Project Powerpuff: Declassified

by xbriannova

Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. It can best be described as this: What if the cartoon series (both new and old) are easy mode, and Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are put in a far more realistic world full of consequences (and potentially greater rewards)? COMPLETED
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the grim, dark future is revealed through a new prologue, one that is closer to the present than the last.

A/N: This here is the new prologue, and the previous one will be removed and placed in the second arc as the prologue there. However, I will leave this prologue at the bottom for a few days, and the old prologue above for the same amount of time for the sake of you guys, my readers. Cheers!

A/N: (5 JAN 2019) I've decided to give this prologue another fresh coat of edit, with some additional but minor details added. Surprisingly, no major additions are made so far, despite my pessimistic expectations. This prologue wasn't written and edited in the best of times.

"He who fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." - Friedrich Nietszsche

Prologue: Shape of Things to Come


{String corrupted} DEC 1988 {String corrupted}

"Why are you still fighting, Blossom?" a voice questioned, the emotions surrounding its words a blank, though they were in danger of breaking through. It was a male voice; nasally, and if one was savvy enough when it came to the various cultures of the United States, one could place it in the New York region, Italian descent. "What reasons do you possibly have? To fight for those who hate you?"

Blossom, despite the state of her being, could hear the man's voice loud and clear, over her own loud panting, over her own heavy heartbeats. It wasn't that the man was wrong; it was just that neither was she.

She opened her eyes once more. For a wild second, she thought that she might find herself in bed, waking up from a crazy nightmare. Instead, she was still there, in the empty parking lot before the huge laboratory complex owned by Morbucks Industries, bleeding on the ground as she knelt on one knee, having been bested by her gangly opponent. She shuddered and whimpered as she could feel the cold winter air seep into her wounds, and her blood seeping out from the numerous cuts that had gone through her dark red SWAT helmet, vest, and uniform.

Before her was a curious man who looked nothing like the others on the street or those who had fought against her. The tall, lanky man wielded an equally strange curved sword with a handle long
enough to be held with two hands, the sharp edge of its blade shimmering and reflecting the different spectrum of light one time or the other at random intervals. But that wasn't the weird part.

The weird part was his skin, which was green in hue, as if he had been afflicted with some sort of skin disease or another, but the only 'disease' he was afflicted with was a dose of Chemical W, which had enhanced every respect of his body's physical performance, and although his enhancements were no match for Blossom's, his experience had more than made up for it.

And he wasn't the only one of his kind, just as Blossom had two sisters. Behind this green-skinned man were four others of all shapes and sizes, kept back from piling on top of Blossom by the command of their gang boss, mentor, and oyabun - the tall, lanky man, known only as…

The street samurai, Ace. Towering over Blossom but not really muscular at all, his frame was nonetheless a facade to those who would underestimate him. In operations such as this one, he wore a combat vest over black cargo gear. His belt was for holding his sword and submachinegun, but he had drawn the former and thrown the latter to the ground when he initiated his duel with Blossom. His most defining feature, however, was his face. He wore a thin, immature mustache, which betrayed his young age, which would have been a surprise to many because of his occupation. Hiding his eyes, which were usually puffy and pink, was a pair of angular shades, which he wore whether it was day or night.

Blossom did not reply the man. Instead, she glared at him, before jumping up and flying towards him at breakneck speed, despite the blood she was losing. In a blink of an eye, she was next to Ace, throwing a multi-ton punch at him, but Ace had already dodged out of the way, a move that seemed effortless. She could feel the sharp blade of his sword slicing through her back after that, just as she was changing her course and delivering a roundhouse kick at him, which Ace, again, dodged simply by ducking slightly under and to the left. Blossom had followed it up seamlessly with a punch, but Ace was simply no longer there. Instead, she could see him at a corner of her eyes, swinging his sword at her; sticking her arm out, she blocked the swipe by intercepting the hand wielding the sword.

With her other hand, Blossom thrust a straight punch aimed at Ace's throat, a kill-shot, which Ace nullified by headbutting her fist. Talented and experienced though he was, he did not expect his counter-move to hurt too much, so he stumbled back, slightly stunned, just as Blossom retreated, clutching her fist, which she couldn't unfurl anymore because of the paralyzing pain.

Sensing an opportunity, Ace charged at Blossom, his sword, his deadly demigoddess-killer, not far behind. Afraid, Blossom stared at Ace's chest, and willed her eyes to heat up, and out came a twin beam of red, concentrated heat energy.

The beams were hard to dodge, considering that they travelled at the speed of light, but Ace had anticipated it, and before Blossom could do any damage beyond singing his Kevlar vest, he sidestepped the beams and was up close to her within a tick. The enhanced little girl had tried to turn her head to burn him with her beam, but he had gotten up behind her and seized her by the forehead and chest, such that she couldn't turn her head to adjust her aim. Her brilliant red beam of heat shot into the sky harmlessly and she struggled and fought against the man restraining her. Her arms were similarly trapped by Ace's grasp. It was an unpleasant sensation, being restrained by a sweaty criminal invading her personal space.

The moment she felt the street samurai's blade on her neck, she knew that all was lost, and she ceased the flow of her heat beam. She gasped tiredly, but also because she was mortally afraid of what might happen next.

"Stupid, naive little girl," Ace condescended, but he had other reasons for saying so. "You think
they’d appreciate you for what you’re doing? They’ll toss you aside the moment they think you’re useless."

"That's not true! You're lying!" Blossom shrieked. There were so many good people in the world, just as there were so many bad ones, and this Ace was one of them for saying such things, for working with the very same people who had hurt her sisters, Bubbles, and Buttercup. She knew he was lying, because among the 'normal' people of the world was her Daddy, Professor Utonium, her Mom, Agent Blake and his men, those good men. There was General Blake, Psychiatrist Alice, and so many other good people.

"Am I? Or are they?" Ace challenged her claim rhetorically.

**Townsville. Business District. Morbucks Industries Research Labs.**

*(String corrupted) DEC 1988 (String corrupted)*

Elsewhere at the Morbucks Industries Research Labs, Bubbles and Buttercup were racing into the building itself, where they could hear the rapid staccato of gunshots. Buttercup had heard it long before they came to the scene because of her enhanced sense of hearing. That was how they knew where to go before they had to leave Blossom.

They were armed and armored to the teeth like Blossom, though unlike Blossom, they hadn’t tossed their weapons to the ground in the name of ‘fairness’ and ‘honor’, as Ace had put it. Dressed in full SWAT gear, with helmet, vest, guards on knees, elbows, shoulders, and thighs, they were practically ready for war. As they hadn’t learned to project heat or do anything similar like Blossom, their USDO-issued weapons were far more important to them. Bubbles was armed with a stockless XM4 carbine while Buttercup had a Stoner LMG. They both had MP5s for backup and compact P226s as last resorts. But their personal armory was nothing compared to what they were created with - raw physical strength, speed, and agility, among other things - and who knew what else, as they were always discovering new abilities.

"Those poor people! We have to save them, Buttercup!" Bubbles exclaimed halfway to the building. As they were running, streaks of light were trailing behind them - Bubbles' was baby blue while Buttercup's was lime-green.

"Who cares?! I'm just here to kick some butt!" Buttercup replied, just before they busted through the entrance into the labs. When they did, they found themselves in some sort of huge and wide-open reception area. There was enough space to hold a party for hundreds, and a party was likely held during Christmas not too long ago, as streamers and Christmas trees and other Yuletide-themed decorations were still hanging. Before them was a reception area where a dozen or more receptionists could be working.

But there weren’t any receptionists there to greet them, for they were either at home (fortunately) or forced to sit on the floor behind the desks at gunpoint by masked terrorists.

Bubbles and Buttercup weren’t alone, and the Foundation wasn’t going to make it easy for them. As soon as they were inside, eight or so men popped out of the reception desks. More had been patrolling the reception hall, and they sprinted into cover behind pillars and furniture. Snipers took up positions on the second floor overlooking the first. They were all a ragtag army of misfits, with no standard uniform, bringing in a wide range of equipment.

Bodies were scattered throughout the hall. They were mostly security guards employed by Morbucks Industries, but a few had been SWAT officers belonging to a rapid response force deployed by the
USDO, the United States Defence Organization, the same organization who had employed Professor Utonium, who created Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, also known notoriously as 'The Three' by Townsville, under Project Powerpuff.

"Not so fast, you two!" one of the terrorists warned as he dragged one of the receptionists before the two subjects of Project Powerpuff. "One wrong move and this pretty lady here is dead! Just turn around and walk away, little lasses, and things won't get ugly!"

Buttercup smiled from ear to ear her sadistic smile, in anticipation of what was coming. It was men and women like the terrorists arrayed against them right now who made her suffer - she couldn't remember all of it, but from what Professor Utonium and Blossom said, she was actually killed at the Townsville Port, only to be brought back again. They were going to pay for how she was hurt and humiliated, and she was going to make sure they do so with interest. Bubbles, too, was mortally wounded and nearly killed by sniper fire, but Buttercup cared much less about that.

Without saying a word, Buttercup charged to the middle of the reception hall and jumped up high.

"Buttercup, no!" Bubbles screamed, but it was too late. The terrorist who warned them shot the receptionist he was holding in the head and let the corpse fall, the blood streaking in the air. He hadn't been bluffing at all, and both of the little girls knew it. Bubbles stared in horror when Buttercup's rashness and selfishness had caused another death.

The terrorists responded by doing what criminals do best - raining on their parade with a storm of lead, which Buttercup laughed off as the metal raindrops bounced off her skin when she did a double-jump to get to the second floor. Sure, they were painful and annoying from the way they pushed her around, but she had gotten used to it over the course of multiple battles, not that bad guys like them could ever aim straight.

"Buttercup, what about me!?" Bubbles screamed as she covered her face when the terrorists on the ground floor started shooting at her too, shredding away bits of her combat gear and uniform at the same time. Buttercup did not respond from the second floor, which was typical of her. Left to her own devices, Bubbles ran for cover behind a pillar, which the terrorists soon began peppering with bullets in earnest.

Buttercup could hear it - there were more terrorists deeper inside the complex, engaging in a firefight against the remainder of whatever Morbucks security forces were still present and loyal, backed only by a small cadre of USDO rapid response teams. Why they were here to shoot and kill, Buttercup did not know. Buttercup did not care. She was just here to shoot and kill, and shoot and kill she did: Having double-jumped to reach the second floor, she vaulted over the railing and unslung her huge Stoner light machinegun. As the terrorists were scrambling to rearrange their battle line in a vain attempt to respond adequately to Buttercup, the tomboy began firing freely, mowing down the most stubborn of them all - several men and women who had stood their ground and continued their sustained barrage of assault weapons firing.

On the ground floor, Bubbles peeked out of her cover - her weapons wasn't even drawn yet. But what she saw at the reception area had her reconsider her peaceful ways. A terrorist with a revolver was pointing his gun at one of a group of other hostages, all of whom were forced to kneel on the floor and put their hands on their heads - they were receptionists and all-nighter office workers mainly. Only one of the hostages was prepared to die, and he was a badly wounded USDO soldier who continued to insult and spat at the terrorists even from his helpless position. Another terrorist had to pistol-whip him into silence. The other hostages looked terrified; whimpering and begging, crying and wailing and trying to reason in broken gasps and barely intelligible words between sobs with their captors.
'BAM!' the moment the revolver terrorist shot one of them in the head, in cold blood, Bubbles could feel her blood chill, her bones frozen to the core. Almost nonchalantly, the executioner terrorist cocked his revolver and moved on to the next gibbering, pleading and helpless civilian in line. That was when Bubbles flew into action, literally, even though she hadn't quite mastered flight yet.

Bubbles' flight path was unsteady, but her aim was true. Slamming into the executioner, she sent herself and the evil, bad man flying halfway across the hall, tumbling the rest of the way. He was dashed upon a pillar, and Bubbles got to use him as a cushion. A sticky, bloody cushion. But she didn't have time to be mortified by her own actions. More terrorists were shooting at her on the ground floor, and some of them had shot her in the chest, which hurt more because of the wounds there, which were still mending from the Duranium shells that had tore through her days ago.

"Stop it!" Bubbles cried as she felt more bullets were pouring in from all sides, stinging her everywhere.

Back on the second floor, Buttercup had just run out of ammunition for her machine gun. Although she had a couple more boxes hanging on her vest, she had never cultivated a habit for reloading - it was just too much work in the middle of a hairy situation. Instead, she dropped her machinegun and closed in on the remaining terrorists she did not gun down.

They were still hiding behind pillars and walls, unlike her. Through this, Buttercup knew that the bad guys she was up against were afraid of her. They were cowards, and since she, Buttercup, had no need to hide, she was the opposite of that. Running towards a pillar and curving around to get a good view of the two terrorists taking cover there, she launched herself at them foot-first as they were desperately firing their weapons - a shotgun and a submachinegun. The first one ducked just in time, so Buttercup had ended up splattering the second man against the wall. The force of the impact was so strong that her foot had sunk all the way into the terrorist. She could feel organs and spine alike pulverizing against the wall, with blood getting squeezed out like juice out of an orange.

The terrorist she missed didn't last much longer. The outmatched woman had done the smart thing - running away. She just wasn't fast enough. Buttercup had caught up to her within a second, driving her fist through her back, completely destroying her heart, and before her body had hit the floor, Buttercup was already sprinting away, green trail in her wake, searching for other prey. She didn't have to look far, as more were taking cover behind Greek pillars, and she simply smashed through one to get at another terrorist.

Back below, Bubbles had taken refuge behind a pillar, panting as she was clutching her chest. It was hurting very badly from being aggravated by gunshots. In the middle of the reception area, the civilian she saved had taken to hiding behind the reception desks. The lone fighter among them, the USDO soldier, had resumed fighting by taking down the terrorist who had pistol-whipped him while he was distracted, looting his corpse and shooting back at the terrorists, only to attract too much attention and jeopardizing his life along with his fellow hostages'.

Bubbles was forced to act again, dashing to the columns where the ground floor terrorists were arrayed against the hostages and her. Not wanting to kill even if the situation warranted it, she gave the first Foundation agent a push, and when he was on the floor, punched the daylights out of him. When there were two, she would give the two of them a push before punching them hard enough to knock them out too, all the while getting shot at, the only good news being that they hadn't figured out her weakness in the chest yet.

Back above, Buttercup was finishing off the remainder of the second-floor terrorists. The remaining few were huddled against the railing as she had corralled them off against it. There was just the three of them left, and two of them had run out of ammo for their main armaments and were popping off
shots at Buttercup with their pistols. The tomboy ran towards them, speeding into a sprint, before tackling the three of them, the sheer force of her attack destroying the railing behind them, breaking bone against metal, throwing the terrorists off the second floor. They plunged back to the ground floor, Buttercup and her victims screaming, the former with joy and ecstasy, the latter men with fear as they were either killed or were severely maimed by the fall.

There were no more gunshots after that. The reception hall was still. When Buttercup got up to dust herself off, shaking dented bullets off her vest and uniform, there was one more challenge she had to face: Bubbles.

"You left me behind, Buttercup!" Bubbles screeched as she marched up to her sister, one hand clutching her chest, the other pointing accusingly at Buttercup.

"Hey, you did fine, didn't you?" Buttercup countered, crossing her arms. "Looks like the first time you stood up for yourself. I'm surprised you survived, Bubbles."

"Survived? Survived!?" Bubbles came up to Buttercup, almost in a panic, seizing her by the vest. 
"They were killing me, Buttercup! They were hurting me really badly! And those poor people! Why, Buttercup!?"

"Bubbles! Get off me!" Buttercup yelled, pushing her sister off her, overdoing it, as she had pushed her to the ground, and she had exerted too much pressure on her chest.

Bubbles fell to the ground, clutching her chest with both her hands. "Ow!" she cried.

"Wha- I didn't even-" Buttercup said, unable to believe that Bubbles could react so severely to a push. "Stop being such a crybaby and get up, Bubs!"

"I'm telling Daddy after this!" Bubbles sobbed, tearful.

"But I was just-" Buttercup was genuinely shocked at the consequence of her actions. Had Blossom been here, she would have made sure the consequences were worse for Buttercup. But she wasn't here. Knowing her sisters, Buttercup knew that Bubbles would likely tell on her, if not with Blossom then with their Daddy, Professor Utonium. "I didn't even mean it!"

"Then say sorry and I won't tell," Bubbles offered both her proposal and a hand for Buttercup to right her wrong by pulling her up. "Please?" She still had a hand on her chest, because her 'old' wound still hurt.

Buttercup accepted the hand and pulled Bubbles to her feet, but she kept her mouth shut, and was anything but apologetic as she arched her eyebrows and frowned at Bubbles. As far as she was concerned, Bubbles was wrong for being so weak and vulnerable

But before either of them could say anything else, they could hear footsteps, numerous sets of them. More Foundation-affiliated terrorists were streaming in from deep within the complex. Bubbles gave a shivering sigh.

They began shooting, and one of them pointed an odd-looking weapon at them. A huge-calibre beast, crudely made with no magazine attached, the moment it was fired, the entire assembly of the weapon split apart in an explosion, and the shooter himself was injured by the chamber explosion. The strange shooter tumbled to the ground, unmoving. The bullet that was fired had hit Buttercup. For a moment, it felt like any other weapon, but when she looked down, she saw that there was a hole in her arm, and it was bleeding profusely, the blood already staining half her right sleeve. The sight scared her - it was the first time ever that she had been wounded by gunshot. She felt faint and
sunk to the ground as she was moaning and crying in pain. It wasn't any ordinary bullet. It was made of Duranium, just like the ones that were fired upon Bubbles.

Bubbles knew better what to do - she'd been there before, and her wounds had been far worse. She pulled Buttercup into cover behind a pillar.

"This is Delta-Three, where's our reinforcement!? My squad is losing ground and civilians are dying! We need backup! Please! Over!" one of the USDO rapid response team soldier said over the radio. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could hear it loud and clear, wherever they were.

The defensive operation was falling apart, despite the Girls' best efforts, despite the USDO's perfect execution and performance. It was at this critical moment, as Blossom was brought low once again, as Buttercup was unexpectedly injured and Bubbles had to cower with her, that all of 'The Three' could not help but to think back to the past, and reminisce about the simpler times, back when life was free of worry, free of pain. Sure, there were times when they were miserable, but Daddy and Mommy were always there to make things right. With her eidetic memory, she could remember those days, right up to the very second she had awakened for the first time…
**File 1: Project Powerpuff**

File 1: Project Powerpuff

DOC: 2 MAR 1967

Updated: 17 JUN 1987

Description: Project Powerpuff is an idea conceived by the Organization in 1967, during the Vietnam War, as a desperate measure proposed to the US government when the war was projected to be a defeat. The codename is derived from the nature of the chemical, and meant to throw off any potential agents investigating it as to what its intentions are.

Project Powerpuff has changed throughout the years, but some details remain consistent. One consistency is the utilization of Chemical X, named after the alphabetical character used to designate its position in a series of refinement trials and coincidentally, the alphabetical character used to redact the actual scientific and technical long-form used to refer to it (i.e. Chemical XXXXXXXXXX).

Chemical X was discovered in trace amounts in a classified location in Egypt, during an archaeological dig which had since been suspended and buried. The coordinates to its location has been broken down into parts and handed to key leadership personnel such that only a full subversion or subjugation of the Organization will stand a chance at unlocking it.

Originally, Project Powerpuff was meant to weaponize Chemical X by developing a method to intravenously infuse soldiers with it, using its properties to create super-soldiers (forgive the obsolete term) capable of destroying entire armies on their own. However, early trials were rushed haphazard projects that were underfunded and undermanned, resulting in the death of thirteen volunteers drawn from the US army and the mutilation and escape of subjects A14-A16 into the jungles of Vietnam. Their current whereabouts are unknown, but since their escape, there have been tales of vengeful ghosts or creatures roaming in the jungle, killing innocent villagers and soldiers on both sides. Reports had ceased shortly after the end of the war.

The slow progress of Project Powerpuff meant that it was too late when America backed out of the war. The final version of Chemical X had only been synthesized much later on, with only a small sample in the micro-grams produced in 1981. However, Project Powerpuff was allowed to continue due to the projection that the US government will likely become involved in yet more wars.

Human trials continued with early versions of the Chemicals, B through to W, with more stringent measures. With each incarnation of the Chemical, trials would begin first with plant trials, then animal trials, in order of similarity to Homo Sapiens-Sapiens, then to Human trials. Despite these measures, casualties continued to mount, as well as escapees. These failures were factors to the necessity of the Powerpuff Girls Media Complex (refer to File 33: The Powerpuff Girls Media Complex).

In 1985, trials involving Chemical X proves to be far more promising, right from the start. Plants infused with Chemical X would grow beyond maximum height and biological performance, and even some adaptations both in genotype and phenotype. Some had even gained motility and behavioral adaptations. Animal trials yielded the same positive results, resulting in no deaths in the fauna, and even the creation of Jojo, a Chimpanzee who gained limited sapience and is able to function as a lab assistant. Although a breach of protocols, 'Jojo' was not terminated on the insistence of agent Utonium (code-name in force). More details are available in their files.
Chemical X trials continued into 1987, when Human trials began, and this was where another hurdle presented itself. Despite earlier successes with flora and fauna, infusion of Chemical X into Humans of both sexes and ages from 13 - 71 resulted in a huge variation of results across the board, from no visible effects to varying degrees of mutations and even death.

It was not until a lab incident that a solution was found. Jojo, the aforementioned home-grown sapient lab Chimpanzee, was said to have ‘freaked out’ in an episode previously unobserved. Even agent Utonium, his designated handler, could not understand if he was warning him or goading him on. Previously, Utonium, the main researcher attached to Project Powerpuff at the time, was exploring the possibility of using other chemicals as stabilizing agents to Chemical X. Agent Utonium had been working on a cocktail consisting of Chemicals Sugar, Spice and Everything-Nice (code-named) and was unfinished, intending to add other stabilizing chemicals when Jojo accidentally knocked over a vial of Chemical X into the chemical cocktail.

With the half-prepared Chemical X cocktail ruined, Agent Utonium attempted to salvage the experiment by running some tests on it. Surprisingly, Chemical X appeared stable after its addition to the cocktail. From there, Project Powerpuff was launched to new heights, going into practical trials, with development shifting into internal affairs rather than foreign policy, due to concerns of crime and terrorism.

For more information on the latest batch of subjects for Project Powerpuff, refer to their files.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassifed is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after, chronologically. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium, as he is known, is introduced.

Personnel File S0064

DOC: 1 JAN 1980
Updated: 1 JAN 2017

Personal Records
Name: Thomas Lewis Upton
DOB: 22 APR 1946
Age: 71 (As of 2017)
Sex: Male

Personal History:
- Born on 22 APR 1946 to typist mother Mary Upton and a USMC father Caleb Upton.
- In 8 JUL 1948, Thomas gains a brother, Eugene Upton.
- Disagreements reported to be common within family, but not to the point of rendering the family completely dysfunctional. Thomas Lewis Upton favours a more progressive and pacifistic stance while the parents are more traditionalist and military (they are a three-generational military family). This extends to all aspects of life, be it religion, politics or science.
- The father is reported to be very unhappy with Thomas Lewis Upton's decision to pursue the sciences, preferring him to continue the family tradition of joining the armed forces.
- Eugene Upton, the brother, continues the family tradition instead.
- Thomas maintains very little contact with his family since enrolling in MIT, and it is only in his later years as a professor that there was some semblance of communication between him and his family.

[FILE CORRUPTED MISSING STRINGS]

Personality

Thomas Lewis Upton, unlike the rest of his family, is introverted and shy even despite his educators 'breaking him out of his shell'. However, he is kind, a people person and 'moral' (which can be a liability) especially when he is in his element in the sciences. He is passionate about his field, and
could be riled up if he felt his work or colleagues/peers are threatened.

History of Education:

- (1968, age 22) Thomas Lewis Upton graduated from MIT with a triple degree in Electronic Engineering, Biochemistry and Physics, with first class honours and distinction. He was second in his cohort and valedictorian.

- (1970, age 24) Thomas Lewis Upton attains his master's degree in Theoretical Physics at Oxford University, where he worked on theories on dimensions beyond the third and non-euclidean physics.

- (1975, age 29) Thomas Lewis Upton becomes professor of Theoretical Physics, and had remained prolific in his multi-disciplinary pursuits, attaining a master's degree in Biochemistry and Biology. He studied medicine part-time, but at this age, has yet to attain a doctor's license.

- (1978, age 32) Thomas Lewis Upton receives his doctor's license, as well as credit for numerous breakthroughs in his field of Theoretical Physics.

- (1979, age 33) Thomas Lewis Upton gains a degree in Mechanical Engineering and would have achieved a Master's Degree in it had it not been for the Organization's recruitment policy targeting him.

Organization Code-Name: Utonium

Rank: Head of Research

Clearance: Level 11

Organization Record:

- 1980: Recruited by Organization in expansion of science department as Head of Research. His performance is exemplary on induction, and he is well-liked by his peers and subordinates for his kindness, conflict management, mentorship and for getting his hands dirty in the research, surpassing his predecessor.

- 1981: He successfully synthesized a tiny amount of what will be known as Chemical X in small amounts, far ahead of schedule when earlier versions were still undergoing trials.

- 1981: Let it be recorded that Thomas Lewis Upton has objected against some of the human trial experiments, on grounds of morality. Demotion or termination considered but ultimately not acted upon on the behest of then Director.

- 1981: He has since reformed the Organization's human trial process multiple times to minimize risk to subjects of the experiments, including the suspension of subject termination protocols. Casualties have decreased, but escapees have increased under his watch. He was reprimanded for his actions.

- 1984: Professor Utonium, as he was known in the Organization, has devised a method of manufacturing Chemical X in large quantities.

- 1985: He spearheads the Chemical X plant and animal trials. He resists the Organization's attempt at reversing his humanitarian reforms, even arguing against the termination of a potentially dangerous animal test subject, Jojo, who is a Chimpanzee that had gained limited sapience and under his watch, gains membership into his laboratory staff as assistant. The Directorate tolerates this due to his value and abilities.
- 1987: His work in Project Powerpuff continues, but his results in the human trials are limited. Demotion or termination considered but not acted upon on the behest of then Director.

-1987: Due to a lab accident, a surprising breakthrough in Project Powerpuff was made under his watch. While he was reprimanded for allowing his Chimpanzee assistant to run amok in his lab, his work is allowed to continue as it will ultimately prove beneficial to the Organization.

- 1988: Professor Utonium creates the first batch of successful subjects under Project Powerpuff, subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49, though many parameters are not met and they are deemed to be too cost-ineffective, and quite frankly, not worth the effort, even as prototypes. Termination of subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 considered. Professor Utonium vigorous and passionately protested against termination, and the Director agrees.

[FILE CORRUPTED MISSING STRINGS]
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassifed is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after, chronologically. In the latest episode, an accident results in the unexpected birth of three girls. Thus, the angels were born!

Background: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 are made possible by a series of accidents (some details are available in File 1: Project Powerpuff). To reiterate, an unfinished cocktail of stabilizing chemicals had been accidentally mixed with Chemical X due to Jojo, Agent Utonium's sapient Chimpanzee assistant. The result proved to be surprisingly stable, and the compound was brought to Testing.

Preliminary testing involved flora, fauna and human stem cells at first, before moving on to the standard process. It is here when the incident that produced Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 happened. The incident involved the human stem cells samples that had been used to test for reaction with the Chemical X cocktail. The human stem cells were derived from 5-year-old patients from the [STRING MISSING] Women & Children's Hospital. The human stem cells were labeled 5YG-1847 through to 5YG-1849 and selected due to the patients' youth, health (the kindergarteners were there merely for a prophylactic check-up) and other factors. When the cells were immersed in the Chemical X cocktail in a sterile chamber, the result was through the roof.

There was a burst of activity under the microscope when examined, and the cells multiplied beyond biological and even physical limitations. According Professor Utonium (code-name in force), the cells multiplied in an alarming rate, with each binary fission process completed within 1 minutes and 5 seconds.

There was another disturbing discovery. The nutrient solution that the stem cells were immersed in could not have supported the cell divisions taking place, and were just enough to keep the human stem cells from dying during the testing process. At the time, even Professor Utonium struggled to find an explanation for the phenomenon.

Within an hour, the result of this uncontrolled, even cancerous cell division became visible to the naked eye. In a panic, one of Utonium's assistants called security to implement scorched earth policy, but Professor Utonium nullified the order and got security to stand down. He advocated patience.

Below is a partial note of the human stem cell colony's progress-

Time 1831, T-0: Taken to be the moment Professor Utonium noticed that samples 5YG-1847 to
5YG-1849 became visible.

Time 1959, T-1.5: Samples 5YG-1847 to 5YG-1849 formed what appeared to be a Week 6 embryonic fetus.

Time 2025, T-2: Embryonic fetus doubled in size, becoming the equivalent of Week 8 fetuses. At this point, Professor Utonium ordered that Gynocological equipment be brought into the lab. Due to the speed of the development, security (with an accompanying nurse) was ordered to fly to the nearest hospital by helicopter to directly purchase the required equipment second-hand from the officials there. (due to the irregularity and possibly illegal nature of the transaction, the funds spent on the Gynocological equipment was several times greater than the market price of first-hand equivalents)

Time 2100, T-2.5: Week 10 equivalent fetuses. The rapidly growing samples 5YG-1847 to 5YG-1849 were transferred to the medical wing where Professor Utonium and staff awaited the required equipment. It is unknown how the fetuses could survive outside a womb, but improvised scans of the fetuses by Utonium show them to be in a healthy state.

Time 2130, T-3: Week 12 equivalent fetuses. The security copter bearing the Gynocological equipment for samples 5YG-1847 to 5YG-1849 returned (it is worth noting that the security staff responsible for this is commendable for expediting this). The fetuses were incubated. The fetuses had began moving. A nurse was reported to have fainted whilst witnessing this - her hospitalization was expedited by their current location.

Time 2200, T-4: The samples developed into Week 16 fetuses.

Time 2222, T-4.5: Growth appeared to have accelerated. Week 20.

Time 2259, T-5: Week 24

Time 2330, T-5.5: Week 28.

Time 2358, T-6: Week 36.

Time 0030, T-6.5: Week 40. The former samples 5YG-1847 to 5YG-1849 became fully-formed babies, and were transferred to maternity cradles. They started crying soon after as observation notes were made. Sample 5YG-1847 shall henceforth be known as Subject B-47, 5YG-1848 as Subject B-48 and 5YG-1849 as Subject B-49. Subject B-47 was observed to possess reddish-brown hair, Subject B-48 was observed to possess black hair while Subject B-49 was observed to possess light blonde hair (Note: It was later realised that the subjects took after the children from which they were taken from). Professor Utonium made a call for volunteers to breastfeed Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49. Two volunteers, nurses, reluctantly stepped up. He had to order the next closest woman to volunteer when the response proved insufficient.

Time 0100, T-7: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 ceased feeding and seemed to have fallen asleep. Volunteers who fed them reported that they seemed to be growing heavier.

Time 0127, T-7.5: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 were quantitatively established to indeed be growing, gaining half an inch and pounds every few minutes. They were returned to the cradles and hooked up to machines for monitoring their life signs. Volunteers observed to be very relieved to be relieved of their emergency maternal duties.

Time 0259, T-8: Rapid growth continued, such that months of development were breezed by within minutes.
Time 0330, T-8.5: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 equivalent of 1-year-olds.

Time 0400, T-9: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 equivalent of 2-year-olds. They were transferred to hospital beds in the medical wing.

Time 0430, T-9.5: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 equivalent of 3-year-olds. Professor Utonium sanctions further observations to be made of them. Their eyes were examined for reactions, and they were normal. However, what was not normal were the eye colours (which were established to be different from the sources of the subjects, and were outside the phenotype limits of human gene expression). B-47 appeared to have bright pink eyes - albinism was ruled out as other symptoms of it were absent. B-48 appeared to have bright green eyes and B-49 appeared to have baby blue eyes. They could not be explained at the time.

Time 0500, T-10: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 equivalent of 4-year-olds.

Time 0524, T-10.5: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 equivalent of 5-year olds. Subjects stopped breathing soon afterwards. Heart rates had also flat lined. An odd observation was made: they seemed to have done this simultaneously. Emergency crew was scrambled to revive them, and Professor Utonium joined in the effort, having clearance in medicine. However, Defibrillation and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation appeared to be ineffective, and the equipment were reported to malfunction when this was tried multiple times (later reports point out that the defibrillators were damaged by the Subjects' bodies somehow)

Time 0534, T-10.6: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 pronounced medically dead after 10 minutes elapsed. Professor Utonium had tried beyond brain death to revive them to no avail. Professor Utonium appeared to be visibly distressed by the sight. However, after 12 minutes elapsed, pulse and breathing returned. Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 had apparently returned to life, but were, however, still unconscious. They were placed in a shared ICU.

Time 0600, T-11: Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 appeared stable and had entered REM sleep. Professor Utonium observed to be staying in ICU with them. He had to be ordered repeatedly to leave them and attend an emergency meeting precipitated by these recent developments.

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after, chronologically. In this episode, an emergency meeting is held in light of the birth of three test subjects from the lab - in order to decide on how best to determine their capabilities.

Emergency Meeting 11221987A Transcript

DOC: 22 NOV 1987

The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

START TRANSCRIPT

(The Location: Main Conference Room, Organization HQ.)

(Attending: All departmental heads along with their deputies and relevant personnel.)

(Time: 0621. The Main Conference Room was packed. All department heads were seated at the centre, around an oval conference table with the seal of the Organization in the middle. Organization Director [MISSING STRING] was at its head. Chief of Security [MISSING STRING] was on his right. Liaison Head [MISSING STRING] was on his left. Chief of Logistics [MISSING STRING] was further to the left. Medical Wing Director [MISSING STRING] was further to the right. The only person missing was the Head of Research, Utonium (code-name in force)

(More department personnel were seated around the oval table, talking, taking notes, looking nervous, looking excited, looking intimidated. The main entrance was flanked by security personnel, at the time looking little more like security guards, with batons and pistols on their belt.)

Organization Director: Where the hell is Upton?

Chief of Security: Let me check. (he grabbed the phone on the table, dialed an extension number and spoke) This is the Chief. Where's the Head of Research? I see. Uh-huh. Well, don't just stand there! Then go get him again! (hangs up the phone)

Organization Director: Well?

Chief of Security: He's still with Subjects B-47, 48 and 49. Got my man to get him. Upton's still with those freaks. I don't know what he sees in them, though I must say, I would have been a happy father if my children took just half a day to crawl out of my wife's womb.

Medical Wing Director: It was truly remarkable, that. What could have possibly allowed for such accelerated development! And outside a womb!

Organization DIrector: People, this is unprecedented. Project Powerpuff had been in the making for a
long time, and this could be where it pays off.

Chief of Logistics: Heh. I doubt it, unless you think a trio of 5-year-old sleeping beauties are what you think the US needs to lower its crime index.

Organization Director: That is a concern, but we will wait for an official report from Upton.

(Minutes of idle chit-chat)

(Utonium enters the room, looking haggard and rather disturbed, but in a strange way.)

Organization Director: There you are! Sit down! What took you?

Head of Research Utonium: Sorry. I was just... I've been... Busy. It's been a rough day. I mean, not just for me. Not just for my team, or the medical wing.

Organization Director: I understand. You should have tomorrow, or rather, today off. Get yourself into bed or something. But for now-

Head of Research Utonium: Look, I don't need a day off. I think- I think I should stay with the girls- I mean, the urm... The subjects.

(pause in response)

Organization Director: We'll talk about that later. For now, I need a report. What's the condition of B-47 through to 49?

Head of Research Utonium: They're stable, and by that, I mean they are no longer aging rapidly, but they're healthy. They're asleep, based on my readings on the-

Chief of Security: Spare me the details, son. What's their threat level? Are four of my men enough?

Head of Research Utonium: Technically, it's three men and a woman, but they're soundly asleep, and theoretically, since they'd spent a lot of energy just growing for the past 11 hours, and they are physically and approximately 5-year-olds, I believe they should pose no threat.

Chief of Security: Believe? Believe! Believe ain't good enough, boy. You're a scientist, you should know that.

Head of Research Utonium: I... I... I... Urm. They-

Organization Director: Look, professor. I like you. You've been on the forefront of the Organization's achievements for the past 8 years. Your contribution to Project Powerpuff is one-of-a-kind. Even your contributions to the other projects on the side has increased our fledgling agency's worth ten-fold. But ever since those... Things had started growing out of those petri dishes, you've been acting strangely. You're not yourself.

Medical Wing Director: Perhaps he's in shock? Can you tell me your symptoms, Upton? One of my nurses fainted just by looking at the subjects maturing from zygote to babies. It can be quite... Graphic for amateurs, I guess.

Head of Research Utonium: No, it's not that.

Chief of Logistics: Lots of emotions running in your voice, prof.

Head of Research Utonium: I'm fine. Just reminded me of my late wife and baby girl. That's... All.
Organization Director: My condolences again, Upton. But please. Professionalism! We're in the middle of a breakthrough! Can't believe your monkey's-

Head of Research Utonium: Chimpanzee. Pan Troglodyte-

Organization Director: Whatever! Can't believe your Chimpanzee was a God send. We have to embrace this chance now! Have you tested B-47 to 49 on their capabilities yet? Are they what we've been looking for? Are they our ticket back to Foreign Policy?

Head of Research Utonium: I haven't test their capabilities nor executed any of the standard stress tests yet.

Organization Director: That's understandable, given the time frame. When will the results be ready?

Head of Research Utonium: I haven't ordered any tests scheduled.

Organization Director: You what!? Why?

Head of Research Utonium: The girls are asleep, and after such a mess! They're 5-year-old, and they were literally born just yesterday!

Chief of Logistics: Urm... I'm no rocket scientists, but can't we just wake them up?

Chief of Security: That could be dangerous. I think four of my men just aren't enough. Remember what happened the last time? In fact, we need to expand MY department. A few dozen men is enough for a mall, but not an agency as important as ours!

Organization Director: Wake em' up, Upton. Get those tests done on those things!

Head of Research Utonium: Look! It doesn't matter how they're born, where they're born! They're little girls! With or without enhancements!

Organization Director: Haven't you learnt your lesson yet? Do you want your retirement package that soon?

Head of Research Utonium: You said it yourself, that this is unprecedented, that they're a chance, a God send. So treat those girls like the miracle they are! If I have to speak your language, then fine: We need to treat this situation as delicately as possible. They might be all we'll ever have! It's a possibility that we might never get something like this again! They're still sleeping, and there's our chance.

Chief of Security: To set up a parameter and kill zones in case they escape and destroy our already terrible reputation with the government again?

Head of Research Utonium: No! Okay, they're just born yesterday right? We don't know if they even possess the intellect to even participate in most of the tests. We're in unfamiliar territory here. Within hours, the established fundamentals in biology and physics- and chemistry had just been put into question. Do they wake up as 5-year-olds with the mind of 5-year-olds? Or 5-day-olds? I simply don't know. (appears enthusiastic) And I can't wait to find out!

Organization Director: Fine, you have my ear, Upton. What do you have in mind?

Head of Research Utonium: We move on to the next phase.

Organization Director: There is no 'next phase'.
Head of Research Utonium: So we expand our SOP! You said it yourself, this is unprecedented! I can't wait to see their eyes, those beautiful eyes open! (appears enthusiastic)

Organization Director: And let me guess, you're writing our new SOP?

Head of Research Utonium: I've always advocated the right thing to do. It's hard, I know, for all of us. But this time, it's even more important! And this time, it's going to work out perfectly, I just know it.

Chief of Security: That's what you always say. Tell that to my men, to all those pictures of the dearly departed in the barracks, Frankenstein.

Head of Research Utonium: I have a good feeling about this one. All we need is a house straight out of the American Dream, a stable, safe environment. If you want results, I can get them for you, but I'm not putting their lives in danger just to cut corners and do it hard and fast.

Organization Director: And who's going to take care of their every need? You? We're not running a childcare service here! If it's just three ordinary children, fine. You've got the Dinosaur Room at our HQ. But we're talking about children with enhanced abilities, likely!

Head of Research Utonium: I'll do it. They're born under my watch. They're my responsibility. (slips back into upset state) I can't just abandon them like that. I can't just abandon them. I can't just abandon her.

Organization Director: Fine. You've always had your way, Upton. Just don't make me regret this one. Logistics?

Chief of Logistics: We can get it done within a day, no, give us 12 hours. We'll get the house, the furniture, the car, anything.

Organization Director: Security?

Chief of Security: My pleasure, boss. I can deploy security en-masse, form a parameter. But, boss - expand my department or our facilities will be left largely defenseless.

Organization Director: You got it.

Chief of Security: Finally!

Head of Research Utonium: And make sure they're instructed to protect the girls, too!


Organization Director: Liaisons?

Liaisons Head: Yes sir. I'll put the paperwork in order. Which city would it be?

Organization Director: That would be my decision. Let's make it happen, people.

END TRANSCRIPT
Chapter 0: White

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after, chronologically. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium starts his new family with the Girls in their new home.

The following is constructed out of logs, journals, video and audio records, newspaper and magazine articles, first and second hand accounts and interviews.

Chapter 0: White

The City of Townsville

23 NOV 1988, 0613

In the suburbs just outside the urban centre of the great and historic city of Townsville, there was the hustle and bustle of activity where there usually was peace and quiet. A convoy of trucks had moved in, stopping just outside of a house that stood out. It was a house inspired by futurist or post-modern architectural sense. An estate agent ran up to the 'For Sale' sign on its lawn and pulled it out.

Then the trucks opened the mouths on their back, and disgorged furnitures, and boxes full of little trinkets, and crates full of equipment. Men upon men worked like ants, throwing themselves into the house with belongings in tow, filling the house at a pace unmatched by the local moving companies and leaving just as quickly. They were far too disciplined and precise to be just any other movers.

Then the trucks made a U-turn and left just as fast as they had come. Residents of the surrounding house, not all of them awake, and not all of them concerned, could only stare with tired eyes and make dull-edged observations. Only the estate agent remained.

Just as soon as the moving trucks, all of which were unlabeled, left, a bigger, much larger fourteen-wheeler thundered towards the house and stopped just outside. A door on the cab opened, and out stepped a man in neat lab-wear, and just as neat haircut, if a little angular and square. He straightened himself. It had been a rough ride, and he hadn't slept ever since the evening of 21 NOV 1988, ever since IT happened.

Even after B-47, B-48 and B-49 were no longer in danger of a premature cessation of life, he had been beside them all this time, making the necessary preparations, preparing them for the move.

They were still asleep. 'Growing up physically into 5-year-olds in the span of 11 hours must have really been taxing, really taxing', the professor thought. In fact, they were so out of it that they could be moved in self-contained boxes which doubled as tiny mobile medical rooms, and they were still asleep. Utonium (code-name in force) was actually worried that they might actually be born into a coma, but he knew that he could only wait and see. His readings were inconclusive.

The three boxes containing the first 'successful' subjects of Project Powerpuff were disgorged from
the back of the 14-wheeler just like how the furnitures were, and they were wheeled into the house from the garage, by people in lab coats. They were Professor Utonium's staff.

Professor Utonium himself came up to the house, breathing in the fresh smell of the lawn and the morning dew still forming. He stared at the house, and it seemed perfect. It looked almost like a space station to him, with each room like a module. The living room was the centre, the garage to his right and the kitchen/dining room to the left. The second floor consisted of sleeping quarters, and the biggest will be given to the subjects, who Utonium referred to as the Girls, even as everyone else just called them subjects, or things, or freaks. There were spare rooms that even the Chief of Logistics did not know what to do with, but Utonium promised himself that he will figure it out next time.

The basement was incredibly huge for the house. The last owner of the house, who didn't live there long, had been a doomsday prepper, and as such, he had expanded the basement to the boundaries of the property. It was perfect for the laboratory.

"Sign here," the estate agent, a suave man in a business suit, pushed a clipboard full of papers at the Professor. Utonium did just that, half distracted by the endless possibilities of this 'next phase' of Project Powerpuff that his signature had ended up misshapen. But it wasn't science he was thinking of, not this time.

As the girls were carried up to the second floor, the professor ran into the house and joined the people, his people, who were bringing it up.

"Careful now, careful. Don't drop them- Very delicate-" he would nag. His staff didn't mind. They knew what he was thinking, and feeling. Most of them had worked with him for years.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 were delivered to what would be their room, a giant bedroom with its own bathroom, painted all white with three cots pre-made with white bedsheets and white pillows and white pillowcases, filled with white tables and bookshelves and shelves in general. Professor Utonium entered it for the first time, and thought that it looked more like a lab than a room for girls. The Chief of Logistics hadn't thought this through, but then again, the cold man of hard numbers would have thought he did - the Chief of Logistics, like all the other heads, had thought of the Girls as little more than objects, objects that are of high rarity and value at most. In their words, they were things. Freaks. Working with them was going to be a difficult endeavour from now on, the Professor just knew it. With how things had changed and with how high the stakes were raised, it could only get much harder.

The Little-ICUs were brought into the room. The professor's science staff tapped on the keypads and opened them. The ventilation system inside shut down, having done their work. They were about to carry them out when the professor stopped them.

"May I do the honours?" he was almost pleading with them with eyes staring enthusiastically at them, like never before.

"Yeah, sure." "You're welcome." "Go ahead-" "All yours, prof." The staff agreed, cacophonous.

Professor Utonium reached into the Little-ICU of B-47 and pulled out a red-headed little girl in white hospital gown, who had been sleeping all on her side, but straight and headstrong. He cradled her in his arms and walked over to the centre cot, depositing her there, and pulling up the blanket over her.

He then went over to the next Little-ICU. B-48. Reaching in, he pulled out a black-haired little girl in white hospital gown, who had been sleeping on her back, with arms instinctively crossed, but otherwise peaceful. He brought her over to the cot on the left of B-47, and laid her there, pulling the blanket over her. She stirred, digging herself in. It was an encouraging side. This one must be the
active one,' the Professor thought.

Then he went over to the last Little-ICU. B-49. Reaching in, he pulled out a blonde little girl in white hospital gown, who slept with her hands beneath her head, seemingly prepackaged with a smile. He took her over to the last remaining cot, and tucked her in there. Professor Utonium smiled at the sight.

Lastly, he hooked them up to ECGs and other machines, to monitor their life signs. Despite them being stable for the past 12 hours or so, he was still deathly worried that they might slip back into oblivion again.

"It's been great working with you, prof," one of the staff said.

"We'll really miss you," another said.

"I'll try to visit!" yet another promised.

There was no good without sacrifice. In volunteering to be the caretaker of B-47, B-48 and B-49, Professor Utonium had to relinquish his role as Head of Research, or Science Director. He was given the role of 'Field Researcher' instead, but he knew that the Organization Director was just being kind. But Utonium didn't care. He was going to make it right again, pay back for his mistakes. He had to make his late wife and daughter matter, save lives and make them better, and this would continue with B-47, B-48 and B-49.

Then before he knew it, they were gone; his former subordinates (though he prefer to call them friends or colleagues). And he was left all alone with the three girls.

Sitting down on a WHITE little kiddy stool with nothing but the steady beeps of the girls' strong hearts, he began to perspire cold sweats, his smile replaced with trembling lips.

He had no idea what was going to happen next, nor how he could really take care of three potentially 'enhanced' 5-year-olds when he had only experience being a father to one ordinary girl… And he thought that he was a terrible father at that, after what had happened.

"Please make this work," he said to the WHITE room, to the sleeping girls, almost praying.
Chapter Summary

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Chapter 1: Blue-Som

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

23 NOV 1988, 1048

Voices. Voices swirling in the dark. Voices telling him that everything was going to fall apart, that the girls would come out of this suffering, whether it was falling in a void of darkness forever in catatonia, or suffering from one horrific malady or another from being grown from chemical X. Then he saw his wife and daughter, both with horrified looks, their skin withering into dust, then the muscles and bones underneath.

Professor Utonium opened his eyes to discover that he had been sitting on the white carpeted floor of the girls' room, half his body, his head on the table. His entire body ached. He knew he had fallen asleep, for the last thing he recalled was him watching over the girls, getting lulled into unconsciousness from sheer exhaustion by the steady beep of their heartbeat monitors.

He could barely see. His vision was a blur. He tried blinking it away, thinking that he had seen something. But when his vision cleared, he realised that he wasn't wrong. B-47 was sitting up, watching with ever-curious pink eyes, her youthful lips curling into a smile.

"What?" was all Utonium could think when he saw her. Rising up from the table, he straightened himself, hearing multiple cracks rippling throughout his body. Stroking his chin, he realised that he hadn't shaved for the past three days. Taking steps towards B-47, the red-head, looking at her in wonder, he still could not believe his eyes. 'Am I still dreaming?'

"Are you real?" he found himself asking B-47. "Is that really you? Wait, do you even understand what I'm saying?"

All B-47 let out was laughter. Then, looking around him, Professor Utonium realised that the others, B-48, the black-haired girl and B-49, the blonde, were both awake and laughing with her.

"Do you understand me?" Professor Utonium tried again. Then other concerns began plaguing him, and they were of the plague-natured. He would have to begin taking readings again, to check on the girls' health. He placed a hand on B-47's forehead to check her temperature. It was the least he could do. It was normal. "B-47?"

This time, all the pink-eyed girl did was to take his arm and hug it, mute-like. Her own arms were strong, that he could say that shrugging them away would be difficult.
"Wait, I don't think I can keep calling you B-47 forever. It wouldn't be a nice name, would it?" the Professor said to the girl. "How about if I call you..." he racked his brains for names. It had been forever since he was creating a list of names for his new born baby girl - the one he lost. "Blossom! For opening up to me so quickly!"

The nightmares he had was long forgotten, and so were the aches running through his body. B-47, or Blossom, would not let go of his arm, her face a forever-smile, so he hugged her and carried her to B-49's white bed instead. It was a long, long time since he felt like a million dollars. Even his successes in the sciences did not give him that much joy, not since the accident.

Coming up to B-49, the blonde-haired girl with baby-blue eyes (those eyes!), he set Blossom down. B-49 gave out a giggle. She had been standing on her bed, and she looked like she couldn't wait for her turn with Utonium. The professor put his hand on 49's shoulder. It felt just right. No fever. He looked at her vital signs. No trouble. B-49 put a hand on her back and sucked on her thumb, obviously naturally shy. "Now aren't you bubbly, B-49? That's it! Bubbles! That's your name, Bubbles! Do you like it?"

Bubbles gave out another giggle and hugged the Professor. Blossom and Bubbles did not seem to mind the professor's smell. He was basically made up of sweat and dirt and the faint smell of lab alcohol, but the girls had never smelled enough to judge it as funky.

Bubbles would not let go, so Professor Utonium just carried the both of them to B-48's bed, who was positively jumping with joy at getting noticed, before falling on her bum. Apparently, words weren't the only things beyond them for the time being. Even standing or walking were things that they need to learn. It was awkward that they looked like 5-year-olds, but the Professor was too happy to care.

"And as for you... How about... Urm... Oh I don't know... Buttercup? Because it also starts with a B?" the Professor struggled. The tone did not go unnoticed, and B-48 stopped smiling, folded her arms and frowned a little. Sensing her unhappiness, the Professor combed his fingers through Buttercup's black hair, caressing her scalp. Being simple at the time, the green-eyed girl liked it and forgave the professor, hugging him by the neck.

"Ooof!" the professor verbalised as he felt the girls weighing down on him, as all three of them were hugging him. "This is good news indeed! I should probably inform the Organization! But first, let's get the three of you out of those drab hospital gowns."

The hospital gowns did not do the girls any justice. They were white, with openings at the back rather than the front. The girls had been fitted with diapers, which reminded the professor of the difficult tasks ahead. Seeing that they could not speak, walk or even stand properly, it was very much likely that they would need potty training as well.

Needless to say, he was very rusty in that area of child development.

Leaving the girls on the floor and pulling open a drawer of the white wardrobe, Professor Utonium was actually surprised to see colour, though the colours were of the usual pastel type, very light and soft looking, just like the rest of the house. But they simple dresses, probably bought because they were economical. 'I oughta have a word with the Chief of Logistics later!' the professor thought angrily as he pulled three dresses out.

Candidly, he held the dresses out to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, wondering what their reaction would be. He thought there would be more giggles, or laughter, but all he was met with was a blank stare from the three of them. "You three probably don't even know what they are, do you? Lucky you."
Starting with Blossom, the professor pulled off the hospital gowns and slipped the dresses on. Blossom was put in a beige dress with a knot on the back, Bubbles had a light green short-skirted monstrosity while Buttercup was fitted in a sky-blue leotard with a frilled short skirt. As if it was instinct, Buttercup frowned and crossed her arms. They looked incredibly unfashionable, and ill-fitting. "Yeah, we'll work on that."

The rest of the day was spent on tests and education. It might sound unfun, but the professor had tried to make it as entertaining to the girls as possible—though it helped that Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were literally born yesterday. They were impressionable and simple. At this, the professor was surprised, but it fed into this working theory of his that the girls’ mind were matured just as much as their body, just that they were empty and in need of filling.

Within a few hours, the professor had established that all the girls had no trouble with their five senses, hand-eye coordination and limbs. They were healthy, perfect little girls. But it was only a cursory examination.

The professor had no choice. The potty training started immediately, and thankfully, the Chief of Logistics had anticipated this, much to the scientist's surprise. The adjoining toilet to the girl's room had a little miniature porcelain throne, which was entirely operable and connected to the sewage.

So the diapers were ditched, and much time was spent on a rotating schedule on the potty, between play time with their adoptive father. The result: a horrific mess on the floor that could be smelled from the corridor outside. The girls knew the smell to be bad, and it motivated them further to get it right.

In less musky matters, the professor showed them the stand and the walk - and allowed the girls to imitate him. They would take turns standing on top of the professor's feet as he took them through the motions. Rome wasn't built in a day, but the professor couldn't help but to notice that they were learning far faster than what an infant could manage. Buttercup was the quickest learner, making a few metres before falling over, followed by Blossom, and although Bubbles could only manage the stand, it was progress fast enough, considering that babies who were just born would take months before they could even get upright.

Even as Professor Utonium laughed and played with his bundles of joy, he was making theories in his head. 'Is their learning enhanced, or are they just advantaged by their 5-year-old mind and body? Or could it be a combination of both?'

But there was a limit to how much he could download into their freshly-minted minds. Having had a hand in his late biological daughter's education, he knew that he had to go slow and not burden them, even if they had five years of learning to catch up with. Solid food, for example, was left literally off the table, and the professor settled on powdered milk formula for the day.

Yet, by the time the sun rolled downhill and out, and the moon rose to take its place, the professor had already proceeded to language.

"Blooo-ssoom," Professor Utonium enunciated as he was pointing at Blossom. He and the three girls were seated around the white kiddy table. "Blossom."

"Blue-som!" Blossom tried pronouncing her name for the fifth time, throwing her hands up in excitement. She had been coming very close to it for the past hour. The professor had let the girl take turns trying to learn their name. "Blue-som!" she screamed in joy again while pointing at herself.

By now, Utonium knew that Blossom was the smartest out of all of them, and unfortunately, that meant that there was a third-placer. Bubbles hadn't been able to speak at all the entire day, and
whatever had come out of her mouth resembled nothing on the English dictionary, nothing remotely close to her name, only garbles and saliva literally bubbling out of the corner of her lips. It had her caretaker worried.

"Veeeeery good, Blossom," Professor Utonium encouraged, then picked up a clipboard and scribbled a few notes in. Even if it was something as mundane as child-raising, he couldn't help but to keep it official. The Organization might take a dim view of the girls and their first baby steps, but knowing them, they would want a progress report as soon as possible. "Now, do you remember…" he pointed at himself. "Daddy?"

"Dadda!" Blossom tried her best, and came very close again, leaving Buttercup in the dust, whose last attempt couldn't even hit a syllable right. The green-eyed girl folded her arms and stared angrily at her reddish-haired sister.

The professor noticed.

"Now, now, Buttercup… It's your turn anyway," he said. "Can you say… But-ter-cup?" The instant the professor laid eyes on her, she turned her frown into a smile.

"Bueur-up!" Buttercup spattered her words.

"No, no, dear," the Professor corrected her patiently. "It's But… Ter… Cup…"

"But…Ta… Cut?" Buttercup tried again, and nearly succeeded, spurred on by competition even before her second day was up.

"Close. Now your turn, Bubbles," he then turned to face Bubbles, the one that worried him. A million questions ran through his mind, all in the hopes of answering one question: 'Is Bubbles going to have difficulties? The kind that parents fear for their children?" "Can you say… Bubbles?"

All Bubbles did was to stare at him.

"Bubbles- Bar… Bles…" the Professor tried patiently again.

Then tears started to well up in her eyes, and all she had in hand for comfort was a weird tetrahedron-sided ball (which was white of course).

"There, there, it's alright," the Professor comforted her. At the same time, he looked at his watch. It was getting late, coming to ten in the night. "My, how time flies!" Scooting over to Bubbles, he gave her a hug, and it calmed her right down.

After tucking the Girls into bed and making sure they were asleep, and by that time it was almost eleven, the professor reluctantly got up to leave. But leaving the girls' white room was like leaving his soul behind. As soon as he was out of it and heading towards his lab, he could feel sheer exhaustion setting in again. And it made sense. He hadn't had any real sleep since 21 NOV 1988, and today, he hadn't even corrected that, and had merely passed out for 4 hours. He hadn't showered or brushed his teeth for two days, or changed into a fresh set of uniform in just as long. He'd eaten little, only whatever he could get out of the fridge in the little time he had while he was preparing the girls’ milk powder.

But the girls took precedence. He still had a report to file to the Organization and a few calls to make, the time be damned. At least one of them was going to hear it from him.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium loses a friend on the Organization committee over the Girls.

Chief of Logistics: (Yawns) Hello? Whoever's calling, it's a little late, don't you think? Is that you, chief?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Aggressive and seething with anger) It's me, Wiggums.

Chief of Logistics: Upton? What is up with you? I was having an early night, man! The numbers aren't going to crunch themselves, you know.

Field Researcher Utonium: Now you listen to me, 'man'. You've darn screwed up far enough. Is that how you decorate your children's room? That it?

Chief of Logistics: I'm not married, so I don't even have-

Field Researcher Utonium: Yeah, little wonder. You don't even have to be married to have a little common sense, Wiggums! The girls' room looks like a White Room Torture chamber in there! If it weren't for the girls, I would have gone insane myself!

Chief of Logistics: Look, I was just following protocols, man, honest. It's how we furnish most of our HQ, isn't that right?

Field Researcher Utonium: Well, The House isn't the HQ now, is it? Your sense of decoration could have a bad effect on the girls, do you know that?

Chief of Logistics: They're not girls, Utonium. They're... You saw how they just popped into existence out of nowhere, right? I mean, we created them ourselves, so-

Field Researcher Utonium: DO NOT say that to me again, Wiggums. And I created them, not you, not 'we'. So they popped into existence out of nowhere - that doesn't make them any less human. I've seen them awake. They can laugh and they can cry. They can love. They're HUMAN.

Chief of Logistics: Look, man, I'm not gonna debate with you on the philosophizing or whatever it is. What do you want from me?
Field Researcher Utonium: I want an overhaul of the girl's room.

Chief of Logistics: Fine, I'll do it tomorrow-

Field Researcher Utonium: And this time, I'll pick the looks, the furniture.

Chief of Logistics: You're cutting into my jurisdiction, Upton.

Field Researcher Utonium: And if you know what's good for you, you'll keep this quiet, or it's your career on the line.

Chief of Logistics: Fine. I'll send you the catalogue. You want it this way, it's going to be slower.

Field Researcher Utonium: I don't care, as long as the girls get what they deserve.

Chief of Logistics: And Upton?

Field Researcher Utonium: What?

Chief of Logistics: What's gotten into you, man? We used to do lunch together, talking about things like inseparable college pals. Now, you're just…

Field Researcher Utonium: And your selection of clothes for the girls is terrible, Wiggums. What the hell is wrong with you?

Chief of Logistics: I have a budget to follow, man! And like I said, they're not-

Field Researcher Utonium: I want the catalogue for the clothes too. I need additional funding for everything in a local bank account.

Chief of Logistics: Fine. If the chief comes screaming into my office, I'm pointing him to you.

Field Researcher Utonium: Do whatever you want.

Chief of Logistics: And Upton?

Field Researcher Utonium: What?

Chief of Logistics: We're not friends anymore.

(pause)

Chief of Logistics: Look, I-

Field Researcher Utonium: Fine. (Hangs up)

Chief of Logistics: (Hangs up)
Chapter 2: Reality

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium begins to feel reality setting in as he mulls over his custodianship of the Girls.

Chapter 2: Reality

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

24 NOV 1988 0028

After putting the girls to bed, Professor Utonium had very little time to himself. By the time he was done with Organization duties, it was already past midnight. For once, he was glad that he didn't have any side projects to do, no new thesis to write and theories to change or create. Struggling up from his chair, he ambled across his laboratory and up the stairs leading into the living room.

Picking up his pipe, he filled it with a carefully measured amount of tobacco and lit it up. It reminded him of the old days, when the only adversity he faced was his own biological family. But with adversity came camaraderie, and all the good things humanity was capable of. Eugene, his younger brother, had taught him how to use the pipe, surprisingly. His younger brother had developed that old-fashioned habit because of their father. Eugene had thought that it had fitted well with his army officer image, that 'old general' image that he was trying to fill.

Taking a puff, he blew the smoke out, and stood at the wide and tall window of the living room overlooking the street outside. It was getting cold, and the first snowflakes were just beginning to fall. It had a calming, if chilling, effect on him. Winter was coming, just as bad things could happen, but where there was winter, Spring would follow. The seasons would pass, and so would time, whether he liked it or not, just like how the bad and good times would. It was reality, for better or for worse.

Smoking itself was a bad sign, he knew. He hadn't smoked the pipe for months, and he knew exactly why. He felt like he was way over his head, and a little trapped - he had to be honest with himself. But images of the Girls would come flooding back every time he felt that things would fall apart.

'I'm their creator. Their father. Who will take care of them if not me?' it was his go-to statement for making it all a little better. In fact, if it was somebody else from the Organization, the Girls would probably be kept in cages, and trained immediately for what they were created to do: Fight.

When he was done, he snuffed out the tobacco and headed up the stairs. He had to wander around for a bit to find his room, as it was their first night here, and he wasn't even the one who did the renovating and decorating. The moment he reached the master bedroom, he fell into bed and passed out again.

24 NOV 1988 0613
We're not friends anymore

Fine

If the chief comes screaming into my office, I'm pointing him to you.

Fine

They're just things, Upton, THINGS!

Fine

Like your lab monkeys-

Chimpanzee. Pan Troglodyte-

They can be put to sleep anytime-

Fine

Professor Utonium opened his eyes. His body ached, and the only difference was that it ached a little less. He could barely remember his journey from living room to master bedroom, as if he had drowned himself with a keg of beer, only, that the keg of beer was exhaustion. Looking up at the alarm clock, he noticed that it was still just a little past six in the morning. Looking down at himself, he realized that he hadn't showered or changed into a fresh set of uniforms. Again.

Then the girls popped into his mind. "The girls!" he cried and scrambled out of bed quickly. Running out of his room and into the corridor, he was possessed by fear, chased by the disjointed nightmare he was having in his five hours of sleep (if it could even be called that). Coming up to the girls' room, he swiftly opened the door and peeked inside.

It took him time to search the room for them, with every fraction of second a searing pain, but then he saw them - still fast asleep in their respective cots. Blossom and Bubbles had a smile on their face, while Buttercup appeared more… Neutral, but otherwise at peace. Buttercup was snoring soundly, and under that gentle rhythm of snores, Professor Utonium could hear breathing from the others. The medical monitoring machines inside had already been switched off before he put the girls into bed, though he was beginning to wish that they were switched on.

'They're fine. They're fine, Upton. Don't you worry-' he thought to himself. Backing out of the room, he made his way back to his. Then he started hurrying his footsteps. The girls could be awake at any time, and they wouldn't know what they were doing when they do. Images of them screaming and hurting themselves with the Chief of Logistics' weird geometric toys were clear in his head.

But he knew he had to take care of himself at some point. He stank like a week-old fish in a wet market and felt like one too.

Back in his room, he unbuttoned his lab coat and finally removed it. Placing it in a basket, he then proceeded to undo his shirt, only to realize that he had forgotten about the pistol he was wearing. He had a pistol in a paddle holster under his lab coat, hanging on his belt. It was an idea of the Chief of Security. He had forgotten about it all this time.

'Here's a little something, son. Just in case those bug-eyed freaks of yours decided that you're not their daddy anymore,' he remembered the Chief of Security saying. He doubt he'd ever be using it. Unholstering the pistol, he threw it on his bed and just plain forgot about it.
Stripping quickly, he went into the shower and turned on the taps. The heated water streamed from the shower head to him. It felt heavenly. But not as heavenly as his time with the Girls.

The professor did not dawdle in the shower room for long. Within minutes, his fears overtook his need for creature comforts, and he made do with the bare necessities - a quick shower, a fresh set of uniforms and no breakfast - at least not yet. Then it was back to the girls' room.

By the time he opened the door, he expected the girls to be bouncing around the room, risking all manners of injury. But his fear had been unfounded - the girls were literally just born yesterday (this time a little more figuratively), and they needed to recover. At least, that was the theory.

He longed to examine the girls in greater detail, but his work was limited to the progress the girls were making. Tissue analysis wouldn't happen until the girls had developed enough cognizance and pain tolerance, otherwise the procedure of extracting blood and other samples would just be a danger to all of them. They would need to understand, and allow the extraction - that meant awareness, ability to communicate and understanding abstract concepts. Professor Utonium estimated that it would be months, at least, before he could try something of that sort. The Organization wouldn't be pleased, but they knew that they had to hang onto his every word and judgement. That was his bargaining chip.

Crossing the room, Professor Utonium sat down on the same kiddy stool once more, and waited. He occupied his time by penning down his thoughts on a clipboard. He had a diary, a habit he had kept since his late childhood years - being different from the rest of his family, and having but a few close friends who couldn't be with him every day, he had resorted to the diary to express himself.

Once more, the sun crept up from the horizon, filling the room with blue, then red, then orange and finally, yellow light. One by one, the girls rose from their beds, instinctively rubbing their eyes, and the moment they noticed him, they smiled, and laughed with joy.

"Dadda! Dadda!" Blossom cried, and the others aped her as able as they could, with varying results - Buttercup almost matching Blossom with Bubbles left far behind.

It was time to put reality out the door for the time being.
Chapter 3: Progression, Regression

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, days into the winter pass as the Girls continued to learn from their creator, Professor Utonium.

Chapter 3: Progression, Regression

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

24 NOV 1988. 0823

"Hungy! Hungy!" The girls were screaming at the professor, throwing the word they'd learn from him, at him, imperfect but effective. Well, the girls sans Bubbles. Bubbles was still mostly silent. Professor Utonium thought that this was an opportunity to introduce them to solid food, and he had to hold off on the feeding.

"Hungy! Hungy!" They would shout even as he carried them out of their room, after changing their diapers. The potty training would come again later. They would only stop to gaze at the wider world around them, which they had thought was only the size of their room. Breathing heavily, his body aches acting up, he descended down the steps, afraid that he might lose balance, what with Buttercup swinging on his neck and the others acting like pendulums on his arms. He had to carry them because they hadn't learnt how to walk beyond a few meters - Bubbles couldn't even manage the walk.

Later at the kitchen, he was able to find kiddy chairs, and they were white of course. It reminded Utonium of his conversation yesterday on the phone. He would have done some shopping too, had it not been for the girls' inability to take care of themselves.

Plopping the Girls down in the chairs, he began cooking up something simple. He could still remember the ingredients, and it was easy to do so because the girls seemed to be awed by their surrounding, by The House. But he knew that it wouldn't last for long, especially when they seem to be capable of learning at a rapid pace, like how they grew to be 5-year-olds within 11 hours.

Soon, the chorus of "Hungy! Hungy!" began again. Pushing three bowls of porridge into the oven, he turned it up, and flew back to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.

"Food's almost ready- Patience-" he panted.

As with the results of yesterday's potty training, their first encounter with solid food was a mess. By the end of it, there was porridge everywhere. Slobbering on the girls' mouth, on the surface of the kiddy chairs, on the table, on Professor Utonium. But at least the chorus of "Hungy! Hungy!" was over.

Professor Utonium introduced them to the concept of bathing soon after - the kids were a mess.
Yesterday, he'd washed them during potty training with a quick shower. They seemed to like it. The standard issue rubber ducky was an amazing sensation.

Time flew once more. Professor Utonium would go on to train them in standing and walking, and they were mastering the art increasingly fast. Even Bubbles was taking her first successful steps, and she would jump with joy over it, before falling over on her bum and crying. It served to ease Utonium's worries a little. Surely a child who could learn to walk within two days couldn't be suffering from any developmental problems, right? Buttercup could cross her room on her own, though she was still teetering worryingly on her heels on occasion.

Potty training remained a constant, and so did listening and speaking lessons. The professor could not wait for the day when they would be able to communicate with each other. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were exposed to more words. It helped that there were picture cards in the storeroom for their educational needs. They went through the basics: things that the girls would find at home. Their own bodies, and what the different parts were called. They went through toys, furnitures. They learnt what to actually call the activities they had been doing. While their pronunciation was always off, Professor Utonium knew that he was getting through to them. He'd discreetly tested them on their progress by playing a game of 'name the card', and the girls could remember most of the words they had learn, and connected those words to what they represent. Bubbles, as usual, had great difficulty in this. Bubbles' achievements for the day had remained largely confined to her own name, that whatever little confidence Utonium had gained that she had no issues was shattered.

25 NOV 1988. 0815

Snow had begun to fall. The girls continued to learn. They ate with increasing precision, though Professor Utonium was still doing the feeding, flying food aeroplanes into their mouths again and again. They moved with increasing agility. Buttercup could walk with alarming agility, and run almost just as well. Buttercup remained the third-placer, as she was still walking across the room with great difficulty. Potty accidents became minimal - even with Bubbles. Avoiding the 'icky' smell of human waste was still a great motivational factor.

They learned even more words, and brushed up on their pronunciations for words they had encountered before.

"Blossom! Blossom!" Blossom would shout her name with great confidence. "Blossom happy!" the red-haired girl would then laugh in a victory celebration. Buttercup was not far behind. Bubbles was trying to catch up with them, and had left the claustrophobic feeling that came with only knowing one's name. "Daddy! Daddy!"

26 NOV 1988. 0801

Snow fell in increasing volume. The girls continued to learn. They ate while spilling little. Professor Utonium had graduated them to scrambled eggs and bread for breakfast, and porridge enriched with tiny flakes of chicken for lunch and dinner.

The girls were allowed the first time to venture out of their room on their own power. Bubbles had to be watched very closely. The stairs became their arch-nemesis, to be conquered another day.

"Blossom love daddy! Blossom love daddy!" Blossom would proclaim today. Professor Utonium hugged the three girls upon hearing that.

"Bubbles love!" Bubbles imitated her more articulate sisters.

"Buttercup love!" Buttercup said the same.
"Blossom happy daddy!" Blossom would insist after they let go, and she loved the way it sounded. Rhyme and alliteration was lost on her, but she could instinctively appreciate the effect these literary phenomena produce.

27 NOV 1988. 0840

It was winter proper. When the professor woke up this day, he could feel the weight of his debt incurred to bring his girls up to speed. He could barely get out of bed, and a paradoxical wave of both chill and heat swept over him the moment he was conscious. The alarm was blaring into his ears, and when he groped for it, he accidentally knocked it to the ground along with his useless pistol, which he had carelessly tossed onto the nightstand a few days before.

But something wasn't quite right. He could feel a lump by his leg. He tried to make out what it was in the dark; he had to consciously focus his eyes to see.

One of the girls. Of all the girls, it was Bubbles. 'How did she get here?' he thought. He knew Bubbles, had seen her something like 18 hours of his life a day. She was reluctant to move any 'great' distance at all, and a 'great' distance to her was the boundaries of her room.

Seeing her gave him strength. Silently, he crawled out of bed and picked her up, cradling her in his arms. Gingerly, he walked towards the girls' room and deposited her in her own cot, careful not to wake the girls.

After that, he returned to his room to get dressed and look over the catalogue that his former-friend, the Chief of Logistics, had sent him. It didn't take long for him to realize that the selection wasn't much better. Wiggums had been working with a company that specialized in minimalistic furniture and interior design that favoured either bachelor pads or the cold, sterile insides of a lab. The clothes catalogue was a little better - dresses of all sorts and colors crowded the pages. Predictably, the clothes that Wiggums did get belonged to the budget section of the catalogue. Before he made any choices, the Professor decided that the girls should take their pick. Tossing the catalogue aside, he dragged himself towards the kitchen.

It was the start of another long day.

28 NOV 1988. 1754

A loud, piercing scream suddenly filled the room as Professor Utonium was teaching Blossom how to draw shapes on a piece of paper. It'd busted his eardrums, nearly giving him a heart attack. He wasn't expecting it; the girls had been nothing but peaceful, passive creatures.

All of that was about to change.

The professor turned to look. Bubbles was lying sprawled on the floor, crying her heart out. Buttercup stood over her, an abstract WHITE toy train in her hand, with a rather mean look on her face. He knew, somewhat, what had happened, but he couldn't be sure - back when he still had his own family, he had only one child to look after, and sibling interaction was something he just wasn't experienced in.

Professor Utonium got up to her and wrapped his arms around her. "Bubbles, what's the matter?"

Needless to say, it took Bubbles a long time before she could even speak - even in normal circumstances, she would have difficulty on the verbal side of things.

"Butt-Ta-Cut mean! Butt-Ta-Cut mean!" Bubbles cried. "The train!"
The professor turned to Buttercup. "Now look at what you did, Buttercup. Apologize to your sister and give it back to her," he said in a genial sort of way, hoping that Buttercup would turn her frown upside-down like before. But it seemed that her mouth was frozen that way.

"Buttercup, there's toys everywhere around you - and you've been hoarding quite a few on your side," the professor tried to reason with her, pointing at all the toys to make sure she understood.

"My train! Train mine!" Buttercup protested, waving the train in her hand in an infantile manner. While the professor thought that her aptitude in speaking was admirable, the message was clear: selfishness, an end which she met with violence and selfishness. "My train!"

"But-Ta-Cut mean!" Bubbles repeated, still crying.

The professor found himself frustrated, irritable, more than he wanted to be. The past week hadn't been easy. There was no one he could speak to, to reveal the mental pain that he had been enduring. The line between his life and work was blurred. The girls were a blessing, and yet they reminded him of the bloody past, and how it could just repeat so easily again. He had been working more than a double shift essentially for the past week, sleeping and eating little, much less having any kind of free time to himself. He was a single parent, and he felt the worst of it. He had to face the possibility of Bubbles suffering developmental problems, and now Buttercup was coming up with a little issue of her own.

"Buttercup! Give the train back to Bubbles," he said sternly to the black-haired girl, who responded by shaking her head while crossing her arms. He found himself gritting his teeth. Grabbing the train by force, he yanked it away from Buttercup and deposited it on the ground next to Bubbles roughly.

Buttercup was stunned, and soon, too, did tears welled up in her eyes. And then she started crying in that raspy voice of hers. The professor himself was horrified at what he had done. "Come here," he said as he wrapped himself around her, hugging her. She resisted at first, and she was strong - for a second there, she could have actually thrown the professor off her, but she relented as it felt good. Her cries became sniffles, and soon just straggling tears. She smiled.

"Don't do that again, okay? My Butterbear?" the professor said.

"Yes, daddy," Buttercup promised. The professor had forgotten about the apology, and Buttercup was glad he did.

As soon as the professor left, she turned to Bubbles, who was playing with HER train, and glared at her, at the same time smiling maliciously. All the while, Blossom had been watching, and although she hadn't learnt all the words for the thought yet, she thought that her daddy was heroic for what he did. She thought that what he did was good, and she wanted to be just like him.

'What was I doing? What was I thinking?' the professor thought, worried about his lack of control earlier. He had nearly lost it. 'I'll do better… It's all going to be fine, Thomas, you just have to bear with it…'

Then a thought occurred to the professor. The sudden burst of strength from Buttercup. The girls' physical strength hadn't gone unnoticed. At first, he'd thought that it was his mind playing tricks on him, that it was just exhaustion building a circus for him. For days, he had thought that instant growth and accelerated mental development were the only traits provided by Chemical X, but that view had been proven wrong (and gladly). Now, it was only a matter of testing its limits, and he had already come up with several ways to measure the girls' physical strength safely - and it would keep the Organization off his back and give him more time to raise Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.
Chapter Summary

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B-47, B-48 and B-49 W1 Report

DOC: 29 NOV 1988

Created By: Agent Utonium

Title: First Week Development

Desc: On awakening, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup (I would like to request that the girls be officially named as such, even in Project Powerpuff) were able to emote themselves. While lacking any skills with the use of their limbs, they are perfectly healthy and is able to function as children do.

In general, the girls are learning at a rapid pace. By the end of this project week, they are able to use the toilet, wash themselves, eat and drink, walk, run, play with their toys, draw and speak. With just another week or two of familiarization, all of those things should become second nature to them. Their vocabulary consists of about 195 words now, which is amazing progress for 1-week-olds. However, progress between the three girls are not consistent.

Blossom appears to absorb lessons the fastest, and appears to be the most cooperative of the three.

Buttercup is physically more able, outshining Blossom in this respect, but falls behind in learning, and has mastered about 160 words thus far. There are words she is having difficulty with.

Bubbles concerns me the most, as she is falling behind in every respect. While she is able to walk and run confidently, she refuses to use those abilities freely. Her grasp of the English language remains the weakest. The last time I checked, she knows less than 50 words at heart, and her backlog is piling up.

For now, I would not recommend doing any sort of invasive or instructive tests and examinations. It is advisable that we let the girls develop their cognizance further first before we attempt anything of that sort. However, I will investigate the cause of both their shortcomings and strengths once they are mentally ready to handle them.

However, I have observed that they appear to possess superior strength compared even to a regular adult human being. I will proceed to set up simple tests to determine the extent of this enhancement. However, as I am not willing to endanger their lives and limbs in any way, I will not be exploring the upper limit of their physical strength just yet.

To remind all who are concerned, please remember that these girls are only ONE WEEK OLD. Whatever shortcomings they have, are only a matter of comparison between the three. Even Bubbles
can be considered a prodigy, if measured up against a regular 1-week-old human being. While they may look like 5-year-olds, no one should expect to act like 5-year-olds, not yet. Much less the 'crime-fighting human platform' you guys want so much.

In fact, I believe the girls' greatest achievement is their ability to love, connect, and care. If nothing else, this is what I believe is the most important thing for the time being.

Agent Utonium

Field Researcher

B-47, B-48 and B-49 W1 Report Response

DOC 30 NOV 1988

Title: I Decide Things Here

Desc: Utonium, this has got to be the most unprofessional and poorly written report from you I have ever seen. I do not want to hear anything else about 'love' and 'connect' and 'care' and all that kind of jazz any longer. Remember what I told you the last time? Project Powerpuff is an initiative to create a system for reducing crime rate (after its scope was changed from warfare), not to create 'the perfect little girl'. We don't need children who'd just play house all day long. Please restrict your report to the relevant information.

Furthermore, your request to change their designation from B-47, B-48 and B-49 to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup (is that the right order? I don't care) is denied. You appear to have forgotten that these subjects are lab-grown animals, just that they appear human this time. You shouldn't have named them, but since the damage has been done, you may call them what you will, but that will only be between the four of you.

Also, this is not a suggestion: Implement the tests next week. Since they appear to be able to speak and understand words, this shouldn't be a problem, now would it? Just teach them words related to the tests. In fact, you don't even have to. It is not a requirement that they understand what is going on. Do you really need me to tell you how to do your job? A test subject does not need to understand what a syringe is for blood to be drawn from her.

Lastly, keep me updated on subjects B-47 to 49's enhancements. The Organization is most interested in those areas. Keep us updated and don't stray again. Perhaps you've been too engrossed with your current work. Or perhaps you've been away from HQ for too long. But let me remind you that the Organization is a serious organization, and Project Powerpuff is an important initiative. We have a country, even a world, to make a better place of. Do not slow us down.

Agent Cliff

Organization Director
Chapter 4: The Weight of It All

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls go down to the labs for the first time.

Chapter 4: The Weight of It All

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.


Lighting his pipe, Professor Utonium bit on it and inhaled. He was looking out at the driveway, the streets. It was snowing, and the front lawn was almost completely covered. His eyes wandered down the streets, at his neighbors' houses. He saw an unmarked van, innocuously WHITE with shaded windows. He didn't need to go up to the van and bang on the cab window to know who was inside. It was the Chief of Security's men, and they'd inched closer to The House, to the girls. Thinking back, he could recall seeing the van a few days ago. It was likely that they'd been there for just as long. He could only pray that the Chief of Security was there to protect the Girls, as promised, and not for anything else.

It was the start of the Girls' second week. Professor Utonium could only hope that their innocence would remain intact throughout. The way the Organization Chief was rushing him, it seemed as if he was bent on scarring the Girls as quickly as he could.

The Professor sighed, and headed up the stairs gingerly, as if he was in pain, and into the Girls' room. He was exhausted, as usual. He had pulled a late-night shift, preparing paperwork and forms for the test ahead; squeezing in his own research on the bizarre nature of Chemical X - with the little time he had. He went nowhere real. He couldn't even remember when he'd passed out, and the next thing he knew, he had woken up on his desk in cold sweat.

The day was spent learning as usual, but deep in his heart, he knew what the day was going to be far, at least as far as the Organization was concerned. The first test would be held today, and although he was excited to see the extent of his Girls' strength, he knew that it would be like opening Pandora's Box - it would be the first of many things he would be doing to the Girls, and the Organization would just demand more and more, until…

In the Girls' room, Blossom was drawing with Bubbles while Buttercup was left alone with her hoarded toys.

"Kitty… Kitty… Cute kitty," Bubbles was able to enunciate the few words she knew as she rendered a rather unconvincing cat with too long a body and legs that were too thick. It was all in black - thanks to Chief of Logistics Wiggums, who thought that black crayons was all they ever needed.

"Bubbles, look this!" Blossom said excitedly as she held up a picture she drew of the family:
Professor Utonium and them. It attracted the attention of the professor, and he came to look as well. It consisted largely of stick figures, but the shape of the hair gave away who was who. Blossom was drawn with a crayon, Bubbles had a white teddy bear while Buttercup had her toy train. The professor was the biggest stick figure, with his clipboard.

It reminded Utonium that someone was missing from the table. He turned around. "Buttercup, why don't you come here and draw with us?"

Buttercup was still frowning and seated on the floor, this time in a WHITE t-shirt and light green pants. She was wheeling an abstract WHITE toy truck left and right. She shook her head. She appeared a little upset… At something. 'Perhaps the incident before?' Professor Utonium thought. "Come on, Buttercup, be a sport," he then turned to Blossom and Bubbles. "You forgive her, right?"

The two girls nodded vigorously, with excited eyes staring at Buttercup, who, despite it all, they recognized as their sister, one of them.

"Okay…” Buttercup relented, and walked over, depositing herself on an empty stool. All she would draw was her train and various other vehicles.

Later at night, an hour after dinner, Professor Utonium led the Girls down the stairs, this time without carrying them. Cautiously, as if the stairs would just collapse or swallow them up, the Girls formed a chain and descended step by step, in order of: Utonium, Blossom, Bubbles then Buttercup. Looking back at the Girls while going down the stairs, the Professor saw that Blossom appeared excited, Bubbles afraid while Buttercup determined. Eventually, they made it down, and it was a minor victory to underscore what was to come.

They had to go down another flight of stairs, this time leading down into the laboratory. Professor Utonium shepherded them to the lab door, which was essentially a small blast door, airtight with hydraulic seals behind, and opened it. There was a second door behind it, forming an airlock - the work of the doomsday prepper who came before them - which the Professor got them through as well. Then there was the stairs, another set of intimidating stairs!

Bubbles cried, begging to be held while Blossom and Buttercup moaned.

"Oh alright, come here, you poor thing," Professor Utonium said as he picked up Bubbles, feeling himself more poor than her, as his back erupted in pain after that. The blue-eyed girl wrapped her arms and legs around him as he took Blossom by a hand and led them down once more.

The hum of supercomputers became apparent. This was where the Chief of Logistics excelled at his job. He had given him a lab almost as well-equipped as a regular lab in an Organization outpost, if only a little smaller. It had everything he needed, including a wide, open space contained within bulletproof shock glass for tests to be conducted. That was where Utonium led the girls to next.

Putting down Bubbles, he got on one knee, getting to her level. "Girls, do you know why we're down here?"

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup looked at each other in puzzlement.

"To play?" Blossom guessed. Professor Utonium smiled.

"Oh, it can be fun, but listen," Professor Utonium said. "You Girls are special, you know that? You're all smart, and strong; perfect angels."

All the three girls did was to smile at him.

"We'll play a game to see how strong you three are!" The Professor proclaimed, changing his tactic
mid-conversation. Building up excitement; it worked the last time.

"Yay!" the Girls cheered at the thought of playing another game, and it was all the more fun as it was in a different place, with different colours and shapes and other things. The supercomputers in the lab resembled giant toys to them - but before they could touch it, the Professor led them into the test area.

In the test area, the floor was white and the lighting very bright, making clear what sat in a row across the area. There was a series of cubes with handles on opposing sides, each one bigger than the last. They were ordered in yesterday. Labels denoted their weight, but the girls could not understand what they mean: 50lbs/22.68kg, 100lbs/45.36kg, 150lbs/68.04kg, 200lbs/90.72kg, 250lbs/113.40kg.

Looking at the weights he ordered himself, Professor Utonium did not expect any of the girls to be able to carry beyond 100lbs. He remembered the trials of earlier predecessors of Chemical X: most of the subjects of those trials did not have enhanced strength, and he had learned not to expect too much.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the this episode, Professor Utonium investigates the Girls' strength based on a hunch.

Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 Strength Test 1 Log

DOC: 30 NOV 1988

Subjects Involved:

B-47 (Blossom)
B-48 (Buttercup)
B-49 (Bubbles)

Equipment Used:

1x 50lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 100lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 150lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 200lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 250lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x Medical Kit
3x Strength Test forms
1x Clipboard

Location Used:

The House Laboratory Test Area

Operating Procedure:

- As a control test, I will lift the weights first.
- The Girls are to take turns lifting each steel weights.
- Time before exhaustion sets in is to be recorded.
- The Girls are to be examined for physiological reactions.
- A rest period of ten minutes is designated between each consecutive weight levels.
- Safety is paramount. Test to stop if any difficulty whatsoever is encountered by the girls.
- Standard first aid procedures is a must.

Test Results:

50lbs Steel Weight

S0064 (Utonium): I managed to carry the weight with little difficulty. I can even shift it around.

B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no difficulty. 10 minutes elapsed with no change in condition.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty. 5 minutes before test ceased.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no difficulty. 3 minutes before test ceased.

Notes: Even at this stage, it is astounding how the Girls carried a 50lbs weight with no apparent difficulty or strain. They carried the weights while laughing and talking. They were each examined for any change in physiology. Their heart rate appears normal. No sweat, no increased blood circulation.

The Girls became increasingly restless and bored while carrying the weights, so I have decided to cut the tests early after Blossom’s attempt. From now on, the time will not be recorded if the Girls show no sign of physiological and behavioral change.

100lbs Steel Weight

S0064 (Utonium): It was difficult for me. It was all I can do to lift it up.

B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no difficulty

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no difficulty

Notes: Same as before. No change in physiology or behaviour. It's the same as picking up a toy - Buttercup said so herself. Also, they can tell what is heavy and what isn't, despite their tolerance to heavier weights.

150lbs Steel Weight

S0064 (Utonium): I think this is my recommended limit, as I was sweating, shaking and panting so much. Even the Girls were worried about me.

B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no difficulty

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no difficulty

Notes: (scribbled with poor handwriting) This is approaching the average man's carry capacity. Same physiological and behavioral reaction in that there is none.

200lbs Steel Weight
S0064 (Utonium): Lifted the weight off the ground by about an inch, but I had to drop it within a few seconds. Serious pain and exhaustion experienced in hands and arms, heavy perspiration and breathing.

B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no difficulty

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Felt 'funny' in her fingers. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

Notes: (scribbled in even worse handwriting) This is far beyond my expectations. The girls are special, which is why I have insisted again and again that they are irreplaceable. They are just over 1-week-old, and they are capable of carrying more than an adult's capacity.

Bubbles was examined for physiological changes, and there was a slight increase in heart rate. Behavior includes shifting the weight. However, this could be the result of boredom or stress, rather than difficulty. Reluctantly, I went ahead with the next subsequent weight with Bubbles.

250lbs Steel Weight

S0064 (Utonium): N/A

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Felt a 'tickle' in her hands. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty. When prompted, alleged that she felt nothing.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Explosive bowel evacuation while lifting weight. She did not wish to talk about the test after that.

Notes: While it may seem that Bubbles was having difficulty with the 250lbs weight, I insist that it was not so. Bubbles was merely experiencing stomach upset from dinner, which consisted of porridge with a little pepper, resulting in the aforementioned fecal incontinence. I was thinking of introducing them to the concept of spices. This is the first time she has ever suffered from diarrhoea, so it was unexpected for all involved. She also told me that she was nervous that she could not be like her sisters, so this has nothing to do with her physical ability and more to do with psychology.

Needless to say, I had to do damage control with Bubbles; Buttercup began laughing at her because of this while Blossom seemed a little horrified and Bubbles was very upset and inconsolable because of her 'accident'.

Conclusion: It is reasonable to assume that Chemical X has something to do with the Girls' strength. However, the reason behind this requires more investigation. The Girls have been established to be able to carry more than 5 times their weight, or the maximum carry capacity of 5-year-olds.

This implies a lot about the Girls' anatomy as well. For a 5-year-old to carry such a weight, they will need the ability to produce and channel the required amount of energy in their body. They will need the muscle and bone strength to match, as well as pain tolerances and mental fortitude to carry out the act.

Further Investigation: As it seems that weights up to 250lbs pose no difficulty whatsoever to the Girls, I will re-do the test in the near future with heavier weights and larger increments in difficulty. I am thinking 300lbs, 400lbs and 500lbs. I will also be introducing more advanced medical equipment to take readings of their vitals. Furthermore, adding pepper to their porridge before a test like this was a bad idea and won't be repeated.
I seriously doubt that the girls will be able to carry beyond 10 times their own weight. As their caretaker, I hesitate to push them too aggressively.

On a side note, I think I should do the test with Bubbles alone, in case something else might happen to her again that would shame her in front of Blossom and Buttercup. I don't want any of them to be traumatized and discouraged from these experiments. They should be free to discover their true selves and what they are capable of.

Once they are more mature, I will investigate the contents and structure of their tissue to determine the cause of this, but I have a few theories of my own. In short, it is possible that Chemical X, along with its stabilizing agents, could have enhanced their body in a number of ways, either changing their genes to express the right substances, fortifying their body, or to directly enhance their bodies. However, from a biochemical standpoint, it's beyond belief how any substance could accomplish any of these.
Chapter 5: Jojo

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, we turn our attention to Professor Utonium's other adopted child and his past.

Chapter 5: Jojo

Geographical Location Classified. Organization HQ.

17 JUN 1988. 1418. (5 months ago)

The HQ laboratory was a scene of cacophonous pandemonium. Jojo, Head Researcher Utonium's uplifted Chimpanzee assistant, was running wild, and it was sending the Organization's brightest minds running for their lives, huddling in corners.

"What the hell is it doing!?” one of them shouted. "Call security!” another screamed. Yet another ordered. "Call anyone!” one amongst them panicked. In its frenzy, Jojo had already injured a scientist, scratching him up and slamming his head against the wall. The doctor in biochemistry was lying on the ground, near a computer, and no one was sure if he was going to be alright.

Professor Utonium was still at his post. He had been preparing some chemicals to stabilize Chemical X, and when he turned around to see what was happening, he could not bring himself into action. Jojo had never acted that way before. "Jojo! Cut it out!” He ordered, but the Chimpanzee would not listen. By that time, it was already close, and after sweeping a full set of lab glass onto the ground, it barreled into Professor Utonium, sending it flying to the ground, arms wide as he tried in vain to catch hold of something, or find his balance. Pipettes and centrifuges and beakers were sent toppling into the ground.

But the worst damage of it all was the vial of Chemical X, which had toppled over and emptied itself into a conical flask filled with a half-finished stabilizing agent meant to augment Chemical X. The conical flask was knocked over, but it was thankfully trapped in a diagonal position, in between a timer and beaker, and had only spilled a fraction of its contents. After getting up, Professor Utonium could only stare in horror as his work was ruined - work that took weeks to draft, prepare for and execute.

"Jojo!” he screamed in literal agony, and would be dishonest to say he didn't wish ill on the Chimpanzee - that was, until he saw what had happened to him. At some point, the uplifted Simian lab worker had bashed its head in, and now it was leaning against the counter where the Chemical X stood. Anger turned to horror when Professor Utonium saw the damage he had done to himself, and what was worse was that Jojo had contaminated himself with Chemical X after launching itself at it. "Jojo!"

Just then, the entrance into the lab opened, and eight security officers came charging in, wearing vests and pointing their pistols and shotguns at the Chimpanzee.
"Wait! Stop! He's injured! He's no threat!" The Professor ordered, shielding Jojo from the guns. The security guards stood down. Among them was the Chief of Security, who came forward while holstering his pistol.

"I told you about that monkey, didn't I?" he reminded the professor, his rage barely contained. The Chief of Security was quite old, past retirement age and hardly looking it and he was still bigger than anyone in the lab, or even his security teams. He wouldn't have looked much worse even without the Organization's health benefits. The man had simply won the genetic lottery. Professor Utonium had seen his medical report. He looked like he was going to commit a second Simian fit, but, thankfully, the Chief of Security was also a highly intelligent man. "The moment I looked at him, I knew that he would get out of control sooner or later. Monkeys don't just become men overnight."

"You're right of course," the professor replied, a little intimidated by the Chief of Security himself. The hulking man was doing his job all too well. "But there's got to be a reason why Jojo did these things. He's hurt. We should call medical."

"No one's calling medical this time, Utonium," The Chief of Security warned as he pressed himself up closer to the professor. Utonium himself was taller than average, but the Chief was even taller, by more than a head. "That monkey is done, sonny. I'm taking him to the Termination Chamber."

The moment the Chief of Security said those two dreaded words, the professor could see his life flashing by - not his entire life, but his time with Jojo. The Chimpanzee was never a threat, not until today. Jojo was an exemplary lab assistant, working tirelessly for no gain but his friendship. It was a friend, and he swore that it could understand what he said and feel sometimes - he had the scientific data to prove it. Jojo's Cerebrum had grown after its exposure to Chemical W, the direct predecessor of Chemical X, and it was far more active than in normal Chimpanzees, than his family in animal storage. Whenever the Professor had a rough day at work, Jojo was there, doing tricks to make him feel better, or just giving him a simple pat in the back or making microwave food for him. They were little things, but it gave him hope. It was clear that Jojo saw him as a surrogate father, and Professor Utonium had treated him as a son.

"He is a Chimpanzee, you ape," the Professor corrected the Chief, anger seething inside of him. The only thing keeping him from punching the lights out of the Chief was his inability to win in a physical altercation and his professionalism. "There's a big difference. And you're not taking him to Termination. He and his kind here has sacrificed everything for us! Involuntarily! It's only fair that we take good care of them, and give them what we rightfully owe them! Now Jojo needs medical attention, and I'm giving it to him. He and his family was taken from the wild, and I'm sending them back eventually, whether you like it or not."

"Jojo, maybe. But not the rest of his family," the Chief of Security said with a grin. Professor Utonium did not miss it, and the implications tore him apart.

"Blackwater… What did you do?" the Professor questioned the big, insurmountable man.

"There was a budget cut. We couldn't afford to take care of all the animals," the Chief of Security explained. At least his grin had disappeared.

"What did you do?" the Professor repeated, shaking not with anger, but now with shock.

"Shot them in their cages. Cyanide darts," the Chief of Security confessed. The look on Professor Utonium's face couldn't be described. "Jeez, Utonium, what's with the look? It was quick and painless, doc. And we only took out half the monkeys - you still have the other half to work with."

"Why wasn't I told?" Professor Utonium said, his voice almost a whisper. He had to lean against his
Chemical X counter for support. "No one ran it by me? I could have - I could have set them free instead - or, or, balance the finances and find some way to accommodate them - why wasn't I told?"

"Org-Chief knew you'd say something like that. We can't afford to fly them back to Mozambique and certainly not with what we've exposed them to... and we sure as hell can't afford to 'balance the finances'. We've let too many subjects die or escape, and we've produced too little results. The Senate and President - Professor?" Blackwater was in the middle of his explanation when the Professor just up and left. Scooping up Jojo from the ground, he, with little energy, carried the Chimpanzee to the Medical Wing.

Professor Utonium didn't say it, but he knew exactly why Jojo had gone berserk. After all, it was helping to distribute documents on the way to the lab, and Animal Holding was on its path. He couldn't put such a thing in the reports though. Only he would know and believe in the Chimpanzee, no one else.

The professor could only feel all the worse, when he discovered that Jojo had unknowingly helped to create a stabilized version of Chemical X - thus saving the Organization and everyone in it from early retirement, and giving birth to B-47, B-48 and B-49, otherwise known as Blossom, Buttercup and Bubbles.

"I'm sorry, Jojo."
Chapter 6: The Rise

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Jojo finds himself on deathrow, cut off from the support of the only human being he knew to be good.

Chapter 6: The Rise


"Hey Ernie, how's the preparations coming along?" George asked his friend over the radio. It had been a long night, and the only thing that was marginally meaningful was their order to execute a lab chimpanzee. He remembered the name of it: Jojo. He was there when the crazy monkey had wreaked havoc among a group of innocent, defenseless scientists.

"I just finished up, bud. Quit badgering me about it. I'm just going to get Lara and Bob from the lunch room so we can get it over with," Ernie said over the radio. George swung his chair around to the monitors in front of him. Searching the screens, he finally found his friend, on the way to the lunch room, as promised. He checked another screen, and saw Lara and Bob talking over some midnight burgers. He was staring at Lara, and he couldn't help but to wonder how she managed to keep her shape despite her fast food diet, how - tearing his eyes away from Lara's boobs, he covered them. "Oh Jesus, what was I doing?" He swiveled his chair around to his desk to the side, and picked up a photo of his family. A plain but intelligent-looking wife (it was all in the eyes) and two kids - a boy and a girl. He gave a sigh. The job itself wasn't hard, but the isolation from his family was getting to him. He couldn't wait to get his leave.

He had missed his last one thanks to this 'Jojo', when he was selected to be part of the execution squad. The chimp was originally from HQ, and had been isolated and nursed back to health on the instructions of Professor Utonium. George couldn't say that he especially liked the professor, not when he had repeatedly put the Organization, and thus his job, at risk because of his insistence to follow an idealistic moral code. However, the security officer had to give the scientist credit - Professor Utonium was passionate as hell. If it wasn't his work, then he'd treat his colleagues as if they were walking piles of platinum. The professor had treated Jojo himself, and he had heard stories of the his friendship with the chimp, as well as some rather crude jokes about it, especially from the boys at security; telling and hearing jokes like that was like a staple of being part of the tribe.

From what he heard, due to the chimp's exposure to Chemical X, it couldn't be allowed to work as a lab assistant anymore. Moreover, it seemed to have lost all composure, though George had to wonder - how on Earth does a monkey become a lab assistant in the first place?

'Those scientists guys can be a bunch of real nutjobs,' he would consistently think.

Then he was transferred to Organization Outpost Charlie, along with the mutated chimp. From what
he'd seen, Professor Utonium had created something big, something crazy. Well, actually not that big. He'd seen it for himself. Babies grown out of petri dishes! What would they think of next? George had guarded the little lab-grown girls himself, and it was little wonder that the Professor had become obsessed with them. The three kids, all girls, whom the Organization had so boringly dubbed B-47, B-48 and B-49, were quite cute, more so than his own kids - and the only reason why he'd call his own children the prettiest children on Earth was because he was their father.

Last he heard, Professor Utonium got himself willingly demoted to raise the lab-grown girls. He'd put in a request for Jojo to join them, but the Organization Chief had denied that request FIRMLY. He'd heard lots of things; it was all part of the job. And here's the kicker: the Organization Chief had also ordered Jojo's execution behind the professor's back. And that was the story of how George and his security pals wound up with the chimp for execution. The chimp was transferred to his outpost specifically for that, so that Utonium's friends on the inside wouldn't catch on so quickly.

For days, it rotted in its cell, and the one time George visited the simian and fed it peanuts, he actually felt sorry for it. It wouldn't eat the peanuts of course, as if it knew its time had come.

It likely did, at least that was what he thought.

He remembered how it looked like, right down to the wrinkles on its face. It wasn't a wonder why it was kept in isolation. Its brain had grown like ten times its original size, such that Professor Utonium had to design an artificial skull to protect it. The skull was a waste. Within an hour, the protection it provided wouldn't matter any longer.

"Hey Ernie, you guys at Jojo's cell yet?" George bothered his friend again over the radio. He looked over at the monitors, staring at the camera feed with the chimp's cell in it. There was a problem with the feed, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"Yeah, just a sec. I told you not to badger me," Ernie said over the radio.

"Impatient as usual, George?" Lara said on the same channel. George couldn't help but giggle in a manly way.

"Yeah, well…" George could only say - he wasn't sure what else he could add. It was Lara over the radio, after all.

"Oh my God," Ernie suddenly cut in.

"Wha- What's the matter? You guys at Jojo's cell yet?" George questioned, getting worried.

"Can't you see what's happened on the camera, George? Monkey's not here!" Bob cut in.

"What!? But- The camera- It-" George blabbered, staring straight at the Jojo cell feed. The chimp was clearly still there, sleeping on the cold, hard floor, peanuts still near the bars. That was when it hit him. He looked at the time stamp. The seconds ticked by, and when it hit a new minute, the time would reset itself to the minute the video started on. Back to square one after a short frazzle of static. It was a video loop. Someone had sabotaged the camera feed.

"The monkey! It's not there all along! Someone hacked the system!" George blared into the radio in a panic.

"What do we do!?" Bob shouted into the radio, clearly afraid. He had seen the cell alright, how wide the gate had opened. They were all briefed on Jojo. In the last few months Professor Utonium had spent with the chimp, it had grown dramatically smarter. The scientist had encouraged it. It was even able to speak where it previously could not, and it had made its hatred of the Organization as clear as
"Don't panic, people," George calmed them; it was his job as the leader of the security detail. His rank was lieutenant, after all. He was there before, in the last trial when another subject escaped. He knew what to do… Right? "Get to the armoury. Break out the shotguns and wait for the others. I'll rally everyone- Order an evacuation- and call this in with HQ." It seemed too much. He wasn't expecting this.

Swiveling his office chair again, he reached for the phone and dialed the HQ's number. Putting the phone to his head, he waited for the beeps, then the voice. But there were no beeps, and certainly no voices. "What?"

There was only the sound of pattering in the room, in his command center. He swiveled his chair to face the door. The room was dark; he regretted not switching on the lights, but the darkness, coupled with the hum of the monitors had always been soothing for him, reminding him of TV night with his kids.

The light from the door was blocked, blocked by a shape. The shape of an over-sized brain encased in an artificial skull.

It bolted for him. George gave a terrified shout, reaching for his pistol, but the last thing he would see was the green, hairy face of a human-sized mutant chimpanzee as he felt himself being torn limb from limb.

"George? George?" Lara called into the radio, but there was no answer. She, Bob and Ernie had been waiting for almost ten minutes, keeping the armoury strong door open for the four other security officers on the premise.

"Hey George, you there?" Bob tried his turn, but the radio remained silent, with nothing but ghost and static speaking over it. "What the hell is going on?"

The sound of distant screams and gunshots answered their question almost succinctly.

"Shit," Lara swore as she trained her shotgun down a corridor, in the direction of the screams.

"All this, a chimp? I mean, even with a 'smart' one. How is this possible?" Bob wondered as he pointed his shotgun to the left, covering Lara. Ernie took the cue and covered right.

"I don't know, but best of luck to it. We've got a good spot," Lara said, trying to inject some manner of positiveness into the situation, where there was little. It sounded as if the entire outpost was gone except for them. After the screams and gunshot, there wasn't so much as a shift in the air.

"If only we have five times the men, like what the Chief promised us," Bob lamented.

"We'd have to wait a few weeks for that," Ernie explained.

Silence.

And just when they thought Jojo had given up on them, the ventilation grating above them fell open, the sound of screeching metal hinges compensating for their attacker's silence. Something fell on top of Bob, crunching and breaking bones, instantly killing the man. The thing then grabbed Ernie's shotgun, pushing it up against his chin and pulling the trigger. A shower of blood, bones, teeth, bits of skin and eyeballs. The resultant blast had made sure that even Ernie's wife would not be able to recognize him.
Lara turned around, ready to fire on whatever had surprised them, but the thing had already seized the barrel of her shotgun and pushed it out of the way. Lara let off an anti-climactic shot, still sure she could put a dozen pellets in the beast, but it was too late.

It was the chimp. Jojo. And it was bigger than she thought it would be.

Wrenching the shotgun out of her grasp, the chimp threw it aside, took her by an arm and leg and threw her against the wall. She gasped in agony. Lara could hear something snap inside of her, but she wasn't done yet. She wanted to make it out alive; she had someone she wanted to meet and go out with, confessions to make, things she wanted to do before she die. She reached for her holstered pistol and pulled it out, managing to get off a cowboy shot, perhaps even hitting the damned creature, but this chimp, named Jojo, was far from over. Seizing her by the arms, one of which was broken, it threw her across the corridor and into the opposing wall, next to the armoury’s strong door. Lara's pistol fell out of reach, just into the armoury.

Breathing felt like a swim across the Atlantic. Her left arm was broken, and she couldn't move her legs, couldn't even feel it. But she wasn't out yet, didn't want to be out. With her one good arm, she reached for her pistol in the armoury, just beyond the strong door…

Only for Jojo to slam the strong door shut, shattering her wrist bones into a million pieces, into dust, like glass dropping on the floor.

Then footsteps in the distance.

Jojo picked up Bob's shotgun, examining it before cocking it. A remaining two more security officers, stragglers late to the scene, had come charging towards it. Jojo aimed and fired multiple shots, cocking in rapid succession. The men did not expect it. They fell one after the other, their bodies thumping on the floor.

But it wasn't over yet. Jojo could still hear breathing, laborious breathing. Wet breathing. He turned to the sound, and saw that Lara was still alive.

"P-please… Please don't… I h-have family-" the security officer begged.

"So did I," Jojo said rhetorically, before pointing the shotgun one-handed at her face, just inches away. Lara gave a terrified scream before the large chimp pulled the trigger.

"Vengeance. Vengeance! VENGEANCE!" The chimp screamed in fury, followed by a most evil laughter.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the real amount of damage the Girls had done is revealed.

**Organization Combat Report 11301988-C02**

**Battle of Charlie-02**

**Introduction:** Professor Utonium's mutated chimpanzee, Jojo, escaped and went on to do damage to both facility and personnel.

**Date/Time:** 30 NOV 1988. 2200 (est) - 2330 (est).

**Location:** Pokey Oaks Country, Organization Outpost Charlie-02

**Belligerents**

**Organization**

- 8 Organization security officers (Lieutenant George Rousseau in command)
- 3 Scientists (attached to Project Powerpuff)
- 11 Technicians (attached to Project Powerpuff)
- 19 Support personnel

[8 combatants and 33 civilians total]

**Project Powerpuff Subjects**

- Jojo (mutated chimpanzee)

[1 combatant total]

**Casualties & Losses**

**Organization**

- 8 Organization security officers KIA
- 2 Scientists KIA, 1 MIA
- 11 Technicians KIA
- 18 Support personnel KIA, 1 severely wounded

[Total 8 combatants KIA, 31 civilians KIA, 1 MIA, 1 wounded]

Project Powerpuff Subjects
- Jojo (camera feeds suggest that it was at least wounded by pistol shot)

[Total 1 wounded]

Background

Investigative officers report that the security systems have been tampered with. Video and audio recordings, as well as stringent documentation suggests that it was an inside job. Forensic data suggests that Jojo was able to tamper with the camera system. The only possibility of it ever succeeding was that it had timed the guard rotations just right for it to be able to access a security panel to do this.

Supervisory reports of Organization Outpost Charlie-02 dating back to 28 NOV 1988 were less than optimistic, which points out that local security forces were under-strength by 50% of skeletal crew, unmotivated and had willfully made lapses in their duties. This is believed to have contributed to the defeat of on-site security officers in the hands of Jojo. Despite being armed with pistols and shotguns, the security officers were unable to incapacitate or kill the mutated chimp.

Order of Combat

- Jojo escapes cell under the cover of a tampered security system.

- He travels through ventilation into the security command centre, taking out security lieutenant George Rousseau.

- He travels through the ventilation system and into the barracks, killing most of the civilian personnel there. Resistance from civilians were minimal as most of them were asleep.

- Jojo had picked up maintenance tools at some point to augment his damage capability. Personnel were either killed by blunt force trauma from a sledgehammer or deep wounds from a crowbar.

- One off-duty security officer was killed in the barracks, the other was able to fire off a few shots, but missed. He was killed by a crowbar buried into the base of his skull. His body was mutilated by sledgehammer before Jojo dropped the sledgehammer. The sound of gunshots alerted the 3 security guards at the armoury.

- It once more uses the ventilation duct and dropped down on one security officer, killing him using the sheer mass of its body, turned another's shotgun on himself and savages the third security officer and eventually executing her with a shotgun fire to the face after gunning down two more officers responding to the sounds of the struggle with a scavenged shotgun.

Aftermath

Overwhelming victory for Jojo. Organization Outpost Charlie-02 was left completely bare of working personnel and thus non-functional. The armoury had been raided, as well as classified security gadgets. Most research materials and documents connected to Project Powerpuff and subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 were either destroyed by fire or stolen. The facility's power and inter-
network grid was disabled.

By the time an investigative force of 20 security officers arrived on scene, Jojo was nowhere to be seen.
Chapter 7: Of Happiness & Pain

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium lets the Girls see the wider world, both the good and the bad of it.

Chapter 7: Of Happiness & Pain

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

1 DEC 1988. 0713.

Professor Utonium woke up with a gasp. These days, he had the tendency to do that. Whether it was the phantoms of the past, or the fears of the present, or the ghosts of the future, he felt like he was under siege. This time, he was feeling feverish, and it was little wonder why. He had fallen asleep on the couch, and the fire had died down a little in the middle of winter. Getting up, he limped over to the fireplace and threw in another log, nudging at it with a fire poker to make sure it was in the right spot.

But the exhaustion wouldn't last, not in the face of what was planned for the day. It would be the first day the Girls would be coming out of the house. He knew it had to be soon - he was getting worried that Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup would develop a case of agoraphobia if they did not get out of the house.

And boy were they going to have a good time, because today was also the day that they would finally replace some of Chief of Logistics Wiggum's clinical furniture and toys. And probably get some real clothes too.

The morning, however, was all about play and learning as usual. After a breakfast consisting of porridge (without peppers, of course), the Professor led the Girls back to their rooms. They were growing accustomed to the stairs and the concept of vertical movement. 'Keep this up and they'd probably sprout some wings and fly,' the professor joked to himself as he was holding onto Blossom's hand, leading her up.

Bubbles was still upset about the diarrhoea incident of yesterday. As such, she would play with her white teddy bear all by herself in a corner of the room, with nothing but a tiny slice of the white wall and carpet to look at. When it was time to learn new words, she would speak them half-heartedly, absorbing even fewer words, being completely distracted. It broke the Professor a little that those baby-blue eyes of hers appeared so upset. He could only hope that her amazing ability to grow would extend to her emotional adaptability as well…

"Girls, we'll be going out today," the Professor announced with a smile. "I want all of you to be on your best behaviour."

"Yay! Explore!" Blossom erupted with the newest, hardest word she learned. "We get to see things!"
"Yeah! Fun!" Buttercup celebrated alongside her sister. "Run around!"

Even Bubbles had turned around. A smile slowly spread across her face. It was all she needed to communicate to the professor, for him to know that everything was fine with her.

"Now now, Girls. Best behaviour, remember?" Utonium repeated.

"Yes, daddy," the Girls chorused, with Bubbles joining in.

But just when they were about to leave, as Professor Utonium was staring out the window by the front door, he realised that the Organization security van he noticed just yesterday had crept even closer. Almost all pretenses were lifted, and it was right before the entrance of The House, on the opposite side of the road.

Turning around to the Girls, who were in the living room and just getting their first taste of TV with a puppet show, Professor Utonium said, "Stay there, Girls. There's something I have to do." With that, he marched right outside, ignoring the cold, even though he had only his lab coat on. Coming up to the van, he banged on the shaded cab door. Three loud bangs. Three angry bangs. The cab door window was wound down.

Inside the cab were plain clothes Organization security. Suits with jackets for the winter. A shotgun was nestled in the centre of the cab, unapologetic about its presence. The driver looked on at Professor Utonium with a rather bored look. "Can I help you, agent Utonium?"

"Yeah. Would you mind explaining to me why you're invading our personal space?" the professor interrogated.

"Wasn't aware the street was your personal space," the bored security officer replied coolly. "We're here for your protection, agent - for the subjects' protection too of course."

"Are you? Those chimpanzees back in HQ would have disagreed," the professor said cynically. Just to look good for this moment, he resisted shivering in the wintry cold. "A lot of subjects you executed in the early days would have something to say about that."

"We're here on orders of the Chief, whether you like it or not," the head security officer said, ignoring the snark. "Something's going down, Utonium. You just don't know it yet."

"What's going down?" the professor questioned, his curiosity peaked. 'And surely, if they are here as it happened, then they must think it to be a threat to me and the Girls,' he thought.

"It's security business. We'll fill you in on a need-to-know basis. For now, I don't think you need to know anything - at least, that's the Chief's opinion. I'm just the muscle," the head security officer said, then his eyes, those cold steel eyes, shifted to look behind the Professor Utonium. "Looks like B-47 needs you. Don't keep it waiting," he said further, pointing behind the professor. The professor looked behind him to see Blossom pressing her face into the window glass, peering at him. The professor's mind began racing for an answer to explain everything.

Coming back into the house, he was still unsure of what to say.

"Who is he, daddy?" Blossom asked.

"Urm- Oh- He- A Neighbor? I was just saying hello," Professor Utonium lied without thinking things through. He was out of time. Blossom suspected nothing, fully and intrinsically trusting the professor. Then, to the rest of the Powerpuff subjects, feigning full excitement when Utonium was a little rattled inside: "Okay, Girls, it's time to go. Put those winter wear on and follow me to the car."
It's time for you all to see the big, wide world!" He went over to the coffee table, picked up the
remote and switched off the television before helping the Girls with their jackets and gloves and
boots. Hats. Buttercup and Bubbles were dressed in white (we all know who to thank) while
Blossom had a pastel blue version of the gear, which would have looked a lot better on Bubbles.
They drove towards the city of Townsville, proper. Throughout the entire journey, the Girls were
never bored. Everything was new to them, from the houses of the suburbs to the snowy plains
between suburbs and city, then to the bustling city itself. Even when there was a pre-Christmas traffic
jam, the Girls were ecstatic, playing a game with identifying the colors of the cars around them.
Blossom was in the lead, and Buttercup was just thrilled to finally see life-sized and fully-colored
versions of her toys. Bubbles looked around her with a faint smile, feeling slightly intimidated by the
change of pace, so she leaped from the back seat to the front - almost flying because of her speed.
The professor looked at her with a smile, and secured a seat belt around her.
All the while, the professor had been keeping an eye on the rear-view mirror. The Chief of Security's
goons had been tailing them. The van wasn't far away, even in the traffic jam - they might be able to
fool the Girls, but they weren't fooling him. The only good news was that if they were plotting to kill
his Girls, they wouldn't be able to find a quiet spot to do it in the middle of the shopping season in
the mall.
Then there was an explosion. It was nowhere near them, but it was loud enough that it shocked
everyone in the car. Off to their right, there had been a robbery in progress at a city gas station. A
shootout between attendants and robbers must have set off one of the gas pumps, and it was clear
who the winners were. A group of men clad fully in black was sprinting for a car. In the distance,
sirens were sounding.
"Wha- What is happening, daddy?" Blossom asked, terror in her voice.
"Whoa, cool!" Buttercup squealed in delight as she looked on.
Bubbles cowered in her front seat. Thankfully, the traffic jam was clearing, and the professor stepped
on it. "Bad things, Blossom honey," he simply said, then fell silent. A robbery in broad daylight. The
instant he saw it, he knew that it wasn't exactly the safe and sleepy city he asked for. In fact, had it
not been for security, as much as he hated to admit it, he and the Girls would have been robbed blind
within the week. He would have to dig deeper into this the moment he got back, along with a million
other things to do.
Before they could leave, however, they could see a man limping out of the store - thankfully, he was
wearing a black rock band shirt, and his blood couldn't be seen - and falling flat on the pavement.
Another man was running haphazardly, on fire. He eventually dropped and rolled, just like how the
PSA videos taught.
"Are those men hurt, daddy?" Blossom asked again. Buttercup was smiling at the mayhem in the
background.
"They'll be fine, sweetie," the professor simply said. They drove away after that, with Blossom
looking on sadly at the scene, until it was out of sight, just as the black-and-white police cruisers
reached the gas station.
At the mall, Blossom hadn't recovered from what she had seen at the gas station robbery. She was
still putting on a rather upset look that worried even passers-by at the entrance of the mall. "Should
we help them, daddy?" Blossom insisted. The professor got down on one knee, looking at her. A
tear had escaped her eyes.


"I know it looked bad, Blossom. But we can't help them," the professor said, aware that he wasn't speaking the whole truth - he wasn't even speaking in full confidence. He had no idea what the Girls were capable of yet, not that he would ever approve of them ever coming anywhere close to a crime in progress. To him, they were little Girls, his Girls, and even in technological terms, they were prototypes, not meant for deployment. "Besides, if it would make you feel better, there are people out there who'd help them." Blossom's eyes lit up a little, though she still seemed visibly upset. "Heroes, Blossy-dear. Police officers and doctors. You've seen pictures of them right? Now be happy and smile, Blossom. It's okay."

Blossom tried her best to smile, and it came out alright - though not enough to fool anyone. Professor Utonium simply act fooled. "Now let's go and have a good time," he then narrowed his voice into a whisper. "And remember, don't use your super-strength."

They continued walking. "It was cool, Blossom. Wow!" Buttercup added, mostly unaware that she was adding salt to injury. The professor halted.

"Buttercup," he called her sternly. The Girls stopped.

"Yes, daddy?" she asked innocently.

"It isn't 'cool'," he said.

"But- but- the fire, and the…" Buttercup tried to explain herself, but lacked the words for it. In the end, she imitated the explosion by motioning with her hands the expansion of the smoke and 'fire'.

"Buttercup. It's not cool. People suffered because of it," the professor lectured her. "And the word you were looking for is 'explosion'."

"Ex-plo-sion?" Buttercup repeated, and liked the word. "Yes, daddy." And all she had taken out of it was the new word signifying her new obsession.

After the lecture was done and over with, they went on their way. All the while, Professor Utonium had been discreetly looking over his shoulder. The same men from the van were there, and there were more than two. He knew that the back of the van was likely occupied, he just didn't know how insecure the Chief of Security was. As it turned out, he was very insecure. There were five men and a woman in total; four had been crammed into the back of the van. They were all dressed to blend in, mostly looking like people on a business trip, armed with a pistol or two hidden somewhere.

At the kiddy clothes store, the Girls were attracting stares, and so was Professor Utonium, though for all the wrong reasons.

"Colored contact lenses at five years old! How disgraceful!" the professor heard a woman in her thirties say. "Oh my," the thirties-woman commented, equally shocked, if the hand on her mouth was any indication. The Girls had heard them too, but the meaning was lost on them. They didn't even know what contact lenses were. Nor disgraceful, yet.

"My, mister, what beautiful children you have!" a more positive lady with a stroller couldn't help but to praise. "Yeah, those eyes!" the man accompanying the stroller lady added.

"Uh- Thanks, I guess," the professor said. He then turned to the Girls. "I think we should be quick about it, Girls."

And they were really quick. It helped that they had to be together at all times, so Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup ended up choosing the same type of clothes. As it just so happened, they had come upon a shelf advertising a type of dress-and-sash that came in all kinds of colors, arranged from hot
to cold colors, from dark red to dark purple, as if the shelves were made from rainbow. The professor helped with the selection, and together, they all came to a unanimous agreement that dresses of the same colour as the Girls' eyes looked best.

To go along with the dress-and-sashes, the professor picked out some high socks and black Mary Jane shoes that would fit with the shade of the black sashes.

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were so in love with this new outfit that they wore them on the immediately to purchase. The shop assistants had to rush to cut the price tags out as they were leaving. They loved it so much that the professor had bought seven sets for the each of them.

Whatever underwear, winter wear and other clothes they bought had become mere after-thoughts.

"And now they're even more beautiful!" the same stroller lady who had praised them earlier, did an encore - she just so happened to be outside with her baby and older kid. "Yeah, those eyes - and dresses!" her man reiterated.

By the time Professor Utonium and the Girls were done shopping, they had already made multiple trips to their car. The car boot was filled with paper bags upon paper bags of clothes, soft toys and other things and the backseats was only a little less occupied. The Girls were wearing jackets of the same signature colors for the winter weather, except for Buttercup, who had her eyes on a black leather jacket.

But what was most important of all were the gifts he had wrapped up for them in secret, as well as a rainbow-colored short and wide package he was balancing on his lap while he was driving. Whenever the Girls would ask about the contents of the mystery boxes, the professor would just ask them to wait, or guess what was inside.

Back at home, the mystery boxes were laid out at the dining table. The gifts were basically color-coded, with pink belonging to Blossom, blue to Bubbles and green to Buttercup. The only box that wasn't color-coded was a flat but wide box, which had a rainbow pattern to it.

With the family gathered, Professor Utonium opened the rainbow box, to reveal a rainbow cake. "Wow!" the Girls stared in awe, in unison.

"You see, Girls, I owe all of you an apology," the professor explained as he removed three candles from their packaging. "More than a week ago, the three of you were born. It was something worth celebrating over, but I was just too busy. I just thought I should do it now." Sticking the candles into the cake, he lit them up with the provided matchstick.

"Happy birthday, Girls," he wished them. "Even if it's belated. Close your eyes, make a wish and blow out the candles - one for each of you."

"What's a wish?" Blossom asked.

"It's when you think of something you want, Blossy-dear," the professor said. So the Girls closed their eyes.

'Please don't let anyone else be hurt,' Blossom thought.

'Haha- Explosions!' Buttercup thought.

'I want everyone to be happy forever,' and so did Bubbles.

And they made their wish, blowing out their candles.
Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's W2 Speed Test 1 Log

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium discovers another of the Girls' enhanced abilities.

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's W2 Speed Test 1 Log

DOC: 2 DEC 1988

Created by: Agent Utonium

Introduction: Earlier in the afternoon, I had decided to take the Girls out for a jog around the neighbourhood. Security was following of course. How could they not? I realized within minutes that they were incredibly fast for a trio of 5-year-old equivalents who were just born last week such that I could not catch up with them and had to call for them to slow down a little. The following experiment is conducted to investigate the speed at which Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could run.

Subjects Involved:
B-47 (Blossom)
B-48 (Buttercup)
B-49 (Bubbles)

Equipment Used:
1x Standard Exercise Treadmill
1x Standard medical equipment for measuring heart rate and breathing.
1x Timer
1x Clipboard
1x Speed Test Forms
1x Medical Kit

Location Used:
The House Laboratory Test Area

Operating Procedure:
- As a control test, I will attempt to run at increasing speeds to find my maximum speed, which is
defined as the speed I can hold for a minute.

- Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup will each take turns on the treadmill to define their maximum speed.

- For each level of speed, they will attempt to hold for as long as possible. Test to stop if any of the Girls become winded.

- Safety is paramount. If any of the Girls are at risk of injury due to exhaustion, the test will be terminated.

- Standard first-aid procedures is a must.

Test Results:

Control (S0064 Utonium)
T-0min: 3mph/4.8kph (Warm-up)
T-5min: 5mph/8.0kph (Sustained)
T-10min: 7mph/11.3kph (Sustained, but at this point I was beginning to have difficulty keeping up with the treadmill)
T-13min: 8mph/12.9kph (Sustained, barely)
T-15min: 9mph/14.5kph (Maximum speed)
T-16min: 10mph/16.1kph (Unsustainable. Test cut for me)

Conclusion: I need to exercise more, but I don't see how that is possible with my responsibilities.

B-47 (Blossom)
T-0min: 3mph/4.8kph (Warm-up)
T-3min: 5mph/8.0kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing. Test fast-forwarded on insistence of Blossom)
T-6min: 8mph/12.9kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)
T-9min: 10mph/16.1kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)
T-11min: 13mph/20.9kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)
T-13min: 15mph/24.1kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)
T-15min: 20mph/32.2kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)
T-17min: 25mph/40.2kph (Sustained with slight increase in heart rate and breathing. Test cut.)

Conclusion: Blossom was able to maintain a speed of 25mph/40.2kph for 5 minutes without any difficulties in breathing nor exhaustion setting in. The treadmill was on maximum setting, and was rapidly heating up, so the exercise had to be stopped. As it turns out, it is the treadmill that needs rest more than Blossom. This is astounding! At this rate, even the champions of the Olympic dash events will lose easily to her! Based on the graph I've been reading of her vitals, I can only estimate a top
running speed of about 50mph/80.5kph to 75mph/120.7kph. However, I won't be surprised if she could run at an even higher speed than that, even if it is for short bursts.

**B-49 (Bubbles)**

T-0min: 3mph/4.8kph (Warm-up. Bubbles insisted on going before Buttercup. This is encouraging)

T-3min: 10mph/16.1kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing. Test fast-forwarded on Bubbles' insistence.)

T-6min: 15mph/24.1kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-9min: 20mph/32.2kph (Sustained with slight increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-11min: 25mph/40.2kph (Sustained with slight increase in heart rate and breathing.)

**Conclusion:** If nothing else, Bubbles is almost as good as Blossom in running at high speeds. Her vitals did increase faster than Blossom's however, implying a slightly lower stamina. However, there is something else that could be gathered from this data here. It seems that a faster acceleration is not an obstacle. In fact, it is possible that Bubbles' faster increase in heart rate and breathing was the result of higher acceleration, or, if we consider the W1 Strength Test, simply nervousness. Bubbles is the shy one, so that is a likely explanation.

**B-48(Buttercup)**

T-0min: 10mph/16.1kph (Does not believe in warm-ups, so she started the test running immediately. While I didn't agree with this, I decided to let her go ahead to see if I can make any other interesting observations about their physiology. Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-1min: 15mph/24.1kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-2min: 20mph/32.2kph (Sustained with negligible increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-3min: 25mph/40.2kph (Sustained with slight increase in heart rate and breathing.)

T-4min: 28mph/45.0kph (Without consulting me, Buttercup increased the speed of the treadmill even further. The treadmill broke down and came to an abrupt stop, causing Buttercup to launch forward and hit the dashboard head-first. Surprisingly, she was uninjured, unless her pride was counted. She cried on the spot perhaps due to the shock of the trauma and had to be soothed.)

**Conclusion:** While disastrous in that the treadmill was a smoking wreck and unusable by the end and Buttercup was upset, it did show me something I would not have otherwise seen. Rapid acceleration is no problem for Buttercup, and very possibly for the other Girls too. However, I have yet to test if instant acceleration over mere seconds would prove too much for them.

**General Conclusion:** All of the Girls are projected to be capable of average speeds beyond that of even Cheetahs, but with the ability of sustaining the speed for an extended period of time. Acceleration to top speed is possible within minutes, though further experiments would have to be done to determine maximum acceleration. It is just entirely possible that they could reach maximum speed within a minute, owing to the nature of the basic anatomy of the human body.

This is incredible. I am proud of the Girls! It appears that what Chemical X has done to their strength, it has also done the same with their running speed. It is possible that the root cause above Chemical X is the same - increased production and release of energy (origin of which I have yet to figure out - it simply couldn't be the porridge I fed them), superior musculature and skeletal structure.
Further Investigation: It is not possible to repeat the experiment and test for higher speed limits and acceleration - if nothing else, Buttercup had proven that. In order to test for high speed and acceleration limits, a complete overhaul of the experimental set-up must be done, which is impossible for now. Quite simply, I will need a stadium to accomplish the next level of speed testing, which would be a security nightmare for the Chief of Security. I'll have to shelf this one.
Chapter 8: Stained

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Buttercup does a precociously terrible thing.

Chapter 8: Stained

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

3 DEC 1988. 1220.

"-And there. It looks nice, doesn't it?" Professor Utonium said as both him and Blossom were standing in front of the mirror. The Professor had been figuring out her hair with the girl. They had tried everything - pig tails and pony tail, buns and hornet's nest. None of them worked, until they came upon the simplest solution - Blossom's hair looked best all combed down and with a red bow to hold the front and back in place. The colour had matched her eyes and dress.

"It's beautiful! Thanks, daddy!" she said. The professor had done the same with Bubbles, whose hair was the same as Blossom's, reaching down to her waist, except that it was blonde. For now, the professor had given her pig tails with blue ribbons instead, though it seemed a little inconvenient as it would reach down to her sides and get in the way of things. As it wasn't rocket science, the professor had opted to give Bubbles time to adjust to it, or they could brainstorm together for a new solution to her hairdo. For some inexplicable reason, putting a hair bow on Bubbles didn't really work.

Meanwhile, Buttercup had been the wild one, refusing anything beyond a comb-down with her hair reaching out in massive tangles spreading all the way down to her waist. She had gone downstairs to wait for lunch - it was supposed to be a very special lunch.

While waiting downstairs, Buttercup had grown restless. She had tried to investigate for herself what the special lunch was, but the kitchen was empty. Normally, the professor would have put their impending lunch on the stove or the oven, but there was none. Looking outside the window, however, something else caught her eye. Some small animal, walking up to the window, disappearing under it soon after she spotted it. Whether it was a cat, or a dog, or an elephant or lion, she couldn't be sure, so she ran up to the front door, put on her winter gear, and rushed out excitedly.

It was obvious against the white of snow what it was when Buttercup was outside. It was a cat, larger than she thought it would be, with fur the colour of Blossom's hair. It was standing on two legs and pawing the walls of the house in an attempt to reach the warmth that the window of The House provided. Buttercup snuck up to it in awe.

"Kitty, good kitty..." she whispered, her raspy voice shivering with both the cold and anticipation of good times. When she got close enough, the cat got down on all fours and turned around to regard Buttercup with its sharp eyes. Buttercup bent down, reaching out for it. "Nice kitty..."

Then the furball exploded in a snarling puffed-up fit of rage.
Buttercup kicked it, shocked… Sending the cat into the wall, head-first.

The sound of the skull cracking and blood splattering made it all the worse. Buttercup's mistake was very much a visible red against the frost-covered wall. The cat wasn't moving after that.

At this point, any normal girl would be shocked, frightened and guilty of what she had done. Perhaps Buttercup was a little of each, but she could not help but to be fascinated by what had happened. She had never seen blood before, and the explosion and resultant suffering she witnessed before was tamed by distance and the mostly soundproof shell of the professor's car - nothing compared to what she had done first-hand.

Going down to her knees, she poked at the creature, noticing that it still didn't move after that. It wasn't sleeping - sleepers would stir after being jabbed at. She had tried that with her sisters. Then there was the blood. Taking off her gloves, feeling the pinch of cold but not caring, Buttercup ran her fingers against the blood. For some reason, it made her smile. It reminded her of the paint the professor had bought her.

Back to the cat, Buttercup became curious. She had seen the inside of things - boxes and stuff. Was there anything inside the cat? Seizing a handful of fur and skin, Buttercup tore at it, revealing even more blood… and flesh. It was like being in the playroom to her - learning new things, doing new things. It made her smile for some reason.

"Buttercup! Where are you! Lunch should be here any minute!" the professor from inside suddenly shouted. Buttercup panicked, looking around for a way to hide her mistake. Then it hit her, the snow! Shoveling up large amounts, she buried the cat under them, then tried to erase the bloodstain on the wall with a snowball. There was only so much she could do. She rubbed her naked hand against the snow, making red-brownish smudges, then covered those as well. "Buttercup! Are you in the toilet?"

When the deed was done, she wore her glove again and hurried through the front door, faking the best smile she had ever tried to fake. "I'm here, daddy!" She slammed the door shut, and leaned her back against it as though she was trying to keep something out.

"There you are! What were you doing outside? Didn't I tell you to stay put in the living room?" the professor lectured. Blossom and Bubbles followed up behind him.

"Nothing, daddy- Just- Just playing with the snow, I guess," Buttercup tried her best to lie. It wasn't at all convincing, but what did work was the fact that the professor couldn't even begin to guess what she was hiding. Instead, he assumed that she was just guilty for disobeying him. The professor bent down to regard her on her eye level. "Buttercup, I really need you to listen to me, okay? It's dangerous outside."

"Yes, daddy…" Buttercup said.

"Daddy, something smells funny…" Bubbles innocently said. Buttercup shot at the blue-eyed girl with a quick stare. Then the professor began sniffing the air.

"What's that smell?" he asked. Buttercup began panicking again, sweating cold sweat that she didn't even know she was capable of pushing out.

"Er- Er… I- The-" Buttercup stammered, still trying to think of a reason, but her inexperience fought against her.

"Must be something in the ground, am I right?" the professor guessed. Buttercup felt like a grilled
prisoner, only that she wouldn’t know what that would be like, but the feeling was all the same. Still, she was determined not to tell the truth. The professor had taught them what it meant to be good girls - and respecting life (in simpler terms, of course) was one of them.

"I- I don't know," Buttercup eventually settled on the answer.

"You must have dug too deep and hit the soil," the professor guessed again. Some of the tension in Buttercup was lifted, though she was still afraid of being discovered. "Is that right, Buttercup?"

"Y-yes," she lied, her arms on her back, playing with her foot. "I'm sorry."

"Oh, that's alright, Buttercup. Listen to daddy next time, okay?" the professor said, and Buttercup agreed. "Now toss those dirty gloves into the basket and wash your hands. Lunch should be coming any minute now."

Buttercup raced to the washroom. "That's my girl!" the professor said after her. She didn't just wash her hands. She rinsed her gloves as well, and watched the faint blood from both swirling into the washing basin. She'd made sure to scrub her hands clean.

"Phew!" she said, crisis averted, as she deposited the gloves into the laundry basket on the way to the living room. Despite the social dangers she had put herself in, what had happened earlier with the cat had made an impression upon her. She couldn't help but to look upon it with fascination, still, and it felt like something that she would try again sometime. And then there was Bubbles - Buttercup just could not help but to dislike her for very nearly causing her to be caught red-handed.

Ten minutes later, the rarely used doorbell rang. Professor Utonium came up to the door and opened it. The Girls watched as this strange phenomenon took place. They could barely see who the alien at the door was - it was someone with a strange gadget on his head, connected by black wire to a device on his heap, with a brown hat with some sort of messy 'hairy' picture on it, a black shirt and jeans. The professor produced some green paper from his pocket and gave it to the man, who in turn handed a bag full of… Things to him.

"Thanks for the delivery. Keep the change," the professor uttered some strange language which the Girls could not decode. After closing the door, the professor turned around, revealing a paper bag.

"What is it, professor?" Blossom asked. Bubbles thought she could smell something, but it seemed unfamiliar. She opted to wait before saying anything.

"Is it something we can eat?" Buttercup guessed.

"I've yet to perfect the recipe for spaghetti and meatballs, so I decided to get someone else to do it instead…” the professor explained, going at length to describe how restaurants and delivery worked. The Girls hung onto his every word - for now, they wanted to learn everything, and wouldn't discover what was boring to them until later on.

Setting the paper bag down on the dining table, the professor took out plastic lunchboxes filled with the stuff. The set was complete with mushroom cream soup and soda. A whole new spectrum of food for the Girls to experience, and decide what they liked. With the soda, the professor had decided to make an exception and let them have it… For once.

Settling down to the meal, the professor showed them how the fork was operated, and how the spoon was used for soup. They discovered, together, the benefits of the straw, and all of this was made all the more palatable by the food. It was another magical moment for them, simple as it was - to the professor, it was necessary for what must come next, to sate the Organization's lust for data
from their latest prototypes.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls enjoy the snow for the first time.

Chapter 9: Narrow Aversion

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.


The new furniture for the Girl's room had finally come. Although the movers had offered to help them redecorate, Professor Utonium opted to just let them have the old furniture - Wiggum's monstrosities - and let them go. The professor thought that it would be a good time for the Girls and him to bond after a long morning of learning even more new words and ideas. And it wasn't just some redecorating they were going to do. He had also ordered in some paint, and he kept the color a surprise.

After moving out the toys and wall accessories and padding the Girls' room with newspaper, he showed the Girls the art of wall-painting. "Is it like drawing a picture?" Bubbles asked innocently.

"Nope, but it's easier and just as fun," the professor replied. "Now, we start by cleaning the wall."

And so they wiped the wall with water and cloth.

"And next…" the professor bent down to pick up a can of primer from a paper bag.

"But dad… Our room is white. Why are we painting it white again?" Blossom asked, misinterpreting the primer as white paint.

"Maybe it's a special kind of white?" Buttercup suggested.

"No, Buttercup. It's just the primer. It'll help the paint stick," the professor explained. He showed them the brushes to be used, and how to apply the primer. They had fun coating the walls, forgetting about what had happened yesterday. However, the professor still thought it necessary to make it up to them - and he had spent hours in the night, just thinking things through.

Last night had been terrible. After tucking the Girls in, after preparing his daily Organization reports and making late-night orders for the upcoming experiments, he had collapsed in the living room, on the sofa… And descended into a guilt-ridden spiral of no return. The Girls' crying continued to ring in his mind, as he stabbed and sliced at them with his instruments. No physical damage was done, but he knew that it had opened a rift between him and the Girls, no matter how small and unnoticeable at first. A hairline fracture was still a fracture, and knowing the demands placed on him, he knew that it could only get worse.

In the end, after smoking his pipe, his dosage of tobacco already twice as much as before, he fell
asleep on the sofa and woke up feeling feverish once more - something that was becoming all too common. The morning fever took longer to dissipate, but he didn't let it show.

"Is it pink?" Blossom guessed at the new color of their room as she added the last patch of primer in broad, controlled strokes.

"Is it green? Please make it green!" Buttercup took her shot while she was practically splashing primer into a wide area on the wall.

"Is it blue?" Bubbles added timidly as she made small little brushstrokes on the wall, as if she was drawing.

The professor observed them as they made the final touches, nodding with approval. Even if the end result wasn't perfect, it would still be the Girls' room, done without complaint, done by their own hands. It was a victory regardless. "It'll be a surprise. How about we let the primer dry? It's tea time, and I have just the thing…"

The City of Townsville. Townsville Central Park.

4 DEC 1988. 1531.

Although it was snowing, there were still people in the park, building snowmen, throwing snowballs at each other and walking in the winter landscape. The cold scenery was oddly beautiful. Surprisingly, there was an ice cream man still operating, and a row of adults and children alike were lining up for their edible ice.

"Any preferences for the ice cream?" Professor Utonium asked the Girls.

"What's ice-cream?" Blossom, always the curious one, asked.

"It's a dessert, very sweet. I just thought you three deserved it," he said, not revealing the real reason why he was treating them to a late afternoon of ice cream.

"Is there spaghetti ice cream? I like spaghetti," Bubbles tried.

"Urm… No. How about I get you Girls what I think you like, and then we'll see?" Professor Utonium suggested. "In the meantime, why don't you three play with the snow nearby? Don't wander off now."

"Yes, daddy," Blossom said obediently.

"Haha, yeah! Now to make an explosion!" Buttercup exclaimed, which had the professor worried. He gestured for the girls to come closer.

"Remember the rules, Girls?" he whispered to them his worries.

"Yes. No super-strength…" Blossom recited the rule.

"And no super-speed?" Bubbles followed

"Yes, dear. And don't wander off, please. Especially you, Buttercup," the professor singled the green-jacketed girl out.

"Yeah, yeah…" Buttercup said with arms crossed. The professor was as straight-faced as he could be when Buttercup acted the way she did. The tougher of the three had been showing early signs of defiance. He'd have to keep a close eye on her.
In the end, the professor returned to them with three ice cream cones on a platform: green apple, red strawberry and blueberry. The Girls had been building a giant snowball-thing, and it was about their height by the time he came along. He couldn't decide if they were using their powers or not.

"Girls! Ice cream's ready!" The professor called. The Girls ran over to him, perhaps a little too fast for his liking. He looked around, looking like he had something to hide, but he breathed a sigh of relief when he thought that no one's watching. Well, except for their 'neighbors' from the van, who had followed them for their 'protection'. Two of them were sitting on a wooden bench, a man and a woman, pretending to be lovers - though they would make a rather cold and distant pair. Two of them were 'playing' with the snow. The rest were 'talking', but their eyes were always shifting to their general direction.

Naturally, the Girls picked the ice creams based on their favorite colors. Buttercup immediately plunged her teeth into her scoop of ice cream, and regretted it. "Dad! It's so cold!

Bubbles did the same thing, only more conservatively, but felt the chill through her teeth all the same. "Yeah, daddy - how do ice creams work?" she asked in broken English.

Behind them, however, Blossom had no problem chewing her ice cream. To her, it wasn't too off-putting to sink her teeth into it.

"Well... You have to lick it, like this!" the professor thus demonstrated the art of eating ice creams to them. They followed suit. By the time Blossom came around to it, however, she had already bitten off half her ice cream.

They had a snowball fight after that. Blossom and Buttercup versus Professor Utonium and Bubbles. Their laughter, for a time, intermingled with that of the other park goers. The Girls were, at first, terrible with their aim, having never thrown things beyond an arm's length before. Without knowing it, the professor was accidentally training them to throw objects, and they were learning fast.

"Quick, Bubbles!" the professor instructed Bubbles as they hid behind their snowy bulwark. "This is how you make a good snowball-" the professor scooped up some snow from the ground and rolled it into a spherical shape. Bubbles did the same, though she was getting carried away, and she had scooped up twice the required snow, and made a strange, ovular mess. "You'll get used to it."

Together, they got out of cover and launched their snow projectiles at Blossom and Buttercup, who didn't understand the concept of taking cover, but after Blossom was hit in the chest, they soon understood. They quickly dived for cover behind a half-buried log. Thus, the professor had accidentally gave them an introductory course in surviving a firefight, and the Girls learned fast, and without knowing it.

"Do you know how to win?" Buttercup asked Blossom as she scooped another lump of snow out of the ground.

"Winning? I'm just having fun!" Blossom cried with joy. "But how about lots of snowballs?"

"Haha, good idea!" Buttercup said with clear mischief in her voice. She began working, hyper-concentrated, excavating her material at a rapid, blurry pace. She was like an ice cream machine, and she had manufactured a dozen snowballs within a fraction of a minute.

Blossom jumped up to shoot a snowball, missing by a mile, and she dropped back into cover when the professor's superior marksmanship had put a snowball close to where her right arm was.

"This is fun!" Bubbles shouted gleefully as she continued heaving her giant snowballs at her sisters -
some of them would disintegrate in mid-air, shooting small pellets of crushed snow at the other Girls, while some actually made it all the way to their target, exploding on contact - though Bubbles, too, couldn't hit the broadside of a barn. She and the professor continued suppressing Blossom and Buttercup with their remaining ammunition, which was when Buttercup snapped up and began unloading her many snowballs at them, two at a time, while she was shouting a war cry. She had prioritized quantity over quality, instinctively knowing that she had the aim of a newborn baby. Some flew nowhere near her targets, but a few did manage to land on the professor's bulwark. Bubbles was hit in the dome, and she fell backwards on her bum. The professor looked worriedly at her, but surprisingly, she wasn't crying, and was instead laughing uncontrollably with joy. The professor smiled. It was another one of those moments to remember, to punctuate the bad times.

This went on for a long time, and by the end of it, snowballs were screaming very closely to their targets, though the professor had thus far avoided getting hit. Bubbles, under his guidance, was never hit again, while Blossom and Buttercup were whiter than they normally were by the end, their hair speckled in icy dust. They had to shake off the frost to retain their colors.

"Okay, it's time to go!" the professor announced the truce from behind his 'fort'. "Come on, Bubbles. It's time to defrost and go back to putting colors in your room."

Together, the Girls and the Professor met in the centre of their battlefield. "Are you two alright? I guess I should have gone easier on the both of you, huh?" The professor said proudly. Buttercup had other ideas. Her hands were folded behind her back, but it wasn't good manners she was portraying. She had a snowball in hand.

Without warning, she winded up her throwing arm and launched her last snowball point-blank at Professor Utonium, right in the face.

The force of the blow had thrown the professor off his feet. For a moment, there was intense pain, then numbness as he fell to the floor, unmoving. He felt his vision blur, then nothing.

The Organization security officers watching them had taken notice of this. Upon realizing what had happened, their leader, a white man with graying hair and aviator sunglasses, gestured for the security officers to spread out and surround Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup in a semi-circular pattern - far and in the background. Wordlessly, the security officers who were feigning having fun obeyed and began moving into position. "Utonium appears to be down. Chance of B-47 through to 49 going rogue. Observe and report," the leader whispered into the mic he had buried inside his jacket.

"Hah! Take that, daddy!" Buttercup shouted in triumph as her sisters laughed. She looked at the professor, expecting him to get up and laugh with them. But the professor remained still. "Daddy?" Happiness turned to confusion, then to horror. "Dad!"

Buttercup ran up to the unmoving professor and turned him over, shaking him while she was doing so. His eyes were closed.

"Why did you do that, Buttercup!" Blossom scolded. "You knew that daddy wasn't as strong as us!"

Bubbles had already started crying, and her tears were turning to ice right as they sprouted from her eyes.

"But- Bu- Hu- I- Te-" Buttercup babbled. Then she gave a shout and turned on Blossom. "You were laughing too, weren't you! You liked that as much as me! You would have done the same thing!"
"Nah-ah! I didn't do what you did! You threw the snowball, not me!" Blossom defended herself. Bubbles knelt beside the professor, trying to shake him awake, at the same time crying shards of ice down on him.

"Daddy, wake up!" Bubbles cried.

"You laughed! So why don't you shut up!" Buttercup shouted.

"No, you did it! You shut up!" Blossom countered.

The security officers were in place. "Sitrep? Over." one of them whispered.

"Utonium status unknown. Can't see breathing," another said.

"What are the subjects doing?" yet another asked.

"Fighting, apparently. One of them appears upset," yet another observed.

"Should we engage?" the first one asked.

"No, stand-by and observe," the leader ordered, and put both his hands in his jacket. He appeared to just be warming himself up, but he was actually reaching for his weapon. He had a saw-off shotgun tucked away in there.

"Look at how sad you made Bubbles!" Blossom scolded again.

"She's ALWAYS sad! So shut up!" Buttercup defended.

"No, you shut up!" Blossom repeated.

"Shut up!" Buttercup cried.

"You shut up!" Blossom countered again, until…

"They appear to be having a 'mature' discussion on the matter," one of the plain-clothes security officer said sarcastically.

"Makes me wonder if they planned this - Did they just assassinate Agent Utonium?" another security officer speculated. "If so, why are they assigning blame on each other?"

"Do we engage?" a particularly trigger-happy security guard asked again. He had put a hand in his coat, reaching for his pistol. "We don't have much time before they-"

"I said stand by!" the leader ordered again.

"Girls..." the professor said weakly. Clutching his head, he sat up - he could barely do it. His vision was still a blur.

"Dad!" Blossom and Buttercup shouted in unison before coming up to his side. Buttercup promptly buried her face in the professor's chest, putting her arm around him possessively.

"I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry!" Buttercup apologized beyond profusely. "I didn't mean it! I thought- I didn't mean it! I'm sorry!" The professor hugged her back. "I'm so sorry!"

"It's fine. I'm okay, I'm okay," the professor's voice was a whisper, a dead give-away of a lie. He was anything but. He could still feel his skull ringing and he was seeing twice the number of Girls.
His head felt like Bubbles' failed giant snowballs, disintegrating in mid-air. He clutched his head. It was the headache of the century. "Ow…" At this point, the only thing he could be glad about was the fact that he had an ample supply of ice to put on his head.

"False alarm, people," the leader said. "Now let's scatter before we attract any attention." But it was too late. The professor had already seen them. To him, it was a close call, and the love between him and the Girls had averted a disaster. Had there been no forgiveness, the security officers might have over-reacted and put an end to their family.

"Let's just go back home and paint the walls," Professor Utonium said weakly. He tried to get up, but slipped on the ice. "Do daddy a favor and help me up?" All three of them took him by the hands. With difficulty, he got to his feet. Putting his arms on Buttercup and Bubbles' shoulders, they worked their way back to the car.

The professor drove the car slowly, afraid that his slow reaction time from the double-vision, headache and still-blurry sight would result in another accident. As he piloted the family car, Bubbles sat beside him and applied Buttercup's glove on his forehead, which was full of snow. "Thanks, Bubbles," he said.
Chapter 10: Rift

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls talked about what happened earlier.

Chapter 10: Rift

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.


Despite the massive headache Professor Utonium couldn't shake off, not even with Bubbles' glove ice pack, he wasted no time in sitting the Girls down for a talk. He had heard them arguing while he was coming out of his brief black-out. On the way home, Blossom and Buttercup had sat as far away from each other as possible, on opposite sides of the backseat.

Looking at the pile of furniture that was yet to be arranged, he couldn't bear the thought of having to spend the rest of the day painting and furnishing their room with two of his Girls treating each other like enemies.

Even after sitting them down, Blossom and Buttercup sat as far away from each other as possible, occupying either poles of a sofa facing the professor, with Bubbles in the middle. Before talking, the professor clutched his head, still feeling the super-dense snowball from Buttercup. His left eye had become black and blue at some point, as the internal bleeding finally stopped and the blood within congealed.

"Now that we're together as one family in The House, I want the three of you to talk. Please," the professor started awkwardly, unsure of how to begin the conversation. Blossom and Buttercup remained silent.

"I wish we could just love and forgive each other…" Bubbles contributed, after no one else would.

"You hear that, Blossom, Buttercup? Bubbles had little to do with the accident, but she was willing to speak," the professor added.

"Buttercup hurt you! There's nothing to talk about!" Blossom shouted, infuriated.

"Now, the two of you stop right there!" the professor found himself raising his voice, if only to get them to listen. It'd done the job, startling the Girls, even the innocent one. "I know you two are mad at each other, but that's when you need to listen to the other. Blossom, Buttercup said that it was an accident, and I believe her. So what's there to be mad about?"

"But… She threw the snowball so hard…” Blossom tried her best to explain, and the professor thought he understood. He turned to Buttercup, willing her to explain it all, while clutching his head
again.

"I was excited; we've had so much fun. Daddy, please believe me; I don't know what came over me; I thought it would be more fun, what I did," Buttercup tried even harder to explain, using the few hundred words she had. The professor thought her effort to be admirable, considering that they weren't even 2 weeks old yet.

"You were overexcited, Buttercup. People tend to forget themselves when that happens," Professor Utonium explained to Buttercup, then turned to Blossom. "Blossom. Ever since you were born, I've noticed that you are the smart one. The reasonable one I'm asking you to be yourself and give your sister a chance, as I have."

'I do want to be like daddy…' Blossom thought. 'And he did teach us to forgive and forget.'

"Oh okay…" Blossom finally agreed, her voice dejected, quite the opposite of what the professor was hoping for.

"And what about you, Buttercup?" the professor turned to the green-eyed girl.

"What about me?" she asked, having found no reason to say anything further before.

"Don't you love your sister? Don't you forgive her?" the professor half-quizzed. In truth, he was still trying to understand fully the relationship between Blossom and Buttercup. Despite rarely being away from them both, he knew that there was enough of a blind spot for him to miss things out; the most recent being him falling unconscious after getting hit by Buttercup's ice cannonball.

"But she was being bossy and- and- She was mean- and she's always telling me what to do-" Buttercup struggled to put thoughts into words. Professor Utonium sighed, and came over to Buttercup. Picking her up, he sat down in between Bubbles and Blossom, putting her on his lap.

"She only wants the best for you. Right, Blossom?" the professor said.

"I- I guess. I just want things to go back to when no one was hurt. I want the best for you, Daddy," Blossom explained.

"See?" the professor said with a smile, glad that Blossom was able to affirm his position. From his own experiences, and current time with the Girls, he knew that kids were unpredictable - that Blossom knew exactly what was right, and what to say, was a God send.

Buttercup had felt almost nothing for her siblings at all. Sure, they were 'born' together, and they had been playmates since day one, but they had also been obstacles, competition. She couldn't forget how the professor had exhausted all the good names, giving her 'Buttercup' - had one of them not existed, she would have either been Blossom or Bubbles. In retrospect, after learning the language, she knew the difference. Her name had meant nothing in the onset. And now she couldn't let go of the fact that Blossom seemed to be closer to daddy now, and not her.

But what she did feel was an unbreakable connection with who she called 'Daddy', and if getting along with Blossom and Bubbles meant getting closer to him, then she knew that she would have to yield. Deep down, she hated losing, but she reasoned with herself that the game wasn't over yet.

When Buttercup took too long to think about things, Professor Utonium continued his lecture: "We're a family, Girls. I guess I've been trying to tell you this, but… The world out there-" It was his turn to struggle with putting thoughts into words. He had so much to consider: the Girls' mental simplicity and development, the complexity of the world and the secrets of the Organization he worked for. "Not everyone cares about you. People will even go on to dislike or hate you, sometimes
for no reason." The professor said this knowing very well who he was talking about. "Friends will leave you and stop being friends. But a family will always be a family. Buttercup, Blossom and Bubbles will never stop being your sisters, and I will always be your father."

"Okay…" Buttercup relented once more, then turning to Blossom, said: "Maybe we could play house together later?" Buttercup had said this with less enthusiasm than usual, but Blossom and Bubbles were none the wiser, thinking that words could not lie. All the professor could hope for was that the cracks between the three Girls would heal in time.

"Now let's paint the room together, like a good family," Professor Utonium announced, before putting Buttercup down and heading up the stairs, all the while doing his best to hide the fact that his head was still pounding, and his vision was still a blur. 'Maybe a rest stop in the washroom first,' he thought. 'Wiggums had better put some good painkillers in there.'

It didn't take long for Buttercup to get mad once more, though she kept it all in this time, with much difficulty. When the professor unveiled the color of the paint they were using, Buttercup's face was basically twitching, and it did not look good on her youthful and beautiful face. The professor actually feared that she had somehow contracted a neurological disease from the way she was conceived.

"Are you okay, Buttercup?" Professor Utonium asked as he was uncapping the first tin full of paint.

"I'm… Fine," Buttercup lied with difficulty. It didn't come naturally to her, and that she could do it with a smile on her face, even if a pained one, was considered exceptional in a sub-2-weeks-old. "I just like the color so much," she continued lying.

The color that the professor chosen was pink. Blossom's favorite. 'Of course it had to be Blossom's favorite,' Buttercup thought enviously. Off to the side, Bubbles did not seem to mind pink, even if it wasn't her favorite. In truth, Bubbles liked many colors. She loved the general idea of colors in the world. Buttercup did not know the word then, but she thought Bubbles to be stupid.

"Of course you do, Buttercup!" Blossom said, cheerfully. "Pink is the best color in the world!"

"Yeah… Totally," Buttercup agreed insincerely, putting her all in the fake smile she was putting on. 'Of course Blossom is happy. It's her favorite color!' she thought hatefully even as she faced her own sister.

"Now isn't this lovely - the two of you making up!" the professor added, unaware that Buttercup was harboring more and more resentment.

At the end of the day, the Girls' room had become unusable as the first coat of paint was completed only hours into the evening. The Girls would have to sleep in with the professor in his room, something that they found to be exciting and delightful. It was technically their first sleepover, and the professor had even introduced them to the concept, talking about how he had done the same thing with his friends long ago, except that he actually went all the way to another house miles away to be with his friends.

"Wow Dad, you have such a huge bed! It's like it's made for the four of us!" Bubbles said excitedly on encountering the professor's bed. The Girls padded into his room, examining everything. Professor Utonium didn't mind, at least until Bubbles got to the pistol he had so carelessly tossed onto his nightstand. The professor practically sprinted over to her and snatched the gun away from her hands in full view of the other two Girls.

"I'm sorry I touched your toy," Bubbles apologized innocently, looking like she was about to cry
"Bubbles, hey..." the professor cooed at the blue-eyed girl as he pressed himself up close to her. "I was just concerned, that's all. This thing is not a toy. It's dangerous."

"Then why was it next to your bed, Daddy?" Blossom asked. 'Oh no, not again,' the professor thought. He didn't want the Girls to lose any of their innocence from the get-go. Not when they were so young.

"No reason. It was just there," the professor said. At least this time, he didn't have to lie. Looking around for a place to chuck it in, he decided on the top of the wardrobe and left it there.

"It looks cool," Buttercup added. "Why is it dangerous?"

"It could hurt you," the professor said.

"How?" Buttercup pursued.

"I'll tell you about it next time," Professor Utonium said, hoping at the same time that the 'next time' would be years away. "For now, bed."

"Can I sleep next to you?" Blossom pleaded, and she had beaten Buttercup and Bubbles to it, much to the former's chagrin, who went straight to the bathroom to brush her teeth.

"Sure," the professor agreed.

"Can I sleep next to you too?" Bubbles asked as well.

"No, unless you want to sleep on the floor," the professor joked and everyone in the room laughed. Everyone except for the only person absent - Buttercup. At the very least, she didn't have to sleep next to Blossom, for that night, Bubbles had placed herself between them.
Chapter 11: New Crime

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, a perspective from the City of Townsville describes the terrible state of things.

Chapter 11: New Crime

5 DEC 1988. 1003.

The City of Townsville. It is all in the name. A topsy turvy world where up means down and down means up. I have been here all my life, rarely travelled unless you count time travelling the conventional way, half a century into the future from just before the world's second greatest slaughter began to after the world's culture got slaughtered. I had seen how clean it used to be, when the world was covered in so much blood and guts that cleaners today are still working on it. Oh, the irony. And I'd seen how dirty it could be, how dirty it is now. Let's just say this old dame of a city has seen better days.

Looking outside the window of my office in Townsville Police Department, I can hardly see the muck and scum. I know better. I know it all too well. I see it even more often than I see my wife - and I'm counting the days before the divorce. I see it in my sleep, and I see it everyday on the job. Thirty years of being in the blues can do that to you. I was never the tourist, unless you count the City. I have seen every inch of this lady, and I know her better than I know my ex-wife. I have seen the business districts, downtown. I have seen the suburbs. I have seen the dingy shithole slums and their alleyways, the ghettos.

But just when I thought things can't get any worse, that we'd hit the Marianas Trench of crime and vice, the City just have to prove me wrong. It had always proven me wrong. And when it'd ran out of the boring and mundane ol' blood and bullets and cocaine and dirty money, it'll bring out the topsy turvy.

I still remember the day the file on the 'Amoeba Boys' hit my desk. "This one's yours, Detective Mullens. It makes no bloody sense, and I got no one else in this department who cares," the Police Chief, a black man I had to try very hard to respect for the job he's pulling, had said carelessly. Story of my life.

The Amoeba Boys. Bossman, Junior and Skinny Slim, as they are known by. They'd outgrown their names, but they've stuck to them like flies on rotten haunch. Immigration has it that they are out-of-towners, not just from the City of Townsville, but the Pokey Oaks county. Their records are sketchy, but what isn't these days? That isn't what concerned me. Three stooges of Italian descent, they started out exactly the way any bottom-feeders start out. They did the small gigs: messaging, running, petty stealing or otherwise. Then they worked their way up the food chain, eating away at their own kind, eating the rear end of the bosses upstairs.

The fact that they had eaten their way to the top of a local gang within a couple years does not concern me either. It's all about how they do it. They like to get their hands dirty, something odd for
three crooks looking to get into the Godfather routine. And when they get their hands dirty… That's when it becomes… Sketchy.

In their first murder crime scene, they'd cleaned out members of a rival gang in a hotel lobby. It was a regular job, something their boss ordered every Sunday with an extra topping of sacrilege. I would even call it sloppy, if I trust my fellow detectives enough (I don't). Collateral damage, lots of missed shots, non-core shots, a slow and delayed ticket to hell for their targets. But even this does not leave me concerned.

It was the bullets that hit them. Those leads either end up in the wall behind them, or somehow fell in beautiful, undamaged bits all around them. There was no blood, and only tiny bits of fabric caught in the heat of battle. Sloppy as the Amoeba Boys were, those they hit never stood a chance.

It became their MO. They riddle their marks with lead, and shrug off lead like raindrops. None of the detectives before me had figured out how they did it.

By the time their file landed on my desk, they're at war with another gang, and they have chopped off the head of the Snakes - their competitor in drugs, women and illegal firearms. Now… Now they're my problem.

And it isn't as simple as it sounds, like how it was back when they would get their hands dirty. Now, I'll have to visit the lair of the beast, ply the web of crime, coercing the small fries to get at the Amoeba Boys, starting with the hitman they hired to snuff out the Snake head.

And I plan to do more than that. I may be a tired old man just a few years away from retirement, but beneath that scum, beneath all that dirt I see as a detective everyday, I still dream of a Townsville that was, and will be. Divorced I may be, but I love my daughter, and she had taken after her dad and joined the TPD. We are so alike that she hates me for it, even before I filed my way to being a bachelor again. I want a Townsville when her risk of getting gunned down like a bitch in the streets is next to nil. And she's getting it.

I'm bringing the Amoeba Boys down. I'll discover their secret to an immortal life, and I'm going to pin every single crime they have committed onto their bullet-resistant bodies if that's the last thing I do.
Chapter 12: What Are Little Girls Made Of?

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the professor receives disturbing news, and psyches himself up for some unpleasant things he had to do.

Chapter 12: What Are Little Girls Made Of?

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

5 DEC 1988. 0621.

Daddy…

Shhh… Bloome, don't speak- Just- Just- Breathe-

Daddy, it hurts…

The pain will pass, honey, just..

Where is mommy?

Mommy? She's-

The professor woke up long before the sun did, his head still feeling like an over-pumped basketball. Looking around at the Girls, he saw that they were still sleeping soundly. Being young, they had no trouble sleeping even beyond eight, or even nine hours. Unlike him. He got out of bed silently, without ruffling the blankets too much, gently removing Blossom's hands from his arm. He didn't want to wake the Girls. Not in the state he was in. Looking at himself in the mirror, he saw that he was a mess - his left eye was still swollen and purple. He looked pale, like a ghost.

He went out of the room straight. Showering or even changing might wake the Girls up. Going down to the living room, he made a beeline for his pipe, and lit it up with shivering hands. Looking out the window, at the wintry neighborhood beyond, he couldn't decide if he had been inadequate as a father or too good as a parent. Either way, there were consequences. Either way, the Girls would suffer for his sins.

The scenery outside was different. The house on the opposite side of the road seemed less occupied than before. Somehow. The unmarked van that had been stalking them for the past two weeks wasn't the only ominous vehicle out there anymore. Accompanying it was what looked like a police bus, except without the reassuring badge and motto, and it was smaller. It had shaded windows, of course.

He had read the notes that the Chief of Security had so kindly sent him. Increased security, though not entirely to the Girls' benefit, he knew that - no matter what his security officers claimed. As if eight shady men with pistols and shotguns who would not hesitate to kill the little girls at a moment's
notice wasn't enough, Blackwater had to add evil SWAT officers on top of that. He could only be amazed at how morally blind the Organization's committee was, that they would claim to do good for the U.S. (and the world, apparently), when they had been acting like psychos behind the back of three harmless little girls.

'But are they truly harmless?' a dissenting voice in Professor Utonium said. He shut the thought out immediately. They're his perfect little girls, and nothing would ever change his mind on that.

With the time still early, he went down to the lab to eke out whatever little research he could do. Even though the Organization had been expanding and doing a hundred times better financially (literally) than it used to be, owing to the same Girls they had been oppressing, they were falling behind when it came to the sciences. His voluntary demotion had something to do with that. From what he had heard from his friends at HQ, they had yet to find a real replacement for Head of Research, and his deputy, who had been filling in for him, was not a hands-on man. Without Professor Utonium's input, research on Chemical X had practically ground to a halt.

The professor surveyed his lab. It was packed with even more equipment. More tests were going to be done today, and some actual research, if he could manage it. Walking down the stairs to the lab, he felt his temples spike with pain. It was quite sudden that he nearly lost his balance. So, ambling to the first aid kit, he popped a couple of aspirins before going back to work.

But it had been almost a couple of weeks since he had participated in any active research. He had to go back to the basics again. Picking up a sample of crude Chemical X, he placed it under the gigantic electron microscope and viewed it in the visor.

Right from the beginning, the code-named and mysterious Chemicals A to X, as well as their source, had exhibited some incredibly strange properties, properties that couldn't be adequately explained by conventional science. For one thing, they exist naturally as a liquid, but had a freezing point so low that it could only be theoretically far below absolute zero. Its freezing point could only be reached by negative temperature. As for its boiling point... Even the sun would fail to boil Chemicals A through to X. This meant that Chemical X had bonds between its molecule so incredibly powerful that power plants' worth of energy could easily fit within a tiny amount. It also meant that it was incredibly tricky to form chemical reactions with it.

Looking at the Chemical X molecules, which were gigantic, under the electron microscope, he observed its behavior - and it was behaving as expected. Unpredictably. Even the laws of physics held no sway with Chemical X, seemingly. They would wiggle and move under their own power in three-dimensional space. The reason for this was currently unknown. Professor Utonium had still been etching away at the theory that Chemical X was converting energy from one form to another by some unknown phenomenon when the Girls were born, pulling him away from his research.

Switching on a recording device on the electron microscope, he let it make a video of Chemical X movements while he observed the wonder that was one of the Girls' 'ingredients'. He was still unable to make the connection between Chemical X's properties and the Girls' super-abilities.

He ran the numbers through his aching head. He was barely be able to. Buttercup's ice asteroid was still making an impact. 'First there's Chemical X', he thought, 'then the Chemical X cocktail'. Yes, the stabilizing agents, code-named 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything-Nice', had something to do with it. They were meant to serve as the middle-men between Chemical X and other other, more conventional, molecules, as well as taming the strange behavior of the Chemical X molecules.

Then there was the fact that he had planned to put even more ingredients in. He hadn't redone his calculations ever since the accident that made the Girls. He had to return to square one. Only, the pain in his head was obstructing his thought process, and he couldn't even begin to recite his own
formulas, much less make changes to them. Frustrated, he swept his papers and books from the table. "Damn it!" he shouted. It wasn't just frustration. He felt that he had lost himself, and then there were the Girls - a failure to understand how they had come to be could be dangerous. Somewhere down the road, there could be some unknown consequence waiting for them as a result of Chemical X. For all he knew, they could be having an undetectable cancer at present, or the very Chemical X in their body could just become unstable enough to blow them up. Or they could simply just die in their sleep from exposure. With the way Chemical X defies all conventions, he simply didn't know.

Wheeling himself over to his computer, he booted it up, hoping for nothing to come up from the internetwork. For the first time in a long time, his mind was empty as he waited for his Pre-Market Windows 3.0 operating system to load. When it did, he went to his e-mail, only to be disappointed:

From: orgchief
To: .utonium
Date/Time Received: 4 DEC 1988, 2354
Title: General Meeting W2

Field Researcher Agent Utonium,

There will be a general meeting the day after tomorrow (6 DEC 1988) at Organization Outpost Charlie-01. Don't bother driving there. We will send a security vehicle to pick you and Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 up at 1700. Make sure you tell your petri dish kids that this is just part of your science work. Remember the protocols. Do not reveal the Organization to them, at least not yet.

Make sure you file your Week 2 report on 5 DEC 1988 so we all have something to look at. I expect interesting news tomorrow and the day after. Lots of interesting things are going to happening from here onwards. I've made sure of it.

Stay loyal and productive,

Agent Cliff

Organization Chief

The Organization: Guarding liberty and freedom no matter the cost.

The professor backed away from his computer, giving out a sigh after rubbing his head. In a way, he knew that it was coming. That was why he had prepared to rush through a few tests with the Girls today.

5 DEC 1988. 1250.

It was almost time for the day's experiments. The morning was spent on learning, playing and painting the Girl's room, but it was more than that. It was a way to psyche the Girls up, but it was just as much a necessity for him. They spent the noon on television after a lunch of chicken breast, corn and mashed potatoes - the Girls' first time, and they relished it. The professor had sensed that Bubbles would not take well to knowing that the meat was from an actual animal, so he didn't explain more than he should what meat was.

The kiddy channel was on, and the Girls were simply taken in by it - to them, the TV was a magical box that could show them visions of a dream. This time, it was broadcasting nursery rhymes.
"What are little girls made of? What are little girls made of?" the TV sung as a cartoon girl pranced across the screen. "Sugar and spice and everything nice. That's what little girls are made of!"

"Dad, is it really true that we're made of sugar?" Bubbles asked.

"And spice?" Buttercup participated.

"And everything nice?" Blossom added.

It was a surprisingly hard question to answer for Professor Utonium, because of what he knew. "Why yes, of course," he concurred with a convincing smile. "And that is why the three of you are such sweet little girls."

The moment Bubbles heard the professor's praise, she beamed widely at him, then giggled and returned to the television. Blossom laughed while Buttercup followed along… With difficulty. She never wanted to be the follower, just that she couldn't find the words or courage to tell the professor that.

The door bell rang after that.

"What are little boys made of? What are little boys made of?" the television sung some more, oblivious to the changing situation. A boy flew across the screen on a swing. "Snips and snails and puppy-dogs' tail! That's what little boys are made of!"

"How are little boys like, daddy?" Bubbles asked again, but Professor Utonium was already at the door. 'Who could be visiting at this time?' the professor thought to himself, but the question felt incomplete. 'Who would want to visit me at all?'

The door bell rang again. "Coming, I'm coming!" the professor shouted through the door. Whoever it was on the other side was impatient, a clear indication of Organization affiliation.

"Dad, how are little boys like?" Bubbles repeated herself, then turned to see why the professor hadn't answered her. The Girls had only heard the door bell once before - when the movers came for Wiggum's undesirable furniture - and it took them some time to put two and two together.

"Who's that, daddy?" Blossom asked as she got away from the television. Buttercup followed, running up to who she called her father. They, too, had no idea who was visiting; but their problem was distinct in that they had no concept of 'visitors'.

The professor opened the door… To reveal a somewhat thin figure standing in the doorway. It was Agent Wiggums, in his office wear with winter gear. He had presents wrapped in paper of various colors which did not necessarily matched that of the Girls. He was a stranger to Buttercup. As the Girls had rarely seen human beings other than themselves, seeing Wiggums before her was intimidating.

"Daddy? Who is this?" Buttercup mewled. Wiggums looked down on her with unexpectedly kind eyes.
Chapter 13: Cloaks and Daggers

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium regains an ally on the Organization committee.

Chapter 13: Cloaks and Daggers

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

5 DEC 1988. 1255.

"Wiggums. What are you doing here?" the professor flat out interrogated the man standing at their doorstep.

"I was just passing through, and I thought I should just drop by and visit," Wiggums explained, though Professor Utonium wasn't convinced. Those presents he was holding didn't magically appear when the Chief of Logistics decided to pop down to their house on a whim. "Aren't you going to let me in? It's cold outside."

The professor stepped aside, and sensing Buttercup hugging his leg, he reached down and caressed her head reassuringly.

"Hi, little one," Wiggums acknowledged her, but the face Buttercup was giving him was anything but welcoming. "No need to be afraid of me, kid."

The professor led Wiggums to the centre of the living room, where Blossom and Bubbles were beaming and staring at Wiggums with anticipation. They did like the looks of those presents.

"Girls, this is my… Friend, Wiggums," the professor introduced his colleague to them, though it was difficult to say the word 'friend', and he thought he might have bungled it up. But the Girls were still naive at this stage, except perhaps Buttercup, and they didn't pick up on the clue. "Sit." Wiggums plopped himself down on a single-seater and set down his presents on the coffee table. The professor reached for the remote control and switched off the television. "Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup… Can the three of you go to my room, please? The adults need to have a conversation, privately."

Even the Girls could feel the tension building in the living room. Professor Utonium had become stern and unyielding all of a sudden. It was a side of him that the Girls weren't exposed to at all; even Buttercup hadn't truly seen how severe he could be. The professor didn't want to leave the Girls alone for too long, but this time, he had no choice. "And Girls, bring some toys with you so you won't feel bored."

The Girls complied. Blossom brought with her a drawing block and some colour pencils, Buttercup took a few model cars and Bubbles grabbed her new favorite by the tentacle: Octi - an octopus soft toy the professor had given her during their belated birthday celebration. Together, they went up the stairs, and soon disappeared from view. The professor had waited and watched them to make sure
they were really out of earshot.

"What are you really up to, Wiggums?" Professor Utonium interrogated his colleague further.

Meanwhile, in Professor Utonium's room, Blossom was drawing on the professor's bedroom desk and Bubbles was attending to Octi in bed. Buttercup, however, did not quite have fun on her mind. Instead of playing with her model cars, she was at the door. More specifically, she had her ear on the door. It was a little something she learned while playing with the cabinet door in their room with her sisters, a week ago. She thought she could hear her daddy and Wiggums speaking.

"Buttercup, what are you doing?" Bubbles asked. She thought she found Buttercup's behavior odd.

"Shut up, Bubbles," Buttercup said without thought, too focused on her self-appointed task to worry about such a petty thing as manners. Upset, Bubbles returned to tucking Octi in, which was fast becoming her emotional crutch. Blossom turned to Buttercup and stared at the back of her head angrily. But knowing that there was nothing to be done, she returned to her drawing.

'are you really up to, Wiggums?' Buttercup thought she could hear; it was as if her hearing range had increased when she willed it to. Even at this age, she knew that it was supposed to be an impossible feat, but she didn't care. The professor had always said that they were special little girls, so the green-eyed girl thought that her ears were special, too; more perceptive than her daddy could ever manage - who, for some reason, could not hear what was next to him sometimes.

"It's hard for me to say this, but..." Wiggums said, but could not finish his sentence. He played with his fingers instead, looking a little like a kid. Wiggums wasn't a big man; he was wiry and short, and had compensated poorly for this with his hair, which he kept long. It added to the look of youthful innocence about him. "I'm sorry for what I said on the phone like a week ago."

"Uh-huh," the professor acknowledged, unimpressed. Wrong his Girls in any way, and he would be unlikely to forgive - that was how it was, and he had adapted in this fashion in the face of the Organization's antics such that even the professor himself was unaware of his crusader-like attitude in protecting the Girls. "Anything else?"

"Really, I am, dude. I tried to retract what I said - that we're not friends anymore, but-" Wiggums continued, his eyes unable to meet Professor Utonium's. "Anyway, you're right. The subjects - I mean your kids - I've been thinking a lot about my attitude towards them, like how the others treat them. I had sleepless nights, man, swear."

"Your point?" the professor asked dismissively.

"I said I was sorry, and I'm sorry for calling the kids subjects and lab experiments, Upton," Wiggums confessed. "And I'm sorry I brought those furniture and toys in without sparing a thought. I feel awful about it."

"Took you long enough, did it?" the professor said, dispassionate as always in this state.

"Anyway. I just want you to know that if you need someone on the committee to speak for you, I'm your man," Wiggums offered. "You need all the help you can get. I won't lie to you, prof. You've got enemies there, and with the committee doubling in size, they're only going to multiply. You're not the Head of Research now, and without that power you had, I don't think you can hold them at bay for long."

"Oh, and a peace offering - just to show that I'm sincere," Wiggums waved a hand at the presents he
"What's inside those boxes?" the professor interrogated.

"The kind of stuff that little girls should have. I hope I didn't screw up this time. The colors are a little off - I didn't know your kids have favorites so quickly. But I don't think colors would matter with the chocolate." Wiggums offered, hoping that his efforts would pay off. At this point, he looked a little like a dog looking to please his master - and the professor wasn't surprised. They had been friends for as long as they were both in the Organization, and Wiggums had few others.

The professor sighed and clutched his head. The headache was still there. He was never good at this 'grudge' and 'hatred' kind of thing. He knew he couldn't keep it up forever, not when his friendship with the Chief of Logistics had been sincere for so many years. It was at this point that Wiggums noticed how much his friend had changed physically. And it wasn't just the mysterious black eye he had.

"You don't look so good, Thomas. What's happening to you? You look like you've lost weight, and your face…” He tried to express his concern, but the professor brushed him off.

"Fine. I'll consider your offer," he said tersely. Wiggums' eyes lit up the moment he heard it. "Now, I've got to conduct a few tests with the Girls. I'm… Sorry you can't stay longer than this. You can always… come next time."

"No, it's fine. You do your thing and I'll do mine. Tell me whatever you need and I'm your man," Wiggums said before standing up. The professor escorted him to the door.

"Sure, sure. Have a safe trip," the professor bade him goodbye once he opened the door, though he wasn't entirely sincere. He was still deciding on that.

"One last thing, prof. You should be prepared for the next meeting. It's… Well, it's not going to be easy," Wiggums said before leaving.

"Tell me something I don't know," the professor said to himself, out of earshot. After closing the door, he returned to the coffee table, and opened the gift boxes himself. There were four. The cylindrical, royal blue one had a clown doll inside. The professor didn't think much of it. Then he opened a squarish, yellowish one. The professor thought the color scheme made his headache worse. Inside, there was a doll house with equally tiny furniture and figures within. He thought it seemed typical. In the third box, a purple, oblong box with red ribbons, was a large Bo Peep doll. 'At least it isn't completely white in color and devoid of features,' the professor thought.

Then there was the red, heart-shaped box. The professor opened it to find the chocolate that Wiggums had talked about earlier. He picked up a sample and sniffed it. Nothing funny inside, at least as far as his nose could tell him. But in the end, he couldn't help but to suspect the chocolate, thinking up a hundred possible malicious intents that the chocolate could serve. Besides, he thought that the Girls weren't ready for chocolate yet - the caffeine would not do them any good at night. He hadn't even introduced them to candies yet, and he thought that it would be a long time before he did that. In a fit of paranoia, he picked up the heart-shaped chocolate box, padded over to the kitchen and dumped it wholesale into the waste bin.

All the while, Buttercup had heard everything, including the waste bin opening and closing, each time with a metallic thud.

When all was said and done, Professor Utonium picked up the rest of Wiggum's gifts and brought them down to the lab for analysis; they could be laced with a nerve agent or rare, scentless poison for
all he knew. He stowed them in a file cabinet, where he thought the Girls would never think to find them.

Meanwhile, Buttercup had returned to her toys, a little confused, but also with a great sense of unease. There were things that daddy didn't want her to hear, and they sounded like something bad. After wheeling her Ferrari for a bit, she soon lost her taste for playing and just sat down at the foot of the professor's bed, with her arms folded in the usual fashion, her green-rimmed eyes staring daggers at the door. "How could daddy hide things from me?" she thought, but other things were surfacing, as they never had before, in the horizon of her mind. Her experience with the dead cat had taught her much. 'Is daddy lying to me about something?'

What disturbed Buttercup the most was the part about Wiggums calling them 'subjects' and 'lab experiments'. She knew what those words meant, and they weren't usually used to refer to little girls like them. But who were the others? And what did daddy throw away? And why?

"Buttercup, are you okay?" Bubbles had crept up to her without her knowing. "You look sad."

There was more that Bubbles wanted to say, but she didn't know many words for emotions. There were some she had forgotten about, and had to think hard just to recall. She was the least intelligent and the weakest of her sisters, and she knew it; it was because of this that she was willing to put up with Buttercup's meanness, along with the undeniable love she felt for her as a sister.

Bubbles took Octi and snuggled it up next to Buttercup's cheek. She puppeteer the octopus soft toy to kiss the green-eyed girl on the cheek. "Octi loves you too. Don't be sad."

Buttercup threw Bubbles an angry look, feeling annoyed, but it didn't last for very long. Something had clicked inside of her, and she smiled back but said nothing more, a feeling she had less familiarity with than Blossom and Bubbles, but that, too, did not last.

"Come play with us, Buttercup," Bubbles said, speaking for Octi as well.

"I don't feel like it," the ravenette said, dispassionate.

"You can always draw with me," Blossom offered from the desk. "I'm trying to figure out this 'al-fa-bet' thing that daddy told us about this morning? They look weird, and I still don't understand how they can speak to us…"

"I don't think I can help. Daddy said that you're the smart one, so I'll just slow you down," Buttercup said, for the first time sarcastic. Blossom turned to look at her once more with an eyebrow raised, this time vaguely upset, offended and worried at the same time. Having just discovered sarcasm from Buttercup, she didn't know how to react to it.

"Buttercup..." Blossom said, but could not decide what to say. In her short life, she wasn't used to feeling so many things at once.

Then the door to their daddy's room opened, and Professor Utonium stood at the door. "Girls, it's time to go down to the lab," he said, still a little bit cross with Wiggums' visit, and his stiff mannerism and slight frown had shown it.

"Dad?" Buttercup said, while looking downcast with emptiness in her eyes.

"Yes, sweetie?" Professor Utonium asked.

"Is there something you want to say to me?" Buttercup asked. It was, to her, a last chance at hope.
"Why, no. Why would you ask, Butterbear?" the professor said, completely oblivious to what Buttercup knew.

"Oh, nothing, daddy," Buttercup lied.

"Now come on, I know you like exerting yourself a little bit. I've got just the thing for you in the lab," the professor was almost raving, trying to get the Girls to be excited for the tests ahead. He held out his hand for Buttercup, and she took it. With her eyes perpetually downwards, she followed him out. Blossom and Bubbles trailed behind them, with Blossom honestly excited and Bubbles nervous as usual.

"Be a sport, Buttercup. It's going to be fun!" the professor said some more when he noticed how sad she appeared. To him, it just seemed that she was afraid of more tests, after what had happened with the treadmill and the blood-collection-routine-turned-skin-hardness-test.

For the first time ever, Buttercup finally understood what the word 'alone' meant, despite being in full company of her entire family.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Professor discovers one of the Girls' weaknesses.

12051988 W2 Series Tests

DOC: 5 DEC 1988

The following is a record of all the tests conducted on 5 DEC 1988, in preparation of the week 2 general meeting of 6 DEC 1988.

Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 DNA and cell samples collection, 12051988 W2 Report

Desc: The failure of my equipment in collecting blood samples from the Girls had given me pause when it comes to collecting any kind of tissue samples from the Girls. However, I had an idea a few days ago: should the biological processes of the Girls be analogous to that of a normal stock human being, then it is still possible to collect tissue samples via their body's natural processes.

To this end, I have prepared a standard kit for collecting cheek cell samples, as well as procedures for collecting dead skin cells.

Results: And it worked. The Girls' body naturally sheds tissue cells, and I was able to collect samples from each of the Girls. I will be keeping several sets for myself, for further study of the effects of Chemical X on their bodies and DNA. I will send several sets over to the Organization as well, to the folks in the Department of Science.

Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 Strength Test 2 Log, 12051988 W2

Subjects Involved:

B-47 (Blossom)

B-48 (Buttercup)

B-49 (Bubbles)

Equipment Used:

1x 300lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles

1x 400lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles

1x 500lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles

1x ECG Machine
1x Medical Kit
3x Strength Test forms
1x Clipboard

Location Used:
The House Laboratory Test Area

Operating Procedure:

- As control has been established in Strength Test 1, I will abstain from lifting heavy weights.

- I have decided that Bubbles should do this test with the Girls. With good management, nothing should happen to her and her confidence will increase with the completion of this test.

- The Girls are to take turns lifting each steel weights.

- The Girls are to be examined for physiological reactions.

- If physiological and behavioral change is observed, time to exhaustion is recorded.

- A rest period of ten minutes is designated between each consecutive weight levels.

- Safety is paramount. Test to stop if any difficulty whatsoever is encountered by the girls.

- Standard first aid procedures is a must.

Test Results:

300lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Felt a 'tickle' in her hands. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no difficulty? Alleges that she felt nothing. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Felt 'funny' in her fingers. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

Notes: I made a comparison with my notes in Strength Test 1 Log, and found that the descriptions given by the Girls here is the same as when the Girls were tested with a 250lbs Steel Weight. Cross-referenced with the ECG ratings, it appears that their description is accurate. Except perhaps that of Buttercup - it is possible that she has been downplaying the sensations she felt.

400lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Felt a 'tickle' in her hands. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed. Alleges that she felt nothing. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Felt 'funny' in her fingers. ECG shows more increase in heart rate than B-47
and B-48. Perspiration. Increased breathing rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

Notes: In this test, I asked Buttercup to carry the 400lbs Steel Weight for a full 10 minutes based on my deductions of the inaccuracy of the descriptions of her sensations. She appears unhappy because of this, but did as I asked.

Bubbles appear to be having difficulty. When asked, she reports that she is feeling nervous. It is possible that the physiological change in her has psychological roots. Her ability to carry the 400lbs Steel Weight without struggle supports this.

500lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Felt 'pain' in her hands. Perspiration and increased breathing rate sets in. ECG shows higher increase in heart rate than before. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed. Alleges that she felt nothing. Perspiration and increased breathing rate sets in. ECG shows higher increase in heart rate than before. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Felt 'pain' in her hands, spreading to forearm. Heavier perspiration and breathing rate than the others. ECG shows exponential increase in heart rate than before. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

Notes: It appears that we are within reach of Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's weight threshold. Based on the readings of their physiological reactions, it is possible that their recommended carry capacity stands at 750lbs to a maximum of 1,000lbs. Their real maximum carry weight however, could be anywhere between 1,250lbs to 1,500lbs. Maybe even more. However - a bit of a conjecture here - it is highly possible that their carry capacity can be increased further with training. However, whether it is an increase in 1lbs or 100lbs after conditioning will depend on how Chemical X has adapted their bodies to such super-human rigors. For now, we have no data on this.

At this point, Buttercup is surely lying about what she felt without a shadow of a doubt. I will have to speak to her about this later. However, if there is anything at all to be gained from her insincerity, it is that she casts some light on the level of exertion or pain she is willing to endure, and by extension, what Blossom and Bubbles could potentially be willing to endure.

Bubbles, on the other hand, appears to be upset by her apparently worse performance. It helps her, though, when I told her that, at this point, she is already stronger than the strongest weightlifters in the Olympics.

Psychologically, however, there is consensus - Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are not averse to lifting heavier weights. This is amazing! I never expected them to carry beyond 500 lbs, but they appear to be capable of more!

Conclusion: It appears that the Girls are capable of carrying over 10 times their weight, with very little physiological reaction at all. For comparison, this is a factor of 20 times the recommended carry weight of 5-year-olds, and beyond what even trained male adults are capable of. Strength, however, is only a part of the equation. They are capable of carrying weights for FAR longer than even Olympiad weightlifters. However, I will still be doing a full medical examination of their bodies as soon as I have the equipment. Hopefully, a full medical examination will also shed some light into the mechanisms of their body that allowed this impossible feat to happen.

I will be planning and preparing for a third test. Increment in weight will be the same, but I will go all the way from 600lbs to 1,000lbs, with the expectation that the Girls will not be able to carry the thousand-pounder for more than a few minutes. I'll have to be extra careful with the Girls in this third
test though. The closer I come to their limitations, the more dangerous it becomes for them.

Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 Hardness Test 2, 12051988 W2 Transcript

The following was transcribed from a video taken by Agent Utonium.

DOC: 5 DEC 1988

TRANSCRIPT STARTS

(The camera sits on a counter, before three surgical beds with B-47 (Blossom), B-49 (Bubbles) and B-48 (Buttercup) in nothing but patient gowns sitting on them from left to right. Beside each of the beds are tanks of general anaesthetic gas, ECG machines and surgical trays. B-47 and B-49 appears to be talking animatedly while B-48 appears dejected and withdrawn.)

B-47 (Blossom): -Chicken steak is the best! The way Daddy makes them with mash potatoes and onion rings…

B-49 (Bubbles): But scrambled eggs... Octi and I can never say no to that!

B-47 (Blossom): Bubbles… Scrambled eggs' for breakfast. We're talking about dinner.

B-49 (Bubbles): But why can't we have scrambled eggs for dinner?

B-47 (Blossom): Because we just can't? Right, Buttercup?

B-48 (Buttercup): (grunts her answer) Yeah yeah, of course.

(Professor Utonium, with his head poking outside the FOV of the camera, walks over to the camera while writing a few words on a clipboards and picks it up.)

Professor Utonium: (While looking at watch) The time now is 1630. Subjects involved in this test are Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, or B-47, B-49 and B-48 as you people call them-

B-49 (Bubbles): But I want scrambled eggs!

B-47 (Blossom): But scrambled eggs' for breakfast!

Professor Utonium: (Turns behind) Girls, can you keep it down? We'll have scrambled eggs and chicken steaks both later, but we gotta finish this test!

B-47 and B-49: (In unison) Yay!

B-48 (Buttercup): (in a low tone) Great.

Professor Utonium: (Turns back to face camera) The purpose of the test is to establish, with a degree of accuracy, the position of the Girls' skin on the Moh's scale. The last time I did it was without planning due to the chance discovery of the Girls' resilience, and that resulted in emotional trauma for the Girls. Thus, to avoid causing more pain to the Girls, I have decided that I should anaesthetize the Girls. Should I actually find a material that could cut them, general anaesthesia should also provide me with the opportunity to treat the Girls before they wake up.

(The professor walks over to B-47 (Blossom) and sets the camera down on the tray beside her bed. He picks up a face mask.)
B-47 (Blossom): But what if I can't sleep, Daddy?

Professor Utonium: You'll do fine, Blossom. When I put on the mask and switch on the gas, I want you to count from ten, alright? Do you remember the numbers I taught you?

B-47 (Blossom): Yes, Daddy. (She lies down on the surgical bed. Professor Utonium slips the anaesthetic mask over her face and turns a valve on the anaesthetic tank. He caresses her forehead.)

B-47 (Blossom): Ten… Nine… Eight… (Professor Utonium continues to turn up the valve) Seven… Six… Five… Four… Three… Two… One… Dad, I can't sleep when I'm counting.

Professor Utonium: Just a second, honey. You're tough. (He turns the valve some more, which meant that he had to pump a lot of gas into B-47 in order to knock her out) Can you start from ten again?

B-47 (Blossom): Ten… Nine… Eight… S- Seven… S- (Blossom appears to have been rendered unconscious)

Professor Utonium: Good girl. (The professor sweeps aside a lock from her face, then turns to the camera to pick it up.)

(Professor Utonium walks around the now-asleep B-47 (Blossom) and walks over to B-49 (Bubbles), who looks nervously between B-47 and the professor)

B-49 (Bubbles): Daddy, I'm scared.

Professor Utonium: (encouragingly) Don't be, Bubbles. You're one of the strongest girls I've ever met.

B-49 (Bubbles): But what if I don't wake up again? (She appears to know that the sleep Blossom had entered into was not natural)

Professor Utonium: Daddy's here, Bub. I'll make sure you're fine. I'm a doctor too, other than being a scientist. Now, don't you worry… (He gently presses a hand down on Bubble's shoulder to gesture for her to lie down. Slips an anaesthetic mask over Bubble's face. Bubbles reaches out for Professor Utonium's hand and the professor holds it as he turns the valve on the gas tank, this time more aggressively) Count from ten, honey.

B-49 (Bubbles): T-ten… Nine… Eight… I- I forgot the next- (She still appears to be frightened, and her fear might have caused her to forget her numbers)

Professor Utonium: Seven, darling. It's seven.

B-49 (Bubbles): (Did not reply. She appears to be incapacitated.)

Professor Utonium: You'll be fine, Bubbles. I'll protect you no matter what.

(With that, the professor turns around and picks up his camera. He walks around the now-unconscious Bubbles and sets the camera down next to B-48 (Buttercup)

B-48 (Buttercup): Dad, what's going to happen when I fall asleep? (Appears to be in a bad mood, with her body stiff. Her eyes were down and together with a frown apparent on her face.)

Professor Utonium: Buttercup, we've talked about this. I'm trying to see how strong you are.

B-48 (Buttercup): Really? (she crosses her arms again, Buttercup-style)
Professor Utonium: Yes, really. I will be sticking you different things (the professor drives a finger into Buttercup's side, tickling her) like that! (He then went on to tickle her with both hands on the sides of her torso)

(For a time, B-48 appears to be laughing uncontrollably as she struggles to push the professor's hands away, but the professor would always manage to tickle her some more. B-48 appears to enjoy this. Eventually, the professor stopped but with the both of them laughing together, still.)

Professor Utonium: There you go, Buttercup. Gosh, it's been a long time since I saw a smile on your face. What's gotten into you, lately?

B-48 (Buttercup): (while scratching her head) N-nothing, really. It was nothing. (Appears overwhelmed with emotions for some reason) I- I just… (Her lips tremble and tears well up in her eyes)

Professor Utonium: (Proceeds to hug B-48) Oh, you silly girl. We can always talk if something is wrong.

B-48 (Buttercup): (While sobbing) It's nothing! I-I just…

Professor Utonium: (Lets go of B-48 (Buttercup) and stares lovingly into her eyes, while wiping away her tears with his fingers) Everything's fine, Butterfly. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to, but just remember that I will always be your father and you will always be my daughter.

B-48 (Buttercup): Always? (Controlling her sobs)

Professor Utonium: Always. Now, enough of this sulking. Turn that frown upside down, because you'll be in lalaland and you won't feel a thing this time! (He takes the anaesthetic mask and holds it in front of B-48. B-48 (Buttercup) slips it on and lies down. Tears are still flowing down the sides of her face.) Now count from ten. (Begins aggressively spinning the valve on her gas tank)

B-48 (Buttercup): Ten… Nine… Eight… D-daddy?

Professor Utonium: Hmm?

B-48 (Buttercup): I love-

Professor Utonium: Buttercup?

B-48 (Buttercup): (Non-responsive, appears to have become unconscious)

Professor Utonium: *Sighs* (He picks up a pair of forceps with a ball of cotton on it and wipes away the tears on B-48's face) Note to whoever is watching, I don't think my videos are ever going to be straightforward as planned. Not that I'm complaining. The Girls are amazing, whether or not it has anything to do with their enhancements.

(The recording cuts and then resumes with Professor Utonium standing over Buttercup. The professor is now in surgical scrubs, with rubber gloves and a mask on. He walks over to the camera to adjust it, pointing it at a tray full of scalpels.)

Professor Utonium: The test will be conducted with a range of scalpels made of materials increasingly harder than high carbon stainless steel. From left to right, I have ordered scalpels edged with: Industrial high carbon steel, tungsten carbide, synthetic diamond, diamond, lonsdaleite, crude duranium and refined duranium. This should provide a mohs scale range from 8 to beyond 10. Crude and refined duranium had to be sourced from the Institute, and are the hardest known substances on
Earth, among other things. Accompanying the scalpels are a full set of surgical tools made with the same materials, in case any of the materials do manage to defeat the Girls' skin.

(The camera's position is readjusted once more to focus on the sleeping form of Buttercup. He proceeds to pick up one of the scalpel and holds it over B-48)

Professor Utonium: I will now proceed to test the hardness of Buttercup's skin against industrial high carbon steel. (proceeds to slice Buttercup in the arm, but there is no cut) No effect. Testing other regions of the skin. (proceeds to slice Buttercup in the cheek, neck, chest, stomach and thigh, all to no effect) This concludes my suspicion. It appears that the hardness of Buttercup's skin is not secluded in one region of the skin, but is, as far as I know, universal.

(The professor continues with the test, going through tungsten carbide, synthetic diamond, diamond and lonsdaleite to no effect.)

Professor Utonium: It appears that Buttercup's skin has gone beyond the Mohs scale, joining the ranks of duranium. That said, that leaves duranium. (He picks up another scalpel.) Applying crude duranium to test the hardness of Buttercup's skin against crude duranium (proceeds to slice Buttercup's skin with crude duranium scalpel) I have no doubt that- Wait. (There appears to be a white line drawn by the scalpel on Buttercup's arm) Let me try that again. (slices Buttercup's skin in the exact same spot. The second time, the white line seems to deepen. This continues until the fifth time, when-). *Exhales in shock* (Blood seeps out of the white line, forming a thin, red line).

Professor Utonium: Crude duranium appears to be capable of breaching Buttercup's skin. I will now have to examine the wound, but on initial observation, crude duranium is only slightly harder than Buttercup's skin, as it took multiple strokes and some effort to cut it. (There isn't lots of blood, and the professor cleaned it with a cotton ball on forceps) The wound appears to be superficial. There is no need for stitching.

Professor Utonium: I hesitate to do this, but I must test refined duranium against Buttercup, if only to know how much damage it could do against my Girls… So that we can all avoid it in the future. (Picks up the last scalpel and places it against Buttercup's arm, just below the wound made by crude duranium) *Heavy breathing* (with one deft stroke, the professor sliced Buttercup's arm. It bleeds immediately, the blood voluminous and the wound deeper) Oh God- It appears that I- Refined duranium seems to be what steel is to normal human skin. (blood continues to pour, staining the bed. The professor, with shaky hands, cleans the wound with a cotton ball on forceps) Examining wound. It seems that I have completely cut through the skin and even scraped at the muscle. I wonder… (Picks up diamond scalpel and scrapes against muscle tissue) Yes, just as I suspected. Buttercup's hardness goes beyond skin-deep. Now, to perform the first-ever duranium surgery. (picks up duranium surgical needle and puts a thread through it. He begins sewing up the wound caused by the refined duranium scalpel) *exhales* Calm down, Upton- You didn't mean to hurt your daughter-

Professor Utonium: Conclusion. It appears that Buttercup's skin has a hardness rating close to that of crude duranium but slightly lower, with refined duranium being the only reliable material known to man to be able to penetrate Buttercup's skin and flesh. I hate to do this, but I'll have to repeat this with Blossom and Bubbles, to see if this applies to all of them.

(The rest of the video is a repeat of the test on subjects B-47 and B-49)

(Professor Utonium is standing over Blossom, his pair of rubber gloves bloody. Blossom's arm is cut and stitched up the same way as Buttercup's.)

Professor Utonium: (Appears stressed) Final Conclusion. Nothing new. They're all the same. Even Bubbles. I think I'm done for today. Ice cream just won't cut it this time. They deserve much more for
what I had to do. Another trip to the city? Perhaps the movies? With giant tubs of popcorn and bottomless cups of soda? Beats the hell out of me. I'll decide later. I just hope they won't be too affected by their very first injuries.
Chapter 14: Of Plagues and Plagiarisms

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls discovered that Professor Utonium had cut them. Buttercup begins acting differently.

Chapter 14: Of Plagues and Plagiarisms


Daddy...

Shhh… Bloome, don't speak- Just- Just- Breathe-

Daddy, it hurts...

The pain will pass, honey, just..

WHY DID YOU HURT ME DADDY

Professor Utonium practically jumped out of his sleep when the swirling, otherworldly visions of his past became all too surreal and violent. In it, his late biological daughter, Bloome Upton, was a mangled corpse, and she had turned into Buttercup when she accused him of the worse things a father could do.

Feeling his forehead, the professor felt like a flu was on the horizon. His headache was only slightly improved, and he felt shivers and weakness wrapped around his body. His forehead was burning like a forest fire. He had fallen asleep in the Girls' room, after he had dragged security into the house to help the Girls arrange the furniture of their room. It was all pink now. The only remaining vestige of Wiggums' mistake was the carpet, which was white in color. Their mountain of soft toys lay in a corner, and pink shelves filled with less safer toys and storybooks lined a corner. The only thing the room seemed to lack were windows.

The Girls were just right beside him. He had fallen asleep on a chair he bought for telling bedtime stories, and it was beside a bed seemingly made just for them - a queen sized bed with a pink frame and a red heart on the head board. The blanket divided the bed between the Girls; Blossom took the red centre, Bubbles the blue left and Buttercup the green right. They were all in color-matching night gowns. Bandages on their left arms reminded him of the terrible thing he had to do last night.

It was perhaps a blessing in disguise that the Girls had woken up from general anaesthesia groggy and very late into the night, only long enough for them to eat their dinner, drink gallons of water and then go right back to bed - in his bed. Based on this response, the professor had estimated that he had overshot the requirement for putting them under slightly. It was another discovery worthy of note. They had to inhale most of the anaesthetic in their gas tanks before they were knocked unconscious. A little less would have been enough. However, it showed that they were far more resistant to such
gasses than even a normal adult human being - which could be a good and a bad thing.

They hadn't noticed what he had done to them yet. Minor wounds they might be, but to children who were born just two weeks ago under accelerated conditions, it could be a big deal. Especially to Buttercup - Professor Utonium was becoming increasingly worried about her. She had started testing the waters of his authority rather early. It hadn't gone unnoticed either that she was abrasive to her sisters, defiant, and it was what he didn't know that scared him. He had no idea what Buttercup was thinking, or suspecting, when she had started questioning him and his motives, as misled as she was. It almost seemed as though she was hiding something from him.

The Girls woke up not long after him, somewhat refreshed, earlier than usual. Thankfully, the very first thing they did when they did wasn't to question him about the bandage on their left arms, hiding an even worse truth, but to run straight to the washroom, with each of them occupying each of the three washrooms in the house. They had simply drunk too much last night to compensate for the dry feeling in their mouths when they woke up from their drug-induced coma.

It gave Professor Utonium enough time to think, about what to say and what to do when they realized what he had done - an hour simply wasn't enough - as he prepared their dresses and accessories of the day, all laid on their bed according to the color of their blankets. They hadn't even realized yet the surprise that their room was completed and they had been sleeping in their new bed.

Blossom was the first to return, having used the washroom just outside the door of her room. The professor had switched on the light while she was gone, and the moment she came through the door, her tired eyes became wide eyes. "Wow…" she ogled the room with gaping mouth.

"I got the neighbors to help," the professor confessed, and by neighbors, he meant the security teams stationed on the opposite side of the road from them. Admittedly, it was a little awkward to have nondescript men in business suits and SWAT gear pushing kiddy furniture around the house, but as long as it got the job done… "What do you think, Blossom?"

"It's beautiful," Blossom said with awe, and ran over to the professor to hug him. The professor bent down to receive her. "Oh, thank you, Daddy."

Bubbles and Buttercup were back soon after that. It sounded like they were using their super-speed ability, but the professor did not care to lecture them about superpowers in the house at this time.

The moment Bubbles saw the room, she looked like she was about to shed tears of joy. She went over to her daddy and kissed him in the cheek. Buttercup, however, maintained a lukewarm attitude.

"It's cool, I guess…" the ravenette said, her raspy voice reserved in tone. The color scheme didn't impress her. Where the others had repeatedly returned to their room while it was incomplete just to imagine how it would be like when it was done, Buttercup had steered clear of it just to avoid the thought of how Blossom-centric it was. And now it was official: The walls and ceiling were pink, the furniture were pink, and the pink bed frame had a mattress with pink bed sheets and a blanket with red down the middle, with Blossom taking centre stage as though she was the star among them.

"I'm glad you Girls like it," the professor said, knowing full well that at least one of them didn't. "Now it's time for your morning bath. Today is going to be a special day."

"How is it special, dad?" Blossom asked as they entered the bathroom. The professor plugged the bathtub and ran the hot water.

"We're going out today, and then, you get to see daddy go to work," he explained.
"But don't you work at home?" Buttercup, from behind Blossom, asked.

"I have to meet people sometimes," he claimed, this time without pause; he didn't have to lie this time, something that was refreshing.

The girls took off their nightgowns, but before they could jump into the bathtub, the professor put a hand out to stop them. "I'll have to remove the bandages first, Girls."

"What are they for?" Bubbles asked, curious. "They look nice." Blossom was silent. She thought she knew the answer, but it was at the tip of her tongue.

"It itches inside! What's in there?" Buttercup asked in a gruff manner. Reaching down, the professor loosened the surgical tape holding Bubbles' bandage in place and unrolled it. Soon, the two wounds he had cut into her showed themselves. The lower cut was stitched together, whiter than their skin. Bubbles screamed in her high-pitched voice when she saw it.

"Daddy, what happened!" she screamed.

"Now, now, dear, calm down!" Professor Utonium tried to say. Everything was soon unraveling before him, literally. Buttercup and Blossom copied the professor's action, throwing open their bandages before he could say otherwise. They both discovered the exact same wounds at the exact positions on their arms. They gasped collectively.

"Dad, did you do this to us?" Blossom asked, sounding obviously wounded, the way her voice was heavy with emotions, from the way she looked at the professor.

"You said you wouldn't hurt us!" Buttercup accused.

"Girls, just wait a minute..." the professor pleaded with them. His heart was racing just as much as his mind was racing for an answer. It wasn't easy, trying to condense the rationale behind medical experimentation for the betterment of their lot in the future into something 2-week-olds can understand. "It's... Just... Like a flu shot."

"What's a flu shot?" Blossom inquired, ever the inquisitive one. At least the lust to know distracted her a little. The professor smiled at his tiny success with Blossom, who took after him in almost every way, bar the enhanced abilities.

"It's an injection - painful and unpleasant - that you take so you won't get sick," the professor explained, only to get another torrent of questions from Bubbles and Buttercup. They had no idea what an injection was - their ordeal with a steel needle gave them little indication of what it was. Then there was the part about getting sick. The Girls hadn't truly experienced any form of plague yet, and Professor Utonium wasn't sure if they ever will. For all he knew, Chemical X could have given them an impervious immune system. But it was all working, taking their mind off their first wounds.

"So you see, Girls, I had to do it, even if it seems unpleasant," he concluded after explaining everything.

"It itches," Buttercup said, and reached for the wound to scratch it. The professor grabbed her hand before she could.

"Don't scratch it, and don't touch it. It'll get worse if you do," Professor Utonium warned. "I'll have to wash it carefully."

The Girls carefully dipped themselves in the hot water. The professor gave them a sponge bath instead, carefully padding the wounds and making sure to be gentle. The Girls would usually play in
the tub, flinging water everywhere, building a thick layer of bubbles as they applied copious amounts of soap and shampoo, usually with Buttercup being an unwilling participant who prefers a hassle-free quick bath, but this time, it was a tamer affair.

After the relatively different bath, the Professor made breakfast for them. To make up for the dinner the Girls barely remembered, the professor made scrambled eggs, toast and bacon for them, something which delighted Bubbles immensely.

The morning was spent on the usual routine, and it was during this time that the professor knew it - he felt like he was reaching his breaking point. For two weeks, he had basically brought the three Girls up to speed to a mental state fast approaching that of 5-year-olds. For two weeks, he had almost never left their side, constantly caring for them. For two weeks, work and family life intertwined, becoming nearly one and the same. And for two weeks, he toiled in Organization labour late into the night, late into midnight, constantly plagued by fear and worry and anger. It would be an understatement to say that he hadn't been caring for himself adequately. The debt was accumulating.

He felt his forehead, and he realized that his fever hadn't abated even after a few hours. The same went for his shivers and nerves. As the hours passed, the color drained from his face. Even the Girls, who had no experience with illnesses, especially in adults, were starting to take notice.

"Daddy, are you okay? You look shocked," Blossom, always being the nice one to her daddy, asked, eyebrows arched like a raised bridge as she scrutinized the professor's pale face.

"I'm fine, darling," the professor lied, even as he was wiping cold sweat from his forehead; he was feeling cold where he wasn't covered - namely his face and hands - and hot under his lab coat and office wear. Bubbles and Buttercup stared in silent agreement. "I really am. It's, urm, normal."

Reluctantly, the Girls desisted with their observations.

As time passed, Blossom, as usual, had gravitated towards the professor and he to her. Bubbles took the place of a satellite. It infuriated Buttercup as she was left alone again with her treasure trove of model cars and trucks. But then something clicked in her. An idea, half-worded but fully formed, based in what she observed of her sisters and her daddy.

Later in the morning, Buttercup approached the professor while Blossom and Bubbles were off drawing and coloring together.

"Dad, will I… Look prettier if I wear a bow and comb my hair straighter?" she asked him, while the professor was sitting on the floor, steeling himself for the long day ahead. For some reason that Professor Utonium couldn't find the energy to pursue, Buttercup had adopted a less gruffer attitude, one that he'd come to think wouldn't fit her.

"Sure, honey, why not? Do you need my help?" the professor offered.

"Yes, very much, dad," she said, all sweet like, even to a point beyond the mean of girls. She was fluttering her eyelids lovingly, putting her hands together in anticipation, playing with her feet.

Buttercup's hair was challenging to comb down. Hers was the kind that loved to stick up in blades, even when they were down to the waist. But eventually, the professor was able to straighten it enough such that it resembled Blossom's hefty locks. The professor got up and rummaged through the pink dressing table.

"Well, I don't have a green hair bow - I thought you hated that kind of accessories - but I did have a black one that Blossom didn't want," Professor Utonium said before slipping it onto Buttercup's scalp. "And for the finishing touches..." The professor added a black hair clip - another Blossom
reject - to the back of Buttercup's hair, which was analogous to Blossom's pink heart hair clip. "I think your hair would look nicer if it's shorter. I'll cut it later, okay?" Although the professor was by no means a certified barber, he's had experience with his own biological daughter. The professor had always been able to excel in whatever he put his heart to, whether it was science-related or not.

"It's fine, daddy. I should learn how to take care of my hair better," Buttercup admitted girlishly, which stumped the professor again. The green-eyed girl had never liked her long hair, nor the prospects of maintaining it or taking a bath.

When the professor was done, Buttercup looked almost exactly like Blossom, except green and black, rather than pink and red. When Blossom came over to look, it felt like staring at a doppelganger, or a twin - though she hadn't learned the words for either. She couldn't help but to raise an eyebrow at Buttercup's change of appearance.

Bubbles giggled when she saw the similarities too. "You two look a lot like sisters!" she announced.

"But we are sisters," Blossom said.

"Maybe I should get my own hair bow too!" the blonde said innocently, unaware that Buttercup's moves were calculated.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium discovers that giving his Girls a haircut isn't very straightforward.

A Quick Note on the Girls' Hair

DOC: 6 DEC 1988

Background: In preparation for the Week 2 General Meeting, I just thought I should give the Girls a haircut. While I will never equal the grace and skill of a barber, I believe I can do a very good job just trimming their hair.

Desc: I experimented with Buttercup first, sitting her in a chair with a sheet wrapped around her. 'Is it going to hurt?' that poor innocent girl had asked, no doubt affected by all the experiments I have to do to her. I told her that it would not, because there are no nerves in hair. Anyway, moving on…

I tried using a normal pair of scissors. Small and made of stainless steel. Imagine my surprise when it wouldn't cut the Girls' hair! Sensing another opportunity to discover more about my amazing little Girls, I picked one single strand out to try to cut it with the small stainless steel scissors, but even a single strand was able to withstand steel!

I told Buttercup and her siblings to stay in the balcony, and I raced down to the lab to pick up my collection of harder-than-steel scalpels, the ones I used to test the Mohs rating of their skin. Anyway, to cut the long story short, even the Girls' hair are harder than diamonds. Only Crude Duranium and Refined Duranium can cut them.

Knowing that I will probably do badly as a barber with only scalpels for barbering, I've decided to postpone their haircut. I've placed an order for Duranium scissors and razors from the Institute in addition to surgical tools - Talk about the world's most expensive haircut!

But there's more to this. Yes, I tried fire. Don't ask me how I came up with the idea. I lit a matchstick and held it under Buttercup's hair. I only succeeded in burning my fingertips, not her hair. It appears that their hair, and perhaps by extension, the Girls themselves, are flame retardant. I will have to investigate this further, but it will make for a challenging experiment to plan and set up, especially if I want to know the sensation the Girls would feel while a fire is licking at them, even if they cannot be damaged by it.

Anyway, I think I've done more damage by exposing the Girls to fire. I will have to watch them more closely least they try to play with it and set The House on fire.
Chapter 15: Cracked Mirror

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup shows her true colors to Bubbles.

Chapter 15: Cracked Mirror

The City of Townsville. Downtown. The Mall.


At the mall, Professor Utonium had spared no expense in making the Girls happy. He had taken the Girls to the same clothes store where they had picked out their signature clothes. There, they revisited the same section that gave them their pink, green and blue dresses. The Professor had thought that other types of clothes of the same multi-colored choice was available, and he was right.

Since he was going to an Organization general meeting, and all the bigwigs were going to be there, he thought that dressing up Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup might make… some kind of an impression. He could only hope that his colleagues would see the Girls for who they were - as fellow human beings with thoughts and feelings, who could laugh and cry. It would have to start from the superficial.

Rainbow StreamsTM, whose logo consists of what appeared to be a cross between a rainbow and a river, had been responsible for the Girls' wardrobe, and they would be responsible for more. Next to the dress-and-sashes, there were formal versions of the same thing, with puffed-up skirts with white trims and a more elaborate color-matching ribbon around the back, complete with rounded collars. They were labeled as party dresses.

The professor bought them three sets each, and the Girls loved it, especially Bubbles. Buttercup was swooning over it excessively - even more so than Bubbles, who was supposed to be the most feminine of them all.

After piling on top of that additional accessories to complete the party look, the family had headed to the cineplex, where they bought tickets to Puppet Pals: The Movie. Walking towards their seats, they were constantly under the gaze of unwary citizens, who viewed them with wonder. 'Who are these beautiful girls with their strange, almost-glowing eye colors?' was a common thought. Some stared at the Girls disapprovingly, either jealous, or thinking that they were wearing colored contact lenses. Others couldn't help but to keep looking, mesmerized, as if they knew what the Girls would become. A few others could not help but to fear them - the Girls' eyes were slightly larger than normal, and they thought it uncanny.

When they had reached their aisle, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup began clamoring for their Daddy once more.

"Can I sit next to you, daddy? Bubbles had been the first to ask him, followed by the others.
Professor Utonium seemed to consider the others: Buttercup, who seemed to be making a redoubled effort to gain his attention, and Blossom, who had asked only once and waited patiently after that. Then his eyes slid back down to Bubbles.

"Oh okay, Bubbles, you can sit next to me," the professor agreed, thinking that he was only being fair to the blue-eyed girl. The Professor sat on the corner chair, followed by Bubbles next to him, then Blossom, and Buttercup, who was, again, furthest away from daddy.

As the cinema darkened and the first advertisement played, Blossom and Bubbles wowed at their first experience of the silver screen. Buttercup, however, had reverted to her old self, crossing her arms and glaring hatefully at the senseless advertisement playing before her. She had allowed herself to drop the girly act only because she couldn't be seen in the dark. It took conscious effort to behave 'feminine', and to Buttercup, it felt tiring.

Buttercup had thought that dressing up exactly like Blossom and acting exactly like Bubbles would cause daddy to pay her even more attention, but it wasn't working.

"Daddy, I need to go…" Bubbles suddenly said.

"You'll need to go to the ladies' then, but I can stand outside in case you need me," the professor offered. What he said gave Buttercup ideas.

"I need to go too!" Buttercup said, feigning urgency. Together, the three of them returned to the lobby, and Professor Utonium escorted them to the ladies, where he waited outside.

"Are you sure you'll be fine on your own?" the professor asked Bubbles; he knew that the weakest of the three was prone to depending on him.

"Don't worry, Daddy. I'll take care of my sister," Buttercup vouched sweetly with the biggest smile on her face, and took Bubbles by the hand, leading her into the ladies' room.

"Aw, you're so sweet, Buttercup," Bubbles said to her sister as they walked in.

Inside, the two of them figured out pretty quickly that they were supposed to use the stalls, as there was an absence of toilet bowls out in the open.

"Bubbles, I want to sit next to daddy," Buttercup demanded, talking to her sister from a stall next to hers'. Inside, the ravenette wasn't even using the toilet. She hadn't drunk much, and had no need 'to go'. She was just sitting on the lid, waiting.

"But I want to sit next to daddy too," Bubbles repulsed, but did it innocently, thinking that Buttercup was just asking. "Maybe you can sit next to him next time."

Bubbles' rejection made Buttercup all the more angrier. Staring around her stall, she noticed that the wall was white porcelain, clean enough such that she could see herself reflected on it, and she didn't like what she saw. She hated the Blossom-like bow and hairstyle she was wearing, and she didn't like that she had to put on a mannerism not of her own. She hated everything - it got her pissed to the point where she slammed her fist on the porcelain, and it cracked. Her reflection was now cracked, and her features twisted by anger and hatred that were supposed to be foreign on a five-year-old face.

"Are you okay, Buttercup?" Bubbles asked from her stall, and to Buttercup it sounded like she was badgering her. "Did you fall down?" Buttercup did not reply. Instead, she got up and stomped out of her bathroom stall. Coming over to Bubbles', she knocked on it.

"Buttercup, I'm not done yet. I just… Don't feel like peeing in such a strange place," came Bubbles'
voice from inside her stall. The only reply she got was another round of rapping. "Okay, okay."

Bubbles got off the can and pulled her panties up. Confused, she opened the door to her stall, and before she knew what happened, Buttercup came charging in.

Picking Bubbles up by the collars, Buttercup slammed her sister against the porcelain wall, cracking a tile behind her head. "Bu-Bu-Bu-Butter-" was all Bubbles could manage before Buttercup had put a hand over her mouth. The blonde had never seen such anger and hatred on her sister's face before, the way those green-iris eyes were wide and eyebrows arched with fury, the way those teeth were gritted and ground together - and that was saying a lot, as Buttercup had always displayed some kind of negativity most of the time.

"I'm sitting beside Daddy, like it or not," Buttercup declared, her voice of a lower tone, beyond raspy and expressing a kind of hate that no 5-year-old equivalents should have. Her arms were shaking with fury, punctuating each of her words by shaking Bubbles. "You'll let me sit beside him. We'll switch places. Say yes." Buttercup removed her hand from Bubbles' mouth.

"B-But Butter-" Bubbles tried to reason, but before she could even finish a word, Buttercup's fist landed just beside her face, cracking another porcelain tile. "Yes, yes!"

"Is everything in there okay, Girls?" the professor shouted from the outside.

"Yes, Daddy! Bubbles just fell down in the toilet. It's fine, I helped her up!" Buttercup lied.

"That's my girl!" the professor replied, unaware of what was really going on.

Buttercup had wanted to say more, make more demands, but then something had beaten her to it. The drip of liquid on the bathroom floor. The green-eyed girl looked down… To see a yellowish substance pooling beneath Bubbles' feet. Looking further up, she saw that urine had stained Bubbles' knee-high socks yellow, and dirtied her Mary Jane shoes.

"You peed yourself, Bubbles darling, my dear sister," Buttercup mocked, a devilish smile spreading across her lips.

"Why are you doing this to me?" Bubbles whimpered miserably, tears welling up in her eyes.

"I could ask you the same question," Buttercup said, before turning around and running towards the bathroom's exit, leaving Bubbles standing awkwardly in her stall, her legs closed as she tried desperately to bring her bladder under control; it wasn't an easy feat, as her bladder had been full to begin with.

"Daddy! Daddy! Bubbles peed herself!" Buttercup shouted as she was exiting the ladies', her demented smile still plastered on her face, only to disappear completely as though it was never there to begin with when she was face-to-face with her creator. "What do I do?"

"Oh dear!" the professor said, but then unslung a bag that he had been carrying. "Well, thank goodness I've anticipated that. Here, give this bag to Bubbles. It contains a fresh set of clothes - she can take whatever she needs!"

Buttercup took the bag, and made to return to the ladies'

"And Buttercup," the professor added. Buttercup stopped to listen. "Be a good sister and help Bubbles out, okay? She's always had… difficulties, and we need to support her."

"Yes, Daddy! Of course, Daddy!" Buttercup replied as she raced back into the ladies' and back to
Bubbles' stall. She was weeping silently, paralyzed by both her toilet accident and the contradictory idea that the sister she loved could hurt her so much.

"Stop crying, you baby," Buttercup said coldly, and threw the bag into Bubbles' hands, then stomped forward. Bubbles backed away, but couldn't even make much of a distance as her legs were stuck together in shame. "Don't tell Daddy what happened here, or I will hurt you again."

All Bubbles did was nod as tears were spilling out of her eyes.

It took Bubbles the majority of ten minutes to get her act together and clean herself up. When she was finally out of her stall (a different one from the one she had entered originally), she was met with a rather cross-looking Buttercup.

"Took you long enough," Buttercup said, the emotion she was putting in her voice precociously heavy. "You're still crying?" She came forward, and Bubbles shrank in fear as she did, expecting more violence. But then Buttercup placed a tender hand on her cheek, and wiped her tears away with the other.

"I'm sorry that I hurt you, my dear sister," Buttercup said tenderly. "I just want to be close to Daddy." Then, she hugged her sister. It served only to confuse Bubbles even further. For a moment there, Bubbles had thought that Buttercup hated her, and yet she behaved as if she loved her so dearly - or was it both? Or neither? It was an irreconcilable paradox to the naive girl. "Now stop looking so sad and put on a smile, because you've made your dear sister very happy."

As before, Buttercup took Bubbles by the hand and lead her out of the ladies', where Professor Utonium stood, looking worried. "There you are! I was just about to charge in there!"

"We're fine, Daddy! I took care of it. Right, Bubbles?" Buttercup lied. All Bubbles did was to smile, but it was obvious from her reddish eyes and the tear stains on her cheeks that she had been weeping.

"Bubbles... It's alright to have a little accident," the professor said, mistakenly thinking that Bubbles had been crying because of her bladder malfunction. In reality, it was a little bit of that, and much more. "You're only two weeks old, after all! Give yourself some time."

Bubbles' lips trembled as she looked up at the professor. Everything was locked just behind her lips, her teeth, and yet she just didn't dare to tattle on Buttercup. Buttercup had made a terrible impression on her, that it wasn't just the fear of reprisal that made her mute. The feeling was terrible - helplessness, when help was so close and yet so far.

Back at the cinema, as the last ads were playing, Bubbles did as she was told to and sat in what used to be Buttercup's seat while Buttercup took Bubbles', which was beside Professor Utonium.

"Buttercup, aren't you supposed to be nearer to the centre?" the professor asked, confused.

"Oh, Bubbles didn't want to sit here anymore," Buttercup lied. "She must be ashamed of peeing herself."

"Hush now, Buttercup. Don't be rude. But that makes sense. We should give her some space. Maybe the movie might cheer her up," the professor said unassuminingly.

"Daddy, can I sit closer to you?" Buttercup requested.

"Sure, I'll just..." the professor said half-way as he pushed the armrest between them up. Buttercup
moved up next to him immediately, and together, they cuddled just as two silly-looking puppets appeared on the silver screen. A most contented smile appeared on Buttercup's face as she watched the puppets pummel each other. She held onto her Daddy tightly, wishing that she would never have to let go again.

In the meantime, Bubbles couldn't help but to weep silently at her plight. Her sniffling attracted Blossom's attention. Blossom had overheard what had happened from the professor and Buttercup, even if it was a skewed version of events. Pushing up the armrest between her and Bubbles, she did the same with Bubbles what the professor and Buttercup were doing.

"Forget about it, Bubbles. Just enjoy the movie, it'll make the sadness go away," she tried to comfort her blue sister, but even her words was insufficient, for Bubbles knew that Blossom was ignorant of what had really happened.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium writes about what he knows and not know about the Girls, and what he intends to find out.

The following is written with an unsteady hand, as evidenced by the poor handwriting. Spelling mistakes were common, which is unlike Agent Utonium. It took multiple administrative officers hours to decipher the faxed version of this document. The following is an amended version of the document.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 W2 Report

DOC: 06 DEC 1988

Created By: Agent Utonium

Title: Second Week Development

Text: Blossom (B-47), Bubbles (B-49) and Buttercup (B-48) have been developing at an exponential rate since my last report. It is simply amazing what the Girls have already mastered. In general, the Girls are just as capable as any 'real' 5-year-olds in all basic tasks, including walking, running, speaking, emoting, relieving themselves, etc.

Linguistically, the Girls had made a paradigm shift in their understanding of the language. As I am a man of science and not of matters of the arts such as language, I am only able to provide them with the most basic of instruction - tenses, pronouns, sentence construction. Perhaps it has something to do with my refusal to 'baby-talk' them, and they've been absorbing lessons from whenever I speak, emulating me. They've now attained enough mastery of English to be able to string together conventional sentences, and this applies even to Bubbles, though poor Bub tends to speak in short sentences - she's just not as confident.

What is most important is that they are catching up with the average development level of a 5-year-old fast. I have taught them almost 900 words so far. Blossom was able to absorb about 880 of them, while Buttercup is fast catching up at 831. Bubbles, however, remains the problem, as her backlog is growing faster than her list of words. Her vocabulary is basic, at 342 words - while still prodigious by normal standards, I cannot ignore the possibility anymore that, compensating for the mysterious effects of Chemical X, Bubbles could be developmentally hampered by some factors.

Since Bubbles appears to be very happy with the familial support her sisters and I provide, and my instruction does not favor any one of them, then I'm afraid the reason could be genetic or pathological. When my medical equipment arrives next week, I'll run all the diagnostic tests possible to determine this, including neuro-imaging. I will also be placing an order with Administration to send me all medical data concerning the Girls' source - those hospital patients who had provided
5YG-1847, 5YG-1848 and 5YG-1849. I have also faxed the required forms to Administration and the Institute to provide the Girls' sources with free consultation and full-suite health screening, which includes the use of genetic testing techniques not yet available to the general population, so that the results could also be sent to me.

If nothing else, I think it'd be exciting to learn more about Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's genetic parentage. How are the girl patients (and by extension, the girl patients' parents) who gave me the Girls like? How similar are they, besides in terms of enhanced abilities? How different are they, besides the color of their eyes?

Beyond learning English verbally and aurally, I have started teaching the alphabets and numbers to the Girls. I think Blossom is getting it, but Buttercup and Bubbles still needs time. That said, I think it is necessary for me to give a brief report on each of the Girls.

**BLOSSOM (B-47)** - From what I can gather, she seems to like me far more than the others, if that's even possible. However, I don't know if that is what resulted in her markedly superior intellect in tackling whatever I teach her (the self-praise wasn't intended), or if she is naturally gifted with high intelligence, possibly due to the influence of Chemical X. She seems to understand what is right and wrong, good and bad almost instinctively - the earliest indication of this was when I first took her to the city, and she witnessed a robbery. Not only that, she actually tried to enforce what she view as right on her siblings on more than one occasion - and sometimes, what she thinks is right tends to be what I told her. This does not sit well with me, even though I feel tingling all over thinking about it. What if I were to make a mistake? And she'd emulate my mistake? And what if she's put in the outside world? From whom will she get her moral compass from? I can only hope that you would be more independent in the future.

By now, despite being behind a normal 5-year-old in terms of the size of her vocabulary and the breadth of her life's experience, she is already trying to understand the written word, and numbers.

**BUBBLES (B-49)** - She appears to be the most sensitive of the three. She is awfully sweet and kind. However, her intellectual development is worrying. Not only is she emotionally vulnerable, she is also behind her siblings in terms of her language ability and general knowledge. She usually has to be reminded of things she learned before, and I'm always wreaked with guilt and fear that I can't find a way to help her. She is still wetting herself, most recently in the movies today, which is a few hours before the next incoming general meeting. I can only hope that it isn't a symptom of something greater and worse.

**BUTTERCUP (B-48)** - Buttercup confuses me. For most of the two weeks, she was the 'tomboy' of the three, and is the most physically able of the three. She had learned how to walk and run the fastest, and she is prone to pushing herself beyond what the other Girls are willing to. This is recorded data in the tests as well. Where the Girls felt the need to express discomfort, Buttercup felt the need to tolerate them and put on a good show for me. This implies mental discipline, which is very precocious for someone her age - both physically and mentally. Furthermore, she appears to be growing independent, but for now, she obviously can't be - I hope I won't have to rein her back, because that could create friction between the two of us.

Then there's that sense I've been getting, like she knows things that she shouldn't and things that I didn't know about. She's been liying to me, that much I know. Either lying or hiding things from me. But it seems to me that she's only doing it in the tests I administer - and I'm sure she has the best of intentions: mostly trying to impress me. But what is most baffling of all is that she seems to have made a 180 degree change in personality today. She's now more like Blossom and Bubbles. While it's possible that the last 2 weeks had been a phase in the development of her personality, it's just as possible that she has just entered a temporary phase as well.
Besides these, to consolidate all my findings of the week: Investigation into the effects of Chemical X in the Girls have thus far shown that they are capable of carrying 500lbs loads with ease and for long periods of time, with a possible maximum load of at least thrice that. They are resistant to piercing and cutting by all but the rarest and hardest materials found on Earth, and they can run up to speeds of 25mph easily and for a lengthy period of time, with Buttercup achieving 28mph briefly before the treadmill she was on broke down. They can likely run up to thrice that speed. All my predictions are based on extrapolation using human models of performance in various fields, but there's a chance that even that won't apply at all.

While only briefly mentioned, they are likely bulletproof because of the nature of human tissue, but this needs further testing. What is confirmed, however, is that their hair is flame retardant, and anaesthetic gas is a factor of just under 100 times less effective when used on them.

Next week, I will be attempting to explore the upper limits of their speed and strength. I will also be devising tests for their senses, to see if they are enhanced in any way. In a way, however, their sense of touch has already been tested. They feel pain much the same way as we do, and even though steel knives can't cut them, they do feel some degree of pain from it. As to how much it is, I'm not certain, as there is no empirical standard for pain. It is just as likely that they are merely intolerant to even the slightest sensations, being just born and inexperienced. Somehow, their sense of touch is selective though, considering that they don't seem to suffer from carrying weights that would have crushed a grown man.

Other tests to look forward to in the future would be heat and pressure stress tests. I will have to devise a way to do it safely, otherwise I might have to abandon any thoughts on these.

Beyond these traits, I struggle to think how else the Girls could be enhanced. Intelligence tests will likely be months away, weeks at the earliest - I prefer to wait until they've developed far enough. I will have to wait and see what other surprises the Girls have for me.

I will likely have time to finally examine them on the medical and cellular level. I'm still struggling to even comprehend how Chemical X could give them these abilities, and if there are any side effects of it in the Girls - this is what I'm most worried about. There could be a time bomb in each of them waiting to go off and for now, we can't see it. I can't stop thinking about this, especially at night, when it is like trying to sleep with a knife at my throat.
Chapter 16: Beautiful Things

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium goes to Organization Outpost Charlie-01 for a meeting, bringing the Girls with him.

Chapter 16: Beautiful Things

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

6 DEC 1988. 1650.

"And... There. That should do it," Professor Utonium said as he tied a little butterfly knot on around the back of Buttercup's party dress. Buttercup was standing in front of a standing mirror with the professor kneeling beside her. The professor had added a green ribbon to Buttercup's hair, and now her hair was held in place by an so many head pieces - a Blossom-styled bow, a large hair clip around the back to bunch together her hair, and now... A ribbon.

"Urgh... I mean, I look beautiful, Daddy!" Buttercup swiftly corrected herself, and by now, the professor's awareness was too lacking for him to notice.

"Good, you sure are, Butterfly," the professor added before coughing. It was a dry cough, and the breath he expelled was even worse, as if there was a furnace jammed down his chest cavity, packed with burning coal. Blossom came up to him, worried. She was in her own party dress, frowning briefly at Buttercup when she saw that she looked almost exactly the same as her, except they wore different colors. But she had more important things to worry about.

"Daddy, are you okay?" Blossom asked, hugging the professor from behind. "You look woozy... kinda sick, like the picture you showed me with the green man."

"I'm fine, sweetie, long as I have you," Professor Utonium lied.

"Are you sure? You feel really hot," Blossom pressed on. The professor gently nudged her to let go, before coming to Bubbles, who sat in bed, looking into space. Blossom stared after him with a worried look on her face.

"Bubbles, are you ready?" the professor asked. She did not reply. Instead, she was staring at Buttercup, with a look that the professor thought was difficult to read. Worried? Nervous? Afraid even? But then again, it seemed as if Bubbles was holding back on her facial expression, as if afraid to give away what she felt. "Bubbles?"

Buttercup turned away from the mirror and looked over her shoulder at Bubbles, giving her the same look as she did back in the cinema ladies' washroom. Her eyebrows arched in fury, her teeth gritted and showing as if priming to bite. Her hands clenched into fists, as if ready to turn the room into an open-aired balcony. Bubbles shrank at this display. Blossom thought it strange, but when she traced
her line of sight back to Buttercup, Buttercup simply turned back to the mirror and feigned self-absorption, practicing her cutesy poses.

"I'm ready, Daddy," Bubbles simply said, forcing a toothy smile, which ended up crooked. Blossom wasn't convinced, and thought something was afoot. Standing behind Buttercup, she glared at Buttercup's reflection on the mirror with her hands on her hips, since that was the only way she could make eye contact. The latter girl noticed, and stopped acting in front of the mirror. She simply smiled sweetly at Blossom, conveying false innocence and ignorance.

"Girls, we'll need to go. My colleagues are waiting for me," the professor said, trying to sound excited but falling flat towards the tail end of his sentence. The Girls crowded around him, following him out of the room, none the wiser about the wider world, or the darkness surrounding them. On the way out, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup took their synthetic fur coats with them, to put them on. The professor picked up his briefcase.

Downstairs, Professor Utonium could already see his transport, which was waiting for him on the suburban street. It was a nondescript white SUV with shaded windows (of course), most probably subtly upgraded with protective armor and equipped for war. Behind it was an Organization security squad car, just as squeaky white as the SUV. The unmarked white van that had been standing vigil over The House was just driving over to the front of the passenger SUV, taking the front.

"Why are there so many cars, Daddy?" Buttercup asked, all innocent-like. Perhaps she could get to the truth of it all this way…

"Oh, my colleagues are just worried about me, and us," the professor lied. Well, he wasn't exactly lying. It was more of a half-truth, a white lie as white as The House, as white as the snow and the unmarked cars outside. But he wasn't even trying as hard anymore. He couldn't, not just because he felt really sick, but also because he was really sick of having to lie to the Girls all the time.

"Why are they worried?" Blossom took her turn to ask.

"Well, you saw that explosion in the city. They didn't want that to happen to us," Professor Utonium half-lied again. As they got up to the door, the professor could feel a hand pulling at his lab coat. Looking down, he saw that it was Bubbles.

"Daddy, can you hold me?" Bubbles pleaded. There were no tears in her eyes, but she didn't need that to express… Something. For some reason, she had been somewhat distant lately. Before the cinema, Professor Utonium could see through her like glass, but now…

"Sure, Bubbles," the professor cooed, and picked her up. She was amazingly light, considering the kind of power she wielded - the kind of power she didn't know could be utilized for many things, good and bad. Despite being shaken by some shadow illness, the professor was able to carry her with one arm when she wrapped her petite little arms around his neck. He opened the door with his briefcase arm.

They got outside. It was even colder now, even in the late afternoon, with winter in full swing. The window of the unmarked van in front of the SUV rolled down, revealing the leader of the security squad attached to the House. The same grey-haired, aviator-sunglasses-wearing lunatic poked his head out.

"Get in the SUV, we'll take you there, one hour tops," was all the security lieutenant said, before disappearing into the darkness of his ride. As if on queue, the driver of the white SUV opened his door and came out to greet them. A stocky chap, dressed finely in a business suit and coat. Another
person, a woman in just as formal a wear, with sunglasses, came out from the shotgun seat, peeping over the roof of the car at the Girls.

"... Professor Utonium. Please," the driver greeted the professor after a pause, as if every single word he said was carefully selected and weighed.

"Hi, mister friend!" Blossom greeted the driver, while waving her hand at him. The driver appeared to stiffen up, as if in anticipation of something, but then loosened himself up after the world did not end.

"Greetings," the driver said stiffly before turning his back to open the backseat door for them.

"Awfully kind of you, mister friend!" Buttercup followed up.

"Naturally," the driver acknowledged unnaturally, before returning to the driver's seat. The Girls came up to the car, but neither Blossom nor Buttercup wanted to get in first. They both wanted to sit next to Daddy.

"I'm scared. You first, sister," Buttercup said, feigning cowardice, offering the opening in the car for Blossom.

"Oh come on! You were next to Dad in the movies!" Blossom argued, more direct, pointing an accusing finger at her sister.

"But- But- But-" Buttercup struggled to keep up with her girlish-girl act. She eventually broke, her frown returning. "You were with Dad ALL the time! You're selfish!"

"No, you're being selfish!" Blossom tossed the heinous word back.

"No, you're selfish!" Buttercup returned.

"Do you need require assistance with this, professor?" the woman at the shotgun seat offered.

"N-no, it's fine. It's just the Girls being the Girls," the professor said, looking incredibly harried. In his mind, poisoned by sickness and exhaustion and the fear for the unknown, unabated by a forward-thinking scientific attitude, it seemed as if the world was falling apart. He had to keep this under control - there was no telling what the security officers might do. He'd seen how twitchy they were.

"Girls, please," the professor pleaded, feeling drained. "Just pile into the car."

"But Dad!" Blossom and Buttercup said in unison.

"Buttercup, get in the car," the professor chose the first of them to go in on his first instinct. Afraid to argue and ruin her act entirely, Buttercup climbed into the SUV, scooting over to her corner on the other side of the car. Blossom, with a smile on her face, sat in the middle. Gingerly, Professor Utonium plopped himself down heavily on the right-most side of the car, with Bubbles on his lap.

The journey was spent in silence. Professor Utonium leaned on the door with his eyes closed and Bubbles had fallen asleep, exhausted for some reason. The professor knew, but he could not explain Bubbles' sluggishness as of late. Buttercup started the journey with crocodile tears, but when no one cared, dropped her tactic and just stared out the window. Blossom leaned against her creator, who she knew to be her father, worried for him, worried for Bubbles, even worried for Buttercup too.

The suburbs gave way to the snowy plains, and then the city, and soon even that was passed, as they entered the forest reserves of Pokey Oaks. Within this space of time, the Girls were able to put past
grievances behind them as they stared out of the windows in wonder: they had never seen a forest before. Once in a while, they were rewarded with the sight of the local wildlife, who were long used to these strange metal containers whizzing and screaming through the forest. Deers, mostly.

Before they knew it, the convoy slowed down, and before them were chain-link fences. Behind it was a compound, strangely devoid of security personnel despite the expansion of the Department of Security. The SUV followed the unmarked van in turning left, and they stopped beside what appeared to be a massive bunker.

"This is your stop, Professor Utonium," the driver said gravely without turning back, his eyes on the rear view mirror. The professor stirred, unable to bring himself to open his eyes.

"Daddy?" Blossom shook the professor worriedly.

"I'm fine, I just need a second…" Professor Utonium did not complete his sentence, but instead opened the door without another word. Bubbles felt heavier in his arm. Even the briefcase felt like a boulder. He couldn't believe he was back - back to an Organization establishment. Buttercup took the initiative and opened her door, getting out from the left. Blossom followed Daddy, realizing with a mix of fear and confusion that somehow, he no longer seemed like the invincible giant she thought him to be.

"Bubbles… Wake up. We're here," he said to the bundle of joy in his right arm, gently shaking her awake. She was roused, still silent as before, and the professor put her down.

Once again, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup crowded around the professor. Security officers in gray uniform came out of the entrance, four in all, and shepherded them through the blast doors of the Organization bunker.

Inside, the building seemed different. A little less ominous. But Professor Utonium knew that it was all a facade, just like how everything they did were a facade. There was a receptionist desk up front, a few uniforms around the edges of reception, along with something like a dozen other men in business suits. Officers in plainclothes, the professor knew. Now, he understood why the compound seemed like a ghost town. The walls outside were gray, but the walls inside were white, the furniture futurist.

"Utonium. Right this way," the friendly-looking receptionist in a cardigan waved to her left, flashing a smile that could only be hiding daggers. "We've converted the interro- urm- a room into a fun room!"

"Hello, girls. Do you like fun?" the receptionist rounded around her desk and approached the Girls, at the same time wary that she could be putting herself in danger, but she didn't show it. She'd read the reports - a single punch from one of them could land her in a hospital, eating through a straw and breathing through a tube.

Perhaps the receptionist had came on a bit strong, or perhaps the Girls were still recovering from the shock of their new stark environment, but they were anything but excitable. Blossom was still trying to figure out what 'interro-' was while Buttercup eyed her warily.

"Y-yes?" Blossom managed.

"Great! C'mon girls, let me show you the fun room," the receptionist added, pulling back on her failed attempt at being dynamic. She lead Professor Utonium and the Girls down a corridor, then turned right into a room. Even in his daze, the professor noticed the sign right by the door. 'Security
"Afternoon, Jane. Afternoon, prof," the security officer greeted, standing up. He looked down at the Girls as they passed, with a half-smile on his face. Behind the officer had been a wall, and they had to turn another corner to see an open area with lockers and benches far behind. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could make out four men sitting there on benches, dressed in strange clothes - a headgear that appeared hard, like the helmet motorcyclists in the city would wear, but different. Their clothes seemed very thick, as their body appeared far bulkier than anyone, with numerous pockets that were filled with... something and bulging. The Girls could only guess at what they were filled with. Lollipops? Baby Kangaroos? Their shoes appeared to enclose more than just their feet, and in thick material too. In their hands were... Long metal things, some longer than others, with odds and ends sticking out of them.

It was the first time the Girls had seen submachineguns and assault rifles, and they would never figure out what they were until much later.

The moment the Girls set their sights on the four Organization SWAT officers, the officers returned the look, still talking without tearing their eyes away from the Girls. They seemed tense. Bubbles decided to try to be friendly, and waved at them with a smile on her lips. They didn't wave back, neither did they even smile. Thankfully, she didn't have to stay in this area for long.

"Don't mind the magic glass, kids," the receptionist said, referring to the seemingly ordinary window overlooking the 'fun room'. The receptionist stood beside the door. The Girls crowded at the window, finally excited, wanting to see what was inside. They had to stand on tip-toes to see.

There was a ball pit inside, large enough to accommodate three, as well as a castle-bouncer. They didn't know it, but under the window was a shelf containing more conventional toys, as well as picture books.

"Woah," Buttercup said, impressed.

"Wow!" Blossom followed.

"That room's yours, until your father's done with his meeting!" the receptionist offered. Blossom and Buttercup took it without thought, running at high speeds into the room. Too excited to continue their rivalry, they both dived into the ball pit at the same time, sending plastic balls flying upwards, and out of the pit. Only Bubbles seemed less-than-enthused, and she walked in with her head down. She sat on a chair by the shelf, alone.

The professor poked his head in, looking around. To him, it wasn't the 'fun room'. He knew what it was converted from. It used to be an interrogation room, and it will be again once the Girls were gone. The Girls hadn't noticed, but the 'magic glass' was a one-way mirror. On the inside, it showed only a reflection of the room, but from the outside, they could be seen as clear as day.

"Girls," the professor said to gain their attention. Blossom and Buttercup emerged out of the sea of balls they were in.

"Yes, Daddy?" Blossom and Buttercup asked in unison. Bubbles turned to face him, still silent.

"Behave yourselves now. I'll return in a couple of hours," he said. "I love you."

"I love you too, Daddy!" the Three replied in unison, with Bubbles murmuring. With that, he closed the door, and Blossom and Buttercup returned to swimming in the ball pit, pelting each other with plastic spheres with childish smiles on their faces, all hatred towards each other forgotten.
"Those sweet little girls," the receptionist said with a smile, which disappeared immediately. "But we all know what they really are, am I right?"

"I know 'what' they really are," the professor said cryptically, offended by the receptionist's disregard for the Girls' humanity.

"Meeting room. Opposite end of the building. Level B1. Just follow the signs. They're expecting you in 20 minutes, so take your time. There's a snack machine in the lobby. You look like you need it after 2 weeks with those… Things," the receptionist instructed before leaving the professor be, without waiting for a rebuttal.

But the professor didn't need a snack. He didn't want to leave the Girls. He stood at the one-way window, looking at his angels, putting a shivering hand on the glass. There was no telling what the Organization had in store for them; they were not known for their respect for human rights - much less for animal rights (as Jojo and his family found out the hard way), and even less for… 'Things' which they considered to have no rights. Not that the public knew about them. He feared for their lives, and the four newly-minted SWAT officers, who were now staring at him as if he was guilty of something, did not alleviate that concern.

"Such beautiful young things," a voice commented. A deep voice, gravelly. The professor turned to the source of it. Chief of Security Blackwater. And he was no longer in his gray uniform. Instead, he was dressed the same way as the SWAT officers, in black combat gear with gray trimmings, with a pistol on his thigh - Just no primary firearm and helmet. "All this trouble, over such pretty little things. It's hard to believe that so much power could be found in those creatures."

"Blackwater," Professor Utonium uttered his name with contempt. "Setting your sights on some new targets?"

"I do what is necessary, professor. 'Evil' things, if necessary," Blackwater elaborated, before turning his gaze on the Girls. "That said, that might not be necessary… for now, seeing that you've managed to pacified them… Against all expectations. My men at The House are actually beginning to slacken."

"What do you want?" Professor Utonium demanded. "I'm not supposed to see you until 20 minutes later."

"Just came here to look, prof," Blackwater said, turning to see the Girls in the 'fun room'. "One must know the enemy, as if they're one's friends and family."

"You know, they could be friends and family if you give them a chance," the professor said. He had no energy for hatred and hostilities, even if it was towards a genocidal maniac.

"So you say… So you say," the Chief of Security said, as if deep in thought. "It remains to be seen, but that said, I do only what is necessary. If these little rascals are of no threat to my men, then I will be of no threat to them."

Inside the interrogation room (aka fun room), Buttercup jumped out of the ball pit and came up to Bubbles. "Bubbles! You're missing all the fun!" Buttercup squealed in delight, having forgotten herself in the moment. Bubbles shrank away from Buttercup, but the ravenette took her by the hand and lead her into the ball pit.

"It's just like in the snow, Bubbles! Just… Ball-y!" Blossom shouted with glee from the pit. Bubbles jumped in, and slowly, warmed up to her sisters again, at first wading in the ball pit but then began to engage in the plastic ball fight, perhaps in remembrance of the snowball fight they had… At least the
moments before Buttercup knocked Daddy out with a super-dense snowball.

Laughter filled the room, clearly visible through the speakers, fed by sensors in the room.

"I've seen lots of things in my long life, Agent Utonium," Blackwater revealed unexpected. "From the blasted graveyards of World War Two, to the slaughterhouse of the Korean War. I'd fought in the wet, fetid horror of the Vietnam War, seen the first Project Powerpuff subjects tear apart men like ragdolls. I've seen too many freaks tear apart too many of my men. I know freaks like I know the back of my hand."

"But I've also seen many beautiful things. My wife, my four kids. Two daughters and two sons. They're all older than you by now. But I remember how they were like when they were five," Blackwater seemed lost in his own thoughts, in his own past. His lips parted once more, but he sealed them again, preferring to remain quiet this time, with whatever was on his mind kept a secret. Then, he started up again, straightening himself with his hands behind his back as if he was standing at attention. "I'll see you in the meeting room in 15 minutes, Upton."

The Professor stared after the giant man as he left, wondering what all of that was about - he had never heard the man talk that way before.

15 minutes. He looked at the Girls one last time before deciding that it was time to go. Might as well get it over with. He ambled away from the fun room, dragging himself out of the security wing - with difficulty.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, much of the Girls' future is decided.

General Meeting 12061988A Transcript

DOC: 06 DEC 1988

The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

START TRANSCRIPT

(The Location: Meeting Room, Organization Outpost Charlie-01.)

(Attending: All departmental heads and any relevant personnel.)

(Time: 1810. The meeting room of Organization Outpost Charlie-01 is packed almost to the point of congestion. As usual, all department heads are seated at the centre while lower-ranking personnel are forced to stand around the corners of the room. Security personnel are forced to guard the heads of the Organization from the outside.)

(Agent Utonium is last to come in through the double-doors leading into the meeting room. The room falls silent with whispers barely audible throughout. A seat at the foot of the centre oval table is reserved for him. He slumps into it, appearing exhausted, before pushing himself in.)

Organization Director Cliff: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what the hell happened to you, Upton?

Field Researcher Utonium: What do you mean?

Organization Director Cliff: You look like you've been to 'Nam and back.

Medical Director Simmons: I'd be a lousy doctor with a fake medical cert if I can't even recognize something is wrong. Pale complexion, shivering… Exhaustion and an apparent lost of weight. No sense in hiding it, Thomas. I'm worried about you, too.

Organization Director Cliff: Does it have anything to do with exposure to Chemical X, or… the subjects? Do you need some time in the medical wing?

Field Researcher Utonium: (rubbing his forehead) No, I'm just tired. It's nothing, really.

Chief of Logistics Wiggum: (raises a finger) I… Nevermind.

Organization Director Cliff: Fine. We'll tarry no more. Let's get right down to business. As you all may well know, the Organization has been expanding rapidly in the past two weeks. Some of you might recognize a few new faces among us. To smooth this transition, we'll make a round of
introductions so we can all get acquainted with each other and work for the betterment of the United States. Bellum?

Liaisons Head Bellum: (Waving to a sharp-looking man with a slick, sweptback hairstyle) Due to the increasing complexity of our financial situation, with a hundred times more funds pouring in, and distribution of said funds to our growing agency, we have appointed Agent Silverslick (code-name in force) as our Chief Financial Officer. He was once a highly qualified stock market analyst sourced from Wall Street. He now serves this great country, as opposed to just one corporation. From now on, matters of funding will go through him.

CFO Silverslick: Glad to make your acquaintance!

Liaisons Head Bellum: (Waving to a another scientist in a lab coat with side-parted hair) Most of you may know him, but for the benefit of those who don't. Deputy Head of Research Vanum (code-named) is now acting Head of Research.

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Hi, Professor Utonium. We miss you!

Liaisons Head Bellum: (Waving to a woman with a ponytail, thin spectacles and casual blouse) Owing to the exponential increase in manpower as of late, Organization Director Cliff has generously authorized the formation of a Psychiatry and Social Services Department, formed from a sub-unit of the medical wing. Heading what should be our favorite department is Professor Alice. In keeping with that, we've promoted her from among our own ranks. (code-name in force) (Laughter fills the room)

Psychiatry and S-S Department Head Alice: Happy to serve, y'all!

(A few more newly recruited or newly elevated heads were introduced: a Chief Admin Manager, who is given a place on the oval table due to the increasingly critical information transactions happening in the Administration department. A new Facilities Manager is also found within their ranks, due to the numerous bases that are to pop up all over the country, and the increasing need for an unfailing infrastructure to support them. Then, as if to compete with the FBI and CIA, a new Chief Intelligence Officer is also added to the bigwig party. Due to the proliferation of increasing numbers of military-grade and experimental-grade weapons and technology, there is also a Chief Armory Officer working alongside the Chief of Security. Furthermore, because the Organization has been putting even more unmarked vehicles on the roads of Townsville and beyond, there is also a Central Motorpool Manager. It is no wonder that the meeting room is so crammed)

Organization Director Cliff: Very well, now that we are all acquainted, we'll move on to the first agenda. Security, how is the expansion coming along?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Very good, boss. Our head count stands at 539, more than a 50% increase from November. Our SWAT division and Powerpuff Task Force company are operational, and their numbers stand at (flicks through papers) 30 and 10 respectively.

Organization Director Cliff: And how are they deployed?

Chief of Security Blackwater: For the PTF, I've got 6 on B-47, B-48 and B-49, and 4 right here at Charlie-01. The 6 are for keeping an eye on B-47 to 49 of course, while the 4 is at Charlie-01 as reserve and training instructors. As for our SWAT, I've got 10 on the perimeter around The House in the Townsville Suburbs, 10 here and 10 on the city itself.

Organization Director Cliff: That's all well and good, but what are they armed with?
Chief of Security Blackwater: Only the best, sir. I've decided on the experimental XM4 Carbine as the mainstay of our SWAT officers and PTF soldiers. From what I gather, that puts us years ahead of the US military. I can also confirm that the Institute will be shipping to us their experimental anti-material sniper rifles within the week. But we'll still be using the tried-and-true MP5s and Mossberg 500s. I have an assortment of rocket launchers, grenade launchers and machineguns in our armories as well, but we won't be touching those until our forces are large enough.

Organization Director Cliff: Excellent. I knew I can count on you. What about the more conventional security officers? What's the progress on their training and deployment?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Excellent, boss, and I'm not just tooting my own horn. They're glad to be getting some new toys after what happened in Charlie-02. I've maintained a strength of 30 around B-47, B-48 and B-49, I have about 20 here and 50 on Townsville duty. The rest are either at HQ or scattered throughout the rest of our facilities around the country.

Organization Director Cliff: Keep scaling the numbers up as you recruit more men, Blackwater, but I need more in proportion on B-47, B-48 and B-49, as well as Townsville itself and our facilities in the vicinity. Our Facilities Manager will keep you apprised of his expansion plans, and the numbers he need for the new facilities. Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard, what about your operatives?

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: I have agents deployed in both local Townsville government and civil service, such as the TPD, as well as the criminal underground in Townsville. The… unlawful half of the City proves to be the harder nut to crack, however. One of my agents is already dead - the last time I checked in with him, he reported that our escaped subjects are gravitating towards Townsville, and that the crime rate there has been increasing over the years despite increased funding in the police and legal departments of the City. He was intercepted before he could transmit his data package via the internetwork.

Organization Director Cliff: Extrapolation?

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: The usual reports I received hints at an unusually well-organized crime, with some of our subjects involved, as well as Foundation agents. I have no numbers, however. There's also reports on a strange cult involved, but I think that's just background noise from one of my more… creative agents. That said, I have nothing on the cause of all this - why crime is better organised in Townsville, why the Foundation is interested in it, and certainly not on how a cult is involved.

Organization Director Cliff: Very well, keep me updated.

Field Researcher Utonium: I think I've had enough of this! (rises from his seat) Why have you situated the Girls and I in a… cesspool such as Townsville!? I've long suspected the city of high crime rates, but this is becoming ridiculous! Did you know (coughs) how many times (coughs again) I've brought the Girls to the city centre? Without being informed of all this? (slumps back into his chair) Why the interest in Townsville?

Organization Director Cliff: (looking crossed) Professor Utonium. I don't mean to pull rank on you, but do not forget that you are no longer the Head of Research, and you will not speak out of turn again. The only reason you're here is because of your hold over subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49, and your expertise in Chemical X, of course. Now, since you've interrupted me with your nagging about the 'Girls' safety, I might as well jump ahead on the agenda and enlighten you.

(Stands up) You see, I plan to put B-47, B-48 and B-49 in the field. I- Field Researcher Utonium: You can't be serious!
Organization Director Cliff: Professor-

Field Researcher Utonium: They're just little girls! How could you do this!?

Organization Director Cliff: You're being-

Field Researcher Utonium: (ranting) They're only five, physically! Not to mention the fact that they haven't even learned how to count or spell confidently! They're children! Young children, just a step above toddlers!

Organization Director Cliff: (pointing finger at Agent Utonium) Professor, enough! My patience with you is running thin. Either sit your ass down, or you can spend the next few months doing that in a cell while I do whatever the FUCK I want with your 'girls'.

Field Researcher Utonium: (sits down promptly) But- They're just little girls… Even in technological terms, they're prototypes, nothing more.

Organization Director Cliff: Even prototypes have to be tested, Upton. Don't you know that? As a scientist and inventor?

Field Researcher Utonium: But please, not out there! Not in a place crawling with psychos! I- I can safely do it in the lab, just not out there!

Organization Director Cliff: What? You mean like this!? (grabs a pile of science reports on his side of the conference table) This shit is useless for the kind of money we're putting into those lab-grown dolls! (throws papers across the table in anger) You took 2 weeks to produce results that could have been gotten out of a single day, and you still have the gall to tell me what to do!?

(The room had become tense, to put it lightly. Only a few faces, that of the Chief of Logistics, the Acting Head of Research, the Head of Psychiatry and S-S and Medical Director Simmons were concerned and sympathetic to Agent Utonium.)

Field Researcher Utonium: The objective of Project Powerpuff is to enhance the capability of soldiers - soldiers who were born, raised and trained naturally and conventionally. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup does not fit into any of those words. Won't we be detracting from the mission?

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Sir, I'll have to agree with Utonium here. The logistics of deploying three girls just isn't worth it. We'll be focusing our gigantic infrastructure down on the head of three Girls, when it is more suited to outfit an entire corps of soldiers. Not to mention the fact that those Girls wouldn't know what to do with what we're capable of giving them anyway.

Organization Director Cliff: I'm not convinced. Missions can drift in nature, objectives tailored to changing situations. I'm more acquainted with this than the two of you. Like you said, Utonium. Those three lab rats are all we've got. What's the ETA on our next viable product, Acting Head of Research?

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Never, sir. We're still sourcing for a viable replacement for Professor Utonium. Polymaths with the exact set of scientific background for Chemical X don't exactly grow on trees. I, myself, have a double doctorate in Organic Chemistry and Biomedical Sciences, and yet I can't even make heads and tails of Professor Utonium's research. From what I understand, Chemical X is like the culmination of all of humanity's understand in all of the sciences...

Organization Director Cliff: You hear that, Professor Utonium? Unless you want me to tear apart your little freaky family and put you back in HQ, I don't want to hear it. And if I recall, is this not
what you asked for? To be given the chance to raise and study those bug-eyed freaks?

Field Researcher Utonium: (remains silent for a moment, slumped and downcast) They're not bug-eyed freaks. Their eyes are within the limits of the size of human eyes, albeit at the higher end.

Organization Director Cliff: (he smiles triumphantly, as if he has won a major victory) I'm taking it that you're settling for the status quo. Since we're on the subject of B-47 to 49, we'll need to talk about their deployment. Bellum?

Liaisons Head Bellum: Yes, sir. I've spoken with the Mayor of Townsville, but he's hesitant to deal with a, I quote, 'No good, secretive, traditions-defying agency that no one has ever heard of'. He is confident that the local police will be able to 'sort crime out' eventually, 'just as they have done time and again since Prohibition'.

Organization Director Cliff: You say that he's hesitant. Does that mean he's willing to talk?

Liaisons Head Bellum: Yes, sir, and I already did. He, I quote again, 'wants us honest and open about our affairs'. I must point out something else that is quite dire, however.

Organization Director Cliff: And what is that?

Liaisons Head Bellum: He does not believe that our solution even exists at all, and frankly, sir, I don't blame him. I wouldn't believe anyone who'd walk up to me and say that three five-year-olds are going to save a city of four million citizens from rampant crime and corruption.

Organization Director Cliff: (sighs) This is harder than I expected. Have you mentioned that the Townsville Police Department will gain the support of our security forces as well?

Liaisons Head Bellum: As a matter of course, but he thinks they're 'raisins next to a jar of pickles'.

Organization Director Cliff: What?

Liaisons Head Bellum: He's an eccentric old man. He loves his pickles, believing that it helps him think and cope. He meant that our security force is too small to add anything to his massive police force.

Organization Director Cliff: Even after our expansion phase concludes?

Liaisons Head Bellum: Even after.

Organization Director Cliff: Solutions from the floor?

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: I could have him replaced, it's only a matter of how and when: the hard way with a bullet to the brain, or the soft way, through a rigged election.

Liaisons Head Bellum: That could only raise suspicion. Mayor Walcott hasn't been defeated in an election for the past 20 years, and this isn't his first running streak. He's so popular that even the criminal underground can't get to him. News of our actions could even reach the Senate and Oval Office.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: Damn, that could blow our cover.

Organization Director Cliff: Any other bright ideas, people?

Field Researcher Utonium: (his eyes are initially closed, and he is leaning against the table, as if in sheer agony, but then he opens his eyes, and stands up as if with determination) What if we do
exactly what this Mayor Walcott wants?

Organization Director Cliff: Now isn't that a breath of fresh air, The Professor Utonium going along with my plans for once. Well, out with it. What do you mean?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Hesitantly) We bring ourselves out into the open.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Have you finally gone insane, Frankenstein? That would leave us vulnerable!

Psychiatry and S-S Department Head Alice: Professor Utonium is very much sane, Blackwater.

Field Researcher Utonium: Trust, Director. We need to earn their trust. We should stop hiding in the shadows. We're growing, aren't we? The Organization is no longer a rat, is it? It doesn't sound like you, Blackwater, that you should be afraid of a little challenge.

Chief of Security Blackwater: (Angered) You! I'm not afraid!

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: I can see some benefits in this too. Logistics wouldn't be such a huge problem if we become a publicly known agency. We won't have to worry about hiding our shipments and activities, making it much faster and easier for us to operate than before.

Field Researcher Utonium: If you want to put Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup in danger, you do it my way. (smiles at Wiggums) Besides, it's hard to keep secret three Girls who can run like cars and lift them too, especially from the reporters.

(There is a great deal of murmuring in the room)

CFO Silverslick: As much as I don't see eye to eye with this Professor Utonium, I believe a public venture could profit us. We will stand to gain unlimited freedom by operating out in the open - expect the floodgates to open in terms of opportunities, data and even cold, hard cash. We'd be an instant hit on the Public Relations side of things - and we just have to work to maintain a good image. It's not so different from running a company.

Organization Director Cliff: (with great hesitation) Fine. (pauses) Fine. We'll go public then. Any suggestions for the name?

Chief of Security Blackwater: How about 'Defense Organization'?

Organization Director Cliff: The United States Defense Organization. USDO. I like it. I'll put it under review - we still have a deployment plan to talk to about. Chief Armory Officer, what are your thoughts on equipping B-47, B-48 and B-49?

Chief Armoury Officer: Sir. I've read Professor Utonium's reports, and for one thing, it looks to me like it'd be pointless to give them any sort of personal protection. It's like they're born with Kevlar helmets and plates already installed.

Field Researcher Utonium: It think you read my reports wrong. I didn't say that the Girls are bulletproof, they just could be. The fact is, I don't know.

Chief Armoury Officer: Wait, (Flipping through papers) didn't your report state that the hardness of their body is just below that of Duranium?

Field Researcher Utonium: Hardness isn't everything, and everything else hasn't been established yet.
Organization Director Cliff: Little wonder why. You shouldn't have gone soft on the testing, Upton.

Chief Armory Officer: Kevlar helmets, goggles, vests and pads, then.

(Professor Utonium appears burdened with all sorts of emotions. He slumps in his chair again.)

Field Researcher Utonium: (Whose face appears paler than usual now) You're sending them in even if they could get gunned down?

Organization Director Cliff: If you won't test how bulletproof they are, then there's only one sure way to do it: out there where guns and bullets grow on criminals.

Field Researcher Utonium: (Appears to want to say something, but does not)

Organization Director Cliff: And what about weapons?

Chief Armory Officer: They are small, but they are strong. I can hand them some machineguns, and the kickback would be no problem. But… But their size warrants something smaller. MP5s perhaps?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Alarmed) I don't think handing guns out to the Girls is a good idea. I don't like it.

Organization Director Cliff: You don't have to like it, Utonium.

Chief of Security Blackwater: B-47, B-48 and B-49 don't need guns. That would mean training those kids in the use of firearms, kids! We'll get collateral damage, and there are already men who I don't trust with a gun in their hands. Professor Utonium's report stated that they have enough strength to carry cars. Does that mean that they can punch as hard, Upton?

Field Researcher Utonium: (reluctantly) You read it right. Yes, I suppose.

Organization Director Cliff: And what about uniforms?

Chief of Security Blackwater: I'm not going to put them in uniforms my men are wearing. I've seen the subjects. I think the professor has the right idea. He color-coded them. Makes it easy to identify them.

Field Researcher Utonium: I didn't color-code them. The Girls picked their favorite colors…

Organization Director Cliff: But what about camouflage and all that kind of combat stuff?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Camouflage is pointless at melee range, boss. (to Chief Armory Officer) make sure everything you give them is color-coded as well.

Chief Armory Officer: Sure thing.

CFO Silverslick: As long as they're well packaged for the general public.

Organization Director Cliff: Now that we've got equipment covered, what about deployment?

Liaisons Head Bellum: Sir, if I may. We could create a hotline linked between Townsville and us. The hotline can be used by all high-ranking members of their government and police force, such as the Mayor himself, the Police Chief and their immediate subordinates.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Those kiddos can be scrambled from their homes on a high-speed transport, and be within the crime scene within an hour. (to Central Motorpool Manager) Suggestions
for the vehicle itself?

Central Motorpool Manager: We can get a sports car and armor it up. Their escorts can also be provided with the same high-speed cars. I'm thinking either Ferrari or Lamborghini.

Organization Director Cliff: Why not helicopters?

Central Motorpool Manager: We don't have the landing space for it in the Townsville Suburbs, and landing space isn't guaranteed at the crime scene.

Organization Director Cliff: Make it happen. Professor Utonium?

Field Researcher Utonium: (looks up from the table, sweating)

Organization Director Cliff: How far have you trained B-47, B-48 and B-49 in all the necessary skills for policing crime? I'm talking tactics, recognizing danger and weapons, things like that.

Field Researcher Utonium: I haven't done any of that.

Organization Director Cliff: (Seething) Have you even taught them what a gun is?

Field Researcher Utonium: No. They're just-

Organization Director Cliff: Yeah, yeah, I know. You better get started immediately. Either that, or the criminals of Townsville will do it for you. I'm not slowing my plans down just so you can stay on your moral high horse. (Flips pages on his papers) CFO Silverslick, you said you have a grading system for B-47, B-48 and B-49?

CFO Silverslick: (Opens a binder file) Yes, sir. Just a little inspiration from my time in Wall Street. Debt and credit confidence is measured using a credit rating system, and I think we can apply that to our current... Investments. Based on their performance, we can increase or reduce their grades accordingly, which will represent their ability to take the funding we have invested in them, and turn it into results. This should help streamline our decision-making process.

Organization Director Cliff: I like it. Can you give me a quick overview?

CFO Silverslick: I've simplified my version from the kind used by Fitch. The grades are: Triple A (AAA), Double A (AA), A, Triple B (BBB), Double B (BB), B, Triple C (CCC), Double C (CC), C and finally Triple D (DDD), Double D (DD), D.

Organization Director Cliff: What does it all mean?

CFO Silverslick: Triple A (AAA) represents full confidence while a single D means that the subject is deemed to be completely incapable of performing to our satisfaction, and will likely not do so again in the future. I've already graded B-47 to 49 based on the reports I've been skimming through. Wanna hear it?

Organization Director Cliff: Sure.

CFO Silverslick: B-47 - Buttercup, is it? The fiery red head?

Field Researcher Utonium: Blossom.

CFO Silverslick: Right. You should be proud of her. She's still on AAA.

Field Researcher Utonium: And how did you judge that?
CFO Silverslick: Well, I dropped her to AA after she's created as a 5-year-old, but her learning ability, strength, speed and resilience had more than pushed her all the way to the top. There's almost nothing I can see that will reduce my confidence in her. If there were more grades above Triple A (AAA), I would have given them to her. It's the same for B-48… urm… Bubbles, was it?


CFO Silverslick: Yeah, that's the thing. My system is also comparative. Bubbles isn't doing so hot right now. She's only shown herself to be inferior in every way compared to our two other… Investments. She started at Double A (AA) at birth, dropped to A because of her 'learning difficulties', then Triple B (BBB) when she seem weaker than the others, Double B (BB) when she's seemingly more easily winded than the others, goes back up to Triple B (BBB) when she's shown to be as resilient as her sister products, but loses it again in her second strength test, going down to Double B (BB). In your latest report, you stated her to still be developmentally stunted compared to her… Sister Investments, as well as the most emotionally vulnerable. Also, she's still wetting herself. Now she's at Double C (CC).

Field Researcher Utonium: If that's how lowly you think of her, you're wrong. Your system still needs work, Silverslick. How does Buttercup get a Triple A (AAA) grading? She's been showing early signs of immoral behavior I've been trying to correct.

CFO Silverslick: I'm glad you asked, friend. You see, our… Investments are crime-fighting human platforms, right? Being a liar and knowing how to lie, or at least not reveal the truth, would be an asset to a crime-fighting product, and is good in my books.

Field Researcher Utonium: (shaking his head in disbelief) So tell me, 'friend'. What happens if Bubbles goes all the way down to D?

CFO Silverslick: In the case of companies getting that kind of credit rating, they will likely lose investors, default and go bankrupt. In the case of B-49, well… It's not my call what exactly happens, but I wouldn't want to put any more cash into a failed product. It's just business.

Field Researcher Utonium: (Agitated) What, you're going to kill her?

CFO Silverslick: I didn't say that, I just said that I wouldn't put any more cash into a failed product.

Organization Director Cliff: (To Professor Utonium) I'm sure it wouldn't come to that - as long as you do what is necessary for B-49's well-being. (To CFO Silverslick) You have my full endorsement to implement the grading system.

Field Researcher Utonium: (Shoots up from his chair suddenly and raises his voice feebly) You know, I think I'll take your advice, 'sir', and take some time to recuperate. Away from here. Do you need anything else before I leave?

Organization Director Cliff: No. You may go. And professor?

(Professor Utonium turns to face Organization Director Cliff sluggishly)

Organization Director Cliff: Don't take too long to rest, or your 'Girls' will have to forego your 'fatherly' advice for their maiden mission.

Field Researcher Utonium: I don't need your advice on how to be a father. (Leaves)

(The rest of the meeting is carried out without Field Researcher Utonium, mainly concerning alternative research options, agency restructuring and streamlining, as well as possible inter-agency...
cooperation)

END TRANSCRIPT
Chapter 17: Purpose

The City of Townsville. Tenement Area. Joe's Convenience Store.

6 DEC 1988. 2341.

When a strange figure in a trench coat entered his joint, Joe did not think to look twice at him. Instead, he returned to his fashion model magazine. Those half-naked girls on paper had been his sole obsession for the past hour. Then it struck him - the man in a trench coat looked weirder than normal. Sure, strange people were always patronizing his store, but whatever he saw just now, drifting through the doors, took the cake. He remembered a short figure, probably that of a regular Chinese fellow, but…

He remembered a paper bag where there should be a head. A paper bag for a head… Dropping his half-naked girls, he reached down for his shotgun, taking it by the handle, then cocked it, peering into the chamber. Loaded. Good. He was always prepared for the day - Townsville had become Crimesville over the course of two decades - he could only remember a clean Townsville from his dreamy childhood. He had been robbed multiple times, and each time prepared him for the next one, until today, when he kept a 12-gauge shotgun under his counter. The only reason why he hadn't skipped town to set up shop in another was because he knew no other home, did not have the cash to do so and… The Mayor. Mayor Walcott, despite being in office for as long as Townsville had entered its two decades long slump and rise of vice, had inspired him. He had seen Townsville through a golden age before that, and continued to be hard on crime after, never giving up, not even when he was all shrivelled up and far beyond retirement age.

"Hello?" he called out, cautiously exiting his place behind the cashing machine. "Anyone there?"

The only answer to his question was the crinkling of plastic. He followed it, crossing from aisle to aisle. When he was close to the aisle where his shop was being raided, he hid behind the head of the shelves with his shotgun at the ready. "Mister, are you shopping or shoplifting?"

No answer except the sound of metal bending under weight. Jumping out of his cover, he pointed his shotgun downrange, only to be met with thin air. Nothing. But something was definitely amiss - someone had taken quite a number of bags of chips and peanuts, and the shoplifter was nowhere to be found. "Where the hell?"

That was when Joe heard breathing - not far away as it should be, but somewhere near him. He looked up at the shelf he was next to just as the metal there had bent and creaked under heavy weight as well, just as Trench Coat Man appeared on top of it. "What da hell?"
It wasn't even a man. It would be more accurate to call him a monkey. A chimp. Except a little bigger than how it was supposed to be. Before he could swivel around and point his shotgun at the creature, the large chimp jumped on him, bashing him in the face. He crashed into a neighbouring shelf, and before he could even think to counter-attack, he was out cold.

Trench Coat Man turned out to be Jojo, in heavy disguise. Dropping from the top of the shelves, he approached the man he had just knocked unconscious. In one hand, he held a basket full of chips and nuts, and he shoved the other into the insides of his trench coat, unslipping a shotgun pilfered from the most hated Organization's armory.

Yet, the look of the man gave him pause. He seemed more innocent than the Bad Men in the Organization who wanted to kill him. His mannerism had advertised that. The shopkeeper had warned him beforehand, and Jojo could tell from his voice that he didn't wish to kill. Professor Utonium, the scientist he hailed as his father, popped into mind. His sagely words were as clear as day, even clearer so because of the photographic memory Chemical X had given him.

"Jojo must listen to Utonium. Jojo must follow his teachings, instructions and words," he mumbled to himself, repeating with numerous synonyms - a verbal tic he had gained from devouring the dictionary and thesaurus Professor Utonium had so generously provided him with while he was put into captivity after the accident that mutilated him.

In the end, Jojo returned his shotgun back into the darkness of his trenchcoat. Instead, he pulled some dollar bills and coins from a pocket and laid them down next to the shopkeeper. What he gave wasn’t enough; the Chimpanzee had absorbed enough knowledge of currency to know, but he thought it was enough as an apology.

Without wasting anymore time, Jojo went back to taking what food he could. He chided himself for making an obvious error in his raid; taking the food that his impulse craved, rather than the food he needed. He was still trying to get used to his animal side, his resolve untested by the cold and unnatural environment of a cell, whether it was in the Organization HQ or Charlie-02. To this end, he took a second basket and filled it with as many instant-burgers, sandwiches, bananas and mineral water as he could cram into the plastic container.

Salvaging a roll of duct tape from the human repository, specifically the hardware corner, he taped together the two baskets he had filled with supplies, careful not to let anything spill, and made an improvised plastic crate, which would ease his return journey. Having been living on a scarcity-based subsistence existence as a semi-nomadic urban scavenger, he couldn't help but to grab what he could on his way out and stuff them inside his pocket, things that even his enhanced brain did not, could not process in his haste.

A male human in a winter coat who was just coming in gave a shout of surprise as he raced out into the open and down the street. He had been detected, and his estimates made the probability of an armed response very likely. Weaving through the tenement area on a pre-planned route, he had anticipated this.

Disappearing into an alleyway, he set his plastic crate down by a manhole and removed the cover. He jumped in after that. Pulling a mini-flashlight out of a breast pocket, he shone his way towards his hideout.

He had chosen the sewage system as his residence because of the heat. There was literally no other place that could shield him from the winter… Or at least, there was no other place that could give him warmth and safety both.

Despite the smell of human fecal matter, despite the dirty snow-water he was forced to drink and the
trash that surrounded him, he preferred the sewers over the Organization facilities. For at least here, he could bide his time. He could rest.

The past week had been a struggle. He had spent days crossing the Pokey Oaks countryside, evading Organization hunting parties in the snow, fighting the cold more than the humans pursuing him while lugging his precious equipment and supplies - the trench coat he salvaged from one of the dead security officers' belongings was hardly enough. Thank Utonium for his improved physical strength and resilience. He couldn't have survived the pistol shot one of the human females had given him while he was fighting for his freedom and to avenging his fellow Chimpanzees if it weren't for it.

And then he'd ended up in what the humans called a 'city', where unnaturally thick trees of steel and concrete dominated the geometric forest. It was only in the cover of darkness that he dared approach it, and even then, the city's street lights and hordes of pedestrians and cars kept him from making a direct approach. He discovered very early on that even the alleys of the city were unsafe for him to make camp in. The buildings he infiltrated were crawling with even more humans, and so he settled for the sewers.

For days more, he scouted the underbelly of the city, sewers and tenement area both. In the sewers, he discovered little sign of human habitation, and above, too many. With his supplies long gone for a day and his stomach rumbling, he focused his entire being into identifying any human food storage facilities he could find - and found that they usually came with odd names like 'Abdul's Mini-Mart' or 'Walmart' or '7-11' instead of something like 'Supply Storage 3' or 'Organic Perishables B'. He began his raids on his second day of starvation, at midnight… And found his targets to be so much easier than disabling an Organization outpost. As a Chimpanzee enhanced with Chemical W, his understanding of the human world revolved only around the Organization, and with the accident that was Chemical X, his understanding had expanded, but still insufficiently, with only Professor Utonium as his source of information on the outside world.

His veritable father had told him that humans live in tribes of millions, and that they were guarded by thousands upon thousands of security officers. He had spoken of humanity with much optimism, focusing on the good in them - his fight with criminals in the very first alley he explored told him a different story. It seemed as if everything Professor Utonium had told him was proven false - but it didn't even dent his belief in the professor. 'Perhaps he was mistaken, misled, lied to?' was Jojo's consensus. 'Trapped and cornered as he was in the laboratory like me, Jojo.'

Thus, Jojo devised a routine for himself, a routine he found as natural as it could be to an animal (albeit an elevated one) in an artificial, human environment. Yet, there were other kinds of hunger and thirst that peanuts, mineral water and the heat, carried in by human fecal matter, could not satisfy.

Primarily, his lust for revenge. It felt incomplete with the destruction of Organization outpost Charlie-02. If he had his way, he wouldn't have stopped there. In a perfect world, he would have destroyed every Organization facility, killed every single one of their members, especially their security personnel. Perhaps all but one.

Professor Utonium. Secondarily but most important of all, Jojo wanted to reunite with his father or at least find out where he was, if reunification was impossible immediately. Ever since his escape, he could only dream of the worse fates possible for the father. In his nightmares, he saw the professor carried into an incineration chamber, burnt to cinders to be scattered to the wind, as if he never existed before. He would cry on waking up; only, Chimpanzees couldn't shed tears.

Yet, it felt like an impossible task. For resources, he had only enough food to last him a couple of days, three shotguns and a few boxes of shells, pistols he couldn't use - their bullets made starting a campfire easy, however - and a bunch of documents that spoke of where Professor Utonium could
possibly be. Not only that, but those documents also spoke of how the professor had begotten more
children now, which brought only sorrow to his heart.

Jojo had seen pictures of those children, read reports of them. It seemed as if the professor had
forsaken him for them. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, as his father called the girls. But he
wouldn't know for certain, dared not think the worse of him, not until he saw it for himself. Yet, a
city and the Organization stood between him and his father, and the latter was guarding the professor
and the Organizations' new prizes closely.

It would be much easier to just lie down, roll over and wait for death.

That was, until They visited him.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium does the unthinkable.

Chapter 18: An Extra Ingredient

Chapter Summary

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


By the time they got home, it was already past dinner time. Despite his body crying out for sustenance, the message was lost before it reached Professor Utonium's mind, blocked by the sad state of affairs he had heard about in the week 2 general meeting.

He remained relatively silent even in the car, even when the Girls were practically bouncing around inside, talking about what they had done in Organization Charlie-01 (not that they knew what the place was called).

At least the Girls were in higher spirits, except for perhaps Buttercup. Something was going on with her again, but then again, something was always going on with her. When they got out of the SUV, Blossom and Bubbles were racing into the House. Buttercup had joined the professor again, with her frown for company.

"What's wrong, Buttercup?" the professor asked, then coughed. Another dry cough.

"Nothing, Daddy. I'm sorry. I'll try to look happier next time," Buttercup simply said. The truth had been more complicated than that.

"I want you to be yourself. You can tell me, you know. That's what fathers do. They listen," Professor Utonium coaxed.

"Dad, you're walking really slow. Are you okay?" Buttercup changed the subject.

"I'm... Fine," the professor lied. That made the two of them. By now, even Buttercup could tell that something was wrong, though she decided not to pursue it because she had taken it as fact that her father was invulnerable. "Can you come closer a little though? I think I need to lean on you a little."

"Gladly, Daddy-o," Buttercup opened up unexpectedly, and got up next to him. Although the girl was little more than forty inch tall, Professor Utonium was able to rest a hand on her shoulder, without the insanely powerful girl sagging even slightly. "You feel really hot..."

"Where did you learn that from?" the professor asked, his turn to change the subject. Buttercup had always been the headstrong, precocious one, where Blossom was the smart one, who excelled in whatever rail he'd put her on. Buttercup excelled instead in going off the rails.
"Oh, one of your friends taught me that," Buttercup said. "I think it sounds cool."

The professor didn’t say it, but he resented it. After the meeting had ended back in Charlie-01, he had gone to find the Girls back in the security wing. Naturally, he had expected to find them in the 'fun room', either still swimming in the ball pit or bouncing in the air-filled castle.

He had basically flipped out when they were not there. When one of the security officers came up to him, he'd screamed at him and demanded to see his Girls immediately, at the same time accusing Security of abducting the Girls, slugging the officer who was trying to calm him down. He never knew he had that kind of strength in him, especially when he wasn't at his best.

It took three security officers and a SWAT officer to restrain him and bring him to the cafeteria, where a few undercover plainclothes were feeding them sandwiches from a vending machine. He still remembered what they were munching on. Blossom had chosen tuna, Bubbles egg mayo and lettuce and Buttercup took ham and cheese. They each had a cup of water beside them.

'You see, Agent Utonium? No need to resort to violence there,' one of the officers had said.

'Don't mistake the gesture for kindness though,' one of the undercover officers had told him out of earshot of the Girls. 'We were just preventing a Meltdown-3 event that could result in casualties. The subjects said they were hungry and we fed and watered them.'

He knew he had to check on the Girls later. There was no telling what the security officers had done to the Girls.

Buttercup had her own secrets to keep, skeletons in the closet that kept increasing in number. At the cafeteria, she had noticed the men in thick clothes and hard hats not too far away from her, shaking their heads as they spoke. Out of curiosity, she had extended her hearing range once more to eavesdrop.

She didn't have long to listen in, however, because one of the men, who introduced themselves as her Daddy's friends, had interrupted her, saying that she appeared to have 'zoned out'. But what she heard sounded bad. Something to do with them being 'bug-eyed freaks' and something about a 'meltdown event' - she didn't quite understand, but the tone of the men's voice wasn't good. She had heard the same words being said as when Wiggums had visited them. They were 'experiments' and 'subjects'. What does it all mean? Buttercup still had no idea, but it sounded ominous, and she couldn't just ask Daddy, because he knew and didn't tell her, which meant that somehow, he was involved.

Despite his guilt being largely established, Buttercup couldn't bring herself to hate him. After all, he had been selfless in taking care of her, and she knew the word for it too. He had been there ever since she thought the bedroom was the entire world, and even as her capacity to feel as her sisters do dwindled, he remained her only source of comfort.

Back at home, Blossom and Bubbles had taken the initiative and turned on the TV. By the time Professor Utonium and Buttercup was inside, they were already watching a cartoon about some fairy tale land with magical ponies. Buttercup joined them.

"Girls, I'll be making dinner. What would you like to have?" the professor asked.

"Anything, Daddy," Bubbles said distractedly.

"Yeah, anything, Daddy," Blossom repeated, equally mesmerized by the flying Pegasi in their little magic box. Even Buttercup had to concede that the cartoon was pretty amazing, and she was soon
absorbed as her sisters were.

"I wish I can fly," Bubbles hoped.

"Don't be silly, Bubbles. If people can fly, we wouldn't need cars," Buttercup chided.

The professor didn't reply, and the Girls didn't seem to mind. As soon as he entered the House, dark thoughts had entered his mind, even darker still than what had been haunting him in the car. It felt as if the world was melting, after what was being said and done at Organization Outpost Charlie-01. It had all already been hard enough that the Organization was pushing him to conduct more and more tests on the Girls, and that he had to lie to them on a daily basis, keep them ignorant of what was really going on. And now, they were going to expose them to things that little girls shouldn't be exposed to.

They were going to sell Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup to a city that couldn't manage its own problems. They were going to put them in the same room with hardened criminals and psychopaths. They would go to places where only the wicked or the most heroic of adults would dare venture to. They would learn about things long before they should, things that could only darken their souls and steal the sparkle from their eyes.

And they were going to suffer, as no little girls should. In his mind, he saw the Girls getting gunned down on the streets, shrapnel and bullets tearing at them. His incomplete view of the Girls' resilience completed the picture; perhaps they were resistant to bullets, but even kevlar could fail easily to the tens of thousands of Newtons of force a bullet could put out. Bones could break under that kind of force even if the kevlar held. He remembered how Bloome, his late daughter, had suffered in an explosion caused by Foundation agents, how her body was torn apart and burnt by chemical fire, and how she suffered for days until she left the world for the great unknown.

It was all too much. He had been thinking about it ever since the day's meeting was over. The ghosts of Christmas past, present and future had been haunting him, following him ever since he boarded the SUV, even before that.

Professor Utonium was resolved not to let it happen again. But he knew that a small little nobody of a scientist wasn't able to do much. Lord knows he had tried, tried really hard to keep the Girls safe. In the meeting, he thought that getting the Organization to open up as a publicly-known agency would dissuade them from deploying the Girls in Townsville. He thought wrong... which meant that there was only one way for the Girls to avoid all that pain and suffering. He could feel himself shutting down from two weeks of overwork, exhaustion and sickness, but by God, he was going to push himself to do this one thing.

Going into the kitchen, he whipped up three bowls of porridge, putting them on the stove. While it was heating up, he went to the nearest washroom, opened the medicine cabinet, and took out an entire box of sleeping pills. As a doctor, he knew exactly how much would work - half a pill would put a 5-year-old to sleep really soundly, and there were thirty of them in the box.

Putting it by the stove, he waited for the porridge to be ready. A single tear drop dripped from his eyes, but he wasn't going to botch it up. Wiping it away, he reminded himself that it was all for the better, and no one was going to hurt them again.

"Dad, I'm still worried about you," Buttercup's voice came from in between the living room and kitchen, shocking the professor. Her eyes went down from his face to the box by the stove. She couldn't read yet, but she thought it seemed out of place. It didn't look like something edible.

"I'm fine, honey. Go back to your sisters. Dinner's almost ready," the professor said, putting on the
most cheerful tone possible.

"Are you sure, Daddy?" Buttercup asked again.

"Yes, I'm very sure," he said, before forcing a smile.

"Oh, okay..." the ravenette said, before turning around and walking away.

Professor Utonium tried to make the best possible porridge for them: Eggs, bacon and everything nice. And then he added a little extra ingredients to the concoction: Sleeping pills. Ten of them to each bowl, making sure to ground them down first into fine powder before mixing them into the meals. This way, the taste of the bitter pills would be invisible, and the Girls wouldn't suspecting a thing, completing the illusion of the perfect family dinner.

"Dinner's ready," he said. The Girls were almost flying over to the kitchen when he said so.

"I'm starving!" Buttercup shouted in delight. "Wow, Dad! It looks good!"

"You're always doing the best for us," Blossom said. They sat down around the table. They had long since abandoned the baby chairs when they had gained full use of their bodies.

"I love you, Daddy," Bubbles added.

"I love you three too," he said, as he watched his Girls eating their final meals, holding back his tears desperately. The only reason he could do so was that he believed they were better off this way.

"Aren't you eating, Daddy-o?" Buttercup said in the middle of the meal.

"I'm not hungry," he said, becoming distant. 'So it all came down to this,' he thought. 'So much for a second chance at life. So much for love. The Organization screws everything up.'

It didn't take long for the Girls to finish their meal, with Buttercup finishing last, perhaps because she was putting on her best behavior out of a sense of competition, exaggerating her table manners.

It was only a matter of time now. Next, he considered how he could end it for himself. The pistol in his bedroom, on the roof of the wardrobe, came to mind.

The Girls yawned.

"I'm tired," Blossom said.

"Yeah," Buttercup echoed.

"Me too," Bubbles added.

"Must have been a long day," the professor lied - well, it was technically true. "You Girls had lots of fun, right?"

"Yes," they said in harmony.

"Come on, Girls, let's get into bed," he said before standing up. The Girls did the same, and he shepherded them up the stairs. They were yawning all the way to their room.

"But... What about a bath?" Bubbles asked, before yawning again.

"Maybe tomorrow," the professor said, in a low tone, looking really down. "You can take as long a
bath as you want tomorrow."

"Shouldn't we change?" Blossom asked, but she had answered her own question as she yawned again.

They each hopped into bed, in their designated positions, with Blossom at the centre, Bubbles to the left and Buttercup to the right. The professor thought it fitting, that they should go to sleep looking their finest, in their party dresses.

The professor tucked them in, and gave Bubbles her favorite doll, Octi. He sat down on the story-reading chair, then decided that he should do something more. After all, it was the last time he'd be doing it. He went over to the storybook shelf, and retrieved a book, before returning to his seat beside them.

He knew that they hadn't fallen asleep yet. Blossom turned a little. They were still breathing.

"How about a bedtime story?" the professor said, unsure if he would even get a reply. There wasn't one immediately.

"Sure, Daddy," Buttercup said, her eyes shut and probably impossible to open.

"Thanks Dad. Love you," Bubbles said weakly.

And so Professor Utonium read them 'The Ugly Duckling'. But before the titular swan chick could turn into a swan, the Girls were no longer responding with weird, delirious questions. Tears were flowing down the professor's cheeks as he loomed over them. They were no longer moving, like logs that were dead. He didn't know how long he sat there. He didn't even look at the clock. He didn't dare, not for a while. But after some time, he glanced up at the Kitty-clock on the wall, and realized that he had sat there in catatonia for a couple of hours. It was coming to 11 in the night.

"Oh, my baby Girls," the professor cried as he knelt down beside Bubbles, taking her hand and pressing it against his face, wetting it with his tears. She was non-responsive. "I'm so sorry."

But he had to make sure. Of all the things he shouldn't mess up, he had to make sure that this wasn't it. Placing two fingers on Bubbles' neck, he tried to feel for a pulse. It was still strong. He then held his fingers over her nose. Still breathing.

The pills didn't work. With whatever little capacity he had left for science, he thought that it was the same case as with the anaesthetic he had pumped into the Girls when he tested them for the Mohs rating of their skin and flesh. It took almost a hundred times the amount to anaesthetize them. He had merely given them twenty times the dosage of sleeping pills that would put a 5-year-old child to sleep, effectively a fraction of a sleeping pill when compensating for their resistance. How they had fallen asleep over a fraction of a sleeping pill could only be put down to the time of day, their already-present exhaustion and perhaps a lack of resistance to the drug due to first-time usage.

Gingerly, he went out of the room and into his own. Tiptoeing, he groped for his pistol on the roof of the wardrobe. Eventually, he felt the grip of the pistol and pulled it out. He knew how to use the weapon. The Organization had a mandatory self-defence course for every of its member. Pulling the magazine out, he checked for rounds. It was full. 15 rounds. He reinserted the magazine and pulled the slide, turning the safety off.

Returning to the Girl's room, he once again stood looming over them. They were soundly asleep, with smiles on their faces. He trained his pistol first at Bubbles, his arms shaking wildly at the thought of splattering her brains against the very bed he bought them. It would be a messier way to
go compared to the sleeping pills.

Then he saw the smiles again, and remembered the happiness they'd brought him, and the happiness they said he had brought them. Despite it all, there was light in the darkness.

"What am I doing?" Professor Utonium said, dismayed at his own actions, lowering his gun. "What have I done?"

"What kind of a father am I?" the professor lamented, regretting the thoughts he'd have of killing his own Girls, his attempt on their lives for their supposed benefit. "I've lost myself. I've become exactly the kind of person the Organization wants me to be." Tears flowed freely from his eyes. He sobbed uncontrollably as he left the room.

Sick to the core, he left the room, and travelled for a time, in shock and daze, down to his lab. There, he sat on his desk, sick of himself such that he preferred it that he stayed as far away from Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup as possible.

"What have I become?" he questioned himself again as he sat there, dazed. At that time, all his fears, all his misdeeds and lies and dark things were swirling in his mind. He then coughed non-stop, and nearly vomited. Everything seemed to be coming to a head, and when he tried to stand up, he felt a wave of numbness spreading over him, his vision blurring. Breathing felt impossible, and the extra heat in his body unbearable. He fell over on the lab floor instead, unconscious. His gun clattered on the ground.
Chapter 19: Naga

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Jojo meets a powerful ally, and establishes his purpose.

Chapter 19: Naga

The City of Townsville. Tenement Area. Sewers.

7 DEC 1988. 0240.

Tossing and turning, pulling at his trench coat, which he had to use as a blanket, Jojo had tried his best to sleep. He had managed only about two hours before the nightmares came once more, jolting him awake. Used to it, he had tried to go back to sleep, but drowsiness was slow to come. Yelping angrily in frustration, he got up, and leaned against the filthy wall of his hideout - a small corner of the sewers, largely untouched by water or human waste, or at least in more recent days.

That was when he heard footsteps in the darkness. He knew what it meant. It was either an Organization hunting party, or retribution from the city. He snatched up one of his shotgun with blinding speed, pumping it to load a shell. His nostrils flared with anticipation for blood and violence as he breathed in and out heavily, psyching himself up for a battle, summoning the primal aggression of his close ancestors.

"Alert. Testy. Battle-hardened. I like that," a female voice said from the dark. The silhouette of a figure stood just beyond Jojo's visible range. There wasn't much light from the above that could penetrate into the sewers, and the mutated chimp's enhanced night vision could only do so much. It wasn't an ability he identify with.

Jojo did not entertain the voice. But he was curious - thus far, he had established that very few humans would want to go down to the sewers with their excrement, unless they were desperate like he was. Yet, this one did. Coming closer, the silhouette revealed herself more and more, until a woman in a trench coat and trilby could be seen. White, brunette, amber eyes - Jojo ran through the ways a human would identify another.

"You can put your gun down. Jojo," the woman said. That she had called him by his name did not go unnoticed. When she was in the light, Jojo had plenty of time to try to identify her. But she wasn't anyone he had met before, not in the Organization HQ, and certainly not in Charlie-02.

"And why should I do that? What reason do I have to listen to you and therefore do what you ask?" Jojo questioned the stranger, leaving her advice unheeded. "How did you know my name? Where have you heard of my name? Speak up! I wish to know where you have gathered the intelligence to utter my name!"

"Why, how rude of me. Of course," the woman obliged. Stepping closer to the mutated chimp, as if unafraid of the shotgun and the chimp behind the gun, she made herself clearly visible. "I am Naga. I
represent the Foundation, and we know many things. We have our sources, especially when it comes to you who is important to us. I come to you with nothing but friendship and gifts, both of which you will never get from the Organization."

"And how do I know that you are not lying to me? Which is to say, deceiving me, pulling my leg and backstabbing me?" Jojo interrogated the woman further, still keeping his shotgun up. "How do I know that you are not part of the Organization, those bad men, sent here to kill me, to terminate me as they call It?"

"Because I could have killed you now, and I didn't," the woman claimed, her eyes, piercing and amber, staring into his, conveying both threat and respect. Yet, it seemed like a fairy tale to the chimpanzee. The woman seemed so passive, so vulnerable, the way she stood there, facing the nozzle of his shotgun, with her arms folded behind her back.

"That is rich, bombastic, utterly ridiculous! I am the one with the gun, I hold the power over you, I am in control!" Jojo said, his words stretching far, shaking his pilfered shotgun at the woman.

"You endanger yourself with your own overconfidence," Naga countered, then ordered vaguely: "Lights!"

Immediately upon her command, beams of laser light, ominously red, were immediately switched on, painting little red dots on Jojo's trench coat, far more honest than their source. The chimpanzee counted about eight beams in all. They were coming from behind Naga, from the darkness of the sewers behind, hardly swaying at all thanks to disciplined hands.

"I could have killed you in your sleep, Jojo," Naga declared. Taking off her Trilby, she revealed a tight bun beneath it. Next, she began unbuttoning her trench coat. "But I didn't. Because we're the same."

"If you intend to use your human feminine wiles to seduce me and put me under your spell, you will fail miserably, utterly and completely," Jojo said, his shotgun still up. "I am not attracted or enticed even remotely to your kind and species."

"Don't flatter yourself, Jojo," Naga said, undoing the last buttons of her trench coat and shrugging it off. A lantern lit up behind her, revealing what she had underneath: four arms on shoulders close to each other, and four swords on her belt. Four pistols in four holsters decorated her stomach and solar plexus area. She was wearing some kind of form-fitting skin suit, which looked like it could provide a degree of protection. Behind her, a group of not eight soldiers, but twelve, stood behind her, equipped and clothed without any semblance of uniformity. They were armed with an assortment of rifles and submachineguns, with the only similarity being the laser aiming device. "I told you. We're the same."

"What- Who are you?" Jojo uttered, completely taken by surprise. He finally lowered his shotgun, overwhelmed like never before by a whirlpool of emotions he never felt before that he could hardly make any sense of it. Awe and fear. Familiarity and aversion of the unknown.

"Years ago, they took me from a federal prison. They experimented on me, all in the name of the greater good. They twisted me into something I am not, then they called me a freak, an unhinged psychopath who they should never have used. They tried to kill me… They failed," the woman told her story. If there were any emotions behind it, it was long gone, buried by piles of rotting corpses. "Does any of that sound familiar to you?"

Jojo would be lying if he said he couldn't relate. On the surface, their stories were one and the same.
"You offer me friendship and gifts, and by that, an alliance and material goods, I assume. But tell me," Jojo negotiated, still not entirely at ease. The soldiers behind her were still fidgety, giving him the look. "What do you wish of me? I know enough of humanity to know that nothing is ever given freely, at no charge, but is merely currency, a trade, for something of equal, or similar, value."

"You sure have a way with words, do you?" Naga said, before stretching all four of her arms out as a sign of welcome. "But you're misunderstanding us. We are nothing like the Organization. I simply ask that we band together under a common cause, nothing more."

"And what would that be?" Jojo asked, still cautious of being betrayed.

"Why, the destruction of the Organization, of course!" Naga said as she raised her top two arms with much relishing, as though she could already envision the day when that would happen. "And the guarantee that the rest of humanity will never harm us again! For that, there is much that needs to be done…"

Jojo placed a hand on his nearly non-existent chin, seemingly to think about it. He rolled his eyes around, sideways, up, then back again, doing calculations in his head, estimations, considering all possible scenarios.

"You make a very tempting offer, an enticing one at that," Jojo commented, before sticking out a hand. "But no! At least, not yet, for there is something else that needs tending to, that I must do, for I must complete it before I will ever have the peace of mind to pursue any higher goals, such as the destruction and complete annihilation of the Organization."

"Why, of course, my monkey friend." Naga agreed, but was interrupted by Jojo.

"Chimpanzee. Pan Troglodyte. There's a big difference," Jojo corrected her.

"Yes, slip of a tongue. For that, I apologize," the four-armed woman said, waving her two right hands. "But I will not dictate the terms of our friendship so strictly. You may go do as you wish. I'm simply asking that you consider my offer seriously. In fact, I can even help you with whatever task you have to do. Whatever you need, I can provide."

"I need to see my father. My sire. My parent," Jojo said, his eyes suddenly distant.

"The Utonium, is it? Yes, a great man. A merciful, soft-hearted man. A stupid man despite his genius, whose naivety will be the death of him," Naga said, and the moment she said it, Jojo's primate face had changed expression. The mutated chimp could not help but to bare his fangs.

"You are not to harm him!" Jojo burst out screaming quite suddenly. Lunging forward in primal rage, but Naga did not back away or so much as flinch, not even for an inch. "You are not to hurt, injure him! Not even a hair on his scalp! If you were to assist me, to help me, you will do it my way and my way absolutely!"

"As you wish… Friend," Naga complied, a patronizing smile spreading on her face. She held out one of her right hands.

"I will call you a friend, a comrade, an ally, after I see my father… And after you demonstrate your honesty, that is to say, your trustworthiness," Jojo said, but took Naga's hand anyway, shaking it.
Chapter 20: Absence

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls woke up only to find that something had drastically changed.

Chapter 20: Absence

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 0744.

Soon after the sun's ray crept up on the Girls, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup woke up one after the other, in close succession. Whether they knew it or not, they had the tendency to synchronize their actions at times. Blossom stretched her arms out, yawning once more, just as she did last night after taking ten sleeping pills unknowingly. Buttercup cracked her back, and yawned as well. Bubbles stared out the window, feeling that something was off.

"What a sleep…" Blossom said. Despite lacking an awareness of how time was measured, she could feel its passage. Her hands went up to her hair, but she felt that it was still in good shape.

"Yeah, I feel really good," Buttercup said as she jumped out of bed. "The porridge must have been really good."

"But we slept really long…” Bubbles commented.

"Yeah. We usually play after dinner, but we slept instead…” Blossom reasoned, but thought nothing more of it; her vast intellectual potential remained untapped, and so couldn't be brought to bear on the suspicious.

According to their routine, they had to wait for Daddy to come in, and he would help them with their morning rituals - brushing their teeth, taking a bath. So they waited… And waited. They began playing with their toys, Bubbles with Octi and her company of soft toys, Buttercup with her vehicles, and Blossom with her building blocks.

For 15 minutes they waited, then it became half an hour. Soon, it was an hour, and the Girls grew increasingly worried. And hungry. And thirsty. And 12 hours of sleep had already taken its toll, even if it did refresh them.

"Where's Daddy?” Blossom asked her sisters, as if they knew the answer, even though she knew vaguely that they did not. Her concentration had lapsed from bodily neglect and her tower had fallen; to her, it was a bad sign, even though her tower had always fallen. Perhaps it was the fact that they had fallen faster repeatedly, even though she gave her best.

"I don't know…” Bubbles stated the obvious. The blonde had lost interest in her dolls, such that she'd left them to their own devices at the tea table. Her worry and bodily needs were overwhelming her want to play. "I'm scared."
Buttercup, growing impatient, swept her cars and trucks off the pink kiddy table she was sitting at in a fit of anger. Bubbles jumped at her impulse. Blossom observed Buttercup with some contempt, as well as worry. Her green-eyed sister wasn't anything like herself and Bubbles at all, and she remembered that it hadn't always been that way. "My stomach hurts! Where's Daddy!"

"We have to look for him," Blossom declared, standing up and walking away from her building blocks, towards Bubbles and her tea party.

"Yeah… I'm all icky and smelly," Bubbles said, then looked down at herself. "And we're still wearing yesterday's dress."

"Oh. I forgot about that," Buttercup added. As if needing clarification, she pulled at the hem of her dress. Yep. It was yesterday's party dress - and her senses weren't deceiving her.

"Maybe he's still asleep?" Blossom aired her theory.

"But… He's always here when we wake up," Bubbles countered.

"Can we just go look for him? I'm starving!" Buttercup pushed them.

"Alright. Follow me," Blossom said as she took the initiative and went for the door. Bubbles followed behind her timidly, and Buttercup brought up the rear reluctantly - she never liked Blossom for the way she loved to boss her around, but there was no time to show her exactly how she felt this time.

Reaching up, Blossom twisted the door knob and opened the door. Looking out into the corridor, the thought of going out unsupervised still scared her. Her siblings felt the same too. It wasn't that they were incapable of walking around on their own. It was just that Daddy was always there, just in case. Daddy's presence had always felt good. It felt good to be loved, and cared for. But he wasn't here anymore.

Together, they formed a line and made their way to Professor Utonium's room. As usual, Blossom twisted the door knob and pushed the door open. Inside, they'd expected to find their father in bed, snoring or tossing and turning as he slept. Or talking in his sleep, always feverishly so, and intensely so.

But the bed was bare. The sight of the empty bed drove Bubbles to tears. Daddy had never been this far before. "W-where's Daddy!?" she cried as she crumpled to the ground. "Where is he!?"

"Bubbles! Quit crying! We haven't searched the whole house yet!" Buttercup chided.

"Girls, please, we have to keep moving," Blossom said, starting to sound a little like Daddy when the parental void needed filling. She pulled Bubbles up on her feet, and took Buttercup by the hand, egging them on to keep searching. Buttercup wormed her hand out of Blossom's.

"I know what to do, Bloss," Buttercup said, offended.

They searched the upper floor, including the washroom and spare rooms. They turned up nothing. No clues at all, and certainly no Daddy.

"He must be downstairs," Blossom surmised.

"It's not like him to leave us alone like this," Bubbles cried in despair, wayward tears still dripping.

Buttercup said nothing more. In her mind, she was thinking dark thoughts, things that no little girls
should have to think about. Conspiracies played out in her mind, even though she didn't even know the word for it. She'd heard things on two occasions now. They were experiments. Subjects. As if they belonged in the lab. True realization was far away, still, but she understood the negative connotations.

Going down the stairs, they canvassed the living room. Then Blossom had an epiphany.

"Bubbles, Buttercup. What if we… I don't know, break up? Go our own way? We'll find Daddy faster that way," she proposed. It was based on a game they had played before with the professor. Hide and seek, it was called. Only, they had played it in their own room. Now, they had to apply it to a much larger area.

"Good idea…" Buttercup hated to admit it, but she did. Bubbles merely nodded.

"Bubbles, you go down to the lab," Blossom ordered. "Buttercup-"

"I'm taking the kitchen," Buttercup volunteered rather than be bossed around again.

"And the office, Buttercup. I'll go to the laundry room and backyard," Blossom finished up, but when she did, the three Girls simply stared at each other. "Well? Go!"

And they were off. Owing to the emergency (as well as the gnawing sensation of hunger and thirst), they each decided on their own to break their father's speed limit rule, running at super-speed to expedite the search. Blossom disappeared into the laundry room, Bubbles blinked to the front of the lab blast door, but had difficulty opening it because she hadn't done it before, while Buttercup sped into the kitchen.

But something else was on Buttercup's mind. Professor Utonium had discarded something the night before yesterday, and she would have investigated it had it not been for the professor's tests and yesterday's early bedtime. It was something that Wiggums had given away, she remembered clearly from what she heard. Going to the waste bin, Buttercup stepped on the pedal and opened it up. There was a heart-shaped box, dirtied by yesterday's trash. Picking it up and sweeping off the waste from yesterday's cooking off the surface of the box, she opened the lid.

Inside, there were rows of chocolate. They had avoided melting because of the generally colder temperatures of the winter, and they had avoided contamination because they were sealed. They were still fresh. Buttercup didn't mind the fact that it was taken out of the trash, even though she knew what her sisters and Daddy would say. Her stomach rumbled, and so Buttercup picked up a lump of chocolate and put it into her mouth.

Sweetness exploded inside. She chewed heartily. Then ate another. And another. 'Why did Daddy throw these away?' she thought as she kept eating. She couldn't stop herself at all. 'Why didn't Daddy let me enjoy these… Things?' She didn't have the word for chocolate. They hadn't been introduced to it yet, and Buttercup was the first to discover it.

The chocolate didn't just feed Buttercup through the stomach. It fed her mind, fuelled the conspiracies she'd been thinking of.

While Buttercup was in the middle of gorging on the chocolate, Bubbles was able to let herself into the labs, and Blossom had gone into the backyard, searching desperately any nook and cranny she could find. Buttercup took her time, opening every cabinet and drawers in search of Daddy. But he was nowhere to be found in the kitchen. He certainly couldn't fit in the drawers. She took her time, because the chocolate was so good… And the beginnings of dislike for her Daddy were stirring. Before, she had nothing but good thoughts and feelings for him no matter what perceived wrong he
had committed against her, but now, the conspiracies were beginning to weigh heavily on their relationship. That Daddy would deny her chocolate, which was so good for her now especially when she was starving, was troubling her. The treat was ecstatic, and the thought of betrayal bitter.

Then came a blood curdling scream from below. Bubbles' scream.

Despite the urgency of it all, Buttercup took a little time to stuff more chocolate into her mouth before dumping the heart box back into the trash bin. Then, as she chewed with difficulty, having bit off more than she could chew, she raced through the airlock and down the stairs. Blossom was already there, naturally.

But so was Daddy. And he was on the floor.

"Dad!" Buttercup cried as she flew down the stairs (not literally, not yet). "Wha- But- He- W-what happened!"

Bubbles had found him near his desk, lying down not far from his chair, as if he'd tried to get up but had fallen over. A tile or two away from his hand was the 'gun' that he said was dangerous. He had planted his face on the floor, and despite this, hadn't moved since. Blossom turned him over to a more comfortable position while Bubbles cried over him, wailing for him to wake up.

"What do we do!" Buttercup cried, her own tears dripping. Again, being caught off-guard by something concerning her Daddy, she couldn't help but get emotional.

Blossom was holding back tears, trying to figure out what to do. Daddy had always said that she was the smart one. And now, her sisters certainly weren't the ones doing the thinking, being busy panicking or crying their hearts out. She felt the professor's forehead. It was burning hot. He seemed like he was in huge trouble.

All this while, Professor Utonium had been hiding the fact that he was sick, letting his illness fester. Blossom's waterworks was finally out of control – the fever must have been torturing him for days, and yet all her Dad could think about was her siblings and her.

There was only one thing that she could do. She was hesitant about breaking her Daddy's rules again, but there was no other way. She had always prided herself in being obedient, in being the good girl that Daddy was proud of… But now, in order to be good, she had to be bad. In this moment of crisis, she was beginning to see that the world wasn't all black and white.

"Girls, I'm going out!" Blossom told her sisters after wiping away the last of her tears.

"But… To where? Daddy's here!" Bubbles cried – she had a far more ample supply of tears. She was afraid of losing anymore family members now.

"You can't! It's- it's dangerous, and not just because Dad says so!" Buttercup warned, finally confessing to someone what she knew, albeit in a way that wouldn't truly expose her. "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get the neighbors," Blossom said, then looked to Buttercup, who was more in control of herself than Bubbles, even if she was equally clueless as her on what to do. "Buttercup, stay with Daddy and Bubbles. I'll come back as fast as I can."

"Blossom, no! At least let me come with you!" Buttercup objected.

"Don't leave Daddy and Bubbles alone, Buttercup!" Blossom mandated before running to the stairs and up, at breakneck speed.
Chapter 21: Meltdown

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom is forced to get the 'neighbors' to help with her sick and unconscious father.

A/N: Refer to glossary below for the definition of the radio commands used by the PTF.

Chapter 21: Meltdown

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 0905.

Unlike Bubbles, Buttercup was in control of herself. Soon after Blossom was gone, she was able to calm down, even turn off her emotions when she realized that panicking wasn't going to accomplish anything.

The ravenette would have done something for Daddy if she knew how. Instead, her eyes wandered in the lab as she waited on her sister. Then her eyes caught something black on the floor. The pistol that the professor was holding before he fell unconscious.

'Didn't Dad say that this thing is dangerous?' Buttercup thought as she padded over to the pistol and picked it up. The handle fit pretty well with her hand, as though it was made for her. Thankfully, her finger wasn't on the trigger, as the safety was off, had been since Professor Utonium had decided that he should shoot Bubbles in the forehead to end her suffering before it began.

The knowledge that she was holding onto something dangerous made Buttercup feel powerful, somehow. It felt like she was on the treadmill, running at 28 miles per hour - better than her sisters - or carrying 500 pounds of steel when her father could only manage 150 at the most, barely. The power felt ecstatic.

But Blossom would be back. Buttercup knew what she was going to do if she saw her with the pistol. Racing up the stairs and out of the lab, emerging into the living room within seconds, and then up to the second floor and into her room within another few seconds, Buttercup wondered where she could hide the gun. The wardrobe? The mirror drawers? It seemed as if there were no place private enough for such a prize. Eventually, when she knew that time was of the essence, she threw it below the bed, on the side she slept on. With that, she rushed back down to the lab, at twice the speed she clocked in the speed test without knowing it.

Meanwhile, Blossom ran out of the front door, slowing down on the lawn as she was unwilling to break yet another of her father's rules: No super-speed outside The House. She ran towards the 'neighbors' place, consisting of the unmarked van and the small bus behind it, waving her arms at the windows. "Help! Help! Please!" she shouted.
On the driver's seat of the unmarked van was Agent Blake (code-name in force), enjoying a cup of hot coffee while reading a guns magazine, unaware that one of the subjects he was supposed to guard was running towards him. With Professor Utonium on the job, it was something that never happened. He remained ignorant until his partner grabbed him by the arm.

"Sir, it's B-47! Three o'clock!" he shouted. Agent Blake turned his head so fast that some of his coffee spilled.

"Shit. Shit!" Agent Blake shouted, before setting aside his cup of coffee so roughly that more had spilled. Pulling the shotgun beside him out, he cocked it.

"The hell is it doing!?!" his partner shouted.

Blossom had run all the way up to the unmarked van. "Help! Please!" she repeated, and was now banging on the door, perhaps a little too hard. Agent Blake could not hear her cries of help, but he could feel his van shaking and creaking slightly.

"All PTF units, all PTF units, scramble!" Agent Blake ordered. Being the lieutenant on duty, he wasn't going to let the subjects go rogue on his watch.

"We have Bravo-four-seven on the loose! I say again, Bravo-four-seven is on the loose!" his partner shouted into his radio.

This was it. To leave his vehicle now would be like rolling a dice. He could have sworn that his life was playing like a movie right before his eyes. But he'd lived a pretty good life. Being in his late forties, he was at the height of his career. He had lived a full life in the armed forces and the Organization. He had no children, a few flings, but he felt like he'd lacked for nothing. The things he'd seen, history unfolding, would last him beyond a lifetime. But he would be seeing plenty more, little did he know.

Opening the door, he climbed out. His partner did the same. He'd decided not to go out with his gun blazing, as he'd read the reports. B-47, B-48 and B-49 were largely pacified. Compared to earlier subjects, they were incredibly passive, considering that they hadn't killed anyone in the last two weeks.

"Erm-" Agent Blake stumbled as he faced down Blossom, who was only just realizing that she had ran out of The House without her jacket, and was freezing in the open. However, it wasn't as bad as her Daddy had claimed, for some reason. "Hey, forty-seven - I mean - kid, what's going on?"

In the meantime, the back of the van had opened, and out poured six other plainclothes officers.

"Please, it's my Dad!" Blossom pleaded with Agent Blake, tears falling once more. Turns out, she did have an ample supply of it after all. Just the mere thought of the way her father was lying in the lab, unresponsive, was enough to set her off again. She did love him so dearly. "He's, he's-"

Despite being hard as nails as the Vietnam War, despite being a hardened veteran of the Organization required, her tears had moved him unexpectedly. It was just the way she looked – seemingly helpless and lost, clearly and very upset. He knelt down to bring his sunglasses-covered eyes down to her level. He removed his aviator sun-glasses and stuffed it into his pocket. "What happened to your Dad?"

At the same time, he was very well aware of the possibility that B-47 could be tricking them, leading them into a false sense of security, to try to ambush and kill them. It'd happened before with some of the older subjects in the previous iterations of Chemical X. His training and experience had beaten
that brand of paranoia deep into his mind, and it was reinforced time and again.

"H-he's lying on the floor, and- and- He's not moving.-" Blossom struggled to explain, fighting too
many things at once to do a good job of it – her own emotions, the slight cold, the fact that she was
speaking to strangers… But then again, she didn't need to do that well a job. "H-h-he's s-sick and I
just- I don't know what to do!"

The SWAT bus had opened its doors, and out came six PTF soldiers. Like their SWAT counterparts,
they were armored from head to toe in tactical black but with no gray trimmings, armed to the teeth.
One of them even had a K-9 dog, a German Shepherd, with him. Four of them had XM4 Carbines,
another was armed with an MP5 and the last, a Mossberg 500 shotgun. All of them knew that this
'Blossom' could easily kill them if she wanted to. They spread out, tense and gripping their weapons
tightly.

Blossom, feeling miserable and afraid, alone and cold, lunged at Agent Blake for a hug. The agent
gaped, thinking that Blossom was attacking him. It'd looked the same to his fellow officers and the
PTF soldiers on site. The soldiers raised their weapons, getting ready to fire-

"Hold your fire! Hold your fire!" Blake's partner shouted while waving for them to stand down, his
own pistol out.

"It's horrible!" Blossom cried into Agent Blake's jacket, melting in his arms. The security officer
remained stiff, unsure of what to do. He had never really dealt with children before, much less one
who was grown in a lab with superpowers to boot. But natural instinct took over, and Blake hugged
her back. It wasn't that he was completely clueless. It's just that he had to reach all the way back to
his childhood to remember how kids should be treated, and in the moment, he couldn't help but to
think of B-47 as a kid.

"We'll take a look at your Dad," Agent Blake said. She was still wrapping herself tightly around him.
And she was strong. Very strong. "K-kid… You can let go now. It's alright."

Blossom sniffled a little. "Okay... I'm sorry I cried on you."

"It's fine," Agent Blake said before straightening up. He then turned to his partner. "Fields, update
Charlie-01." then to the mic on his jacket: "All PTF forces, prepare to breach The House. Go up to
threat level Meltdown-1."

Agent Fields, his partner, went over to the unmarked van and picked up the radio there. "This is
PTF-01 at The House. We are at Meltdown-1, over." radio chatter came from the other end. "Agent
Utonium is described by Bravo-four-seven to be down. We are moving in to investigate and secure
Utonium, over." more radio chatter came as a reply. "We will update you on the move, over and
out."

The PTF soldiers ran into position, taking cover on either side of the main door. The plainclothes
officers, more lightly armed with only pistols and the odd shotgun, fell in behind them.

Agent Blake knelt down again, putting a hand on Blossom's shoulder. "I think it's best that I carry
you. Besides, you're not wearing anything but a dress…"

"Thank you… Mister…" Blossom said, and only realized that she didn't know her neighbor's name.

"You can call me Blake," the Agent introduced himself.

"Thank you, Mr. Blake. Please help my Daddy…" Blossom said, then held her arms out. Agent
Blake slung his shotgun on his shoulder, then took her by the armpits and heaved her off the ground.
But it wasn't out of concern that Agent Blake had held her in his arms. He didn't want her to see exactly what was going on. And Blossom did not know it, but he had removed his backup pistol from its holster on his ankle while he was bending down, and he was wielding it even as he carried her towards The House. It was insurance to him; if B-47 and her sister subjects were trying anything funny, he could just empty his pistol into the one he had in his arms. Blossom was a hostage without knowing it.

"All Bravo-Papa units, we are at Meltdown-1. Stay on alert and await further instructions, over and out," Blake ordered into his jacket microphone as he walked closer to the house, towards the left side of the door.

"PTFs in position, sir," one of the soldiers reported into the radio, to Blake through his security earphone. Blake picked up his steps, jogging over to one half of the team getting ready to storm The House.

"Agent Blake to all PTF and Bravo-Papa units, sitrep is unknown. Status of Bravo-four-eight and Bravo-four-nine unknown. Bravo-four-seven is in custody and not in Meltdown-2," Agent Blake briefed all the men in his area. Blossom, in his arms, was too upset to even try to decipher what he said, assuming that it was just adults talking. "PTFs-" Agent Blake was about to give the order to breach when he stopped. Things could go sideways easily, and it would depend on him to keep casualty at zero. He looked at Blossom, who buried her face in his shoulder so innocently, so far a non-threat, and decided that force wasn't a solution… At least not yet.

"PTFs, Set A Good Example. No property damage, no force unless Bravo-four-eight and Bravo-four-nine are in Tantrum-2," Agent Blake ordered. "Move!"

"PTF-1, going in," the PTF soldier taking point echoed as he opened the front door from the side and pointed his XM4 Carbine rifle into the living room, scouting for any hostiles. "Clear! Move!"

"Secure the living room and await further orders," Blake ordered. The men streamed into The House, taking loose positions all over the living room. As ordered, they tried their best not to touch anything, leaving the living room pristine. Agent Blake strolled in, his backup pistol still clutched tightly in a hand, with Blossom none the wiser.

"You have a name, right, kid?" Agent Blake asked. He had read the reports, of what Professor Utonium had named them, but he just couldn't remember the names at all, and it was partly because he hadn't really tried.

"It's Blossom," the girl said, her voice slightly muffled by his jacket.

"Okay, Blossom. Well met. Where's your father?" Agent Blake asked.

"H-he's in the lab," Blossom said after a sniffle.

It was a tough call. The laboratory was in the basement, accessible only by one entrance, a stairwell that would act like a speed bump. Then there was the rest of The House. Blossom had claimed that her father had just fallen ill, but he wasn't about to take any chances. For all he knew, there could be Foundation agents or escapee subjects working with B-47, B-48 and B-49 to secure their extraction, or even Organization dissenters looking to sabotage their greatest project yet.

"PTFs, secure the lab. Watch for Bravo-four-eight, Bravo-four-nine and Utonium. I say again, do not Play unless Bravo-four-eight and Bravo-four-nine are in Tantrum-2 and Meltdown-2. Standby for instructions in case of a Run Away. All security officers, do a room-by-room search of the Play Area," Agent Blake ordered.
The Powerpuff Task Force soldiers, like a well-oiled machine, got into position on either sides of the lab airlock doors. Blake, with Blossom, got behind one of the soldiers. There were six in all, and Blake thought that the odds weren't good. However, looking at Blossom, he was starting to believe that, perhaps, there was no need for odds to begin with.

"Go!" Blake ordered. The leading soldier pulled open the door, scanned the airlock, before leading the pack in. He then opened the second airlock door, and started descending the stairs.

"Kitchen clear," one of Blake's officers reported.

"Office clear," another of Blake's officers reported.

The PTF soldiers descended the stairs in a slightly staggered formation, close to one another, so that they could all get their guns to bear on the front.

It was like descending into the underworld. The lights for the stairwell was neither bright nor dim, functional. All the men and one woman was afraid, but they kept it all to themselves. Still, they stuck to their guns, even if their confidence in it were diminished by reports that the Girls could be bulletproof, in addition to the fact that they could run them down like trucks.

There was light below. They were close. Emerging out into the open, they heard a sort of high-pitched crying. "I've got visual on the Bravos," the point-man said. Bubbles was still wailing over Professor Utonium while Buttercup was on his chair. She jumped to her feet in alarm when the 'neighbors' turned out to be something she didn't expect; looking exactly like the men in thick, hard clothes, hats, goggles and shoes who she saw in Organization Outpost Charlie-01, who she had grown to dislike over what she had heard when she eavesdropped.

Still, Buttercup had a strange fascination with them. Their clothes and 'toys' appealed to her in a way that couldn't be described. The closest she could come to was that they looked 'cool'.

The PTF soldiers fanned out, forming a flat V-shape around the other two Girls, their weapons trained on them. Agent Blake walked past them, less afraid, and put down Blossom so that she could join the others.

"Girls, I've brought the neighbors!" Blossom said to her sisters.

"Please help Daddy, he's - he's-" Bubbles could barely express herself through her tears, which were still freely flowing. She couldn't finish her sentence before going back to crying her eyes out again.

It didn't look like a trap. B-47, B-48 and B-49 were all present and accounted for, which meant that none of them were laying in ambush. The subjects had not fallen into any kind of formation to speak of, nor used any opening tactics to start a battle, or to throw a 'Tantrum-2' event, as they had coded it as.

"Backyard clear. No Hotels so far," another of the plainclothes officers from above reported.

"Level 1 bathrooms clear of Hotels," yet another reported. "Proceeding to level 2."

"Sir..? Instructions?" One of the PTF soldiers inquired. It was almost a Mexican stand-off, except that the subjects were staring at them with no weapons in their hands (they were the weapons, in fact), and no intention to start a fight.

Agent Blake was already sweating. In his mind, which was trained for operations and combat and subterfuge, it seemed as if it was all too easy, all too uneventful. His eyes darted between the three subjects of Project Powerpuff. Had he made a mistake by releasing Blossom?
"Stand down. Corporal Zach, examine Utonium. Sergeant Cromwell, your radio pack," Agent Blake ordered. One of the Powerpuff Task Force soldiers came up to him and reached behind his shoulder to pull out a phone-like device attached to his backpack, which contained a communications device. He handed it over to the commanding officer.

Corporal Zach, the designated medic of the squad, unstrapped a kit with a red cross printed over it and set it down beside Professor Utonium, who was still unresponsive. Bubbles was still lying on top of the professor, so the medic motioned for one of his escorts to carry her off.

"This is Agent Blake, calling Outpost Charlie-01, over," Agent Blake said into the comms device. Radio chatter answered back, nearly inaudible to everyone else. "We have secured Utonium and Bravo-four-seven to nine, over,"

"No, we are dropping off from Meltdown-1 and there is no Tantrum event, over," Agent Blake said cryptically. More radio chatter replied him.

"Eyaaaaah!" it was as though a wild scream had tried to prove him wrong. Turning around to the source of it, he saw that it was B-49, known as… Buttercup, was it? No, it was Bubbles. The blue one. One of the soldiers had tried to pick her up. She flailed around like a mad girl for a while before pushing him back. The soldier stumbled a few feet before regaining his balance. "I want to stay with Daddy!"

Weapons were raised at Bubbles, but she seemed ignorant of it all as she returned to her father.

"Forty-niner, you are hindering my work!" the medic shouted at the blonde girl. "Back the hell off!"

"Corporal Zach!" Agent Blake shouted, jogging over to the unmoving Utonium, afraid that there would violence when everything had seemed promising in the beginning. "Bubbles, you need to give… erm… my friend some space to help your father." Bubbles remained where she was. Then Blake had an idea. "Blossom, be a good pal and take your sisters up to the living room."

Although now was not the time, Blossom was thrilled to hear the word 'pal'. She had never made any friends before, something which Daddy said should be common for children like them. Coming up to Bubbles, Blossom tugged her by an arm. "C'mon, Bubbles. I brought the neighbors to help. There's nothing more we can do now."

"Listen to your 'sister' or your daddy's gonna die because of you," Corporal Zach the grim medic added. He'd only made Bubbles cry even harder.

"Zach!" Agent Blake chided. Bubbles relented, letting Blossom lead her to the stairs. Blake could see the look on her face, and it was the face of utter misery if there was one. Despite never having children nor the time to see any of his nieces and nephews at all, the look of it broke his heart slightly.

"Buttercup, come on," Blossom said to Buttercup, who had stubbornly refused to budge from where she was standing. As the thought of being alone with seven strangely dressed adults was unappealing, Buttercup decided to do as Blossom dictated… For now. Together, the three sisters held hands, with Blossom in the middle, and ascended the stairs.

GLOSSARY OF ORGANIZATION RADIO TERMS (Extract from Organization Security Handbook)

**Bravo-four-seven**: Refers to B-47, also named Blossom by Agent Utonium.
**Bravo-four-eight:** Refers to B-48, also named Buttercup by Agent Utonium.

**Bravo-four-nine:** Refers to B-49, also named Bubbles by Agent Utonium.

**Bravo-Papa Units:** Border Patrol Units. Squads of security officers around the borders surrounding The House.

**PTF:** Powerpuff Task Force. Referring to an elite company designated to protect, subdue or terminate B-47, B-48 and B-49.

**Meltdown-1:** Refers to any situation in which any or all of B-47, B-48 and B-49 are somewhat emotionally distraught or expressing desire to do restricted activities.

**Meltdown-2:** Refers to a situation in which B-47, B-48 and B-49 are very emotionally distraught and rebellious.

**Meltdown-3:** Refers to a situation in which B-47, B-48 and B-49 are inconsolable and cannot be placated.

**Tantrum-1:** Refers to a situation which might cause B-47, B-48 and B-49 to utilized their enhanced abilities to cause harm and/or damage. Also refers to situation in which B-47, B-48 and B-49 are using their enhanced abilities for innocuous reasons.

**Tantrum-2:** Refers to when B-47, B-48 and B-49 are using their enhanced abilities to cause harm and/or damage.

**Tantrum-3:** Refers to when B-47, B-48 and B-49 are unrestricted in their use of enhanced abilities to cause harm/damage.

**Run Away:** Refers to a situation in which any or all of B-47, B-48 and B-49 have escaped or gone AWOL and/or gone rogue.

**Show A Good Example:** A general order given to all units operating around B-47, B-48 and B-49 not to use force unless provoked with deadly force by the subjects.

**Play:** A general order given to all units operating around B-47, B-48 and B-49 to use standard armaments to combat or subdue subjects.

**Show A Bad Example:** A general order given to all units operating around B-47, B-48 and B-49 to use any and all means to terminate or subdue the subjects.

**Play Area:** Combat Zone / Fire Zone / Contact Zone
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Agent Blake, a security officer of the Organization, is forced to take charge of the Girls.

A/N: (17 JUL 2018) Hi guys! First of all, thanks for reading! As this is becoming a massive project that is more 'series' than novel, it would be great if I can get some reviews and feedback concerning... Anything really. The direction, overall tone and motif, character, etc. Let me know how this fanfic is doing, and if you have any suggestions, tell me about it.

Chapter 22: Governor

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 0924.

"You may speak freely. We've secured this line against outside intrusion."

"Yes sir, Utonium is severely compromised," Agent Blake said into the phone of the comms device, which the communications officer of the PTF had loaned to him.

"How bad?" the voice on the other end asked. A gravelly voice that wouldn't be out of place in a mass grave.

"The medic had a look at him. High fever, possibly caused by severe dehydration, weight loss, possibly caused by malnutrition. He appears to be having the beginnings of some sort of flu. The medic reported liquid congestion in his airway. The high fever could also be the result of some disease." Agent Blake reported.

"Can you be more specific with the diagnosis?" the disembodied voice asked.

"No, sir. Our medic's good for only first aid. We need a real doctor," Agent Blake said. "And the only one in The House is the patient."

"I'll send someone over. Has your medic done anything to treat Agent Utonium?" the voice on the other end inquired. "He's a critical asset even if he's stubborn and too idealistic for his own good."

The airlock doors of the lab had just opened the moment the man on the other end of the line had asked that question. Corporal Zach and another PTF soldier was just carrying Professor Utonium by the arms over their shoulders. They were Shuttlving him out of the airlock, then across the living room. He was half-naked and completely wet. He was also completely out of it, mumbling incoherently in his time in the void.

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were seated on the sofa, guarded by most of the security force
mustered at The House. Three PTF soldiers, ominously black with their bodies crowded with equipment, deadly or accessories to murder, stood guard in front of them. The two single-seaters on either side of the Girls' sofa was occupied by suits, one of them with a shotgun. The rest of the plainclothes were in the kitchen. Only the K-9 handler and one security officer was outside, guarding the main entrance to the house.

The Girls were gazing at the professor with great sadness and worry in their eyes. Bubbles, for want of comfort, lied down in Blossom's lap, and Blossom held her. Buttercup folded her arms, seemingly stoic, frowning at the adults in black standing before her. Agent Blake studied them with interest, noting that they each had grown and developed their own personalities remarkably quickly.

"Yes sir, the medic has given Utonium a shower at the decontamination shower in the lab to bring his temperature down. He's going to hook him up on IV to rehydrate him that way," Agent Blake reported, while still keeping an eye on the Girls. He had kept his voice down - he wasn't sure how much they could understand his chatter, and he didn't want to agitate them any further.

"Good. I'll keep you posted on the 'real doctor', but I'll likely send over a full medical team to assist," the gravelly voice on the other end promised. Agent Blake listened but continued to observe the Girls. 'Are they wearing the same dress as yesterday?' he realized, and managed to put two and two together. With the professor incapacitated, B-47, B-48 and B-49 will no longer have a dedicated caretaker to cater to their every need. To his security-trained mind, it meant that there would no longer be someone there to pacify them, which meant that they might go out of control, possibly resulting in a Meltdown and thus Tantrum event, resulting in a Run Away and casualties, likely catastrophic. "Is there anything else?"

"Sir," Agent Blake's mind raced as he tried to figure out how to phrase his concern. His voice took on an alarmed tone that he could not help. It was like standing in front of a nuclear bomb counting down from a few minutes. "I insist that you send in a replacement for Agent Utonium immediately. They look like they've been neglected since yesterday, and if this goes on long enough, there could be consequences."

"Oh," the voice on the other end sounded just as concerned. "Well, we hadn't thought of a replacement for him. I'll escalate this to the Head of Psychiatry and Social Services, Alice. She'll know what to do. Knowing how things go, it'd be a few days before we can send someone down. She's always meticulous about matters concerning welfare."

"That's good to hear, but sir," Agent Blake said. His throat had become dry. "What about now? What about the few days while we wait on the ETA of the new caretaker?"

"I'm afraid you're it, officer," the gravelly voice on the other end said gravely. Then, nothing more. It was like getting hit by a truck.

Agent Blake turned his head to regard B-47, B-48 and B-49 once more. Blossom had taken to staring at him blankly with Bubbles in her lap, who had gone back to crying. Buttercup looked like an outright brat at this point, but she wasn't just any brat – she's one with thousands of pounds of firepower at her fingertips – and she looked like she was in a terrible mood, probably because she had nothing to eat or drink for two hours ever since waking up. She gave him a scowl with her arms folded when their eyes met. Agent Blake broke eye contact right away.

"Sir, I'm begging you. Send someone immediately, please!" Agent Blake pleaded. "You can't do this to me!"

"Actually, I can. Says here on my vest that I'm the Chief of Security. Sorry, Agent Blake," the voice said dispassionately. "You have your orders. Just hold out for a few days until we sort this out. Keep
your fingers crossed for Agent Utonium. Maybe he'd be all better in a couple of days. Maybe."

"Sir, I'm a soldier and a security officer. I'm trained to deal with enemy combatants and criminals and-" Agent Blake was on full-on panic mode. "Look, I'm not qualified to deal with children, especially… Them."

"What, you can't beat a geek?" his contact, who was actually Chief of Security Blackwater, mocked. "Just do as you're told, Agent Blake. You've got two squads of personnel with you where Agent Utonium was alone. Over and out."

"Sir, wait! Please!" Agent Blake tried to get his contact back, but he was already gone. "Shit." There was a lot of thumping on the stairs to the second floor. They had just managed to get the professor up to the second floor and into his bedroom.

He turned to look at his new responsibilities - Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, as they were named. He tried smiling at them, but they didn't smile back - probably because they were utterly miserable. Failing that, Agent Blake did not even know where to start. Walking up to them, he sat down on the coffee table, in front of them. They stared at each other silently for a few seconds. The soldiers and officers around him stiffened up, always ready, always worried that the shit would hit the fan.

"So, how are the three of you doing?" Blake opened up, but immediately regretted his opening line.

"I'm worried, really worried, Mr. Blake. What if Daddy dies?" Blossom said grimly, immediately calling to attention her grasp of concepts that a five-year-old should know… Except that she was little more than a two-week-old.

"I don't want to do anything until Daddy gets better," Bubbles, who was still lying on Blossom's lap, sulked.

"Are you going to do something to Dad?" Buttercup said. Agent Blake couldn't decide if it was an accusation or a simple question as to how they were going to help.

"Your father will be fine. He's in the care of Corporal Zach-" Agent Blake explained, but was cut off by Bubbles.

"I don't like him," she had said. To Agent Blake, it was a red flag, like a worm infestation ready to burst out of a gangrenous wound. He had to fix it, but how? How does one speak to a child without getting her all worked up? He had literally zero experience with such things.

"He may be gruff, but his heart is in the right place," Agent Blake explained, then decided that they might not understand. "He cares, just that he doesn't show it. Like you, Buttercup."

Buttercup's brows were arched, her arms still crossed.

"Hmph! No I'm not! I'm nothing like Zach! I just want Daddy!" Buttercup said, proving his point thoroughly. The raven-haired, green-eyed girl's mannerisms was always putting the entire room on edge. 'Need to pacify them…' Agent Blake was always thinking. However, in the back of his mind, something else was motivating him. Before, he had always told himself that these three 'girls' were merely soul-less creatures. Now, they seemed so alive, so full of spirit. So human. So much like three little girls.

"What if I promise you that you'll get your father back? It's just going to take some time," Agent Blake offered.

"Promise?" Blossom said, not quite convinced.
"Promise," Agent Blake reaffirmed his vow.

"But how long will it take?" Bubbles and Buttercup said in unison, but Buttercup stared at her emotional sister after that, hating the idea of being lumped together with the weakling.

"Oh I don't know... A few days, maybe?" Agent Blake guessed honestly. He'd come to regret his decision on it again.

"But... what are we going to do?" Bubbles cried, tears spilling out again. "I can't wait a few days..."

"The three of you will have to keep going without him in the meantime," Agent Blake told them, unsure what the effects of his words would be. He simply had no clue - having very little experience with children. "Wouldn't that be what he wants?"

"But... Daddy helps us with everything... He teaches us something everyday, helps us with brushing our teeth and bathing and... everything..." Blossom said, sadness clearly seeping into her words from an unending source.

"Well, I've got some news," Agent Blake said, unsure if what he was going to say next would make things better or worse. When it came to matters of security, he could always predict with a reasonable margin of error what was going to happen next. But with this... "I'm going to have to take care of the three of you in the meantime. I'm your-" Agent Blake brainstormed for the right word. He was about to say that he was their new Dad, but thought better of it. Babysitter? No, that would be too demeaning for himself and them. Caretaker? No, that might blow his cover. "erm... governor now."

"Go-Ver-Nor?" Buttercup exclaimed, confused. It was clearly a word they had never encountered before.

"Go-Ver-Nor," Agent Blake explained, at the same time wondering if he had made a mistake with his word choice, but he didn't let it show. "I'm now your governor. It means that I'll be taking care of you until your father's strong enough to go back to being your father."

Behind Agent Blake, his subordinates were all exchanging either confused or amused looks, He knew how it sounded. It was just a few letters short of calling himself a 'governess', and he didn't quite staying true to the definition of the word, but it would have to do.

"But..." Bubbles wanted to object, but kept quiet in the end. Things had taken a turn for the unexpected such that it managed to get her off Blossom's lap.

"Okay..." Blossom relented. "What do we do now?"

"First thing's first..." Agent Blake raked his brain for answers, unsure of the exact needs and wants of a child. He inevitably went back to his training as a soldier and security officer, and found the answers there. The basic needs of a soldier were essentially the same. Soldiers march on their stomachs, as Napoleon would say. Similarly, they would need water, lots of it, especially on the march and in the modern age, on complex operations. So... water and rations. "Have the three of you had your rations- I mean, breakfast?"

"No..." Blossom answered shyly.

"We've been starving since forever because Dad was sick!" Buttercup complained impatiently.

"Okay, great! I mean, then we'll solve that problem right away, and-" Agent Blake said excitedly, thinking that he had made progress, only to feel a roadblock not even a yard before him. The problem was... He hardly knew how to cook for himself, much less cater to the demanding taste
buds of children. Again, he fell back to his military and security theory for answers. In the event of an emergency, an unsolvable crisis, what should one do? Consult command. Assign the right specialists to the right tasks. "Say, when was the last time the three of you took a bath?"

"Oh… Yesterday?" Bubbles answered, sounding as if she was answering a trick question.

"Yesterday afternoon…" Blossom corrected. "We stink."

"Who cares about a bath anyway?" Buttercup countered, and received only stares from both Blossom and Bubbles as though she was crazy.

"Then that's settled," Agent Blake the governor said, a triumphant smile on his face. The puzzle pieces were all clicking in the right place. "How about the three of you go to your room and pick up some fresh underwear and dresses? I'll be up with you in a minute - I just need to speak to my… friends."

"But what about breakfast!?" Buttercup complained again.

"After a bath, Buttercup," Agent Blake insisted firmly, at the same time with his heart racing. He knew that there was risk involved whenever he tried to put his foot firmly down.

"Yes, Mr. Blake," Blossom said obediently before hopping off the sofa, if still very much down. Bubbles followed, then Buttercup, once she realised again that she would be alone with a large group of strangers around her.

When they were out of earshot, Agent Blake called for a briefing in the living room, with all six PTF soldiers and seven of his officers attending.

"Sir, what's with this 'governor' business?" one of the soldiers asked.

"Chief of Security Blackwater has appointed me to take care of the girls temporarily," Agent Blake explained. "Look, we don't have time to waste. We need to decide on things immediately. What's the status of Agent Utonium?"

"He's still out of it, and I don't think anything's going to change for a while even with the meds I've been giving him. His fever needs to go down more before we can talk about lucidity," Corporal Zach reported.

"ETA on his recovery?" Agent Blake asked, hoping.

"Hard to say. Could be a couple of days or more, but if it's something to do with Chemical X, then I wouldn't know. Maybe even never," the medic said. It wasn't what Agent Blake wanted to hear.

"We'll need a doctor to be sure."

"Fine. We'll need to change our operational parameters. I'm going to be stuck in The House, taking care of the girls-" Agent Blake went on, but was interrupted.

"Why are you calling them 'girls' all of a sudden?" one of the PTF soldiers asked.

"They just are, alright? I don't have time to discuss semantics with you. Now, operational parameters. I can't do this alone, so I might need a couple of you around. That means a few of us in the house. That, too, means we're going to be exposed. We'll need backup in the Play Area to guard us. I'm thinking we should all just shift our operations into The House entirely," Agent Blake said.

"Objections?"
"Good. We'll use the living room as our command centre and camp site. First order of business… Breakfast for the girls. Who here knows how to cook? And I don't mean shit like microwave food that's probably going to get us all killed if the girls hate it too much. I'm talking proper breakfasts. Well, anyone?"

Silence.

"Are you serious, sir?" his partner, Agent Fields, questioned.

"Yes, I'm God-damn serious. Pancakes or waffles or whatever - anyone?" Agent Blake was almost pleading. If no one knew how to turn a freaking pancake on a pan, he swore he was going to have a fit.

"Yeah… I'll do it," one of the PTF soldiers put up his free hand, volunteering. For some reason, Agent Blake thought the soldier looked ridiculous, the way he did it - a grown man, a big man in black tactical gear, putting up his hand shyly like a grade school kid. "Used to help in my pop's diner. I cooked lots of breakfast in my time."

"Any idea what you're going to make?" Agent Blake asked.

"This is ridiculous," another of the agents commented.

"Shut the fuck up! The breakfast could be a matter of life and death!" Agent Blake reprimanded the officer, then turned back to the PTF soldier volunteering to be chef. "Well?"

"I'm a little rusty, but If I got the right stuff, I can make eggs benedict," the soldier said.

"ETA?" Agent Blake asked.

"Give me 20 minutes and I'll figure it out," the soldier estimated.

"Alright, get right on it, finish it ASAP!" Agent Blake ordered. The PTF soldier scrambled into the kitchen. Then, he turned to the only female officer around. "And you, I'm going to need you to come with me."

"What for, sir?" the female officer inquired, genuinely concerned and confused. And afraid. They had never operated this closely with B-47, B-48 and B-49 before, and neither had they ever been required to stay in close proximity to them for days on end. "Why me?"

"The kids are taking a bath, I thought it'd be proper to have a lady accompany the girls instead of… you know, a guy like me," Agent Blake explained.

"Why not? Professor Utonium did. They're just lab rats, and even if they were girls, you're not a pedophile, right?" the female officer argued.

"Of course not!" Agent Blake retorted before sighing. This was all so much harder than conducting a security patrol or staking out, or guarding a place. Or fighting in the jungles of Vietnam - at least back then, it all felt natural to him, and he had fought on instincts first and training second. Here, he felt like he was floundering at sea, struggling just to keep from drowning. "Look, it's just- The fact is- I'm just saying- God damn it! Fine! You'll accompany me as escort, along with you, you and you." He picked out two other PTF soldiers and another plainclothes officer.

Agent Blake then started towards the stairs, along with his escorts. But before he ascended the stairs,
he remembered that he had forgotten to give the rest of them orders. The whole thing was confounding him, totally. "And the rest of you… Help Sergeant Holliday with breakfast or just… guard the place."

'This is hell,' Agent Blake thought, as he went up the stairs.
Chapter 23: The Angels

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls attempt to live life under a soldier and law enforcer's regime.

Chapter 23: The Angels

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 0939.

"Mister Blake?" Blossom said to her new 'governor' as she and her siblings had just entered the washroom to start their daily routine.

"Yes, Blossom?" Agent Blake answered with a smile on his lips, a smile that was hiding some impatience, some frustration.

"I don't think I can do this…" Blossom said.

"Yeah…" Bubbles agreed.

"Why not?" Agent Blake asked ignorantly.

"It just feels weird when there's so many of you in the washroom with us," Blossom explained, pointing to the two PTF soldiers with assault rifles standing guard on either side of the washing basin and the female officer leaning against the wall, by the toilet. Agent Blake had left only one officer standing guard outside.

"Yeah, we hardly even have the space to move around!" Buttercup clamored.

Meanwhile, Bubbles had just dipped a hand into the water, and immediately retracted it as though the bathtub was filled with acid. "And the water's cold!" she shrieked in that high-pitched voice of hers.

"Blossom, Bubbles… er… Buttercup, right? Just- Just pretend they don't exist, alright?" Agent Blake tried to get his way.

"But, they're still there," Blossom said.

"And the water's still cold," Bubbles complained further.

Agent Blake sighed, rubbing his face with his hands. "Fine. Everyone out!" he ordered. But one of the PTF soldiers leaned close to his ear.

"Sir, do you think this is a trap?" the soldier suggested.

"No, I'll be fine," Agent Blake whispered back. "I'll scream if there's trouble."
"You sure?" the soldier asked again.

"Yeah, I'm sure. Just go before they suspect something," Agent Blake said quietly. The soldier did as he asked and left.

"Anna, wait, not you," Agent Blake said before pulling the other plainclothes in the washroom back. He puts an arm around her shoulders like a pal, as though introducing his co-worker to his new charges. "Say, Girls, would you prefer my dear friend, Anna, to help you out in here? She's a girl, like the three of you!" The female officer rolled her eyes as she crossed her arms.

"But… I've never met her before," Blossom said. The others were silent, but looking at him, with Buttercup giving him the 'let's just get this over with' look.

"Looks like you're it, sir," Anna the security officer said candidly before wriggling out from under his arm to leave the bathroom, echoing what Blackwater had said in the radio unknowingly. Blake stared after her, feeling a vague sense of betrayal.

Reluctantly, Agent Blake got to work, first removing his outer jacket, then replacing the cold water with something hotter on the insistence of Bubbles. With his face blushing like never before, even in the heat of battle, he helped the Girls out of their party dresses, perhaps a bit too roughly as he was weirded out by something so wrong - strangers, after all, weren't expected to take care of children they hardly knew with an activity so intimate.

With eyes closed, he lifted them into their baths, feeling the instinct to run away as fast as he could, and this time not because he considered them a threat due to their enhanced strength or speed, or resistance to disease, knives and bullets. He had only the flight response, because, this time, guns and combat tactics were useless against the wrongness he felt, made all the clearer, stinging, by the touch of their naked skin against his hands.

"I've got to make a call," Agent Blake uttered, anaemic from shock, as he backed away from the bath, knocking over a stool, making for the door.

"Mister Blake, can I have Ducky?" Bubbles requested before he could leave.

'Shit,' he thought. He searched the room for it, at the same time shielding his eyes from their naked bodies. "Where the he- Where is it?"

"It's on the shelf," Blossom helped. Agent Blake spotted the yellow rubber duck immediately, then feverishly made a grab for it before throwing it like a football.

"Catch!" he shouted, not even thinking. Buttercup managed to intercept it with both hands. All three of them giggled in delight at what they thought was Agent Blake's way of playing and showing affection.

"Now, just let me make that call," he said, face pale, as he made for the door once more.

"But you're supposed to shampoo our hair!" Blossom requested next. Agent Blake raised a finger at them, speechless asking them to wait, before slamming the door shut behind him.

"Is everything alright, sir?" one of the PTF soldiers, who had taken to standing guard in the hallway, asked, truly concerned. They had never seen their fearless lieutenant this way before, looking like he had served a sentence in a communist gulag.

"Just peachy," Agent Blake said, not revealing much. He still had an image to maintain, and can only be thankful that his hair was already gray before it could turn white from shock. "Sergeant Holliday,
what's the status of the breakfast?"

"Coming along just right sir. I've laid the foundations for the toast. I am now working on the payoff that is the egg," his man on the other end reported. "Say, I found some milk and cereal in the fridge. Wouldn't it be easier if-

"No, absolutely not. These are extraordinary circumstances. Cereal and milk might not be effective," Agent Blake decided.

"What about the morning beverage? Should we just water them like mules?" Sergeant Holliday asked over the clinking of dishes and utensils. Agent Blake couldn't get the image of a soldier in full gear putting on an apron and doing house work.

"No! No, no, no!" the security leader almost hollered, still aware that the Girls might hear him. He rubbed his temple, feeling a headache coming on. "You're killing me, man. Haven't you been paying attention? What have you got, other than milk? Orange juice? Give me something with the best payload," He could hear the stomping of boots on wooden floor, then the fridge door opening.

"Let's see... milk, orange juice. There's coffee powder in here. Say, I think there's a coffee machine if payload's what you want-" Sergeant Holliday suggested again.

"Orange juice. Just go with the orange juice," Agent Blake ordered.

"10-4, sir, over and-" Sergeant Holliday, the designated chef, was about to leave the radio when Blake interrupted him.

"Wait! Tell Corporal Zach to prepare some painkillers for me. I have a feeling that I'm going to need it later," Agent Blake said.

"Yes sir, over and out."

Going back into the bathroom, Agent Blake took a deep breath and approached the Girls, who had been playing in the water, even Buttercup. He willed himself to open his eyes, telling himself that there was nothing wrong here, that it was all just part of his duty - meeting the needs of three lab rats so that everything wouldn't spontaneously combust. There would be no shame, no awkwardness in that.

Picking up a bottle of shampoo and folding up his sleeves, he began foaming them up. The Girls remained still throughout the operation, even Buttercup, who had put on a different facade than before. 'Professor Utonium has trained them well,' he thought as the bubbles began multiplying. But when the soap came next, he simply instructed the Girls to do it themselves. There was only so much he could take.

"Thanks, Mister Blake," Blossom said as the security officer was drying them off with a towel. At least with that, there was a layer of cloth between him and them.

"Don't thank me," he said as he rubbed his forehead between Bubbles and Buttercup's turn. "Just doing what I'm supposed to. Didn't your father teach you to shower on your own?" He had asked this, knowing full well that they were actually just over two weeks old. It was already a bloody miracle that they could even speak to him and comprehend his speech.

"Yeah, but we're still not good at it. Especially Buttercup. Daddy was so much better at it," Blossom explained. "And you're pretty good at it too. I like how you wanted us to learn fast. For our own good."
"Y-yeah," Blake agreed, knowing full well what his intentions were. If they'd just do it themselves, he wouldn't have to do it, and kill himself with the shame and awkwardness he'd tried and failed to distance himself from, in the name of duty.

Then Bubbles began tearing again. Just when he thought he'd distracted her from her father's fall.

"What's the matter?" Agent Blake asked.

"Nothing, it's just…" Bubbles explained all but poorly. "We were sad, but you made us smile and laugh. Daddy said that the outside world is horrible, but… You're not." Agent Blake thought he understood. He'd defied expectations, show her how kindness was, despite having no intention at all of doing so.

He couldn't help but smile at that, very much aware that his own opinions on the Girls was changing. They were definitely several marks, no, a million marks above the kind of monsters he had to deal with before, the kind created by Chemical A to W.

"Alright, enough with the mushy stuff," he said, but gently with his smile still not diminished at all, his whole attitude changed. "Let's hustle up. Can you three put on your own clothes? Your rations- I mean breakfast should be on the table now."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 1003.

At the dinner table, the Girls sat down around the table, and Sergeant Holliday, the PTF soldier turned designated chef, set down their plates of eggs benedict before them. Each of them had two, which the ex-cook-turned-soldier had deemed to be more than enough for 5-year-olds. The Girls stared at their unfamiliar dish as if they were strange creatures. Buttercup went a step further and actually sniffed at the thing.

As Sergeant Holliday served the orange juice from a tray like a waiter in SWAT gear, Agent Blake sat down at the head of the table, feeling nervous, his palm and forehead clammy for some reason. The soldier-cook backed away as well, leaning against a nearby wall, his gun drawn once more, afraid that his cooking wasn't good enough that he'd start something - a fear put in him very well by Agent Blake. His helmet, goggles and ski mask had long been removed in the middle of his culinary mission, revealing a pale-looking and slightly gaunt man with black hair. He was normally unsmiling, but for some reason, cooking like this had changed that for him now.

"What is it?" Blossom asked, poking at the toast with egg on top with a fork, as if the thing could be alive. "Daddy didn't cook like this. He'd make us pancakes and waffles and stuff."

"Eat up, Girls," Agent Blake said, waving a hand at the chef responsible for it. "My friend here worked hard on it."

Buttercup was the first to try it, being famished and lacking the manners to hide it well. She chopped at one of the eggs benedict with a fork, splitting it in half, letting the yolk spill like the blood of some animal. Cutting it up further, she lifted a large piece into her mouth roughly.

And she froze after that, her mouth slightly ajar. Sergeant Holliday straightened up, his gun trembling. Agent Blake looked at her as if she might explode the next instant. Outside the kitchen, three other PTF soldiers and most of the security officers watched with anticipation, afraid that this could be it.
Then Buttercup smiled, and chewed, and chewed. "Dish- Ish- Awshome!" she said as she was still chewing, her mouth full, but she couldn't help it. Blossom and Bubbles followed suit, cutting up their own eggs benedict in a hurry so that they could satisfy their curiosity as to what had gained such high praise from the normally morose Buttercup.

Agent Blake smiled at this. Couldn't help it. Someone from the soldier-and-officer crowd laughed, then stopped himself, aware that sympathy of the subjects was frowned upon. Still, Sergeant Holliday's slight smile became a toothy beam, as he seemed pleased with himself. After all, it had been ages since he last cooked in his pops' diner. For the moment, he'd even forgotten that he was supposed to be a grunt working for a shady secret government agency.

"I'm glad the three of you liked it," Agent Blake said, pleased. Then, Bubbles appeared down once more. "Is something wrong with yours, Bubbles?"

"No, it's just… I miss having Daddy at the table," Bubbles lamented. "Can we see him later?"

"I'm afraid not. You'd have to let Corporal Zach work on him," Agent Blake said. "But he's fine. There's going to be some people coming over later to take a look at him. They'll make him all better with med'cine, you know, pills and such. I promise."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 1045.

After breakfast, the Girls were dismissed to their room. Agent Blake, however, did not follow them. Instead, he'd crashed on the sofa, waiting for the double dose of aspirin he'd taken to kick in. In his place, he'd sent two PTF soldiers and Anna (as a form of revenge) up. While he had told them that they were there to guard the Girls, he'd told the Girls a different story. They had asked him to play with them and teach them about the ways of the world in their Daddy's stead. He promised instead to send them some playmates until his headache was gone.

When Anna got to the door, she knocked on it. "Come in!" Blossom from inside said. Anna went in, her pistol out. Only Buttercup realized what she was doing with her gun. The others were none the wiser.

"Oh, you brought your toys with you!" Bubbles squealed, referring to Anna's pistol and the PTF soldiers' rifles, delighted at the company. She giggled after that, much to the confusion of the three adults entering the room. Anna simply gestured for the PTF soldiers to take up their posts at different corners of the room.

"Didn't Daddy say that those toys are dangerous?" Buttercup inquired.

"Hey, yeah!" Blossom added, noticing the pistol too. She had been too miserable before to notice such things.

"Yeah, about that" Anna struggled to explain herself. Since the Girls knew, it meant their element of surprise was gone. She holstered her weapon, hiding it in her jacket as she fumbled for an explanation. "Every adult has a gun. We know how to make it safe," she lied, though it was partly true.

"Oh okay," Blossom accepted it without a challenge and went back to her building blocks. Buttercup didn't look convinced, but went back to her soft toys - this time, she'd decided to act like a 'normal' girl, even if she wasn't having fun. She thought that it might bring her… Something, even if Daddy wasn't around as a reward.
With that, Anna quietly went over to Professor Utonium's storytelling chair and sat down. The Girls continued to watch her, as though expecting her to suddenly just up and perform magic tricks.

"What?" Anna asked, noticing that they were looking at her as if she was made of chocolate.

"We're building a tower," Blossom said. She was sitting beside a tall thing made of blocks of different shapes. Bubbles was beside her, holding onto a circular block that was bound to cause another catastrophic failure in the half-finished skyscraper.

"Yeah, so?" Anna shot back, making it a point to temper her voice in case she started something she was looking to avoid.

"Mister Blake said that you came up here to play with us," Blossom explained.

Realization dawned on her in the most horrific fashion possible. "That Blake!" Anna whispered, the way she did far from enough to release the seething anger in her. It meant being in close proximity to the Girls. One wrong move, and one of them could be holding her beating heart out in the open while she screamed her dying breath, bleeding on the floor. At least, that was what she imagined.

"Hold on for a minute," Anna bade them to wait as she stood up and marched outside the door. Blossom and Bubbles didn't quite understand her fully, so they held each other instead, giggling all the way.

"Blake, come in," Anna tuned into her mic the moment she was out the door. "Come in, damn it!"

She could hear a groan coming from the other end of the line. It was Blake, probably still trying to recover from his headache. "Yeah, what is it? It better be good."

"Blake, you son-of-a-bitch!" she screeched into the mic, though she made sure to keep further away from the Girls' room. "I'm totally fine with standing guard, but to 'play' with those lab rats!? What the actual fuck!"

"Relax, Anna. They're not that bad. You certainly didn't mind leaving me with them in the bathroom, did you?" Agent Blake said. Anna could positively feel his smugness right through her earphone, even if he had taken ill from a headache. "Anyway, it won't be long. Just give me half an hour, and I'll join you for a tea party. Over and out and see ya!"

"Blake!" Anna shouted hoarsely into her mic, keeping it down, but she knew it was no use. "Damn it!"

Returning into the room, she resigned herself to sitting next to Blossom and Bubbles, keeping her pistol holstered. From what she read on the reports, her pistol might well be useless against them anyway.

"What about me?" Buttercup with her soft toys said from the other end of the room. Anna thought she could feel her own headache coming on, and she wasn't about to take on the lab rats on her own.

"Sergeant Rutherford, play with Buttercup," Anna ordered one of the Powerpuff Task Force soldiers. Even behind his ski mask, goggles and helmet, she could easily see that he was surprised and confused.

"What? Ma'am, I don't know how," the soldier said.

"Do I have to get you knocked down to recruit? I'm third in command of this detail and I can do that, you know," Anna threatened, her mood already foul from the indignation of this kindergarten
bullshit, just simply unable to brook anymore delays to the problem.

"Yes, ma'am," the PTF soldier said. He slung his XM4 carbine on his back, and sat down next to Buttercup. Admittedly, it felt good to rest his legs, even if it was to sit Indian-like on the floor - but at what cost? "So… What do you want to do?" he asked Buttercup. The Girls listened to this exchange with curiosity, and couldn't understand most of it. They just thought, in their own ways, that it was how adults spoke to each other.

"You look funny in all that stuff," Buttercup said, smiling. By that, she meant 'different', but she didn't know the exact way to express that. "I can't see your face. Can you take off all that stuff on your face? Pretty please? I wanna see how you look like."

To the soldier, it seemed as if B-48 wanted to expose him for the kill. He looked at Anna, and when the officer noticed, returned the gaze. She made a 'just do it' face to him, and the soldier, still fearing for his rank and career, complied. Reaching up to his chin, he unclasped the straps of his helmet, removed it, then slipped off his goggles and pulled away his ski mask, revealing his face.

He was a bald man. Black and dark-skinned. Thick nose. Slight wrinkles, aging from many battles of yesteryears. And now, he had to face another battle: to play with a monster in the guise of a kindergartner without getting killed. "How do I look?"

"You look cool," Buttercup seemed taken in by his appearance. She thought he was different. She couldn't remember the last time she'd seen a bald man. But he looked strong, like her.

"Do you wanna play with cars? I like cars, and explosions," Buttercup asked, again dropping her 'girlish-girl' act, as she believed that she had gained something from her performance.

"Sure, sure," Sergeant Rutherford complied, alarmed at B-48's admission to liking destruction, just more worried about keeping the supposedly dangerous lab experiment placated, so as to keep himself alive. "Whatever you want, girl."
Chapter 24: Heaven

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, a medical team led by a familiar face arrives to treat Professor Utonium; the Girls mingle with the guards, leading to unexpected results.

Chapter 24: Heaven

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 1115.

It had been half an hour since Agent Anna had called in to check with her lieutenant, Agent Blake, to see if he was ever going to come up. In the meantime, she had been stealthily reducing her responsibilities since.

Instead of playing with both Blossom and Bubbles, she had called for a change in activity. Blossom had decided on figuring out the alphabet and numbers again, having never quite caught on since she first started, while Bubbles wanted to draw. Anna decided to help with Blossom, while Sergeant Rutherford had switched over to Bubbles' side, once again on his superior's orders, leaving Buttercup with the second PTF soldier, who was just as confused and nervous about the prospect of abandoning the familiarity of guard duty for the dark unknown of play-time with the Chemical X subjects.

Sergeant Rutherford had decided to grab himself a piece of drawing block and color pencils to draw himself, so that Bubbles wouldn't be alone in the endeavor or be micro-managed by his adult sensibilities - 'Let girls be girls, kids be kids', he thought. In his mere half an hour with the Girls, he had thought better of them, just like Agent Blake. Due to distance and a lack of contact, he had thought of them before as the monsters the Organization made them out to be. However, being a new member of the Organization, recruited because of his combat experience in the Vietnam War and police vocation since, he had little preconceived notions of 'B-47, B-48 and B-49' as they were called. It was easy for him to change his mind.

Bubbles sat on her kiddy stool, hunched over her drawing. She had been trying to stay positive for the past hour, following Mister Blake's encouragements, and this time, she had dedicated her drawing to that effort, rendering from her memories the day when she'd woken up for the first time, like a newly-hatched chick, to find Daddy at the foot of her cot. She drew the cots with the three of them in them. It was far from an accurate drawing, with the beds far too big, as if each of them were given king-sized beds by Wiggums in the beginning. Her sisters and she were scribbles of the appropriate colors. Her Daddy was black and white, drawn a little boxy based on his strong, manly features.

Her drawing buddy had other ideas. He couldn't help but to recall his time in Vietnam. In fact, there wasn't a day when he didn't. He drew trees and trenches, men crawling in the thickets. Only, those weren't his men. They were the Viet Cong. He drew rough shapes of men on the floor, their rifles
scattered around them. Men were dead on both sides. He drew tears, unrealistically large, and blood, downplayed because the soil and grass and bushes and trees would suck on that blood greedily, he remembered. A helicopter thundered above the treeline, firing its miniguns at the enemy lines. He was down there, killing men he had never seen before, who he knew had lives, families and friends, who were killing men he knew on his side, who he knew had lives, families and friends too.

He didn't want to fire his rifle, but he had to, and when the hated M16 jammed because of the terrible, fetid jungles of Vietnam, he tossed it aside and fired rounds from his M1911A1 that he didn't want to fire, but had to, because men who didn't really want to kill him were firing at him anyway.

"What are you drawing, Mister Ruthy?" Bubbles interrupted his unwelcome reminiscence, thankfully. She had nicknamed him Mister Ruthy because she found it hard to pronounce his last name.

"Something really bad that happened long ago," Sergeant Rutherford said, his voice a near-whisper, his eyes a still distant, as though he was still in Vietnam, watching innocent men, friends and enemies alike take their final fall under the leadership of their supposed superiors.

"Who are these people?" Bubbles asked innocently, pointing at the figures lying on the ground. Despite being developmentally behind her sisters, she was still able to grasp the concept of death. At first, she thought that Mister Ruthy had drawn people who were sleeping after a picnic in a garden, but it dawned on her that they might not be asleep, after all.

"Friends I haven't seen for almost twenty years, who I'll never see again," Sergeant Rutherford said. "And those guys on the other side… They're people I'll never get to say 'I'm sorry' to."

"What happened?" Bubbles asked, her hands went up to her mouth in shock. She never liked it when she was upset, so she didn't like that Mister Ruthy looked beyond miserable too.

"People had arguments, and they got really mad at each other, so we fought and hurt each other…" Sergeant Rutherford answered in as simple a way as possible, not really confident at all that Bubbles would understand, but then again, he wouldn't want her to understand the whole truth anyway. It was just something that no little girls should have to understand. His mind wandered to the many little girls he had seen suffering in that far-away land.

"My Daddy said that there's always time to talk," Bubbles said, putting on her best smile for her new friend. "He read a story to me once, about a great big place in the sky where people go when they die." She picked up a light-blue colored pencil and drew angel-like wings on the dead bodies in Sergeant Rutherford's depiction of a Vietnam War two-sided massacre. "Maybe they're all up there now, and you'll see them again? And when you see them, you can say 'hi' and apologize to them?" She drew a cloud with a trees and flowers above a battlefield, just above the attack chopper firing down on the Vietnamese jungle. There, she drew stick figures giving each other flowers. "Now isn't that nice? I think I'm getting better at drawing."

Sergeant Rutherford had heard her, stared at the changes she made to his drawings. Slowly but surely, it eroded at his tough front, and eventually he couldn't help but to scrunch up his face as he felt a wave of comfort, a wave of sadness released like he never did before. Tears started to crawl out from one of his eyes.

"Excuse me," he whispered to Bubbles before shooting up. "Permission to be dismissed," he mumbled to Agent Anna before hurriedly going for the door, without waiting for a response or permission, or even caring if she'd heard him.

"Mister Ruthy?" Bubbles called out to him, worried that she'd said something wrong.
"Sergeant Rutherford, your rifle!" Agent Anna warned him, but he had already opened the door and slipped out, leaving his XM4 rifle behind, leaning against the pink kiddy table. Anna could only wonder what had actually happened, as she was absorbed in her task of explaining the alphabets. Blossom and Buttercup were also wondering what had happened.

"Bubbles, what did you say to him?" Blossom asked, though she honestly didn't think she had done any wrong.

"I don't know, I just told him that he'd get to meet his friends again…" Bubbles said, too ignorant to know what she had done for Sergeant Rutherford that no psychiatrist, family member or social worker was capable of. Anna stared at her, fearing the worst, as though she could smite her dead at a moment's notice. To her, what Bubbles said seemed ominous. It sounded like a veiled threat, even.

Outside, Agent Blake was just walking towards the Girls' room when Sergeant Rutherford hurried past him, a hand obscuring his face for some reason. Was that sobbing he thought he heard? Coming from one of the toughest soldiers in the new Powerpuff Task Force? He stared at the soldier as he was almost running into the washroom, sans headgear. Sans weapon. He had known the PTF soldier for a few days now, and he was supposed to be one of the best, undeniably. That he had left behind his rifle was a huge red flag. Something had changed, and he could only wonder what was going on. As he came close to the door leading into the Girls' room, Agent Anna opened the door and poked her head out.

"Blake, did you see Rutherford?" she asked.

"Yeah, I think he went into the can. Had to go, I suppose," Agent Blake guessed rather poorly; he didn't have the time to process what had happened. Anna pulled the door even wider and pushed Rutherford's XM4 Carbine into his hands.

"Here, he forgot this," Anna said, before coming out the door entirely. "I think one of the Girls, Bubbles, was it? Yeah, Bubbles, did something to him. Do you think they are psionically active? Like a few of those cases we had before?"

"Not that I know of. It's not in the files," Agent Blake said, trying to recall, but coming up with nothing.

"I have a theory, Blake. I think I know what's going on," Anna claimed, then with a hand, pulled Blake further away from the room. "I think they're capable of screwing with our minds. If not psionically, then conventionally."

"What the hell are you talking about, Anne?" Blake said. It seemed ridiculous. Mind control? Even with the previous cases, it was obvious whenever the subjects they were guarding had tampered with their agents' minds. Agents who survived mind control, or more accurately, mind tampering and mood alterations, could feel changes in their own brains, had described it as something they could resist or fail to resist. He'd felt nothing so far.

"I'm calling this in, Blake," Agent Anna said, before brushing past him. "Oh, and by the way, it's your turn. I'm done."

Before Agent Blake could say anything, tell her that she was wrong, that she was wasting her time, the female officer was already gone.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 1211.
When the medical team had arrived at the front door of the 'Utonium Residence', Agent Blake was relieved. It meant that the Chief of Security had meant what he said, kept his word, instead of using 'scorched earth policy'. He wasn't above it, but for now, it only meant that he had decided against it. He wouldn't claim to know the inner workings of the deep sixty-plus-something old-world warrior, but he knew that total destruction was always a consideration at every turn under the man.

The medical team was led by none other than Medical Wing Director Simmons himself. It was no accident that Simmons was the medical director. The man was a prodigy, a miracle worker armed with next-generation medical technology and techniques that only the Organization (and the Institute) had. He was also a close co-worker of Professor Utonium, and knew about the effects of Chemical X on the human body almost as much as him.

It could mean only good things from here onwards.

The medical team consisted of Simmons himself, another doctor and two nurses. The Chief of Security wasn't kidding when he said that he was still a valued asset.

"So what's the prognosis, doc?" Agent Blake questioned Medical Director Simmons the moment he stepped out of Professor Utonium's room. "Does it have anything to do with Chemical X? Is the prof going to die from exposure to it?"

"One thing at a time," Medical Director Simmons said. "First, your medic did a pretty good job, perhaps, in wresting Utonium from the jaws of death itself." The doctor said dramatically. He had a flare for that, and he thought that it might be something to do with his age and a gentleman's demeanor from a bygone era. The old man was over seventy, but still looked like he was sixty because of experimental, but effective, medical treatment. "A few more hours, and we'd have lost our century's Da Vinci, or even worse, turn him into something less… mentally developed than his adopted daughters. I don't mean that as an insult to your… new responsibilities, of course." He'd ended that off with a chuckle. "The Human brain is both a wondrous yet fragile thing."

"Anyway, your medic was able to bring his temperature down and rehydrate the man. I've added some nutrition and drugs to his IV to further stabilize his condition. I won't get too technical with you - anti-inflammations, a standard cocktail of drugs for fever and cold treatment, antibiotics."

"Does it have anything to do with Chemical X?" Agent Blake asked again.

"Hmm- The short answer is, no. The long answer is… I don't know. Chemical X is still an enigmatic substance, my security friend. Even Professor Utonium struggles to understand it, much less a humble man like me. What I do know is that it cannot interact well with a biological system in its raw form, requiring stabilizing agents and primers and such for the task. Whether he could somehow be contaminated with a 'stable' form of Chemical X from the… Girls, is another matter however. I won't pursue that matter, however," the doctor explained at length.

"Why not?"

"Because of my lack of qualification for Chemical X. I'm afraid I might misdiagnose Professor Utonium. At this point, even Professor Utonium can't diagnose himself with any Chemical X-related symptoms and disease. However, I will say this: What he's suffering now is as I've suspected during the meeting he attended yesterday, and it's conventional even if it's serious. Overwork, stress, sleep deprivation, nutritional deficiency, he's contracted some form of a simple flu and cold, and while I'm no psychiatrist - that's Alice's territory - he's got a chip on his shoulder. I know the man, as I'm sure you do, and I know why he's so protective of the Girls."

"His wife and kid?"
"Yes. That must have driven him to the edge, to say nothing about the Organization's harsh measures against its test subjects and members. Anyway, I'll be sticking around close by to make sure he makes a full recovery. I've already instructed a nurse to keep tabs on his prescription, and I'll probably make a full recommendation to the Organization committee to introduce someone else into the Girls' lives."

"You mean replacing Utonium as the caretaker?"

"No, I mean assisting him in raising the Girls. Being a single parent is a tough job, especially when he'd have to care for three kids who started out like slates as blank as infants, and then juggle that with a demanding around-the-clock job that all but invades his new 'private' life right from the beginning…"

"I didn't realize how bad it was…"

"Perks of being a fellow committee member and sitting close to Professor Utonium, I suppose."

"How long before he's on his feet again?" Agent Blake asked the magic question.

"He should be conscious again in… Give or take, four to eighteen hours. I'd be worried if it's more than that. But to make a full recovery? That's going to take more than the two or three days your medic predicted. Sure, he'd be able to walk around after two or three days, but I'm also prescribing two weeks of reduced workload for him - after he's up and about. If my recommendation for a second parent for the Girls is heeded by the committee, he'd have a reduced workload practically forever, anyway."

Medical Director Simmons had all but given Agent Blake nothing but good news. Packaging it into something the Girls would understand however, would be a challenge, but it was something the ex-soldier was willing to confront head-on. And what better way than to do it over a good meal at the table? Looking at his watch, he realized it was nearing lunch time.

'Lunch time. Shit,' Agent Blake thought as he remembered that he no longer had only himself to think of anymore. The Girls would need lunch too. As Simmons returned to Professor Utonium's room, presumably to pack up, he radioed in on The House's designated chef.

"Sierra-Lima to PTF-3, over," he spoke into his mic.

"PTF-3 present and accounted for, sir. What can I do you for? Over," Sergeant Holliday returned his call.

"I'm afraid I have another mission for you in the kitchen, over," Agent Blake said.

"I'm afraid I have another mission for you in the kitchen, over," Agent Blake said.

"If it's urgent, I would recommend a takeout, over," Sergeant Holliday replied. Agent Blake glanced at his watch, made estimations. There were no restaurants in this area of Townsville. No, a takeout would probably take as much time as a homemade bomb of a meal, if not more.

"Takeout is a no-go. Culinary preparation must be done on-site," Agent Blake said. "What can you cook up in… Thirty minutes? Over."

"I've taken the initiative and inventoried the kitchen, sir," Sergeant Holliday on the other end reported. Agent Blake could hear plastic hitting the wooden floor. The PTF soldier was probably setting down his rifle again, which had proven to be a less useful weapon than Eggs Benedict. "What would you say to Cordon Bleu? Did I mention that my dad's diner was classier than the usual? It's still alive and well, over."
"That'll do. It's now T minus thirty, I need you to double-time with lunch. As for the rest of us, get someone to order in some pizza, and make sure to get some for the medical team too. Make it a full spread of flavors. Maybe that'd get some of you to lighten up. Over and out."
Chapter 25: Sleeping Beauties

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup meet Doctor Simmons, a friend of Professor Utonium.

Chapter 25: Sleeping Beauties

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

7 DEC 1988. 1324.

While Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were in their room, playing together with Sergeant Rutherford and Agent Blake, there was a knock on the door. "Come in!" Agent Blake said. The door opened, revealing none other than Medical Director Simmons. He stared at the sight of Chemical X mutant children and a pair of hardened soldiers playing together, and couldn't help but to chuckle. They were building a city together, using whatever they had on hand - building blocks, Jenga blocks, model cars, boxes and containers. Another PTF soldier, Private Jessup, was busy rooting through the closet for even more 'building materials', and he'd just came out with a few shoe boxes.

Agent Blake, feeling blood rushing to his cheeks, stood up and straightened himself out, dusting his jacket. "Doctor Simmons, er, I don't think you've met the Girls?"

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup looked up from their half-constructed model Townsville and pinned their eyes on Doctor Simmons in anticipation. 'He looks important! Does he have more good news?' Blossom hoped. 'Are we getting more playmates?' Bubbles guessed. 'Am I getting more model cars?' Buttercup thought greedily.

"No, I don't believe I have the pleasure," Doctor Simmons said, each of his words properly pronounced. He seemed more formal than usual, which was how he would behave in front of new acquaintances who were important.

"Girls, this is Doctor Simmons. He's been taking good care of your father for a couple hours now," Agent Blake introduced the man, standing beside him and giving him a pat on the back. The Girls stood up, beaming at him, glad that he was here - since it meant their Daddy would be saved. "Doctor Simmons, this is Blossom," he waved his hand at the pink-eyed girl in a red bow and pink dress, "Bubbles," his hand shifted to the blue-eyed girl with incredibly long pigtails that were just begging to be cut, "and Buttercup." Attention in the room shifted to a green-eyed girl who had modeled herself exactly after Blossom in appearance, copying her bow and hairstyle. She struck a cutey pose more girly than Bubbles', who didn't even know that Buttercup was competing with her.

"It's nice to finally meet the three of you. I've heard only good things about you angels," Doctor Simmons stuck out a hand, shaking the Girls' one after the other. It was a ritual they had just learned from the security officers and PTF soldiers, since they hadn't even known that Buttercup was competing with her.
Utonium until they came. He then turned to their temporary caretaker. "Eh- May I speak to them alone, please?"

"Sure," Agent Blake agreed, before turning to the PTF soldiers. "Let's move out, people."

The room was soon vacated, leaving just the doctor and the three subjects of Project Powerpuff.

"Please, don't stand on ceremony. I'm not your father, you know. Sit," Doctor Simmons said graciously, waving a hand at their kiddie stools. The doctor himself looked around for a place to sit down, a place more conducive for his old bones, and he found the Girls' tri-colored bed. The Girls followed his instructions, taking places around their pink kid's tea table, their eyes still expectantly fixed on him.

The Girls were beautiful, and Doctor Simmons had to wonder if Chemical X had a part to play with that as well.

Blossom and her aristocratic features: upturned Grecian nose, high cheek bones, large eyes with pink, slightly glowing irises, her flaming red hair, combed into a flowing, cascading waterfall of fire down to her waist, tamed by a red bow and red pink-heart hair clip. She looked at him with intent, her eyes reading his, intelligent beyond her age of a mere two weeks and two days.

Bubbles, with her button nose, those soft cheeks, large eyes with light blue, slightly glowing irises, golden-blonde hair that fell on either side of her owing to the blue matching ribbons she wore, almost down to the waist, which, even without a trim, worked well like sun beams or golden curtains. She looked at him with the most innocent, lovable eyes that could probably disarm some of the most ruthless men in Townsville.

And finally, Buttercup, who looked similar except for her slightly sharp and straight nose and strong features, those arched eyebrows and green-irised, glowing glare that promised strength. Somehow, he felt that her Blossom-esque hairstyle did not quite fit her, even though he hadn't seen the other forms her mane could take. Her raven hair, however, was wilder than her aristocratic sister's, with the ends sticking up sideways like blades at the end.

Realizing that he was getting distracted with his admiration of the Girls, he went on: "As you have probably heard, your father is going to make a full recovery-"

"Can we see him?" Blossom asked impatiently, excitedly.

"Pretty please?" Bubbles completed her sentence for her.

"Yeah, I can't wait to be with him again!" Buttercup added.

"I suppose you could, but I don't think he's woken up yet," the doctor said.

"But… Why is he asleep for so long? Does he hate us now?" Buttercup asked, was almost interrogative, afraid that somehow her Daddy had found out about her deepest, darkest secrets somehow and decided not to tend to her again.

"Oh no, no, no. You can't think that way, young lady," the doctor corrected her swiftly. He wouldn't want such an innocent girl like Buttercup to suffer the wrong ideas (not that he knew how she'd murdered a cat, assaulted and blackmailed her sister and invaded her father's privacy, and of course, stolen a gun). "You see, when people got really sick, really hurt, what they'll do is fall asleep, sometimes for a long time."

"He was sick for a long time, I knew it," Blossom said. A teardrop fell from one of her large eyes. "I
"Sweet little girl, there was nothing you could have done. I've known your father for eight years. I know how stubborn he can be. If he was hiding his illnesses from you, he would have done it all the way," Medical Director Simmons explained. He pulled a handkerchief out from a pocket, came up to Blossom, kneeling down with a difficult grunt, and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "There you go, isn't that better? Be a strong girl for your father now. After all, you're strong as an ox from what I heard."

The doctor glanced down at Blossom, studying her. She was an interesting specimen of humanity – from her ethereal eyes, which seemed otherworldly, the way it glowed slightly, to her body – somehow managing to look like a normal 5-year-old, despite the enhancements it received. Then he noticed something else. Stitches. Stitches on her upper arm. Upton's stitches, he knew from the times the professor had to double as a doctor in an emergency.

"What is this?" he held up Blossoms arm, examining his colleagues handiwork.

"Did your father do this?" Simmons asked, even though he knew the answer to his question. Young as they were, the Girls could detect an accusatory tone from their time with the professor. After all, there were many minor wrongs they had committed.

"He made us sleep to test how strong we were…" Blossom try red to explain, but Simmons already knew what it was for. The problem was… there was no longer a cut under the stitches, not so much even a faint scar. The stitches, in fact, looked as if it had been half-bitten off by the girl's flesh as it recovered, with some of the surgical thread practically disappeared while the rest were loose and drooping. Simmons checked both Bubbles and Buttercup's arms, and he saw the same thing.

It had only been two days. It would have taken a week or two normally, and even longer for any scars to disappear, if the scar could even disappear entirely. It could have taken even be less than two days, since there was no report of the Girls' rapid healing factor. "Extraordinary!" he couldn't help but to utter.

"What?" the Girls asked in unison.

"It means you three are one-of-a-kind, amazing!" the doctor said. "But I'll need to help the three of you get those stitches off. Once we're done with that, I'll take you kids to see your father."

His promise, however, would do little, as Professor Utonium was still out of it, hooked to an IV drip and monitored by ECGs and heart rate machines. The Girls and their keeper had switched places. They would spend hours in the room, allowed to do so on the promise that they wouldn't cause a ruckus or destroy the machines keeping him safe. Bubbles drew a picture of them as a family, while Blossom, with the help of an idling nurse, had written her first get-well-soon card for the professor. Buttercup got into bed with the unconscious professor, wrapping his arm around her. The nurse had objected, but her words fell on deaf ears and Simmons eventually got her to let it be. "Wake up soon, Daddy," Buttercup told the professor before napping beside him.

Dinner was eaten in silence, as their father continued to lie in bed, unresponsive. Night fell, and then bedtime came, as if uncaring that the Girls were dejected at the seeming lack of progress in their Daddy's recovery, despite all the hopeful things Medical Director Simmons had heaped on them.

Bedtime was presided by Agent Blake himself, who had found himself liking the prospect of taking care of the Girls more and more, that it was beginning to scare even him. Over the course of a single day, his outlook on life had changed. Before, he was a hardened ex-soldier, career man at the peak of his performance, and now… Even his disposition towards his own men had become, as Corporal
Zach had described, 'almost motherly'. It was an exaggeration of course, but then again, he couldn't remember the last time he'd just let his men be, instead of whipping them into shape constantly, micromanaging them, and then allow them to order in every flavor of pizza possible, decadent with all the sides and drinks the nearest pizzeria had to offer.

By the end of the day, the living room had become more of a rec room than command centre for the PTF soldiers and security officers, with the television always on. With the Girls proven to be a non-threat, the tension in the House had lifted for most of the personnel present, with their focus shifting towards protecting the Girls from any outside threat, rather than the maddening duality of having to oppress the very same children they had to defend. Only Anna and a handful others remained adamant that the Girls need to be treated as things that were dangerous.

Without batting an eye, Agent Blake helped the Girls into their night gown, one after the other, like an assembly line of love. He'd noticed a change in them. Where their mood in the afternoon had swung towards sunny, their mood at night had darkened dramatically.

"What if Dad doesn't wake up again?" Blossom despaired once again.

"What if he dies!?" Bubbles feared the worse.

"What if he doesn't wake up because he hates us!" Buttercup speculated, insecure. "I've been trying my best to be the perfect little girl!"

They were already tucked into bed, according to the colors of the bed sheet, but were far from being in the mood for some sleep.

"I'm sure it's none of that," Agent Blake promised. "Good things come with time, even if it takes a while sometimes." He padded over to the bookshelf, and began rooting through the selection. He remembered a story that his mother used to tell him. Though it had little significance to him beyond a measure of entertainment value, he thought that it was pertinent to the current situation. Yet, after flipping past a dozen storybooks, he couldn't find it.

"I don't think I want a bedtime story. I just want Dad!" Bubbles began crying. 'Oh no, better hurry' Agent Blake thought as he went through the selection faster. Just when he thought he'd hit the end of the shelf with nothing to show for it, he finally found it - Thank God for Utonium's meticulousness! The man had practically purchased all of the classic fairy tales.

He turned around and held up a book to them. The cover showed a picture of a princess sleeping on a stone slab.

"What does that have anything to do with Dad?" Buttercup said cynically, crossing her arms.

"It has everything to do with your Dad," Agent Blake claimed. "This masterpiece will change your life." Perhaps he'd oversold it a little, but he would be lying to himself if he claimed that it wasn't intentional.

And so Agent Blake told them the story of Sleeping Beauty, and how it took a hundred years for her to waken and live happily ever after. The moral of the story? All good things took time to manifest, and with their Daddy, at least it would likely take less than a hundred years for him to wake up and smell the roses.

Even if it didn't put the Girls entirely at ease, it'd stopped them from melting down any further, and motivated them to sleep so that the next day could come faster.

"I guess I'll leave you lot to it then," Agent Blake finally said, actually proud and feeling fulfilled at a
mission accomplished, even if said mission had nothing to do with combat. "Good night."

"Mister Blake, wait," Bubbles said, urgency in her voice.

"Something wrong, Bubbles?" Agent Blake asked.

"May I have Octi?" she said. "He's the octopus." Agent Blake looked around the room, but he couldn't pick out the eight-tentacled soft toy anywhere. "He's with his friends."

"Right, of course he is," Agent Blake commented before walking over to the giant pile of soft toys and pulling Octi out of it, depositing it into the blonde's arms.

"Thank you, Mister Blake," Bubbles said. "Nighty-night, Mister Blake."

"Right, night." Agent Blake said before leaving the room and moving to close the door behind him. Before he could fully close it though, he could hear Bubbles whimpering in fear. He came back in again.

"What's the matter?" He asked again.

"Please keep the door open?" Bubbles requested.

"Bubbles, there are six soldiers and seven guards in this house, and you've got superpowers. What's there to be afraid of?" Agent Blake tried to reason with her.

"But the darkness is everywhere!" Bubbles cried.

"Mister Blake, I'm kinda afraid of the dark too…" Blossom added, if only in support of Bubbles.

"Alright, alright," Agent Blake struggled with the illogical and irrational of the Girls, but he relented. "I'll keep the hall lights shining." And with that, he left the Girls to slumber, hopefully towards a better tomorrow.

And the Girls tried. They honestly did, but there was one other thing that was bugging them.

"I can't sleep…" Bubbles squeaked.

"Yeah, even though I'm pooped," Buttercup added.

"Erm… Mister Ruthy, Mister Jessup…" Blossom said to the two dark figures in the room with them. They were camouflage against the darkness by their black tactical gear. They were on either corners of the room, opposite of their queen-sized bed. "I can't sleep with the two of you staring at us…"

"Oh. Sorry," Sergeant Rutherford apologized. Removing a hand from the grip of his XM4 Carbine rifle, he searched the night vision device he was wearing for a switch before turning it off and resting it against his forehead. "Force of habit, I suppose. It was our turn to guard you three." He made a move towards the door. "C'mon, Private Jessup. We'll be right outside the door. Holler if you see any boogie-men, or need anything else."
Chapter 26: Broken

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium wakes up, but not necessarily for the better. Buttercup adds another skeleton into her closet.

A/N: I've decided to put the quote below in the prologue, as it seems to be the overwhelmingly prevailing theme in this story:

"He who fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." - Friedrich Nietzsche

Chapter 26: Broken

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

8 DEC 1988. 1019.

"How is his vitals?" Medical Director Simmons asked, while he was scribbling on a clipboard. He had been sitting by the door of Professor Utonium's room for the past couple of hours. He was getting worried that his beleaguered colleague might never wake up again. The professor hadn't woken up in the time period he estimated, and he was usually accurate with his educated guesses.

"Vital signs are normal. 51 bpm, ECG 140 to about 155. Body temperature's at… 100.2 Fahrenheit. Nothing's changed," the nurse, a female blonde who was a little overweight, reported.

"Have you changed his IV?" Simmons inquired again, scribbling more notes in cursive handwriting that was almost a secret code, since only his own medical staff could read it. The nurse did not reply for some reason. "Doctor! Have you changed his IV?"

"D-doctor!" the nurse shouted, alarmed.

"What is it? Did you do something wrong?" the doctor accused - there was no such thing as a patient he could afford to screw up with, not in his book. He rushed over to his patient, swallowing whatever speculations he had boiling in his brain.

"No, his eyes! He opened his eyes!" the nurse said. "He's awake!"

Doctor Simmons had to see it for himself, and it was true. Professor Utonium was finally awake. But he looked barely conscious, and clearly confused, as expected from someone who had jump forward in time and space for almost two days from his perspective.

"Thomas? Can you hear me?" the doctor said, snapping his fingers before the professor's eyes. He
then shone a pen-light into his eyes, testing their reactions. Normal dilation. No sign of brain damage thus far. The previous day, he'd even taken advantage of the medical imaging equipment the Professor himself had brought in for examining Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, and ran him through a brain scan, MRI. Nothing would have indicated otherwise. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

Professor Utonium did not reply. Instead, he turned over, facing away from the doctor.

"Thomas, we have to do some basic tests. It's for your own good. You're a doctor too, you should know that," Simmons told him, perhaps confused by his colleague's behavior. From what he knew, Professor Utonium was in love with his Girls. Shouldn't he be jumping up to see them the second he was conscious?

"Leave me alone," Professor Utonium simply muttered, weak from being bedridden for a couple of days.

"Professor, at least tell me what the problem is?" Simmons asked, now deeply concerned.

"You should have euthanized me. That's the problem," the professor lamented cryptically, his voice vacant of emotions, as if he'd ran out of it.

"May I at least keep you in observation and on the drip?" Simmons requested. Silence was his only reply. 'What the hell is going on?' the doctor wondered. He made a move out of the room, equally confused as to what to do.

"I'll keep an eye on him," the nurse said.

"You do that. Good show, missus," the doctor praised her emptily. His mind was on something else. When he was out of the room, it didn't take him long to reach the corridor overlooking the living room. The Girls were there, watching cartoons with half the security force present. As much as the situation with the Girls was stable for now, it couldn't go on like this. The Girls were ignorant, but they were under what was little more than a provisional military governorship. Soldiers make good guardians or protectors. They wouldn't be any good as parents and educators. He's had a talk with Agent Blake, and he knew that the Girls had advanced very little in their education and understanding of the world, or their understanding of themselves in the day the security lieutenant was responsible for them, compared to the huge strides Professor Utonium made, based on his reports, based on what he saw.

Should he even inform the Girls? He had to. They were his family, at least the ones he cared for, anyway. But even that was thrown into question by his acute nihilistic streak, made apparent by his behavior on waking up. No, he needed to. Perhaps the Girls might make the professor come around.

Descending down the stairs, Medical Director Simmons approached the Girls. It was as if they sensed his coming, as they immediately turned away from the television to him without him saying a word. "Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup. I need to speak with the three of you."

Together, the old doctor and the three Girls sat on the steps of the stairs, but for a moment, there were no words exchanged as the doctor struggled to think of a way to persecute the matter.

"He's dead, isn't he?" Buttercup muttered, her spirit low, fearing the worse when she misinterpreted the doctor's silence for grave news.

"No, he's not," the doctor said immediately.

"So he's alive?" Bubbles surmised.
"Of course he is, bobble-head!" Buttercup chided, sick of what she perceived as stupidity on the part of her blue sister. At this point, sadness was bubbling just under the surface of Bubble's skin, under the surface of all the Girls' skin, that the blonde couldn't pretend not to be upset to save her life.

"Buttercup!" Blossom hushed her tomboy sister up, then turned to the doctor. "Then what's the matter? Is something happening to him?"

"He seems… really upset. Did something happen between you three and your father?" Medical Director Simmons inquired. "Did something happen the night before you three found him in the lab?"

Bubbles seemed really upset with his statement, even though it wasn't even an accusation. She had already started sniffling and tearing. The doctor took out his handkerchief once more to wipe her eyes and cheeks.

"I don't know," Bubbles sobbed.

"He was really quiet on the way back home," Blossom recalled.

"You mean on the way back from the meeting?" the doctor checked.

"Yes… He was having trouble walking back into the house. He was really hot," Buttercup continued the story.

"Must be the fever," the doctor confirmed.

"He felt hot a long time before that," Blossom added.

"He made us dinner, but he didn't make himself dinner," Bubbles reminisced while she was still trying to control her tears. "It was really good. I didn't like it that he wouldn't eat."

"We went to bed straight after that," Blossom said.

"Straight after? Like, immediately after?" the doctor questioned.

"Yeah, I was tired after dinner all of a sudden," Buttercup recalled.

"We didn't even take a bath or change before going into bed," Blossom then added.

"We slept in our party dresses," Bubbles added even further. "I felt all icky and sticky but I was too sleepy…"

Doctor Simmons could only suspect the worse. He got the Girls to stay at the stairs while he went over to the kitchen He searched the counter, the cabinets, but there was nothing. He checked the waste bin last, and found what he was looking for. A box of sleeping pills. He picked it out of the inner recesses of the bin, and opened the package. Empty except for the plastic and aluminium.

'Did Professor Utonium do what I think he did?' Doctor Simmons thought. 'No, it can't be. He wouldn't - he could have been taking the pills himself, or prescribed some to the Girls when he knew that he was becoming incapacitated.' Still, the possibility of it was disquieting.

"Girls, I'm taking you up to see your father," Doctor Simmons decided after a while. If there was one thing that could re-energize Professor Utonium, it was his adopted daughters. He led them up, holding Blossom's hand while the rest formed a chain again, just like how they used to when they thought that the stairs was the scariest thing in the world. "Just… Be gentle with him. He's still very
But the Girls were anything but gentle. They'd burst into their Daddy's room like a rampaging horde of raiders, excited to be able to see him again. "Dad!" the Girls squealed almost in unison, with Buttercup jumping into his bed and Blossom coming up beside him. Bubbles was almost flying up to his lap, sitting on it. Professor Utonium hardly had the time to lift his head from his pillow to see them coming. But he didn't need to. Their laughter was a dead giveaway.

Yet even they could immediately tell that something was wrong. Even when he was fatigued, the professor would normally be very excited to be with them, but now, he simply closed his eyes as if in contemplation.

"Dad, what's wrong?" Buttercup asked sadly, when she noticed that he wouldn't even look at her. "Why won't you look at me anymore? Did I do something wrong?" All her fears were coming back to haunt her.

"Go away, Buttercup," the professor simply said weakly. "Bubbles, get off my legs." Bubbles did as she was told, in vain hope that maybe, just maybe, it would make all the sadness go away. But she knew right after that it wouldn't mean much.

The words cut deep, even deeper than what a Duranium scalpel could do. Buttercup's hands went up to her mouth, her face, when she felt something of an intensity she had never felt before. A mix of utter misery, abandonment and even disappointment and betrayal. Anger, intense anger.

Bubbles had felt the same, but her sensitivity made it worse. "Daddy, why are you saying such things?"

"I'm not your daddy anymore. You don't deserve a father like me," Professor Utonium said, his face a rock. The lack of tears made speculation for the worst easy. Blossom took him by the hand, afraid to let go.

"Dad, don't talk like that, please!" Blossom said desperately, her own eyes wet. "You said that you'll always be my father, and I'll always be your daughter!"

"I thought you're the smart one, Blossom. Didn't you hear what I said?" the professor said coldly, before tearing his arm away from her and rolling to his side to face away from her. But Buttercup was on the other side, so he pushed Buttercup away. The ravenette did not expect him to do that, so she fell down on her bum in bed. "Get lost!"

Bubbles, unable to take it anymore, ran out of the room in tears, her hands covering her eyes. The door was slammed so hard that the wood cracked, and the entire Powerpuff Task Force on site was sent up the second floor to check what had happened.

"Dad, please…" Blossom repeated herself, placing a hand on his shoulder. Professor Utonium simply shrugged away from her. Buttercup got off the bed and stomped away, completing the damage Bubbles had done to Professor Utonium's door. Blossom simply sunk onto the floor, wailing.

"I- I think visiting hours are over," the nurse said, sympathetic even though she had hardly met the Girls, before picking her up. "Come on, let's go. I'll make you hot chocolate if you do..."

"Noooo! No! Daddy, please!" Blossom cried and pushed her away. She continued crying on the floor, pounding her hands on the bed. "DAD!" Four soldiers had to carry her out, and even then, it was only because she wasn't angry enough to punch them across the room; that would be Buttercup's
Meanwhile, Doctor Simmons had come in a little too late, unable to do anything. "What the hell is
going on here?" he asked the room impotently. By this time, there was only the nurse and Professor
Utonium left, neither of whom were very inclined to speak.

"Jeez, Blossom, calm down a bit," Corporal Zach, one of the soldiers carrying Blossom to her room,
said as he struggled with her. "It's just some daddy issues!"

"You're a real charmer, you know that?" Sergeant Rutherford said sarcastically. "Just shut up and do
your job."

Agent Blake was already up, and he had seen enough to know what had happened. "This is Sierr-
Lima, we're at Meltdown-1, over. Tantrum-1 as well. All personnel, Show a Good Example, I
repeat, Show a Good Example." He went into the Girls' room, where four of his soldiers had just
deposited Blossom in. The poor girl continued to cry on the floor. The other two were unaccounted
for.

"Sir! Sir! It's Bravo-Four-Eight! She's gone out the door!" Agent Fields, his second-in-command,
reported.

"Then talk to her and bring her back inside!" Agent Blake ordered through his mic.

"I can't, I tried chasing her down, but she was too fast! Like 50 miles an hour or something!" Agent
Fields replied through the radio. Blake couldn't help but to feel a pang of guilt, that giant boulder in
him that was present when he'd gotten people killed in the Vietnam War, in the operations since.
He'd done it again. He hadn't gotten people killed yet, but he'd allowed the possibility by going soft –
he didn't regret getting close to the Girls, but he'd regretted letting it got to his head. He had never felt
such... parenthood before, even if it was temporary, and it was like candy, like drugs.

"Damn it! All units, we have a Run Away. I repeat, we have a Run Away! Inform Bravo-Papa units
to conduct search pattern Spiral-Delta!" Agent Blake ordered, falling back to his old self.

"Bravo-Papa units, this is PTF-6. We have a Run Away event. Requesting a Spiral-Delta, over," it
was the K-9 soldiers voice.

"This is Bravo-Papa-5, which Bravo is Running Away, over?" one of the border patrol officers
asked.

"Bravo-Four-Eight is Running Away, over," K-9 Soldier said.

In the meantime, Agent Blake was working on damage control in The House. Blossom was
accounted for, but Bubbles was nowhere to be seen. Leaving behind two soldiers with Blossom, he
took the other two with him in search of her on the second floor. "All Sierras in Play Area, do a
room-by-room search for Bravo-Four-Nine, level one and B-one."

"10-4, sir," third-in-command Anna sounded out from below.

Back in the room, Medical Director Simmons was glaring at Professor Utonium. He kind of knew
what had gone down, and it must had been something to do with him. "What did you say to them?"
he asked. The professor remained stubbornly silent. Only the heart-rate monitor told him something
resembling the truth. The professors heart rate was elevated.

"Nurse, would you excuse us for a moment?" the doctor said. The nurse obliged, taking off quite
readily. When he heard the door slamming and creaking from severe damage, he continued: "They were devastated. Heartbroken, Upton."

"So I heard," the professor finally said something, his voice hoarse, coming from a tunnel as parched as a desert.

"Jesus Christ, Thomas. What's going on with you?" Simmons asked, wondering. He pulled up a chair and sat down next to the professor. "I thought you loved those kids, adored them since the day they were born, and it's not like they're born twenty years ago."

Silence. Except for the hear rate monitor.

"I… I do. Still. So, so much," Professor Utonium confessed.

"Then why did I have to be the one to wipe Bubbles' tears away?" Doctor Simmons said. "What did you do yesterday?"

"I tried to kill them yesterday," Professor Utonium confessed. Tears welled up in his eyes. The feeling that came with it felt worse than the fever, felt worse than the two weeks of neglect he'd put himself through.

"That was two days ago, Upton. You were gone two days. The Girls missed you terribly," Doctor Simmons said.

"I meant what I said, Jacob. They don't deserve a father like me. They deserved better. Maybe it's a good idea that I drive them away now, make them hate me," the professor finally opened up. "I've failed them over and over. I couldn't protect them from the Organization, I couldn't protect them from anyone. And then I slipped them the pills, and when that didn't work, I almost shot them-" He broke up into tears, unable to speak any further.

"I understand, Upton," Doctor Simmons said.

"H-How could you? You're a part of the Organization," the professor said, almost with fury, but his illness had blunted it nearly beyond recognition. It got through to the doctor, however. The doctor rearranged himself on his seat. 'It's going to be a long day,' he thought.

"I'm only part of the Organization as much as you. Don't forget that you're not alone, son. You have friends, you know. Wiggums, Alice, your science staff. We're with you," the doctor said. "And you're now just stomping on our friendship. Let us help, Upton."

Silence.

"5 June 1940. Does that date mean anything to you?" the doctor asked, the question more rhetorical than answerable. Professor Utonium wasn't even born then. Predictably, he didn't answer the question. "The Nazis invaded the French before that. I was a young doctor like you once. Yes, even me. I was a Red Cross volunteer then. It wasn't the French POWs and their hopelessness that got to me. Do you know what did? It was the Jew concentration camps. Somehow, I had access to one of them. 'It's a waste of time,' one of the SS officers there said in German. 'They're all going to die anyway'. Still, I gave the kids there as much help as one doctor could give. There were hundreds of them, Upton, looking like little skeletons. The day before they were due to be shipped to the extermination camps, I despaired and overdosed as many as I could.

"I killed 63 of them myself, before the Germans could pack them like cattle into the death trains. They found out and threw me out. The Red Cross threw me out of the organization after that too. Next thing I heard, one of those trains were intercepted by the French Resistance. Their method was
crude - they knocked off the train tracks and let the death train derail, but they saved whoever survived. It made me wonder - would any of the 63 children I killed survive had I not taken that chance away from them? I was stuck with that question for years, and even as World War II ended, the war inside me did not. I wandered for many years until the Organization found me."

"Why are you telling me this?" Professor Utonium asked, but Doctor Simmons smiled. At least he'd gotten his attention.

"You're where I was before. My 63 children are no longer here, but your three children are, and I think their chances are greater than those poor Jews. Return to them, before it's too late," Doctor Simmons reasoned with the man.

"But how? I tried to kill them. I can't ever forget that. I can't forget the lies I've told them. How can I ever smile at them again? I'm broken. And now I've hurt their feelings, and I know they're going to be hurt more, and it won't be just their feelings in the future," Professor Utonium lamented. His tears were flowing down his cheeks, but the doctor wiped them away, mingling them with Bubbles' tears.

"Time will heal all wounds. You're lying down in a room with a mass murderer, and I'm no psychopath. I've made many mistakes even after the 5th of June, 1940, but I can smile time and again. It wasn't an ideal decision I've made for those Jewish children, and that's an understatement, but... It's not my fault. It took years for me to see that; it was the Nazis' fault. Just as it isn't your fault that you tried to kill Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. You were just compelled to do so by forces beyond you. But you can fight back in your own way. Don't let them win, Upton," the doctor said further. The professor simply closed his eyes, saying nothing further. Medical Director Simmons thought that he was tired. He got up to leave. "Think about what I said."

Outside The House, Buttercup had crossed the snowy lawn within a second, coming through a hole in the fence and trespassing into the neighbors' lawn. She hid behind some tall bushes, and then followed it into the neighbors' backyard. Hearing with her enhanced senses that a car was coming, she hid inside a bush, shivering. She had only realized then that she had foregone her winter wear when she decided to run.

The car was far away, and the hum of the engine soon faded even further, at least a mile away, still. She lied down in the frozen soil, curling into a fetal position. "Dad hates me. He hates me! But- But- It can't be- He said he'd always be my father... He can't hate me..." she cried. She couldn't help but to leak a few tears, which turned to crystals quickly. "Stupid eyes! Why do you keep doing this?!"

Then came barks from the house. She could hear paws padding on wood, then snow. The barks became louder. The barks irritated her. Annoyed her. Here she was, having the worse crisis ever known to girdom, and a dog was barking at her. She crawled out of the bushes and into the snow, and she was met with a golden retriever, which backed away, but continued barking. "Stupid dog! Go away!" She'd finally learned the word 'stupid' from one of the soldiers.

But it did not listen, and instead kept scolding it in its own language. Buttercup became fuming mad, shaking with fury at the dog's discourtesy, as her hands went up to her head, as if trying to contain her brain, stopping it from exploding. Then something gave in her mind, and a demented smile soon spread across her face. She stared at the dog with hungry, lusty eyes. There was... a way the dog could make up for its disrespect.

"Here, doggy, doggy," Buttercup bent down, sticking a hand out, coaxing the dog to come closer. When it did not, she took steps towards the golden retriever. The dog continued barking, then stopped for a while. She picked up a stick that was sticking out of the ground. "Do you want this?"
The dog stuck its tongue out, then came closer. And closer. Its ears peaked. "Good doggy."

Then the dog lunged at her, biting her hand. Although its teeth couldn't sink much into her flesh, it still felt a little painful.

Buttercup stuck the stick into its eye, pushing half of it through the socket with ease, then delivered a punch across its skull as hard as she could. There was a sickening crunch and a yelp, the bony version of a vase breaking. The dog's neck snapped before its body was sent sprawling across the neighbors' snowy plain. "Bad doggy."

She'd totally meant it. Whether the dog attacked her or not, she would have done it. Buttercup couldn't help but to spread her smile wider, made it a toothy scream of a smile. She approached the instant dog carcass, then brought her foot down on the torso over and over, as if she was stomping on a bug. She heard ribs shattering, and delighted in it as the bones sang to her. She laughed and giggled uncontrollably. It helped her to forget, warding away the bad words that Daddy had spoken.

Then, with a single hand, she pulled the carcass into the bushes, like some predator looking to chow down on some hunted meat. Ever-curious about what was inside the body of a 'real' thing unlike dolls, she tore at the skin, exposing flesh and bones. Pebbles of shattered bones rained from the carcass. It reminded her of a Pinata she'd seen on television - would Dad ever give her one now? - and then she dug even further, spilling more blood. She took care not to let any get on her dress, as the last time she got some on her gloves, she was almost caught. She ripped out the intestines, then the stomach. But there seemed like there was a never-ending supply of blood, and, placated for now by her unconventional play-time, she decided that it was time to head inside.

Digging a quick grave behind the bushes, she deposited the mutilated dog corpse in it, and after washing her hands with the snow, buried the evidence with even more snow.

Then, leaping out of her hiding spot, she made a beeline towards the House, and let herself be caught by a group of PTF soldiers who were just done searching the House for her, and was fanning out to expand the search beyond. Agent Blake was with them.

"Where were you!?” Blake scolded. "You gave us quite a heart attack, young lady! Don't do it again, okay?"

"I'm sorry… I was just… Upset," Buttercup half-lied, shedding tears by thinking of her father. She was getting good at this. She didn't need to fake her shivers, however. Agent Blake picked her up, and Buttercup hugged him for warmth.

"It's alright," Agent Blake said. "C'mon, let's get you inside and warmed up."

"What's that smell?" one of the soldiers wondered.

"Probably just the dirt she was getting mixed up in," another soldier answered, and that was the end of that.

"This is Sierra-Lima of the PTF to Bravo-Papa, cancel Spiral-Delta. We've found her, over and out," the K-9 soldier with them, who also had a radio pack, reported to the border patrols.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the this episode, newspaper articles from Townsville describes the city in all its terrible glory...

Townsville Tribune Extract 8 DEC 1988

The following are newspaper articles clandestinely supported by the Organization, which are preceded by days of preparations. They are boosted in the local news media to herald the entrance of the Organization as the United States Defence Organization into the public consciousness, especially in Townsville.

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TOWNSVILLE KNOWN AS CRIMESVILLE, USA

Townsville, despite its name, is home to six million and a hundred and fifteen thousand denizens, not counting the transient population. Some would think that there are more criminals than people. In a Times article published just a month ago, Townsville is named the city with the worst crime rates in the United States, and one of the worst in the world. Townsville is ranked highest in all categories of crime, aggravated or not, for the past 15 years.

What is worst of all is that there is no sign of it ever going away. The city has also joined the top 10 list of the most corrupt city in the USA, with the police 'dirty rate' estimated to be at 40%, and that is based on a UN task force's assessment, which was forced to pull out half a year ago due to assassination attempts, unsuccessful and otherwise. Top officials, at least some of them, believe it to be as high as 59% to 65%. Some experts, including clinical psychiatrist Dr. Tony Leland, believes it to be lower, at 21% to 33%, citing the fact that some cops and city officials are forced to blend in.

Some will even describe Townsville as a sinking ship, with an endless number of holes to patch up. The more daring ones will even cite that Mayor Wilford, who have served the city in numerous capacities for sixty years, to be one of them.

"No disrespect to the man - he's one of the few politicians I actually trust - but he's old-fashioned, and his mind is going. Expanding the police force just isn't enough - you're just increasing the number of corrupt cops that way. Why, just a month ago, he was talking about bringing back Prohibition and applying it to anything vice or resembling vice - if that's a sign that he's becoming senile and in need of impeachment, then I don't know what is," one of Mayor Wilford's detractors, Professor McQuinn, pHD in Political Sciences, of Townsville University, comments.

When asked for his opinion on the 'many holes' of USS Townsville, Police Commissioner Davis, who was cleared of corruption charges 3 years ago, listed these factors like they are written off the back of his hand:

Gangland Tradition - Townsville has been the home of dozens of gangs, some of whom have roots
going back as far as a two hundred years, not all of whom are homegrown. While there are often power struggles and shifts in the status quo, citizens are always downtrodden because of this - it only means paying a different man for 'protection', and each change means different rules and an increased 'protection fee' because of the gang wars. Most recently, the mysterious 'Amoeba Boys' have emerged and brought the Lombardi family to the top of the game.

Corruption - With the history of Townsville crime stretching back centuries, the legal system in Townsville has only weakened with bribery an everyday routine, favors being bought and sold like stocks and candy, and a significant minority of the police force moonlighting as enforcers. Government officials are similarly compromised.

Paralysis - So bad is the corruption, in fact, that court cases for even the most basic of crimes could drag on for weeks and months, and even those criminals who are convicted are given much lighter sentences compared to criminals of other US cities and regions. The Townsville Police Department is regarded as inefficient than most other similar organizations, and is only tolerated because the honest cops the city produced are also said to be forged by blood and steel, and are among the best in the country.

Poverty - Townsville is host to a significant slum and tenement wealth gap has only exacerbated the situation. This has led to the creation of numerous breeding zones for criminals, and there is even an informal career ladder for those deciding to get into crime. Common thugs grow on the streets, who will either form their own gangs or join one after committing a feat of crime. They may rise through the ranks to become a Godfather-type figure or die trying.

Vice - Townsville had put up no barrier to vices such as gambling and prostitution since the end of Prohibition. With the exception of the business and government districts, as well as the suburbs, the city is crawling with casinos, gambling dens, brothels, bars, strip clubs and other less savory places that have multiplied over the last two decades. With crime and corruption at an all-time high, these places often serve as criminal headquarters and outposts, and doubles as fronts, drug dens, warehouses or negotiation places. They are also an important part of the criminal underground's income.

Untaxed Wealth - Peculiarly, Townsville remains rich even as it approaches its second decade of a spiraling descend into becoming an absolute crime haven. Despite numerous seizures of illegal goods and monies by the police amounting to millions a year, the criminal underground remains incredibly profitable and well-funded, on par with the police and even surpassing them, as it is hard to estimate money that is laundered and hidden. There has also been seizures of minerals and gold and other precious metals that couldn't be traced inside or outside of Townsville. There is nothing but rumors that the several cults operating in Townsville, themselves occasionally involved in crime, have something to do with this.

'Super-Crime': Compounding the problem is the rise of what Commissioner Davis termed 'Super-Crime', which involves the 'Amoeba Boys' as well. Criminals are said to have made the jump to a next level, with even the most heroic and die-hard cops being unable to capture them. The mysterious 'Naga' is another such example, with the cops unable to make heads or tails of the crime scene she leaves behind. Apparently, she is so skilled with firearms and hand-to-hand weapons that it seems as if she has four arms, according to forensic investigators, basing their claim on evidences such as shell casings and wounds sustained by her victims.

Despite this, the citizens of Townsville had maintained a kind of hard-boiled, weathered hope for a brighter future. Despite the toxic level of crime and corruption, the population growth here has only seen a positive trend, as business and work remains abundant, still, having been entrenched in the city ever since what is known as the Golden Age of Townsville, a period from 1930 to 1960 when
the city quadrupled in size and by even greater factors in wealth and affluence, outgrowing its name. Despite having to pay corrupt cops and criminal gangs alike for protection, the middle and high class remain marginally wealthier than their neighbors in the surrounding regions, and the poor remain mostly fed, clothed and sheltered, even if still very much poor. Even with the dead piling up and victims increasing, the unscathed will always remain confident that they won't be next - at least until they join the affected.

Most of the local folks still remember the days when crime and corruption were mostly under control, with the criminal underground being terrified of the police and government and not the other way around. Townsville had seen reversals in the eternal battle against crime before, twice, both in the 19th century and during and after Prohibition, and some believe that there will be a third, and hopefully, final time.

HOPE IN THE HORIZON?

THE USDO DOES THE UNEXPECTED

In a city like Townsville where the World War equivalent of a desperate struggle against crime is fought everyday on the streets, where nothing has changed for the past two decades that the locals are becoming used to stepping over dead bodies and turning the other cheek to drugs, something new is good news indeed.

In a series of events that took Townsville by shock and surprise, and even the entire nation, a new federal agency has just revealed itself to the media across the world. Known vaguely as the United States Defence Organization, or USDO for short, it has introduced itself by offering a nugget of information concerning itself as a gesture of goodwill: it was once a secret organization that had existed since just after World War II, and has been working in secret to develop new technologies for use in defence and more recently, law enforcement. They are an organization with about two hundred men and women already present in the city.

Now, they have set their sights on Townsville, and will be in negotiations with the local government, represented by Mayor Wilford, to assist the beleaguered city in ridding it of crime and corruption.

A heavily protected convoy of USDO officials in military-styled Humvees was seen at 9:15pm, 7 DEC 1988 (yesterday), unmarked and heavenly-white, pulling up at the City Hall, unafraid of travelling the dark streets of the city. The City Hall itself is guarded by multiple squad cars and SWAT units. Men and women in business suits alighted from these vehicles, surrounded by security officers in gray uniforms and what appear to be soldiers in black gear. Sources say that they are comprised of key USDO leadership and negotiators.

Speculations abound as to how the USDO will assist in reducing crime and corruption rates in our fair city. While it is not out of the question that USDO federal manpower will be directly assisting the local police, there is also the possibility that aid might come in the form of advanced technology as well. Only time will reveal the method to this new kid around the block.

Will this spell the end of crime and corruption in the city? Or is this merely an escalation in the war against crime, a new stage in a never-ending struggle? Analyst believes that this is a positive step towards a safer, cleaner Townsville, but there is no telling what will happen next and a regression into a worse state is possible, considering the inexperience and small size of the newly-minted USDO. No matter what happens, it will be a long and hard-fought battle against the shadier elements of the embattled city.
Chapter 27: On the Mend

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium comes back from the brink, and so too, does the family.

Chapter 27: On the Mend

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

8 DEC 1988. 1145.

"I'm so sorry, Girls," a familiar voice said. Buttercup could hear it on the way out of the second floor bathroom. She had been sitting in the bathtub, immersed in hot water for the past hour with Agent Blake for company, who sat beside her with a guns magazine, no longer as freaked out at the idea of tending to the Girls' hygiene needs.

She followed the voice to Professor Utonium's room. Four plainclothes officers were guarding the ruined door to the room. One of them glanced in her direction, but he treated her like it was business as usual.

"I'm sorry too," she heard Blossom said.

"Me three," and Bubbles too.

"Please, don't be. It's all my fault, all mine," she heard the familiar voice said again. It was Professor Utonium's voice. She took a peek into the room, and saw her sisters in Daddy's arms. For some reason, she felt betrayed, again; while she was warming up in the bathtub, they had reunited without her, as if… They could do without her.

Professor Utonium's eyes shifted from her sisters to catching her in the hallway. "Buttercup!" he cried in joy. Buttercup stopped hiding and stepped into the doorway, padding towards Daddy's bed. She couldn't help but to frown at the man. "Buttercup, Daddy's sorry. I'm sorry for all the things I've said."

Buttercup came closer, her face still contorted with anger. She folded her arms, seriously unhappy. "You said some mean things, Daddy."

"I know, I just- It's complicated. And I'm sorry. Please, come here," the professor apologized. Buttercup stared at him with intent, calculating in her own way, even though she knew nothing about numbers.

"Am I still your daughter? Should I still call you Daddy now?" Buttercup asked, her words cutting as deep as his, a kind of tit-for-tat that was more than what normal little girls were capable of.

"Yes. I was wrong, and I have lots of explaining to do..." the professor said. Reluctantly, Buttercup came up to him, climbed up to his lap, shifted to straddling on his stomach, and then hugged him.
"I've said before that the three of you are special," the professor said, his voice a tired whisper. "But not just because you're all my little girls."

The Girls let go. Buttercup sat on his lap, Bubbles next to him in bed and Blossom stood beside him.

"What do you mean?" Blossom asked, always the curious one who needed to know. Professor Utonium was at a lost for words. 'Should I tell them everything?' he thought. He thought long and hard.

"What do you mean, Daddy?" Blossom repeated her question again. 'No,' the professor thought better of it. He hated lying to the Girls. Hell, it was one of those things that nearly got all of them killed in the first place. But to reveal everything would be like jumping into the rabbit hole. He was well aware that one of those lies was the fact that he wasn't quite their father. Sure, he'd created them in a lab, but even that wasn't the whole truth. The Organization had set things up for them to be created, some twenty years in the making. Jojo, his lab assistant, heck, the entire science department of the Organization had a part to play. He couldn't explain all of that to the Girls for now; they wouldn't understand.

No, they weren't ready for the whole truth, at least not yet. He himself felt unready for it.

"Dad?" Bubbles prompted him again.

"You see... I'm sure the three of you have noticed how strong and fast you are, and there's no one else like you," the professor meandered in his attempts to whitewash the truth, simplify it for three little girls. Already, he had told them another lie. No, there were others who were somewhat like them, all failed experiments who were either unfit for military or law enforcement service to begin with, or were rendered unfit for military or law enforcement service by the Chemical X precursor trials.

"Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup..." the professor could feel his heart thumping hard in his chest. Thank God that the heart rate monitor was removed. "You're all meant to be heroines, to fight crime."

"What do you mean?" Bubbles, ever the innocent one, asked.

"Crime is when people do bad things, really bad things. Remember when I first brought the three of you out to shopping? And people were hurting each other, and there was an explosion?" the professor explained.

"We're supposed to stop people from doing bad things?" Blossom asked - the professor couldn't remember the last time she had asked a rhetorical question.

"But why would you say that you're not our father because of that?" Buttercup questioned, direct and to the point. "Fighting sounds like fun."

"Buttercup, it's not. You see, remember when I said that the world outside is dangerous? That people will hate you, sometimes for all the wrong reasons? For no reason at all?" Professor Utonium tried to make them recall.

"Yes..." Blossom said, remembering it all. It would be hard not to. Buttercup echoed her sentiment.

"I got scared, Girls," the professor confessed, trying to keep his tears from spilling. His voice wavered instead. "I was afraid that you three would get hurt outside, and really badly too. I was
afraid that your feelings would be hurt and…” ’Should I even try to explain how I tried to kill them
two days ago?’ he thought. ‘Is it even possible to?’ It was all so difficult, and he felt like he was
reaching another tipping point.

"Dad, it's okay," Blossom tried to calm him down. He didn't realize it, but his lips were trembling.
He bit on them to make it stop. Blossom moved to hug his arm. Bubbles hugged his other arm and
Buttercup dug at his side, snuggling with him.

"And I don't want the three of you to do something like that, especially when you don't want to,” the
professor said, hugging them back.

"But I want to, Dad," Blossom said. "I wished I could have done something that day. If I'm meant to
fight crime and be a heroine, I want to."

"Yeah, it'd be fun. Right, Bubbles?" Buttercup said, almost trembling with excitement.

"I don't know, I think so…” Bubbles agreed halfheartedly, meekly, unsure of what she was getting
into. The truth was, none of them knew what they were getting into. In Blossom's mind, she thought
that it meant speaking to people and getting them to be nice to each other. To Bubbles, it was to
smile at them and play with them so that they'd be too busy to be mean. It'd worked on Buttercup
before, which meant that it was a validated tactic. Buttercup was the only one of the three to think of
violence as an option first. Because explosions were fun, and fighting sounded cool, too. The green-
eyed girl certainly knew how to make something stop - after all, her punches and kicks had silenced
a cat and a dog thus far, making sure that they wouldn't be mean to her again.

The Girls' admission to their enthusiasm for crime-fighting did not dampen Professor Utonium's fears
and concerns one bit. Rightly, he thought that they had no idea how it was like. A wave of lethargy
overcame him, and he sighed in exhaustion. There was so much to think about…

"I think your father needs some rest, younglings," the nurse said as she was coming in.

"But can we stay with him?" Bubbles asked.

"I'll be fine," the professor said. "Girls, you can't stay in here all day."

Agent Blake had been watching them since the middle of their conversation. He didn't want to
intrude on their privacy, but it was hard to. The professor's door had fallen off its hinges, and it
would be a day before Wiggums' contractors could arrive to fix it. He leaned against the frame of the
ruined doorway, admiring the family. When the Girls refused to budge, and the nurse could do
nothing about it, he padded into the room, right up to the professor and the GIrls.

"I'll take care of them," Agent Blake promised. "Girls, you need to let your father rest, or he'll get
sicker…” When he lifted Buttercup off Professor Utonium's lap, she didn't resist, knowing full well
even with her 2-week-old mind that it was true. He did the same with Bubbles, then led Blossom
away from her creator by the hand. Before the security lieutenant could leave, however, Professor
Utonium took him by the arm, his grip surprisingly tight, almost hurting him.

"If you so much as touch a hair on their head…” the professor threatened, keeping it down so that
the Girls, who were at the doorway, couldn't hear.

"Professor Utonium, when you were out, I had every opportunity to 'touch a hair on their head' for
the past two days and I didn't. You know why?" Agent Blake said, his face soft, no longer as
psychopathic as the professor remembered. Even at this point, in his drug-addled mind, the professor
could see that something had changed in him.
"Because you're a dog on a leash?" the professor tried. He wasn't a man of faith. He had to see before he'd know.

"Because I finally understand why you love the Girls so much," Agent Blake admitted. "You have my word that I'll keep them safe while you work on getting back on your feet."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 5B.

8 DEC 1988. 1200.

It was the perfect vantage point, far enough from Organization lines and yet close enough for Jojo's stolen computerized binoculars to work. And they had been watching all this time. Dressed and heavily disguised as city plumbing maintenance workers, Jojo and Naga had been spying on The House and the Organization movement there for hours. The block where Professor Utonium was held in was heavily guarded, patrolled, like a priceless art piece or gold in Fort Knox, and Organization presence had only been reinforced day after day around the area.

"So, tell me again how you intend to speak to your 'father' with all that security?" Naga questioned Jojo. It was the third time on the tower. She found Jojo's manner of speech entertaining, but she had also found it fascinating how his mind worked - how much it resembled a fusion between an organic brain and a calculating computer colder than the current winter. Besides, if there was a way to motivate someone to do as she wished, it was to keep bringing up the topic over and over - twist the knife in their gut, so to speak.

"If I were to divulge my plans, strategies and grand scheme to you, will you keep quiet and absolutely mum while I concentrate and focus on the calculations, matrices and scheming in my mind?" Jojo asked, pissed at her interruption once more. It wasn't frequent, and it did almost nothing to his power of attention, but it was an annoyance. However, Naga did ensure that he didn't need to spend all his time scavenging for sustenance or materials any longer. She'd moved him to a Foundation safehouse too, which was a mark up in terms of facilities and hygiene compared to the sewers.

"Yes..?" Naga agreed, though it meant little as she had done so each time she'd asked him for his grand scheme.

"I have established, which is to say, mapped and drawn out the Organization's patrol routes, concentration of forces and resources, as well as guard rotations and did I mention patrol routes? Yes. I have been making minor adjustments to my calculations, mathematical formulas, as well as possible and projected changes in their patrol routes, concentration of forces and resources, and I know the exact time I will be going in, and I will be able to head in with very little resources involved," Jojo explained. His plans had changed slightly, included more variables. Naga would be lying if she could do the same as he did.

"And when exactly will you be heading in?" Naga asked again.

"In the cover of darkness, which is night or midnight. I have narrowed it down to 11:15pm or 12:15am, but not today," Jojo said.

"Not today!" Naga raised her voice. She had hoped that she could get Jojo's agenda out of the way in order to officially recruit him, but... "Then when?"

"Patience! Have a little perseverance and restraint!" Jojo scolded, annoyed once more. "This day is not ideal or perfect, nor this night. The House, as the Organization, or the United States Defence
Organization, calls it, is now occupied." He patted on a radio beside him. "Intercepting their radio signals was easy, elementary, simple, for a Chimpanzee of my stature, mojo, intelligence. I know what had happened to have caused this, and I know what will happen to undo the increased, escalated, higher presence of the security force in The House. Patience is all I need now, perseverance!"

"I still don't understand why you won't leverage our firepower to your bidding. We could punch right through their security patrols now, and take your father away by force," Naga said. "But we have to do it now, as their numbers will only keep growing!"

"No! It is not what my father, my sire, would have wanted!" Jojo rejected, his nostrils flaring once more, his breath puffing visibly from his mouth rapidly.

"You destroyed an entire outpost, Jojo," Naga reminded the Chimpanzee. "Yes, we know about that as well. We have our sources."

"That was out of necessity, as my hand was forced. They plotted and planned to kill me and I was forced into a cell like an animal, a feral thing, a non-person!" Jojo said. "But now, now I am free, liberated, I have conquered my right to do as I wish! So now, I will stay calm and collected, and do as my father have taught me."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

8 DEC 1988. 1237.

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had been left largely alone in their rooms, which was a luxury ever since the 'neighbors' had taken over The House to help them. But it wasn't something that would last. Agent Blake had seen to it that the time taken to rotate the guards was only stretched out by ten minutes, to provide the Girls with the 'privacy' and 'quiet time' they needed. Even then, the PTF soldiers and security officers wouldn't be far away, with four of the latter being posted outside Professor Utonium's.

"Buttercup, come join us! Whitey and Bunny are having a great time!" Blossom invited. Blossom and Bubbles had taken this time to do a tea party with the vacated table and stools.

"Yeah, and Octi is here, too!" Bubbles added, hoping that Octi's presence would make it more enticing for Buttercup. She had vastly overvalued her favorite soft toy's ability to attract her sister, for Buttercup had something more interesting to play with.

Buttercup had pulled the pistol she had found from underneath the bed. Hiding out of view from her siblings, she started fiddling around with it.

"Buttercup!" Blossom called to her sister again. "We have tea! It's tasty!" And the Girls weren't pretending in that area. The PTF soldiers had procured for them tea bags and boiled water for their activity before leaving.

"I'm not interested!" Buttercup called from the bed, not even distracted at all from her new toy. To her, the pistol was like a puzzle box, and there were buttons and moving parts, too. For now, she was preoccupied with a tube down the middle of the gun. She pointed the gun at her own eye as she stared into the barrel, wondering what could be inside. But there was nothing. Without knowing it, she had even used her eyes as a torchlight to see into the gun better. But it was just a tube, with nothing inside - no candy, no ice cream, and certainly no chocolate like the waste bin. But it had to contain something!
She started playing around with it again, and managed to pull the slide. It felt as though something had clicked inside. But what? A present? Hugging the gun with the barrel pointed at her chest, she started pulling and pushing and even trying to open different parts of the thing, wondering if she had gone on to the 'next level' of the puzzle.

That was when her fingers had caught the trigger and pulled it.

**BANG!**

The gunshot could be heard throughout the entire House. Professor Utonium had practically jumped into a sitting-up position and it’d had the four guards outside pull their pistols out in an instant. The PTF soldiers below were sent running up the stairs.

But it was Professor Utonium who was the first to get to the room, and on his approach, he could hear crying from all the Girls. 'Oh no,' he thought. 'No, no, no, no, no, NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!' He thought he might have verbalized some of that. With a few security officers behind him and coming up fast, he threw open the door and ran in.

"Girls! What happened!" the professor yelled, looking all over the room. Blossom and Bubbles were hugging each other, terrified of the gunshot that had torn past the House. It didn't take long for him to hear the moaning and sniffling and weeping coming from behind the bed. "BUTTERCUP! NO!"

He rounded the bed and saw Buttercup lying on the floor, clutching her chest with both hands. The expression on her face was one of wretched pain as she gritted her teeth with eyes forced shut in utter agony. The pistol she had shot herself with was lying not far from her, still smoking. It was HIS pistol, HIS responsibility. Taking it and putting it on safety, putting it out of reach, he reached out to Buttercup. Security officers poured into the room, guns drawn, shouting cryptic combat codes.

"Put down your guns!" Professor Utonium shouted at them. "I don't need anymore accidents!"

Professor Utonium pulled at Buttercup's hands, trying to see the damage done, but Buttercup would not budge, her hands still cupping the unseen wound on her chest, her face still screwed up in pain.

"Let me- Let me see!" the professor said as he tried to get Buttercup to let go. "Buttercup! Please!"

It took a while before Buttercup dared let go, but when she did, Professor Utonium saw no blood, not even a hole in her chest. The only sign that she had been shot was a bullet-shaped hole as she gritted her teeth with eyes forced shut in utter agony. The pistol she had shot herself with was lying not far from her, still smoking. It was HIS pistol, HIS responsibility. Taking it and putting it on safety, putting it out of reach, he reached out to Buttercup. Security officers poured into the room, guns drawn, shouting cryptic combat codes.

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"Let me- Let me see!" the professor said as he tried to get Buttercup to let go. "Buttercup! Please!"

It took a while before Buttercup dared let go, but when she did, Professor Utonium saw no blood, not even a hole in her chest. The only sign that she had been shot was a bullet-shaped hole in her dress, some scorch marks and the bullet itself, which had deformed itself against Buttercup's body, resembling a raindrop in mid-collision.

"It hurts! Daddy, it hurts!" Buttercup cried. She was still on the floor, somehow paralyzed by the gunshot despite there being no damage. The professor pinched the bullet with his thumb and index and lifted it. There was not even a blister, sore or bruise underneath it.

"Buttercup, you're fine," Professor Utonium said, a relieved smile, a little delayed, soon spread across his lips. "Buttercup, you're okay!" He laughed, and picked up Buttercup to hug her.

"I- I am?" Buttercup said. "But it was so loud!" But the fact that the pain was fading quickly from her chest made it clear that she was made of stronger stuff. Buttercup let go of her Daddy, before examining herself, seeing the hole in her dress. The professor showed her the bullet.

But the professor's relief had lasted only just as long as Buttercup's pain. "How did you get that gun?" he asked, stern all of a sudden that he was scaring even the super-powered girl.

"I found it," Buttercup said, still wincing at the non-existent gunshot wound. She volunteered no
more information than that. It'd brought the professor back to a time before he fainted. Buttercup was fast becoming a compulsive liar, and he didn't like it one bit.

"You found it while I was in the lab, did you?" the professor pressed the girl.

"Y-yes," Buttercup gave in, now looking at her feet.

"Don't do that again, you understand?" Professor Utonium warned, perhaps appearing stricter than he wanted to, on account of his health. "This is how the world outside is going to be like. You're going to find dangerous things out there, Buttercup, and you can't just touch everything like that."

"But I'm fine, Dad," Buttercup countered.

"You might not be one day if you keep trifling with things you don't know. And I'm not just talking about things you can pick up," the professor said.

"I'm sorry, Daddy," she apologized.

"I'm sorry, too," the professor said, tried to defuse the situation by planting a kiss on her forehead. He was sure now; he wasn't going to try to leave them again. They needed him, now more than ever. While the accident with Buttercup and the pistol had proven that they couldn't be gunned down the moment they stepped into a crime-in-progress, they were still entirely vulnerable. Not every threat would come as honest and direct as bullets. No, there were more insidious things out there that could do far more damage than a bullet ever could, and if the Girls had any weaknesses, it was that they could feel emotions as much as anyone, and their minds were as human as the next little girl's. Any day now, and they would be out in the streets. Running away from that fact was wrong, and now he was going to put things right once more.
Joint Townsville-USGO Project Powerpuff Deployment Talks Transcript 12081988

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the City of Townsville and the newly-revealed USDO begins a talk on deploying the Girls of Project Powerpuff to fight crime.

Joint Townsville-USGO Project Powerpuff Deployment Talks Transcript 12081988


The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

START TRANSCRIPT

(The Location: Townsville City Hall)

(Townsville Attendants: Mayor Wilford and staff. Police Commissioner Davis and direct subordinates, including multiple Police Chiefs. The District Attorney and his assistants are present. Key municipal officials are also present.)

(USGO Attendants: Organization Chief Cliff and staff. Chief of Security Blackwater and staff. Liaisons Head Bellum.)

(Time: 1314. The talk is in the main hall, which is emptier than usual due to the exclusiveness of the talk. Representatives of Townsville and USGO are seated on opposite sides of the city hall.) The entrance is guarded by USGO SWAT officers.)

Organization Chief Cliff: I would like to thank you all, representatives of Townsville, Mayor Wilford especially, for making this possible.

Mayor Wilford: Why, it's my pleasure, Cliff. I'm happy to oblige since you've cleaned up your act on my request. I've dealt with many federal agencies in my time, and they didn't budge like you did.

Organization Chief Cliff: And I'm sure we won't regret it. Bellum?

Liaisons Head Bellum: As all who are present may be concerned, we are here today to discuss the deployment of our crime-fighting solution, the result of Project Powerpuff. The agenda of the day is to decide on the manner of which They may be deployed to serve the City of Townsville. But first, for the benefit of those who aren't here yesterday, of which there's an abundance of, due to the top secret nature of these proceedings, we will have a quick recap of yesterday's session.

(Bellum opens a file and flips through it)

Yesterday, we've settled on a general agreement that USGO manpower, including security forces
and support personnel, will assist in directly policing the city. With corruption at an all-time high, the USGO will serve as a neutral third-party force. The USGO will build up its forces from the current 200 up to a strength of 2,000 in the city. As our numbers are small, we will focus our efforts on high-profile missions; the protection of VIPs, major investigations, major raids on the criminal elements, and the deployment of Project Powerpuff. You will find that we are much more potent than our small size will indicate. Unlike the TPD, we are allowed to completely militarize our forces, multiplying our effectiveness. If the results of Project Powerpuff is positive, we can expect our three subjects to serve as they are intended, with each of them the equivalent of an entire army.

(Flips through file again)

Moving on, to assist with the integration of the USGO into the local law enforcement scene, we will be allowed to take over several public buildings to serve as our headquarters and outposts, and USGO members will be given full jurisdiction over the entire city and county, in addition to their federal-level powers. USGO members will also be given limited authority over the TPD. We have also agreed that the City of Townsville will pay a token 20% of the costs of USGO operations in the city, as well as 25% of the operational costs incurred by Project Powerpuff, if we can agree on the terms of their deployment.

(There are murmurs of disagreements or agreements. Mayor Wilford appears still, staring with his one good monocled eye at Liaisons Head Bellum, perhaps seeing something in her. Both his hands were balanced on a cane as he sits at the head of the Townsville representatives.)

(Liaisons Head Bellum whispers something into the mic on her blouse. The projector screen at the front of the hall lights up, playing footage showing the subjects of Project Powerpuff)

We, again, apologize for not coming forward with evidences of our claims on our first meeting, and it is with great pride that we show these footage of our Project Powerpuff subjects.

(Footage 1, a video from 'Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 Strength Test 1 Log' shows Agent Utonium carrying, or failing to carry, a 200lbs steel weight. Then B-47 (Blossom) taking over and picking it up with no apparent difficulty. B-48 (Buttercup) and B-49 (Bubbles) follows suit)

(Footage 2 shows a video from 'Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's W2 Speed Test 1 Log', with Agent Utonium almost tripping on a treadmill at 10mph, then with B-47 (Blossom) taking over and easily managing 25mph. B-49 (Bubbles) follows suit, followed by B-48 (Buttercup) doing the same thing, except dialing up the speed to 28mph. The machine breaks down, launching B-48 (buttercup) into the machine's dashboard head-first. It attracts yelps and cries from the Townsville audience. B-48 cries in front of the camera, and Agent Utonium proceeds to hug and coo her. B-48 smiles, her face clearly unharmed from the accident.)

(Footage 3 shows clips from '12051988 W2 Series Tests', showing B-47, B-48 and B-49 to be capable of much higher carry capacity. It ends with Professor Utonium's explanation and demonstration of the subjects' ability to resist puncturing and cutting forces from objects less harder than crude duranium.)

Police Commissioner Davis: One minor question. Don't you think that it is a huge problem if we start sending kids out into the field? Ain't no one's going to accept that. Not my boys, not the public. Where the 'ell you even get them from, anyway?

Chief of Security Blackwater: We grew them in the labs. They may look like children, but they are not quite. The videos we showed you should be evidence of that. So, don't think of them as children. Think of them instead as... organic weapon platforms for crime-fighting.
Blackwater attracts a lot of murmurs from the Townsville side of the hall.

Police Commissioner Davis: Sure, call them what you want, but most of the folks in this city won't take well to this.

District Attorney: Say we deploy these… Erm… Three kids of the 'Project Powerpuff', it's going to start something, and I don't just mean the fireworks. It's going to call a lot of laws into question. I'm referring to child labor laws, and that's just the start. When were they born? Have they been granted US citizenship?

Organization Chief Cliff: As my colleague has said, these… things are not children. They were created exactly 17 days ago. They are property of the USGO, not citizens.

(Louder murmurs resulted this time)

Police Chief Jonas: So we aren't sending kids into the streets, we're putting babies out there instead.

(A round of laughter resulted from the Townsville representatives. Mayor Wilford, Police Commissioner Davis and District Attorney remains stoic)

Chief of Security Blackwater: They are fully-formed and estimated to be physically 5 years old. As of this date, they are already capable of most things 5-year-olds could do.

Police Commissioner Davis: 'Capable of most things 5-year-olds could do'?

Organization Chief Cliff: (holds up a piece of paper) As of my earliest report, they have a vocabulary approaching a thousand words, they speak English with few grammatical errors, and they can understand it just as easily. Their motor functions have approached that of 5-year-olds.

Police Chief Jonas: Sounds like my kids could do better. They sound like they belong in kindergarten, Cliff.

Organization Chief Cliff: Can your kids learn a thousand words within three weeks of birth? I'm saying that there's no telling how smart they'll get within another three weeks. For all we know, they could graduate from college within three months.

Police Commissioner Davis: I'll believe it when I see it. Kids, you know, they learn fast when they're young, but you know what they say: as they get older…

Mayor Wilford: (leans on his cane and stands up. He clears his throat. Everyone falls silent.) Assuming that we are in favor of the deployment of this… 'Project Powerpuff', how do you propose we use them? It's a major pickle, from the looks of it, to even get them to where they need to be, or to get them to do what my professionals do.

Liaisons Head Bellum: Mayor, if you will, sir. We wish to set up a dedicated hotline between your government and Project Powerpuff. The Girls are surrounded by some of our very best, and they will handle them for you. The hotline will be available to you and your highest ranking officials and officers. They'll be brought to whatever locations you need them to be in the fastest sports cars on the planet.

Mayor Wilford: That's a start. (looks like he is going to say something more, but lowers himself into his seat with the help of his cane instead.)

Police Commissioner Davis: And how will they be equipped?
Chief of Security Blackwater: We have just received a call from one of our agents in the… House where the subjects are kept. They are now at least naturally Type II-A or Type III.

Mayor Wilford: What does that mean?

Police Commissioner Davis: It means they're bulletproof, Mayor.

Chief of Security Blackwater: But we're not taking any chances. They'll come equipped in the best possible personal protection we can give them, and seeing that they can carry hundreds of pounds of steel without breaking a sweat, weight is not a problem.

Police Commissioner Davis: And I suppose you'll be handing out guns to children now?

Chief of Security Blackwater: No.

Police Chief Jonas: Great, now we're sending babies to fight crime barehanded? This is a circus!

(Raucous laughter results. Mayor Wilford, Police Commissioner Davis and District Attorney remains unimpressed.)

Chief of Security Blackwater: (stares at Police Chief Jonas with great intensity) Perhaps I wasn't clear about the capabilities of these… 'babies', and the footage we've brought are abridged, so let me break it down to you what they're capable of. Kate?

Security Captain Kate: (holds up a piece of document) Bulletproof level Type II-A to Type III, possibly more. Our field researcher estimates at least 1,500 pounds maximum carry capacity and 75 miles an hour top speed on foot. Their hair was observed to be flame retardant, so it is a good bet that it applies to their entire body. They are also highly resistant to anaesthetics, sleeping pills and God knows what other chemicals anyone can throw at them.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Thank you, Kate. Imagine one of those kids running up to you at 75 miles an hour with a punch that could send a car rolling down a street. They'll laugh off knife cuts and blunt force trauma, and you can't shoot them dead or torch them with molotovs. They can't be assassinated or kidnapped. Do you think they still need guns?

Police Commissioner Davis: Hold up, didn't your doctor say that they'd get cut by… What do you call it again?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Exactly. If you've never heard of it, then I doubt those scum on the other side have. It's the only thing that might kill the girls, but it's so hard to produce and so expensive that it's rare and exclusive to only one agency we know of.

Police Commissioner Davis: And what agency is that?

Chief of Security Blackwater: One that no one knows about. The identity of both the metal and agency will remain inaccessible and nothing's going to change that.

Police Commissioner Davis: I'm not so sure about that. You don't know Townsville like I do. If they want something, they'll get it.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Not this time. Not with us around.

(Silence on the floor)

District Attorney: Wait a second here, we still haven't talked about the legal side of things! That's
what separates us from them. Now, about the laws that apply to children…

Organization Chief Cliff: We've already spoken to the governor of this state, the Senate and the White House. They are already in talks to make an exclusion clause just for them, to any laws applying to children. Their eyes are open. Are yours?

District Attorney: I guess we could fall in line and apply those laws to our city…

Police Commissioner Davis: Still wouldn't change public perception, I bet.

Organization Chief Cliff: We'll handle that. We're augmenting our media team for conventional operations even as we speak. There is one other thing - we will need to agree on what to deploy the three subjects for, initially. We will need to test them first, before we fully utilize them on a bigger scale.

Police Commissioner Davis: Now that - that's a tough question ain't it? What can I do with a bunch of illiterate 5-year-olds with superhuman strength? I can't have them issue parking tickets. They're not police officers, so I can't have them walk the beat. They're not smart enough for undercover duties even though they'd look great for some of those human trafficking rings and deviant brothels. I'm not even sure if they can handle a radio.

Organization Chief Cliff: And they won't have to. Give us something straight-forward, and we'll handle our subjects the best we can. Something that would just require B-47, B-48 and B-49 to crush something head-on.

Police Commissioner Davis: 'Haps I can use those peewee human tanks to break up some of them sieges we've been having. Bank robberies, high-rise criminal strongholds we've been busting. It'd give you time to mobilize 'em, too.

Chief of Security: I like the sound of that. We can have that.

Organization Chief Cliff: Agreed.

Mayor Wilford: (stands up once more. The crowd goes silent) Very well. But before anything moves in my city, I would like to meet them. Speak with them, perhaps understand them a little. See if they should even put themselves out there.

(The hall bursts into chatters)

Chief of Security Blackwater: Mayor, that is not necessary. It will not do. It will entail too much security preparations, not to mention a risk to the classified phase of our current plans. You'll be delaying the deployment of Project Powerpuff! Besides, like I said-

Mayor Wilford: (stares at Blackwater with his one good monocled eye with some intensity. He leans against the banister and points his cane at Blackwater) Don't tell me what to do in my city, boy. If some girls are going to risk their pretty necks for the city, I would like to see them first. And as far as I'm concerned, they're little girls - not because of some debatable philosophical truth or subjective opinion, but because, by God, I'm a decent man who've pinned medals on dogs before. Right, Davis?

Police Commissioner Davis: Right! (murmurs of agreement sounds throughout the hall from the Townsville side)

Mayor Wilford: Girls or not, I'll treat anything or anyone real nice if she, or it, or she, I don't care, is going to make Townsville a better place.
Organization Chief Cliff: Fine. We'll make the arrangements.

Mayor Wilford: And one more thing, Cliff.

Organization Chief Cliff: How can I assist?

Mayor Wilford: Do they have names? It would be awkward for me to call them subjects or numbers in front of them. Manners, Cliff. That's how I was raised, and that's how I'll be until I'm buried under my city.

Organization Chief Cliff: (he flips through his notes, going through multiple pages, sifting through them) Er… The pink one is Blossom, the blue one is Bubbles and the Green one is Buttercup. Our field researcher named them as such.

Police Commissioner Davis: And does their unit have a name? I assume that they're working as a team, am I right?

Organization Chief Cliff: No, we've never thought of that, but they're attached to the Powerpuff Task Force, also known as the PTF.

(Silence returned to the hall as there are no further questions)

Mayor Wilford: Well, I guess it's time for a recess. All this politicking has made me hungry! I'm going to need a pickle or two in my sandwich.

TRANSCRIPT END
Chapter 28: Quiet

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, The House becomes quiet after things return to normal.

Chapter 28: Quiet

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

8 DEC 1988. 1720.

"Sir, we have eyes on target. B-47 and B-48 have Run Away," Sergeant Rutherford reported to his superior, Agent Blake, who was right next to him. They were hiding behind a tree together.

"Yeah, I see them. All units, B-47 and B-48 have retreated into a fortified position, over," Agent Blake spoke into his mic as he leaned out of a tree, and had just spotted the corners of a red and green dress just flitting out of sight. Things had gotten serious, such that he was wearing his own helmet, goggles and kevlar vest.

"This is Sierra-Lima-2, received. Orders to proceed?" Agent Fields asked. Geared up the same way as Blake, he wasn't hiding very far from his lieutenant, just out of sight, out of mind, behind a low wall of snow. Private Jessup, another PTF soldier, was next to him.

"Affirmative, get into position, one left, one right, but wait for reinforcement. We're going to get them," Agent Blake ordered.

Not far away, a convoy of three white humvees, unmarked, pulled up in front of The House. The middle humvee was the first to open up, and out stepped Chief of Security Blackwater, as well as a captain and two black and gray-trimmed SWAT officers. A mix of four security officers in gray uniforms, armed with Mossberg 500 shotguns and MP5 submachineguns exited from the two humvees front and back of Blackwater's, along with two other SWAT officers, both armed with XM4 carbines.

As Blackwater was walking up to the front door of The House, the officers and SWATs flanked him, guns up.

"Reinforcements are in position, should we recon in force? Over," Agent Fields asked over the radio.

"That's a positive. Proceed with caution. They are definitely in Meltdown and Tantrum, over and out," Agent Blake gave the go-ahead. Agent Fields sat up, peeking over his snowy low wall, seeing nothing - no red, no green. He signaled for Private Jessup to get up, and together, they went either way of their barrier, crossing the play area. From the backdoor of The House, two more security officers joined them.
All hell broke loose after that.

Chief of Security Blackwater was peeved at what he found the moment he stepped out of his vehicle. At the front door of The House stood a PTF soldier and a plainclothes security officer. Anna, he remembered. He also remembered that the PTF soldier on guard duty was also supposed to be the local unit's K-9 handler, but his dog wasn't with him.

No, B-49, or the blue one Professor Utonium had named Bubbles, had somehow subverted it for her use. The German Shepherd, which was fully-trained by a police unit before being brought over to the Organization, was hanging its tongue out and panting like an undisciplined mutt as Bubbles was petting it. Bubbles was kneeling down on a knee, giggling and muttering to it as if the dog could understand her. The K-9 dog then licked her face and Bubbles giggled some more. She then picked up a stick and threw it across the other lawn. The K-9 dog promptly went after it.

Blackwater stomped up the path towards the front door. Bubbles had only just noticed him. Imposing as he was, she stared at him in awe, this huge, gorilla-like man with hair, silver like a crown. Blackwater ignored her, leaving his men to watch her instead as he marched up to the K-9 handler.

"What the hell happened to your dog?" Blackwater interrogated, then glanced down at the PTF soldier's nametag. "Corporal Miller?" The PTF soldier stood at attention.

"Bubbles - I mean B-49 - is playing with it, sir," the soldier reported. "She is a natural dog whisperer, sir."

"Your dog is not a plaything!" Blackwater bellowed at the soldier, who, despite being one of the best in the USGO, jolted when he did. Anna wasn't kidding when she discreetly reported that unit morale has plummeted ever since Agent Blake was forced to take charge of the Project Powerpuff subjects. "I gave you that dog to guard them! Not to turn the lawn into a petting zoo, got that!?!"

"Yes sir, clearly sir," the soldier said.

"Now take back control of your dog," Blackwater ordered.

"It wouldn't listen to my commands anymore, sir," the soldier said. Blackwater could not bear to listen any longer. Instead, he turned around and pointed at bubbles.

"You, girl, get inside, now!" the Chief of Security ordered her instead. "And return my man his dog! It's not your damned toy!"

Bubbles gasped at the bad word he had used, but felt compelled to listen to the big, scary man. It wasn't just fear and obedience. He looked like her new playmates, so she thought that he was a friend of her friends. A little gruff perhaps, but then again, so were her playmates on their first day. 'Maybe if we drew some pictures together, he'll be friendlier!' she thought.

When the K-9 dog returned to her with the stick, she bent down and whispered something into its ear. Blackwater watched her with fascination, thinking that there was something to Corporal Miller's claim after all. The dog padded back to its original master after that, and plopped itself down at his feet.

"Sierra-Lima-1! We're pinned down, over!" Agent Fields reported. He'd dropped down to the ground, along with Private Jessup and his reinforcement.

"Affirmative, return fire!" Agent Blake ordered. He took a peek out from his tree, and saw that his
men were in huge trouble, prone in the middle of the play area. "Hold on, keep 'em pinned down. I'm flanking, over." He tapped Sergeant Rutherford and gently nudged him to move on. They followed the fences, keeping their profile low, discreetly avoiding detection.

Meanwhile, Agent Fields and his men began 'returning fire' with what little ammunition they had. Snowballs, and they didn't manufacture many. Blossom and Buttercup were fast, popping out of their snow fort and launching their snowballs before flitting out of view. They returned the favor in kind, but could only chip away at their walls. The Girls had the home field advantage, the benefit of a fortification where they could build their supply of snowballs.

"Argh!" one of his men shouted, having been hit. The grown man, a plainclothes officer, raised his hand to signal his status to the Girls while laughing as he retreated behind their snow wall on their side of the backyard.

"Sir, we have one man down! Be quick about it!" Agent Fields shouted into his radio.

Chief of Security Blackwater entered The House, expecting the worst. His men had already gone ahead of him, securing the living room. There was only one security officer and a PTF soldier in the supposed 'command centre' of Agent Blake's unit. They were watching television, but the moment they saw who had arrived, they shot up from the sofa and stood at attention. "Sir," one of them greeted. Blackwater frowned at them.

But television was the least of the irregularities in The House, as he could hear the clinking of porcelain, of pots and pans. He went over to the kitchen to investigate, his boots thumping the ground.

And he was greeted by the most disgusting, shocking and unexpected of sights. Another of his PTF soldier was busy at the stove, cooking. The soldier had removed his headgear, leaned his weapon on the wall, and put an apron over his kevlar vest.

"You there!" Blackwater bellowed. The soldier turned around, surprised by the all-too-familiar voice. The moment he saw that it was his CO, he stood at attention, like the others.

"Yes sir?" Sergeant Holliday echoed.

"What the hell are you doing?" Blackwater questioned.

"I'm preparing dinner for the Girls, sir," the soldier said. "It's spaghetti with tomato sauce and beef balls sir, with a side of-"

"I don't want to know what you're cooking!" Blackwater interrupted the soldier. "I want you to stop what you're doing and assemble with the rest of your detail in the backyard. I think I've seen enough. Where in the flying fuck is Agent Blake?"

"He's… erm… playing with Blossom and Buttercup, sir," Sergeant Holliday said.

"B-47 and B-48, you mean. And what about the rest of your detail?" Blackwater interrogated the man further, barely holding it together, barely resisting the idea of throwing Sergeant Holliday across the kitchen.

"He's got five others with him," the soldier-chef said.

"Let me guess, playing with the subjects, too?" Blackwater chided, his voice rising like a coming storm as his patience waned rapidly.
"Yes. Yes sir," Sergeant Holliday divulged, feeling weirded out all of a sudden, with his more serious colleagues from HQ looking at him like he had gone mad. "And the other two are upstairs, on guard duty."

Agent Blake was able to flank Blossom and Buttercup easily. They were just too into throwing snowballs at his frontal assault team in the middle of the play area, but it wasn't without casualties. One had withdrawn earlier, and another was just hit as he got behind their lines.

The Girls were caught so unaware, in fact, that they were able to slip all the way behind the enhanced little girls and tackle them.

"Gotta!" Agent Blake shouted in triumph as he pinned Blossom to the ground, straddling her as if he was preparing to beat the lights out of a wanted felon. He pulled off his helmet and goggles - there was no need for those any other. Blossom was shocked at first, but on seeing who it was, started laughing. Buttercup had done the same with Sergeant Rutherford, though the PTF soldier had already gotten off her and rolled away to sit down beside the ravenette. "You're under arrest for the crime of being too cute a girl, and I sentence you to tickling!"

"Oh please, no sir, anything but-" Blossom pleaded candidly for a less severe sentence, but it was too late. The security officer had left her no time to think, and immediately thrust his fingers into her sides, forcing more laughter out of her. "-Hahahaha!"

"Hahahaha-! Sto- Hehehe- stop! Stop! Hahahahaha," Blossom laughed uncontrollably, who in truth, didn't want it to end. That was when he heard someone clearing his throat loudly. It was only then did the security lieutenant stop, as he turned to the sound, only to realize that his Chief of Security, Blackwater, had been watching all the while. He got off Blossom immediately, wiping snow off his jacket and pants.

"Evening sir. I didn't know you were visiting," Agent Blake greeted Blackwater as calmly as he could, but he knew he'd done it. He'd let himself go when he'd tasted the ecstasy of being a parent, or at least something of a surrogate parent-nanny type, and he'd paid for it with a risk to his career.

Blossom was still on her back and she got up to her elbows, adjusting her hair bow, when the huge man in black had appeared at her backyard, wondering what was going on, and who the man who could fill her entire front door was.

"Save it, Blake," Blackwater shut him up, and ordered the rest of Blake's security detail out into the backyard. "Guns on the ground! Line up!"

"What's going on?" Agent Blake asked, now truly afraid of the repercussions. The Organization had become a publicly known federal agency, but it sure hadn't lost its teeth. Now, he began to fear that he would be the last of those who would pay the ultimate price.

"I said weapons on the ground!" Blackwater simply ordered again. The Chief of Security's own squad formed a line and raised their weapons at Blake and his men. Agent Blake had no choice but to do as he was told. He pulled his pistol and saw-off shotgun out of his jacket, and then reached down to his ankle to remove his concealed backup pistol and knife, throwing it down in the snow, still wondering if his blood would soon be painting the snow as well. Blake's own men reluctantly followed, throwing down their weapons in a pile, then lining up in the backyard. "Hands on your head! Now!"

They did as they were told.
"You and you, take B-47 and B-48 into The House with B-49 and Utonium," Blackwater ordered again. Two SWAT officers took Blossom and Buttercup by the arm, leading them in, surprisingly gentle only because they believed it would cost them their lives otherwise.

"What are you going to do? Are you going to shoot us dead just because we played games and made pancakes for the Girls?" Agent Blake said.

"Depends on what this baby says," Chief of Security Blackwater said, tapping on a scanner-type device hanging on his belt. The device itself looked a little like something from Ghostbusters, with a rectangular screen and a handle below it.

Inside The House, Blossom and Buttercup joined Bubbles, Professor Utonium and Medical Director Simmons in the living room.

"What's happening, Dad?" Blossom asked, afraid. She looked out the sliding doors leading into the backyard. It was hard to see past the strangers, but then something strange happened when she tried really hard, because she was already starting to miss Blake. It was as if her vision had zoomed in like a pair of binoculars, and she could just about see Blake's face, as afraid as hers. She saw her friends being lined up like prisoners, and she thought she could see through the strangers. She shook her head, forcing her eyes shut, thinking that something had gone wrong with her eyes.

"Are they here to hurt us?" Buttercup assumed the worst. At the same time, she was using her eavesdropping ability to listen in on Blackwater outside.

"Just friends having a little argument, that's all," Professor Utonium explained, making sure that his every word was clear.

"I hate it when people fight…" Bubbles cried as she leaned on her Daddy. "Why can't everyone just smile and be happy…"

"It's fine, honey," Professor Utonium cooed. "Nothing's going to happen."

"You're threatening to shoot us for doing what you told me to do?" Agent Blake argued.

"I told you to take care of them, and by that, I mean providing for their physical needs, nothing more. Not to befriend them, much less to play with them and let your guard down!" Blackwater said, with a tone of finality. He unhooked the device on his belt and switched it on. It started humming and beeping the moment he did. After turning a knob and pressing a few buttons, he waved it in front of Agent Blake like a handheld metal-detecting wand.

"Hell is that Scientology shit supposed to do?" Agent Blake sassed the Chief.

"It's latest tech. I'm checking you for psionic tampering," the Chief of Security said. His men around him were starting to shift their footing and their hands on their weapons nervously as Blackwater began scanning Blake. "You better hope it doesn't start screaming or you'd be screaming next."

"Amazing, Anna," Agent Blake said sarcastically to his third-in-command, who was just a few persons down the row. "You really did call it in, did you? You paranoid bitch."

"I was doing my job, Blake," Anna countered. "Were you doing yours?"

"Seeing that we're still here, yes," Blake defended.
"Yeah, and 'Buttercup' nearly wasn't yesterday," Anna said.

"She returned home, Anna! Because there was an actual home with friendlies to return to!" Blake yelled at his third-in-command. Betrayal was something he could never get used to, not when he thought it was something that belong in the past.

"Both of you shut your mouths!" the Chief bellowed as he adjusted his instrument further. After another quiet moment of scanning, Blackwater lowered the instrument, glaring at Blake as though he'd murdered someone. "You're clean. Move him over to the left." One of Blackwater's own SWAT officer led Blackwater away from the rest.

The scanning continued as he moved on to the next man. He wasn't going to leave anything to chance. The psionic scanner was working faster after Blake, as it had been primed after him. All he had to do was to wave it a few times over each men to accurately assess their brainwave patterns. He knew exactly what to look for; he'd done it several times in the past, when several subjects with psionic abilities were able to access minds and twist them to inflict varying degrees of mental trauma or control.

But it wasn't here this time, not on any of the men, though he wasn't sure if he should be smiling this time. It meant one less thing that B-47 to 49 could do, when they were the most stable of all the subjects they had to work with.

"You knuckleheads seem to have forgotten what those kids in The House are!" Chief of Security Blackwater reprimanded the entire PTF unit after he was done. "They may look like cute little girls, but they are dangerous! They are living weapons. Creatures. They're things! Not human! They might seem all nice and friendly now, but you don't know what's going to happen next, and it's stunningly stupid that the lot of you have exposed yourselves this way."

All the while, Blackwater did not know that he was being listened to by Buttercup, who could hear him loud and clear even through the double-layered soundproof sliding glass doors. Buttercup gasped silently at the way Blackwater described her, and she remembered the other words used to describe her clearly. She was an experiment, a subject, a lab rat. Perhaps they were connected?

"I'm bringing you boys back to our new headquarters. I'm going to have to ask a lot of questions," Blackwater said. "In fact, I'm not even sure if I can even deploy you and your detail anywhere, any longer, Blake."

Agent Blake and his officers and soldiers were led back into the living room, guarded by their armed colleagues. A couple of their captors were left behind to bag their weapons. The Girls could only watch as they streamed towards the door.

But Blossom didn't want to just watch. It'd been a fun three days, and Mister Blake, as she knew him, had been there for her when her Daddy could not. She'd known no other friends.

"Mister Blake!" Blossom called out to him as she ran up to the disgraced security lieutenant. The guards around him stiffened up.

"It's been great, Blossom," Agent Blake said as he felt the enhanced little girl hugging him around a leg. "I'll not forget you, and I'll not forget this."

"Please don't go," Blossom begged, hugging his leg even tighter.

"Perhaps we'll see each other again," Blake said. "But I have to go now."

Professor Utonium had to intervene to get Blossom to release Agent Blake, who could only repeat
her request knowing fully well what would happen next. He knew he had to do it, because it was either him or the goons who came with the Chief of Security. He led Blossom back to the sofa, and when he sat down, he hoisted Blossom onto his lap.

The Girls waved goodbye to their friends. It was all they could do. And before long, the House was quiet again, quiet except for the fast-fading bubbling of the clam chowder Sergeant Holliday had prepared, and the muffled sound of the humvees and prisoner transports outside starting up and driving away.
Chapter 29: Family Dynamics

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium and the Girls gain a new family member.

Chapter 29: Family Dynamics

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

9 DEC 1988. 0745.

"Thomas, come with us, please," Eileen pleaded with her husband, even as Thomas Lewis Upton, otherwise known as Agent Utonium in the Organization, closed the door to their Organization security cruiser. "Just take our family car, please. We can go as a family."

"Eileen, honey, I can't. There are things I must do - and it'd help us in the long run," Thomas said, holding her hand with both of his. He hated doing this - but he was a man married just as much to his work as he was to his wife, and if he could work hard enough, long enough, they could be a normal family again, one who didn't have to be afraid all their life.

"Daddy, why aren't you getting into the car with us?" Bloome, from the backseat window, said, a tinge of sadness in her voice. She had brown eyes, and she was wearing a brown synthetic fur coat in the middle of this horrid winter. Thomas thought himself lucky to have her; she was intelligent and wise beyond her years, just like dear old dad. Beautiful too, with her high cheeks, button nose that was slightly upturned and waist-length hair, which she groomed and kept in place with a brown hairband that had a bow on it.

Thomas bent down and regarded her with loving, but equally sad, and longing eyes. Bloome was only five, and she had suffered his absence for far too long, far too frequently.

"Honey, I can't. I'm working on something that'd make the bad things go away. But one day, Bloome, one day, we'd live happily ever after." Thomas promised, at the same time caressing her cheek, pushing her fringe out of the way of her eyes. He smiled, and she did the same, and she planted a kiss on his cheek.

"Goodbye, Daddy…” Bloome bade farewell sadly, as she waved at him while their transport started moving. She then held up her doll, which she named Sir Squido, and waved one of its tentacles at him too. Thomas stared after them, breathing a sigh of relief when he knew that they would be safe from now on, so that he could continue his work on the Chemicals R and S, though something tells him they were far from the final form of the mysterious substance.

That was when it happened - He didn't know why, and he didn't know how. They had departed at an unknown time, date and location after all, and no one could have found out.

After travelling a fair distance, Eileen and Bloome's car had exploded, and the vibrations and shock
Professor Utonium woke up with a gasp, sweat pouring down his forehead. His nightmare had been more vivid, and he knew it had something to do with his retreating fever, with everything that had happened recently - his own attempts on his adopted daughters' lives, the fact that they had to live under another man's temporary governorship, and their impending deployment as weapons against crime. He wiped his sweat away, only to realize that he had been crying in his sleep.

"Awake now, are we?" a voice in the dark said, snarky. The professor looked down at the foot of his bed, but he could not quite see who it was there - a dark silhouette, just outside the morning light coming from his window. Professor Utonium gave a shout, thinking that the Foundation had put an operative in The House to finish the job. His mind raced madly - after all, he had just recalled in his nightmare how the Foundation had killed his family.

"W-who are you!? What do you want!?" he practically screamed as he sat up, feeling a wet towel tumbling down his forehead. He pulled his blanket closer to himself, like a scared little boy.

The figure stepped into the light, revealing black SWAT gear with gray trimmings, the uniform of the USDO's security branch, SWAT division. He, or she, had a duffel bag in one hand. The other was resting on an XM4 Carbine rifle that was slung on his, or her, shoulder. The face of the stranger was revealed by the light last. And she was a lady underneath her helmet and ballistic glasses.

"Je-sus, man, I didn't mean to scare you that much," the stranger said as she threw down her duffel bag on the floor. It thumped heavily. She removed her helmet, revealing a bob cut underneath, raven locks that framed her face. She took off her sunglasses, showing natural green eyes. "I'm Sergeant Goodwin. Selicia Goodwin. And I assume you're Professor Utonium? You look different from how you used to be."

"We've met before?" the professor asked, still apprehensive about the woman who'd just appeared in his room, who had possibly been watching him sleeping. Scratch that, cry and mumble in his sleep. He didn't dare ask about that.

"Don't tell me you've forgotten about me? I was one of the security officers who guarded the Girls in their ICU after they were born? Remember?" Sergeant Goodwin said. "I was the girl who kept badgering you to attend that damned emergency meeting, ring a bell?"

The SWAT officer gave a rather rough, tomboy-ish laugh, which didn't fit the SWAT gear she was wearing, then went on to recall further. "You wouldn't leave those gals alone, right from the beginning. I kept hearing about you at the lunch room. I was the one who promised to take care of the Girls while you went for the meeting, does that work for you now?"

Recognition set in belatedly, but he was too tired, despite sleeping for ten hours, to be surprised, or to act the part of a good company. He simply sunk back down into his pillow. "Oh, it's you," he said. "Still doesn't explain why you're here."

"Here's the beef, prof. The committee was concerned about everything - you, the Girls, and how you looked like you're in the next life after only two weeks. It didn't help that an entire security team was somehow completely demoralized when their leader was ordered to substitute you when you're out of action," Sergeant Goodwin explained and then laughed, when she recalled something else. "Ho boy, the look on Chief Blackwater's face. You should have seen it!"

"I believe I have," Professor Utonium said.
"Anyway, long story short, I've been assigned by the committee as the Girls' second caretaker. My orders are to help pacify the Girls as their mother," the SWAT officer finally said. It'd came out hard and fast, no holds barred. The professor didn't need the energy to react to that.

"C-come again?" he simply said, unsure if he heard it right.

"I've been transferred to you as backup. I'm the Girls' mother now," Selicia explained again, this time simplifying things, as if the professor was a boy. She sat down on his bed, next to him. She was deceptively light, despite the SWAT gear on.

"What! For how long? Three days? Because I think I'm fine right now," Professor Utonium said in disbelief as he sat up once more. Selicia pushed him back down and removed a glove.

"You're as stubborn as they say," She commented as she felt his forehead. Still hot despite the wet towel. "Still hot, too. The doc said your fever's gone down, but not completely out for the count. If you go on like this, they'd probably have to send someone else in your place, if you know what I mean."

"Anyway, I'll be here as long as the Girls are. It's a permanent transfer, unless I botch the job so badly that Alice from Social Services start going after my neck, and believe me, she'd treat even Pol Pot real nice if she's given the chance," Selicia said. "You know, we're going to need a cover story."

"A cover story? What do you mean?" Utonium said weakly. He felt himself instinctively gravitating towards Selicia's palm as she felt his forehead. It was tingly. It felt good, and it reminded him of a time when he had a girl in his life, an adult one.

"I'm supposed to be their birth mother. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, was it?" Selicia added.

"But isn't that going a bit too far?" the Professor said.

"More than telling them that they never have biological parents to begin with? As much as I hated mine, no, I don't think so pal," Selicia said. She removed her hand from the professor's forehead, and replaced the wet towel on his head. "Now, I need clarification. Can't afford to screw things up, can I? Blossom, pink-eyed, has red hair, 44 inches tall, 43 pounds. Bubbles, baby-blue-eyes, blonde hair, 43.5 inches, 42 pounds. Buttercup, green-eyed, black hair and 44.5 inches, 45 pounds. Am I right?"

"You've done your homework, Selicia. But being a parent is more than statistics," the professor said.

"Which is why we need a cover story," Selicia countered. "I take it that you've been lying to them about everything, haven't you? What's a little more? If it means keeping them happy?"

Her words hit Utonium hard, leaving him speechless. There was no denying that he'd been keeping the Girls in the dark, that he had his own cover story with them as well - in fact, he could even reason that he was the worst of them both, seeing that he hadn't even quite laid out his cards for the Girls, not like what Selicia intended. The Professor had made no attempt at explaining himself to the Girls, even though they deserved something of a groundwork for their relationship, and he had done nothing but answer a few questions with vague answers regarding how little girls were made and what they were made of. Sure, they knew about babies and fathers, but he'd expressly avoided the topic of mothers and giving birth. They didn't ask because of their ignorance. And now…

"How about if I start? But first..." Selicia said, then paused as she went back to her duffel bag and, after unzipping it, rummaged through her own belongings. It sounded messy in there, as the professor could hear clanking metal and plastic. "Where did I put those- Yeah, here we go." She returned to his side and plopped herself down beside her once more, this time the left cheek of her
butt was touching his thigh. He shifted away from her. "A little wedding present from the Organization." She left some papers and passports on his stomach. Professor Utonium picked up several of them to look.

He flipped open the passports. He saw a picture of himself staring at him, and he knew where he'd taken that photo. It was a year ago, when he had to renew his security card. His name was listed as 'Thomas Utonium'. The Organization was slowly cleaning up their act, pushing both the truth and the lies out. Then there was a photo of Selicia in the next passport. Her name was listed as 'Selicia Utonium', aged 25. She wasn't kidding about it being a wedding present. He groaned as he saw it, but he went through the rest of it. Blossom Utonium. Bubbles Utonium. Buttercup Utonium. Their pictures were derived from security footages, cleaned up such that they looked convincing. He knew the background. Those slimy bastards had taken videos of them in Outpost Charlie-01 while he was in the general meeting.

He skimmed through the papers. They were proof of Selicia's orders. Signed by Chief of Security Blackwater and Organization Director Cliff.

"Say… Since we're technically married now…" Selicia said with a mischievous smile spreading on her face out of nowhere, putting herself on top of Utonium. "We should probably consummate our marriage, don't you think? Bet it'd help with the undercover duty!" She pressed her face close to the professor's. The latter tried to worm out of her grasp, but there was no room for him. Her grip was strong.

"Save it for the next time if we actually feel something for each other, Selicia," Professor Utonium muttered, making a futile effort to push her away, but it was no use. The SWAT officer withdrew from him.

"Ah haha! You should have seen your mug! Anyway, I wouldn't want your fever to get worse, so I'll take your advice. I'm going to need your help anyway," Selicia said, getting off him, leaving the professor blushing and hotter, as Selicia had feared. He hated to admit it even though he knew the biological basis for it, but Selicia did get to him. The woman was wild, nothing like Eileen. "How does this sound: I gave birth to them as triplets before leaving for what was supposed to be a three-week long operation. I've come back early, and now I'm working from home."

"You can't seriously think they would accept that," Professor Utonium said in disbelief, dismayed that he had to lie some more. When will it ever end?

"Well, they accepted you, didn't they? When you're alone with them?" Selicia reasoned.

"And what about when they find out?"

"Find out what?"

"About how reproduction really works?" the professor asked. He was asking himself just as much as he was questioning his new 'wife'. He was just as guilty as she was for hiding the truth from the Girls. "They woke up looking exactly as they are now on their first day, and they remember it.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," Selicia simply said. She wasn't just wild. The professor was already having doubts about having her as a mother to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. "Now, how about if I meet the Girls with your support? Right about… Now?"

"As if I have a choice…” the professor said resentfully. "The Organization is never about choices."

"It's known as the USDO now, Thomas. The United States Defence Organization. They can be
good once you really get to know them, instead of stranding yourself in the lab all the time," Selicia defended the USDO. "After all, they gave me a life and purpose when my own family gave me nothing… And worse than nothing."

The professor said nothing to that. The Organization was partly responsible for his wife and child's death, for the mutilation and mutation of his Chimpanzee lab assistant… After massacring his kind because of money problems. But they did give him Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, though he could claim most of the credit, of course.

"If you're going to meet the Girls, you're not going in like that," Professor Utonium said.

"Like what?"

"Looking like you're in a war zone, about to put lead into them," the professor explained. "Even if you're afraid of them, that rifle of yours might not do much, anyway."

"I'm not afraid of them. I… er… When I first saw them, and believe me, I had hours to just stare at them in their ICU, I guess I understand why you gave up being one of the most powerful man in the United States," Selicia confessed. Previously, she had gone from serious to playful, and now she was becoming emotional. She was a hard creature to read, even with the professor's smarts. "I didn't have much of a childhood, and I was afraid for those three kids that being born enhanced in the lab might mean the same thing. When they offered to transfer me to this… 'unit', I knew I had to take it, to give them something I never had."

"You're still going to have to change, Selicia," the professor said, making no mention of the woman's declaration of 'love' for the Girls. It was something he'd have to file in the back of his mind until he'd seen enough of her. "I think you can agree that mothers generally do not wave a rifle in front of their daughters."

"As you wish… Husband dear," Selicia said, and the professor couldn't decide if she had done it mockingly or just plain mischievously. In fact, he couldn't decide exactly who she was - and he could only put it down to the fact that they hardly knew each other, even when he was the Head of Research in the old Organization's HQ. He had only seen her a few times before the day Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were born. He had probably seen her more often than that, but he didn't quite remember.

Without any warning, Selicia began stripping in front of him. Her rifle and vest came down within an instant.

"Selicia, wh-what are you doing?" Professor Utonium stuttered.

"Thomas dear, you really need to start acting the part. Have you forgotten that we're happily married? Especially after five long years of bliss?" Selicia reminded him before pulling the top of her uniform off, leaving only a gray shirt underneath. After that, there was only a skin-colored bra, then nothing. She returned to her duffel bag and pulled out the top of a gray Organization dress uniform. She rested it on her chest. "What do you think? I've read your report. I think at least one of them would love it. It comes with a few medals I earned from disposing some of their predecessors."

"Anything, Selicia. Just put some clothes on," the professor simply agreed hurriedly. He had squeezed his eyes shut long ago. It felt like an insult to Eileen's memory, that the Organization would just shove a woman into his arms, a woman who would masquerade his late wife's part.

It was worse when he pretended to have fallen asleep (and he wasn't fooling anyone). He could hear clothes falling onto the carpet, boots thumping to the ground, and then feel her naked butt beside him
after that, pressing against his thigh as Selicia did as he asked. The only thing he could be grateful for was that she didn't make him watch, and knowing security officers like her, she could have if she wanted to.

He could hear undergarments slipping on, then clothes. The worst part? The biological part of him longed to see her, to feel her. To have sex with her. The meat on his bones weren't much different from that of an animal, no matter how intelligent he was. He opened his eyes when he heard nothing more, and half expected the unpredictable Selicia to flash him just to prank him, but when he did, her back was turned to her. He could see the darker jacket and lighter skirt of her military dress, and when she turned around, he was greeted by silver buttons and four medals. She was still mostly unmarked, with only the three chevrons of a sergeant on her arm and collars, despite the Organization gaining a public face. Perhaps Wiggums and the logistics arm of the USGO hadn't gotten around to it yet. Her boots were replaced by black pumps.

"Better?" Selicia asked.

"Better," for once, the professor agreed with her.
Chapter 30: Mommy Dearest

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are introduced to a new member of the family.

Chapter 30: Mommy Dearest

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

9 DEC 1988. 0830.

"Don't peek, Girls! Remember, it's a surprise," Professor Utonium reminded the Girls as he guided them to the living room from the backyard. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup each had a hand over their eyes and the other to form a line with Blossom holding onto Professor Utonium, followed by Bubbles and Buttercup. The professor was all smiles and laughter when he was in front of the Girls, but when their eyes were closed, he'd dropped the act. He had no idea what the outcome would be, whether it was to do with the Girls' reactions, or the viability of his new 'wife'.

"Is it a new bookshelf full of fairy tales?" Blossom guessed, giggling.

"Is it a pony? I want a pony so bad!" Bubbles took her turn, wishing.

"Is it… I don't know, a full set of playhouse and dolls?" Buttercup took her turn, disingenuously asserting her girly front.

"Okay, Girls, you can open your eyes now," Professor Utonium said, as excitedly as he could sound. He found it frightening that he was actually getting better at acting.

The Girls were standing in front of the television, and when they opened their eyes, they saw a woman in military dress uniform, sitting on the sofa, crossing her legs. The Girls were smiling as much as they were confused.

"Hello, Girls. Long time no see," Sergeant Selicia Goodwin greeted her 'children', kept up with her lie right down to her words. For a moment, she didn't know what to do with her hands, or her legs, so she simply leaned back, throwing her arms on the top of the cushions, giving a relaxed facade.

"My, the three of you look more beautiful than I remember."

"Is she my new playmate?" Buttercup guessed, still smiling. "You found a playmate for me, right Dad?"

"Is she our new friend?" Blossom took her turn.

"Is she going to turn into a pony?" Bubbles obsessed over her new pony fixation.

"No, Girls, she's more than that. You see, Girls…" Professor Utonium came over to Selicia, who
stood up. He put an arm around her waist, though his mind was screaming for him to do otherwise. "She's your mother."

"But Dad, I don't understand," Blossom opened up first. "What's a mother?" She'd spoken for Bubbles and Buttercup, even if the latter wouldn't want to admit it. They all had the same questions in their mind.

"Why, she's like me, except she's female, like you," the professor explained with a laugh. "I know it's complicated. You see, it takes two person to have a child, or children, like the three of you."

"But if it takes two to have us, why didn't we know about her?" Blossom asked. The professor had noticed recently that her questions were targeting increasingly complex issues. She was learning fast, terrifyingly so, sometimes.

"Well, you see-" the professor wanted to explain, but Selicia took over.

"You see, Girls, I had a job to do outside. As soon as I have you, I had to go away," she explained in a language as simple as she could. "But now I'm back, and I won't be leaving anytime soon." The security officer approached them. The Girls remained rooted to the ground. The professor thought they looked a little apprehensive about this new parental figure. Selicia knelt down to bring her eye level to theirs. "I won't be leaving your side again. I'm just sorry I was never there when the three of you woke up for the first time."

Selicia had put on a regretful appearance. Whether it was genuine or not, Professor Utonium could not tell, even as he remained by her side, a hand on her shoulder, a supportive gesture just as fake as half the things in The House. But whether it was genuine or not, Selicia was a master at this. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had melted at the sight of their new mother, all remorseful and willing to redeem herself for a mistake that never existed.

Bubbles' hands had gone up to her mouth, stifling a cry. Blossom seemed touched. Buttercup, however, seemed a little confused as to what to feel.

"Group hug?" Selicia requested. The Girls hugged her. Looking up at the professor, who was still standing there, she pulled him down into the group hug.

"It's good to have a mother," Blossom said; she had already understood the idea and appeal of having a second parent.

"Yeah, it'd be like having two Dads, right, Buttercup?" Bubbles said.

"Humph," Buttercup simply grunted her half-hearted agreement. To her, there can only be one Daddy. In fact, there was just something about this that didn't sit right with her. With more and more discoveries of backroom conversations weighing down on her shoulders, she couldn't help but to suspect everything.

Selicia laughed at their reactions. "I can always show the three of you what it's like to have a mother," she said. "And we're going to have a great day. Right, darling?"

Professor Utonium didn't respond immediately. He was still trying to get used to the sudden increase in terms of endearments being thrown at him... From a woman he barely knew, who, for all he knew, wasn't kidding about getting into his pants.

"Yes, of course... Honey," the professor went along with the ruse.
From the Girls' perspective, the day had gone by really fast. Even Buttercup was going with the flow, and for all her paranoia, she found out that her new mother wasn't bad at all.

They started the day with Selicia cooking, and her pancakes were one-of-a-kind. The Girls had pressed her for answers throughout breakfast. What was her favorite color? What does she do at work? What animal did she like the most? Does she sleep with a soft toy or three? Selicia would do the same, partly to ease the pressure on her. They learned a lot about each other that way. Professor Utonium was able to take a backseat, which was good for his body, but bad for his soul - with Selicia disrupting the usual routine he had built in the last two weeks, it felt as if the Girls were slipping away from him.

But he would find out later that, in the eyes of the Girls, their Daddy was God, and not even their shiny new parent could replace him. They decided to go out for lunch to celebrate Mommy's return. They went shopping after that, then the movies, with a Christmas comedy filling the silver screen.

But before the commercials could even play, history repeated itself once again, and the Girls had a stronger reaction to it.

"But I want to sit next to Daddy!" Buttercup yelled at Bubbles, who had once again secured a seat left of Daddy, and the seat to his right was taken by an apathetic stranger.

"But- But- You butthead! You sat next to him the last time!" Bubbles insulted her sister. Bubbles' new name for Buttercup had taken the ravenette off-guard. Made her mad. Real mad. Mad enough that she'd started shaking, unable to control her impulse. They were attracting stares from all over the cinema, stares that denoted either awe for the Girls' uncanny beauty, or their fierce sibling rivalry.

"Girls, please, people are looking at you…" Selicia warned them, but she was feeling helpless. She'd even looked the part as she was wearing a dainty shoulder-less black dress she had just bought to further bury her security background in favor of a softer approach befitting that of a stereotypical mother. She didn't dare get between the Girls. She'd read their reports, and she certainly didn't want to be in the way of thousands of pounds of force if they started throwing punches.

"It's okay, dear. They do it all the time," Professor Utonium said to his 'wife', this time too occupied with the Girls to even worry about the mismatch between his feelings and his words. "Buttercup, Bubbles, be nice to each other…"

"You're a butthead! Butthead! Butthead! Butthead!" Bubbles repeated herself, her voice shrill and even more high-pitched than how it normally was. She had erupted in tears, stamping her feet each time she twisted Buttercup's name. Memories of Buttercup's abuse the last time they were in the cinema had come flooding back into her mind, and she was just as much fearful as she was angry at Buttercup's insistence on taking Daddy away from her.

With clenched jaws, baring teeth, Buttercup gave a shout and pushed Bubbles, who yelped and fell a yard or two away. Buttercup's green eyes glared widely at her downed sister, with a kind of insanity in her eyes. It'd shocked both 'parents' enough that Selicia was able to put aside her fear and seize Buttercup just as she was leaping for Bubbles.

"Oh my God!" someone in the cinema shrieked in shock.

"Let go of me!" Buttercup screamed while she was in Selicia's arm.

"Buttercup baby, stop! Just please, stop," Selicia said. Buttercup struggled and turned around, glaring at her, but the sight of her calmed her down, for some reason.
Professor Utonium went for Bubbles, who was crying on the floor.

"Man, put a leash on that green dog!" a man commented not far away.

Thomas and Selicia had to drag Bubbles and Buttercup out of the cinema after that, and Blossom had to help with Buttercup. They went straight home after that, with Bubbles crying on Mommy's shoulder and Buttercup and Blossom occupying either ends of the backseat, as before.

The moment they reached the House, Buttercup had raced up to her room, breaking the house rule on super-speed, resulting in askew paintings and pictures in her wake. Bubbles and Blossom, in the meantime, had hung their coats and just sat in the living room, upset that the day was ruined, thanks to Buttercup.

"How about if I take this one?" Selicia said to Professor Utonium before taking the stairs.

"I'll stay with Blossom and Bubbles," the man of The House said, and sat down in between the Blue and Red, putting his arms around them.

"Buttercup? Are you in there?" Selicia called out for her 'daughter'. She pushed open the door to the Girls' room, no denying that she was a little afraid. She was in a shoulder-less black dress, something she would never have worn otherwise, if ever, and she lacked a firearm in her hands. It was the first time in a long time she felt vulnerable, ever since she ran away from home.

She knew immediately that Buttercup was in the room. She was making a lot of noise. One thing she'd learned about her the moment she'd met the tomboy was that she lacked subtlety.

"Stupid, stupid, stupid!" Buttercup screamed, oblivious that her supposed mother was watching. She'd taken off her black hair bow and threw it to the ground, stomping on it, pulverizing the plastic. She did the same with the black hair clip that was binding her waist-length hair to Blossom's standards. "I hate this! Blossom and her stupid hair! Sissy little Bubbles!" She then proceeded to mess up her carefully-groomed hair, clearly not a big fan of her own looks. She then punted what remained of her hair bow and clip with her foot across the room. What remained of the plastic bow and hair clip broke even further against the wall.

"Buttercup?" Selicia called out to her again. The green-eyed girl turned around to regard her newly-arrived mother, with a look of guilt on her face.

"M-mom? I-" Buttercup struggled to explain her frenzy, "I- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to mess up my hair! I didn't mean what I said!"

"Buttercup, it's alright," Selicia entered the room, taking careful steps towards the volatile super-powered girl.

"I'm sorry, I really am. I'll act like a good little girl!" Buttercup promised, just as afraid of her mother as her mother was of her - after all, she'd barely met her. "I didn't mean to act the way I did. I'll be a good girl!"

"Buttercup, I understand more than you know," Selicia said. "You don't have to act anymore."

"I don't?" Buttercup asked, surprised at her reaction. She was expecting disapproval, something she was afraid of getting from Daddy.

"I knew that hairdo didn't fit you. You have to be yourself, Buttercup," Selicia said. "Why are you trying to act the cute, good little girl anyway?"
"Because Daddy loves Blossom and Bubbles more-" Buttercup cried, actual tears welling up. A single tear escaped, and she wiped it away "I can see it, even though he doesn't say it. I thought that if I acted more like them, he'd love me just as much!"

"Silly girl, come here, you," Selicia said, welcoming the kid into her arms. Buttercup padded up to her and quickly buried her face in her stomach, wrapping her arms around her. "I don't think he loves you any less. There are fathers like that, but I've known him for so long, and he's not one of them." In truth, Selicia had deduced that from a day's observation, but she thought it was accurate all the same.

Buttercup said nothing more. She sniffled for a bit, her crying muffled by Selicia's dress, but she was able to bring herself under control faster than her siblings were able to.

"You know, how about…” Selicia said with a comforting smile, a great idea just popping into her mind. She ran her hair through Buttercup's waist-length lock. "We get you a haircut? I bet you'll feel a lot better once you're more like yourself."

"Really? Can I get one just like yours?" Buttercup asked. "I didn't say this, Mommy dearest, but, I like you the moment I saw you."

"That's awfully sweet of you, Buttercup," Selicia said, a genuine smile spreading across her face. She was positively beaming, over the mountain. It felt so much better than drugs, or getting drunk - being recognized as a mother, being loved had beaten all of that. But there's more to capitalize from this. "I'll have to give everyone a haircut. Bubbles kept shoving her pigtails aside and Blossom had to keep avoiding sitting on her own hair."

"Oh," Buttercup enunciated, turning her eyes away from hers, clearly nervous about something.

"You just have to apologize to Bubbles, Buttercup. You shouldn't have attacked her like that, girl," Selicia said. "I'm sure she'll do the same for you. It wasn't nice for her to call you Butthead, after all. I'll make sure she apologizes to you."

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

9 DEC 1988. 2243.

Buttercup stared at herself in the mirror. She couldn't believe what Mommy had done to her hair. She couldn't help but to constantly feel it as she watched herself. "This. Is. Awesome!" she cried. Her hair had basically been trimmed down to the barest minimum for a girl. Selicia had given her exactly what she asked for: a haircut similar to her own, a bob cut, to that effect, except that the ends of her hair would stick up sideways like blades, something to do with how her hair works. Her fringes were cut to manageable lengths, straight across, with an arrowhead-like split down the middle. This meant that she didn't need to spend the entire age of the universe washing and tending to it. Buttercup never quite took well to baths, and she'd prefer to get it over with as quickly as she could.

"I know, right?" Blossom said. She was standing to Buttercup's right, admiring her own hair as well. It used to be slightly beyond waist-length. Selicia had done the least work with her, but the effect was just as pronounced. The ends of her hair would no longer form a rough, jagged line, and they were neater, just slightly above waist-length such that it was convenient.

Bubbles hugged Buttercup from behind. "Don't we just look lovely?" she said dreamily, looking at her own pigtails. Most of them were amputated such that they could barely reach her ears. If she'd let her hair down, they'd only be neck-length.
Selicia had entered the room just as the Girls were admiring themselves at the wardrobe mirror. "Now isn't that great? The three of you getting along without trying to kill each other?" she said. "Isn't this so much better?"

"Mommy, is Daddy coming in to read us a story?" Blossom asked, before yawning a little.

"Aw, look at you - you've had a tiring day, haven't you?" Selicia observed. "Your father needs a break. He's only just gotten well from his sickness. How about if I sing you three to sleep? My aunt used to do that for me on the bad nights."

It didn't take the Girls long to get changed and lie in bed. The lights went out next, and the Girls' eyes began to droop.

"Hush little baby, don't say a word, Momma's gonna buy you a mockingbird…"

"And if that mockingbird won't sing, Momma's gonna buy you a diamond ring…"

Meanwhile, Professor Utonium was down in the labs.

"And if that diamond ring turns to brass, Momma's gonna buy you a looking glass…"

Unbeknownst to him, a certain Chimpanzee was staring at him working at his desk.

"And if that looking glass gets broke, Momma's gonna buy you a billy goat…"

And accompanying that Chimpanzee was a certain four-armed woman in a trilby, who smiled a psychotic smile.
Chapter 31: One Bad Monkey

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Jojo meets with his creator and father, Professor Utonium. The professor discovers much about the Girls' genetic source.

Chapter 31: One Bad Monkey

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

9 DEC 1988. 2320.

As much as Professor Utonium disliked the idea of someone else taking care of Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, especially someone he hardly knew, someone like Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, he couldn't deny the clear advantages it gave him.

For one thing, he was able to settle down in the labs far earlier than before, and without feeling like he had just ran an Olympic Marathon. Granted, he would gladly run a marathon everyday just for the Girls, but there were far too many pressing matters that required his attention, from the most mundane and hated, such as reports and papers to write and send to the Organization, or the USDO, as they had rebranded themselves, to the most pressing and esoteric, such as the continuation of his research into Chemical X, and how it had so empowered the Girls, and if it could, so suddenly one day, take it all away and more.

Not to mention, his fever had broken, and he preferred to keep it that way if only he could take care of the Girls and not the other way around.

First order of business: Bubbles. For almost three weeks now, he had been worried about her. While Blossom and Buttercup had no trouble catching up with the general 5-year-old demographics in terms of knowledge and education, Bubbles was already beginning to plateau. And he had just the thing.

In a rare case of USDO magnanimity, the results of the complete health check-up for the Girls' Sources had arrived. Medical Director Simmons had even done a little extra, getting Alice, Head of Psychiatry and Social Services, to issue the Sources free psychiatric screening. And the thick brown envelopes were just right there, sitting on his desk, with a note attached to them:

From: Doctor Simmons

I was able to get all of this done express-like. The parents of the Girls' sources were thrilled at such a royal treatment. That already tells us a lot: none of the girls from whom the Girls gained their DNA from are wealthy. I've taken a look at their files myself, and two of them are of middle class, the other's in the poor house. The bills waived amounted in the tens of thousands, mainly due to the fact that we've given them exclusive medical screenings not yet available to the public.
I've refrained from looking through the documents enclosed inside. They are for your eyes alone, and it is your decision if you want to involve me.

Professor Utonium would have leaped at the chance to see them, had it not been for something else.

"Professor?" a familiar voice enunciated behind him, the pronunciation flawless, but not quite human. It had been months since he heard that voice. The professor turned around, to catch sight of two individuals who had somehow gotten into his lab, two individuals who likely didn't have the security clearance to even come within a 1-mile radius of The House.

It was Jojo and an old acquaintance from years ago, both of them dressed in what appeared to be city-plumbing maintenance work clothes. Jojo's companion had called herself Naga after a psychotic breakdown, based on a myth she'd read in South Asia. Their sudden appearance had unearthed many old memories, both good and bad. He remembered how the past had always been a struggle. But those days were easier compared to the present, and the difference that had made it so was that he'd fallen deeply in love with his three Girls.

"Jojo!" the professor greeted his new guest in surprise. "I didn't see you come in!"

"And… Michelle, was it? How long has it been?" the professor greeted the other person.

"Don't call me that. Michelle is dead, killed by Organization cruelty and experimentation. I am Naga now," Trench Coat Woman snapped at the professor. Professor Utonium had wanted to say more, remind her that he didn't help her escape to dedicate her life to hatred, but Jojo took precedence.

"Jojo… My good friend," he approached the Chimpanzee, the mutated animal did the same. "How did you get here? Did they bring you here?" They hugged.

"No, father," Jojo replied, his voice recognizable as sad by human standards. He wasn't even speaking in the usual repetitive fashion. "I had to fight my way here. The bad men tried to stop me coming here, but I came."

"I hate to break up the reunion, but the sooner we leave, the better, Jojo," Naga warned the Chimpanzee from not far away. "They'll discover the bodies sooner or later."

"What is she talking about? What bodies?" the professor asked, now worried, once again haunted by the same spectre that had been dogging him since Bloome's birth. The world, his world, had a way of staining the young, corrupting them. It was only a matter of degree.

"I had to kill to get in here, father," Jojo admitted, deciding that he wasn't going to hide anything from the one human being he trusted with his life. "I destroyed Charlie-02. They were bad. Evil. Loathsome!"

"How many did you kill? Who?" the professor asked, shocked. He found himself backing away from the Chimpanzee, who looked upset that rejection seemed inevitable. He knew that Professor Utonium was a good man, a paragon of morality and ethics as much as science. Naga had told him as much.

"Forty-three, father. Security men, scientists, supporters of the Organization. They were all trying to kill me, father. I had to kill them," the Chimpanzee explained, trying to bridge the gap between him and his father at the same time.

"The scientists and civilians too?" the professor uttered his question, horrified. He had friends who were in there, a few in security, many of them in science and the more supportive branches of the
Organization. Jojo had gone overboard. He didn't even realize that he'd backed away so far that he'd returned to his desk. He groped for its corners for support as he felt his legs weaken. "Jojo, what have you become?"

"They were the Organization! If they did not try to kill me, they will attempt to get me killed! If they did not try to get me killed, they would help those who will! Father, please!" Jojo begged.

"And I'm not helping them? I work in the USDO too, Jojo! There are many good people in the USDO, Jojo! Just like me, and you just..." the professor reprimanded, but found himself to be too light-headed to finish. So many lives lost, so many innocent bystanders punished for the crimes of a few... "You shouldn't have killed anyone. I know you. You were superior in every way to the average human being. You could have avoided spilling any blood. Why, Jojo?"

"Vengeance... Revenge..." Jojo admitted, unwilling to lie. The professor's heart immediately broke after he heard it. "Father, please come with me. I've met some friends who were oppressed by the Organization just as much, just like you."

"I can't." the professor simply said.

"Why not?" Jojo pleaded. "You have nothing to lose in the Organization!"

"I have the three Girls now. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. I have to be with them," the professor said.

"You have other children?" Jojo said, disappointed, feeling cast aside by the fact. "You have... Other children? Other offsprings? You sired more?"

"I'm sorry, Jojo," the professor said.

"Then bring them with you to my friends in the Foundation-"

"The Foundation!" the professor roared, looking almost insane, uncharacteristic of him. The mere mention of the Foundation had brought everything from his tragic past back to the fore. "The Foundation killed my family!"

"I didn't know- Father, I-" Jojo tried to explain, but the professor had cut him off:

"Don't! Do not call me that again! If I was a father to you, you wouldn't have killed for revenge! You wouldn't have fallen in with the Foundation!" the professor chided. He pulled open a drawer on his desk, started to fumble around in it.

"You don't understand!" Jojo shrieked, upset at the rejection. "I trusted you! I looked up to you! I thought you would understand!"

Professor Utonium pulled out his pistol from the drawer, pointing it at both Jojo and Naga.

"I'll give you ten minutes before I call security. That's all I can give you now," Professor Utonium warned. "I don't ever want to see you again!"

"Don't worry, Jojo, he doesn't have the guts!" Naga said with a smirk. Although she was basically covered with weapons - four pistols, four swords and SMGs on her back, she had drawn none of them. She, too, knew the professor.

"He doesn't need to shoot. He had already killed me with his words alone," Jojo said dejected. With shoulders slumped, he made for the stairs. Naga followed, but before she left, she threw a triumphant
smile at the professor. Without knowing it, the professor had done exactly what she needed. Everything was falling into place for her and the Foundation.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

9 DEC 1988. 2335.

By the time security came, Jojo and Naga were long gone. In fact, they were scarce the moment he went up the stairs to see them off, make sure that they didn't do anything to the Girls and Selicia. He'd then gone up to check on them, only to see that the Girls were asleep, and Selicia was still singing to them.

Professor Utonium found out later that Jojo had killed three officers to get past the security cordon surrounding the House. The new lieutenant in charge, a rather cold man, just like Agent Blake before he got to know the kids, believed that Jojo had planned it all thoroughly, based on the fact that the three officers were at their most vulnerable. They were occupying the most isolated position, and they were exhausted as they were nearing the end of their shift, waiting for their relief.

The incident had even put the professor off looking at the files containing information on the Girls' DNA sources. That his first child, so to speak, had turned to evil was demoralizing - he didn't have the stomach for any other bad news, even if it was only a chance of it.

But he knew he had to force himself to do it. It concerned his Girls. Jojo had only proven that he needed to do it right this time. After seeing a squad of security officers off, he returned to his lab and sat down at his desk. The very first envelop he opened was Bubbles', of course.

The first thing he noticed was the picture, and the photographer had developed it into a big one. The Kodak was an 11" by 14", showing Bubbles' DNA source in all her colored polaroid glory. And the resemblance was uncanny.

However, there were difference between Bubbles and Ester Olofsson. Ester was already bespectacled at the tender age of five, which wasn't encouraging. She had normal silver-blue eyes instead of glowing baby blue eyes. She wore her shoulder-length hair free and straight. There were also some minor differences in the expression of Ester and Bubbles' shared DNA that only the parents would notice - the ears and cheeks were imperceptibly different, and it could be put down to random epigenetics. Bubbles' source seemed normal on the surface. Ester Olofsson was smiling innocently at the camera, like how Bubbles would have done.

If only it was that simple. The professor poured through her medical data. Their height and weight seemed similar, with Ester Olofsson heavier by half a pound. The standard full range of medical examination yielded no positive results for any genetic or acquired diseases.

The USDO's assessment of Ester Olofsson's medical outlook was far more grim. Being a secret organization that had just jumped out of the closet, the USDO had access to medical technology beyond what was available to the general public, some provided for by the Institute, while others were developed by the USDO back when it was still the Organization. They were able to detect genetic abnormalities and markers for certain deficiencies.

Ester Olofsson had been tested positive for numerous genetic markers associated with low intelligence. It was as if she was genetically cursed - not only was she tested positive for low intelligence, the report stated as well that she had genetic markers for nearsightedness (which explained the spectacles), as well as hearing loss (which hadn't been expressed… yet).
An IQ test that was applied to Ester Olofsson, adjusted for her age, gave her a rating of 81, right next door to mental disability territory. Her parents were also tested, and it seemed that Ester had taken after her father, who was a first-generation Swedish immigrant, a former iron miner in his home country. The near-sightedness was from her mother, who was already over a thousand degrees into her blur vision, and she wasn't even as old as Professor Utonium.

Chemical X might have alleviated some of the difficulties associated with genetic low intelligence, allowing Bubbles to progress as she had. Professor Utonium had no doubt that if Bubbles was given the same IQ test, she would have scored higher. Ester wasn't as lucky. In her psychiatric report, she was diagnosed with early onset clinical depression due to poor performance in kindergarten and bullying. Her family situation wasn't much better. Although the family had gone into the low-middle-class since the father had started working security in a private firm, they were still plagued by a massive housing debt on their head. Arguments and fights were common at home. The depression was minor at present, but the psychiatrist in charge feared the worst.

"Poor girl," Professor Utonium said, referring to both Bubbles and Ester at the same time. He would have to test Bubbles' sight and hearing soon, just in case, and pay extra attention to her education - though he was starting to think that he wasn't the right man to be in charge of her early childhood education. Sure, he could teach non-euclidean and theoretical physics as if they were common sense, but to get a child to understand the ABCs and 123s from nothing was even harder. Next, he tore up Blossom's envelope and poured through her documents.

Aislinn Callaghan, fourth generation Irish American. Had Aislinn put on a pair of shades and switched places with Blossom, Professor Utonium would have been none the wiser, at least until the moment she had to demonstrate any superpowers. Unlike Bubbles, Blossom had grown in the labs to look exactly like Aislinn, except for the amber irises. Even her hair was made up the same way, perhaps by converging ideas as to how Blossom/Aislinn would look her best.

Aislinn, unlike Bubbles, had got off very lightly when it came to the grand game of natural selection. Both conventional and USDO medical and genetic screenings have yielded no genetic abnormalities or diseases. The only concern was that Aislinn was tested positive for sociopathy and Huntington's Disease in a few markers each, but the former would have had so minor an effect on her well-being that it didn't matter. The latter wouldn't even be expressed at all.

The psychiatry report stated little out of the ordinary. The family was poor, but happy. Their financial situation was kept stable through careful spending, the father's company's social program, and love. The parents were happy with their marriage despite it all. Aislinn had no psychiatric issues to speak of. She was tested for an IQ in excess of 139 in her adjusted test. Yet, even a child with such intelligence couldn't have learned as quickly as Blossom did - this fed into the professor's idea that Chemical X had the effect of enhancing intelligence.

Next, the professor tore open the lid of Buttercup's envelope-

"Hey, Thomas," a mischievous voice came from behind him. Professor Utonium jumped and swiveled on his chair. It was Selicia, The wife.

"It's past midnight. You shouldn't be down here," Selicia said, hugging him from behind, talking into his ear. He could feel her mouth or tongue coming at anytime, but it didn't. "Besides, we have to get used to getting in bed together and- what's that you got there?"

"Oh, that - nothing, just some reports from the lab for Chemical X," the professor lied. He couldn't trust her, not yet. Perhaps in the future, if she had proven that she had no secret agenda from the USDO, but not at present. "I've just resumed my research on Chemical X."
"Come to bed, dear," Selicia said. "Besides, I'm supposed to make sure you don't work yourself to death again."

"One second, sergeant," Professor Utonium said. Taking the documents and the one unopened envelope, he dumped them into a filing cabinet. Selicia didn't waste anytime, and started pulling him by the hand towards the stairs the moment he was done.

"Oh c'mon, Thomas," Selicia said, making her voice a little sultry this time. "You need to drop the formalities. It wouldn't do if the Girls heard it. I really need to unwind you a little…" Selicia laughed playfully after that, and Professor Utonium couldn't help but to shudder at what might be coming next.
Chapter 32: Truth

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, a dark messenger arrives with gifts for the Girls and Selicia spills her heart out to Professor Utonium.

Chapter 32: Truth

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

10 DEC 1988. 0904.

Professor Utonium was staring into space during breakfast. He could not help it; the moment he woke up, he could only think about last night. The fake wedding ring on his left ring finger felt heavier than it should be.

Last night, the professor had insisted on sleeping in the living room couch, but Selicia had told him to do so otherwise.

"It'd look suspicious, Thomas darling," Selicia had said, injecting her terms of endearment as usual. Real or practiced acting, Professor Utonium could not tell, still. In the end, he'd relented and sat in bed. Selicia was onto him immediately after that. He could feel her hands on his shoulders the moment he was down. Military alacrity and precision, he supposed. "Jesus, 'Utonium', you're stiffer than the last corpse I made!"

She'd given him a massage, and he would be lying if he said it didn't feel good. That was when he could feel her lips on his neck, and that had the opposite effect of the massage.

"Goodwin! God!" the professor shot up from the bed after that, facing her immediately.

"What, Thomas? If we're going to be parents to the Girls, fake biological parents, then we'd better start acting convincingly, darling," Selicia instructed. The amused smile on her face told him that she was anything but offended, or frustrated. It was almost as if she was enjoying this - though which part of it, he wasn't very sure. Was she a lustful demon? Was she sadistic, knowing full well that he hadn't let go of Eileen a few years ago? Or was she simply playing games? He couldn't believe that it was all just for the sake of putting on a good show - the only audience in the bedroom was the ghost of his dead wife.

"Look, can we just- Let's just go to sleep, like you suggested?" the professor changed the subject instead. "I'm tired anyway. You're right that I needed a break."

"Right. Sorry for coming on to you so quickly," Selicia said, unexpectedly respectful. She had always been a wild card, something he knew right from the start. She picked up her pillow, inspecting the XM4 Carbine rifle she'd put underneath it.

"You put a gun in our bed?!" the professor shouted in shock.
"After what happened today? You should be lucky I don't put the entire armory under my pillow," Selicia explained. She dropped her pillow on the carbine rifle after that, hiding it. The SWAT officer had brought her own armory to the House - a couple of rifles, a couple of shotguns, about six handguns and boxes upon boxes of bullets. It explained why her duffel bag had rattled and clunked when she searched for the 'wedding presents'.

It was lights out after that. Despite his drowsiness, he'd kept his eyes open, and for good reason. It wasn't even five minutes after the lights were out when Sergeant Selicia Goodwin had rolled over to him, putting an arm on his chest. He could feel her fingertips gently caressing him.

It took him an hour before he could fall asleep, and that was after waiting for Selicia to begin snoring.

"Dad? Daa-aad? Buttercup to Dad?" the professor heard one of the Girls as he snapped out of his thoughts. "What are we doing today?"

"Oh, well…" the professor was at a loss for words. He was still recovering from his recollections of the night before. He was saved by the doorbell, literally. It rang, once, then twice, then thrice. The person on the other side of the door seemed impatient. But then again, that would describe the majority of the people in USDO. If nothing else, the USDO had a reputation for being efficient, even if brutal. "Oh my, who could be visiting at this time?"

The professor made a move to leave the table, but Selicia had beaten him to the door. "I'll get it," she said.

"So what are we doing today?" Buttercup asked again, impatient.

When Selicia opened the door, she knew who to expect. It was the Chief of Security, Blackwater.

"Sergeant Goodwin?" he greeted in his gravelly voice, always looking like World War II was still an ongoing affair as usual. Professor Utonium came up behind his 'wife', and he could only wonder what this was about.

"Come in, sir," she stepped aside, and the huge man ducked his head as he entered the House. He was pulling a trolley behind him in.

"Blackwater. Are you here to do more scans?" the professor asked, not without a degree of snark. "I'm surprised you didn't push ten or twenty of your men into my house first."

"Believe me, I wanted to," Blackwater said to the professor, looking at him with a condescending sideways glance. "But that is not necessary. I think I've established that the Girls are of no threat. I left them outside instead." Blackwater pointed his thumb backwards. The professor looked past the huge security officer to see six SWAT officers and ten regular officers lined up outside just as Selicia closed the door.

"Tommy dear, don't be rude to the house guest," Selicia said to her 'husband', then turned to her boss. "Can I offer you something? A cup of orange juice?"

"I see that you've settled in really nice and comfy, sergeant," Blackwater said, ignoring her offer. "I'm surprised you didn't push ten or twenty of your men into my house first."

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"I see that you've settled in really nice and comfy, sergeant," Blackwater said, ignoring her offer. "Don't get too comfortable. You have a job to do."

"What are you doing here, anyway?" the professor asked again. He didn't like that the USDO was a common source of interruption in his family life.

"I have something for the kids," Blackwater replied. He wheeled the trolley in front of him. It was
filled with nondescript, unmarked duffel bags, smaller than Selicia's. He reached down to one of
them and unzipped it, breaking a security seal that was supposed to guarantee no tampering until
delivery. Inside the duffel bag, Thomas and Selicia could see a dark forest green helmet and bullet
resistant vest. Shockingly, there was also a compact pistol in a holster, the only two things that
weren't color-coded. Blackwater knew what they were looking at, what they were concerned about -
well, it was mainly Professor Utonium who was concerned. "That's just in case."

The last time Blackwater had said that was when he gave the professor his pistol. The giant had a
habit of over-preparing. Had the Girls been vulnerable to gunshots, the results would have been
disastrous.

"Doesn't take a head of department to deliver a package, Chief, what's up?" Selicia added.

"The Mayor of Townsville wants to see the kids tomorrow. A convoy will pick the five of you up," Blackwater declared. "Make sure to put the kids in those kits tomorrow if you know what's good for
them. It's not just to showcase them, it's just as much for their protection. We don't know who's
watching. Intelligence thinks that our security is tight, but the Foundation did come in here
yesterday."

"So, a package and a message - when we have deliverymen and telephones. Is that all, Chief?" the
professor asked, hoping that his loathsome colleague would just go - just leave.

"No, professor. You bet there's more-" the Chief of Security reached out for Utonium with a hand,
intending to seize him by the collar. Selicia, afraid of exposing violence to the Girls at this point,
stood between the men. He retracted his hand. "I see that you're getting really comfortable in this
House, Goodwin. Was the bed big and warm enough for the both of you? Alice wasn't wrong about
you."

"You better not screw this up, Upton," the Chief of Security simply pointed at him. "Have you
prepared the Girls for law enforcement operations yet?"

"I've told them what they were meant to do. They expressed the desire to fight crime," Professor
Utonium reported, his face downcast. It was the equivalent of seeing an eighteen-year-old son to a
foreign war. With the professor, it was more than thrice true. "But they don't know how it's like,
Blackwater, can't we-"

"Can't we what? There's no going back, and there's no alternative. The Girls are it, and the USDO
depends on them to be viable organic crime-fighting platforms," Blackwater retorted. "Anyway, it's
not enough that they know. They must be trained for it, even if it's only a few day's training."

"A few days?" Selicia picked up on the urgency.

"If everything goes well, and the Mayor gives his approval, the City and USDO will begin trials for
the Girls. It could all happen within a few days," Blackwater explained.

"A few days…" Professor Utonium dragged on, now afraid, really afraid for his Girls.

"If it makes you feel any better, we've bought the Girls some sports cars. That's the kind of royal
treatment even I don't get, not that I'd want it," Blackwater added. He unloaded the trolley with
Selicia's help. For a brief moment, he made eye contact with the Girls. Bubbles waved at him as they
smiled innocently. He managed a bitter half smile before making to leave. "And professor? Don't
forget about what Silverslick said, especially when it comes to Bubbles.

Professor Utonium froze up. Bubbles and Silverslick. The damned grading system. Bubbles hadn't
even put a single foot in a crime scene, and already, she was penalized, and hard. He remembered the veiled threat the Wall Street wolf and Cliff had given him. 'I'm sure it wouldn't come to that - as long as you do what is necessary for B-49's well-being,' Cliff had said.

The Girls were onto them the moment Blackwater had closed the door. Sprinting at the top speed of a regular human being was like walking as slow as a grandma to them. They giggled as they stood over the duffel bags like kids on Christmas day.

"Wow, Dad, what are those things?" the three asked simultaneously, excitedly.

"Are they for us?" Bubbles asked. "Are they more soft toys?"

"Are they more cars? Bigger ones? Or- or- what about rocket ships?" Buttercup asked, not knowing that she'd be getting some life-sized luxury cars the next day.

"These are… presents, just for you!" Selicia said. "I just thought I'd get them for you."

"Wow, thanks, Mommy!" the three said in unity once more.

"But… What are they?" Blossom asked again.

"Well… How about the three of you finish your breakfast, and we'll find out in your room?" the professor suggested. The Girls immediately darted back to the dining table. "Not too fast, Girls! You don't want to choke on your waffles!"

The professor wasn't even sure if the Girls were capable of choking. The superior lung capacity that enabled them to run as fast as they could might just mean that they'd blow out whatever blockages there were in their windpipe. What he was sure, though, was that he didn't like how fast things were going. Within three weeks, the Girls could be out there.

"C'mon, Thomas, let's move these bags up," Selicia nudged at him as she picked up two of the duffel bags, her biceps bulging a little as she did. She knew that her 'husband' was very much upset by these plans, which was why he chose to separate himself from the Girls. "Hold it together, alright?"

The professor picked one of the duffel bags up, and realized that they were incredibly heavy despite being made for 5-year-olds. Knowing Blackwater, he'd probably ordered them packed with kevlar beyond even what normal soldiers were meant to carry. The armor seemed even heavier than the Girls themselves. Even Selicia was having trouble with the duffel bags, and she'd been pumping iron thrice weekly. By the time they were at the Girls' room, they were sweating like they'd ran across Townsville.

"The Girls are going to work at three weeks old. I can't believe this," Professor Utonium lamented as he sat down on the Girls' bed. "My baby girls… They haven't even gone to school yet. I wish… Sometimes I wish they were just normal little Girls."

"Don't say that, Thomas. They're who they are and we've got to accept that," Selicia said.

"We', Selicia? There's no 'we'! I heard the way Blackwater talked about you. What are the two of you planning!?" The professor accused.

"Thomas! I- just because Blackwater and I worked in the same department doesn't mean anything." Selicia tried to reassure him, but Utonium didn't wait to say what he had in mind next.

"Don't play dumb with me, and don't treat me like an idiot. There's got to be something. With twice the number of departments, why security? Why not—Why not get Bellum to play house with me, or
Alice, or one of my lab techs?" the professor asserted.

"Thomas darling, the Girls are going to hear-"

"Don't call me that! I want answers!"

"You're having a bad morning, I get that-"

"And if you want me to feel better, I want answers!"

"Look, okay, we exchanged a few words before I came here, that's all," Selicia admitted. "But it's not some big JFK assassination conspiracy or anything. Blackwater just wants someone to make sure he didn't need to put his squads on nanny duty. He also needs a parent with the girls who knows about law enforcement, to train and teach the Girls. It's not wrong, you know! They're going in with or without me, with or without training. I didn't lie about what I feel, Thomas. I do feel something for the Girls. You're not bad yourself too… Isn't that what's most important?"

"When I went for the interview, they had this file on me. They knew what I wanted. I guess those bastards had eyes everywhere," Selicia went on, when the professor thought there was nothing more. She'd started crying and wiping those tears away."I have this stupid dream of a perfect family. I guess even my best friend can't keep his mouth shut. Perfect husband, perfect kids who no one's going to mess with because I'm there, alongside… You. I guess a bad childhood can do that to you, huh?"

"I didn't know you really feel that way," the professor sort-of apologized, standing up, actually thinking of reciprocating. Selicia went up to him and hugged him, her sweat and tears absorbed by his lab coat. He was only just realizing that it was a common occurrence, going back in history to Eileen and Bloome.

The door slammed open after that, and both Professor and Miss Utonium jumped at the sudden noise.

"Oh, sorry, Daddy, I think I was too excited," Blossom apologized. The three of them smiled when they saw their parents in each other's arms.

"It's fine, Girls," the professor said, putting on his usual air of calmness, then childish excitement. "it's understandable, since it's time to unbox your presents, right, darling?"

"Right. You know what would be cool? I'm going to get my own gear. And the camera," Selicia said, similarly putting on her usual act. Only Buttercup appeared to suspect something. "Why don't Daddy help you unpack?"

Selicia left without waiting for a response. She simply assumed the positive as she went to her room. She needed to stall, get the tears and red out of her eyes. Despite it all, she couldn't blame Thomas for what he said – she knew from the inside that the USDO had been turning the screws on him and the Girls a bit much. She'd have to try her best to make it as painless as possible… For her perfect family.

Back in the Girls' room, the Professor had been helping the Girls with laying out the gear that came in the duffel bag. There was a list in each duffel bag, and the man had to go through it to make sure nothing was missing. He'd tried to look on the bright side. Perhaps the USDO really wasn't that bad. After all, they had provided everything for the Girls. A less magnanimous, more dictatorial regime couldn't have cared less. Right?

When Selicia was back, she knew exactly the angle for the Girls' miniature SWAT gear. But she was
honest to God. They were playing dress-up at present, but she’d told them exactly what the 'presents' were for. The Girls', however, couldn't help but to see things from an ignorant and innocent point-of-view. It was the same as putting their frilly party dress on. With a wardrobe to their name, they understood the concept of different clothes for different occasions, and the SWAT gear was just another addition to the collection.

"Its heavier than the other dresses…” Bubbles commented as she stared at herself in the mirror. She could barely see her face at all. It was the strangest set of headpieces she ever wore. In fact, she could hardly see any exposed skin. The SWAT gear was made to fit based on their medical information, so the result was a perfect fit. She had to undo her pig tails for comfort, but the helmet and goggles had covered her entire face but the lower part: the lower half of her nose, her mouth and the skin around it. Her chin was covered by the helmet strap.

She had a vest on with pistol magazine pouches on her chest. Her pistol was kept in a holster left of her stomach. She had elbow and knee pads on. Shoulder pads held extra kevlar protecting her flanks. Thigh pads did the same for her legs. Underneath it all, she had a miniaturized army uniform on, dyed simple blue. Her SWAT gear was mainly dark blue, resembling the preferred color of the police. Black leather boots enclosed her feet like predatory animals. She couldn't help but to feel a little claustrophobic.

Blossom and Buttercup were dressed the same way, except Blossom had a red uniform on, with her SWAT gear in maroon, while Buttercup had army green underneath and dark green on her SWAT gear.

"Its hard to see, Mommy," Blossom said. The helmet and goggles had limited her peripheral vision.

"You'll get used to it," Selicia said. She had changed into her own SWAT gear as well, though hers was mostly black with grey trimmings. The only odd one out was Professor Utonium, who could only watch as his Girls transformed themselves into a squad of killing machines.

"It's hot and itchy," Buttercup complained as she furiously scratched herself.

"And it's hard to move," Bubbles said. It'd only reminded the professor of how human they were. Apparently, their super-abilities weren't omnipresent. At least, that was what he observed. The Girls hadn't broken any plates or destroyed any doors by touching them. Therefore, they could control the amount of strength they put into an action as finely as any regular human being – with the difference being that they had a much, much higher upper limit.

"Thomas dear, do you mind setting up the camera?" Selicia requested as she was helping to adjust the Girls' gear.
Chapter 33: Winds of Change

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, things change rapidly as the Girls are propelled ever closer to their destiny.

Chapter 33: Winds of Change

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

11 DEC 1988. 1409.

"-And put your hands up like this," Selicia had been instructing the Girls down in the labs. She had put the Girls in a row in front of her, teaching them the most basics of the defensive arts. The Girls put their fists in front of them, but their posture was all wrong. Selicia went over to them to make the corrections. Professor Utonium watched from his desk as he was typing up a report on some earlier tests and medical screenings he had done on the Girls.

"This is funny," Bubbles said as Mommy adjusted her arms by pulling them up higher.

"Yeah? I think this is fun!" Buttercup added.

"If it helps us fight crime…" Blossom said reluctantly. She never had violence in mind. She had always thought that fighting crime was all about speaking to the offenders and getting them to stop whatever wrong they were doing.

"Okay, good. Now, Girls, just thrust your fist forward like this-" Selicia demonstrated by giving the air a straight punch with her right hand. For the sake of clarity, she'd put no oomph into it. "To punch."

The Girls copied her example with varying degrees of accuracy. Buttercup was most familiar with it, due to her secret culling of pet animals and the incident in the cinema ladies' room. She'd put so much force into her air-punch that there was a loud whipping sound. Even Selicia, who was yards away, could feel the wind from it as Buttercup had almost instantly changed from little girl to killing machine. Blossom was able to mimic her mother effectively, but she lacked the confidence to put any force into it. Bubbles' 'punch' went off-centre, and she'd dropped her defensive posture to do it, and she'd done all that with her eyes closed.

"Bubbles! You're not doing it right!" Selicia bellowed at the gentlest of them all. She marched over to her and reset her posture roughly, putting her fists up again. The sudden change in Selicia's disposition had shaken Bubbles such that she'd started tearing a little. "Good, now look to the front, aim at where you're looking at, and thrust you arm forward like how I did it!"

Selicia returned to the front to observe Bubbles again. And Bubbles… did the exact same thing with very little improvement. "Bubbles! You're not listening!"

This went on a few more times until Bubbles had burst into tears. "Bubbles, stop crying," Selicia
ordered unsympathetically. Bubbles couldn't turn off the tap, and it was turned on at full blast as she rubbed her eyes and tried in vain to wipe it all away. Selicia took Bubbles by the shoulders and shook her. "Stop crying!"

"Isn't this too much?" the professor said from behind her.

"We can't coddle them all the time," Selicia said coldly before returning her angry gaze to Bubbles, who backed away when she did. Her inconsolable screams and waterfalls had become pathetic whimpers and streams, but Mommy wasn't pleased. "If you're going to keep crying, go to that corner-" she pointed to a dirty alley between a huge supercomputer and a wall, "-and bawl your eyes out for all I care! Don't come back until you're done."

Instead of going to the corner, Bubbles ran up the stairs instead, her bawling worse than before. The professor glared at Selicia, who didn't seem too bothered by what she did.

"I'll get her," the professor mumbled before running up the stairs after Bubbles.

Selicia continued her training with Buttercup and Blossom uninterrupted. Buttercup seemed unaffected by what had happened with Bubbles, but Blossom was staring at the stairs with dismay now that they were one girl short. She did love her 'little' sister so dearly, who was always right by her side as a companion. It didn't stop her from executing a straight punch with precision though, but… "Blossom, why can't you be more like Buttercup? Put some strength into your punch!"

Buttercup chuckled with triumph. For once, she was finally above her sisters, getting more attention than they were.

Upstairs, Professor Utonium searched the living room for his most timid adopted daughter. "Bubbles? Are you in here?" But he knew she wouldn't have been. He would have heard her.

He went upstairs, keeping his ears peeled, but he already knew where she would be. The Girls' room was where she first woke up and it was the centre of her activities. It would make sense as a place she would fall back to.

Sure enough, when he was close, he could hear muffled weeping coming from the other side of the door. He opened it. He didn't see her immediately until he was fully inside. A sizeable lump in the blanket told him exactly where she was.

"Go away!" Bubbles shouted. The professor did the opposite. That she would prefer to be alone and not with her one and only beloved Daddy was a huge red flag.

"Are you sure you want Daddy to leave?" Professor Utonium said. Bubbles poked her head out of the blanket, sniffling. He took it as a no.

"I thought you were mom," she stuttered, still trying to keep a lid on her meltdown. Bubbles was never any good at that.

"Your mother meant well, you know," the professor tried to explain. He sat down next to Bubbles, and that had gotten halfway out of her blanket. Octi emerged from the cushion-y depths of the bed in her arms; it'd served as a surrogate tear-sponge in the absence of her parents.

"She hates me," Bubbles cried as she cuddled with the professor, who gave her a squeeze.

"No, Bubbles. She doesn't," the professor reassured her, and he couldn't believe that he was siding with Selicia – it wasn't that he wouldn't, or couldn't find the reason to. It was just that the way things had changed so quickly had jarred him a little. "She's just concerned about you. She's afraid for you.
She's scared of what will happen if you can't fight crime, or even protect yourself."

"But I don't want to fight crime. I want to stay here with you," Bubbles confessed, but at least she had stopped crying. The professor wiped her face with a handkerchief.

"I'll always be here, Bubbles. Just remember that, okay? You can always come back to me at the end of the day," Professor Utonium said.

"But what if I don't want to leave in the first place?" Bubbles contended.

"You have to. Your sisters are going, and you can't let them go alone. They need you," the professor reasoned, but he felt dirty for doing so. It was all the more painful as he couldn't let it show. Justifying it was his only comfort, a double-edged sword that he thought would surely cut him in the days to come. "It's what you're meant to do, sweetie. The City and millions of people will love you for it." He'd failed to mention the fact that thousands, likely, would be after her blood, too.

"I'm scared of going back down, Dad. What if Mommy shouts at me again?" Bubbles said, pulling Octi close to her chest.

"I have a feeling she won't. I'll be with you, alright?" the professor promised. He made to stand up, and held out a hand for Bubbles to take. She did.

Back downstairs, Selicia was still working with Blossom and Buttercup on the punches, this time showing them the double-punch with the left and right. Buttercup had actually surpassed all expectations by repeating the action so fast that she ended up with what could only be adequately called 'machinegun punches'. Selicia had to get her to slow down.

"Good work, Buttercup! That'd show the bad guys!" Selicia had praised the girl who was fast becoming her favorite. But Buttercup did not respond. Instead, Blossom and she was looking behind her. Selicia turned around to see that Bubbles had returned, her hand held by the professor.

"Bubbles!" Selicia remarked, neither disapprovingly nor with the same kind of warmth she'd put on topside. "It's nice for you to join us again. Go back to the same posture as before."

"Go easy on her, honey," the professor said as he let go of Bubbles' hand and gently nudged her to join her sisters. Bubbles stared at Mommy with apprehension. "She's really delicate. Besides, she'll learn nothing if she gets upset."

As if to prove that, Bubbles just stood there, her mother-turned-instructor's orders not followed. Then there was one other thing. Octi was held tightly in her other hand. Selicia gave a sigh; it was going to be a long day, and they didn't have lots of time, as the morning was spent on playing and the ABCs, and the late afternoon and evening was taken up by the visit to the Mayor's office.

With the professor vigilantly watching, Selicia did little to force Bubbles' conformation. She allowed the shy little girl to err in her posture and striking techniques, and she made little progress when her sisters, especially Buttercup, were naturals when it came to the defensive arts. Selicia noticed that Buttercup was just like her, sans the history of domestic violence (at least as far as she knew), and she had no reservations about doing harm, and reveled in the practice to do harm. Even the security officer was worried that the green-eyed girl would go too far. As for Blossom, she was incredibly bright, and made little mistakes in following her instructions or copying her posture. She would punch and kick as she was told, but her conscience, her concern for Buttercup and those around her, meant that she wouldn't dare put any force in her blows.

When it came time for a one-on-one physical training, Buttercup was jumping with joy while her
sisters weren't too thrilled.

Blossom was made to put on some pads on her hands while Buttercup punched those pads. Despite being asked to pull back on her punches, Buttercup had sent Blossom flying half the room away. The ravenette's definition of pulling back was a grave understatement. Thankfully, this did not injure Blossom, and wasn't repeated again, especially not when Blossom and Bubbles did the punching and kicking.

Things became far less tense when Selicia got the Girls to tackle some football tackle sleds. Even Bubbles was a powerhouse when it came to this; despite being loaded down with steel weights, the Girls were able to move the tackle sleds across the room with such ease as if they were cat-sized dolls. They had hardly broken out any sweat throughout training.


After a bath, the Girls had to go to their room to put their armor on. The weight was never a problem, but the complexity of the outfit was. Selicia had to familiarize them with it, and she suspected that she would have to be around for a few more rounds of this before they could do it themselves. Little girls their age, after all, weren't expected to dress up for war.

Blossom tried to make her combat outfit look nicer by taping her signature bow to her helmet, and Selicia thought it looked okay, so she allowed the red-head to keep it. Buttercup couldn't care less, being absorbed by thoughts of violence, while Bubbles was still upset over a mother who had turned out to be fearsome that she needed extra help with her armor.

When they were done, Blossom and Buttercup jogged out of the room, trying to get used to the awkwardness of weighing more than twice their usual body weight, while Bubbles was dragging her feet out.

"Wait!" Selicia said to the blonde. Bubbles turned around obediently, playing with her hands. Even with her SWAT gear on, which was supposed to make her seem a bit more intimidating, Bubbles still seemed cute.

"Yes, Mommy?" Bubbles mumbled, afraid that speaking in a higher volume might set her mother off somehow.

"I'm sorry I shouted at you," Selicia said. Bubbles continued to stare at the floor, pointing her feet at each other as if they were some great puzzle. "I was just terrified for you, that's all."

"Daddy told me," Bubbles acknowledged.

"Am I still your Mommy?" Selicia asked, regret in her voice. Bubbles came up to her, and hugged her. It was harder to do so, considering the bulk of her battle dress. Selicia hugged her back, and as her face was out of view, kept an emotionally lethargic look. Her relationship with Bubbles seemed so uncertain now - when Thomas insisted that she let Bubbles off lightly, the quality of her training had taken a nosedive. From here onwards, it seemed as if there was only two options: either preserve her mother-daughter relationship and let Bubbles' training suffer, or train Bubbles harder and strain her mother-daughter relationship. She didn't know what was best.

When it came time for a visit to the Mayor in City Hall, the Girls were already ready with their SWAT gear on, as a result of their Mother's preparedness. They even had time to watch a pair of puppets tell jokes on television. Selicia, as a sign of solidarity, had put her own SWAT gear on, while the professor had donned his bullet resistant vest on her insistence.
When a convoy of three white Lamborghini sports cars, looking bulkier than usual, had slowed to a stop up front, the family left The House hand-in-hand, with Buttercup and Blossom between Selicia and Professor Utonium and Bubbles taking the professor's other hand. The middle speed-transport flung open its doors like wings, and from the driver's seat emerged Agent Blake, and he was wearing the same SWAT gear as Selicia, but without the helmet and eyewear.

"Whoa, cool!" Buttercup said as she admired her new carriage.

"Mister Blake!" Blossom and Bubbles resounded when they saw him. They broke the Utonium human chain and charged up to him, hugging him by the legs. Buttercup joined them after that, with a smile on her face, a facial expression that was slowly becoming rare on her.

"I hope you weren't in trouble because of us," Blossom said, a clear, apologetic tone in her voice. Agent Blake could hardly make out her facial expression because of her helmet and goggles, but when he did, he smiled and stroked her hair, or at least the part of her enclosing helmet that corresponded to her hair.

"No, no, whatever trouble I got into was my own responsibility," Agent Blake said. "They, erm, just asked me a few questions."

"Will you come play with us forever and ever and ever?" Bubbles asked, almost creepily, as she was taken over by hopefulness. She was hoping for more love and comfort, especially after what had happened with Mommy.

"You'll visit us, right?" Blossom hoped, more level-headed.

"Well, I'm not sure about that… I'd love to, but..." Agent Blake meandered a little, and the Girls' expression became increasingly dejected when he went on. "I've got something else. I'm supposed to drive you around in this new car from now on, and accompany you whenever you head out." He gestured at the car.

"That's even better!" Buttercup exclaimed. "There's lots of cool stuff I learned from Mommy I want to show you!"

"Mommy?" Agent Blake wondered aloud. "Since when did you have a mother?"

"That's me, haha," Selicia said as she came forward, removing her combat goggles.

"Sergeant Selicia Goodwin," Agent Blake said. "It's been a long time."

"Yes, it has been," Selicia agreed. "Seems like forever that life-and-death was a problem."

"I'm glad it's all behind us now, with these Girls ahead of us," Agent Blake said. "Anyway, we've got to hustle up. The Director and Mayor are expecting us."

The winds picked up just as the Girls got into their Lamborghini transport, threatening to change the scene drastically. "A storm must be coming," Agent Blake said as he got into the driver's seat. "Better buckle up and hope the ride doesn't take long."
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium discovers much about his Girls' enhanced abilities.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 W3 Series Tests

DOC: 11 DEC 1988

The following are tests and examinations done by Agent Utonium on B-47, B-48 and B-49 and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin.

Desc: The purpose of today's battery of tests is to:

1) Examine the Girls medically using conventional techniques, then advanced medical imaging tools brought in with the help of Wiggums and his logistics team. The entire spectrum of tests are to be performed due to the unprecedented nature of the Girls' 'condition'.

2) Determine the upper limit of the Girls' senses. This will include the testing of all five senses, after Blossom brought up to me that there is something 'wrong' with her eyes. When asked for clarification, she said that things became 'bigger' when she concentrated hard on seeing something. She even said that she could see things that are blocked by others.

3) Determine the reaction speed of the Girls. This is a natural step from their speed tests and my observations of their ability to complete complex tasks with their hands. They would sometimes rapidly construct buildings with their blocks at speeds beyond that of normal children. Agent Blake reported that they were able to manufacture snowballs 'like factories'. Whenever they run at speeds beyond human limits, they did not appear to struggle to coordinate their feet and body, nor become anymore clumsier than they are walking.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 W3 Standard Medical Examinations

Tests Performed with Normal Results

Vitals

Heart Rate: Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are all tested normal.

Respiration: Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are all tested normal.

Blood Pressure: Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are all tested normal.

Physical Examination

Height and Weight: The Girls did not appear to have grown in the past three weeks. Measurements
remained the same. However, this is inconclusive due to the short time elapsed since their creation.

Head: No visible swelling in all Girls. The Girls reported no pain or pressure in their heads.


Chest: No abnormalities and unusual swellings. No sign of pneumothorax, whether micro or macro. Their lung capacity has been discovered to be incredibly high. Without training, the Girls are able to hold their breath for 5 minutes and 13 seconds without difficulty. I will devise a real test of their lung capacity for the near future.

Abdomen: No abnormalities and unusual swellings on any of them.

Limbs: No abnormalities beyond the fact that they can lift five hundred pounds with one hand without injury or exhaustion.

Nervous Function: All of them tested normal. I administered a quick reaction test, and I found their reaction time to be exceedingly fast. Their response to visual cues clock in at about 0.12 seconds, 0.10 seconds for audio cues and 0.09 for touch cues. This is without prior training. Full details available on attached report.

Skin, Hair, Nails: No discoloration indicating malnutrition, poor or excess blood circulation, or disease.

Genitalia and Rectum: Normal and fully formed for 5-year-olds. No obstructions and unusual growths.

Tests Performed with New Results

Medical Imaging

MRI: At first glance, the Girls' internals appear to be normal, with no additional organs, glands and bones. This is actually unexpected, considering their enhanced performance in almost every respect. The only extraordinary thing is that their bones appear to be denser than normal. However, a full analysis will take time.

Neurological CT Scan: Brain and glands appear normal for Blossom and Bubbles. However, Buttercup's result is concerning in that the structure and activity of her right orbitofrontal cortex, right anterior cingulate cortex and left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex appears to be abnormal and reduced. I will need time to look through the images after they have been developed. I might need to consult the specialists under Doctor Simmons on what all of this means as I am not as well versed in neurology as I am in other areas. In the meantime, I might need to devise a set of questions with Buttercup to determine how her unusual brain structure and activity has affected her.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 Sensory Tests

Sight

Eye Chart

Desc: This test is done with a modified eye chart. Standard eye charts would have 10 rows of increasingly smaller alphabets. I have increased this to 20, with the last few rows so small that it is
almost impossible even for a human being with 20/20 vision to see even at a 1 foot distance. Due to the Girls' unfamiliarity with the English Alphabets (with the exception of Blossom), I have opted to use simple symbols instead, which the Girls will have to draw on an A4-sized paper.

Subjects Involved:

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin (She is ideal as a control due to her good eyesight as a young security officer)
B-47 (Blossom)
B-48 (Buttercup)
B-49 (Bubbles)

Equipment Used:
1x Modified Eye Chart
4x Study Chair w/ Attached Tabletop
8x Pencils
8x Erasers
4x Lecture Pads
4x Eye Test Forms

Location Used:
The House Laboratory Test Area

Operating Procedure:
- Selicia and the Girls are to be seated 20 feet away from the eye chart.
- They are to be tested simultaneously, with the slowest test subject setting the pace.
- Subjects are to be instructed to raise their hand once they are done.
- The entire group will progress to the next row of smaller symbols once everyone is done.
- Speed as well as accuracy are to be recorded.

Test results
Row 1 (20/200)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes.
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes.
Notes: This is to be expected. No fundamental difference in speed of completion between the four.

Row 2 (20/100)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes.
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes.
Notes: No difference in speed.

Row 3 (20/70)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes.
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes.
Notes: No difference in speed.

Row 4 (20/50)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes.
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes.
Notes: No difference in speed.

Row 5 (20/40)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes.
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with no mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes.
Notes: No difference in speed.

Row 6 (20/30)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with no mistakes. 4th fastest
B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes. 2nd fastest.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes. 3rd fastest

Notes: Blossom appears to show no sign of slowing down. When questioned about the difficulty of the test, she says that it hasn't increased at all. Unsurprisingly, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin has started to lag behind as we approach 20/20.

Row 7 (20/25)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with two mistakes. 4th fastest


B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes. 2nd fastest. Negligible decrease in speed.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes. 3rd fastest. Negligible decrease in speed.

Notes: Blossom continues to blaze through the test. Despite their slower speed, Bubbles and Buttercup are still proven to have excellent eyesight.

Row 8 (20/20)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Passed with four mistakes. 4th fastest


B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes. 2nd fastest. Slight decrease in speed.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with no mistakes. 3rd fastest. Slight decrease in speed. Shows strain.

Notes: No change in Blossom's condition. Bubbles appear to be somewhat distressed by the test. Could this be a manifestation of her genetic disposition towards nearsightedness? Her last placement (not counting the control) and the strain on her eyes seem to support this. Selicia expresses that her eyesight has might have worsened since her last test, as she used to make only 1-2 errors in the 20/20 row.

Row 9 (20/15)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Failed with 7 mistakes. 4th fastest


B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with no mistakes. 2nd fastest. Minor decrease in speed

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with one mistake. 3rd fastest. Minor decrease in speed. Shows strain.

Notes: At this point, I was beginning to believe that I have recreated Blossom's 'wrongness' with her eye. When I asked her about any change in her vision, she says that she seemed to be able to make the symbols bigger. I will have to examine her eye structure more closely than in the standard medical examination. Despite having made one mistake, Bubbles' vision has been conclusively established to be far superior to her genetic source's, though I still think her genes have a bearing on her performance.

Row 10 (20/10)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Completely wrong. She opts out of further testing.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with two mistakes. 2nd fastest. Moderate decrease in speed. Seems angry.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed with four mistakes. 3rd fastest. Moderate decrease in speed. Shows distress.

Notes: Blossom is still doing well as if the 20/10 row is the 20/200 row. Buttercup snaps her pencil in two with her right hand. Her anger might be a sign of strain as much as Bubbles’ despair and stress. Bubbles must be hitting close to her limit.

Row 11 (20/5)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A


B-48 (Buttercup): Passed with five mistakes. 2nd fastest. Moderate decrease in speed. She is frustrated.

B-49 (Bubbles): Failed with seven mistakes. 3rd fastest. Significant decrease in speed. Shows distress.

Notes: Blossom appears to be slowing down. Buttercup and Bubbles refuses to back down despite the difficulty.

Row 12 (20/3)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A


B-48 (Buttercup): Failed with seven mistakes. 2nd fastest. Significant decrease in speed.

B-49 (Bubbles): Completely wrong. 3rd fastest. Significant decrease in speed.

Notes: Bubbles leaves the test from now onwards.

Row 13 (20/2)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A


B-48 (Buttercup): Completely wrong. 2nd fastest. Significant decrease in speed.

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Buttercup leaves the test. Blossom is encountering a degree of difficulty. However, she does not seem to show it.

Row 14 (20/1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): Passed with one mistake. Minor decrease in speed.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A
Notes: If nothing else, this test and the last proves Blossom's observation of her own sight.
Row 15 (20/0.7)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A
B-47 (Blossom): Passed with three mistakes. Moderate decrease in speed. Shows strain.
B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A
Notes: I believe we are hitting the limit of Blossom's 'vision zoom' ability.
Row 16 (20/0.5)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A
B-47 (Blossom): Failed with five mistakes. Significant decrease in speed. Shows strain.
B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A
Notes: Theoretical limit of her vision.
Row 17 (20/0.4)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A
B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A
Notes: Blossom bows out after a good showing.
Row 18 (20/0.3)
N/A
Row 19 (20/0.2)
N/A
Row 20 (20/0.1)
N/A

Conclusion: I had a post-examination talk with the Girls, the intention being to establish how their experience was like. Buttercup and Bubbles reported that they were unsure if there was any zooming. 'Maybe', they had said in unison. Blossom, on the other hand, could confirm the zoom-in effect. She could even provide clear descriptions. By the time she had zoomed in on the chart to her furthest extent, it was like standing next to the eye chart. Assuming that her eyesight was beyond
20/20 in quality like her sisters, I believe her clear vision did the rest. It also took conscious effort, as Blossom also reported that she had to 'think harder to make it bigger'.

Further Investigation: This will be followed up immediately by an examination using the Retinal Camera. I will have to regularly give the Girls the eye test to track the development of their eyesight, and in Bubbles' case, if there will eventually be any regression to her eyesight.

Retinal Camera Optometry Eye Examination

Desc: Owing to the mysterious nature of Blossom's ability to 'zoom in' her eyes like binoculars, I have decided to examine their eyes more closely with a Retinal Camera, which will allow me to investigate the structure of their eyes closely in a way that even the MRI machine had failed to provide.

Conclusion: Viewing through the lens of the machine myself, the only exceptional change in the Girls' ocular anatomy is a higher density of photo-receptors in the Girls' retina, which would no doubt lend a higher visual resolution to their vision. This alone, however, wouldn't even begin to explain the 'zoom-in' effect, but it does begin to explain why the Girls have such good vision. I will need to examine them more to understand their vision better.

In examining Blossom's eyes, I noticed some strange phenomenon. When I gave her a distant object to look at, the luminescence of her eye increased, not by much but it was a perceptible increase. I then noticed a kind of displacement vortex in front of her pupils, followed by some kind of 'hyper-constriction' of the pupils, which visibly decreased the 'size' of the pupils.

The displacement vortex had affected the retinal camera's own zoom functions, reversing it. Based on these observations, I believe all of these phenomenon are related to Blossom's ability to 'zoom in' on things with her eyes in like a camera.

The displacement vortex might have acted as an assembly of lenses of some sort, a sort of extension to her eyes. This is processed by her hyper-constricted eyes. It is reasonable to assume that all of this has something to do with Chemical X, due to the reaction of her pink, glowing irises during the examination, which itself is a product of Chemical X.

It is unknown if this ability of Blossom is unique to her, or if Bubbles and Buttercup will eventually develop these abilities. I will have to let time and their natural development to do their work. It wouldn't hurt to gently encourage them, too.

Further Investigation: I will have to bring in more tools to understand Blossom's 'zoom-in' function. I'm thinking I can replace the retinal camera on the Optometry machine with something more sensitive and with a broad spectrum of functions, such as infrared, UV imaging, to be able to analyse the vortex better.

X-Ray Vision Blinder Test

Desc: I take my Girls seriously, more so when I am able to confirm Blossom's claim of super-sensory abilities. As such, I have set up a quick experiment to test her claim that she is able to see through objects. As she believed that she is able to see through Blackwater and his security officers, I will have to set up multiple levels of opacity and blockage.

I will likely involve the other Girls as well to leave no stones unturned. I have to consider the possibility of universality of abilities between the Girls, due to the similarity of the Girls' results in previous tests.
Subjects Involved:

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin (As control. Unless she's been hiding the fact that she's been Chemical-X-Enhanced, she won't make it far into the experiment)

B-47 (Blossom)
B-48 (Buttercup)
B-49 (Bubbles)

Location Used:
The House Laboratory Test Area

Equipment Used:
- 21x Drawing Blocks with 5 Symbols Each
- 4x Translucent Barrier
- 4x Paper Barrier
- 4x Plastic Barrier
- 4x Steel Panel
- Myself and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin
- 3x 500 lbs Steel Weight

Operating Procedure:
- As before, Selicia and the Girls will take the test together.
- Pace will be set by the slowest performer.
- Drawing block to be mounted behind blocking objects, to be replaced each time a part of the test is concluded.
- Each test will involve a specific type of sight blocker. Each test will involve multiple parts, with each successive part presenting an increase in difficulty.
- First test to involve translucent barriers, with an additional blinder added after each presentation of the drawing block.
- Second test to be conducted with paper barriers.
- Third test to be conducted with plastic barriers.
- Fourth test to be conducted with Steel panels.
- Fifth test to be conducted with myself and Selicia.
- Sixth test to be conducted with steel weights.

Test Results:
Control (No Blinders)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: No mistakes.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): No mistakes.

B-49 (Bubbles): No mistakes.

Notes: As expected, no one gets anything wrong.

Translucent Barrier (Level 1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: No mistakes.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): No mistakes.

B-49 (Bubbles): No mistakes.

Notes: The translucency isn't strong enough to completely obscure the symbols. As expected, no one gets anything wrong.

Translucent Barrier (Level 2)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: 3/5 correct.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): No mistakes.

B-49 (Bubbles): No mistakes.

Notes: The translucency here is enough to blur the images. Selicia, representing normal stock humanity, is able to extrapolate most of the symbols. The Girls were able to copy the symbols without a problem, even Buttercup and Bubbles. When asked if she could see through the translucent barriers, Blossom said that she didn't even need to. It is possible that the Girls' ocular resolution is good enough to make out the shapes.

Translucent Barrier (Level 3)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: 1/5 correct.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): No mistakes.

B-49 (Bubbles): 4/5 correct.

Notes: By this point, the shapes are almost completely blurred beyond recognition. Bubbles appear to have difficulty from here onwards, but not Blossom and Buttercup. Bubbles appear to be upset by this, mentioning that she is always placed last in everything. I'll have to remind her later of the times when she wasn't.

Translucent Barrier (Level 4)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: 0/5 correct.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): No mistakes. Delayed reaction.

B-49 (Bubbles): 2/5 correct.

Notes: The images are all but blurred out. Bubbles weren't able to make out most of the shapes. Blossom, when asked about her vision, said that she was able to see through the translucent barriers, and it wasn't as hard as 'zooming in'. While she was concentrating on the drawing block behind the barriers, I noticed that the glow in her eyes had grown in luminosity. Buttercup did not appear to have a problem either. She said the same thing as Blossom when asked, but her eyes lacked the same glow. Different physiological reactions from different Girls, perhaps?

Plastic Barrier (Level 1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: 0/5 correct.

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): 3/5 correct. Slowest to complete the test.

B-49 (Bubbles): 0/5 correct. Fastest to complete the test.

Notes: As expected, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin is not enhanced by Chemical X. Her participation in this experiment ends here. The Girls are a mystery however. Blossom had no difficulty seeing through the plastic barrier, while Bubbles could not, and became confused as to what she was supposed to do. Buttercup appears to have difficulty. Her eyes continued to show no sign of 'the glow'.

Plastic Barrier (Level 2)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): 4/5 correct. Slowest to complete the test.

B-49 (Bubbles): 0/5 correct. Fastest to complete the test.

Notes: Bubbles' participation in this experiment ends here.

Plastic Barrier (Level 3)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): 2/5 correct. Slowest to complete the test.

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Buttercup's performance appears to be dropping. Blossom's eyes glowed each time she has to see through something. Buttercup's eyes did not glow brighter, still.
Plastic Barrier (Level 4)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): 4/5 correct. Slowest to complete the test.

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Buttercup's performance is shown to be inconsistent. Perhaps it is due to a lack of 'skill' in her use of the 'x-ray vision'? When asked if she has difficulty exerting herself, she said, however, that it was 'too easy'. She then asked if I'm proud of her. I said yes. Her eyes continued to lack the same kind of glow as Blossom's.

Steel Panel (Level 1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): 5/5 correct. Slowest to complete the test.

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: I think I know what's going on. Out of the corner of my eyes, I saw Buttercup peeking at Blossom's paper, when she thought that I wasn't looking.

Steel Panel (Level 2)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): Voided

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: I caught Buttercup cheating. She admitted to have been cheating in the entire test, but swore that she hadn't cheated in the eye test. This explains the lack of the same physiological reactions as Blossom. I reprimanded her for the misdeed. She seemed incredibly upset. Must be the way I said it, or perhaps she hadn't learned her lesson. I will have to speak to her later. Her participation in this experiment ends here.

Steel Panel (Level 3)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Blossom reports that it is getting harder each time to penetrate the steel panels each time a new one is added. The glow in her eyes is becoming more and more pronounced each time the difficulty
level increases.

Steel Panel (Level 4)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: It is astounding that Blossom hasn't made any mistakes yet.

Myself (Level 1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Blossom reports that it is easier to see through me. Material might play a part in the permeability of a barrier.

Myself and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin (Level 2)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Blossom was hesitant to report her experience. When prompted multiple times, she timidly states that she saw Selicia naked. Apparently, her sight had gone completely through me, but, either by mistake or lack of skill or just the way her eyes work, did not completely penetrated Selicia. She then asked why 'Mommy looks different from her'. Selicia excused herself from the lab. When I asked her about her experience further, she said that she had always needed to 'search through' the multiple layers of barriers to get to the drawing block.

500 lbs Steel Weight (Level 1)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A

B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.

B-48 (Buttercup): N/A

B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: the 500 lbs Steel Weight is arranged in such a way by Buttercup such that it represents about 2 feet of steel material for Blossom to search through. Blossom reports that it takes a great deal more effort to see through it.
500 lbs Steel Weight (Level 2)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A
B-47 (Blossom): No mistakes.
B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Blossom reports great difficulty in seeing through the steel weights, but manages to get all the symbols right. The glow in her eyes was very pronounced at this point. She was visibly sweating.

500 lbs Steel Weight (Level 3)
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N/A
B-47 (Blossom): 4/5 correct
B-48 (Buttercup): N/A
B-49 (Bubbles): N/A

Notes: Blossom reports pain in her eyes, and immense difficulty in seeing through 3 steel weights. The experiment concludes.

Conclusion: From this experiment, it is established that Blossom is the only one of the Girls to be able to see through objects, in addition to 'zooming in' her eyes to great magnifications. Whether Buttercup and Bubbles will develop these abilities or not is an open question. Furthermore, I have been able to establish a few rules for Blossom's 'x-ray vision':

- The amount of material (thickness) in the way affects the amount of effort requires. The more the material, the harder it gets.

- The type of material affects the amount of effort required. This could be dependent on certain properties expected and unexpected. For the former, translucency is one of those. For the latter, density is a possibility. I am also considering radiation shielding as a possible barrier to her 'x-ray vision', but that is highly speculative, as I have not yet established the mechanism of Blossom's 'x-ray vision'.

- The glow in her irises is indicative of the amount of effort required.

Further Investigation: I will need a special camera with additional functions to understand how her eye works. In understanding the exact mechanism of her 'x-ray vision', I believe I will be able to understand the limitations of it better.

Hearing

Hearing Acuity Test

Desc: The Hearing Acuity Test is designed to determine the sensitivity of the Girls' hearing. Due to the fact that I have no soundproof room in The House, I will have to improvise by using the car, which functions surprisingly well as a soundproof room.

Subjects Involved:
Sergeant Selicia Goodwin (As control)

B-47 (Blossom)

B-48 (Buttercup)

B-49 (Bubbles)

Location Used:
The House. Garage. Family Car

Equipment Used:
- 1x Family Car
- 1x Headphone
- 1x Cassette Player
- 1x Cassette with Standard Hearing Test Audio Cues
- 4x Hearing Test Forms

Operating Procedure:

- Selicia and the Girls are to take turns going into the car with the headphone on, connected to a cassette player by wire that will be controlled from the outside.
- Audio cues will be played, and the test subject is to raise her hand and give a thumbs up if she hears it.
- The test subject will raise her hand and give a thumbs down if she could not hear it.
- Test results are to be recorded accordingly.

Test Result:

Due to the unremarkable nature of the test results, I will abridge it here and attach the forms to the report for the sake of completion and administration.

Bubbles, despite my concerns due to her genetic disposition towards hearing loss, has not suffered the effects of it and has good, even excellent hearing.

When it comes to super-human hearing, however, there is nothing exceptional. The Girls' hearing aren’t anything beyond what a human being is capable of. The only upside is that they have excellent hearing, putting them among the best of us in that respect.

Buttercup, however, concerns me greatly. When tested even on the first audio cues, she seem to have a delayed reaction in reporting her perception of the audio cues. This happened intermittently throughout the test. There could be a problem with her hearing. When I asked her about it, however, she claimed to be daydreaming, forcing me to repeat the test with her.

It was only then that her test results, at least towards the front and middle of the test, had normalized. Towards the back of the test however, when the lower-decibel hard-to-hear sounds were played, she started having delayed reactions again, before giving the thumbs-down sign. This time, when I asked
her if there were problems with the cassette player or something else, she simply claimed that she could not hear anything.

She had cheated and lied to me before, so now I am simply unsure of what to make of this. However, since there is no conceivable reason that she would cheat or lie to appear incompetent when it comes to hearing, I will just put it down to her being competitive as always, and unwilling to appear less able than her sisters.

[ Other tests involving the sense of touch, taste and smell has been excluded from this extract due to the lack of compelling evidence for enhancements. Full details can be found in the reports concerning those tests.]
Chapter 34: Mojo

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Jojo finds new purpose.

Chapter 34: Mojo

The City of Townsville. The Slums. A Foundation Safehouse.


"How long is he going to lie down there?" a man in T-shirt, jeans and stab vest questioned a woman in trench coat and trilby. "He's been there since yesterday morning. Seriously, how does it even hold it in? Haven't seen him tinkle in the can."

"That's because he's stopped drinking, genius," Naga, the woman in a trench coat, said. She turned to regard Jojo, who's been lying on his side, facing the wall of his room for the past 40 hours. Ever since he heard what Professor Utonium thought of him.

"It's useless to us this way," the man in the stab vest, who was the captain of his Foundation cell, remarked casually. "If he doesn't die of thirst, I'll kill it myself." He slapped the AK-47 hanging on his shoulder. He meant business. The Foundation could tolerate no weakness, not with what they faced.

"He'll come around," Naga promised. "I'll make sure he does."

The Naga knocked on the door frame of Jojo's missing door, wordlessly asking for permission to enter his room. Jojo had wordlessly told her that he didn't care if she did. Didn't so much as shift from his position. Using her lower right arm, Naga flipped a lighter and lit a cigarette she'd been holding with her upper left hand. She took a puff of the cancer stick and sat down on a rickety chair beside Jojo.

"You know, I used to be like you, when I first escaped," Naga tried to make conversation, though she had a trajectory in mind.

"We are nothing alike," Jojo mumbled, his voice cracked, nearly a whisper. Naga actually missed his usual manner of speech, which involved endless repetitions of synonyms and rephrasing.

"I meant in terms of purpose, Jojo," Naga corrected. "I used to wander the streets aimlessly, when I was forcibly ejected into the world, made a freak by the oh-so-noble Organization." She took another puff of her cigarette. It was easier now to talk about the past, though not by much. Those were tough times, when she was forced to do whatever it took to get by.

"You're right. I had a purpose, and now I have none," the mutated Chimpanzee lamented. "How did it go wrong? Would my father have accepted me more if I hadn't killed those three security officers near The House, his abode?"
The three security officers. Jojo had planned his infiltration of The House carefully. Everything had gone into motion unhindered, until a random element had upset it. Jojo and Naga was able to slip past them undetected after deactivating the trip wires and alarms they had set up on the streets, until one of them had turned his head to spit a glob of phlegm and saw them. The Chimpanzee wasn't even thinking when he leaped at one of the security officers. Naga dispatched the other two with a sword planted in the back and breaking the neck of the other. Hatred for the Organization must have blinded him with rage, and he'd strangled his target to death. When one of Naga's victim was still writhing with pain, unable to even squeal miserably because of her sword puncturing a lung, he ended it for the (barely) surviving officer.

"You heard the professor. You killed his 'friends', so-called 'innocent bystanders'. Knowing that idealistic do-gooder, he wouldn't have accepted you even if you'd just killed the scumbags who're directly responsible for your execution orders," Naga said. She glanced at the night stand beside Jojo's mattress. There were three cups left there, filled with water, some more than others. The heated air in the safehouse had drunk the water more than Jojo did. "I think it's clear that you've been deceived, Jojo. The Utonium isn't anyone special. He's one of them. You may not know it, but he carried out experiments over the course of eight years, mutated and mutilated hundreds of others. He's a hypocrite, and that makes him the worst of them all. Whatever good he did, the sapience he gave you - those were just excuses he needed, ways for him to pat himself on the back so he could do more harm in this world."

Despite everything that had happened, Jojo didn't like the way Naga had described the professor. His nostrils flared, and his gritted his fangs. Rising from his cot for the first time in forty hours, he pressed his face closer to Naga, who merely smirked at him. "And I suppose you are any better, morally superior to the Organization? Is it true that you killed, murdered, destroyed his family? Is it true that the Foundation deserves hatred and vilification?"

"I wasn't in the Foundation when it happened, but yes, it did. The Foundation took his family away," Naga admitted. In truth, she thought it to be a low blow when the Foundation killed Utonium's family to get to him, a waste of resources that, in the end, achieved nothing. But at the very least, the Foundation had good reasons for its activities."Things are better now. The Foundation has good reasons for existing."

"And what are those supposedly good, excellent, all-so-altruistic reasons?" Jojo questioned, still blowing hot air out of his nostrils and mouth, still angry. It felt as if the entire world had betrayed them, the Foundation included, by withholding information from him - but the Foundation alone was his only silver lining.

"The Organization for one, now the self-styled United States Defence Organization. They represent everything that is evil in this great country," Naga said. "But they are not alone. The United States is on the brink, its governments and leaders and merchants, the people in the position to do something, are all corrupted. You've seen it for yourself, Jojo. Unchecked human and animal experimentation, rampant crime and the corruption that allowed it. People suffering - the real good people. The Foundation will set things right." She put a hand on Jojo's cheek, and another on his shoulder. "You need a purpose, and the Foundation can give it to you. With your kind of mojo, there's no reason why you should not be one of those who will set things right, and rule the world as you see fit. Your fellow Chimpanzees in the USDO's old HQ will thank you for it, if they know how."

Jojo stared at Naga with irritation for her chaffing remark directed at his fellow Chimpanzees. But then Jojo grinned, as a train of thought had just exited the station of his mind, bearing a long and complex set of ideas, plans. More accurately, it was more of a web of thoughts, calculations, deliberations.
"You're forgetting my 'father', Naga," Jojo said, mentioning the professor with a kind of venom never heard of before. "The one I loved so dearly, who abandoned me for those other 'children', who rejected me for things I had to do, am forced to do in my darkest hours! Vengeance will be mine, revenge! And in the course, on the path to gaining my succulent fruit of retribution, I will destroy everything Professor Utonium represents and holds dear! The world he helped build! The Organization! This 'Project Powerpuff'! His ill-begotten children! His- His…"

But then Jojo sank back down from reveling in his epiphany, his eyes closed and his head bowed as if in prayer. He had wanted to say 'his life' by the end, but could he really take the life of his father? It took him time, clouded by anger and grief as he was, before he had decided. "And then, perhaps, father would understand, accept me, for loosed from the shackles that is the evil USDO or Organization and the world, and forced to endure the same desperation and lack of choice I suffered, he would realize that I was right." He opened his eyes once more. "So, my dear Naga, bringer of my enlightenment, my epiphany, my moment of realization… How can the Foundation aid me in my new purpose?"

"The Foundation is much more humble than the USDO in terms of resources, but we have our own ways of supplying our members," Naga said. "We are, for the most part, scattered into cells, but for a Chimpanzee of your mojo, Jojo, we do have our own labs and workshops-"

"What did you say?" Jojo interrupted his new friend.

"We are not as well off as the USDO, but-" Naga tried to explain again, but Jojo gestured for her to stop.

"No, no! I meant that last part, your last few phrases before I interrupted you!" Jojo explained himself much more clearly.

"I said that, 'for a Chimpanzee of your mojo, Jojo, we do have our own labs-" Naga repeated herself exactly, but was cut off again by her new colleague. For the first time, a scowl scrawled itself across her face.

"Yeees, yeeeee! it's perfect!" the enhanced Chimpanzee exclaimed, another moment of clarity.

"Okay, what'a perfect, Jojo?" Naga asked, still frowning, frustrated at the eccentricity of the Chimpanzee. However, she'd masked most of it, hoping to remain in the chimp's good books. After all, it was all part of the agenda.

"For years, I have lived under a name created under a deceptive, deceitful, fraudulent regime! It is a name ill-fitting for a Chimpanzee like me!" Jojo whooped, "From now on, the hobo formerly known as Jojo is no more! From now on, I shall be known as Mojo Jojo!"

Naga's smile returned upon hearing that. Yes, the Chimpanzee was right. It was perfect; the now self-named Mojo Jojo had internalized what she wanted of him, took on the wishes of the Foundation after she had gently steered him in that direction.

The USDO will fall. They would make sure of it. In making themselves publicly known, they had also put themselves out in the open, vulnerable like hunting game to be gunned down. And their meat would fuel the growth of the Foundation, until the entire United States, then the world, fall under their enlightened rule.
Chapter 35: Mayor Wilford (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Mayor of Townsville, the eccentric figurehead of the city, meet the Girls.

Chapter 35: Mayor Wilford (Part 1)

The City of Townsville. Central District. City Hall.


"This is so cool!" Buttercup exclaimed time and again throughout the short ride, as she watched the scenery outside zooming by as if they were on a rocket.

The ride to City Hall did not take long, partly because Agent Blake had decided to 'drill' the Girls' speed transport convoy, to show them exactly what their rides and drivers were capable of. Agent Blake had even ordered the convoy to turn on their sirens and the red-and-blue lightbar on the roof of the sports cars, ensuring that there were fewer vehicles slowing them down. Buttercup would have been jumping excitedly on the backseat had she not been tied down by her seat belt - her siblings were quite taken by it as well, though they saw it more as an amusement park ride than an appreciation for a speed demon of a car. Professor Utonium, with his nervous tics, frantically looking forward and outside the windows and shifting on his seat, was the exact opposite of that, though he wasn't afraid for himself.

Thankfully for the professor, It didn't last very long. At the City Hall area, the three-car convoy joined a pack of its own; humvees with heavy machineguns manned and mounted on top were waiting for them, eternally vigilant for any possible signs of an all-out attack or assassination attempt. Police cruisers and SWAT vans surround the City Hall. Numerous police barriers were set up, and there was a cop or police SWAT officer every few yards. Teams of snipers line the roof of the City Hall, their watchful eyes forever scanning the surrounding pavements and buildings. The war zone they were in excited Buttercup further. The sight of all those guns and gruff men with the license to kill was her idea of a winter wonderland.

When the three Girls and their caretakers exited their Lamborghini, they were immediately surrounded by Powerpuff Task Force soldiers and USDO SWATs, some whom the Girls knew, like Agent Blake, most of whom were strangers. It had been peaceful inside their transport, and the moment they were out, they were surrounded by a cacophony of people speaking, cars grinding asphalt and sirens in the distance.

"Bravo-four-seven, four-eight and four-nine are secure, over," one of the PTF soldiers reported into the radio.

"Confirmed, not even a Meltdown-1, over," another of the PTF soldiers reported into his radio.

"Sir, snipers confirmed no Tangos so far," another of the PTF soldiers reported to Agent Blake.
"Riot cops are pushing back civilians and journalists."

"No fly zone maintained, sir," yet another said to Agent Blake.

They were led into the City Hall, where they passed through a massive portal consisting of two giant doors flanked by USDO security officers. Inside, they entered the lobby area, where a mix of TPD and USDO officers guarded every door there was.

Liaison Head Bellum and one of Mayor Wilford's aides were talking in the centre, where numerous tables and seats were arrayed in strict rectangular patterns. As Professor Utonium, Selicia and the Girls approached them, the mayoral aide approached them first.

"Mister and Missus Utonium, I presume?" the aide said. "I'm afraid the two of you will have to wait here." He spoke something into a mic hidden in his tuxedo. Immediately, eight men in black suits entered from double doors on the opposite side of the City Hall entrance, half of them looking like they were wrestlers, while the other half weren't too shabby either. "The Mayor's bodyguards will take it from here."

"Wait, we're responsible for the Girls' security. At least a couple of us should follow them up," Agent Blake said.

"No. You're in his town, buddy. His rules, or you don't stay here for long," the head of the Mayor's bodyguard replied, and firmly. He was a tall, square-jawed and tough looking man who looked like he was a secret service agent, what with his shades, earphone and black suit.

Professor Utonium got down beside the three Girls and they crowded around him. He looked them in the eyes. It felt like that moment when he's sending Bloome to kindergarten for the first time. He couldn't see their faces well, what with their helmets and goggles in the way, which cast shadows on their faces. The slight glow of their irises were a little more obvious then, a little reminder that they were special, meant for this.

"Girls, the three of you will have to go up there alone," the professor said to them, trying not to look worried. Extreme as the USDO was, they were largely incorruptible, and wouldn't deal with a figurehead with a black spot on his portfolio - which meant that this 'Mayor Wilford had to be trustworthy. At least, that was what's on paper. "You're about to meet a new friend. He'll be nice to you, so be real friendly to him, okay?"

"But I can't go on without you," Bubbles blurted, her wide eyes and tight grip on the professor conveying everything in her mind. "What if- what if- Dad, I'm scared!"

"Don't be, Bubbles, you're stronger than you know," Professor Utonium encouraged, then turned to Blossom, who was clearly marked by the bow she had attached to her helmet, if the color of her SWAT gear didn't give her away. "Blossom dear, take care of your sisters for me, okay?"

"Will do, Daddy," Blossom promised, a smile on her face, though deep inside, she, too, was nervous and afraid.

"Pfff! I don't need her to take care of me!" Buttercup declared. "I think I'll have to take care of them instead."

"Attagirl, Buttercup," Selicia praised the toughest among them. "That's my strong little girl." She and Buttercup smiled at each other as the woman stroked her helmet, since it was in the way of her hair.

"Hahaha, alright. Take care of each other now," the professor said. "Especially Bubbles."
Bubbles wasn't glad to hear it. Despite being only three weeks old, she knew what it meant when the professor said it. She was the weak one. The dimmest one. She was the baby of the three, unlike Blossom, who Daddy would often praise for being the smartest, and Buttercup, who Mommy would praise for being the toughest. Her, on the other hand, was nothing. Her eyes were staring at the blank tiles of the City Hall floor, herself just as vacant inside. But no one noticed because of her helmet and goggles.

When it was time, the professor gently pushed them in the direction of the mayoral bodyguard. Bubbles immediately latched onto Blossom with both arms on the red girl's right. Buttercup walked on her own. They were brought to the double doors leading deeper into the City Hall building, but at the door, the police officers there stopped them.

"You're going to have to hand over your weapons, lassies," one of the police officers said.

"What weapons?" Blossom asked.

"Erm- Those pistols in your holsters? On your vest?" the police officer spelt it out condescendingly. "Do you know what pistols are? Do I have to spell it out for you?"

"He meant this, Blossom!" Buttercup said in frustration at her 'smart' sister, unbuttoning her holster with difficulty and pulling out the compact pistol from it.

"Hey, watch it!" the police officer yelled. Buttercup had accidentally pointed the pistol at him. Buttercup stared at him in confusion.

"What?" she asked, entirely ignorant of gun safety rules.

"Don't point that thing at me, you dolt! Don't you know that guns are dangerous?" the police officer scolded.

"Oh, fine. Here you go, mister policeman," Buttercup handed her pistol to the police officer, still pointing the dangerous weapon at him. The police officer snatched it quickly, muttering something else under his breath, which Buttercup could hear with clarity. He'd called her a dolt again, though she didn't know what it meant. She could only infer that it wasn't something good. She'd have to ask the professor what it meant later.

Blossom and Bubbles did the same thing, but with wiser deftness, shifting their guns by holding them by the barrels instead.

"And that, missy, is how you do it. You should be more like your reddish girl friend, greeny," the police officer added after collecting their weapons. Buttercup glared at Blossom from the corner of her eyes, feeling coal burning behind them. She'd never liked the idea of being second best, or that she had to be like Blossom, ever since she'd let her sisters dictate her appearance and behavior. Mommy had set her free, let her be herself, and encouraged her to do so - but she was only one person, as much as she loved her.

The Girls walked through the door, but not without getting sniped by the police officers as they continued.

"Can't believe the Mayor's agreeing with this kiddy nonsense," the head police officer said.

"Yeah, I know right? Townsville's going to the nuthouse if it isn't there already," another unseen police officer said.

The Girls' were as far from deaf as girls could be. They'd heard it, turned around and stared at the
doors in dismay. The professor was right about people hating them for no reason, at least that was from their perspective. To the policemen, who were handpicked by the Mayor as the most dedicated, most loyal, it was like a slap in the face that Mayor Wilford had turned to what appeared to be a joke of a solution, from what they saw as the fraudster of federal agencies. Some were even afraid that his mind had finally succumbed to time and old age, and the Girls were the result of it.

"This way, kiddos. Don't keep the Mayor waiting," one of the bodyguards said; a black man with an iceberg of a face, as gorilla-like in stature as half his peers.

The mayoral bodyguards led the Girls to a lift that would take them up to the top floor. Oddly enough, there were three luggage, about the size of the Girls themselves, sitting beside the lift. One of the bodyguards, this time a man in his forties, judging from the crow's feet and wrinkles that were carved on his face, went up next to it.

"The mayor's an old man, kids," the forties guy said. "He wants the three of you to carry these up to him."

"Why can't you carry it up to him?" Buttercup asked. "There's eight of you, and you're all ten times as big as us!"

The forty-something looked at his fellow shades-wearing partner. The huge black man.

"He wants the three of you to carry them up for him," the black bodyguard insisted. "But… I guess he will understand if the three of you ain't got the strength for it-"

"What do you mean I 'ain't got the strength for it'?" Buttercup said, indignant because of the mayoral bodyguard's challenge. She immediately went over to one of the luggage and picked it up by the handles, holding it over her head. "Hah, too easy!"

The guards stared at her as if she had just grown a second head. Only, she didn't know that they were wide-eyed in surprise, or awe, or were at least fascinated by her display of strength. Blossom and Bubbles both did the same as Buttercup, which only added to everything they had discovered about the Girls.

The luggage had been filled with pieces of solid steel beams meant for constructing the skeleton of buildings. Even the bodyguards had trouble putting those luggage in place, even when two of them were assigned to each. The men did not understand why the mystery steel packages were there until the Girls took them up and swung them over their heads with ease. It had all been a test, a little insurance the Mayor had personally ordered to make sure the Girls were as strong as the USDO claimed.

"Buttercup, it wouldn't hurt you to help an old man, you know," Blossom chided her ravenette sister.

"Daddy said that old men are really tired and weak because they've been around forever…” Bubbles added.

Four of the guards followed the Girls into the lift and brought them to the top floor. They snuck peeks at the three Girls, wondering if they would ever get tired. "Don't drop the luggage, kids. Whatever's inside those luggage are fragile. Just keep holding them over your heads. Good."

The numbers on the elevator buttons took turns to shine as they climbed higher. Second floor. Third floor. Fourth floor. Then the fifth. The lift door opened, showing a corridor.

"This way, Supergirls," the black bodyguard continued to lead them. They went down the corridor, to its centre, then went through a mighty pair of oak doors, into a huge room built into the dome of
the City Hall. The brain of the city, built for the one man who would lead it: the Mayor, and for much of Townsville's notable history, it was occupied by one man. Mayor Wilford. Even in his prime, he was rather short, standing only at little more than 5 feet 5, and now he'd shrunken – but Townsville didn't need a strong body. It was his vision, his ideas, character and morality that shaped it… At least until a decade ago, when other men, younger men, began chipping away at the marble statue that was the city he built.

Mayor Wilford sat behind a great redwood desk, giving him far more surface area than he'd normally use, on a leather high-backed boss chair that outsized him, giving the Girls, who were far away, the illusion that he was about their size.

He stood up to greet them, doing so feebly.

"Why hello Girls, it's nice to finally meet the three of you," he said, his voice still strong, despite his age and size. Decades upon decades of speeches had done its work. "Oh you poor girls, do set those luggage down next to my desk. I'm sorry I had to ask the three of you to drag them up from the ground floor."

'So, those videos weren't doctored,' Mayor Wilford thought even as he smiled at the Girls.

"No problem, mister… um…" Blossom said as the Girls came up to his desk, stopping when she realized that she did not know his name.

"I'm Mayor Wilford. You can call me Mister Mayor if you're so inclined, but my name will do for the three of you," he said as the Girls set down his hundreds of pounds of steel.

"It's nice to meet you, Mayor Wilford," Bubbles said, smiling at him.

"Yeah…" Buttercup added, with a tone of boredom, her voice extra abrasive.

"And… What are your names?" the Mayor took his turn to ask.

"I'm Blossom," the red-haired girl in dark red SWAT gear said.

"I'm Bubbles," the blonde girl in dark blue SWAT gear introduced herself.

"And I'm Buttercup, toughest of the three!" the ravenette in dark green SWAT gear added explosively.

"Well met, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup" Mayor Wilford acknowledged, admiring the Girls, who were already dressed to combat crime. He wasn't ignorant, of course, of what the USDO was trying to do. He knew that they were trying to create an impression of combat readiness. He knew better, he who had heard a million lies and half-truths, some of which he himself had to manufacture to some ends. He wanted to know more about the Girls, what was underneath all that Kevlar. He stepped around his desk, a feat that took him time. Buttercup gave a sigh. Blossom glared at her green-eyed sister. "Let's not stand on ceremony, shall we. Come on, let's sit by the warm fireplace while we talk."

"Here, Mayor Wilford, let me help you," Blossom offered, taking the Mayor by an arm.

"I'll help you too," Bubbles said as she giggled, taking his other arm.

"Oh brother…" Buttercup remarked. In her mind, she saw no reason to help; the Mayor was doing fine on his own, and it wasn't like it would do anything for her – get her on the first line in front of Daddy over her siblings, say.
The Mayor gently touched down on a tall, red and well-cushioned single seater. He waved kindly at a sofa perpendicular to his chair, and the Girls climbed onto it. "Are the three of you comfortable?" he asked with a smile only partially obscured by his white moustache.

"Very much so, Mister Mayor."

Bubbles nodded with a toothy smile.

"Humph," Buttercup grunted.

"Good. You know, I would like to take a good look at the three little girls who're going to fight crime in my city," the Mayor said as he adjusted his monocle. Seeing that there was a smudge on the lens, he took it off and wiped it with a fine silk cloth.

"What do you mean? We're right here!" Buttercup said in frustration. The whole affair felt boring next to the rollercoaster ride she'd had with Agent Blake and his fast car.

"I meant your helmets and facial doohickeys, Girls. I can't see your face," the Mayor explained patiently, very much aware that Buttercup wouldn't be the most well-liked of the three, even with him. But then again, these were children in his eyes, and he knew that some needed time to improve their character more than others.

The Girls undid the buckles on their chin strap and pulled off their helmets, then their goggles. Bubbles combed her hair quickly with her fingers, hoping that she'd at least look half-decent. Blossom's hair fell naturally in place. Buttercup's didn't need much work.

"Now that's more like it. My, what sweet little angels you are!" the Mayor said, meaning it several ways at once. The deepest part of him thought them to be beautiful children who should belong in a high-middle class home and at parties, like in Christmas. The other part of him didn't expect much considering their origin, considering their purpose. The political animal in him could think of numerous ways to take advantage of the fact. Just like the fact that they were having a nice conversation right now, building what he hoped would be a highly beneficial relationship. "I could sure use some hot chocolate right about now. Do you Girls want some hot chocolate?"

"Now that's more like it!" Buttercup said with a greedy smile.

"Uh-huh, uh-huh!" Bubbles said while nodding her head.

"Yes, Mister Mayor. It's very nice of you to offer," Blossom said, with the professor's voice in her head, reminding her of all the manners he'd taught her.

The Mayor waved a somewhat bony hand. An aide, who had somehow managed to remain invisible in the background, came over. "Four cups of hot chocolate, Alfred. Make 'em all adult-sized, it matters not," the Mayor ordered. The aide made to leave, but then the Mayor gently took him by the sleeve. "Oh and Alfred, make it four cups of hot chocolate with marshmallows. Extra marshmallows."

The Girls were thrilled, their smiles as extra wide as the amount of extra ingredients to be added. Even Buttercup had forgotten her bad attitude. The professor hadn't been wrong, they each thought – the Mayor was a friend. To the Mayor, though, even cups of hot chocolate had multiple facets to them. The physical, as a simple gift, then again, it was something of a social contract. 'I'm good to you and so you're supposed to be good to me'. At the worst, it could be a bribe, and with children, the value of a cup of hot chocolate (with extra marshmallows) was multiplied a thousand fold. The Mayor, however, hoped that it would just be a gift, and their relationship, a simple friendship
between an old Knight of Townsville and three young heroines.

The Girls eyes kept shifting towards the jar of cookies that the Mayor had planted on an end table next to him. They'd finally spotted it, now that he had brought up matters of gastronomy. He took it and opened the sealed jar with difficulty. "Cookies?"

"Yes, please!" Buttercup was almost begging.

"Yes, please," Blossom said with dignity.

"You're so sweet, Mayor Wilford," Bubbles said. They each reached into the jar, taking one giant chocolate chip cookie each. Buttercup had two.

The Mayor watched them eat contentedly, enjoying his cookies. This was good. Really good. Everything was falling in place. For the good of the city.

"Now, let's talk for a bit, Girls..." the Mayor opened up. The Girls looked up at him, beaming with expectations. Crumbs were falling off of Buttercup's lips and cheeks while Blossom and Bubbles we're less messy.

"Yeah, what about?" Buttercup asked. 'At least she's in a good mood and willing to talk now,' the Mayor thought. Dislike her a little though he might, he still think that Buttercup had her own strengths, and it wasn't just the strength of her arms that he needed to strong-arm the criminals of his city into civil obedience. She was direct, and hid nothing. A good politician could use someone like that.

"Why, about your dedication to protect the city, of course," the Mayor said, putting on the most innocent smile he could. "I've heard lots about the three of you even before we've met, and I just can't help but to wonder. Why fight crime, younglings? Why not stay home with your Daddy and play with your dolls?"

"Yuck! I don't play with dolls!" Buttercup spat with disgust, remembering that she used to pretend she loved it, just so that she could get closer to Daddy. It didn't quite work out, and she loathed the idea of being like Bubbles.

"Or whatever it is you play with, Buttercup," the Mayor added with a laugh. Yes, there's always a use for those who deemed themselves tough.

"Mister Mayor, I once saw people get hurt, and, and..." Blossom thought hard. Was that the only time when she wanted to act? No. There were other times when she wanted to take control. "I want to be able to do things to help. Sometimes my friends were in trouble, and I stood by and did nothing." She remembered when Agent Blake and his men were being taken away, when she didn't know if she'd see them again.

"I don't know, I'm here because my sisters are," Bubbles added, unsure of herself. She searched the floor for answers, but another came up on its own. "I want everyone around me to be happy, I guess."

"And it'd be fun! All the punching and kicking and explosions!" Buttercup added. She swung her fists left and right, producing audible whipping sounds, the way her Mommy had taught her.

"Is there more to it than that?" There's got to be, aren't there?" Mayor Wilford said. "I mean, there's no doubt that helping others and putting a smile on their faces, even if for fun, is great, but, don't the three of you want anything else for yourselves?"
The Mayor had thought hard when it came to that question. The Girls seemed pure, incorruptible, with the possible exception of Buttercup, making them good candidates as law enforcers, their apparent age and naivete notwithstanding, but he had to make sure.

"I guess there is one thing. When Daddy spoke about the city," Blossom was first to speak as the others were unsure of what to say. "He said that people would hate us, sometimes for no reason."

"Like that scary policeman below," Bubbles added, her voice extra high-pitched, making it clear that she was distressed at the thought.

"Mister Mayor, I want to them to stop hating us. I want to be loved," Blossom said, finally. Buttercup, in her corner, rolled her eyes as she crossed her arms. Daddy's love was enough for her, and Mommy was already a bonus. The rest of them were either recipients of her knuckle sandwich, or pretext for her to dish out knuckle sandwiches.

"Love is nice," Bubbles supported her sister.

"Humph..." Buttercup grunted in faint agreement just so she wouldn't be left out.

"Well, that may be hard, I'm afraid," Mayor Wilford said, and this time, he meant it. He closed his one good monocled eye and clasped his hands. It took a hardcore politician like him to win the favor of a city filled with the hopeless and the hardened. Three little girls wouldn't fare well in such circumstances. "The city's been hurting for a long, long time, lassies. And people who are hurt, who are hungry and desperate, they don't love as easily."

"What do you mean, Mister Mayor?" Blossom asked. She thought she understood him, but she was lost halfway.

"When someone's been hated for a long time, he will hate in turn, spread that hate, Miss Blossom," Mayor Wilford tried his best to explain, his one good eye stuck on Blossom's two. He then turned his single peering eye to Bubbles. "You've seen how my trusted police officer was. Please don't blame him for it - he'd seen many things... Terrible things, and when that happens, people, well, they get grumpy, really grumpy. They'd forgotten how to be nice, how to love."

"That's sad..." Bubbles said, her eyes still on the floor, a tear dripping from an eye. In her mind, it was impossible to live without love, or being nice, not in the kind of house she lived in. Mayor Wilford looked at her, and it broke his heart to see such a sight, a five-year-old girl (even less, considering what the USDO reps told him) destroyed by the state of things.

"But... What can we do to make them nice again? So that they'd love us?" Blossom asked.

"Break the cycle of hate," Mayor Wilford said, confidently. He wouldn't be a good mayor if he couldn't say that one thing right. After all, he'd been hard on crime, combating the evil elements of his embattled city for two decades now, even more so if he was counting his first streak of mayoral responsibilities and before that, as a more ordinary civil servant. "Do what's right. Fight crime as you so desire. Do it well, and the people will learn to love again, and they will love you."

"And have fun in the process, I guess," Mayor Wilford said to Buttercup. No, in the end, he couldn't bring himself to dislike Buttercup, no matter how she looked like. Even at her current stage, she didn't seem all bad. At least she hadn't turned to crime to sate her desire for 'fun', and with her kind of abilities, she could have easily done so. He reminded himself that he would have to thank the parents of these three special girls for having raised them right. "Now... Now that the three of you have told me why you want to fight crime, I think it'd be fair for me to tell you why I do it. And I have just the thing that I thought would be fun. Tell me, do you Girls like to fly?"
It brought to mind the flying ponies of television. The three Girls had all watched that, and they couldn't wait to be riding pegasi of their own. At least, they thought the Mayor had his own stable of flying horses with angel wings. Then the hot chocolate came. "Well, I guess flying would have to wait."

But they just couldn't wait. Though the hot chocolate were steaming at close to boiling point, the Girls had drained their cups fast, at first hurting themselves over the hot chocolate, but eventually developing a kind of resistance to hot liquid.

The Mayor tried to distract them by talking about other things. The Girls' own family life, their parents, what they do for fun. He thought he'd succeeded a little, but they were always sipping impatiently at their chocolate, and he didn't gather as much about the Girls as he had hoped.

They were halfway through when the Mayor put down his mostly-full cup of hot chocolate with extra marshmallows. He was more worried about how the Girls weren't enjoying their hot chocolate, seeing it as a means to an end, than himself. "It's time to fly. Come on, Girls."
Chapter 36: Mayor Wilford (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Mayor shows the Girls his city.

Chapter 36: Mayor Wilford (Part 2)

The City of Townsville. Central District. City Hall.


With the help of two aides, Mayor Wilford climbed aboard his dirigible. He was wearing a thick coat to shield him from the city cold that gnawed at him. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup jumped in with ease. The Mayor gave his staff on the roof a thumbs-up sign, and so they let loose the rope that was anchoring the dirigible to the roof.

The airship was a simple contraption, meant to hold no more than a few people in a basket. It rose slowly up into the air, with the Girls whooping with joy at ascending to heights they had never been before. Below, the snipers of the TPD were extra vigilant; the Mayor was taking a big risk this way, exposing himself in the middle of the day, in the middle of the open air. And he was alone up there with three 'operatives' of the USDO. Some snipers had already shifted their targets to put Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup in their sights.

Soon, they were at the equivalent of ten storey in the air, then fifteen, twenty and finally twenty-five, when the weight of the rope and cargo was equal to the lift the flying machine was able to put out. The Girls looked around them in wonderment, at the city that had, until recently, towered over them. Now, it seemed as if the opposite was true.

"Isn't Townsville beautiful?" Mayor Wilford said with admiration at his own city.

"Yes, Mister Mayor, it is! I like it! It's so… So…" Blossom agreed, and she wasn't just being nice. It truly was beautiful. The Central District was filled with tall buildings, and surrounding the Central District was the Business District, which contributed numerous skyscrapers to the skyline.

"Breathtaking?" the Mayor filled in the blanks for Blossom.

"Yeah! Breathtaking!" Blossom repeated the new word the Mayor had given her. It was a good word, one that she'd remember like the other odd 1,200 something words she had filed in her mind.

"I wish I can spread my arms and fly…" Bubbles said once more.

"Wish hard enough, and maybe you can," the Mayor said, not wanting to destroy the hopes of a (very) young child.

Even Buttercup was speechless at the sight, even if she felt its effect less.
"You see these sleek, tall buildings all around you? They weren't always there," the Mayor said as he pointed his cane at the skyline, drawing a line across it, a little more contemplative now. "That over there is the business district. You see all that glass, Girls?"

"It looks like I can swim in it…" Blossom said in wonderment. The skyscrapers were amazing. She had never seen that many windows before, and it was like a cascading waterfall to her, just like in those fairy tale books. But she had never seen a waterfall before.

"That was where Townsville got rich. I saw tall skyscrapers rise out of the ground like beanstalks one after the other, from the sixties and even to this day," the Mayor said, with one or two embellishments thrown in. He knew who he was dealing with. It wouldn't hurt to capture their attention with some hyperbole.

"Did those skyscrappies really rise from the ground? Like beanstalks?" Bubbles asked naively.

"Well, in a way, yeah. Except we planted money there to make them grow," the Mayor continued to joke with them. Only, the Girls weren't able to tell jokes from facts. Wilford then pointed his cane elsewhere. "And that over there is the Tenement Area. Some of the few public housing projects in America to work. I remember ordering it in the fifties, I think, for the poor, and for twenty years, they built those apartments for those who couldn't afford a roof over their heads. I remember that place to be peaceful, thanks to those hippies in the seventies. Now… It's filled with no-good bad guys, as you would call it."

"It looks… Sad," Bubbles described, her vocabulary beginning to show its limits. But her description was apt. The apartments there were stunted creatures, dark and dirty and looking like a horde of hobgoblins getting together to jab spears into their taller, cleaner neighbors. Smoke rose from numerous apartments and alleys there, a sign of desperation in an age of heaters.

"What happened to it?" Blossom asked.

"People get desperate when they're poor, and there are people who took advantage of that," the Mayor explained. He then pointed his cane at an even more dismal area near the tenement areas. The slums, which was a part of the tenement area that had fallen into disarray, with crumbling buildings and houses, makeshift homes and tents. "And it gets worst there. People here call it The Slums, or The Hole, or The Gangrene Gulag. None but the most heroic of my men would ever visit that place."

"Why not just bulldoze it?" Buttercup suggested. The sight of urban blight there had irked even her, and her tolerance level for all things dirty was higher than the other GIrls.

"Darling, it's not that simple. It never is," the Mayor said, with a hint of sadness in his voice. "No matter how it looks, it's still home to some of the most needy and destitute. If I clear it, those people will have no place to go. In a winter like this, they'd die out there. No other cities will accept them, and the bad seeds among them will crowd the other parts of Townsville."

"Really? Who would want to live in that dump?" Buttercup said unsympathetically. "I'd rather live in a dumpster."

"The dumpsters are full," the Mayor said cryptically. Buttercup thought he meant it literally, and she pictured dumpsters with doors and windows in them, with men coming in and out of them, though there was very little space inside. Maybe he did, or maybe he meant something in between - Buttercup's imagination had hit a roadblock.

The Mayor then took the time to show them the other parts of the City of Townsville, even if he was
starting to get really cold. The Downtown area, Uptown. Little Tokyo, when he remarked that he'd
seen the roots of it grow like a sapling when he was a mere boy, starting with just a few hundred
Japanese settlers in the 1900s and 1910s before ballooning into the endless thousands that made up
that area. Those districts were a little more upbeat than the Tenements and Slums.

"I've been in Townsville for a very long time. I was born here, near the turn of this century, and I
was raised here. I've seen Townsville when it didn't even have a million citizens, and now there's six
million of us."

"Is that a lot?" Bubbles asked, having never heard of numbers amounting to millions before.

"Yes, lots and lots and lots…" the Mayor said. "I've seen these buildings rise myself. I've cut the red
ribbon countless times. See, I helped build this town, until it's not quite a town anymore."

"You must really love this city, Mister Mayor," Blossom said as she continued gazing at
Townsville's skyline.

"Yes, I do. And there are evil men and women who are ruining it, trying to destroy everything and
everyone in it," the Mayor said, his one monocled eye staring intently into the distance, as if
searching the city for its criminals, for Intruders. "My city's been hurting and bleeding for a long
time, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup." He then turned to them, one sad little eyes peering out of its
glass. "Will you help me save it?"

"I'd want to. Very much, Mister Mayor," Blossom agreed. The look on his face, that old, worn out
face, had told her that he needed her, just like how he needed her to walk him across his room, no
matter how independent he wanted to appear. "If there are people who need our help, then we
should help them. I don't want anyone else to get hurt…"

"As long as I get to punch and kick something," Buttercup said.

"As much as I hate to admit it, there will always be people who need a few punches and kicks to set
them straight," the Mayor said, in a rare moment of casualness. In the meantime, he was studying the
Girls' faces very carefully. He pride himself for being a very good judge of character, and he could
always tell (well, most of the time anyway), whenever someone had something to hide or if they
were lying.

"What if we try giving everyone a bunny to hug, everyone would be happy," Bubbles followed
along.

"Haha, you try that, Bubbles," the Mayor said patronizingly. "You might swing some of them to
your side, who knows?"

Mayor Wilford liked what he had heard. It wasn't all just a mere conversation to him. He had been
testing them throughout their short time together. Thus far, no one had seen much value in the Girls,
not even the USDO who created them. He could tell from the way they spoke about them. His very
own top dogs in the Townsville Police Department were no better; it was all a joke to them, these
Girls. It was a miracle that Police Commissioner Davis had given the USDO the clearance to deploy
the Girls at all. Perhaps he thought that a catastrophic USDO failure would mean that he didn't have
to share his job with a federal agency that seemed determined to sink its roots in Townsville.

No, he believed in the Girls. They were clearly the real deal when it came to their lab-gained
abilities, but what was most important was the fact that they were pure of heart. Even Buttercup
could be described as that - she wasn't in it for the money, or the glory, or the sweet sex, or for some
God-forsaken ambition in a bid to win some upcoming election or promotion. She was in it for the
fun, however misplaced though it may be. They seemed incorruptible, like angels of justice that had come down from the heavens to dispense the law and order so desperately needed.

They even looked the part when the clouds, for a brief moment, parted to shine a ray of hope on them.

Mayor Wilford was going to make sure the Girls get to do their bit even if it killed him.

"At least, today, Townsville looks peaceful," the Mayor said. He was an old man, but he had beaten the superstition out of himself with decades of self-determination and down-to-Earth municipal politics and management. But this was the one time he thought he should let himself believe. "I think it's a good omen. The three of you will save the day, and the city will love you for it."

But he'd spoken too soon. In the distance, at one of the nearer residential districts, there was a bomb explosion, followed by the sound of police sirens. The Mayor gave a sigh. So much for a good omen. Even the Girls noticed the bad timing, and they hung their head in sadness.

"We'll help you, Mister Mayor," Blossom declared once more. She could imagine people on fire, people hurt, people shooting each other, when the bomb exploded. And she didn't like the idea one bit. Her photographic memory had captured every single pixel of that moment, when she saw the burning men at the gas station, their faces. She wasn't sure if she'd zoomed in on the scene; she was a couple weeks too young to notice back then.

"I hope your policemen have puppies for the poor people in pain…" Bubbles commented after that.

"If only we were there!" Buttercup then said.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House


Professor Utonium stood on the balcony facing his backyard, his signature black smoking pipe in his hand. He nursed the pipe and released a puff of smoke.

Changes were happening, good and bad. After the Girls had come down from the Mayor's personal office, he was able to speak to the most important person in Townsville. Mayor Wilford. And they'd talked. Touched on things he might have thought of, that he was deathly worried about, and he'd touched on things he'd never thought about.

He was a good politician, good with words, good with his image. When he expressed his fears that the Girls would be in peril in a city like Townsville, he'd launched into a speech about the virtues of his trusted police officers, the citizens of Townsville and how even the Mob, the worst of the worst, had a certain honor code. He'd covered, in great length, how his cops would have the Girls' back and how they fully, whole-heartedly supported the Girls' entrance into the local law enforcement scene. Of course, Professor Utonium wasn't entirely convinced. He was no politician, but the Organization had its fair share of politicians. Agent Cliff, the current director, was a prime example, though what Mayor Wilford did with words, Cliff did with actions. It remained to be seen if the Mayor of Townsville was both.

Less shady things were brought up too. The Girls' education, for one thing. Although the Mayor was still partial to the Girls' involvement in law enforcement despite their illiteracy, he advocated enrolling the Girls into the Townsville education system. It was one of the few things they could agree on, though the professor had mostly kept his opinions to himself. Back at home, he'd already talked it over with Selicia, who was just as adamant as the Mayor about sending the Girls to school,
and he'd already made the necessary phone call to Wiggums, who promised to expedite this with the help of Alice and… Blackwater, of all people. Within half an hour, the weedy Chief of Logistics promised on a return call that the principal of Pokey Oaks Kindergarten was 'willing' to accept the girls despite the fact that the year was about to end. Arrangements would be made the next morning with one Ms. Keane, so that the Girls would be able to go to school immediately the next day.

However, Blackwater had conditions. He always had conditions. With the Mayor of Townsville's go-ahead for the deployment of the Girls, law enforcement operations took precedence over the Girls' education, and they would be accompanied by their speed transport convoy in the event of a scramble. Originally, Blackwater wanted the Girls permanently suited up in SWAT gear and escorted by guards, but the professor had rang the Chief of Security on the line and argued vehemently – for close to half an hour – against that, and when that didn't work (as usual), he spoke in Blackwater's language. The man of science brought up matters of morale, and that the lack of it will worsen the Girls' performance in combat, as well as their concentration on actually becoming literate, which would be undoubtedly useful to soldiers who need to understand and interpret orders in the first place.

In the end, Blackwater had compromised by having all the Girls' gear stored in their Lamborghini speed transport, though it meant changing in the vehicle while it was speeding towards its target. Security would be provided from a distance by Sergeant Blake (who had been demoted by Blackwater for what he saw as poor leadership) and his Powerpuff Task Force soldiers in the transports and accompanying security detail, commanded by a new lieutenant.

The professor took another puff from his pipe. Jojo came to mind. Had he been too hard on the chimpanzee? Could someone good be pushed to commit a massacre? No, he decided. Killing 42 people would have required too much premeditation for someone good. Desperation was only good for a single cry-of-help kind of deed, and Jojo was incredibly intelligent for someone of his origins that the professor had thought of him as a person shortly after his exposure to Chemical X. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, his three good angels, would not have done such a thing, no matter what happens to them.

But the incident with Jojo's visit had raised questions. The USDO had been doing things behind his back. As much as he hated it, it was standard fare for the organization to do as it wish without consulting its members. He could only hope that as the USDO became more and more known to the general public, with newspaper journalists and watchdog organizations surrounding it, that they will stop operating like the very criminals they sought to stop.

After having his fill of his one vice, Professor Utonium put out his pipe and went back into the House. He had resumed his research on Chemical X, and he wasn't going to stop until he'd understood everything about it. It was going to be tough, however, considering that he had to start from the beginning, remaking the stabilizing cocktail that had resulted in the kind of Chemical X that created the Girls. But he'd begun considering other avenues of research, such as analyzing and studying the cells he had taken from the Girls.

With Selicia helping with the Girls, he would be able to scrounge together a few hours of research time a day, and more than that, now that the Girls would be attending Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. As the professor was heading down to the labs, he smiled. Just a mere couple of days ago, he wouldn't have thought that having Selicia around was a good thing. But now… No, he wouldn't allow himself to feel for her. Their 'marriage' was a lie, concocted to give the Girls a more stable domestic life. It would be like spitting on Eileen and Bloome's grave.

He could hear the Girls shouting as he descended the stairwell leading into the labs. Selicia was getting the Girls to go through everything she had taught them about punching and kicking. He hated
the idea that the Girls were going out there to fight crime, but with Selicia, at least they would be prepared for it. Everything was falling into place, not just for the USDO, but for himself.

He didn't want to admit it, but he was starting to believe that things might go well from here onwards.
Chapter 37: Leads

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, we get a perspective from a different angle - a hard-boiled detective fights crime the conventional way.

Chapter 37: Leads

2 Hours Ago…

The City of Townsville. Central District. City Hall.


When I got the call to City Hall, I knew what to expect. Honor guard duty. Putting the uniform back on, putting on a good show, standing around looking good. They needed every honest cop a hundred block radius around City Hall, and if I was in it, they were scraping at the bottom of the well. Hell, Townsville's been scraping at the bottom of the well for over ten years, like a thirsty man out of a desert.

It meant time away from my investigations, from taking down the Amoeba Boys, and I'd been busy shaking coins out of their expendable soldiers. It was a waste of time, but duty was duty, especially when I was still paying back for my crimes years back.

I was positioned at the door opposite the City Hall entrance, next to another one of them from the old boy's club. Officer Jacobson, with a scar through his left eye from an old, deep wound. Crazy junkie attack from eight years ago. We call him 'Canvas' because of his other, less visible scars underneath the uniform.

"Looking good, old man," Jacobson greeted me when I got to my post.

"I think I'll look better after this," I said, and meant it. I prefer beating the shit out of half-crazed low-lives under the payroll of the Lombardi Family, whether or not they had all the answers.

"So you heard about who's coming?" Canvas asked while he was straightening his uniform, checking his police belt.

"No, I've been busy. Got a big fish to catch, and it isn't something I wait for," I said. I was hesitant to reveal the big surprise. I couldn't trust anyone these days. Not even the supposedly handpicked men of the Mayor.

"Heard that it's the USDO. Word in the office is they got something big going on, a secret weapon," Officer Jacobson said. He smelt exactly like what he was doing. Swimming in the sewers that was the office, drinking up rumors.

"USDO? Those monkeys in black and white?" I said. The feds – I had no quarrel with them, but
those guys got nothing on the mobs. The USDO weren't the only feds who tried. The FBI, the CIA, even the global feds who were the UN had all tried to help. The mob, the families, the serial killers and rapists and gangbangers and robbers and cop-killers and thieves and cultists and did I mention the mob? They're still here. "Sure. What are they going to do? Sic a bunch of monkeys down on the ski masks?"

"That's all I got, Mullens. We'll see who's walking through our door," the Canvas said.

"It's not my door," I said, made it loud and clear. The city's crawling with two-faced men whose tongues waggle on both ends. I wasn't going to be one of them, not anymore. Politicians – it was the men on top whose weaknesses broke the dam on us. Mayor Wilford – people may love that old grandpa, but I knew better.

"Well, here they come," Canvas gave me a heads up. Awfully kind of him. "USDO's secret weapons."

The grand oak doors into City Hall yawned open, and in came the so-called 'secret weapons'.

Apparently, the USDO wasn't sending in monkeys to do their work. They were deploying midgets into the fray instead. And they were dressed like clowns or some weird shit from a Japanese serial. One in red, one in blue and one in green. They were accompanied by a SWAT chick and some mad scientist without the Einstein hair to match.

"What the hell is this?" I couldn't help but to utter. Here I was, busting my ass to clean up the city for citizens who didn't deserve it, against criminals who wouldn't ever go away, and the USDO had decided that Townsville needed a circus. It was almost a sacrilege.

"Keep your voice down. They're coming this way," Jacobson whispered to me. I was a closed zipper after that. I didn't need any kind of flak for my current case; the case to end all cases. After speaking to some hot chick in red who represented the USDO and a tuxedo man, the midgets began coming my way. And wouldn't you know it? SWAT chick and Victor Frankenstein were left behind.

"You're going to have to hand over your weapons, lassies," I said to the one in red SWAT gear. She, or he, had a stupid bow attached to his or her helmet, as if she didn't look stupid enough. They were all armed with only compact pistols. It was as if they were trying hard to disappoint me. And after thirty years on the force, it's hard for me to feel disappointed. But here I was.

"What weapons?" the red midget spoke. A girl. I looked closer. Turned out, she was no midget. No, it was far worse than that. She was literally a girl. A little girl who looked like she should be riding a pony in the city circus instead of being decked out in what looked like kevlar armor on steroids and getting pimped by a shady agency like the USDO.

"Erm- Those pistols in your holsters? On your vest?" I said. Couldn't help give her the tone. The kind of tone I'd give to rookie cops who were likely in the force because the selection was slim. "Do you know what pistols are? Do I have to spell it out for you?"

"He meant this, Blossom!" another of the tri-colored joker girls exclaimed, unbuttoning her holster with difficulty and pulling out the compact pistol from it. But she was doing it all wrong, clumsy as well, the way a drug junkie would do it and end up accidentally shooting his friend.

"Hey, watch it!" I yelled. This second girl in green SWAT gear was just staring at me in confusion, like she had never handled a firearm before, hadn't even been on the firing range for a single day.

"What?" she asked. That had just confirmed it. She was entirely ignorant of gun safety rules. The
USDO had just brought in three little kindergartners for some reason, and they didn't look like they
could even handle a toy gun, much less the real thing. God help Townsville and the Mayor. Except
he won't.

"Don't point that thing at me, you dolt! Don't you know that guns are dangerous?" I scolded the girl
in green, feeling my masculinity shrink just by being around them. I was already starting to feel like a
kindergarten teacher, rather than a copper. Perhaps I'd become something in between, like a
kindergarten cop. Thank God the tri-colored kids were USDO, not TPD, and certainly not my
business. I could only hope that they wouldn't be in my way as I work my way up the mafioso food
web.

"Oh, fine. Here you go, mister policeman," the girl in green said like a brat, as if I was the one in the
wrong.

"God damn dolt," I muttered under my breath as I snatched her little pistol quickly, and it certainly
wasn't a term of endearment I'd mumbled. I'd barely met the green-geared girl, and she'd already
endangered my life.

The red girl and the blue girl (who hadn't spoken yet) did the same thing, but with wiser deftness,
shifting their guns by holding them by the barrels instead.

"And that, missy, is how you do it. You should be more like your reddish girl friend, greeny," I
added after collecting their weapons, and I'd made sure to sound as marginalizing as I could. I don't
take kindly to having the muzzle of a gun pointed at me, as a few hundred fuckers found out the hard
way. The green girl then threw a hateful look at the red girl with the stupid bow on her helmet. That
was the only time when I saw how different those little girls were.

Their eyes were humming with a kind of faint glow, visible because of the shadow cast on them by
the kiddy-colored USDO helmets they wore. Then there was that green-eyed girl. Something about
the way she looked at her girl friend. Let's just say that it wasn't the kind of look you'd expect on a
girl. Well, a normal girl anyway. Had the USDO done something to her? It took a while for me to
match the jade jewels on her visage to the others I'd seen, and suffice it to say, the look she'd gave
her girl friend was the kind you'd find on the streets, and I wasn't talking about the streets of the
idyllic American Dream suburbs.

When it was all over and I'd remained standing despite the USDO secret weapons' sheer
incompetence, the girls in gear walked through the door.

"Can't believe the Mayor's agreeing with this kiddy nonsense," I couldn't help but to say it. It was
way beyond the crazy shit I'd seen in this city. Homicide, purse-snatching, robberies - those were like
brushing your teeth or eating cereal in the morning. A crazy serial killer who'd pose his dead victims
in a BDSM scene I can handle, but three completely untrained kids sent to fight crime by a federal
agency? Sheer lunacy. Even more so than those crazy cultists running rampant in the peripheries and
dark corners of Townsville.

"Yeah, I know right? Townsville's going to the nuthouse if it isn't there already," Canvas said.
Seemed that we were in agreement for once. Hallelujah.

When the circus show was over, I'd gladly returned to my trench coat and leather shoes. The timing
couldn't be better. It was over an hour into the night, when the low-lives and freakshows, nocturnal
as they were, came out to hunt and play. But they weren't the only animals that were nocturnal. They
weren't the only animals to hunt and play at night.

I should know. I used to be one of them.
Years ago, I'd gone deep undercover, let myself be swallowed up by the whale that was the Townsville criminal underground. The only problem was, it wasn't exactly an operation sanctioned by my captain. I had taken the initiative, and not entirely for the best of reasons. I was legitimately undercover for the most part. But two decades of honest police work had taken its toll. I had something of a crisis of faith. Sure, I'd burnt down more than my fair share of wolf dens, put over a hundred behind bars (most of whom didn't stay behind the psychopath zoo for long), even received medals and awards for it… But I was my family was still dirt poor. Happy, but dirt poor. I had to explore the other side, know about what prospects lay there. It was a procrastination of decisions to the highest order.

I'd sunk roots alongside gangsters and drug pushers alike, cut deals with them. At the same time, I'd arrested the right people - their competition and criminals who'd fallen out with the wrong people - to stay out of the gaze of the ratters, internal affairs, mob enforcers and street thugs alike.

Long story short, I'd decided to cut my new friends loose. The world of bling-blings bought from drug and prostitution money just wasn't for me. I had a daughter and a wife, and buying them dresses and jewellery with the sweat off the back of prostitutes, some way too young, just didn't have a good ring to it. My new friends didn't take too kindly to it. They'd confessed to my deep involvement with them, right down to the minute details, and the devil's in the details, especially when it involved the fact that I had to do certain things to get in with them. Certain things like tampering with evidences linking them to crimes, making selective arrests, enforcing and running for them. And those were the less damning things. Here's a hint: the girls of the house didn't like that I had to do things to said prostitutes, some way too young, to prove my loyalty.

The court cases took a whole year to peter out. I'd won that battle, mainly because of my reputation and intention to expose the rings I got myself in, but that was only one battle. The domestic front was a catastrophe. The wife left me, and the daughter grew to hate me, even after she joined up with the blues and saw for herself how murky things could get. I don't blame them.

After the City Hall bullshit, I drove into the tenement area. Alone. My partner was no good. I'd left him to do his own dirty work. A soldier of the Lombardi Family I tortured for three days had finally squealed and revealed his Capo's activities. They were involved in some sort of new drug operation. Something 'better' than cocaine. Apparently, the new drug was so potent and potentially profitable that it was kept under wraps. They refer to it as 'His Secret'. Street name unknown, probably because it was too new. My money's on the certainty that it was short form for something else, something only a chemist or a biologist would know.

The tenement area was barely habitable by civilized terms. Roadblocks were set up around it 24/7, but the drugsters had long circumvented it with their own underground railroad for cocaine slaves in the sewers that it was merely an inconvenience. The police precincts there weren't so much as maintaining a civil society as operating like castles, sending out blue knights to raid the surroundings for the seemingly endless supply of drugs and illegal prostitutes and shipments. The sheer number of criminals around them kept their activities down. An uneasy status quo was struck, and no one's winning.

When I was at the roadblock, I was warned about entering the Tenement area. I'd heard it too many times. I went full speed ahead regardless. I stopped a block away from an apartment, rundown even by tenement standards, and suited up for war. Vest, shotgun, a large revolver, a spare pistol. Flashbangs. A knife. The license to kill, the perfect place to snuff out cockroaches like drug runners. In a place as bad as this, the death of low-lives were often overlooked. I didn't need a warrant. The drugs weren't the priority.

I'd spent over twenty years of police action in a hell hole known as Townsville. I'd seen fellow
honest cops fall during the early days, in the resurgence of crime, when they couldn't handle the kind of heat outside issuing parking tickets and telling off jaywalkers. You'd think that I should have used the backdoor.

Nope. I'd decided to knock from the front. It was the in thing with hardcores like me these days, and it wasn't for show. The backdoor was more heavily guarded. I went in cold at first, crossing the street with a hoody bought off a bum. Went up to the guards, spouting all-out street slang, claiming to be looking for a restock on my shelf of cocaine for my 'hoes'. Being one of them years ago helped.

There were only two of them at the front entrance. When one of them turned his back, I stuck a knife in him, then rushed the other. The 21-foot rule won out. The other guard couldn't even pull his pistol out, couldn't even scream, when I put my knife through his throat.

Before I went in, I greeted the receptionists in the lobby area with a flashbang. They didn't give me a warm welcome, so I demonstrated to them how it was done with my shotgun. In the chaos that resulted, with men shouting as they were coming down to tango, I found an empty elevator shaft and took it up instead. What can I say? I guess I got lazy.

Mob protocol usually puts the Capo on the top floor. He was the brains, not the muscle, and so he wasn't always expected to fight. There was something about symbolism too. A man's dome was on top of the body, so it should be, at least according to the Lombardi Family, that he should be on top of a Family front.

I climbed my way to the third level, halfway to top floor. By now, most of the muscle had filtered downstairs, like white blood cells in an autoimmune body. But there was a minority of them who were a little smarter, and as I landed on the landing of the third-floor lift, two of them took me by surprise, firing rounds from their street-grade pistols at me. I drew mine and fired. We all drew blood.

I felt the needle jab in my left upper arm. Another had cracked the kevlar on my chest, nothing else underneath. I was lucky. Those two Lombardi soldiers weren't. I'd made sure they felt nothing when I shot them in the face.

I ascended the stairs. Two more were coming down. I fired more rounds to send them tumbling. Fourth floor. No more cockroaches there. The fifth floor was livelier. Sparks were flying when I tried to cross to the stairs leading further up. Taking cover just behind the doorless entrance to the fifth floor, I let off more rounds blindly, saw who I was dealing with this time. Some half-naked under-aged punk-girl, shooting a revolver alongside a pinstriped soldier, who didn't look much older than her, perhaps just breaking into the big 20.

I didn't discriminate. Unhooking my second flashbang, I threw it in and waited. I unslung my shotgun to fire pellets, something they'd have more difficulty negotiating around. For a brief moment, I saw blood all over the girl and her boyfriend. I took off after that. The regrets would have to come later, when I had the painkiller ready at the bottom of a bottle.

Sixth floor. The doors were locked. I picked it open with my shotgun after reloading it. Bullets smashed through it the moment I did, grazing my cheek. I took cover as more were turning the wooden doors into a modern art impression. When it all stopped, I faced my back to the wall and did a horse kick to open one of the Swiss cheese. More shots were fired. They had been waiting for me all along, hoping that I'd assume they'd run out.

I went in, shotgun blazing, after that. I dropped a mobster to the Capo's left, then another to his right. Some of the pellets had clipped the low-level mafiaso leader in the arm, almost like retribution, almost as if there's such a thing as the divine. He went down, had probably never tasted pain for a while. I slung my shotgun and pulled my revolver on him. He didn't dare move.
"Fuck is this shit? What the fuck d'you think your' doing’?" the Capo demanded, like he was the freakin’ king of the city. "You think you can come in here and just-" I booted him in the ribs before he could flap his lips any further, a payback for the bruise that was likely forming on mine. Before he could recover, I gave him the boot again in the face. He was out after that. Before I exit the stage, I saw syringes on his desk. I had nearly lost all hope of stealing a sample of 'His Secret'. After swiping them, I turned my attention back to the Capo.

Taking him with a fireman's lift, I exited the floor through the window, on the fire escape. I was long gone before the Capo's gangsters knew to look for their under-underboss. I grunted as I worked my way down, the bullet in my left arm starting to smart even with the adrenaline pumping in my veins.

It was all in a day's work, but there was more ahead. Making the mob captain talk, for instance. The higher they climb, the less they were willing to talk.

It should prove to be a fun and interesting challenge.
Interlude: A Book Clipping

Chapter Summary

A brief interlude portraying what is to come, presented in a different medium.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Interlude: A Book Clipping


Artist's Impression of The 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank by bluedotdenizen
Chapter End Notes

This picture will either be moved or copied into the relevant chapter later on.
Chapter 38: School

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls get to go to school, and a new figure enters the Girls' life.

Chapter 38: School


A new dawn. A new day. Another day full of possibilities. Miss Jessica Keane had always loved her day at work, so much so that the term ‘Monday Blues’ meant nothing to her.

Walking up the path leading to her school, a beige-colored two-story tall complex serving several neighborhoods all around, she greeted the security guards at their posts, who seemed stiffer and more formal than they usually were. ‘Must be the Monday Blues,’ she thought as she produced a key and opened the double doors. The corridor within was still dark. She was the first teacher in school, as usual. Flipping the switch, she brought life to the corridor, and made her way to her office at the back of the school. In her right arm was a bag of groceries; coffee powder and milk for her coffee machine, assorted snacks to supplement to endless supply of apples from her students and of course, stickers for the kids. The school's stock was limited, and she wanted very much to surprise the kids on a day so close to Christmas.

At the frosted glass of her door, she flipped through the keys on her keyring, and opened the door. As usual, it was dark inside, and it smelled of lavender because of the aromatherapy dispenser. She reached for the light switch and flipped it-

To find a huge man in black uniform sitting at her desk. Old, considering the hair and wrinkles, but still looking very much as healthy as an ox, and as strong as one too.

"Oh my!" the kindergarten teacher exclaimed in shock when she saw him, dropping her grocery bag. Thankfully, there was nothing inside that could break.

"Hello, Miss Keane," he said in a gravelly voice that sent chills down her spine, as if getting startled by his sudden appearance wasn't enough. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Please, have a seat."

The look of the big man screamed danger. She wasn't sure if he was trying to calm her down or intimidate her, but he pulled his pistol out of his holster and rested it on the table. She backed away, only to be met with the hard glass of her door. Someone had closed it. Hands seized her by both arms and dragged her forward. As it turned out, she was flanked by two security officers in gray uniform; they were there all along, hiding in the dark.

"Gentle, men, gentle," the big man said to his officers, who obeyed immediately, leading her forward
"What's happening?" Miss Keane said, still shaken from the sudden appearance of these men, who looked like they were ready to do something to her. "Are you going to kill me?"

"I'm Chief of Security Blackwater. I represent the USDO. Heard of it?" the big man introduced himself. He leaned back, pressing his fingers together as if in contemplation. Keane thought back. Yes. The USDO. She didn't read or watch the news much, but word of their arrival in town to clean up Townsville had filtered to her through her fellow teachers at Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. It was relevant news after all. Anything that could reduce crime and make the neighborhoods a safer place would be a boon the school.

"I guess- What is this about?" Miss Keane questioned again. She'd pressed herself closer to her guest chair. She'd be lying if she said she wasn't afraid. Despite everything she had seen and avoided, she had never been this close to danger before. She had always been a herd creature, commuting with her friends, and now that she was alone with her friends probably halfway to town by now, with people who was definitely not part of her herd in close proximity with her, she was deathly terrified.

"You'll be getting three new students today, what would appear to be three little girls," Blackwater said coldly.

"What do you mean by 'what would appear to be three little girls'?" Miss Keane inquired, but cautiously. One question at a time, nothing that could set a man she thought to be volatile off.

"It's complicated. Let me just get one thing out of the way first. You're one of us now," Blackwater asserted.

"W- w- what?" Miss Keane stuttered, all the more confused now. "I'm just a kindergarten teacher!"

"And you'll continue to be a kindergarten teacher, with a few extra benefits," Blackwater said. "You'll get double your current pay, additional medical benefits. Special protection. And of course, the chance to make history."

"Um- Mister Blackwater," Miss Keane raised a hand, as if a kid who had a question. "What about the three little girls? Why the need for all this- This- Drama?"

"They're not quite little girls. They're lab-grown organic crime-fighting weapon platforms. At least, that's how we term them. At least ten times stronger and faster than a trained soldier, and a heck of a lot more resilient. But they're still acting like stupid little baby girls. Your job is to educate them enough that they will be the equivalent of at least 16 or 18-year-old military recruits," Blackwater said.

"Have you spoken with Principal Truman about this? I'm hardly the woman to make any kind of enrollment decisions, Mister Blackwater. I'm just a humble teacher," Miss Keane asked.

"Yesterday. Do we have your cooperation?" Blackwater demanded.

"Can I refuse?" Miss Keane said, though she regretted it the moment she did. These people didn't look like the sort who would take no for an answer.

"Yes, you could," Blackwater said unexpectedly. Miss Keane was about to thank him for being a gentleman when he continued. "At the cost of your position in this... Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, and a blanket blacklist that will prevent you from ever taking up a position in any educational institutions in the entirety of the United States. And her allies,"
"But-" Miss Keane said, her voice shaking, finding it impossible to believe that she could be so unlucky. "Why me? Why not the other teachers in the faculty? Mrs Brown from next door has 20 years more experience than I do!"

"We selected you based on job performance. 55% of your graduated kindergartners had gone on to become overachieving grade-A students in elementary school thus far. Mrs Brown, on the other hand, couldn't even make 10% to save her life," Blackwater explained. Miss Keane was dumbfounded. The administration of Pokey Oaks Kindergarten hadn't even bothered to collect such data, and here the USDO was, coming up with percentages despite being a paramilitary organization. The only way they could have done it was by comparing old student files with that of the elementary schools they were transferred to. And they had done it overnight by probably twisting the arms of school officials into letting them access their computer data or literally flying soldiers to the schools to pick through old-fashioned paper documents.

"Oh, that's flattering, but what if-" Jessica was cut off the moment she showed a hint of doubt.

"The three girls'… foster parents are still alive. Unlike our previous efforts, these subjects could be controlled and pacified. They behave like normal children… with far superior physical abilities, of course. If you treat them as such, they should cooperate," Blackwater assured the school teacher. Well, as much as a shadowy military operative with hundreds of goons on his back and the license to kill could attempt such a thing. He looked at his watch. A reinforced black military-grade thing with a compass and a 24-hour dial. "Their ETA is 45 minutes. You have until then to get ready for class." He then nodded to a soldier who had just come in through the door. Without warning, the soldier slapped a collection of document in front of Keane. She jumped when he did.

"That's all you need to know, plus a little extra curriculum material for the girls," the Chief of Security said. Miss Keane leafed through the documents. Collated information on the girls. Their physical descriptions. Surface information on their enhanced abilities, and even then, it was stamped with 'CLASSIFIED' in big, blocky red ink. The extra curriculum consisted of vocabulary found on the battlefield, starting with radio codes for all English alphabets, as well as standard radio commands. There was a detailed map of Townsville folded within, which highlights the major landmarks, streets, potential crime targets such as the Townsville Museum and the Townsville Central Bank, and more. Then there was a list of general and specific terms for different kinds of guns and gun designs, as well as the anatomy of the gun, and as if that wasn't enough, there was material for the anatomy of the human body, as well as notes on which parts could be struck for the most adverse effects and damage. "Assign them as homework if you want. I know for a fact that at least one of their parents would be glad to help."

"But- Teaching girls about guns and violence! Isn't that the opposite of what I'm supposed to do?" Miss Keane objected. Too much had changed within minutes that she thought she was going to faint. Blackwater stared at her in the eyes for a while. It had the effect of shutting her up. For a moment, the teacher was afraid that she was going to be shot in the head.

"Not when these three girls are going to be at the forefront of law enforcement in Townsville. What, you think that, with all their capabilities and applications, we're just going to let them sit around and play house?" Blackwater said. "That brings me to another point, so listen well, Miss Keane. They'll be on call 24/7 from now on. If it just so happens to be during class hours, you'll give them a pass every time. Any questions, Keane? Or should I say, Agent Keane?"

It was revolting, the way Blackwater had given her a title so contradictory to what she had been doing for the last eight odd years or so.
"No," Miss Keane said, her voice barely a whisper, her guts in knots as she stared fearfully into the steel eyes of the beast that was sitting on her chair.

"Then I'll leave you to it then. Your joining bonus has been credited into your bank account, by the way. Have a nice day," Blackwater said, before standing up, her chair creaking with relief from the weight coming off its seat. Miss Keane felt the opposite of that. Just yesterday, she'd been enjoying a nice pasta and champagne, apathetic of the world outside her apartment and life, and now, it seemed as if she was neck-deep in the politics and seedy realities of it. Within minutes, it seemed as if her life had been turned upside down, ruined. Whatever amount of money that had been credited into her bank account wouldn't make up for that.

"Oh, and before I leave," Blackwater said again, before he left. Pulling something black out of a compartment on his belt, he thrust a metallic thing at her, and she took it instinctively with two outstretched hands. A pistol in a holster. She screamed as if it was a giant rat and dropped it. "It's just in case someone thinks you're too valuable, or one of them girls think you're the opposite of that. Good luck. Agent Keane."

"Just Miss Keane will do," she muttered timidly. Blackwater stared down at her as if she'd done something wrong, but said nothing more before leaving with his men. When he did, she picked up the gun by the tip of the handle, pinching it with two fingers as if it was something dead from the sewers. "Well, it's going to be a long day." She tried to stay positive - perhaps nothing much would change. She was going to make sure that her class was going to remain as normal as possible. Going around her desk, she sat down on her chair, feeling that it was all warmed up by Blackwater. She promptly dumped the gun in her drawer and closed it.

But she'd had second thoughts. She was involved in the violence of Townsville now, whether she liked it or not. Opening the drawer again, she took the pistol out and stuff it into a pocket inside her red vest. She might have been trying to keep the world out of her life, but she was prepared to defend it. She'd been on the firing range once in a while and kept her own revolver at home. She told herself that this was no different.


"Is it going to be like our room?" Bubbles asked as she bounced on the backseat of the family car, excited, as always, at encountering new things. And people. People, especially, and especially when they weren't all going to be big and scary and mean, as she'd discovered with the policemen in City Hall and Blackwater. She'd finally be able to find out how boys were like.

"It's going to be much better than that, sweetie," Professor Utonium said. "It'll be bigger, and there'll be other kids your age to play and learn with."

"What is it called again?" Buttercup asked. She hadn't been paying attention, having slipped back into a more brooding state earlier.

"School. Kindergarten, Buttercup," Selicia reminded the feisty little girl from the front seat.

"Will you be teaching us there instead?" Blossom said, hoping that Daddy would say yes.

"No, someone better at teaching will be taking you three instead," the professor said.

"But no one's better than you," Blossom said. She wrapped her arms around the professor's neck and seat headrest from behind lovingly. But he could see her eyes on the rear-view mirror, how her
brows were knit together in worry and dismay. The beginnings of separation anxiety. "I wish you'd teach us instead of a… a…"

"Teacher, Blossom," the professor reminded the smart girl. It seemed strange that she would forget that word, something he'd taught the three just the day before. But then again, a near-hundred-percent retention rate wasn't a hundred percent. He pushed his worry away, putting it down to other things. "Now, now, Blossom. You have to learn to meet new people and befriend them. As much as we love each other, your sisters and parents aren't the only people – good people – in the world."

"But I've made friends with Mister Blake, Mister Simmons, Mister Ruthy and their friends too," Blossom said.

"I'm talking about the kind of friends kids your age should make, honey," the professor explained. He looked into the rear view mirror again. Blossom's face did not change. Buttercup looked annoyed in her corner of the car, looking away from how Blossom was so lovingly marking her territory. Bubbles sat in the middle, close to neither parents.

"But what's wrong with Mister Blake and the others?" Blossom persisted.

"They're not your age, and, well, they're just not the same as you," the professor tried to explain, but there were things that he could not say, or didn't want to say out loud. In truth, he didn't like the idea of soldiers and the general assortment of rough people mingling with his adopted daughters. Selicia was a gamble enough.

"But you and Mom aren't the same as me," Blossom fumbled for words. There was so much more on her mind that she could not put into words, and there wasn't time for her to figure it out either. Soon, Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, a beige building two storey high and at least eight classrooms large came into view, standing out against the snow with its brightly-painted walls. The professor drove them past the open gate, then to the parking lot.

"Whoa…" the Girls chorused as they saw what was there. Other children streaming into the school. They had never seen this many children before, and to think that they were going to rub shoulders with them soon!

Together, the Utonium family (as they were code-named) exited their vehicle, and with hands joined, entered the building. Inside, lots of children and the few teachers present threw them 'the look'. The same kind they'd been getting since weeks ago at the mall. The Girls were almost ethereally beautiful - Blossom with her almost royal allure, Bubbles and her irresistible cuteness and Buttercup with her bottomless well of strength and 'bad attitude' - then there was their eyes, which were one of a kind. It was hard not to get noticed. Add to this the parents, one who looked like he was going to invent a time machine, and the other, despite the black dress and coat, looked tough due to her well-toned muscles. Selicia's youth (and the fact that she had never actually given birth to triplets), perhaps a ways below the average age of mothers with 5-year-old children, had given her a way to cheat when it came to beauty.

"Mister and Missus Utonium, hello there!" a female voice, not too high-pitched, greeted them, each word deliberately pronounced to perfection. It was Miss Keane, the Girls' new teacher. She was wearing a red vest over an orange shirt. Brown pants. Short, blue eyes, shoulder-length black hair. Her face was like the sun itself, bright and welcoming.

"Guilty as charged," Selicia returned the greeting.

"Nice to meet you," Thomas did the same.
"Welcome to Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, it's good to see some new faces," the educator introduced herself, a hand on her chest. The children under her were pretty well-behaved. They were all lined up outside the classroom, but they were all looking at the new arrivals, who were all beginning to feel a little shy. Thankfully, they were just streaming into the classroom. The moment Miss Keane looked down at Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, she was awed by how they looked. The pictures she was provided with did not do them justice. "Oh my, what beautiful little angels!"

When Miss Keane looked down at the Girls, beaming at them, the Girls felt calm. Whatever nervousness and fear they had for a future in this school was dispelled. The teacher bent down to their level, making eye contact. It was hard for the teacher to do so, considering what she knew, but years of interacting with children had trained her for this, especially when some of them could be… difficult. "Hi there! I'm your teacher, Miss Keane, and welcome to your new school!"

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Keane," Blossom opened up first, as usual. "I'm Blossom."

"And I'm Bubbles," the blonde one introduced herself next. "Can we be friends?"

"And I'm Buttercup!" the green-dressed one came last.

"It's a pleasure to meet you three too," Miss Keane said. "Why don't the three of you go on in and take a look while I speak to your dearest parents?" She got up and opened the door, leading the Girls in to stand by the door. The sound of children playing came flooding out the moment Miss Keane opened the door. Professor Utonium and Selicia followed them, and ended up standing at the threshold between classroom and corridor. When Miss Keane turned to the Utoniums again, however, the adults were beaten to it by the children.

"Hey, do you want to play?" a boy in white and cyan shirt, sent on behalf of a quarter of the classroom, had come forward to offer the newcomers. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup turned to Miss Keane, deferring to her authority instantly. It was as if Miss Keane knew they would do that. Most children would, because of their initial timidity and general dependence on adults. With this, Blackwater was right, at least. Miss Keane nodded at them. The Girls took off with Cyan Shirt Boy, giggling and laughing as they ran towards their new classmates without the use of their superpowers - the professor had made sure to reiterate that rule multiple times in the car. It was as if all anxiety and fear of separating from their Daddy was gone, as they were distracted by the wondrous sight before them. Girls like them! Boys, the mythical boys! New toys! Strange, new books! Everything was new in the gigantic room they called the classroom.

"Um, do you think they'd be okay? Because I'm sort of… new at this parenting thing and I wanted to come and meet you and see them off for the first day because they're really special- I mean, reeeeeeally special, and I just want to make sure they'd be okay. So, what do you think, do you think they'd be okay?" the professor went on and on, nervous about the prospect of leaving the Girls all alone on their own without supervision. He was constantly shifting his eyes between the Girls, who had dispersed in the classroom, and Miss Keane.

"New?" Miss Keane asked. She had not been told that the Girls were actually 3 weeks old. The classified documents she was given had only given her their physical descriptions, personality matrix and limited info on their enhanced abilities.

Selicia cleared her throat to attract their attention. "What my hubby here meant is that he's just not very confident of his abilities as a father," she covered for the professor. "But we all know how good you are to the Girls, aren't you, Tommy?" Selicia had an arm around the professor, giving him a squeeze and kissing him on the cheek.

The professor gave a nervous laughter. "I guess…"
"Oh, they'll be just fine, Mister Utonium, see?" Miss Keane reassured the professor, waving a hand in the general direction of the Girls. Blossom had taken to sharing a book with another child. Bubbles had joined in with an arts and craft table, and Buttercup was haphazardly directing some model traffic, creating model accidents with model automobiles on the floor not far away. "We'll see you at noon, okay?"

"Okay… Bye Girls!" the professor shouted to the Girls, waving at them, over the crashing sound of children having fun. Blossom and Bubbles waved back, while Buttercup was too absorbed by the model mayhem she was causing to notice. "Bye! Goodbye!" the professor repeatedly bade farewell, still afraid for the Girls, and what might happen if he wasn't around. Buttercup finally took notice and waved back. "Bye-bye! Bye!"

Miss Keane led him out. Selicia followed. It was nearly always the case - parents anxious to leave their children alone. Sometimes, the children would suffer separation anxiety, but apparently, that was not so with these new kids. Even when the door was closed, the professor was still waving goodbye at his charges, until Selicia eventually managed to pull him out of sight.

For once, things were going swimmingly well. But just beyond the walls of the school, things were building up. Immediately beyond the education institution, the Girls' speed convoy was lined up at the parking lot, ready at a moment's notice to take the Girls to wherever they were most needed. Humvees and men were stationed around the school, as if it was Fort Knox itself. In the City of Townsville itself, important men were meeting to discuss their respective businesses, and the crooks in their own hideouts too, which would put Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup to the test.
Joint Townsville-USDO Project Powerpuff Deployment Talks Transcript 12121988

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Mayor Wilford gives his final decision as to whether Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup should be allowed to fight crime or not.

Joint Townsville-USDO Project Powerpuff Deployment Talks Transcript 12121988


The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

START TRANSCRIPT

(Location: Townsville City Hall)

(Townsville Attendants: Mayor Wilford and staff. Police Commissioner Davis and direct subordinates, including multiple Police Chiefs. The District Attorney and his assistants are present. Key municipal officials are also present.)

(USDO Attendants: Organization Chief Cliff and staff. Chief of Security Blackwater and staff. Liaisons Head Bellum.)

(Time: 1029. The talk is held in the City Hall, as usual, but it is now filled with more attendants than before. Representatives of Townsville and USDO are seated on opposite sides of the city hall. The entrance is guarded by both USDO and Police SWAT teams.)

Mayor's Aide: This meeting is now in session. The agenda of the day will cover the Mayor's decision to either give his go-ahead or no-go to the deployment of Project Powerpuff. Should it be the former, matters raised will include Project Powerpuff's mode of operation, their level of involvement, general strategies to tackle crime in Townsville as well as logistical issues, legal matters and administration. Mayor?

(What follows will be a long speech)

Mayor Wilford: (Stands up with the help of his cane) I would like to start by thanking everyone involved in making my meeting with the Girls, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, possible. This extends to the folks on both sides, the USDO and Townsville. Thank you all. (he sweeps his gaze at everyone, his smile partially hidden by his massive gray moustache.

Because of all your hard work, I was able to meet these fine young lasses in my office. While my first impressions was that their parents, or should I say, the USDO, involvement, hadn't quite picked the right dresses for a formal sit-down tea session with the Mayor (hearty laughter, mainly from
Townsville side), these Girls had made up for it with their lovely beauty, their sweetness, their optimism for life, and for Townsville itself, and whether they are self-conscious of this or not, it matters not. I pride myself for being an excellent judge of character, and I sense that they are sincerely, genuinely, good little girls. They're kind - they'd walked me to my seat even though it was just a few measly yards away. I don't know when's the last time someone did that for me.

(Murmurs on USDO side.)

You know, we talked for a while, me and the girls - Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup - I've made it a point to remember their names, recite them in front of the mirror everyday, making sure I pronounce them right, making sure I matched them to the right Girls, the right colors. I don't know if everyone in the USDO does that, but that's just manners - and I got to learn much about them as much as I'm sure they've learned much about me. And I couldn't help but to keep asking myself: do I want these young little girls to do my men's job?

For a while, I hovered between a yes and a no. These are little girls, for Pete's sake! Now, I don't care what you USDOes think. But then they started talking about a better place, a city where no one's hurting one another. They started talking about how sad the state of affairs in Townsville made them. And just like that, they started talking about helping these people. What they didn't talk about is money. They didn't talk about power, even when they possess the destructive force of an atom bomb at their fingertips. They didn't talk about politics, even if they could hold everyone in this hall hostage right now. They didn't talk about recognition and fame, even though they could easily accumulate those easily through their feats and displays of near-supernatural powers. Even when I extended my hand and asked them 'Don't the three of you want anything for yourselves?'. Blossom did request a single term - and her price isn't so steep. She wants to be loved. I don't know what happened that might have caused her to think that it is otherwise, but I'm willing to bet that the hatred in this city had gotten to her - an innocent girl.

If you don't mind, Alfred, do you mind playing my video for me, if you please?

(Alfred, the Mayor's aide, picks up a remote control and presses a few buttons. A projector screen rolls down like a scroll from the top. He then signaled to the projector man to begin playing a video)

I apologize for the breach of privacy, but then again, it's all security footage, and I'm sure the Girls will forgive me for this trespass. After all, it will show all of you what they really are underneath.

[A video plays on the screen. The following is a transcript of the video:

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT START

Mayor Wilford, with Blossom supporting him by his right arm and Bubbles holding him by the left arm, returns to the Mayor's office from the outside.

Buttercup: Oh man, that was cool! It's like the soldiers down there were like ants, and we get to look down at the city, and- (continues raving as the others speak)

Bubbles: Daddy told us about airplanes, do you have an airplane, Mayor Wilford? He said that we can go really high that we'll land on the clouds!

Blossom: It's really nice of you to give us a ride on your balloon, Mister Mayor!

Mayor Wilford: Oh, don't mention it, you three. You know, Bubbles, I do have an airplane. It sure can't compare to Air Force One but at least you'd get a good view of the city. I can take the three of you one of these days… But for now, I have a little surprise. Can I trouble the three of you to open
the luggage you brought up?

Blossom: No problem, Mister Mayor - It's the least we could do. Right, Girls?

Bubbles: Right! (excited)

Buttercup: Yeah, yeah… (appears disgruntled at Blossom)

(The three Girls go up to the luggage sitting beside the Mayor's desk. The Mayor follows behind them. Blossom is the first to try opening the luggage. She seem to struggle at first, but she tears the lid completely off after that. She looks at the Mayor with a rather troubled look on her face, but the Mayor gives her a nod.)

Mayor Wilford: It's fine, Blossom. I meant for it to come off that way. There wasn't a way to open it. You had to break it open like you did.

(Bubbles and Buttercup each tore off the lid to their luggage like aluminium foil despite the fact that they are reinforced. Mayor Wilford appears impressed by their feat of strength. Blossom pulls out what appears to be a jar of assorted candies standing among steel beams filling the luggage. Bubbles and Buttercup does the same. Blossom looks at Mayor Wilford as if looking for his approval.)

Mayor Wilford: I just thought I should show you three a little something with that. Sometimes, a task can seem harsh, or meaningless, or unrewarding. But sometimes - you never know - there could be a reward waiting for you if you do it right.

Blossom: Mister Mayor, it's really nice of you, but Daddy said that I shouldn't eat these stuff. (She puts the jar of candies on the Mayor's table. Bubbles follow suit, then followed by a reluctant Buttercup) Besides, I don't need a reward for helping you. It's just really nice to make a new friend.

Mayor Wilford: How noble of the three of you. You know, I won't mind the three of you eating at least one of the candies from the jars. I won't tell your father.

(Buttercup makes a move for her jar of candies. Mayor Wilford nods in approval. The ravenette then proceeds to tear the lid off the jar and scoop up some candies, pouring them into a magazine pouch on her vest. She unwraps one of them and pops it into her mouth.

Buttercup: Hmm-mmm! Apple flavored!

Blossom: Thank you, Mister Mayor, but I'll pass. (Smiles at the Mayor)

Bubbles: I like spending time with you, Mayor Wilford. (Smiles toothily at the Mayor)

Mayor Wilford: Why, it's my pleasure too! The three of you have singlehandedly made me feel nostalgic about my children… And grandchildren… Oh, and the great-grandchildren too! Oh how-

(Video cuts off from here)

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT END]
former glory!

(The floor applauds his speech, and slowly subsides)

But we can't rebuild this city on the back of these well-meaning Girls alone, which is why I'm giving them my fullest support. Commissioner Davis, make sure that the police won't ever hinder the Girls. I want full cooperation from the police. In fact, I want all civil departments to give full access and cooperation in their areas of responsibility, effective immediately. I want concerns raised and debated and solved by today, because from today onwards, they will be Townsville's defenders.

District Attorney: Just one thing. The status of these three… girls. We have established that they are neither American citizens nor even persons. That makes their status equivalent to that of animals. Will this change anytime soon, Director Cliff?

Organization Director Cliff: No.

District Attorney: So they can't be put in court, and neither can they even appear in court. Do you realize how big an impediment this will be to the justice system?

Organization Director Cliff: Their statements can be taken as evidence and compared against eyewitness and official accounts.

District Attorney: And I'm not just talking about their influence in court proceedings against defendants. How will these… Three be held responsible should they commit any wrongdoings? You've shown us how powerful they are. But what's going to happen if they turn their fists against the wrong people? Do property damage, especially unwarranted damage?

Chief of Security Blackwater: That's never going to happen-

District Attorney: Yeah, and fairy tales are real, too.

Chief of Security Blackwater: And even if it does, the USDO will be the party chiefly responsible for any 'wrongdoings' they commit.

District Attorney: Right, that's comforting, because we all know how easy it is for a federal agency, even one of your calibre, to come forward and admit a mistake.

Mayor Wilford: (Clears throat) We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Mister Cliff, I'll accept your stance on the Girls' status for now, but I want that issue open for discussion in the future, preferably when things are calmer and friendlier.

Organization Director Cliff: Thank you, Mayor. We can always renew our agreements whenever both parties agree to. Failing that, there's always a year later, when the agreement is up for re-negotiation.

Mayor Wilford: Any other concerns from my city?

Commissioner Davis: Blackwater. You mentioned a few days back that you won't be handing out guns like candy to those kids. My man at the door told me a different story. What's the big idea?

Chief of Security Blackwater: I like to play it safe. Make sure the personnel under me are adequately protected, and that includes their own ability to protect themselves. With those kiddies, I've decided that they should have the tactical flexibility that guns provide.

Commissioner Davis: What's next? You gonna give them bazookas or something? We're talking
civilian lives here, Blackwater! And I don't feel it. I don't think putting the lives of the citizens of Townsville in the hands of a bunch of kids is a good idea!

Chief of Security Blackwater: They're not just any kind of kids. Recently, we've conducted more tests on our subjects. Their vision is far superior to ours. B-47 is even able to use her eyes like a pair of binoculars, with a zoom factor of about 50 times? 100 times? Combined with their superior strength and reflex, firing a gun should be elementary to them.

Commissioner Davis: Have you trained them in the use of firearms?

Chief of Security Blackwater: We're working on it.

Commissioner Davis: 'We're working on it'? Great, just great.

Mayor Wilford: Commissioner. (Davis stops and sits down) I realize that this is a leap of faith for all of us, but quite frankly, the only thing we can do is to leap. I, of all people, should know that. I'm beginning to fear that simply increasing the size of the TPD isn't enough – our situation is beyond ordinary. So, we have to jump to the next rock we know. The Girls and the USDO. It's the one thing we haven't tried, the same as democracy when all other methods of governance had been tried and failed.

Chief of Security Blackwater. You have my permission to arm the Girls. It wasn't reflected in the agreement we're drafting, but it will be.

Commissioner Davis: People are going to die because of this!

Mayor Wilford: People are already dying out there in the streets, Commissioner. I know. The City is ill, and if a fever is what it takes for it to get better, then so be it, if it means a future where no one needs to die. Besides, I trust them not to wreck Townsville and kill its citizens while they try to save it. I can't see those three little girls doing that.

(Silence)

Organization Director Cliff: Liaison Head Bellum, how's the hotline coming along?

Liaison Head Bellum: Good, sir. All the required equipment has been installed. Now, it's just a matter of getting a call.

Organization Director Cliff: Good. Now, from here onwards, I would like you to act as a representative oof the USDO, to stay on in the Townsville City Hall and act as the Mayor's adviser in all things USDO and Project Powerpuff. What do you think, Mayor? This is one way we, the USDO and Townsville, can work together better.

Liaison Head Bellum: I'll gladly take up that position, sir.

Mayor Wilford: I've worked with Bellum before, and the family could always use a new member, now that things are getting complicated. Er- Welcome to the City Hall, Miss Bellum.

(The rest of the meeting goes into details about the more mundane matters of the deployment of Project Powerpuff. Red tape, administrative processes.)

TRANSCRIPT END
Chapter 39: Changes

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the winds of change rush all around them for one last time. Wiggums brought them more stuff they need to fight crime and the Girls train for the day they'd be out there. Selicia makes an unfortunate decision.

A/N: I've decided to put the quote below in the prologue, as it seems to be the overwhelmingly prevailing theme in this story:

"He who fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." - Friedrich Nietszche

Chapter 39: Changes


"Why not the Townsville Mall? It's not so bad," Selicia was in the middle of her suggestion for a date between her and Professor Utonium. And the Girls, of course. "I haven't been there much at all. Just twice."

"Twice?" Professor Utonium said. He'd thought that his wife had been there only once - when Buttercup shoved Bubbles in the movie theater. The both of them were in the car, waiting outside the kindergarten complex. "When's the first time?"

"The night before I scared your pants brown in your room," Selicia said. "I flew straight to Townsville from HQ, the old one, I mean. I went to the mall, had a few cold ones, and just waited there until morning. I actually had the Butterflies, or should I say the Buttercups? It was worse than entering a fire zone. I didn't know how it's going to be like, adopting the Girls as my babies and you as my hubby."

"You waited in the bar for one whole night?" the professor said. He could still remember the morning when Selicia just appeared in his room like a genie from a bottle. She didn't look like a barfly out of an alcoholic dump at all.

"Yeah, and- oh, here they come," Selicia was about to reveal more when she warned the professor about the approaching Girls. They were running towards them, all smiles and laughter. Miss Keane, their new teacher, was waving goodbye to them, and Bubbles waved at her a final time before entering the car. The moment Professor Utonium saw her, he knew that there was something he had to do.

"Watch the Girls for me," the professor instructed Selicia curtly before exiting the family car. He
came up to Miss Keane, whose smile seemed permanently glued to her face.

"Afternoon, Miss Keane," the professor greeted the teacher as he ascended to steps to the door she was standing beside.

"Afternoon, Mister Utonium! Your children's been lovely today," Miss Keane returned the greeting.

"Really? You mean there's nothing out of the ordinary?" the professor questioned vaguely, eyebrow raised. He'd been worried for the past six hours, every minute, that something was going to happen, that the Girls would accidentally or purposefully activate their powers for fun and laughter. He'd dreaded what would happen if they'd done that in a room full of normal children.

"No, like what?" Miss Keane answered, knowing full well what the professor meant, but keeping her awareness to herself. "Your girls were perfect! Perfect, normal little girls."

The professor couldn't help but to stare at her. It was all in the way she said it, how she seemed to have overcompensated for her claims. As if she knew something. Miss Keane stared back, then chuckled.

"That's great, Miss Keane. I'm glad I put my Girls in your care," the professor said, preferring to drop the matter. 'I think I've been cooped up in The House for too long,' he reasoned his paranoia away. His car started honking soon after. He looked back at it, and saw that Selicia had been pressing the horn, hurrying him to get a move on. "Well, I better get going. Thanks again!"

"No problem," Miss Keane said, almost sung to herself those words. It was a tense moment, when she thought that her little secret with the USDO would be prematurely revealed. The pistol in her vest had started feeling far too heavy.

"What was that about?" Selicia questioned the professor the moment he returned to the driver's seat.

"Just asking a few questions, that's all," Professor Utonium said vaguely. What he didn't mention was that he had asked questions he didn't want his Girls to answer.

They were on the way back home soon after that.

"So, what did the three of you learn today?" the professor asked the Girls, who had been chatting among themselves cheerfully, carefree compared to the days before.

"Miss Keane taught us the ABCs!" Blossom exclaimed excitedly. "And I can make words out of them! I can spell my own name!"

"Can I hear it?" Selicia said.

"It's B-L-O-S-S-O and M!" Blossom recited. "Did I spell that right, Daddy?"

"Perfectly, sweetheart. What about the two of you?" the professor asked of the other Girls. Looking at the rear-view mirror, he noticed that Bubbles was bouncing on her seat, but Buttercup had taken to glaring out the window, as if she was going to burn a hole through the door with her eyes alone. Her arms were folded tightly as she leaned against the door.

"I know how to spell my name too!" Bubbles volunteered. "Ooh, ooh, can I spell it? Can I spell it?"

"So shoot," Selicia was almost ordering the bubbly girl. For some reason, she was a little less enthused to hear from her.
"B-U-B-L… E… S?" Bubbles recited, and the further she went along her name, the less confident she became. Something was wrong.

"You're missing a B, Bubbles," Selicia corrected bluntly.

"Oh," Bubbles replied.

"It's B-U-B-B-L-E-S, Bub," the professor corrected.

"I'm sorry," Bubbles apologized, looking a little down. It was a reminder of her own shortcoming - something Miss Keane was able to skilfully avoid the mention of. In the eyes of the teacher, Bubbles was already a quick study by the standards of the class, but within the family, she was at the bottom of the totem.

"Don't be, honeysuckle. It's why you're in school," the professor comforted her. "What about you, Buttercup? Do you know how to spell your name?"

"I don't want to spell my name," Buttercup retorted, still staring out the window. She hated this, hated how Blossom had become the centre of attention again. And now that the subject of names had been brought up, she couldn't help but to remember her very first minutes in this world - which was tainted by the professor's disregard for her.

"Why not? It's a beautiful name," the professor countered. He had all but forgotten the reason why he gave Buttercup her name, or rather, the lack of reason why. In his mind, it was a beautiful name, and that was the end of that.

"It's meaningless," Buttercup said in a hateful tone, her eyes no longer burning, but… Something else. This time, the professor found it hard to read, and that scared him. He had always known how his Girls felt just by their look, and it wasn't a difficult feat.

"Buttercup, darling, every name has a meaning-" Selicia tried to help, but Buttercup would not have it.

"You don't know anything, Mommy," Buttercup said callously. "You weren't there."

"Buttercup!" Professor Utonium had started off raising his voice, but cooled it when he realized that shouting at the ravenette could just make things worse. What Buttercup said had jogged his memory. "Buttercup-"

"No, it's fine. She's right. I wasn't there," Selicia said. "I'm sorry."

"Buttercup, do you love me?" Professor Utonium asked earnestly. The green-eyed girl rolled her eyes.

"Yes, Dad, of course," Buttercup replied positively.

"And I gave you that name. Doesn't that mean something?" the professor tried to reason with the brooding little girl.

"Pfff… I guess," Buttercup agreed, sort of.

"You know, it's the name of a flower too, Buttercup," Selicia added, trying to cheer the girl up.

"It is?" Buttercup said, somewhat surprised, but not enough to distract her from the idea she had that she was given a second-rate name because the attention her father gave her was second best, or, next
to Blossom and Bubbles, third best. Professor Utonium took a glance at the rear-view mirror again, but all he saw was an alarming lack of youthful sparkle.

"So, what else did you learn in class today?" the professor tried to change the subject and perhaps Buttercup's mood.

"The 123s, I guess, but we already knew that stuff," Buttercup moaned her response.

"She made it easier for us to remember it. We sung a song about it," Bubbles added, but she sounded more like she was defending school from Buttercup than she was recalling happy memories from their first day. "I like singing."

"Yeah, and Miss Keane said that we have 'natural singing voices'," Blossom said further. "Buttercup too, right, Buttercup?"

"Yeah," Buttercup said curtly, not liking the idea of even speaking to Blossom after how she took the limelight. It was all better back in Kindergarten, when equal numbers of children would flock to each of them, and Miss Keane knew how to distribute her attention to twenty students all at once.

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


When they were wheeling up to their House, there were multiple vans parked up front, all marked with the new eagle and shield symbol of the USDO. They did not look like security, due to the lack of shaded windows and the civilian make of the vehicles. Coming up to the door, Professor Utonium and his family opened it, to find men and women walking up and down the house, from the first to second story, and the basement. They were all in work clothes, jumpsuits and construction helmets.

In the living room stood Wiggums, the Chief of Logistics. Professor Utonium approached him. "Wiggums? What's going on?"

"Oh hi, Thomas," Wiggums turned and greeted. He noticed only too late that he was with his family, and he had slipped up with the name, but went with the flow. "And hello, Girls. Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup and um…"

"Selicia Goodwin," the security officer introduced herself. At least Buttercup found it bizarre that a friend of her father knew nothing about his wife. Blossom was beginning to get the same impressions as her wayward sister. Bubbles, meanwhile, just liked having friendly faces around.

"Well? Why are all these men tromping around in our House?" the professor questioned his estranged friend again.

"You mean other than delivering extra sets of uniforms and gear? We're installing some stuff, important stuff that's going to help the Girls save Townsville," Wiggums explained. He lead the family to a phone in the living room, which had a corner to itself. It was an odd thing, a colorful clown-faced phone that wouldn't look out of place in a kid's room. It even looked almost non-functional, with no dial pad at all. The receiver was red against the white body of a feminine-eyed, red-nosed clown impression. "A little brainwave I had, you know, since it practically belongs to the Girls." He scratched his head and adjusted his ponytail before explaining further. "We've installed a phone in all major locations throughout the house. There's one more on the second floor corridor, in their room and down in the lab."

Wiggums brought them to the Girls' room, where the clown phone was situated near the windows,
and had its own pedestal. Unhooking the brick-like mobile phone on his belt, he dialed a certain cryptic number and waited a few seconds. The phone started ringing like a buzzer: "Brzzz! Brzzz! Brzzz!" and the nose, which was actually a warning light, started flashing red.

"Cool!" Buttercup exclaimed. The Girls had gone over to the clown phone and started obsessing over it.

"It used to be louder, and Blackwater wanted me to install sirens throughout The House as well, but I talked him out of it. You can hear the buzzing throughout the entire House," Wiggums said, and took him out to prove it. They could hear it in the corridor, in every room upstairs, faint when behind a door, but clearly audible. Downstairs, the buzzing continued. "Only sirens I installed are in the backyard and lawn, but they sound just the same."

"Sure, Wiggums, but who's calling?" the professor asked.

"It'll probably be the your friends in the speed convoy," Wiggums said, while his eyes and finger was pointed to Selicia. "From what I gather, the boys in those Lamborghini gets the call from any senior officials in the City, and they'll call the Girls."

"And how did you 'gather this?" Professor Utonium interrogated.

"I've been handing out those shiny new flip-phones to them. I'm envious," the Chief of Logistics said, holding up his brick-sized mobile phone. "It's way better than this club. Speaking of flip-phones, I'm supposed to issue each of you one of those too, in case you guys were out like the perfect American Dream family you are."

They went back inside, and sat around the dining table. Wiggum's workers had already left the phones on the table. There were ten of them, five of which were redundant. They were brandless, likely covertly ordered from the most cutting-edge of cell phone manufacturers. Wiggum pulled a box from the centre of the table and opened it. "I've already installed the microchip that will slave the phone to a number." He flipped open the device, pulled a small antenna out and pressed a button. The small digital screen lit up. The device wasn't even as big as a handheld radio, and it wouldn't be some time before the public could purchase such a wondrous piece of technology at an affordable price. He began demonstrating the use of the phone. How to access the many different functions of the phone, how to call and send messages, how to charge it. He had already saved some phone numbers into the phones, linking them all together and with the speed convoy PTF soldiers. He even showed them how to access the only game in the phone - Snakes, a simple thing about a long box eating pixels to increase a number in the corner, causing the long box, the 'snake', to grow longer, until it became harder for the 'snake' to get over itself. Collision meant starting over. The Girls began playing it voraciously.

"Forty-seven… This is for you, Blossom. Forty-eight, so Buttercup and forty-nine, so Bubbles. Sixty-three and sixty-four should be for you and Selicia then," he said, handing out the phones.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Buttercup stood against Blossom, both their arms raised before them in a defensive posture. They were both dressed in their SWAT gear, and on top of that. When the former rushed the latter, Blossom tried to grab Buttercup's punching arm, but she was too fast. She was hit squarely in the chest, sending her flying a few yards away, even when Buttercup had already 'pulled back' on her punch, though in the usual Buttercup fashion, her definition of 'pulling back' was a little loose.
"Buttercup! What did I tell you!" Selicia chided routinely, but the green-eyed Girl did little more than apologize halfheartedly. She was enjoying it, hurting her own sister. It felt like vengeance for all the times Blossom stole Daddy from her. Of course, she didn't tell that to anyone. She would just say that she'd had trouble holding back most of her strength because of how strong she was. "And Blossom, please, for the third time, stay mobile! You're not a tree, you're a super-powered little girl! Try again, the both of you!" Meanwhile, Bubbles sat in the sidelines, looking like she was about to be examined for a black belt in Karate even though nothing much was expected of her yet.

Buttercup and Blossom returned to their original position on the lab floor once more, putting their arms up and spreading their feet on the two dimensions of the floor for extra balance. Buttercup, who had thus far enjoyed success using the same old tactic of brute force, did the same thing again, rushing Blossom with a power-packed and intimidating punch. This time, Blossom tried to do as Mommy had instructed, trying to sidestep the blow and seize Buttercup by the arm despite her fear of her sister's brutality, but Buttercup had tracked Blossom's sideways movement and she homed in for the punch all the same.

Blossom flew a few yards away again, though not as far this time, and when she was down, Buttercup launched a flurry of punches at Blossom, her famous 'machinegun punches' move. Blossom could block a few of it, but not all of it.

"Stop!" Selicia ordered, and Buttercup stepped away from Blossom. But the security officer did nothing this time to chastise Buttercup; besides, whenever she did, it was largely for appearances. She had decided that Buttercup was her favorite. She was in love with her, how tenacious she was, how strong and detached she was from her emotions. Selicia had even gone on to think that Buttercup's attitude was something even she could look up to, as she had spent many years to even begin to approach the little girl's ruthlessness. She couldn't help but to think that, had she been this way younger, her childhood would have been salvageable.

Selicia marched up to Blossom, who was just scrambling to her feet. She seized Blossom by the arm and pulled her up – she deserved that much. At the very least, Blossom was persistent, and her intelligence was nothing to scoff at even if she could be a bit of an insufferable know-it-all and snotty little snob in the woman's eyes. Bubbles, on the other hand, reminded her of everything she hated in girls. Herself. Selicia's extreme girlishness was what sealed her in a never-ending cycle of abuse and bullying and victimhood in her youth. And here was Bubbles, with her God-given superpowers, acting dainty despite her ability to wipe out an army of abusive men.

"Is it really that hard to outwit your sister?" Selicia said to Blossom. No, this would not do. As much as she wanted to continue favoring her little Buttercup, Blossom's repeated defeat at her hands wouldn't teach her anything. Putting her mouth close to Blossom's ear and covering it with a hand, she whispered more tips to the red-haired girl. Buttercup did not expect this, and in the heat of the moment, didn't use her secret enhanced hearing. "Fade to the left this time, and mirror your moves by using your left hand first. I know you're ambidextrous, Blossom. You can do it."

Blossom and Buttercup returned to their original position once more. Flushed with victory four times over, Buttercup was ecstatic. Saliva dripped from a corner of her mouth as she stared hungrily at Blossom, wishing, more than anything else, to pummel her once more. She grinned maniacally as she charged Blossom once more, this time her posture sloppy as she did a long wind-up of her right arm.

Following Selicia's advice, Blossom changed the direction of her dodge to the left, and when Buttercup's expression changed from psychotic smirk to surprise, she seized her by the arm and pulled her to the ground. Twisting Buttercup's arm around her back, Blossom got on top of Buttercup, who, while kicking and screaming, tried to pull her arm away, but Blossom's arm lock
was perfectly executed. There was no getting out of that one.

"Gotcha, sister!" Blossom said triumphantly, a smile spreading on her lips as she twisted Buttercup's arm more, getting her to grunt and squeal more. She couldn't resist a little payback for the four times she was floored so violently.

"That's not fair!" Buttercup grunted on the floor, her voice sounded squashed with Blossom on top of her.

Selicia came up to them, clapping her hands.

"That's my Blossom!" Professor yelled proudly from his desk.

"Well done, Blossom. You can get off poor Buttercup now," she said. Blossom obeyed without a question and let go of Buttercup, who sat up, looking harassed. "Let this be your lesson, Buttercup darling. Brute force alone isn't enough!" As much as she loved Buttercup so much, she simply couldn't agree with the doctrine the wayward girl had been nursing for weeks. It was one thing to be ruthless, another to be tactically simple and predictable.

"It sure was enough the last four times!" Buttercup countered, and got to her feet, priming to start again. She didn't like it that Blossom had actually won her in her own game, in something she liked to do very much. She didn't like it one bit. After all, she had already taken away everything else. "Let me try again, Mom! I'll floor her ten times over! And I'll do it before dinner!"

"Maybe tomorrow, Buttercup, it's Bubbles' turn," Selicia said. Much as she hate to take away what she wanted, she had to look after Bubbles as well – and Bubbles was in dire straits compared to them.

"But-" Buttercup 's insistence was cut short by Mommy's own.

"Tomorrow, Buttercup. But I think you're not hearing me right. Because you get to go up against Bubbles next," Selicia said, and she couldn't help but to grin. She relished the chance to correct a mistake she wasn't able to erase all those years ago – through Bubbles. She was going to do whatever it took to beat the overabundance of innocence out of her. The security officer then motioned for Bubbles to come forward. Bubbles took dainty steps towards her Mom and sisters.

"Bubbles, it's your turn now. I want you to try and attack Buttercup."

"Um, Mom, shouldn't Bubbles and I do this together? Buttercup's too tough for Bubbles," Blossom tried to speak up for her timid sister.

"Girls, when you're out there, you don't get to decide who you're attacking and who's attacking you. You shouldn't expect that here either," Selicia said. She gently nudged at Blossom to take a seat. Blossom went to the sidelines. Professor Utonium watched intently, now afraid for Bubbles.

Selicia backed away, and Buttercup and Bubbles got into position, facing each other. And they waited. And waited. Selicia marched up to them. "Bubbles, what on Earth are you waiting for?"

"But Mom… I don't want to hit Buttercup! She's my sister!" Bubbles whined.

"Oh, don't worry about me, Bubbles," Buttercup said menacingly, her unnerving smile returning as she was anticipating greater pleasure from facing off with Bubbles. "I'll be fine."

"See, Bubbles? Buttercup'll be fine," Mommy said, even though she knew what Buttercup meant. It was all but certain that Buttercup would wipe the floor with Bubbles.
"But Mom-" Bubbles persisted, her arms already down. Her persistence infuriated Selicia.

"Buttercup, if Bubbles doesn't attack you in ten seconds, punch her," the woman said to her favorite before turning her back and getting to the sidelines.

Even with this ultimatum, and despite it, Bubbles shrank away from Buttercup even more. It was different from pushing a football sled into a wall, or striking the head of a dummy. This was her sister, her family, and family members don't fight.

"Bubbles, what are you waiting for?" Buttercup whispered to her sister even as her fists we're up, and trembling from her anticipation for glorious violence. She could almost feel for her. Almost. "Don't you want to hit me? Like what I did to you in the theater?"

"But… I forgave you," Bubbles said, her fists trembling from fear as well, though it was a fear at the thought of violence. Her fists sank, as they weren't going to hit anyone.

Buttercup rushed forward and delivered a punch that went straight for Bubbles' chest. Bubbles threw her arms in front of her more from shock than skill. She felt a jab in her lower ribs after that, which sent her rolling yards away. Buttercup returned her foot to the floor. She had given Bubbles a side-kick, something she'd been itching to try since Mommy had taught her that new move an hour ago.

Bubbles sat up almost immediately, clutching her kidney, her face screwed up in agony. Buttercup did not let up. Taking rapid steps, she tried to punt Bubbles across the face, but Bubbles had thrown up an arm again.

"Stop! Buttercup! Just stop!" it wasn't Selicia shouting, but Professor Utonium, who was running forward to the Girls. Selicia put out a hand to stop him. "What are you doing, Selicia?!"

"Bubbles need to learn, darling. I'd rather it sooner with us rather than later with the monsters out there!" Selicia said. Professor Utonium tried to get past his 'wife', but she was far too strong for him.

However, Buttercup did stop hitting Bubbles at least. She had seen her father's face, and if nothing else, Daddy was God, and she didn't want to upset the one she loved.

"Thomas darling, I know how you feel. I feel it too but it's all for the best," Selicia said, and she wasn't exactly lying. She did feel something for Bubbles, even if it wasn't as much as the love she had for Buttercup. Professor Utonium continued to struggle for a time, but eventually gave up.

Blossom, however, had slipped past Selicia while she was busy with her 'husband', and the wisest of the three Girls got up to her sisters. "Bubbles, are you okay?"

Bubbles did not reply. Instead, she'd erupted in tears, sinking to the floor and crying there on her side. It was all too much for her; the violence, fighting between family, even if it was all simulated – 'Why can't everyone just play with dolls all day long?' was a thought that kept repeating in her head, and it didn't just apply to her family, but the wide world. She simply couldn't understand the need for punching and kicking.

Blossom extended a hand, and when Bubbles wouldn't take it, she reached for Bubbles' hand instead. Selicia left the professor behind as he sank to his knees, and ran up to Blossom, slapping her hand away with all her might, knowing that the Girls were (relatively) resistant to pain.

"Ow! Mom! Why did you do that?!" Blossom exclaimed sharply.

"Don't help Bubbles up!" Selicia hissed at Blossom.
"But why not? She's down on the floor," Blossom said.

"Let her learn how to get up on her own," Selicia explained, before turning to the blue-eyed Girl on the floor. "Bubbles, get up. On your feet."

It was as if Bubbles did not hear her, or didn't want to. Getting up would mean starting it all over again, fighting with Buttercup, using violence.

Time passed, and Selicia has had it. Winding up her leg, she booted Bubbles across the bum, sending her sliding a foot or two on the floor. Bubbles sat up, shrinking away from Mommy as she took steps closer to her. Reluctantly, the timid little girl in SWAT suit got up, holding an arm with her other hand as tears continued to pour down her face.

"Bubbles, stop crying. You don't deserve to cry," Selicia scolded her adopted daughter. She grabbed her by an arm and shook her again. "Seriously, stop crying like a baby! You lil'-" Selicia had almost swore in front of the Girls, stopping herself just short of it.

"Mom, stop, please!" Bubbles cried as she tore herself away from her. But Selicia was thinking of the opposite of that.

"Buttercup, Blossom, I think the two of you are done down here. Go up and get your dinner. Bubbles and I are going to have a little talk," Selicia said. Blossom stood rooted to the ground, afraid for Bubbles. She had all the enhanced abilities in the world, and yet she felt helpless in this situation. Buttercup had to pull Blossom away, until she eventually relented. "And take your father with you!"

Professor Utonium was just as helpless; it was a conundrum harder than nuclear physics. The impossibility of it all was paralyzing, as if he was a King on a chess board, checkmated by his opponent, and Selicia was just another piece, not necessarily against him. He had always pampered the Girls, but even he knew that treating the Girls like royalty alone wouldn't help them when they were out there in Townsville, AKA Crimesville. He abhorred the measures Selicia took to train Bubbles, and yet, knowing how naturally pacifistic and overly good-natured Bubbles was, it seemed like the only way. And the clock was ticking - Silverslick had already plunged Bubbles deep down on his rating system, and all it would take for his blue-eyed daughter to go beyond the point of no return was a few more missteps and failures.

When Blossom and Buttercup each held one of the professor's hands and led him away, he could do nothing but follow his less-troubled daughters.

"Alright, let's try something else," Selicia said as she was bent down, holding Bubbles by her chin with one hand. "Why don't you try and hit me."

Bubbles shook her head. "No!" she cried. "I don't want to I l-l-love-"

"YOU LOVE ME?" Selicia screamed at Bubbles, who shook as if a lightning struck nearby. "You barely even know me, Bubbles."

"But you're my Mommy," Bubbles cried.

Selicia unclasped Bubbles' helmet and took it off, tossing the kevlar aside. "Hit me. Now. Listen to Mommy."

"N-no, please," Bubbles cried. "I'll hurt you."

"If that's what it takes. Hit me."
Bubbles did not, but instead stood stock-still, her hands folded on her tummy.

"And what if I hit you? Are you going to hit me now?" Selicia snarled, raising a hand, threatening exactly to strike her. Bubbles stared at her hand, afraid, but shook her head. To Selicia, this was infuriating. As a kid, she had read comic books depicting superheroes and superheroines, and for a long time, she had wished for their powers, if only to punish her parents for mistreating her. Bubbles was living her dream, and yet she refused to use what she had been blessed with - and it wasn't as if her abilities were to be used for evil.

Selicia's palm whipped across the air, landing hard on Bubbles' cheek, sailing across it at such a force that it would have knocked out a baby tooth had Bubbles been a normal child. Instead, it'd only knocked Bubbles off her feet with no injuries. "Hit me, darling. Or I will keep hitting you. And believe me, it's worse out there!"

Bubbles' solution to her proposition was a renewed stream of tears.

Upstairs, the rest of the family wasn't eating. The food smelled tasteless owing to what they knew was happening below.

"I can't take this anymore!" the professor shouted, half-crazed, before running towards the lab airlock, leaving Blossom and Buttercup behind at the dining table.

The professor could hear Selicia's mad screaming and Bubbles' whimpers from the stairs to the lab. Skipping two or three steps at a time, he flew down the stairs quickly; the only thing on his mind was to put a stop to Bubbles' suffering as soon as possible.

"C'mon, hit me! I know you want to hit me, so hit me!" he could hear Selicia bellowing, followed by the sound of whipping and flesh hitting flesh.

At the last flight of stairs, the professor could see what was happening. Bubbles was on the floor. 'Was that blood on her lips? How could it be possible?' his mind screamed bloody murder. He later discovered that Bubbles had bit herself when Selicia had slapped her one too many times.

"Selicia, stop!" the professor screamed. He dropped another few more steps, but in his haste and focus on Bubbles' welfare, had landed wrongly on his right foot. He went tumbling down the stairs.

"Dad!" Bubbles cried, and ran at top speed to him, catching him before he went all the way down. Still, the damage was done. Selicia stood where she was, shocked. How did things turn out so wrong? When all she had were the best of intentions? Honestly, she had expected Bubbles to break quickly, but she had remained surprisingly stubborn throughout, more so than Buttercup.

The day did not get any better after that. Dinner was eaten in silence. Playtime after dinner lacked the usual laughter. Instead of doing anything 'fun', the Girls had spent their playtime on Miss Keane's homework instead: a general chart of the human anatomy, made easy by a poster she'd printed for each of them which simplified things.

At bedtime, an argument erupted in the professor's bedroom as parent screamed at parent, and the Girls were right outside when it happened. Buttercup could hear it best, and numerous unpleasant things were spoken. Numerous lies were uncovered.

It was then that Buttercup learned that they were 'accidents', and that because of that, they weren't 'exactly custom-designed to fight crime' at all. At least, that was all she learned before she tuned out, out of shock.
Selicia would stomp out after that, but long after the Girls had retreated to their bedrooms at super-speed. Going down the stairs and to the living room, the security officer crashed on the couch there to sleep through the night instead.

Bubbles, whose waterworks had been leaky ever since she was down at the labs, took her place in the professor's bed. Father and adopted daughter fell asleep clinging to each other to weather through this dark time - and the real storm hadn't even arrived yet.
Chapter 40: Voices in the Night

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup makes a new, unlikely friend.

Chapter 40: Voices in the Night

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Selicia tipped a can of cold beer, finishing half of it in one gulp. She was sitting on the floor, in her red night gown, nestled between the sofa and the coffee table. A natural defensive reaction, perhaps, after what had happened. Beside her were another two empty cans, half-crushed and carelessly thrown. The coffee table hosted what remained of a six pack, and she intended to finish it all up. Her supposed husband, who was supposed to have her back, was a teetotaller for the most part, and the beer and wine that Wiggums had stocked the fridge with at the beginning of this 'next phase of Project Powerpuff' had remained untouched.

To say that her incident with Bubbles hadn't affected her would be a lie - she was well aware of how much pain she had caused, both to Bubbles and Thomas, and she was just as aware that she was becoming exactly like how her parents were. Her father would often whip her with his belt, slap her or straight-up beat her up. Her mother suffered some of the same fate, and would join in sometimes. But she also knew the difference between she and her parents - they did it out of hate, seeing her as a drain on their bank account, an unwanted byproduct of their relationship and a no-good child with no good talents. Selicia thought that she was doing the right thing - after all, wasn't that how the military and police train their personnel? It was either Bubbles suffer now, or get buried in an early grave later - it was an unshakable logic to her, and yet…

She was a mess now. Whatever water she'd drink had gone through her eyes. It seemed as if her time in this 'perfect family' was done, and there was no way out of the hole she had to dig under herself, for the sake of Bubbles – she had dug her own early grave for the sake of who? Her least favorite of the three children of Project Powerpuff? 'What a tactical genius you are, Goodwin. Good fucking win, Selicia,' she thought to herself derisively.

"Mom?" a young, feminine voice called out in the dark. Selicia turned to the source of it, her vision blurry from being inebriated. She recognized that voice, but her brain wasn't exactly greased very well by alcohol.

"Buttercup?" Selicia slurred, horrified of being discovered like this. She'd thought that the Girls were asleep. In her state, she hadn't thought of how what appeared to be her abuse of Bubbles could have changed the family's habits. She scrambled to sit up higher and straighter, perhaps get up on the couch, but there was just too much alcohol in her system.

"Mom, are you okay?" Buttercup asked, her voice sounding somewhat concerned, at least as much
as Buttercup could sound that way. The tomboy came closer, and saw for herself the mess Selicia was in. The TV, which broadcasted only static, had lit the area around them well enough.

"Don't look at me, Buttercup, please," Selicia begged her favorite, ashamed of the position she'd put herself in. Buttercup did the exact opposite, depositing herself beside her, sliding under her arms and resting her head on her shoulder. "I've messed up, Buttercup."

"I don't understand, Mom," Buttercup said.

"I've hurt Bubbles, and now your father hates me, and I don't know if I can stay in this house anymore," Selicia cried, which stunned Buttercup. The young girl hadn't seen a lot of adults cry before, either because they'd hidden the fact well or they'd long run away to avoid being seen crying. Neither could she imagine a House without Mom, now that she had found her niche in it. "All I wanted to do was to help your sister, I guess I've done it all wrong and I don't know how else to do it and-" Selicia cried too much and couldn't speak any further.

"But you didn't do anything wrong, Mom," Buttercup contended, and without lying, too. "Bubbles deserve to be beaten up for being that way. I don't know what Daddy sees in her. She's so useless."

"You really think so?" Selicia said as she wiped away her tears. It felt comforting that at least one other family member could still appreciate her.

"Yeah. I think it would be a lot better if Blossom and Bubbles didn't exist," Buttercup confessed. "They're always taking Daddy away from me, and they don't deserve him as much as I do."

"What about me? Do you want me around?" Selicia asked, this time just out of pure and personal gratification.

"You're the greatest, Mom," Buttercup said as she hugged her mother tightly. "You're cool, and- and you taught me how to fight, and even Daddy couldn't do that. And I like your hair."

"It's yours too, you know," Selicia said as she caressed Buttercup's hair, which was styled after her own. "Thank you, sweetie. But Buttercup?"

"Hmm?"

"Don't talk like that about your sisters again," Selicia said. "You may be the toughest among them, but you still need them, even Bubbles. Blossom's smart and Bubbles-"

"What would I need Bubbles for? She's useless! She's stupid and weak and-" Buttercup exclaimed.

"Buttercup, listen to Mommy, okay?" Selicia said, her voice still shaking. She tried to think of something, but couldn't quite put her finger on it. It didn't help that she couldn't think straight because of what she'd been drinking. So she'd just reach for her closest, more instinctual thoughts, and Bubbles really did seem useless. "Bubbles- She-Maybe she'll come around sooner or later. She has to. Besides, with Bubbles around, you'll know for sure you're the best, right?"

"Right…” Buttercup concurred, with a smirk spreading on her face, and she could imagine what Mommy meant. Bubbles' uselessness, when compared to her aptitude in combat, would make her look good. Besides, it meant that there would always be easy pickings whenever they fought down in the lab. It felt good, having someone inferior close by that she could push around and assert her dominance.

Selicia and Buttercup sat in the living room for a while, enjoying each other's company, being close to one another. "Is Daddy really going to chase you out of the House?" Buttercup asked.
"I don't know," Selicia slurred. "We'll have to see." She fell asleep after that. Buttercup did not. The lack of positiveness and finality in her last words for the night didn't sit well with her.

"Mom? Mom!" Buttercup tried to shake her mother awake, but Selicia was completely out. For a while, Buttercup sat by her side, alone once more, despite being beside her mother, despite The House having five occupants. The uncertainty stewed in her, the fear of losing one of the two she loved (and no, they weren't her sisters) preyed on her undisciplined, insecure mind.

She needed a distraction.

Walking up to the front door, she tried to open it, but found it stuck fast. She examined the door. Locks. Not just one of them, but two of them. Probably installed by Daddy to prevent them from leaving. But if Buttercup could figure out how to shoot herself in the chest with a pistol on her own, a door wasn't a problem. Reaching for the first one, she pulled at it, but it wouldn't slide. The lever was an L-shape. So she lifted it and slid it to the left successfully.

The second lock was out of her reach. Afraid that getting a chair would produce too much noise or leave her with too little time to react and hide her activities if she was discovered, She pulled herself up by the door knob one-handed, ascending within reach of the lock and unlocked the door.

Donning her coat, she went outside into the freezing winter cold and searched for her first kill. She had fond memories of it, how she silenced the cat quick and permanently when it threatened her, despite her trying to be nice to it.

She remembered that it was somewhere in the bushes, under a snow mound. Yes, yes! There it was! Buttercup started digging, exhuming the little feline grave she'd made.

And there it was. The cat was still there, well-preserved by the bitter cold. Its fur was orange, and it reminded her of Blossom's beautiful, cascading waist-length hair. The comparison made her consider killing her sisters, Blossom and Bubbles, and taking Daddy and Mommy for herself. Without Blossom, Daddy would always be hers forever, and without Bubbles, Daddy wouldn't be mad at Mommy.

"Should I?" she asked the dead cat, but she was really asking herself. When she realized what she had been doing, she chided herself for such an act of madness, and sat beside the dead cat, leaning against the wall. She was just too preoccupied with her family to even play with her carcass.

"Buttercup..." a strange voice called out to her, right out of the blue and in the dark, that even Buttercup could feel a shiver down her spine upon hearing it, and it wasn't the cold that tingled her. The troubled little girl looked all around her, trying to find out where the speaker was. But there was no one around, and it wasn't because she couldn't see. Far from it.

"Buttercup..." the voice whispered to her again. A strange voice that spoke in a feminine, yet male voice - ethereal and dreamy.

"W-who's there?" Buttercup warned her shadow onlooker - wherever he was.

"Down here, Buttercup..." the voice said again, this time the direction much more clearer, and it did indeed came from below her.

It'd come from the cat.

And when she was looking down at the cat, it lifted its head rigidly to regard its murderer, Buttercup stared at it, her heart racing, her quickened breath obvious in the wind because of the misting.

"Should you what... Buttercup?"
Buttercup fell on her butt when she realized that the cat carcass had talked. "Y-you can talk?"

"Why yes… Yes… Aren't I talking now, darling girl?" the dead cat said, eyes still pinned on her, those almond, slit eyes below a cracked skull.

"But how?" Buttercup asked the dead cat, still conscious of how wrong it all felt.

"Hmm… I suppose you're the one to ask that question? When you can run at the speed of a car and hear the drop of a pin from a mile away?" the cat countered Buttercup's question with another, defeating her quickly. "Why the glum face, Buttercup?"

"It's just- Dad and Mom had a fight, and it's all because of that stupid Bubbles!" Buttercup cried. She could feel ice forming on her cheek. "Now I'm scared that I'm going to lose Mom. And she's cool and stuff."

"But what about your Daddy, honeypot? Isn't he enough?" the cat said.

"He's always spending time with Blossom and Bubbles, those… Those…" Buttercup hissed, but she couldn't find a strong enough word for them.

"SLUTS? WHORES?" the cat completed her sentence for her with such hatred that it'd shaken Buttercup.

"Yeah, yeah!" Buttercup agreed, though she didn't quite know what those words meant. "I wish I can be alone with Daddy…"

"Does that have something to do with your first question?" the cat inquired.

"I was thinking of killing Blossom and Bubbles, but…" Buttercup hesitated.

"But?"

"I know that Daddy will hate me for it, and Mom doesn't want me to," Buttercup said. "So do you think I should?"

"Of course not, YOU-! Silly little honey bunny…" the cat suddenly yelled, but calmed down quickly. It'd raised an eyebrow with Buttercup, but she quickly dismissed it as a quirk associated with dead cats that had come alive all of a sudden. She could imagine that being killed and buried under a sheet of cold snow for more than two weeks would be an unpleasant experience. "Just… Not yet. But yes… Yes… You should kill them. After all, they are bad sisters for what they've done to you and your life. Yes… They are evil for hoarding all that fatherly love to themselves… Just… Not… Yet. There will be a time and place for that. But the question is… Do you really love your Dad? Is he even that good a father to begin with? Just some questions, Buttercup… that you should be asking yourself…"

"But… Dad has always been good to me. He's always there for me…" Buttercup said, but then it slowly dawned on her that her preconceptions about her father might be more idealized fantasy and wishful thinking than reality.

"Is he?" the cat reinforced her epiphany. "I might have lived a short life, but I know for a fact that a good father does not ostracize his child, even if he has more than one…"

"But- He- Daddy's not-" Buttercup stuttered, not liking the implications. If Daddy wasn't good, then who would be?
"He'd hurt you, hadn't he? I can tell... Think of all those times he'd swept you aside, wound you gravely with his words... A good father would never do that..." the cat continued assailing Buttercup's impression of Professor Utonium.

"No! He can't be bad! He can't be! You're wrong!" Buttercup resisted, covering her ears as she shook her head. But the whispers would not go away.

"I don't expect you to take it well. Bad news can be bitter pills to swallow... Take your time with it, Buttercup. Think about what I said... After all, I'm only looking out for you..." the cat said, with a tone of finality, his voice somehow still loud and clear even when Buttercup was covering her ears. It was as if the cat's voice was coming from inside her. She stopped covering her ears. The cat had only been looking out for her. Surely that couldn't be a bad thing?

"Even after I killed you?" Buttercup said.

"Oh, it's just a minor inconvenience. I don't mind," the cat said in a trivial manner, as if death was inconsequential. At this point, it now seemed that way, considering that a dead cat could speak to her.

"Thank you," Buttercup said.

"Don't mention it, but most important of all... Don't forget to bury me. The others won't understand you the way I do. I'll see you again, yes?" the cat said.

"Why not? Bye-bye, kitty!" Buttercup promised. The cat laid its head back down on its snowy deathbed, and before she knew it, it was back to how it was. The little girl covered it back up, as the cat had suggested she do.

Later, when she returned to bed after putting her mother on the couch and covering her with a blanket, kissing her goodnight, she couldn't fall asleep for the life of her. After all, she was lying down beside a very special little girl. A little girl so special that she had overshadowed Buttercup entirely. Getting up and lying on her side, propping her head up as she stared down at Blossom, she who slept in the centre, took the centre stage in the family, and had everything handed to her, Buttercup couldn't help but to entertain the few ideas she had on how to kill her. Because why not? It was the perfect opportunity, with Bubbles (the other special little girl) sleeping in Daddy's room and no one else in hers.

Perhaps she could punch her as many times as she could in the head before she could react? No, that would be too unreliable and messy. Steal her father's duranium scalpel and plunge it into her neck? But where would she even begin to find the surgical knife? Then again, it could be traced back to her. Perhaps simply choke her for as long as it would take for her to asphyxiate, be it ten minutes, or fifteen, or twenty? Yes, yes, that'd be the ticket! It wouldn't leave behind a mess, and all she had to say was that she didn't know Blossom had died! No, that wouldn't work either; she'd fight back, and then there'd be too much noise.

During this time, she couldn't help but to wander back to the cat's advice. 'Not yet,' it'd said. 'There is a time and place for killing one's sisters.' Inevitably, this led her back to what Daddy and Mommy thought, what their wishes were. Could she really bring herself to disobey them? No, she couldn't, partly because she knew she'd lose them both if she'd made an attempt on her sisters' lives. There was still too much to think about what the cat said about Daddy, and Mommy was dear to her, as much as anyone could be dear to Buttercup; the woman had earned her respect and showed her how beneficial she was to her.

Buttercup caressed Blossom's hair instead, that luscious, hefty, flowing mop of red river that had
impressed so many. The pink-eyed girl had even slept with her bow and hair clip still holding her hair together. Talk about being vain! She then slid her fingers down to her cheek, enjoying the smoothness of her skin. If it was Mommy and Daddy's wish that Blossom be alive, then their wish was her command.

"How lucky you are, Blossom, my dear sister," Buttercup whispered to her sleeping alpha-sister. The red-haired girl mumbled something in her sleep, perhaps in her dreams, as she shifted in bed. She kissed Blossom in the forehead, not as a sign of affection to the sister but as a sign of obedience to her parents, before turning away from her rival sibling.

With her mind made up, Buttercup plopped herself down back on her pillow. At the very least, she'd still have playmates in her room and sparring partners in the lab this way.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium resumes his research into Chemical X, the Girls prove themselves to still be full of mysteries when it came to their enhanced abilities, and the professor has a heart-to-heart talk with Buttercup.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 Lab Activity Report 12121988

DOC: 12 DEC 1988

Created By: Agent Utonium

Chemical X Progress Report

Intro: I have recently begun research on Chemical X again. In the past few days, I have achieved the following.

- Re-established a communication link with my science team at the old HQ. Note: I would like to request that my science team be returned to its original state. With half of them reassigned to other projects, progress will be slowed significantly.

- Secured a stock of raw Chemical X. It helped that Chemical X is stable and does not require special environmental conditions to be kept.

- Secured a stock of stabilizing agents 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything Nice'.

- Re-examined my old research and documentation.

- Prepared basic equipment for Chemical X experiments.

Experiment X-TH01 (Abridged Report)

Introduction: I have decided to recreate stabilized Chemical X. To this end, I will need raw Chemical X, as well as the necessary stabilizing agents to bring down its anomalous properties and make it more reactive.

A full, working lab-grade chemistry set is needed for this task, including micro-pipettes that will allow me to draw micrograms of each stabilizing agents and Chemical X itself. For cells to test on, I have procured grass cell samples from the local mall.

Of course, I will need a supply of Chemical X as well as stabilizing agents coded 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything Nice'.

In order to manufacture stabilized Chemical X, I will need to adhere to the original formula, at least
up to the point where JoJo interrupted the experiment. Note to self: Draft new documentation for the 
formula. Also, I have yet to examine what would happen if I had used the original formula for the 
theoretically stabilized Chemical X? Would it result in failure, or some other kind of success? It could 
be material for another experiment.

X-TH01-01 Results

Attempt 1: Failure resulting in malformed blade of grass that expired soon after.

Possible Reason: Excess of 'Everything Nice' by 5 micrograms.

Attempt 2: Failure resulting in cancerous growth and death of a blade of grass.

Possible Reason: Imprecise ratio favoring 'Spice' over 'Everything Nice' by 5 micrograms.

Attempt 3: Failure resulting in a blade of grass shrivelling up and expiring due to rapid cell death.

Possible Reason: Lack of 'Sugar' by 5 micrograms. At this point, it is fair to assume that all biochemical properties of Chemical X remains the same since the lab accident that created my Girls. Precise amounts of 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything Nice' is needed.

Attempt 4: Failure resulting in malformed blade of grass that expired soon after. Interesting to note is that it took longer for it to die.

Possible Reason: Human error resulting in 1 microgram lack of 'Everything Nice'.

Attempt 5: Failure resulting in cancerous growth and death of a blade of grass.

Possible Reason: Human error resulting in 0.5 microgram excess of 'Spice'.

Intermediate Notes: This is frustrating. My hands are still shaky from exhaustion and disease. I have decided, that, instead of waiting for my recovery, which is assisted by Selicia to my reluctance, or ordering in expensive machines for the job which will take time to arrive due to bureaucratic nonsense, I'll be producing the stabilized Chemical X on a larger scale instead.

The rationale is simple: larger portions mean less requirement for precision. Rather than concentrate on a single, tiny dose of Chemical X which amounts to little more than a few milligrams (at most), I stabilize Chemical X by the liters. Huge quantities are easily measured. The only problem is, what should I do with the excess quantity? My only thought on this is that I could always stockpile the stabilized Chemical X for the day when I might need the quantity.

Attempt 6: 1000ml of stabilized Chemical X produced. 1ml of Stabilized Chemical X has been applied to grass cell sample, resulting in a small mat of grass. Grass has been transferred to a pot of soil. Success. The Chemical-X enhanced grass will be subject to testing, but a quick test with a carbon steel scalpel shows that it is more resilient than normal grass. A lawnmower would break trying to cut it down to size.

Conclusion: I have successfully recreated stabilized Chemical X from raw Chemical X, but without the assistance of the kind of state-of-the-art automated, mechanized lab equipment that the old HQ had, my manufacturing technique has become less precise and flexible. For the time being, it will have to do.

Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 Strength Test 3 Log, 12121988 W3
Subjects Involved:
B-47 (Blossom)
B-48 (Buttercup)
B-49 (Bubbles)

Equipment Used:
1x 600lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 800lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x 1000lbs Steel Weight w/ Handles
1x ECG Machine
1x Medical Kit
3x Strength Test forms
1x Clipboard

Location Used:
The House Laboratory Test Area

Operating Procedure:
- As control has long been established back in Strength Test 1, I will abstain from lifting heavy weights.
- The Girls are to take turns lifting each steel weights.
- The Girls are to be examined for physiological reactions.
- If physiological and behavioral change is observed, time to exhaustion is recorded.
- A rest period of ten minutes is designated between each consecutive weight levels.
- Safety is paramount. Test to stop if any difficulty whatsoever is encountered by the girls.
- Standard first aid procedures is a must.

Test Results:

600lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Felt a kind of pain in her palms, but remarks that it is nothing. Some perspiration sets in. Marginal increase in breathing rate. ECG shows slight increase in heart rate. 10 minutes elapsed before test has been cut.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed. After repeated prompting, admits to feeling 'something' in her hands. Similar level of perspiration, breathing rate and heart rate increase as Blossom. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.
B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Complained of pain in her hands. Reluctant to continue testing. Similar level of perspiration, breathing rate and heart rate increase as Buttercup. 10 minutes elapsed before test cut.

Notes: In comparing my notes and hard data on physiological reactions here with that of the previous strength test, I am able to conclude that there is not much difference in physiological reaction between the 500lbs and 600 lbs Steel Weight test. Selicia has been working the Girls out with the 500lbs for the past few days, so it could be that the Girls have been conditioned to carry heavy loads. However, a more in-depth study is required to confirm this.

There are other possible explanations. It could simply be that the Girls are participating in the test 'fresh', having done no heavy duty lift before. The conditions for the 500lbs test was different in that the Girls had to carry the 300lbs and 400lbs Steel Weights before.

800lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. I asked her to give a pain rating between 0 to 10, with 0 being painless and 10 excruciating. She gave a rating of about 2, even after 10 minutes. Perspiration, breathing and heart rate increase marginally from 600lbs.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed. Alleges that her pain rating was 1, but then again, she'd heard Blossom. It could be a 2. Similar physiological reactions as that of Blossom.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Pain rating 4 after 10 minutes. Perspiration, breathing and heart rate increase higher than the other two Girls.

Note: Based on these collected data, it could be possible that their cargo limit could be at 1,500lbs - but of course, that refers to how much they can carry for an extended period of time, of at least 5 to 10 minutes. It is entirely possible for them to lift twice that, but only for seconds to a minute.

1000lbs Steel Weight

B-47 (Blossom): Passed. Pain rating 3. Perspiration, breathing and heart rate increase marginally from 800lbs. 10 minutes elapsed without incident.

B-48 (Buttercup): Passed. Pain rating 2. Perspiration, breathing and heart rate increase marginally from 800lbs. 10 minutes elapsed without incident.

B-49 (Bubbles): Passed. Pain rating 6 after 10 minutes Perspiration increases marginally. Breathing and heart rate increment higher than before. Cried during and after testing and has to be comforted.

Note: Bubbles is able to carry a 1000lbs Steel Weight as ably as Blossom and Buttercup, as shown from how she managed 10 minutes with it. Her physiological reaction could be from mental triggers rather than physical.

Family Car - Sedan (3000lbs est.)

(On the insistence of Buttercup, I've moved the experiment to the garage where the Girls will try to carry the Family Car. They have been instructed to lift the car and set it down carefully and gently. We have a lot of fond memories with the car, and I don't wish it to be damaged)

B-47 (Blossom): Pain rating 8. Huge increase in perspiration, breathing and heart rate. Panting observed. Her palms were red from the effort. Time elapsed: 2 minutes 5 seconds.

B-48 (Buttercup): Pain rating 6, but similarly huge increase in perspiration, breathing and heart rate suggests otherwise. She was panting and visibly shaking and flushed from the effort. Time elapsed,
however, is at an extraordinary 4 minutes and 33 seconds.

B-49 (Bubbles): Pain rating 10. Perspiration, breathing and heart rate through the roof. She appears obviously exhausted, panting and sweating rivers and appearing red. Time elapsed: 1 minute 20 seconds, which is still incredible considering that it would take a dozen regular human beings to even attempt such a feat, and they would still find it incredibly difficult.

Note: This is confirmation that the Girls have a strength of over 20 times that of an adult human being or over 60 times that of young girls their physical age, and we haven't approached their absolute limit yet. However, 3000lbs appears to be close to it. It is by no means what I would recommend them to carry for long, however, as it strains them severely. I stand by my earlier statement that 1500lbs remain their recommended carry weight, and even then, the Girls will have to be trained to carry such a weight for lengthy periods of time, if that is even possible or even required.

As for their absolute maximum, I believe 4500lbs to 5000lbs could be it - anything beyond that, and they will end up like me with a 150lbs weight.

Conclusion: Tests still need to be carried out to determine their recommended carry weight, and their absolute maximum. I will be giving them a quick X-ray to detect any damage to their body - I'm particularly concerned about their skeletal structure.

B-48 (Buttercup) Interview

Desc: While I wait for the USDO's medical wing to get back to me with their analysis of Buttercup's brain scans, I have decided to pursue examining her for any side effects of the lack of activity in certain parts of her brain, specifically, the right orbitofrontal cortex, right anterior cingulate cortex and left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex.

To this end, I have prepared an interview with her with a focus on mapping out her mental and emotional processes. Well, I think it is more accurate to say that I've just decided to take her aside and talk to her, as father and daughter. I haven't really done that very often with Buttercup, so I thought this might be a good opportunity for me to spend some time with her.

TRANSCRIPT START

(The 'interview area' is Agent Utonium's desk, with two swivel chairs and a camera on the desk. Utonium adjusts it, his hands close to the lens. B-48 (Buttercup) is seated on a chair raised to maximum height, off-centre but completely visible. The camera is angled to capture her face at a good angle. Agent Utonium sits down.)

Professor Utonium: Do you feel comfortable in that chair, Buttercup?

B-48 (Buttercup): It's a little big, but it feels good. No wonder you're here most of the time!

Professor Utonium: (Smiles) Is it okay if we talk?

B-48 (Buttercup): It's more than okay, Daddy. I like it when it's just the two of us.

Professor Utonium: (Laughs) That's great then, Buttercup.

B-48 (Buttercup): Can we do this more often?

Professor Utonium: (Considers for a moment as he looks then, then looks up with a smile) Well, we'll see. Blossom and Bubbles need me too. We could always get together and talk as a family
some time soon.

B-48 (Buttercup): (Her smile seems to fade but returns quickly) Okay… So what do you want to talk about, Daddy-o?

Professor Utonium: I just… How have you been feeling, Buttercup? Are you happy here, in this family?

B-48 (Buttercup): (With the widest smile she could manage) I'm perfectly happy, Daddy. Especially when I'm with you.

Professor Utonium: But what about those times when you weren't smiling? Like when you were in the car, on the way home?

B-48 (Buttercup): I- uh- I wasn't serious about that, Daddy. I'm sorry I made you mad.

Professor Utonium: Buttercup-

B-48 (Buttercup): I just want to be loved. (starts tearing) Please don't be mad.

Professor Utonium: Buttercup, I'm not mad. You know I'll always love you, forever and always.

B-48 (Buttercup): I like it when you say that. (Wipes tears away)

Professor Utonium: So, you're not entirely happy?

B-48 (Buttercup): But I am, Dad.

Professor Utonium: (Does not look convinced) If you say so, Buttercup, I believe you. Now, about that time you pushed Bubbles in the movies…

B-48 (Buttercup): (Promptly) I'm sorry. I'll never do it again. (Appears dismayed at the mention of the topic)

Professor Utonium: Buttercup, what do you mean when you say 'I'm sorry'?

B-48 (Buttercup): I- I uh- When you taught me that word, you told me that it means I regret what I did, and that it makes me unhappy too to have done something wrong.

Professor Utonium: But what does 'sorry' mean to you?

B-48 (Buttercup): Dad… I don't understand…

Professor Utonium: What do you feel when you said you're 'sorry’?

B-48 (Buttercup): Sad and unhappy? Like what you said?

Professor Utonium: In your own words, Buttercup.

B-48 (Buttercup): I… Don't… I just don't want to lose you, Daddy.

Professor Utonium: That's sweet. But do you really regret pushing Bubbles?

B-48 (Buttercup): Y-yes, I do.

Professor Utonium: Why?
B-48 (Buttercup): Because it made you and Mommy sad? I don't like it when the two of you are sad.

Professor Utonium: Hmm. (Looks into Buttercup's eyes, searching)

B-48 (Buttercup): Can I sit on your lap, Dad?

Professor Utonium: Sure, come over here. (Buttercup beams at Agent Utonium and gets off her chair. Utonium picks her up from under her arms and puts her on his legs. She leans on him.)

Professor Utonium: Nice and comfy, Buttercup? (adjusts camera while she's not looking)

B-48 (Buttercup): Yeah. I wish we can be like this forever.

Professor Utonium: What do you think of your sisters, Buttercup?

B-48 (Buttercup): Do we have to talk about them?

Professor Utonium: Don't you want to talk about your sisters? Don't you love them?

B-48 (Buttercup): But I do, Dad, yes, of course I do! I love them very much! (Puts on a wide smile, which seems forced)

Professor Utonium: That's great. Have you been having any trouble with them? Anything at all?

B-48 (Buttercup): No, not at all, Dad. We love each other perfectly and nicely and warmly and-Why, Dad?

Professor Utonium: Then why do you fight with Blossom and Bubbles sometimes?

B-48 (Buttercup): I didn't mean any of it. I just… get so mad sometimes, Dad. I do love them, Daddy, I swear. Please believe me, Dad. I love you. (tearful)

Professor Utonium: (hugs Buttercup) There, there, Butterfly. It's okay to get mad… You just can't fight with your sisters like that, alright? They're family, don't forget that. We look out for each other.

B-48 (Buttercup): Yes, Daddy.

Professor Utonium: That's my Girl.

(They stared into each other's eyes, silent for a minute, smiling then laughing)

Professor Utonium: You're so beautiful when you smile, you know that? You should do that more often. What is it that makes you so angry all the time?

B-48 (Buttercup): (considers the question) I don't know. It- It just happens. I just can't help it, Dad. I'm sorry.

Professor Utonium: Don't be. We all get angry all the time. The next time it happens, just close your eyes and count to ten, okay, honey? It'd go away on its own.

B-48 (Buttercup): Yes, Daddy.

Professor Utonium: And you know what else would help you?

B-48 (Buttercup): What, Dad? (excited)

Professor Utonium: Blossom does drawings and numbers and spellings when she's mad. You should
try it, be like Blossom.

B-48 (Buttercup): Oh. (appears sullen) Yes, Dad. Of course, Dad.

Professor Utonium: Are you okay?

B-48 (Buttercup): I'm just tired…

Professor Utonium: Even before training with Mom? You were really energetic the last time.

B-48 (Buttercup): Can I go, Dad? I need to prepare for training. (Gets off Agent Utonium's lap)

Professor Utonium: It's still early, Buttercup.

B-48 (Buttercup): (offscreen) Mom likes it when I'm early.

Professor Utonium: Did I say something wrong? Huh. Anyway, conclusion: To be honest, I'm not sure what to make of this. On one hand, she appears to be a normal little girl who feels and love and care about things the same way I do. Sure, she does seem to get angry and upset more often, but I think I can put it down to personality. Maybe.

There doesn't seem to be anything that could indicate that her neurological abnormalities have affected her. On the other hand, it's just a hunch, but something's off. I can't quite put my finger on it. Just the way she couldn't seem to define 'being sorry' and 'regret', and she seems to swing back and forth between moods a little too quickly. She's giving me contradictory signals about her opinions of her sisters.

But I'm not a psychiatrist. I'm starting to regret not taking that minor in psychiatry back in university. For all I know, it could all just be in my head. Parents tend to worry too much at times. I should know, clearly too, now that I've rejoined their ranks. Should I do another scan of her brain? Perhaps I should. In the meantime, I think I'll wait for results from the USDO Medical Wing.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, a most troubling development is made by the USDO under the direction of Chief of Security Blackwater.

USDO Security Expansion Report SEC12121988-2

DOC: 12 DEC 1988

Created by: Chief of Security, Agent Blackwater

Title: The Ultimate Containment Solution

Desc: Before the creation of subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49, containment had never been an impossible problem as the subjects before them were not bulletproof. I've personally led and carried out enough hunting and killing missions to know that, despite their resilience and bullet resistance, they would eventually go down. The minority of subjects who managed to escape were the result of sabotage or the ingenuity of our subjects.

Now, with the advent of B-47, B-48 and B-49, containment becomes impossible. For the past three weeks, me and my men (save for some who'd let their guard down big time) have been standing guard with a knife at our throats. Whatever firearms we have had been reduced to little more long distance cattle prods, if Security Incident 12081988-PP-A is anything to go by.

Agent Utonium is not a man I can work with in close company, but he is effective in his own right. He is able to tame the subjects as their handler, despite the obvious gulf in power - those brats could have killed him instantly, anytime, but they didn't. A manhunt within these 3 weeks would have been futile without the means to wound or kill B-47, B-48 and B-49, and Agent Utonium has made sure, at least for now, that a manhunt is not necessary. However, it's a house on cards. We will never know what's going to happen the next day, or the day after that. Something could just go wrong, and one or more of the subjects could just decide to up and run away for all we know. And there isn't a single thing we can do about it.

Until now.

The shipment of anti-material rifles we ordered from the Institute has just arrived, and none too soon. I have inspected the equipment, and the team I have assigned it to could do nothing but fawn over it for the entire day, and ever since then. I won't go over the numbers and stats of this amazing weapon, but here's the basic facts:

The anti-material rifle itself is based on an experimental weapon still in development in collaboration with the Barrett Firearms Company. Using our connections, the Institute is able to procure copies of the XM90 Anti-Material Rifle and modify it according to our needs.
The entire barrel and rifling has been replaced with a Duranium equivalent, which ensures that the anti-material rifle can be used repeatedly, but most importantly, retains the same accuracy as the model it is based on.

Such a modification is necessary because of the ammunition it fires. The Duranium XM90 fires .50 BMG rounds made of crude Duranium and tipped with refined Duranium. The propellant used is interesting. The Institute has utilized our old Chemical A to enhance the chemical propellant, which means firepower unheard of before. The normal XM90s are designed to penetrate the armor and hull of light vehicles and concrete bunkers. The Institute has demonstrated that their Duranium version is able to punch through the armor of even a fully kitted-out M1 Abrams tank, port to starboard.

Based on Agent Utonium's report, they should easily kill B-47, B-48 and B-49. The only downside is that this solution is expensive, with each Duranium XM90 Anti-Material Rifle costing over a million greens to build, and each bullet costing tens of thousands. We can't afford to field many of them even with the money we're getting from the White House. For now, we have a grand total of 2 rifles and 3 cartridges. We will really have to make them count.

I have assigned my best sniper and spotter, in the Powerpuff Taskforce as the Kill Team with an accompanying rifleman to protect them. However, I have stationed them in Outpost Charlie-01 as they will also be responsible for assassinating escaped subjects such as Jojo should we be able to corner them - they will downgrade to normal ammunition in that case.

In the more conventional realm, I have been able to more than double the number of personnel in Townsville. Our security forces there numbers 500 now, including the personnel surrounding B-47, B-48 and B-49. They are also far better equipped than we would even dare imagine just a month ago. Motorpool has been able to order in a huge stock of Humvees and even APCs, the former of which are already in use while the latter will be ready to deploy in a few days. We have started distributing HMGs and explosive weapons to our men.

Law enforcement operations has already begun, and Project Powerpuff will be deployed any day now, at the discretion of Police Commissioner Davis and his Chiefs, after being green-lit to go by Mayor Wilford. How the three subjects of Project Powerpuff can be integrated into our security forces, however, is still up for debate. They look like children and act like it too, and it gets complicated since these are 'children' with abilities enhanced beyond expectations - and they are practically illiterate, since they have only just barely started as preschoolers. Command and control will be a difficult proposition when I can't even be sure that they can interpret and execute orders effective, and if they even want to interpret and execute my orders.
Chapter 41: Eve of The Call

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls discovered something horrifying in school and gets closer to their parents.

Chapter 41: Eve of The Call

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

13 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0708.

-Can't tell the ass end of a donkey from it's head.

If you're going to keep this shit up, we should just toss you out, and then we'll see how much you appreciate us.

You God damn whore. You're going to grow up to be a prostitute-

You're stupid! Weak! Useless!

Stupid! Weak! Useless!

Useless!

Wake up, Selicia, for fuck's sake! Wake up!

"Wake up, Selicia," the security officer could hear a male voice serving as an alarm and deliverance from her nightmares. It could only be Professor Utonium, the only man in The House. He was already in his lab coat, prepared. "Wake up. We need to talk." He was nudging her awake roughly, with no hint of love or even care at all.

"Thomas?" Selicia said groggily. A headache pounded at her. As she sat up, she could feel a blanket falling away from her, and that she was on the couch. As drunk as she was last night, she couldn't remember getting up on the couch – she wasn't that drunk.

The professor stood there with his arms crossed, looking at her severely. She had thought him to be a bit of a goofy old nerd before, when things were cheerful, but now – now there was this other side of him that she'd only glimpsed at for short periods, that even she could not help but to respect and fear. Touch his Girls, and he'd raise hell, or make life difficult for the perps who harassed his angels. From what she'd heard, he was part of the reason why the Organization became the USDO, losing much of its ability to operate covertly and secretly.

"Thomas darling, I'm so sorry I-" Selicia stumbled as she looked timidly up at her 'husband'.

"Save it, Selicia. In my office, now," the professor said firmly, pointing at the door to his office.
authoritarian-like. Selicia stumbled up, her blanket wrapped around her as if it was her life boat, and followed the professor meekly. He didn't wait, forcing her to play catch up. The blanket had meant more to her now. She could only think of one person who'd put it on her. Buttercup, her darling.

"How are you feeling?" the professor asked coldly as he drew water from the office's water cooler. Bubbles rose in the giant bottle of the mini-water tower.

"Like shit, Thomas. I'm a mess, and…" Selicia said, but she was afraid to go on.

"Good. Because you deserve it," the professor said coldly as he sipped his cup of water, facing away from her. Instead, he was looking at the spines of his many books and tomes and encyclopedias. But Selicia knew that he was looking at something else, something on his mind. He'd seen her slap Bubbles while he was facing down the stairs. She knew that he was still looking at that scene, frozen and burnt into his mind. "You we're supposed to be a mother to them all, not some drill sergeant."

"I'm sorry," Selicia apologized. She felt a need inside of her to justify her behavior and actions, but she'd decided against it. A wise move on her part. "But Tom, I love them, I really do. I just-"

"Don't 'Tom' me, Selicia! Do you know how Bubbles was like in her sleep last night?" Professor Utonium bellowed at her. While still facing his books. Somehow, he seemed more frightening that way to Selicia. The woman shook when he'd suddenly shouted. "She wouldn't stop crying and whimpering in her sleep. She couldn't escape you even in her sleep."

It hurt Selicia badly when the professor associated the word 'escape' with her. It'd hurt all the more because it was an entirely justifiable word choice.

"I'm sorry, Tom," Selicia said. "I know I'm wrong now, I just- I love them, I swear, I fucking swear. I just didn't want to see them hurt out there and I thought that-"

"Don't apologize to me, Selicia. And I don't want to hear your excuse," the professor said, swinging around to face her quite suddenly and furiously that Selicia jumped. "But the USDO was right to send you here. The Girls do need a mother. You wouldn't have been my first choice, but you're here anyway, and they now think that you're their real mother. Which is why I'm going to give you a chance. You'll make it right today. It's you and Bubbles after school in the Townsville Mall. I don't want to hear even a hint of a possibility that you're treating her any less than stellar. Do you understand me? Or am I speaking in rocket science?"

"I understand. Crystal clear," Selicia said, not that she could do anything other than agree with his terms. She'd fucked up. It was all on her.

There was silence after that in the office, for a while. A pregnant silence as uncomfortable as facing the professor's justified anger. The professor migrated to the window, looking out into the early winter morning outside, and the speed convoy and USDO security vehicles parked right up front that never failed to remind him of what kind of circumstances the Girls were in.

"I guess we'll wake the Girls up and get them ready for school then," Selicia broke the silence meekly with her suggestion. She had never been this way before – submissive and deferring – ever since she was a teenager on the verge of running far, far away from home and becoming a young outlaw.

"Not you. I'm preparing them for school, and I'm driving them to school. You can stay at home and... Do whatever it is that you do when you had no real responsibilities," the professor said, still cold. In her vulnerable and emotional state, Selicia felt useless, the way he said it. "I'll pick you up after the meeting in the new headquarters, and then you'll start making amends for your mistake."
With that, the professor left her behind, alone in the cold office, with only Buttercup's blanket for company.


13 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0825.

"And here we are, school!" Professor Utonium announced when he pulled up at Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, trying to sound as excited as he could.

"I can't wait to learn more words!" Blossom exclaimed eagerly.

"I can't wait to play tag!" Buttercup exclaimed too. "Remember that game from yesterday? It's better than hopscotch. Right, Bubbles?"

Bubbles did not answer. She was clutching onto her little blue school bag tightly, eyes staring at the professor's chair as if it was a television replaying what had happened yesterday.

"Bubbles, are you okay?" the professor asked softly, gently, concerned after turning around to regard her. Bubbles did not reply. "Bubbles?"

"Yes," Bubbles lied, then regretted it and corrected herself. "No, Dad. I don't feel like doing anything. I don't feel like going to school."

'God damn Selicia and her security antics,' the professor thought, and couldn't help but to scowl at the thought of her hurting his baby girl. He glanced out through the front passenger seat window, and saw Miss Keane waiting for her students by the main entrance of the school complex. Time was of the essence.

"Blossom, Buttercup, why don't the two of you go to Miss Keane while I talk to your sister?" the professor said calmly, while managing a smile despite it all.

"Yes, Daddy." Blossom and Buttercup said in unison, with Bubbles accidentally muttering the first syllable of 'yes' for some eccentric reason before stopping herself. They left and slammed the door shut, a little too forcefully. The professor thought that he'd needed to work on that with the other two, but his attention quickly returned to Bubbles.

"Bubbles, I know it was bad yesterday, but you can't stop living because of one bad thing," the professor tried to reason with Bubbles, hoping that she'd see through her own misery. "Like school. You had fun yesterday, right? I'm sure it'll be fun today too."

"Mom hates me, and I love her," Bubbles cried. "I don't understand."

The professor shuddered at the thought of ever defending Selicia, but he had to this time. He had no choice. Selicia had secured for herself a position as the Girls' mother, and a biological mother at that — that B word alone had ensured that the position was for life. He would have to make do with what he had. He tried to psyche himself into thinking positively. 'Selicia was pretty good before her abuse of Bubbles last night. She could be again… Maybe," he thought.

"Bubbles, you silly girl, Mommy doesn't hate you," Professor Utonium said. "She thought that she was helping you. She wants you to grow up big and tough."

"But she hit me," Bubbles said this while she clutched her cheek. Tears dripped. It broke the professor, seeing his sweetest like this.
"I know, Bubbles. She's wrong to do that. But you know what? She knew it too, and she's really sorry. She's sad too because of it," the professor said, his voice heavy as well. Even Theoretical Physics was less complicated and painful than this. It had always astounded him how humanity was capable of such complexity, like how Selicia and the USDO had muddied the morality of everyone around him, of him, even.

"Oh," Bubbles squeaked, not looking anymore happier or relieved than before.

"She's really sorry, and really upset about it. She wants to make up for it, for hitting you, sweetie," the Professor said. "She's taking you out after school."

"Okay," Bubbles said, still looking the same as before, as if she was going to fall apart any minute.

"You don't have to go if you don't want to, you know."

"I guess I'll go…" Bubbles agreed reluctantly.

"Are you sure, honey?"

"Y-yes…” Bubbles stumbled on her one word. The professor could sense conflict in her, something she shouldn't have to go through, not at this age, so young an age - she wasn't even a month old. A normal human being at this age would be in the safe, warm embrace of a loving parent, for the next few years. He looked out the window at Miss Keane again. Blossom and Buttercup were talking to her, and Blossom had just pointed towards them as she spoke. Miss Keane then gazed in the direction of him and Bubbles. He would have to find out later what the Girls had told their teacher.

"If you say so, Bubbles. I'll drop you and Mom off at the mall after school, alright?" the professor said. "You've got to go now. Your sisters and teacher are waiting for you."

Time ground to a halt after that when the Girls were gone, delivered into the care of someone he barely knew, but had to trust. He drove towards the new USDO HQ in Townsville, with a Humvee for escort, of course - the USDO could never leave him alone.

At the new headquarters, the meeting was all the same - the usual doom and gloom, except it was worse for him, for the Girls. They were officially part of the network now, and the button could be pressed at any time to send them into the underworld. The professor went through the motions, delivering information like a computer. What he'd discovered of the Girls, what little scientific breakthroughs he'd made.

The non-science staff were especially impatient with his progress in exploring Chemical X, as if Einstein was born with the Theory of Relativity in his head and Thomas Edison with a bulb in his belly. They had yet to find a replacement for Head of Research, and as a result the various USDO science teams scattered throughout the US floundered in the dark, went about their own way without direction. At this, the professor took small pleasure. Considered it retribution for what they'd put the Girls and him through.

All the while, he could think of nothing and no one but Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.


13 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1135.

"Tag! You're it!" Mary, one of Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's classmates yelled after he'd tapped
Buttercup in the shoulder. She didn't know how she'd done it, but being in a crowd of screaming children had something to do with it. That, and she was beholden to her Daddy, and if he said 'no superpowers', his word was law. Except when it was too inconvenient for her, of course… or if she got too angry.

Everyone started running away from Buttercup, even her own sisters, spreading in all directions as if they were avoiding the plague. Except they were laughing and squealing with joy.

She started looking in all directions, looking for the closest target. Her pure, joyful smile turned shark-like. She sped after a boy in a red shirt, homing in on him like some predator.

The more fortunate gave her a wide berth, while the targeted boy ran with all his lungs could give, but never quite putting any distance between him and Buttercup.

It didn't take long for the boy to be cornered like a rabbit preyed upon, and for Buttercup, lost in the thrill of the hunt, to give him a shove against the fence. The boy gave a frightened shout, before bouncing off the fence and falling on the floor, his loose, red shirt flying up to reveal his belly.

Buttercup stared at the boy she'd just pushed, not because she'd just cause him pain, but there was just something abnormal about him that she'd just discovered. Something really wrong and unnatural. Blossom and Bubbles joined her, as did the rest of the class.

"Blossom, Bubbles, are you seeing what I'm seeing?" Buttercup asked her sisters.

"What, Buttercup?" Blossom asked, but she had something else on her mind. "You didn't have to push him so hard, Buttercup!"

"I know, but look! See that on his stomach?" Buttercup insisted, pointing at Mac's belly. Blossom and Bubbles saw where she was pointing at… and gasped simultaneously.

"I'm fine! I'm fine! My father's a policeman!" The boy boasted before sitting up and covering himself. "You're strong, Butters!"

"Mac, what was that on your stomach?" Buttercup questioned, her curiosity burning. Mac lifted his shirt up again, searching. But nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

"There, that… thing!" Buttercup yelled, pointing, as if she had just spotted the Sasquatch.

"What, this?" Mac pointed at his own belly.

"Yeah, what is that?" Blossom asked as well.

"It's what my mum calls the belly button," Mac revealed. "Didn't your own mother tell you that?"

"No…" Bubbles said, and her utterance meant several things at once. The Girls had never seen such a mystical thing as a belly button before. Not even on themselves.

"Everyone has it, how can you not know?" another student, a tanned girl, said.

"Really?" Blossom said. One after another, the children around them showed them their belly buttons, that birth scar that marked them as naturally born human beings, and the Project Powerpuff trio as something else altogether.

"Don't you have one?" another of their classmate asked, this time an overweight boy with freckles.

"No…” the Girls chorused sadly, eyes fallen to the floor. All of a sudden, it felt as if they were the
wrong ones, the outcast.

"Har-har! Your mother must be a drunken prostitute!" Mac suddenly let out, but he was merely parroting his father. It immediately got Buttercup's attention the worst way possible – instinctively, she knew that those were bad things, even if she didn't know the exact meaning of it. Buttercup had tried Dad's anger management method, counting to ten. But she couldn't even make it to two when she felt herself explode inside. Without any warning, the enhanced green-dressed girl seized him by the collar with a single hand, lifting him off his feet and pinning him against the fence.

"I dare you to say that again!" Buttercup snarled viciously, raising her other fist. "Go ahead, Mac, say it!"

"Buttercup! Oh my God! Stop it, all of you!" Miss Keane screamed from the backdoor as she ran towards them. Buttercup turned to glance at the teacher from the corner of her eyes, distracted.

Blossom and Bubbles took the opportunity to grab their violent sister, one to each arm, before she could do any harm. Blossom, in charge of Buttercup's left arm, twisted it so that she'd let go of Mac, who dropped to the black top of the playground, crying.

"Mac! Are you okay!?” Miss Keane screamed as she picked the boy up. "Go back inside, the rest of you!"

The children, at least the normal ones with belly buttons, started streaming into the school building. It wouldn't take a genius to figure out that Miss Keane didn't mean the Girls, and at this, the Girls were commendable for figuring it out.

"Thanks a bunch, losers!" another boy shouted from behind Miss Keane, thinking that the teacher could not figure out who it was.

"Yeah, thanks for no recess!" another student, a girl, was encouraged to jeer, extremely bitter about losing the rest of her recess. They were only ten minutes into it when they had to go back inside.

"I'll see you two later, Lucas and Minnie," Miss Keane said, picking up on the voices. The kindergartners, by virtue of their inexperience and growing pride, had vastly underestimated their teacher.

"Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup… Can the three of you tell me what happened?" Miss Keane asked patiently. She set Mac down. The boy, shaken, hid behind her legs. "Macmillian, what happened?"

"He called my mother a 'drunken prostitute!'" Buttercup yelled. The boy had been poking his head out from behind Miss Keane's legs, but he returned into hiding when Buttercup glared death and daggers at him. The ravenette felt the genuine need to kill him, and the boy felt it. "Can I punch him, Miss Keane!?"

Buttercup took steps forward, looking like she could bolt at her anytime. Miss Keane couldn't help but to reach for her vest, where her pistol was hidden in, but resisted the urge to pull the weapon out. She reminded herself repeatedly that she was surrounded by children, just that three of them were born, or rather, created with super-abilities, as she understood it.

"No! Absolutely not!" Miss Keane scolded Buttercup, putting her hands out as she shielded Mac, who cowered behind her. For a minute, she'd thought that the girl with the green slightly-glowing eyes would just attack the both of them anyway, but she backed off. It helped that her sisters, the nicer ones of the trio, were pulling her back, telling their sister to stop.

"But he was being mean!" Buttercup rebelled.
"And you were wrong too for hurting him, Buttercup," Miss Keane told the girl, wagging a finger at her.

"But he-" Buttercup wanted to say more, but Miss Keane interrupted her.

"No buts! Two wrongs don't make a right," the teacher lectured. "Now apologize to each other right this minute!"


13 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1301.

Buttercup stared nervously out the window of the family car; she had never been more afraid for her life. Blossom and Bubbles, out of love for their sister, feared for her. Professor Utonium was out of the car again, and right next to Miss Keane at the entrance of the school, speaking. The teacher and the professor would occasionally glance in Buttercup's direction.

When they were done, Miss Keane passed through the school entrance, where, for all the Girls knew, was where she lived. The professor, in the meantime, walked towards the car, his eyes shifting between the car and Buttercup. He rounded the car before getting into the driver's seat. He was silent as he put on his seat belt and placed both hands on the steering wheel. He pressed his forehead against it, as though his head was too heavy to carry.

It had been a close call. Buttercup could have decapitated a boy today, had it not been for Miss Keane. He knew how Buttercup could get when she was angry. She'd broke a door nearly off its hinges when he made her mad. Hell, he'd just found out the previous day that she could carry the very car they were sitting in and probably toss it, too.

"Is everything alright?" Selicia on his left asked. She leaned in on him with a hand on his shoulder, genuinely worried - the stakes were higher with her now, since she had a debt to pay, and even more to prove. The professor shrugged her hand off, still pissed at her for hitting Bubbles repeatedly last night.

The Girls could see his face with the rear view mirror. It wasn't one of anger, but concern and sadness.

"Dad…" Buttercup said, had wanted to explain things, but decided against it. The professor turned around, looking at his little butterfly.

"I know why you did it, honey," the professor said, gentle as always. "You love your mother. But you can't hurt people just because someone said something about her."

"I'm sorry," Buttercup apologized. The professor knew full well that it might not mean what it normally meant. Based on his father-daughter conversation with her yesterday, he knew that she had trouble grasping that concept - perhaps because of her age. It had to be. What else could it be?

"There's a common saying, Buttercup. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," the professor lectured. "Do you know what it means?"

"I guess…" Buttercup said.

"It means that words are just words, Buttercup. And you're tougher than any other children, right?" the professor explained anyway, putting on a reassuring smile. The green-eyed girl smiled in return.

"Right, Daddy," Buttercup said, feeling a little better. She had thought that she was in for it, that her
father was sure to love her less, and that she wouldn't be able to enjoy the pleasure of his company, but that threat now seemed like a thing of the past. Professor Utonium started up the car, and drove towards the city.

"What started the fight anyway?" the professor asked out of curiosity.

"Dad… What happened to our belly buttons?" Blossom asked in return. Apparently, that was what started the fight.

'Einstein help me,' the professor thought. He'd completely forgotten about that. He slammed on the brakes, alarmed, stopping at the side of the road. Everyone was thrown forward, but thankfully, they had seat belts on.

"Belly buttons?" the professor repeated Blossom's question, eyes darting around as if the answers were somewhere around him. He had to think of an answer fast. A reason why they were born without it. Something - anything to hide the fact that they were created in a sterile lab because of an accident, not out of love between wife and husband. Naturally, he turned to science for his answers, or at least a perversion of it.

"Everyone had belly buttons. They showed them to us," Bubbles recounted the horrible experience, her shrill voice sad and saddening.

"Well…" the professor stumbled on words, more in his mind than verbally. He had a few ideas, so he allowed them to draw straws and he took the first thing that floated to the surface. "You know that last time when I cut the three of you with a scalpel? And it took only a day for the three of you to heal from it?"

"Perfectly, Dad," Blossom said confidently, the horror of that day long gone.

"Yes, Dad…" Bubbles said reluctant, still shuddering from that experience.

"Yeah," Buttercup said gruffly, as she was reminded of how gray things could be, lies and all.

"Well… You see, Girls, the belly button is a scar, and you Girls don't get scars. So the moment the umbilical cord - that little tube that connected you to Mommy over here, was cut, your belly buttons disappeared really quickly," the professor lied through his teeth, improvising along the way, knowing very well that he sounded ridiculous. It was perfectly scientifically plausible and accurate - if the Girls had really been inside Selicia before. "Okay, Girls? That's what happened." The professor was just as much lying to himself as he was lying to the Girls, trying to convince himself that that was the ticket, that it was now the truth.

He glanced at the rear-view mirror, briefly. Their facial expression did not swing around. "What's wrong? Don't you believe me?" Professor Utonium asked, trying to stuff the panic inside him back down.

"It's not that," Blossom said. "It's the other children in class-"

"I don't think they like us anymore," Bubbles completed Blossom's sentence for her.

"And it's all thanks to that Mac boy!" Buttercup added.

"Because you don't have a navel?" the professor clarified.

"Yes," the three Girls answered in accord.
"That's just how children are, Girls. They'll forget about it in a day or two," Professor Utonium said. Buttercup wasn't quite convinced. After all, she was a child and she didn't forget things. Blossom and Bubbles, however, ate it up, everything their Daddy said. "And even if they don't... You'll be joining a new class next year. The children you three are with now will move on to elementary school next year."

"Oh..." Blossom and Bubbles emoted sadly. They'd met some friends, and had hoped that they would turn around and stay as friends for longer than half a month.

"Well, good riddance anyway. It's not like they were good friends!" Buttercup snapped, with her arms folded.

"You should forgive them, Buttercup. They don't know any better," Selicia finally said something, motivated by the fact that her favorite was in distress, and to a lesser extent, so were the other two Girls. "They're just kids."

"But I wouldn't judge someone just because they're different," Blossom said.

"That's good, honey," the professor praised. "But not everyone's as smart and nice as you." The professor started up the car again, and swerved back into the lane.

"Well, they better come up with a nice surprise tomorrow, or I'm going to be really mad!" Buttercup said.

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville Mall


After getting dropped off at the mall, Selicia and Bubbles sort of stood there for a while, afraid of each other. Selicia made the first move, knowing that it was all on her, considering what she had done. The wound on Bubbles' lips, where she had bit herself, had long disappeared owing to her healing factor, but she knew that the wound in her mind would take much longer. The mother put out a hand, and Bubbles shrank away from it, afraid that it was another slap, then stared at it after seeing that it wasn't, as if she had forgotten what to do with a mother's hand.

"Come on, Bubbles," Selicia said as she gestured for Bubbles to take her hand. Bubbles slipped her little hand around hers, and the mother closed hers gently around it. They walked in the mall for a while, aimlessly. "How about lunch?"

"I had lunch in school," Bubbles said timidly, still afraid that she was going to get a slap in the face next if she said the wrong thing. "But lunch would be great." Selicia sensed it. Bubbles had broke at the wrong time; she had wanted her to just accept violence as part of her life as a member of law enforcement, but now Bubbles had broke long after in some sort of delayed reaction. It was all messed up, and she would have to clean up her mess.

"You don't have to eat if you don't want to, darling," Selicia said. They happened upon a restaurant advertising a 'happy meal' for kids. It was perfect for Bubbles even if it wasn't five stars.

"I guess I want to..." Bubbles said timidly. She felt trapped with Mommy's hand around hers. "We didn't have much in school."

The City of Townsville. Townsville Central Park
After dropping off Selicia Goodwin and Bubbles, Professor Utonium had taken Blossom and Buttercup to the park, for more father-and-daughter time. He would have preferred Bubbles to be with them. Selicia, too, only because the Girls wanted her around. But there had to be a compromise somehow, for the Girls' good. They needed a mother, a positive female influence, one who could do some things that a man could not. He could only keep his fingers crossed that Selicia would eventually get better at this whole parenting business.

After a stroll in the park with ice cream to top them off, they swung by the playground. Blossom and Buttercup took turns chasing each other in the castle of corridors and tubes there, exploring the construct, sliding down the tubes while the professor sat down on a bench with his pipe, watching. For the moment, it seemed like a perfect moment of family time, that the red and green girls could get along - he had to admit, they weren't perfect siblings to each other, with the each of them a near-complete opposite of the other. It made sense, considering that they weren't even biological siblings, not that they knew about it. But science had a saving grace: it wasn't just about genetics that could determine how good or bad a familial relationship could get.

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville Mall

13 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1344.

Selicia and Bubbles sat on opposite sides of a two-seater table, fries, burgers and soda between them, but all the little girl could do was to stare at the food with her mind somewhere else, back in The House, on the floor of the basement, with blood dripping from her lower lip when she had accidentally bit herself after getting slapped.

"Bubbles, about what happened…" Selicia started, she herself feeling awkward and unsure of things. She played with her hands underneath the table. "I'm sorry I hit you. I've misbehaved yesterday."

Bubbles said nothing. It had been easy to forgive Buttercup. She was one of her, a little girl. But Mom was different. She was one of the adults, one of those whom she thought could do no wrong. But she had done a lot of wrong the day before, and it stung much harder than the slaps. It'd changed things.

"I- I- was just afraid, girl, that when you step out there…" Selicia began to cry. Bubbles took a peek at her, and when she saw that her mother was crying, she couldn't help but to feel sorry for her. "I just didn't want you to get hurt when you're out fighting crime, you know. I wanted you to be ready, but I guess I-" Selicia sniffled, and used a napkin to wipe her tears away. Bubbles hated it when someone cry. People should be happy and smiley.

"I forgive you, Mom. Please don't cry," Bubbles finally said. She reached out for her mother's hand. Selicia took it hungrily, glad that things had come to a close. "I'm sorry I'm not as tough as Buttercup, or- or- you know, as smart as Blossom."

"It's fine, honey. I'm sure you will be," Selicia said, smiling as she wiped her tears away. "I love you, don't ever forget that, alright?"

"I love you too, Mom."

"So… are you going to eat that? Food's getting cold."

The City of Townsville. Townsville Central Park
When Blossom and Buttercup were done with the tubes and platforms, they settled down on the swing set. There weren't many children due to the winter climate, so they had the place to themselves. They had never been on a swing before, and the professor was happy to introduce them to it. He swung them both consecutively, teaching them how to lean forward and back to build momentum.

"Yeah, that's it. Lean forward when you're flying forward and back when you're falling back," the professor instructed the Girls.

"Wee!" they each shouted in glee as they experienced what felt like flying.

"Harder, Dad! Harder!" Buttercup squealed with joy as she egged the professor on to send her up higher.

"Alright, my butterfly, just one more," the professor said with a toothy smile, gave Buttercup a final push before moving on to Blossom, who had come to a standstill, and appeared understandably upset by the lack of attention. "Nice, Buttercup, keep going back and forth! I've got to push Blossom now."

"Dad? I don't feel good," Blossom said to him when he got around to her.

"What's the matter? Is it a tummy ache?" the professor asked. Putting them in school meant putting them in a different environment, which meant different food and millions more pathogens and disease vectors. The Girls had never been sick before, but it could be a matter of time. He still had no idea if Chemical X had any effect on their immune system.

"No, Dad. Here," Blossom put a hand on her chest. The professor got to her front and bent down to her level. She was clutching her heart. "I don't know why, but I feel sad all of a sudden."

"Can you think of why?" the professor asked. There were times when the Girls couldn't put emotions to words, but they were surprisingly few. The professor surmised that it was due to their lightning intellectual development.

"I don't know," Blossom said. A single tear drop fell from her eyes. The professor wiped it away. She glanced from at the floor from left to right, her slightly glowing pink eyes searching. "I miss the first days, Dad. When it was just you and me and my sisters, in The House."

"Dad! Is it my turn yet?" Buttercup shouted in the background. She had lost all her momentum, and couldn't get it back. "Dad!"

"Buttercup, push yourself for now, okay? Use your legs," the professor turned his head and said dismissively before turning back to Blossom.

"But Dad, it's my turn!" Buttercup persisted. For some reason, Buttercup had struck a nerve in the professor. For the first time, he thought that the green-eyed girl was being selfish. "Daaa-aad! I need a push!"

"Buttercup! Be quiet for a minute! Just one minute! Is that too much to ask for!?" Professor Utonium snapped at Buttercup before returning to Blossom. Buttercup sat in her swing, stunned how Daddy had scolded her.

"Blossom, we're all still together, as one family," the professor comforted.
"But things have changed so much. I don't get to see you for as long as before because of school and Mom, and we'll be out fighting crime… And…" Blossom put her thoughts and emotions into words with difficulty. "It wasn't like before, when it's just you and the three of us."

Professor Utonium knew immediately what she was referring to. How her life was changing, and how it was changing fast. The Girls had blazed through the better part of five years of development in not even a month. While normal children would not have remembered the several years of idle growth and development they had enjoyed, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had developed mentally from blank slates resembling the mental state of babies to that of 5-year-olds… while they were fully aware and capable of remembering everything. That, and the fact that they didn't get to enjoy the many years of childhood before they had to start school and… go to 'work'. It was all unprecedented, considering that the Girls were one-of-a-kind.

"Blossom, things change. You have to understand and accept that," the professor said. Blossom didn't look any happier after hearing that. He had to think of something, but thankfully, parenting solutions wasn't the least of his talents. "But it can still be the four of us together, you know. I can take the three of you out, and we can all have fun together, just like old times. What do you say? We can do it this weekend, if you want."

Blossom beamed at him when he proposed the weekend getaway. Those ethereal eyes, forever glowing pink, seemed capable of displaying so much more emotions than that of a normal child's. Or was it his parenthood talking?

"That would be nice, Daddy," Blossom agreed. The professor gave her a few more pushes of the swing after that. All the while, Buttercup watched as her influence on her father waned once more, fuming mad. Once again, bad thoughts were coming back to her. She couldn't kill Blossom, but she could always get even with her. One of these days, she could get even with her. One of these days…

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville Mall


After the little talk with Bubbles at the fast food restaurant, things were smooth-sailing from there. Selicia brought her adopted daughter around the mall after that, eventually ending up in the arcade, where electronic and analog games alike were operating. As Bubbles had a dislike for explosions and violence, Selicia Goodwin opted instead to bring her to the traditional games. There, they fished for plastic ducks, threw balls at cans, and Selicia was able to trick Bubbles into enjoying whatever would have been considered violent - such as shooting paper boards with images of wild west bandits using a BB gun. Bubbles proved to be a natural with a rifle, what with her visual acuity, winning herself a monkey. At the cans, Selicia was able to win Bubbles a pony; it was no different from bouncing a grenade towards an enemy target.

By the time they were waiting for Professor Utonium to pick them up, their arms were full of soft toys, whether won or bought at a store. But most importantly, all animosity between Selicia and Bubbles was gone, and they were all smiles. The question remained, however: what would it take to turn Bubbles into the perfect law enforcement officer, who wouldn't hesitate to shoot to kill, if necessary?
Chapter 42: Call to Arms

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls are called in for their maiden mission.

Chapter 42: Call to Arms

City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

14 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 2142.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The sound of the Project Powerpuff Hotline ringing for the first time since Wiggum's demonstration resounded throughout The House. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had been playing in their room when it did. The Girls looked up from their tea party, of which Buttercup was reluctantly party to. Buttercup looked at it with anticipation, Bubbles with dread while Blossom was straight-faced, psyched up to do her part to help people.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The phone continued to interrupt their playtime.

"It's really loud…" Bubbles commented as she put down a whale doll.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The phone replied.

"What do we do?" Buttercup asked.

"I'll pick it up," Blossom volunteered as she got up from her kiddy chair and padded towards the clown phone, which smiled at her with the sunniest possible smile. She'd seen how Daddy had done it, using the phone. She picked up the handheld receiver and put it against her ear.

"Hello? Agent- I mean, Mister Blake here. Are you Blossom, Bubbles or Buttercup?" the voice on the other end said.

"Oh hi, Mister Blake. It's me, Blossom," the red-haired Girl said cheerily, as if it was just another pleasant conversation.

"Hello? Agent- I mean, Mister Blake here. Are you Blossom, Bubbles or Buttercup?" the voice on the other end said.

"Ah, of course. Blossom, looks like we've got a call. The three of you are officially in the law enforcement business. Put your gear on and get in the car," Agent Blake said.

"W-what?" Blossom stuttered at the news, before regaining her senses. It had come without warning, and it’d taken her by surprise. She wasn't ignorant of what was to come - Selicia had taken it upon herself to tell them about the horrors of the outside world and crime. Even her kid-friendly, abridged version of it was enough to put nervousness and even fear in her. But she was still adamant to help. "I- uh- Yes, Mister Blake. I'll come down soon."

"And be quick, Blossom. People can get really impatient with this kind of stuff. I'll see you in a few?" Agent Blake said on the phone.
Okay. Bye…” Blossom bade stiffly. Her friend on the line hung up, and she followed after that. She turned to her sisters, her pink-glowing eyes wide as she stared at them.

"Who was it, Blossom?" Buttercup quizzed impatiently.

"Mister Blake," Blossom said, her eyes closed, trying to push the fear out of her, trying to remember why she'd agreed to this crime-fighting business. She opened her eyes, determined. "It's time."

"We're fighting crime, now?" Buttercup asked again, not believing her ears. Unlike Blossom, and definitely Bubbles, she'd been looking forward to the day when she could punch some real meat. She was getting bored of pushing steel weights with a baddy plastered in front of it or kicking a crash dummy, even if it was kind of cool to watch it fall apart. She'd been dying to try her new flying kick move.

"Yes," Blossom said. "We'll have to put our suits on."

"Urgh! I hate that dress!" Buttercup complained as she sprinted towards the closet. Opening the doors, she pulled her SWAT gear out. Blossom and Bubbles did the same.

"Shouldn't we be wearing our most beautiful dress if we're giving out puppies?" Bubbles said, still in the lalaland of fantastic crime fighting.

"That's because we won't be giving out puppies, dummy! We'll be giving out knuckle sandwiches, instead!" Buttercup scolded as she pulled her dress off. She'd learned the term 'knuckle sandwich' from Mommy, and it'd stuck with her since.

"Buttercup, quit it!" Blossom scolded as she was pulling her dress off.

Footsteps thundered outside the door. There was a quick rap and the door flew open. "Girls!" it was the professor, looking more anxious than the Girls were. "I just heard the hotline!" The girls were in their undies when he did this, but since he was their Daddy, they didn't mind. "Did Blake say what it was? What you're fighting?"

"No..." Blossom said as she pulled her red military trousers up. "He just wants us down 'in a few'."

"Well, whatever it is, I'm coming with you," he insisted. "I'll be downstairs. Love you, Girls!" The door slammed shut once more as the professor hurried away, his footsteps fading in the distance. The Girls hurried up, using their natural speed to suit up lightning fast.

"Bubbles, you wore your vest backwards!" Buttercup scolded her sister. "The pockets are supposed to go in front."

"Oh!" Bubbles, with Blossom's help, removed it and turned it around. But despite this, they were quick. By the time the professor was climbing down the stairs, with a bullet-resistant vest underneath his lab coat, the Girls had already joined him. Together, they ran towards the front door. Selicia was there too.

"Hey Thomas, am I coming with the four of you?" Selicia said. The professor looked at her from head to toe. She was dressed in her security uniform with a gray hooded jacket, rifle on her shoulder and pistol on her hip. She had scrambled as well, and knowing that the Girls were fast, left her SWAT gear out of it. But the professor couldn't bring himself to trust her, not yet.

"Stay at home, honey. Put the supper on and keep it warm for us," he simply said before brushing her aside and reaching for his jacket. She didn't show it, but his response had massively disappointed her. She'd wanted to see Buttercup (and the other Girls to a lesser extent) on her first day of crime-
fighting. But she knew she deserved it - it was punishment for what she'd done to Bubbles.

"But-! Can't you come with us, Mom?" Buttercup exclaimed in dismay; she'd wanted her with her, so that she could show off everything she'd taught her.

"You heard your Daddy. I can't, honeybun," Selicia said, trying to keep from sounding too upset so that it wouldn't affect Buttercup and her morale and performance in combat. She gently nudged her ahead. "Don't keep your sisters waiting. Go and do me proud!"

"But Dad! Why can't Mom come with us?" Buttercup protested as they went out the front door. A blast of freezing wind greeted them.

"Someone has to stay at home and keep things in order, Buttercup," the professor ran with the first excuse on his mind. He was able to get away with it because of the rush. They ran up to the speed convoy, the professor lagging behind by a million miles when the Girls sprinted at top speed towards Mister Blake's middle transport.

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The House. Mission Time - 0 mins

"Professor! Didn't expect to find you here!" Agent Blake from the driver's cockpit greeted when the Girls and their caretaker came in. The professor went in first, followed by Blossom (naturally), then Bubbles and Buttercup. It was cramped inside, as the Lamborghini wasn't quite made for transporting large numbers of people, especially when they were wearing tactical gear, but the Girls hadn't complained. "We're going into a hot zone, not the lab."

"It's the Girls' first time. I should be with them," the professor said curtly. He still couldn't bring himself to trust this 'Blake' character. Call him over-protective, but no one's going to hurt his little angels. If they were going to be solve a problem in place of adults, he was going to be with them every step of the way. If not him, who else? Few in the USDO could care less if they'd died.

"Yeah, I understand," Agent Blake concurred. The speed convoy zoomed towards the city. With no traffic at this time of the day, the houses of the suburbs zoomed by as if they were on a bullet train. "Are you Girls nervous?"

Blossom and Bubbles giggled nervously, giving him all the answers he needed. "Not at all," Buttercup said, with a mean look on her face. Whatever nervousness she felt was minuscule compared to the promise of fun and explosions.

"You three are right to be nervous," Blake said. "So was I on my first operation. But you know what I didn't have?"

"What?" Blossom asked, her voice weak and loaded with fear.

"I didn't have superpowers," Blake said, but it didn't help scare away the butterflies in Blossom and Bubbles' stomach. "And I was going up against people much, much stronger than me. And here I am, you know, still in one piece." What he didn't mention was the fact that he was one of the lucky ones. But that would be a story for another time, perhaps when they were much older. He hoped that they could get much older.

Blossom could only remember that horrific scene at the gas station, where men were shot and burnt. Bubbles remembered it too. Buttercup, in the meantime, remembered the scene fondly. The explosion was awesome to behold.

"Girls, everything will be fine," Professor Utonium cut in. He was growing jealous of Agent Blake's
monopoly over the Girls when it came to combat situations. He had to say something and stay relevant somehow. "You're far stronger than you know. We've seen that in the labs. You can do this."

The rest of the journey, short though because of the speed of their transport, was spent in silence punctuated by radio chatter on the Lamborghini's on board radio. Blossom leaned against the Professor, unable to fully enjoy the warmth of his body because of her thick kevlar gear. Bubbles leaned on Blossom while Buttercup leaned against the door, looking outside, enjoying the speed, enjoying the rush of being psyched up for the kill.

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Townsville Central Bank. Mission Time - 24 mins

The speed transports carrying the three subjects of Project Powerpuff slowed down and crawled through what was practically a war zone. Long before they had reached their destination, there were police barriers in place that they had to get through, guarded by SWAT cops who looked like soldiers on duty. At the barriers, police officers were denying entry to journalists and reporters, marked clearly by their flashing cameras and mics and sound recorders.

A police copter flew overhead, illuminating dark spots and alleys with its spotlight. Twenty or more police cruisers and vans surrounded a classically-inspired white-gray building, with police officers and SWATs hiding behind them, pointing their revolvers, or pistols, or shotguns and rifles forward. 'Townsville Central Bank' was carved and painted neatly above a row of white Greek columns. Humvees belonging to the USDO, a mere three or so, were scattered throughout the police blockade, but they stood out, what with the mounted machineguns on top of the humvees and the men in black and grey, armed to the teeth more for war than quelling criminal elements. The scene was chaotic, with the thumping of helicopter blades above, men shouting orders and reports or general expletives and comments. A black man in a gray suit spoke into a loudhailer, demanding the surrender of whoever had warranted this level of attention.

The Girls' speed transports joined the metal herd, parking right beside its own white brethren. All eyes were on the Lamborghiniis, which supposedly held the secret weapons to eradicate crime in Townsville. There had been word on the streets about it, but the Girls had been kept a secret from practically everyone, including the rank-and-file and the media, except for the top brass in charge.

"Ready, Girls?" Agent Blake asked kindly, putting his hand over the controls to the door, but not pressing it just yet.

Blossom and Bubbles were shaking.

"I can't feel my legs..." Bubbles mewed.

Blossom, on the other hand, was just staring at the floor, trying to control the outpouring of fear and nervousness in her.

"Just wait, Blake," the professor said. He turned to Blossom, and took her hands.

"Well, Blossom, this is it," he said. The red-haired girl looked up at him, into those eyes that loved her as if she was his own. As far as she knew, she was his own biological daughter. "This is what you're born to do, your destiny."

"Dad, I don't want to go," Blossom suddenly said.

"You have to. This is what you want; it is why you're so special," the professor said. He'd wished otherwise, to be able to tell her that she didn't need to go, that he'd be able to take her home and
forget about all that crime-fighting nonsense, and preferably in a new city as far away from Townsville as possible. Crime-free Singapore over the Pacific would make a good choice, but then again, he knew that the USDO would never let that fly. This was it - the Girls would either have to fly, or crash.

"I know..." Blossom mumbled. Tears rolled down her eyes. She hadn't worn her combat goggles yet, which made wiping them away easy for the professor.

"It's okay for you to cry when you're with me, but you have to be strong out there, alright?" Professor Utonium advised her one last time. He hugged her, and Blossom took him tightly. "And one more thing, honey."

"Hmm?" Blossom sniffled.

"Stay the same, no matter what, okay? Don't let the city change you," the professor was almost pleading. "Please be my little Blossom forever?"

"I promise, Daddy. I'll always be your Blossom," she said, before letting go of her father.

"Alright. Now go, get out there," the professor said, then turned to his other Girls. "Take good care of each other. The world out there is harsh, but as long as the three of you are together, you'll always have a family out there."

Agent Blake opened the doors of the speed transport. A flood of noise came gushing in. Sirens, screams and shouts. A few gunshots rang out from the bank, the rattle of numerous automatics returning fire. Loudhailer orders. Radio chatter in the wind.

"Girls, Blackwater will be there to guide you! Huge, gigantic guy, you can't miss him! Go to him!" Agent Blake instructed. Buttercup was the first to hop off the speed transport. Blossom continued to stare into the professor's eyes, still unwilling to go, still holding onto his hands, but Bubbles pulled at her.

"C'mon, Blossom, we have to go..." Bubbles said as she tugged at Blossom. Reluctantly, father and daughter let go of each other. Professor Utonium felt a tear dripping, so he wiped it away with a finger.

Together as three, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup walked towards a Humvee, where a giant man in SWAT gear stood with his arms crossed, waiting. Blossom looked over her shoulders at the professor one last time, before she disappeared from view as a large group of police officers ran across. They made a turn, and then they were gone.

Townsville Central Bank. Mission Time - 28 mins

Police officers and SWAT cops alike stared at the Girls as they passed, their mouths agape and their eyes wide with surprise. The Girls were the walking definition of a contradiction - they were supposed to be their secret weapons, and yet they were children. They were said to be powerful, but they appeared weak and afraid. They were suited from head to toe in SWAT gear equivalent or even better than that of an actual SWAT cop's, and yet there they were, holding hands with each other as Kindergartners were wont to do.

"Took the three of you long enough to get here!" Blackwater bellowed the moment he saw them.

"H-hi, you must be Mister Blackwater..." Blossom spoke up, shaken like never before, a fact hidden by her armor. "I'm Blossom-"
"I know bloody well who the hell you are," Blackwater yelled. "We met in your house, remember?"

"Yes, but I didn't know your name," Blossom said.

"Yeah whatever, now let's talk business," Blackwater interrupted. He pointed at the Greek-inspired architecture before him. The Central Bank. "You see that big, white building there? That's where all the bad guys are. Now, I need one of you to take charge as the leader. Who is it?"

"I can be the leader," Blossom volunteered, but she wasn't the only one.

"Oh! Oh! Pick me!" Buttercup exclaimed excitedly as she jumped up and down.

Only Bubbles remained averse to the idea of a promotion.

Blackwater stared at the red and the green girls. He ran through his brain for the solution. Who should the leader be? He'd read the professor's report on their personalities. The green one was the tough one, something of a liar and a cheat, which meant that she was capable of both aggression and deception in equal measure. But Selicia had reported that Buttercup seem to favor outright aggression. Or should it be the red one, who was highly intelligent and creative, and not lacking in her martial abilities either, judging from Selicia's reports? The blue one was definitely out - she seemed to have no redeeming qualities in his eyes.

He'd finally settled on the red one. What was her name again? Blossom. He needed someone intelligent enough to interpret and follow orders - with the Project Powerpuff subjects, it would be a stretch to say that, but he had to take what he could get. Besides, this Blossom girl was prominently marked and easy to identify with the red bow attached to her helmet and her flaming red hair flowing out of the bottom of her helmet, looking a little like a cloak. Turning around, he pulled something out of his Humvee. An headphone with a mic, with a wire running down to nowhere.

"Blossom, you're taking point. Put this on," the Chief of Security said to her. He handed it over to her. Blossom looked at it as if it was some sort of alien artifact. She turned it around and looked into the earpiece, finding it curious.

"What do I do with it?" Blossom asked innocently. Meanwhile, Buttercup was pissed off. She had lost out to Blossom again, and she didn't like that. To her, fighting was supposed to be her territory, and this was supposed to be it. And Blossom had taken it away from her again, along with everything else.

"What, are you born yesterday!" Chief of Security Blackwater exclaimed in disbelief.

"Actually, we were born three weeks ago..." Blossom corrected.

"Are you sassing me, Blossom!" Blackwater barked at the girl, who only looked at him in confusion.

"I don't understand. What's sassing?" Blossom asked, but her question went unanswered as the Chief of Security stared, as if unsure of what to do with her. She'd have to ask the professor about that word later, or Miss Keane the next day.

"Oh, for f- Take your damn helmet off, let me put this on for you," Blackwater snatched the headphone back roughly. The Girls were so short and him so tall that he had to kneel all the way down and hunch his back to jack the headphone in. The wire was too long for her that it had to be tied, but at least the adjustable headphone could fit at the shortest extension. All the while, police officers were shaking their heads in disbelief - these three Girls were supposed to be their salvation? If they weren't in a deadly siege at one of the most important locations of Townsville, they'd be
laughing right now.

Blackwater shoved the headphone on top of Blossom's head roughly. "Ow!" she cried.

"Shut up!" he barked, and adjusted the mic so that it was an inch away from her mouth.

They tested the radio after that, and it was loud and clear. Now, Blackwater's voice would be scolding her everywhere she went. "Cool, this would come in handy in a pillow fort," Blossom remarked, trying to find the light in this decidedly dark night.

"Yeah, yeah," Blackwater said dismissively. "Now come 'ere and listen up!" the Girls huddled around Blackwater. "There's about twenty of them in there. Intel says that there's about twelve in the lobby, four around the back and four on the second floor. They've locked down the building pretty tightly, except for the front entrance. They've got hostages. A few bankers, some tellers, some customers. Eight of them."

"What's a hostage?" Bubbles raised her hand and asked, as if she was in a classroom.

"You thumbsucking-" Blackwater nearly blew his top once more, before deciding that it would be faster if he just explain what a 'hostage' was. Bubbles stuck her thumb into her mouth. Blackwater glared at her. "A hostage is someone the bad guys will kill if we don't do what they say. Can you remove your God-damn thumb from your God-damn mouth?"

"Sorry, Mister Blacky," Bubbles said after doing as he asked.

"It's Blackwater! Black-wa-ter! Get that right!" the Chief of Security yelled. It was worst than handling the recruits. He actually felt like dying, trying to put these kids in line to crash the bank robbers' party.

Just then, Commissioner Davis, the black guy in gray, joined them. "I got 'em talking, and they agreed to let us send in a negotiator. Or three." He nodded at the Girls.

"Here's what I want you three to do, and it's simple enough for you kids to understand: Get in through the front entrance, demand that they release the hostages, then demand their surrender. If they do not surrender, kill or knock them out. It's that simple."

Blossom put up a hand.

"What?" Blackwater said, seething with anger.

"But what if I don't want to kill anyone?" Blossom asked.

"I don't care how you do it, stupid! Just make sure they can't hurt anyone!" Blackwater barked. Blossom shook at being called stupid. She thought that she was anything but that - the professor had said so. She could feel her lips trembling and tears welling up, but she bit it down, and somehow managed to stop herself from melting down despite her age. The professor had said that she needed to be strong, and she was going to be strong. "Is that understood!? Or do I have to spell it out for you!?"

"I understand, Mister Blackwater," Blossom acknowledged, her voice still trembling.

"The three of you will address me as sir, or chief, from now on. Understand?" Blackwater added.

"Yes, Mister Chief," Bubbles said.
"It's just chief, or sir. Not 'Mister Chief'. I'm not some rabbit on a cereal box, okay?" Blackwater lectured - running out of steam to be angry. "Alright? I don't have my own TV commercial or kid's cartoon."

"Urgh, can we get going now, chief?" Buttercup made her only contribution.

"Only if I say so. But yes, the three of you should move in now," Blackwater said, pointing at the entrance of the Townsville Central Bank.

"Girls - kids, just approach the bank nice and slow - don't give yourselves away right away," Commissioner Davis advised them. "Keep them superpowers a surprise."

"I like surprises!" Bubbles added.

"And I'm sure they do too," Davis said with a smirk. If everything goes well, the siege could end with no blood being spilled. With the Girls being bulletproof, they could easily wipe out the robbers without getting hurt - at least, that's what he knew.

Another police officer arrived before the Girls could leave. A familiar face, which the Girls recognized immediately. Detective Mullens. He frowned at them, at how helpless he was, now that these… secret weapons were taking over the operation. He would have preferred going in on his own than to put his case with the Lombardi in their hands. 'Kids, seriously?' he thought. 'They're serious. They're actually here, about to storm the bank.'

"Commissioner sir, Chief of security," he greeted the two top brass in his presence, before turning to the rascals who had crashed the party. "I don't know what you're going to do and how you're going to do it, but I need their leader and a few of them alive for questioning. You got that, diaper-wearers?"

"I- I'm not going to kill any of them," Blossom repeated herself, caught off-guard by Mullen's sudden appearance, and his usual brusqueness. What she said, however, didn't seem to satisfy the detective, who mumbled to himself something whilst shaking his head at the Girls before going back to his car.

Townsville Central Bank. Mission Time - 37 mins

"Why was everyone so mad?" Bubbles wondered innocently as they walked up the steps towards the huge entrance of the Greek architecture.

"I don't know, but once we do good, I'm sure they're bound to love us!" Blossom said.

"They'll love us alright, after what I'll do later," Buttercup said.

"Easy does it. Go through the front doors. They're waiting for you," Blackwater ordered through Blossom's headphone. He seemed less agitated and fierce through the radio.

"So, 'leader'," Buttercup said sarcastically. Blossom looked at her, a mix of anger and sadness in her eyes, clearly offended. She'd hoped for her sisters to be happy and supportive of her, just like Daddy. "What do we do if we have to fight?"

"We won't have to. I'll just talk to them. I'm sure the bad guys inside will understand," Blossom told Buttercup her 'plan'. There's a first time for everything.

"But what will you say? They sound mean," Bubbles asked.
"Exactly what Daddy would tell us, that sulking in a room doesn't help but coming out to face the music does. Besides, they're causing lots of people to be unhappy. I'm sure they'll listen," Blossom said as they passed through the door.

And what they found on the opposite side of it was anything but nice. Guns of all shapes and sizes were pointed at them the moment they passed through. A few other men and a woman, all wearing ski masks and gloves, were guarding about eight hostages; men in suits, women in dresses. Some of them were bleeding in the head and arms and legs. The lobby of the Central Bank was huge. It took them a minute to cross the half of it.

"Oi! What the hell is this bullshit!" one of the masked man pointing a shotgun at them shouted rudely.

They had expected a police officer, or a fancy man in a fancy suit coming through the door. What they didn't expect were three little girls in thick, all-covering SWAT armor colored red, blue and green. To top it all off, one of them had a cute little bow attached to the back of her helmet.

"If you girl scouts are out sellin' cookies, you're in the wrong place!" another of them said, in a Harlem accent.

The fact that the Girls were armed with pistols did not go unnoticed. The crooks kept their guns up. They knew that something was up; the cops in Townsville, at least the real ones anyway, might be desperate, but they weren't stupid. Something was up with the girls they'd sent in. They just didn't know what it was.

"But we have no cookies!" Bubbles was the first to speak, being more spontaneous. Some of the robbers exchanged confused looks.

"Blossom, demand that they release the hostages and surrender," Blackwater instructed the leader of the trio through the radio. Blossom thought that she should try to make friends with the robbers first. It'd worked before with Mister Blake and his pals, why shouldn't it work now?

"Erm, hi! My name's Blossom. What's your name?" Blossom introduced herself, waving at them.

"Yeah? And why should I tell you ma' name, 'Blossom'? What's it to you?" the black robber behind the counter said defensively. He straightened up, instead of hiding behind the teller's counter. Unlike his friends, he'd at least put his silver-plated pistol away. Blossom thought that they were on the way to being friends.

"Erm… I don't know. I just thought we'd be friends and talk," Blossom said. The robbers could see nothing but deception in her honest words. Something was very wrong with the three girls, they just couldn't put their finger on it, and it wasn't the fact that they were decked out in SWAT gear heavier than themselves.

"Yeah? Well, I ain't telling you ma' name, fool. What kind of idiot do you think I am?" the black robber said.

"O-okay," Blossom agreed. Things weren't going as well as she had hoped. She took a quick gander at the hostages again. They looked really unhappy, and some of them in pain. A man had half his shirt covered in blood. They were afraid for their lives, and upon seeing who had come to their rescue, became terrified. It wasn't the cavalry they were expecting. "Erm- Could you please let those people go?" Blossom pointed timidly at the hostages. "They don't look good. I think some of them need a doctor for their boo-boos…"
"You're damn right they don't look good. You want us to be friends? How 'bout you ask your police boys outside to let us go, and then we'll talk about being friends," the black robber said. It was becoming clear that he was the leader of the robbers.

"Blackwater here, I need to know what's going on, over," the Chief of Security asked over the radio.

"Mister Robber wants to leave before he lets go of the hostages," Blossom replied into the mic.

"Unacceptable! Demand their surrender immediately! If they're not surrendering, take them down! You got that? They're either handing over their weapons, or you're attacking them!" Blackwater barked into the radio, and it didn't help Blossom feel any less tense or nervous. She felt way over her head. She just wanted to see her Daddy again.

"But-"

"No buts, Blossom! Do what an adult tells you to do! Over and out!" Blackwater demanded over the radio. Blossom looked at the robbers once more. Mister Robber was going to be so disappointed.

"Well?" the leader of the robbers asked impatiently.

"My friends outside wouldn't allow it," Blossom said, hating the pissed-off glare the robbers were now giving her. "Please stop this, Mister Robber. Those people are hurt. If you'd just give me your weapons-"

"Give you my weapons? Haha! Hahaha!" Laughter erupted from the leader of the robbers. He pulled his mask off, revealing the face of a bald, black man with a scorpion tattoo on his right cheek. He pulled his silver gun out, pointing it at Blossom, startling her. "How about if I blow your motherfuckin' head off with this motherfuckin' gun!? How about that!? Ain't no little white bitch going to tell me what to do!"

"Language! And we're not white, we're red, blue and green!" Bubbles chided. Even the otherwise sweet Bubbles was miffed.

"Watch your mouth before I punch it, mister!" Buttercup said, raring to go. She'd been waiting long enough. This was supposed to be her moment to shine, perhaps to outshine her overachieving sister and gain more love from Daddy and Mommy. Blossom had to physically hold her back.

The head robber pointed his pistol at Buttercup. "What, you think I ain't got the guts to shoot a little girl!? If you're going to dress like a pig, I'll plug you dead like a pig!"

"But we're not pigs!" Bubbles said, upset at the accusation, however silly the form it had taken in Bubbles' mind was.

For the first time, Blossom felt anger rising in her. All she'd wanted to do was to make friends, fight crime and make everyone happy, ending the day with a 'happily ever after'. Yet, Mister Robber had been rude all the way. She glared at him, her eyebrows knitted together in anger. The head robber didn't like that one bit.

"Hey Rob, you got beads on the blue one? Show them what I'm talkin' about," the head robber ordered menacingly.

Another robber, this one armed with a shotgun, pointed his weapon at Bubbles and, without warning, pulled the trigger. The hostages screamed, the women loud and shrill.

Bubbles felt her vision go white in an instant as she felt shotgun pellets shattering her goggles and
bouncing off her left eye and face. She was blasted off her feet, and didn't even have the time to scream. The pain felt was so excruciating, so much so that when Bubbles hit the floor, she didn't move. Couldn't. It was paralyzing, and more.

"BUBBLES!" Blossom screamed, rushing to her side. Buttercup clenched her fists, taking steps towards the robbers, screaming threats.

"Shots fired in the bank!" the police radio channel was abuzz with activity after that. "Eagle eyes, do you have-" "Casualty count still pending-" "All units, all units-" "Precinct 13 to 15 SWAT units prepare for-"

"Blossom, what the hell is going on!?!" Blackwater screamed into Blossom's headphone, but Blossom wasn't listening. She was trying to shake Bubbles awake, but she wouldn't wake up. Glass shards were scattered all over her face, which wore an almost peaceful look, strangely. It scared Blossom, seeing her like this. There was no blood however, no damage.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! The head robber, in the meantime, was unloading shots at Buttercup, who shielded her face as he did that. Bullets were bouncing off Buttercup's helmet, defacing it. Some had put holes in her uniform, plastering themselves on the skin of her forearm harmlessly. Except they felt hot. "Ow! Ow! Ow! Quit it!"

"What… Da… Hell…" the robbers' leader said in disbelief. Buttercup was still standing, no worse for wear.

"Buttercup, run!" Blossom shouted, her first order as leader, before taking the unconscious Bubbles by the arm and dragging her towards some wooden counters between the exit and the robbers.

Buttercup ran forward instead, launching herself at the robber leader in a flying kick. She could jump incredibly high, and she sailed right over the counter the robbers were hiding behind, landing a hard, devastating kick in the man's chest, sending both she and her target flying a distance and slide on the floor. She'd landed all wrong, and had ended up on her back instead.

"Oh fu- Sh-she killed the boss!" one of the robbers shouted in terror. It was obvious that Robber Leader was dead. A pool of blood was expanding rapidly underneath him. Blood had spurted from his mouth and his chest had caved in. The look on his face was that of pure horror as he tried to breathe his last in his death throes.

Meanwhile, a few robbers were unloading automatic shots with SMGs and rifles at Blossom as she was retreating into cover, pulling Bubbles behind her. She could feel bullets stinging her back, cracking or denting her kevlar, or slipping past her armor and digging through the fabric of her gear and uniform.

"What the 'ell are they!" one of the robbers shouted after realizing that the girls should have been dead long ago, but weren't – perhaps with the exception of the blue one.

"Light her up!" another robber screamed. Guns were pointed at Buttercup, something like eight or nine of them. She'd found out too late that she was surrounded with no help in sight. "Just keep firing!"

"Blossom! What are you doing!?" Buttercup shouted when she realized she had been left behind. She could feel sharp pain all over her as she got what she wanted: explosions on all sides, except that it came in the form of an undesirable storm of lead raining down on her from everywhere. She screamed as she ran away with her eyes closed, leaving bloody footprints that faded within a short distance. Crashing through a wooden door which broke apart and she broke through, she sprinted to
the middle service area where Blossom and Bubbles were, and jumped over counter, landing next to
them on all fours.

There, Blossom was still trying to shake Bubbles awake - it was all she knew when it came to first
aid. "Wake up! Bubbles, wake up!" she cried, literally. Her goggles were off, and her tears were
overflowing.

"Blossom! You left me back there! How could you!?” Buttercup screamed behind her back, furious.

"Look at what they did to Bubbles!” Blossom sobbed as she held Bubbles, her blue sister's head in
the crook of her elbow. Her other arm was wrapped around her torso. The blonde was still non-
responsive. The remaining half of her combat goggles was still hanging off an ear, jagged and
twisted.

Just then, a molotov exploded above them, setting fire to the service counters they were hiding
behind. "Die, Diablos! Die!” one of the robbers shouted, as much in aggression as in fear, from half
the bank service area away.
"I don't care! She's weak and useless anyways! We can kill more of them!" Buttercup shouted. "We have to go back!"

"We can't, Buttercup! We have to run! Look at Bubbles!" Blossom countered. "I'm the leader! You're supposed to listen to the leader!"

Buttercup considered the options - she could either go out there herself, or run away with her sisters. The bullets still whizzing overhead, and a second molotov exploding near them made that dilemma an easy one to solve. There were too many of them, and the shots they were firing stung to high heaven that she actually felt faint and nauseous from having taken too many hits.

"Ahhhh!" Buttercup screamed unintelligibly, frustrated. "Fine!" Pulling her pistol out and cocking it, she got ready to pop out.

"What are you doing!?" Blossom asked. It looked as if Buttercup was doing the exact opposite of retreating. Buttercup shot her a condescending glare.

"I'm going to scare them with my gun. When I start shooting, you run," she said. Leaning against the counter, which was starting to feel hot from the spreading fire, she got up from her knee, popping out to fire some wild shots with her compact Beretta.

Blossom bolted, with Bubbles in her arms.

Buttercup was only able to let off a few shots, killing no one, before a hail of bullets struck her in the helmet, cheek and face. She ran on the trail of her sisters' after that, firing more shots behind her as she was sprinting. It'd worked however, forcing some of the robbers to duck for cover when she'd fired. Just then, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at her, which smashed on her back, coating her in fire and smoke. But there was only one thing she could do - run. It was too late to turn back and fight now.

Just ahead, Blossom smashed through the front door with her shoulder. Outside, she saw squads of SWAT officers and USDO soldiers advancing on the bank, substituting them. Buttercup jumped through the window, diving for the floor in a belly flop, landing hard, knocking the wind out of her. She was still on fire, but a police officer threw his jacket over her to put out the flames. The Girls hid under the windows as the SWAT officers and their USDO allies took up positions by the doors and windows, exchanging shots with the trapped robbers within. Bullets peppered the walls. One SWAT cop leaned out to fire a few rounds, only to be shot in the shoulder. He fell over, shouting, writhing on the ground. A grenade exploded in a far window, blowing a USDO soldier and SWAT cop off their feet, neither of them moving. The latter had fallen in such a way that his eyes had rolled over to stare at the Girls, with blood dripping in great volumes from his mouth. Blossom shook in fear at the violence around her. Buttercup glared at her, smoke still rising from her body, unable to forgive her sister for what she perceived as betrayal.

Townsville Central Bank. Mission Time - 56 mins

When the battle was won and things had settled down, the police and meagre USDO presence was able to swarm over the bank, arresting the few remaining robbers who were still alive. The Girls were still hiding under the windows outside. Blossom stared miserably into the distance while Buttercup was still wordlessly telling Blossom how much she hated her with just her eyes alone. Bubbles had come to not long ago, her left eye still shut because of the glass shards trapped inside, her face pale and her right eye completely glassy.

Chief of Security Blackwater, with several USDO SWAT operatives flanking him, stopped before
them and looked down at them condescendingly. "Explain yourselves," the huge man commanded them coldly. The Girls stood up; Bubbles had to be helped and led to Blackwater. It was as if she'd lost all agency and control over herself.

"They… Just…" Blossom tried to explain, but the moment she recounted what had happened, she couldn't help but to let the waterworks flow.

"The robbers j-just started shooting at us!" she cried, wiping her tears, only for more to replace them. "They- They- Wouldn't listen- They-"

"You ran away when you were supposed to help me fight them!" Buttercup jabbed at Blossom from the side. She was still smoking from the Molotov thrown at her. "They shot me a gazillion times and burned me because of you!"

"I was saving Bubbles, you selfish idiot!" Blossom screamed back at Buttercup, stomping her foot in the snow. "You're stupid! You're selfish! You wouldn't listen to me! I was the leader and you wouldn't listen to me! You deserve getting burned! No wonder Daddy hates you!"

"You- You take that back!" Buttercup could feel her own tear ducts going on overdrive because of what Blossom said. "Dad doesn't hate me! You're lying!"

Meanwhile, Bubbles remained silent, her face still pale and eyes still distant. She could be left there for hours and she'd still be standing there like a statue.

"You're a liar! Liar, liar, liar! Dad doesn't hate me!" Buttercup cried, wiping her own tears away.

Blackwater was seething mad. It was a glaring reminder that the USDO's grand achievement was a trio of super-powered kindergartners, who, for now, seemed to be more kindergartner than super-powered. It was like a slap in the face for all the dedication and hard work he'd put into the USDO and what the organization seek to accomplish. It was a disaster - the Girls' maiden mission was supposed to prove the organization's worth, pave the way for greater things. Everything had seemed so possible, so close, and now uncertainty was the only thing in the air. For all he knew, it could even spell the end of their involvement in Townsville.

"Shut up! The three of you!" he bellowed, even though Bubbles hadn't said a word. "Shut up! And stop mewling like a bunch of infants!

"But- But- Mister Chief- She lied about Daddy hating me!" Buttercup cried. "Tell her, chief, tell her she's lying!"

"The robbers- they- shot us- I was just trying to nice and- and- talking to them!" Blossom cried inconsolably while she continued to try to explain herself in vain. That she was in pieces over what had happened made it an impossible task despite her intelligence. "I- They- I even told them I'd like to be friends with them! And they shot us!"

"Shut the fuck up! The two of you!" Blackwater swore, gesticulating wildly. He's had enough. "I don't care! The three of you darn screwed up! God damn it! You three are useless for all the abilities you're given!"

Upon hearing it from the Chief of Security, Blossom and Buttercup just cried harder.

"Get lost! Get out of my sight! I don't want to hear your blabbering! If you're going to cry like babies, go cry to your 'father'! Now git!" Blackwater was nearly bursting at the seams screaming his head off, pointing in the general direction of their speed transports. With all that being said and done, he walked away, turning his back on the Girls, leaving them in the snow. Even then, he was still
screaming obscenities to himself, swinging his fists in anger, kicking the wheel of a humvee on the way to the bank, and slamming the hood of the same vehicle with his fist.

With nothing left for them, Blossom and Buttercup shuffled towards their Lamborghinis, eyes on the ground as they continued to wipe silent tears that would never end away. Bubbles just stood where she was, staring into the distance with her one unobstructed eye, and Blossom had to turn around to take her by the hand and lead her back to their father.
Chapter 43: Code

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls seek solace in their 'parents' after their failed maiden mission.

Chapter 43: Code


14 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 2249.

Professor Utonium was worried sick. The past twenty minutes was the longest twenty minutes of his life, and he'd spent most of it with his face in his hands, as if he didn't want to see what was next, as if he was an ostrich with his head in the sand. In this state, he was constantly going over his Girls' data mentally, estimating and trying to divine an answer as to how they would fare in any given scenario. He was stuck, a computer recursively calculating and recalculating.

"Dad?" Blossom's voice broke him out of his miserable trance-like state. He raised his head immediately in the direction of that voice. It really was Blossom, still alive, still his baby girl. She was tugging at Bubbles arm, who followed her with an eye squeezed shut, and her Goggles ruined. Buttercup ran up to him, putting her arms around his waist. She smelled like ash. Her uniform and gear was largely ruined by machinegun fire.

"Dad! Please don't hate me! Please, please, please!" Buttercup cried. The professor put a hand on her shoulder, giving her a squeeze.

"What are you talking about, Buttercup? Why would I hate you?" the professor asked quizzically. 'What's going on?' he thought.

"Dad…" Blossom whimpered as she got closer. She had been crying. The moment she got to her Daddy, she buried her face in his stomach. He could feel his lab coat getting wet. Bubbles, on the other hand, just stood where she was led to, nearby. She was still staring into space, with a lethargic look on her face. "It was h-horrible, Dad!"

"Girls, what happened?" the professor asked. If the state of the Girls were any indication, it couldn't be anything good. Blossom told the professor everything, somehow managing it between sobs and sniffles - how the robbers had verbally abused them even when she tried to be friendly, how the bad guys just shot them just because they could, how Mister Blackwater had done nothing but shout at them. The professor was especially pissed at the last fact. He'd have to make a phone call later to set things straight with Blackwater.

"We failed, Daddy," Blossom finally said. She was sitting in the car with her legs outside the vehicle, with the professor kneeling down beside her. Buttercup was leaning on the professor, with her arms around his neck. "Maybe Mister Blackwater is right. We're-" Blossom considered her words, and decided to change it. "I'm useless and stupid."
"No, Blossom, you can't say that," the professor hurried to correct his beloved quickly - it would be a dangerous thing for a child to believe that she was useless and stupid. It wouldn't exactly be the most enabling thing in the world. "You're a bright little girl, and this is just your first time doing something adults do. We've all failed time and again, Blossom. I know I've failed to do some things." The professor said this with loaded words, his heart heavy - he'd failed to protect them, to emancipate them from the controlling tendencies of the USDO. He'd failed Eileen, his late wife, and Bloome, his late daughter, who, now that he thought about it, looked a little like Blossom.

"But it was really bad, Dad," Blossom went on, still unable to shake off the dark cloud over her head, that feeling of worthlessness. "I couldn't do anything right, and the poor policemen had to do everything for us. They're hurt because of me."

In Blossom's mind, she remembered seeing the SWAT officer getting blown up by a fragmentary grenade. How the shrapnel had tore at him, and how, when he landed on the ground, his head lolled to face her with a bloody mouth permanently wide open as if in an eternal scream, his dead eyes staring at her accusingly. Blossom shook at the thought of it, and tears flowed down her cheek anew.

"You can't think that way, Blossom. You're not the bad guy here. You didn't hurt those men. The robbers did," the professor said as he hugged his little girl. The poor red-haired girl was shaking so much in his arms, whimpering. She was nothing like the killing machine the USDO thought she was, nothing like it at all. It wasn't Blossom who failed. It was Townsville, who couldn't protect their own city in the first place, and the USDO, who couldn't take her for who she was. He'd heard over the radio what they'd done. They'd sent the three of them up against 20 robbers on their first day, when they had no prior experience to fall back on, and only a few days of training on and off.

"Dad, I killed one of them. Are you proud of me?" Buttercup said from behind him. It shocked the professor, how she'd said such a thing without remorse, with the same kind of excitement a five-year-old would have on completing a crayon drawing. Professor Utonium gestured for her to let him go. Buttercup unwrapped her arms around his neck, those arms that had killed, and could kill him had she flexed her muscles around his neck. He turned to look at her. There were no more tears, only a smile as if a child looking for approval. "I went in there and jumped, and I kicked him in the chest! Just like Mommy taught me!"

"Buttercup..." the professor looked into her eyes, searching her soul. He was at a loss for words. One of his Girls had killed at the tender age of three weeks. It was wrong. Very wrong. "It's wrong to kill. You shouldn't feel happy about it."

"But Dad! He was a bad guy and he was shooting at me!" Buttercup insisted. It felt wrong, very wrong that her father stood on the side of the robbers when they were hurting his own daughter. Or at least, that was what it seemed like to her.

The professor looked around, to make sure that all three of his Girls were with him. From the looks of it, only two of them were, and Bubbles was only physically there. She seemed preoccupied inside, but it didn't matter. Sweet little Bubbles would never hurt a fly, and she didn't need this talk. "Girls, killing is wrong. It just is. And- I'm just not sure how to say this."

"He was shooting at me and it was painful..." Buttercup repeated herself; it was her only justification, or at least, the only one she cared to mention. On the other hand, killing that man felt glorious and empowering, and it was fun to apply what Mommy had taught her, to watch how it would look like in real life, rather than what a flying kick would do to a crash test dummy. "Why are policemen allowed to kill and I'm not?"

"Buttercup-" Professor Utonium growled at the green-eyed girl, but softly. In his mind, she didn't understand the implications of taking a life, and scolding her would be wrong. "You see, Girls, the
three of you are special. With normal people like me, and the police, we get hurt or even die very easily. We have to protect ourselves. But with the three of you, well, with great power comes great responsibility. Do you understand?"

"Not really…” Buttercup said. The professor sighed. He could feel a headache coming on, so he rubbed his forehead. Buttercup stared at the ground, feeling less loved and more disappointing. She thought that Daddy would be proud of her. Instead, she felt more second-rate than ever.

"Those robbers- Some of them might not be so bad. Some of them could be desperate. They could be doing bad things because they were forced to. Or because they were poor. You can't always know who's truly bad and who is good. Buttercup- Girls, you hold great power in your hands. You can take them down without killing them. That way, the good won't have to die even if the truly evil deserve justice. Do you understand better now, Buttercup?"

"I guess…” Buttercup said, her hands behind her back as she played with her half-burnt boots and the snow. It felt like nothing more than a lecture, and she hadn't heard even half of it.

City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

14 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 2314.

They were home within a half hour, speeding away from the Central Bank and arriving at the quiet suburbs as though the bank robbers were all boogeymen in a bad dream. Blake was silent throughout the journey, knowing that Professor Utonium had already said everything that needed to be said. The radio was sociopathic for a while, blaring out reports and information from the crime scene, but Agent Blake was quick to silence it, knowing that the Girls didn't need to hear it and be reminded of the mess at Central Bank.

Bubbles had been silent throughout. She'd never said a word since coming to, even when Professor Utonium had tried to speak to her, to get her to open up as he tended to the glass shards in her left eye at the Central Bank. He thought that she just needed time, having gone through a horrific thing that would have killed just about anyone else - a shotgun blast in the eye that must have been terribly painful, even if ineffective against her. Then there was the violence after that.

When Professor Utonium and the Girls approached The House, the door opened the moment they were close. Selicia had been waiting for them. At first, she was all smiles, perhaps confident that her Girls would shine on their first day, just like in school, but a single look at how the rest of the family look was all she needed to know that something had gone wrong.

"Supper or shower first? What do you Girls feel like doing?” she asked the Girls and her 'husband'. They were silent for a while. None of them could decide what to do. Had Blossom and Buttercup had their way, they would have gone right off to bed, preferably with the other sleeping elsewhere.

"I'm not really hungry, but supper first, I guess," Blossom said, looking up at her Mom.

"Right, anything for my sweethearts - Give me a minute to heat the muffins up, you Girls just sit down and rest," Selicia said, padding away into the kitchen, her steps hurried. The Girls looked like they'd been through hell, and it was her only way of making things right today. Blossom started peeling off her kevlar after that. Buttercup had to do that literally, due to the synthetic material in her SWAT gear melting after she was hit with a Molotov, mixing with the ash to give out a toxic, burnt smell that was almost just as thick. Metal rattled as they removed their gear, and dented bullets fell like marbles out of an upturned bag when they did.
"Don't worry about the mess, Girls. I'll clean it up later," the professor told them. The last thing they needed right now was to worry about the little things. It was surreal, however, how many bullets were shaken loose from their gear, from their uniform, and they were of all shapes and sizes too, from .44s to 9mms to shotgun pellets and 7.62mm rifle slugs. It was a shame that whatever few robbers were left after the police were done mopping up the bank couldn't be charged for aggravated attempted child murder and assault - considering that the USDO, in its infinite wisdom, had made Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup non-persons.

Bubbles had sat down on the sofa, doing nothing more all the while. Her gear and uniform was the most intact, but even she had a few holes in them from stray bullets fired at her while Blossom was dragging her to safety. The professor had to help her out of it, and when he did, she acted as if she hadn't been relieved of her heavy gear. Her blonde hair fell across half her face, and she didn't sweep it away - the professor had to do that for her too.

"Girls, supper's ready!" Selicia called from the kitchen. Buttercup was the first to respond, dashing to the dining table to have her cake. Blossom took Bubbles by the hand to lead her there. When she was at the table, she took what was obviously hers – the red cake. Seeing that Buttercup was sitting down on the nearest seat – 'typical, lazy Buttercup,' Blossom thought – she picked the seat furthest away from her, right on the opposite end.

"Bubbles, the blue one's yours," Selicia said to Bubbles, who stood there, looking past the cake. The blonde girl snapped into focus, well, barely, before taking reluctant steps towards the cake. Meanwhile, the mother was busy setting down cups of hot chocolate.

Buttercup was already digging into her food. She thrust her fork and knife at her cake hungrily and aggressively. Loudly.

Bubbles shook at the noise of the crashing of cutlery. Somehow, it reminded her of what had happened in the bank. It was loud here, and it was loud there. Her hand shook as she reached for the plate.

The ski-mask wearing bank robber pointed his shotgun at her. She thought she could see what was inside the tube of the weapon. Something red. And it burst into a clutch of metal bearings, rushing at her, biting her in the face. The pain was excruciating, the fact that a person could do such a thing to her even worse.

Bubbles leaned against the plate she'd reached, feeling her heart racing, unable to breathe. She felt faint, as if she was going to drop dead.

"Bubbles!" Selicia screamed when she fell, her plate of blue frosting cake crashing to the floor next to her. "Bubbles!"

Both Selicia and Professor Utonium ran up to her. Blossom stood up, peering down at her sister upset. Buttercup was still at her seat, closest to Bubbles but doing nothing except turning around and resting an arm on the back of chair, looking apathetically at Bubbles on the floor. Selicia held Bubbles in her arms, screaming for her to respond, but the girl wouldn't. Her eyes were glassy, staring a thousand yards through the ceiling. The professor examined her, noting the pulse and the lack of response in her eyes.

"It's worse than I thought. She's suffering from shock," the professor said.

"I'll take her up," Selicia offered, already cradling the fallen girl in her arms.

"No, give her to me. I'll do it," the professor rejected, eyeing her suspiciously. He motioned for
Selicia to hand Bubbles over, and she did, dropped her into Professor Utonium's arms.

"Dad, is Bubbles going to be fine?" Blossom asked her Dad, her voice betraying how shattered she was inside by everything. It was the worst day ever.

"She'll be fine. She's just shocked, that's all. I'm sure it'll wear off soon," the professor said, but he was being as optimistic as possible. Things were already as bad as it was. He adjusted his grip on Bubbles, putting one of her arms around his neck, but she wasn't exerting much strength at all even on the scale of a 5-year-old to hold onto her Dad. He started towards the stairs. "She's a strong kid. She'll be fine with some TLC. Right, Bubbles?" Bubbles said nothing, but continued to stare through The House.

When they were gone, the kitchen had fallen into silence. Buttercup pigged out on her cake while Blossom took only tiny nibbles.

"I wish you were there, Mommy," Buttercup said with food still in her mouth. "You should have seen me! I was flying through the air, and I killed one of those robbers! Thanks for teaching me how to do a flying kick, Mom! I think I still have his blood on my boots."

"So that's where the smell came from," Selicia said. She smiled at Buttercup - it was as if her little favorite had grown up in just three weeks, already killing her first crook at such a young age. "Good job, my little SWAT cop! That'd teach those bastards."

Blossom did not like that her mother and sibling were celebrating murder. Buttercup stared at Mommy, not believing the language she used.

"Excuse my french," Selicia said, realizing that she'd gone overboard. But it'd felt like being with her fellow security officers again, and talking about killing intruders and subjects was a common topic, right up there with the use of vulgarities. She laughed, and Buttercup followed along. Blossom simply chuckled for a bit, but she only did so bitterly. Things had changed too much.

"And I would have killed more of them, Mom, had it not been for Bubbles!" Buttercup continued her war story. "She fell down after just one shot! She was lousy! And then Blossom decided to run away like a chicken-"

Blossom slammed her fists on the table. The plates and jumped. Her cup of chocolate spilled. Selicia and Buttercup's teetered and they had to hold their cup of chocolates down. If she didn't look like she could kill in the bank, she definitely looked like she could kill in The House at present.

"Stop picking on Bubbles, you Butthead!" Blossom snarled at Buttercup. "And I didn't run away, I was helping Bubbles!"

"Stop calling me that, you b-" Buttercup could not complete her sentence when Selicia interrupted.

"Girls! Please! Blossom, don't ever bang the table again! And stop calling your sister names!" Selicia lectured, standing up and pointing a warning finger at Blossom.

"But Mom!" Blossom tried to argue.

"No buts! Now, it might not sound pleasant, but if you messed up, you have to face the music! Especially when it's coming from your coming from your own beloved sister!" Selicia lectured, her face turning into one of seriousness.

"I didn't mess up, Mom, I just-" Blossom tried to speak, but she was cut off rather quickly.
"You just… what? Buttercup did her part for Townsville and you didn't," Selicia said coldly. "She'd taken a criminal off the street and you let the rest of them go, right?"

"And Blossom left me behind while I was fighting to run away with Bubbles," Buttercup added in the least helpful way for Blossom possible, a malicious grin spreading from ear to ear on her face.

"That's not true at all! I told you to run away too! You didn't listen! I had to help Bubbles after what they did to her! You were supposed to listen to me! Blackwater made me the leader!" Blossom argued. "Tell her, Mom! Tell her she's wrong!"

"Blossom, if you were the leader, you weren't supposed to leave anyone behind, least of all your sister! Bubbles would have been fine just lying there on the ground. You should have fought alongside Buttercup. If you were the leader, you were a bad one at that," Selicia said. Blossom stared at her, stunned that such sharp words could come from her mother.

"And if you're going to be an ungrateful brat and spill the hot chocolate I so lovingly worked hard to make for you, then you can go up to your room!" Selicia snapped at Blossom, whose lips trembled after being malignied by who she considered her own family.

"Mom-" Blossom tried one more time, but she had even less speaking time than before.

"Now! Blossom!" Selicia ordered. Hanging her head in submission, Blossom shuffled up the stairs, an odd bullet still falling out of her military pants, which was full of holes around the back area.

"Thanks, Mom. You're the best!" Buttercup said lovingly as she went up to her Mommy and hug her around the legs. "She'd said the same mean things about me in front of Mister Blackwater too, Mom."

"The Chief of Security Blackwater made Blossom the leader?" Selicia said, not quite in disbelief, but she wouldn't have picked Blossom. Sure, Blossom was smart and all that jazz, but Buttercup would have been a better choice in her opinion. She did not hesitate to attack, and she was brave. Plus, Buttercup was her favorite.

"Yeah, Mom, even when I asked to be made leader," Buttercup said, squeezing her beloved mother tightly. "Should I have been the leader, Mom?"

"Of course, darling. If it was up to me, I would have put you in charge," Selicia said.

"Hey Mom?"

"Yes, Buttercup?"

"I love you," Buttercup confessed.

"Me too, little angel, and to the death, too," Selicia said.

"Can I have Blossom's cake?" Buttercup asked.

"Sure. Would be a shame for it to go to waste," Selicia said.
Chapter 44: Rivalry

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are sent for training.

Chapter 44: Rivalry

City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House

14 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 2341.

Despite it being way past bedtime, the Girls were allowed to stay up. After revealing that they were still feeling wide awake even after a tense bath in which Blossom and Buttercup refused to speak to each other, the professor had decided to let them be, deciding that he would check on them later. He reasoned that it was likely due to adrenaline, and when it wears off, they will likely feel the lull of sleep beckoning to them rather quickly. He'd gotten them to change into their night gowns in anticipation of that.

"Well, I'm not sleeping with you!" Buttercup yelled at Blossom. They had been expending their free time glaring at each other in anger, instead of playing with their toys.

"Good! So sleep on the floor then!" Blossom yelled back.

"Yeah? You should sleep on the floor instead! You ran away like a coward! You don't deserve a bed!" Buttercup countered, and each time they traded snarks, they got closer to each other, ready to tear the other's head off.

"It's my bed, Buttercup!" Blossom shouted.

"I don't see your name on it!" Buttercup countered.

"There's a pink stripe down the middle, so it's mine! Besides, I'm the leader now, so you're supposed to listen to me!" Blossom yelled. "And you didn't listen to me before!"

Just then, they heard a whimper coming from the bed. Looking over, Blossom saw that Bubbles was crying again. There was a milk bottle on the night stand beside her. The professor had observed that Bubbles might have regressed because of the shock, and she'd stopped walking, talking and started sucking her thumb and… She'd wet the bed, and Blossom knew why.

"Great work, Buttercup! You scared Bubbles again!" Blossom said sarcastically to Buttercup, pointing at the mess Bubbles had made, throwing back the sarcasm she'd learned from her wilder sister.

"Ugh, that crybaby!? She's always scared!" Buttercup accused. When Bubbles wailing grew louder, the ravenette, too, grew impatient. "Shut up, you baby! Now no one's sleeping in that bed because of you!"
Yet Bubbles would not stop crying. Buttercup took steps towards the blonde girl, and Blossom stood between them. "Why are you always picking on Bubbles, Buttercup!? She's your sister!"

"Get- Get out of my way!" Buttercup uttered as she tried to circle around Blossom, but the latter girl was always able to block her easily. When Buttercup tried to force her way through, Blossom gave her a shove, and she ended up falling on her butt.

That was the last straw to her. The one thing Buttercup never liked was to be bossed around, to have her superiority threatened. And it had been threatened and mocked and spat on far too many times. She got up to her feet, wearing a most terrifying look, as if a demon from some other world had possessed her. Blossom could feel cold sweat breaking out all over her the moment she saw it, but she stood her ground.

"Buttercup- Why don't you stop acting like this and we can- arck!" Blossom tried to reason with Buttercup when her sister savagely tackled her to the ground, and without giving her a chance to speak, wrapped her fingers around her neck, closing them in without mercy, without hesitation. Having had the wind knocked out of her when Buttercup had tackled her, Blossom could feel asphyxiation setting in almost immediately. She opened her mouth to try to speak, but nothing but a croak came out - she was practically begging to be released.

Buttercup stared into the eyes of her sister with an intensity that terrified Blossom; the total abandoning of reason, of decency and civilization and love, and the want to kill all too clear, the impulse unrestricted and strong. Saliva dribbled down a corner of her mouth, dripping down on Blossom's face, as if she couldn't wait to eat her up.

Blossom tried her best to fight back, punching Buttercup in the face, but she was weakened by the lack of air. She started kicking, but there was nothing to kick; Buttercup was crouching over her. In a last ditch attempt, Blossom pushed herself up, only for Buttercup to slam her against the foot of the bed. But then Blossom was able to curl her legs up before launching another desperate kick at Buttercup, and her foot just so happened to land a hard blow in between her legs. It got her to let go immediately.

Where previously Buttercup had been choking the life out of Blossom, she reached down to clutch at her privates, rolling on the ground, writhing in pain as she alternated between moaning and crying. "Oooh! Ow!" she cried as she curled up. "You didn't need to do that, Blossom!"

Footsteps echoed down the corridor outside their room. The door was opened soon after that. "Girls! Is everything alright!?" Buttercup immediately sat up, facing away from their Daddy. She feigned a toothy smile as she looked over her shoulder at the professor. Blossom did the same, beaming at the professor - though it was easier for her, considering that she wasn't in as much pain as Buttercup.

"Everything's fine, Daddy," Buttercup said, trying her best to keep the pain out of her voice, though she could feel as though her face could crack from her effort to keep her smile up.

"Bubbles' crying though. She'd wet the bed, Dad," Blossom added.

"Oh no! I'll clean her up right this minute," Professor Utonium said as he went around the bed to pick Bubbles up. It was just like the old days, it seemed to him, but it wasn't the way he wanted to relive it. "Now where did I put those diapers? I thought I didn't need them anymore - I'll be back with a new mattress, Girls."

With that, the professor left, closing the door. Buttercup's fake happy face turned into one contorted by pain as she resumed rolling on the ground in excruciating pain. Thousands of pounds of force from a desperate Blossom had ensured that it would last for a good long while. It looked so bad that
even Blossom had started feeling sorry for her.

"Are you okay, Buttercup?" Blossom asked as she knelt next to her mean sister. She was even going to hug her when Buttercup pushed her away.

"Leave me alone, Bloss! Ouch…" Buttercup struggled to even speak coherently as she returned to the floor.

"I'm going to get Daddy, he'll know what to do!" Blossom said as she made to stand up, but Buttercup's hand shot up to her and took her by the wrist.

"No, wait! Please don't!" Buttercup pleaded. It would mean Daddy finding out about their fight, and then she would get into trouble, even fall further from his good graces - at least, that was how she saw it. The pain just would not go away, and for a moment, Buttercup despaired that it would never ever go away. Tears started misting in her eyes. "Stay with me, please! I'm sorry I hurt you."

Blossom sank back down to the floor, putting a hand on Buttercup's shoulder. She laid her sister on her lap, holding her, hoping that it would at least make the pain more bearable.

"Why are we always fighting, Buttercup?" Blossom said, feeling nostalgic of their more innocent past, when even Buttercup knew nothing about violence and explosions. "We're supposed to be sisters."

"I'm sorry, Blossom. I shouldn't have hurt you. I was so mad I couldn't control myself," Buttercup said, her eyes still squeezed shut and her body shaking from the pain. She was only revealing half the story; the hidden half being that she wanted so much to hurt her despite her need to please the father figure, but Blossom didn't need to hear that, just as much as she didn't need to hear that she actually intended to kill her for shoving her to the ground. But the light half she revealed existed and it was genuine; hurting her sister was something she shouldn't have done, and not just because Daddy said so.

Phone Recording 12141988-2341-TH

DOC: 14 DEC 1988

EXTRACTED: 14 DEC 1988

TRANSCRIPT START

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Hello?

Chief of Security Blackwater: This is Chief of Security Blackwater. Real comfy for you there? (Takes a puff of cigar)

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Sir?

Chief of Security Blackwater: You should know what happened at the bank by now, Selicia. Those petri kids had probably gone crying to mommy long ago, am I right?

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Yes, sir.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Then you've failed miserably, am I fucking right?!

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: N-not entirely, sir. Buttercup's promising. She killed the gang leader with nothing but her bare hands, sir. As for the rest…
Chief of Security Blackwater: The gang leader! She was supposed to leave the gang leader alive for questioning! That moron! The detective in charge of the Lombardi made that very clear before those meddling kids went in!

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: I… wasn't aware of that, sir.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Makes sense, considering that lil' bitch you call Buttercup is a compulsive liar. Tell me, what other sweet little nibbles had she put in your ear lately?

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: I… I don't follow, sir.

Chief of Security Blackwater: From now on, I want things done exactly how I want it, when I want it, you hear me! Because, so help me, Selicia, when the time comes, I'll get those pretty little girls scrapped if you don't do what I say.

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Scrapped, sir? (Afraid)

Chief of Security Blackwater: It can happen, you know. There's going to be a meeting tomorrow because of this mess-up. You and your mad scientist sweetheart aren't invited.

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Sir, please… At least not Buttercup. And the others- they're just little girls, sir. They don't know anything!

Chief of Security Blackwater: Getting all soft on me, Goodwin?

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: What do I have to do?

Chief of Security Blackwater: I want a full report on their combat capabilities, with input from agent Utonium. I want you to give them a crash course on counter-terrorism at HQ tomorrow. I want them fully equipped like a God-damn tac team. No more screw-ups. And Selicia?

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Yes?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Tell your dearest husband to back the hell off. It won't do anyone any good. I don't need his voice in my ear when he's reluctant to prepare the Girls for duty himself. None of this would have happened if he'd played along with the rest of us. Well, I'm done talking. I'll probably need a bottle of whiskey thanks to your girls.

TRANSCRIPT END

City of Townsville. Downtown. USDO Townsville HQ


"Ooh, ooh! Can I try the shotgun, Mommy?" Buttercup pleaded excitedly.

"Later, Buttercup. Keep your pistol forward, honey. Don't point it at anyone unless you want 'im dead," Selicia instructed. The whole family was out on the underground range in the USDO headquarters in Townsville, which used to be a police complex. Everyone had a booth to themselves, and Selicia was in the middle. Even Professor Utonium was in on it, after lots of reasoning and begging and attempted seduction from Selicia in and out of bed since midnight. In the end, he agreed, just so he could motivate the Girls to train for their next call – and the Girls needed lots of motivation after what had happened at the central bank.

They began emptying a magazine each into their targets. Both Buttercup and Blossom had absorbed
their lessons well that their grouping was tight enough to be mistaken for a trained soldier's. It helped that a pistol's recoil was nothing to them. After the initial surprise of the gun jumping up, it was all peachy from there. Bubbles did well, considering that she was still recovering from shock. Still in diapers, she was able to put half her shots into a paper target. Selicia was a natural sharpshooter, of course, while the professor did just well enough, having found no purpose in excelling in the art of violence.

They graduated to the SMG later, with each of them armed with an MP5. Buttercup and Blossom were naturals – the kickback of even a full-auto SMG was nothing compared to carrying the family sedan. Their groupings were so tight that only a drone could do better. They'd even received a standing ovation from the top brass who were watching. Well, except for Blackwater.

This continued for a while, with every class of weapons tried. Shotguns, assault rifles, sniper rifle, grenade launchers… But it was found that the larger the weapon, the less confident the Girls were. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were just too small to handle the larger weapons. The law enforcement world was simply not built with little children in mind, and Blackwater had rejected the idea of building customized guns for them. It was settled that MP5s would be handed out to them – less chance of collateral damage, and whatever extra firepower they needed could come from their fists and flying feet.

There was a recess after that, and the Girls settled down in the canteen for tea with sandwich and juice boxes from the vending machines.

Blossom had asked her Daddy to sit with her, aside from the rest. A pressing question had been on her mind since last night, keeping her company before, during and after her night's sleep.

"Dad, how do I become a good leader?" Blossom asked.

"Well, you don't give up for a start. Like Thomas Edison," the professor said.

"Who's Thomas Edison? Is he a friend of yours?"

"Not really. You see all these lights all around us? He invented the light bulb, and do you know how many times he failed to make it right?"

"I don't know, a couple of times?" Blossom guessed.

"Why, no one knows. A thousand times, or three thousand, even ten thousand times, give or take. And he didn't throw in the towel at all, even when he was laughed at," the professor explained. "But you'd also have to be smart, which I've no doubt you are."

Professor Utonium gave Blossom a squeeze and she giggled.

"But really, as a leader, you're responsible for everyone around you. That's most important is for you to take great care of them. That's how I did it. Be friendly with them, and you'll be loved and respected by all forever. That's how you can get anything done."

"I don't know if I can be like you," Blossom confessed, toying with her orange juice box.

"You don't have to be, Blossom. You just need to be yourself," the professor said. "They're supposed to fall in love with you, sugar plum, not me."

They spent some time in silence, just basking in each other's presence. It wouldn't be long before they would be separated again, and every time that happened, she would feel uncontrollable anxiety rising in her.
"What if they won't listen to me?" Blossom asked again, breaking the silence.

"You mean your sisters?"

"Yes. But just Buttercup, really," Blossom said.

"Then you'll have to be firm with her," the professor suggested.

"You mean being mean to her?"

"In a way. It's okay to be a little mean if it's for their own good," the professor said. "Like how I can be sometimes?"

"I don't think you've ever been mean to me…"

"Haha, that's because I never need to be, darling," the professor said as he caressed Blossom's lovely hair as they were looking at Buttercup, the professor nodding at the green-eyed girl. Buttercup smiled back at them, but there was no happiness behind her smile. She knew that they were talking about her, but it had made her anxious because she hadn't extended her hearing to them as she was busy with Mom.

"But with Buttercup, I had to be. For her own good, I had to control her sometimes… Because I love her. You- You understand me, right?" the professor said.

"I understand, Dad," Blossom said, still staring at Buttercup, but this time, with a dash of strength in her eyes. She understood more than her Daddy knew. It wasn't just at the bank that Buttercup's been acting out. Yesterday, Buttercup had tried to strangle her, and she'd been a really bad sister to Bubbles. It was time to put a stop to that.

City of Townsville. Downtown. Abandoned Mall.


"So, Blossom, here's the scenario: We've got ten rogue USDO SWAT operatives holed up in that mall. We know that they're hiding in a sports shop out in the middle of the second floor, right here." Selicia briefed the Girls. They were out in the middle of an empty parking lot. The Girls were standing around their Lamborghini speed transport, looking at a map that seemed too abstract and confusing to them. She had to redraw the map on a drawing block with a crayon to make it seem more palatable and understandable to them. "What do you do, Blossom?"

"Can we talk to them?" Blossom suggested. The Girls were dressed in their SWAT gear, and each of them were given an MP5, along with a variety of non-lethal grenades.

"Oh, come on! We've tried that before!" Buttercup whined unhelpfully. Blossom glared at her from the corners of her eye, a frown forming on her face, but she chose to ignore her.

"Hmm, let's leave negotiation out for now. Say they're completely evil and unwilling to talk. What do you do?"

"We run up to them and punch them all in the face!" Buttercup cut into the planning.

"Mom, it's the leader, Buttercup!" Blossom scolded. Buttercup gave her the stink eye. "Running up to them wouldn't work, we tried that in the bank and it didn't work. They'll shoot us the moment they see us."
"Only because Bubbles was useless and you were a chicken," Buttercup added some more, and at this point, even Selicia thought that she was being a little excessive. Bubbles' gaze migrated to the floor, having been reminded by Buttercup of what had happened in the bank. Blossom glared at her. Her tomboy sister was doing exactly everything that she hated. She would have to sort her out later, as her Daddy said she should.

"Buttercup, we need to focus on the mission. And no punching this time, missy. Just guns for now," Selicia said.

"Yes, Mom," Buttercup agreed.

"Can we sneak up on them, like in hide-and-seek?" Blossom suggested. It felt like the only way. What were they going to do, fly through the ceiling?

"Ah!" Selicia exclaimed. They were going somewhere now. She had led Blossom to the stealth option and she had succeeded in following the breadcrumbs. "As a matter of fact, yes. There are some places here and here and here," Selicia pointed at certain parts of her crayon recreation of the map. "Where the rogues wouldn't be able to see you. You can even drop down from the third floor and go through the air vent gratings."

"What are air vent gratings?" Bubbles asked, speaking for the first time in a long time.

"They're like doors on the ceiling that you can open to get through. You three are small, so it shouldn't be a problem," Selicia answered.

"But wouldn't the third floor be too high up?" Bubbles asked.

"I've seen how high the three of you can jump, Bubbles, and if the three of you can land without hurting yourselves after touching the lab ceilings, then dropping from the third floor to the second shouldn't be a problem. Just make sure you land on your feet," Selicia explained. "There's the three of you and ten of them, Blossom. You'll have to plan this carefully, and try not to get shot too many times. We're grading you according to that, too. We even have a truck full of computers to do that."

Selicia pointed to a truck marked with the USDO eagle and shield. The back doors were open, and men were sitting inside, watching monitors. The professor was inside as well - he wanted to see how well his Girls would do out there.

Blossom smiled. She had the perfect answer to this riddle.

City of Townsville. Downtown. Abandoned Mall. Mission Time - 0 mins

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup jogged up the mall, their submachineguns up. On the way there, Blossom magnified her vision to scout out the roof of the mall, and the windows overlooking the parking grounds, but there was no one. Seeing this, Blossom, leading the three, went around the back like speeding cars with the others following, quickly reaching an 'Employees Only' door, only to find it locked and chained up. But it wasn't as much of a hindrance as it would be to an average SWAT officer, who would have needed a bolt cutter to get through the door. Blossom simply clutched at the chain and gave it a yank, breaking it and unblocking the door.

Once inside, they travelled through the service corridor, before emerging out into the inside of the abandoned mall. The massive skylights and above weren't enough to illuminate most of the mall. There were plenty of places to skulk around in.

Choosing an escalator cloaked in darkness, the Girls ascended the steel steps, and on finding stacks of boxes in the middle of the open-aired second floor corridors overlooking the first floor, hid behind
them. Blossom peeked over the boxes, and magnified her vision once more, stealing glances at the rogue USDO soldiers holed up in the sports store. They were there alright. Six of them were standing behind barricades, looking out the store front which lacked glass panes. They were equipped as SWAT operatives with kevlar vest and helmet, assault rifles, SMGs, shotguns. Blossom went back into hiding after sighting their targets.

"Buttercup, I need you sneak to the front and wait there for me," Blossom instructed her sisters.
"Bubbles, you'll sneak around the back. I'll drop down from the third floor. Don't shoot until I say so over the radio. I'm going to-"

"Blossom-" Buttercup interrupted.

"What?" Blossom said, annoyed, knowing that nothing good could come next from Buttercup.

"Why do I have to be at the front? Why can't I drop down from the ceiling?" Buttercup complained - in her mind, Blossom was trying to show off once again, and make everyone believe that she had done all the work.

"Buttercup, you're the toughest of the three of us-" Blossom tried to reason with her, but she was quickly cut off by Buttercup. She hated it when she does that - it was incredibly rude, and she hated rudeness.

"I'm dropping down from the ceiling, Blossom. You can take the front," Buttercup rebelled. Blossom has had it. Seizing the ravenette by the vest, she slammed her against the boxes - Thankfully, they were filled with some stuff that were heavy or their cover would be blown.

"I'm the leader, Buttercup," Blossom snarled at her wayward sister, her eyes narrowing into slits. "You'll listen to me."

"What is with you, Blossom!" Buttercup exclaimed in surprise; she had never seen her red-haired sister like this before.

"Blossom… You're scaring me…” Bubbles blurted out from the corner. She was hugging her submachinegun as though it was Octi.

"You're going to the front, Buttercup, or you're not going anywhere," Blossom warned Buttercup.

"Fine! Fine! It's not like it's a big deal anyway!" Buttercup finally yielded, and Blossom let go of her.

"Good. If only you'd just listened," Blossom said before continuing as if nothing happened. "I'll sneak up the third floor. Bubbles, you'll sneak around the dark walkways to the back and Buttercup - behind the boxes and benches. Tell me when you're ready."

City of Townsville. Downtown. Abandoned Mall. Mission Time - 7 mins

"Very well done so far, Girls. You're fast. They won't be expecting you," Sergeant Selicia Goodwin said over the radio. Blossom hoisted herself up on the railing a third floor corridor, aiming at the roof of the sports store to drop down on. She let go when she was able to swallow her fear of heights.

"Blossom, it's Buttercup. I'm waiting," Buttercup reported over the radio. "I don't think they've seen me yet."

Blossom fell through the air, and as she did, she was looking down at the roof of the store, still fearful of heights. But then something different happened - it felt as if she was actually slowing down
as she landed on threes in a crouching position. "Weird," she whispered to herself, wondering what had happened there. Nevertheless, she made her way to the grate. There, she could see two of the rogue USDO operatives playing a game of solitaire.

"Bubbles, are you there yet?" Blossom whispered into her radio after withdrawing from the grate.

"Almost..." Bubbles' high-pitched voice, eternally worried and afraid, no thanks to Buttercup and the robbers yesterday, rang out over the radio.

Buttercup, in the meantime, was waiting under a skylight. It was a cloudy day, so there wasn't much light to expose her. "Stupid Blossom and her 'leadership'," she muttered to herself as she waited. She took a peek over the box she was hiding behind, and saw Blossom waiting on the roof of the sports store. Bubbles was nowhere to be seen. "I'll show her leadership."

Buttercup, against orders, stalked closer to the store front, using the boxes scattered around.

"Bubbles, are you there yet?" Blossom asked over the radio.

"Almost," Bubbles replied.

That was when gunshots rang out.

'Buttercup!' Blossom thought. She looked over to where Buttercup was supposed to be at, only to find her missing. No, she had gone down-lane, even closer to the rogue USDOes in the sports stores. She was firing shots wildly at the storefront, laughing hysterically.

"Good job, Girls, one man down, nine more to go!" Selicia praised over the radio.

"Buttercup! You weren't supposed to come out yet!" Blossom yelled over the radio. Things weren't supposed to go this way. They were supposed to take all ten of the soldiers down at one go.

"Take cover! They're out there!" one of the soldiers in the sports store shouted.

"I see only one of them! They're flanking!" another soldier shouted. Gunshots soon ensued from inside the sports store as the USDO rogues returned fire against Buttercup.

"Fan out!" yet another soldier ordered.

"Oh no!" Blossom gasped as she hurried to the grates. Her well-laid plan was falling apart at the seams, and she wasn't sure if she could save it. Unclipping the flashbangs from her vest. She pulled the pins off all of them, pressed the levers and dropped them down.

"Grenades!" someone below shouted. "Take cover!"

It wasn't supposed to happen this way. The flashbangs were supposed to be surprises.

"Blossom, what's happening!" Bubbles babbled over the radio. "I'm not there yet, but they're shooting at me!"

"Take cover, Bubbles, and shoot back!" Blossom ordered as she dropped down into the sports shop, her submachinegun out. The men inside were supposed to be incapacitated, blinded by the flashbangs, but they weren't. Not most of them yet. A single USDO operative in black-gray SWAT gear was covering his eyes, hiding under a table that failed to protect him from the blinding light. Blossom tagged him with her gun first. The others in the sports store was ready for her, and they fired back.
"Blossom, honey, you're taking fire. I'm counting 15 bullets and rising." Selicia warned over the radio.

There were fewer of them than she had expected in the store. The others had long exited it. She could see the backs of three of them as she ran for cover. They were outside, hiding behind boxes, squaring off against Buttercup, who had just ran out of bullets and was reloading.

"Blossom, help me!" Bubbles said over the radio.

Blossom circles around a counter two soldiers were hiding behind. She'd done it with her super-speed such that they weren't able to track where she was. Knocking over display frames and a mannequin, she got around the men and fired her SMG, tagging them both. The soldiers fell to the ground, feigning death. More shots were fired in her general direction.

"Bubbles, you need to learn how to take cover or retreat. I'm counting 34 bullets on you and rising!" Selicia barked over the radio, impatient.

Outside, Buttercup has had enough of hiding. Jumping out of cover, she ran around the three men arrayed against her, taking imaginary bullets in the meantime, firing her SMG one-handed. One of them went down when his laser sensor blared out that he was dead. The others continued firing, scrambling to find new covers as Buttercup was flanking them.

"Buttercup, you're not playing by the rules!" Selicia said through the radio. "67 bullets on you and rising! Buttercup!" But Buttercup wasn't listening.

Back inside, Blossom was exchanging fire with two other 'rogue USDO soldiers'. After running out of ammunition, she ducked back into cover to reload. "Doing good, Blossom, 23 bullets on you and holding steady. Take them out carefully."

But the red-haired girl had a devious plan. Unpinning a final flashbang, she pushed its lever and threw it over the counter where the soldiers were hiding. After hearing them scramble out, she hopped over her counter, pushing herself over it with just a single hand, before unloading her MP5 at them. They were out for the count.

With that, she rushed at full speed out, getting behind the two soldiers firing on Bubbles. She was able to tag them without them even knowing what hit em, at least until they turned around and raised their hands. "You got us!" one of the soldiers said.

Meanwhile, Buttercup had only just shot down her second man, all the while running around in the open. She tackled the third man, who had just ran out of bullets on his assault rifle. "TAG!" she screamed when she did. The USDO SWAT officer was knocked yards away, and when he went down, he didn't get up again. Instead, he was clutching his ribs, writhing in pain.

"Y-you weren't supposed to do that you-!" the soldier howled. "Idiot! This is only a simulation, God damn!"

Buttercup stared down at the soldier triumphantly, caring little for the pain she had caused him. As far as she was concerned, she had won.

"Girls, we're done here. Come back out," Selicia said over the radio. Buttercup took off at full speed, smile on her face, leaving her sisters behind. She knew that Blossom would likely have something to say about this, and she wasn't going to hear it.

City of Townsville. Downtown. Abandoned Mall. Mission Time - 16 mins
When the Girls were all together again, Blossom was doing nothing but frowning at Buttercup, her arms crossed. Buttercup, on the other hand, wore a smug look on her face. Bubbles, in the meantime, was, again, hugging her simulation gun as if it was a bolster. Both Professor Utonium and Selicia were with them.

"Girls," the professor greeted as she was reading off a paper. "How well do you think you three did?"

"I think I was awesome!" Buttercup boasted.

"Not good…" Blossom and Bubbles said at the same time.

"Buttercup, you were hit 129 times. Blossom, you were hit 23 times. Bubbles… 64 times," Professor Utonium read off the paper. "That's quite a lot, Girls. But it's a job well done for you, Blossom, considering."

"Blossom, what happened to your plan? It was nothing like what you told me," Selicia said.

"Mom, Buttercup disobeyed orders! Again!" Blossom exclaimed angrily, throwing up her hands.

"She was planning to leave me out of everything!" Buttercup accused, pointing a finger at her alpha-sister as her eyes secretly pleaded with her Mommy to take her side.

"No I wasn't!" Blossom countered, facing Buttercup, looking like she was going to tackle her over the accusation.

"Yes you were!" Buttercup asserted, her voice grating, as she faced off with her sister.

"No!" Blossom returned.

"Yes!" Buttercup re-asserted. Fearing the worst, the professor took Blossom by an arm, and Selicia pulled Buttercup back.

"Girls, please! Calm down a little!" the professor reasoned with the both of them.

"She's the reason why we failed at the bank yesterday! Why should she continue to be the leader!?" Buttercup shouted.

"No, you're the reason why we failed in the bank yesterday! I could have talked the robbers into giving up if you didn't threaten them!" Blossom countered. They were able to get closer to each other, nearly pressing their faces together, despite their parents' intervention.

"Girls! It's useless to blame each other like this!" the professor screamed as he squeezed himself between his two adopted daughters.

It took half an hour for the Girls to calm down, and that was including the professor's mandatory corner time. When they were all brought back together again, back in the USDO HQ, Selicia read their individual grades.

"Buttercup, you scored an F," Selicia said. "You defied the rules of the game, you were shot too many times and you were reckless. I'm sorry, dear."

"Bubbles, you scored an F too," Selicia said. "You've contributed nothing for your sisters. You didn't kill a single enemy and had to be rescued."
"Blossom… You scored a D," Selicia said. "You were able to do everything you were trained for, and you were shot only 23 times. But your plan wasn't executed well, resulting in your sisters getting shot too many times."

"Buttercup, I saw what you were doing on the security cameras, and I heard you on the radio," the professor added. "I'm afraid I'd have to agree with Blossom - you didn't do as you were asked, and Blossom's plan failed because of it."

"But Dad, her plan wasn't even a good one!" Buttercup came up with another excuse.

"You don't know that, and now we'll never know because we weren't able to see it," the professor reasoned. "Blossom was made the leader, and you're her dear sister. You shouldn't make it so hard for her to lead, Buttercup. How would you feel if you were made the leader, and Blossom defies everything you say?"

Buttercup considered the professor's question, and she was afraid of the only answer she could give. "But I'm not the leader now, she is!"

"Answer me, Buttercup," the professor told the green-eyed girl gently.

"I... would be angry?" Buttercup finally replied.

"Exactly. Now think about what Blossom has been going through ever since you started going against her," the professor said.

"Yes, Daddy…" Buttercup said, but in truth, she hadn't thought much about it, even now. Despite the professor's best intentions, she hadn't seen it from Blossom nor his point of view, nor feel what they felt, not exactly.

She was simply, largely, incapable of it.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, more details of the 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank is revealed.

USDO Combat Report 12141988-TV01

DOC: 15 DEC 1988
Updated: 18 DEC 1988
Created by: Security Captain Kate
Updated by: Chief of Security Blackwater

1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank

Introduction: The ‘1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank’ is named for posterity in anticipation of the hope that Project Powerpuff will continue to serve the city of Townsville in fighting the extreme crime rates there. It is predicted that it will not be the last attempt on the Townsville Central Bank’s reserves.

The 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank was perpetrated by a large gang of robbers. Delayed by the ample security measures there, the Townsville Police Department was able to surround the building and trap the robbers in the very bank they were trying to rob.

Due to the potential for high casualties, Police Chief Commissioner Davis ordered that the subjects of Project Powerpuff be brought in to break the siege.

Date/Time: 14 DEC 1988. 2120 (est) - 2241 (est).

Location: City of Townsville. Townsville Business District. Townsville Central Bank.

|Belligerent Forces|

TOWNSVILLE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Commanders and Leaders

- Police Commissioner Davis (Townsville Police Department - Overall)
- Detective Mullens (Townsville Police Department - Investigation)
- Chief of Security Blackwater (United States Defence Organization)
- Leader of The Three, B-47 'Blossom' (The Three of Project Powerpuff)
Townsville Police Department
- 48 Police Officers (Bank Task Force)
- 20 SWAT Officers (Bank Task Force)
- 21 Police Cruisers (Bank Task Force)
- 4 SWAT Vans (Bank Task Force)
- 1 Police Helicopter (Bank Task Force)
- 121 Police Officers (Outer Parameter)
- 46 SWAT Officers (Outer Parameter)
- 65 Police Cruisers (Outer Parameter)
- 9 SWAT Vans (Outer Parameter)

[235 Combatants in total]

UNITED STATES DEFENCE ORGANIZATION
- 28 SWAT Operatives
- 2 Civilians
- 5 Humvees

[28 Combatants and 2 Civilians in total]

PROJECT POWERPUFF SUBJECTS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL
- 10 Powerpuff Task Force Soldiers
- B-47 (Blossom)
- B-48 (Bubbles)
- B-49 (Buttercup)
- 1 Civilian
- 3 Lamborghini Speed Transports

[10 Combatants, 3 Organic Law Enforcement Weapon Platforms and 1 Civilian in total]

LOMBARDI MAFIA FAMILY

Commanders and Leaders
- Disgraced Capo Doug 'Scorpion' Benson

Lombardi Mafia Enforcers
- 12 Disgraced Lombardi Soldiers
- 8 Indentured Lombardi Associates
- 3 Getaway Vans

[20 Combatants in total]

Casualties and Losses

THE CITY OF TOWNSVILLE

- 5 Unarmed Civilians KIA, 29 injured, 6 severely injured
- 2 Private Security Officers KIA, 6 injured, 2 severely injured

[7 KIA, 35 injured, 8 severely injured]

TOWNSVILLE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Townsville Police Department

- 1 Police Officers KIA, 3 injured
- 3 SWAT Officers KIA, 2 injured, 2 severely injured
- 4 Police Cruisers damaged

[4 KIA, 5 injured and 2 severely injured]

UNITED STATES DEFENCE ORGANIZATION

- 1 SWAT Operative KIA, 1 injured

[1 KIA, 1 injured]

PROJECT POWERPUFF SUBJECTS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL

- B-47 (Blossom) uninjured with equipment damage.
- B-48 (Bubbles) uninjured with equipment damage.
- B-49 (Buttercup) uninjured with equipment damage.

[3 equipment damage]

LOMBARDI MAFIA FAMILY

Lombardi Mafia Enforcers

- Leader killed
- 10 Disgraced Lombardi Soldiers KIA, 2 injured and captured
- 5 Indebted Lombardi Associates KIA, 3 captured with 2 injured.
- 3 Getaway vans impounded.

[15 KIA, 4 injured and 5 captured]
Background – The Botched Heist

Townsville Central Bank was systematically taken over by the bank robbers, with all exits covered and blown up using plastic explosives if locked. Resistance from private security was nullified very quickly and with no casualties, which suggests that the building was scouted beforehand.

Initially, the bank robbers were able to secure hundreds of hostages, but when that number of hostages proved impossible to guard and violence broke out, resulting in dozens gunned down but few dead, the robbers opted to release most of their hostages, believing that they have more than enough time to leave with their stolen monies and goods.

However, complications arose when they tried to crack the bank vault, and they were delayed too long to make a clean getaway. Forensic evidence suggested that the drills they used had broke mid-operation and their remaining stock of plastic explosives were ineffective.

Townsville Central Bank was surrounded by the police before they could decide to retreat.

Composition of Lombardi Mafia Forces

The bank robbers were made up of disgraced members of the Lombardi Mafia Family, who were found to be involved with the more honest elements of the TPD. They were coerced either through threats to their loved ones or themselves, or through blackmail, to plan and carry out the heist. They were supplemented by associates of the Lombardi who had fallen out with the family, who had owed too many favors or had made too many mistakes.

They were lead by the veteran criminal Capo Doug Benson, nicknamed the Scorpion. His experience is considered to be one of the main reasons why the botched heist turned into a siege.

The Siege

Knowing that he is unable to get away, Capo Doug 'Scorpion' Benson posted his men at the lobby and back entrance after blocking the exits to the sides of the building by detonating explosives over the exits. He posted four men on the second floor for coverage over the main body of the police. However, they acted more in the capacity of a deterrent than snipers because they were out-ranged by SWAT snipers, and could not risk exposure for long.

Deploying Project Powerpuff

Despite outnumbering the bank robbers 4 to 1 with the aid of USDO federal forces, Police Commissioner Davis, who took personal charge of the operation, decided that storming the bank is too costly a move to risk due to how fortified the bank robbers were – Additional reinforcement brings the ratio of forces up to over 10:1, but it mattered little because of how the bank would funnel a police response into two general directions of assault.

Unwilling to lose more honest cops, who he thinks were a valuable resource hard to come by, and unwilling to risk public backlash from casualties, Police Commissioner Davis decided to call in The Three of Project Powerpuff.

While waiting for the USDO's Project Powerpuff to be deployed on site, Commissioner Davis ordered that police personnel on site form up into 2 groups, forming the Bank Task Force and the Outer Parameter, with the former focused on keeping the Lombardi robbers contained while the latter to keep ordinary citizens and the media out, which is necessary due to the classified nature of Project Powerpuff, which is not ready for an unveiling to the public.
Arrival of The Three of Project Powerpuff

B-47, B-48 and B-49 of the USDO’s Project Powerpuff faced no obstacles from both the police and mafia while en route to Townsville Central Bank.

Chief of Security Blackwater was on site to brief them on the necessary details of their maiden mission. They were sent in without any USDO support backing them up and only minimal police support in the form of police snipers suppressing the robbers on the second floor. Police Commissioner Davis was able to arrange for a last minute ceasefire to allow The Three entrance into the bank by promising a meeting with a negotiator.

Order of Battle

- B-47 (Blossom) failed to negotiate for the robbers' unconditional surrender. Security footage reveals that it could be due to agitation from B-48 (Buttercup).

- The Lombardi Mafia Family forces opened fire first. B-49 (Bubbles) was knocked unconscious from a shotgun blast. B-47 (Blossom) responds by ordering a retreat and attempting evacuation of B-49 (Bubbles), all the while under heavy fire.

- B-48 (Buttercup) defies orders and attacks, but is only able to kill one combatant of the robbers before being forced to retreat due to concentrated fire from most of the robbers.

- The Three regroups behind cover in the middle of the bank service lobby.

- B-48 (Buttercup) provides cover fire while B-47 (Blossom) retreats with B-49 (Bubbles) in tow.

- B-48 retreats while taking fire and getting burned from a Molotov Cocktail.

- In the ensuing chaos, police snipers and observers reported the full retreat made by The Three to Police Commissioner Davis, who orders an assault on the bank to try to cover their retreat and take down the crime perpetrators at the same time. There was also a concern that the hostages might be executed or wounded by the robbers during this time.

- Police and USDO takes up position outside the bank, trading fire with the robbers, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides.

- Smoke grenades were launched into the bank, allowing all units involved to assault the lobby robbers. However, the perpetrators were still putting up a stiff resistance, forcing all law enforcement units to kill or wound on sight.

- The robbers situated around the back of the bank were taken down after being flanked from the back.

- The robbers on the second floor were pinned down by snipers, and were easily taken out when they were flanked from the back.

- Surviving robbers were arrested, with a total headcount of 5, with 4 of them injured from the incident.

Result and Aftermath

Although law enforcement was victorious, the triumph came at a great cost. The TPD had lost officers, some of whom were considered irreplaceable assets. Many more were taken off the streets, even if temporarily, during a time when pressure cannot be let up on crime. Detective Mullen’s
investigation into the Lombardi Mafia Family was hindered by the death of the robbers' leader, who was wanted for questioning, among other things. Numerous civilians were killed or injured during the failed heist, and out of the remaining 8 civilians held hostage, only 4 survived with 1 dying of his wounds in hospital while another 3 were killed in the firefight.

The USDO, although shown to be capable of contributing greatly to major operations, was dealt a crippling blow because of the failure of Project Powerpuff to deliver, which resulted in a PR crisis with Townsville, its government and law enforcement agencies.

This is added to the fact that the criminals involved are considered expendable by the Lombardi Mafia Family, as they consisted of members who had fallen out of favor with the criminal regime, and the bank heist is considered to be a 'death march', a near-impossible feat to be accomplished for redemption in the criminal underground.

Analysis - Project Powerpuff Failure

Project Powerpuff had failed to achieve results, far below even the most pessimistic of expectations. Where Chief of Security Blackwater projected that at the very least, the subjects of the project will kill or incapacitate 25% of the perpetrators in the crime scene out of self-defence, casualty rate due to the deployment of Project Powerpuff stood only at 5%. Possible reasons for this failure has since been explored and found to be numerous.

- Poor grooming: Agent Utonium has subverted Project Powerpuff for his own gratuitous need for family and daughters and has failed to prepare B-47, B-48 and B-49 as Organic Law Enforcement Weapon Platforms. Instead, Agent Utonium has selfishly raised the subjects for normal civilian life (as kindergartners!). Sergeant Selicia Goodwin has been unable to make up for this, and might have even been 'converted' by either Agent Utonium or the subjects. Psiionic influence has been ruled out, but it is possible that B-47, B-48 and B-49 might have some hidden ability that could cause a shift in the priority of their handlers. Until this is entirely ruled out, Agent Utonium and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin will not be replaced as a disruption to the subjects' 'lifestyle' for no gain is counter-productive.

- Poor training: B-47, B-48 and B-49 were poorly trained, having clocked in few hours of conditioning and unarmed combat training over the course of a few days. They were not given firearms training, modern warfare and law enforcement training. They received effectively no instruction in any body of knowledge necessary for law enforcement, with Miss Keane's contribution only just starting. As a result, combined with their 5-year-old bodies and mindset, their morale is poorer than even the most unfit of normal civilian volunteers, resulting in a quick rout and retreat despite their superior enhanced abilities.

- Prototypes: B-47, B-48 and B-49 are prototypes and couldn't be expected to live up to any expectations for field duty. This becomes obvious when it comes to their 5-year-old bodies and minds, when Project Powerpuff was intended to enhance fully-trained soldiers who would have been ready for law enforcement operations within days or even hours post-enhancement.

- No Support: B-47, B-48 and B-49 were given effectively no support when they were sent into Townsville Central Bank, with accordance with makeshift USDO doctrine in deploying Project Powerpuff. A combined arms approach would have certainly been beneficial to the success of Project Powerpuff.

- Mission Difficulty: The Three of Project Powerpuff were sent into a first mission that was simply too difficult for an inexperienced and untested force, with them being severely outnumbered. However, this is unlikely to be the cause of the failure of Project Powerpuff because of the subjects' complete bulletproof nature and superiority in every way. Security footage and reports from the
subjects’ handlers have shown them to be completely unharmed by bullets and fire. The only casualty caused by Project Powerpuff was shown to have died after sustaining a single flying kick to the chest.

Response

Blackwater has already ordered that B-47, B-48 and B-49 undergo training. Sergeant Selicia Goodwin projected that a dramatically shortened training period can be sufficient, as The Three of Project Powerpuff do not require physical conditioning, have photographic memory (with the possible exception of B-49 (Bubbles)) and are prodigious in intelligence (with the possible exception of B-49 (Bubbles)).

Meetings will be held in the USDO internally to determine the direction of Project Powerpuff and the severity of the ratings downgrade of B-47, B-48 and B-49. Meetings will also be held with Townsville officials externally, to discuss the developments of Project Powerpuff and how it could impact the USDO-Townsville partnership.
Chapter 45: The Buttercup Way

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup plots behind Blossom's back to overthrow her leadership. Mojo Jojo meets with his benefactors.

Chapter 45: The Buttercup Way

Pokey Oaks County. Undisclosed Location. A Foundation Lab.


"Yes! Yeeessss! This is perfect! Flawless! Indisputably impeccable!" Mojo Jojo cried as he threw up his hands in admiration of the location Naga and her Foundation friends had brought him to. He was in a massive dome-like structure, surrounded by laboratory instrument, computers and machines, various prototypes that went nowhere, in the middle of construction. "This is where I can plot, plan, carefully construct my deceits, my feigns, my tricks, my master plan!"

"I'm glad you feel that way, Mojo," Naga said, before slyly asking innocently for the second time what his plan was: "What is your master plan, anyway?"

But this time around, Mojo Jojo was all too happy to share it, but before he could, he'd caught sight of a group of people, men and women alike, coming up to him, people dressed for various functions, be it combat, or scientific experimentation, or business and administration.

"Yes… What is your master plan? We would like to know," a prominent man in a business suit said. He had a high forehead and piercing gray eyes. Black hair.

"And who are you people?" Mojo Jojo asked gruffly, an attitude and habit he had retained from his days as prisoner, runaway and survivalist. Naga immediately leaned towards him, whispering.

"These are people you don't want to mess with, Mojo," Naga warned, all the while keeping her eyes on this group of apparently dangerous people. "But they can provide you with great rewards, should you prove useful to them."

The large Chimpanzee adjusted his new outfit, feeling a bit of an itch coming on underneath it. It was something he would have to get used to. After all, it was his first creation, a simple thing based off on the same technology as Naga's skin suit, something he tirelessly made while in a workshop on the way to what would become his lair. It was a white-blue-purple outfit, sleeveless and loose fitting, ideal for a hairy creature like him. "Why, it starts - begins, with you people of course, the originators of my plans!"

Mojo Jojo wasn't cowed by this group of so-called important people. He had already killed forty-three so-called important people, who deemed themselves superior to the general populace, if Professor Utonium's words were still words to go by and live by.
"If we were to work together, I want to know what YOUR master plan is! So as to integrate mine with yours, so that our master plan will become one, united, whole, stronger, unstoppable, inevitable!" Mojo Jojo ranted in his usual thesaurus way. Business Suit Man smiled, a gesture which Naga knew to be most rare and promising.

"You're bold, Mr. Mojo. As my four-armed friend right here says you are. I see that the Chemical W and X in you hasn't gone to waste." Business Suit Man praised, a hand in his pocket, himself unconcerned of his own safety in the presence of two chemically-enhanced individuals. "Very well. You shall attend and speak in our meeting, right here, right now."

Mojo Jojo was first given a tour of the dome-shaped lab he was brought to. There were multiple layers of it, and as its shape had hinted at, it was designed abstractly like a brain, with each level dedicated to a different function altogether, and it was all built on private property - the Foundation was very well connected. At the very top were the administrative centers, where the Foundation had their meetings.

It was here that the Chimpanzee newcomer listened and learned about its adoptive organization, and he had learned that the Foundation was indeed very well-connected. They had spread their tendrils all over Townsville, and it was just one of many theaters of engagement they were operating in. They had cells all over the country, and beyond. But they had an obsession over Townsville, for reasons even they were being very vague about.

The local crime families and gangs were working with the Foundation to varying degrees, and the leading family, the Lombardi, had numerous dealings with them. There were a few cults in the city that Mojo Jojo could not fathom nor want to for he had no interest in the mystical. Yet, the Foundation had dealings with them too - the Foundation apparently drew funds and materials from these cults, in return for... some reason that wasn't revealed. The simian could only imagine that it was merely a convenient alliance. They had spies everywhere, including the police, and yes, inside the USDO, even before it became a public agency.

The Foundation's plans were simple on the surface - finance and support local crime organizations to weaken the local government and the USDO, and when they were weak enough, take over with a figurehead mayor on election day and establish a Foundation capital to operate from and take over other large population centers. But there was more that wasn't revealed. The mystery of it all was beginning to anger Mojo Jojo, even if it was to be expected - he hadn't even done anything for the Foundation at all. Yet, it was a chicken and the egg problem to him - how could he do anything, if not everything was revealed to him?

"So, what is your grand plan, monkey?" Business Suit Man, who Naga had since revealed to be simply known as Mr. White, said derisively, but no one laughed.

"Chimpanzee. Pan Troglodyte," Mojo JoJo corrected the Foundation boss nonchalantly. "Your plan, your scheme, has neglected a most serious, critical and severe development. Those three accursed girls Professor Utonium has made, created, manufactured!"

"Those Three? Of Project Powerpuff?" Mr. White remarked casually, unperturbed, as he rested his elbows on the table, his hands clasped as if in prayer. "Yes, we've heard of them. They're just three more failures of the USDO. Just like you and Naga, and worse. They're failures we can't turn to our advantage."

"I wouldn't be so sure about it, Mr. White. I have seen their files, documentations and manifests-" Mojo JoJo argued.

"We will hear about it if they ever become a threat, which I doubt they ever will," Mr. White said
dissmissively, his every word deliberate. "Go on. Tell us your… Master plan."

"It will involve the Foundation and all its links, assets, associations, and it will no doubt involve those 'Three'," Mojo JoJo began, a maniacal smile on his face. Soon, the world will be rid of the USDO, and anyone like them. Soon, the Utonium will lose his ill-begotten daughters and then, perhaps, just perhaps, he will be reunited with an Utonium who knows better.

The world would soon become a better place.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House


Professor Utonium was sitting behind his desk, looking down at the CT scan printout of Buttercup's brain he was holding up. If nothing else, the activity in the affected areas of her brain was more reduced than before. Yet, his arranged conversation with her, and his conversations with her since had revealed more mysteries than he had solved. However, he wouldn't have to wonder for long.

A brown envelope sat beside his own CT scans. It was sent directly from the old USDO HQ. The medical wing there had done their job. Tearing the envelope open, he pulled the CT scans out – those were the first scans he'd taken of Buttercup's brain – and noticed immediately words scribbled everywhere on the printout, as well as several pages of notes.

"Dad…” Buttercup's voice made him jump. It'd come from behind him. Although he knew that what he had in his hands might as well be magic runes to the little girl, he couldn't help but to be secretive about it. His relationship with his Girls was just too precious to him. She sounded distraught. He quickly repacked the CT scans and notes inside the brown envelope and dumped everything into the bottom drawer of his filing cabinet, which was fast becoming the 'Buttercup Drawer', considering that it held documentation for her DNA source's medical data, too. "Daddy…”

Professor Utonium turned around. Buttercup was in tears. "What is it, honey?"

"Blossom's been mean to me," Buttercup cried as she wiped tears away from her cheeks.

"Okay… What did she do?" the professor asked, not believing his ears. Blossom had been nothing but nice to everyone.

"Can I sit on your lap?" Buttercup asked first.

"Sure thing, Buttercup," the professor obliged, picking her up from under the arms and depositing her on his legs. "Now, what could Blossom possibly have done to upset my toughie toffee?"

"Dad, I'm sorry I've been disobeying Blossom, but… I- I-" Buttercup struggled as she choked on her own words. The professor grew worried at how upset she was. Something was wrong. Perhaps a new dimension to the relationship between Blossom and Buttercup he had failed to notice?

"Buttercup, you can tell me. What happened?" the professor asked, the worry marks on his forehead creased as he sensed something very wrong. He held Buttercup's hand, concerned.

"Blossom's been hurting me. It's why I stopped listening to her," Buttercup lied, and she had been practising in the mirror, too. "She slammed me against some boxes while we were training today, and..." Buttercup continued shedding crocodile tears, those tears that proved to be so powerful. The professor absolutely could not believe what he had just heard. His Blossom, a bully? It would explain why the Girls took so long to execute their plans, and it certainly explained what was going
on in front of the security camera in the mall. Blocked by the boxes they were hiding behind, he couldn't see what they were doing.

"And she- she kicked me yesterday night…” Buttercup stuttered, gesturing with her eyes where Blossom had kicked her. The professor didn't understand at first.

"Kicked you? Where?" he asked.

"D-down there…” Buttercup said. The professor nodded. Blossom had gone too far. Sure, she had been appointed the leader of the trio by the USDO, and that meant getting her sisters to listen to her, but this was just too much. In fact, as the professor's mind began turning, he even theorized that Buttercup's defiance might have been made worse by Blossom's abuse.

"It hurt so much. I had trouble sleeping last night because of it," Buttercup fed the professor more lies. "It was horrible!"

"Let's go, Buttercup. We're going to have a talk with Blossom," the professor said sternly, his face hardened that it could join the forefathers on Mt. Rushmore.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House


"But Dad! She's lying!" Blossom exclaimed, and in her confusion, could not explain so well what she meant.

"So did you slam her against the boxes at training, or not?" the professor asked sternly, his hands on his hip, his words severe. Blossom had never seen and heard him speak to her like this before.

"I did, but I was just-" Blossom wanted to explain things, but neither the professor nor her largely untapped wit would allow her to do it sufficiently.

"So you did slam her against the boxes, am I right, Blossom Utonium?" the professor said rhetorically. "And I take it that it's true that you shoved her yesterday night? And kicked her in the…” Professor Utonium struggled to find the proper substitute for the word. He cleared his throat. "Down below?" Blossom understood immediately. It was the worse time to learn a new phrase, but she'd understood it based only on inference.

"But that wasn't the whole thing, Dad!" Blossom tried to explain, feeling that her eyes were prickly at the same time. She had never felt so misunderstood in her entire life, even if it wasn't even longer than a month.

"Then what is the whole thing, young lady?" the professor asked. Blossom could feel it - the anger boiling underneath her Daddy. But she could make it right, she just knew it. It was all a misunderstanding. However, looking at Buttercup standing beside the professor, she knew that there was a bigger picture to it. Buttercup had told on her, but it was more than that.

"She's lying, Dad. I didn't touch Bubbles at all, and I never wanted to! Blossom tried to force me to sleep on the floor because she's the leader! I got upset and…” Buttercup twisted the story, and had, once again, forced tears to well up in her eyes. Blossom had never felt more wronged and angry in her entire life. She could feel her face heating up. The professor could see hatred and fury in her eyes as she gritted her teeth and glared at Buttercup. "I'm sorry I shouted at you, Bubbles."
Bubbles, who had been in bed all the while, turned lethargically in bed to them and nodded to acknowledge Buttercup. "It's okay, Buttercup. I'm sure you had your reasons."

"So you pushed Buttercup over what you imagined will happen, and you started the whole thing because you wanted to make her sleep on the floor?" the professor accused.

Overwhelmed by her beloved Daddy's questions, Blossom simply bowed her head, her eyes closed as she fought back tears, even when she was wrongly portrayed as an abusive sister. "I just- I need Buttercup to go along with my plans, that's all Dad." She sniffled as her tears fought through her eyelids, she rubbed a fist across her face. For the first time, she hid her tears, preferring to show something resembling strength and dignity in the light of the topic.

"Blossom… Blossom…" the professor cooed unexpectedly. "This is not what I meant, Blossom, when I said that you have to be firm with your sister." Buttercup's eyes flitted from Blossom to the professor then back again. They'd been talking about her, there was no doubt about that anymore.

"Why must it be so difficult?" Blossom wondered through gritted teeth as she held back the torrent of tears threatening to break through. It was already leaking through her eyelids.

"Buttercup, could you leave us alone for a minute? Go watch some T.V, run to it at full speed. I want to hear it from here," the professor told Buttercup.

"Can't I stay, Daddy?" Buttercup replied. "You said that I have to face my problems or I'll never learn to cope with them."

"You've done it, Butterbear. I need to speak to Blossom alone," Professor Utonium said patiently.

"Okay…" Buttercup relented before zooming down to the living room and switching the television on as she was asked.

"Use your words, not your fists," the professor advised the girl after putting himself at the doorway between the corridor outside and the Girls' room to watch for Buttercup, wagging a finger at her. "I would have thought that you, of all people, know this better than anyone else."

"But she never listened, she never did, Daddy, honest!" Blossom tried to get her point across as she looked up at the professor, but she was already half defeated.

"You might have been too rough with her at first," the professor said. Content that Buttercup wasn't eavesdropping on the both of them, he sat down on the Girls' bed and gestured for Blossom to hop on. Blossom gingerly shuffled towards him and climbed onto his lap. "Besides, I know how Buttercup can be like, I should. Talk to her, Blossom, and give her time. It's only been two days since you started out."

"But what if she doesn't listen?" Blossom asked again.

"I know its difficult, honey. Not everyone's as reasonable - it's something we all have to live with and… try to work with," the professor said. Blossom was in his arms, nestling between his chest and arm. The professor rocked her like a baby, trying to get her to calm down. "I know how Buttercup is like, but she's your sister. I'm sure she'll come around for you eventually - but you have to treat her right, too. She's as rough as she's tough, but she has feelings too."

"She gets angry all the time," Blossom commented.

"I'm sure she has other feelings too. She's just keeping them inside most of the time," the professor added. "I know for a fact that she's capable of feeling happy and sad."
All the while, Buttercup had been listening closely and intently. Even though she was in the living room with the television on, she could hear them well enough to make out every word they were saying. And she was fuming mad. She had expected much more than this. She had wanted more than a heart-to-heart talk between her Daddy and Blossom. She had wanted them to fight, and drift apart, so that Daddy and even the leadership of the trio would be hers. But no, nothing ever went her way. Frustrated, Buttercup went out the front door, to unearth her new friend, the dead cat.

Outside, she knelt down beside the shallow, snowy grave of the dead cat beneath the bushes of her home. She dug it up, first unearthing its head, before the rest of its body.

It didn't react immediately, and Buttercup didn't expect it to. Staying frozen for days on end should slow one down at least a little.

Eventually, it lifted its head slowly, its eyes rotating sluggishly to meet Buttercup's. "Good… morning… Buttercup. Or should I say, evening? Time is so different like this."

"Evening, dead kitty cat," Buttercup greeted.

"In trouble again, are you?" the dead cat purred.

"Not really, kitty," Buttercup said, as her eyes dug around the snow for what to say. "It's just stupid Blossom and her leadership. Why do I have to listen to her anyway? Because some big, fat gorilla said so?"

"My, my! How… awful… I, for one, hate being bossed around by others. I love deciding things myself, and if cats can be lone wolves, why not the tough and powerful Buttercup?" the dead cat said, its voice alternating from a whisper to a calm, kindly voice.

"It's just that- No matter how hard I try to be myself, Blossom had to go and ruin it!" Buttercup reflected resentfully. "And Daddy's really good to her no matter what I said. He loves her more than me."

"That is a fact, my dear… Buttercup," the cat said, making no attempts to hide what it considered fact. It twisted its neck to look up at the window leading into the living room. "Which is why you need to try harder, little girl. After all… love is the greatest reward anyone can ever have. TRY HARDER! You need to overcome Blossom."

"But what if I play along and follow Blossom around? Maybe Daddy would like me better… Yesterday was bad when he saw me on the camera," Buttercup wondered.

"You're going to roll over and die? Like me? End up in the snow with no one to love, alone? THAT'S PATHETIC!" the dead cat chided, its voice constantly shifting, then, without building, became a shout that Buttercup was both shaken by it and afraid that her new friend would be discovered. "Haven't you learned your lesson yet? That playing by the rules, that letting your sisters have their way, WILL PUT YOU AT THE BOTTOM!? That's Blossom and Bubbles' territory, Buttercup. You need to push harder, the Buttercup way…"

Buttercup thought about it for a moment. Before, she was always last when it came to her father's affections. At least, that was how she saw it. Now, after twisting the facts with Daddy, even after disobeying Blossom's orders on the field, she was better off - she had more time with her father, and he'd actually listened to her. In fact, whenever she did things her way, she would tend to win out.

"You're right, kitty cat," Buttercup said. "Blossom's going down, and I'm going up. I just need the right moment."
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the top brass of the USDO meets to discuss what to do with The Three Girls of Project Powerpuff.

Post-Deployment Meeting 12151988A Transcript

DOC: 15 DEC 1988

The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

START TRANSCRIPT

(The Location: Meeting Room, Townsville USDO HQ.)

(Attending: All departmental heads and any relevant personnel.)

(Time: 1335.)

USDO Director Cliff: Are we all here? Good. First on the agenda (aggressively), Project Powerpuff. Chief of Security Blackwater, give us an abridged version of your report.

Chief of Security Blackwater: The Three were deployed with no support up against 20 bank robbers. They killed one, and retreated when B-49, the most useless of the lot, was knocked unconscious by a shotgun blast. The police and our men had to step up. 4 hostages survived. 3 were killed in the resulting firefight and 1 died of his wounds because he couldn't be evacuated in time. The TPD lost 4 officers, with 7 injured. We lost a man, and one is injured.

Medical Director Simmons: What about the Girls? Are they hurt?

Chief of Security Blackwater: They were able to walk out of there, I saw no blood or injuries, and their handlers did not report anything. And those bitches certainly had the cheeks to cry about the robbers being mean.

Medical Director Simmons: No one checked them for injuries?

Chief of Security Blackwater: I left it up to Professor Utonium. He's the dog handler.

USDO Director Cliff: Are B-47, B-48 and B-49 bulletproof?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Completely. I've checked the security footage from inside the bank. The robbers were firing rounds as large as 7.56mm, and they hadn't even made a dent in the three subjects.

USDO Director Cliff: So why the hell did they retreat?
Chief of Security Blackwater: According to their handlers, Professor Utonium and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, they are still capable of feeling pain. The shotgun blast directed at B-49 was enough to knock her out. Professor Utonium added in his report on the 'Girls' combat effectiveness that they are (looks at a piece of printed paper) 'just as sensitive as any other children' and that 'they feel fear and panic and anxiety as any children would, enhanced abilities notwithstanding'. I guess that translates to a huge morale problem on our hands.

USDO Director Cliff: Lab-grown pussies, in every sense of the word. Solutions?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Several. I've already put one into motion. They should be getting ready for training even as we speak. I've ordered that they be put into a crash course in counter-terrorism. Guns, tactics, confidence training. The whole package.

USDO Director Cliff: You have several solutions. Tell me.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Combat drugs. We pump them high, so they feel less fear and more excitement and become more susceptible to suggestion. It's not cutting edge science either. It's been done since World War II. I've used some before. We just have to increase the dosage to account for the Girls' resistance to drugs.

USDO Director Cliff: What are your thoughts, doctor? (Turns to Medical Director Simmons)

Medical Director Simmons: I wouldn't recommend it unless it's a desperate move. We're only one operation in, and it's not like we're losing a world war. The long term effects will not be worth the short term gain. Subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49 are physically children, and it might affect their growth and development. They could become addicted, and you don't want three addicts with superpowers tearing up the town for their next dosage, do you? Then there's the question of ethics-

USDO Director Cliff: Alright, I get the picture. Any other solutions?

Chief of Security Blackwater: There's one little science experiment I heard about. We install computer chips in those brats, overriding their individual emotions and thoughts. We turn them into drones. The computers can be packed in a Duranium backpack for protection.

USDO Director Cliff: Science division, what's your opinion on this?

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Yes, Project Slipstream from California. It's still in its early stages. It's not viable, unless you want the Girls to turn into million-dollar vegetables.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Or we retire those 5-year-olds and start over.

USDO Director Cliff: Out of the question. We've promised Townsville those kids as secret weapons, and it is a promise we have to keep. It's either we succeed in Townsville with them, or we fail.

Acting Head of Research Vanum: To add, we have no other viable products available to replace them. Professor Utonium has continued experimenting with Chemical X, but it is still in the early stages. It took us two decades to get this far, and I don't know how many years it will be before we can produce a more ideal version of Chemical X. Or Chemical Z, or anything further.

Chief of Security Blackwater: B-47, B-48 and B-49 are here to stay, then.

USDO Director Cliff: Just get them prepared for their next deployment. (Turns to the table) CFO Silverslick?

CFO Silverslick: As before, we will vote on reducing or increasing the performance rating of B-47,
B-48 and B-49. As it stands, their ratings are:

B-47, or who they call Blossom, is at Triple A (AAA). She remains at the top of the list, which therefore means that she is our most promising product.

B-48, or who they call Buttercup, stands at Double A (AA). As all of you may recall, we have electronically voted on downgrading her rating twice because of Agent Utonium's report of a possible neurological abnormality, whatever that means, and possible hearing problems. However, we voted to raise her rating because of Sergeant Selicia Goodwin's report on her training.

B-49, or Bubbles, has a single C because we recently voted to drop her rating due to her continued under-performance under laboratory settings compared to her sister products.

We will now vote to change their performance rating, starting with B-47, or Blossom. As her rating is already at Triple A, there will only be two choices - no change or downgrade. Those in favour of no drop, raise your hand.

(Few hands were raised, forming a minority. Medical Director Simmons, Psychiatrist Alice, Chief of Logistics Wiggums were among them.)

Reasons?

Medical Director Simmons: Ethical and logical. What we're doing is wrong enough, never mind the fact that we're thrusting young lives into a world of blood and pain and expecting them to come out on top, enhanced or not. Patience should be given where it is due, and here, it certainly is due.

CFO Silverslick: Noted.

Psychiatrist Alice: From my observations, the Girls did not underperform in their duty. They were merely reacting to stimuli that cannot be ignored, the way that young children would normally react. They shouldn't be penalized for what they cannot control.

CFO Silverslick: Okay, noted.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: What they said.

CFO Silverslick: You'll need proper justification for your vote or it will be a null.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Alright, alright. I just think that the Girls were screwing up because it's their first day, y'know. Gotta cut them some slack so they'd have time to learn the ropes.

Acting Head of Research Vanum: That's true, and I agree. We should give Blossom the benefit of the doubt, considering that she's shouldering a heavy burden at such an early age.

CFO Silverslick: Fine, accepted. Anyone else? (He scans the room, seeing no other hands raised) Very well, those in favour of lowering B-47's rating, I'll need justifications for the record. Mr. Director?

USDO Director Cliff: I've seen B-47's data, and it doesn't match her performance on the field. She must have failed the mission because of negligence.

CFO Silverslick: Well said, sir. Blackwater?

Chief of Security Blackwater: She couldn't keep her team together and she didn't know what to do with them – and this is all despite the fact that they're sisters! They've been together since the
beginning, 24/7. I'd say that's an equivalent of basic training when recruits would be put together into their squads.

On the field, she was ignorant of almost everything required of her, she was always hesitant to do what is necessary. She was a massive disappointment. I would have pinned all the blame on her back with a knife if it weren't for B-49.

CFO Silverslick: Good one, sir. Who wants to go next?

Chief Armory Officer: In my opinion, those kids had everything handed to them. Their crazy voodoo stuff aside, they had kevlar thicker and wider than what our soldiers carry, and they had pistols. That Blossom ordered a retreat without even trying to tackle the robber problem is a huge red flag. We'd have to replace the equipment destroyed during the operation, too, and for no results.

CFO Silverslick: That's in the book. Next?

Central Motorpool Manager: I don't have any Shakespeare reasons for this, but, we practically gave Blossom everything she could possibly need to make the right decisions without worrying about anything except to punch out the baddies. She couldn't even do that? I mean, back when I was just a lieutenant, I had to worry about everything – schedules, timing, the number of men under me, their competency, whether they would be given everything they need and put in places they're needed. Blossom, from what I heard, was treated like a princess, and she failed like one too. That's just an insult considering everything we've done. I gave her three Lamborghinis for Christ's sake-

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: Add to that the effect this defeat will have on morale and confidence. Only a bad leader would retreat so lightly without considering the repercussions it has on everyone else. I think B-47, aka Blossom, knows enough that her actions should have consequences. Right now, my agents within Townsville are reporting complaints made against Project Powerpuff and the USDO, and it's not just the ignorant rank-and-file police officers reporting what they thought to be child labor and abuse.

CFO Silverslick: I think we get the picture. Ms. Bellum?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: On second thought, I would like my vote to be voided.

CFO Silverslick: Are you sure?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: Yes. I'm conflicted and any vote I cast would be dishonest.

CFO Silverslick: I understand. It's my turn. I've decided to downgrade B-47's credit because… At the end of the day, when you're asked to turn a million in profit, you've got to turn a million in profit. Nothing less, something hopefully more. She was the most critical component of our product, and she failed. Based on the number of votes, B-47's credit rating is now Double A (AA).

Let's move on to B-48. Buttercup. Because of her current credit rating, our votes will be split three ways, between raising, maintaining or lowering it. Those in favor of raising B-48's rating, please raise your hand. (a few hands shot up, and they all belong to the department heads of the security branch) State your reasons for the vote.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Although she'd killed the wrong bottom-feeder, she has potential. I've seen some footage of her in action. She has proven that she was willing to do whatever it takes to fight crime. She was the only one of the three to engage the enemy, and kill something. From what I heard from the brats, Buttercup actually defied the assigned leader's orders to retreat, something I would have done in her shoes considering the ineptitude of B-47.
Chief Armory Officer: And she was the only one of The Three to actually use the equipment I provided. She's demonstrated the ability to recognize and use weapons, and to use it against the enemy. The others might have realized the same thing, but B-48 is the only one to show evidence of this.

Central Motorpool Manager: I agree with this. I'm afraid I have nothing special to offer. I just think that it's a watershed moment for B-48. Having killed an enemy, she's officially more experienced than even some of our raw recruits.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: Yes, and she was ruthless at that, wading against overwhelming odds to despatch the bank robbers' Capo. Had her 'sister products', as you would call it, Silverslick, backed her up, I believe she could have done more.

Townsville Liaison Bellum: She did her job. It was brutal, but in a brutal city like this, it had to be done. I've been getting to know the mayor, and his stance is one that's tough on crime. If it had to be done, Mayor Wilford will support it.

CFO Silverslick: Very well. All those in favor of maintaining B-48's credit rating, do explain now.

Acting Head of Research Vanum: There's just not enough data to prove even the most rudimentary of hypothesis - such as Buttercup's willingness to kill, much less her reasons for doing so. Until we have a large enough data set, we should not be jumping to conclusions.

Medical Director Simmons: I agree. It's premature right now to derive anything meaningful from what we have. The right thing to do is to observe Buttercup's performance in her subsequent forays.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Let's just wait and see - because for now, I'm seeing both sides of the same coin, man, and it's tough for me to make a good decision from that.

CFO Silverslick: Alice? What about you?

Psychiatrist Alice: I've reviewed footage of Buttercup myself. There are many ways to interpret her action, and her suggested willingness to kill. From where I stand, it might not be a good thing at all. It's almost as if she enjoyed it - I've seen her face as she delivered a kick to the bank robber. But I'll need more hard evidence to support my claim. The action to take lives shouldn't be taken lightly. I've worked with Professor Utonium before, and he wouldn't have taught a child to love the kill, and certainly not when it involves human lives. B-48's rating should be maintained until this is ascertained.

CFO Silverslick: (scribbling on his document hastily) Here… And… Here. Alright- My turn. I'm raising B-48's rating. From what I've seen, she's demonstrating everything I want in a law enforcement product, especially in a hellhole like Townsville. I think our security staff had explained things best. B-48, or Buttercup's rating, is now Triple A (AAA) then, overtaking B-47 as our best product.

It's B-49, or Bubbles', turn now. All in favor of raising it, raise your hands. (Chief of Logistics Wiggums is about to put up his hand when he retracted it. CFO Silverslick notices it with a raised eyebrow before his eyes flit back to his file. He writes something on it)

All in favor of maintaining it, raise your hand. (About three hands shot up)

Doctor?

Medical Director Simmons: From what I understand, she was just an unlucky victim of a biological inevitability – she had simply received a serious enough of a blow to the head during the worse of
circumstances to induce unconsciousness. We don't know how well she would have done in the operation. For all we know, she could have been the star of the show had it not been for that one shotgun shell.

CFO Silverslick: Very well. Alice?

Psychiatrist Alice: There is nothing that would have indicated that she would have under-performed in combat, neither do we have a large data set. This could be a fluke.

CFO Silverslick: Naturally. Wiggums?

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: If my movers were stuck in traffic on a pre-assigned route, I won't blame them for the thousands of cars blocking their way.

CFO Silverslick: Of course. Reasons for downgrading B-49's credit rating?

USDO Director Cliff: If B-47 is bad, then B-49 is even worse. Nothing was expected of her except for her individual actions to fight crime and she was down in a single shot – even when she's impervious to bullets.

Chief of Security Blackwater: I can add to that with details from the battlefield. I've seen some security footage of the 'battle'. This 'Bubbles' went down in a single shot when the others had taken dozens, even over a hundred shots to their body. The gap in performance based on those numbers is extreme at the least, and if her test results aren't enough, this one incident proves that B-49 is less viable a platform as the other two.

Chief Armory Officer: We've talked about B-49's reception to training. She's unwilling and untalented. I don't see any meaningful chance for an improvement in B-49's performance.

Central Motorpool Manager: From my understanding of the battle report, that's only the start, isn't it? She's a deadweight. And what do we do with deadweight on a vehicle? We cut them loose. Take a train for instance - if a carriage is grinding the rails, we either unbolt it or lose the whole thing.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: Par for the course. If one of my own has been leaking information because of gross negligence, there would have been severe consequences. It's no different in this case.

USDO Director Cliff: Some of you may not know this, but millions in funding are behind each of the subjects. Agent Utonium had ordered Duranium surgical sets and even Duranium scissors for their hair. That alone costed hundreds of thousands. The Chemical X behind them and experiments associated with them were in the millions. That's not to mention the costs of maintaining the staff, facilities and materials supporting those kids - that's hundreds of people at the very least. I can't spend millions of dollars and get nothing.

CFO Silverslick: And I'm in agreement, sir. That's bad investment right there. Due to a majority vote in lowering B-49's rating, her new rating is now Triple D (DDD), and because of that, we'll have to come to a decision as to what to do with B-49. By any measure of success - or failure - B-49 is terrible investment. In a business setting, funding would have been withdrawn immediately, but since this is the USDO and we're dealing with a super-powered infant, it's not so simple. Director?

USDO Director Cliff: Our choice is simple. It's either she gets scrapped or we wait. Make your choice, people.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Can't she be retired or something, boss?
USDO Director Cliff: No. She'll still be our responsibility and we'll still have to maintain her. It'll run up the costs.

Chief of Security Blackwater: What about re-purposing her for other uses?

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: We could use her strength for lifting cargo here in HQ.

USDO Director Cliff: Same issues as before. It'll be the world's most expensive forklift in the world. I don't need Professor Utonium to double between HQ and The House nursing his babies. I need him working on Chemical X, and the more promising subjects, as incompetent as he is with our organic platforms. No more discussions. Who's in favor of scrapping B-49?

(Silence for a moment. One or two hands are raised slowly. The Chief Armory Officer and Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard. No one else moved a muscle.)

Blackwater?

Chief of Security Blackwater: No, not yet, sir. If she's one of my own, I'd give her a chance at redeeming herself. She'd get punishments and training but not death.

USDO Director Cliff: Fine. We're not scrapping B-49 then. But she'd better make up for the hole she's burning in the organization's wallet.

TRANSCRIPT END
Chapter 46: Police Brutality

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Detective Mullens meets the Girls of Project Powerpuff properly.

A/N: Hi guys, first of all thanks for reading. This chapter came out slower because I got sick and exhausted for a day and couldn't write as much. Anyway, do review and let me know what I've done right and what needs improvement. Suggestions are welcome :). I would also love to hear your thoughts on the story. Cheers!

Chapter 46: Police Brutality


16 DEC 1988 (Friday). 1018.

The Girls had been busy drawing, even Buttercup. Seated together, school had provided a welcome distraction from the strife of the past two days, and as children were prone to do, the Girls had largely left the enmity between them behind while they were having fun.

Blossom was drawing with both her hands, using her ambidextrous nature to mirror the circular pattern she'd been creating. The picture was flawless. And abstract. Based on something she remembered in her dreams.

Meanwhile, Bubbles was working on a picture of the three of them. Blossom in the middle, as usual, standing in between herself and Buttercup as their leader. Bubbles and Buttercup in the drawing were each holding one of Blossom's hands, standing on one foot and swinging the other. She had neglected to draw the fingers, ears and nose, but she thought the illustration looked better without them. It was crude but a step up from the stickmen she used to draw; it wasn't her first attempt at this drawing, and she had been getting better at it since.

Buttercup, on the other hand, was recreating the moment she made her first kill. She could still smell the gunpowder in the air, the blood from her prey as it exited from his nose and mouth. The moment she was flying in mid-air, connecting a kick with the bank robber leader, came to mind. But all she could manage were stickmen: the shorter one representing her, and the longer one representing the gangster. There were others all around her, firing L-shaped things that were supposed to be guns, fire at the tip of those loud things. Buttercup gave a sigh. She longed to be out there again, to fight crime so that she could kill more bad guys. Yesterday's training didn't feel real enough. Sure, she'd broken a USDO SWAT officer's rib, but it was far from caving some bank robber's chest in.

Miss Keane happened to be walking past their table, and she looked at Blossom's drawing. "Oh, that's very nice, Blossom. It'll look good on a dress."

"Thanks, Miss Keane," Blossom said gracefully as she continued mirroring her work using both her
hands to draw.

"And... Oh my, those are some very good-looking cartoon characters," Miss Keane commented when she saw Bubbles' drawing of herself and her sisters. "I see that they're based on the three of you!"

"Actually, they are us, Miss Keane," Bubbles corrected as she continued refining her illustration. She pointed at the 'cartoon characters', naming each of them as either herself or Blossom or Buttercup. "See?"

"Yes, Bubbles, I see. Where are the fingers and facial features? Like the noses and ears?" Miss Keane asked.

"I was having trouble drawing them, so I didn't add them in this time," Bubbles explained.

"Well, they look nice like that. Good work, Bubbles," Miss Keane then shifted her gaze at Buttercup's drawing. Buttercup was just done adding spurts of blood and flying bullets all over the place.

"Buttercup!" Miss Keane uttered, alarmed at the graphic nature of her doodling. "What are you drawing?"

"Good memories, Miss Keane," Buttercup said to her teacher, smiling. She lifted the drawing block and pointed what she drew. "This is me, and this is a robber. That's my foot and it went into the robber. It's funny how squishy he is!" Buttercup actually laughed at the thought of it. The way the robber felt when his chest was crushed reminded her of the cat she killed, or the golden retriever, which was her second victim. The black robber was her third. They all reminded her of the pinata she saw on television, and they were all interesting things that she could dig into - she found it amazing how beautiful and complex the insides of animals and people could be, and the simplified anatomy charts Miss Keane had given the Girls for homework did not do it justice.

Buttercup's statement had attracted stares from both Blossom and Bubbles, the former who scrutinized her with an angry glare while the latter gave her a look one would give to a ravenous animal, but it quickly changed to one of sadness as Bubbles returned her attention to her drawing of a more idealized version of the three of them.

"Don't mind my sister, Miss Keane. She's weird like that," Blossom said, even as she continued to stab Buttercup with her eyes.

"Buttercup," Miss Keane said in a lecturing tone, having heard Blossom but she was too focused on the problem to reply her. "Violence is not a happy memory. Didn't your father teach you that?"

"Yes, Miss Keane, but... I don't feel that way, no matter how hard I try," Buttercup admitted. She was still admiring her own work, touching it up with her red crayon. Soon, Miss Keane's words were forgotten in favour of her obsession. "Should I add more bullets? I didn't know drawing could be so much fun!"

It was a stark reminder of the world that Miss Keane was thrust into. Sure, some of the kids were exposed to violence of all sorts from domestic to criminal, and there were more in this city than others, but none of them were anywhere near this close to it, to the point of directly participating in it.

Before she could do anything, there was rapping on the door. A man in trench coat and fedora. Today's visitor. She had forgotten about him in light of Buttercup's unhealthy obsession. She struggled to remember her own schedule. A first in her career. The deal with the USDO had really
turned her life upside-down.

The man in the trench coat and fedora. The detective. Miss Keane finally remembered. Detective Mullens. Here for a little show and tell for the police. Something arranged on a regular basis in partnership with the TPD and Mayoral Office, 'to set children down on the right path', they said.

"Class, it's time to put down your crayons. We have two visitors today!" Miss Keane announced, forcing as much excitement as she could out of her lungs. She reached out for Buttercup's drawing, whispering her request: "How about if I have that, Buttercup?"

"It's my favorite, but you can have it. I can draw an even better one at home! Do you really like it, Miss Keane?" Buttercup asked.

"Yes, very much, now eyes to the front, Buttercup, and be polite to our visitors," Miss Keane whispered to her most troubled student thus far, never forgetting what she was and what she had tried to do to one of her older students. Rolling up Buttercup's macabre drawing and sticking it inside her vest, almost exposing her sidearm but she'd quickly hugged it tightly, she went for the door. "Now class, this is Mister Mullens and…" Miss Keane waved a hand at a second representative of the Townsville Police Department who had just appeared, gesturing for her to introduce herself.

"Officer Olivia will do," the female officer said gruffly, her voice rough and well-projected even when she didn't mean to be. Not a single child in the room had missed it.

Mister Mullens. Blossom thought the name familiar. Something she'd heard before in the background. It took longer, but her sisters arrived at the same idea as well. When the man in the trench coat came in, it was all but certain why it sounded familiar. They'd seen that man before. Twice. And neither of their encounters with the man was pleasant.

Behind him was the other representative of Townsville Police Department. A much younger officer, half the detective's age. Light-brown skinned. A mix of African-American and Caucasian blood. Blossom thought that the two officers bore some kind of resemblance, but she couldn't quite place it - she had still much to learn when it comes to facial recognition and description. They both bore the same no-nonsense expression though.

"Class B for Buzzing Bees, am I right?" Mister Mullens clarified with the classroom gruffly, forcing a smile through his slightly-wrinkled weather-beaten face, the faint laceration scar on his lip disturbing what was already a very shallow smile. The entire class stared at him as if a fairy-tale ogre had just entered the room. But then disjointed murmurs of agreement came from one student after another. None came from The Three as Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup stared at him as if they had seen a ghost.

Mister Mullens stared at the class in return, before his eyes were fixed on the three new 'protectors' of Townsville. It took his all not to let his disdain for these three kindergartners show in his eyes, but the way he looked at them lengthily was enough for him to communicate what he thought of them.

The detective sat down on Miss Keane's desk. The fun began after that, but it wasn't the usual kind of fun. For the entire half hour he was there, the Girls were tense, that they actually felt their body ache from it. No one but Miss Keane noticed, as the rest of the class were asking all sorts of morbid and innocent questions in equal measure, that Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were silent throughout.

It wasn't a coincidence that the detective had met the Girls in Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. It was all arranged, and Detective Mullens knew it too. The USDO and TPD had arranged for them to meet for the sake of future cooperation, and more besides, much to his chagrin. After what had happened
at Townsville Central Bank, he had wanted nothing more to do with these… 'secret weapons'. The Scorpion, the Capo responsible for the heist, was dead because of them, and he had carried with him to his grave vital information and evidence for his case. Despite the influence and wealth of the Lombardi Mafioso, it wasn't every day that they would arrange for such an operation to be carried out. It was like losing that one card he needed for the royal flush he'd been building.

And he was going to let them know, too.

"Now who wants to go on a ride-along?" he finally said, after divulging some facts of the police made kid-friendly enough. Hands shot up immediately, despite Detective Mullens' gruff attitude. It didn't matter. He had his eyes on Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.

"How about the three of you princesses?" he said, allowing some condescension through, allowing for plausible deniability in case Miss Keane decided to do something about it. "You three look special, and there's a special place at the back of my car for the three of you." He got off Miss Keane's desk. "Come on, on the double!"

The car ride towards the City of Townsville proper was silent as the tall apartments and skyscrapers of the city gravitated closer. If one were to check the book, it was a way to grill suspects into talking, and it was working with the Girls. With the exception of Buttercup, the Girls looked a little horrified to be sharing a car with him, despite their under-used abilities.

"The name's Mullens, by the way," the detective introduced himself as he viewed the Girls from the rear-view mirror. "That's Detective Mullens for you." the policewoman sitting on the shotgun seat was also observing the Girls, but her eyes were less harsh than the detective's. If nothing else, they were soft, concerned. Understanding. Blossom looked her in the eyes through the rear-view mirror, begging for relief. The policewoman, Olivia, Blossom remembered the name, looked away.

"Do you have a first name, Mister Mullens?" Blossom brought up the courage to ask. She barely made it without sounding weak.

"Detective Mullens," the man corrected sternly. "My first name's not for strangers."

"But we're not strangers, we've met before," Blossom said.

"Yes, we have," Detective Mullens said ominously. "And do you remember how we met?"

"The town hall, and…" Blossom said in hindsight. She remembered his face as clear as day. Who could forget?

"At the bank, too," Bubbles completed Blossom's sentence, surprisingly.

"At the bank," Detective Mullens growled bitterly.

Silence pervaded the detective's car once more. It was a classic muscle car, perfect for high-speed chases, dark gray to avoid suspicion whenever he went dark. The engine spoke for the detective's ire as he drove forever forwards towards Townsville.

As the detective patrolled a random route around the city, he tried to get to know the Girls better, though he'd asked his questions too curtly and too directly, too interrogatively for the Girls to be completely at ease. It was all on purpose. They deserved it. The only thing stopping him from making the Girls squeal and cry was the Girls' Lamborghini transports tailing him - reminding him of the ever-present eye of the USDO now watching the city, his city, growing bigger with each passing day.
What he learned of the Girls didn't put him at ease. Their 'father' was a nerdy out-of-towner, same as the USDO, and he was with the USDO. He'd taught them nothing but pacifistic bullshit, and whatever little they learned of the real world was from their mother, a 'security officer'. Blossom was a know-it-all who knew nothing, Bubbles should have stayed in her room with her Barbie dolls while Buttercup should be put in a church and Sunday school. That was aside from the fact that they were a little too young to be out in the streets. They weren't fit to even write speeding tickets at all, much less help take down the largest mob in Townsville, or even the United States.

That was when the radio sounded out with an assault in progress. Detective Mullens took it. After all, it was a ride-along. Might as well show something fun.

"Let me show you how it's done," the detective said, still severe, as he switched his police lights and siren on, driving downtown. It wasn't far. It was perfect for a demonstration.

Within minutes, Detective Mullens had taken them to the site of the crime-in-progress. "Stay in the car with them," he said to his partner, the policewoman.

"Shouldn't I come along as backup?" Olivia said even as Mullens was halfway from shutting the driver's door.

"Just take care of the Girls," he said, and without waiting for a reply, shut the door.

The perpetrator and victim were on the streets. Crowds of bystanders had gathered in the distance, but none of them had intervened - as it was office hours, they were few and half-filled with seniors. The attacker, a surprisingly normal-looking man in a business suit, was kicking a more casual-wearing man who was down on the curb. A baseball bat was clutched in one of the aggressor's hands, spattered with blood. The victim was a man in denim jacket and pants, black shirt underneath. Ear rings and dyed hair. Despite looking like he needed the ER, he was still smiling and gibbering and giggling.

"Hey, baseball bat boy, why don't you drop it? Save your aggression for your new home? I'll even show you your new room." Detective Mullens warned the perp. He was within striking range, but he wasn't afraid. Punks with baseball bats weren't even breakfast this part of the world. Blossom watched with grim helplessness. From what she'd seen, there could be no happy outcome from this. Bubbles refused to watch. Buttercup beside her was smiling with anticipation, waiting for the kill.

Baseball Bat Perp appeared to be crying, his tears mingling with the blood splattered on his face. Without warning, he swung his baseball bat at Detective Mullens, who ducked to let the wood sail over him harmlessly, having anticipated that. Surging forward, he swept Baseball Bat Perp off his feet with a leg and a palm to his throat. The assaulter fell flat on his ground.

"Bad move, pal. I gave you a chance," the detective said as the criminal was on the ground. "You have the right to remain silence-" But before he could read the rest of the Miranda Warning and kick the baseball bat away, the perp played his game and swung the bat at his calves, harder than what he looked like he was capable of.

Their positions were switched quickly, with Baseball Bat Perp getting up and Detective Mullens down on the ground. Except one of them had a revolver. Detective Mullens pulled his large revolver without a moment's hesitation as the criminal was making an overhead swing with his bat.

BAM! There was a shout from the passers-by, people scattering, but overall less panicky than a normal crowd in some other, safer, city. Mullens had put a hole through the man's shoulder, and he was back down on the ground, falling at the same time as his baseball bat. The detective got up and rolled the suspect onto his belly with a push of his foot while the wounded man was crying and
moaning in pain. He read the Miranda warning uninterrupted this time as he handcuffed the assaulter. Paramedics arrived soon after. Detective Mullens leaned the wounded perp against a lamppost as the detective sat on the hood of his car, nursing the bruise forming on his calf. The paramedics tended to both the attacker and victim separately.

Blossom got out of the muscle car, visible shock on her face. Officer Olivia tried to grab her and get her back, but she was in the middle of radioing for backup.

"Blossom! Stop!" Olivia shouted, but had to continue speaking into the radio. She did so hurriedly. Blossom did not stop. She walked timidly up to Baseball Bat Perp. She had to know. One of the paramedics stepped between her and her query.

"Girl, this is no place to be playing around. It's dangerous here," the paramedic said. Blossom pushed the paramedic aside, who stumbled despite the little girl using only a mere fraction of her strength. Confused, the paramedic didn't try again.

"It's okay, I'll handle it," Officer Olivia said to the paramedic as she rushed up to Blossom. "What are you doing! Blossom!"

Blossom ignored the policewoman. Instead, she stared into the eyes of the perp, her pink, glowing eyes piercing into the soul of the wounded man. The man stared back, knowing full well that this was no ordinary girl.

"Why did you do it?" Blossom asked the man.

"I had to," the man said.

"Why?" Blossom asked again.

"That man killed my wife," the perp said. "Did unspeakable things to her before that, too. And he was let go after only a few years in jail!"

"What sort of things?" Blossom asked, her voice soft, sympathetic and understanding.

"It's nothing a little girl should know," he said softly, tears sprouting from his eyes, fresh. There was no shame in them. He had nothing left. "I had to live with it for years, then I saw him here, walking on the sidewalk like nothing happened."

"Blossom!" another man's voice boomed as a hand seized Blossom by the arm, pulling her back. She did not expect it, and so did not put up any resistance. When she turned around, she saw that it was Mullens. Bubbles and Buttercup weren't far behind him. People were watching, wondering why three girls were with a pair of hardened police officers.

Mullens was able to pull Blossom back to the car before she shook him loose. "Let me go!"

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing?" the detective yelled at the girl.

"I was talking to him!" Blossom yelled back, caught in the moment. She was surprised at her own audacity, but she couldn't wait to smell the roses. The detective backed her up against the car.

"You don't speak to criminals. You don't know them. They're the enemy, you understand?" Detective Mullens jabbed two fingers into Blossom's shoulder as he lectured her. "You don't open your pie hole unless you're grilling them, capiche? They're the bad guys! Is that plain enough for you?"
"But Daddy said that they're not all bad! Some of them are just poor or desperate, and that man looked really sad!" Blossom countered, despite still feeling the uncomfortable jab of the detective's fingers on her shoulder.

"What are you, born yesterday!?" Detective Mullens said condescendingly.

"No, I was born three weeks ago!" Blossom defended, unaware of how ridiculous her actual age sounded in the eyes of a normal human being. With what the man knew, the fact had actually caught him off-guard at first, but he quickly recovered.

"Right, 'course you are. Yeah, they'll spin their stories any ol' way they want. That's how they trick stupid little girls like you - with their little sob stories," Detective Mullens chided harshly. "And that's how talking got you into trouble the other day at the bank. Not only that, you ruined my investigation, you stupid girlie!"

"Stop calling me stupid!" Blossom cried, shaking, barely holding tears back. It was all too much. Mayor Wilford's promise of love from the people if she fought crime, felt harder to achieve, and it was blowing up in her face again and again. Behind Mullens, Buttercup was barely able to resist a smirk as Blossom was under fire again. Bubbles stared at the two of them, unsure of what to do with her limbs, a sure sign of powerlessness. "You're a bad man, Mister Mullens! You're just like the robbers!"

What Blossom said ticked him off. His campaign against the Lombardi was held back, and it was all due to these Three of the so-called Project Powerpuff. Yet, they either refused to admit it, or they couldn't see it, no matter how glaringly obvious they had failed in their maiden mission. And his Police Chief had requested that The Three assist in his efforts. It could only spell disaster, failure after failure. Which meant that somewhere down the road, as the Amoeba Boys caught wind of him, he was going to lose, and badly, but what scared him was that his family's going to pay big time for his failure, The Three's failure.

Detective Mullens seized Blossom by the dress, easily lifting her off her feet. He slammed her against the door of his car.

"Now you listen to me, you lil' pipsqueak!" the detective snarled, pressing his face close to hers. Blossom could smell his acidic breath, see just how much fire was in his eyes. "You want to serve up some justice? Then you'd better learn fast, or I swear to God-" He could feel a hand on his shoulder. Officer Olivia's.

"What is it, Olive? Can't you see I'm busy?" the detective said.

"People are looking. We have to do this nice and quietly," Officer Olivia said. Detective Mullens looked over her shoulders to see another crowd of bystanders forming, whispering, gossiping, looking at him.

"Hey, copper, how about keeping the police brutality out of the playground!?" a man from the crowd yelled.

"Yeah, this is just too much!" a woman added.

"What's the world coming to!?" another man shouted.

"No wonder the mobs' winning!" another person said. An exaggeration, but what could the detective do?

Just then, two police cruisers arrived. Backup was here to take the Baseball Bat Perp away. His job
was done. Thank God.

Detective Mullens looked Blossom in the eyes, sizing her up. What was she? Was she dirty? Like all the rest of them? It couldn't be. She was just a kid. Was she idiotic? No, he hated to admit it, but she seemed bright. All he saw was innocence in those bright, pink irises, and it led right back to him. For the first time in a good, long while, he felt some kind of remorse for his violence. He let go of Blossom. She landed on her feet as deftly as a cat, wiping tears away. "Get in the car. Now," he said simply as he got into the driver's seat. "All of you! Now!"

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville Police Department Headquarters.

16 DEC 1988 (Friday). 1105.

Detective Mullens stopped his car at the sidewalk. Looking at the police headquarters, he couldn't help but to look inwards too. Everything that had happened had given him much to think about. He looked into the rear-view mirror, checking up on the Girls. Blossom was still shaken, that she wasn't even aware that she had put her head on Buttercup's shoulder. Buttercup had her arm around her leader's shoulders, whispering false, insincere words of comfort. Sometimes, a smile would wound up exposed on her lips, but those were quickly suppressed.

Regret wormed his way into his heart, doing something that money couldn't: getting to him.

Ting Ting! Mullens could barely hear the bell through the windshield of his car. He looked around at the source of the call for customers. An ice cream stand, serving up cones to some bored desk cops.

Ice cream. Girls. It didn't occur to him immediately. It had been too long since he had to take care of children, over a decade too long. Reaching for his wallet, he pulled out a ten dollar bill and handed it to Officer Olivia.

The policewoman took it, understanding what he implied immediately.

"Girls, how about ice cream? His treat," Officer Olivia offered.

"I don't feel up to it," Blossom said.

"Okay…" Bubbles agreed, but only reluctantly.

"Oh yeah! Can I have a double scoop, can I?" Buttercup said enthusiastically, making up for her siblings' lack of it.

"Blossom, it'd be rude to reject someone's gift," the policewoman said. She gestured with her eyes at Detective Mullens, who was staring ahead of his vehicles, thunderclouds of emotions and dark thoughts around him. She wasn't sure if she was able to tell them everything with her eyes alone, but she was sure that most of it was lost in translation.

"I guess I'll have the ice cream," Blossom corrected her decision.

"Yeah! Ice cream! Can I have chocolate mint and apple?" Buttercup's voice trailed off as the Girls left the muscle car with Officer Olivia.

Detective Mullens stared after them as they approached the ice cream man in heavy winter gear. Wheeling down his window, he took out a pack of cigarettes and a light, lit himself one and had a puff.
"And what would you like to have?" Olivia asked the leader of The Three, who had fixed her gaze on the police headquarters like Mullens as distraction.

"Anything will do, Miss Olivia," Blossom said. Olivia looked at her, all concerned. Detective Mullens had done his damage, and it was going to take more than a cone of randomly-flavored ice cream to fix.

"One scoop of cherry and one of chocolate for pinkie here, please," Olivia ordered from the ice cream man. The ice cream man, an white-haired pudgy old man, opened his cart and started scooping.

"Beautiful little girls you have there, Olivia," the ice cream man said. He was a regular fixture outside the Police Headquarters. Most of the police officers there knew him. "Nieces here to visit or somethin'? Best you keep 'em safe, y'hear? This town isn't the best place to be in. But you don't need me to tell you that."

"They're really special kids for sure, like you won't be able to imagine," Olivia said.

"Gotta, Olivia. Well, there you go," the old man held out a cone with a double serving of ice cream. He scanned Blossom from head to toe. Officer Olivia weren't kidding about the kids. There was something about this 'Blossom' that he couldn't quite catch. He eventually settled on the eyes though. It was of a color he had never seen on a girl before. However, they were filled with so much sadness for how beautiful they were. "Tell ya what:" he retracted the ice cream and added some syrup on top. Cherry with marshmallow bits. "A little extra for the extra-cute eh?"

Blossom smiled at the kindly old man and his generosity as she took the cone of ice cream. It was a welcome relief from the hatred that seemed to ooze out of every corner of Townsville.

Bubbles received a vanilla and blueberry ice cream while Buttercup got what she wanted. They spent some time licking their syrupy globes, enjoying the taste. Blossom took little; the ice cream wasn't going anywhere, not in winter. Officer Olivia noticed how down she was. She'd noticed right from the beginning.

"You know, he's actually a really nice guy," the police officer said. She had a scoop of corn-flavored ice cream herself. It was the healthy alternative. With her free fist, she put it against her heart. "In here, He's just… seen too many things, that's all. It took me a very long time to see that, to accept that, but here I am, sitting beside him in his muscle car."

"He's cool, Miss Olivia. I like him!" Buttercup agreed, as if this was all just another walk in the park. To her, there was practically nothing wrong with Detective Mullens. The only thing that struck her as slightly off was the brooding, but even then, it was a minor thing.

"I'm glad you do!" Officer Olivia said with a chuckle. "He can sure use as many fans as he can get."

"I find it hard to believe that he's nice," Bubbles stated between licks.

"Well, you should've seen him when he was younger. God, he was such a knight in shining armor back then," the policewoman said, her eyes beyond the horizon, peering into a past that could never come again. "He was the closest thing to a superhero Townsville had. Took down hundreds, but it wasn't without cost. It all got too much, I'm only beginning to understand. And now…"

The Three and the police officer looked at the detective in his old muscle car, whose gaze was locked on the police headquarters, but he wasn't looking. His cigarette dangled between two fingers outside the car. He'd produced a hip flask, wondering if he should risk a sip, before thinking better of
"You're worried about him," Blossom asserted. The gloom in her was lifted slightly with enlightenment, but not entirely. The darkness around her was so thick that it choked her - and it was only the tip of the iceberg when it came to understanding the true extent of the crime and corruption and darkness in Townsville.

"Actually, I'm worried about us," Officer Olivia said. "Well, him, too. But when he told me about the three of you, I couldn't believe my ears - I mean, I've heard rumors, but… Crime-fighting 5-year-olds with crazy powers?"

"Anyway, I'm just worried that we're all going to become just like him. I know just too many of us who're exactly like him," the officer continued.

"I promised my Daddy that I'm going to be his Blossom forever, same as always," Blossom said. "I promised him."

"So did he," Olivia said, referring to Detective Mullens. "I guess it's unavoidable that when you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back at you. And then before you know it, the two of you are one."

"What do you mean?" Blossom asked. Officer Olivia did not reply immediately.


"Anyway, beneath all that iron he's wrapped up around himself, that detective's a nice guy," Officer Olivia said again. "He didn't say it, but he's really sorry about what he did to you, Blossom. Some men, you know, especially the older ones. But he means well. He just didn't want you to make the same mistake he did."

"Oh… I'm just… really sorry too," Blossom said.

They took their time filing away at their ice cream, and when they were done, they were driven straight back to Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. The trip was mostly silent, until the most silent of them all spoke up.

"We'll be working together from now on," Detective Mullens said suddenly. "Like colleagues, I guess, even if I look ten times your age." He still could not believe that the Girls weren't even a month old. But then again, just weeks ago, he wouldn't have believed that there were such a thing as bulletproof girls with super-strength in the world.

"Yes, Mister Mullens," Blossom said, the troubles of before less. Before she knew it, the school was coming back into view. It had been a long day. "When will I see you again?"

"Sooner than you think," the detective said cryptically as he was bringing his car to a stop.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, we bring you an interesting broadcast on the Townsville News Network. Recorded for your viewing pleasure.

A/N: As some of you might have noticed, my uploads have slowed a little. This is due to the fact that I have completely cleared my backlog of chapters. This is the last of it, which means that this particular chapter was only recently completed - something like 12 hours ago. So, from now on, uploads will likely come in only once every two or three days, assuming nothing happens to me in real life that'd take me out of action.

Television Recording 12161988-TNN

The following transcript is a recording of the TNN (Townsville News Network) channel from 2101-2109.

TRANSCRIPT START

(Logo of the TNN shows and fades)

Stanley Whitfield: Good evening, I'm your news anchor, Stanley Whitfield, here to keep an eye on the storm that is Townsville.

Sally Perth: And I am Sally Perth, staying on top of things to keep a bird's eye view of our stunning city!

Stanley Whitfield: Today's top news - the Townsville Central Bank, or rather, the controversy surrounding it. On the 14 of December, there was an attempted robbery in the Townsville Central Bank, resulting in 12 citizens and police officers killed. It marks the first time the USDO has intervened to assist in fighting crime around Townsville. (Turns to look at Sally Perth)

Sally Perth: The siege of the bank was controversial because of the blanket ban on the media around the surrounding area. But there's been a development. Just hours ago, we have received a video footage alleged to be a capture of the event, from an anonymous source, a film student producing an overnight footage of the city skyline on the rooftop of a nearby building. Here it is… now:

(the footage is shot from a building at least 12 storey high. The police blockade around the Townsville Central Bank could be seen very clearly, and in the middle of it are three strange officers in red, blue and green gear, talking to a man in black. The video quality is too poor to make out their faces. Despite the distance, they are clearly too small to be adults, and colored wrongly to be SWAT officers. The man they are talking to points to the building, and the three in red, blue and green walks towards it, until they enter the bank.)
There is a time skip to abridge the video. The windows of the bank shatter from gunshots. The red short person, while carrying the blue one, who appears to be dead or unconscious, busts through the door and hides under a window. The short person in green leaps through the window, falling on her belly, before scrambling to hide under the window.

Stanley Whitfield: A rather strange video to say the least, showing some non-typical police response to the bank heist. Experts believe the video to be authentic, based on the hand movement of the camera and the lack of marks left by doctoring. We have the said expert on the line, here to comment on the video itself. What is it about, Doctor Philips Tetsuo?

Doctor Philips Tetsuo: (voice and photograph only) Yes, the video is a curious one. The main subjects of the video are, of course, the strange, short people in red, blue and green-colored gear. Based on my analysis, they are about the size of - of little children, perhaps a maximum of, say, 48 inches tall, but they are likely shorter. Judging from the positioning of the the short people and the person they are talking to, relative to the white humvee of the USDO close to them, I would say that they are from the United States Defence Organization. From a logical, ah, standpoint, it makes sense, as they are participating in a major police response for the first time, while the Townsville Police Force has never fielded anyone or anything so small before.

Stanley Whitfield: Do you have any idea who or what they are?

Doctor Philips Tetsuo: It's, urm, baffling to say the least. They appear to move fluidly enough, based on the video, so, urm, they are not any kind of machines or robots. They could either be... children or people suffering from dwarfism - but that just leaves us with the, ah, question. What on Earth is the USDO doing with children or dwarves? For you conspiracy theorists out there, they could be aliens, of course, hahaha.

Stanley Whitfield: Haha- Thank you, Doctor Philips. When queried on this video, the USDO spokesperson dismissed it as a hoax, believed to be perpetrated for the purpose of discrediting the USDO. Due to the fact that we are not allowed to approach eyewitnesses present in the bank itself and the surviving bank robbers of the heist, there is zero evidence for either side of this conversation.

Sally Perth: Perhaps they really are aliens, considering the tight security and secrecy.

Stanley Whitfield: Hahaha- They could very well be.

Sally Perth: In other news... Cults. Since 8pm today, the Temple of His Promise, one of several major homegrown cults in Townsville, is holding a rally in Perkins Avenue Park. The Temple of His Promise, one of the older cults of Townsville, was founded by one Kane 'Raven' Jayne in the early 60s, known as 'His Avatar', a title denoting the second highest position in the cult. We bring to you live on the scene, Phil Robertson. Phil?

(Phil Robertson: We're here at the Temple of His Promise rally at Perkins Avenue Park. It's loud and it's alive. There's over five hundred people in attendance, but that's counting only the cultists. They have their own security detail, and there's been some long-standing rumors that some of them are part of the mafia and associated with the Lombardi as well as the minor families and gangs. (He walks to the left, and the camera swings to track him, showing lines of well-dressed men and women standing)
in front and behind some railings.)

(The chanting continues)

There are protesters of various religious groups just beyond the park - Catholics, Protestants, you name it. They've been at it since right from the beginning, and they don't like the cultists very much. You can see from just beyond the lines of bouncers that they are chanting verses from the Holy Bible. (camera swerves around to focus on the Christian protesters. They are all holding either bibles or lit candles) Some other independent groups have been shouting slurs. Even the police seem a little apprehensive. They're keeping their distance.

(The camera returns to the reporter, who approaches a young woman who appears to be part of the cult. She is wearing heavy Gothic make-up, thigh-high boots and dark trench coat. She stares at the camera with a piercing gaze that looks as if it could reach the viewer, whoever they are, before she turns it upon Phil Robertson)

Hi ma'am, I'm Phil of TNN. Care to introduce yourself? (points mic at follower)

Temple of His Promise Follower: (stares intensely at Phil) My name is immaterial in this vast universe and the next above… I serve him, the old one, our gateway to the world beyond, who opens our eyes to pleasures at the ceiling of this world and the next…

Phil Robertson: (takes back mic, pause as he stares back at the Follower, intimidated even though he is more than a head taller than the Goth girl) I see. So, what can you tell me about this lovely evening rally you have here? (points mic at follower)

Temple of His Promise Follower: His coming is near. We are here to remember that, to preach his coming so that more may know and taste the pleasures of the world beyond. They will join us in the writhing pleasures of the flesh and beyond, or perish in his fire.

Phil Robertson: (takes back mic) Tasteful.

Temple of His Promise Follower: Without a doubt. (continues to stare intensely at Phil)

Phil Robertson: So, what is he? Another version of God or the Devil? (points the mic at the follower)

Temple of His Promise Follower: He is both and neither. But unlike God or the Devil, he is very real, and he is everywhere and nowhere. His servants are among us, and apart from us. Most of them are wayward souls with his essence, but they will soon know who their true master… mistress is.

Phil Robertson: (takes back mic) Huh. Well, that's very interesting, ma'am. (The Goth girl sidles up to him) Um-

Temple of His Promise Follower: I can show you the beginnings of his teaching.

Phil Robertson: That's a very kind offer ma'am, but no thanks. (The follower takes him by the upper arms) Ma'am- (follower tiptoes to kiss him. He cranks his head back) We're on live camera- (Phil gestures for the camera feed to be cut)

Stanley Whitfield: Thank you, Phil. And good luck, Phil. (it is unsure if he is winking because one of his eyes is perpetually closed. He clears his throat before speaking again) In other news, a double-whammy case of police brutality out in the streets of downtown Townsville. At 10:38am this morning, two police officers had responded to a call at Anderson Avenue, where one attempted to arrest a perpetrator in an assault case. Eyewitness accounts states that the detective responding to the crime had goaded the perpetrator into attacking him, before shooting him. Not only that, the police
officer's car had been carrying three little girls, estimated to be 5-years-old, and the detective would later assault one of them himself. A video has been submitted to us hours after the incident, which we'll bring to you… now:

( There is lots of background noise. The video is shot from across the street, from behind a window in what appears to be a diner. We see Detective Mullens getting out of the car, leaving on policewoman and three little girls in his car. He approaches the assaulter, talks to him. They tussle, and eventually, Mullens shot the assaulter while the detective was down on the ground. One of the Girls, the one in pink, came out, and after briefly speaking to the perpetrator, she was pulled back by the detective and slammed against his car.)

Stanley Whitfield: When questioned about this incident, the Townsville Police Department's public relations spokesperson claimed that they are currently investigating the incident and the personnel involved. What do you think, Perth? Are they stalling for time or are they clean?

Sally Perth: The police? Clean in Townsville? I doubt it - they're never clean. But they are the good guys, at least most of the time. We'll have more news after the break.

(The following commercial is a USDO production, meant to steer public sentiments towards accepting the USDO as part of their life)

(The USDO Eagle and Shield fades in with an official tune)

Narrator: We are the U - S - D - O. The United States Defence Organization.

(Stock footage which is colored shows US marines streaming past a camera)

Narrator: Around since the second world war, we stand vigilant, watching over our troops, and now you.

(Old footage of Organization scientists working in a lab, putting together a prototype tank)

Narrator: Where strength of arms fail, we put steel behind them, so that it may thrust, true, and stick a blade into the heart of evil.

(Old footage of Organization scientists working on mixing chemicals in a lab)

Narrator: Where the solution to the lack of security requires the application of the mind, we are there where others will fail.

(Old footage of soldiers fighting in the foxholes of the Korean War)

Narrator: We saw to the the frantic defence of our allies in Asia-

(Old footage of soldiers fighting in the jungles of Vietnam)

Narrator: as well as in Southeast Asia, making the lives of the soldiers, our soldiers, better with more reliable equipment.

(scene switches to a footage of a street in downtown, Townsville, with USDO humvees and soldiers standing guard.)

Narrator: And now we are here with you, discovering the next secret to fighting crime, and the forces of evil.
(scene switches to one of USDO soldiers arresting criminals, backing them up against the wall, pointing rifles at them)

Narrator: Far removed from the locality, we are an incorruptible force, insurmountable for we bring technology, equipment and tactics long forbidden to the enforcers of order - down on the heads of the agents of chaos.

(scene switches back to a USDO logo that fades in)

Narrator: U - S - D - O. Guarding liberty and freedom, no matter the cost. We are the U - S - D - O. Let us do it.
Chapter 47: Hide and Seek (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls are called up for a second mission.

Chapter 47: Hide and Seek (Part 1)

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

16 DEC 1988 (Friday). 2125.

"This is the hardest homework ever! I can't understand this map-thing no matter how hard I try…” Bubbles said. She and Blossom were on their queen-sized tri-colored bed, figuring out a map of Townsville together, which took up much of the space on their bed. Blossom, thus far, was able to make some kind of sense of it. "I don't understand these lines." She pointed at the topographical lines all over the map, especially in places where there were no houses.

"Miss Keane said not to mind those," Blossom said. "I don't know what they mean either…”

"But what about these?” Bubbles pointed to another set of colored lines. "I forgot what they were.”

"Bubbles!” Blossom chided, though her tone was lessened by her sisterly worry. "Those are roads, like the ones outside our house.”

"Oh, I keep forgetting that. I keep getting them confused with the rest of the lines…” Bubbles explained timidly, pointing at the power lines, railway lines, metro lines, rivers and again, the topographical lines. To be fair to her, the map Miss Keane had given them was huge and fully detailed.

"The roads have names and most of the others don't," Blossom explained, pointing out an example: Perkins Avenue. "We just have to remember all of them…” It was no easy feat, even for Blossom, as she still had to associate the innumerable roads with the real rivers of asphalt and tar outside her house.

"It's giving me a headache," Bubbles complained. "Where's Buttercup anyway? She's been using the washroom all the time.”

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The clown phone, forever smiling at them from the window-side wall of the room, interrupted them. Blossom and Bubbles looked up to regard it, beads of cold sweat forming almost immediately.

Blossom ran up to it at the speed of a car, knowing that it was an emergency. It had been an emergency the last time. When she was next to the phone, however, she hesitated, knowing what would come next.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The clown phone insisted, still smiling. For some reason, Blossom read ill intent
into its smile.

*Bzzz!* *Bzzz!* *Bzzz!* The hotline nagged. Blossom finally picked it up.

"Hello?" Blossom greeted the agent on the other end of the line.

"Evening, Blossom. You really need to put that super-speed of yours to work picking up the phone, Blossom. Every second counts, remember that. Anyway, we got a call. This one's big, but then again, so are all of them. Suit up, and don't forget to take your submachineguns out," Agent Blake instructed.

"Yes, Mister Blake…" Blossom acknowledged. But there was something in her chest that she needed to get off. "Mister Blake!" she said urgently before the USDO security officer could hang up. But the feeling in her chest was hard to translate. "I… uh…"

"It'll be fine, Blossom. It's going to be different this time," Agent Blake reassured her.

"Okay…” Blossom said. The feeling in her chest hadn't gone away, and it had also spread to her stomach. Her friend in the USDO had known exactly what she felt. Fear of failure. Anxiety. Butterflies in her stomach, and a Buttercup to watch out for.

There was a rap on the door. Blossom called for whoever was knocking to come in, knowing full well who it was. The door opened. It was Professor Utonium. He came in already looking around, seeing only two girls.

"Where's Buttercup?" the professor asked.

"I think she's in the washroom. She's been in there for a while," Bubbles told him. She was already undoing the black sash of her dress.

"I'll go check on her before I get ready," the professor said before turning around, giving Blossom and Bubbles their privacy. The two girls proceeded to open the closet to pull their uniform, gear and weapons out. The professor had set aside a portion of the closet as their ad-hoc armory. However, as the Girls were bulletproof, there was little need to control access to the guns and grenades inside the closet. They were all just neatly arranged in an unlocked trunk.

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

16 DEC 1988 (Friday). 2131.

"Buttercup! We have a call!" Professor Utonium shouted as he was approaching the washroom that Buttercup was occupying. "Buttercup!" He got up to the door leading into the washroom. There was no response. 'What's going on with her?' he thought. Putting an ear on the door, he thought he could hear something. Giggles? He thought he heard giggles in there. But what could she possibly be doing in there? He knocked on the door. "Buttercup!"

There was a gasp. Then footsteps as the soles of Buttercup's Mary Jane shoes rapidly tapped on the porcelain floor. There was the sound of the faucet turning and water rushing, before it was turned off. There was another set of footsteps, growing louder, before the door was unlocked with a loud 'klack!'. It swung open.

"Buttercup, what were you doing in there?" Professor Utonium asked.

"Nothing. I was just using the toilet," Buttercup said.
"Then why were you giggling inside?" the professor questioned.

"Oh, I…" Buttercup fumbled. She didn't think that she was that loud, and even then, she didn't think that anyone would be listening through the door. "I was using the toilet, and I thought of something funny."

The professor couldn't help but to raise an eyebrow at Buttercup's claim. Sure, it wasn't far-fetched, but there was something about it that didn't quite fit. Regardless, he had to let it go, as he didn't want their relationship stained by distrust. And then there was the call - there was no time. "Buttercup, you heard the phone, right? You should get changed."

"Yes, Daddy," Buttercup said before charging around him and into her room, knowing that he would allow super-speed in The House in the event of an emergency.

By the time Buttercup had returned to her room, her sisters had already changed, and were hanging weapons on their vest.

"Buttercup, come on! We're going to be late!" Blossom nagged at her tougher sister as she was pulling the slide on her pistol, chambering a bullet. She turned the safety on and slipped it into its holster. She picked up her SMG and loaded a magazine, pulling the charging handle. She had absorbed her firearms lessons well – actually using them was another matter entirely. She had no wish to. Buttercup, in the meantime, was changing at breakneck speed, and she was already pulling her green military trousers on.

"Why do we have to wear these stuff anyway? It looks good, but it never helped," Buttercup grumbled as she threw the rest of her uniform on, and laced up her boots.

Blossom and Bubbles were already impatient and rearing to go by the time Buttercup was done. She headed for the door.

"Buttercup, we're using the windows this time, it's faster," Blossom ordered. She and Bubbles were already opening their respective circular hatch-like windows. Buttercup decided to go along with it only because she thought it would be a cool way to get to Agent Blake. Just then, the door opened, and the professor popped in.

"Girls, what are you doing?" the professor asked when he saw that they were at the windows.

"It's faster this way, Dad. We'll see you downstairs," Blossom said as she unlatched the centre window and pushed it up.

"Are you sure you can get down there safely, honey?" Professor Utonium asked out of concern. He'd seen her jumping an entire storey unhurt, but… it wasn't something anyone could expect a 5-year-old to do, and it wasn't something the professor was used to.

"We'll be fine, Dad." Blossom reassured him with a smile as she pulled herself up to the rounded window sill effortlessly, herself, gear and weapons all – which would have left even the strongest of soldiers and athletes with their jaws on the floor. Bubbles copied her actions while Buttercup went along with it after a scoff.

Seeing them drop down from the window had sent the professor running, and when he'd reached the living room, he saw Selicia, like before, waiting for him near the front door, this time with not just her weapons and vest, but her helmet.

"Thomas," Selicia greeted him. They hadn't spoken to each other much ever since she had tried to force Bubbles into violence, only what was necessary to keep the family and the act running. "I need
Professor Utonium stared at his 'wife', or more accurately, his colleague or even subordinate. He thought he detected sincerity in her eyes. Thinking back, there was no doubt that she felt something for the Girls – as much as she said she did. Her way of expression it, however, was less than acceptable.

"Fine," the professor agreed, very reluctantly, as he brushed past his 'wife'. Sergeant Selicia Goodwin followed up behind him.

When the Girls had dropped down from their windows, Blossom felt a strange sensation as she landed. She thought she could feel herself physically slow down from the fall just before landing. It was the same thing she'd felt back in training, when she'd landed one storey below.

"Did you two feel that?" Blossom asked her sisters.

"Feel what?" Buttercup asked. She had landed crouching on threes.

"Yeah, feel what, Blossom?" Bubbles asked. Obviously oblivious.

Blossom considered what to say for a moment.

"Did the two of you feel anything before you touch the floor?" Blossom asked her sisters.

"Come to think of it…" Bubbles seemed lost in thoughts. "Is it normal?"

"No, nothing! I think it's just the snow, Blossom! We need to focus on the mission!" Buttercup bellowed impatiently. Her assessment seemed surprisingly convincing. The snow slowing her down seemed to explain things.

Yet, there was no snow inside the abandoned mall to slow her down.

The Girls waited at the lawn. When their parents were finally out, Blossom stood looking at her (secretly foster) parents, while Bubbles played with the snow with her boots, making boot prints as her SMG hung loosely on her shoulder, while Buttercup was clenching her fists around her own submachinegun, looking like she couldn't wait to get into action. Selicia thought they looked impressive, how far they'd come, how much they'd grown in the space of a month. The professor, on the other hand, didn't like the trajectory of their development. Two weeks ago, they had nothing but their dresses on as they tested their mettle against thousand pound weights and treadmills. A week ago, they wore kevlar, and had pistols only as a precaution. And now, they were armed with submachineguns, with flashbangs and smoke grenades on their vests. What would tomorrow bring? What would Crimesville do to them once they'd become a serious threat?

Together, the family trudged towards the three Lamborghinis. Sergeant Blake, alongside Corporal Rutherford, were waiting outside the doors of their their speed transport.

"Sorry, professor, I'm afraid we can't bring you this time," Blake held out a hand, apologizing. It seemed sincere. It came out of nowhere, surprised the professor. Now, he couldn't decide if it was a policy specifically targeting him, or if it was due to some standard procedure.

"What? Why not?" Professor Utonium pressed the agent for answers. "The Girls need me!" Upon hearing this, the Girls turned around, crowding around him like needy children.

"It's too dangerous this time. Combatants only. We won't have the benefit of being surrounded by police officers and soldiers this time," Agent Blake explained. "The Girls need you, so sending you
in there to die is not the best way to go about doing things." He was being sympathetic - he couldn't help but to be. After having the scales removed from his eyes, having so much open up to him because of the Girls, he was completely on their side.

"What kind of war zone are you sending them into this time?" the professor asked, feeling his insides turn to ice. It was bad enough the last time, with Bubbles spiraling into shock very quickly and regressing for a day - she had only just barely recovered. The battle at Townsville Central Bank had driven a wedge between the sisterly love between Blossom and Buttercup, the professor thought. What would a worse scenario do to them now?

"I'm just the messenger and driver, prof," Agent Blake said, sensing anger directed at him. Understandable, but misguided. "It's not a direct assault, that much I know. They're going in quietly… At least at first. That's all I got. I don't know where it would be, and I don't know who they'll be going up against. They'll be briefed on-site."

"Dad…" Bubbles mewled, afraid of what all this meant. She would be away from Daddy, and for how long, she didn't know. The prospect of separation, in the face of violence, nearly to tears.

Professor Utonium knelt down to face his Girls. "Blossom… Bubbles. Buttercup. The three of you will have to go on without me."

"I can't." Bubbles cried.

"It's not fair. Why can't you stay with us a little longer?" Blossom lamented. The professor ran his hand across her cheek.

"Some things just are. If I go out there, I might put all of us in danger. I guess… I don't want you to have to choose between me, and what is right," the professor reasoned things out. Perhaps Agent Blake, or whoever had made the decision, was right to exclude him, even if their reasons were different from his. Buttercup stood at one side, saying nothing. There was nothing to be said - in her mind, she was dangling between two pleasures. Daddy could wait. There was explosions and fights to be had!

The professor spread his arms out, pulling the three Girls into a hug. "Just remember what I said - as long as the three of you are together, you have a family out there. Please, take good care of each other. Blossom, I'm counting on you." Blossom hugged the professor tight. He could smell the scent off her. The smell of an innocent baby, untainted by the world. When she let go, he looked up at Selicia. She gave him an idea.

"Blake, can Selicia go with the Girls?" the professor asked the security officer in SWAT gear as he straightened up.

"She's one of us, and I've seen her do some serious kicking. It's my pleasure to say 'yes','" Agent Blake said, feeling triumphant and useful for once, ever since he was knocked off his command position, stripped of rank. Professor Utonium turned to his 'wife'.

"Selicia, look after them for me, will you?" he said to her, and couldn't help but to arch his eyebrows and clench his jaws - it wasn't the best position for him, putting the Girls in her hands, but he'd have to compromise. He looked at the Girls, who didn't have a good impression of their parents' relationship, and it showed. Bubbles' shoulders were drooping, and she looked away, as if afraid that another argument would erupt soon. Blossom was almost angry herself, and for a rare moment, Buttercup appeared a little dismayed, though he couldn't be sure - her expressions had always been mild, except when she was angry, or fighting. If this kept up, the Girls would be fighting on empty. They would fail, and Bubbles' rating with the USDO committee would tank even further. And for all
he knew, he'd wake up in the near future with Bubbles missing from her bed, and his other two angels not far behind.

He had to fix this. Coming up to Selicia, he pressed up against her, putting his arms around the security officer. He gave her a kiss. Nothing that would melt the snow around them, but still something no one, including himself and his 'wife', had seen before. Mouth-to-mouth, brief and as loving as he could make it. He stared into her eyes for a moment, searching, hoping for an understanding. What he saw was a mix of that, and confusion. He looked around at the Girls, and saw the same thing.

"It's a kiss, Girls," the professor explained. "It's the kind that you give when you really love someone." He tried his best to stomach the lie that he didn't love Selicia. Perhaps the next step was to force himself to love her, if there was such a thing. Their act the past week had been shoddy, maintained with total secrecy only because the Girls were inexperienced in life as much as they were in law enforcement. Slowly, smiles began to form on the Girls, even Buttercup. He looked at Selicia. "Go, and come back in one piece - all four of you!"

With that, the Girls and Selicia entered the speed transport. Agent Blake, for some reason, stayed.

"I'll be there for them, if it means anything to you," he said. "Instructions from Blackwater are that the convoy provide support fire and manpower whenever applicable. I intend to do that as often as I can."

Professor Utonium stood there, scanning Blake, this man who had usurped his position for three days - touched his Girls. The rational part of him knew that it didn't mean anything, but the emotional part of him wanted to deck the man.

"I don't know if it does, but make sure it means something to the Girls," he finally said, before turning around and walking away, his lab coat fluttering in the cold winter night wind.
**Chapter 48: Hide and Seek (Part 2)**

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, takes on the mob using a very different tactic.

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"Mom, what if Mister Blackwater shouts at me again?" Blossom asked Selicia at the other end of the car. Buttercup was sitting next to her, with Bubbles wedged in the between her sisters.

"Oh, don't be a scaredy cat, Blossom," Selicia Goodwin said. She puts her arm around Buttercup, who leaned on her, her face a picture of absolute bliss. She could sense the pendulum swinging in her favor again. "Besides, Chief Blackwater does that all the time to everyone. Right, Blake?"

"Right. I think he's just used to it," Blake answered with his eyes front and centre, concentrating on the road.

"Mmm…" Bubbles in the centre was shaking and whimpering. Somehow, she had managed to smuggle Octi into the car, without anyone noticing, and she was hugging it tightly, as if she was in the middle of the ocean and it was her life vest. It wasn't a secret what had gotten over her. She laid her head on Buttercup for comfort - despite her green-uniformed sister's rough edges, she found her to be a pillar of strength she could literally and metaphorically lean on. She was the unattainable goal - Bubbles had always wanted to be a little like her, tougher, but she just couldn't find it within her.

"Scared, Bubbles?" Buttercup asked, not out of concern. She'd kept her real tone a secret, her face veiled by shadows and Selicia. Inside, she was gloating and boasting. As long as Bubbles was around, there's a loser in the team to contrast herself with. But Blossom wasn't fooled. She'd seen enough of Buttercup to know what she's thinking. Besides, she found that she could somehow sense her sisters in some indescribable, dull way, and it wasn't through the conventional five senses and empathy either. She'd have to check in with the professor on what it was.

"Mm-hm… How are you so brave, Buttercup?" Bubbles asked, her voice wavering.

"I just am," Buttercup answered, surprisingly earnest. The question had prompted her to look inward. Fear and risk had never quite factored into her decisions. In fact, the former had hardly ever struck her and the latter was usually lost on her. "I don't think about it when I jump in."

"I wish I can be more like you," Bubbles admitted. Buttercup sat up, and looked around at Bubbles, who was still snuggling with her. Something stirred in Buttercup, a feeling almost unnatural to her. She put a reassuring arm around Bubbles, unsure of why she was even doing that. It all felt so strange to her, as if Bubbles had inspired something within her. Buttercup said nothing after that; she was too confused about herself and what to say.
"Now isn't that cute?" Selicia said, sincerely. "You're such a caring little angel, Buttercup."

"Thanks, Mom," Buttercup said in gratitude even though she knew that she was anything but caring.

"How about a little something to calm the nerves?" Agent Blake offered, and switched on the commercial radio. Tuning it, he turned to a pop song station, which immediately blared out Gloria Gaynor.

"-Oh no, not I, I will survive!
Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive!
I've got all my life to live
And I've got all my love to give and I'll survive-" Gloria sang to them.

"Lovely," Blake commented. "All those wasted years without music…"

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Townsville Industrial Park. Mission Time - 31 minutes

They had never been to this part of Townsville before, and it wasn't a part of Townsville that Mayor Wilford had mentioned. There were apartment buildings around them a few minutes ago, but that had given way to some little shops, then the industrial estates. They passed by factories, before reaching a sort of warehousing and storage area. The convoy took a turn into a canyon of tall warehouses, before coming to a full stop.

The doors of all three Lamborghini speed transports opened up, the first and the last of them disgorging soldiers from the front and back seat, three from each, pointing their weapons around them to cover every possible angle of attack. The street of this industrial area was dark, with islands of light every twenty metres or so, shined down upon the road by streetlamps. There was not a single soul in sight. Almost everyone in the area had gone home on rush hour, leaving behind security guards and all-nighters, who were all indoors and either busy idling or working hard.

"Take over the wheels for me, Corporal," Sergeant Blake ordered his shotgun sitter, before exiting the driver's seat and pulling his own weapon out, scanning the immediate surroundings. Sergeant Selicia Goodwin did the same. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup came out of the same door quickly, their super-speed in effect. "Everyone, on me!"

"Bubbles, leave that doll behind!" Blossom said to her baby blue sister when she finally noticed what was in her hands.

"But… But…" Bubbles blubbered, afraid to let go of Octi - it was always there for her, whether the day had ended terribly or not.

"Do you want him to get shot or blown up, Bubbles?" Buttercup added persuasively. It'd gotten Bubbles going. Speeding up next to their Lamborghini, she carefully and lovingly leaned Octi against the backseat, promising it that she would be back soon.

The Girls caught up to their escorts within a second, with their super-speed.

Together, they piled towards a door. A man in plainclothes stood guard there, apparently unarmed, but he was holding a hand behind him, hiding something. Blossom took the initiative to stare through him with her X-ray vision, and saw that he was hiding a pistol on his back.
"Dark," the man said to Blake, looking like he was expecting something.

"Heart," Blake replied. It was a password.

"Come on in," the guard said. The soldiers filed through the door, followed by the Girls. They soon found themselves in a warehouse office, with men and women standing around a pool table, a map between them. Three of them were recognizable. Chief of Security Blackwater, Detective Mullens and Officer Olivia. There was another woman of the USDO, in SWAT gear. A few guards stood around the room, all of the USDO eagle and shield.

"-Say we go in hard and fast, catch them by surprise with superior numbers," Chief of Security Blackwater barked his tactical suggestion.

"This is not a war with conventional forces or whatever it is you're used to, big man. If you go in there looking to start world war three, they'll just scatter - I know the man in charge. He's got all sorts of tricks up his sleeves, and before we know it-" Detective Mullens was saying before he looked up and saw who arrived. The Three of Project Powerpuff, and their escorts.

"Finally," Blackwater remarked derisively as Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were led by Agent Blake to the table. The Blossom and Bubbles was intimidated by the assembly, though the glint off their combat goggles had covered their expression slightly. Buttercup, on the other hand, clutched the edge of the pool table, looking at the map, which had little model soldiers of different colors on them. To her, it was something fun.

"It's decided, Blackwater," Mullens said on the side, as he took a glance at the Girls, vaguely and barely acknowledging their presence as he was too busy crossing swords with his supposed allies. "It's my operation, my call. We creep up on them real quiet, come up to them in all directions carefully. As for the Girls-"

"As for the Girls!" Blackwater barked, emphasizing his presence and authority over the Girls. Bubbles shook at the boom of his voice. "The three of you listen up! There's a warehouse full of gang members protecting stuff. Since you sissies couldn't handle things by yourself, Sergeant Blake and Detective Mullens here will take you to the warehouse. Once there, you'll sneak in, try to take as many of them out quietly. Do not let them know that you're in there with them. Don't alert them. But if you do, go loud with your guns, slaughter them, and then I'll deal with you three later."

"Blossom, there's a man inside you need to pay special attention to," Detective Mullens took the briefing. Blossom turned to him. "Short guy, always wears a black French beret - a funny hat that looks a little like a potato." He flashed a polaroid picture of the man, then gestured for Blossom to take it. She did, looking closely at the picture.

"He's in his late 20s, a bit of a shorty," the Detective added. "They call him Junior, but don't let that name fool you. He's more than just a lil' scrappy."

"Gotcha," Blossom said, forced a smile on her face, hoping that the detective would smile back. He didn't. She let go of the smile.

"I want him alive, you hear me? Don't get the leader killed like the last time," the detective emphasized. "I'm looking at you, Buttercup." He stuck his eyes, stern and wide, on the green-uniformed girl.

"Okay, okay…" Buttercup submitted.

"Here, I've got a few more extra things for you three," Sergeant Blake said, as he handed headsets
with microphones to them, so that they could communicate over the radio silently during the mission.


Progress was slow as the Girls, and their massive escort of some eight USDO soldiers and two police officers, had to cross an entire city block of warehouses, all the while doing it under the cover of darkness - which meant sneaking through alleys. Their already slow pace was made slower by the fact that they had to treat everyone they encounter on the way as a potential spy for the Lombardi mafia, and had to sneak past them as well. It meant detours, as the alleyways that were breeding grounds not just of rats and cockroaches, but also low-lives, the human rats and cockroaches that'd been plaguing the city since time immemorial.

The USDO soldiers, under agent Blake's direction, were more than adequate for the task. Using subsonic rounds in suppressed guns, they were able to take out streetlamps and other light sources with precision, quietly. Knowing that The Three of Project Powerpuff were averse to hurting people under Blossom's leadership, they were able to avoid it, chiefly to keep the Girls calm while they were still on the way to the mission site. Without knowing it, Blossom had saved lots of people lots of trouble and headaches and bruises with that attitude, as civilians with unclear loyalties, who may or may not be involved, were skirted around entirely, rather than being cornered and knocked out, mob or not.

The squad stopped by the fence of the target warehouse, hiding among trees and bushes. In the distance beyond the fence, Lombardi mobsters could already be spotted, patrolling.

"This is it, Girls," Selicia, their designated mother, whispered. "Make me proud, alright?"

"Yes, mom," Buttercup said lovingly. Naturally, she was next to her.

"Tear down the fence quietly. Bubbles?" Sergeant Blake ordered one of the three, and chose Bubbles because she was closest. Timidly, Bubbles hooked onto the fence with her fingers and pulled, tearing the wire netting of the fence, making a hole effortlessly despite her lack of confidence. Lots of eyes were on her when she did this - the Girls were still a novelty at this point, and it was unbelievable what even the weakest of The Three could do so effortlessly.

Detective Mullens got up next to them. "Remember - do it quiet-like, or they'll just scatter and run for it. Should be easier than before."

"We'll be right behind you, Girls. Don't be scared now," Selicia added, trying to be supportive, not just to Buttercup but to Blossom and Bubbles - those two would have a huge impact on Buttercup's welfare during the mission.

"There's about forty of them in there, but if you could take them down quietly, it shouldn't be a problem - remember your training," Agent Blake added. Blossom nodded her head, anaemic. This was it, and when the time had come to dispense justice once more, she felt sick to the stomach, always afraid that she couldn't live up to expectations - how they'd all fawned over her and repeatedly told her how smart she was.


Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were able to sneak past the guards on the outside with ease. With the abundance of trucks and eighteen wheelers and cargo containers, finding something to hide behind wasn't a feat. Combined with their super-speed, even last minute reactions could easily guarantee staying out of sight.
They made their way through the parking lot, Blossom determined to make things right with the world and the others' impression of her, Bubbles wanting it to be over painlessly and nicely and Buttercup ready to test the new skills she'd been developing over the days, ready to draw blood and break bones - and if Blossom wasn't looking, kill.

They hid behind a truck closest to the building, crouching low to reduce their already tiny profile, but they had to stop. The way inside was unclear; there were many entrances into the warehouse.

"What now?" Buttercup questioned her 'leader', impatient right from the start.

"Let me see," Blossom said, trying not to let her wayward sister bother her. She concentrated hard on the building. Her pupils contracted, and soon, she could see through the walls of the warehouse, and clearly too, since she had 'zoomed in' with her vision at the same time.

Inside were rows upon rows of shelves that reached up high to the ceiling, and the ceiling was at least two storey high. It was less crowded inside than Blossom had imagined. Forty seemed like a big number to the month-old, but the sheer area of the warehouse had drowned that number out. A small number were outside, and they would be the fortunate ones as Blossom had decided to take out the majority of them inside. Inside, most of them were concentrated around the front, either sitting down around tables, playing some sort of card games or chatting, or they were inside some of the rooms, eating or sleeping. A few of them were talking in the foreman's office, not that she knew what it was called. She had just decided on the name 'front room'. A few were guarding the periphery, patrolling the corridors made by the warehouse-sized industrial shelves, or just standing around.

The warehouse was poorly guarded, the result of years of Lombardi success and arrogance.

"We're going to the back," Blossom decided. The coast was clear; the pair of mobsters patrolling the outside had gone round the corner, and there was no one else. They sped to the back, slowing down as they reached the right door to avoid making too much noise, reaching it within the space of a minute. Blossom had decided to choose a regular door as the entrance, over the loading bay doors, some of which were half open. The door was blocked from view by a shelf. The only deterrence, or the lack of it, was a young gangster in a blazer, a hand holding a MAC-10 machine-pistol, smoking a cigarette with his back facing the door.

"Follow me…" Blossom whispered to her sisters. Bubbles was terrified to the point of shaking visibly, while Buttercup was so psyched up that she had twitching in one of her eyes and could only just barely stifle a sadistic giggle. Silently, she tried the door. Unlocked. She pulled it open gently, before sneaking in with her sisters. The gangster did not notice, not even as Blossom crept up towards him.

A wind blew; a common occurrence in winter. It was louder with the door open. The man turned around, a hand still holding onto a cigarette between two fingers as he blew smoke out of his nostrils like a dragon. The door was slammed shut by a particularly strong gust of wind. But something else had his attention.

A diminutive person, standing at not even half his height, decked out in miniature SWAT gear, grenades hanging on her vest, SMG gripped in one hand and slung on her shoulder. Her eyes, those pink eyes that glowed so visibly in the half-dark, looking almost demonic, which spooked him out. It wasn't exactly a sight he had expected, nor seen before.

"W-w-w-w-w-wh-," the mobster struggled to form even one syllable as Blossom stared him down eye-to-eye, equally shocked as she had been discovered, but before he could even complete his word or fire his Uzi, Buttercup had jumped up behind him and punched him across the base of his skull. He fell immediately, and Bubbles caught him before he could hit the floor.
"Nice of you to catch him, Bubbles," Blossom whispered her praise, before moving to help her with the unconscious bad guy.

"I just didn't want him to get hurt…" Bubbles said.

"Too late for that," Buttercup said mischievously with a smile on her face as she examined her handiwork. But it wasn't enough. She wanted to really hurt someone. To spill blood, rip and tear at flesh, just like what she did with the cat and the dog, just like what she'd done in the washroom.

"Put him down on the floor." Blossom said as she looked around for a place to hide him, and found the perfect spot; underneath the lowest 'floor' of the towering shelves. Quickly, with Bubbles' help, they stuffed him in there.

"Well, what now?" Buttercup repeated her question. Blossom looked around, X-ray vision on. The mob guards patrolling around the warehouse had gone back to the front. To charge at them would mean breaking their cover. 'Think, think, Blossom!' the smart one thought, her eyes flitting up as her mind returned to training day, which included a quick course on stealth.

That was when she saw her solution.

"Buttercup, stay down here and stay hidden," Blossom ordered in a low mumble. "Bubbles, we're climbing up the shelves."

"Aren't you going to tell me what you're planning?" Buttercup protested, her voice louder, earning her a shush from Blossom.

"I'll tell you what to do over the radio," Blossom simply said, before taking Bubbles by the hand to find the best way up the warehouse shelves. Buttercup felt left out, and it made her angrier, all the more eager to take the leadership position from her dear sister as soon as possible.

At the end of the shelves were bars forming Xes, acting as a support structure holding the shelves together. They were ideal as ladders. Blossom took it up, with Bubbles behind her. Above, Blossom had a bird's eye view of the place, and could see it from a whole new angle - the shelves formed a path above the warehouse aisles and work area, with some shelves in the middle that could be accessed by jumping the gap. It was perfect for an ambush, just like the game she played in the abandoned mall with the friendly soldiers, or the hide-and-seek game Selicia had them play as an introduction to stealth.

Blossom made that jump, landing softly and lightly like a bird touching down on the top level of the shelf. Bubbles followed up behind her - had she been a normal little girl, her fear of heights would have been much worst, but the lack of consequences for falling had largely negated it.

Blossom pressed a button on her radio.

"Buttercup, can you hear me?" she whispered into her mic.

"What is it now?" Buttercup asked over the radio, disgruntled.

"I need you to make some noise. Like knock something big over," Blossom ordered.

"Okay…" Buttercup agreed reluctantly. Searching the shelves near her, she saw a box bigger than any other, one that looked like it could hold the TV in The House. She gave it a push, gentle by her standards, but the box was easily knocked cleanly off the shelf. It dropped and hit the floor with what sounded like a hundred little metal things rattling inside, and spilling out from the poorly-sealed top. What looked like metal hypodermic needles and syringes poured out of the box. "What was that
"Hide," Blossom simply said, refusing to explain. Buttercup, despite being fuming mad, did as she was told - no sense in repeating the drama that had put her in a disadvantage when it came to her father, at least not until she'd taken over Blossom's position in their trio. And then she'd really get to do what she wanted. She imagined making Blossom kneel down before her with a demented smile, just like how some beggars she'd seen on the streets would kneel down before a penny benefactor.

More bad guys were streaming out of the rooms to the front, something like six of them. Two were women, looking equally as harsh.

"Oi, Tony, that you?" one of the men shouted. Two guards from the edges of the warehouse joined them.

"What's going on?" one of the guards asked.

"I thought I heard something," the same man who shouted said.

Together as eight, they approached the warehouse shelves, unaware that two SWAT-gereared little girls were crouching high above them, waiting.

"B-Blossom… I don't think I can do this…" Bubbles whispered over the radio. Blossom looked over at Bubbles, who was two shelves over. If they dropped down, they would be isolated from each other, at least for a little while. It was more of a psychological effect than anything else.

"Bubbles, you have to!" Blossom whispered into her mic, eyes stuck on her, begging. "These bad people will hurt others if we don't stop them. What if they hurt Dad?" Bubbles returned her pink sister's gaze, and nodded curtly, her face still betraying the fact that she was very scared. "Sisters, wait for my signal."

"Tony! It better not be one of them pranks, man! It's not good for you to do such things on such a night man! One of the Amoeba Boys is here for inspection!" the man shouted again. They were coming closer, and they had their weapons out. Half of them had guns; pistols, shotguns, SMGs. There were some who didn't look like they belong to the suave, smooth-talking gangster group, and it was clear right down to their clothes; beanies, baseball caps. Worn-out cotton jackets and shirts. Jeans, slightly torn. They were workers, indentured servants of the poor house who now worked for the Lombardi mafioso. With their lives in the hands of the Amoeba Boys, paid for by gang money and put in as a deposit as a safeguard against disobedience, they were essentially gangsters without the money, status and protection. They carried no weapons saved for whatever they could find lying around - rebars and spanners and crowbars.

The shouter gestured for half of the eight to take another aisle. Everything was perfectly going according to plan - one half was coming beneath Blossom, the other Bubbles. Buttercup could back them up.

"Tony! Answer me!" the shouter bellowed.

"Look at that!" one of the indentured workers pointed to the knocked-over box, with all the metal syringes fallen out. "Someone knocked over the drugs. Ain't no rat, that's for sure."

"You better not be doping yourself on the job, Tony," the leader of the ragged group warned.

It was time; the mobsters had just walked past Blossom.

"Now, Bubbles," Blossom whispered into her mic. With that, she leaped down, her red hair flowing
above her from under her helmet, aiming for the worker with a lead pipe at the back. She landed right on top of him, taking him down, but it wasn't entirely silent.

"Hmm?" the shouter grunted as he turned around, unable to bring his AK-47 to bear on Blossom as he was crowded in with his colleagues. Blossom jumped, giving him an upper-cut, sending him flying off his feet and then down on his back, but most importantly, unable to react. Another worker with a crowbar was faster, taking a swing at Blossom, thumping her across the back, doing nothing but still causing pain.

Bubbles had done the same thing, except her dive down ended with her sitting on top of an unconscious gangster, whose fedora fluttered away, right next to a worker with an iron rebar, who, too surprised to see the unlikely sight of a little girl dressed like some kind of a next-generation copper, stood petrified.

"What's going on behind there?" the gangster woman leading Bubbles' target group turned around, waving a pistol. In the heat of battle, Bubbles did not know what her next move was.

The indentured worker with a crowbar took another swing at Blossom, but she managed to seize the crowbar mid-strike. The worker tried to rip it out of her grasp. He couldn't. Blossom gave him a quick jump-kick to the stomach, sending him bowling into more boxes of metal-syringe drugs. Blossom's last target, a woman with an MP5K and a knife-cut-scar on her cheek, turned around. Blossom was quick to apply one of the more advanced moves Selicia had taught her: jumping up, wrapping herself around the gangster's gun arm, dragging her down with the weight of her body before ripping the weapon away from her. While they were both on the ground, she delivered a horse kick at the bad guy's face, knocking her out. No blood was drawn, except for two snake-like streams coming out of the nostrils of her broken nose.

Buttercup flew into action, speeding towards Bubbles, who had frozen in combat.

"What in the flying-" one of Bubbles' targets swore, having turned around, but was intercepted by Buttercup mid-sentence, who had delivered a flying elbow to his back. She and the gangster fell on top of Bubbles in a heap. Jumping to her feet, she gave the other armed mobster no time as she jumped again, aiming a punch across his jaw, hearing bones breaking, seeing teeth flying. The last of Bubbles' target, armed with only a spanner, took a swing at Buttercup, but Bubbles couldn't let her sister get hurt, and rushed into action, caring little for technique. The timid girl found herself wrapped around the worker's legs, who fell because he couldn't maintain his balance, hitting his head on the floor. Buttercup polished him off with a stomp to the head - not killing him of course, because the almighty Blossom said not to.

Nine down, thirty-one more to go.
Chapter 49: Hide and Seek (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls meet one of the Amoeba Boys for the first time.

A/N: (24 SEP 2019) Extended the fight scene between Blossom and Junior to account for her shattered combat goggles.

Chapter 49: Hide and Seek (Part 3)

Doc Bob's Pharmaceutical Storage. Mission Time - 1 hr 15 mins

"Bubbles, Buttercup," Blossom said into her mic, sounding a little like a little girl who was going to get caught doing something really bad. "Hide the bad guys, quickly! They're going to see!"

Looking around, Blossom searched the area high and low for hiding spots. Some of the crooks she took down were too large to fit under the floorings of the shelves. Bubbles and Buttercup faced a similar problem. At last, Blossom found an empty box. Pulling it out, she lifted one of the workers, cradling him in her arms and could barely do it because of her small size, and gently laid him inside the box.

"Nighty-night, Mister Baddy," she tucked the indentured worker into the box, not forgetting the crowbar he'd struck her with, throwing it in with him. She returned the box to the shelf, then went on to push the gangster girl under a shelf. She threw the other worker, who was small and wiry, into a smaller box with his weapon, but it was too small, which meant that his legs were sticking out slightly, but it would have to do. As for the mob enforcer with the AK-47, the shouter, Blossom had no choice but to drag him to the back of the warehouse, into the darkness.

She looked around at Bubbles and Buttercup. They weren't doing a good job. Bubbles had sat one of the gangsters down on one of the shelves, hoping that he'd pass off as cargo, another was put in a box far too small, and the unconscious woman gangster was mostly sticking out of a box. Buttercup had contorted one of the workers into a box which was a size or two too small for him, and had to knock the worker out a second time as he'd wakened from the pain. The most rebellious of the three was in the process of trying to hang the fourth Lombardi worker at the top of the warehouse shelf, where he would likely be seen within a millisecond, when Blossom stopped her.

"Guys! What's the hold-up!?” came another voice from the front. "I'm on a winning streak here! You trying to skip out on my dough or what!?”

"Oh no!" Blossom gasped, panicking. There were footsteps, at first a single set, then it became two, and three, multiplying quickly. "Hide!" Turning around, she pushed for her sisters to hide behind some shelves off-centre from an aisle opening to the front.
"Agent Blake to Blossom," Blossom's radio came alive, Blake's voice asking in her ear. "How are you doing, sweetheart? Over."

"There's more of them," Blossom said vaguely into her mic, too panicked to give a full report. She waved for Bubbles and Buttercup to get down as she did the same.

"Guys!? Did you guys go to a pizza house or what!?" the unseen gangster shouted. "Hey Jonesy, Marco, something ain't right here! Get the others!"

Blossom squeezed her eyes into a slit once more, willing them to see through the shelves she was hiding behind. The unseen gangster was thus visible. A stereotypical classic type, well dressed and covered in a trenchcoat and fedora. The only relatively modern thing about him was the AR-15 in his hands - he was well-prepared, likely experienced. Men were coming up behind him. Four. Then six. Then ten.

"What do we do…?" Bubbles cried softly.

"I say we get them now!" Buttercup suggested forcefully, just barely keeping her voice down as a whisper. She was about to get up when Blossom forced her back down. "Ouch!"

"Shh!" Blossom hushed them. "Just wait."

It was tougher this time. With the gangster keeping watch, they couldn't climb up the shelves using the support beams that acted as ladders, and with the way Bubbles and Buttercup had botched the job hiding the downed felons, it was only a matter of time before they were discovered. They still had one unconscious Lombardi worker still with them, and as they were hiding, he moaned, awakening. Blossom punched him back to sleep.

When Classic Gangster was joined by his men, the group started surging forward, all ten of them, and all of them looking meaner than the last group. They were all armed with guns of all kinds. They trod on the same path as Blossom's targets, but as one big group. Blossom retreated towards the middle of the shelf separating gangster from girls.

Buttercup unslung her MP5, getting ready to cock it. Blossom mouthed for her to stop, grabbing her gun and pushing it down. Buttercup argued, shouting defiance without a sound, but she eventually relented. Bubbles had both her hands on her mouth, which threatened to give away their position.

There was no other way. They had to attack sooner, or later. Already, Classic Gangster had noticed something poking out from under the shelf. The handle of an SMG.

Blossom pointed a finger towards the other side of the shelf, mouthing for Bubbles and Buttercup to go. She went with them, and when she thought they were far enough, gave them their instructions quickly and at as low a volume as possible. "I'm going to attack them from the front. Buttercup, tag them from the back. Bubbles, climb up from here and jump down on them." A three-pronged attack, just like in training.

"Jonesy, Marco, watch our back. Something's going on here," the Classic Gangster ordered as he pulled the MP5k Blossom had tried to hide with the gangster girl. It caught on something. 'No, no, no,' Blossom thought, alarmed. Buttercup was going to have a harder time with some of them looking behind the group. Her stealth strategy was falling to pieces, and it could only get worse from there. Their element of surprise was quickly expiring. Memories of Blackwater chastising her severely, and of Mom calling her a bad leader came flooding back at such a critical moment.

Bubbles was having difficulty climbing the shelves - without using the support beams, there were far
fewer places to put her hands and feet into, even if she was small.

"Spread out, cover a wider area," the Classic Gangster ordered. His underlings spread out accordingly, some going with him towards the back of the warehouse, others circling around to Blossom and Buttercup's aisle. It was now or never.

Despite the difficulty of the climb, Bubbles was nearly at the summit. It helped to have super-strength; a hundred pounds of gear was still nothing next to a three thousand pound car. Near to the top, Bubbles reached for the top shelf, grabbing onto it, pulling herself up.

And she could feel herself slipping on that final leg of the journey; it was especially dusty there. She gasped, clinching the shelf harder to stop the slip from going any further.

That was when her MP5 submachinegun had slipped from her shoulder. Blossom stared in horror at her. Reaching back, Bubbles made a grab for her falling weapon, and was able to secure it by the sling - but that had only been one link in a chain of events. The SMG swung like a pendulum towards the shelves, banging against it with a plastic and metallic thud.

"There's someone here!" one of the mobsters shouted in realization.

Blossom ran towards her targets, pushing her plan forward early; it was the only way to salvage it. Buttercup did the same, but by the time they'd gone into action, nearly all the cards favoring the Girls were gone. The gangsters were spread apart, watching every direction, well aware that something was afoot.

Still, Blossom was able to launch herself in a flying kick at her first target, her super-speed precluding retaliation from her enemies. Her first target, another well-dressed gangster, was horizontal after he took it to the chest.

"Hell's this!" the Classic Gangster yelled as he pointed his weapon instinctively down at Blossom, and so did a few others.

Buttercup had gone with a simple tackle on going in, taking down one of them, and as she straddled him, went with a double punch to the face, knocking him out. Weapons were pointed at her as she made her next move.

On reaching the top, Bubbles jumped, falling on top of another man, whose partner was far enough away that he noticed instantly. He pointed a shotgun at her. Bubbles stared down the barrel of the shotgun, which reminded her of what happened at the Townsville Central Bank. Weakness set in as she struggled inside.

_Bam!_ The gangster fired the shotgun. But it wasn't the only firearm report. _Tatatatatatat!_ Automatic fire supported by a choir of semi-automatic resounded throughout.

Blossom was able to grab at one of the pistols pointed at her, twisting it out of the owner's grasp, but everyone else had opened fire on her. There was a quick succession of shots. She could feel pain all around her as she waded against the current of lead towards her next target.

Buttercup suffered the same fate when she reacted as fast as she could, jumping up and spin-kicking another gangster. She took a few shots in mid-air, but it didn't ruin her form.

Bubbles wasn't shot - she had pushed the shotgun out of her way before it fired, to the owner's surprise. But Bubbles did feel faint - it felt as though she had been shot. Shaking from reliving her trauma, afraid that it would be repeated again, she wound up a quick punch and threw it, sending him flying a few yards, sliding another few. She'd punched the man in the face, and when he stopped
moving, she saw blood. Lots of it. Pooling. The red was unpleasant; she could feel her own blood draining from her face, the fact of what she did sinking in quickly. She'd hurt someone, and badly. She might even have killed him.

She ran - over the fallen bad guys on Buttercup's side, she ran, disappearing into the warehouse.

"Bubbles! What're you doing!" Buttercup chided when she saw what she was doing. She had just punched out her third bad guy, before a fourth came up to her and unloaded his SMG point-blank at her.

On the other end of the battlefield, Classic Gangster was firing shots at Blossom when she got up to him and seized him by the rifle, tearing it out of his hands. Using it as a club, she swung it at him, but the experienced gangster was able to dodge it. The red-haired girl threw the rifle aside, and the gangster powered forward, sweeping his fist down at Blossom, catching her by the temple, but essentially doing nothing but cause a momentary, dull pain and annoying her. His other fist caught her by the cheek, doing just as much.

"What the hell are you!?" Classic Gangster shouted in disbelief on seeing that all his attacks, from rifle to fists, had done nothing.

"Justice!" Blossom responded with a second uppercut of the day, sending him flying into the air and landing on his back, like his colleague from before, leaving it up to Buttercup to end the skirmish.

The last mobster standing had been able to push Buttercup back, stumbling her with every few bullets, looking like he could win - but that was only until he had ran out of bullets. Buttercup smiled with the 'Click! Click! Click!' of his old German Wehrmacht MP40, before proceeding to grab him by a hand and deliver an upward blow to his elbow, cracking it loudly and bending it the wrong way. The last gangster screamed, falling backwards, clutching his broken and dislocated arm.

Buttercup was mad, out-of-control mad. Too many things had gone wrong. What had been easy and fun at first, with all the hide and seek action going on, had turned out to become a pain in the neck - literally, when dozens of bullets were fired upon her. Bubbles had ran away instead of helping. And it was all Blossom's fault that things had turned out so badly. If only she had been the leader!

Arming herself with her MP5, carrying it one-handed, she pointed it at the broken-armed gangster, who had backed himself against a shelf trying to crawl away. She stared intensely at him, truly wishing him dead, if only to make herself feel a little better. She walked up to him, pressing the muzzle of her SMG against his cheek, so hard that she was pinning his head against a leg of the shelf. Her gun arm shook, her trigger finger itchy. She was getting that tic in her face again, her cheek twitching as she hovered between listening to Blossom and wanting to do what she pleased.

"Please! No more!" the gangster pleaded. "Look at me! I'm done! I'll hurt no one no more! Don't!"

"Buttercup!" Blossom shouted, coming up to her, tried to pulled Buttercup's SMG away from the wounded man. Buttercup refused to budge, and her SMG stay pointed at him. "We're not supposed to kill! Daddy said so!"

"He's mine to kill! Mister Blackwater said we should!" Buttercup argued back.

"I'm listening to Dad, and so are you. Don't you love him?" Blossom reiterated, and on seeing that reason wasn't going to sway her sister towards the light, added: "I'll tell on you if you do it!"

"Blossom!" Buttercup uttered painfully, upset that such pleasure, so close, was being yanked away from her again. Killing small animals just didn't cut it, and neither did hurting bad guys. "Fine!" She
put down her SMG.

"Thank you! Oh God- Thank you!" the gangster cried pitifully. Blossom responded by slapping him hard enough to knock him out.

"We have to go anyway. They're bound to have heard us," Blossom said. "Where's Bubbles?"

"Ran away like you did in the bank, Blossom," Buttercup sassd her sister, incredibly unhappy at her decision to block her from the kill. Blossom frowned at her, but could say nothing for lack of time. "Should we go find her?"

"There's no time! We have to fight the rest of them now or they'd run like Blackwater said!" Blossom explained again. Pulling at Buttercup, she ran towards the front. Buttercup followed reluctantly - there were so many baddies she could have potentially killed in their vulnerable state.

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Blossom and Buttercup charged towards the front, at a far slower speed than they're capable of because of the uncertainties of their actions. Blossom was convinced that she could do it without a single gunshot being fired only to be disappointed at herself, and Buttercup had no confidence in her leadership.

The foreman's office was in full view of Blossom and Buttercup. Inside, two important-looking persons had been chatting. Blossom recognized one of them. The short man in an opened jacket with a high collar over a vest and smart wear, with that French beret Detective Mullens highlighted. He was together with a mysterious-looking woman in a trench coat and fedora, which covered most of her. She had amber eyes which screamed danger and brunette hair that revealed too little. She had the pale skin of a ghost, like someone long dead but returned.

Around them, the remaining Lombardi forces, about twenty others, had gotten into position, firing on them from behind the cover of walls and furniture. Blossom and Buttercup could feel bullets bouncing off their helmets and digging through their uniforms with equal measure. They could even feel some of the larger bullets punching through their helmets and plates, the pain caused deeply unpleasant. But at least it wasn't like in the bank, when there were so much in a short time. Buttercup had actually felt nauseous and faint then, from the pain alone.

They hid behind a forklift. Blossom thought it looked a little like a car, which gave her an idea. "Buttercup, help me with this thing," she ordered her sister. With a heave, she managed to lift the forklift. It was so much lighter than the family sedan. Buttercup helped with the other end of it, understanding immediately what to do with it. Bullets were punching into the forklift, but not entirely through it. Some were ricocheting off.

"How are they even doin' that!?!" one of the gangsters yelled in a panic as he continued firing pot shots at the forklift desperately.

"How are they even so small!?!" another gangster added.

"Someone throw them an egg!" another man ordered. Blossom had been peeking over the foot area of the forklift cabin, and she saw that it was the short man who gave the order. Junior, Mullens called him. He was the leader. She had to catch him somehow, but he and the mysterious woman had entrenched themselves behind a metal table they'd flipped.

"An egg?" Buttercup wondered aloud, not getting the metaphor. "That's all they could think of?!"
"Eat this!" one of the mobsters shouted as he popped above the window, winding his arm up. As if in a game of baseball, he threw something dark green and ovular at the Girls. It bounced on the seat of the forklift and over, landing behind the Girls.

"That was an egg?" Buttercup questioned.

"No time, keep going!" Blossom said. They continued walking forward, the forklift poorly balanced since they were carrying it from one side of it, but their strength made up for it.

The 'egg' exploded after that, taking them by surprise, throwing them forwards, their forklift dropped and flipped over. Shrapnel had dug into them from behind, shredding their gear and uniform, shredding their mind even if the metal shards did nothing to their body.

"Hah! Good throw! Hahaha!" Junior, praised, revelry in his voice, sounding like a little mischievous imp. "I knew having you on my baseball team was a good idea!"

"You think they're dead?" one of the gangsters said as he stood up, surveying the mess they'd made; the poured cement floor peppered with lead, the furniture and crates and cargo all messed up, the forklift that wouldn't be working anytime soon.

Blossom moaned, she was lying face-down on the floor, and she didn't want to move until the pain all over the back of her head, limbs and her back subsides. The force of the grenade explosion, and the shrapnel had propelled Buttercup forward enough for her to face-plant against the forklift, and she was clutching her face, rolling on the ground in pain.

When the tendrils of shock had finally released her, at least partly, Blossom got up, peeking over the overturned forklift. She had to pull herself up to get a view, as even when overturned, the forklift was still taller than her.

"Oh shit! Oh fuck! It- He- It's still alive!" one of the gangsters exclaimed. "How did they even survive that?"

"I think it's clear what you must do," a woman's voice said, almost inaudible, but Blossom's hearing was good enough. "It's time to show them what you really."

"That would be interesting, hehehe," Blossom could hear the other important-looking person, Junior, say. "Boys and gals, time for you to go. Remember that the Amoeba Boys protect!"

"Oooof..." Buttercup was still in pain when she sat up. "Any other bright ideas, Blossom?" She got up, and peeked around a corner of the forklift. The gangsters were filing out, running away. Blossom was still popping up from the forklift periodically, watching. She knew just as well. "Can we shoot them now?"

"No! We can't, Buttercup!" Blossom repeated her bottom line, but she had nothing else to suggest - she was the smart one, and she had ran out of ideas. There were too many of them, and running up to almost 20 fully-armed mobsters would only be a more severe repeat of the Townsville Central Bank incident.

"Then what do we do?" Buttercup demanded, and when Blossom could offer nothing again, she let out a scornful snort. She peeked out again, only for a number of shots to be directed at her, forcing her back into cover.

"Blake to Blossom, what's the sitrep, over?" Agent Blake, whose voice Blossom was glad to hear, returned in her earphone.
"Mister Blake, it's bad. Bubbles is gone-" Blossom reported.

"Pff, more like ran away," Buttercup added. Blake heard it loud and clear, as she had a mic too.

"And the bad guys are running away. I don't know what to do anymore," Blossom continued, on the verge of tears as she remembered what Blackwater's opinion of her was. 'Useless and stupid', he'd said, and she was proving him right again.

"Affirmative, Blossom," Agent Blake acknowledged. "Don't worry about it, we have people who'll catch them. Just... Hang in there, sweetie. We're coming in as soon as we arrest these two slippery bas- erm- guys. Is Junior running away with them?"

Blossom peeked out again. There were no shots whizzing towards her this time. The mobsters were all but gone, and so was the mysterious woman. But, surprisingly, Junior was still there, coming out of the 'front room'.

"Come out, come out, little men, it's time for a little dance!" Junior taunted when he was out of the door.

"He's still there!" Blossom whispered into her mic. This could be it. It could be her ticket to proving that she wasn't useless and stupid after all, that she could fight crime and deserve everyone's love.

"He's still there? Arrest him - keep him restrained until we get there. Can you do that, Blossom?"

Agent Blake said.

"Yes," Blossom promised with renewed confidence. She turned to Buttercup after that, who was frowning at her, her green-glowing eyes staring into hers. It would have put her off had it not been the occasion of a lifetime, her chance to redeem herself. "Buttercup, we need to get out there and catch this crook. It should be easy - he's only one man."

"Great, we'll be right over. Over and out." Agent Blake signed off.

Wordlessly, they stepped out of their forklift cover, coming out from opposite ends, into full view of the man known as 'Junior'.

"There you are! Now ain't the two of you cute!" Junior taunted again. He didn't look like he was prepared to fight. His hands were in his pocket, and a toothpick was hanging in his mouth. "I didn't know you were little girls, too. Now how about the two of you walk away before you get a boo-boo?"

"We're not going anywhere," Buttercup proclaimed with gritted teeth, her gloved fists halfway up. This little man, whoever he was, was so arrogant to think that he alone could hand them some 'boo-boos' when half his crew were either snoring in the aisles or stuffed in boxes and shelves.

"Mister Junior, you're under arrest," Blossom said, her brows arched. The man wasn't the most pleasant of people - she didn't like the way he talked. "Please, sit down and wait for my friends-"

"I'm under arrest? Oh, I'm under arrest!" Junior taunted, mimicking their higher-pitched girly voices as he put his hands up next to his cheek. The act ended as quickly as his mood seemingly changed. "You're going to have to do more than say 'please'!" The short man shrugged off his jacket, revealing holsters underneath it. Two pistols were tucked neatly under his armpits.

"That's all you have?" Buttercup taunted back. But Junior was done talking, and he didn't reach for those pistols. Instead, he reached behind his back, pulling out a pair of machine-pistols, silver-plated Uzis, unloading them on the Girls without pause. Blossom and Buttercup retreated, jumping high up
and vaulting over the forklift back into cover in short order, feeling pin-point accurate shots biting
them in the back as they did. They were hurting more. His bullets were different, somehow.
Unbeknownst to them, they were cop-killer rounds. Armor-piercing and expensive. While they
weren't Powerpuff-killers, they'd hurt more.

"Been going to gymnastics class, little girls? That ain't gonna matter much!" Junior taunted again.
Blossom could hear footsteps, flanking them.

"Can we shoot our guns now?" Buttercup asked again.

"Fine!" Blossom finally caved in. She had to bag this one, or she would never hear the end of it from
her and Blackwater. She unslung her own submachinegun. Buttercup smiled viciously as she did the
same. "But shoot him in the leg or something. Don't kill him, okay!?"

"Yeah, yeah," Buttercup said dismissively.

When Junior appeared out of Blossom's corner, Blossom had to quickly pull the bolt handle of her
SMG. She could feel a shower of lead immediately, knocking her down from her crouched position.
Buttercup fired back, full auto, and Junior leaped for some crates, dodging her bullets. Blossom sat
up, and contributed some shots, hitting the crates Junior was hiding behind.

"The two of you are tougher than you look!" Junior said from behind his cover. Buttercup pumped
the crate full of lead, hoping that the bullets would go through. Wood splintered, sending shards
everywhere. "Showing some teeth, I see!" Buttercup was confounded. She was sure that she'd hit the
man at least a few times, before and after he'd jumped for the crates.

Junior leaped out after that, machine-pistols blazing, stinging the Girls more. Blossom aimed and
fired, and this time it was clear that it was a bull's eye ten time over, seeing holes appear on Junior's
clothes, but doing nothing.

Junior, in the meantime, was firing back, his shots concentrated and on point. Unlike his 'boys and
gals', he wasn't diving into cover like other human beings do this time. Blossom and Buttercup
continued firing, putting more holes into his clothes, until their SMGs were out.

"It's not working!" Blossom said. She slung her SMG on her back once more. Buttercup, on the
other hand, released the magazine from its catch, replacing it with a fresh one. "Buttercup, we have
to use our hands!"

And it was the perfect time, too. Junior was out of ammunition as well for his twin Uzis. Blossom
didn't wait. Charging in, she launched herself into a high flying kick - 'this had to be it,' she thought,
only for her foot to glance off Junior as he sidestepped her attack a little.

"Woo-hoo! I love girls who get physical!" Junior said. Buttercup ran up to him at lightning speed,
eager to join in the fray. "Let's tango!"

Buttercup ran up to Junior, taking a swing at him. He slapped her fist away harmlessly. Blossom got
down to a spinning crouch-kick, hoping to sweep Junior of his feet, but her move was anticipated,
and Junior jumped the kick, landing on one foot then the next. Buttercup pulled a punch with her
other fist, hitting him straight-on in the stomach, which stumbled Junior back. The green-eyed girl
thought he seemed softer than usual.

But it did nothing more than that.

"You're… You're like us?" Buttercup stuttered, thinking it unbelievable that she and her sisters
weren't special.
"No, I'm better," Junior said with a smile, before surging forward and giving Buttercup a low-kick to the face. It'd hurt far too much to be a normal kick, and it'd sent Buttercup skidding on the floor a few fair yards. Blossom, at the side, aimed a hard kick to the back of his knee, hoping to get him down. He didn't fall. Instead, he turned around. Blossom followed it up with an uppercut, but Junior simply leaned back, letting Blossom fly up the air harmlessly, before delivering a headbutt at her on the way down, knocking her against a shelf, the force stunning her momentarily.

He was different, that much she knew. And very skilled at fighting unarmed. The Girls, having never fought anyone who could take more than a single punch or kick from them, wasn't prepared for this.

Taking advantage of Blossom's lapse in concentration, Junior grabbed Blossom by the collars and threw her against the shelf once more, sending boxes at multiple levels to fall, metal syringes clattering on the floor. He repeated the move, and this time, with so much force that the shelf fell over, bringing down the shelves behind it in a domino effect.

Buttercup came up behind Junior, but he'd heard her coming, and as she jumped and flew towards him with a flying punch, Junior countered the move with an elbow, intercepting her mid-air - she flew past him, clutching her cheek, tumbling on the floor.

Coming forward with his fists up as if in a boxing match, he dodged Blossom's punch deftly, before delivering a one-two punch, first catching her by the side of her helmet, then hitting her in the mouth straight. When Blossom screamed in pain, she'd done so with red teeth. She tried to reverse her fortunes with a fully-winded haymaker, but she hadn't fully understood the art of deception in a duel. Junior was able to fade away, letting the punch sail by harmlessly, letting Blossom lose her balance, before kicking her down. When she tried to get up, she was met with a straight punch to the goggles, which shattered it through sheer, enhanced force.

Blossom had closed her eyes when her goggles were shattered, but she couldn't prevent glass shards from going in. And now she couldn't open her eyes due to the pain. Terrified, she started flinging her fists all over the place, following the sound of Junior's laughter, but she was never able to connect fist with flesh. Conversely, Junior was able to land blows on her with ease, knocking her down, before taking her by the collar again. He pinned her against the fallen shelf, which was at a diagonal angle, leaning against another fallen shelf. She retched from the increasing level of pain, struggled against his iron grip. He undid her helmet quickly and pulled it off, recognizing the clip that held it together, and punched her across the face, multiple times, until he had given Blossom another combat wound - a black eye. Content, he slammed Blossom head-first against the ground hard. She wasn't moving after that. He could hear metal clacking behind him.

Buttercup was crouching on a knee, and had finished reloading her SMG, and pointed it at Junior, the range: point blank. Junior turned around. Buttercup didn't wait any longer, and fired it, full auto, into his chest. The gang boss didn't seem afraid. She fired her gun, until it was smoking hot and empty…

And all she'd done was to ruin his vest and shirt.

Shifting her gun around, Buttercup held it by the barrel and swung it at Junior's hip. The makeshift club thumped him there hard, but the blow did nothing. But Buttercup had noticed something - Junior was really soft. Soft, as in it was as if his mass gets pushed around quite a bit, like jelly, more so than a normal human being.

Junior seized Buttercup's SMG, and twisted it out of her hands, at the same time giving her a quick kick, stumbling her back. Raising the empty MP5 over his head, he brought it down on Buttercup, striking her over the dome.
"Hrng!" Buttercup gasped, but she refused to go down. Trying to recover as fast as she could, she lifted her head and a fist, only to receive another blow from Junior with her own SMG, sideways. It went downhill from there, as Junior swung the gun at her face in the other direction, before winding it up and breaking the gun over her head, sending plastic shards all around them when she went down.

Buttercup felt her vision blur after that, and a foot rolling her over on her back. Junior stood over her, then bent down to remove her helmet. He caressed her cheek. Buttercup blinked twice, unable to understand his odd gesture.

"You've got spirit, kid, I'll give you that," Junior said, his voice distorted by Buttercup's rapidly diminishing senses. "Too bad you didn't take my advice. I would have left you alone if you'd run - the Family's got rules, you see. We don't hit ladies and children. That is, unless they hit us. And now you're going to pay for my shirt! It's my best shirt, my favorite - I wear it on my most important duties!"

Standing up again, he raised a foot and brought it down on her face, Once, twice, three times.

That was when there was the sound of doors busting open.

"Hey!" someone shouted. "Freeze! USDO!"

There were gunshots after that. Junior was scarce in an instant.

Buttercup could barely breathe. She could feel something liquid flowing down her forehead, in her nose. She coughed, and rolled her head sideways, and it allowed her to breathe as the liquid dripped to the floor.

"But-cup!? Oh- God- -ter-! -on!" Buttercup could hear a woman's voice, but her consciousness was fading fast. She could feel arms wrapping around her.

Darkness overtook her after that.
Chapter 50: Aftermath

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls deal with the consequences of their failure.

A/N: There will be a change to Chapter 49: Hide and Seek (Part 3), ETA 12 hours, to account for Blossom's shattered goggles. Due to my work schedule, I'm unable to make the change immediately without delaying the release of this chapter.

Chapter 50: Aftermath


16 DEC 1988 (Friday). 2304.

Selicia and Blake flanked one of the warehouse doors, leading up the rest of the Powerpuff Task Force squad. Detective Mullens and Officer Olivia had been left behind to guard the mobsters they had arrested after a fierce firefight. They could hear an intense struggle inside, things getting knocked over, muffled voices, then silence.

"Do you think they're alright?" Selicia asked Blake from across the door.

"They're bulletproof, right? Nothing can possibly hurt them," Blake surmised. "On three."

They busted the door open for a quick entry. A grisly sight greeted them. A singular mobster standing over two of The Three - Blossom and Buttercup. Bubbles was nowhere to be found.

"Hey!" Agent Blake shouted. "Freeze! USDO!"

"How is it even possible?" Blake thought as he raised his XM4 Carbine. And it looked like the Girls were beaten in unarmed combat too. Even from afar, the impact wounds were painfully obvious.

Selicia raised her own rifle. They fired a few rounds, but Junior, said to be one of the triad of bosses who owned the Lombardi Mafiaso, was quick to run away, instead of sticking around to gloat about whatever secret he'd used to beat what were otherwise indestructible Girls into submission. They weren't even sure if they were able to hit him.

Selicia's eyes were on Buttercup. Blood was pooling beneath her head, meaning that she had sustained some sort of head injury. It wasn't much, but just seeing blood coming out of her alone was cause for alarm - considering that it was supposed to be impossible to open a blood vessel in her... at least before Junior. Her SMG, with the stock broken and gnarled, lay nearby - it was likely the weapon Junior had used to bludgeon her into the ground. She ran up to Buttercup, throwing caution to the wind. "Buttercup!"

"Oh God! Buttercup!" Selicia screamed as she got up to her darling.
"Selicia, wait!" Agent Blake shouted after her, failing to gain her attention. He gestured for his men to fan out. He could see some movement in the shelves, likely men the Girls had knocked out, but were beginning to come to. It was just like Blossom to avoid killing - bless her soul.

When Selicia got up to Buttercup, she could see that she was barely conscious. Blood was oozing out of her nostrils, mouth and... Somewhere else, probably the back of her head. A huge, unsightly bruise had formed on her right cheek. "Buttercup! Hang on!" She got down, picking her up. The tomboy mouthed something, but was unable to make a sound. Selicia could make it out. Had she been able to vocalize, she would be calling out to her, begging for her to take away the pain. 'Mom-' she'd mouthed.

"Shhh... It's okay, shh... Mommy's here now, shh..." Selicia cooed at the fallen girl. She held her closer, resting her head against the crook of her elbow as she tried to undo the super-powered little girl's vest, checking for other wounds. Blood stained her arm. "Medic! I need a medic, ASAP!"

"Buttercup, look at me," Selicia said to Buttercup. The girl did not respond, and her eyes were staring into the ceiling. Briefly, they regarded her's. She tried to say something, but she was too weak and hurt to. "It's going to be fine. You're safe now. Shh... It's over."

Agent Blake was next to get up to the Girls. With Buttercup looked after, he went up next to Blossom, who looked like she'd been in a cage fight gone wrong. One of her eyes was swollen, black-and-blue. On top of that, her goggles were shattered, just like Bubbles' at the bank, which meant that glass shards could be in Blossom's eyes. Blood was streaming off her forehead and her teeth were colored red with blood, though the damage wasn't as bad as what Buttercup suffered. Blake put a finger on Blossom's neck. The pulse was still strong. She'd only been KO'ed. He was actually worried for a second there. Getting down, he began stripping Blossom of her gear as well, to check for other wounds.

"Buttercup..." Selicia repeated her favorite's name. She wasn't even sure if the girl was even aware of her or the warehouse anymore, but she didn't have to wonder for long as Buttercup went limp. Frantically, Selicia hovered a hand over her nose.

There was still breathing. Good. She was still alive, just finally out, which might be a good thing - her wounds looked painful.

Private Zach, the same medic who'd been the first to respond to Professor Utonium, came up to them. "Never thought I'd see the day," he muttered as he knelt down beside Buttercup first, who he could tell at a glance was worse off. "Well, let's take a look."

"Corporal Rutherford, Bubbles is missing. Search for her, let the rest handle the arrests, over," Agent Blake ordered over the radio.

"I copy, sir. Over and out," Corporal Rutherford, the Vietnam veteran, acknowledged. For a while, he walked the periphery, but it didn't take him long to hear the sound of weeping and sniffling coming from underneath one of the fallen shelves.

It was dark inside the fallen shelves. Boxes and crates and lab equipment had formed an unstable roof over it. Corporal Rutherford put aside his rifle and crawled in. It reminded him of a time when he'd doubled as a tunnel rat in the Vietnam War.

"Bubbles?" Rutherford called out. No answer but more weeping and sniffles. He crawled deeper into the shelves. "Bubbles, it's me! Mister Ruthy!"

"Go away!" a high-pitched voice cried, clearly shaken and tearful. Rutherford did not oblige,
knowing full well what could happen if one of the Girls were to go out of control. He pulled his flashlight out and clicked it into luminescence. But even without it, he knew where Bubbles was. Her baby blue eyes were glowing in the dark, sometimes closed, sometimes opened as she cried, red around the white. Had this been a month ago, he would have been taken aback by the glowing eyes in the dark, but now, he could empathize with it.

Without saying another word, he crawled up to Bubbles. She had found herself a little cave in the fallen shelves, perfect for hiding out and staying out of sight, out of shame. It was big enough for him to sit up next to her.

"Hello, Bubbles," Corporal Rutherford said, unsure of how to start the conversation. He wasn't very good with children to begin with, even his own back when they were kids – but this Bubbles was special, aside from the fact that she'd rescued him, somehow, from a slow death by spiralling depression where more qualified experts couldn't. But how would you even begin to comfort what was essentially a child soldier, knowing fully well that she'd be sent back into battle over and over again? "What happened? Why are you so sad?"

"I hurt someone bad," Bubbles whimpered. She could still see it all as if it was a video loop right in front of her. The gangster's neck snapping back, the blood spraying and spreading on the floor. "I was scared and I hurt someone bad. I think I killed him – and Daddy said killing is wrong and I killed him."

A KIA in the warehouse? He hadn't seen any corpses yet, but it was possible that some of the unconscious might turn out to be stiffs. Come to think of it, he might have seen a number of mobsters who might have taken some serious wounds. Bubbles might have seen blood and jumped to conclusions.

"You don't know that," Corporal Rutherford said.

"You weren't there!" Bubbles screamed, as if she was in pain.

"Look, even if you'd killed someone, you didn't mean it – he was trying to hurt you, right? And you were in the right for attacking him – he's a bad guy, hurting innocent people," Corporal Rutherford reasoned. It didn't help. Bubbles kept sobbing, and it wasn't hard to imagine why – children were more emotional creatures than logical. Reluctantly, he put an arm around the girl, pressing himself close up to her. Despite the rapport they'd developed in their three days together, he was still afraid that she might go into 'Tantrum' as their lingo went, or that she might not accept him in such a critical moment.

"Remember that time when we drew together? You said that there's always a time for forgiveness? You taught me that, so I'm giving it back to you now. He'll forgive you… eventually, and I'm sure you've already forgiven him for shooting you, right?"

"Yes..." Bubbles finally stopped bleeding tears to say.

"See? Things are going to get better from now on. Why don't you come on out? We'll go see... Whoever it was who shot you."

Buttercup was sitting down on the kiddy table in her room, drawing a nice scene of a fairy tale land, with pink teddy bears rubbing shoulders with yellow unicorns and blue pegasi (as far as Buttercup was concerned, they were the same, and she didn't care enough to learn the difference). A rainbow streamed from left to right overhead. She hated the drawing, but Blossom had made her do it. Bubbles was next to her, drawing the exact same thing.
"Now that's more like it. Isn't that nice, Buttercup? No fighting, no violence - no one getting killed," Blossom said from behind her, sounding a little more like an adult than she was supposed to be. She leaned on her, putting two arms on her shoulders and her chin on her head. "You're going to be exactly like us, Buttercup."

"But- No! I don't like this!" Buttercup resisted, throwing Blossom back. She could hear her stumbling, before falling on the carpeted floor.

"Stupid little sister," Blossom insulted her. Buttercup was shocked that those words had come out of her mouth, of all places. She turned around to see that she had the most malicious smile she had ever seen, something she would never see on Blossom, but it was there. "No one likes you the way you are! So unless you want to be kicked out of the family, you'll do exactly as I say!" She sashayed towards her as she said this. "This is my room - my bed - Daddy's mine, and you're on my law enforcement team. You're mine, Buttercup!"

Buttercup was rarely ever truly afraid, but this was one of those times. She took several steps back, only to trip and fall on the table, sitting on it. "Stay back! I'll hurt you bad!"

"Go ahead, I'll tell on you! And then you'll wish that you were bowing down at my feet!" Blossom said as she loomed closer, until she was within arms length. Buttercup took a swing at her, only for Blossom to wrap her hand around the wrist she threw up, and giving it a twist. Buttercup could hear a ripple of cracks as she felt pain erupting like a string of volcanoes in her wrist. She screamed. Blossom pushed her down on the table, and jumped on top of it, crouching over her. She pinned Buttercup down by the upper arms. "You're nothing, Buttercup. I'm better than you in every way. I'm prettier than you. I'm smarter, and I'm stronger than you. You're nothing. But if you were to be my pet…" Blossom leaned close to her face, a condescending smile on her own. She could almost literally feel her lips close to her ear. "You can be third best. Sorry, Bubbles took second place."

"No. No! No!" Buttercup screamed as she struggled against the vice-like grip of Blossom. She looked around the room, searching for Bubbles. "Bubbles! Don't just stand there, help!" But Bubbles was nowhere to be found. She'd ditched her.

"Yes… Yes… Buttercup! You're mine!" Blossom said, not sounding like herself at all.

"No, no, NO!" Buttercup screamed as she spent her all to resist Blossom, and with a push, threw Blossom off her, sending her pink-eyed sister flying through the door of the cabinet. Blossom went flying out almost as quickly, winding up a punch and throwing it the moment she was in range. Buttercup ducked, before springing up and pulling a stationary uppercut. Blossom was taken off her feet, flying a few feet upwards and backwards, but was able to recover by landing on her feet. Buttercup did not give her a chance to launch another attack; she put her back on a single, most destructive punch across Blossom's cheek.

And Blossom's head flew clean off her shoulders, spine, gullet and windpipe following behind her, sprays of blood painting spots on the carpet and Buttercup's face and dress. Buttercup could feel weakness in her knees as she realized what she'd done. She stumbled backwards, and could barely make it to a chair when she fell into the seat. Blossom's head had rolled on the floor, and when it was done, it was facing her at one end of the room, with eyes closed, seemingly dead.

"B-B-Blossom…" Buttercup stuttered as she stared at the decapitated head of her sister, for the first time feeling guilty for hurting her. "I-I didn't mean it! I was just- It wasn't- I didn't mean to kill you!"

Blossom's eyes flipped open the moment she'd said that. Buttercup jumped.

"But you did, Buttercup! And I'm going to tell on you!" Blossom screamed. "Dad! Daddy!"
The door into the room immediately opened, as though Professor Utonium had been waiting there all along. "Girls! What on Earth is going on!?" the professor said. In his hands was a huge present covered in pink wrappers, its recipient all but clear in the colour. He dropped the present upon seeing what was on the floor: Blossom's limp body, lying down in a heap, and her head in a corner. The present produced the sound of glass shattering when it hit the floor, but Buttercup couldn't figure out what it was.

"Buttercup hurt me really badly! Like she said she would!" Blossom's head told on Buttercup. The ravenette stared helplessly at the professor - there was no lying through this one.

"Buttercup! I'm disappointed in you!" the professor scolded, pointing an accusing finger at her. "You've been trouble from day one! I knew right from the beginning that you don't deserve my love!"

"But Dad-! No!" Buttercup cried, tears on free-flow, which she tried desperately to wipe away, but couldn't do it entirely. "I- I love you! I didn't mean to-"

"And I hate you! You're a subject! An experiment! You're from a lab! A lab rat, they'd call you! You don't deserve my love!"

"But Dad-!" Buttercup cried, only to be cut off.

"I hate you!" the professor snarled. "I hate you so much that the word 'hate' doesn't even begin to cover it!"

"Me-yeowth! That's right!" a most familiar voice concurred with that statement. A feline voice, if cats could speak. Buttercup traced the voice to where the present had dropped. Only, the present had somehow opened itself. The dead cat, which was supposed to be buried in snow just outside the front door of The House, was somehow in the present. "I tried to warn you about your Daddy, Buttercup… BUT YOU REFUSED TO LISTEN!"

"But- But- He can't- It can't be!" Buttercup stumbled in her words as her worst nightmares became reality. Somehow, she found herself on her knees, naked on the floor. On realizing this, she covered herself with her hands.

"He loves Blossom and Bubbles more than you, Buttercup," the dead cat said. Somehow, it managed to get up on its paws, padding towards her despite its broken neck and cracked skull. "In fact, I don't think he loves you at all… Yes… Yes…"

"Yes… He doesn't… love… you," Blossom's head concurred on the floor.

"You're going to have to try harder than that!" Bubbles had somehow appeared beside Daddy just to add salt to the wound.

"Now the only thing to do…" Professor Utonium said tearfully, with his back slumped. He then straightened up, with a determined look on his face. A demented smile formed from ear to ear after that. "Is to put you back on the table!"

Buttercup suddenly found herself on the surgical table, with not even surgical scrubs to cover her. She tried to move, but she couldn't. Looking around her, she noticed straps holding her in place, in a rough crucifix position. Professor Utonium came into view, masked with an apron over his lab coat. He held a Duranium surgical knife over her.

"Daddy… No… Please don't!" Buttercup said weakly, the glint of the knife scaring her. Without a word, the professor brought it down, digging into her chest. Buttercup gasped - the pain was
excruciating that she couldn't even scream - not that screaming would do it justice. She could feel the scalpel going down her chest, dragging through her flesh as if it was made of paper, cutting a wide slit open on her chest cavity, spilling blood in either directions. She whimpered as she cried tears of blood. The scalpel went all the way down to her groin. Once done, the professor pulled open the skin sideways as Buttercup struggled to even breathe, knowing full well that her lungs were exposed. A mirror was held above her just to show her what the professor was doing to her.

"Dad- P-please! No… No…"

The City of Townsville. Townsville Industrial Park. Temporary USDO Command Centre.

16 DEC 1988. 2331.

"No… No…" Buttercup mumbled in her unconsciousness. She and her sisters had been brought back to the warehouse and office where the USDO had set up shop. "No!" Buttercup shot up from her makeshift bed - the employee couch. And Blossom was right beside her, her face covered in gauze.

"Mom!" Blossom shouted over her shoulder upon seeing that her sister had finally come to. She herself had clawed her way to consciousness not long ago, and had been sitting beside Buttercup for the past ten minutes. She hugged Buttercup tightly on seeing that she was alright, and not in a 'coma' as Private Zach had suggested she might fall into. "Oh, Buttercup, I was so worried." She looked Buttercup in the eyes when she was done squeezing her.

Buttercup stared at Blossom with fear in her eyes, petrified.

"Buttercup? It's okay - I was scared too," Blossom tried to comfort her sister. Selicia Goodwin came up next to Buttercup, taking her turn to hug her favorite.

"How are you feeling, darling?" Selicia asked. She ran her finger gently along Buttercup's face, checking to make sure the gauze taped to her face would stay on. Thankfully, none of the Girls required surgery - as far as Private Zach was able to determine. They would have to be scanned at home for any internal injuries. Stitches would have helped - but the medic's supply of needles wouldn't penetrate their skin - it would have to be done at home, as the professor had ordered in his own supply of Duranium surgical tools, including Duranium needles - if the Girls even require stitching to fully heal in the first place.

"Mom…" Buttercup merely whimpered and hugged her back. She immediately resisted the tears that were threatening to burst forth, it being second nature to put up a brave front. But this was all too much, and she couldn't hold it all back. A single teardrop fell before she could keep it under control. What she couldn't resist was a good squeeze.

But the relief didn't last. Buttercup could hear stomping coming up to him. She knew immediately who it was.

"Finally," Chief of Security Blackwater said, his tone unfeeling. "I want to hear what happened, and I want to hear it from the both of you."

Buttercup glanced around Blackwater, searching for Bubbles. She was in her own corner, sitting on a single-seater couch, looking down at the floor, looking suitably ashamed of herself. Buttercup thought she deserved it because of the way she abandoned her. In fact, as soon as she could drag herself out of the dumpster, she was going to give her a piece of her mind.

The resultant conversation next was basically Blossom and Buttercup trying to talk over each other,
and Blackwater shushing them up to hear one side of the story then the next. The USDO Chief of Security was hardly even interested - to him, it was merely procedure. All he needed to know was that they'd failed miserably to meet mission parameters once more. His captain, who was sitting nearby, needed it more than he did, as she would be writing the report instead of him. He'd called Bubbles over for her opinion, but she had too little to give, and Blackwater's intention hadn't been duty - he wanted to make sure that Bubbles was humiliated over her cowardice and inaction.

And he was successful. He'd made sure to give her questions she couldn't answer, forcing her to admit each time that she didn't know because she'd ran away.

"The three of you have failed once again," Blackwater said severely, with the three Girls seated together on the couch. "We were only able to arrest a fraction of the bad guys in the warehouse. Some of the criminals you knocked out woke up and ran away, Blossom. Then there's their escape - 29 of them. Including one of their bosses, who you three somehow failed to defeat. You've defied orders, and refused to shoot and kill even though I explicitly ordered that you do. I can't stand disobedience, Blossom! And I can't stand uselessness and stupidity! I can't stand-"

"You weren't there!" Bubbles suddenly shouted, interrupting Blackwater, who immediately shot ICBMs at her with his eyes, absolutely hating the fact that the most useless of the three had talked over him.

"You weren't there!" Bubbles repeated herself, crying in a high-pitched tone, a mix of too many negative emotions, unlike a normal kid. She had simply experienced too much for a single emotion to cover. "You called us useless and stupid but you weren't there!"

"Bubbles, shut the hell up!" Blackwater bellowed.

"You're mean! You weren't there to help us and all you do is to shout at us!" Bubbles added, not listening. Blossom stared at her, worried. Blackwater didn't look like the kind of person who would appreciate children talking out of turn. Blackwater has had it. At first, all he did was to shoot missiles at her with his eyes, until he smiled. To the Girls, it seemed an unnaturally kind smile. But everyone else in the room knew better.

"You know, perhaps you're right, Bubbles," Blackwater said unexpectedly. Getting down to one knee, he caressed Bubbles' hair. Selicia shifted uncomfortably. Even in the distance, Agent Blake and his men had gone silent. Detective Mullens and Officer Olivia watched the scene vigilantly, sensing more scum in their city. "How could I have been so blind, Bubbles? You're right, you're totally right, of course."

"I am?" Bubbles said, a little confused.

"Come on, why don't we have our own little private session by the pool table?" Blackwater proposed, but he wasn't making a suggestion. Picking up Bubbles and holding onto her like a baby, he walked over to the pool table. Selicia watched with dread, and knew what Blackwater was doing. If he was acting this way, it meant that there was something evil up ahead.

"Chief, I think I should take the Girls home," Selicia suggested meekly.

"Oh no, there's no rush, Sergeant. After all, I've got to hear what our brilliant genius here have got to say," Blackwater denied, continuing to maintain his fake smile, which was beginning to scare Selicia. He put Bubbles down on the pool table, bringing her up closer to his height. "A good girl like her… Deserves a reward. You know what? How about I give you a little something for all your hard work. What do you say, Bubbles?"
Bubbles nodded cautiously, thinking that, perhaps, she had gotten through to her. She had done it before, after all, and now Mister Blake and his squad were her friends. It couldn't be any different now, could it?

"Open your mouth, Bubbles. I have a little something for you," Blackwater said, his smile slowly fading. Bubbles did as he asked.

"Chief Blackwater. Sir, please don't," Selicia begged. The Chief of Security's guards moved to block her. She could picture what he was about to do, and she didn't like what her imagination had brought up. Rough as she might be, Blackwater was about to cross a line even she wouldn't dare come within a mile of.

Chief of Security Blackwater reached for his hip, unholstering his pistol. He pulled the slide blindingly fast and stuck the pistol into Bubbles' mouth, catching Bubbles by surprise, who could only mumble unintelligibly to protest.

"You scumbag! Don't ever interrupt me, don't ever talk over me again, understand!?" Blackwater yelled at Bubbles, who shook at his sudden change in tone. Blossom and Buttercup stood up, alarmed. "I'm in charge here, and whatever I say goes! No arguments, no tantrums!"

"Blackwater, please! She's only a baby! She doesn't understand!" Selicia pleaded with her superior to stop. Blackwater did not so much as glance in her direction. The guards pushed her back, but she could see exactly what was happening. Part of Blackwater's sidearm was in Bubbles' mouth, and Bubbles didn't like it one bit. Predictably, she had started crying, her sobs muffled by the gun in her mouth.

"It's only because of people like me that you're even here, and frankly, you don't deserve it. Look at what your sisters went through, because you were too cowardly to help them," Blackwater accused. Bubbles replied and begged unintelligibly.

And then the Chief of Security fired his pistol. There were screams in the room; Selicia and the Girls', even a few other operatives, otherwise hardened modern warriors.

"Bubbles!" Selicia screamed.

"Jesus H. Christ!" Agent Blake exclaimed.

"What the hell, big man!" Detective Mullens shouted.

The bullet had ricocheted inside Bubbles' mouth, and it took some time for it to run out of energy. Bubbles bit down on the Chief of Security's pistol in pain and alarm, before looking like she was choking on a jawbreaker. Blackwater pulled his pistol out, inspecting it. There were bite marks near the muzzle-end of the slide, as well as the bottom. Bubbles bawled her eyes out at the ordeal.

"Idiot! You broke my pistol!" Blackwater scolded despite what he had put Bubbles through. He slapped her with his huge ham-fist. Bubbles fell off the pool table. He holstered his damaged pistol. "We're done here. It's time to pack up and move."

The Chief of Security made for the exit, and so did most of the USDO soldiers. Selicia broke through his guards and ran up to him, throwing a right hook up at his jaw. It hardly even registered in him.

"Hell of a right hook, Selicia, but you're going to have to do better than that. Try harder next time, and I'll get you demoted down to private," he said anti-climatically before pushing Selicia aside and walking the rest of the way out of the office. Soldiers streamed out, leaving behind Agent Blake and
Selicia ran up to Bubbles, who was clutching her cheek, and picked her up, returning her to the pool table. She was crowded around by the others; Sergeant Blake, Detective Mullens, the Girls, all concerned that Blackwater might have done some damage. She was trying to get Bubbles to open her mouth, trying to pry open the little girl's mouth, but Bubbles' wouldn't budge at first, as she was too busy bawling and holding her mouth shut because of the pain. "Bubbles, let your Mommy see it!"

It took some coaxing to get Bubbles to open her mouth, and Selicia stared inside, unable to see anything because of the chiaroscuro lighting of the room.

"Here, let me," Agent Blake squeezed into the epicentre of the crowd and pulled out a flashlight, shining it into Bubbles' mouth.

"Jesus! At least give them some credit, for Pete's sake!" Detective Mullens protested belatedly. "Handing a beat-down to twenty bottom feeders with just your hands ain't an easy thing!"

Selicia had expected some blood - it was commonly understood that flesh inside the body is more vulnerable than what was outside. She was afraid that that could apply to the Girls too. But when she could finally inspect the damage with Blake's light, she saw no damage.

"Where's the bullet? I don't see the bullet!" Agent Blake exclaimed, still fearing for Bubbles. He couldn't find the dull shine of the lead that was supposed to be somewhere inside Bubbles' mouth.

"Did it disintegrate? Can you see any shrapnels?" Officer Olivia suggested from the periphery.

"Or can it break apart into powder? Is that how the Gals work?" Detective Mullens contributed.

Bubbles sniffled, trying to speak, and she could barely. "I- I think I s-swallowed it…" Bubbles said.

"Ew," Buttercup expressed her opinion curtly. She received a nudge from Blossom. Her body aching badly from the fight, she actually felt pain from the gentle gesture, and stopped. Bubbles recalled the terrible taste of the metal, and how it slid down her throat, having accidentally swallowed it because of the pain and anxiety. It'd made a rough journey down because of the bullet's deformation and sharp edges. The mere memory of this made Bubbles cried harder, her shrill voice reverberating across the room.

"Can we get it out any way? Maybe by surgery?" Corporal Rutherford asked.

"She could poop it out, there's that," the crass Private Zach suggested. Selicia wanted neither.

"Bubbles, I need you to stop crying," Selicia told her adopted daughter. Bubbles tried, but she could barely hold it in. "I can fix this, but I need you to stop crying, okay?" Selicia gave her a brief hug to reassure her…

Before thrusting her fingers into Bubbles' throat, causing a gag reflex. Selicia held Bubbles up as she vomited down onto the carpeted floor. Everyone backed away. Sure enough, in the pool of stomach fluid was the dull shine of metal. Blackwater's expended bullet.

'The professor's going to kill me,' Selicia thought.
Chapter 51: Opportunity

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, *Project Powerpuff: Declassified* is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of *The Powerpuff Girls*, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls and their guardians attempt to resume their family life.

Chapter 51: Opportunity

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988. 2352

When the Lamborghini speed transports were back at The House, the lights in the living room were switched on almost immediately. Professor Utonium stepped out immediately, looking a little weary despite having done nothing but sit at the couch, dying of worry, while listening to some oldies on the radio in a futile attempt to calm himself. He had been worried sick for the past couple of hours, completely incapacitated by it, by Agent Blake's admission that the Girls were going somewhere worst than the Townsville Central Bank robbery. The image of three kid-sized body bags coming towards him across the lawn in his head wouldn't go away.

And what he saw when the Girls came out wasn't the furthest from that image. At first, the professor had greeted them with the widest smile he could manage to mask his emotional debilitation, but when he saw the Girls disembarking, it fell away very quickly when he saw their faces, which were covered in bruises and gauze. Much of their gear had been removed and Bubbles was the only exception, though her pallid complexion told of a story almost as bad.

"Dad!" Blossom shouted with relief as she ran up to him, crossing the lawn at super-speed and slowing down only when she was close to the professor. She immediately hugged him around the legs. Bubbles and Buttercup followed up behind him, with the former stopping to stand in front of him with head bowed in shame while the latter hugged the professor as well. Selicia was taking her time, exchanging goodbyes with her fellow security personnel before walking across the snowy lawn.

"Blossom! Girls! What happened!?” the professor exclaimed, alarmed by their injuries - what could possibly cause them?

"It was really bad, Dad!" Blossom said, her voice trembling from relief and memories of the not-so-distant past.

"Yeah! We were beaten by a bad guy!” Buttercup elaborated a little. All she had done was to introduce more questions than answers. How on Earth could a regular Joe, even if he was a seasoned criminal, even begin to injure them in the first place? His only conclusion was that there was something special about this particular crook. The USDO, as the shadowy Organization, did have some escaped subjected in the past. Jojo and Naga came to mind.

"I can't believe this!” the professor said. He knelt down, inspecting Blossom's wounds. They were
superficial, though he couldn't be sure what trauma was or wasn't under the skin. The family would have to burn midnight oil in the lab tonight. The professor's head and shoulders sagged when he was done. "I should've been there! It's all my fault!"

"Dad, it's not," Blossom comforted. She hugged the professor. "Remember what you said when I blamed myself for the policemen's death? Dad, you weren't the man who beat me up…"

"Daddy… Please don't be sad," Buttercup chipped in, genuinely troubled that her beloved father was so broken. He thought he could a stifled sniffle, and see him wiping his eyes. "I did what you asked - I didn't kill anyone." It was all she got - even if she did want to kill someone. She would have said more, had it not been for her nightmare, which she was still struggling to process. It seemed so vivid, so different from the kind she'd had before Junior, so vivid that it seemed real. She couldn't get the image of a hateful professor out of her head.

"I'm fine, Girls. I'm fine," the professor said, finally looking up. "You're right, Blossom, and I'm proud of you, Buttercup. Come on, let's get the three of you inside…"

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988. 0021.

Professor Utonium held the x-ray printouts of the Girls above him, using the fluorescent lights in the ceiling of his lab to view them. He couldn't seem to find even a single micro-fracture anywhere. Despite how the Girls appeared, there was some silver lining to their ordeal - there were no internal injuries. He had previously ran them through a neurological CT scan, to find no brain damage.

Even their flesh wounds were already beginning to mend rapidly. He could have sworn that, as he was stitching up Blossom's forehead, he could see the internal bleeding in her black eye receding. It was the same with Buttercup - as he was examining her, he thought he could see the bruise on her jaw receding, bit by bit.

Even the cut on Blossom's forehead seemed smaller, if Selicia's observation was anything to do by - he conjectured that, even without stitching, the Girls would be able to heal very quickly - just that stitching helped hasten the process.

Needless to say, the professor was equal parts furious, and depressed. His worst nightmare with the Girls was coming to pass. While getting gunned down by thugs on the streets was no longer a possibility, they were suffering, and badly. No girls, normal or enhanced, should have to go through this - getting beaten up to the point of turning black-and-blue and red.

And he was furious at what Chief of Security Blackwater had done with the Girls, with Bubbles. He promised himself that the next time he met him, there would be words, no matter where they were.

"Dad, why is it so difficult to fight crime?" Blossom had asked him while he was stitching her up - she was valiantly resisting the urge to sprint to the other end of the lab when he stuck a Duranium needle in her repeatedly.

"Because it's what good people do. That's how you know it's the right thing to do, Blossom dear," the professor replied as he was concentrating on her forehead. "It might seem painful and pointless to do the right thing, but that's because you can't always see the good that you do. When you took down those bad guys, you're never going to see how you've saved the lives they were going to destroy - but it's there, and eventually the people of Townsville will love you for it. It's just like what I'm doing with you right now, darling. It might hurt to stitch you up, but it's going to help you heal
much faster. You'll see that you're good as new tomorrow when you look into the mirror."

"I understand, Dad," Blossom said after a long pause, pondering on his words of wisdom. "Thank you."

"Don't mention it, dear," the professor said. He planted a kiss on top of her head before moving onto Buttercup. Of the three Girls, Buttercup has had it the worst. The skin on her scalp had split long and wide from repeated trauma in the same spot, and she required more stitches. "Turn around, Buttercup."

"Is she going to be okay, Thomas?" Selicia asked. She'd snuck up on them - a habit of hers.

"They'll live, Selicia," the professor replied curtly. "And they won't even have a faint scar by morning. I don't know about the rest." If the professor was trying to dredge up some guilt in Selicia, he had done a good job at that. She could feel the pangs immediately. She was a woman of action, and she would always feel that there was more she could have done.

"I'll be okay Mom, Dad," Buttercup said quickly, looking to impress, and she didn't have to lie this time to do it. She was eager to get out there again, perhaps even get revenge for what Junior had done to her, and if that wasn't on the menu, find more bad guys to beat up, though strictly, they didn't have to be bad guys... The dark thought had entered her mind quite suddenly, that it'd fazed even her. But she moved on rather quickly - she couldn't wait for the time when Blossom was no longer the leader. It meant that she could do whatever she wanted, kill and play around with as many baddies as she could get her hands on.


"This is going to hurt, Buttercup, but it'll make you all better," the professor gave her a heads up while he was targeting his needle. It was harder this time, as he had to try to do it through Buttercup's hair, which obscured his vision - what he wouldn't give to have Blossom's x-ray vision! Perhaps in time, he could teach the Girls first aid or even medicine and surgery.

Selicia sat down next to Buttercup and held her hand, comforting her gently that it would be over quickly. The black-haired girl could feel disinfectant after that, then the needle. She winced at both. The only silver lining to this was that the Professor had opted not to shave her, owing to the lack of proper Duranium equipment - if his hypothesis was right, the Girls were completely immune to normal bacteria and viruses. They were born without a mother, which should have made them vulnerable to illnesses, but thus far, they hadn't even gotten a flu. It did make the work more intricate, as it meant clearing any hair that got in, but it didn't deter him.

"You're doing fine, Buttercup. Don't move," the professor encouraged. Being incredibly resilient to any kind of penetrating force, including armor-piercing bullets, Buttercup found it weird and alarming feeling, sensing the needle slipping through her skin as if it was cloth. It made her feel vulnerable, if Junior hadn't put that in her already.

"I'm so sorry, Thomas, for everything," Selicia said, as she held on tightly to Buttercup's hand, gently stroking it as she winced with every needle jab and pull of the thread. The little girl's grip was strong - it was like feeling an adult's hand crushing her's every time she felt pain, except it was small - the contrast broke her heart.

Professor Utonium stayed silent as he continued his master work, but not entirely because of it.

"Don't be sorry, Mom. You were there for me," Bubbles said. She had been watching silently all along while sitting nearly, though the stitching had grossed her out. The professor took note. He'd
heard it from the Girls what she had done - little. But there was only so much Selicia could do in the field - she had spearheaded the charge to recover them, helped with applying first-aid and came to Bubbles' defense, where previously she had attacked her.

"I wish I could have done more," Selicia said to the both of them.

"Uh-huh…” the professor simply grunted as he continued down Buttercup's long gash. He took his time to sweat Selicia out, but as he worked on Buttercup, she had said nothing more, nor incriminated herself in any way. In the end, the Girls had all but supported her, with the possible exception of Blossom, who stayed silent.

"I could have done more too," Professor Utonium finally replied his wife. It was a fair assessment. He could have pushed his way into the speed transport but he didn't. Could he survive entering a war zone? Anything for his daughters. He could have done more, just like Selicia.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


After bathing the Girls and tucking them in bed, Thomas and Selicia was finally able to tend to their own needs, taking quick showers before settling into bed. The professor was in his usual white pyjamas while Selicia had slipped into her red sleeping gown. As soon as he switched off the table lamp, a void of light and sound took over the room. As usual, they slept facing away from each other.

"Hey Thomas," Selicia suddenly said.

"Yes?" Thomas asked.

"Thanks," Selicia said.

"For what?" Thomas asked.

"For not pushing me away in the lab. We feel like a family again just now," Selicia explained.

"Don't mention it," Thomas simply said. Selicia rolled around to face him. She inched closer to him. The professor could feel her getting closer, so he rolled over to face her. "Something else you want?"

"Just returning the favor," Selicia said, before cuddling up to him and kissing him in the lips, putting her arms around him. She didn't let go the way he did before the Girls left for their second mission. Instead, she went all in, kissing him passionately. Thomas did not resist this time. She wormed her tongue into his mouth, which took him by surprise. He pulled back, and made some space between them.

"I can't," he said.

"Is it because of your wife? Eileen?" Selicia asked.

"Yes… and no. A big no. Not on a night like this. All I can think about are the Girls," Thomas professed.

"Does that mean you want me, Tommy?" Selicia said slyly, lust in her voice. But it was more than lust. It was a way for her to seal her place in the family, and to make the family itself seem more like a real one, no matter how fake it was.
"No..." the professor struggled, uncertainty in his voice. The mind clashing with the body. "Go back to sleep, Selicia."

"Can I at least do it in your arms? Please, I just need you to hold me. God, I was so afraid out there," Selicia said. "When I saw the Buttercup, all messed up and lying on the ground, I thought that..." she paused for a while, still trying to come to grips with her emotions. "Is there room for one more girl in your arms?"

The professor sighed. Selicia did have the Girls' happiness interest in mind, there was no doubt about that since day one or day two. She had erred, but to err was human - ostracizing her wasn't going to do the anyone any favours. Awkwardly, he slipped his arm under Selicia's nape, which went around her shoulders. The woman laid her head on his chest, putting her hand on his stomach.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988. 0117.

Back in the Girls' room, The Three had trouble sleeping, with the exception of Bubbles, who was somehow, miraculously, able to do so despite the trauma she suffered at the hands of Blackwater. Buttercup's eyes were wide-open, but she'd kept it hidden from Blossom, who was just as awake, by turning away from her. She didn't exactly want to see her in such an intimate moment. It'd reveal exactly how angry she was at Blossom, not just for what had happened in the warehouse, but also because of what had happened in the nightmare. She knew vaguely that it couldn't be real, but it spoke to her so clearly, agreeing with her on how she felt about Blossom.

She knew she had to be the leader, not Blossom. Blossom had been the leader twice now, and they had failed twice. All she needed was an opportunity. Closing her eyes, Buttercup tried again to sleep, hoping that her chance to set things right, to be the leader, would come the next day.

In the meantime, Blossom was tossing and turning in the middle. At first, she was facing Bubbles, then Buttercup. For a time, she tried to keep her eyes closed, hoping that drowsiness would take her, but it wouldn't. Sitting up, she leaned against the heart-patterned headboard.

Daddy had taught her before how to fall asleep - but it wasn't working. Or rather, she couldn't make it work. Whenever she closed her eyes, all she would see was Junior, laying in on her, causing her pain unequaled even by the many bullets shot at her. And then there's Buttercup...

Blossom laid a hand on Buttercup's head, caressing her short bob cut.

"My dear sister..." she whispered as she continued to lovingly caress Buttercups hair, as if Buttercup was well awake and could hear and feel her. "Poor Buttercup... I'm sorry that you suffered."

Whimpering as she wished she was asleep, Blossom gently and carefully pulled the tri-colored blanket down, before emerging out of it. And crawling down from the bed. Starting from the foot of the bed, she went around to Buttercup's side of it and pulled the blanket over her once again. With that, she adjusted her red hair bow, which she had insisted on wearing to sleep.

"Get better soon," Blossom said to the sleeping Buttercup, before turning around and leaving the room through the door.

Buttercup opened her green-glowing eyes. She had been wide awake all along.

'My sister,' Blossom had described her as such, in her most honest moments - after all, Blossom had thought that she was asleep, and there was no one else in the room. She didn't like it. Earlier, when
Daddy had offered to let Blossom sleep in his room, Blossom had rejected the offer, stating that she would be fine sleeping in 'MY room' and in 'MY bed'. It was just like the dream; everything belonged to her now.

And that would change very soon. Buttercup could sense that her opportunity was now, when Blossom had gone off into the dark, dark House, alone. And vulnerable.
Chapter 52: In The Snow

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Blossom discovers a new ability in her struggle to maintain her authority as leader.

Chapter 52: In The Snow

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988. 0119.

Blossom could not sleep, and so she took to leaving her room and going down to the kitchen. The professor, so loving and understanding as he was, had anticipated this, and shown her after stitching her up in the labs where the milk and the glasses were in the kitchen, should she need a little help.

It was dark, but darkness was no obstacle. Instinctively, she was able to will it away. Her eyes glowed brighter, until they resembled a pair of flashlights, illuminating a short distance ahead of her, just like what Buttercup did with her eyes when she peeked into the barrel of a pistol for the first time - it wasn't as strong as a real flashlight, but at least she wouldn't be tripping over anything anytime soon.

It was the first time she did this, and she was genuinely surprised at herself. However, she was used to doing strange things that the vast majority of the population could not, so she moved on quickly.

Going through the living room, she got to the kitchen and opened the fridge. She searched for the white carton. First tier, second tier, and finally found it on the third tier of the fridge. On it was written 'milk', a word she had learned to interpret only recently. Taking it out, she stepped on a stool to reach the counter with the glass and poured herself half a cup of milk.

Then there was the sound of a door sliding open. Alarmed, she looked around her - and she couldn't see too far ahead despite the light from her eyes. "Mom?" she called out into the void. No reply from it came. Perplexed, she took her glass of milk along and went into the living room. It'd come from there. "Dad?"

The glass door leading into the backyard was open for some reason. She could feel the cold wind coming in, though she could not perceive the cold as well as others - it simply did not affect her as badly. 'Did the wind blow it open?' she thought as she approached it. In her mind, it was a real possibility, as she did not know how quite did sliding doors work.

"Odd..." she said to herself as she grabbed the door, intending to pull it shut. That was when she heard footsteps behind her. She looked over her shoulder, alarmed-

And saw a pair of glowing green irises rushing towards her at a blindingly fast speed. She realized too late that it was Buttercup as she came within range of her flashlight-eyes. With a vicious shout,
her green-eyed sister tackled her, throwing her out into the backyard, skidding along the snow, her glass of milk tumbling and emptying its content in the snow, the brim shattering but not most of it.

Blossom could taste snow in her mouth as she was recovering. Rolling over, she saw Buttercup standing over her, even without her eyes on lantern mode. The light from the streetlamps had put a dim texture on everything, and Buttercup's eyes was a contrast to it all, glowing menacingly, the shape of it angry, more than angry. It was deadly. Venomous.

"Buttercup! What are you doing!!" Blossom questioned her sister, feeling paralyzing fear enveloping her heart – and Buttercup had become something worse than even the gangsters she fought just a couple of hours ago, rivalling that of Junior's killer aura.

Buttercup did not answer. Instead, she broke into a run towards Blossom, who was barely able to stand up when her wayward sister threw a charging punch at her, which Blossom blocked with her forearms, but the force of it had thrown her back into the snow.

"I'm taking what's mine," Buttercup finally said something as she looked condescendingly down on her red-gowned sister, and it didn't reassure Blossom at all. Instead, it'd made her shiver, and it wasn't because of the wintry night air or the snow. "You're not the leader anymore. I'm the leader now. Say yes, Blossom."

"What are you saying, Buttercup?" Blossom asked rhetorically in disbelief, unable to accept what her very own sister had just said, what she was trying to do.

"Say yes, Blossom," Buttercup repeated, a chilling smile spreading across her equally cold face in anticipation of what she felt was inevitable victory – she had surprised Blossom and bested her in a fight. Now, she had to give up and realize that she, Buttercup, was more fit to lead the three of them.

"Say yes, and I'll love you like a sister should…"

"No, Buttercup. You can't do this," Blossom insisted as she stood up, taking Buttercup's smile away. "You just can't." When it came to explaining it, Blossom faltered. There was just so many reasons why, and no guarantee that Buttercup would even listen – she knew how her headstrong sister could be.

"If you won't say yes, then I'll make you!" Buttercup screamed before launching into a flurry of machinegun punches, which even Blossom, her equivalent in combat, had trouble dodging or blocking. Her arms felt sore within seconds, either from taking punches head-on or deflecting them - until they started sagging from exhaustion.

"Buttercup, stop!" Blossom pleaded in despair as she felt herself weakening.

"Give up, Blossom, and I will!" Buttercup said, keeping her punches up, as if it wasn't even taxing her even slightly, until finally, she went for a more underhanded route and punched Blossom in the stomach. Blossom sank into the ground, clutching her stomach. Buttercup chortled, and pulled a fist back, but as she did, Blossom found the handle of her cup again. Buttercup threw a hard punch at her, but the wind-up was so slow that Blossom had only need to duck a little to dodge it. In turn, Blossom smashed her cup on Buttercup's head.

Buttercup screamed. The wound on her scalp ignited with burning pain. She jumped on top of Blossom, knocking her down, punching her in the face several times. Blossom retaliated by punching back, then digging her fingers into her stitching, ripping some of the threads off, reopening the wound. Blood flowed freely once more. Buttercup yowled in pain and headbutted Blossom, and while she was stunned from the blow, she picked her up and threw her into the backyard tree. Blossom bounced off the wood back-first with a loud thud. The tree shook and snow fell like an
avalanche all around it and on Blossom, covering her, blinding her as she was still moaning on the snowy floor. It was like being buried alive. Like Buttercup's other victims.

The snow smothered Blossom, and she couldn't breathe in it, forcing her to burst through it, but she had taken too long. She wasn't even on her feet for a second when Buttercup rammed into her, sending her spinning and slamming into the tree once more, this time head-first. It felt like existence and pain was one and the same when Buttercup assaulted her so mercilessly. Blossom couldn't even think for all her intelligence because of it, and neither did Buttercup let up.

Grabbing Blossom by the arm, Buttercup gave it a twist with one hand, locking it behind her back. She slammed her into the tree after that, and pinned her against it with a forearm to the back of her neck and her knee on her spine. "This is revenge for beating me in front of Mom!" She twisted Blossom's arm harder. Pain surged through the pink-eyed little girl's arm and shoulder. Blossom's other arm pushed against the bark of the tree uselessly, trying to push herself away from it, but Buttercup was all too strong, and she'd had her in a bind.

"Say it, sister! I'm the leader now, say it!" Buttercup demanded, almost gloating. She was so into it that she was paying zero attention to her conduct - saliva dribbled from a corner of her mouth as she stared into the back of her sister's head, as if able to see her brain, hungrily as if she could try to dig it out from her skull the next moment.

It was at this time that Blossom seriously considered relinquishing her leadership position. But that would mean disappointing Dad - she had counted on her, always, to look after her sisters. Blackwater, despite being mean, had seen something in her, made her the leader - and he didn't take it away even after the terrible mess that was the debacle at Townsville Central bank. Surely, that meant something?

"No!" Blossom cried, tears forming snakes down her cheeks, just as much from being hurt by Buttercup's mutiny as from the pain that seemed to occupy every single cell in her left arm and shoulder.

Blossom responded by twisting her arm further. "Hrng!" Blossom gasped, truly terrified.

"I'll break it, Blossom, my dear sister," Buttercup threatened. "I promise I'll break it, and then we'll see how you'll fight crime!"

"Buttercup- we're- sisters!" Blossom struggled to reason with her, even as her arm felt like it was coming out of its socket. "I- I love you! Don't you love me!?"

"Love!?" Buttercup spat, and twisted Blossom's arm harder. Blossom screamed. "You took everything - the room, the bed, being the leader! Dad!"

"What are you talking about!?" Blossom struggled. Buttercup found it insulting that she was so ignorant - her only explanation for this was that Blossom was just playing dumb. She added a few more degrees to her arm twist. Blossom slammed her right fist against the tree as a futile way to cope with the excruciating pain, whimpering, and since she knew nothing of any divine entity who could help, Dad replaced her call for divine intervention. But she was outside - he wasn't able to hear her.

"You're strong, not like Bubbles. She cried like a baby and wetted herself," Buttercup laughed, recounting the first time she'd threatened someone. Specifically, that time in the cinema lady's room when she took the seat next to Daddy by force.

It didn't take long for Blossom to put two and two together, even as pain had clouded her mind.
"You… You did this to Bubbles?"

"I didn't hurt her, Blossom. She gave up before I could do that," Buttercup said. "You should be like her. Give up, Blossom. I won't ask again."

Blossom clawed at the bark of the tree as Buttercup put more pressure on her shoulder joint. She could feel that it was on the verge of dislocating. No matter how much she struggled, she couldn't push Buttercup off, and neither could she turn around or go down, slide under her. If only there was some other way…

"No!" Blossom said again.

"Wrong answer, dear sister," Buttercup gloated with glee, and added even more force to her arm twist. Blossom resisted however much she could, but she could feel her strength failing.

"Nooooooo!" Blossom cried as she could feel the beginnings of a dislocation. That was when Blossom felt herself lifting off, ever so gently, imperceptibly.

Pretty soon, what felt like a mere upward force became an overwhelming force that completely took her off the ground, and it took Buttercup completely by surprise as she rose without coming down, to a slight hover a few feet up. Blossom was able to dislodge herself that way.

"What- What's happening!?!" Buttercup cried as Blossom rose higher. She was still clinging onto Blossom's hand, and she, too, was off the ground, but only because she was holding onto her hand. "Wooaaah!"

Blossom looked down in surprise, at what she was achieving - flight! Or at least the precursor to it, as she was merely hovering a few feet up, then two yard, then several. But she had trouble controlling it. She kicked the tree in front of her, and was able to move backwards away from it, as if she was in a zero gravity environment. She wanted to get down, so she tried it by kicking her legs backwards, higher. The result was more violent than she had anticipated. By kicking her legs backwards, she had orientated herself to face the ground head-first, putting Buttercup above her, relatively. When she straightened her legs in surprise, she accidentally launched herself into Buttercup, smashing her into the ground.

Buttercup had it worse than Blossom, as the latter little girl had the former to act as a cushion when the former had only a thin layer of snow. For a time, the both of them were stunned, lying down together in the snow, then Blossom got off, crawling away from Buttercup, who looked like she was half-dead, if not from shock, then from the impact.

Buttercup could barely sit up, and when she did, she had to get out of a Buttercup-shaped hole in the snow. She felt the back of her head. It was slick with something wet, and it hurt bad. The impact with Blossom had agitated the wound there, but with it half-sealed, the bleeding wasn't as bad. "Ouch…"

"I'm telling Daddy about you, Buttercup!" Blossom said angrily as she sat up, dusting the snow off her. Her left arm and shoulder still felt terribly sore, so she held tightly onto it, her wild imagination giving her the idea that it might actually fall off. "Bubbles and I - we're your sister and we loved you - and all you've done is to hurt us! I'm telling on you!"

"No, wait! Please!" Buttercup begged, but Blossom simply turned around and walked back towards the House. Buttercup tried to go after Blossom, but she had tripped in the snow, her limbs dumb from the impact and cold. What Blossom did with her new 'floating' ability had taken the fight out of Buttercup, and it was all she could do. "Please don't! I'm sorry!"
"That's what you said the last time!" Blossom turned around and chided her wayward sister. "And you lied to Dad about me after that!"

"Blossom, please!" Buttercup pleaded with her more reasonable sister, crawling up to her and throwing herself at her feet. "I'm sorry - I just want to be loved by Mom and Dad! I- I-" By this point, Buttercup was truly desperate, and the tears that fell from her eyes were more genuine, well, almost.

"I just feel left out of everything! I just thought that being leader will make them notice me more!" Buttercup spluttered as she clutched tightly onto Blossom's ankle. Blossom looked down at her, dispassionate. She had just gone too far, talking and plotting behind her back and nearly breaking her arm - and enjoying the cruelty in the process. Buttercup was no longer the sister she knew. She continued towards the house, practically dragging Buttercup across the snow, making a trail.

"Let go of me, Buttercup!" Blossom demanded. She tried to shake Buttercup's hands loose, but she wouldn't let go. It wasn't that she was impeding her in any way - it was just a minor inconvenience barely affecting her gait, but she didn't like the touch of Buttercup's hands - those same hands that had nearly tore her arm right out of its joints. Tired of this, she gave Buttercup a horse-kick in the face, but her death grip was strong as ever.

"You don't love me, Blossom! You're lying!" Buttercup cried. "You took everything from me, and now you're going to take Dad away! Forever!"

"What are you talking about?" Blossom asked angrily.

"The room's yours, the bed's yours, you- you're the leader! Dad- he- he talks and listens to you all the time!" Buttercup spluttered. Somehow, what she said had gotten Blossom to stop.

"Buttercup, I don't understand! The room... the bed... they're ours, not mine. And Dad - he's our father, yours too," Blossom said, this time looking down at Buttercup with eyes filled with concern. Their eyes met, and for the first time in the backyard, neither of them was angry-looking. "I may be the leader, but we're a team! I can't fight crime without you or Bubbles."

"Then why's the room pink? Why're you always in the centre of the bed?" Buttercup cried. "And Daddy... he..."

Blossom could not help but to tear up herself. Buttercup's feelings seemed genuine - and if they were genuine... Then she must have been incredibly upset for much of her short existence. It'd explained everything - her bad attitude, her sour mood that hardly ever improved. Blossom knelt down.

"Buttercup, why didn't you tell me all this before?" Blossom asked, now genuinely concerned. Looking at Buttercup now, lying in the snow with just her green sleeping gown, shivering miserably from the cold with her bob cut a mess, she couldn't help but to pity her. "You could have told me - we didn't need to fight."

"I didn't think you'd understand," Buttercup cried.

"Oh, Buttercup..." Blossom cried with her. She pulled her sister into a hug, then helped her up. "We're a family, I would have tried to understand."

"Please don't tell Dad about this. I'll do anything-" Buttercup pleaded, still feeling awed by what had happened just now - it wasn't everyday that a family member could suddenly fly, even if the three of them were enhanced far beyond human capabilities.

"I won't tell, but I need you to listen to me - we need to stop fighting each other, okay?" Blossom
"Promise?" Buttercup said.

"Promise."

"Yes, Blossom," Buttercup agreed, and quite readily too - it felt like the only way out. "Anything you say."

"Did I hurt you?" Blossom asked, suddenly realizing that her crash into Buttercup might have done something. "I'm sorry I kicked you - and flew into you and..."

"My head hurts," Buttercup said. She felt the back of her head, and withdrew her hand, only to see blood. Blossom saw it too.

"Buttercup!" Blossom exclaimed in shock. She tugged her sister towards the house, with her arms around her torso. "We have to tell Dad about this!"

"No!" Buttercup went the other way, trying to pull herself away from the House, but she was hurt and weak, and Blossom, stronger. "You promised! You promised not to tell!"

"I'm not going to tell, Buttercup! I'm just going to-"

"Tell me about what?" came a masculine voice from ahead of them. It could only be Professor Utonium. He flicked a switch in the living room, lighting up the place, casting white light on the backyard and the Girls.

"Dad!" Blossom and Buttercup shouted in unison.

"Well, I- urm- I was in the backyard and-" Blossom struggled to speak, paralyzed by too many choices, too many possible ways to save or not save Buttercup. She looked over at Buttercup, who was begging with her eyes, those despairing eyes, not to tell.

"Is that blood?" Selicia came up behind the professor and said. She had seen Buttercup's hands, how bloody one of them are. One of Blossom's hand was bloody too, from touching Buttercup's hair.

"Blossom! What did you do!?"

"I didn't do anything!" Blossom insisted. Buttercup, by force of habit, thought she had a chance there to turn the tables on Blossom. All she had to do was to lie about the blood and how Blossom had attacked her. Mommy would defend her, and bring Daddy to her side.

But she did not. There was something else she wanted now, something in Blossom. Her ability to fly had both awed and fascinated her. Buttercup wanted to fly too, and if Blossom could do it, why not her? Blossom could teach her how to do it. Not only would it be fun, it would be good for beating baddies. She wanted to inflict the same kind of pain that Blossom had accidentally done her.

But there was more than that. Something foreign in her. This 'love'. 'Sisterly love'. Could she really love Blossom the same way she loved Mom and Dad? In truth, Buttercup did not quite understand what love even was. Her closest understanding of it was 'when two people do good things for each other' or even 'when a person is beneficial to her'.

"It wasn't Blossom's fault, Mom," Buttercup said. Blossom looked at her, surprised, but the gesture from the normally subversive tomboy managed to coax a faint, hard-earned smile from her.

"We were in the backyard because... we discovered something, Dad," Blossom finally managed to
come up with a story. "I couldn't control it and we got hurt."

"Control what, Blossom?" the professor bent down, bringing him to the level of his red-haired little
girl, both afraid and fascinated of the unknown.

"Dad, I can fly," Blossom said curtly, as if it was a shameful, wrong thing. After all, no one else
could fly. She was the odd one out, just like how she and her sisters had no belly buttons.

"Come again?" the professor asked, unable to believe what he heard. He thought he heard it wrong,
or misinterpreted what Blossom had said.

"I can fly, Dad," Blossom repeated herself. She tried to recreate what she had done in the backyard -
remembering how trapped she felt, how going up was the only way out, remember the odd feeling
that she had an extension of herself, pushing her up.

Sure enough, she levitated off the ground, such that Professor Utonium had to stand up to get to the
same eye level at her.

"This is unprecedented…" the professor said, his jaw slack. He rubbed his eyes, wondering if he was
dreaming - but Blossom remained hovering, bobbing up and down.

He had to wonder, too, if they would be sleeping at all tonight.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom learns to fly.

A/N: Hi guys, this came out a little shoddy yesterday, but now it's been edited again. There should be less grammar mistakes now.

Flight Trial 12171988 Video Transcript


The following transcript has been prepared by administration to complement the Flight Trial 12171988 Video Transcript, both for reference and archival.

-TRANSCRIPT START-

Timestamp: 0137

(We see Agent Utonium's face close up to the camera as he adjusts the lenses. He stands up, disappears, and adjusts the angle of the camera, then points it at a staging area in the middle of The House's lab. The camera cuts)

(The camera is recording once more. He moves two chairs up to the desk the camera is placed on. He goes off camera)

Field Researcher Utonium: (off-screen) Blossom!

B-47 (Blossom): Coming Daddy!

(Field Researcher Utonium reappears on camera)

Field Researcher Utonium: For the sake of keeping records, I'll be conducting an interview first, before I move on to the tests. The tests will consist of a full scan of the energy, if any, emitted from Blossom as she attempts again to fly. (Blossom comes up next to him and wraps herself around his legs. Only her head, up to the nose, could be seen on-camera. Utonium rests a hand on her shoulder) We'll then move on to a flight trial, to see the extent of Blossom's ability to fly, or if it is even flying, instead of… hovering or… something else.

(The camera is cut before it is activated again. Blossom is seated to the left while Field Researcher Utonium is seated to the right.)

Field Researcher Utonium: How are you feeling, Blossom? Did that ice pack help with your aching shoulder?
B-47 (Blossom): It did, Dad. I'm feeling a lot better. Thanks.

Field Researcher Utonium: Good. Er- How did you hurt your shoulder again?

B-47 (Blossom): I- I- urm- (hesitates) I flew into… the ground, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: It's okay, Blossom, there's no need to be embarrassed over it. It was your first time flying- or hovering- I'll have to get the term straight.

B-47 (Blossom): I was flying, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: (laughs and strokes Blossom in the head) Yes you are, Blossom. How did it feel like?

B-47 (Blossom): It was… It felt good, Dad. I was like a bird and… I feel like I can do anything.

Field Researcher Utonium: That's great. But what did you feel? We're there itches all around your body? Tingling? Was it painful to do it? Or does it feel… Pleasurable?

B-47 (Blossom): What's pleasurable?

Field Researcher Utonium: Like eating an ice cream or resting in bed after a hard day's work, or taking a hot bath after being out in the snow for the whole day.

B-47 (Blossom): Oh… It was hard at first…

Field Researcher Utonium: What do you mean?

B-47 (Blossom): It was like lifting our car, but it got easier when I went up.

Field Researcher Utonium: I think I understand.

B-47 (Blossom): I felt as though… Promise not to laugh at me, Dad?

Field Researcher Utonium: I promise, Blossom. What is it?

B-47 (Blossom): It felt like I had… another arm or a leg that helps me to fly… or wings on my feet… or- I don't know how to describe it.

Field Researcher Utonium: Huh. Interesting. (Puts a hand on his chin and strokes it) And those wings, did they push you up or pull you up?

B-47 (Blossom): I don't know… Both?

Field Researcher Utonium: Hmm. Okay. Did you feel heat under your feet or anywhere on your body?

B-47 (Blossom): No, Dad. I was a little cold because I was in the backyard.

Field Researcher Utonium: Does flying make you sick in any way? Was there radiation – urm – I mean, nevermind. Does it make you feel sick?

B-47 (Blossom): No…

Field Researcher Utonium: I see. That's good. Honey, why don't you go up to your room and change into your armor? I'll be waiting down here. Try not to wake Bubbles. (Blossom gets off her chair)
B-47 (Blossom): Yes, Dad. (Walks out of camera perspective)

Field Researcher Utonium: Love you.

B-47 (Blossom): (off-screen) Love you too, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: (Writes on a clipboard with a form) Summary and hypothesis. It's not clear, at least from Blossom's perspective, how she has achieved flight or hovering. All I can understand is that there's a force she's exerting to put her into the air. We're unsure of the nature of it, and unlike how conventional propulsion works – like fossil-fuel based combustion, whether in a car or a jet, there is no apparent waste of energy from a conversion of energy from fuel to heat or kinetic sound energy – I dearly hope that includes all forms of radiation or Selicia and I would be contaminated and our health compromised.

My hypothesis is that this, as usual, has something to do with Chemical X, and the energy necessary to achieve flight is taken from the chemical itself – I know for sure that Chemical X has massive stores of energy that no other substance in the universe could match, so this seems reasonable. But how, I'm not sure... This energy is emitted from several or every part of her body as both a push and pull force, allowing stable flight or hovering. It's also possible that it is highly efficient with little to no waste of energy.

B-48 (Buttercup): (comes into camera field of view, scratching the back of her head) Dad, my head itches.

Field Researcher Utonium: Don't scratch it, Buttercup, or it'd get worse!

(Agent Utonium reaches for the camera to turn it off. When it is turned on again, we see him and Blossom a distance from it, about 30 feet away from the desk. B-47 is dressed in its SWAT outfit, without weapons.)

Field Researcher Utonium: (to B-47, with a clipboard in hand) Okay, Blossom, I want you to try floating up.

B-47 (Blossom): (Concentrates hard, with hands clenched in fists. When that did not work she tried jumping several times, only to come back down each time. Finally, she Concentrates with arched brows again, resulting in her lifting off the ground, slowly, achieving a flying height of two feet. But it does not stop there as she keeps rising) Dad!

Field Researcher Utonium: You can stop rising now!

B-47 (Blossom): I don't know how! Dad! I'm scared! (achieves height of 8 feet)

Field Researcher Utonium: Think, Blossom! What did you do to get down!

B-47 (Blossom): (she swings her legs back in a 360 degrees swing, but fails to get down. She desperately paddles with her hands, but it does little except wildly change her pitch, roll and yaw.) Dad!

Field Researcher Utonium: Blossom, I have a hunch. You need to calm down! You're in control! Just… relax!

B-47 (Blossom): I'm trying, Dad! (she puts a leg up as if stepping on a rock. This ceased her ascent. She hovers at about 12 feet)

Field Researcher Utonium: Okay, keep yourself relaxed, and look down. Reach for the ground with
your 'wings'.

B-47 (Blossom): I'll try, Dad. (with a clear look of anxiety on her face, Blossom follows Agent Utonium's instructions. Slowly, she drifts downwards until she is able to land on her feet. When she does, she runs to Utonium's side, wrapping her arms around his legs, not letting go. She appears to be crying. Field Researcher Utonium puts his hand on her helmet as a gesture of affection and comfort.)

Field Researcher Utonium: There, there, Blossom. You're fine now, it wasn't bad – you were in control all the time. (He gently nudges her to let go, but she wouldn't. Agent Utonium laughs) How about if I carry you? I need to do something, Blossom. (Blossom lets go and stretches her hands out to be taken by her 'father'. With difficulty due to the weight of Blossom's armor, Utonium heaves the subject up into his arms. She puts her arms around his neck and legs around his waist. With difficulty, he walks over to the camera. We can hear sniffling as he approaches it. He puts an arm over the camera. The recording is cut here.)

(When the camera has been switched on again, we see Blossom already hovering in place, at a height that puts her a head higher than Agent Utonium, much more exuberant than before. Professor Utonium has put a trolley filled with instruments beside him.

Field Researcher Utonium: I'm going to conduct some tests, Blossom. Don't be alarmed. (He picks up a small bar of steel and holds it close to Blossom.) Hmm... No sign of magnetism. (He presses the bar of steel gently on Blossom's calf before withdrawing it. Finally, he pulls up a leg of Blossom's military trousers just above the boot and presses the bar of steel against her calf again. He lets go of the steel, which dropped to the ground) Definitely no magnetism there.

(Next, he picks up a camera-like device and switches it on. He waits for it to boot)

B-47 (Blossom): (As she is bobbing up and down in a stationary hovering position) What is that, Dad? Is it going to hurt?

Field Researcher Utonium: (laughs) No, it won't, rosebud. It's just a camera, except it helps me to see how hot something is. (He holds it up and scans Blossom's legs) Huh. No heat. (He places his hand on Blossom's calf.) Feels normal to me. (He scans the rest of Blossom's body) No heat exhaust anywhere.

(Next, he picks up a camera-like device and switches it on. He waits for it to boot)

B-47 (Blossom): (As she is bobbing up and down in a stationary hovering position) What is that, Dad? Is it going to hurt?

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(Field Researcher Utonium returns the infrared camera to the trolley and picks up a yellow object with a digital readout. He pulls out a sensor by a handle, connected to the device by a cord, and points it at Blossom's feet. Blossom looks troubled. The professor looks at her eye-to-eye)

Don't worry, this won't hurt either. It's for measuring something called 'radiation'.

(He switches on the device, and it starts beeping, but barely. He hovers the sensor over Blossom's calves, then knees, then body and head, but there is almost no beeping.)

Hmm. No radioactive emissions at all - of any kind. That means Selicia and I are safe.

B-47 (Blossom): What's 'ra-dio-tion', Dad?

Field Researcher Utonium: (as he is looking at the Geiger counter) It's radiation, Blossom. It's like light, but you can't see it.

B-47 (Blossom): Oh.

(Field Researcher Utonium returns the Geiger counter back to the trolley. He picks up what appears
to be an ammeter, top lab-grade. He balances the meter between his hip and elbow, and handles the two pliers attached to it by the rubbery handles.)

B-47 (Blossom): Will this one hurt?

Field Researcher Utonium: No, definitely not. (He then presses both pliers against Blossom's exposed calf. Blossom winces and shrinks away from it, but stops after the pliers touch her, indicating that she feels no pain. The professor glances at the needle on the Ammeter.) No electrical discharges.

(Professor Utonium returns the Ammeter to the trolley and reaches for a device that looks like a mic, but with a digital readout. He points it at Blossom's feet)

B-47 (Blossom): What is that?

Field Researcher Utonium: Shh. (He looks at the digital readout, shaking his head. He moves it up Blossom's body.) Negative on noise discharge.

(He returns the noise reader back to the trolley, then picks up a photometer.)

Field Researcher Utonium: Selicia honey, do you mind switching off the lights?

(The lab is plunged into darkness soon. Only Blossom's glowing pink eyes are visible against the pitch-blackness, as well as a very faint pink glow around the lower half of her body.)

B-48 (Buttercup): This is cool!

Field Researcher Utonium: Interesting. It appears that you're discharging - which means giving out - light, Blossom. Just trace amounts. Not even 50 Lumens.

B-47 (Blossom): Like an angel?

Field Researcher Utonium: (laughs) Like an angel, sweetheart. My angel. Could you get the lights again, Selicia?

(The light is switched back on, and we see Blossom and Agent Utonium smiling at each other. The professor then walks over to the camera before switching it off. When it is switched on again, Blossom is standing on what appears to be a 'starting line' made with yellow tape. A 'finishing line' made with red tape is about 20 feet away.)

Field Researcher Utonium: (while holding clipboard and stopwatch) Are you sure you're up to this, Blossom? Aren't you tired?

B-47 (Blossom): Just a little, Dad. I'll be fine - you taught me not to be afraid of flying.

Field Researcher Utonium: No problem, honey. Could you fly to the finish line for me? Whenever you're ready.

B-47 (Blossom): Yes, Dad. (she faces forward with an intense look on her face, licking her upper lip. She floats upwards to a height of 6 feet. Putting up her hands at waist level with her palms facing the floor, she gently kicks her feet back and faces her palm slightly towards the back. She starts forward unsteadily and lazily, her flight path meandering from left to right as she bobs up and down. She is able to progress 5 feet before her path zigs and zags wildly.) I can't control it, Dad!

Field Researcher Utonium: Don't panic, angel - you're in control!
B-47 (Blossom): I can't! (she flails her arms and legs wildly, and accidentally launches herself towards the ground at high speed, skidding along the rest of the way, before rolling far beyond the finish line) Ouch…

(the footage cuts. Selicia is likely behind the camera. When it returns, Blossom is back at the starting line. She starts forward again, but this time, she couldn't even make 3 feet without losing control and falling on her butt as she panics and swings her legs forward. The footage cuts again, before Blossom is, once again, back to the starting line. Again, she pushes her feet back and raises her hands to waist level, palms down. This time, she is able to make 5 feet on a nearly stable flight path, but begins to bob and meander haphazardly in the next few feet. She goes too far off course, attempts to course-correct, but accidentally rolls sideways. She panics again and accidentally launches herself into the ground, shoulder-first.)

B-47 (Blossom): Dad, this is impossible. (her tone seems upset. Agent Utonium comes up next to her to help her up to her feet)

Field Researcher Utonium: It's not, Blossom. You just have to keep trying.

B-47 (Blossom): But I've already tried so many times! (clearly upset)

Field Researcher Utonium: (Gets down on a knee) Darling, do you remember our first week together? When it was just the four of us?

B-47 (Blossom): Yeah, those were the best days of my life.

Field Researcher Utonium: Was it? You kept falling down, for days, when you were learning how to walk.

B-47 (Blossom): I couldn't even speak, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: And now you're saying words like 'impossible'. (he laughs) I remember how you first pronounced your name. 'Blue-som'.

B-47 (Blossom): (laughs)

Fields Researcher Utonium: See? It's not so bad now is it? We fall, Blossom, so we can learn to pick ourselves up. That's how you learned to walk, dear, then you began to jog, and you ran - my, how you ran. My car would die trying to catch up with you. Blossom, you can do this. I know you can.

B-47 (Blossom): (smiles) Thanks, Dad. I'll keep trying.

Field Researcher Utonium: Perhaps a few more time. It's way, way past bedtime, and we've got something special tomorrow. (He motions for Selicia to stop the camera.)

(When the footage returns, Blossom is back on the starting line. She floats up to a height of 8 feet, taking the same stance. She kicks her feet back and spreads her arms a little wider, hands at waist level, palms facing diagonally to the back. She begins moving forward, somewhat quickly, reaching 5 feet somewhat smoothly. But something happens and her path starts to deviate from 5 to 8 feet. She tries to correct it, but she starts rolling clockwise to the right. Alarmed, she lands before she falls.)

B-47 (Blossom): I'm sorry, Dad. Can I try again?


(Blossom returns to the starting line, then hovers in place again. She takes the usual pose, and starts
forward. 5 feet. 6 feet. 7 feet, smoothly so far. She starts wobbling, her hands and feet moving to compensate, but barely able to. She does something different to compensate. She puts up her right leg, as if stepping on a rock. She stabilizes immediately. She continues forward, right leg still up. 8 feet, 9 feet, 10 feet. She speeds up, reaching 12 feet, then 15 feet, then 20 feet. She lands on the finish line.)

B-48 (Buttercup): You did it, Blossom! That was wicked!

B-47 (Blossom): I did it! Dad, I did it!

Field Researcher Utonium: That's remarkable, Blossom! (walks up to her. 'Father' and 'daughter' shares a hug) I knew you'll come through! How did you do it, anyway?

B-47 (Blossom): I remember kicking the tree in the backyard, and when I did, I didn't lose control. I remember doing that earlier, too, and I didn't fall. So I tried it again, and it worked!

(B-48, otherwise known as Buttercup, enters the Field of View of the camera.)

B-48 (Buttercup): Hey Dad, can you teach me how to fly?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Laughs) An interesting idea! But I think Blossom here will be teaching you instead. (He motions for the camera to be cut. The footage stops, and when it resumes again, Blossom and Buttercup are speaking, in the middle of the flat, empty area. Blossom demonstrates a lift-off. Buttercup tries to do the same thing, jumping up and down on the spot when standing still does not help.)

B-48 (Buttercup): I don't understand…

B-47 (Blossom): (Yawns) I'm tired. Can I teach you tomorrow, Buttercup?

B-48 (Buttercup): (Infected with yawn.) Come to think of it… I'm tired too. (Yawns.)

(the camera cuts, and when it resumes again, we see Professor Utonium and Blossom sitting down behind the desk the camera is placed on.)

Field Researcher Utonium: So, Blossom, can you tell me about how you fly? From the starting line to the finish line?

B-47 (Blossom): I would love to, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: Tell me again how you lift off, Blossom.

B-47 (Blossom): Well, it's like… flexing my arm, except it's all around me… Like flapping wings that aren't there, but I can feel it, and I needed to put in lots of effort to do it. It's getting easier, though.

Field Researcher Utonium: How did you move forward?

B-47 (Blossom): I don't know… It's as if I could control it with my arms and legs, but not really. I was also controlling it with my… 'wings'. I don't know what to call it. I had to push myself forward with arms and legs and 'wings', Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: Hmm. (pens down a few things on a clipboard) I see. Well, I think it's time for bed, Blossom. Selicia, do you mind taking the Girls upstairs?

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin: Sure thing, dear. Will you be coming up soon?
Field Researcher Utonium: I won't be long, Selicia. I just need to clear something up.

(Blossom gets off the chair. Selicia walks by her and takes her by the hand. They walk out of the FOV of the camera. Professor Utonium watches them leave.

Field Researcher Utonium: In summary, Blossom appears to have gained an incredibly efficient mode of propulsion. While the limit of its output hasn't been tested yet - though it could be quite high considering the speed she had accidentally launched herself into - I have been able to establish that it indeed currently wastes very little energy. A small amount of it - which equates to a tiny LED bulb's worth of wastage, is discharged as exhaust in the form of light. Good thing too - pollution of any form isn't a concern.

How Blossom is able to control her flight is still largely a mystery. She describes phantom limbs, but that could be due to her inability to accurately describe sensations. I have been observing her during flight. Her actual limbs seem to play a part in some of the finer controls. It is possible that some of the force emitted from her body comes from her arms and legs, and by manipulating them, she is able to move in certain directions. How the energy output and speed is determined, however, I'm not very sure. Mood could play a part. She might even be willing it. But that might not be entirely possible - she accidentally accelerated herself into the ground. It could be a combination of everything.

I will need to investigate further. I will have to establish her maximum speed, flight height and how her control and speed works. I will also need to determine the nature of her propulsion. I have yet to establish if it is even flight - again - the test I've set is inconclusive as Blossom will have to develop this ability further first before I can truly determine this. I was hesitant to make her float too high due to her lack of flight hours. I have yet to determine its method - is it anti-gravity? Some kind of organic reactionless drive? Or something else entirely unexplored by the human mind?

In any case, I won't be finding out tonight. (Yawns) Perhaps in my dreams, maybe. I will draw up some lab experiments tomorrow or the day after to yield these data in the future.

- TRANSCRIPT END -
Chapter 53: Flops

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom teaches her sisters the art of flying. Professor Utonium confronts Selicia.

Chapter 53: Flops

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 0948.

"So what are we going to do today, Dad?" Buttercup asked her Daddy impatiently as she was sitting on a stool, her scalp under some bright light. Selicia was sitting beside her, holding her hand. Professor Utonium sat behind Buttercup, hunched over her head with scissors and tweezers. He had been examining the wound, and the results were profound - it had only been a night, and there wasn't even a scar present at all. He started cutting the surgical threads, and pulling at them. "Ow!"

"It's going to be a surprise. It's more fun that way," the professor simply said as he began pulling at more threads.

"Ow! I hate - ow! Surprises!" Buttercup said in between winces as the professor pulled out even more threads. He had already done the same with Blossom's forehead earlier, but her case was milder, with fewer stitches to remove. It was all the same. The wound was gone within the night, and the same went for their bruises, which likely disappeared even faster.

"Oh, come now, Buttercup," the professor simply said.

"You get to guess what it is along the way," Selicia added, "Just like how you can guess what I have cooking in the oven."

"Are we - ow! Going to the - ow! Arcade?" Buttercup guessed.

"Maybe," the professor teased.

"Careful, Tommy dear, you might kill her with the anticipation," Selicia laughed, and so did Professor Utonium.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1041.

When breakfast was over, the Girls went right to training, with Blossom serving as her siblings' flight instructor. Bubbles was brought up to speed about flying, and she was thrilled - after all, she had always wanted to fly like a Pegasus in those cartoons she kept watching.
"Like this!" Blossom said as she kicked off from the lawn into a hover, a few feet off the ground. There, she bobbed in the air, but she was otherwise stable despite the heavy SWAT gear she had donned for safety. Her sisters were similarly dressed. Bubbles stared at her wide-eyed, her jaw dropped. The feat had commanded Buttercup's attention as it had before at midnight, and she stared at Blossom hungrily, coveting her ability for herself. It would be cool if she could fly, and deliver kicks and punches from above.

Blossom had been demonstrating flight to her sisters as she tried to teach them how to do it. She'd been having no such luck so far. It was the third time she had repeated her explanations, as esoteric as her descriptions were childish, and it was the third time she had shown them the trick, but to no luck.

Bubbles and Buttercup jumped - they were able to leap far above their height, eight or nine feet into the air, with no effort, but they couldn't stay in the air.

"No, no, no!" Blossom exclaimed, a little exasperated. "You're not supposed to use your legs and jump, Bubbles, Buttercup! Remember how you slow down before you land? Use the 'wings' that helped you do that!"

After landing, Bubbles and Buttercup concentrated on the feeling of slowing down they had felt. Neither of them rose into the air like Blossom did.

"It's not working!" Bubbles said. "I really wish I can fly like you."

"Arghhhhhh!" Buttercup screamed in frustration. "I'm sick of this! I wanna fly! Like whoosh! Zoom! And hit some bad guys with it!"

On the street, Agent Blake and his detail at the speed transports were standing outside their vehicles, looking at them. They'd been looking at Blossom ever since she started training her sisters, and they still couldn't believe their eyes. How on earth could anyone, or anything, fly without wings? Even if she's enhanced by Chemical X? It was like witnessing the laws of physics breaking down right before their eyes.

"Well, shouting about it isn't going to help you, Buttercup!" Blossom chided, but not harshly. "And wishing about it doesn't help either. If only there's a better way…" Blossom looked at the House, thinking. What would Dad do to teach them better? She went back to midnight yesterday, how Daddy had taught her so much, despite lacking the ability to fly, the words of wisdom he dispensed. Her eyes wandered to the roof of the building.

'Of course!' she thought. "C'mon, sisters, we're going to try something else," Blossom said. She floated towards the front door, practicing at the same time as she was travelling - her flight path was still unstable, but at least she was managing it without making a valley in the snow. It would be some time before it becomes second nature. Bubbles and Buttercup, still staring in awe at their sister, followed behind her.

"What are we going to do, Blossom?" Bubbles asked. Without replying, Blossom took her from under the arms and lifted her up as she ascended towards the roof. "Blossom!" Still, Blossom kept quiet as she ferried her baby-blue-eyed sister up to a part of the House they had visited the least.

"Stay here," Blossom said to Bubbles as she returned to the ground and did the same thing with Buttercup.

"What are we doing?" Buttercup asked the same question, if rather gruffly, when all three of them were on the roof.
"We fall so we can learn to pick ourselves up again.' That's what Daddy said," Blossom explained. Unlike them, she was floating away from the roof, more than two storeys away from the lawn far below. Bubbles and Buttercup leaned over the roof, looking down at the lawn. They had never fallen from such a height before - at the warehouse, the shelves had only been two floors high. The roof was like the third floor of their house, inaccessible (at least by a normal human being) but just as high. Below, their Daddy had just come out of the front door, likely wondering where they had gone. Before their ascent to the roof, he had been watching from the living room. He turned around, and when he did, the look on his face wasn't exactly a happy one.

"Girls! What are you doing up there!" he screamed, hands on his head. He knew that the Girls could fall from floor to floor without getting hurt, but the roof of a two-floored house was something he had never seen the Girls endure before.

Blossom orientated herself in the air to face him. "We're practicing, Dad!" she replied.

"Are you sure this isn't too high!?" Professor Utonium shouted back up at her. "I don't want the three of you to get hurt!"

'Daddy's right,' Blossom thought, now worried that she might get her beloved sisters hurt. There was only one way to be sure that they wouldn't be. Hovering out of the professor's way, she aimed for the ground and let herself go, eyes closed. She dived for the snow, plummeting to the ground.

"Blossom!" Everyone shouted as she landed on the lawn in a belly flop, making a Blossom-shaped hole in it. She wasn't moving after that. Professor Utonium ran up to her, turning her over.

"Blossom!" he cried, the fear in his voice unmistakable. But Blossom's eyes were open, and there was a smile on her face.

"It hurts, Dad, but I'm fine," she said, and winced. She squirmed out of his hands, but the professor wouldn't let her go.

"Why on Earth did you do that!?" the professor scolded her. "You could've gotten hurt, or worse!"

"I don't want anyone to get hurt because of me, Dad," Blossom explained herself. "Mom said that I was a bad leader because I left Buttercup behind. I don't want to be a bad leader again." the professor seemed taken aback by what Blossom had confessed.

"She said that?" the professor pressed. "When?"

"After we came back from that awful night at the bank, Dad," Blossom said.

"Why that no-good-" the professor was about to swear, but he stopped himself when he remembered who he was with. He set Blossom down on the ground and straightened up. "You Girls keep practicing. I'm going to go have a word with your dear mother." With that, he marched back into The House, his bushy eyebrows furrowed and his lips curled into a very visible frown. Before he disappeared into The House, he stared at Agent Blake, who had advanced up to the mailbox. The security officer nodded in mutual understanding. The professor slammed the door shut when he was in, leaving Blossom to stare at the door.

"Can we go now!"? Buttercup shouted impatiently from above. Blossom looked up at them, still unsure if she should subject her sisters to such a training regime. She kicked off the ground and floated towards them, taking care to keep herself upright with her hands and feet.

Inside, the professor marched into the kitchen, where Selicia was baking some cookies for the Girls.
She was wearing an apron and mittens, and she looked awkward in them, the culinary garment out-of-place on her. The oven's bell had just rung, and she opened the lid to remove a tray with fifteen large cookies made in the style of Bubbles' drawing of the Girls, or at least the huge heads that they had in that universe. There were five of each Girls.

"Selicia!" Professor Utonium shouted as he crossed the threshold into the kitchen. She had just set down the tray when the professor grabbed her by the upper arm.

"Thomas!" Selicia exclaimed in surprise as she turned around. "What's with the shouting? Are you here for the cookie?"

"Blossom told me about what you said, Selicia," the professor shouted. "She doesn't need that kind of shite when she's a kid doing an adult's job! You ever thought about that!?"

The professor's grip was startlingly strong when he was furious, so much so that even Selicia found it hard to tear herself away from.

"What did she tell you, Thomas?" Selicia asked, her voice trembling from the suddenness of it all, and fright. In her struggle, she'd knocked over the tray of cookies. It fell flat on the ground, the cookies still somehow inside, but not intact. Some of the cookies cracked, while others had crumbled completely.

"You called her a bad leader! It was her first time, God damn it! Doing a combat-trained adult's job!" Thomas shouted, practically in her face. His ferocity leaving even the seasoned security officer shaken. "Nevermind the fact that the USDO is forcing her into it! Mistreating her! Treating her like an animal, an object!"

"I was just being honest, Tommy!" Selicia cried. "Isn't that what I should do as a mom!? If I can't tell her the hard truth, who can!?"

The professor shoved her back to her counter. "There's more to it than that, isn't there? I've seen the way you looked at Blossom. You don't like her, do you!? You... You hate her!" the professor snarled while pointing an accusing index finger at her. For some reason, it gave Selicia the impression of a mad scientist, too passionate about his work and willing to do anything for it.

Meanwhile, at the window, Bubbles fell unnoticed, followed by Buttercup, the sound of their screams and crash muted by the glass and wall.

"Thomas! No!" Selicia gasped.

"Don't Thomas me! What is it, then!?" Thomas demanded.

"Hate is too strong a word - I don't hate Blossom, I just-" Selicia defended herself. She stopped, deciding on her next words carefully. "I just- I guess I just find it hard to like her. Buttercup, on the other hand-"

"You're playing favorites!?" the professor yelled at her.

"Stop shouting at me!" Selicia pleaded, before going on to explain things. "I just- I can't help it. I just feel more for Buttercup, and Blossom, she - I'm trying, okay? I'm trying to be fair to her even though."

"Well, try harder next time," the professor said coldly. He considered Selicia's words, whether he had forgiven her one too many times. The fact that, at the very least, she was very close to at least one of them was a card in her favor. He looked down at the tray of freshly-baked cookies on the
floor. Oval heads with huge, insect-like eyes with red, green and blue frosting mimicking the eye colors of the three girls. Some of the cartoon faces were cracked or crumbled. He actually felt sorry that he had destroyed some of her work, confectionery that she had made for all three of them. All three of them. He decided, then, that there was some truth to Selicia's fairness.

In the meantime, Blossom had just flown down by the window to join her sisters, who were just standing up, clutching their heads in agony. Blossom carried Buttercup up again, then Bubbles, reminiscent of what a mother bird would do to get her chicks to attain flight.

"Selicia, please, the Girls, they're suffering - you should know that after the warehouse!" the professor said, his tone changing to one of desperation - he was their father, and he was meant to be their protector, and yet he felt completely helpless in aiding them, even a little. "They don't need trouble back at home on top of that."

"Thomas, I know. Trust me, I know…" the security officer said as she bent down and picked up the tray of cookies. "I'm trying."

"I'm sorry," Thomas apologized, realizing that he might have gone too far himself.

"Don't be," Selicia said. "You were right to call me out for it. I saw how it was at the warehouse. Blossom and Buttercup… They were both beaten up pretty bad. I had Blossom in my arms when we were in the car. She's a real magic girl, you know that? Right then and there, I felt like her real mother, like never before. At the end of the day, despite our differences, she's just a kid after all, who needs love. She reminded me of that."

"I just hope you don't need to be reminded again," Thomas sniped coldly. He made to leave the kitchen, but Selicia took him by the shoulder.

"Thomas, wait. Does it affect… You know, what's between us?" she asked. The professor had to stop to think about it, finding himself divided.

"No, not that there's much between us," he said. "But only because we need to get along for the Girls."

"But we can. I'm really sorry about what I said to Blossom. I thought I was doing her some good," Selicia said.

"We'll talk when the Girls and I get back home," the professor said, before he left the kitchen, and made his way towards his room.

Selicia breathed a sigh of relief. It could have been worse, and there were silver linings to this storm. It'd gotten something out of her mind, her past sins. And she had just convinced herself that she love Blossom more than she originally did - half of what she said about her feelings towards the little know-it-all had been a performance, but now that she thought about it, it was too good a performance. She had lied using the truth, and ended up unearthing feelings and thoughts she never realized she had before. 'Did Blossom really put a spell on me?' she found herself wondering.

Outside, Bubbles stood on the edge of the roof, unable to bring herself to drop down again. "Come on, Bubbles! I want to go too!" Buttercup chided impatiently behind her. Blossom egged her on as she continued floating near the roof, unsteady every time she lose too much focus - she'd correct her drift and orientation whenever it happened.

"But what if I hit the lawn again!?" Bubbles cried in a high-pitched voice.
"So try to fly before that happens! Remember that feeling before you land! It's your 'wings', Bubbles," Blossom instructed her again. But she would no jump off. Being impatient, Buttercup kicked her in the small of Bubbles' back, sending her plummeting to the ground.

"Buttercup!" Blossom scolded, but it was too late. Bubbles fell, screaming, flapping her arms as if a bird hatchling, trying to fly. Blossom watched with an eye covered.

But just when Bubbles was about to hit the lawn, she glided up, having reversed directions only briefly before falling back down again, sliding on the snow, forming a trail a few yards long. Buttercup, on seeing the progress Bubbles had made, jumped. She screwed up her face in concentration, trying to do the same thing Bubbles did, but she plopped into the snow, unmov ing. Pain had shot up everywhere in her body, and as she landed on her belly, could not slow the descent as well.

Blossom floated down and landed near Bubbles, who was sitting up. "Bubbles! You did it!"

"I did?" Bubbles questioned both her sister and herself. It had all happened too fast that she couldn't process it. It all came back to her in tiny packets of memory. "I guess I did!"

Buttercup moaned not far away as she rubbed her head, still dizzy from the fall. Blossom trudged up to her wayward sister. "Buttercup! That was mean of you!" Blossom pulled Buttercup up to her feet, not to help but, but just so that she could be in her face.

"But- But- She wouldn't go! And she had to jump! She-" Buttercup spluttered, trying to explain herself. She had hoped that Blossom did not see.

"No, Buttercup! Apologize to Bubbles!" Blossom ordered, pointing at Bubbles, who had just stood up, looking at them.

"But-" Buttercup tried again to defend herself.

"Now, Buttercup!" Blossom reiterated her order. Buttercup considered her options - the day before, she'd promised not to tell on her, and now she had still yet to learn how to fly from her. She could rescind her offer - both to keep her little secret and teach her flight - at any time. Then there was that odd little feeling in her heart too, that foreign invader. She hated to admit it, but Blossom had put her in a bit of a bind.

"Yes… Blossom…" Buttercup finally said, her back hunched as she walked towards Bubbles, her eyes closed in shame, but she was more ashamed that she had been reduced to a subservient position below Blossom, when she had been so close to subduing her last night. Before Bubbles, who looked on with a confusion of moods, she apologized: "Hey, Bubbles, it was mean of me to kick you off the House. I'm s-" It was hard for Buttercup to use the 's' word. "I'm s- s- s-"

Blossom came up to Buttercup and gave her a shadow nudge. "I'm s- s-sorry." Buttercup had finally managed it with titanic difficulty.

"Aw, Buttercup, it's fine," Bubbles accepted her apology immediately, an innocent smile spread across her face instantly. She gave Buttercup a hug after that, a gesture which froze her harder than the winter did. "It's nice of you to apologize."

Training did not last long after that. Blossom had tried to get Bubbles to repeat what she had done earlier, or even surpass it, but she had done a belly flop on the snow again, much to Blossom's perplexity. Buttercup made no progress, and planted her face in the snow once more. It helped that Blossom had built snow mounds for them to aim for, however, such that the experience wasn't as
painful. Daddy came out after that, calling for them to come in to prepare for family time in Townsville.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the USDO deliberates on Project Powerpuff and what to do with the Girls after their most recent failure.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 Rating Update and Attached Combat Report

DOC: 17 DEC 1988
Updated: 17 DEC 1988
Created by: CFO Silverslick

Introduction: On 17 DEC 1988, the central committee of the USDO has come together for a general meeting. On the agenda is a performance review of B-47, B-48 and B-49, which, naturally, affects their credit rating. The decisions of committee members are based on an abridged version of the combat report attached below.

Inserted note: Why do you keep calling it the ’credit rating’? The kids are military hardware, like tanks or humvees, not stock companies! - Chief of Security Blackwater

B-47 (Blossom)

Previous Rating: Double A (AA)

Votes for Rating Increase

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Improved performance.
Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Her zero casualty policy saved lives.
Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: Level-headed under extreme circumstances.
Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: Good performance despite inexperience.
Townsville Liaison Bellum | Reason: Zero casualty policy supported by Mayor Wilford.

Votes for Maintaining Rating

NIL

Votes for Rating Decrease

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: Letting criminals go and not killing them.
Chief Armory Officer | Reason: Poor arrest procedures and neglected use of equipment.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: Poor use of manpower, B-48 and B-49 in particular.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Lack of planning and direction.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: Fell far below target, having only detained or killed (zero, precisely, in this case) a fraction of criminals.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Did not achieve mission objectives - few arrests, no kills, one of the three mob boss runs free.

Result: Rating decrease from Double A (AA) to Single A (A). However, USDO Director Cliff demands that her rating be decreased again due to a second mission failure in a row under her leadership. Majority agrees. Therefore, rating decreases again from Single A (A) to Triple B (BBB)

**B-48 (Buttercup)**

**Previous Rating: Triple A (AAA)**

**Votes for Maintaining Rating**

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Listened to leader despite personal differences.

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Severe injuries in targets but no deaths.

Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: Good performance.

Townsville Liaison Bellum | Reason: Helps maintain zero casualty policy, therefore the Mayor's support.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: 'Effective fighting machine'.

**Votes for Rating Decrease**

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: B-48 (Buttercup) should be put under psychiatric review.

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: Did not disobey B-47 (Blossom) when she is wrong.

Chief Armory Officer | Reason: Poor arrest procedures.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Lack of tactics and adaptability.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: Did not take the initiative to achieve mission objectives on her own.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Did not help in achieving mission objectives.

Result: Rating decreased from Triple A (AAA) to Double A (AA).

**B-49 (Bubbles)**

**Previous Rating: Triple D (DDD)**

**Votes for Rating Increase**

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Improved performance.
Votes for Maintaining Rating

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Ethical considerations - B-49 is a child. (Voided, as B-49 is considered a non-person under USDO directive.) Unable to produce a second reason, resulting in his vote null.

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: Recommended to freeze rating until psychiatric evaluation.

Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: Wait for further evidence before passing judgement.

Townsville Liaison Bellum | Reason: Losing B-49 will reduce Townsville's confidence in Project Powerpuff and USDO.

Votes for Rating Decrease

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: Desertion and cowardice.

Chief Armory Officer | Reason: Desertion despite good equipment.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: 'Spat on the effort everyone put in to put her on the field'

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Soft and weak.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: Complete waste of money and resources for practically no returns.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Absolutely did nothing for the mission.

Result: Rating decreased from Triple D (DDD) to Double D (DD)

Owing to the poor and rapidly deteriorating rating of B-49 (Bubbles), the committee has decided to vote on whether to euthanize B-49 (Bubbles).

Votes for No Actions

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Euthanasia of B-49 will be a waste of money and resources previously invested.

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Child euthanasia is illegal. (Note: Voided as B-49 is a non-person, not a child) New Reason: Euthanasia of B-49 is a waste of opportunity to study the body of an enhanced human being. (Note: Reason passed despite B-49 not considered a human being)

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: Child euthanasia is wrong. (Note: Voided as B-49 is a non-person, not a child) New Reason: Euthanasia of B-49 will mean loss of opportunity to study the psychology of an enhanced human being. (Note: Reason passed despite B-49 not considered a human being)

Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: Despite her poor performance, B-49 is a scientific marvel to be cherished. She should at least be kept for observation and research purposes.

Townsville Liaison Bellum | Reason: Losing B-49 will reduce Townsville's confidence in Project Powerpuff and the USDO.

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: Soldiers should not be executed for poor performance - only chastised, punished, reconditioned, retrained, even brainwashed, but not executed.

Votes to Euthanize B-49 (Bubbles)
Chief Armory Officer | Reason: B-49 is a money and resource sink that must be rid of.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: Same as above.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Sensitivity of the missions necessitates her death.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: No point in investing further money and resources in a failed product.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Redirection of Project Powerpuff's focus to the other two subjects, and possibly other newer, more promising subjects.

Result: For the time being, owing to a majority vote for no actions to be taken, B-49 (Bubbles) will be allowed to continue law enforcement duties. The committee will convene again and vote on euthanasia if B-49's rating does not improve or deteriorates further.

USDO Combat Report 12161988-TV05

DOC: 17 DEC 1988
Updated: 22 DEC 1988

Created by: Security Captain Kate
Updated by: Chief of Security Blackwater

1st Covert Ops of Townsville Industrial Park

Introduction: In the pursuit of evidence against the 'Amoeba Boys', Dons of the Lombardi Family, and arrests of their muscles, the Townsville Police Department's very own Detective Mullens had targeted 'Doc Bob's Pharmaceutical Storage' in the warehouse area of the Townsville Industrial Park for its known involvement with the Lombardi mafioso as a front for storing drugs. As the TPD had requested that The Three of Project Powerpuff assist Detective Mullens in this important case, the USDO becomes involved.

Date/Time: 16 DEC 1988, 2135 - 18 DEC 1988, 2359 (including ongoing manhunt for escaping suspects)


Belligerent Forces

THE LAW

Commanders and Leaders

Police Captain Wilson (Townsville Police Department - Overall)

Detective Mullens (Townsville Police Department - Investigation)

Chief of Security Blackwater (United States Defence Organization)

B-47, Blossom Utonium (Leader of the Three of Project Powerpuff - USDO)

TOWNSVILLE LAW ENFORCEMENT
- 86 Police Officers (Police Raiding Party)
- 20 SWAT Officers (Police Raiding Party)
- 38 Police Cruisers (Police Raiding Party)
- 4 SWAT Vans (Police Raiding Party)

[106 Combatants total]

UNITED STATES DEFENCE ORGANIZATION
- 40 SWAT Operatives
- 6 Humvees
- 4 Unmarked Armored SUVs

[40 Combatants total]

PROJECT POWERPUFF AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL
- 10 Powerpuff Task Force Soldiers
- 1 SWAT Operative
- B-47 (Blossom)
- B-48 (Buttercup)
- B-49 (Bubbles)
- 3 Lamborghini Speed Transports

[11 Combatants, 3 Organic Law Enforcement Platforms total]

CRIME

Commanders and Leaders
Don Ethan 'Junior' Ricci (Lombardi Mafia Family)
Capo Gabriele Gallo (Lombardi Mafia Family)
Foreman Jack Steele (Indentured Associates)

LOMBARDI MAFIA FAMILY
- 20 Mafia Soldato
- 10 Regular Associates
- 10 Indentured Associates
- 8 Vehicles (of various classes)

[40 Combatants total]
Casualties and Losses

THE CITY OF TOWNSVILLE
- 1 Unarmed Civilians Civilian KIA, 6 injured, 1 severely injured
[1 KIA, 6 injured, 1 severely injured]

TOWNSVILLE LAW ENFORCEMENT
- 5 Police Officers injured, 1 severely injured
- 1 SWAT Officer injured
- 3 Police Cruisers damaged
[6 injured, 1 severely injured]

UNITED STATES DEFENCE ORGANIZATION
- 1 SWAT Operative KIA, 1 injured, 1 severely injured
[1 KIA, 1 injured, 1 severely injured]

PROJECT POWERPUFF AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL
- B-47 (Blossom) injured
- B-48 (Buttercup) injured
- B-49 (Bubbles) uninjured with equipment damage
[2 injured]

LOMBARDI MAFIA FAMILY
- 8 Mafia Soldato captured, 6 injured, 1 severely injured
- 3 Regular Associates captured, 3 injured
- 4 Indentured Associates captured, 1 injured, 1 severely injured
- 2 Vehicles damaged
[15 captured, 10 injured, 2 severely injured]

Background - Planning the Raid

After receiving a tip-off from an informant, Detective Mullens organized a raid on Doc Bob's Pharmaceutical Storage with the purpose of securing more evidence to build a case against the Lombardi Mafioso. The ultimate goal of the raid was to catch one of the Dons on the crime scene, which would incriminate him with no chance of an alibi protecting him or allowing the use of plausible deniability.

However, in order to protect himself, Detective Mullens had decided to go for a less direct approach on the raid, with police officers working with him forming a loose net around the target warehouse. He contacted the USDO to form the direct raiding party instead, so that the Lombardi's eye would be
focused on the USDO and not the TPD instead.

This naturally involves The Three of Project Powerpuff, as they are unlikely to die even from a hail of sustained bullets, and they have been trained in counter-terrorism operations, which should improve their performance.

**Composition of Lombardi Mafia Forces**

The drug front was considered to be the back end of mob operations, and was thus lightly guarded. Only 50% of the muscle there were actual initiated members of the Family, with the rest merely associates, and the number present was considered higher than before, raised only because Don Ethan 'Junior' Ricci was rumored to be visiting.

The Caporegime, Gabrielle Gallo, is a seasoned member of the Lombardi.

**Joint TPD-USDO-Project Powerpuff Deployment Plan**

All police units are deployed loosely in a wide area and staggered to appear less like a cohesive force. SWAT units are hidden from the open. The reason for this is to make it appear less like a raid and more like coincidence. However, they were deployed such that all possible routes away from the target warehouse were covered. Only two police officers were present near the warehouse - Detective Mullens and Patrolwoman Olivia, under cover of darkness and behind closed doors.

The USDO were allowed to deploy closer to the the warehouse, as the vanguard raiding party, with B-47 (Blossom), B-48 (Buttercup) and B-49 (Bubbles) put at the very front.

The Three of Project Powerpuff were deployed with their PTF escort shepherding them to the warehouse so that they could enter without alerting the Lombardi forces present at the site.

**Order of Battle**

- The Three, lead by B-47 (Blossom), entered through a hole made by B-49 (Bubbles) in the fence. They sneaked past the guards patrolling the perimeter.

- B-47 (Blossom) chose a backdoor as her point of entry. B-48 (Buttercup) knocks out the guard to cover their tracks.

- B-47 (Blossom) set up an ambush for 9 of the Lombardi muscles within the warehouse, with B-47 and B-49 on the shelves above and B-48 baiting them with noise at the back. The ambush was a success, resulting in all enemy combatants incapacitated.

- They were unable to hide them effectively however, nor restrain them at all due to lack of time and equipment. The absence of the 9 muscles prompted a search by the Capo of the warehouse, Gabriele Gallo.

- Capo Gabriele Gallo was able to organize a search before B-47 (Blossom) was ready, resulting in poor concealment of both incapacitated guards and workers, and positioning.

- Capo Gabriele Gallo saw a weapon previously held by a fellow mobster on the ground, turning the search into a manhunt.

- B-47 (Blossom) improvised with a quick surprise 3-pronged attack with B-47 (Blossom) and B-48 (Buttercup) attacking the back and front of the enemy group, while B-49 (Bubbles) scaled the shelves to attack from above.
- Failure to scale the shelves quietly on B-49's (Bubbles) part resulted in premature execution of B-47 (Blossom). However, account from B-47 stated that the enemy group was splitting up, forcing her to take action quickly.

- B-47 (Blossom)'s decision led to a failed ambush, devolving into an outright pitched battle that, although she was ultimately victorious in, destroyed her element of surprise and stealth.

- B-49 (Bubbles) panics and retreats to hide after making minimal contribution in both ambushes.

- Forced to act without B-49, B-47 and B-48 advances on the remaining Lombardi soldatos and associates under a hail of heavy fire, used a forklift as a mobile cover, a tactic that fell apart due to a grenade.

- Don Ethan 'Junior' Ricci was sighted in the office along with an 'important lady'.

- The remaining Lombardi soldatos and associates retreats from the warehouse, with Junior staying behind to cover their retreat.

- Outside the warehouse, the PTF force supporting the subjects of Project Powerpuff arrested the two patrolling mob soldatos outside after a protracted firefight.

- B-47 (Blossom) and B-48 (Buttercup) engaged in deadly Close Quarters Combat (CQC) in the warehouse. According to their accounts, Junior was immune to gunshots and even more so to their unarmed strikes. Their observations are still pending verification.

- Junior emerged victorious over B-47 and B-48, wounding them 'lightly' and incapacitating them. The Powerpuff Task Force squad supporting The Three arrived, prompting Junior to retreat.

**Result and Aftermath**

Although the subjects of Project Powerpuff were able to incapacitate almost half the warehouse criminals, only 9 were captured in the warehouse itself due to 'Junior's intervention buying them time to wake up and escape with the rest. While an improvement over the previous results in the 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank, it is still well below expectations, even the most pessimistic of them, and this poor result can be traced back to B-47's questionable leadership decisions. Despite having a clear shot and complete immunity to firearms, she refused to open fire on the remaining half of the criminals who were still fighting fit.

B-47, B-48 and B-49's failure to detain Don Ethan 'Junior' Ricci, a critical objective, has also lowered confidence in Project Powerpuff, especially when it has proven that the subjects are not completely invulnerable to injuries. The USDO's direction, however, has been adjusted due to this, with intelligence manpower diverted to investigate The Lombardi leader's abilities, which is apparently similar to the Project Powerpuff subjects.

The escaped criminals were mostly able to escape police and USDO attempts to detain them through the use of a hidden path through the chainlink fences using their vehicles. The result was a high-speed chase through Townsville Industrial Park and a connecting highway, resulting in casualties on all sides, and only 6 other criminals captured. It is suspected that some of the TPD officers involved were corrupted and had intentionally 'lose' the escaping Mafia members and associates.

Investigations revealed that the camera footage in the warehouse had been partially erased, such that without 'Junior's arrest at the scene of the crime, his presence cannot be proven in the warehouse. Evidences such as shell casings will likely become 'expired' as their link to the Don will be erased by criminal measures.
This will ultimately complicate the investigation against the Lombardi Crime Family, as fewer evidence has been gathered against them, and their members and associates' testimonials will largely be empty even if they were to speak, as they will be backed by little evidence.

Analysis - Project Powerpuff Failure

Other than the previously stated reasons for the failure of the mission in the 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank, others can be added to the list here, such as:

- Poor leadership on the part of B-47 (Blossom): Her defining failure is her refusal to kill.

- Inexperience: the subjects have never fought anyone equivalent to their abilities before, if their account of the mission proves to be true.

Response

While training them had proven to be beneficial, more would be deemed useless as training is no longer the limiting factor of Project Powerpuff's success. Instead, efforts will be made on-site to induce B-47 (Blossom) to make the right decisions, or at least manage the limitations of her leadership to promote greater success.

The committee will decide on the nature of the inducements to be made to 'improve' her leadership. However, preliminary analysis of the possibilities excludes direct threats to her and her sisters' lives as it might result in a breach of containment. It may also make known their caretakers' direct involvement with the USDO (note: surprisingly, the subjects have never questioned their caretakers' cooperation with the USDO), and the true nature of their existence.
Chapter 54: A Family Trip

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium, Selicia and the Girls goes on a much-needed family trip.

Chapter 54: A Family Trip

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Road to City.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1125.

Professor Utonium drove his car with the utmost concentration. It was a way to distract himself, but even this measure was failing. There was simply too much on his mind. The storm that nearly drove him to suicide, that had sapped his health and gave him an illness that had only recently abated, had never left. It had ebbed and flowed, and now he could feel the tide of trouble rising once more.

"Hello? Thomas? It's been a while," Wiggums had called him on his USDO-issued flip-phone, not even half an hour ago, just before he got into his car. The day was ruined for him the moment his old Organization friend called, though he couldn't bring himself to blame the socially awkward logistics manager. He had planned the trip right down to the minute; he had a camera dangling on his neck, and it was all ruined.

"What is it, Wiggums?" he had replied, that moment scarcely thirty minutes ago.

"You're not going to like this, Upton. All the Girls have just been down-rated," Wiggums had told him then. "We tried voting to increase or at least maintain their performance ratings, but we're always short. I'm sorry, Upton."

"How bad is it?" he had asked, even as his Girls were walking up to him, towards the car.

"Not entirely bad though. Buttercup's still at double A. Blossom's been knocked down to triple B. It's Bubbles I'm worried about. She's now a double D, just next door to absolute zero," Wiggums had replied, and it felt like his guts were doing somersaults in, as if his chest cavity was filled with boiling water when he heard it.

"What are they going to do?" the professor had asked, feeling his throat dry. Just then, Bubbles had come up to him, asking for him to carry her. He obliged, scooping her up with one arm, with the little girl doing most of the work.

"Nothing, thankfully. It's a relief. There's enough of us to block off euthanasia," Wiggums reported proudly. But Professor Utonium was anything but relieved. Instead, he could feel his heart skip a beat when there was the mere mention of euthanasia. With the USDO, it wasn't going to even be something as humane as how medical euthanasia was conducted, likely. Shadowy agencies like the USDO were usually fond of their double-speak.
As if that wasn't enough to ensure that he wasn't going to enjoy his day with the Girls, Buttercup had wailed about how Mommy should come along too before they left. The professor needed time away from the 'wife', especially after what Blossom had told him. But Blossom had actually sided with Buttercup and Selicia, and Bubbles went along with it as well.

And to top it off, he'd caught Buttercup hogging the bathroom again, doing God-knows-what. Once more, he'd heard giggles inside. The tinkling of glass, too? He couldn't quite tell. And when he knocked on the door, he heard rapid footsteps and the faucet. When he pressed his adopted daughter about it, she'd came up with another excuse.

"Oh, I was just really looking forward to our trip, Daddy," Buttercup had said. But enigmas and secrets aside, the worse part of it all, besides Bubbles' life on the balance, certainly had nothing to do with bathrooms.

"But Dad! Mom's family, too!" she'd cried after Professor Utonium had told her, when asked, that Mommy wasn't coming. "Can't she come? Please, Dad? Pleeeeeease?!" It seemed like an eternity ago that Buttercup had gotten over her 'girlish' phase, and it was at that moment that it had resurfaced, even if briefly, and boy did Buttercup chose the right moment to let the girly girl in her out.

"She has things to do at home anyway," Professor Utonium scrambled for the next excuse he could take.

And Blossom had chosen the right moment to see eye-to-eye with Buttercup, who he knew had a completely different personality from her sister.

"Dad, I think Buttercup's right. Mom should come along too," Blossom had said, but she appeared to be in a strange mood. She'd said it with her eyes to the floor, if it wasn't closed, as if she was afraid that he would see what was in her eyes.

"But- What about that whole thing back in the playground? About you missing the first days and just the four of us together?" The professor had tried to reason with Blossom. Blossom wasn't quite herself, at least not as he knew her. The Girls were changing so fast.

"But she's our mom – she just had to go away when she had us. She's family, that's what you said, and it's a family trip," Blossom said. The professor had to look away when he heard Selicia's lie – his lie – quoted to him. Blossom, and Bubbles in his arms, hadn't noticed. Buttercup found it peculiar.

"What do you think, Bubbles?" the professor asked the bundle of joy in his arms after a sigh.

"Mommy should come. Because she's… Mom?" Bubbles tried in vain to substantiate herself, but to the professor, her opinion was enough, even if it was backed shoddily with circular reasoning. That was the end of it. Selicia was with them the next moment; he had to get back to The House to fetch her.

That was the story of how Selicia ended up sitting right next to him in the car. Looking at his rear-view mirror, he saw the entourage his family was attracting. The speed transports were right behind him, followed by several humvees. He tried his best not to show any contempt for his current situation. He smiled at Selicia, making use of his new-found talent in hiding and faking emotions. Selicia smiled back, but she knew better than to take Thomas' smile at face value.

The Girls at the back were oblivious of the tension between the two. They chomped away at the cookies Mommy had made.
"Wow, Mom! You're the best! These chocolate cookies are awesome!" Buttercup exclaimed as she took another bite into 'herself', or rather, a cartoon representation of her in a confectionery medium. They were each given a paper bag full of it. Each of them had four; Thomas had given up his share as he couldn't bear to eat anything Selicia had made at the moment.

The first place they'd been to was Townsville Central Park. The Girls loved the place. He could tell from how alive they became when they were there. Together, the family built snowmen, tried to build a castle, though the walls kept falling apart, under siege by their own limited ability in masonry using unconventional materials. The tension between Selicia and Thomas melted away as they tended to the super-powered younglings between them. It was a reminder that they both had common grounds, even if they expressed it in different ways.

In the distance, an odd ten or so USDO soldiers were spread out, somehow attracting more attention than the Girls, though when the Girls were sighted, people tend to get mesmerized, still, by their appearance. Their eyes in particular, then their beauty as a close second. Thankfully, they could pass very easily as regular human beings, and their eyes could still be explained away as a result of contact lenses. Professor Utonium had even come up with a story just in case; he had plenty of time to do so. Special contact lenses. Very special. Cutting edge stuff. For a rare hereditary disease that required special corrective eyewear.

After taking a few pictures as keepsakes, they took to the road again. This time, it was something different, for they stopped at Pete's-A Pizza, where the moment the Girls entered the Pizzeria, they were dazzled and wowed by the vibrant atmosphere, with an animatronics band singing and dancing on stage, and more children and parents were having fun. Arcades lined one wall with a mega ball pit. The moment they sat down, a man in a dog suit came over to take their order.

"Bow wow wow wow! Can I take your order?" the waiter quipped excitedly.

As it was practically a kids' zone, Professor Utonium decided to let the Girls have their own table, while he took another not far from theirs with his 'wife'. At first, they ate in silence as they watched the Girls talking among themselves. Blossom and Buttercup seemed closer than before, where they were previously at odds with each other most of the time. They could only sit and eat in silence for so long, however, before the kids started noticing them.

"So, I guess this is our first date?" the professor said to Selicia, jumping at the first thing on his mind to stave off suspicions from the Girls.

"I guess it kinda is," Selicia replied, a little awkward too. She played with the fake wedding band on her ring finger, rotating it. She took a secretive glance at the Girls. They'd gone back to talking among themselves. Something about flying. Of course. They, too, took occasional glances at them. "The Girls are looking at us," she added.

"I know," the professor said.

"Reach for my hand," Selicia suggested. Thomas took her advice, and put a hand on top of hers, completely engulfing it. Silence prevailed for another awkward moment, before she defeated it once more. "Pretty wild ride so far, huh?"

"Yeah, wild," the professor followed along, with a nervous laughter trailing behind his copy-cat words. Selicia placed a hand over the one that engulfed her other. She could feel his hand pull away, only to stop.

"We need to get along better than this," Selicia said.
"Sounds like a conversation we had before," the professor remarked.

"And with the two of us flying, I'm sure we'll put a smile on Mister Blackwater's face in no time," Blossom said to her sisters as she chomped on a pizza. "He'll love us, and then he'll stop shouting at us."

"Urgh, that gorilla? I don't think he even knows how to smile!" Buttercup said, before taking a huge chunk off a pepperoni slice hungrily, smearing her lips and cheeks with ketchup. "Mmm-hmm, this is better than the last one."

"That's not the point, Buttercup. We need to stop the bad guys or they'll hurt Townsville…" Blossom explained.

"And we'll do it better if we all could fly. What's the secret, Bubbles?" Buttercup asked.

"I don't know- I was just… Afraid, I guess," Bubbles said, unsure of herself.

"Oh, that's helpful," Buttercup remarked sarcastically as she frowned at Bubbles, who became downcast. Blossom stared at the emerald-eyed little girl angrily, who turned her frown upside-down into a nervous smile immediately. She knew what it meant. "Bubbles, I didn't mean that. I get angry all the time, I can't help it. I'm s-sorry." It had taken some practice, but Buttercup managed to vomit the apology out quicker.

"You've been awfully sweet lately, Buttercup," Bubbles said, immediately smiling back. "Thank you."

"Don't mention it," Buttercup replied, her fake smile still up, though Bubbles was none the wiser. She sneaked a glance at Blossom, whose gaze, pinned on her, was still on fire, but at least she was smiling from the effort she took to correct herself. It meant only good things. It meant that Blossom wouldn't tell on her, which meant that she wouldn't lose Daddy immediately. "Hey, you want a slice of my pepperoni? It's good!"

"Aw, you're too kind, Buttercup," Bubbles praised as she took a slice from Buttercup's kid-sized pan. Buttercup laughed, feeling the sting as she did love her pepperoni pizza. "I'll trade with you. You can have my Hawaiian if you want. The pineapple is tasty!"

Buttercup looked at Blossom, wondering what to do. Blossom nodded, and Buttercup took a slice of Hawaiian and dug into it, before feeling the sole of her leader's Mary-Jane digging into the top of her foot. "Thank you, Bubbles. You're kind, too," Buttercup said, her tone painfully artificial. It made Bubbles happy, though. The tomboy reached for a slice and munched on it. The fruit crunched within her mouth, but she thought that it tasted strange. Weird. Dreadful. A single teardrop fell from Buttercup's eye as she withdrew the rest of the Hawaiian pizza slice and she continued to smile, her face feeling like cracking, when Blossom pulled at her string again.

"You know, we sound exactly like a married couple," Selicia said.

"Really?" Professor Utonium replied in disbelief.

"We argue all the time," Selicia said. "Isn't that how it normally goes?"
"Well…" the professor thought back to his days with Eileen. It was all happy memories, even the days when they had argued, until that fateful day, which made it all the more painful and it had shown on his face. "Yes, that's how it normally goes."

"You're thinking about Eileen and Bloome again, are you?" Selicia pressed gently. She got up and stood behind her 'husband', leaning on him, putting her face beside his, her chin resting on his shoulder. They both looked at the Girls, who were engrossed in some other discussion. Then Bubbles spotted Selicia and how she was lovingly embracing her Daddy. It naturally attracted looks from the other two. "I promise I'm not trying to replace Eileen, Tommy. But you have to move on. She'd want you to. Look at Buttercup, Blossom and Bubbles, look at us. We're in this forever - I'd want this to last forever, and you've shown me how. We should act as if our… relationship is a little more stronger and permanent."

"I don't know if I can, Selicia," the professor confessed, barely containing himself. Memories were flooding back once more, quite suddenly, and it had been many days now - a first, and it wasn't hard to explain why, when he was so preoccupied with his adopted lab-grown children.

"I know you can, Thomas," Selicia encouraged. "You've managed it in front of the kids for a month now."

What Selicia said got the professor to turn and regard her, this time in a different light. She was right, of course. Come to think of it, the professor thought she looked rather attractive. Relative young age aside, she was a fine specimen of a female Homo Sapien Sapien. Her attitude needed work, and it had all worked out. As far as he knew, she had stopped abusing Bubbles, and she had changed her attitude towards Blossom. Buttercup wasn't even remotely an issue - they got along just fine, a little too well, even.

He had to try, really try, not for himself or Selicia, but for the Girls.

"We could go on another date on Monday. A real one, I mean," Thomas finally said. "How are you with fine-dining?"

"I'll kill you if I don't die of shame first," Selicia joked with an ecstatic giggle. "I saw an Italian cafe which looked really good, I'll take you there."

"Does it have to be… You know," Thomas agreed. "Italian?"

"Oh come on! They're not all part of the mafia!" Selicia exclaimed, taking care not to be too loud, while slapping Thomas in the shoulder playfully. "Besides, if anything were to happen, we'll save you - all four of us."

Professor Utonium gave a sigh. He couldn't help but to notice that he had been doing that very often lately, as if he was twice his age, a lamenting old man filled with regrets. "I wish the Girls could experience a normal childhood. The way things are going now, they practically have none. They're part-time children, at most."

"Yeah well, it's not like you can turn off their enhancements, right?" Selicia said rhetorically.

An unexpected brainwave washed across the professor. Chemical X's formula, its molecular structure. The stabilizing agents. The USDO were only so hard on the Girls only because they thought the Girls were too powerful, too dangerous, too important an asset. What if they were no longer powerful?

Connecting the dots, however, he knew that there were many steps that he would have to take before
he could even think of testing a method to safely disempower the Girls. It would be years at worse, months at best, before he could arrive at a viable solution. It meant coming up with a unifying theory on the inner workings of Chemical X first - he had only multiple bodies of loosely linked theories related to its different properties. It meant understanding how Chemical X was able to bestow the wondrous gifts and curses that were the many enhancements of the Girls, which seemed to be multiplying by the numbers and growing more complicated by the day. It meant coming up with a way to separate the Girls from the Chemical X, somehow. Trials involving earlier versions of Chemical X and its removal from subjects has always had fatal consequences, unfortunately.

It was a pipe-dream, at least for now.

"I wish we could," the professor said hopelessly.

"Until we can," Selicia added, agreeing with him. "We'll just have to be there for them every time they go to war."

Blossom came up to them after that. "Hey Dad, hey Mom, can we jump into the ball pit?" she asked sweetly. Buttercup and Bubbles were looking expectantly at them.

Blossom was all the professor needed to feel a little better. "Sure, go right ahead, you three," he said to the Girls with a laugh. "Just don't overexert yourselves. You don't want your pizzas coming back up!"

So they went into the ball pit, tried the arcade and ate some more before they took a few more family pictures and left the Italian Animatronic Jug Band to their music.

The City of Townsville. Uptown. The Mall.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1354.

They spent their after-lunch hours in Townville's The Mall. Third times' the charm. Being the biggest there was, they hadn't even explored the entirety of The Mall yet, but they didn't need to. Despite how complicated their lives had become, the Girls enjoyed the little things. They returned to the same clothes mega-store, just that they'd picked up different things. Black belts as an option to replace their sashes, the beginnings of fashion choice for the Girls. Rainbow Steams (TM) had also just pushed out a line of jackets (In all the colors of the rainbow, naturally) meant to complement the Girls' dresses, normal and frilly alike. The professor took three for each of the three Girls. Selicia picked out pantyhoses for them, of the white variety. But most importantly, they bought dresses and shoes one size bigger for them.

"Dad, aren't those too big for us?" Blossom, ever the observant one, asked as the professor threw in three of each for each of the three Girls.

"They won't be for long, Blossy-dear," Professor Utonium replied. "Before you know it, you'd be the same size as Mommy here."

"That would be cool," Buttercup, who was standing on the frame of the shopping cart the man was pushing, said. "I bet I can punch and kick harder if I'm two, no, four times bigger!"

"But how will Dad carry us if we get that big?" Bubbles commented meekly from inside the shopping cart. She looked a little like a caged animal while she was inside.
"Maybe Dad will be twice as big by that time, right Dad?" Blossom theorized. The professor and his 'wife' laughed.

"No, he'll be four times bigger!" Buttercup corrected.

"That's not how it works, Girls," Professor Utonium explained, still laughing. "We stop growing at a certain age. I won't be getting any bigger anytime soon."

"Then how will Dad carry us if we get that big?" Bubbles repeated her question. For some reason, she could feel fear and sadness welling up inside her.

"I probably won't have to by that time," the professor said. He'd seen the look on Bubbles' face, and he knew why she would feel that way. "You can carry me instead," he tried joking, but it didn't improve her mood. He thought fast for a solution. "You know what wouldn't change?"

"What?" Bubbles asked, close to tears.

"My love for you," the professor said. "No matter how things change, I will always love the three of you. Forever and always."

"Thanks, Dad," Blossom said.

"Yeah, Dad, you're the best," Buttercup added.

Bubbles said nothing. She simply leaned the back of her head on the professor's fingers on the handlebar of the cart, craving the feeling of his hand. The professor caressed her in the cheek briefly.

As usual, a few people were staring at them, specifically, a man and his girlfriend, or wife. His look was fixed on the Girls.

"What are you staring at!?" Selicia spat at him sternly.

"N-nothing! Beautiful family you have there!" the man stammered before backing off and walking away hurriedly, dragging his lady along. It'd reminded the Girls' guardians of their eyes. They'd added sunglasses to the cart after that as an afterthought. In reality, it would be almost as hard to explain the sunglasses away. It didn't work all the time either - while testing it in the dim lighting of a changing stall, the Girls' glowing eyes would still shine through, making them seem a little intimidating. Chief of Security Blackwater would have loved it.

After doing their shopping, Professor Utonium brought them to the arcade, but the game machines there were only half the fun. The photo machines there offered something that the professor's camera did not have - fun overlays, a stress-free timer, and the privacy of a booth.

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Photo Archive 12171988 - Utonium 'Family'

DOC: 23 FEB 1989

The following photos have been copied for archival, to be used by USDO personnel for any purposes, including administration, research, investigation, public relations, newsletter publications, covert or military operations, political leverage and manipulation, etc.

Photo #45
Desc: Subjects B-47 (Blossom, centre), B-48 (Buttercup, B-47's right) and B-49 (Bubbles, B-48's left) close together and smiling. The size of the photo booth had forced them close to each other, such that their cheeks were pressing close to each other. Overlay with clouds and angels at the top and bottom of the photo.

Photo #46

Desc: Subjects B-47 (Blossom, left) and B-48 (Buttercup, right) hugging closely, with B-47 smiling but B-48 was barely maintaining a smile. Overlay has puppies lining top and bottom.

Photo #47

Desc: Subjects B-47 (Blossom, centre) and B-49 (Bubbles, behind) with B-49 on the back of B-47, both smiling. Overlay has balloons on the left and right.

Photo #48

Desc: Subjects B-48 (Buttercup, right) and B-49 (Bubbles, left) with B-48 putting an arm around B-49's neck, as if wrestling. Both of them were laughing. Overlay has Mexican masked wrestlers on all four corners of the photo.

Photo #49

Desc: Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, SWAT division, designated 'mother' and subject handler, with B-48 (Buttercup) in a close-up, with them kissing in the lips (note by psychiatrist Alice: filial and platonic) while looking at the camera. Hearts lined the top of the photo.

Photo #51

Desc: Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, SWAT division, designated 'mother' and subject handler, with B-47 (Blossom) and B-49 (Bubbles) hanging on each of her arms. She appears to be able to lift the both of them with very little visible distress. All three smiling.

Photo #52

Desc: Professor Utonium, Research Division, designated field researcher and subject handler, with B-47 (Blossom) on his lap. The professor's head is on top of B-47's, and he is hugging her from behind. Overlay has books at the bottom.

Photo #53

Desc: Professor Utonium, Research Division, designated field researcher and subject handler, with B-48 (Buttercup) kissing him in the lips. Professor Utonium appeared surprised, with his eyes looking away from the camera (note by psychiatrist Alice: the professor appears to have been ambushed in this case). Overlay has toy rocket ships at the bottom.

Photo #54

Desc: Professor Utonium, Research Division, designated field researcher and subject handler, with B-49 (Bubbles) cradled in his arms like a baby. Overlay has bubbles around the border.

Photo #55

Desc: Professor Utonium with all three subjects. B-47 (Blossom, right leg), B-48 (Buttercup, left leg) and B-49 (Bubbles, on the professor's back). All subjects smiling. Overlay has rainbows and hearts
at the bottom.

Photo #56

Desc: The entire family, squeezed in together for a close-up of their faces. The subjects at the bottom (B-47 at the centre, B-48 on the right and B-49 on the left), the handlers above them (Professor Utonium on the right and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin on the left), their cheeks pressed closely together.

The City of Townsville. Downtown. The Mall.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1509.

It was tea time. The professor had taken the family to a cafe in the mall for some cake and juice, but it was more for Selicia and him. The Girls weren't tired from walking (or running around the place), as their enhanced strength and stamina weren't taxed at all by the weight of their bodies or the minuscule distance they traveled (by enhanced human being standards), so it was just another experience for them. The professor, on the other hand, needed to sit down, while Selicia could also use the break, though it would take another twelve more hours of forced marching to tire her out.

This time, the guardians and Girls were together at one table.

"You know, Christmas is coming," Selicia changed the topic when it was most convenient.

"Christmas? Oh! I've nearly forgotten about Christmas!" Professor Utonium exclaimed in agitation - it would have been disastrous if he did.

"Any idea what to do for Christmas Eve and the big day itself?" Selicia asked. The professor hunched his back, hand on his chin. It had been a long time since he had to celebrate it in a family setting.

"Right, umr," the professor uttered as he thought some more.

"Wait, what's Christmas?" Blossom asked. The professor agonizing it, after Selicia made special mention of it had piqued her interest. It seemed like something special. The professor's eyes lit up. Answering Blossom's question would buy him time from total embarrassment, perhaps inspire him. "Christmas is the celebration of giving, honey."

"But what do we give on Christmas?" Bubbles asked.

"And what do I get?" Buttercup came up with his own question too.

"Well, anything really, as long as you mean it," the professor said. "But don't worry your little head over giving. Bubbles - Girls - I think the three of you have been giving too much. It's time the three of you get something."

"It's also a time when we decorate The House with a Christmas tree, and streamers and bells and… the three of you will love it," Selicia explained further. "But most importantly, it's the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ."

"Do we have to bring religion into this?" the professor interrupted.

"Religion? We're talking about Christmas." Selicia said.
"Selicia, it's not what I-" Thomas was about to raise his voice when he stopped. Smiles fell away from the Girls' face when they sense an argument in the horizon. Not wanting to ruin the family trip, he lowered his tone, tried to compromise. "I guess it's culture. It would be interesting for the Girls."

So Selicia went on about Jesus Christ, and inevitably talked about Christianity and the Bible. Blossom listened attentively, always curious. Bubbles thought Jesus was a nice guy who she would like to meet. Buttercup did not say it, but she thought this 'Jesus' fellow should have killed the Roman soldiers instead of the other way around. The whole religious lesson didn't last long, however-

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! Came a familiar sound from the professor's jacket. Bubbles broke out in cold sweats instantly because of it. The professor reached into his jacket and pulled out the flip phone Wiggums issued to all of them. Blossom thought it strange that it wasn't the flip phone in her pocket that rang.

The professor sighed.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The emergency hotline did not care for his reluctance.

"Dad…" Bubbles mewled, visibly distressed. Tears were welling up in her eyes. The professor looked at her, the well of emotions inside him stirred into a maelstrom. What could he say to her? When Wiggums had told him that the sweetest of the three was just a vote away from being executed? Just because she was the most normal-seeming girl of the three?

It did not mean that the others were free from trouble either. Buttercup had killed a man. Even if he was a robber, what worried him the most was that Buttercup felt nothing after she had done the deed. It wasn't even mentioned in their conversation about guilt. The professor couldn't decide if it was just childhood naivety or… something more unspeakable.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! The phone continued to bang on the door of their party. The professor caressed Bubbles' hair as he flipped open the phone and pressed the answer button. He brought it up to his ear.

"Hello?" he said dispassionately into the phone.

"Professor Utonium. Sorry to interrupt. I know what you guys are doing now, but we've got a call," Agent Blake on the other end said.

"This early in the day? On a weekend?" the professor tried to wiggle his family out of this one - if there's room to wiggle.

"Sorry, sir. It's not my call," Agent Blake apologized.

"Can I say no?" the professor tried again.

"No, I'm afraid not," the security officer said apologetically.

"What is it about?" the professor asked.

"Hell if I know," Agent Blake said.

"Can I come with them?"

"No. I'm sorry, prof. We'll be at the grand entrance of the mall."
The security officer hung up after that, leaving the professor alone to explain the situation to his family. "Girls… It's time for you three to go again."

"Dad, I can't! Please don't send me away!" Bubbles cried, attracting stares from the the tables surrounding them. The professor looked around, embarrassed. He stood up.

"Selicia, watch the table. Come on, Girls," he said. Blossom and Buttercup jumped off their chairs immediately. Bubbles did it reluctantly, torn between listening to her father and not wanting to go. Professor Utonium had to take her by the hand, and there was some resistance as they walked out of the cafe.

"Dad, I don't want to go!" Bubbles sobbed, attracting yet more stares from shoppers close enough. They crossed the plaza, and by this time, the professor had to actually pull Bubbles along.

"Don't be such a pussy, Bubbles," Buttercup spat, disgusted by Bubbles' cowardice. Blossom glared at her, and she backed off, intimidated once more by what she could do to her.

"Buttercup, where did you learn that word? Don't use it again," the professor reprimanded her. That was when Bubbles started pulling back, putting her foot down, nearly causing her father to fall. "Bubbles!" The professor pulled at her, but she was far too strong. He was stuck, as if chained to a ship's anchor.

Professor Utonium knelt down, taking out a handkerchief to wipe Bubbles' tears away. "Bubbles, this is what you're born to do - it's your gift." Of course, he couldn't tell her that if she wouldn't do it - couldn't do it - the USDO was going to make sure she wouldn't have to try again. For good.

"But I can't! I- I- hurt a man real bad and…" Bubbles tried to explain. "They'll hurt me too!"

"Your sisters will be there with you," the professor said to her. "You're helping people this way, Bubbles."

"Dad, no…" Bubbles continued to cry, inconsolable. Time was of the essence.

"Bubbles, if you don't, there are people who will hate you for this," the professor said desperately. "And they won't be kind to you. I love you, and I don't want you to get into trouble. Please."

"No!" Bubbles screamed.

"Blossom, Buttercup," the professor instructed his other Girls. Together, the two of them dragged her towards The Mall's grand entrance, all the way into the Lamborghini with Agent Blake, all the while attracting even more stares from people who were wondering what the hell was going on as Bubbles screamed all the way to the car.

"Must be a spoiled rich kid-" the professor heard one of them say.

"Damn rich kids and their tantrums- Why can't they be more like that Princess Morbucks?" he heard another concur.

"Hey, watch the kid! Dang bad parents…" another Townsville citizen spat.

As the Lamborghini drove away, the professor could only dread what was next. Bubbles seemed to be reacting quite badly to her law enforcement duties, even if it wasn't like the first time. Something told him he was going to need professional help at this stage - not just for himself, but also for Bubbles.
Chapter 55: The Strip (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls are sent into a place where little girls ought not to be in.

Chapter 55: The Strip (Part 1)

The Mall. Mission Time - 0 mins

Bubbles was dragged into the Lamborghini speed transport kicking and screaming and crying. Blossom and Buttercup had to sit with her in between to keep her from flying out of the car - literally or otherwise. "I hate you! I hate all of you!" she screamed in a high-pitched wail. Agent Blake and Corporal Rutherford had to cover their ears due to how shrill it was.

"Afternoon to the three of you too," Agent Blake said as he switched gears on the Lamborghini. "Looks like the three of you would have to get changed inside." Corporal Rutherford started handing out their uniforms, armor and helmets.

"Ooh, thank God! I was gettin' crushed in here," Corporal Rutherford said with relief as he felt the weight coming off his chest. "We've got some other surprises for you too. A little something before Christmas."

It was cramped inside, but the Girls' size had made it possible to actually move in the backseat. They were frequently in each other's way as they got suited up, however, and Bubbles' sobbing and sniffling made the passenger compartment feel tighter, somehow. But they had their super-agility, and it was a long ride.

Corporal Rutherford handed out their flashbangs and smoke grenades when they were done, then their MP5s. "Ready for the surprise?"

"Uh-huh," the Girls said in unison, with Buttercup enthusiastic and Bubbles quite the opposite.

"Here, take your pick, Girls," Rutherford stuck three guns out from over his shoulder. An odd assortment of them, picked out for their use. There was an XM14 rifle with the stock removed, a Serbu Super Shorty shotgun which looked like it was made for children, and a stockless Stoner 63 carbine light machinegun.

Buttercup went for the biggest gun sitting on the soldier's shoulder, the light machinegun, beaming at it all the while. Blossom took the stockless XM14, leaving the super shorty shotgun. Bubbles did not take it. Instead, she sat where she was, eyes searching for answers in the floor of the cabin.

"What are you waiting for, Bubbles? It's yours!" Rutherford said, waving the handle of the shotgun at her.

"I don't like shotguns," Bubbles said meekly. "They hurt me badly the last time."
"Here, Bubbles, you can have my gun," Blossom said as she handed her carbine over to Bubbles and took the super shorty. She pumped it. No shells came out. Buttercup took out the drum magazine of her machinegun, only to see nothing in it. She charged the gun, but found the chamber empty. Corporal Rutherford corrected their lack of ammo by handing out boxes of it.

"Start loading up, Girls," Agent Blake reminded them.

Agent Blake turned on the radio, this time switching to a classical music channel. The sound of soothing piano had helped calm Bubbles down. They spent some time listening to it, before Bubbles broke the lull.

"Blossom, I'm scared."

"So am I, Bubbles."

"I'm not," Buttercup boasted.

"What if something really bad happens this time?" Bubbles was almost whispering, as if the bad guys were listening.

"Bubbles, you need to listen to me," Blossom reassured her. She took Bubbles by the shoulder, their face close. "If we help each other, we should be fine."

"Yeah, don't run away like the last time!" Buttercup added.

"Buttercup..." Blossom sighed, warning her aggressive sister off, her tone rather anaemic because this time, she knew that Buttercup was right to be bitter. Bubbles had left them behind in the warehouse, and they were beaten to unconsciousness as a result. She could not help but to think that they might have won had Bubbles joined in the fight against Junior.

"I'm sorry..." Bubbles apologized.

"So stay with us this time, okay?" Blossom asked. "We can't do it without you."

"Okay," Bubbles agreed.

The Strip. Mission Time - 21 mins

It was day time, hours from twilight. Concealment didn't look like it was in the cards until the speed convoy entered an alleyway, where two familiar persons greeted Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup the moment they left their transport.

"Hello, Girls," it was Detective Mullens, leaning against the filthy brick wall of a strip club's back. Officer Olivia, in jeans, a thick, brown jacket and sweater inside, was leaning against an opposite wall belonging to a bar. The detective took a puff from his cigarette. "I apologize for the smoke." He took one more puff before dropping it in the snow and stomping it out, snuffing it.

"Hello Mister Mullens, how are you?" Blossom opened up politely as she came up to him, a little reserved since the first two times they had met did not exactly give her the best impressions. The ride-along was still fresh on her mind, but so was the ice-cream he got her.

"Detective Mullens. I'm fine, all things considered, depending on how you look at it," the detective said cryptically.

"Where's Mister Blackwater?" Bubbles asked, looking around, peeking behind the detective, seeing
nothing but dumpsters and trash and rats and shadows. "And all those soldiers and policemen?"

"It's just us today," Detective Mullens answered.

"Blackwater's busy with something else, Blossom," Agent Blake added.

"With any luck, we won't have to fire a single shot today," Detective Mullens went on.

"That would be boring!" Buttercup exclaimed. "But what are we doing here anyway?"

"I got a tip-off from an informant just this morning. A deal's going down in the Lucky Strip Club. We won't be get another shot at catching a mob boss this time, but it's their place. If there's bad stuff in there, it's their problem," Detective Mullens said. "You Girls ready?"

"Yes we are," Blossom spoke for the team, though Bubbles didn't look like it. She hugged her stockless XM4 closely - it was Octi's surrogate. She would have had it if she wasn't rushed from the Mall to a mission.

Detective Mullens grunted, before leading them towards the backdoor of the Lucky Strip Club with Officer Olivia.

"Mister Mullens?" Blossom said again.

"Hmm?" Mullens grunted in response.

"Why do you still want us around, after what happened in the bank and warehouse?" Blossom asked.

"I can't blame the three of you for what happened," Detective Mullens said.

"But we failed. What if we fail again?" Blossom pressed on.

"You three didn't fail in the warehouse, not in my book," Detective Mullens said, coming close to sounding comforting.

"But we let most of the bad guys go," Blossom said.

"And we got some of them in the bag thanks to you," Detective Mullens reassured her. "I think there's something up with Junior and the Amoeba Boys. It's not your fault you couldn't catch him."

There were bouncers even at the back entrance. Two of them, in suave suits. To their credit, they stood their ground despite having two police officers coming up to them, backed by three strange little girls armed to the teeth and armored thoroughly, with seven USDO soldiers in black bringing up the rear.

"You know who owns this joint!" the larger of the bouncers warned the detective. "Scram, copper, if you know what's good for you!"

Detective Mullens pulled a folded piece of paper out of his breast pocket, unfolded it and shoved it into the face of the huge man. The bouncer read what was on it and snorted.

"Do you know what a warrant is, you ape?" Mullens said.

"I know what a fucking warrant is," the big bouncer said. The Girls looked taken aback. The professor had taken great pains to educate them about colorful languages.
"Watch your mouth, apeman!" the detective warned.

"Whatever! This piece of paper isn't worth nothing 'round here, don't you know how things work?"
the bouncer resisted.

"Things are going to work differently in Townsville from now on. Now step aside, or you'll be
guarding a cell!" Detective Mullens warned again, standing his ground. To back him up, the Girls
pointed their new guns at them - Blossom and Buttercup with scowls on their faces, while Bubbles
with a rather apologetic and terrified look. The other bouncer who had been silent withdrew his hand
from the insides of his jacket; he had planned to pull his pistol out - a stupid move considering the
disparity in numbers, but the Lombardi had a talent for inspiring such bravery with a few well-placed
threats and carrots.

"What's with the kids, man!?" the other bouncer said. "You're bringing them into a strip club!?"

"I don't need childcare advice from a lowlife like you," the detective said dismissively, even though
the 'lowlife' had a point. "Sergeant Blake, watch the back entrance. I'll call you on the radio if I need
reinforcement." He pushed past the bouncers and went through the door. The Girls followed. Agent
Blake ordered two of his men to restrain the bouncers. They dragged them to some pipes and cuffed
them there, each with both their hands restrained.

A dreary corridor was all they had to pass through to reach the main stage and floor area, a far cry for
what was to come.

"Girls, you're going to see some… weird things around here. Don't let it affect you," Detective
Mullens said to the Girls.

"That's the best you can do?" Officer Olivia criticized, then looked over her shoulders at the Girls as
they walked through the staff corridor. "There's going to be some naked women around here.
They're here for fun - but they should be harmless." The detective did a double take on Officer
Olivia, but said nothing more. His eyes were on the prize.

When they were close to the entrance into the stages and floor - a set of double doors - those doors
swung open. The detective and police officer reached for their guns, pulling them out, but it turned
out to be a pair of strippers, half naked. Speak of the devil.

The strippers stared at the police officers, then looked down at their waist-tall reinforcement.
Children. In a strip club. They screamed and covered their breasts, running into the make-up room,
leaving behind a very shocked Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. But at least Blossom now knew
that all women looked the same underneath their shirts - when she'd accidentally saw Mom naked
with her X-ray vision, she was confused by what she saw.

Going through the swinging doors, the police officers and the Girls emerged at the stages and floor,
but it wasn't filled with raucous crowds and rows of naked girls. It was far too early, even for a
Saturday. But the area was designed to be loud and dynamic and in-your-face even without a crowd,
as strobing lights, complemented by laser lights, painted everyone and everything in a golden-
yellowish hue. This was complemented by a strobing soundtrack blasted from speakers all over the
hall of decadence.

There were but a few groups of men and women crowding around several strippers in various stages
of undress. Detective Mullens pointed at the DJ, and Officer Olivia understood. The Girls, in the
meantime, stared at what was going on with the groups of cheering and hooting adults, at the
strippers, still very much overwhelmed by shock, confusion, even fear. Only Buttercup seemed to be
able to manage her emotions.
The music was cut after that, and the strippers on stage stopped gyrating and spinning around their poles. "Hey, what gives!? I paid good money for this!" one of them shouted. "Yoh, DJ, what the fuck!?!" another scolded, displeased at having been interrupted. "Jamal, what the fuck! You ruined my flow!" one of the pole dancers screamed - upset that her shower of greens was turned off. Their clients turned around to look at the DJ, then Olivia, and finally, the obvious detective with his fedora and trench coat.

"What the hell is that!?" one of them shouted in disbelief when he saw who were standing around Detective Mullens. "Children!?" another man shouted. "Hey, Halloween's over!" yet another man said. When the pole-dancing strippers realized that they were standing half-naked, or almost fully naked, in front of three little girls, they immediately screamed, covering themselves up with whatever they had on - their hands, the meagre clothes they had on before they started. One of them was handed a trench coat, another jumped down a stage and fell on her knees with a pained shout. Blossom and Bubbles stood where they were, feeling a little awkward at the mayhem they had caused by simply being there. Buttercup chuckled, and thought it was funny, like some slapstick comedy in action.

Detective Mullens watched them scramble and panic with a kind of childish amusement he never thought he could ever feel again. He reached into his trench coat and pulled his police badge out. "TPD, all of you get out!" Detective Mullens ordered.

"Who the fuck do you think you are!?" one of the clients bellowed, coming up to the detective. "Do you even know who you're messing with!?" He reached inside his jacket. The Girls pointed their guns at him. He stopped. "We- We're the Lombardi! You've got some nerve! And just what the shit is with those voodoo-eyed kids, man!?" He was referring to their eyes, which shone red, blue and green under their own power despite the place being lit up in gold by spotlights and strobe lighting.

"Watch your mouth, sonny, before I feed you lead," Detective Mullens threatened the young gangster. "I can guarantee you that lead isn't as good as calcium."

Instead of taking the hint, the men and women who were audience of the strippers were still standing where they were, instead of leaving - wondering what on Earth the police was doing putting children in the field with guns and more armor than the average crack SWAT cop. Olivia returned to Mullens' side, before taking the young gangster away in cuffs on his instruction - they'd argued for a bit, as Officer Olivia wanted to stay with the detective, but she complied anyway. The clients were mostly looking at the Girls, still shocked by their appearance, as if they were zoo animals outside their cage. They pointed at them, looking at their otherworldly eyes after the Lombardi enforcer had pointed them out. Bubbles couldn't look at them as it'd made them shy and Blossom wasn't far behind as she had to force herself to return the stares that the crowd was giving her. The floor was easier to stare at. The way they were looking at them made Buttercup angry, however.

"What are you looking at!?" she snapped at them crazily, making some of them jump. Detective Mullens assessed the crowd, noting that there were no more mob enforcers in their midst, before firing several rounds into the ceiling.

"I said out!" he ordered again. This time, he'd sent them packing - the customers to the front door, and the strippers towards the make-up room. The strippers, on their way there, made a huge circle around the Girls, as if they were some kind of supernatural - and dangerous - presence. To the Girls, he said: "C'mon, let's keep moving."

"I thought we didn't have to fire a single shot…" Bubbles said while they were on the way, a little shaken by the gunshots. Blossom gave her a squeeze in the shoulder for reassurance, but it did little to calm her down.
"That's not counted," Detective Mullens corrected.

They moved towards the VIP area, going through the door and into another corridor filled with doors before they met any other trigger-happy gangsters. They started clearing the rooms. Detective Mullens had to kick the doors down. Blossom and Bubbles broke the door knobs while twisting them, completely breaking the locking mechanisms with an effortless twist. Buttercup followed the detective's example, but made a hole in the door she tried to kick down instead. Screams came from inside. She tried again, this time closer to the hinges, which took the entire door down.

While Blossom and Bubbles took great care in escorting their victims out for Detective Mullens to identify, Buttercup was dragging hers out instead. None of them were the people they were looking for. Just strippers and clients.

"They've got to be past this hallway," Detective Mullens surmised. There was no more room for subtlety. They had been making too much noise, shooting bullets into the air, kicking down doors. All bets were off. Just as they were about to get through the door at the end of the hallway, with a sign above it that read 'Bar', a man came through it, a submachinegun in one hand. Detective Mullens grabbed him by the wrist of his gun arm, twisted the gun out of the way before pistol-whipping the mob enforcer in the head, stunning him. Grabbing him by the throat, he used the man as a door knocker, pushing the door he came through a second ago open.

He was glad that he had that man, because he had just come face to face with a large group of his friends in the bar, surrounding their local underboss, a bald man in a black suit, at the table with a mysterious woman in a fedora and trench coat. Their guns were out, and they had already taken positions. Detective Mullens had only the defeated gangster for a shield.

"That's the same lady we saw in the warehouse, Mister Mullens!" Blossom exclaimed on seeing the mysterious woman.

"We meet again," the mysterious woman greeted from the across the room.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't the legendary Detective Mullens," the Strip Club Underboss said. "Whose brats are those? Yours? You have ten seconds to talk before I blow you and your kids' heads off."

Bubbles' fears had been justified. There was no way they could end the day without bullets tearing into flesh and bodies hitting the floor. He was here to secure evidence of a drug deal - specifically an exchange of money for a shipment of 'His Secret', and to arrest anyone connected to it - all to add weight to his case against the Lombardi. He wasn't going to back out of it. It was never his way.

The problem was, the underbosses of the Lombardi, driven both by fear and greed, weren't known to back out either, at least until half their muscles were stripped away from them.

It was about to get really bloody.
Chapter 56: The Strip (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls are sent into a place where little girls ought not to be in.

Chapter 56: The Strip (Part 2)

Lucky Strip Club. Mission Time - 33 mins

Detective Mullens scanned the room. There were about fifteen Lombardi gangsters hiding behind bar counters and flipped-over steel tables, not counting the boss and broad, who were behind a bar in the centre.

"You're under arrest. How about you and your monkeys put down your guns and follow me down to the police HQ?" he remarked, and managed a smile despite the seemingly poor odds. He'd had worst, and he'd learned a long time ago that laughing in the face of danger and death made the shit go down better.

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had their guns up as well, though the former two had no intention of shooting anyone dead. Blossom was peeking at the corners of her eyes, taking stock of the situation, planning, surveying the terrain. She had to get her sisters through this one, especially Bubbles. Daddy had said that there were people who would hate her if she didn't fight crime. It wasn't a stretch to imagine that those same people wouldn't be kind to her if she failed in fighting crime.

Detective Mullens' remark made the mobsters in the room laugh.

"Look around you, detective. There's seventeen of us here, against a grand total of you - and your little kids from kindergarten, of course. Where did you find them? Were they on a ride-along - on a weekend?" the mob underboss taunted.

"Do not underestimate the little girls, Matthias. They're not what they seem they are," the mysterious woman advised. The underboss brushed her aside to continue with his boast:

"I'm going to give you an ultimatum, Detective Mutts. You turn around and walk away. And- and take those little girls along with you back to their dollhouse. You do that, and I'll make sure the Amoeba Boys go easy on you."

The Detective responded by putting one in between one of the mobsters, before dashing towards the bar counter closest to him, to the right of the room.

"Left!" Blossom shouted before dashing into the bar counter to the left of the room, with Buttercup spraying bullets across the room to intimidate the gangsters. The Girls were in cover within a second, due to how fast they were.
The gangsters responded with seventeen times the number of lead, first killing the man Mullens had held hostage before putting holes in the bar counters the detective and Girls were hiding behind. Blossom peeked over her bar counter, and saw the mysterious woman shrugging off her trench coat and-

She had four arms.

Blossom blinked.

She had four arms.

The leader of The Three couldn't believe her eyes.

And she had pulled two submachineguns out from behind her with her top two arms while unhooking two more SMGs from her belt with her bottom two arms.

Detective Mullens had seen the four-armed woman as well, how she had revealed her abnormality by throwing off her trench coat. It wasn't only the arms. Her eyes were amber and glowing like Blossom's. She wore a catsuit underneath, though it didn't look like any ordinary catsuit. It seemed thicker, functional with the aesthetics a mere coincidence and byproduct of necessary design.

He popped out to fire off a few more shots, missing every one of them. Seeing the four-armed woman had thrown him off. Something screwy was going on in the Lucky Strip Club. He'd known that the drugs were something weird even though he'd yet to get results from forensics and the labs.

Blossom was worried. Most of the gunfire was directed at Detective Mullens, and she knew that he was more fragile than she was. She had to do something, and quick. She looked at Bubbles and Buttecup. Bubbles was shaking with fright, while Buttercup was restless, adjusting and readjusting her grip on her new toy - her light machinegun. She looked at Blossom impatiently, waiting for instructions, telling her to hurry up with her eyes, just a hair trigger away from breaking off and doing her own thing.

Detective Mullens popped up one more time, letting off another round from his revolver, this time landing a shot - but that shot had only gone through a mobster's shoulder. The lucky man screamed as he collapsed behind his cover. In that instant, the four-armed woman had pointed all four of her SMGs at him and let it rip. Before he could duck down, a wall of bullets slammed into his position. He felt some metal ripping at his right arm and shoulder. He saw literal sprays of blood from his body. He counted three rounds, but couldn't tell if they were still in him. He fell clumsily back down, couldn't help but to scream as pain gripped his entire body.

It prompted Blossom to get a move on as she feared for his life. "Buttercup, shoot at them but don't kill them! Bubbles, smoke grenades at Mister Mullens!"

"Finally!" Buttercup remarked with a smirk as she popped up and pointed her machinegun at the closest table. She squeezed the trigger and peppered it with bullets. The Lombardi enforcer behind it ducked. She was about to move on to damage another cover when the four arms of the mysterious woman made her pause and look. She ducked down when her observation fought back, firing two of its four SMGs at her.

Bubbles had frozen solid. Blossom took her by both shoulders and shook her hard. "Smoke grenades, Bubbles! Mister Mullens is in trouble!"

Although her face was an ice sheet, Bubbles nodded and unpinned a smoke grenade with shaking hands. Blossom looked on. At least she remembered what to do with the cylindrical thing. Squeezing
the lever, she threw it at Detective Mullens' bar counter, but her hands were shaking too much that it fell short and bounced off the side of it, ending up in between the Girls' bar and his. "Throw another one, Bubbles! Right in front of him!"

Buttercup, in the meantime, had returned to spraying bullets across the room, forcing most of the mobsters to duck. Some retaliated, but had either missed or were only able to bounce bullets off Buttercup's helmet as she hid in turn. The latter were mere annoyance, as only a few hit home.

Bubbles unpinned another smoke grenade, and after going through the motions, lobbed it. This time, despite her trembling fingers, she managed to land it right in front of the detective's bar counter.

"Good, now take Mister Mullens back to Mister Blake when I tell you to!" Blossom ordered as she prepared for the next part of her strategy. As Buttercup continued to fire her new toy wildly, Blossom looked up at the wall on the left and the ceiling. There was nothing there to prevent the bad guys and four-armed woman from shooting her, but there was no other way.

Taking a few deep breaths, she pulled two flashbangs off her vest, unpinned and primed them and threw them towards the bad guys. "Hide!" she screamed at Buttercup, who was still shooting. When the tomboy, who was clearly enjoying it, was still lost in her revelry, she took her by the arms and pulled her down. Bubbles covered both her ears and shut her eyes as she sat by them, knees to her chest. The room exploded in a blinding flash of white and an explosion so loud it drowned the room in a ringing silence after that.

"Bubbles, go!" Blossom ordered as she unslung her Serbu Super Shorty. Bubbles leaped over the counter, running towards Detective Mullens. Blossom looked to the ceiling and jumped, willing her invisible 'wings' to push her up, and it did. She held her little shotgun in her left hand and controlled her flight by holding her right palm down towards the ground. She did a sort of wall-run towards the bad guys' side, but she could only do so so long before she had to kick herself off the wall and float herself down to the ground. Even then, it was a rough landing, as she fell on her left shoulder.

The gangsters were just recovering, and didn't see her there. The four-armed woman was still facing forward, her attention split between her sisters and friend as she fired her right SMGs at Buttercup's bar counter and her left SMGs at the detective's. Blossom aimed her gun at a gangster's leg and fired, putting him down. She did the same to several others, putting pellets in an arm at one corner, then a leg in the next. One gangster fell after another, clutching their limbs, their faces screwed up in intense pain. A multitude of guns swung around to face her. Four-Armed Woman spun around, aiming her left two SMGs at Buttercup, and her right two SMGs at Blossom, and opened fire once more, never seeming to run out of bullets.

In the meantime, Bubbles had reached Detective Mullens. The shirt underneath his trench coat was completely soaked in blood. Blood was dripping down the sleeve of his trench coat. "Bubbles-" he said weakly, still clutching onto his large revolver with his left hand. He smiled at her, felt like a stupid old man for what he said earlier. He wasn't the young man he used to be - back then, thirty of them wouldn't have meant shit. Back then, thirty of them would have surrendered just because he was around. But now, he'd paid for his overconfidence with his blood, and he'd tipped the floor rather generously.

"Mister Mullens! Oh no!" Bubbles came up to him. "You're hurt really badly! Blossom said to take you away!"

Blossom hid behind a pillar as bullets peppered it. She tapped her radio. "Buttercup! Start punching! Now!" Blossom shouted into her mic. Sure enough, Buttercup vaulted over the bar counter, racing towards the distracted mobsters. She crashed through a table, taking one down instantly. Blossom got out, stepped off the floor and literally flew towards the closest bad guy and delivered a flying punch -
which connected because her target was stunned by how she was actually flying towards him, like some cherub of justice in SWAT gear.

Four-Armed Woman was gone in the meantime. Buttercup got up from a tangled mess of broken furniture and wounded mobster, and charged at the next closest one, still hiding behind a table. The guy that Mullens shot, with a hole in his shoulder and stubborn enough to pull an old pistol out. He was only able to get a few shots out at Buttercup before she swept his legs and punched him out when he fell, sending his teeth scattering across the floor. A few of his friends saw the brutality and fired shotgun shells and rifle bullets at her. Buttercup hid behind the steel table, and on seeing the beautiful bone pearls she had harvested from the wounded mobster's mouth, collected a few of them feverishly before depositing them in her pants pocket with a greedy smile on her face. They just looked so beautiful…

Bubbles, in the meantime, was helping Detective Mullens out, allowing him to lean on her as she walked the old man back out of the bar. "Poor Mister Mullens… My friends will make you feel better."

"I'll be fine, just lemme-" the detective reassured her as he pulled out his radio with his wounded arm. Pain rippled through it, but he tolerated it - it couldn't be compared to the sorry state of his family life, or his reputation and career as a cop.

Blossom, on seeing that Buttercup was pinned down at a table with half the remaining bad guys shooting freely at her, charged straight at them. They didn't have much time to react, and they could only fire so many rounds in her way at a pinch. One cut through the ribbon on her helmet and several slammed into her helmet, chest and arms, doing nothing but making her wince. She jumped up into a flight path midway, aiming a flying kick at one of them, knocking him across the room. She stopped in the crowd, hovering such that she was as 'tall' as them. One of them whipped his rifle stock at her, but she grabbed it and punched him sideways by the jaw; he collapsed immediately, unconscious. A third man shoved the barrel of his pump-action shotgun at her chest and fired, sending her spinning out of control, slamming into a wall. Buttercup had tackled him by the legs too late, but when they were both on the floor, she discovered that she had broken the both of them, leaving the gangster squirming on the floor in pain. She quickly crawled up to his head and delivered a devastating punch, again spilling teeth out. She took a few as trophies.

The mob underboss, a thickset man, looked on in disbelief as Buttercup continued to beat his men up. Blossom soon flew back into the fray, turning her poor flight control into an advantage by barreling into another mobster and delivering a knock-out blow.

"I think it's time you leave!" a female voice said from behind another pillar. There were mechanical clanking sounds coming from behind there. The mysterious woman had reloaded out of sight. Blossom wasn't sure who she was talking to, until the mob underboss grabbed a suitcase of his and ran. The few men he had left followed.

"They're getting away!" Blossom shouted. Buttercup looked around from the last bad guy she took down. Just when they were about to pursue the fleeing gangsters, Four-Armed Woman blocked the way, her SMGs reloaded. Blossom glanced at her weapons. They all had magazines bigger than her own - no wonder she had so many bullets! Her amber eyes, shining like theirs, the pupils splitting to twice their number, stared at Blossom.

"Who are you anyway? Why're you helping those bad people?" Blossom interrogated the insect-like woman.

"I go by Naga - and that will be the last name you'll hear before you perish!" the woman shrieked, before training two SMGs on each of the Girls. The Girls looked at each other, and each took off in
the opposite direction as bullets bit at them like rabid wolves. Blossom practically flew to one of the bars the mob Enforcers had vacated while Buttercup did the same in an opposite bar.

Having found cover, Blossom pumped her shotgun, rose up and pulled the trigger, only for it to click emptily. Naga was coming towards her, having chosen her as her first victim. Bullets peppered her, and she fell back down. Naga's ammunition hurt more. Unknown to them, she was using military-grade rounds, armor-piercing all.

Putting her shotgun down on the ground, Blossom unslung her MP5 and popped out once more, only for Naga to be right in front of her. Blossom screamed in fright, and when she fired her weapon in panic, it had already been grabbed and pushed out of the way.

Blossom had learned the hard way that Naga's strength was also enhanced. Stronger, since she had two spare arms. With her lower two, she had wrestled Blossom's SMG away. She felt metal sing in her mouth as Naga whipped her with one of her SMGs. Next thing she knew, she was thrown into a wall, and she felt worse than the crater she'd made after that.

Buttercup rushed up at Naga and started delivering punches, but she was able to redirect them all harmlessly. Unlike the Girls, she'd had years of martial arts training, and with the Chemical N in her body, was almost able to match their raw power.

"Why don't you stay still!" Buttercup punctuated each of her punches and kicks with each word, but she wasn't able to land a hit. The moment there was an opening, Naga swiped her foot at Buttercup. "Woah!" But she ducked and dodged through sweeping kick, by a fraction of an inch. She felt it in her hair. But that had only been half the trick. Rearing up, Naga delivered a second – a side kick without putting her foot down, sending Buttercup flying across the room. She landed on her feet, skidding on the marble floor. But Naga didn't intend for her to stay up for long.

Unhooking her lower SMGs from her belt, she pointed all four of her guns at Buttercup and fired, like a walking, breathing flak cannon. Buttercup put up her hands, and immediately felt it all over her, causing her to stumble backwards, ripping and tearing through her SWAT gear and uniform. It was an endless torrent of metal and pain, and even as Buttercup met the wall, Naga did not stop.

"Aaaaargh!" Buttercup screamed in pure agony as she felt even her helmet shot off. Some bullets had gotten past her hands and struck her goggles, shattering it. Glass shards exploded inwards, stinging her eyes. But still, it did not let up.

Until it did.

"Get off me, you brat!" Naga screamed, uncharacteristic of a human flak cannon.

Bubbles had returned earlier to find Buttercup in trouble, screaming like it was her final moment as she suffered Naga's metal rain. She'd ran up to Naga without a moment's notice, even though she was bereft of any plan or tactic. She had jumped up on Naga's back, pulling at her upper arms in a crude double arm-lock, sending Naga into a panic, as she knew what one of those Girls could potentially do.

"Leave my sister alone, you meanie!" Bubbles screamed in fury, her voice painfully shrill as she hung onto Naga like a monkey on her back. The four-armed woman twirled and spun in an attempt to get the enhanced little girl off her, but she was too strong.

When the endless rain of bullets had stopped, Buttercup had never been more grateful in her short life. But it had all been too much. The pain that Naga had caused her continued to linger in its debilitating intensity. She sank to her knees, her arms wrapped around her stomach, where most of
the bullets had landed. Her SWAT gear and uniform were reduced to rags. Her vest hung in an
uncomfortably lopsided manner. She threw it off, and the smoke grenades and flashbangs on it went
off with a pathetic wisp of smoke, having been too damaged to do their job. She could barely see -
one of her eyes was shut and couldn't open because of the glass shards in it, and the other was
watery from pain. Her hair was a mess, as if she had just woke up in the morning. She couldn't
move, paralyzed by traumatic pain, only stare at what was before her.

Bubbles could feel hands closing in around her ankles as Naga tried to get her off. They tugged at
her, trying to pull her down. But Bubbles held on, her arms wrapped around Naga's upper arms.
Panicking and out of options (that she knew of), she bit down on Naga's neck, and the four-armed
woman howled when she felt teeth sinking into her neck. Bubbles could taste blood, and had even
accidentally drank a little of it, and it was deeply unpleasant. The woman pointed her guns
backwards, firing blindly, trying to hit Bubbles, but they would always miss, until she pressed their
barrels right up to Bubbles' head, left and right, and pulled the triggers. That finally got Bubbles to let
go, both because of the impact of the bullets as well as the noise of gunshots right in her ears.

Bubbles was blown off her back, and Naga whirled around, backing away, actually feeling
threatened by the Girls for the first time. Bubbles got up, looking up at Naga with the woman's blood
on her lips and cheeks. The little girl went for her stockless XM4 carbine, but Naga was faster on the
draw, as she already had her guns in hand.

Blossom, in the meantime, had recovered and floated up from her cover. Buttercup, similarly, got to
her feet, unsteady, but not out for the count. Noticing that she was still outnumbered, Naga fired on
Bubbles, knocking her down, before rushing up to her as she put away her lower SMGs. Picking up
Bubbles by the neck, she started taking off pins from her flashbangs. Bubbles tried to wrench her
hand off her, but Naga simply slugged her across the cheek.

"Let Bubbles go, Naga!" Blossom shouted. There were footsteps in the distance, a whole lot of
them. A whole group of people were coming. Friend or foe, no one knew.

After unpinning Bubbles' flashbangs, Naga primed them and held Bubbles up to her sisters, using
her body as a shield against the blinding light that was to come. "See you, girls. It's been fun," she
said. The flashbangs detonated just as Agent Blake and his men arrived, drowning everything in
white light.

Bubbles felt her eyes burn, and Naga dropping her.

For the longest seconds in the universe, there was only a big bang, then white void and silence,
which faded away only gradually.

Lucky Strip Club. Mission Time - 40 mins

"Oh, my eyes…" Buttercup said as she rubbed them, she tried pulling out the glass shards in her
right eye, but it was an impossible endeavor with just her bare hands.

Blossom was the least affected, having hid at the last minute, but the blast of light had still caught
her. Her vision felt blurry, but that soon faded. Naga was nowhere to be found, having ran away
while everyone in the room was stunned. The sight of Buttercup shocked her. She had almost
nothing to cover her upper body, and she was bleeding from the nose and mouth, likely from the
kick Naga had give her. She looked like she had been dragged through a forest by a horse. She
floated towards her. "Buttercup! Are you okay!?" she asked out of concern.

Buttercup opened her mouth to say something, but then stopped short. Her hand went up to her
mouth, and she looked green, lesser than her irises and ruined uniform, but still- She stumbled forward and bent over. Blossom took her by an arm, but Buttercup pulled her arm violently away from her. Without warning, Buttercup vomited all over the floor the remains of her cake and fruit juice. It took her a while to get it done, but when she tried to straighten up again, the nausea returned, and she retched once more, and hurled a little more on top of her cake and fruit juice. Blossom resisted the urge to say 'ewwwww!', knowing that her sister was suffering.

"Augh, disgusting!" Buttercup spat, then literally spat some saliva. Agent Blake came up to her with a water canteen in hand.

"Here, wash it out with this," he said. Buttercup took it urgently, poured what seemed to be half the content into her mouth, before gargling and then spitting the mixture down on her multi-layered puddle of vomit.

Bubbles, in the meantime, was just sitting up as she rubbed her eyes. A bruise had formed on her cheek where Naga had slugged her. Blossom helped her up. Like Buttercup, she was feeling dizzy from all the hits she had taken. "Are you alright, Bubbles?"

"I don't… know…" Bubbles said, still reeling. In the meantime, Agent Blake's soldiers were securing the downed Lombardi enforcers, who were sensible enough to stay down after getting treated to some girl power.

"Blossom, where's the rest of them?" Agent Blake asked.

"The rest of-?" Blossom repeated as she looked around the room. Then she remembered. The rest of them had ran away. Urgency returned to her heart. "They've ran away! We've got to catch them!" She turned to her sisters. "Bubbles, Buttercup! We have to go! Now!"

"Do we have to?" Bubbles asked, reluctant after what she had gone through.

"Yes! We can't keep letting the bad guys go! They'll hurt the innocent!" Blossom said, based on her loose understanding of crime. "Are you up to it, Buttercup?"

"Always," Buttercup said.

"Blossom, wait!" Agent Blake said, but the Girls were already speeding away. "Girls, wait! You can't go out there!" He'd hoped that they could hear him, but his hope was unfounded.

The Girls were out of the building before they knew it. Just then, a car had exited the parking complex from the other side of the road, breaking a toll booth barrier and knocking down a stop sign in the process. Blossom concentrated her vision upon the car, willing them to see through the metal frame of the vehicle.

"It's them!" Blossom exclaimed before starting down the road in pursuit. Bubbles and Buttercup followed.
Chapter 57: The Strip (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls are sent into a place where little girls ought not to be in.

Chapter 57: The Strip (Part 3)

The Strip. Mission Time - 41 mins

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup pursued the mob underboss' car down the road of The Strip, a busy entertainment district in Townsville. The mob car, an ominously black thing, weaved between the traffic, trying to throw off the Girls - but this was where the Girls had better control - a car was artificial, with clunky controls, while the Girls were using their natural mode of locomotion. They turned and jumped to avoid the cars in their way. Blossom tried to fly as fast, but she couldn't control herself right, and nearby tumbled on the ground - she resigned herself to sprinting on the asphalt.

"Blossom, come in!" Agent Blake said on the radio. Blossom did not reply. She was too busy trying to gain on the mob underboss' car. It was on a general channel such that all three of the Girls could hear him. "Blossom, you can't go out there! Bubbles? Buttercup? Are you picking this up!"

"Why not, Mister Blake?" Blossom finally replied as she was, slowly, coming up to the mob car, but she and her sisters were thrown off slightly when the black car drifted right, then left, circumnavigating a tight group of cars, confounding them. As they zoomed past the cars and pedestrians on the road bearing pleasure seekers, they were attracting all sorts of attention. Eyes turned to them as they sped past, eyes belonging to people who were wondering what was going on, who observed that three little girls were somehow matching the speed of a car, and two of them looked like they were miniature riot cops with the third appearing to have been beaten up by gangbangers.

"Blos- you- breaking up! Don't-" Agent Blake tried to warn Blossom, but she was fast going out of radio range. "No one is- to know that- what you're doing is- -posed to be a secret!"

"Mister Blake? Mister Blake!" Blossom shouted into the mic, but there was no reply.

Bubbles got close to her. "What did Mister Blake say?" Bubbles asked

"I think he wants us to keep our fighting crime a secret!" Blossom said.

"That's lame!" Buttercup commented as she got up next to her while they were pursuing the car.

Blossom couldn't even consider stopping - the criminals were just right in front of them, close but not too close. They continued running, gaining on the black car. They had never run this fast in their life before, short as it might have been. The gangsters' car swerved right, then left again to avoid a row of cars. The Girls broke up, with Blossom going left, Bubbles going right, and Buttercup jumping on top of a car blocking them, landing on threes and denting the roof, breaking a glass on top. The occupants inside screamed. She then proceeded to hop on the family saloon directly in front of it,
doing the same damage, before skipping the first car entirely and landing in front of it into an immediate sprint. It startled the driver however, who was already distracted by the seemingly supernatural happening going on in his rear-view mirror. The car swerved out of control and braked suddenly, causing a vehicle pile-up.

They were easily going 100 miles an hour, or more, and as they kept pushing themselves, they quickly gained on the black car.

"Shit! What the fuck are these- these girls!" the mob underboss in his car screamed. "Drive faster!" The driver obliged by switching gears, pushing the car to its maximum limit. It sped up to 110 miles an hour, 115 miles an hour. Blossom saw this, then pushed herself even harder - but she was starting to feel the same thing that regular human beings would feel on an extended sprint - exhaustion and pain setting in, in her limbs. Sweat pouring down her forehead, heat building up, breath that was harder to catch. Her sisters did the same to match her speed. Buttercup saw this as a challenge, and soon overtook her.

Within seconds, they were mere feet away from the car.

"What do we do?" Bubbles asked Blossom.

"We jump inside and punch them out!" Blossom said. Just then, one of the gangsters poked out of a window. He pulled out an old AR-15 rifle and fired on Buttercup, causing her to stumble as she put up a hand to shield her face. It'd slowed her down, but it did not knock her back. Another gangster poked out of another window, this time with a Spas-12 shotgun and fired pellets at Bubbles, catching her in the shoulder; if her heart wasn't pumping at full speed, then it'd just reached it. She could feel the freeze washing over her, but she refused to back down. Memories from earlier incidents with a shotgun flashed before her eyes. She stumbled, and nearly fell. Blossom was shot too.

The high speed chase was soon after taken to the highway towards another part of Townsville. The cars there were faster, the stakes higher.

Blossom pulled her pistol out, having left behind her primary armaments back in the Lucky Strip Club. "Scare them with our guns!" she told her sisters. Buttercup pulled her own pistol out as well. Bubbles raised her stockless XM4 Carbine. "Don't kill anyone!"

Blossom fired several rounds at them, putting holes in the trunk. The men hid inside their car. Buttercup placed several rounds square in the back window, which shattered. The black car swerved a little, almost spinning out, but the driver managed to bring it back under control. Bubbles raised her weapon, but flashes of blood in her memory when she punched one of the bad guys overwhelmed her - she didn't fire.

The mob car overtook several more cars, attempting ever-more dangerous maneuvers, whatever it took, to shake off the Girls, but the Girls were far too agile with their body than a man in a car could ever compete against. All around them, people in other cars watched in bewilderment, excitement, as well as fear, shock - an entanglement of feelings that couldn't be described. Three children in a family saloon watched the Girls speed by, and thought it was cool, pointing at them and chattering wildly. Their parents' mouths were agape.

Highway patrolmen who were nearby soon joined in the fray. A police car and a motorcycle cop. The police cruiser matched the Girls’ and the black car's speed, going up beside them, their sirens blaring and police light bars blazing. Not far away, there were more sirens.

The Girls were gaining on the black car once more. The gangsters popped out to shoot. The shotgunner pumped multiple shells into Buttercup in quick succession, who stumbled sideways
towards the police cruiser. She jumped towards it and kicked herself off the door of the police cruiser, giving herself a boost. The police cruiser swung out of control, crashing into railings by the highway; sparks flew, but it was still going forward strong, only slowing down slightly.

Blossom exchanged fire with the assault rifle mobster, who was able to put a few more in the little girl, who only yelped in pain, no worse for wear. Blossom, on the other hand, was able to put a bullet in the mobster's arm, who dropped his weapon and fell back into the car. She looked to Bubbles, another idea forming in her head.

"Bubbles, jump into their car! Now!" Blossom commanded, despite doubting her sweet sister's will or way to deal with bad guys. She could only hope. To cover her blue-eyed sister's advance, she fired more rounds at the car, forcing the wounded mobster to huddle in the backseat - she'd seen him draw a pistol, but had succeeded in stopping him from using it. The mob underboss pulled his own pistol out. Aiming behind him, he fired shots through the now-broken back windshield at Blossom, perceiving her as the greater threat - the leading little girl's plan was working.

Bubbles homed in on the car, and Blossom noticed something; blue trail forming behind her legs, like some sort of… exhaust, like car exhaust, but cleaner and brilliant in Bubbles' color. Looking down at her own legs, she noticed the same thing - except her exhaust, or trail, was pink. Buttercup was starting to emit the same trail. In keeping up with the mob car, they had been pushing 120 miles per hour without realizing it, forcing them into a form of overdrive. But it was tiring - extremely tiring.

The mob shotgunner leaned out and trained his weapon on Bubbles. Buttercup spotted this and shot first at him, missing because of how much she was shaking from exhaustion, but ultimately forcing the shotgunner to go back into the safety of his car. Another police car came up beside the Girls, right beside Buttercup to the right, this time with its left window wound down. A police officer with square jaws and a pair of shades hollered with a loudhailer, but despite his officious and strong appearance, his voice was riddled with uncertainty: "This is the police! Lit-little girls, whoever you are, whatever you are, you are to pull over- stop whatever you're doing and wait by the highway!"

Unfortunately for the Girls, only a tiny part of the police force were ever aware of them - the vast majority of the rank and file knew nothing about The Three of Project Powerpuff. To the police officers on site, it was like being in some kind of a weird Japanese anime at best and a frightening monster movie at worst.

"Can't you see we're busy, mister!" Buttercup yelled at the police officer.

"You are to stop and lay down your arms!" the police officer insisted with his loudhailer. Buttercup was annoyed, but mere annoyance ceased to cover it within seconds. She was seething with anger - How could this lowly normal human being interrupt her reverie at work? "You're… You're breaking the law!"

"Shut up!" Buttercup screamed madly at the police officer before raising her pistol at the police officer and firing a few rounds, but only damaging his door. The police officer ducked. Buttercup's pistol clicked, hollow of rounds. Blossom saw this and came up beside her, pulling her gun arm down.

"Buttercup! No shooting at policemen!" Blossom reprimanded her wayward sister. Meanwhile, Bubbles took a leap at the mob car, and actually flew faster than her intended target. For a moment, she thought that she might overshoot the car, but she was able to grab hold of the hood - for a second, anyway. She slipped, as the hood was slick with bits of snow, and fell onto the trunk of the mob car, before finally finding purchase on the frame of the broken back windshield. The mob underboss took notice and pointed his pistol at her, firing point-blank rounds at her.
"Ow! Ow! Ow!" Bubbles screamed. The wounded mobster on the backseat did the same, unloading his pistol at her. She lunged forward, slapping his gun away. But then came the shotgunner, who pointed his shotgun directly at Bubbles' face, and fired without hesitation, bouncing pellets off her helmet first, snapping her head back, before firing another shell, aimed at her mouth. That got her to let go, sending her tumbling on the highway at high speed.

"Bubbles!" Blossom screamed, immediately beating herself over the fact that she'd sent her to the car in the first place. Bubbles was left far behind very quickly. Blossom looked back.

Bubbles rolled on the asphalt a fair distance, her body on fire from the pain. Her mouth felt like a dentist had a manic marathon on it. Looking down the highway, she saw a four-wheeled jeep rushing up at her, cars were honking everywhere, as if warning the jeep. Even with her superior reaction time, she couldn't get out of the way. She felt herself getting flattened on the road, a tire grinding over her as the jeep ran over her, then a second as the jeep spun out of control, but managed to go forward a fair distance before another car crashed into it. She felt faint after that. She could barely move, her nerves completely fried from the burning, electrifying agony running through her body.

But the traffic on the highway was still flowing despite. Next, a semi-truck came up at her, the driver was unable to see her at first due to other vehicles blocking the way. When he did, it was just barely. He blasted the giant machine's horns, hoping that the little girl would roll out of the way or pick herself up and run.

Bubbles didn't. She'd only managed to sit up, only for the bottom of the semi's face to slam into hers before she went under the vehicle. Despite pain being the only, singular thing on her mind right then, she was able to clutch tightly onto the bumper of the vehicle, avoiding the numerous wheels of the giant mechanical beast. The truck stopped too late. It drifted down a ramp, taking Bubbles along with it, the cargo container it was hauling following with it and then keeling over. Cars behind it had to stop, causing another pile-up on the highway.

At the very least, Bubbles did not have to suffer the pain for too long after that, as she drifted into unconsciousness, her tears of agony and whimper cut short.

Blossom and Buttercup did not stop. They couldn't, not if they had to make it all worth the pain. Blossom turned around to face the mob car again, with tears in her eyes. She clenched her jaw, turned her eyebrows into an angry valley. She turned to Buttercup, who was still able to keep up.

"Buttercup!" she shouted at her other sister, with only a slight tremble in her voice as she was able to keep most of the pain in her heart out, at least temporarily. "We run up to them together!"

By then, the cruisers with the TPD following them had multiplied. The one next to Buttercup hadn't broken away. Instead of helping them, however, the police officer Buttercup had shot at had pulled out his service pistol and aimed it at Buttercup. He didn't warn her but fired immediately after that.

It quickly became a three-way skirmish after that. Another police cruiser came up to Blossom on the left. The police officer who was driving pulled out her service pistol and fired at the mob car, aiming at the tires, but unable to hit it from her angle. She turned to look at Blossom, was startled by the intimidating look of her pink, glowing eyes, and started firing at her - it didn't help that the police officer whom Buttercup fired upon had reported that the Girls were hostile, armed and dangerous.

Meanwhile, the gangsters in the mob car spread their attention across both the police cruisers and the Girls. The wounded mobster fired pot shots, once at Blossom, then at the police officer shooting at Blossom. The shotgunner did the same with Buttercup and her police assailant. It was a mess, which had the Girls confused.
"Ow! Stop!" Blossom shouted at the policewoman unloading her gun at her. Finally, after she'd had it, she got up to the police car and jumped on the policewoman's driver seat door, hanging on it. Seizing the policewoman's gun, she gave it a twist, disarming her. "I'm trying to stop the bad guys! Stop shooting at me!"

The policewoman, startled and held in an awkward position because of Blossom's arm lock, couldn't control her cruiser as well. Her partner, a lean cop, pulled a shotgun on her, but before he could fire, the cruiser hit the railing, then the car up front. His aim was thrown off, and he accidentally discharged his shotgun on the windshield of his own cruiser. Blossom jumped off, to avoid Bubbles' fate, but the police cruiser did not lose control, and had merely slowed to regain it. She had accidentally stolen the policewoman's service pistol, a Glock. She returned to Buttercup. "Now, Buttercup!"

They both jumped, and caught hold of the trunk of the car. It helped that it was riddled with bullets, but even then, as they climbed the trunk of the car, they were able to dig holes into it with their fingers. The shotgunner, ever the enthusiastic one, fired buckshots at Buttercup, causing her to lose her grip, hanging on by only a hand. Blossom pointed her police Glock at the shotguuner. Exhausted, her aim was off, and with the car shaking, she accidentally put a round squarely in his chest. The gangster fell backwards, a spray of blood coming from his chest, much to her shock, but she didn't, couldn't let it affect her.

Meanwhile, Buttercup was able to recover her grip. The mob underboss and the mobster who was wounded in the arm took several shots at her, but it was far too little, too late. Dropping down into the backseat, she took the wounded man by the collar and punched him out. With almost no one left to hinder them, Blossom was able to get into the car. Exhausted, upset, but worst of all, furious at what the Lombardi muscles had done to Bubbles, she tore the head of his seat off, before doing the same with the body of the shotgun chair. Exposed, Mob Underboss squeezed himself towards the front windshield with a startled shout, but his safety belt got in the way. He pointed his pistol at Blossom's forehead and squeezed the trigger. It came up empty. Blossom smacked it away, and delivered a straight punch to his face, knocking him out instantly. Buttercup threw a right hook at the driver, who barely put up a fight - he'd drawn his pistol, but was KO'ed before he could even fire it.

"We did it!" Buttercup shouted in triumph, throwing her fists up in celebration. But there was still one problem left.

"Um, Buttercup, how do we stop a car?" Blossom asked her sister. But at least the police had stopped shooting at them, on seeing that things had quietened down. Instead, they'd returned to their loudhailer, screaming their orders to stop and not resist arrest, among other things.

"I thought you'd know, Blossom!" Buttercup retorted, on realizing that they were in trouble. "You're the smart one, Daddy said!"

"I didn't ask you to knock the driver out, Buttercup!" Blossom screamed at her aggressive sister - there was just too much in her heart without Buttercup topping it off with her shenanigans. She racked her brain for a solution. How do cars brake? She'd seen those machines at work, and she'd seen how the wheels would stop turning. Was that it?

"Hurry up, sis!" Buttercup pressed her as the car collided with another up front, slowing down from the impact, but still going straight and accelerating. Unknown to them, the driver, although knocked out, still had his foot on the accelerator.

"I got it!" Blossom exclaimed, a momentary smile on her face. "Buttercup, open the door on your side." Buttercup did as she was told, but instead of opening it, she pulled it off its hinges and let it drop. The car door went under the police cruiser behind them. Blossom opened the backseat door on
"Alright, lean out, Buttercup! We need to use our feet to stop the car!" Blossom said. "Ready?"

Buttercup honestly thought that it was a good idea. After all, she had come up with none herself and her mind was barren of creativity. She leaned out, and prepared to grind her feet on the highway. She thought that it was going to hurt. Blossom knew better; it was going to be excruciating.

"Go!" Blossom ordered as she jumped out and held onto the car by the door frame. The moment her feet touched the road, she felt a pull, as if the road was sucking her in, and heat building up. Her feet was towards the front, her body diagonal as she fought against the engine of the car. Buttercup did the same, and the car seemed to be slowing down.

The friction ate away at their boots. It felt like a million rope burns, sandpaper filing away at their feet. But the car slowed, crossing the 120 miles per hour, to 110 mph, then 100 mph. But the pain was all too much. Blossom had ran out of boots, and the bottom of her fatigue had even caught fire. The car was exerting too much force on a weakened Blossom, and so her legs gave out, and Buttercup was alone in trying to stop the car.

Only, Buttercup was grinding her feet on the ground from one side, causing the car to swerve out of control to the right, hitting the police cruiser that had accelerated and come up beside it. The mob car had accelerated once more, and both vehicles smashed into another car ahead, which spun out of control, and tumbled on the road. Both mob car and police cruiser crashed into it, and more cars from the back crashed behind them, causing the mother of all pile-ups, the third one on the same highway.

The Girls felt themselves thrown forward as the mob car finally came to a stop, partially from engine failure, but the poor victims ahead of them had acted as a bumper. They were barely able to hold on.

It took what seemed like forever for things to calm down and come to a stop. When it did, both Girls let go of the door frame of the mob car, lying on the ground, all tired out, pain coursing through their veins. Police cars pulled up at the mess they had caused. When the police officers in those cruisers came up to Blossom, who was just sitting up, she thought that they were there to help her…

Cue half a dozen of them pointing pistols and shotguns at her. "Police, freeze! Do not move!"

Buttercup was surrounded by just as many of them. "Don't move! Drop your weapons!" But Buttercup did not listen. Instead, she was incredulous and furious at the kind of treatment she had received after all she had done. She stood up in defiance, her pistol in hand. "Freeze! Or we'll shoot!"

"Buttercup, no!" Blossom shouted at her sister.

"But-!" Buttercup objected, but Blossom did not wait.

"They're policemen, Buttercup! We have to listen to them!" Blossom told her. Buttercup seemed to consider this, but remembered the power Blossom had over her. Reluctantly, Buttercup dropped her Beretta pistol. Blossom dropped the police Glock she had taken from the policewoman. She then reached for her own sidearm, but she had done it too fast. The more trigger-happy of the police firing squad attending to her had put several rounds in her chest in response, knocking her down such that she dropped to her knees. "Ouch! Stop hurting me!"

Another police officer had to stop the more gung-ho of them from firing, and Blossom finally pulled her pistol out and dropped it. "What the hell are you?" one of them, the shades-wearing officer Buttercup had shot at, asked rhetorically, upon realizing that these Girls were nigh-indestructible.
The police officers were all looking at each other, or looking at Blossom with mouths hanging.

"Get over to your girl friend and go down to your knees!" another police officer ordered Buttercup to do so. Sluggishly, both from the exertion of the mission and unwillingness, Buttercup did as she was told and got up next to Blossom and knelt down beside her. More police officers swarmed over the mob car, checking for survivors.

"Are they alive in there?" the shades-wearing officer asked his colleague.

"Yep, I recognize them. The Neanderthals from The Strip. I think we have two stiffs here. Matthias is one of them," one of the officers checking the car reported.

"Not yet! We'll pull them out for a CPR," another officer added. "We got two breathing at the backseat though. One of them's in a really bad way. Shot in the chest. Get the ambulance, ASAP!"

Blossom stared at the floor as the scene played out around her, in the smoking ruins of the cars and highway. So much had happened within an hour, almost all of which she regretted. But there was no more room for tears, not yet, for she was still struggling to process everything that had happened and in a way, she would prefer to push those dark thoughts away for fear of what they might tell her.
Chapter 58: Consequences

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls face up to what they have done.

Chapter 58: Consequences


"Hands on your head where I can see them!" the leading police officer shouted at the Girls, who reluctantly did as they asked. Similar questions ran through both Blossom and Buttercup's head: What did we do wrong? But Blossom knew the answer, at least part of it: she had accidentally killed the bad guys, and she had shot one of them in the wrong place. She remembered the anatomy chart Miss Keane had given her, and she remembered, with crystal clarity, where she had shot the shotgunner. The bullet had gone into a lung, which meant that the shotgun gangster stood a high chance of dying.

Ten police officers continued to train their guns on the Girls while two rather brave cops went around them and took their arms, swinging them around to their backs, handcuffing them. They made sure that the cuffs were tight. The leading police officer, the one in square-jawed man in shades, with buzz-cut hair, came up to them, examining them, scanning them.

"You have the right to remain silent and refuse to answer questions. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law," the police officer said. "You have the right to consult an attorney before speaking to the police and to have an attorney present during questioning now or in the future." The police officer read the rest of the Miranda warning, but the Girls couldn't understand the half of it; they did not understand what a 'court of law' was, or what was meant by 'rights'. They had no idea what an 'attorney' was.

"Do you understand?" the police officer finally asked. Blossom glanced up at the police officer, her eyes as human as they were ethereal because of how abject they were, filled as much with misery as it seemed to be pulsing with energy.

"No…" Blossom said, a single tear-drop falling, as she was still keeping it all in. "We were only trying to help."

"Help? Do you know how much damage you've done?" the leading police officer chided. He turned to another officer beside him. "How many affected, give me an estimation."

"40, maybe 50, most of them likely wounded to varying degrees," the other police officer said.

"You've hurt 40 to 50 people today. Some of them could even be dead, little girl," the leading police officer said. "If that's what you are. What are you, anyway?"

"I'm… Blossom," she said. "And this is Buttercup, my sister."
"I didn't ask for your name," Shades Officer said.

"We're little girls…" Blossom insisted.

"Not to me, not from the looks of it. Little girls don't dress up the way you do, and go around hurting people. I think you're bluffing. You're both criminals, belonging to a rival gang - how you manage to run at the speed of a car is another matter," the policeman said.

"But we're not," Blossom said. Two police officers pulled the Girls to their feet.

"You don't get to decide that," Shades Officer said before turning to the officers handling the Girls. "Put them in my car. I'm taking them down to Central Booking."

"You don't get to do that," another voice, this one male as well, said. A familiar voice. The leading police officer turned around. It was Sergeant Blake, with Corporal Rutherland and Corporal Fields, his number two, with him.

"And who the hell are you?" the leading police officer asked.

"USDO, can't you see the badge?" Sergeant Blake said. He took a glance at Blossom. Their eyes met for a second, before he turned his eyes back to the police officer. Blossom thought the warmth in his eyes was missing. "Those Girls are part of the USDO. Let them go."

"They are part of my jurisdiction now. Look at what they've done to my city! My men are collecting charges now. I bet there's a few dozen waiting for them," Shades Officer insisted, marching up to Agent Blake, putting his face close to his.

"Your jurisdiction is in the city of Townsville. Mine's the entire United States of America. And Townsville," Agent Blake said, not intimidated by the police officer. "This is a federal matter. My authority overrides yours. Hand them over, or you and your pals will have to hand in your badges."

"Go to hell! You feds have nothing on this city! The TPD's been here since forever! And you? You're the new kid around the block!" the leading police officer yelled at Agent Blake, who remained impassive to the police officer.

Agent Blake simply waved a hand upwards. The PTF soldiers behind him knew the hand gesture. They raised their weapons and trained them on the police officers. "You seem to have forgotten something. The USDO has been given certain powers and authority over the TPD. The TPD's been here since forever, and what a stunning job you've done so far, letting the cockroaches and rats breed out of control, letting those vermin into your police department. I can just have you and your men killed right now, and write you off as being corrupted and on the take. After all, you are interfering with USDO business." With the way Agent Blake appeared now, even Blossom was intimidated. He seemed to have changed from how he was before, back when he had taken cared of her sisters and her when Daddy was too ill to do so. Unknown to her, Agent Blake was simply slipping back to his old self.

Stiffly, the leading police officer stepped aside. Blossom's cuff was removed, while Buttercup snapped the chain of her cuff off the moment she saw that she could go. She looked at her wrists, and saw that the cuffs were still there, so she pried those open as well, as if they were little more than threads. There were gasps after that, and some of the police officers looked on in fear, wondering what they were actually dealing with.

Agent Blake marched up to Blossom as she stood up.

"Thanks, Mister Blake," Blossom said, a relieved smile on her face. "I was scared and-"
"Don't you Mister Blake me!" Agent Blake yelled at her. "Didn't you hear me over the radio??\"

"I did, but-" Blossom tried to explain herself, but Blake wouldn't hear it.

"You did! And you didn't listen! I thought we had an understanding, you and me!" Blake continued scolding the little girl, who trembled from being overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions as she looked up at the man, who was supposed to be her friend. Agent Blake took her by the hand and dragged her towards the Lamborghini transport he had piloted to get to her. The speed transport was all scratched up, having endured its own accidents on the way, though certainly nothing like the kind that Blossom and her sisters had caused. "You're in big trouble, Blossom. Same goes for you, Buttercup!" Buttercup had been following along. Spared most of the scolding, she had little reaction to it, and Blake's warning did not carry much weight either.

"But I couldn't let them go! I didn't want it to be like the last time! They'll hurt the innocent, that's what Daddy said!" Blossom tried to explain again. Blake practically threw her forward when he stopped.

"Look in front of you!" Blake demanded. Blossom turned around instead, to look him in the eyes, pleading for him to just stop. Blake stomped up to her and forcibly turned her around again. He held her head tightly with one hand and her right arm tightly with the other. "Look at what you've done!"

Down the highway from where Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had come from, there were multiple pile-ups along the way. The highway had been blocked off by the traffic police, such that no new vehicles had gone through. Blossom could see it all - there were no obstructions. Numerous ambulances were tending to the wounded, young and old, even children, some appearing as young as her. Some of them looked terrible, with half their clothes covered in blood. Blossom couldn't even hang her head in shame as Agent Blake had held her head up to force her to keep looking.

"And that wasn't all! Because why should it be!?" Blake shouted. "Do you know what would have happened to you and your sisters had I not arrived?"

"No…" Blossom said, close to tears.

"The police would have taken you far away, locked you up in a room, and you'd be lucky if you'll ever see your father again, that's what," Agent Blake explained coldly, anger still seething underneath. "And they would have been right to do so. You've hurt lots of people. I saw them myself when I drove up here. And Christmas is just a few days away."

Blossom was devastated. Had Blake not dragged her to the speed transport, she would have lain down by the side of the highway and let herself rot there for all eternity. All she was trying to do was to help, and yet every time she tried to do something good, she had failed in some way, and what she had done on the highway was the mother of all failures - instead of helping the innocent, she had harmed them instead. Just like the bad guys.

When Blossom was in the speed transport, she squeezed herself into a corner, against the opposite door, which remained closed. She could feel herself trembling, still, from all the things Mister Blake had said, from everything she had done, the exhaustion and pain she had suffered as she chased the Lombardi enforcers down. She held up her hands before her eyes, and saw that her hands were shaking. She gripped them tightly, and closed her eyes, and felt like it wouldn't be a bad idea to just fall asleep forever. Buttercup sat beside her, looking at her, perplexed. As far as Buttercup was concerned, they'd had fun, and whatever consequences there were… were inconsequential. Sure, people were hurt, but so what? So was she, and she had been hurting for a long time - it was only fair.
But Buttercup could feel something in her. The same unnatural emotion welling up in her. Where it was coming from, she didn't know. Looking at Blossom and how pathetic she was, all curled up and shaking in a corner, she could feel it more strongly. She couldn't even understand what it was. Pity? Sadness? Love, even? 'Strong', however, was relative. What Buttercup felt wasn't even half as much as what her more sensitive sisters felt on a regular basis, but next to an emotional vacuum, it might as well be.

"Hey Blossom," she said. If there was any reply from Blossom, it was in the form of a pathetic acknowledging whimper. Blossom was locked in her own head, that had become a theater with a loop of her mistakes replaying over and over. Buttercup did not know what to say. It simply wasn't her way. "You were cool just now, when we stopped the bad guys."

It was as if Blossom had no mouth, and she wanted to scream, just scream so badly. Before Buttercup could say anything else, Agent Blake ducked into the backseat. "Blossom, where did Bubbles go? Blossom?"

Blossom lifted her head with difficulty to look at Blake. Bubbles. Where had she gone? Blossom did not know, and now, all she could think of regarding her sweetest sister was that she was hurt because of her.

"I… don't know," Blossom cried, her voice cracked. She'd slid lower on the backseat, her face pressing into the crook between door and cushion.

"She fell down just now," Buttercup added, standing in for Blossom. "I didn't see her after that, either."

"She was your responsibility, Blossom," Agent Blake reprimanded coldly. "You know how Bubbles can be like, and you just left her behind?" Shaking his head, Agent Blake left the backseat, circled around the car and poked half his body into the driver's seat. He picked up the radio and reported Bubbles' MIA status.

When Blake was done, he sat in the driver's seat, resting an arm against the steering wheel, a hand still clutching the radio as he banged it against his forehead gently, waiting for a reply. The Girls did not know the full extent of what they'd done, even if what they knew was severe enough. Chief of Security Blackwater wouldn't be happy with the outcome of the latest operation, and neither would the Central Committee.

Ramp off Highway 13. 10 minutes earlier. (Mission Time - 45 mins)

When the semi-truck had finally ground to a halt on the ramp leading back down to the city, and all vehicles around it had stopped, the driver of the semi opened his massive door and got out. Hurriedly, he surveyed the wheels of his vehicle for the little girl he had hit, and on finding no one, got to the front. That was where he found Bubbles. Several cars, including the four-wheeled jeep that had ran over the enhanced little girl, had stopped around the semi-truck, their occupants equally worried.

"Little girl? Are you alright?" the truck driver called out to the form underneath his truck. Bubbles had let go of the truck's bumper late into its skid, and as a result hadn't gone too far underneath the truck.

"Jesus, is she alright!?" a man in white T-shirt and jeans came up to the truck driver - as the driver of the four-wheeled jeep who was the first to grind over Bubbles, he was deeply concerned, and not just for the girl she had hit, but his own legal well-being. "Please tell me she's fine!"
A few more men and women had come up to the semi-truck, deeply concerned. A few children watched from inside their cars.

"Well, she ain't responding," the truck driver said. He bent down, before going down on his belly to try to crawl under his semi-truck and get the little girl out.

"I'll help," the jeep driver offered. He got down as well, and crawled towards Bubbles. Together with the truck driver, they dragged her from underneath the truck and out into the open. Meanwhile, someone had pulled out a brick-sized cellphone and called the ambulance.

What everyone saw had drawn a collective gasp of shock, not because of the amount of blood, or gore, or disfigurement, but because Bubbles was… entirely intact, except for the bruise on her cheek, which she had gained during her fight against Naga, and was only worsened by literally getting hit by a truck. One other thing that puzzled the civilian bystanders was the way the little girl was dressed. She was practically equipped for war, as she was dressed in what looked like a miniature riot cop gear, with helmet and goggles, the latter of which had cracked badly, but not entirely shattered. Her stockless XM4 Carbine was still hanging on her shoulder, as was the rest of her weapons.

The truck driver unbuckled her helmet and removed it. Blonde hair, shoulder-length. He took off the broken goggles, and managed to cut himself on a shard accidentally. He winced.

"What the hell is going on with this girl?" another bystander commented.

"Isn't it too late for Halloween?" a woman said.

"I saw her running on the highway - she was even faster than my car!" a man in the crowd claimed.

"That's crazy," another bystander replied.

"I saw her running in front of me too," Jeep Driver added. "It's true."

"What? Really?" another bystander said.

"Be careful," Jeep Driver said to Truck Driver as he sucked on his cut finger. "Is she alive? You know, like breathing?"

"I don't know," Truck Driver said. Being a simple man untrained in first aid or medicine, he hovered his fingers over the little girl's nose, and thought he could feel light breathing. Next, he opened the girl's eyelid, to find that her eye color was… off. Bright baby blue, too bright, and under the cloudy sky, he thought it was glowing slightly. There were whispers because of this. Startled, Truck Driver let go of the girl's eyelid.

"Here, let me see," Jeep Driver knelt down beside the little girl and placed a finger on her neck. He could feel little, gentle pulses, the kind that a little girl would make. "I think she's fine."

"Little girl, you okay? Hey, wake up," Truck Driver said to Bubbles again. Putting a hand on her shoulder, he shook her, but Jeep Driver stopped him.

"Hey, stop!" Jeep Driver warned, pulling him back. "We don't know what kind of internal injuries or bone fractures she'd suffered! Better not move her anymore than we already did!"

Not long after, a police cruiser, with the police officers coming in to put some distance between the crowd and the unconscious little girl. One of them started taking statements. Ultimately, no one was in trouble - the highway wasn't exactly supposed to be a place for little girls to wander around in. An
ambulance came in after that, and the paramedics examined Bubbles quickly, noting the surprising lack of injury to the skin and flesh, visible sign of internal injury and hemorrhage, nor fractures or broken bones. The only symptoms were the bruise on her cheek and her unconsciousness. One of them thought that neurological trauma was a possibility.

The paramedics loaded Bubbles up on a stretcher, strapping her in, taking her belongings - her weapons, her helmet and broken goggles along with them separately to be stored as patient belongings. They carried her into their ambulance before driving off to the nearest hospital. The police cruiser attending to the scene followed the ambulance. They knew what Bubbles had been doing on the highway. They'd heard it from their colleagues on the radio. As far as she was concerned, she was armed and dangerous, and a suspect in a shooting incident, all but confirmed to be a participant of it.

Just then, three USDO Lamborghini speed transports passed by on the highway, towards two other little girls on the highway…
Chapter 59: Casualties of War

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Blossom and Buttercup faces their father after what happened on the highway. Bubbles is found but not before Townsville learned more about Project Powerpuff from her presence.

Chapter 59: Casualties of War

The City of Townsville. Road Towards Suburbs.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1610.

"My eye still hurt," Buttercup complained in the silent zone that was the speed transport. She had an ice pack on her eye, but it could only numb the pain so much.

"Just keep it on your face," Sergeant Rutherford said, referring to the ice pack. "I've already taken out the glass shards. You should be fine."

"I'm aching all over," Buttercup said further. "But it was worth it. Right, Blossom?"

Blossom did not answer her. She wasn't even listening. No one answered her. Sergeant Rutherford cupped his forehead in his hand.

"Aren't we supposed to find Bubbles, Mister Blake?" Blossom asked the man. He did not answer immediately, and Blossom knew exactly why. "Mister Blake?"

"We have people out there looking for her," the security officer finally said. There was no more warmth in his voice. Blossom missed it. He was one of the first friend she had made.

There was silence for a time after that, as the speed transport sped towards home. Blossom couldn't calm down even in this space that was given to her. Everything was wrong, and being driven away from the highway did not make it any less so.

"Mister Blake?" Blossom said.

Silence.

"Are we still friends?" Blossom asked.

Agent Blake shifted in his driver's seat, adjusted his grip on the steering wheel. It made Blossom uncomfortable.

"I don't know," Agent Blake finally said. He had believed that The Three - Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, were the first subjects of Project Powerpuff who were like normal human beings, not the psychopaths that the Chemical A-X series tend to produce. Now, after what had happened, after the
crisis on Highway 13, he wasn't sure anymore. Was Blackwater right all along, that he was blinded by Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's appearance? Had he thrown away his career for a trio of Project Powerpuff subjects who had turned out to be just as destructive, just as psychopathic as the others?

Blossom stared at the back of his seat in dismay. She knew what Agent Blake meant. In her mind, he had effectively dissolved their friendship.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1631.

"Here," Corporal Rutherford handed the Girls the things they had left behind. Blossom was returned both her SMG and shotgun, while Buttercup got her Stoner LMG back. "Don't lose them again. It took us some time to get them."

When Buttercup leaped off the car with her discarded clothes and shoes and weapons, she felt a wave of dizziness, nausea. Her ordeal had left a mark on her, and it hadn't worn off just yet. Blossom followed behind her with her own stuff, relieved by the sight of The House. She tried to be rational about things - whatever bad things that had happened was over. People were looking for Bubbles, so she should be fine… Right? She thought that Agent Blake was mad and upset, but believed that he would cool down later, and even if he didn't, she still had Daddy and Mommy.

Buttercup bent over, retching, but nothing came out. Blossom took her by the hand, and they walked, hand-in-hand, towards The House. This time around, neither her Dad nor her Mom had come out to receive them. No - something was wrong, even in The House.

Before entering The House, Blossom turned back to regard Agent Blake, hoping to catch him in the eye, hoping that, perhaps he might change his mind - But the USDO officer was already getting into the driver's seat. He was about to close the door when he stopped and returned Blossom's look. They stared at each other for a second before the man closed the door. Blossom couldn't tell what his expression was, because he had his aviator shades on, and she did not use her x-ray vision.

"Come on, Blossom! I'm feeling really sick!" Buttercup said impatiently. Blossom turned back to the front door of her home and opened it.

Only to wish that she hadn't, for the sight that greeted her was even worse than the cold shoulder Agent Blake had been giving her, or the accidents on the highway. Blossom had always thought that, no matter how bad things could get, she would always have a home to return to, and the warm embrace of her Daddy to fall into. That notion had never been more challenged than it was, the moment she stepped into the living room.

Professor Utonium was sitting on the living room couch, hunched over, his face in his hands. Selicia, still in the red dress she wore for the family trip, had an arm around his shoulder, and Blossom could hear that she was whispering comfort into his ears. When they heard the door open, the both of them looked up at her. The professor's eyes were red, and the look on his face - it was a blend of anger and misery, and other things that she couldn't understand, a look that hurt Blossom when she saw it. Not even Buttercup was immune from this, as all her past misdeeds returned to haunt her, and she became afraid that Daddy might have found out, somehow.

"Blossom, Buttercup - kids - could you come here for a second?" the professor beckoned. Selicia did not need to say a word - all she had to do was to glare disapprovingly at Blossom to get her point across, as she sat beside her 'husband'. Blossom gingerly padded over to them; she had never been
more afraid of her father before - in fact, there was never a time in her short life that she had ever been afraid of her father. Buttercup followed behind Blossom, actually using her as a shield. "We need to talk."

"Dad…" Blossom tried to defend herself - to explain things, but she didn't even know how to begin. The professor actually waited for her- so that she could say anything, whatever it took to explain away what she did, so that the ghosts of Project Powerpuff's past wouldn't come back to haunt him.

"Sit down, Girls," Selicia ordered Blossom and Buttercup. Buttercup took the single-seater, mostly because she still felt sick from her adventure at the strip club and on the road. Blossom stood next to her, too tense, too afraid to let herself relax.

"I just heard from Blackwater on the phone," the professor began, himself unsure of where to start. His mouth and lips felt dry, even though he had a cup of water on the insistence of Selicia. "He said that the two of you had hurt forty to fifty innocent people." He could feel his heart beating fast. "While you're chasing down suspects. He said that you were ordered not to. Is it true?"

"They were running away, I didn't want them to run away or they'd hurt the innocent, like you said," Blossom repeated his words, hanging her head in abject misery as she did.

"You didn't answer my question. Is it true?" the professor interrogated. He had been controlling himself before, but no longer. Anger was slipping through the tone of his voice. Blossom trembled at the sound of his voice, at everything that she'd been suppressing inside her - the pain, the sadness. "I asked you a question and I expect an answer. It's called manners."

"Yes," Blossom admitted, face to the floor.

"I also heard from Blackwater that the two of you killed the criminals you were chasing," the professor added. Fear gripped him as he said it, for what he must find out. "Did… the two of you - and Bubbles - enjoy killing people?"

"No!" Blossom and Buttercup cried in unison, the former sincere while the other lied. Blossom summoned whatever little courage she had left and looked up at Daddy, only to be met with a stone cliff that was his face.

"Really?" the professor clarified. The doubt in him, in his voice broke Blossom. Tears, long buried, spilled from her eyes as her lips trembled.

"You don't love me anymore," Blossom cried, her voice breaking.

"Dad! I- I swear! It's not- It wasn't like you-" Buttercup blabbered on the side.

"What does love have anything to do with this?" the professor said sternly. "Don't bring us into this."

"You don't love me anymore," Blossom repeated herself, fixated on that fact she perceived, falling into the pit of despair, and it seemed like a point of no return.

"Blossom, stop," the professor demanded coldly. He stepped towards Blossom. "We need to talk about this."

"No," Blossom said, taking a step back.

"Honey, this is not something you can run away from," Professor Utonium said, and somehow he sounded menacing to the now-irrational Blossom.
"No!" Blossom screamed before speeding up away, going up the stairs and into her room, leaving behind a trail of askew paintings and pictures. A door slammed in the distance. The professor sank into the couch, rubbing his temples, sighing.

"Want me to do something?" Selicia asked.

"No, I'll get her," the professor said. Getting up, looking weary, he went up the stairs, leaving Selicia and Buttercup in the living room When he was out of earshot, they both smiled at each other.

"And how are you, Buttercup dear?" Selicia finally got to ask her favorite.

"I'm really sick," Buttercup said, but maintained her smile. "I got to really hurt some bad people though. It was worth it." Selicia looked away for a second, giving a slight sigh as she dropped her smile.

"Are you mad at me too?" Buttercup asked, her smile fading too. She was glad that the heat from Dad was off her, but now she was worried that her mother was thinking the same thing as Daddy too.

"No, not really," Selicia was quick to say. "But you need to be more careful around people. They're not as strong as you."

Buttercup considered for a second to tell her exactly what she thought: that she cared nothing for those bystanders who did nothing, that it wasn't her problem that they were weak and it was only fair that everyone got hurt when she had been in pain, on and off, ever since she started fighting crime, heck, even before. But she wisely kept it all to herself.

"Now how about if we clean you up?" Selicia offered.

"Can I use the bathroom first? I need to go," Buttercup asked.

"Of course, sweetheart," the mother said.

The professor did not have to search every room for Blossom. At first, he was dreadfully worried that she might have decided to run away, but he thought it unlikely. Home is where the heart is. He believed that even if Blossom believed that there was no more love between them, she would have stayed on because she would have still loved him anyway. If nothing else, the trail of spent, dented bullets were breadcrumbs leading to her.

It was no surprise where she'd decided to hide. The lead led him to her room. Coming up to the door, he tried to open it, but the door knob wasn't turning. Locked. He rapped on the door. "Blossom, honey, open the door." He tried to sound as gentle as he could, and it helped that his worry for his adopted daughter was all he could think about now. For one thing, the toll exacted on Blossom's mind for doing what she did - fighting crime - must be heavy. There's a very good reason why the act of pressing children into the military as child soldiers was an act universally frowned upon.

He could hear sobbing and sniffing inside. "Honey, please open the door."

"Go away!" Blossom shouted from inside the room.

"Blossom, you got me all wrong. I've never stopped loving you," the professor said, thought that addressing the little girl's first concern would open more doors, literally and figuratively. Besides, she needed to know that - he couldn't imagine how soul-crushing it would be for a little girl to think that her father no longer loved her. "I've promised that I'll always be your father. Love's part of that too."
The sobbing inside continued. Then silence and hesitation. Finally, he could hear footsteps, getting louder. The door then opened, but not fully, as if Blossom was using the door as a shield. She had taken off her helmet, and removed the goggles hanging on her neck. Her hair was a mess, with strands of them sticking out. Her eyes, those beautiful eyes, had cried so much that there was red all around her glowing pink irises.

She took a gaze at the professor, making eye contact briefly before walking away and sitting on her bed. Professor Utonium sat down beside her. He'd noticed something else that he hadn't before. She was practically barefooted, with most of the bottom of her boots destroyed. She had been walking on the cold surface of the winter world all this time.

"I don't enjoy killing people," Blossom said.

"I know, honey," the professor said. "I just needed to ask."

"I'm sorry I made you mad," Blossom apologized, looking up at her Daddy, who towered over her, still afraid. The professor held her hands, to let her know that she shouldn't have to be afraid of him. They were so small, even with the combat gloves she was wearing, and yet they had already done things that the majority of adults wouldn't dare to do, or would dream of doing. She looked away quickly, but the professor held her chin and got her to look back up.

"I wasn't really mad at you, Blossom," he said. "If I was mad, I was mad at myself for everything. I'm your father, and yet I'm helpless to alleviate what you're going through. I was just worried about you. I care about you so much, Blossom. I just... wanted to help you."

Blossom did not say anything beyond that. She cried some more, and ended up in his lap. For how long they were together like this, the professor didn't know nor care. The most important thing was that they were together.

"It was horrible - there were women who were naked and men who acted like... like..." Blossom spilled out her story as she was lying in bed, in Buttercup's green side of it, covered in her blanket. The professor sat down beside her, stroking her hair.

"I understand, sweetie," the professor said as he listened sympathetically.

"We were fighting against the bad guys, and- and there was this la-lady with four arms- she shot Mi-Mister Mullens and he was bleeding so much and- and-" Blossom continued narrating her plight, inconsolable. Blossom did not have to mention the name of the lady for the professor to know who she was. Naga. "And she was really, really mean to us. She shot Buttercup really badly and-"

Blossom went over the whole thing, how she went on to chase the mob underboss on the highway, what happened to Bubbles and how it was all her fault, how the police shot at her, how to gangsters shot at her. How she accidentally shot one of them in the chest. How half of the bad guys died when she couldn't stop the car they were in. She had been weeping uncontrollably. It had been just as the professor feared. The thought that he should have killed his children before it all came to be returned, but he buried that thought again - filicide should never be an option.

But when would there be a day when Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could return home without being physically and mentally traumatized?

The City of Townsville. Uptown. Wilford Women and Children's Hospital.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1640.
Bubbles, still unconscious, was wheeled into the x-ray room of the Wilford Women and Children's Hospital after some time - despite how she had gotten 'injured', she had been made low priority because of her stable condition and an apparent lack of physical trauma. Before she was given the scan, her SWAT gear was removed. They gave her a full body scan - and yet, nothing. The technicians in the x-ray room actually thought that her document had been filed improperly - how was it actually possible that a little girl could get run over by a jeep and hit by a truck without any kind of internal injury? Even the most miraculous cases had some form of injury or another, and here, it seemed that the only thing the little girl had suffered was just a bruise on her cheek, something that didn't require an x-ray to detect. The only abnormality they detected was a metal object in her mouth.

She was quickly handed over to the physician in charge of her, who did little to help her - seeing that she didn't need it. She was merely put in her own ward and changed into a hospital gown.

"Extraordinary!" Doctor Coleman, the attending physician said as he read her charts. No internal injuries, not so much as a scratch on her skin - nothing but a bruise that would indicate that she had been in any kind of accident. The police officers who were guarding the little girl, for some reason, had even added that she had been involved in an extended shooting incident on the highway. Her uniform had holes in it that the nurses noticed when they changed her, and there were even bullets juggling around inside her clothes.

The doctor went ahead to examine Bubbles, first opening one of her eyelids, but before he could even conduct a simple test, he could already tell that something was wrong with Bubbles. Her eye color - as the ward wasn't fully lit, with the curtains drawn, he could see very well the glow coming from it. The eye color was something rare, if not non-existent on the human range, too - a shade of baby blue that he wasn't quite sure the human body was capable of producing. He gave a gasp when he saw it.

"You alright, doc?" one of the police officers guarding the girl asked. A nurse came up to him.

"Nothing, I'm fine," the doctor said as he continued with the eye test using his flashlight. Next, he pried open the little girl's mouth to investigate what the metal object in her mouth was. He shone his flashlight in it. There was a glint of metal. Using a pair of medical forceps, he pulled it out.

It was a shotgun pellet.

"How did that get in there?" the attending nurse asked as the doctor put the pellet on a metal tray, which tinkled sharply on it when he did.

"She was involved in a shooting," the doctor explained, but the explanation had fallen terribly short and he knew it. There was no way a human being could take a shotgun blast to the mouth and live without any severe trauma and physical disability. The little girl had, based on this evidence, survived it without so much as a sore on the inside of her mouth.

"Anything I need to do, Doctor Coleman?" the nurse asked.

"She seems a little dehydrated and feverish. Hook her up on IV with Caldolor for the fever and bruise," the doctor said as he continued to examine the little girl for injuries - but it was merely a formality at this point. The paramedics had noted no other injuries, and neither did the x-ray team. The nurse padded over to the ward's medical cabinet to draw the required supplies.

Just then, the swinging doors of the ward opened. Another medical technician, a man with tattoos covering both his forearms, came in with a trolley. "Hey doc, local vampire here for a blood sample. May I?" he asked comically.
"Hey Rupert," the doctor greeted casually.

"Go right ahead. Your next victim is unconscious, should make it easy to drain her," Doctor Coleman joked as he walked over to another patient's bed to pick up her charts. However, before he could continue doing his job, a news reporter with his crew barged into the ward, mike and camera in hand.

"Doctor Coleman?" the news reporter, a man in a beige overcoat, asked.

"Yes - what the hell is going on here? Who let you in?" the doctor objected.

"Don't worry, the cops and city know me. Phil Robertson, TNN," the news reporter introduced himself. He turned to his news crew and put up his index finger - a little inner circle gesture that meant 'get ready in one minute'. "We were at the scene of the crime that little girl over there was part of, and I'm sure the city would like to know more."

The doctor stared at the camera, torn between his duty and his chance to appear on TV, do his bit for the local news. It gave the news crew enough breathing room to prepare their equipment.

"Alright, we're live, Phil," the camera man said as he pointed the camera at his colleague, and the doctor, who stood straighter than normal. Phil Robertson listened to the question streaming into his earphone from Stanley Whitfield.

"Alright, Phil, what can you tell us about the Highway 13 Incident?" Stanley Whitfield, the eye keeping watch over Townsville, asked over the wire.

"This is the ward where one of the alleged participants of the Highway 13 Incident was held. Eyewitnesses said that three little girls, armed and decked out in armor, were chasing down a car. One of the girls was thrown off the car when she managed to cling to it, and was alleged to have been run over by a jeep and hit by a truck. We're now live with the doctor attending to this girl," Phil Robertson introduced the scene. The camera was panned to centre to Doctor Coleman, and Phil put the mic under his mouth. "What can you tell me about the state of this girl, doctor? Will she survive the horrific accident?"

"W-well," the doctor stammered, before steadying himself. It had been a strange day thus far. "Surprisingly, yes. The little girl in question - we'll just call her Jane Doe for the lack of an ID - isn't even hurt in the slightest by the accident."

"In your experience, doctor, is such a thing possible?" Phil Robertson said, himself surprised by the information he had just uncovered, and it showed.

"I've been a doctor for twenty years, and I've heard of plenty of stories from dozens of doctors, some who's been in the coat for longer. Closest I've heard is a boy who survived getting hit by an old Ford pickup truck with just cuts and bruises and a hairline fracture. But it was an old pickup truck, travelling at maybe 40 miles an hour. Jane Doe was on a highway with vehicles going at maybe 100 miles an hour. The Jeep should've shattered or broken half her bones, and the semi should've taken her head clean off. From the paramedics' report, she was shot multiple times too. Jane Doe survived with not so much as a scratch, and just a bruise on her cheek. So no, I-" the doctor reported.

"Doctor!" the nurse attending to 'Jane Doe' shouted.

"What, nurse? Can't you see we're in the middle of an interview?" Doctor Coleman said.

"The needle isn't going in!" the nurse said.
"Oh for crying out loud-" the doctor said as he rushed towards Bubbles' bed. "Of all the time you chose to be incompetent, it had to be now!" The news crew took the opportunity to go up to the 'crime suspect', and she wasn't like anything they had expected. In Phil Robertson's mind, he was expecting a scarred, battle-hardened child soldier of the local Yakuza or Russian mob or something similar, but Bubbles turned out to be quite normal, if very pretty little girl - blonde hair, unscarred skin, button nose. Cute. Not someone who should be chasing down members of the dominant crime family in Townsville. The only odd thing he could see was her eyes - the color and the size, which was a little bigger than average.

The doctor took over the IV drip and after slapping Bubbles' skin below the crook of her elbow to find a vein, tried to stick the needle in. It wouldn't go in. The doctor pushed it harder, but it wasn't doing anything beyond pressing down Bubbles' skin. And it was all captured on live camera.

"Hey doc, this vamp's real hungry, cause my needle isn't working either," the blood sample technician said. The camera swiveled to him as he was trying to draw blood again. The needle wasn't going in.

"Odd," the doctor remarked, struggling to explain his little patient's tough skin. It certainly wasn't mentioned in any medical journals and textbooks he had ever read in his entire life.

"Doctor, care to comment?" Phil the field reporter pressed - but the doctor could only give him a stare that told him that he, probably the most well-educated person in the room, had no idea what was going on.

"I… don't understand," he could only say.

"Doctor, she's coming to!" the nurse said. Everyone turned to Bubbles, who slowly opened her eyes, then blinked a few times.

"Oh… my head- Where am I?" Bubbles mumbled. Her body was still aching and her head felt as how it should be - like she had just been hit by a truck. The first thing she noticed was that she was surrounded by strangers. She bolted up immediately, backing away from them, screaming."Where am I!? Who are you!?"

Just then, there was commotion outside. People shouting. Heavy footsteps. People running. Things getting overturned. The swinging doors leading into the ward were slammed open. Half a dozen men in black SWAT gear and masks came in, assault weapons up in a combat posture. The camera man swung alone to point his camera at them.

"Put that damn camera down! Now!" one of the black-geared soldiers, a huge beast of a man, demanded in a growling voice. The camera man did not comply immediately. "Put it down before I break it!" and with that threat issued, the camera man did as he was told. Despite this, the soldier grabbed it and threw it to the ground.

"Hey!" Camera Man yelled.

"Get away from the little girl, now!" the huge soldier demanded. The lone police officer in the room couldn't even draw his sidearm when the soldiers busted in. The doctor stepped in between the soldiers and Bubbles.

"Wait! She's my patient and I haven't discharged her just yet!" Doctor Coleman said.

"Put your weapon on the ground and lie face-down!" another soldier, who sounded female and looked the size, ordered the police officer, who had no choice but to comply, seeing that his
lonesome peashooter was up against six assault rifles, possibly more outside the room.

Without considering what the doctor said, the leading black-gear soldier shoved him and the news crew aside, getting to Bubbles, who had gotten off her bed to hide behind it, her glowing baby blue irises visible in the dark corner she was in.

The leading soldier pulled down his mask. It was Chief of Security Blackwater. Bubbles wasn't sure if she was glad to see him.

"B-49- Bubbles- Screwing up as usual," Blackwater growled at the cowering little girl. "Get up. It's time to go."

"My head hurts…" Bubbles said.

"Shut up. You don't get to complain after the stunt you pulled," Blackwater said coldly. "Now move!" When Bubbles did not, he reached out to grab her and pulled her out of her hiding spot. Bubbles was too afraid and submissive to resist, and so she let him pull her along. He was walking so fast that she had difficulty catching up without the use of her super-speed. Before the bear of a man left, he turned to his soldiers.

"The rest of you - secure B-49's gear and destroy all evidence of her," he ordered.

"Does that include the civilians present on site?" one of the soldiers asked, emotionless.

"No, you idiot! Don't even mention such a thing again!" the Chief of Security bellowed at his men. "We don't do that kind of stuff anymore!"

Chief of Security Blackwater pulled Bubbles all the way down to the underground carpark, where a convoy of humvees had stopped. Near one of the humvees, Bubbles begged for the man to stop pulling her towards the humvee, but he would not let go. Finally, out of desperation, she pulled her hand away. Blackwater could immediately feel heat in his hand from the friction.

"What the hell are you doing!?" Blackwater bellowed at her. Bubbles turned away, bending down. She could feel stomach fluid coming up her gullet. She fell to her knees and threw up whatever she had in her stomach, which, by this time, was an unrecognizable mush mixed with stomach acid. Blackwater watched on, his nostrils flaring, his arms crossed, glaring. But at the very least, he gave her time.

Bubbles got up and turned around when she was done, wiping bits of mush and her vomit off her mouth as she did. Ashamed, she cried a little. "I'm sorry…" she whimpered. Blackwater merely stared down at her, but reached behind him to pull out a water canteen. He uncapped the bottle.

"Here," he said gruffly as he handed the bottle to her. Bubbles took it reluctantly.

"Thank you," she said as she took a mouthful.

"Don't thank me," Blackwater said, cold as ever, as Bubbles rinsed her mouth and drank a little. "Now get in the vehicle. I'm sick of babysitting you."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1645.

Buttercup giggled. She was in the bathroom. She had locked herself in after excusing herself from
the living room. She giggled again as she held up the glass jar she had scrounged up from the kitchen, complete with a cap. Opening the cap, she reached into her pocket and pulled out the trophies she had collected from her latest battle. A few teeth, three to be exact, and a fingernail that one of the bad guys had somehow lost. She dropped them into the bottle, where they joined several teeth already there before, harvested from the bad guys at the warehouse.

It was her collection. She did love those pretty little bone pearls the moment she saw the Lombardi capo lose some back in Townsville Central Bank. It was a shame that she didn't get to collect any of the first teeth she had loosened - they would've been historical. Turning the jar around, she wondered how long it would be before she could fill the entire jar with teeth and fingernails.

Then there were some knocks on the door. "Buttercup! How long do you need you're done? Blossom needs a warm shower and so do you!" Daddy's voice came through the door. Buttercup gasped before moving to hide the jar of white, pearly teeth. She then raced over to the sink to wash her hands. When she was done hiding her masterpiece, she opened the door.

"Sorry, Dad! I was just tired!" she lied as she faced her father figure.
Chapter 60: Theories

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium works on Chemical X in the labs after taking care of the Girls.

Chapter 60: Theories

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1655.

"Buttercup, where are you?" Professor Utonium called out to one of his lab-grown daughters as soon as he opened the door leading into the Girls' room. Buttercup was nowhere in sight. As soon as she left the bathroom, after doing God-knows-what, she had disappeared elsewhere. The professor had no idea what was going on with Buttercup.

Unbeknownst to him, Buttercup was in the walk-in closet. She had been inside ever since she left the bathroom. Sitting with her back leaning against the wall, she was admiring something on her lap. A shoebox she had been hiding in plain sight, in a little space between the weapons trunk and the wall of the closet.

It was her little pirate treasure chest. Sticking her hand in, she pulled out one of her treasures. A metal syringe, labeled 'His Secret'. She had already collected a bunch of them, first from the warehouse, then from the strip club. When the bad guys' suitcase had cracked open in the car they failed to stop, she had collected a few from there as well, shoved them in her pockets without anyone looking. By now, she had seven of them.

Buttercup had no idea what they were. They did, however, resemble some of the doctor instruments that her Daddy had used when he had put her under weeks ago, but very much different. It added to the mystery, the novelty and value of it, and they were all hers now.

"Buttercup, I've just ran the water and Blossom's waiting for you!" the professor called out again. Buttercup did not come out immediately. She didn't want her little secret to be exposed - she wasn't sure if her Daddy would like it, and she was sure that Blossom wouldn't. When the door closed, Buttercup gave her Dad time to walk away before coming out of the closet. With lightning speed, she got out of her room and up to him and pulled at his lab coat. "Oh there you are! Where were you?"

"I was just feeling sick, Dad," Buttercup didn't have to lie. "I was lying down on the floor in my room. Didn't you see me, Daddy?" But lying had become a well-practiced habit with her.

"The bed must have blocked the view," Professor Utonium reasoned, smiling, then picked her up. He could feel how sticky and filthy Buttercup was. He could have sworn that this was the first time he could feel and smell her sweat, and it was the same with Blossom. "Come on, let's get you
cleaned up."

But the professor's smile did not last for long.

"What's the matter, Dad?" Buttercup asked.

"I'm just worried about Bubbles, that's all," the professor said. "Blackwater just called. They found her, but she's 'sick, or something', they said."

Phone Recording 12171988-1955-TH

DOC: 17 DEC 1988

EXTRACTED: 3 MAR 1989

-TRANSCRIPT START-

Psychiatrist Alice: Hello?

Field Researcher Utonium: Hello. It's Thomas. We need to talk.

Psychiatrist Alice: Upton! It's been a long time! I've been meaning to speak to you, but work's been keeping me away.

Field Researcher Utonium: You've been meaning to speak to me?

Psychiatrist Alice: Yeah, but never mind. What do you need to talk about?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Agitated) It's the Girls. I think they need help. All those missions the USDO kept sending them - you've got to help me. I don't know what to do!

Psychiatrist Alice: Okay, calm down a bit. I'm sure it's not too bad. I know you, Thomas. It's not the first time you're a father, and it's certainly not the first time you've asked for my help. It's been a while, and with these extraordinary circumstances-

Field Researcher Utonium: (Interrupts. Shaken.) It's not any of that. You don't understand.

Psychiatrist Alice: I've been examining videos of the Girls in combat, Thomas. I've been keeping myself in the loop. It's also not very inconceivable that putting little girls in law enforcement duties and combat might cause severe psychological side effects either. I understand, Upton, more than you know. It's why I've been meaning to speak with you.

Field Researcher Utonium: Is there anything you can do for them?

Psychiatrist Alice: Let's not get way ahead of ourselves first. Before we do anything, we need to understand the problem better. I need to examine them, analyse them. Build their profile. It wouldn't hurt either, if we talk face to face.

Field Researcher Utonium: I don't need a shrink, Alice! It's the Girls I'm worried about.

Psychiatrist Alice: Are you sure?

Field Researcher Utonium: (Silence)

Psychiatrist Alice: Alright, let me see (leafs through her notebook). I'm clearing a slot on Monday
just for you and your kids. Is that alright?

Field Researcher Utonium: You're taking this case all by yourself?

Psychiatrist Alice: Yes. I'm very interested in the Girls, and in case you've forgotten, we're friends, remember? It's been eons since we've talked, so I don't blame you if-

Field Researcher Utonium: (interrupts) No, I prefer it that way, if it's just you. You're one of the few I can trust. The others in the USDO - I don't think they've wrapped their heads around the fact that Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are truly little girls. All those abuses they've suffered under their hands... And I wasn't there to stop it... (Seems upset)

Psychiatrist Alice: Calm down, professor. You're doing fine as a father. From the reports I've read of your relationship with them, I think you've done a good job. They won't be so attached to you if you hadn't, and no, it's not Stockholm Syndrome that's keeping the family together. Monday it is, then. Can you hold out until Monday?

Field Researcher Utonium: Yes. I'll do anything for them.

Psychiatrist Alice: Alright, see you on Monday then. I'll come over at 8pm. Is that good for you?

Field Researcher Utonium: At night?

Psychiatrist Alice: Yes. I'm afraid I have important tasks and a meeting to attend on Monday that I can't put off. I can try to swap things around if you want.

Field Researcher Utonium: No, it's fine. Monday at 8 then. It'd be nice to see another friendly face. Wouldn't hurt for the Girls either, if they meet someone who isn't going to scream or shoot at them on sight.

Psychiatrist Alice: I'm flattered. See you on Monday, then.

Field Researcher Utonium: See you on Monday.

-TRANSCRIPT END-

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


When Professor Utonium was done with his phone call, he returned to the Girls' room, where all three of his Girls were. He opened the door, and he was greeted by an unpleasant sight, and knowing that he would see it did not make it any easier to witness.

Walking over to the bedtime story chair, he sat down next to the Girls' tri-colored bed. Bubbles and Buttercup were lying down in it with their blanket over them, asleep - though sedated would be a more accurate word.

"Hey Daddy," Blossom greeted as she came up to him. Her gait had an odd limp. She was a little stiff from being thrown around like a rag doll by Naga - the aches would take time to disappear. The professor and his most intelligent adopted daughter could only be glad that it would likely take only a night to do so.

"Hey Blossom. What have you been working on?" the professor asked.
"Drawings for Bubbles and Buttercup," Blossom said, holding up two drawing blocks for him to see. One was of Bubbles riding a cloud of, well, bubbles, and the other was of Buttercup being tough and throwing a punch at a stereotypical bank robber with a black mask, striped shirt and a brown sack of money with a dollar sign on it. "I want them to wake up with something nice to look at."

"They're beautiful, flower blossom," the professor praised, and kept up with an optimistic smile on his face. "I'm sure they'll put a smile on their faces in no time."

"I'm going to keep working on them," Blossom added. "I want them to be perfect."

"Go right ahead, darling," the professor encouraged. "I'll be right here."

Blossom returned to her kiddy table, but for the professor, it was painful to look at the way she was walking towards it. It could only serve to remind him that she had been, quite frankly, getting her ass kicked out there. Looking back at the other two Girls lying in bed did not reassure him.

He was right next to Buttercup, who was hooked up on an IV drip, the incredibly common medical procedure made possible by the Duranium hypothermic needles he had ordered from the institute a week or two ago. Reaching out for Buttercup's head, he stroked her bob-cut hair. Despite her brash and rough nature, her hair was soft and her scalp smooth. While he wished that she wouldn't take to violence so well and adapt so fast to it, he could only love her as a father would.

Unlike the last time in the warehouse operation, Buttercup hadn't sustained any physical injuries, at least ones that could be detected with current medical technology and techniques - both conventional and USDO. It didn't have to be cuts and bruises to hurt, however. When the professor had gotten back to her, she had been complaining about her body aching, having a severe headache and nausea. A warm bath did not help her, and neither did time. When it was dinner time and he had fed her porridge, she'd vomited everything out minutes after eating them. Getting shot over a hundred times over had something to do with it.

He was forced to medically intervene in Buttercup's case - sedatives, painkillers, nutrients and hydration, all from the artificial and invasive needle of a syringe and IV drip. By the time he was forced to do this, Buttercup was almost welcoming it, though the idea that certain needles could penetrate her skin had still put off the tomboy considerably, at least until she eventually fell asleep from a combination of drugs and his story reading.

Bubbles underwent a similar procedure, though the cause was different for the same results. Getting hit by a truck, literally, on top of other things, had that kind of effect. The way she described how her head hurt, however, tore at his heart. She'd said that 'her head felt like a smashed fruit' or that 'it could break into two at any moment'. In any other circumstances, he would have applauded her sudden leap in language ability, but the origin of her inspiration left the celebration of it out of the question. Similar to Buttercup, she couldn't keep any food and drink down, and so she'd have to take her nutrient and fluid through alternative means. The IV drip.

But there was something else. The Girls had never complained about exhaustion before, outside of sleepiness. Overexertion could become dangerous, especially when the Girls - and himself - knew nothing of their limits, and it appeared that they do have limits. With the Chemical X factor thrown in, there was no telling what would happen if the Girls were to keep using their powers over a long stretch of time. He would have to monitor them carefully from now on.

So here, he had two Girls on IV, and one who had come close to getting one. It certainly wasn't the best of days, despite his every attempt to make it so. It was supposed to be their best day ever! Their duty, their supposed birthright, had gotten in the way.
After putting Blossom to bed with her sedated sisters, Professor Utonium returned to the labs to continue his work. He had everything he needed now - after sedating Bubbles and Buttercup, he had taken the opportunity to draw blood from each of them, and Blossom, who was able to bear with the pain before shedding some tears after seeing the needle get driven into her.

He did some basic analysis first, putting the skin cells he obtained from the Girls a week or two ago under the microscope, before doing the same thing with the blood. They came up otherwise normal, if saturated by Chemical X - he was able to determine that using a molecular dye. He made some notes, then leaned back on his swivel chair, running through the theories he had on Chemical X. He returned to his papers on Chemical X, sensing gaping holes in his understanding of the substance, trying to make sense of it all.

-TOP SECRET-


(The paper is to be circulated within the scientific community of the Organization exclusively. Intentional or unintentional distribution of top secret documents are punishable offenses and individuals found to be guilty of these misdemeanors will be given the death penalty.)

PROPERTIES OF CHEMICAL X - SUMMARY

Chemical X remains an enigmatic substance full of contradictions and paradoxes, unexplained by current science, even Organization-level science. This summary will attempt to contain a description of its properties within a few lines:

Stable: Chemical X is highly stable, and does not need special storage conditions to prevent accidental combustion or explosions. Chemical X in its purest form, is most stable.

Reactive: Yet, Chemical X is reactive to certain substances - this property alone is responsible for our progress with the use of Chemical X in the pursuit of functional applications. Chemicals 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything-Nice' are just a few such chemicals that have been proven to react with Chemical X. When forming compounds with more mundane substances, these 'bridging' molecules allow Chemical X to react with a wider array of substances.

Extreme Energy Density: Chemical X stores an incredible amount of energy within its molecular bonds, estimated to exceed any known elements or compounds by a wide margin. This has been true for Chemicals A through to X, though Chemical X, being more refined than the others, have the highest energy density of them all.

Extreme Thermal Capacity: Chemical X requires a great deal of energy to even gain a single Kelvin of temperature. It is partly due to this that Chemical X could remain in a liquid state even in temperatures approaching that of the surface of the sun.

Energy Expulsion: Despite being stable, Chemical X appears to express energy in some form of anti-gravity. This form of energy remains unknown. Previous efforts to determine the type of energy converted into the more mundane and obvious kinetic energy has only proven what it is not. It is not magnetic, heat or electrical. It is not any form of radiation either. Its molecular movement is random
and follows no rhyme or reason, unlike normal molecules which are subject to the Newton's Laws and Brownian Motion. Furthermore, this expression of energy does not seem to reduce the temperature of Chemical X nor cause a molecular breakdown of the substance.

Quantum Irregularity: Not even the molecular structure of Chemical X is fixed. The number of atoms of Chemical X fluctuates, as does the subatomic particles of Chemical X atoms. It is unknown how small or large a Chemical X molecule can get. Previous measurements and calculations have yielded a minimum of 3,000 atoms to a maximum count of 10 million so far. It is currently unknown how Chemical X molecules could change structure so drastically, and practically instantly. Use of stabilizing agents, however, will reduce this to a minimum.

Self-Replication: Finally, Chemical X is somehow capable of self-replication. Under certain special conditions, Chemical X is able to increase in mass and volume, especially when subjected to intense electrical charge or heat. However, this is not an exact science, as there is only a chance for the chemical to self-replicate, which means that there is a missing piece of the puzzle, an undiscovered factor that affects self-replication.

-TOP SECRET-

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

17 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 2334.

Professor Utonium had been at it for over an hour now, in deep, concentrated thought, supplemented by only ineffectual, repetitive tics and movement on his computer and blackboard.

He leaned back on his chair once more, thinking. So far, the prevailing theory that explained some of Chemical X's properties was the Hyper-Density Theory, which he penned, of course. It posited that the molecules of Chemical X were so tightly packed that its subatomic particles were mashed together that they resembled more of a soup of protons, neutrons and electrons rather than separate molecules, resulting in a 'fluctuating' molecular mass when there was an impossible-to-determine fixed amount. This unstable 'soup' of molecular structure almost meant that it was unable to form stable molecular bonds for very long, making it stable, until certain substances which could tame this instability were introduced.

The Hyper-Density Theory could also explain why Chemical X had such a high energy and thermal capacity - the exponentially higher number of bonds within the Chemical X molecular 'soup' structure could mean a huge storage capacity for energy and heat.

The Hyper-Density Theory, however, was entirely theoretical, and largely incomplete. It couldn't explain how on Earth the Chemical X molecules were floating on their own accord, how the number of atoms could fluctuate so dramatically when his calculations could only explain a much smaller range of particle count, and how in the living blazes Chemical X could self-replicate.

There were other theories he came up with, none of which could explain the Chemical X problem entirely. The Quantum Hotspot Theory - in that somehow, Chemical X was capable of inducing an incredibly large number of quantum incidences. However, if the Hyper-Density Theory was theoretical, then the Quantum Hotspot Theory must be fantastical.

Then there was the Living Molecule Theory, which suggested that Chemical X was similar in nature to viruses, prions and viroids. While Chemical X, in theory, was made of only one element that was uncharted by the periodic table, its 'soup-based' atomic and molecular structure allowed it to mimic the molecular behavior of many other elements. The fact that Chemical X was poisonous, even if not
always fatal, when ingested, supported this theory. However, many substances were poisonous, yet possessed none of the characteristics of Chemical X.

The professor stood up, stretching his back, before walking over to his blackboard and doodling a series of equations. The same question ran through his head - 'What is the unifying theory?'

'What is the unifying theory?'

'Even then, how does it apply to the Girls?' He thought, already getting ahead of himself, forming a theory in his head, but it'd came out just as soupy as he thought the molecular structure of Chemical X was. Chemical X bonded with 'Sugar', 'Spice' and 'Everything-Nice', allowing it to react with the stem cells that resulted in Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. The stem cells had grown into 5-year-old human beings using energy and heat from Chemical X, and material was transported in somehow via… quantum incidences? It would have been an astronomically numerous amount of quantum incidences - as many as the number of molecules it took to make up the Girls, which was astronomically unlikely. He'd hit a roadblock on the Girls' genesis quickly.

Then what of the Girls' enhanced abilities? He had already seen how Chemical X was in the Girls' very cells and blood. Perhaps Chemical X had done the same thing to the Girls as what carbon could do to Iron? By becoming saturated with Chemical X, the Girls gain toughness unequaled by all materials except Duranium? Chemical X could conceivably do that, with his understanding of the substance. It was a huge molecule, with an intricate network of molecular bonds, backed by a seemingly bottomless well of energy.

"Yes. Yes, that's it! Now I'm getting somewhere!" the professor said out loud to himself when he rode the brainwave he'd just had. His equation doodles had turned into words in point form.

Chemical X could be metabolized by the Girls' body to unleash an incredible amount of energy. But how? It could be present and mixed in with the nutrients they ingested. After all, Chemical X was self-replicating. But why was it replicating itself in the Girls' body? He wasn't even sure if this line of thought was legitimately logical. But he had to push on:

Chemical X was metabolized by the Girls, in the form of Chemical X saturated nutrients and… Perhaps even directly due to the presence of Chemical X in the Mitochondria?

And yet, how did Blossom fly? Her ability to just levitate seemed so fantastical, it might as well be magic. Then he remembered: Chemical X expressed energy by floating as well. Somehow, that property was transferred to Blossom, and likely her sisters. Somehow.

The professor could feel a sense of accomplishment welling up in his heart - only for it to fall flat quickly. He had come up with a series of explanations - no, speculations - and yet they remained unsupported by evidence, their logic full of gaping holes such that trucks the size of the semi that hit Bubbles could drive through them.

And those lines of self-criticisms took on a life of their own, attacking him, filling his head, replicating like Chemical X under special conditions. How does it explain Blossom's x-ray vision? Her ability to magnify her vision? How does it explain psychotic behaviour in the earlier recipients of the chemicals? How does it-

"Damn it!" he screamed, remembering, again, what was at stake. Grabbing his blackboard, he threw it down on the ground. He could only be glad that his lab was underground, not next to the Girls' room. The Girls had used their abilities for an extended period of time today, causing them exhaustion, possibly having a part to play in their physical discomfort. Without even the slightest clue as to how Chemical X worked in their body, he had no hope of ever preparing for the event that it
might have debilitating effects on them. Then there was the pipe dream - for a second, just a second, he thought he'd had it - a grasp of how Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could be reverted to normal little girls, but it'd gone away, like a bird flying free from his hand.

Slumping into his chair, he tried to think, but a headache was coming on, and he couldn't do it as straight as he used to, just a minute ago. Somehow, Eileen and Bloome came back to mind. When he looked at a picture of himself, Selicia and the Girls framed on his desk, he thought, for a moment, that he'd seen a picture of them. Oh, how he'd missed them, how he'd missed even his pictures of them on his desk back in the old Organization HQ.

Tears welled up. He sobbed after that.

"Thomas? Are you okay?" came a female voice. The professor could feel hands on his shoulders after that. How long had he been crying?

"I'm sorry, d-didn't hear you coming," the professor said, wiping away his tears, seizing his weakness by the throat, stopping his sobs, at least most of it. "It's just... Nothing."

"I know you're a bit of a nerd, Thomas," Selicia said. "But you're no wimp. You don't cry for nothing."

"It's just- It's been hard. The Girls - my work - their suffering - my failure," the professor struggled to explain. "I can't seem to do anything right - I've lost it, Selicia. I can't even do what I'm best at anymore."

"Jesus Christ, Tommy, look at you," Selicia remarked, sympathetic. She felt his forehead, and it was hot. A vein was popping out on his temple. He looked like his head was about to explode. "You'll be back to two weeks ago if you don't call it quits tonight." She tried to pull him out of his chair, but Professor Utonium would not allow it. He sank firmly into his chair.

"I can't- I have to- the Girls- Need to solve the riddle-" the professor said deliriously, unable to even open his eyes anymore.

"You won't be solving any riddles like this," Selicia said. This time, with more force, she forced the professor off his chair and wrapped his arm around her shoulder, dragging him towards the stairs leading up.

"But- the Girls- Did you leave the Girls alone?" the professor asked hysterically.

"They're fine, you're not," Selicia said with military precision. "And if you're not, they won't be fine."

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"There, much better, don't you think?" Selicia said as she laid Thomas down in his bed, without his lab coat and shoes. She pulled the blanket over him. "Bad time to have a breakdown, don't you think? The Girls need you."

"They have you too," the professor replied.

"Nah, I think they like you more. They can live without me if I ever get shot to pieces out in the field, or something," Selicia said grimly. "I'm jealous." She slid into the blanket with him.
"Buttercup likes you a lot," he said, with his eyes closed. After his episode in the lab, he was all but exhausted. "She would be devastated if that happens."

"Thanks, Tommy," Selicia said. She leaned over to him, getting on top of him. She tried to kiss him in the lips, but he pushed her away.

"Just… Not now, Selicia. Just don't," Thomas said. Selicia didn't care to listen. She pushed herself on him, and since he was exhausted and she was stronger, in an advantageous position, she was able to overpower him and plant a kiss on him anyway.

In fact, she did more than just give him a peck. It was a long one, and it would have been passionate had it not been for Thomas, who kept his mouth shut. Sensing his reluctance, she backed away.

"You know, you ought to loosen up," she said as she returned to her side of the bed, crossing back to her territory on the mattress. "Things will be easier if you do."

"Is that what your daddy taught you? To be loose and easy?" Thomas said sharply, a little cross that Selicia was still trying to seduce him when he had greater priorities, when he was obviously hurting. It didn't help that Eileen and Bloome had returned to his mind.

Selicia felt his words hard, so hard that she bolted up, glaring at him. It'd stung, how deeply it'd stung. But Thomas was right about something - her parents did have a profound effect on her, even if she didn't know it. Painful as it was, he was right.

"Keep your pants on. You should feel lucky I'm even going on a date with you on Monday," the professor added. Selicia smiled, tried to be a good sport about it.

"You're right. I'll be a good girl candidly," Selicia said, still feeling a little naughty, then lie back down in bed. "You're more right than I wish you'd be. My father said that I'd be a whore when I grow up, and here I am, proving him right."

"I'm sorry," Thomas apologized.

"No, it's fine. It's my bad," Selicia said. "I just wish I have a normal childhood to fall back on. I guess it's never happen - maybe in some alternate universe or the eleventh dimension or something, but not here. Unlucky me."

Professor Utonium opened his eyes. Wide. Something Selicia had said had opened his mind, gave him an epiphany of unprecedented proportions.

Alternate universe.

Eleventh dimension.

Inaccurate though her language might be, that could be it.

No.

That was it.

The unifying theory.

It could explain everything to do with Chemical X.

"That's it!" the professor shouted, eureka moment in the works.
"What? What are you talking about?" Selicia said, alarmed. Afraid that Thomas was having another nervous breakdown.

"You said it yourself - alternate universes! The eleventh dimension!" the professor exclaimed. Sitting up, he threw off the blanket.

"Thomas? Where are you going? You need to sleep!" Selicia told him, but by then, the professor was already at the door. She moved to stop him quickly, seizing him by the shoulder. Thomas merely took her in his arms and kissed her, just like she wanted.

"Oh thank you, Selicia!" he said, before running out of the room and back to the lab, barefooted and without his lab coat, leaving behind a very perplexed security officer.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, The City of Townsville is made aware that the days of normal crime-fighting and crime are long over.

Television Recording 12171988-TNN

The following transcript is a recording of the TNN (Townsville News Network) channel from 1635-1650.

-TRANSCRIPT START-

(Logo of the TNN shows and fades)

Stanley Whitfield: Now that we are back from a break… Startling, fantastical news from Highway 13. (A video-in-video footage is shown to the top right of the video, showing a video shot from a TNN helicopter. What appears to be three little girls trailing behind a car) Just half an hour ago, eyewitnesses report seeing three little girls running on Highway 13, chasing after a black car. Eyewitnesses say that they were running as fast as the vehicles on the highway - something that would have been dismissed instantly had it not been for the overwhelming number of eyewitnesses saying the same thing.

The Townsville Police Department is able to confirm the authenticity of these claims, ruling out the possibility of flash mobs. Videos from our very own crew makes for convincing evidence. The little girls were reportedly capable of running at speeds of 100 to 120 miles an hour. They were also described to be 'armored' and armed with guns, exchanging fire with the occupants of the black car, which the police confirmed belongs to the Lombardi Mafia. (the video-in-video aerial shot of Highway 13 is expanded to fill the screen, showing, somewhat clearly, that the car and the little girls had sped up, and the girls have started leaving some kind of chromatic trails, one pink, one baby-blue and one lime green. They are shooting at the car, and mobsters from the car are shooting back.)

The Townsville Police Department, however, has stated that they are not responsible for the three little girls, despite their apparently military-grade armor and armaments. The USDO has yet to comment on these developments. (we are returned to the news anchor) What do you think, Sally?

Sally Perth: (as a still image of the leaked video from the 1st Battle of Townsville Central Bank appears at a corner) As it turns out, this is not the first time we’ve seen our three little girls here. Remember this from three days ago? As it turns out, the USDO has been working with these strange little girls all along.

Stanley Whitfield: A stunning revelation, unequaled. (Stops suddenly as his hand shoots up to his ear as he presses his earphone deeper into it) Ladies and gentlemen, this just in. Additional footage from eyewitnesses on Highway 13 has just come to light. The following footage contains violent and disturbing content. Viewer discretion is advised. (A video shot on Highway 13 is shown)
(The video is shot from the perspective of a cameraman in a car, to the front of the mob getaway vehicle. The camera is peeking through the back window of said car. We can see from a diagonal angle the three girls pursuing the mob car. The one in the middle with pink eyes and red bow attached to the back of her helmet, turns her head to another one on her left, speaking to her and pointing at the gangsters’ car.

Cameraman: Oh Jesus Christ, what the hell is even going on!?

Girl Beside Cameraman: How are those kids running so fast?

Cameraman: Oh my God, those kids are armed!

(B-47 fires her pistol at the mob car. The blue-eyed little girl sprints even faster, jumping to land on the mob car, before sliding off the roof of the car and landing on the trunk. At the same time, the girl on B-47’s right raises her pistol and shoots at a police car. Soon after this, however, B-49 slips off the car after getting shot in the face with a shotgun.

Girl Beside Cameraman: (screams loudly)

Cameraman: Oh fuck! Oh my God! Did you see that!?

B-49 tumbles on the highway behind the other two Girls, before getting run over by a jeep.

Girl Beside Cameraman: (screams incredibly loudly)

Cameraman: (screaming)

(B-49 sits up, but is then hit by a semi-truck, and both she and the truck disappears from view down a ramp.)

Stanley Whitfield: Rather disturbing. Joel Macdonald, the man behind it, is just one of many eyewitnesses on the highway, many of whom were unfortunate enough to be injured in the wake of the three gun-toting little girls. We'll now bring you live to the scene with one of our very best. What's going on over there, Rivera?

(The scene switches to a highway. Nathan Rivera, a field reporter in a navy blue business suit with greased hair and sloping features, stands before the camera with a pot-bellied truck driver beside him. Behind him is a pile-up that stretches beyond the field-of-view of the camera, but there are about six cars and a semi-truck involved from what can be seen. Several ambulances have parked beside the semi-truck.)

Nathan Rivera: I'm standing beside one of the many vehicular pile-ups on Highway 13, this one just off the ramp to King Avenue, but the unfortunate commuters here were still unable to escape the mayhem caused by the strange incident. Beside me here is the man behind the semi-truck that had struck one of the three little girls. (Turns to Truck Driver) Sir, can you tell me what happened?

Truck Driver: It was just supposed to be another weekend gig, you know, for the overtime - Christmas coming and all. Got three kids, y'know. I was just minding my own business, driving on the highway. What could go wrong, right? I saw them first when this crazy black car zoomed past me, top speed like you wouldn't believe. But then there were these little girls - you know - they were so tiny next to all the cars and vans and trucks and my semi... Anyway, they started shooting at each other - those crazy guys in the car and those little girls. I thought I was going nuts, you know, from working too much. But it wasn't some fever dream-
Nathan Rivera: Yes, it wasn't. Could you tell me about how you struck one of the three little girls?

Truck Driver: (Irritated) You make me sound like a nutjob! But yeah, one of them tried to climb aboard the black car with all the bang-bang crazy guys while I was about to get off the highway. One minute she was on the car, the next, I couldn't see her anymore. I saw the jeep in front of me slow, and hit something on the road. Things were happening so fast, you know, I couldn't even react fast enough. Tried to get off the highway and avoid the jeep, but then I saw her - the little girl. God, I still remember those blue eyes of hers. I turned my steering wheel really fast, but what can I do, man? Semi-trucks aren't like formula cars, they're huge and they don't turn as well, not with what I was hauling.

Anyway, she went under. I thought I could even hear it when my truck hit her. Anyway, I stepped on the brakes immediately, but it was hard to stop on the ramp, when you're going downhill. At first I thought I was done for, you know. Thought my cabin's gonna flip too. Cars were hitting the back of my truck and all. But... I'm still here, unhurt.

Nathan Rivera: What happened after that?

Truck Driver: I went down to take a look. The jeep had gone down the ramp with me. The guy in it came to look as well. Anyway, we pulled the little girl out. I was scared like *censored* man, I really didn't know what I'd find down there. The way it sounded like, the way it looked, I thought I'd be packing some mincemeat in a garbage bag to go, you know what I mean? But...

She wasn't just below my truck. She wasn't mincemeat either. She was alive and she was still in one piece. We pulled her out and... There wasn't even blood. It was a *censored* miracle. I guess it helped that she was wearing a helmet and all but I wouldn't say that that would have helped.

Nathan Rivera: How does the little girl look like?

Truck Driver: Blonde hair, blue eyes. White. Really short, like 4 or 5 years old or something. I don't know, dressed like some hardcore military type, I guess, but her face didn't look like the type, you know. She looked like she should be playing with my youngest daughter. But she had helmet and goggles on, and some kind of police SWAT stuff she's wearing. She had guns, like the kind the army uses. I didn't see any police badges or logo on her, so I don't know if she's with the TPD.

Nathan Rivera: So there you have it. Apparently, the crime situation in Townsville has gotten so bad that even little girls are pressed into the war between crime and justice, and the irony? They're doing so well that they don't need cars to chase down criminals like our regular cops do.

(Stanley Whitfield switches back to the newsroom)

Stanley Whitfield: Thank you, Nathan Rivera. The police, when contacted for information on the current whereabouts of the girl, has confirmed that she is alive and currently receiving medical attention. To prevent a possible escalation of violence, her location is currently undisclosed. They are currently putting the girl under police protection. The police are unable to ID the girl, but has stated that her identity will also be kept secret in the event they succeed. When pressed about how they will keep a seemingly indestructible, incredibly fast girl under guard, they declined to comment. (Reaches for his ear)

Phil Robertson, one of our field reporters, has found the little girl. We'll take you live to her whereabouts. Alright, Phil, what can you tell us about the Highway 13 Incident?

(Phil Robertson)

(The scene is switched to a ward)
Phil Robertson: This is the ward where one of the alleged participants of the Highway 13 Incident was held. Eyewitnesses said that three little girls, armed and decked out in armor, were chasing down a car. One of the girls was thrown off the car when she managed to cling to it, and was alleged to have been run over by a jeep and hit by a truck. We're now live with the doctor attending to this girl.

(The camera was panned to center on Doctor Coleman, and Phil put the mic under his mouth.)

What can you tell me about the state of this girl, doctor? Will she survive the horrific accident?

Doctor Coleman: W-well (Stammering, but straightens himself afterwards, looking a little more respectable) Surprisingly, yes. The little girl in question - we'll just call her Jane Doe for the lack of an ID - isn't even hurt in the slightest by the accident.

Phil Robertson: In your experience, doctor, is such a thing possible?

Doctor Coleman: I've been a doctor for twenty years, and I've heard of plenty of stories from dozens of doctors, some who've been in the coat for longer. Closest I've heard is a boy who survived getting hit by an old Ford pickup truck with just cuts and bruises and a hairline fracture. But it was an old pickup truck, travelling at maybe 40 miles an hour. Jane Doe was on a highway with vehicles going at maybe 100 miles an hour. The Jeep should've shattered or broken half her bones, and the semi should've taken her head clean off. From the paramedics' report, she was shot multiple times too. Jane Doe survived with not so much as a scratch, and just a bruise on her cheek. So no, I-

Nurse: (From background) Doctor! (The camera pans to centre on a nurse standing over a little girl matching B-49's descriptions.)

Doctor Coleman: (off-center) What, nurse? Can't you see we're in the middle of an interview?

Nurse: The needle isn't going in!

Doctor Coleman: Oh for crying out loud- (exasperated) Of all the time you chose to be incompetent, it had to be now!

(The camera is moved close to the little girl. She does indeed appear unscathed save for the bruise on her cheek. The camera centers on the little girl's arm when the doctor attempts to insert an IV drip needle into her. He is unable to, and the needle bends under the pressure.)

Technician: Hey doc, this vamp's real hungry, cause my needle isn't working either.

(The camera goes close up to the needle and vacuum tube the technician is using to blood. Similar to the IV drip needle, it does not pierce B-49's skin either.)

Doctor Coleman: Odd…

(The camera returns to face the field reporter, who signals with his eyes and face for it to point to the doctor. The field reporter becomes frustrated that the cameraman does not understand. He physically reaches for the camera and yanks it towards the doctor.)

Phil Robertson: Doctor, care to comment?

Doctor Coleman: I… don't understand.

Nurse: Doctor! She's coming to! (the camera points at the nurse before it is pointed at the little girl on the hospital bed)
B-49 (Bubbles): Oh… my head- Where am I? (she rubs her head as she opens her eyes slowly, revealing glowing baby-blue eyes which is obvious enough because of the drawn curtains and dimmed lights.

(The camera zooms in on her face)

B-49 (Bubbles): Where am I!? Who are you!?

(Just then, there is a lot of noise coming from the background. People screaming and shouting, furniture getting overturned, heavy footsteps. The camera turns around to focus on the ward doors. Six soldiers barge into the ward in short order. Their assault weapons, both rifles and shotguns, are raised, one of which is pointed directly at the camera.)

Huge Soldier (Chief of Security Blackwater, Face Hidden): Put that damn camera down! Now! (the camera fidgets, but is not down) Put it down before I break it!

(the camera is lowered down to waist level. There is some struggle, before the camera's field of view fidgets wildly. It is presumably thrown a distance, with the FOV finally ending up facing a wall, the lens cracked.)

(From here onwards, only the audio is informative)

Cameraman: Hey!

Huge Soldier (Chief of Security Blackwater, Face Hidden): Get way from the little girl, now!

Doctor Coleman: Wait! She's my patient and I haven't discharged her just yet!

Small Soldier (Captain Kate, Face Hidden): Put your weapon on the ground and lie face-down!

(The camera stops transmitting after a gunshot. It has presumably been shot.)

(The scene switches back to the TNN newsroom after a few seconds of black screen.)

Stanley Whitfield: -llo? Phil? (clears throat) Due to technical difficulties, we will have to come back to him later. Related to the Highway 13 incident, authorities have estimated at least $150,000 in property damages, including damages to both private and public vehicles and public property. The casualty toll has increased to 59 injured, 11 of whom are children aged between 3 and 11, and 2 killed, though authorities have mentioned that these figures are likely to increase.

Sally Perth: And that is only the beginning. Experts project a fallout in the days following this incident, with opinion polls for the Townsville government, TPD and USDO likely to show a higher degree of negativity.

It is a strange day indeed for Townsville, as more questions remain than answers. (still images of B-47, B-48 and B-49 appears above news presenter. They are not very flattering. The picture of B-47 (Blossom) shows her running menacingly in the direction of the camera, with an angry face, pistol in hand. The picture of B-48 (Buttercup) shows her shooting at a police car while barking madly. The picture of B-49 (Bubbles) shows her staring at the camera, afraid and in a hospital patient gown.) Who are these three little girls? Who are they fighting for? Are they on the side of justice or crime? How are they running so fast? And how do they survive gunshots and getting hit by a truck?

After the break, we will explore these questions, as we approach experts and the men and women of the streets alike, to delve deeper into the pulse and mind of the city as she recovers from this incident.
(Logo and tune of TNN plays out before switching to commercial)

(The USDO Eagle and Shield fades in with an official tune)

Narrator: War. Crime. The U - S - D - O is here for you through thick and thin.

(showing stock footage of Vietnam and criminal arrests conducted by the USDO)

Narrator: (showing carefully selected footage of USDO soldiers in barracks, revealing no sensitive information) As a third-party federal agency, we use non-local agents who are separated from the locals; we maintain a neutral, dispassionate stance.

(Showing a video of the scales of justice) We are free from corruption.

(showing a scrolling video of rows of USDO soldiers standing at attention, in full battle gear) We are the ideal arbiters of justice.

Narrator: (showing soldiers on the range) But idealism isn't enough - as a paramilitary organization, the USDO will bring peace of mind through superior firepower and overwhelming tactics.

An organization on the forefront of military and law enforcement technology, we bring to bear equipment that only the local police and army units could dream of.

Narrator: (shows officials shaking hands) Working together with the Townsville Police Department, justice system and government, we will bring a safer, peaceful world to everyone, (shows a couple walking on the sidewalk at night) where civilians could walk the streets at night without getting robbed, (shows children in the park) and the children can play without fear.

(scene switches back to a USDO logo that fades in)


-TRANSCRIPT END-
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, we learn from the perspective of the average man how 'The Three', as the Girls were called, looked

Townsville Tribune Extract 18 DEC 1988

The following is a newspaper article that was part of the breach of the Project Powerpuff secret. Following the incident of Highway 13, the secret surrounding Project Powerpuff was deemed impossible to contain, and as such, the media is allowed to circulate content relating to it - any attempt at censorship will only result in negative public relations.

FREAKY BUG-EYED WEIRD GIRLS BROKE THE MAIN HIGHWAY

(Note: Three huge pictures precede the text, ones similar to what was aired on TNN.

Left: Front shot of B-48 (Buttercup), in damaged SWAT gear with the vest missing, raising a pistol at a police vehicle and firing bullets into its door, all the while with a mad and insane look on her face.

Middle: Front-left shot of a fully-geared B-47 (Blossom) rushing towards the camera with an angry look on her face, with a pistol in hand.

Right: Close-up of B-49 (Bubbles) looking into a camera, afraid and in hospital gown.)

17 December 1988. Commuters consisting mainly of weekender families preparing for and anticipating the upcoming Christmas celebrations and festivities. Early bird party goers visiting friends and relatives and loved ones in the spirit of Christmas. Men and women working overtime to make ends meet, to make the upcoming Christmas a special one. Townsville's finest, patrolling the streets of the city, making sure that no one steals Christmas. What all these citizens of Townsville have in common is their shared tragedy.

At approximately 4pm yesterday, three 'freaky' 'bug-eyed' 'weirdo' little girls were reported to be pursuing a black car through The Strip, one of Townsville's entertainment districts, resulting in three instances of car accidents - a prelude to the horror that was to come. The strange sight was brought upwards to Highway 13, one of the main highways leading into Townsville proper, a perfect storm waiting to happen due to the 100 mph speed limit and the density of vehicles on the highway.

The final casualty toll released by authorities amounts to 64 injured and 1 dead - the driver of the black car. The TPD reported that he was dead on impact, a fact confirmed by paramedics on site.
"I was just driving my wagon, minding my own business and kids, when something made a crater on my roof," Jennifer Gomez, a mother of three who suffered a broken arm from the accident expressed. "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw who did it - a little girl, who was skipping on cars like rocks on a shallow river."

Jennifer's husband was hospitalized with a concussion and fractured skull along with two of their children, one of whom suffered a hairline fracture along the jaw and another who lost a few milk teeth due to the impact. They were 7 and 5 respectively. They were victims of the first vehicular pile-up caused by the three little girls, five of 18 others, some who were worse off than them.

Then things started heating up on the highway. Gunshots were exchanged, though witnesses say that collateral damage was miraculously minimal, with no reported hospitalizations due to gunshot wounds. One might even say that Father Christmas was dispensing some intangible gifts early. Unfortunately, he did not bring a bigger bag.

There were reportedly two more pile ups after that, one more severe than the next. Another pile-up involving nine vehicles started when one of the little girls had fallen off the vehicle she was pursuing. She was run over by a jeep and hit by a semi-truck, which swerved out of control, causing its cargo to flip, and the cars behind it to crash into it or spin out of control in an attempt to avoid an accident. Most of them weren't successful. While the speedy little girl survived with not even a scratch to ground her in reality, 22 individuals were not as lucky.

A third pile-up was reported further down Highway 13, when the remaining two speeding little girls had 'overwhelmed' the occupants of the black car they were chasing after. Police accounts suggest that they had either killed or knocked everyone out, but did not or could not stop the car. They attempted to brake the car using their feet, but were unsuccessful, causing a chain of crashes that resulted in 24 other wounded and 1 dead.

The Townsville Police Department has issued a warning related to this incident. Branded by both the police and media as 'The Three', they have been put on the wanted list. Citizens who have spotted or encountered them are advised to remain calm, retreat to a safe location and call the police. Citizens are not to approach them, and are also advised not to fall for their innocuous little girl looks.

Despite the all-time high crime rate of Townsville, citizens are shocked to hear of the incident. While murder, theft, burglary, rape, petty crimes, assault and organized crime, etcetera, are common, crime committed by children are still thankfully rare (if still much higher than other US cities). The last high-profile saga involving children that shook the city was 15 years ago in 1973, when a gang of 8 kids, aged 7 to 10, began a murder spree that saw 13 dead and 9 wounded. Using weapons ranging from assault rifles to knives, the 2 girls and 6 boys were raised by the Bianchi crime family as child soldiers - something that even the Lombardi mafia at the time despised, a factor that ultimately helped in the dismantling of the Bianchi crime family.

Citizens feared that this is a repeat of the Bianchi Children Controversy, except that the numbers could only show that 'The Three' are worse.

(Editor Note: 'The Three' has been quickly removed from the wanted list for no obvious reasons, but the TPD advice remains in effect.)

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**STRIP CLUB OWNER KILLED IN MOTOR MAYHEM**

Matthias Giovanni, owner of the Lucky Strip Club, a major player in the adult entertainment industry
of Townsville, was declared dead on the spot by paramedics at Highway 13, due to severe trauma to the cranial region, resulting in his head caving in and most of the brain damaged beyond saving.

Police responding to the Highway 13 Incident were able to save his driver and colleague using CPR and first-aid. Investigators in charge of the scene were quick to rule out accident as a cause, though they had stated that they had yet to decide if his death was the result of murder or manslaughter on the part of the now infamous 'The Three', who were responsible for the injuries and destruction of Highway 13.

Although known to have clear ties with the Lombardi Mafia, Matthias was known to be a fair and even-handed employer, making sure that his staff and adult performers were paid timely and fairly, and that they were not mistreated by customers and fellow colleagues. His death is a serious blow to those under him.

"I don't know where I'd be without him," one of his strippers, who prefers not to be named, said. "I could have ended up working in a joint with an exploitative manager, or out there, still. Now I'm not sure what to do, if Lucky Strip Club would even still be the same. It's tragic. He's a real gentleman no matter what people say. He walked me home once when a customer got too rowdy and punched me black-and-blue in the face."

MORBUCKS ESTATE DONATES MILLIONS TO CANCER FUND

A born-and-bred denizen of Townsville who had pulled himself up by the bootstraps and out of the ditch decades ago, Mr. Morbucks of the Morbucks Estate has renewed his dedication to the Townsville Cancer Fund, a charity organization that raises money for cancer research and hospices. One of the richest person in Townsville, the city rejoices at the news of his philanthropy.

When asked why he would donate $5.12 million dollars to the Townsville Cancer Fund on a yearly basis, he replied solemnly that no one should have to suffer from the debilitating effects of cancer, nor die slowly in pain from the disease. He added that the 12 May was his daughter's birthday, a fact used to decide on the final sum in millions to be donated.

It is a widely known fact that Mr. Morbuck's daughter, Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks, is currently suffering from a rapid onset of lung cancer. Now 5 years old, she has been dealing with the disease since she was 4 years old. Despite this, she appears to be cheerful and bright in public. Known to be an incredibly bright and intelligent child, Mr. Morbuck had mentioned on numerous occasions that she was a wunderkind, and an ideal heir to the Morbucks fortune.

It is not inconceivable that Mr. Morbucks is making donations to the Townsville Cancer Fund because of his daughter. The citizens of Townsville are with him every step of the way.
Chapter 61: Fallout

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the professor begins to understand Chemical X better. Uncertainty hangs in the air after the last mission.

Chapter 61: Fallout

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 0804.

Professor Utonium lowered the newspaper he had been reading, gravely silent when Selicia stared at him as if he might turn into some freaking zombie demon from outer space. She had seen what the massive headline was. The professor lowered the newspaper on the table and took a sip of his coffee, his hand shaking from both anger and shock and the all-nighter he had just pulled to put his theory together.

"Do you like it?" Selicia asked, then felt the need to add: "The coffee, I mean." She bit her lower lip, knowing that she might have screwed up.

"Yes, it's good," the professor said without meaning it, absent-minded in the face of everything he had gone through, everything the Girls had gone through in the last 24 hours. He had just made a breakthrough on the blackboard, in the labs, made progress in his understanding of Chemical X that was a paradigm shift he could only dream of mere days ago. It was more than what he had done in all his time in the USDO, at least in the theoretical arena. But his new unifying theory had some uncomfortable implications of the substance and the Girls.

Then there were the Girls. And the newspaper. He looked at the unflattering pictures taken of the Girls. For some reason he couldn't fathom, the media was always able to procure photographs that would paint their subjects in a terrible light. The Girls looked like outright criminals in those photos, Buttercup especially. She looked like a complete psychopath - his precious daughter, a psychopath! How absurd! It wasn't lost on him that she was shooting at a police cruiser, but he thought that there was probably a good explanation for it. The look on her face, on the other hand, could easily be explained away by the nature of photography. It was only a single, given moment. He was all but sure that Buttercup did not maintain that crazed look for long - it was probably a 'heat of the moment' kind of look.

He wasn't able to speak to her much the previous day. Being sick for the first time in her life, Buttercup wasn't exactly in the mood for a talk. Besides, he was too busy with Blossom, who had all but broken down from the horrors of her last mission, the unspeakable things she had seen, done, and the tough decisions she had to make. The professor promised himself that he would put in more time for Buttercup today. He had to, as her father.

The Girls themselves weren't doing very well. After coming up from the labs, he had gone to check
on the Girls. They were all running a fever. Nothing that would kill even a normal human being, but it concerned him that the Girls could be under the weather despite their apparent invulnerability. He theorized that it might have something to do with their liberal use of their enhanced abilities in the last operation, but it required investigation. He had just an idea or two on how he could do it.

The professor ran his hand through his hair. Before he could do anything else, there was a loud series of bells ringing, the sound coming from a set of three waffle-makers.

"Why don't you go up and get the Girls? I'll get their breakfast ready," Selicia said. This, the professor did. On entering the Girls' room, however, he saw that only Blossom was awake. Bubbles and Buttercup were still sleeping like logs, with their IVs still attached. Blossom was only just sitting up in her pink night gown, throwing off the tri-colored blanket, rubbing her eyes. She moaned in a most sickly fashion.

"Good morning, Blossom. How are you today?" the professor asked as he sat at the foot of her bed. Blossom slid up to him. He felt her forehead. The slight fever was still there.

"I feel pain all over my body, Dad," Blossom groaned as she slipped into his arms.

"You must just be tired from yesterday's crime-fighting," the professor suggested. Blossom said nothing to that. It was reasonable and logical.

"I'm cold," she added.

"You're a little sick too, I guess," the professor said.

"This is how being sick feels like? It's terrible," Blossom said. She was basically limp in the professor's arms, feeling drained and too lethargic to move. "You're a doctor, Dad. Do you have any medicine for this?"

"I can try giving the three of you something, but I can help you three better... by taking another blood sample," the professor said.

"Again?" Blossom whined from the prospect of a needle getting stuck into her. Again. It was an unpleasant feeling, something going into her, followed by sharp pain as she felt blood flowing out of her. Faintness had followed after that, last night.

"Yes, Blossom. I'm afraid it's necessary," the professor tried to sound as comforting as he could, but it was a tough proposition - no children, super-powered or not, would ever look forward to getting stuck with a hollow needle and seeing her own blood getting leeched out of her. He took out a portable blood sample collection kit from his lab coat. "I think it's better that I do it now, when your sisters are still asleep."

At least Blossom did not cry this time when blood was drawn, and neither did Bubbles and Buttercup, who took the needles like logs. They'd slept through the procedure. The concentrated sedative the professor had prescribed them should have worn off an hour or two ago; they were far tougher than they looked, the professor knew first-hand.

After removing them from the IV drips, he had to shake them awake, and like Blossom, they were paying for yesterday's exertions and their enemies' hate right from the moment they were conscious. Buttercup was just glad that she didn't feel as nauseous as before and Bubbles could only be happy that her crushing migraine was gone. Mostly.

"My head's still a little achy," Bubbles said as they were headed towards the bathroom for their morning ritual.
"I know, Miss Bubbly," the professor soothed. "A warm bath might help."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 0836.

"Are we going out today, Daddy?" Bubbles asked expectantly as she nibbled on her waffle. The Girls' appetite had only improved marginally. It didn't help that their fever had not broke yet. Blossom was taking small bites from a slice of her strawberry syrup waffle while Buttercup was playing with her share; she had cut up her waffle into little pieces, but had yet to eat any of it.

The professor looked at the Girls. Blossom returned the look with tired eyes while Buttercup appeared bored. His gaze slipped to the table and the newspaper he'd left there.

The newspaper!

The Girls followed his gaze to the odd stack of paper in the middle of the dining table. Professor Utonium snatched it away quickly, hiding it under the table. But the damage was done. Blossom, the smartest of the three, could discern what the headline was trying to say, even though she couldn't understand all the words. All she needed was to understand 'Freaky' and 'Girls' and correlate that with the ugly pictures of them to know what the author of the article meant.

"I'm afraid family trips aren't possible now," the professor said. They would be instantly recognizable from now on, and he knew that their presence alone would cause lots of chaos and grief - for both the people around them and the Girls. Lying low for now was their only option. But the cat's out of the bag. The Girls were probably no longer a secret - not with the extent in which Townsville's media had covered them. Not even the USDO could stop the cogs of the news machine from turning. School would be another problem, but with so much on his mind, he decided that he - and the Girls - would cross that bridge when they come to it.

"Oh," Bubbles' eyes turned to her waffle dejectedly.

"What are we going to do now?" Blossom asked, lost and helpless.

"Rest - the three of you need to get better. Even if we could go outside, the three of you are too ill for that," the professor said tenderly.

"Eat your breakfast, Girls," Selicia added. "I know it's hard, but you three need to keep your strength up. Your body needs food to recover."

Buttercup slams her fork down on the table. Somehow, Blossom and Bubbles weren't shocked, not like their adoptive parents. "I can't! I feel really sick!"

It was a new level of bad attitude. Even Selicia had to give her the glare. Buttercup promptly backed down, afraid that she might lose favour in even her Mom. "I'm sorry," she said, hoping that it would fix her mistake.

"Would it help if I feed you instead?" Selicia said, putting on a smile immediately.

"Yes," Buttercup smiled back, her smile weak. Selicia got up, grabbed her chair and plopped herself down next to Buttercup, taking over the spoon.
When breakfast was done, the professor sent the Girls back up to their bed with Selicia to tend to them. He returned to the lab, where he had been slogging all night. There, he prepared the Girls' most recent blood samples for analysis. He was able to get on the microscope after deftly preparing the blood samples. The differences between the recent samples and the previous day's were immediately obvious. At first glance, the concentration of Chemical X in their blood cells had increased. Using a camera mounted on the microscope, he took a picture of it and ran it through the supercomputer. The machine took a few minutes to analyse the pictures, and it agreed with him. A comparison of yesterday's blood sample and today's yielded a 20% increase in Chemical X.

He had done further quick studies using the skin cells from the Girls. Comparing that against the blood samples from the previous day and the morning's sample, he was able to gauge the decrease and increase of Chemical X. At healthy levels, the Girls had 1550 parts per million of Chemical X in their blood - this he concluded from the concentration of Chemical X in the skin cells. It dropped to around 1010 ppm following Highway 13, and had risen to 1220 ppm. If his projection was correct, the Girls would have to wait out most of the day for their Chemical X levels to rise again, all the while suffering from fever, headache and nausea - assuming they were linked to the level of Chemical X in their body.

It was the perfect explanation, more evidence for the unifying theory he was developing. It wasn't that the level of stabilized Chemical X in their body had increased beyond normal. It was just that they had expended it the previous day in their fight against the mob and the chase on Highway 13, and they were replenishing it. They? Or was it replenishing itself?

Turning away from his desk, he looked at the huge bottles of stabilized Chemical X he had manufactured in bulk, and wondered if the Girls could ingest it like vitamins and minerals? They were suffering, so he had to try it; concentrated doses of painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs could only do so much, even if they were in the order of 20 to 50 times greater than the normal prescription.

So, knowing this, he set about pouring a small amount of Chemical X into three glass cups - not a lot, just an ounce of it per cup. He then brought it up to the kitchen, and topped the glasses off with orange juice. The most labor-intensive part however, was when he had to ground down two dozen pain pills into fine powder for each of the Girls, before pouring them into the cup. There was so much powder that he had to stir for minutes to get most of them to dissolve, and even then, they were visible.

Before he could bring his medicinal brew up, however, his flip-phone rang.

Bzzz! Bzzz! Bzzz! It interrupted. This time, he intended to be firm. The Girls would not be going on a mission - and that was final. They were overstretched the last time, and the USDO would have to pay for that by substituting the Girls with its own men. Perhaps this way, they might understand what kind of strain they were putting them under - it would be a hard and merciless lesson, considering that the likes of Naga and the Amoeba Boys were enhanced far beyond the capabilities of a normal human being.

But the Professor would do anything for the Girls. Anything. Even if it involved people dying. It wouldn't be his fault anyway, and the Girls were, well, girls. They were little girls. Kids - innocent children who couldn't and shouldn't be blamed for such things.
"Hello? Not this time, Blake!" the professor retorted immediately on picking up the phone. "The Girls are sick! They're not fighting fit, goodbye!"

"Professor, wait!" Agent Blake on the other end said. "It's not a mission this time!"

"What do you mean?" the professor asked, surprised, but still keeping doubt in his heart. For all he knew, it could be a trick, a 'Get-Rid-of-Professor' SOP intended to keep him calm while putting the Girls in an operation again.

"It's the Mayor, Mayor Wilford, I think?" the security officer said. "He wants to see the Girls, and he wants them in their dresses. No armor, no weapons."

"That's a very odd and specific request. I'm coming along this time. I mean it," the professor insisted. To him, it was insurance - if nothing else, he'd know if he had been tricked into letting the Girls go on an operation.

"Like I said, it's not a mission with a free fire zone. You can come along if you want," the agent said. "There's no rush. I just thought I should phone it in early. I'm sorry that the Girls are sick. They don't have to rush this one. They can take their time. I'll see you at ten hundred hours?"

"Fine," the professor agreed. He could never bring himself to trust this Blake character, still. He could never trust anyone in the security branch of the USDO, in fact - they were just responsible for far too many unethical actions, and in the line of duty, they would do whatever it takes to do what they were ordered to do, morality and lives, human or otherwise, be damned.

After putting away the phone, he returned to the more important task at hand. Putting the three glasses of Chemical X and medication into a tray, he brought it upstairs. When he entered the Girls' room, Selicia was sitting in a chair beside the Girls' bed, humming to herself as she was drawing a sketch of Buttercup. The Girls were all in bed. Buttercup was lying down, her eyes closed such that the professor did not know if she was just resting or sleeping.

"I like the picture you drew me, Blossom," Bubbles said as she was drawing another picture of her own. Blossom was deciphering words in a storybook in the meantime, titled Three Little Pigs.

"It's for you, Bubbles," Blossom replied. "I'm sorry you were hurt really badly yesterday."

"Why thank you!" Bubbles said as she admired the picture before tucked Blossom's picture underneath her work-in-progress.

"Girls, it's time to take your medicine," the professor announced. He kept his expressions positive, even though he knew what was in store for them later. The Mayor of Townsville couldn't be happy with what the Girls had unwittingly done. Selicia looked up at him. Buttercup's eyes fluttered open. Blossom lowered her book and Bubbles put down her crayon.

"Will it hurt?" Bubbles asked timidly, looking at the three glasses of orange juice. They looked different from the other glasses of orange juice she had consumed in the past. There were granules floating in it, and they weren't orange pulps. The juice was also darker than normal because of the Chemical X, and Bubbles could only wonder why that was. Blossom thought that the juice was darker because it was tastier.

"No, of course not," the professor assured the Girls as he started handing them out with Selicia's help. "All you have to do is drink it, and you'll be all better." 'At least, I hope so,' the professor thought.

The Girls scrutinized the glass of juice. "But isn't it just orange juice?" Buttercup asked. The fact that
"What's inside the orange juice, Dad?" Blossom asked, curious as ever.

"Why, medicine," the professor replied, kept it general. He didn't want to alarm the Girls.

"Will we fall asleep like the last time?" Bubbles asked innocently. The professor looked at her. He knew what she meant, more than she knew. It'd brought back some bad memories, the fact that he'd tried to commit filicide when the Girls had trusted him. The professor stopped smiling. "I'm sorry," she apologized, sensing that she had said something wrong.

"No, it's nothing. It's not your fault," the professor said vaguely. Then forced a smile on his face. Only Buttercup noticed his expression, how dodgy it was. It'd brought back memories of that day. How she noticed him mixing some things into their porridge. Things from a strange box. "Just drink up, Girls. You'll feel better."

The Girls started sipping at the juice at first. Buttercup's expression became one of surprise. The others were smiling. They started drinking with a thirst they never knew they had, draining their juice quickly.

"How does it taste like?" the professor asked out of curiosity, noting that the Girls' behavior wasn't usual for children who were sick and had to swallow the bitter taste of medicine.

"Wow, Dad! Did you put something else in the orange juice? It's really good!" Buttercup exclaimed as she downed the remainder of her glass. She didn't turn her cup upright again even though there were just dribbles left. Her comment made the professor's smile harder to maintain as the feeling of getting caught red-handed assaulted him. It was made worse by the fact that the remaining dribble that Buttercup, and soon Blossom and Bubbles, was sucking from the glass was much darker in color. Some of the Chemical X had settled at the bottom.

"Yeah, Dad! You're the best," Blossom and Bubbles chorused, in agreement with Buttercup for once.

"I feel better already," Buttercup added as she put down her empty glass and stretched.

"Really?" the professor asked excitedly - was his intuition right? About Chemical X acting as a nutritional supplement for the children? Only science could provide the real answers, but he didn't want to ruin the Girls' mood by drawing more blood samples. "How are the three of you feeling? Any pain, aches and nausea?"

"I feel a lot better," Bubbles said. "I'm still aching all over though, but I think the headache's gone."

"And I'm still a little tired," Blossom added. "But it helped, Dad."

"That's great," the professor said, but he remembered that there was another reason why he was in the Girls' room. He ran his hand across his scalp as he sighed. "Girls. Blake just called."

"Oh no…" Bubbles reacted immediately, negatively. "Do we have to fight crime again?"

"No, Girls. The Mayor wants to see the three of you," he said, now just waiting for the Girls to get upset. His mind raced for options on how to cheer them up.

"Oh, I'd love to see him! I can't wait!" Blossom exclaimed.

"Yeah, he's really nice," Bubbles added.
"And the hot chocolate and candies he gave me tasted great!" Buttercup added further. Distracted, she had let her guard down. "I hope I get more tasty stuff!"

"Candies, Buttercup?" the professor said disapprovingly. Buttercup's jaw dropped and her eyes widened at her mistake. Hoping to preserve their happiness at all costs, the professor quickly added: "I suppose it's fine if it's only occasional." Buttercup smiled once more.

But Professor Utonium had his own secrets to keep. He was still debating within himself if he should give the Girls a heads-up, to tell them that the Mayor might not be all chocolate and candies, fun and rainbows this time. Mayor Wilford was the Mayor of Townsville after all, and if over 60 people were wounded in an operation, he would likely be deeply upset.

The Girls' revelry, the sound of their girlish giggles and enthusiastic chatter as they spoke among themselves, however, had made the decision for him. If it meant temporarily prolonging their happiness, which he found was getting harder and harder to come by, even if it meant withholding information from them, he would let it be without stopping for a heartbeat. After all, wasn't that what he had been doing ever since their creation? What's a little more dishonesty if the ends justified the means? It wasn't his way, so he had to struggle with it, and the struggle was almost physical. Painful. Wearisome. It reminded him of how oppressive the aura of deceit the USDO had set up around them was.

"Girls, I have to collect some cell samples," he said, getting up. "I'm going to go get the collection kit."

"Are you going to stick a needle into me again, Dad?" Blossom asked, her smile fading once more.

"No, and it definitely won't hurt. Promise," the professor said before leaving, excusing himself, and not just because he needed to get his instruments. In the back of his mind, he chided himself for the improper execution of his research work involving investigating the Girls' tissue samples in relation to the level of Chemical X and their sickness. It was a rookie mistake for him to compare results between two different types of body tissue - epidermal and blood, which meant introducing all sorts of factors he could not control, factors which could impact his conclusion. With what little he knew about how Chemical X behaved in the human body, who's to say that it might be more concentrated in the Girls' skin? it only meant that he had to do it properly at a later date, and stick even more needles into the Girls.

Blossom smiled after the professor as he left the room, ignorant of what was to come.
Chapter 62: Friends Lost and Found

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls lost some and gained some when it comes to friends.

Chapter 62: Friends Lost and Found

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 0955.

Professor Utonium, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup looked like a picture perfect family as they strolled towards the Lamborghini speed transports in their best and jackets - the professor had a thick parka on while Selicia and the Girls were in synthetic fur coats colored to match the rest of their outfit - Selicia in black to match her red dress, and the Girls in pink, baby blue and lime green.

Sergeant Blake and his second-in-command, Corporal Fields, stood by the middle transport meant for them. The officer in command stared at Blossom. His aviator sunglasses hid his facial expressions. What little Blossom could see did not seem positive. He wasn't smiling, not like before. Everything bad that had happened since the afternoon before had come rushing back to Blossom. Detective Mullens' spilled blood, the things she had to do to the bad guys, the things she had done on the highway, the innocent people she had accidentally hurt. And Mister Blake saying 'I don't know' to their friendship. Her eyes drifted with the snowflakes to the ground. No tears fell - no, that would ruin the make-up Mommy had applied on her face. Buttercup was largely unaffected - everything had practically sailed over her head, including the fact that Mister Blake might not want to have anything to do with them anymore. Bubbles had missed everything because of her trip to the hospital.

"Professor," Agent Blake greeted the man of the house.

"Agent Blake," Professor Utonium returned the greeting stiffly.

"May I speak to Blossom alone?" Blake requested. The professor sized the man up. It wasn't even a request, based on his tone.

"Fine. I'll be in the car with the rest of my family," the professor said. He wasn't backing down this time - he'd done that far too often. No, it was what a civilized human being would call a compromise. He wasn't going to let Blossom get out of his sight at any time, not when she was alone with that… The professor didn't quite have the words for it. The primal part of him would call Blake a potential predator - no matter how unlikely it was. The jealous and selfish part of him would call him a competitor for the position of father and mentor.

Blossom stared after her family, who disappeared into the speed transport with Agent Fields, leaving her behind, then turned to look at Mister Blake, who stood before her, a colossus to her eyes. All of a
sudden, she didn't know what to do with her hands and feet. At first folding them before her, she ended up folding them behind her back. Her eyes shifted from his heavy loadbearing vest to his eyes, before going back down to the ground.

"Blossom," Mister Blake greeted.

"Sergeant Blake," Blossom replied. To her, his rank sounded awkward beside his name. "Or do I call you Agent Blake?"

"You can call me Mister Blake," the man said, a little warmer than before, than when he said 'I don't know' to their friendship.

"Okay, Mister Blake," Blossom said, her eyes stuck on his boots. Mister Blake removed his sunglasses and bent down to regard the little girl. Blossom chanced eye contact with him.

"I'm sorry about what I said yesterday," he said. "I should have been more sensitive."

"Are we still friends?" Blossom asked again.

"Yes, Blossom," Agent Blake said. "We've always been friends. I was wrong to have doubted you. I just- I guess I've never learned how to talk to kids because I've never had kids. Still, gotta start somewhere, right?"

"Maybe you should have children of your own," Blossom suggested, a faint smile forming on her face. But it disappeared quickly. When she remembered yesterday, it was like a boogieman the size of a skyscraper, bearing down on her. She remembered the blood - and there was so much blood.

"I'm sorry too, for what I did yesterday. You were right, Mister Blake."

"We all make mistakes, Blossom," Agent Blake reassured the child. "Between you and me? I understand how you feel. Completely. I've hurt people too, people who didn't deserve pain or death."

"Oh," Blossom said, a little shocked. In her naivety, she saw Mister Blake as a sort of knight in shining armor who could do no wrong. "I don't feel good about it."

"That's good," Blake said. "It means that you're a good girl, Blossom."

"So it means that you're a good man too," Blossom said in return.

"I'm not. I didn't feel remorse all the time," Agent Blake said, the way he enunciated his words clear and methodical, as if they were meditated over multiple times. "I reasoned that they were acceptable losses."

"But you are a good man, Mister Blake," Blossom insisted, now concerned for her friend. He did look a little upset, like he was weighed down by something.

"That's a debate for another day," Agent Blake said. "What's most important right now is you. You're a special kid, you know that? You're fighting crime like us, making decisions as a leader in your own right - all while being younger than my youngest man by twenty years. It's not your fault that you've made mistakes, even if so many people are suffering right now."

"But what if I kept making more mistakes, and hurting more people?" Blossom asked, clear that she was afraid from the urgency of her voice.

"You'll just have to learn not to," Agent Blake said. "I'm sure you will. You're a smart kid, but most importantly, nice and sweet." He patted her on her head. He reached into one of his ammunition
Blake put the gift on Blossom's hands. A pink digital watch with a floral pattern on the straps.

"Is it a watch?" Blossom asked - she had seen such devices before. Daddy had taught her the word using a picture. She had seen it on lots of people, and she had only just figured out that the numbers on the watch was meant to tell 'time', which measured how far gone a day or night was. But the watch Agent Blake had given her was different. Black numbers in an angular, modular font was flashing on a gray screen. A digital watch - something which she assumed was a bracelet when she first saw it. She had barely begun learning how to tell the time on a traditional watch with hour, minute and second hands - a digital display was beyond her.

"Yes, it's a watch," Mister Blake said. He pointed out the numbers. "See? That's the hour, and that's the minutes. It's 9:58 in the morning right now."

"Thanks, Mister Blake," Blossom said, hugging the watch. "It's really nice."

"Here, let me put it on for you," Mister Blake offered. Blossom put out her hand, and the security officer wrapped the watch over her wrist, securing the leather straps. "My mother gave me a watch when I was young too. It's to remind me that time passes, she said." His eyes met Blossom's, piercing deep into her soul, but in empathy. "Every time something bad happens, just remember that time heals all wounds. It'd be over before you know it."

"Did time heal all your wounds, Mister Blake?" Blossom asked. Mister Blake stared into the distance behind her. Blossom could tell that something wasn't quite so positive.

"It… hurts less, I guess," Mister Blake said, still distant, as if he wasn't in there in the snow, with the enhanced little girl anymore. He was back in the USDO of yesteryear, back when it was still called the Organization. He was in a village in Mexico, tracking down a dangerous specimen that got out. A particularly virulent one that had somehow made the Chemical V in its blood infectious using cells in its body as vectors. They were able to to kill it, but it had spread its Chemical V to multiple families. He and his detail had to gun them down as a firing squad. Thirteen men, eleven women. Eight boys and ten girls. He'd felt nothing then. He thought that he was doing them a favor, doing the world a favor. The guilt had crept up on him slowly but surely, a stalking monster worse than the one he killed. "They're scars now."

"Daddy said that I can't get a scar," Blossom remarked confidently.

"That's good. You're strong," Mister Blake said. He looked over at the car. He couldn't see through the shaded windows, but he knew that Professor Utonium was waiting, and looking. He reached for his thigh pocket and pulled out two more watches packed in translucent packaging. They were blue and green.

"Here. Why don't you give these to your sisters before they get jealous," Mister Blake said candidly before patting her on the head and nudging her to get in the car. He opened the driver's seat door and got in too.

When she was inside, Selicia had to pull Blossom up and put her in the middle of the car, in between her sisters. Blossom handed the watches out to Bubbles and Buttercup, announcing to them that the watches were from Mister Blake.

"What did the two of you talk about?" Professor Utonium asked, tried to appear as cordial on the surface as possible.
"Nothing, just some soldier talk," Sergeant Blake said vaguely.

"He gave me a watch," Blossom said excitedly as she read off the digital watch again. "It's one... zero... zero... zero. Ten o'clock?"

"Very good, Blossom. It sure is," Professor Utonium praised as he was staring at his own watch to authenticate Blossom's attempt at telling the time.

"It's sweet of you, Mister Blake," Bubbles said as she admired her version of the watch, a design similar to Blossom's, except dark blue in color, with similar floral patterns.

"Wicked!" Buttercup said as she slapped her watch on. Hers was dark green, and looked like it was marketed for boys instead. It had airplanes and tanks decorating the straps.

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The City of Townsville. Central District. City Hall.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 1034.

The city hall was guarded just like before, when the Girls first met the Mayor. Except the police officers present on site were constantly staring at the Girls, watching as they walked past them, obviously nervous from the way they were sweating and twitchy. There seemed to be more than the usual number of them, and more heavily armed. Before, there were honor guards with little more than service pistols and revolvers on their belt. Now, officers in their usual uniforms, wielding shotguns and SMGs, some of them with helmets and vests, stood in their place.

At the lobby, they were greeted by the same mayoral aide, Alfre, and bodyguards, except that the USDO's Townsville Liaison, Bellum, wasn't present. Professor Utonium and Sergeant Selicia were given the usual greetings and led away to another room.

The Girls were led into the same room with the elevator, surrounded by double the number of police officers, all faceless and armed to the teeth, all of them watching the Girls like hungry hawks who couldn't wait to tear at their flesh. Their guns twitched as they could barely resist the temptation of raising their weapons.

The elevator opened, and the mayoral aide and bodyguards escorting them showed the Girls inside. At this point, the little girls knew that something was wrong, but could not figure out what it was. The police officers were on their guard - that they could understand, considering what they had put them through on the highway. But what else could be wrong? Even Blossom could not figure it out; Mayor Wilford had been nothing but nice to them, giving them cups of chocolate with marshmallows, candies, a ride on his personal balloon. They bared their souls to each other.

They didn't have to wait for long to find out why, when the large double doors between corridor and mayor's office closed with a loud bang behind them. Mayor Wilford stood at a window overlooking the city. He was so far away, and so he appeared so small to the Girls. Despite the extravagant mayoral outfit, with his purple blazer, yellow pants and classical mayor's sash and hat, he appeared shrunken somehow. It was the way he carried himself this time, the way he slouched on his cane as he looked out that window, as if he was completely void of energy.

Townsville Liaison Bellum came up to them from the side. She was wearing a red business dress, with high heels. Her orange hair was all puffy, obscuring part of her face.

"Hi miss..." Blossom tried to greet her only to realize she never knew her name to begin with.

"Missus..." Bubbles had tried too, at the same time, to no avail.

"Have we met before?" Buttercup asked gruffly.

"I've seen you before, ma'am," Blossom said.

"Yes, we have. The last time you're here," Bellum said. "We never actually spoke to each other. I wish we could have met under better circumstances." She bent down and stuck a hand out. "I'm Miss Bellum. Sara Bellum. I work with the mayor here to make the city a better place."

"I'm Blossom, and these are my sisters," Blossom returned the introduction and waved a hand at her sisters: "Bubbles and Buttercup. How do you do?"

"Hi," Bubbles greeted. "I like your hair."

"Hi," Buttercup said plainly with her arms crossed. She couldn't wait to dip her hands into a candy jar.

"Hello, Girls," Miss Bellum replied, but she wasn't smiling for long, as if the upkeep for it was too much. Her eyes darted to the carpet briefly before returning to the Girls. "No matter what happens, if the three of you need a friend..."

"That would be all, Miss Bellum," Mayor Wilford's voice boomed from the far corner of the mayor's office. "Please leave me and the Girls to our privacy."

"Thanks, Miss Bellum," Blossom said gratefully.

"It's nice to have friends," Bubbles added.

"Yeah," Buttercup added too.

"I'll see you downstairs," Miss Bellum said before straightening up and leaving through the double doors, turning back to regard the Girls one last time worriedly before leaving properly. The Girls looked at each other as silence permeated the room. It wasn't like the last time, when it was all rainbow and sunshine despite the weather.

"What do we do?" Bubbles asked Blossom.

"We'll walk up to him and talk to him," Blossom said. "Maybe he's just having a bad day, like us yesterday?"

"Maybe we can cheer him up!" Bubbles suggested optimistically.

"I just hope there's more candy for me," Buttercup hoped, already looking around the room for treats, only to find none.

Together, they came up to the Mayor gingerly, with Bubbles hiding behind Blossom and Buttercup on her right.

"Mister Wilford? We're here," Blossom called out to him.

"Are you alright? You look a little upset..." Bubbles said, in a very soft and comforting voice. Buttercup thought about asking for candy, but thought better of it.
The mayor scoffed upon hearing Bubbles. "One would think 'a little upset' is an understatement," he said, and Blossom thought that he sounded older than he was before. The Girls walked a little closer to the mayor, who didn't budge from his position at the window, whose back was still turned rudely to them. They kept going until they were a few arm's length away.

"What's an understatement?" Buttercup questioned in her usual non-discriminating tone.

"Ah I see. Understatement. The word of the day!" the mayor said, his sudden change of tone to faux-friendly frightening the Girls except Buttercup. He turned around suddenly, revealing a bloodshot monocled eye and a pair of bulging eye bags. "Little kids need their education, whether it's in a hospital or city hall, am I right? Of course I'm right!"

"Mister Wilford!" Blossom gasped, shocked by the look on his face.

"That's Mayor Wilford for you!" the mayor corrected abrasively.

"Understatement. A noun," the mayor began educating. "To say something that represents an idea weakly. Calling the three of you 'little girls', for example."

The Girls started putting two and two together. Blossom's mouth fell open in shock when she realized what the Mayor meant, with Buttercup catching up eventually.

"I don't understand," Bubbles admitted.

"Then I'll make you understand!" Mayor Wilford jabbed at them with both his words and cane. "Did you realize what I had to do yesterday!? What you've put me through!?

"I have an entire city to run! Six million souls to look out for! One mayor, six million souls! Including yours! That is, if the three of you have souls!" Mayor Wilford shouted, quickly reducing Bubbles to a trembling mess, with Blossom not so far behind. Buttercup remained unimpressed, if a little cross about the way the mayor was talking to her. The mayor crossed over to his desk. Blossom twitched a little - her first instinct was to help the Mayor, but she realized that he might not want her help, the way he was acting and talking. In fact, he appeared as if possessed by some really angry, really mean spirit.

"I was sitting right here on this desk, making decisions between one legislation or another, judging what funds to allow and what events to attend. Who to save… and who to sacrifice," the mayor said, his voice absolutely shivering with anger as his hand circled around his workspace. He snatched a fountain pen from its holder. "Do you understand? Of course you don't! Why should you? The three of you are just little girls! I was signing a few important papers, and then one of my aides - Alfred, you've met Alfred right? - Came up to me and told me…" He'd said this while he mimicked writing on a piece of paper.

"That three little girls had put over sixty people in the hospital," Mayor Wilford completed his sentence while pointing his fountain pen accusingly at Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, with the middle child in tears. The mayor threw his pen across his desk. The pen bounced on the great redwood surface and broke, leaving ink splotches behind. Blossom and even Buttercup jumped, with the former shaking uncontrollably both from trying to hold back tears and fear. "Three little girls! Over sixty people! And I allowed this!"

"W-we were t-trying t-" Blossom explained, but her voice failed her.

"Trying to help!?" Mayor Wilford completed her sentence for her. "I've visited the people you were 'trying to help' in the hospital yesterday. While the three of you were probably enjoying a sumptuous
dinner by a warm and comfortable fireplace with your parents, I had to travel across the city to three different hospitals in the freezing winter, meeting a boy who might never wake up again! A young man who could no longer dream to play for Townsville's football team! A girl your age who might never walk again! A woman who will lose her job!"

"I'm s-sorry- I… I… don't," Blossom cried as she apologized, unable to think - images of those wretched souls whose lives she had destroyed kept forming in her mind, one after the next.

"Well, I'm not sorry! We caught those bad guys, didn't we!?" Buttercup retaliated defensively. Mayor Wilford marched up to her promptly, with vigor never seen before for years in a body so old, and delivered a slap across her face. It didn't faze the girl.

"Ow! Hey!" Buttercup could only say - she knew better than to retaliate this time and risk the wrath of thousands of police officers coming down on her.

"You shot at my boys!" Mayor Wilford accused Buttercup, and justly. "Don't you start thinking that I'm some senile old man you can trick! I've seen what you did! When I first laid eyes on you, I didn't think that you were capable of such things. I was wrong!"

"But- You- I wasn't- They- I had no- They were just-" Buttercup blabbered, with each lie she could concoct shot down by herself for being too weak before it could even fly. "I didn't mean it!"

"Just like how the three of you didn't mean to put over sixty people in the hospital? That's one hell of an accident," the Mayor said, starting to feel a wave of lethargy and defeat over him. He sat down on his desk, tired. "I stood up for the three of you. I spoke highly of the three of you. In front of all my colleagues, my peers. In front of all those people you've been working with. Those people who wouldn't have let you fly."

Blossom cried quietly before him, rubbing her eyes, unable to restrain herself any longer. Bubbles had sank to her knees, utterly destroyed and bawling her eyes out. Buttercup glared at the Mayor. There was nothing they could say.

"I feel like a fool now. And now I have to speak to my city and tell them the truth. I don't even know what I should say to them. Do you know what the three of you have really done?" the mayor added. Nothing but crying and sniffing and hateful glare was his answer. "There's going to be consequences. We can't keep you three a secret anymore. You've done nothing but to help the truly wicked and evil - people are going to think that I'm no longer fit to lead them. People are going to think that the police and USDO are no longer fit to protect them. And people are sure as hell going to think that the three of you are not fit to help them. They're not going to love you, Blossom. They're going to hate you. And there are people who will take advantage of this."

There was silence after that, save for the sound of the Girls' regrets. Mayor Wilford looked around the room, searching for answers, finding none. It would just have to be like before - he would have to fly off the seat of his pants. He looked down at the Girls, and felt regret for a few things he'd said - not the majority of it - but a few things. He sighed.

"I suppose I can't blame the three of you, can I? I don't know what I saw in you, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. Kids - that's what the three of you are. Nothing more. I'm the one to blame, for allowing this to happen in the first place," the Mayor said as he stared distantly with his one good eye. "I have only myself to blame, for succumbing to desperation, like Hitler in his final months. I saw what I thought was the perfect wonder weapon against crime, and I fell for it. Like a naïve little kid."

Silence.
"I don't even know if I can continue being the mayor of Townsville at all for long," Wilford said. "All I can tell you is that the next one might not be as kind and merciful to the three of you as I am. No, the next one will likely be crooked. Townsville will be beyond hope after that. People will die, and people will suffer for how many more decades, I don't know."

The mayor had found even more reasons to hate the Girls, even if he didn't intend to. He came out of his brief stupor, the urgency in him returning when he realized that the city was on the brink, and probably worse off than before. His one good eye returned to the Girls once more, glaring. All kinds of damning words were cropping up in his head, both for the Girls and in the form of imaginary headlines, damning him. "Now get out before I say something unkind."

He had intended to spend an hour or two to discuss things with Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, but it was no longer possible, not with the things he said, and the things he would have said had the Girls stayed. He was so good with words, in fact, that he had caused a man to hang himself long ago with words alone. He had hoped that he could keep calm and stay professional, but he had slipped – and he realized then that he wasn't just old. Time wasn't on his side.
Chapter 63: Doppelganger

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the ripple effect of the Highway 13 Incident had an unintended consequence.

A/N: (4 NOV 2018) I've decided to try to add more details to the climax and resolution (and some everywhere else) in the hopes of making the chapter more impactful. I feel that it fell short on debut.

Chapter 63: Doppelganger


18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 1124.

Two little girls walked out the door in light winter gear. The morning was an optimistic one - no clouds, a smiling sun, as hot as winter can be. One of the girls had orange-brown hair that covered most of her back, which she adorned with a red bow. Her regular-sized but lovely amber eyes darted around the suburban paradise, which she was grateful for - she knew how it was like in the poorer neighborhoods, and she knew that her father had to bend over backwards to put her in such a safe place. She'd already made something for him, to show how much she loved him.

"Don't be too long now, Emily!" the amber-eyed girl's friend's father called out.

"I won't be!" Emily, the amber-eyed girl's friend, replied. Together, they made boot prints on the lawn.

"Your parents are really nice for letting me stay over, Emily," the amber-eyed girl gave thanks to her friend in a vaguely Irish accent - though with three generations of Irish-Americans behind her, her accent was near-imperceptible.

"It's nothing, Aislinn. We're best friends after all!" Emily said. They skipped over to the road, Aislinn lugging a little pink backpack with her, containing all her essentials for a single night of staying over.

"How long until your parents come, Aislinn?"

"Just a few minutes. They're rarely ever late," Aislinn said. She looked down, and Emily did the same. A newspaper, half-buried in the snow.

"Daddy must have missed it," Emily remarked as she bent down to pick it up. Aislinn was adjusting her red bow. It was precious to her - Dad had bought it for her fifth birthday after all.

"Or maybe he forgot about it," Aislinn suggested. "We saw it easily - and it was snowing before. The newspaper was probably in plain sight a few hours ago."

"Ever the detective, Aislinn?" Emily joked.
"It comes to me naturally," Aislinn said with a laugh. "My dad said that I'm really smart and I can be a detective if I want to. Or a scientist, or a professor…" While she was talking, Emily had already unfolded the newspaper. The front page with its bold headlines in gigantic font was hard to miss.

**FREAKY BUG-EYED WEIRDO GIRLS BROKE THE MAIN HIGHWAY**

"Talk about freaky…" Emily remarked. Aislinn could sense the chill in her voice.

"What's the matter?" Aislinn asked, concerned about her friend.

"Look at this picture," Emily said as she pointed out one of the three photos on the front page. She was pointing at the middle photo. The subtitle read 'Apparent Leader of The Three'. The little girl in that photo was running on some highway, wielding a pistol and wearing some kind of shrunken-down military outfit. But that wasn't the weird part, even though it was weird enough on its own.

The 'Apparent Leader of The Three' looked almost exactly like Aislinn. The only difference was the eyes. They were slightly bigger, and the color… was truly freaky to both Aislinn and Emily.

Aislinn gasped, covering her mouth as she couldn't seem to shut it. Freaky couldn't even begin to cover it.

"She even has my bow!" Aislinn said, referring to the damaged red bow attached to the back of the 'Leader of The Three's helmet.

"Maybe she's your doppelganger…” Emily whispered in fear.

"My dober-what?" Aislinn said, not following.

"Doppelganger - an evil version of you, who looks exactly like you..." Emily said in a hushed tone. All of a sudden, fear gripped not just Emily, but Aislinn too. Something was wrong. She looked around, suddenly afraid that someone who was exactly the same in appearance as her was stalking her, peeking at her from some fence or bush or window. "My daddy told me about doppelgangers this Halloween. He said that it's bad luck to see your doppelganger…"

The neighborhood Aislinn and Emily lived in was safe partly because of the clockwork police patrol on the streets. In fact, one such police cruiser was just passing by the neighborhood girls when it stopped.

Unknown to those girls, the police officer driving the cruiser had pulled up because he needed to ascertain something. Pulling out a file, he flipped it open to the most recent document he’d just received from his captain – there were photos inside. They happened to be the same ones Aislinn and Emily were looking at – those photos were, after all, the most widely circulated polaroids of the infamous 'The Three'. Despite the fact that Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were pulled from the wanted list, police officers were still ordered to treat them as suspects, to haul them in for questioning. It was a necessity, what with the TPD and USDO working separately, even if they were working towards the same goal.

"You sure that's the girl?" Officer Gomez's partner asked – an old veteran, who knew to make sure. He'd dealt with plenty of kids in his time, and Officer Wilson knew that he had to be more than excellent on the job, especially with the kind of children from Townsville - child crime was high, but innocent children were just as numerous as in any other cities. Officer Gomez showed the picture to his old partner.

"An exact match. Except for the contact lenses. Little girl probably thinks she's smart," Officer
Gomez said. "This is just perfect. We haul her in and we'll probably become the talk of the town, eh?"

"You believe the crazy things they were saying about her in briefing?" Officer Wilson asked.

"Haven't you been watching the news? She's bulletproof alright, but it'll still hurt if we shoot them," Officer Gomez said.

"Nah, I tuned out years ago. Just bad news after bad news. What's new?" Officer Wilson said. "We'll do it the usual way. Hands up, drop your weapon, yadda, yadda, yadda. But I'm not shooting a kid."

"We'll likely have to shoot. It's not usual this time, Wilson, not with these freaks," Officer Gomez asserted, all gung-ho as he exited the police cruiser in a rush. His partner did the same, but being all pudgy and close to retirement and looking the part, he was far behind. It didn't help that he was sitting on the shotgun seat, facing away from the suspect.

Officer Gomez rushed up to Aislinn and Emily, and before they could even look up from the newspaper they were trying to read, he was standing not even ten feet away from them, with his service pistol, a Glock, out. "Police! Freeze! You're under arrest for suspected murder, manslaughter, property damage and assaulting police officers!"

Aislinn stared at the police officer, then at his gun, terror rippling through her – she had never experience such a thing before, owing to her father having protected her so well from violence. She opened her mouth, wanting to claim innocence, but panic had choked her too tightly.

Officer Wilson caught up with his partner after that, his service revolver out but not trained on the two little girls, panting from the strain.

"Put your hands on your head and lie face down on the ground!" Officer Gomez ordered, his pistol shaking from fear.

Aislinn didn't hear it. She couldn't. The guns had occupied her attention. She couldn't even breathe - she didn't dare, and without warning, she turned and darted away, throwing down her little pink backpack. Emily followed.

"Stop! I said stop!" Officer Gomez ordered and when he saw that the murder suspect wasn't listening, he fired a few rounds, only to hit Emily in the back as she got in the way. Nonetheless, two pistol rounds drilled through her to hit their intended target. A third round went through Aislinn's upper arm, ending up in the snow with a small spatter of her blood following.

Both girls fell. Emily was motionless as blood pooled in the snow beneath her. Aislinn appeared to be in a similar state at first, dead. But then her eyes opened and she started crawling away. She couldn't get very far at all – two feet, maybe three.

Officer Gomez came up to her, weapon still pointing at the bleeding girl. With a foot, he forcibly flipped Aislinn around on her back, who cried out because of the impact on the entrance wounds on her back.

"Jesus… She's bleeding!" Officer Wilson, who was behind him, insinuated. "You said she was bulletproof!"

Aislinn was still trying to get away from the police officers - pushing herself away from them with one working arm and her weak two legs. She opened her mouth, to try to beg for her life, but only a copious amount of blood came out. She coughed more blood as she cried brokenly. Blood was everywhere – coming out of her nostrils, streaking the ground beneath her, coloring her beige dress
Officer Gomez was frozen above her, weapon still hanging in his hands. His mind was all jammed up – things weren't matching up. Something was wrong. There wasn't supposed to be blood. It wasn't supposed to be this easy.

Aislinn Callaghan shielded her face with an arm, afraid that she might get shot again, all the while coughing more blood out, crying like it was her last, because it probably was.

"Gomez, I think we got the wrong girl!" Officer Wilson shouted, his voice grave.

Just then, Emily's parents rushed out of the house, having heard the gunshots. They ran up to Emily, who was lying face down in the snow, arms splayed out, far too much blood forming a red circle of death around her.

"Emily! Oh my God!" the mother screamed, followed by the father. They knelt down beside her, turning her over. Her eyes were closed. She was no longer breathing. Her dress was completely drenched in blood, and she was still bleeding from multiple gunshot wounds on both her back and chest. There was too much blood – one bullet had hit an artery close to the heart and completely ruptured it. The other had punctured a lung twice over. "No! Emily!

Officer Gomez looked at the scene he'd caused, shocked at what he'd done. The parents were broken up over their daughter. Even the father was crying.

"What did you do!?" the father howled as he cried. "Why!?!"

"Gomez," Officer Wilson said to his partner as he shook him. "Hey, Gomez! Hand over your weapon. Come on."

Officer Gomez pistol-whipped his partner instead, backing away. He pointed his pistol at Wilson.

"Gomez! You made a mistake – I have to take you in," Officer Wilson said with his hands raised.

"No!" Officer Gomez screamed, himself in tears after realizing what he'd done. "I didn't mean it! I thought she was that- that- monster!"

"Gomez, I know. Put the gun down. You made a mistake, that's all. You're a good man. You were only trying to do your part," Officer Wilson tried to reason with his partner.

Officer Gomez looked at the Emily once more, at how even her parents were now covered in her blood as they hugged their dead daughters to them. He looked at Aislinn, the Blossom look-alike, who looked like she could catch up with her friend soon in a race to the pearly-white gates.

"I never wanted this," Officer Gomez said grimly when he realized what he must do. He turned to regard the parents of the little girl he killed one last time. "I'm sorry."

"Gomez, don't," his partner pleaded. But there was nothing he could do when Officer Gomez promptly pushed the barrel of his pistol up to his chin, and pulled the trigger.

An explosion. Blood spurted from both his chin and the top of his head. His peak hat flew off, landing not far away and the snow was redder than before as his body fell.

"No!" Officer Wilson shouted. He stared at the body of his partner, unable to believe what had just happened in the space of a minute, how an ordinary day in one of the safer parts of Townsville could
just turn into a bloodbath out of the blue. He looked around at Emily and her parents. There was no saving them but… He looked around at Aislinn Callaghan, who was still breathing, but laboriously as he could hear her wheezing. Running up to the severely wounded little girl, he tore at his uniform to create makeshift bandages, wrapping them around the body shots she had taken. The bullets were slowed, but they were buried inside her, doing massive internal damage. He ripped another piece of fabric out of his sleeve and used it as a tourniquet for her arm. He applied pressure to try to reduce the bleeding.

"Hey!" Officer Wilson shouted at the freshly bereaved man next to Emily. "Hey you! Watch this kid while I call this in!"

The man turned to look at the officer, dazed from how his world had fallen apart. He nodded weekly. Emily's father walked over to Aislinn. Removing his jacket, he covered the wounded girl with it, pulling it up to her chin. It was largely ineffective because she was lying in snow, but it was the least he could do. Aislinn Callaghan was a friend to his daughter, who made her life a pleasant one. In the distance, the man saw a newspaper, unfolded and wide open. The headline stood out.

**FREAKY BUG-EYED WEIRDO GIRLS BROKE THE MAIN HIGHWAY**

And one of the picture in that article was of a girl who looked practically the same as Aislinn. 'Doppelganger' was the first word that popped up in his mind.
Chapter 64: Undercurrents

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the Girls couldn't catch a break even as they rest from their most arduous mission ever.

Chapter 64: Undercurrents

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 1245.

When the Girls entered the House, they didn't race up to their room like they usually did. Professor Utonium knew exactly why. Oh, he knew the reason very, very well. By the time they were returned to him, they were in tears, even Buttercup - though Buttercup's reasons for it were more trivial, and as such, her tears were less. From what he could decipher from the blabbering in between their sobs and sniffles, the Mayor of Townsville had made it clear in no uncertain terms that they had messed up, doomed the entire city and as a result, would be hated by everyone, including him.

Both the professor and Selicia thought that the mayor was just spouting apocalyptic bullshit out of dementia and desperation. While the Girls had made a terrible mistake in their last operation (or a long series of terrible mistakes), the butterfly effect from it shouldn't be as serious and far-reaching as what the Mayor claimed.

What worried Professor Utonium the most was the effect of the mayor's words on them. When lunch was ready, Blossom and Bubbles flat out refused to eat. Buttercup was the exception. She pigged out on her corn cob and chicken steak and had to be reminded of her table manners. He tried to talk Blossom and Bubbles out of the hole they'd been put in, telling them that Mayor Wilford would likely cool down soon, or that things could turn around when they inevitably start doing things right, or that the opinions of others did not matter, or that family and love was all that mattered - he did it in that exact order, when what he said failed to calm them down one after the next.

Later in the day, when the Girls returned to bed, the professor had taken skin and cheek cell samples to track the recovery of Chemical X in their bodies. The rate of Chemical X refill in their body had fallen below expectations, with the exception of Buttercup, while Bubbles' recover was the slowest. With no previously existing data, he could only speculate that hunger might have something to do with it. Buttercup had eaten while her sisters had not, after all. But the fact that there was a dynamic between the three of them required some investigating. There were other factors at play.

"They just need time, Thomas," Selicia said while they were just outside the room. "There was this once when I didn't eat for three days."

"Are you embellishing that story?" Thomas asked, partly out of curiosity and partly because he was grasping at straws, and needed something, anything, to make two of his Girls better.
"No. Three days, Thomas, and I'm not shitting you. My parents didn't care. I had to beg for food when I finally came around," Selicia went on. "But your Girls - our Girls - they've got you - us - I think that's a massive advantage there."

"We'll just have to be with them," the professor agreed.

"Yes - I think I'm going to pull Bubbles aside later. I'll see if I can talk to her," Selicia said. "You'll do the same with Blossom."

"What was it about?" the professor asked.

"What is what about?" Selicia said.

"Your hunger strike - what was it about?" Professor Utonium made his question clearer.

"Oh. It was about a boy I liked. They wouldn't let us be together," Selicia recounted. "I was 15 then. He was such a smart guy. He knew that my parents were abusing me. He tried to negotiate for my release - spoke their language by saying that he could take me off their hands. He failed, and my father made sure we'd never see each other again. I ran away after that."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I'm here now. It's fate, I guess. If I hadn't been abused, I wouldn't have ran away, and if I hadn't run away, I wouldn't have become so streetwise. I became a very successful thief, cat burglar and general rogue after that, so successful that even the USDO - the Organization then - recruited me for covert missions. And now here I am, with you and Buttercup - I mean the Girls."

"I'm not much of a prize. If you want a hunk, you should have picked Johnson in security or even Blake outside," the professor said.

"Johnson's got nothing between his ears and Blake's too old for me. He's not my type either," Selicia said. She comes up to the professor, who backed away and accidentally banged himself against the Girls' door.

"Save it for our date tomorrow, Selicia," the professor said, gently pushing her away before making his way to the lab. He paused. "You're attractive, you really are. But that's not what love is. I don't know if I'm even capable of loving another woman again."

"I'll try my best to change your mind," Selicia replied comically.

"Hmm. You can try," the professor said, smiling. He pulled his black pipe out, deciding that he needed a stop at the living room before going into the lab. There was a lot on his mind.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 1332.

Back in the Girls room, Blossom had resumed her journey into Three Little Pigs, but she couldn't concentrate. There simply wasn't enough head space for her to decipher the intricate patterns on the page above or below the pictures that the adults called the 'alphabets', and to link them to ideas. With what she had read of the story, she could see herself in it too, somehow. She could remember every word the Mayor had said to her back in the city hall. Her ability to remember even the smallest details had turned against her.
Bubbles was lying next to her, defeated. She was content to just sprawl herself out in bed and do nothing but stare at the ceiling. Nothing seemed to have any meaning - it was as if suffering was her lot, and she was just waiting for the next time she would take a beating, and get scolded for it. Buttercup was playing with her toy trains and cars. She created another pile-up of her own, and rammed a train into it. She threw the train across the room and it skidded across the carpeted floor.

"That Mayor Wilford! Why did he have to be like that!?!" she shouted. "No candies, no chocolate and no rides! That was a waste of time!"

As much as Blossom did not enjoy her previous meeting with the mayor, she did not like Buttercup's sentiments. They deserved it. Blossom knew that they had made mistakes and gotten a lot of people injured. She had seen them for herself. The faces, contorted in pain, and red overtaking every other color. She knew that Buttercup had seen it too, but chose not to care. She wasn't just being insensitive. She was being incredibly mean.

"Maybe if someone hadn't shot at the policemen, the mayor wouldn't have been so angry," Blossom wondered out loud, and meant for every word of it to sting. Buttercup turned sharply to her, gritting her teeth.

"Oh yeah? Maybe if someone hadn't insisted on chasing down those bad guys, the mayor wouldn't have been angry at all!" Buttercup countered as she jumped to her feet, kicking aside toys.

"They would have hurt other people in the future!" Blossom defended herself, jumping off her bed, anticipating another Buttercup blow-up, but this time, she was ready - and she was better than Buttercup even in her element, she knew it.

"But Daddy said 'They would have hurt other people in the future!'" Buttercup mimicked and mocked Blossom in the most absurd way possible, crossing her eyes and sticking her tongue out and looking like an idiot - only, the idiot to the tomboy was Blossom. Bubbles sat up, looking at them with tired eyes. It wasn't an encouraging sight to her. The world could be a dirty, messy place - the loss of the mayor's trust was a huge blow - but she had thought that her family and home would be her retreat if everything else fell apart - that her sisters could provide her stability. It felt as though even that was gone too. Tears welled up, and she had lost all resolve in containing it long ago. While Blossom and Buttercup fought in their pink, carpeted battleground, Bubbles cried, her sharp wails ignored. "Why don't you stay home and let Dad fight crime instead, goody two shoes!"

"Well, I didn't see you putting up a fight!" Blossom accused, before crossing her arms and smiling. "Oh, right. Because you couldn't fight. You lost to me, remember?"

Buttercup clenched her fists and bared her teeth, looking at Blossom as though she was prey. She stomped towards Blossom. But Blossom wasn't intimidated.

"Have you forgotten something, Buttercup?" Blossom said.

"What!?!" Buttercup snarled as she came closer to Blossom.

"Our agreement? You listen to me, and I don't tell Daddy about you," Blossom reminded her wayward sister, and just to twist the dagger, she called out: "Dad! Daddy!"

"Wha- No! Stop!" Buttercup told her, alarmed, still shaking in fury, but also because she was trying very hard to restrain herself from pummeling her sister to death.

"Dad!" Blossom called out to her father again with a triumphant smile on her face. There were footsteps in the distance. Buttercup could hear it far better than Blossom.
"No, please!" Buttercup cried, promptly sinking to her knees and sidling up to Blossom, hugging her around the waist in a desperate attempt to placate her leader. "I'll listen to you! Please! I'll be a good sister!"

"That's not what I heard just now," Blossom said. The door flew open after that and Buttercup jumped. Bubbles, in the meantime, was still having a meltdown in bed. Blossom quickly put her arm around Buttercup's shoulder as she turned around to face the door.

"Girls! Is something wrong!?" Professor Utonium exclaimed, worried about the Girls.

"Oh nothing, Daddy. It's just that Buttercup-" Blossom had made sure to mention Buttercup first, just to torture her sister a little more and drive home her point. Buttercup had nearly died of a heart attack then. Blossom and Buttercup made eye contact briefly, with Buttercup practically begging with her eyes to not be exposed while Blossom smiled. ":and I were having a hard time accepting what the mayor said, but we understand why he's so sad. It's just Bubbles I'm worried about." Blossom pointed at Bubbles, who wasn't even listen, and wouldn't have even been able to comprehend it because of how broken up she was.

"Oh, Blossom. It's sweet of you to care so much about your sisters," the professor said, ignorant of what was truly going on.

"I know, right?" Blossom said as she continued to regard her emerald-eyed sister with a victorious smile on her face. Buttercup had forced a smile, hoping to keep what was really going on a secret, so that her secrets would not be revealed. "Right, Buttercup?"

"Yes, sister," Buttercup forced herself to sound cheerful, but she had fallen a bit too short by overacting. The professor, however, was none the wiser, as he fully trust the Girls to be good. Even Buttercup, whom he regarded as stubborn, but essentially good. "You're so sweet and caring, sister."

"I'll take care of Bubbles while the two of you stay here and enjoy each other's company," the professor said as he crossed the room and picked up Bubbles, who stopped crying the moment she was in his arms.

"Dad?" Blossom said just as the professor was about to leave. Buttercup froze in shock - she was always mortally afraid that Blossom would reconsider her options. Blossom smiled maliciously at Buttercup before turning to Daddy again. "I love you."

"I love you too, Flower Blossom," the professor replied. "You too, Butterfly. Be good to your leader!" the professor had said the last part as a jest with a laugh, but to Buttercup, it was fuel for her paranoia and fear that Daddy knew something - somehow.

"Feeling better, Buttercup?" Blossom mocked her headstrong sister.

"Yes," Buttercup chose an answer she thought would placate Blossom the most. "Totally."

"That's good, Buttercup," Blossom said, her malicious smile still plastered on her face. "Let's make nice to each other. How about if we… play with dolls?"

"No, please, no!" Buttercup cried. Blossom's smile disappeared very quickly when she was denied. "I mean yes, I would love to!" Buttercup corrected herself on seeing that her 'leader' was displeased.
"So you see… That's why the Mayor was really angry," the professor ended off his talk with Bubbles, trying to get her to understand what he thought the Mayor was about. While he hated to side with a man who had little regard for the feelings of his adopted daughters, morality had forced him along that line. The Mayor wasn't entirely wrong to be angry, even if he could have been angry in a more graceful way. Bubbles, on the other hand, wasn't entirely right either - an innocent little child though she might be, she still had to learn responsibility and courtesy (which was another understatement). "Imagine that he was me, and he had six million little girls to take care of, and sixty of them are hurt badly, like how Blossom and Buttercup were the last time. He would have lost most of his hair even if he's 20 years old today."

That last bit was meant as a joke, but Bubbles didn't laugh. It wasn't a good sign, as Bubbles tend to be the easiest to impress. The professor got up from his single seater closer to the fireplace and sat down next to Bubbles, cuddling with her.

"Oh. I understand. I still don't really understand how big a million is, but it's just…" Bubbles' sentence trailed off. "I don't think anyone likes us anymore. Mister Wilford, Mister Blackwater, the policemen. Mister Wilford said that the city hates us."

"Well, I like you, and so does your mother. And what about your sisters?" Professor Utonium said.

"I don't think Mommy likes me very much. Buttercup, she..." Bubbles lamented, looking up at the Professor. "She thinks I'm a crybaby. I don't even like myself. I'm not smart like Blossom or as brave as Buttercup, but I know, Dad. No one likes me because everyone needs to take care of me."

"Mister Blake and his friends seem to like you," Professor Utonium added in the hopes of proving Bubbles wrong. Security officers gave the impression that they didn't like crybabies - the fact that they had taken a liking to her might do just that.

"But you said that as long as we're together, we'll always have a family? It doesn't matter that everyone else hates us, as long as we have a family," Bubbles continued regardless. It was clear that his rhetoric didn't work.

"Yes, that's right, and-" Professor Utonium said, but was quickly interrupted, by, of all people, the sweet Bubbles.

"But why does it feel as if we're not a family?" Bubbles said with a tone of finality. It raised a few alarm bells.

"What do you mean?" the professor said, his mouth feeling a little dry. He'd expected this from Blossom or Buttercup, maybe, but not Bubbles. Bubbles wasn't one to notice and discern things. He was afraid that the cover had been blown from the least expected person.

"No one likes me, except you… and Blossom," Bubbles said. The professor wiped some sweat from his forehead.

"I think your mother and Buttercup do like you, Bubbles,' the professor reassured his daughter. "They just have a different way of showing it. In fact, I think your Mom wants some alone time with you later. Just mother and daughter together."

"Can I be alone with you for a while first, Dad?" Bubbles asked. She leaned against him, resting her head against his chest, feeling the strong quaking from his heart, which she felt very strongly because of her superior sense of touch. It was a comforting sensation. The world and half the family could
hate her, but as long as she had Dad, it felt as if things were tolerable.

"Sure," the professor said as he put an arm around her, letting her nestle.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

18 DEC 1988 (Sunday). 1351.

After depositing Bubbles with Selicia, Professor Utonium went through the front door and towards the Girls' speed convoy. It was something he had to do sooner or later. After a certain distance, the fact that he intended to speak to someone operating the convoy did not go unnoticed. Agent Blake got out of his vehicle, looking a little stand off-ish. He knew how the professor could be like when his Girls were in the picture. He had never failed to give that impression each time they crossed paths. And these days, it was always something to do with his Girls.

"Professor, To what do I owe the pleasure?" Agent Blake greeted him, and Professor Utonium couldn't decide if it was genuine or sarcastic. The security officer had hidden his true emotions too well, sun shades and poker face and all. Until a couple weeks ago, Blake had been the perfect soldier raised to leadership by Blackwater himself, and even then, he'd retained most of those traits.

"We are both busy men, so I'll keep it brief, Sergeant Blake," the professor said matter-of-fact-like. But what he was about to say had softened him up. Taking a deep breathe, he continued. "I just want to thank you."

He could sense surprise or shock in those eyes behind those aviator shades, but then again, it could just the Kuleshov Effect in real life.

"Thank me? For what?" Agent Blake asked.

"For being there for my- the Girls, when I'm..." the professor had to pick through his words carefully. He didn't want to appear weak in front of other men, not when it concerned his family. "Unavailable or when things were out of my field of expertise."

"It's not a problem, professor," Agent Blake said. "The Girls inspired me. They're young, and yet, it's as if they're holding the secrets of the universe in their eyes. Huh. I've never thought that I can be that poetic until I met them. It's the only way I can say it. You're one lucky son-of-a-bitch, you know that?"

Although Agent Blake had meant well, the professor didn't take too kindly to how Agent Blake ended his sentence off. It sounded far too suspicious, ominous even, to him. Walking up closer to Agent Blake, the professor fixed his eyes on Agent Blake's; a direct challenge to the security officer, a reminder that The House and the Girls were his, even though Agent Blake needed no such reminder.

"Then you remember who their father is, I take it?" Professor Utonium said sternly.

"Of course I do," Agent Blake replied. He wasn't an easy man to be intimidated, but the professor came pretty close to striking fear in him. Having had the displeasure of having to deal with protective fathers in the course of his career, he knew how they can be like, and Professor Utonium was an extreme example of it.

"Good. You keep your hands to yourself, grunt. If I hear anything about you touching my Girls inappropriately-" the professor went on. Agent Blake had something to say about his insinuation.
"What sort of a man do you think I am, sir?" Blake retorted, this time thinking that the professor had
gone too far. "I would never-"

"That remains to be seen. I'm their father, and I retain the right to suspect anyone of anything when they deal with my kids. Do you understand?"

"All too well. You need to lighten up," Blake said. "I've heard people talking about you. I'm surprised you still have friends all the way up there in the council. I know what you've been through but-"

"Don't patronize me," Professor Utonium shot back. "You have no idea. Go on, be a friend to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, but don't you dare step out of line, mister. We're done here."

The professor turned around and returned to his house.

A hastily-built snowman stood in the backyard of The House, a stereotypical example with three globes of snow stacked on top of each other, one smaller than the next. Two branches, sourced from the backyard tree, represented the arms while stones represented the buttons and eyes. A carrot from the kitchen was the nose, long and sharp, as if the snowman had lied like Pinnocchio. In a way, it was supposed to be someone worse than Pinnocchio, because it was supposed to represent a criminal as crooked as its arms.

A snowball flew over its Santa's hat, missing by a mile. Another went sideways, glancing the snowman on the side, but otherwise doing no damage.

"Eyes on the snowman's face, Bubbles," Selicia instructed as she watched with a disapproving frown barely hidden on her face.

Bubbles squeezed her last snowball and licked her lips. She tried to do as she was told, fixing her gaze on the snowman's 'face', but as soon as she threw the snowball, it disintegrated. She had squeezed it too hard and loosened the snow it was made of as a result.

Bubbles looked up at her Mommy, and Selicia looked back, remembering that she should keep up appearances a little too late. She forced her frown down and kept her smile up too late and Bubbles noticed.

"Here, let me show you how it's done," Selicia said as she picked up her first. She pointed at her eyes, then the snowman. "Eyes on target. Wind up your body like so, and off!"

Selicia's snowball hardly had any parabolic curve to it despite her weaker strength compared to the enhanced little girl. However, it had landed on target, smacking the snowman's face, knocking off the Pinnocchio nose. She picked up a second snowball and demonstrated the throw once more, this time goring the snowman's head, taking half of it off. A third snowball took out the remaining half.

"Come one, let's give it back its head and try again," Selicia said as she took Bubbles by the hand and lead her back up to the snowman. They rolled up a new head, and Selicia placed it on the decapitated snowman's shoulders. It was the third time they were doing this - and Bubbles had failed to strike the snowman consistently three times over.

"Can I put its eyes and nose back on? Please? Can I?" Bubbles pleaded as she jumped up and down. Selicia handed her the materials and picked her up from under her arms. Bubbles placed the eyes and nose. One of the pebbles that was supposed to represent an eye fell off, but Selicia waved it off. "Maybe he'll be an evil pirate this time."
"Mom?"

"Yeah?" Selicia replied as she pulled Bubbles back to the firing line.

"Can't we leave him alone and make more snowmen? Maybe they can be his family. He looks so sad, being alone out here," Bubbles said.

"Maybe later," Selicia denied. "Let's throw some snowballs for now. Don't you like throwing snowballs?"

"But you said that the last time! Buttercup likes throwing snowballs," Bubbles said. "But I prefer building snow-stuff, like snowmen and castles."

"Okay, fine, whatever," Selicia waved it all away dismissively. "Now let's try again. You need to learn how to enjoy certain other things more anyway."

"But I don't wanna hurt Mister Carrot!" Bubbles cried. "I wanna build him a family!"

Selicia has had enough - she had expected Bubbles to toughen up a little, especially after all the missions she had been through in just one week alone. She grabbed Bubbles by the arm, tightening her grip on it.

"Now you listen here, you little shit!" Selicia snarled at Bubbles as she bent down to regard her with furious, mad eyes.

"Ow! Mom, stop!" Bubbles pleaded.

"Ow? Ow!?" Selicia rebuked the little girl severely, finding it ridiculous that Bubbles found her grip painful, incredulous that she was acting like a normal little kid. She pinched her in the upper arm, putting all the strength in her fingers into it, and adding a twist for good measure. Bubbles' mouth flung open in pain as she stared at what her Mom was doing to her. She didn't want to hurt her Mommy, so she did not resist. "Buttercup and Blossom earned their right to cry in pain, but not you!"

"They were hurt because of you!" Selicia snapped at Bubbles as she bent down and grabbed her other arm, making sure that she couldn't even shrink away from her. She shook her roughly with every phrase she spoke. "They were hated by the city, by the mayor, by everyone because of you! You couldn't get anything right, and now you're ruining it when I'm trying to do something about you the nicest way I can! WAKE UP, BUBBLES!"

"I hate you! Daddy is nicer to me!" Bubbles spluttered as she cried.

"Well, Daddy doesn't know anything about crime-fighting now, does he? And if he does, he wouldn't have been nice to you. In fact, I think he secretly resents you because you keep screwing things up for your sisters," Selicia asserted even if she didn't know if half of what she said was true - not that it mattered. Means to an end. The end justified the means - if she could get Bubbles to work as intended in the place.

"No he doesn't. You're lying," Bubbles countered. But the seeds of doubt had already been planted.

"You're being useless, and no one likes a useless girl. You're going to be a whore when you grow up," Selicia said out of frustration, only realizing too late that she had said something really wrong, something that shouldn't be said to a little girl. "If it weren't for your superpowers, you would be." She tried to salvage it, but it was too late. She had to wing it, but realized she had dug an even deeper hole for herself.
'You're going to be a whore when you grow up,' Selicia's mother had said to her when she was young. The worst part was that she had fulfilled her mother's prophecy, albeit in brief bursts, and not directly. She had done all kinds of things on the streets. Alcohol and smokes were the least of it. Drugs and one night stands weren't even the worst of it. She had prostituted herself several times when things got rough, slept with some men to get to some of her marks at best, back when she was prowling the streets as a cat burglar and thief. Her time in the Organization weren't entirely innocent either.

"Oh God, Bubbles - I didn't mean it," Selicia apologized, except she had fully intended it - making sure she realized how much damage she was causing, breaking her down, before starting the work of turning her into a soldier. She just thought she had gone a little too far. "I'm sorry." She pulled Bubbles into a hug. She resisted at first, but then relented, melting into her. Putting frozen tears into her jacket.

"I'm so sorry, it's just…" Selicia tried to explain, but couldn't. Her own tears were coming out - old wounds had come undone. "It won't happen again."

"Mom, you're crying," Bubbles said, alarmed. Selicia did not say anything. It would all be too hard and complex for her to understand anyway. The little girl made ran a hand across Selicia's cheeks, trying to wipe all the tears away. It was shocking for an adult to cry for Bubbles - in her knowledge, adults rarely do that, and when they do, something was obviously, incredibly, wrong. And it wasn't the first time either - Bubbles could notice the pattern. Mom would cry when she was around her. Bubbles couldn't help but to feel responsible for making her mother cry. It was all her fault.

"Bubbles, listen to me. Please don't tell your father about this," Selicia said as she took Bubbles by the sides of her head. "He'll hate me for it. He'll even hate you for it. Our family will break apart." Bubbles regarded her for the moment, shocked that there were more consequences to follow. "Please - do the right thing for once, Bubbles. Be a good girl and save your family."

"I promise I won't say anything, Mom," Bubbles finally said, feeling important for once - the fate of her family hung in the balance, and she had the power to change it.

Just then, the sliding door to the backyard opened. Professor Utonium stood at the threshold. He noticed that both girls, big and little, were crying. He furrowed his eyebrows. "Is everything okay? Selicia? Bubbles?"

Selicia sniffled a little. "Yeah," she lied. "Just having some mother-daughter bonding time. Right, Bubbles?"

Bubbles sniffled too. "Yeah," she lied. "I love my Mommy." They hugged as they faced Professor Utonium.

"That's great," Professor Utonium said. "Well, I won't be disturbing the two of you. I'll be upstairs."
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the USDO top brass meets up to discuss the bleak future of Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup.

Post-Incident Meeting 12191988A Transcript

DOC: 19 DEC 1988

The following has been reconstructed from video and audio recordings.

-START TRANSCRIPT-

(The Location: Meeting Room, Townsville USDO HQ.)

(Attending: All departmental heads and any relevant personnel.)

ATTENDANCE MANIFEST: (Codenames in force)

- USDO Director Cliff
- Chief of Security Blackwater
- Chief Armory Officer Redding
- Central Motorpool Manager Longshot
- Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard
- Acting Head of Research Vanum
- Medical Director Simmons
- Psychiatry and Social Services Department Head Alice
- Chief of Logistics Wiggums
- CFO Silverslick
- Liaisons Head Yorkshire

(Time: 1430)

USDO Director Cliff: Now that we're all here, some not as punctually, I might add, let us begin. Anything to report?
Chief of Security Blackwater: Recruitment has been progressing steadily. We now have about 600 security operatives in Townsville. We have been stepping up our efforts to reduce crime there. Conventional operations are seeing some successes. We've been able to perform up to the standards of the TPD when it comes to patrols and arrest of minor criminals. Our raids on the criminal underground are bearing fruit - drug labs, illegal gambling dens and human trafficking networks, to name a few such operations, have been shut down. While we're just hitting the tip of the iceberg, if we scale up our operations once we have operatives in the thousands, we'll be able to make a huge impact. As much as I hate to admit it, the three girls of Project Powerpuff has had the criminal underground rattled as well - even if they were failing every damn time, they were a challenge to the Lombardi Mafia, something that hasn't been seen for a couple of years.

USDO Director Cliff: Hmm. (Leans back on his chair) Why the sudden change of opinion of the 'girls', Blackwater? Just a few days ago, you were giving a speech about how worthless those lab-grown guinea pigs were.

Chief of Security Blackwater: My opinion hasn't changed. They're still failures considering what they have and what they can't achieve, but even failures can be melted down and cast into something resembling success, sir.

USDO Director Cliff: (pause) I see. Anyone else?

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: We've been able to infiltrate the Foundation cell in Townsville, sir. Apparently, our former pet monkey, Jojo, who now calls himself Mojo Jojo, and has joined the local council.

USDO Director Cliff: They put a monkey in their council? I think we should be relieved instead, Jackard.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackward: My sources indicate that we should feel otherwise, sir. He's had an impact on the Foundation's planning - he's even directing a large part of it. He now has a hand in everything that's happening in Townsville.

USDO Director Cliff: And what is the Foundation planning in Townsville?

Chief Intelligence Officer: Unclear, sir. But we know that they are in contact with every organized criminal gang in the city, as well as the various cults in it sir. Apparently, the cults of Townsville play a role in crime as well.

USDO Director Cliff: Like what? Recruitment? Money Laundering?

Chief Intelligence Officer: Unclear. We've only just begin shifting some of our focus on the cults. We'll have more info in the coming weeks.

USDO Director Cliff: Anything else?

Chief Intelligence Officer: No.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Sir, I would like to congratulate you on your sound decisions.

USDO Director Cliff: That goes without saying. But what are you talking about?

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: Regarding turning what used to be the Organization into a publicly known federal agency? Ever since that happened, um, we've been seeing a huge increase in the volume and speed of our shipping and transactions. I'm sure Blackwater can tell you that weapons, ammunition and equipment are no longer as limited, and our capabilities have now surpassed even
that of the United States Postal Service.

(Laughter. Wiggums smiles at the council)

USDO Director Cliff: Right. Anyone else?

(Silence)

USDO Director Cliff: No? Then let's move on to the first thing on our agenda for today. You see, people, I feel that we need to bring the other projects into this. I am starting to get the distinct feeling that Project Powerpuff should no longer be the main focus of the USDO's advanced armaments program. Vanum - what can we reliably bring into Townsville?

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Well - I've been consulting Professor Utonium about this, and making some small decisions on my part about the direction of our research projects, but, um-

USDO Director Cliff: To the point, Vanum! I don't want to sit through an hour of technobabble!

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Alright- So basically, we - and by that, I mean Professor Utonium and I - were inspired by the use of Chemical A in the XM90 anti-material rifle's rounds. We've decided to greenlight the use of the chemical as a form of fuel or battery fluid. This is a massive boon to several of the programs that had stalled because of power storage and transmission issues, like the ones you're asking for, namely Project Klendathu and Project Cyclops.

USDO Director Cliff: What are they again?

Acting Head of Research Vanum: Project Klendathu concerns the development of Powered Armor for infantry troops - an artificial rather than chemical or biological means of enhancing a soldier. We were ahead of the United States Armed Forces in terms of suit agility, speed and articulation, but neither of us could solve the power issues, until now. Project Cyclops refers to the development of human-piloted bipedal robots designed for rough urban or natural terrain. We have designs varying in size and armaments. I think the smaller models are most promising because of their lower power requirements, maneuverability and agility.

USDO Director Cliff: Alright. Bring them both in. How soon can we get units of Klendathu and Cyclops into the field?

Acting Head of Research Vanum: I've only just ordered the use of Chemical A, sir. With the most optimistic projections, I'd say two months, maybe three. They will need to design and manufacture power packs around Chemical A, integrate them into the current models of powered armor and bipedal bot, lab-test them before bringing them over for field-testing.

USDO Director Cliff: Fine. Make it happen. (Turns to Blackwater) I'll be relying on you, Blackwater, to deploy these resources in the most effective way possible. If they turn out to be more successful than Project Powerpuff, we might be able to scrap those brats altogether. Can I count on you, Blackwater?

Chief of Security Blackwater: (Perplexed by question) Of course, sir.

USDO Director Cliff: We'll see.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Sir?

USDO Director Cliff: (Ignores Blackwater) And speaking of those brats, we need to talk about them. It's always about them these days - what they've done, what damage they've caused. Liaisons Head
Yorkshire, why don't you call your predecessor and let her tell us what Townsville thinks of them.

Liaisons Head Yorkshire: Yes, sir. (Picks up her phone and dials a number. Switches phone to loudspeaker mode. The dial tone beeps for a few seconds before the call is picked up.)

Townsville Liaison Bellum: (from loudspeaker) Hello? Director?

Liaisons Head Yorkshire: This is codename Yorkshire, your successor. The director wants to know about the sentiments of Townsville on 'The Three'of Project Powerpuff.

Townsville Liaison Bellum: Sorry, Mayor, I have to get this. (sound of door closing) Which part of Townsville?

USDO Director Cliff: Let's start with the Mayor. Does he still want our lab rats around?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: He's conflicted, sir. He's due for a press conference and yet he has no idea what to say, whether to condemn 'The Three' as the city now calls them or to stick his neck out for them. I've studied his file, sir, and he's rarely been like this before. I think it's good news to the project, at least.

USDO Director Cliff: Good news, how?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: He would have condemned anyone else right away for the same mistakes, but not the Girls for some reason. Not just that, he would have set up a task force right away to have anyone else convicted and sentenced, and the prison in Townsville is a cesspool, sir.

USDO Director Cliff: What about the sentiments on the ground. The TPD, the citizens?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: Not good, sir. The TPD are still treating the Girls as crime suspects, and the news is still abuzz since two days ago about the Girls, and there's nothing good about them. PR is working on this, but with our denial of involvement with the Girls at the bank, it's hard.

USDO Director Cliff: Thank you for your expertise, Bellum. Cozy over there?

Townsville Liaison Bellum: It's not the same, but I can get used to it. The Mayor's hard to work with, but I've worked with many difficult people. Worse people.

USDO Director Cliff: (seems to take a pause to stew for a moment) Don't get too comfy there. (motions for the phone to be hung up. Liaisons Head Yorkshire hangs the phone up) Analysis, gentlemen and women?

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard: I don't think public opinions are at an irreversibly critical low, sir, but another failure will put us there. And we aren't exactly making a dent with Project Powerpuff - sure, we've rattled the cage with B-47, B-48 and B-49, arrested a few untouchables, but that's just a drop in the vast, murky ocean that is the Lombardi. And we're just talking the Lombardi. There's still the minor players who are just as liable to take over if the Lombardi falls. Then there's the Foundation, the cults, the corruption in the Townsville justice system-

USDO Director Cliff: (puts up a hand) I get the idea.

Chief of Security Blackwater: My men are making more of an impact than the Girls. I agree with Jackard. Another mistake, and they're done.

USDO Director Cliff: Very well, put Project Powerpuff on hold. Have the Powerpuff Task Force take over their function. Liaisons Head Yorkshire, have Bellum inform the Wilford administration of
the change. This is just as well.

Chief of Security Blackwater: Sir?

USDO Director Cliff: Because we'll have to vote on their performance rating, and you know how that will go.

Liaisons Head Yorkshire: Sir, what about our policy towards the media and PR?

USDO Director Cliff: Keep up with cultivating the positive image. We can't back down now. We can only hope that things will turn around - our boots on the ground can help with that.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: And what about the Girls, sir? Will they have a chance to redeem themselves?

USDO Director Cliff: We'll see. If I were to give them a chance, it'd be in a spot where they can do no harm. I'd have to be desperate to give them something more.

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: That includes Bub- B-49, right?

USDO Director Cliff: That depends on what the council thinks.

-THE TRANSCRIPT CUT-

B-47, B-48 and B-49 Rating Update

DOC: 19 DEC 1988

Created by: CFO Silverslick

Note: For the sake of brevity, the transcript excerpt containing the dialogue for the performance rating vote process has been abridged with Performance Rating Summary Form 02B. Transcript excerpt containing dialogue for the performance rating vote process has been put in Appendix B for archival purposes.

B-47 (Blossom)

**Previous Rating: Triple B (BBB)**

**Votes for Rating Increase**

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Potential, especially in terms of deployment range. Developed flight capability according to Professor Utonium's report.

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Intention to pursue criminals are not malicious despite results (Voided, as intentions of B-47 cannot be proven)

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: Performance expectation too high for B-47, and circumstances resulted in B-47's actions, therefore B-47 cannot be blamed.

Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: None given (Voided due to inability to justify vote)

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: First time B-47 demonstrated critical thinking, even if the results leave more to be desired, which is essential for a field leader.
Votes for Maintaining Rating

NIL

Votes for Rating Decrease

Liaisons Head Yorkshire | Reason: B-47’s actions are heinous and destroys the trust between USDO and Townsville.

Chief Armory Officer Redding | Reason: B-47 had gone rogue, making her dangerous as a biological weapon.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: Caused too much destruction and too many casualties, no telling what could happen as she develops further.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Rogue agents in the field are a loose cannon - B-47 could even defect one day.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: Her decisions resulted in a PR nightmare, which might irreversibly undermine the USDO. She failed as the smartest of the three and as the leader.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Poor decision-making ability resulting in severe consequences.

Result: Rating decreased from Triple B (BBB) to Double B (BB). The downward trend is slowed because she has become flight capable; USDO Director Cliff has decided to allow B-47 room to develop its abilities more to see if it can turn things around.

B-48 (Buttercup)

Previous Rating: Double A (AA)

Votes for Rating Increase

NIL

Votes for Maintaining Rating

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: She has made a mistake, but her records are otherwise good - this does not warrant demerit but a warning instead.

Central Motorpool Manager | Reason: She might have shot at the wrong people, but she can be controlled, unlike her leader.

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: No judgement should be made before psychiatric evaluation is followed up on.

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: B-48 has virtually no instructions in identifying friend or foe, and this has been automatically corrected by all who are concerned. It is not on B-48 when the TPD and Commissioner Davis could not handle their own men.

Chief Armory Officer | Reason: She is an effective soldier, making use of the equipment provided.

Votes for Rating Decrease

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: Jeopardized innocent lives.
Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: B-48 has repeatedly given evidence that she is dangerous to innocents.

Liaisons Head Yorkshire | Reason: She has jeopardized Townsville-USDO relations as well as brought negative attention to the USDO not just from the public and local agencies, but also from other federal agencies.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: Demonstrates lack of tactical flexibility AND ability to identify friend and foe.

CFO Silverslick | Reason: Poor performance, and this is an understatement - she couldn't even tell who the friendlies are despite uniform. Couldn't even brake cars.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: Unable to even achieve even the most rudimentary of mission parameters - Don't kill your own. This is on top of mindlessly helping the 'leader' to disobey orders and expose Project Powerpuff.

Result: Rating decreased from Double A (AA) to Single A (A).

B-49 (Bubbles)

Previous Rating: Double D (DD)

Votes for Rating Increase

Chief of Logistics Wiggums | Reason: Improved performance and enhanced abilities.

Medical Director Simmons | Reason: B-49 has proven her worth and ability to save lives, and not take them away.

Psychiatrist Alice | Reason: B-49 has done well despite numerous factors working against her, including possible mental trauma.

Acting Head of Research Vanum | Reason: There are signs that B-49 might develop more abilities - she should be studied, not destroyed.

Chief of Security Blackwater | Reason: She shows camaraderie with her sisters.

Votes for Maintaining Rating

NIL

Votes for Rating Decrease

Chief Armory Officer Redding | Reason: She contributed the least to the latest operation, possibly resulting in overall poor performance of Project Powerpuff.

Central Motorpool Officer Longshot | Reason: She pulls her team of three down, and singlehandedly exposed Project Powerpuff's existence.

Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard | Reason: She has exposed Project Powerpuff's existence, putting the USDO at a disadvantage compared to the Foundation, and possibly other criminal organizations.

Liaisons Head Yorkshire | Reason: She has a part to play in causing the casualties at Highway 13, exposing Project Powerpuff and therefore destroying relations between the USDO and Townsville.
CFO Silverslick | Reason: Repeated failures with no recovery in sight. B-49 is a dead investment at this point.

USDO Director Cliff | Reason: It is clear that B-49 is not a viable product, with her inability to handle combat, nor improve on this respect. A replacement should be ordered if Project Klendathu or Cyclops doesn't do that first.

Result: Rating decreased from Double D (DD) to **Single D (D)**.

With B-49's rating absolutely rock-bottom, the committee has to vote on euthanasia.

**Votes for No Actions**

Chief of Logistics Wiggums  
Medical Director Simmons  
Psychiatrist Alice  
Acting Head of Research Vanum  
Chief of Security Blackwater

**Votes to Euthanize B-49 (Bubbles)**

Chief Armory Officer  
Central Motorpool Manager  
Chief Intelligence Officer Jackard  
CFO Silverslick  
USDO Director Cliff  
Liaisons Head Yorkshire

Result: Due to majority vote for euthanasia, B-49 (Bubbles) will be euthanized.

-TRANSCRIPT CONTINUE-

Chief of Logistics Wiggums: (Pleading) Sir, if you would listen to me-

USDO Director Cliff: It's done. The council has voted on it. There's no more room for discussion. Chief of Security Blackwater, I want you to make the arrangements. You'll be good to go once I get the necessary papers out of the way.

Chief of Security Blackwater: (Stands up) I'm afraid I can't follow that order, Sir.

USDO Director Cliff: (Does a double-take on Chief of Security Blackwater) And why is that? The council has voted.

Chief of Security Blackwater: You mean after you rigged the vote? Bellum's not here, replaced by Yorkshire.
USDO Director Cliff: Really? You of all people, questioning me? We've all been doing this all the time - I'm talking about the voting blocs? Don't tell me you didn't notice that everyone's been voting for the same thing all the time?

Chief of Security Blackwater: Not everyone.

USDO Director Cliff: Yes, and that's very disappointing, isn't it? (Glances at the security officers behind Chief of Security Blackwater. They got up, with Captain Kate pulling her pistol out and jabbing it at Blackwater's back. Blackwater raises his hands in surrender. Captain Kate unholsters Blackwater's pistol and hands it to another security officer.) Honestly, what's gotten into you, lately? Don't tell me that those lab-grown lab rats had gotten to you too?

Chief of Security Blackwater: That's bullshit. Captain Kate, what are you doing?

Captain Kate: Sorry sir, Director Cliff outranks you.

Chief of Security Blackwater: I've trained and groomed you too well.

Captain Kate: Yes, you have. It's why I look up to you even now. I'm sorry, sir.

USDO Director Cliff: This makes sense, now, doesn't it? It sure explains your choices for the speed transport personnel. Doesn't matter anyway. Captain Kate, you are now Acting Chief of Security, please make the necessary arrangements for the euthanasia of B-49 and escort Ex-Chief of Security Blackwater to his new accommodations.

Captain Kate: Yes, sir. (Jabs pistol at Blackwater) Move! (Security officers follow Captain Kate)

Chief of Security Blackwater: This is wrong! Punishments and training, sure! But outright execution!? B-49 isn't dangerous- she's just- child-like! (voice fades as he is moves further away)

USDO Director Cliff: Yorkshire, get admin to prepare the documents for the euthanasia protocol. Let's take five before we move forward with our discussions.

-END TRANSCRIPT-
Chapter 65: Crisis of Faith

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Miss Keane comes clean with her involvement with the USDO. Professor Utonium and Selicia go on a date.

A/N: Hey guys, sorry for not updating yesterday. There was an error 503 in Fanfiction.net that prevented me from accessing my account. I waited until 4am (GMT +8) and it still wasn't resolved. But here it is. Enjoy!

Chapter 65: Crisis of Faith


It was playtime, but Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup weren't enjoying their time at school at all. Ever since arriving in Pokey Oaks Kindergarten, they were treated to hostile stares or given the cold shoulder. Ever since that horrible incident on Highway 13, life had been nothing but depressing, and whatever goodness there was left behind had come from their Mom and Dad. They couldn't even escape it in their dreams. Buttercup couldn't even seek solace in it in her dream-like communion with the dead cat.

The previous day, when Buttercup could not sleep, she sneaked her way out of The House as usual, to exhume the dead cat's grave once more. Unlike her sisters, it was the fact that she had become subservient to Blossom that kept her up at night. But that wasn't the only thing.

"Back again, are you?" the dead cat had said that night.

"Oh it's so good to see you, kitty!" Buttercup had sweetened her tongue on seeing her friend - the only other persons she would talk sweetly to was her Mom and Dad. "It's been really bad!"

"Bad? Yes… yes… So I've heard," the dead cat had said. It had piqued Buttercup's curiosity.

"You've heard about it?" Buttercup had asked last night.

"Yes, of course… I have other friends too… acquaintances. I like to stretch my legs and go for a walk sometimes to… visit them," the dead cat had explained.

"Oh. I thought I was your only friend," Buttercup had said.

"THAT WOULD BE PATHETIC!" the dead cat had suddenly yelled, but Buttercup was already used to the inconsistently grumpy cat's outbursts. "But yes… yes… I have many, many friends."

"But you know what's the worst, kitty cat?" Buttercup had gone on, despite feeling vaguely insulted.
"Blossom. She's still the 'leader' and I couldn't beat her into giving that up! She just started flying and- She'd tell on me if I try anything else."

"You have to keep trying, Buttercup," the kitty cat advised.

"But I can't," Buttercup interjected. "She's too smart and powerful!"

"Then we are no longer friends," the dead cat had spat.

"Kitty, no!" Buttercup had said.

"I do not count quitters and losers as friends," the dead cat had gone on, ignoring Buttercup. "AND YOU'RE ONE OF THEM NOW! Goodbye, Buttercup…" With that, the dead cat laid its head down on its snowy pillow. Buttercup begged and pleaded for it to speak to her, to so much as meow in response, but it had gone back to being a stiff and frozen carcass. With a heavy heart, Buttercup reburied the dead cat, with a renewed dislike for Blossom. She had caused this - it was because of her that she had lost a friend.

When Buttercup was able to sleep, her dreams consisted of the same rejection over and over, sometimes with the dead cat replaced by Daddy, or Mommy, or even Blossom and Bubbles. Or the Mayor. They would tell her that she was a loser and a quitter, that she was stupid and weaker than Blossom, who took the lime light, standing at the centre of the stage while she was relegated to the role of stage hand.

Blossom, on the other hand, had her own demons to face, though her dreams weren't entirely nightmarish. In her dreams, she had to make choices between letting a large group of people die… or another large group of people die. She had to make a choice between killing her Daddy or Mommy, between Bubbles or Buttercup. It felt as if a small piece of her soul was chipped away each time she had to make such an impossible choice. And then she was rescued as a hand pulled her into a strange vortex of red and black, to end up on an endless plain of grass, where she dined with a mysterious stranger with a goatee and a black suit, in a picnic setting. The man, who sported a kind of buzz cut, promised her knowledge of the entire world, so that her Daddy would be proud of her. It was then she would notice a sense of déjà vu. It was a dream she'd had before.

Bubbles suffered the worse of it, it went without saying. Her dream consisted of a swirling void, with everyone she knew lambasting her, criticizing her, or flat out insulting her. She was stupid, weak and useless, a crybaby, according to everyone she knew. She was stuck in a room once, with a glass pane separating her from her Dad and Blossom. Her sister was sitting on his lap, and her Dad was reading her a story. Try as she might, she banged her fists on the glass pane to gain their attention, but gained nothing but their ignorance instead. They fell apart into sand, and Bubbles could not even break the glass. The dream ended with her on Highway 13 once more, trying to stop the crash from happening, and even with her foreknowledge, was shot in the mouth by a shotgun-wielding thug once more, and history repeated itself - except when she fell down, she was at the Townsville Central Bank, after taking a shotgun to the eye. She woke up in cold sweat, too early for school, and waiting for the morning sun to rise was all she could do, as she was afraid to go back to sleep.

Upon reaching school, Miss Keane had taken the Girls to her office. As they came in and sat down on the chairs before her desk, Miss Keane locked the door, the mechanisms of the door giving out an ominous and loud 'clack'. She then went around her desk and slumped into her chair, looking less than pleased to see them. Even Bubbles knew what was going on before Miss Keane had said a word. Blossom and Buttercup knew all too well. She knew about Highway 13, what they had done. But what came next was something they couldn't have predicted, especially when Miss Keane was one of the nicest woman they had ever met.
Reaching into her red vest, she pulled a pistol out and laid it down on her desk with a thump. The Girls looked at it, alarm bells going off in their heads as they looked back up at Miss Keane, who had folded her arms, a cold, scolding stare pinned on them.

"What's the matter, Miss Keane?" Blossom managed to blurt out when their kindergarten teacher remained silent.

"I'm sure you Girls know what's the matter," Miss Keane said, each of her words immaculately pronounced, honed by a good education, her experience and her passion as a teacher.

"Are you angry at us, Miss Keane?" Bubbles asked timidly, hoping, despite having no hope left, that that wasn't the case.

"Are you scared of us, Miss Keane?" Buttercup asked daringly, her confidence in her innocence unshaken. The police officers were a nuisance - what was she supposed to do?

"Are you disappointed in us, Miss Keane?" Blossom asked, afraid of what her answer might be.

"I'm all three of those things, and more," Miss Keane said, her voice breaking up. None of the Girls could tell if she was about to cry, or blow up, or give them a lecture. It seemed as if she might end up doing all three things. Bubbles had sunk into her chair, as if she was about to watch a train wreck unfold. Her face was pale, her eyelids twitching a little. Buttercup returned Miss Keane's glare with her own, defiant without end. Blossom stared in dismay.

"Miss Keane…" Blossom tried to speak.

"Don't! Just don't!" Miss Keane screamed and banged her desk with a hand. "One of your classmates isn't here today. She won't be here in school for weeks. Do you know why?" Her voice was trembling, and the Girls still could not decide what she was feeling - with their limited experience in life, they didn't know that emotions and thoughts could exist as mixtures, rather than pure emotions to be felt and released one at a time.

"Is she sick?" Bubbles guessed.

"There's a time and place for acting, Bubbles," Miss Keane accused. "But this is not one of those times. Don't play dumb in front of me again."

"But I wasn't playing dumb!" Bubbles insisted.

"Enough!" Miss Keane shouted. "Poor little Sally won't be joining us again this month and the next because of the three of you! She was there, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup Utonium! And that's not even the worse of it!" A single tear escaped the teacher's eyes despite her best efforts to stay stoic. "She's been paralyzed from the waist down."

"Para…lyzed?" Blossom repeated the word, which seemed unfamiliar to her. In the heat of the moment, Miss Keane found this extremely offensive. She shot up to her feet. The Girls jumped.

"Paralyzed!" Miss Keane repeated the word. Turning around, she picked up a piece of chalk and started writing the word on a blackboard behind her, in huge, bold, capitalized letters in pink. She underlined the word as a finishing touch, accidentally breaking the chalk she was holding in two. "Paralyzed!" She turned around in an agitated fashion. The Girls jumped again. They had never seen the teacher like this before. "P - A - R - A - L - Y - Z - E - D! It means losing control over a part of your body! Do you know how it feels like to lose control over your legs, Girls?"

"No…" the Girls said in unison.
"Do you Girls want to know how it feels like to lose control over your legs?" Miss Keane interrogated them aggressively.

"No..." the Girls said in unison again.

"Well, little Sally didn't get that choice!" Miss Keane said.

"But Miss Keane, we didn't mean it!" Blossom said.

"Don't ever talk back to your teacher again!" Miss Keane snapped at Blossom. "I want to make this clear - do not hurt any of my kids again-"

"But we don't even want to-" Bubbles said, but was interrupted by the teacher.

"Because you'll have to go through me first!" Miss Keane continued without letting Bubbles finish. Buttercup looked like she was actually considering going through Miss Keane, specifically, putting a fist or foot through her chest, but with her relationship with Mom and Dad at stake, she couldn't do it even if she wanted to. "I have some new rules for the three of you to follow. Just stay away from the children." she had said it as though the Girls weren't children. On a subconscious level, the Girls recognized this. "In class, the three of you will stay at your table. In the backyard, I have a special corner for the three of you. The three of you are not to leave my sight. Is that clear?"

The Girls didn't reply as they were too preoccupied with their own feelings.

"I expect an answer when I ask a question, Girls," Miss Keane said sternly.

"Yes," the Girls said in unison once more, with Blossom and Bubbles bowing their heads in dismay, while Buttercup sat with her arms crossed, stewing in her seat. Miss Keane didn't like it.

"Don't give me that look, Buttercup," Miss Keane scolded the green-eyed girl. "It's incredibly rude, and it tells me that you've learned nothing."

The day had only gone downhill from there. Miss Keane no longer responded to Blossom as readily whenever she raised her hand to answer a question. She had only allowed her to answer one question - a simple math question (2 + 1), and when she answered it correctly, Miss Keane merely scoffed at her and wrote down the answer on the blackboard. No praises, no nothing - next kid in line please.

When one of the kids threw a paper ball at Bubbles, Miss Keane had subtly let the enhanced little girl know that she would never be on her side again.

"Mac, it's wrong to throw paper balls at someone," Miss Keane had reprimanded the boy lightly, as if she was just following through with the motions.

"But they're not someone, Miss Keane! They're monsters!" Mac asserted. "That's what my dad said! And he's a policeman!"

"Well, that's not an excuse for behaving like a monster," Miss Keane explained, indirectly agreeing that the Girls were monsters. Mac rolled up a second paper ball and threw it at Buttercup as revenge for last week's incident in the schoolyard. "Mac! Why don't you go over there," Miss Keane pointed to a table at the far end of the classroom. "And work on your math questions with Mary."

It was just as much for Mac's protection, as Buttercup was visibly losing control, it was too obvious from the way she was digging her fingernails into her palm, pressing those fists down on the table with such force (even when restrained) that the furniture creaked. The look on her face had done
nothing but prove to the children in class that they were sharing their classroom with a monster. In Buttercup's mind, all she could think about at that moment was that she didn't have to take such insults from anyone - she had already lost a friend in both the dead cat and the Mayor of Townsville, as far as Buttercup understood the concept of friendship, and the last few days wasn't exactly stress free. From what she understood, everyone should be ceaselessly grateful for how she's been killing or putting away criminals.

Blossom could only clutch Buttercup by an arm and whisper advice from their father about anger management. 'Breathe in, breathe out', 'think happy thoughts', all that kind of stuff, not that Buttercup was receptive to such exercises. When Buttercup couldn't keep a straight face on her own accord, Miss Keane banished her to corner-time, adding salt to the wound.

The City of Townsville. Uptown. Pugliesi's Siciliano Restaurant.

19 DEC 1988. 1114.

Professor Utonium pushed his plate of spaghetti towards his date, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, for a demonstration. They were dressed in their best, with Professor Utonium in a suit and Selicia in a red dress.

"Now imagine that this is… Buttercup," the professor explained as he waved at the plate of spaghetti.

"Yum, I could definitely eat her up," Selicia joked. The both of them laughed.

"Or more specifically, this is the Chemical X in her," the professor went on after his hearty laughter. "Now, what do you see?"

"Urm… Spaghetti?" Selicia took a crack at it, and failed miserably.

"Yes, we see what is on the surface - spaghetti, or matter, in general. We see Chemical X as matter, with finite volume, mass, and all that good stuff that makes matter… matter, or spaghetti, for that matter. But what if I tell you that there's an endless supply of spaghetti on this plate?" the professor explained cryptically. Selicia stared at the plate and then her date with a 'huh?' look on her face. He went on to demonstrate. Picking up his fork, he pulled a strand of spaghetti up after twirling some around it for a bit. "Imagine that this is a single molecule. It's a chain of carbohydrate atoms. If I keep pulling it…" the professor stood up and pulled at the strand of spaghetti, until it eventually ran out. "We see that it's finite. With Chemical X, it's like pulling a strand of spaghetti and seeing no end of it."

"How's that possible?" Selicia said.

"I know how it seems fantastic, but bear with me and it'll actually make sense - it took me years to figure it out, and that's with a phD in theoretical physics, and an in-depth understanding of biochemistry, non-euclidean space and medicine," the professor said.

"Non-eucl-what? This is deep!" Selicia said, her head feeling like it had spontaneously grown larger. At the same time, she could feel her cheeks flushing, the same kind of feeling swelling up in her breasts as most of the time when she met Thomas Upton. "And impressive, I'll add."

"Non-euclidean space. I know, right?" the professor said excitedly. Talking about science made him feel young, as if he was in his twenties, rather than the middle of his middle-age. "Okay, so bear with me - instead of finite spaghetti, we have infinite spaghetti."
"Where would it even come from?" Selicia said with a laugh.

"Exactly. Where? Do you remember your high school chemistry? Molecules are made of atoms and atoms are made of neutrons, protons and electrons?" the professor went on.

"Oh God, that's some memory you've dredged up!" Selicia joked, though part of her was serious. High school wasn't a good time for her. "But yeah, I remember. Kinda."

"So, Chemical X, like this infinite spaghetti, seems to be pulling atoms out of nowhere, like a never-ending chain. That's why it has an inconsistent composition, and formula. Where does it come from? What about high school physics? You remember that too?"

"Don't ask," Selicia said with a chuckle.

"Our universe is made of three dimensions, well, four, if you count time, but there are theories that suggest that there are as many as ten, maybe eleven dimensions out there," the professor went on.

"Now you've lost me," Selicia admitted. "Why can't we see these other dimensions?" The professor laid his napkin on the table and pulls out a pen. He drew shapes on it.

"It's simple, imagine that these shapes are people. What dimensions can they perceive?" the professor asked.

"Urm…" Selicia was visibly struggling with the question. "All of it? I mean, we're here, right in front of them. Right?"

"No, Selicia," the professor corrected. "They are two-dimensional. If they have eyes, they will see only length and breadth. No height. It's the same with us. We see in three-dimensions. We're made for a three-dimensional world. We see in only three dimensions."

"So, Chemical X atoms are coming from other dimensions?" Selicia said, still unsure of herself.

"Something like that," the professor finally said. "There's still a whole chunk of other stuff I haven't explained yet. Quantum mechanics and all that, but that's the most of it."

"No wonder you were going ape-shit in bed on Saturday when I mentioned the eleventh dimension," Selicia added.

"And I have you to thank for it," the professor said. For the first time, eye contact became uncomfortable in a good way, because of some deep connection that he could not understand yet. Friendship, infatuation or love, he couldn't quite tell yet.

"But…" Selicia said, suddenly feeling afraid for reasons even she herself was unsure of. "What does that mean for Buttercup? And Blossom, and Bubbles?" The professor could understand why she felt that way. He had grown unimaginably close to the Girls, that his heart bled every time they felt even a hint of pain.

"Well, at best, it wouldn't matter to the Girls. They'll just have an unlimited supply of Chemical X in their body, which they can somehow induce to multiply. At worse… well…" the professor hesitated to go on.

"Well, what?" Selicia said - she hadn't noticed it, but she was perching on the edge of her seat.

"It's not that bad. It'd just mean that their bodies, in actual fact, extends beyond three-dimensional space. They would look very different if we could see them from a higher vantage point in terms of
"And?" Selicia found her heart racing.

"I mean, this is all theory, if even that. They could be... eldritch in nature. Never thought I'd describe the Girls this way," the professor continued. "That's a whole other thing altogether."

"That's some Lovecraftian level shit right there," Selicia said, her eyes still wide with fear too vague to identify and quash.

"You read H. P. Lovecraft?" the professor asked, surprised - Selicia didn't strike him as a reader, much less a reader of niche literature.

"Some of his works. Enough to know that I really don't want to go there with Buttercup - the Girls," Selicia said. "I don't want to think that I'm hugging some kind of gelatinous beast from the eleventh dimension with a million tiny tentacles all over her body."

"All I know is I love them - no matter what," the professor said, suddenly dreamy. "They're human enough to me. Tentacles or not. It goes beyond the physical. Or metaphysical, for that matter."

"You're right. Beauty and the Beast, except without the romance, right?" Selicia added. "Yeah, I'm just going to focus on what I can see, touch and feel too."

After this conversation, Professor Utonium steered the conversation away from the Girls and Chemical X sciences. They talked about each other; how the professor actually came from a military family, which resulted in his distaste for all things military, and how he had to strike out on his own to even put his foot through the door of the sciences.

Selicia tried to talk about the good parts of her youth, though with so few of it, it was a difficult thing to achieve. She talked about Aunt Martha, who occasionally sheltered her when things turned too bad, at least until she passed away when she was 10. Then there was her string of boyfriends, who, in comparison to her parents, were saints, some more so than others. She even had a girlfriend once, which was how she found out that she wasn't a lesbian, even if the sex was 'something to experience'. Professor Utonium couldn't help but to shift in his seat at how intimate the conversation had become.

A phone call placed directly on Professor Utonium's flip-phone served as a welcome reprieve. Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! He never thought he could ever be glad to hear the loud and offensive ring tone of the next-gen digital display phone.

"Sorry, I have to pick this up," he said to Selicia before rising from his seat and walking out of the restaurant. The numbers displayed on the pixellated display wasn't a familiar one. It took him a few seconds to figure out where he had seen it from.

Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. He remembered now. He pressed the green button with the phone symbol and held the flip-phone to his ear.

"Hello?" Professor Utonium answered, an uneasy feeling filling his stomach as he didn't know what to expect, considering that the school had taken special care to contact him on a line that normally wasn't available to the public.

"Hi! Mister Utonium, it's me, Miss Keane, the teacher?" a female voice greeted.

"Good morning, Miss Keane," the professor answered. "The Girls are fine, right?"
"Yeah, as fine as fine can be," Miss Keane said with a nervous, incriminating chuckle. "I just thought I should call you to set up a meeting today, after school. Sooner the better, right?"

"Wait, how did you even get this number?" the professor asked.

"We'll, urm, talk about that later," Miss Keane deflected the question rather poorly, chuckling nervously again.

"What's the meeting about? Did the Girls do something wrong?" the professor asked again.

"Well, yes and no," Miss Keane said vaguely. "I'll be in my office immediately after school hours. Just knock on my door - the name's on the glass pane - and I'll see you in." She was going full steam ahead, and she sounded like she was rushing, even afraid. She was worried about answering questions.

"Sure, I'll be there," the professor promised.

"That's great! Sorry, got to go. See you, bye!" Miss Keane hurried to hang up before he could say anything else. All Professor Utonium could do was to return to his table, and pretend that he was never nervous or afraid for the Girls to begin with.

"What was that about?" Selicia asked.

"It's the Girls. We'll have to meet Miss Keane later," the professor said, while slumped on his chair, deep in thought, wallowing in a pit of sticky fluid called fear and uncertainty. A common pit that parents tend to fall into. The only good thing was that it was a familiar feeling, a reaffirmation of his love for Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. He'd felt the same thing when he had to meet Bloome's teacher. In fact, he'd been feeling the same thing since morning, for a whole different reason.

"Thomas honey, are you okay?" Selicia asked. "You look like you've just swallowed cordite or something."

"No, it's just... I'm worried about the Girls," he said. "And not just because of school, either."

"Is it about Alice's visit?" Selicia asked. "Don't worry, she's pretty nice." What Selicia didn't reveal was the fact that they did not see eye-to-eye. Back when the council established that the Girls needed a second handler, Psychiatrist Alice had drawn up a list of candidates for the task. She had put herself in it, as well as the then Liaisons Head Bellum, as well as a few other women in the science, logistics and admin divisions, leaving out security entirely, and that was despite Selicia specifically volunteering for the assignment.

If it weren't for Chief of Security Blackwater and USDO Director Cliff's intervention, she would never have been assigned to the Girls. She'd overheard a few things from Psychiatrist Alice. It was a habit of hers, eavesdropping. Alice had said, behind her back, that she wouldn't put her in charge of a toy baby, much less three little girls, because of her 'high likelihood of abusing the Girls based on her family history, personality and personal, criminal and professional background.' It'd hit her like a high-calibre round from a sniper rifle.

Alice was nice, sure, as long as she wasn't in a purely professional setting. Whenever they met, before and after Selicia had stated her desire to volunteer as the Girls' second handler, Alice was soft-spoken and very careful of her word choice, as if she knew immediately what repercussions each of her words could cause. The perfect psychiatrist - seeing that she worked for the USDO, it was no surprise, as they hire only the best.

"It's not about how nice Alice is, Selicia," the professor said. "I've known her for many years. When
I lost Eileen and Bloome, she'd helped me through the worse of it. We were friends, and she would never let me down. It's just…"

"Is it about the Girls?" Selicia guessed.

"Yes," the professor said. "I'm afraid of what the outcome of Alice's psychiatric evaluations might be. The horrible reality of it we'd have to face. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are physically and mentally enhanced, sure, but emotionally? They're just like any other girls, and little girls aren't supposed to live like this - being treated like trained dogs bred for war, seeing humanity in the worst possible light, getting exposed to violence, abused by the very people they were working with and… I don't want to know what it's done to the Girls. But I'm their father, so I have to know."

Selicia had never seen a man as intelligent, as strong and confident as Professor Utonium crumble so extremely before. She took his hand, rubbing her thumb on his palm. It'd brought the professor back somewhat, but it wasn't a substitute for the ideal American dream, free from shadowy federal influence and the nasty world of law enforcement.

"I'll be there with you, Thomas," Selicia tried to comfort him. The professor smiled at her briefly.

"Thanks, Selicia," Thomas said. "Oh, look at me, I'm ruining our date. Let's actually start eating our food for starters before they freeze to absolute zero."


"Mister and Missus Utonium, it's a pleasure to have you here," Miss Keane greeted them as they entered her office. She waved them to their seats after shaking hands with them. She didn't engage them immediately, but instead proceeded to write something on a clipboard. Something really long. A report perhaps? But for what? The uncertainty of what the contents might be was enough to make Professor Utonium break out in cold sweats. Had the Girls done something really wrong? Selicia felt the effects as well, though being a security officer, was almost numb to it. Her initial thought, though, was that Miss Keane would make a good interrogator. It was only a minute or two, but it felt like forever before she looked up at the Girls' 'parents'.

"So, Mister and Missus Utonium, how is your Monday? I understand that you are a…" Miss Keane looked at a post-it note stuck on her desk. "Scientist and security guard respectively. I hope the Monday blues isn't as bad today, because, you know, I love my job a ton and I don't get Monday blues and…" Miss Keane chuckled at how awkward she'd become. In light of the irregular developments in her kindergarten, she was unsure of how to even carry herself.

"Well, it's really swell," the professor answered as awkwardly, pulling at the collar of his suit to let in some air. He felt feverishly hot despite the winter.

"Like any other Mondays, I guess," Selicia said, almost as awkwardly. Everyone concerned knew what they were dealing with - superpowered little girls. Who devastated a highway and put over 60 in hospital. The topic made for a rather awkward conversation. Selicia didn't like awkward. "Can we go straight to the point? Something about our kids?"

"Selicia, don't be rude," the professor whispered to his 'wife'.

"I can see where Buttercup got her personality from," Miss Keane said, but despite how it sounded like, her tone wasn't especially condescending.
"Excuse me?" Selicia said, picking up on the condescending part of what Miss Keane said. The teacher looked a little alarmed at the reaction.

"Oh, I don't mean it in a bad way. When Buttercup was in the middle of having fun, she can be alive, spontaneous and active. Outgoing, confident," Miss Keane quickly elaborated. "Anyway, how is family life like for the Girls? Are the two of you happy together?" What the teacher said had Selicia quickly seize Professor Utonium by the arm, as though he could be gone the next moment.

"Yes, we are very happy together, can't you tell?" Selicia said as she laid her head on the professor's shoulder. The professor didn't look the part as convincingly, however, as he stiffened up from such intimate contact, especially from a lady ten years his junior whom he had only started dating.

"Why did you ask?" the professor said. Miss Keane opened a drawer and pulled something out. She put it down before Thomas and Selicia. It was Buttercup's drawing from last Friday. A scene from Townsville Central Bank. Bullets flying. Blood spraying. Men dead or dying, and of course, Buttercup was the star of the show, doing the punching, and she had punched out a crook in the picture. "Oh. That."

"Buttercup has an imagination - I'm sure you should know from being her teacher for a week," Selicia immediately tried to find an excuse for her favorite. "You know how she's like. She's a bit of a tomboy, and I guess I've indulged her too much with the TV, that's all."

"She's a good girl at heart, Miss Keane," the professor added. "It's just harmless and fun drawing."

Miss Keane seemed to look at them with intent after they were done finding excuses for Buttercup, as if she was studying them, scrutinizing them.

"I think we ought to be a little more honest with each other," Miss Keane said, her voice heavy, as though someone had been put in the ER.

"What do you mean?" the professor asked. Like before, Miss Keane reached into her red vest and pulled out her USDO-issued pistol, laying it down on the desk. Professor Utonium jumped the moment he saw the gun, thinking that he might become a victim of a shooting. Selicia had reached into her handbag for her own pistol, but thought better of it when Miss Keane set it down before them. The teacher then pulled out a USDO pass and arranged it next to the pistol.

"You're USDO all along?" the professor asked.

"No. They recruited me just an hour before your girls' first day at school. Forcibly," Miss Keane explained. "If I didn't take the job, they'd put me out of my career forever. That's what they said."

"Figures. That's the USDO alright," Selicia commented.

"I know all about the Girls, Mister and Missus Utonium," Miss Keane divulged. "And I know everything about what they've been doing. I've seen the news."

"Is that why we're here?" the professor asked.

"Yes, and no. I'm going to be straight with you. The USDO doubled my pay and gave me benefits to take the Girls and educate them. Frankly, I don't know if it's worth it. I love my job, as it was. I like dealing with kids, but..." Miss Keane said. "In a way, the two of you are here because I need you to help me out here. I'm stuck with your children, and I don't want to spend every single day at my favorite workplace afraid, on edge, thinking about reaching for my pistol all the time when I should be thinking of the other children."
"I know how it looks like on the news," the professor said. "But they really are good girls. You've got to understand that. I've been with them for a..." he couldn't decide if he should divulge everything about what was going on with the Girls. "Long time now, and they've been nothing but good. I don't feel threatened by them, nor am I living in fear of the day that they might hurt or kill someone out of malicious intent. Sure, they all have their flaws, but which child doesn't?"

"Buttercup concerns me the most. Last week, she assaulted a boy. Today, had I not stepped in, she could have done worse," Miss Keane went on.

"We'll talk to her, Miss Keane," Selicia said immediately, to try to defuse the situation. "Right, honey?" She turned to Thomas for support.

"Yes, of course," the professor gave his support.

"Not just Buttercup. You need to talk to all three of them," Miss Keane said. She, too, was visibly sweating. "I really want to believe the both of you, I really do. I've seen for myself the angels in them, but after Highway 13 - you see, one of the victims there is my student."

"I'm sorry," the professor said.

"Jesus..." Selicia said.

"I want to believe that you're a decent man too. But from now on, the Girls will have to work extra hard to gain my trust again, not to mention their classmates' trust, at least until they move on to elementary school," Miss Keane said. "I like kids. I've never met a child I've actively disliked before, and if I have to be honest, until now. Help me change that - I want to like your Girls again. I want my passion to never be stained."

"We'll talk to them, like I said," Selicia repeated herself, with a tone of mild irritation in her voice.

"I'll let them know, and work with them on this," the professor tried to undo Selicia's emotional outburst.

When the hard part was over, they moved on to exchange information about working with the USDO. From Miss Keane, Professor Utonium had gleaned some knowledge as to how Miss Keane's class wasn't emptied of children immediately following the incident of Highway 13. Apparently, the USDO had to step in to prevent the parents of Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's classmates from relocating them to a new school, in an effort to maintain the illusion of a normal classroom setting to better facilitate the Girls' educational needs. They had completely subsidized their educational expenses, and even provided a monthly 'risk pay', as well as promised by contract all medical fees paid for in the event of injury sustained due to the Girls and a moderate lump sum in the event of their child or children's death.

Miss Keane, in turn, learned of the horrific circumstances the Girls were put in, and it helped, in part, to make the teacher understand the Girls better, and to see past the blinding hate building up in her because one of her students was injured and irreversibly paralyzed.

Still, despite shaking hands, and much ignorance dispelled by a good exchange of information, Professor Utonium left Miss Keane's office with a bad taste in his mouth. The Girls were immediately within his sight the moment he stepped out of the teacher's office. They were sitting on a bench, with the school's security guard, armed with only a revolver and a retractable baton, watching them intently as though they were criminals waiting to be transferred to prison.

"Come on, Girls. Let's go," the professor said to them with a heavy heart.
Chapter 66: Promises

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Psychiatrist Alice tries to convince USDO Director Cliff to halt the euthanasia of bubbles.

Chapter 66: Promises

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.


After the day's council meeting was over, USDO Director Cliff had returned to his office on the top floor of the USDO Headquarters. There, he stood behind the window overlooking Townsville's downtown, hands behind his back. It was peaceful outside, deceptively so. His mind was anything but peaceful, not with everything that had been going on. The USDO had changed within the space of a month more than it did in the past four decades. Had he seen the USDO as it was today when he took over the leadership of the federal entity, he wouldn't have recognized it at all. Even the name had changed, which was the final original piece of the Organization that was shed.

Cliff was not a handsome man. Perhaps two decades ago, he might be classified as above average, but now, with the stress of knowing what the vast majority of Americans didn't, with the stress of leading an organization with so many secrets, which had been waging a secret civil war against the insurgents of the Foundation ever since its founding, time had not been so kind to his health and appearance. He was overweight, on the verge of obesity. He had started balding a decade ago, when he was forty, and now the process had left him with only a crown of graying hair. Wrinkles were beginning to form.

The only physical characteristic he retained was his height, which wasn't remarkable to begin with, as he stood at only 5 feet 8 inches. But the Organization's council, as the USDO was called back then, had chosen him to lead not because of his physical attractiveness or athletic prowess, not even because of his intellect, which paled in comparison to the likes of Professor Utonium or even his temporary successor, Vanum, but because of his ability to make the tough decisions, the hard choices, and come out on top almost every time and live with the mortifying experience. Time and time again, he was tested with some of the worse dilemmas since World War II, and the Vietnam War, and time and time again, the Organization had survived and made progress intact.

And here he was, with another dilemma to consider. And it was surprisingly difficult. Director Cliff gave a tired sigh as he rubbed his temples. It never gets any easier, making these decisions and living with the consequences, the regrets.

Then came rapping at his door. "Come," he gave his permission to whoever it was who was knocking.

"Director Cliff, here're the documents you've ordered for Subject Euthanasia," a young clerk said
after opening the door, her tone distanced from the subject matter. She probably didn't even know who or what they were euthanizing. The euphemism had done its job, shielding the lower tiers of the USDO from the cold, hard truth. A common train of thought would be that some poor lab animal would soon be biting the dust. It wasn't too far from the truth.

The Director did not answer immediately, as he was lost in thought. "Sir?" the young clerk tried to gain his attention. It worked.

"Ah yes. Please set it down on my desk. Thank you," the Director instructed before slipping back to the world inside his mind, the war raging within. The clerk did as she was told and left wordlessly, closing the door silently after herself.

The sky was surprisingly clear, a pale blue hue that mocked him with its association with the subject he had to order the termination of. It stood in stark contrast with the hardship and suffering the City of Townsville was going through, the injustice and crimes committed daily, the sacrifices and deaths that occur on both sides of the law whenever the good tried to end the torment.

There was another rapping on the door. "Come," he gave his permission again to the next person looking to seek an audience with him.

"Director Cliff," another woman, this time higher up the ladder. Someone from the council. The Head of Psychiatry and Social Services. Alice, as she was code-named. "I need to speak to you."

"If you're looking for more funding and personnel for your department, I've already told you that you'll get it in the next financial quarter," Director Cliff said in a brusque manner. He didn't like to be interrupted whenever he was thinking about the choices he had to make. It had become a sort of ritual for him, a form of mourning of sorts, for another little part of himself that must die, and for whomever must suffer or die under his leadership, for the greater good. He knew exactly what Alice wanted to talk about; he just had to hope that it was something else.

"Sir, it's about B-49. Bubbles?" Alice said. She had tried her best to hide the urgency and discontentment in her voice. It would have worked on somebody else, but not on him.

"What about B-49?" Cliff asked, knowing full well what Alice was going to say. He could only hope that it was otherwise.

"I would like to ask that you reconsider the euthanasia of Bubbles," Alice said.

"The council has voted," was Cliff's curt reply.

"We both know who's in control of the council," Alice asserted with a slightly tremble in her voice. "And we both know who's in control now."

"Fine, I'll humor you. Why should B-49 be allowed to live?" Cliff asked.

"She's- well- she has much potential when it comes to the development of its abilities. I have no doubt that, given time, she will catch up with her sisters when it comes to her law enforcement duties," the psychiatrist explained her disposition matter-of-fact-like, her tone straight and dispassionate. Cliff could see past the wall she had built around herself, straight into her intent with this. "She's also a specimen who hasn't tried to kill anyone or escape yet."

"Tell me the real reason why you think B-49 should be allowed to live," Cliff asked, as if Alice had given nothing. Alice couldn't believe her ears at first, but then again, the surprise didn't last. Cliff was a chessmaster. He knew how to play the game. She, on the other hand, was too busy with her chief profession to learn it.
"Bubbles is a little girl, sir. She shouldn't be punished for being who she is!" Alice could not help but to raise her voice; after all, if things were to continue this way, that little girl would only have hours left to live.

"You mean aside from the fact that she's enhanced with Chemical X?" Director Cliff turned away from his window to regard Alice, a little miffed, if he had to be honest with himself, by the way Alice was talking to him. "Other than the fact that she's costing us hundreds of thousands of millions? Or the fact that she's unable to fulfill any mission objectives?"

Director Cliff returned to his desk, sitting down before the orange envelope that contained the documents to end Bubbles' life. He untied the knot binding it shut and pulled a stack of expensive vanilla paper out. They were all release papers, detailing the effects that Bubbles have on each of the departments of the USDO, acknowledged and signed by each department head. The administration department would only need to generate more documents chronicling the little girl's death, and close the admin accounts associated with her. Manpower would be reassigned to other tasks. The finance department's papers included a breakdown of savings and expenses - in Bubbles' case, it meant millions saved every year, projected. The security department's papers was mainly a short summary of changes to officer assignments and security plans. But the very first page of the stack of papers was a document demanding that he give his approval to the euthanasia of Bubbles.

He grabbed a fountain pen from its holder at a corner of his desk and brought its tip down on the dotted line.

"Sir- Director Cliff- Please," Psychiatrist Alice pleaded once more. "Hear me out - at least let me evaluate Bubbles. I have reasons to believe that she's performing far below normal because of psychological factors. I can fix it! I can fix her!"

The Director glanced up at one of his favorite department heads, his slightly wrinkled forehead creased. He sighed and laid the pen down on its side. "Tell me more."

"I've been examining footages of Bubbles, and going through all documents concerning her. I've noticed differences in initial conditions presented to Bubbles, compared to her sisters - Blossom and Buttercup," Alice explained. Of course, she wasn't entirely truthful, or willing to divulge the truth.

"They were all sent into the same missions, no exceptions," Director Cliff said, before picking up his pen again.

"Bubbles was shot and incapacitated at the beginning of her first mission," Alice said further.

"Yes, and that proves that she's inferior compared to her… sister platforms. As I recall, they were all shot countless times, and 'Bubbles' suffered the least of it," Director Cliff said, before signing the first page of the stack of documents. Alice could have sworn that her heart had skipped a beat.

"She's not inferior, she was hit in the eye - an obvious weak point of the human body, enhanced or not, and she was traumatized as a result. That's the most likely outcome. I can cure her, and she'll perform just as well, if not better than her sisters!" Alice promised, and it wasn't a promise that she could guarantee to keep, but she had to try. At the very least, it could buy Bubbles time - and along the way, circumstances could change and her death would no longer be necessary. But her words weren't completely just hot air - a little girl in numerous violent situations is a recipe for psychological damage, and when there's psychological damage, she could solve it.

Director Cliff was leafing through the documents, but Alice had gained his attention once more. He took some time to think about it, before pushing the death documents aside.
"How long do you need?" the Director asked.

"I have already arranged for a session today," Alice said, relieved and excited that the Director was finally listening and things were going her way. "Full recovery could take years, but I believe I can limit the effect of her psychological trauma to a minimum within a shorter time span, say, three to six months. There are a lot of factors at play, but Bubbles possesses an incredible healing factor. It could be possible that this extends to her mental faculty as well."

"You have a way with words," Director Cliff praised the psychiatrist. He took the stack of documents, pulled open a large drawer and deposited them into it. "Very well. But I can only give you a month, nothing more."

"Thank you, Mister Director," Alice said with glee. She felt like she could kiss him - well, almost. He was normally an uncompromising man who stick with his decisions. Clearly, that had changed, somehow. "I promise you, you won't regret it!"

"Don't thank me, doctor," Director Cliff said. "Oh, and one last thing before you leave. Report to me the outcome of today's session. I'm sure you know, it's of interest to me."

"Yes, sir. I owe it to you," Alice said gladly. After Alice had left Director Cliff's office, the aging man swiveled on his seat to gaze out the window once more. Alice hadn't actually convinced him, not one bit, but he wasn't a man who would let opportunity slide away from him. If there was even a chance B-49 could be salvaged, he had to take it.

Either that, or Alice was just pulling things out of her ass. The fact that she had been voting on the opposite camp of him on the council at every turn hadn't sailed over his head. There's a silent war raging on the council, between those who knew to do what was necessary, and those who were too weak to do what was right. Between him and... Professor Utonium. Despite their relationship resembling something like friendship, Director Cliff and Professor Utonium had always been at odds with each other. Ever since being booted out of the council, Professor Utonium had lost much of his power - not that the geek cared for it at all. It wouldn't be a stretch of the imagination that Professor Utonium was acting through the head psychiatrist for his own interests, in order to secure Bubbles' life and his selfish need for a surrogate daughter.

The Director reached for his phone. As the leader of the USDO, he knew the people in it intimately, and it was time he reach out to some of them to gain a second opinion on Bubbles - Alice's colleagues, for one thing, might tell him something that their head psychiatrist wouldn't.
Chapter 67: Alice

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls meet a new friend.

A/N: I apologize for the delay in posting. I've been under medication for the past 3 days because of a flu, and unfortunately, the majority of them causes drowsiness, reducing my effective number of words written per day.

Chapter 67: Alice

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Ever since coming back home, Selícia had taken the time to continue training the Girls for their next mission. Professor Utonium had his own ideas on how training should be conducted, as he had a new side hypothesis about how Chemical X interacted with the Girls, and he wanted to test if his new hypothesis was correct. Should it be proven true and graduate into a theory, it could prove beneficial for the Girls.

Using more skin cells taken from the Girls the previous day, Professor Utonium was able to draw a chart detailing the rate at which the level of Chemical X in the Girls' blood replenish. Buttercup's Chemical X saturation returned to normal the fastest, the trend followed closely by Blossom, with Bubbles taking the longest to recover. He thought it had something to do with how much they had trained and how often they used their enhancements, which indirectly draws on Chemical X for power. However, since correlation did not equal causation, he had Selícia focus on endurance training using their enhanced abilities to put his hypothesis to the test.

To this end, Selícia had put the Girls on an industrial treadmill first, which had settings that could go up to 50 miles per hour. After thirty minutes of jogging at varying speeds, made slightly harder by their SWAT gear, which doubled as safety gear, the Girls did weightlifting using the various weights that the professor had ordered into the lab over the weeks. Without any proper equipment, they could only do simple weightlifting exercises with them. It was only after they were moderately tired were they allowed to practice the defensive arts that Selícia had taught them. Selícia thought that this arrangement was ideal for instilling mental and physical discipline in the Girls.

Predictably, while Blossom and even Buttercup could barely keep up after their first day of genuinely working out their Chemical X-enhanced muscles, Bubbles had all but collapsed in the middle of sparring with Blossom that she had to be taken to the sidelines. A quick examination of her shed skin tissue revealed that it wasn't that her Chemical X saturation had dipped to Highway 13 levels. When Professor Utonium queried Selícia on this, she remarked that it was probably the fact
that Bubbles had a lower threshold for exhaustion and pain, unlike Buttercup.

"I think it's time to go up," Professor Utonium said to both Selicia and the Girls after they had spent almost two hours exercising and training (with rests in between). It wouldn't be long now, before a psychiatrist who could expose all the secrets of their mind would knock on their door.

"Thomas, I think I need to spend some extra time with Bubbles," Selicia said instead, pulling Bubbles back as she tried to follow her sisters. Professor Utonium stared at her, studying her look, her posture, suspicious, but that day when Selicia had attacked Bubbles in a bid to bring out the aggression in her was long ago. He would like to think that the Selicia of today had changed, and knew better than to use violence to solve all her problems. He'd seen the change in her, how she appeared to have taken a liking to Blossom and Bubbles despite confessing to having a favorite.

"Very well, Selicia. Don't be too long now," the professor relented. "I need to bathe and feed the Girls before Alice arrives at eight."

"It won't take too long," Selicia said.

"Who's Alice?" Blossom asked as she was following Daddy up. Both of the Girls were on either side of him, holding his hand.

"Yeah, who's Alice?" Buttercup followed. Blossom tugged at the her Daddy's sleeve and repeated her question when he didn't reply. He didn't know how he should at first - there was no telling how things would turn out later, whether the Girls would like Alice or if they should even like her.

"She's a friend of mine," Professor Utonium finally answered. He tried to focus on the good side of things; he would be seeing an old friend. Not to mention, it would be infinitely better to have Alice over than someone else, like Blackwater or Cliff. "She wants to see the three of you, that's all."

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


"Why can't I go with Daddy, Mom?" Bubbles asked, even though she knew why, based on what she had said to her adoptive father. She could feel fear gripping her heart as the distant sound of the airlock doors opening and shutting could be heard. She was alone with Mom again.

"Because we both know you need to toughen up, Bubbles!" Selicia said sternly. "Unless you want everyone to hate you, and your sisters to get hurt because of you. Do you want any of that?"

"No…" Bubbles said timidly. Although she didn't feel like doing anymore exercises, and she wanted very much to take a shower owing to how hot and sweaty she felt underneath her SWAT gear, she didn't complain for fear of harsh words or reprisal.

"Then go pick up that weight and hold it over your head until I tell you otherwise!" Selicia scolded as she pointed at a stack of steel weights, with a 500 pounds steel weight resting on top of a larger one that was 1000 pounds.

"But I'm tired!" Bubbles cried. Selicia did not reply, but kept pushing her towards the weight.

"I'll ask you again, then," Selicia snarled viciously when Bubbles refused to budge after a certain distance. "Do you want everyone, including your dear Daddy, to hate you? Because no one likes a screw-up, especially one who gets her sisters hurt. Badly."
Bubbles did not reply, and instead stared at the floor in dismay.

"Well?" Selicia pressed.

Bubbles submitted quickly after that, without saying another word. Heaving the stacked steel weights carefully over her head, she held it there with her arms straightened up while Selicia walked away and sat down on the professor's swivel chair with a fashion magazine she had kept in the thigh pocket of her security uniform. She held it up as she read it, but then put it down again to regard Bubbles with scornful eyes once more.

"And don't you dare put it down until I tell you to, Bubbles!" Selicia warned the little girl. "I'm watching you!" With that, she went back to her fashion magazine, holding it up low enough such that she could see Bubbles' face and the dangerously heavy stack of steel she was holding above her head.

5 minutes passed, and Bubbles' arms were beginning to shiver with exhaustion. Selicia put down her magazine, and took a sip of water as she watched Bubbles struggling before her. When she was done, she returned to her reading.

"Mom! I'm tired!" Bubbles shouted with a strained voice.

"No complaining!" Selicia warned the little girl, and did little else.

10 minutes went by, and Bubbles found her elbows buckling, and she had to constantly and consciously will her arms to straighten up. Selicia yawned as she put down her reading material a second time and took another sip of water. She saw shiny streaks of forking rivers going down Bubbles' cheeks, and it displeased her. An occasional whimper would escape Bubbles' lips, and that sealed the deal for Selicia.

"No crying! Stop being such a wimp!" Selicia scolded, shaking her head in disapproval after that. "Seriously!" Bubbles clammed up, biting her lips. Selicia returned to reading her magazine.

15 minutes passed and Bubbles could barely hold the steel weights up. Selicia took a glance in her direction, but cared little even when she couldn't adhere to her no-crying instruction any longer.

When 20 minutes was over, Selicia put down her fashion magazine for the last time, rolling it up and sticking it into her thigh pocket. She got off the professor's swivel chair and came over to Bubbles to watch, her arms crossed. Bubbles was in agony, her face red from strain, and completely slick with sweat.

"Mom please can I put it down please please please-" Bubbles said in haste as it felt like her arm could just fall off any minute.

"And risk everyone hating you over it? No," Selicia threatened once more with a grin on her face. She thought that her extra training for Bubbles might be bearing fruit. "10 more minutes."

"I can't!" Bubbles exclaimed, her voice hoarse from thirst and showing much strain. "Please mom!"

"Shut up! Just shut up!" Selicia scolded. "You owe Buttercup for getting her injured in that warehouse!"

Within another three minutes, Bubbles had to use her head to brace the weights up. Her arms were nearly done. "Mom!" she cried, but Selicia ignored her. Just then, the weights slipped off her helmet. In attempting to keep them up, Bubbles lost her balance when she leaned back too far, causing the weights to collapse on her as she fell down.
"Bubbles!" Selicia said with an irritated tone. "Stop being so clumsy! It's not time's up yet. Get up and hold up those weights or I'm adding another ten minutes on top of your thirty!"

Bubbles did not reply. Her face wasn't visible under the weights.

"Bubbles?" Selicia called out to the baby blue-eyed girl, now somewhat worried and regretful of her actions. "Bubbles!

She did not reply.

"God damn you, Bubbles, you weakling!" Selicia cried as she tried to push the weight off Bubbles, but it was far too heavy for her, even if there was only one steel weight left. The 500 pounds weight was thrown harmlessly off as Bubbles went down.

"I'm sorry…" Bubbles mewedled from below the thousand pounder.

"Bubbles! Can you get this weight off yourself?" Selicia asked while looking over the weight at Bubbles' face. She closed her eyes as she concentrated on pushing the weight off. It wouldn't come off; she was just too tired.


"Bubbles, stop crying. I'll help, alright?" Selicia said. She placed her hands against the weight, getting ready to push. She counted down from three, and the two girls gave the weight a shove. The heavy thing rolled to its side, coming to a halt very quickly. Selicia bent down beside Bubbles, who was lying on her back. She had closed her eyes. "Are you okay? Are you injured? Talk to me, Bubs!"

Bubbles' eyes flickered open, and even then, she looked like she could barely keep them open. "I'm sorry, Mom… So sorry…"

"Shh… Bubbles, it's fine. Let's not talk about that now," Selicia cooed at Bubbles, "In fact, let's not mention this at all. Deal?"

"Deal…" Bubbles said, agreeing mainly because it was humiliating that she couldn't handle the weights. Selicia checked the little girl for injuries after that - but there was none. Not even a bruise. At the back of her mind, she thought it convenient, since it meant that there would be no evidence of the accident.

"C'mon, let's get you cleaned up," Selicia said as she picked Bubbles up with a heave - she was rather heavy with her SWAT gear on, which was packed with heavy plates of Kevlar.

By the time Selicia had brought Bubbles up to the living room, Professor Utonium was already cooking dinner. Blossom and Buttercup were in the living room, watching a kid's show involving a Lochness monster. The professor poked his head out of the kitchen. "Selicia? Dinner will be ready in thirty minutes-" the professor gave his 'wife' the heads-up, but in that time, noticed that something was wrong. Bubbles was in Selicia's arms, rather than walking on her own power. "Is Bubbles alright?"

"Oh she's fine, just tired from the extra training," Selicia spoke for Bubbles, who cared for nothing except to tune out of the hurtful world. "But she'll get better, right, honey?" Selicia was addressing the girl in her arms, but she did not reply. The woman gave her adopted daughter a peck in the cheek. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. It's the object behind every training regime. No pain, no gain."
They ascended the stairs to the Girls’ room.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


The doorbell rang a single time, nothing more. Professor Utonium could tell who it was. Doctor Alice had always been a patient person - dealing with patients who tend to act out or blow their top required a degree of tolerance and patience, after all, especially when one knew full well that it wasn't the patients' fault. With the rest of the family up in the Girls' room, the professor was alone when he padded over to the front door and opened it.

Doctor Alice in the flesh. She was wearing something casual - a pastel red blouse and jeans - no doubt to put her 'patients' at ease. A small backpack was hanging by a strap on her shoulder. It had been weeks since he last saw her, longer since he last spoke to her in person. The professor smiled when he saw her, even though he had some reservations about anyone from the USDO, friend or rival. With the USDO, he could never be sure.

"Hello," the professor greeted plainly.

"Professor Thomas Lewis Upton. Finally. It's been a long time," Doctor Alice was far more liberal with her greeting and self-expression. She looked around the living room. The place was bereft of life. There was no one else, the lights were mostly switched off, leaving only the nightlights to guide the way. There was not so much as ember at the fireplace. "Where's everyone else?"

"Upstairs, in the Girls' room," the professor said. Putting a hand out, he welcomed the psychiatrist into his home. "I guess it's time you meet them." But the professor was thinking a different thing when he let the woman in. 'A little anxious to meet the Girls eh?' he couldn't help but to suspect even Alice. It was a little suspicious that Alice she had suddenly become interested in the Girls out of the blue, where previously she was only responsible for the mental well-being of USDO personnel. Still, he tried to put it out of his mind. It was far more likely that Alice was here to help, just like how she had been there for him when he had lost Eileen and Bloome.

"So, how have you been, Thomas?" Alice asked as they crossed the living room.

"I don't know. Times are hard, and I would have fallen apart had it not been for the Girls, had it not been for Selicia, even," Professor Utonium replied. They went up the stairs.

"No problems with Selicia?" Alice asked. The professor considered the question, perhaps more than he ought to. He found himself partial to Selicia, even though they had arguments mere days ago, and more besides. But in between those times, as well as recently, she had shown that she cared, that she could love the Girls as much as him.

"It was rough getting her settled in, but no, not really," the professor said, keeping it vague.

"That's good. I was expecting worse. She's not exactly my first choice when Blackwater had escalated to me the need for a new handler to pose as your wife and be inserted into the Girls' life as their mother," Alice said, slipping into a dispassionate, professional stance. They were walking along the corridor towards the Girls' room.

"What do you mean?" the professor asked.

"I made a list of recommendations, but I was overruled by Director Cliff. They needed someone from security here, someone who could guard the Girls more closely, and train them for law
enforcement," Alice explained. "Selicia was the best choice we can think of with the extra criteria: female, 35 years of age or younger, security background. Mentally stable." Alice had mentioned the last criteria with some hesitation, as if for emphasis. The professor thought it strange for her to speak like that, but before he could ask any further questions, they were already at the door leading into the Girls' room.

Professor Utonium moved to open the door, but Alice stopped him, grabbing him by the hand. She retracted her hand quickly when she realized that she had made physical contact.

"Before you open the door, I have to tell you how things work," Alice said. She looked like she was having trouble catching a breath. "I intend for this to be as professional as any other therapy session I conduct."

"Don't you want to meet everyone first?" the professor said. The way she described the visit, however, did not serve to put him at ease. "You make it sound like my Girls are all patients."

"That's not my intention," Alice said. She hadn't seen Thomas Upton this way for a very long time, not since Eileen and Bloome's death. "Are you alright, professor?"

"I'm sorry. I'm fine," the professor apologized hastily. Alice thought that he looked like a nervous wreck, but she knew exactly why. "You were saying?"

"Right. I'd like to see one girl at a time. Blossom first, then Bubbles, and finally Buttercup. Then Selicia, and finally you, so I can debrief you at the end of it," Alice instructed. "Is there a room with a chair and a couch big enough for an adult to lie down?"

"My home office fits that description very well," the professor said. "You may use it."

"Right," Alice said, "I guess I'll get ready for consultation." She promptly turned around and would have marched right off had the professor not take her by the shoulder.

"Don't you want to meet the Girls first?" Professor Utonium asked. Alice turned around once more to face him. "They don't bite, you know."

"Unless you're shooting at them. Yeah, I know," Alice added. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm just nervous, now that I'm this close to them."

"In a good way, I hope?" the professor inquired.

"Yes. And no," Alice said. "They're famous or infamous in the USDO - depending on who's talking - and they're a scientific marvel, but I know what they can do to a human being."

"And you want to be in a room, alone, with one of them? Come on," the professor said with an exasperated but friendly tone, dragging her by the arm as he opened the door and led the both of them into the room. It was as if Alice's breathing had ceased the moment she stepped into the room.

"Girls!" the professor called out to Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, who were seated together at a kiddy table, playing with their toys in their room. Selicia was sitting on the Girls' tri-colored bed, watching them. She turned to look at Thomas and Alice, and saw that her 'husband' was holding her by the arm. The smile on her face disappeared, replaced by something more confrontational, jealous. "Remember we talked about Miss Alice? Here she is!" It was only when she was standing before them that the professor let go of her.

The Girls looked up at the new arrival all at once. Bubbles had returned to her cheery self after being made to do extra training - good. The professor was worried that Bubbles would still be in a
depressed mood by the time Alice arrived, after Selicia had told him about how Bubbles wasn't very receptive to additional training even if it was good for her.

"Hiya Miss Alice, it's nice to meet you!" the Girls greeted in unison. The professor thought it strange whenever they did that, as it was usually impromptu and not a one-off incident.

"Uh… Hi," Alice returned the greeting awkwardly - it didn't help that the Girls had spoken as if in a chorus together. It'd practically swept her off her feet, and she had nothing on her mind to alleviate the awkwardness.

"So, I'm Alice," the psychiatrist improvised, to horrible effect, though no one seemed to mind. "And it's great to finally meet the three of you - and hi again, Selicia, it's been a while." Selicia nodded her head in Alice's direction. "In fact, I'd like to get to know the each of you better, which is why I'm going to talk to the three of you one by one."

"That would be nice, Miss Alice," Blossom said.

"It's always great to make more friends," Bubbles added.

"Do we get to eat candies too?" Buttercup asked greedily.

"No candies, but I have marshmallows, right here," Alice said, showing them her backpack.

"That's awesome! I like marshmallows!" Buttercup declared excitedly, even though marshmallows were far from the only thing she liked, and it certainly wasn't the first thing she liked.

"Right," Alice said with an awkward chuckle. "Blossom, how about if we start with you first? Why don't you walk with me to your father's office?"

It was going to be a psychiatric evaluation like no other.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the psychiatrist Alice gets to work uncovering Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup's darkest thoughts.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 Psychiatric Evaluation 12191988

The following is a compiled document composed using the audio transcript of Head of Psychiatry and Social Services Alice's psychiatric evaluation of B-47, B-48 and B-49 as well as the accompanying note taken during her interview of the Project Powerpuff subjects.

-TRANSCRIPT START-

(Note 1: Time - 2006. Subject - B-47, christened Blossom by Professor Utonium and Blossom Utonium by Intelligence Department. Blossom is, in Professor Utonium's field research documents, considered the most intelligent of the three Project Powerpuff subjects. She is also developing the fastest. In the most recent progress report, Professor Utonium claims that she has achieved limited flight. When deployed into law enforcement duties, she is, without fail, selected as the leader of the trio.)

Doctor Alice: (leans back on chair) Are you feeling comfortable?

Blossom: (digs into the couch she is reclining on) I'm very comfortable. Thank you, Doctor Alice.

Doctor Alice: (laughs) You can call me Alice, Blossom. You have very good manners.

Blossom: My Daddy taught me that.

Doctor Alice: Does your dad teach you everything?

Blossom: Most things. My Mom taught me how to fight crime.

Doctor Alice: That's great. Blossom, there are some questions I have to ask that might… disturb you. Are you fine with that?

Blossom: Like what?

Doctor Alice: Questions about your time out there, fighting crime.

Blossom: Why would you want to ask questions about that?

(Note 2: Subject appears agitated. It appears that law enforcement isn't something she enjoys all the time. There could be some aspects of it that puts her off. Based on my notes alone, it could be her treatment in the hands of Chief of Security Blackwater and other key figures)
Doctor Alice: You see, Blossom, I'm what you would call a psychiatrist. I'm a doctor of sorts. Where your father heals the body, I heal the mind. I try to make people feel better.

Blossom: Oh. Well, you're Daddy's friend, so it's fine.

Doctor Alice: Let me know if it becomes too much, okay?

Blossom: Okay.

Doctor Alice: But first, how about we talk about something you like?

Blossom: That would be nice.

Doctor Alice: How well do you get along with your father?

Blossom: He's... He's...

Doctor Alice: Is something wrong?

Blossom: No. It's the opposite. I just don't know if there are words I can use for my Dad. He's just been so good to me. He taught me everything. When I'm hurt, or sad, he's always there for me. Whenever he's not there, it always feels as if a part of me is missing.

Doctor Alice: Like when you're in an operation?

Blossom: Operation?

Doctor Alice: When you're fighting crime?

Blossom: Yeah.

Doctor Alice: Do you think it has affected your ability to fight crime?

Blossom: A little. Not really. Actually, if it weren't for him, I wouldn't even want to fight crime. I wouldn't even know that crime is wrong. There was this one time when Buttercup took some toys from Bubbles - I couldn't even speak then - and he told Buttercup off and returned the toy to Bubbles - that's when I first realized what is good, and what is evil.

(Comment: Blossom absolutely worships Professor Utonium)

Doctor Alice: Hmm. We'll get to your sisters in a minute. Have your father ever touched you in a way that made you uncomfortable before?

Blossom: What do you mean?

Doctor Alice: Well, did he ever... touched you down there?

Blossom: When we're bathing, but it doesn't make me uncomfortable.

Doctor Alice: Did he touch you there for a long time? Did he ever stick his fingers in there?

Blossom: No... Only that one time when he had to give us a physical examination in the lab.

Doctor Alice: I see. (Scribbles notes) Did he ever hit you in any way? Or otherwise hurt you with words?

Blossom: No. He would never.
Doctor Alice: That's good (Scribbles notes)

(Note 4: Blossom does not appear to be conflicted or in distress when she spoke about her father. As I expected, Professor Utonium has done nothing wrong. As a parent, he's the ideal father, put in a shitty position by the USDO.)

Doctor Alice: What about your mother? Are you getting along with your mom very well?

Blossom: I guess…

Doctor Alice: Could you be more specific? (scribbles on notepad)

(Note 5 excerpt: Blossom appears uncertain about Sergeant Selicia Goodwin)

Blossom: She could be mean sometimes, but I know she loves me. She just shows it less often. Dad said that she loves me, and I believe him.

Doctor Alice: What has she done that makes you say that? That she's mean, I mean.

Blossom: She said that I was a bad leader and an ungrateful brat that day after the bank. Did my father tell you about my crime-fighting adventures?

Doctor Alice: Yes, something like that. Tell me more.

Blossom: She grounded me after that even though I was just… (appears upset)

Doctor Alice: It's okay to cry, Blossom. It's perfectly natural and even encouraged for a girl your age.

Blossom: (lets loose a few tears before managing to control herself) But she doesn't like it when I do that. I don't think Blackwater likes it either.

Doctor Alice: I'm sure your dad doesn't mind. Neither do I.

Blossom: (wipes tears away) I'm fine. I'm the leader and my sisters need me… I have to be strong. (a few more tears roll down the sides of her cheek)

Doctor Alice: That's admirable, Blossom. Did your mother do anything else that's mean?

Blossom: She accused me of- nevermind. I don't want to get Buttercup in trouble.

Doctor Alice: You don't have to be afraid, Blossom.

Blossom: I'm not, I just- I don't want to talk about it. You said that I don't have to talk about something if I don't want to.

Doctor Alice: Yes, I did. And I respect that. (Scribbles down some notes)

(Note 6 excerpt: Selicia has lots of explaining to do!)

Doctor Alice: Now, how about your sisters? The three of you must be really close. I heard from your father that the three of you are practically inseparable.

Blossom: I really like Bubbles. She's fun to play with, and she's really sweet. She would say the nicest things, and she wouldn't hurt a fly - is that how the… urm… met- meta-

Doctor Alice: Metaphor. Yes, that's how it goes, sweetheart. What about Buttercup?
Blossom: Oh. Buttercup. I- I urm-

Doctor Alice: (scribbles on note) You can tell me. I'm a close friend of your father. I've known him for eight years now.

Blossom: Buttercup's really mean. She loves to hurt people, and nothing good ever comes out of her mouth! She's always trying to hurt Bubbles and I, and she's… always trying to kill someone when we were out. She's always arguing with me, and… she's… scary. At least until some days ago - I talked to her, and she's a little better now. We'd train and play together.

(Note 7 excerpt: This comes as a surprise. It's more serious than I thought.)

Doctor Alice: How did Buttercup try to hurt you and Bubbles?

Blossom: I don't want to talk about it (tears up)

Doctor Alice: Try.

Blossom: Miss Alice, I don't want to. You said I don't have to. (unable to control herself and whimpers)

Doctor Alice: I know what I said, but I'm trying to help you, Blossom. It looks like it's causing you lots of grief, and I need to know how.

Blossom: She tried to kill me once! She nearly broke my arm a few days ago! (sobs uncontrollably) She- she lied t-to Daddy about me-

Doctor Alice: Oh my- I didn't think that- One more thing, Blossom, just one more.

Blossom: H-hmm? (crying)

Doctor Alice: What do you mean she tried to kill you?

Blossom: She- she wrapped her hands around my neck and- she- squeezed it. (crying)

Doctor Alice: (shocked) She tried to strangle you!? Did you tell your father about this?

Blossom: N-no… I didn't want to get Buttercup in trouble. (crying)

Doctor Alice: Alright, I guess I have no more questions. You can get up now. Please, have some marshmallows (the sound of porcelain grating on wood as she pushes a bowl of marshmallow towards Blossom)

Blossom: Thank you. (takes a couple)

Doctor Alice: You should have more.

Blossom: No, Daddy says I shouldn't.

Doctor Alice: As you wish. (sits up) Here, let me take you to your father. You did very well today.

(Note 8: Summary. I had to cut the evaluation short, but I don't think I've missed out much. If she's already facing so much emotional turmoil at home, I don't know how hard it is for Blossom when she's out in the field. Otherwise, Blossom appears to be as smart as they say, and a sensitive and nice little girl. I doubt that she is suffering from any mental debilitation, though if her home and field situation keeps up, she's at risk of developing PTSD, not to mention depression and anxiety to go
Follow-up sessions are required, as I have no doubt that I haven't discovered the full extent of Blossom's psyche, nor dig deep enough into what is causing her so much grief. Blossom's emotional fragility limits the extent of each session, but I am surprised that she is able to come this far when she hasn't even celebrated her first month birthday yet.)

(Note 9: Time - 2024. Subject - B-49, christened Bubbles by Professor Utonium and Bubbles Utonium by Intelligence Department. Bubbles, according to field notes by Professor Utonium, is constantly lagging behind in development in almost every respect, which could cause problems on its own. It's no guarantee though, and I am hoping that she's an exception. Bubbles' description matches up with Professor Utonium's, and she's a sweet little girl. It is my hope that her personality grants her immunity from the kind of difficulties that Blossom faced. Documents relating to her field operations, however, did not paint a very optimistic picture.)

Doctor Alice: Feeling comfortable on that couch?

Bubbles: (enthusiastic) Very! It's a nice place you've chosen for our fun time together!

Doctor Alice: Before we start, would you like a marshmallow or two?

Bubbles: Sure!

Doctor Alice: Oh no, don't get up from the couch. I'll just- (gets up to grab a piece of marshmallow, walks over and hands it to Bubbles) there you go.

Bubbles: Thanks, Doctor Alice.

Doctor Alice: You can call me Alice. Or Miss Alice. But just Alice is fine.

Bubbles: Thanks, Miss Alice. (smiles and nibbles on marshmallow)

Doctor Alice: Like it?

Bubbles: Very much, Doctor Alice.

Doctor Alice: (chuckles slightly) Great. Anyway, let's get started. There's a reason why people call me a doctor. Do you know why?

Bubbles: Because you're like Daddy? He's a doctor too! Does he see you if he's too sick to fix himself?

Doctor Alice: Well (chuckles slightly) something like that. But you see, I'm a different kind of doctor. Your father heals the body, but I heal the mind. Bubbles, I'm sincere when I said that I want to get to know you. But I want to do more too. I want to help you. If you're feeling bad in any way, I'm here to fix you. Alright?

Bubbles: That's kind of you, Doctor Alice. I think we're going to be really good friends!

Doctor Alice: Yes, we are. So, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Some of them could be hard to answer, so if you don't want to, you don't have to. Alright, sweetie?

Bubbles: Hard like nine plus two? Miss Keane gave me that question this morning and I still don't understand it.
Doctor Alice: No, by hard I mean emotionally hard. I mean questions that could make you upset - but they could be questions that need to be answered.

Bubbles: Oh… Okay…

(TRANSCRIPT SKIP AHEAD TO SECTION DETALING MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP. FOR FULL TRANSCRIPT, CONSULT ARCHIVES SECTION OF ADMIN)

Doctor Alice: It's good to know that you and your father are getting along just fine, Bubbles. What about your mother?

Bubbles: (silent)

Doctor Alice: Is something wrong?

Bubbles: (forces smile) No. We are getting along just fine.

(Note 10: Bubbles' sudden change in tone and reluctance to speak when the topic of her mother was mentioned is suspicious. She copied my exact words, and while that does not confirm my suspicion, adds to it.)

Doctor Alice: Has she done or said something to you that's mean?

Bubbles: No. (appears flushed and tearful)

Doctor Alice: I know there's something wrong, Bubbles. You can speak to me. I can be your friend, Bubbles, and I can help you.

Bubbles: She loves me. (crying)

Doctor Alice: Then why are you crying?

Bubbles: I'm n-not supposed to say. (crying)

Doctor Alice: Did she threaten you into keeping quiet?

Bubbles: N-no. She just s-said that I will- will- destroy this family, and everyone w-will hate me for it. (crying)

Doctor Alice: And what if I tell you that no one will hate you if you tell me about what your mother has done? There's something we call patient-doctor confidentiality. I won't reveal what you tell me in this room to anyone, especially to your mother.

Bubbles: She- Mommy… Mommy's been hurting me, Alice. (crying)

Doctor Alice: How so?

Bubbles: She m-made me c-carry weights over my head until I couldn't, and- and it fell on top of me, and I couldn't get it off, but she helped me get it off. She said that I was weak and it was all my fault that Blossom and Buttercup got hurt. (crying)

Doctor Alice: When did that happen?

Bubbles: Today- before- before you came. (crying)
Doctor Alice: Has she done anything like this before today?

Bubbles: (Weeps and wails inconsolably.)

(Note 11: Patient entirely unresponsive at this point. I had to spend a full fifteen minutes to calm her down.)

Doctor Alice: How else did your mother hurt you?

Bubbles: (dejectedly) She pinched me once, and on our first training, she kicked and slapped me. I hate it when she shouts at me. Why can't she be kind to me all the time like Dad?

Doctor Alice: (scribbles) Hmm. See? It's not so bad when you talk about it, right?

Bubbles: (dejectedly) I don't know.

Doctor Alice: Let's talk about something else then. I take it that you and your sisters are close?

Bubbles: (smiles for the first time in 15 minutes) Blossom is really nice to me. She's like Dad. She doesn't call me useless or weak or a crybaby. We play together all the time, and I feel safe with her when I'm out...

Doctor Alice: You mean fighting crime?

Bubbles: Yes.

Doctor Alice: What about Buttercup?

Bubbles: She hates me… (closes eyes) But she's a little nicer these days. I hope she becomes better.

Doctor Alice: Why do you say that Buttercup hates you?

Bubbles: She used to call me a crybaby and she blames me for everything. She… hurts me all the time, but Blossom knows about it. She was there to protect me the last time Buttercup wanted to hit me.

Doctor Alice: Do you hate Buttercup because of what she did?

Bubbles: No… She's my sister. I love her. Besides, she's becoming a little nicer. I think everyone's nice inside. Dad said that different people have different ways of expressing their love.

Doctor Alice: (scribbles on notepad) You're an angel, you know that? Would you like to have more marshmallows?

Bubbles: Sure. Thanks, Doctor Alice.

(Note 12: It appears that Buttercup's outbursts aren't restricted to Blossom. Based on what the kids had said, it could have been even worse had it not been for Blossom. I wonder what is the catalyst for Buttercup's improvement in behavior? Anyway, I have a feeling that this goes beyond sibling rivalry.)

Doctor Alice: Uh- Miss Alice will do. (stands up, picks up a couple more marshmallows and gives them to Bubbles)

Bubbles: I like you, Miss Alice. You're nice.
Doctor Alice: I'm glad you do.

Doctor Alice: How are you taking the fact that you're fighting crime, Bubbles?

Bubbles: (dejectedly) I don't know… I know why I should - Daddy and Blossom said that we're helping people. But… I hate it.

Doctor Alice: Why?

Bubbles: I don't like hurting people and… I don't like being afraid all the time. Why can't everyone be nice? Why must they hurt my sisters and shoot at me all the time?

Doctor Alice: You're talking about the bad guys you've… met, right?

Bubbles: It wasn't just them.

Doctor Alice: I get it. Even the good guys, right?

Bubbles: Yes. Why are they called the good guys? Blackwater shot me in the mouth, and the policemen on the road shot at us. Even Mom… Even Buttercup…

Doctor Alice: I see. Why do you think that is?

Bubbles: No one likes me.

Doctor Alice: I don't think that's true.

Bubbles: Then why do they keep hurting me!? (agitated)

Doctor Alice: Would you like this session to stop? (concerned)

Bubbles: No. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have shouted. I'm sorry I made you mad. (tearing up)

Doctor Alice: I'm not. I was just worried about you.

Bubbles: Oh.

Doctor Alice: Do you have trouble sleeping?

Bubbles: Most of the time. I keep having those dreams…

Doctor Alice: Nightmares?

Bubbles: Yes.

Doctor Alice: I see. (scribbles notes)

(Note 13: Possible PTSD, early onset depression. And it's no wonder why. Lesser children would probably have attempted suicide by now or shut down completely. Will probably need to arrange for another session with her. I hesitate to drag the session longer considering all the skeletons I've dug up.

I think I can come up with something to save Bubbles. Her behavior is the most normal of the three, based on reports and my interviews thus far. I can spin that into something good, valuable even. Previous subjects before Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were all natural psychopaths or induced by the Chemicals A to X to be psychopaths, to serious extremes, making them unfit for deployment.
I could use the PTSD and depression too - perhaps Cliff would be partial to letting Bubbles live if I tell him that her poor performance is due to mental issues - mental issues that I can fix.)

Doctor Alice: I think that's all for now. It's nice to know you, Bubbles.

Bubbles: Can't we talk a little longer? No one talks to me, except Dad and Blossom.

Doctor Alice: We'll be seeing each other very often, I imagine, but I don't mind staying to chat. What would you like to talk about?

Bubbles: The fun stuff. Nice things, like your hair. Did your Mom cut it for you?

(TRANSCRIPT CUT SHORT HERE DUE TO UNRELATED CONTENT - REFER TO FULL TRANSCRIPT)

(Note 14: Time - 2055. Subject - B-48, christened Buttercup by Professor Utonium and Buttercup Utonium by Intelligence Department. Buttercup worries me because of the documents and videos of her I've poured through. She appears to take combat and violence lightly. Previous subjects of Project Powerpuff were twisted by Chemicals A to X mentally, and I fear that, somehow, Buttercup might have suffered some effect of it. The facts don't line up though - Blossom and Bubbles appears normal to me, if mentally sturdy by one-month-old standards.

What I've uncovered about Buttercup through Blossom and Bubbles seem to support this. However, it could just be Buttercup's way of coping with the violence and danger surrounding her. More often than not, people who act out are just doing so as an adaptation, and I have no doubt that Buttercup is doing the same thing here.)

Doctor Alice: Good evening, Buttercup. Do you know why we're here?

Buttercup: To talk? That's what you said.

Doctor Alice: Oh no, don't get up. Lie back… That's it. Just relax. Would you like to have some marshmallows?

Buttercup: Sure! That would be awesome!

Doctor Alice: I'll get it for you. (picks up a couple of marshmallows and hands them to Buttercup)

Buttercup: Can I have some more? (Bites a huge chunk out of one marshmallow)

Doctor Alice: Sure. Here's another two more for the cute little girl. (cooing)

Buttercup: You're nice.

Doctor Alice: (laughs) I'm sure I am. So you know why we're here - to talk. But I'm also a doctor, like your dad.

Buttercup: But I'm fine.

Doctor Alice: Oh, I'm not the same kind of doctor as your dad. Your father heals the body, but I heal the mind. If there's anything that's troubling you, that's really getting you down, I'm here for you, Buttercup. But for me to do that and give you a peace of mind, I'd have to ask you some questions that might make you cry, or disturb you. Is that alright?

Buttercup: Pff, nothing makes me cry!
Doctor Alice: (chuckles) Alright, but let me know if you’d like me to stop.

Buttercup: Okay, whatever.

Doctor Alice: Let's talk about your activity outside first.

Buttercup: You mean when I'm fighting the bad guys?

Doctor Alice: Yes, spot on, Buttercup. (scribbles notes)

(Note 15: Seems to have violence on her mind readily.)

Doctor Alice: You've been fighting crime for a week now. As you might know, it's dangerous, and it can be very upsetting. I know that you've been shot at, beaten up and shouted at numerous times now. How do you feel about that?

Buttercup: Oh, I'm fine with it, because I get to beat those bad guys up! They can shoot at me all they want, but when I get my hands on them, I'll make sure it hurts! (smiles)

Doctor Alice: But what about that time when you were hurt and knocked out? Or on the highway, when you were ill because of (ruffles notes) over-expenditure- hmm- because you overexerted yourself?

Buttercup: It's worth it. I can't stand staying in my room and playing with dolls.

Doctor Alice: But don't you think that the danger might be off-putting? Have you ever thought about it? I mean, what if you were seriously injured because of it one day?

Buttercup: Hah, that'll never happen. How bad can it be? I just want to break some bones and knock out some teeth! I like it when that happens. (smiles widely)

Doctor Alice: I see. (scribbles notes)

(Note 16: Buttercup clearly enjoys herself whenever she gets to hurt the 'bad guys'. Does it extend to people who weren't the 'bad guys'?)

Doctor Alice: Do you feel remorseful whenever you've hurt people?

Buttercup: Remorseful? What?

Doctor Alice: Sorry- Do you get guilty or feel sorry for hurting others?

Buttercup: Why should I? Blossom said that they were going to hurt others anyway, and Blackwater wants them dead. They're mine to hurt. (unabated smile)

Doctor Alice: And what if they're not really bad?

Buttercup: But they were there, with the bad guys. That makes them bad.

Doctor Alice: And what if they're forced to be there? Just like how you have to be in school - except school is good for you.

Buttercup: Well… I don't care.

Doctor Alice: And what if they have a family, like yours? What if they have a spouse, and children like you and your sisters?
Buttercup: Then they should have stayed at home.

Doctor Alice: Uh-huh. (scribbles notes)

(Note 17: I don't think Buttercup is just coping. She's thriving in violence. A result of conditioning, maybe? But Professor Utonium can't have conditioned Buttercup to be a soldier. Perhaps that could be coming from Blackwater? But I bet it must be coming from Selicia.)

Doctor Alice: How are you getting along with your parents, Buttercup?

Buttercup: Oh, Mom and Dad are the best. They make me really happy.

Doctor Alice: How's that?

Buttercup: They give me things, and it's fun to be with them. I just wish Dad would spend more time with me, rather than Blossom or that Bubbles - she's so weak and useless! Dad should be like Mom - she treats me much better than she did with Blossom and Bubbles, 'cause I deserve it.

Doctor Alice: What does your mother do for you?

Buttercup: She bakes me cookies and cakes and makes me hot chocolate. She cuts my hair - I really like it when it's exactly like hers. But I really like it a ton whenever she shows me how to fight. I still have a ton of moves I'd like to try out on the bad guys.

Doctor Alice: Has your mother ever… hurt you before?

Buttercup: No. Why would she?

Doctor Alice: That's… good then. (scribbles notes)

(Note 18: It appears that Selicia is playing favorites. Either that, or they're just naturally made for each other. Possible link to Buttercup thriving in violence.)

Doctor Alice: What about your father?

Buttercup: You know, it stinks when he doesn't give me more attention than my sisters. I really hate it when my sisters take everything from me.

(Note 19: I wouldn't believe it, but I think Professor Utonium might be playing favorites too, at least from the perspective of Buttercup, who believes she deserve more attention than her sisters. Could this have resulted in poorer morals in Buttercup?)

Doctor Alice: Do you hate your sisters?

Buttercup: Well… yeah. I mean, sometimes. They're stupid and useless. Sometimes I wish they weren't there, but it's good to have sisters around too, I guess. I can't spar without my sisters.

Doctor Alice: Do you hate them enough to hurt them?

Buttercup: (accusatory) What did they tell you?

Doctor Alice: They told me that they love you, Buttercup.

Buttercup: No. I wouldn't hurt them. They're my sisters and I don't have a reason to hurt them. Why would I? I love them lots!
Doctor Alice: That's great. It's good to have siblings who love you. (scribbles notes)

(Note 20: Something tells me that Buttercup's declaration of love for her sisters seem artificial and shallow. What she said about hurting them doesn't line up with what Blossom and Bubbles' stories. I won't pass judgement yet, but there's a real possibility that Buttercup is lying to me, not only that, manipulating me. I will have to check in with Professor Utonium and Sergeant Selicia about this.

With all the data I've gathered about Buttercup's psyche... I don't like where this is going.)

Buttercup: You look scared, Miss Alice.

Doctor Alice: And why would I be scared?

Buttercup: Because of what I can do to people?

Doctor Alice: No, I'm not afraid, Buttercup. You're a sweet little girl who wouldn't hurt those who are good, right?

Buttercup: (pause) Right.

Doctor Alice: How do you feel about Blossom being the leader?

Buttercup: I hate it that she's the leader! She doesn't deserve to be the leader. She's always getting me into trouble, and she wouldn't allow me to kill the bad guys or even hurt them much! I should be the leader instead - if I were the leader, things would have been better! And I'll get to do whatever I want.

Doctor Alice: Mm-hmm. (scribbles down notes)

(Note 21: Inflated sense of self. Not good.)

Doctor Alice: I understand that you and your sisters attend a school. Urm… (flips through notes) Pokey Oaks Kindergarten. Am I right?

Buttercup: Yeah, I go to school.

Doctor Alice: How is it for you and your sisters?

Buttercup: We were scolded by Miss Keane today, all because one of our classmates was hurt when we were fighting crime - she couldn't walk or something.

Doctor Alice: How do you feel about that?

Buttercup: I think it's stupid! I was helping people and fighting the bad guys, and all she could talk about was my classmate! It's not my fault that she was in the way. It's not my fault that she couldn't take a little knock from me!

Doctor Alice: Well, we all have different opinions.

Buttercup: And her opinions are stupid!

Doctor Alice: Say, I heard that you've had difficulties in school. Something about a fight?

Buttercup: Yeah, a boy called Mac. He made fun of me, so I wanted to hurt him. He deserves it! But too bad Miss Keane was there to stop me.
Doctor Alice: Yeah. I was just wondering if anyone else was giving you a hard time.

Buttercup: They were all in on it when Mac made fun of me. I don't think they like me very much now, after everything.

Doctor Alice: Does that make you sad?

Buttercup: Not really. Miss Keane said that they'll be gone next year. Good riddance. If they won't play with me, then they're useless.

Doctor Alice: It's good that you're such a strong girl. (scribbles notes down)

Buttercup: I know, right?

(Note 22: She speaks with herself consistently in the centre. She has little regard for others. Early problems in school - though this requires more observation, it's all but conclusive to say that she will continue to have problems in school, based on her attitude. She appears to attribute blame to others for her actions, showing a lack of responsibility. Impulsiveness. She turns to violence as a solution quickly. It's a wonder that she hasn't destroyed the school yet. She seems to have no control over her own behavior. Jesus, what's next? Animal mutilation? Am I going to find a dead boy in the basement too? I will need to dig deeper regarding all of these traits, but I am starting to think that whatever I find out about Buttercup will only reinforce my current findings.)

Doctor Alice: Well, I think that would be all. It's a pleasure speaking to you, Buttercup.

Buttercup: Are you going to tell Mommy and Daddy about what I said?

Doctor Alice: Oh, you won't have to worry about that. I totally understand what you're going through (fakes connection).

Buttercup: You're awesome. Can I have more marshmallows?

Doctor Alice: Sure, take as many as you want.

Buttercup: You're nice.

Doctor Alice: Or a handful of it… (referring to the fact that Buttercup took as much as her hands could carry) We'll be seeing each other again soon.

Buttercup: That would be swell. I like the marshmallows.

(Note 23: It's worse than I thought. Buttercup appears to have developed psychopathy, and with all the traits I have identified so far, it's as severe as it can possibly get. I will have to proceed more carefully from now on. Professor Utonium needs to know. The USDO needs to know. No one knows this yet, not even Buttercup, but too many wrong moves, and she will be a disaster worse than Townsville's crime problem.

But I will need to dig deeper first, scout out the full extent of her psychopathy, even if it appears to be a 40/40 case. I will need to understand her fully to form an accurate diagnosis, then a prognosis, then a treatment plan for her accordingly from there. It's the treatment part I'm doubly worried about though. Of all the tragedies in the world… I feel sorry for Professor Utonium.

One more thing: I won't give up on treating this particular subject. Not this time. Buttercup did not choose to be created, and she did not choose to have this wretched mental condition. I can't let Professor Utonium down. He'll be destroyed should anything happen to his Girls, after what
happened to Eileen and Bloome.)

-TRANSCRIPT END-
Chapter 68: Cause and Effect

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the truth about Buttercup is revealed, to horrible consequences.

Chapter 68: Cause and Effect

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


"Sit down, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin," Doctor Alice ordered sternly the moment Selicia had entered Professor Utonium's office as she was summoned, pointing to the couch where the Girls she interviewed had been lying down before. She hadn't even bothered to tell her in person to come; she had used the phone on the professor's desk instead, for that impersonal touch. "And don't bother lying down. You're not my patient anymore."

"What's the matter, Alice? Still miffed that you don't get to mother those perfect little girls?" Selicia taunted as she sashayed towards the couch and put herself down there.

"No, only that you get to do it," Alice tried to return taunt with taunt, but she wasn't as good as Selicia was; she didn't have the kind of tenacity to do it, being a woman with the perfect temperament for social services.

"Well? Diagnosis, doc?" Selicia said with an equally taunting smile on her face.

"You want a diagnosis? How about a bad mother for one?" Alice accused, pointing aggressively at Selicia. "I know what you've been doing to the Girls, Selicia, and you'd better stop."

"And what have I been doing? What did the Girls tell you?" Selicia demanded, her smile disappearing. The jig was up; Blossom and Bubbles had spilled the beans. But the game wasn't over yet. No, she had done nothing wrong - in fact, she was only doing what was best for the Girls. All of them. Even if she would have to take it all the way up to a USDO council hearing, that was what she would maintain, but it wasn't as if Alice had that kind of power or audacity to force one on her.

"That's restricted information now. The Girls could tell me nothing, and it would still be obvious to me what you've been doing to them," Alice said. "You will stop or else-

"Or else what?" Selicia threatened, rising from the couch. "Who are you going to run crying to if I don't? Captain Kate? Director Cliff? I was put here, Alice, not you, and they did it for a very good reason."

"You're supposed to be the Girls' guardian! You're not here to operate some sort of shady orphanage here!" Alice yelled at Selicia - the way the security officer had been acting was pushing all the buttons in her. Throughout her entire career as a psychiatrist, she had seen hundreds of patients, and
many of them had developed problems because of people like Selicia. She wasn't going to let it happen again, not to three young lives just starting out in the world, so vulnerable despite the enhanced abilities they were given.

"I'm here because Cliff and Blackwater need their weapons! 'Organic Law Enforcement Platforms'!" Selicia bellowed. "That I'm showing some love, especially to Buttercup, is already the grand mother of all improvements compared to the objectives they had set for me!"

"Is that what you call love? What you're doing to Blossom and Bubbles?" Alice interrogated, furious. Lines in her were drawn and erased. It was no-holds-barred now. "What was that you used to say all those years ago? You're not going to let mommy and daddy win? That you'd be a good girl after joining the Organization instead of being a 'little hoe'? It sounds to me like mommy and daddy had won all along. A shame really. I thought I'd reached you years ago, but you've become exactly like them!"

"You bitch!" Selicia screamed as she stomped forward, the two women separated only by Professor Utonium's study/work desk.

"Struck a nerve, didn't I?" Alice said. "I saw you when you were just out of your teenage days, Selicia. You're just a scared little girl who've found smaller girls to push around."

Within just one short second, Selicia had rounded the desk, took Alice by the collar and slammed her against the bookcase. Journals and encyclopedias fell, forming heaps on the floor. She pressed her comparatively younger and smoother face close to Alice's, hot, angry breath combating a more fearful but brave counterpart for a moment. Selicia's face was contorted by psychotic rage, the result of old wounds torn open in a calculated manner befitting a surgeon's strokes, or a torturer's precise cuts.

"What are you going to do? Kill me?" Alice taunted once more. "Just like how you've consistently damned those who tried to help you?"

"I love the kids," Selicia said, ignoring Alice, or at least trying her best not to. Her words had indeed cut deep, right through her bones, and she found that she could barely support herself anymore. "I don't need you to tell me what I feel." With that, she released Alice, and showed herself out the door.

"You're welcome," Alice said. She looked at her hands, and saw that they were shaking. It was a crazy thing, what she did. A risky gambit, if there ever was one. By digging into her old wounds, Alice was hoping that it would cause Selicia to be a little more introspective, and stop abusing the Girls outright to avoid proving her own abusive parents right. Putting a little misery into Selicia might also serve to throw her into the loving arms of Professor Utonium and the Girls, causing them to grow closer, forcing her to be more gentle on that ground.

But it could go either way. Negative emotions could just perpetuate itself - and trauma victims tend to relive their trauma. Alice could only hope that Selicia, being the survivor that she was, could adapt and fight against her condition.

The psychiatrist sank into Professor Utonium's high-backed office chair. She wasn't used to such altercation. She had always been on good terms with her peers, such that diplomacy of the cordial sort had always been her tool of choice for resolving matters.

But all was not lost for the day. She might have seen three girls walk out her door all emotional, but there was Professor Utonium to look forward to. Having known each other for eight years, having worked together closely on Project Powerpuff, only good things could come out of seeing him again. There would be bad news, sure, but then there would be fond memories to look back on together, a
friendship to maintain.

With a smile, she left the professor's office.

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**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

**19 DEC 1988 (Monday). 2146.**

"AND DON'T COME BACK! EVER!" Professor Utonium screamed furiously as he shoved Alice out the front door of The House, quite literally. The shock of it didn't even register in Alice until she was in her car, a brown family wagon, which was ironic, considering that she had no family of her own. She'd stumbled in the snow, nearly fell over from the hateful force the professor had put into the shove. She turned around, wanting to say something, but thought better of it.

"I trusted you! And you took advantage of it! Don't ever think that I will forget this!" The professor accused as he pointed at the woman. When she remained silent, he threw her backpack at her, before glaring hatefully at her for one last pregnant moment, then shutting the door as he shook his head, the bang loud but the aftermath silent when it was all over.

Despite being a mistress of the mind and emotions, Alice couldn't help but to feel her own going out of control. 8 years of friendship had turned into dust, and she didn't have many true friends, the kind who were in her inner circle - she had kept almost everyone she knew at arms length, on a professional basis. She felt the urge to cry like Blossom and Bubbles, but clamped it down and took a deep breath.

Alice walked towards her car, fighting through the cold wind, her jacket fluttering, unbuttoned as it was put on in haste. Getting into the safety of her car, she closed the door and looked into the rear view mirror to see a much different woman in herself from what she was used to. Leaning on the steering wheel, her head resting on it, she thought back to what had happened. She had to try to make sense of it...

If it was even possible in the maelstrom of emotions that had resulted from her efforts to do the right thing.

It had all started out fine. She got into the living room and met Professor Utonium there. They sat down around the coffee table to talk. The first thing they covered was Selicia. The professor had noticed her stomping up the stairs.

It was all Alice could do - without revealing what Selicia had done, Alice had told the professor that she was still having difficulty easing into her motherhood role, and that she needed to be more sensitive to the Girls' needs. She moved on to Blossom and Bubbles after that, revealing the fact that, Bubbles in particular, was coping poorly because of tensions at home, their law enforcement duties, and the backlash from the Highway 13 Incident.

Professor Utonium was devastated. Thinking back, Alice thought that the form of Thomas hunched over, all upset with his face in his hands, was a sign that she should have stopped there and let the man calm down, perhaps put the next subject on hold. But did she really have a choice? It didn't matter. What's done was done.

Alice had immediately moved on to the topic of Buttercup, which was when things started getting out of hand.
"I know you're very upset at the moment but... Thomas, you have to listen to me," Alice had said to a rather down-and-out Professor Utonium. "Despite all the bad things that had happened to Blossom and Bubbles, that are happening to Blossom and Bubbles, the one thing that concerns me the greatest is Buttercup."

"What about Buttercup?" The professor said as he leaned back, his eyes closed as he was rubbing his temple. "I think Buttercup's having the least problems if you ask me; I know, because I'm her father."

"It only seems that way because of Buttercup's... condition. Haven't you noticed how readily she throws herself into combat for the sake of it? How she tends to disregard other people's lives, thoughtlessly? I'm sure you, as her father, should know about her problems at school, about how she's been having trouble living with her sisters-"

"Where did you get that from? Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup are really close to each other - they are practically inseparable," the professor countered.

"Not from where I stand. You might need to have a talk with the Girls. But back to Buttercup - I think she's prone to lying and manipulation. The only reason she's not very good at it is because of her inexperience and age."

"What are you getting at? Alice?" Professor Utonium demanded. It was here that Alice noticed his change in attitude. He wasn't just upset anymore. He was offended. Angry.

"Thomas... I believe Buttercup is suffering from high-moderate to severe psychopathy," Alice had said, before promptly shutting up, letting her colleague take in the facts.

"Impossible! I'm no psychiatrist, but Buttercup's really close to me and Selicia - I don't believe that she's not as close to her sisters either! Sure, there might be some friction but- Psychopaths can't form proper relationships, can they? You're not making any sense!" Professor Utonium was borderline shouting, his bushy brows arched, just a hair trigger away from jumping to his feet.

"Thomas, Buttercup could just be latching onto you and Selicia for the benefits the both of you bring! She spoke to me as though the both of you were resources to be obtained or territory to gain. Look, what I said isn't even the half of it. There are more traits I've noticed that led me to this conclusion and if you'd just-" Alice went on, trying to convince her friend, only to be interrupted.

"You come into my house, and started telling me that I don't know my own daughters..." the professor accused, his tone low, but brooding and simmering with anger.

"Thomas-

"No! You're lying! Buttercup's my daughter and she loves me!" Professor Utonium jumped to his feet, just like what his posture from earlier promised. Alice jumped at his sudden outburst. Then he suddenly stopped, as if he'd realized something. "You- You're trying to take her away from me, aren't you?"

"Thomas... Upton... You got me all wrong- Look, I'm just worried that you and your family is in danger, and I'm trying to-" Alice fought to be heard, but was interrupted by the more bullish of the two.

"So Buttercup's a patricidal serial killer now!? A psycho stabber, that it!?" Professor Utonium shouted, almost maniacally. "Who put you up to this? Is it- is it Blackwater? Or Cliff? It's Cliff isn't it? He wants more control over my Girls! Figured he'd use you!"

"Thomas! Psychopathy doesn't always end with murder!" Alice explained - but her position wasn't
built on sturdy foundations. She had bungled up in her panic - Buttercup had already killed one man and severely wounded a great many others. It was only a matter of time before she gain another victim. "Buttercup could be a pro-social psychopath… I… I can treat her and…"

"You want to have her committed!? Where!? At the USDO headquarters!?!" the professor barked, unrestrained by the usual calm temperament he was known for. Alice was shaken as she felt herself losing control. "Doesn't take a psychiatrist to know that psychopathy is impossible to treat. It's the perfect label! Along with PTSD! YOU WANT TO TAKE HER AWAY FROM ME! You want to take the Girls away from me and leave me with nothing!"

"Professor, please! You're being paranoid!" Alice squeaked out her next words.

"Am I? Is that your diagnosis?" the professor said, narrowing his eyes as his voice, too, had narrowed down to a dangerous whisper. "Buttercup loves me, and I love her as my daughter. Nothing will separate us, not even you, and not even the USDO. You won't destroy my family with your psychobabble. I think it's time for you to go."

Professor Utonium approached her quickly, seizing her by the collar and arm. Manhandling her, he started pushing her towards the front door.

"You can't do this! You- Your family's in danger! We're all in danger!" Alice shrieked as she struggled in vain; the professor was far too strong in his fervor of ardent fury. The professor did not reply this time, that was, until she managed to tear herself out of his grasp.

"Please! I'm your friend! I'd never try to-" Alice tried again to reason with her friend, until she felt something sharp and metal jabbing into her stomach. The professor had replied by pulling his pistol out of coat and pointing it at her. Alice did not know what it was at first, but when she peeked down, she gave a loud gasp. "You wouldn't. You're not yourself, Thomas. I'm your friend!"

"I'll do anything to protect my children, and that includes killing you," the professor declared maniacally, for once living the Dr. Frankenstein stereotype that non-scientific members of the USDO kept projecting on him. With Alice's resistance nullified once more, he continued pushing her towards the exit, and at one point, she accidentally dropped her bag. The porcelain bowl used to hold the marshmallows shattered inside. "Besides, you're not my friend anymore."

The rest was history. She was shoved out of the door along with her little brown bag, and here she was, nursing her own mental and emotional wounds in her old, banged-up car. There was nothing she could do… At least at The House where the Girls and professor were. Starting up her car, she drove towards home. It would be a new day tomorrow, where she could actually do some good with Director Cliff and stave off another tragedy for her dear friend.

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


'It can't be- Buttercup's not a psychopath-' the professor kept thinking, his own voice replaying in his head as he leaned against the front door of his house, as if barring it against any and all outsiders. 'She's a perfect little girl, a normal little girl. She loves me- She loves Selicia- and- and- Blossom, Bubbles-"

He slid down on the door until he was sitting on the floor, clutching his head. Yet, Alice sounded
convincing - she always did. But it couldn't be true, could it? He'd lived with Buttercup for almost a month now, and he'd seen the smiling face of that Girl every single day. She could feel, and love. Right? Sure, there were odd instances where it didn't seem the case - like when she couldn't figure out what guilt was, or her problems at school - but it had to just be a matter of personality! It must be! Besides, she was only a month old - less in previous days - how could anyone expect so much from her?

'Except Blossom and Bubbles didn't have the same kind of issue,' a reasonable voice from the back of his head told him.

Except that Alice was right about Buttercup when she was out in the field. When she pushed Bubbles in the cinema, and wanted to hurt her even more had she not been stopped. 'No, no, no!' Professor Utonium resisted. 'It can't be - had to be a perfectly logical explanation for this!'

'You're not being logical, professor. You're being emotional,' the professor found his own mind splitting, which was headache-inducing. 'No no no no. It can't be real - Buttercup's only a month old - it can't be - psychopathy doesn't just materialize out of thin air -'

'You're no psychiatrist,' his own mind spoke out.

'I'm a scientist,' his own mind resisted. 'And cause and effect is a rule not to be ignored.'

**BUTTERCUP IS NOT A PSYCHOPATH. THERE WAS NO CAUSE FOR IT.**

Unless...

*Oh no.*

No no no no no no no no-

"Oh my God," the professor uttered as he got up, the sudden realization of what must be true dawning upon him, like a nuclear bomb visible in the sky, dropping, the explosion expanding. He started towards the lab. "Oh no… It can't be… Please don't let it be…"

He went through the airlocks, and it felt like an eternity, waiting for them to cycle - and to be stuck with his newest unresolved hypothesis, his doubts and fear for an eternity was like a direct, materialist replacement for hell.

"No no no no no…" the professor gave his thoughts a voice as he descended the stairs as quick as he could. He tumbled down the last flight of stairs when, in his manic attack, he slipped on the edge of a step. He got up despite still being in pain, and raced over to his desk.

He started pulling out drawers, tearing through their contents. When they were too full with documents, he would just dislocate the drawers and pour the content out on the surface of the desk and the floor, ruffling through them in search of answers. "Where is it!?"

Then he remembered - the filing cabinet beside his desk. He searched it from top to bottom, laying waste to furniture and documents all the same. Wiggum's gifts spewed out from one of the sections, and finally, what he needed to see. Picking up two files from the 'Buttercup drawer', he swept aside the paper mess on his desk and slapped them down on the surface.

The first thing he looked at was a brown envelop from Doctor Simmons. He practically tore the envelope apart, as if a man on fire and looking for water, and poured through the documents. The first thing that greeted him in that cursed envelop was a photo of Buttercup's DNA source, from whom Buttercup was cloned. The little girl in it seemed normal, and looked almost like Buttercup,
except for the eyes, which were average in size, and slightly almond-shaped with sharp corners, not to mention dark brown in color instead of glowing, lime green - from afar, they would be practically indistinguishable. The smile she wore for the camera seemed underwhelming. Shallow. She wore her hair shoulder-length, with a black hair clip to control a fringe. What she was wearing was unclear, but it had a floral pattern to it and a V-shaped collar. The background was vibrant, as if some kind of festival was proceeding.

5YG-1848 DNA Source Information Documents

Birth Certificate

Name: Kimiko Scarlett Ito

Sex: Female

Age: 5

Birthday: 4/14/1983

Place of Birth: Little Tokyo International Hospital, Townsville - Little Tokyo, Pokey Oaks County

Father: Junzō Ito (Age: 36 Occupation: National Guards Drill Instructor)

Mother: Sonia Ito (Maiden name Sonia Tvardovsky) (Age: 28 Occupation: Writer)

Ethnicity: 75% American, 25% Japanese

Blood Type: B-

Kimiko Scarlett Ito Medical Examinations Summary

"Kimiko Scarlett Ito has been put through both standard medical examinations and the USDO's own advanced medical screenings. While the standard medical examinations have yielded nothing negative, advanced medical screenings have produced some results, some of which I believe requires immediate attention. The DNA screening, in particular, has detected:

- 15 genetic markers for psychopathy
- 2 genetic markers for Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (inconsequential)"

By Researcher Kathy Summers

The professor sank into his chair the moment he saw it. But the medical examinations wasn't all. The researcher responsible for administering the examinations had also dug up some documents that were relevant to what she found.

For example, Kimiko Scarlett Ito was somehow able to gain a police record at the tender age of five. She was responsible for three counts of shoplifting, two counts of arson, one count of underage purchase and consumption of alcohol and one count of possession and abuse of drugs. Her school records had added to it, as she was suspected to be involved in an incident in which a classmate fell
on a pair of scissors, which went through the classmate's eye. She was also caught three times fighting with classmates and was the perpetrator of a bullying case. Her school teacher suspected her of several times the number of misdemeanors, just that Scarlett was very good at not getting caught. Some incidents were linked to her, but could not be proven.

The parents were interviewed, and Kimiko Ito's violent streak weren't just restricted to the school or the public. She had already killed and mutilated the family dog with the family sword, boiled the family goldfishes alive and attacked her elder brother, who was two years her senior, multiple times, once with a kitchen knife. To add to this, her neighborhood had experienced several cases of animal mutilations, though animal control and the police hadn't attributed them to her.

Junzō Ito remarked that it was the Ito family curse, going back many centuries, resulting in just as many infamous, bloodthirsty characters as honorable warriors, officials, politicians and figures. They were related to the Ito clan of old, as well as many 'detestable' monsters and honor-bound soldiers during World War II. In modern times, there were a few Itos who were part of the Yakuza, both in and out of Townsville, counterbalanced by a few who were in the police and military. The mother added that such people existed, too, in her family tree, just not at such a rate.

The father's attempts to Keep Scarlett under control by exposing her to the ideal teachings of Bushido and the sport of Kendo had failed.

When the professor was done reading the files on Buttercup's DNA source, he went back up to the surface and started drinking in the kitchen - and he hadn't drank so heavily for years.
Chapter 69: World of Pain

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium and Selicia tries to cope with the truth about Buttercup.

Chapter 69: World of Pain

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Professor Utonium sat on a dining chair in a haphazard manner, his lab coat slightly awry from his fall at the stairs and frantic search for the truth. Two empty cans of beer were discarded on the table, one of them knocked over with some leftover beer spilled. A third empty can had fallen on the floor and he didn't care when he normally did. In one of his hand was a fourth can of beer. With his other hand, he had unbuttoned his lab coat halfway down. He did feel hot, and aches had erupted throughout his body from the fall.

That was what Selicia saw, too, when she entered the kitchen, in search of her own liquid courage to weather the storm. The cigarettes she'd had on the second-floor balcony did not help much.

"Thomas?" she called out to him. The professor didn't acknowledge her at first, but only mainly because he was incapable of doing it immediately. The beer was doing its job, as intended, clouding his senses, slowing the processes in his brain that was going at breakneck speed, numbing the crushing pain he felt when he learned the truth.

"It's all my fault," Thomas slurred, before taking another gulp of his alcoholic self-medication. "All mine. The root of it all." Selicia approached him carefully, unsure of what kind of drunkard her 'husband' would make. But when it became clear that he wasn't the sort who would fly into an alcohol-fueled rage, she pulled out a chair and sat down next to him, then cracked open one of the two remaining cans of beer out of the six pack Thomas had taken from the fridge.

"What's your fault, darling?" Selicia asked. She pulled her chair closer to the professor, putting a concerned hand on his shoulder.

"Butter- Buttercup was… created that way because of me," Thomas slurred on, before taking another gulp of his beer. "I picked the cells that became Buttercup. It's all on me."

"Don't talk as though there's something wrong with Buttercup!" Selicia said, and she couldn't help but to be mad at the professor even though she knew that he was drunk and losing control of himself.

"But there is- You have no idea- And it's… It's all my fault," the professor cried, weeping his alcohol-induced tears as he went on. "I thought that Alice was wrong, but her story checked out."

"What are you talking about? What story?" Selicia questioned.
"Buttercup's cracked the moment she was created. Genetic psychopathy," the professor cried. He leaned back on his chair; he didn't even have the energy to carry himself any longer, not with the weight he was carrying. "Because when the world isn't done screwing with you- Just gotta throw in another curveball-"

Selicia took an awfully long time to process what the professor had said. For a moment, she thought that it was just the happy juice talking, but she knew him to be smarter and sharper than that, even with some beer in the blender. Then she started thinking back about everything Buttercup had done. It was all too uncanny.

"Jesus- is it as bad as I think it is?" Selicia exclaimed. Immediately, the movie 'Psycho' came to mind, then her own experiences with Project Powerpuff subjects who had developed psychopathy because of the chemicals pumped into them, or were already psychopaths right from the beginning. She had to put down a few of them, sometimes in uphill battles where the slope was steep when they had escaped to wreak havoc on an Organization facility or even out there in the world. Then her mind wandered into her own experiences when she was a teenage thief and rogue, and what she saw from time to time on the news. "Buttercup can't be…"

"That's what I told myself in the beginning," the professor said, in a moment of clarity when the clouds of alcohol in him had abated somewhat, only to rapidly blot out his mind soon. "Blinded by love- That's what I am- I've damned us all- Such a lousy father-"

Selicia took huge gulps from her can of beer, swallowing the happy juice quickly. She thought she was going to need it. Euphoria descended on her like a light fog. As she continued listening to the professor's rambling, she finished her first can of beer. The more she listened, the more she felt like taking another six-pack out of the fridge. Lord knew, the alcoholic she-devil in her was begging to be released from her cage. But if what her 'husband' had said was true, someone had to be conscious and not inebriated in the house.

"Okay, I think that's enough, darling," Selicia said as she plucked the sixth can of beer from the professor's grasp. He was too out of it to resist much at all. Putting his arm around her shoulder, she lifted him out of his chair and started moving him out of the kitchen. Unknown to her, and certainly the professor, Buttercup had been sitting on the second-floor corridor overlooking the living room, listening with her enhanced sense of hearing.

She had heard everything, though she couldn't understand much of it. And when she heard her adoptive parents coming out of the kitchen, she darted away, afraid to be seen considering that Selicia had asked that they stay in their room for the night until bedtime, which was mere minutes away.

Selicia was able to carry the professor up the stairs and into the bedroom that way; she was a trained security officer, after all, and not even her current assignment had softened her up. She had outfitted a room in The House as a gym and she had been using it all week to maintain her strength whenever she wasn't too busy. When there were finally in their private chamber, she laid Thomas down in bed, face up. She stood above him, hands on her hip, at first wondering at the extent of her 'husband's misery, then realizing that he was just so vulnerable, so weak, the way he was at present.

She went out of the room and put the Girls to bed immediately, refusing, this time, to read them a story and instead, immediately switched off the lights and ordered them to go to sleep, leaving them with their eyes still wide open in the dark, glowing and clearly dissatisfied.

When she was back in the master bedroom, she made sure to lock the door, and even double-checked to see if it could be opened. It wouldn't budge. Good. She turned around, glancing slyly at Professor Utonium from the corner of her eyes. 'He's all mine,' the security officer thought as she
came up to him. He hadn't moved much, and his eyes, which had narrowed into a slit, was just staring at the ceiling.

"Let's… Get you ready for bed," Selicia said as she began peeling clothes off of him, first removing his lab coat, then his top, and the singlet underneath, then his shoes, and socks, and pants. With a smirk on her face, she got rid of his underwear as well. Somewhere in between, she had also removed her T-shirt and jeans - she had been dressed plainly all day - stopping short on her lingerie.

"All my fault-" the professor managed to blurt out, still completely out of it, unaware of what was happening. "Such a… bad… father… Should have checked… Been more vi… vigilant…" Selicia climbed on top of him, putting a finger on his lips and shushing him.

"Shh… It's alright," Selicia comforted her 'husband'. "Everything's… going to be alright."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0634.

"Urrrr… Oooofff…” Professor Utonium groaned. Shortly after opening his eyes, he could immediately feel the hangover from yesterday's binge-drinking. He closed his eyes, squeezed them shut for a moment, but that had only made things worse. Then he looked down at himself, and at first, he thought that it was just blurry vision, but after a while, he realized that he wasn't seeing things. He was stark naked, clothed only by his blanket, which had fallen off such that it was barely high enough to cover his crotch. "What… the…"

He looked to his right. Selicia was entirely naked. Her top half entirely exposed; her bosom was ample, her skin was pale, he had only just realized. And she was already awake, staring at him. He pulled up the blanket to cover himself.

"Selicia? What the hell happened last night?" Thomas asked, even though he knew full well what had happened. He had gotten drunk at the height of his despair and desperation. He could remember bits and pieces. Talking to Selicia in the kitchen, being brought up to his room, and Eileen - or Selicia - on top of him. He thought he'd resisted - did he?

Selicia merely gave him the look and sighed, before throwing off the blanket and getting out of bed, completely uncaring that she was naked for her 'husband' (or colleague) to see.

"Selicia, don't," Thomas managed as he shielded his eyes with his hand, not that his 'wife' cared about either of their decency.

"Pills' on the nightstand, by the way," Selicia merely said. "For the… you know, headache." Thomas looked to his left and saw them, as promised. Two white pills and a glass of water. Prepared for him the moment Selicia woke up, not long ago.

"You haven't answered my question," he pressed, even as he took the pills immediately. The headaches were killing him, no, worse than that. It was drilling into the core of his head alive.

"You want to know what happened?" Selicia said as she was heading towards their bathroom, her back to him, soon disappearing into it. Thomas could hear the sound of a faucet turned on. "We had sex last night, and it was awesome. I didn't think you were that good, and you enjoyed it. Completely."

"We- what!?" Thomas shouted. "I enjoyed- I was drunk last night!" He could hear Selicia laughing from inside the washroom in response, and it wasn't infectious. It didn't thrill him at all.
"Yeah, you should have remained a good boy, right? Not that I mind," Selicia said from inside the washroom, her voice echoing from the inside, slightly projected from the enclosed space.

"You!" Thomas flew into a rage as he flew out of bed, though his flurry of fury was impeded by the fact that he could barely find his balance. He rounded the bed until he could see Selicia in the toilet, taking a drink of tap water from the basin. "Y-you raped me! And all in the middle of- I don't need this shit right now, Selicia!"

"Oh come on now, Tommy," Selicia said as she turned around, again baring her naked form to Thomas. The lusty, lustful look on her face, along with her beauty, played with his biology, and that fact made him mad. "We both know that men can't be raped. Looking hot, by the way."

Thomas looked down, then realized for the second time that he was naked again. He covered himself with his hands. Selicia snorted, then laughed.

"I was just kidding, 'Professor Utonium'," Selicia said, still laughing. "No, we didn't have sex last night. I wished we did, though. We nearly did, but then…"

"We nearly did…? You mean you nearly raped me?" Thomas accused. He looked around for his clothes, and spotted them on the floor, all in one heat, messy and crinkly, smelling like a bar.

"Oh please, it wouldn't have counted. I was a little drunk too. Well, a little. One can of beer is still enough to push you over the safety limit for driving," Selicia went on, exiting the bathroom, still confidently in the buff. "But yeah, we didn't- Here, have some fresh underwear." she had pulled a new boxer and singlet from the professor's wardrobe and tossed them at him.

"What stopped you?" Thomas asked, clutching his underwear as though they were alien artifacts.

"The fact that you kept calling me Eileen and moaning about her," Selicia divulged as she leaned on the wardrobe. "And going on and on about your regrets with her and Bloome and Buttercup and the Girls and blah, blah, blah."

"Oh," was all Thomas could say.

"You can say that again. I mean, I might be a bit of a succubus if I have to admit it, but I'm not exactly big on necrophilia and talking about little girls during sex," Selicia said. "So congratulations, you weren't exactly as sexy as I've said. Say…" Selicia then sidled up to Thomas, pressing herself against him. "You could make up for it if you join me in the shower."

Professor Utonium's immediate thought was a huge, big no. But he remembered the Girls, and he remembered the time. He looked at the digital clock on his nightstand. 6:40 am. They were a little behind in getting prepared for the day, to get the Girls ready for school and send them off.

"Fine, but only because it'd save time," he said as he made his way towards the washroom. There was one other reason. Buttercup. He'd have to keep a close eye on her from now on. In the long run, he'd have to figure out a way to make sure that she could do no harm, whether to her family or the city and if exceptional parenting didn't work, perhaps science might provide an answer.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0654.

The kitchen was a mess when Thomas and Selicia returned to it, and a serious parenting hazard that needed to be scrubbed away. The beer cans were easy enough to get rid of, but the smell required
some creativity. Thankfully, Thomas was up to the task. Fetching some scented candles that Selicia had bought for some misguided romantic purposes, he set them down on the dining table and lit them up. By the time the Girls were down, the smell of beer would have been long gone, the parents’ sins harder to detect. Or at least, he could only hope that the Girls didn’t suddenly develop a more acute sense of smell.

"We need to talk, Selicia," Thomas said as he sat at the dining table, the same place where he'd gotten wasted. He had just fetched the newspaper after the clean-up.

"We did, Thomas. Are you coming around to my side of things? Because I'm not getting any younger, you know," Selicia said. She was at the kitchen counter, making something extra special. Waffles with strawberry, blueberry, and apple syrup, to make up for her neglect of the girls yesterday, and her admittedly substandard parenting of Bubbles. For the blondie, she had added more syrup.

"I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about Buttercup," Professor Utonium said.

"What about her? She hasn't hurt anyone yet if we're even supposed to believe Alice," Selicia said. She had just set the waffle machines to bake.

"Buttercup killed a man and wounded many others. You know that," the professor said. "Alice is right. I've obtained hard evidence for it. I can show it to you later."

"But what are we supposed to do with her? We can't lock her up – literally and I don't want to," Selicia said.

"She can't be alone from now on, that's what I'm saying," the professor suggested.

"And how long can we keep this up, Thomas? If she's a psychopath, it's forever. I've met people who are psychopaths. They don't change. The only cure is the death sentence."

"I don't know. I'm not the psychiatrist here," the professor said. "I just wish I didn't run Alice out of The House like that yesterday. She was right all along." The professor sank back into the hole he had dug for himself, and it was dark and miserable, and he looked exactly like he was in a hole. Selicia saw it and immediately grew concerned. As the waffle machines baked, Selicia threw off her apron and sat next to her 'husband'.

"Thomas, I might not be your real wife – I might not be Eileen, but I'm here with you," Selicia said as she took his hand. "You don't have to be alone in this."

"Thanks," Professor Utonium said, thinking that perhaps it was for the best that Selicia was with him. "Because if I'm not around, I need you to rein Buttercup in."

"There's got to be something more we can do," Selicia suggested.

"My Chemical X Unifying Theory is still in its infancy," the professor mumbled, thinking. He was a man of science, and so when there was a need for a solution, he naturally fell into it.

"What's that got to do with anything?" Selicia said.

"Just an idea I have. If Buttercup can't change, I'll have to make sure she can't hurt anyone. She's my responsibility and it falls on me to do it," the professor said.

"And how are you going to do that?" Selicia asked. "She's a hundred times stronger and faster than anyone, and that's just the beginning. Blossom's teaching her how to fly."
"Chemical X can still be manipulated even if it's a manifestation of something from a higher dimension," the professor said, deep in his own mind, performing calculations and experiments on the fly. He rolled his eyes up as he thought about it, then allowed it to roll to one side or the other as he visualized the chemical and the math. "I might be jumping the gun here, but if I can synthesize something to prevent it from being metabolized, or reacting to other substances… It might work."

The professor was a whole different person when he was in his element – and he usually was. The previous day, when his world was torn asunder by the irrationality of human nature and emotions overwhelmed him, he was helpless. But now, in the world of logic, he was no longer flailing to keep afloat. And Selicia recognized this.

"Keep focusing on that, Thomas," she said, even if she didn't agree with his solution. She would have preferred that Buttercup retained her enhanced abilities. "Don't fall apart on me again. Although… I wouldn't mind if you get drunk again. I don't mind a second chance to sleep with you." She had said this jokingly.

"Sleep… Shoot - the Girls. They're sleeping and we have to wake them up," the professor said, suddenly reminded of the Girls, but one of them, in particular, troubled him the most. "This is the last time I'm leaving Buttercup alone with them. If Alice was right about her psychopathy, then she might be right that the Girls aren't exactly getting along."

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0739.

The morning routine with the Girls was the same, except Professor Utonium was paying special attention to Buttercup's every move. Everything she did was held to scrutiny, everything she held considered a weapon, even if she was holding nothing. Every word she spoke, the professor filtered through a special Buttercup lens for lies and threats. Even though he was adept at hiding this from weeks of practice, the Girls had already noticed a change in him, though they couldn't quite put it, and all they could do was to give him an inquisitive, and sometimes blank look.

At the dining table, Buttercup was sequestered from Blossom and Bubbles. The professor had put her between himself and Selicia.

"Dad, why am I sitting here?" Buttercup asked, noticing the change in the seating arrangement.

"Why, don't you like us?" the professor answered with another question, trying to keep calm and candid as much as he could, even though he knew that he was putting a potentially unstable human weapon right next to him, right next to his 'wife'.

"Yeah, don't you?" Selicia chimed in, putting an arm around her.

"Yes… But aren't I supposed to sit next to Blossom or Bubbles?" Buttercup asked again.

"It's not a rule, Buttercup," Professor Utonium said. "Now eat up, my Butterfly. You don't want to be late for school."

Blossom and Bubbles didn't seem to mind. They ate their waffles happily.

The professor unrolled his newspaper and started reading. The front page, as usual, just had to remind him of what had transpired in the wake of the Girls.
MAYOR WILFORD ADMITS TO INVOLVEMENT WITH HIGHWAY 13 INCIDENT

Just yesterday, in the wake of the crushing and maiming of 65 men, women and children on Highway 13, Mayor Wilford held a press conference to address the issue. It began as most would expect - a heartfelt speech going out to the victims, the renewed vow to stop crime, to do good by the people, for the people. What came next had shocked everyone in attendance.

Remarking that he was blowing the lid off the whole thing, Mayor Wilford revealed that he had played a part in the tragedy of Highway 13. He had revealed that 'The Three' were the result of a kind of superhuman programme created by the USDO. While the USDO might be directly responsible in deploying 'The Three' who caused so much mayhem, Mayor Wilford lamented that he was in the position to allow or veto the project out, and he was responsible for giving the deployment of 'The Three' the go-ahead.

After a very long pause, with Mayor Wilford standing before the podium, motionless, the Mayor proceeded to tear up his notes for the speech he had prepared. That was where things took a turn for the unexpected if it hadn't already. The esteemed public figure, the living fossil of Townsville's history, essentially threw his lot with 'The Three', defending them with the same righteous fire and fury as he did the city.

One can only presume that he had intended the opposite, judging from his actions. Such indecision was unheard of with Mayor Wilford for a very long time, at least before his call for prohibition to return.

"The Three', as you call them, are Townsville's Angels of Justice. But even angels can make mistakes - whether they be our biblical angels, angel investors or the many angels among us. Should we, thus, judge them to be Lucifers, crooks, and liars? I think not. I don't see our very own Townsville Police Department condemned with the same sense of totality and finality as these three little girls who were only trying to help!"

That had been the highlight of Mayor Wilford's speech. Questions were raised by all who were concerned, and he never backed down. By the end of the Q&A session, he needed help getting off the stage and into his car.

Is Wilford a mayor to be retired or are there good omens? Gangster girls of angels of justice? Only time will tell. Based on existing information, however, it can be gleaned from this that 'The Three' are backed by both the Townsville Police Department, the Wilford administration and the USDO. Whether this is a mistake or not, however, remains to be seen.

"I didn't think I can count on you, but thank you," the professor mumbled to himself after taking a bite out of his sandwich.

"Did you say something, Dad?" Blossom asked, turning from her waffle. Buttercup heard it loud and clear, but she didn't know the context of it and was equally curious. Bubbles looked at him expectantly. The professor showed them the front page of the newspaper, with a huge picture of Mayor Wilford speaking behind a podium.

"Oh. It's him," Buttercup grumbled, her voice guttural from the hate.

"Don't talk like that, Buttercup," the professor rebuked the little girl, worried that he had become rougher with her subconsciously, realizing too late. "The Mayor was defending the three of you. It
means the people of Townsville won't hate the three of you… Well, not as much."

"That means he's still a friend… Right, Dad?" Bubbles asked uncertainly.

"Yes, yes he is," the professor answered optimistically. The Girls needed that.

"I wish I can thank him," Blossom hoped.

"I'm sure you'll get a chance," the professor said. "Maybe you should prepare for it."

"Like drawing a picture for him?" Blossom said.

"Or making him a card!" Bubbles suggested excitedly.

"Humph," Buttercup merely grunted.

"Buttercup, have a little gratitude - you don't know how much the Mayor has helped you there," the professor said. Buttercup couldn't help but to notice how different her Daddy sounded. Before, even his lectures were overflowing with patience. But now…

"I'll be grateful if he invites me over for candy," Buttercup said, undeterred. Nothing could deter her form anything - it was part of the Buttercup way. Professor Utonium, not wanting to push her too hard, not wanting to change too much, let it go without another word, though he did lock eyes with her for a second, seeing no fear in Buttercup's glowing green eyes. When the Girls had finally calmed down, he returned his attention to the newspaper.

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**TOWNSVILLE TRIBUNE - 20 DECEMBER 1988 - PG 2**

**FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRLS GUNNED DOWN BY SUICIDAL COP**

A beautiful winter day. Two girls in a sleep-over. A happy couple who had everything going for them. Two neighborhood beat cops, both of whom were distinguished officers. Two days ago, at 11:20 am, everything changed for all involved.

In a freak accident, Patrol Officer Gomez had misidentified neighborhood girl Aislinn Callaghan as Blossom, leader of the notorious trio known as 'The Three'.

'She really did look exactly like Blossom,' Sergeant Wilson, Officer Gomez's partner, explained the reason behind the tragedy. 'I mean, exactly like her. They could be twins for all we know. Depressing as it is, I don't blame my partner for what happened - it's the city we live in, a city I hope we'll eventually be able to clean up.'

The aftermath had left the entire Pokey Oaks North Suburb mourning. The result: Aislinn Callaghan, severely wounded. Her attending surgeon reported that her survival was nothing short of a miracle. Her friend, five-years-old Emily Dawson, however, was not so lucky. Shot with a penetrating wound through the chest aorta and right lung, she died within a minute, drowning in her own blood. Two of the three shots fired had reportedly gone through Emily to hit Aislinn - which was one of the contributing factors to Aislinn's survival, both Aislinn's surgeon and Police Officer Wilson agreed.

'They were really good friends, you know. They were like sisters,' Jack Dawson, father of Emily, explained in an interview. 'I have no doubt whatsoever that Emily was looking out for Aislinn. I just wish she didn't have to sacrifice herself to do it.' Jack reportedly broke down in the middle of the interview and declined to answer further questions.
Aislinn Callaghan is currently in the Wilford Foundation General Hospital ICU after a 12-hour surgery. She has yet to wake up. It is understood that Aislinn had suffered a collapsed lung, a damaged liver and flesh wound on her arm. While her lung had been re-inflated and she would be expected to make a full recovery, doctors still fear that there might be other unresolved complications that might arise. The little girl had lost a lot of blood, which might mean that she would slip into a coma despite blood transfusions replenishing her blood levels. Her attending physician is currently monitoring her for any unresolved internal bleeding and injury.

But doctors weren't the only people attending to Aislinn. Kevin Callaghan and Coleen Callaghan, father and mother respectively of Aislinn Callaghan, has been with her ever since her near-fatal shooting. A mere few minutes away from picking her up from Emily's sleep-over, they were devastated by what had happened to their daughter.

'If only we were early,' Kevin, the father, lamented. 'None of this would have happened.'

Kevin and Coleen had reportedly exhausted their insurance options and savings paying for Aislinn's medical bills. They had put out calls for donations immediately, but in the wake of the Highway 13 Incident, donations from charity organizations weren't very forthcoming.

'Aislinn Callaghan could be one of 'The Three'. Until we know for sure, we do not wish to inadvertently fund a terrorist's hospital bills', one of the organizations reportedly stated when they declined to finance Aislinn's medical bills. The identity of this organization has been kept anonymous to prevent backlash.

'It's not fair, not fair at all!' Coleen, mother of Aislinn, said scathingly upon hearing the news, which reduced her to tears. 'Just because that monster took the appearance of my daughter!'

Officer Gomez, the shooter, had reportedly committed suicide on the spot with a gun to the head. He died instantly.

'He was a good man, put in a bad city under weird circumstances,' His partner, Sergeant Wilson, said, as he is led away for questioning pending an investigation over the shooting. 'He wasn't suicidal at all, and his alcoholism didn't cause this. It's unfair for anyone to say that.'

The shooting has sparked a protest at the Townsville Police Department headquarters, with protesters condemning the TPD for rampant corruption, sheer negligence and poor recruitment methods, which the organizer believed eventually led to the tragedy. Another protest is in the works, to be held at the USDO headquarters.

Will Townsville ever see light at the end of the tunnel?

Professor Utonium folded the newspaper the moment he was done with the article. He had been glancing at Blossom throughout, who was none the wiser when it came to her 'genetic mother', Aislinn. He thought that it was best to keep it that way. He couldn't help but feel responsible for Aislinn Callaghan's plight, as well as the difficulty her parents were going through. And his face showed. The picture of Aislinn and Emily on the newspaper was particularly hard to look at - they seemed innocent in those photographs, and it would probably be the last time they'd looked truly innocent - and one of them would soon have her next and last photograph put in the obituary.

"Are you okay, Thomas?" Selicia caught on and asked, placing her hand, once again, on his.

"I'm fine," he lied. "Just the news, that's all. Townsville isn't exactly the most cheerful of places. I'll get over it."
"Maybe we can change that, Dad," Blossom said. "I don't want you to be sad again."

"That's sweet of you, Blossom," the professor smiled at his beloved, genuinely.

"I don't know if we can…" Bubbles wondered, doubting herself, and everything.

"We could, if I get to punch more bad guys!" Buttercup exclaimed. The professor looked at her as though she'd killed someone on the spot.

The professor's mind soon returned to Aislinn's plight once again. She was in ICU, and her parents were in dire straits. He had to do something, anything, to help. It was his project, after all, that had triggered the events leading up to the wounding of Aislinn and the problems it brought. He'd decided then that he would make it a point to visit them in the very near future.
Chapter 70: The Silver Lining

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup are called for another operation. The professor sets off on a journey, but not before discovering a silver lining that had been waiting for him for days all along.

Chapter 70: The Silver Lining

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0950.

"You asked for me, Director Cliff?" Captain Kate said the moment she stepped into her boss' office. It was something she wasn't used to, meeting the director so directly - that had been Chief of Security Blackwater's job, at least until he was thrown into his own jail cell.

"Come here, Kate. Look outside the window," Director Cliff simply invited without so much as turning from the window behind his desk. The security captain came over, standing beside the director, looking out the window.

The first thing that Captain Kate noticed was the huge sign-waving crowd forming near the entrance of the USDO Headquarters, taking over the plaza just right outside. There were hundreds of protesters, and with the still-limited manpower of the USDO in Townsville, the security officers forming a line between them and the building seemed thin and barely adequate. They had already recalled everyone they could - hundreds were still tied up in ongoing operations and other vital security duties.

"It's under control, sir," Captain Kate said, though the crack in her voice had signaled the lack of confidence, something she couldn't help and had come to regret. She missed Chief of Security Blackwater's leadership - and every time a situation came up, she would wonder what he would have done in her place.

"Under control? I doubt it," Director Cliff said, still not deigning to face the captain. He'd picked up on the acting chief's lack of confidence. The woman was a new player in the politics side of the USDO, where previously she was little more than a grunt with stripes. "Even if it were, you know the USDO way. We don't settle for 'under control'. I don't settle for 'under control'. I want this protest over. It's not going to look good for us if this continues. Ideas?"

The acting chief of security couldn't even act as if she had any idea how to disperse the crowd - without making the USDO look bad. She could have her security officers form a battle line and push them back with shields and batons and finally scatter them with tear gas and water jets, but that would put them on the front page of the next issue of the Townsville Tribune, or the top story of the evening's Townsville News Network broadcast. And should they stay passive, some scruffy teenager or troublemaker would likely force their hand.
"What if we call on our TPD allies to clear the crowd for us?" Captain Kate rushed a suggestion, sensing that Director Cliff was displeased with her lack of initiative and expediency.

"What are you, some kind of idiot!?!" Director Cliff shot at her, again without even facing her. "We have a meeting with the Townsville government today, which includes representatives of the TPD! We'd appear weak and incapable of handling our own problems!"

Captain Kate could not help but keep her eyes on the protesters. She didn't even want to imagine how Director Cliff must look like now. While she couldn't hear what the citizens were screaming about, she could understand what their cause was just by looking at the signs they were carrying. One had an ugly red cross over a picture of 'The Three', as they now call B-47, B-48 and B-49. Another had a caricature of Blossom's face drawn on it, looking incredibly evil. A group of eight protesters was holding a banner with pictures of the various victims of the Highway 13 Incident pasted all over it, with huge ugly words spray-painted on it: 'LET US DO IT - THE USDO WAY'.

It gave Captain Kate an idea.

"What if we give them exactly what they hate?" she wondered.

"Elaborate," Director Cliff ordered.

"We bring B-47, B-48, and B-49 into this. The civilians know what they're capable of, and they'll run if they know what's good for them. No tear gas, no water jets - those kids won't have to fire a single shot. We'll just scare them really good," Captain Kate said, thrilled at her own idea, unable to believe that she could ever think of such a thing. Before, she was used to textbook operations that were covert with fatal objectives in mind. Crowd control and policing wasn't her thing.

"You do know that Project Powerpuff is offline, right?" Director Cliff reminded the acting chief of security.

"Yes, for the city, not that we've announced it yet. But they belong to us, so don't we get to use them as we like?" Captain Kate asked.

"Very well," Director Cliff simply said. "Whatever it takes."

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It was recess time, but Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup weren't exactly playing. They were not even allowed anywhere near the other children. Instead, they had decided to use the time to practice flying. With the entire city in the know about them, there was no longer the need to hide their superpowers any longer. Blossom had been mastering flight very quickly, and she was able to control her direction of motion gracefully, gliding in mid-air as if it was second nature, though the speed she could attain wasn't even half as fast as compared to how she ran on Highway 13. Whenever she tried to go any faster, she would begin to lose confidence and control.

To train Bubbles and Buttercup to do the same, Blossom had resumed using the same old method - she simply did not know how to do it any other way. Taking the both of them up onto the roof of the kindergarten complex, which was three floors high, she hoped that it was only a matter of time before they learn flight the same way she did - through fear. In her case, fear of arm dislocation and Buttercup, and in Buttercup and Bubbles', height and falling.

"Well? What are you waiting for? Jump!" Blossom instructed Bubbles, but her sister simply would
not budge. The moment Bubbles looked down, she would quake in her Mary-Janes and sink to the tiles of the roof. Buttercup, unable to stomach the wait for her turn, gave her a shove.

"Buttercup!" Blossom chided as she glared at her wayward emerald-eyed sister. "That's just rude!"

Bubbles plummeted to the ground, screaming in her usual high-pitched way. The rest of the playground had been watching them, both afraid and fascinated at the same time. Bubbles was able to thrust herself upwards briefly, but she ended up skidding on the blacktop, prompting half the playground to wince at the kind of pain Bubbles was probably feeling. Had she been a normal little girl, she would have been skinned alive by the rough blacktop.

"Good try, Bubbles!" Blossom encouraged from above, at the same time giving Buttercup a death glare. She'd seen what Bubbles had done, and it looked like she was close to achieving flight. "Just remember how it feels like! Maybe you'll get it the next time!"

Buttercup went next, and as she fell, she attempted to focus on the 'anti-gravity' feeling around her feet whenever she was close to touching down. But this time around, however, she had slowed too soon, looking like she had slipped on a puddle of water mid-air, before spinning a full 360 degrees and falling forward and down, chin first, much to the horror of most of the playground. When the dust cleared, Buttercup was no worse for wear as she stood up and dust herself off. There was no blood nor bruise, which her classmates found to be disturbing somehow.

"What are you looking at!?!" Buttercup threatened them. It was mainly the seriousness and unrestrained fury and meanness of her face that sold it. They hurriedly went back to 'playing', but when Blossom descended from the roof to pick them up again, they started peeking once more.

It took several tries for Bubbles and Buttercup to do something with the brief mid-air thrusts they had managed. After falling a few more times, they were able to confidently execute what amounted to 'double-jumping'. Falling from a height, they were able to thrust themselves up mid-air, rising once again before landing at a slower speed.

Back on the ground, Bubbles and Buttercup were even able to have fun with their newly mastered ability. Blossom was floating in mid-air, watching from above with a smile on her face as Bubbles jumped forward several yards into the air, before doing a 'double-jump' just as she was starting to fall, allowing her to reach greater heights and go further. Buttercup did the same, jumping forward several yards into the air, before jumping in mid-air again, and even setting a new record with a third thrust, essentially crossing most of the playground in a single motion.

But it wasn't true flight. What mattered, however, was that they were getting close, and they were having fun. And more besides.

In the process of learning, Buttercup was having so much fun that she had forgotten herself, and how much she tends to either hate or patronize her sisters. Bubbles and Buttercup positioned themselves on opposite sides of the playground. Jumping towards each other, they executed their double-jumps at roughly the same time before intercepting and hugging each other in mid-air, laughing all the way as they descended down to the floor. They landed on their back in the snow, then went on to play with the snow, throwing heaps at each other, or drawing triangles in them with their arms and legs.

Blossom absolutely adored the moment when the three of them were close as sisters should be. But it was a painful thing to her too - Buttercup would soon revert to her usual mean self the moment things settled down and she was no longer distracted. Bubbles was little more than a plaything no different from Buttercup's toy cars. If only-

**Bzz! Bzz! Bzz!** Blossom's flip-phone rang out as she was in the middle of her thoughts. Breathing a
sigh and watching her breath escape her as a mist, she flipped her phone open and answered it. "Hello?"

"Blossom, it's me," Agent Blake on the other end greeted. "We have work to do. Miss Keane has been informed. Your chariot awaits outside the gate."

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1029.

In the Lamborghini Speed Transport, after they had properly suited up, Bubbles was shaking uncontrollably in Blossom's lap - all the latter could do was hold her closely and whisper occasionally that it was going to be alright, despite knowing that it wasn't. To Bubbles, the pain from bullets and baseball bats wasn't even the worst of it. A day out there was just another day to earn more hatred from everyone. Buttercup was shaking just as much, not out of despair, but anticipation - she couldn't wait to see what she'd get to do later, who she would get to punch and how many she would get to wound. It was a great distraction, and all she could ask for - it was better than spending time in the stupid playground getting gawked at by useless children who couldn't even jump more than a feet high, and it was certainly better than thinking about how she had lost the dead cat as a friend - someone who truly understood her desires and motivations.

When their car pulled up and the siren cut, they found themselves in a carpark filled with men and women in the same kind of uniform as Agent Blake, before and after his assignment as their driver. The moment they exited the vehicle, a posse of faceless heavily armed and armored guards surrounding an important looking woman, dressed similarly to the black-geared soldiers (except without the helmet) approached them.

"Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup," the woman, whose name tag on her security vest merely read 'Kate', greeted them coldly and dispassionately. "I never thought I'll work directly with the three of you."

"You have a problem with that?" Buttercup snapped at the woman, but Blossom held her back.

"It's nice to meet new friends. Do I call you Miss or Missus Kate?" Blossom returned greeting with greeting diplomatically, even though she didn't like the looks of things - she was surrounded by swarms of armed guards, and the only person she knew cared about her had just been told to 'bugger off with his posh car' by a soldier of British descent.

"Friends? Yes. You will call me Captain Kate," the important-looking woman said.

"W-where's Mister Blackwater?" Bubbles asked from behind Blossom.

"Chief of Security Blackwater? He's… busy right now," Captain Kate lied to them, unless Chief of Security Blackwater was busy counting the tiles that made up the floor of his new accommodation. Bubbles wasn't sure if she liked that - Blackwater was rough and outright mean to her, but at least he was a familiar sight.

"So what's the emergency today?" Blossom asked with a smile, tried her best to pronounce the biggest word in her vocabulary right. She thought it was an impressive accomplishment, learning a new word with four syllables (four syllables!), and she thought she'd impress her new friend, but Captain Kate merely scoffed lightly at her 'accomplishment'. Blossom's smile deflated promptly.

"Things are going to be very different today. Have the three of you brought your radios?" Captain
Kate questioned. The Girls answered in the affirmative one after the other, all but Buttercup discouraged by how serious the woman before them was. "Good. We're going to put on a little show today. But first, let's get the three of you in your costumes."

Despite Captain Kate's sudden change of language, it was clear even to Bubbles that they weren't going to have fun today.

The Girls were brought to the USDO headquarters' armory, and they were made to unload their weapons, replacing their rounds with rubber bullets and shells. Buttercup was handed an M79 grenade launcher and some tear gas grenades, which she thought was cool, and Bubbles had a normal-sized shotgun with rubber shells forced upon her, which she held with shivering hands - she never liked shotguns, and outright feared them for what they'd done to her. They were made to wear mean-looking black balaclavas with a white skull motif. Their goggles were replaced with shaded versions, which emphasized the glow of their eyes to make them look downright menacing and even appear evil, like some demons dredged up from hell.

When they looked at themselves in the mirror, Blossom and Bubbles were actually terrified of themselves, while Buttercup thought the look fitted her to a T.

"I don't like this," Bubbles mumbled.

"You don't have to," Captain Kate, who had been beside them all the while, said. "You're going to follow my instructions exactly from now on. Blossom, is it true that you can fly?"

"Yes," Blossom said. "But my sisters can't. They could jump in the sky though. That's good, right?"

"It sure is," Captain Kate said with a smile on her face. It was perfect. She knew exactly how to spring 'The Three' on the protesters now.

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**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

**20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1035.**

The Utonium family sedan returned to its garage. The garage door rolled down after the car was in. Professor Utonium and Selicia exited the vehicle after that.

"I still can't believe you're leaving me here in The House," Selicia complained as the 'couple' came through the door into the living room. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm not exactly the housewife type. Besides, the Girls need me, especially when they're involved in another operation."

"I'm sorry, Selicia, but there's something I have to do first, and I have to do it alone," the professor explained. "You could always call a cab, but I'd rather that you prepare something nice for the Girls to help them get through the day. I'm thinking an early 'Happy Month-Old Celebration'."

"Did- did you just make that up?" Selicia stuttered when she heard the ridiculous title of the theme. "Good idea though. What are you going to do anyway? You're not just looking to get away from me, are you?"

"No, although that would be a bonus," the professor joked, but whatever mirth it brought him was extinguished very quickly. "It's Blossom's DNA donor. She's been injured critically because of me."

"Still shouldering the burdens of the entire world, I see," Selicia said cynically. "And you'll be back with the Girls for lunch?"
"Sergeant Blake will bring them back. I'm going to visit the parents of the girls who gave me Bubbles and Buttercup as well," Professor Utonium revealed.

"And what's that supposed to accomplish?" Selicia asked, still cynical.

"Insight. I might perhaps learn something from Ester Olofsson and Kimiko Scarlett Ito's parents and pick up a few parenting tips from them. Perhaps Scarlett's parents had figured out a way to cope with their daughter's psychopathy? I could apply it if that's the case," the professor said. "I'll come back with a 'Happy Month-Old' birthday cake too so you won't have to bake it. How's that?"

"I still think I should go with you," Selicia admitted stubbornly.

"Someone has to hold down the fort. Besides, the Girls- I don't know what condition they'd be in after today's operation. They could end up getting hurt, or sick, or plainly depressed, or even all three. Or worse," the professor said. They'd stopped in the middle of the living room without realizing it. He came up to Selicia, and held her by the upper arms, looking down at her, not quite with love, but something resembling trust, even if desperate. "I would rather switch places with you, but you wouldn't know what to do out there. It's important that I do this."

"You're right, Thomas. I guess I'll stay," Selicia grudgingly submitted.

"That's great. I'll see you at dinner with the birthday cake," the professor said as he let go of her and padded towards the lab.

"And Tommy?" Selicia added. The professor stopped and turned around. "Thanks for putting your trust in me."

"It's not easy for me to put my Girls in anyone else's hands, but you've earned it," the professor said, ignorant, of course, of what Selicia had been doing to Bubbles. Before leaving with his car, Professor Utonium had something he needed in the labs. The documents on the Girls' DNA sources. They contained all the information he needed - addresses, names, biographical info. Descending down the concrete steps into the bomb-shelter-turned-lab, he crossed the massive basement to his desk. The place was a mess, with parts of furniture and documents scattered all over the place. There was no time to clean up, but he thought he might do it later that night if only to provide a neat environment for the rest of the family.

On his desk sat Buttercup's DNA source files. But there was something next to it he neglected. Buttercup's brain scans. He had sent them to the USDO labs for analysis, and it was returned to him days ago. He took the envelope and pulled the printouts out. There were numerous photos of Buttercup's cranial physiology, and circles were drawn around a specific part in some of them. 'ANOMALY' was written next to them, with an arrow drawn from the word to the circle. At the center of each circle was what appeared to be a minuscule lump of activity in the regions of Buttercup's brain where there was abnormal inactivity. The lump of activity was like a tiny crack made of bright light in the CT scan images.

A post-it note was attached to the first image. Reading it, he identified it to be Doctor Simmons' writing:

'I got together with the boys and girls in the neurology department and went through the scans you made over dinner. Piece of work you got there. You have my sincere apology and condolences for what Buttercup appears to be suffering from. I'm no psychiatrist, but the neurology department comes pretty close.

The abnormal activity in the amygdala, hippocampus and parahippocampus gyri could possibly
explain Buttercup's tendency towards violence and lack of empathy - though that's just the beginning. Together, we can see abnormal activities and deficiencies in other parts of the brain that might contribute to what I can only describe as… psychopathy. The right orbitofrontal cortex, right anterior cingulate cortex and left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex are similarly affected.

Then there's more. While Buttercup's brain activity is comparable to a psychopath's, something about it is not. You'll see it in the images, circled and labeled as 'ANOMALY'. There's a tiny volume of brain matter that is slightly more stable and normal in terms of activity, overlapping with multiple regions of the brain, but barely. That's not what you normally find in a brain as compromised as Buttercup's. It is possible that Chemical X might have something to do with it. I've never seen anything like it. I'm not going to speculate any further than that, but I think it's worth exploring the possibility that Buttercup might not be irredeemably psychopathic. I would suggest a regime of treatment and mental/emotional training for the poor little girl. You might want to look Alice up, as that's within her field of expertise. Consider this a referral, professor.' - Doctor Simmons (14 DEC 1988)

Professor Utonium sank into his swivel chair, crying tears of relief. 'Buttercup might not be irredeemably psychopathic', he read it over and over again. He had to make sure that he didn't read it wrong. He stared closely at the CT scans. The anomaly in her brain did indeed look like a crack made of light.

Or a silver lining in a dark cloud. It was all he needed, all that he could hope for.

He knew what was the next thing he was going to do tonight - he was going to ring Alice up, explain a few things. Hell, he'd prostrate before Alice and beg for her forgiveness on his knees in person if he had to - if there was anyone who could help Buttercup, it was Alice.

A/N: The lab scene was supposed to be in the previous chapter, but I've decided that it fits here better.
Chapter 71: Set 'Em Up, Knock 'Em Down

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup put on a show to disperse a crowd of protesters.

Chapter 71: Set 'Em Up, Knock 'Em Down

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1112.

"Earth to Bubbles, Earth to Bubbles," it was Buttercup's voice in the radio, broadcast to her sisters as well as all security officers attached to them, including Captain Kate. Buttercup did not know it when she started fooling around. "Earth to Bubbles. Don't be a crybaby this time, over."

"Hey!" Bubbles cried into the radio. They were separated from each other. From what she could gather, Blossom was put on the roof of the security people's giant building while Buttercup was on the other end of the battle line, formed by USDO security officers in riot gear. She stabbed her eye at Buttercup far away; her vision was good enough to see the two green, shining beads that were Buttercup's glowing irises, emphasized by the shaded goggles they were forced to wear.

"Buttercup, knock it off or I'm telling Daddy!" Blossom ordered over the radio. She could see Buttercup too very clearly too, despite being on the rooftop - her eyes functioned like sniper scopes.

"Fine…” Buttercup grunted her reluctant obedience towards her leader.

"This is Captain Kate. Kids, the radios aren't toys! Do not talk into it unless absolutely necessary! Over!" Captain Kate scolded over the radio. She was on the rooftop, near Blossom.

They had been preparing for the 'show' for some time now. Captain Kate had ordered the riot contingent to fall back closer to the headquarters grand entrance, drawing the protesters closer, encouraging them with a false victory so that their discouragement later would feel all the greater; set 'em up, knock 'em down. In the meantime, Bubbles and Buttercup were able to sneak up to the battle line, hidden from view by the security officers screening the crowd. All Blossom had to do was to get to the rooftop of the USDO Headquarters.

"Are you ready, kids?" Captain Kate ordered for a status update.

"Aye aye, captain!" the three Girls chorused. Captain Kate slapped her forehead at the Girls' response. Ever since introducing herself as Captain Kate, they had somehow gotten it into their heads that she must be the captain of a pirate ship somewhere. A few security officers, who were supposed to be professional soldiers sourced from some of the best institutions in the world, sniggered at the exchange.
"Shut up!" Captain Kate screamed over the radio at both the Girls and snickering soldiers. "Let's just begin the show, the three of you! Blossom, go!"

Blossom started backing away from the edge of the rooftop, giving herself a runway to launch herself. Taking a deep breath, she sprinted forward, giving herself an immediate boost of speed. At first, it was just wisps and sparks emanating from her feet, but soon, a line of pink light started trailing behind her.

When she was close to the railing, she kicked herself off, jumping a few yards upwards, her trail of pink light following. Soldiers behind her watched in wonderment - her powers were beginning to seem like magic. Below, protesting citizens screamed and pointed at the streak of pink light coming towards them, given off by a certain little girl in dark red SWAT gear. They started backing away, screaming, as Blossom fell towards them, her orange reddish-brown hair cascading behind her from below her helmet.

As she fell closer and closer to the ground, she thrust herself up, negating some of the downward force so that she could land comfortably. She landed in the gulf between protesters and riot security officers, in a squatting position with a hand planted to the ground. She straightened up, looking at the crowd. To them, it was as if some mindless, faceless biological weapon had been deployed. Even though Blossom was just concerned about the people assembled before her, her face mask did not convey that - the skull motif on it snarled angrily at them.

"Oh my God, it- it's her!" one of the protesters screamed. Several more stated the obvious.

"Buttercup, Bubbles, go!" Captain Kate ordered over the radio. Bubbles and Buttercup did the same thing on the ground, backing away first before jumping over the security officers, then executing their new 'double-jump' skill to get to where they were supposed to land, close to Blossom. The difference, though, was that they didn't need to go fast at all.

"It's them! 'The Three'!" another protester shouted, her voice clearly filled with fear. The crowd had backed away again. It didn't help that the Girls were outfitted to inflict fear and demoralize - they were dehumanized by their skull masks, the soul in their eyes blocked out by their shaded goggles, which accentuated only the least normal aspect of their eyes. They were armed to the teeth, with grenades hanging off their vests, pistols on holstered on their belt - Bubbles had a shotgun in her hands and an XM14 carbine on her back, while Buttercup wielded a fearsome M79 grenade launcher and a Stoner LMG on her back.

"Kids, draw your weapons," Captain Kate commanded.

Hesitantly, Blossom unslung her Serbu Super Shorty and pumped it, pointing the weapon at the crowd. Buttercup did the same with her grenade launcher, while Bubbles carried her 12-gauge shotgun under-armed as the stock was too long. There was a collective gasp when the Girls wordlessly threatened them. At the edge of the group, a few protesters were already beginning to disperse. It seemed to be working.

"Return to your homes! I repeat, return to your homes!" a security officer hollered on the loudhailer. "This is a police zone - you are disrupting law enforcement efforts!"

Yet at some point, the huge group of hundreds had stopped hemorrhaging supporters. Someone was preaching to the crowd, and he had found a box to stand on so that it was obvious that he was the leader. The preacher turned around and face the line of riot guards bravely, at one point making eye contact with the Girls, which made them question their own actions. In previous operations, they were up against cold-blooded men and women out for their blood. The protesters were nothing like that. Their goggles were shaded, but they were not blind - no one was pointing any guns at them,
and all they had in their hands were signs and banners and cardboard art.

"We have our rights!" the preacher, a guy with a full beard and beanie, shouted. "This is our city! Our Townsville! Not yours, not 'The Three's! You go home!"

"Yeah!" someone else agreed aloud. "You're worse than the mob!"

"Stupid evil pygmies! You ruined our city!" another protester screamed.

"Murderers!" another person, a woman, screamed.

"Go back into the shadow! Bastards!" a man hollered from the crowd. There was lots of cheering and whooping for the strong words hurled at the Girls and USDO.

"Ain't afraid of you, bitches! Cry back home to your moms!" another guy screamed. More cheers and whoops and murmurs of agreement. The group surged forward, as their courage grew. The Girls were actually intimidated. Bubbles even took a step back, and with so many eyes scrutinizing them, it was a mistake easily noticed, and her sign of weakness encouraged the protesters to surge forward further. The Girls could handle bad guys - at least the ones who weren't enhanced like them - but these people who wielded harsh language and signs were an even greater challenge as they couldn't be shot at. At least, not without Captain Kate's go-ahead, but Blossom and Bubbles, at least, had no intention of using their guns.

"Can we shoot them now!? Please!?" Buttercup pleaded over the radio - she couldn't wait to hurt these people who dared to make fun of them.

"Can't we just talk to them?" Blossom murmured over the radio.

"Puppies and flowers… Puppies and flowers…" Bubbles repeated to herself, something that was kept to herself, as she didn't press the transmit button on her radio.

"Negative, do not do anything until I give the word," Captain Kate merely said, but then nothing more came out of the radio.

In the crowd, a man in a trench coat was pushing through towards the front. He looked like he hadn't shaved and groomed himself for the past couple of days. Strands of hair fell on his spectacles, and behind those spectacles, his eyes were red, as if from crying for a long time, but they did not waver from the front. There was something he had to do - the only thing he could do as there was nothing more for him in the world. He reached into his trench coat and pulled out a sawn-off shotgun. Due to how packed the protester crowd was, no one noticed that he was carrying a firearm, and coming towards Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup.

The sawn-off shotgun was given to him by a particularly strange individual, a beast, even, who did not reveal his name. It had come to him in the night, bearing the gift and ideas even when his wife had blamed him for his daughter's death and moved immediately to her parents'.

It was what could be best described as a monkey, with a brain so large that it had busted out of its skull, protected only by what appeared to be a glass dome. It had gifted him the sawn-off shotgun, told him to avenge his daughter by ridding Townsville of the evil USDO and the devil children they had spawned - the culprits who were responsible for his daughter's death.

It felt like it was all he had left to do. After all…

Emily Dawson was the world to Jack Dawson, followed closely by his wife, and they were all gone. And 'The Three' were going to pay for it.
"Blossom, please stand by. I am sending someone down to you with a loudhailer," Captain Kate said over the radio. "I want you to try intimidating them with verbal threats. I'll feed you the words - I just need you to be forceful about it. Think of it as playing pretend. Over and out."

But Blossom wasn't ever going to get her loudhailer. There wasn't even time to go along with the charade and try to disperse the assembly of protesters through tricks and words alone - because something else was going to do that for them, in the worst way possible.

Jack Dawson was able to push himself all the way to the front, facing the demon children who had indirectly caused the death of Emily.

"You-!" Jack cried as he came closer to the Girls than anyone else in the peaceful protest. The Girls pointed their guns at him - they realized only after that that the man in a trench coat, the unkempt and bedraggled man, was armed with a sawn-off shotgun. The mere sight of a shotgun was enough to cause panic in Bubbles - she was pouring cold sweat just from the thought of having to endure getting shot with the weapon. "You killed my daughter! You killed her! You killed my Emily!"

"Miss Kate-!" Blossom cried into her radio, unable to verbalize that she needed instructions for the new development - things were going too fast.

"Mister, please-" Blossom tried to speak to the man, but it was too late. Jack Dawson raised his shotgun at the closest subject of Project Powerpuff, who happened to be Bubbles. Bubbles, in her panic, fired her own shotgun first at Jack, the rubber pellets hitting him in the chest. The grieving man had discharged his own weapon by accident from the pain, but his aim was disrupted, the pellets from his buckshot bouncing off Bubbles' helmet.

Bubbles went into full panic mode the moment she felt gunshot on her. She pumped her shotgun and fired another clutch of rubber pellets, knocking Jack Dawson off his feet, his shotgun flying off his hands.

"They're doing it! They're really doing it!" someone in the protest group shouted in panic. "They're firing on us!"

"They've murdered another man!" another protester screamed, thinking that lethal ammunition was being used.

"What the hell is going on down there!" Captain Kate demanded over the radio.

Other men were pushing through the crowd towards the Girls. They appeared to have prepared for a fight, with bulletproof vests and concealed shotguns in their hands. Bubbles, in her terror, started seeing threats everywhere. She pumped her shotgun and fired it into the crowd. Hyperventilating, she continued firing her weapon in the general direction of anything that was moving towards her.

"Bubbles! Stop!" Blossom screamed, before rushing to seize Bubbles by her shotgun. But she was helpless to stop the chain of events set off by Jack. Buttercup saw Bubbles' action as a sign to open fire. She discharged a tear gas grenade from her grenade launcher. The grenade hit one of the protesters squarely in the face, knocking him and several others behind him down. A cloud of tear gas soon formed. Buttercup broke open her launcher and slapped another grenade in. "Buttercup! No!"

Before Blossom knew it, Buttercup had launched another grenade, this time aiming higher, sending the projectile sailing in a parabolic arc, screaming down into the middle of the crowd, releasing another puff of stinging gas that sent them into a panic. A stampede had started, with people screaming and yelling. Not content with the grenade launcher, Buttercup dropped the weapon like a
discarded toy and reached for her machine gun. In the meantime, the armed men Bubbles had seen had somehow melted away with the rest of the crowd, looking like any other civilians, their work done and never to be discovered.

"-the hell is going on!?!" Captain Kate had gone on through the radio, her voice unnoticed in the ensuing chaos. Blossom had left Bubbles alone after making sure that she wasn't going to fire her shotgun any longer, before rushing at Buttercup, who managed to get a barrage of rounds out before Blossom seized the machinegun by the barrel, pushing it down.

In her bloodlust, Buttercup drove her elbow into Blossom's mouth in response to regain control of her gun, before proceeding to empty her rubber rounds on the crowd, knocking down numerous victims. People were trampling over each other, knocking each other around to get away. Blossom had stumbled backward as she clutched her mouth - she could feel her balaclava getting moist, and from the smell, she knew that it was blood.

"Hold your fire, damn it!" Captain Kate ordered from the radio. "Blossom! Your sisters!"

"I'm trying!" Blossom cried into the radio. Clenching her teeth, she charged forward at Buttercup, seized her machinegun by the barrel again and threw a punch aimed at the side of Buttercup's neck, knocking her down. The green-eyed girl had lost her grip on the machine gun, which Blossom held by the barrel. Blossom detached the ammunition box of the light machinegun forcefully, angrily, and ejected the last round in the chamber before dropping the large firearm.

"That hurts! What was that for?!" Buttercup said as she was recovering on the floor, rubbing her neck and glaring at her sister.

"You weren't supposed to shoot those people, Buttercup!" Blossom rebuked her sister, throwing her hands out in frustration. "They weren't hurting us!"

"Says you!" Buttercup countered. "They shot at Bubbles! That makes them the bad guys!"

"He was just one person!" Blossom corrected Buttercup. "The others weren't going to-!"

"You don't know that!" Buttercup screamed at her sister. In the meantime, the crowd was beginning to clear on its own, though it was doing so in a manner harmful to its membership.

"Don't pretend to care about Bubbles!" Blossom shouted. "You just want to hurt someone!"

"Oh yeah? So what if I do?" Buttercup admitted. She stood up, stomping up to her leader in an effort to intimidate her. Blossom wasn't fazed much. She knew she had the upper hand. They continued arguing, leaving Bubbles on the floor, crying at what had happened, at what she had done in her moment of blind panic. "You should feel lucky I'm hurting them and not you!"

"Go right ahead, Daddy will know!" Blossom countered. The stampede continued around them. Soon, much of the crowd who weren't too injured to walk or run or crawl was gone, leaving behind the injured, their derogatory signs or random personal effects. Sirens in the distance wailed as if upset by the chaos. The police had already blocked off the streets. It was just the sound of numerous ambulances called to collect the injured - and there was a huge demand for it. It remained to be seen whether the dead and dying would be added to their responsibilities.

"Is that the best you can do? Threaten me with Daddy?" Buttercup taunted. Her fists were up - she was barely resisting the temptation to punch something, or someone - namely, Blossom. She had tasted her blood when she elbowed her, and she wanted more for what she had done to her; reducing her to the miserable state of being a subservient minion, always making sure that what she wanted
was always out of reach, making sure that what she had become out of reach - and she blamed Daddy's sudden change on Blossom. She must have said something to him when she wasn't paying attention - she must have!

"You know better than that, Buttercup," Blossom warned her wayward sister. "I've been beating you in front of Mom!" Blossom had beaten her several times over in their previous training session, usually with grappling maneuvers designed to restrain. It was her way to win Buttercup, as she could never hope to beat her in a vicious exchange of strikes. Besides, Blossom preferred restraining to striking, mainly because she didn't like causing pain whenever she could help it, especially to her own family.

"Then you better be ready, because you're about to have a rematch!" Buttercup growled, raring to go. Blossom put up her hands defensively, genuinely afraid of what an out-of-control Buttercup might do without Daddy and Mommy's supervision. She had nearly taken her arm off the last time that had happened.

They were interrupted by several gunshots. They turned to the source. Captain Kate, who had just discharged her pistol in the air, surrounded by her guards. It had the effect of stopping Bubbles' weeping, though she was still a tear fountain - just silenced. Buttercup straightened up while she faced the leading soldier, putting her hands behind her in an innocent posture like a little child caught doing something wrong and trying to hide the fact. Blossom was sort of hanging her hands at her sides, unsure of what to do with herself. All she knew was that they had made another mess.

Even though it wasn't their fault - Jack Dawson was encouraged by Mojo Jojo, under the Foundation, to unwittingly cause the stampede and ruin the name of Project Powerpuff and the USDO further. They were set up, and they were knocked down.

"You! The three of you!" Captain Kate snarled at them. The operation was a mess, and no, the kids wouldn't be the ones getting an earful for it - she was going to get it from Director Cliff because of them, and her plan had seemed incredibly good from the beginning, something she considered to be a masterpiece - until a certain one of them decided to act out and go berserk. Admittedly, though, she didn't expect Bubbles, of the three of them, to suddenly become bloodthirsty.

"Get up, you screw-up!" The angry woman-soldier spotted Bubbles on the ground, still trying to control herself. Her shotgun lay abandoned near her - the little girl wouldn't want to touch it anymore even if it meant saving her life. She marched towards the crying child and booted her in the side. She skidded a short distance, falling on her side, before quickly getting to her feet, afraid that the angry 'pirate captain' would kick her again. "You'd better stop the waterworks before I do it for you! You don't deserve to cry!"

"Hey! Leave my sister alone!" Blossom objected against Captain Kate. The acting chief of security, along with her guards, pointed their weapons at her, a pistol and a multitude of assault rifles. Blossom stopped. With the Blossom threat nullified, Captain Kate picked Bubbles up by the collar with both hands. She could feel some tears splashing on her face as she drew it close to her own.

"I know for a fact that the city hates you, and you probably don't like that," Captain Kate said, her tone seething and low. "Now they're going to hate you even more, and for good reason. Good show. Good fucking show." With that, she threw Bubbles down on the ground. She landed on her back and didn't move after that - she was too emotionally damaged to.

"No one's going to ever like you from now on. Sucks to be you - I'd rather kill myself if I'm in your shoes," the captain said, if only out of spite, knowing that a young mind would take such words incredibly seriously. One thing that she could not agree with, under Chief of Security Blackwater's charge, was his use of physical punishments. Those were just too crude and ineffective, and it
showed, considering how Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup had been consistently throwing their objectives out the window. She knew that cutting deep into a person's heart and mind was the way to go, in terms of causing pain and teaching someone a lesson. "Get out of my sight, the three of you!" Then she turned to her guards. "Let's go, boys."

With that, Captain Kate left them behind to their own misery and devices. But they didn't have to be alone for long, as Sergeant Blake had already prepared his convoy to pick them up. They arrived near the plaza, in a slim sliver of road that was devoid of wounded protesters.
Chapter 72: Fate

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Professor Utonium goes on a journey to visit the Girls’ genetic source and their parents. He finds out just as much about himself as them.

Chapter 72: Fate

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Wilford Foundation General Hospital.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1132.

Before leaving his white sedan, Professor Utonium double-checked his pockets to make sure he had everything. It had been years since he had ‘operated' out in the field. While he wasn't on official USDO duty, he thought that acting in the capacity of a USDO agent might unlock some doors for him. In his pocket was a USDO I.D. card, which was supposed to grant him the same kind of access and authority FBI or CIA agents get in the field, but with what was going on, he was sure that it would grant him resistance and infamy instead. He had a checkbook with him too. There was a bouquet of flowers on the shotgun seat. Roses, with their thorns removed. He thought the color would fit Blossom very well, and therefore Aislinn Callaghan.

With that, the professor exited his car and left the underground car park, entering the lobby. The first barrier had been the receptionist, who wouldn't allow him to visit Aislinn Callaghan on the basis that the Callaghan family needed some room to recover from their tragedy. When the professor showed the receptionist his card, he was grudgingly allowed passage. From the look on the old lady receptionist's face, he was sure that she didn't have the best impression of him because of the USDO label.

Aislinn was still placed in ICU, that much he gathered from the receptionist, and when he saw for himself the family in the sealed room. The mother, a somewhat short redhead, was holding Aislinn's hand, and although her tears had dried a long time ago, the look on her face indicated that her misery was far from relieved by Aislinn's survival.

The father was hunched over the mother - he was a huge guy, about the same height as the professor, but built thickly. The professor could tell immediately that Aislinn, and therefore Blossom, had inherited her hair color from this man. He was fully bearded, with hair that reached down to his nape, and could cover much of his forehead had he combed it that way.

Aislinn, on the other hand... Blossom was a spitting image of her, a perfect replica in every way. It was no wonder that Aislinn was mistaken for Blossom. With her eyes closed, she was practically indistinguishable from Blossom. She was so much more fragile, however - there were cuts and bruises on her face, likely sustained from falling on the floor. The professor didn't even want to know what was on her medical chart.

The professor entered the ICU after taking a deep breath. He knew how upset parents could be like.
He'd been there before, and not just with Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup. When he was in, the parents did not respond immediately, even when the sound of the door opening and closing was loud enough to be heard, and so, too, were his footsteps. It was only when he stopped that the father turned around.

"Kevin Callaghan?" Professor Utonium greeted, showing the bouquet of roses to the man. "I'm here to wish Aislinn well. I heard about her in the newspaper." The professor stole glances at Aislinn. She looked too much like Blossom, so much so that the mere sight of her in the ICU, hooked up to machines and on vital monitoring, was deeply disturbing and plainly broke his heart.

"Thank you," Kevin Callaghan said, his voice a little deep, and low. The father shook his hand. The professor couldn't help but notice how large those hands were. "Aislinn could use all the support and well-wishes she could get. Please, set the flowers down on her table. She'll appreciate it when she wakes up."

Professor Utonium did as Kevin asked, putting the flowers on the table beside Aislinn. It was filled with gifts, likely from family and friends - but there weren't many. There was a box of chocolate, a pot filled with flowers of many species. A packet of sweets. A kid's encyclopedia. When he was done, he was just stuck there, looking at Aislinn, her breathing slow and shallow.

"How is she?" the professor asked. He couldn't quite bury his emotions, even though he knew it was inappropriate on many grounds. Last he checked, he was only a professional acquaintance, and an indirect one at that, as he wasn't the one who gave Aislinn her free medical examination and collected her stem cells covertly. He had only given the order and approval as Head of Research back then.

"She'll be fine," the mother, Coleen Callaghan, said in a hushed tone, afraid that she might somehow wake her daughter up from a restful sleep. "She's strong like her father."

"Smarter than us too. Doctors said there's a chance for coma, but I know my girl won't fall into it. She'll will herself awake, right?" the father said hopefully as he returned to his wife's side. It was clear that he knew nothing about medicine or the human brain, but the professor couldn't fault him for that - if Blossom was in Aislinn's place, he would probably be saying something similar, doctor or not.

"Thanks again for coming," Kevin thanked again, without turning away from his daughter. "I never got to ask your name. I'm sorry for being rude."

"You weren't. You're just in a tough spot," Professor Utonium said. He wasn't sure if he should reveal his real name to this man, and it wasn't just a matter of duty to the USDO. In fact, that was the last thing on his mind. Kevin Callaghan deserved to know nothing but the truth because of his daughter's ill fate, but in the end, he decided that it be best to remain distant for the time being. "It's Utonium, by the way. Professor Utonium."

The odd name and title that was blatantly thrown out had Kevin Callaghan turn his head. "Yeah, I can tell from the lab coat. You work here or something?"

"No, not quite," the professor said, revealing another half-truth. He didn't just work in the hospital, his job encompassed the entire city of Townsville. He said nothing more, and he could tell that his counterpart might have detected something, and did not like it. He didn't like anything shadowy.

"I'm terribly sorry, but," Kevin apologized. "We need some time alone. You know how it is." Was it entirely genuine or was the father looking for a way to get rid of him? The professor couldn't tell. All he knew was that there was something else he had to do.
"Before I leave, I have something else for you. I heard that you've been having trouble paying for the medical bills, so..." Professor Utonium said as he pulled his checkbook out of his pocket. Both parents turned to him as he scribbled a sum and his signature on a cheque. When he was done, he tore it out and handed it to the father. "I'd like to do my part."

Kevin Callaghan looked at it. It was a cheque for $100,000, a substantial sum that would more than cover Aislinn Callaghan's hospital bills. The professor had written the cheque to pull the funds out of his own personal bank account. The USDO had paid him handsomely for the past eight years. It was only recently that his salary was cut back dramatically owing to his change of position from Head of Research to a Field Researcher. There was that, and with most of his expenses covered by the same federal agency, his personal bank account was fattened and largely untouched. $100,000 wasn't even half a year's savings to him. But it wasn't the sum that had drawn Kevin's interest this time.

The cheque had the USDO's logo on it. It had been issued to him soon after the Organization had transitioned into a publicly-known federal agency. When Kevin looked up at Professor Utonium, the look on the former man's face was one of burning anger, and the professor found out from that face alone that Kevin Callaghan wasn't a man to be trifled with, even if he was of a humble background and limited means.

"You're USDO?" Kevin questioned, his voice still hushed, but shaking with barely-contained fury. It was more than fury. It was as if he was bleeding profusely from a wound that had barely closed. Sadness for his daughter and the feeling of betrayal couldn't even begin to cover it. Tears were already welling up in his eyes. He waved the cheque angrily as he continued: "What is this? A bribe to keep my mouth shut?"

"What? No- not at all- It doesn't matter who I work for-" the professor hurried to explain, but Kevin had already torn up his cheque and thrown the scattered remains of his goodwill back into his face. The professor was shaken when it happened, but he had done well to contain himself, considering that he had expected to break a few limbs after that. But nothing happened. Kevin merely glared at him with all the hatred he could ever muster.

"Get out. Don't ever come back again," the father merely said in a low voice, but the professor knew that it wasn't a courtesy for him. It was a courtesy for his family. Still, looking at Aislinn, the professor knew that he had to try to reason with this man, even if upset parents were next to impossible to negotiate with.

"Look, I may work for the USDO, but I don't agree with them at all," the professor tried to reason with the man. "I'm a scientist and a doctor - whatever I do, I do it for-"

"I don't care!" Kevin raised his voice to a growl, but it was still quite soft. "You're still enabling those- those- fuckers! I'm not taking your blood money. Get out, before I alert hospital security."

"Kevin," the mother called out from beside Aislinn's bed. "I know how you feel about this, but we need the money. Aislinn's life will be destroyed if we're destitute, even if she mends."

"We can get by with the debt," Kevin turned around and asserted. "We can get by, just like we always did."

"Not this time, Kevin," Coleen said. "Please."

The father returned his gaze on professor Utonium, his face still ridden with anger and hatred. A single tear finally escaped from under his eyes. He was opening and closing his fist as if deciding whether to punch the professor or smack him. Despite it all, the professor could empathize. Hell, he would have let the man beat him up if it'd make him feel better, but he had his own family to return
"Now, I'm going to write another cheque. Don't tear this one up too," the professor said as he scribbled on the second page of his checkbook. "Bank it instead. It's for your daughter's own good, no strings attached." He handed the cheque to Kevin, who was still glaring at him with the kind of hatred meant for a thousand evil men.

"Is it?" the father merely insinuated. The professor knew what he meant - Kevin might be built muscular, but he wasn't stupid. If anything, life below the poverty line had probably taught him plenty of street wisdom.

"Alright, I'll say this - but it's certainly not a bribe. The money's coming from my own pocket. You might not know this, but I owe everything to Aislinn, and to the two of you, of course. I've lost my own family once upon a time, and Aislinn- well- she's given me something I never thought I could have again. Family. Love. A daughter. My gift wouldn't even begin to express the gratitude I have… For everything," the professor all but confessed what exactly was going on, barely keeping it vague. There was silence after that, as the two men stared at each other. Knowing that there was nothing more to be said, the professor turned around and left.

It would be a while before the Callaghans understood what he meant.

What had happened at the hospital had shaken Professor Utonium up pretty badly. He did not expect the hostility, though he did not blame Kevin Callaghan for it. On the way to his next destination, he was entirely silent - his heart was already aching for the sound of his children playing, or talking. He didn't switch the radio on as he thought that it was somehow disrespectful that way.

He ate in silence at a rest stop. Fish burger and fries, to maintain a passing semblance of healthy eating. He wished again to be back with the Girls, but he had to wonder, how did he fall for his adopted children so hard? Was it because of his loss? Or did he pity them? If it weren't for him, they would have been treated like war machines, weapons to be respected in combat but neglected in storage, with no attempts made by the powers that be to provide for them what children need, and no chance at something resembling a childhood.

His mind wandered back a month, to the root of his love, as he chewed on his fish burger with an absent mind.

The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

26 NOV 1988. 1329.

Professor Utonium sat on the couch in silence, watching the fireplace burning. He had let the Girls play in the living room, taught them that 'fire bad'. They learned fast. But doubt had set in, hard and mercilessly. The past few of days had been hard, and he thought he could feel some sickness coming on.

He was going to screw up again. He just knew it. Just like how he had failed his family. He couldn't take care of one child - what right did he have to take care of three? Somewhere on the horizon, he just knew it, something was going to happen, and that was not to mention the fact that they would be used as biological weapons in the not-too-distant future.

The professor couldn't stop himself from tearing up, and finally weeping. Blossom was the first to notice it, and she left behind Wiggum's white tetrahedron and walked towards him, her gait still a little awkward, but she was mastering the walk fast. When she saw that her Daddy was crying, she
"Daddy- Daddy sad?" she said, her vocabulary few and basic, but it was enough for the professor to understand. She broke into tears when she realized that her father was upset. "Daddy sad!" The others looked away from their clinical toys, taking interest in what was happening with their sister.

"Oh, Blossom," was all Professor Utonium could say. He could barely even speak. "I don't- don't know if I can- You wouldn't understand even if I tell you… would you?"

"Daddy sad. Blossom hug," Blossom said as she reached for her father, clambered onto his lap and hugged him. "Daddy happy?"

In her own way, Blossom did understand. The professor hugged her back. "I'm sorry- so sorry- for desparing," he said. Blossom pecked him on the cheek, just as he had done so numerous times over the past few days.

Bubbles and Buttercup joined them soon after. Buttercup had been so innocent then - she hadn't tasted her favorite drug yet - violence, and wouldn't know that she would relish in it until weeks later. They were all so innocent. Bubbles climbed on top of the professor's other leg and hugged him as well. Buttercup, not to be outdone, climbed onto the couch and got him from behind.

"Dadda…" Bubbles said sadly when she saw the tears on the professor's face. She herself was crying because her father was. Father and daughter made eye contact for a while, and her eyes had said much more than the few words she knew could. 'Don't be sad, Daddy, we're together,' her eyes had said. As she sat on his leg, she leaned against him, her cheek pressing against his chest. It'd made him feel so much better.

"Daddy…" Buttercup added. "Daddy good." She tried her utmost best to make him feel better. A basic compliment. It worked far better than the kind of essay-long compliments his colleagues would give him.

"Oh Girls," the professor said. He couldn't help but to smile. The Girls smiled with him. Yes, they were together now, as a family. And together, they could get through this - or whatever was set in their path. They were a family, and nothing would separate them.

The City of Townsville. Highway 12. Razzading's Pit Stop.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1221.

And he wasn't going to give that up or betray that. He had nearly done so before by filicide. Never again. They were a family, and nothing would separate them. Mere days into their life, the Girls cared deeply about him - and he cared deeply about them. It was as if they were meant to be together. Buttercup was the only one of the trio who might have lost most of it as her genetic psychopathy expressed itself, but it was not her fault.

When Professor Utonium was done with his meal, he pressed on, unsure of what he might find at the Olofsson residence.


20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1415.

The sun was out, and there was a clear blue sky. It was as hot as it could be in winter, same as the
day Aislinn was severely wounded and her friend killed. The professor had been sitting on the porch of the Olofsson Residence for over an hour now. The Olofssons weren't home. It made sense for the father, perhaps the mother (he didn't take a good look at the occupations section), but it didn't make sense for the kid. Ester Olofsson. Perhaps they were out shopping for Christmas? It was a real possibility.

The truth was worse than that.

By the time the Olofssons had returned home, the professor was in a daze, looking up at the afternoon sky, dreaming of some fantasy world where he had somehow independently created the Girls - no USDO, no Foundation to fight against, and the Girls were perfectly suited to fighting crime, and only because they wanted to. A perfect world - but only a fantasy.

"Hi. Do I know you?" a male voice greeted him, bringing the professor out of his daydream. It was the father of Ester Olofsson. A man of above-average height, well built from hard labor but had a tummy, either from drinking or poor dietary choices. Dirty blonde hair. He wore a security uniform, light blue shirt, and dark blue pants. Beside him was the wife. The professor almost didn't see the child, as she was hiding behind her mother's legs, peeking at him while exposing only half her face, as timid as a mouse. She was imperceptibly different from Bubbles, but she was dressed differently, wearing a pair of round-framed spectacles and keeping her hair down at shoulder-length. She was beautiful but in a haunting way. He couldn't help but notice that she was pale, more so than usual. There was a bandage on her right wrist.

"Ejnar Olofsson?" the professor shot up from the steps when he was surprised by the family. He stuck out a hand, and the man of the household shook it awkwardly while looking at him quizzically, with an almost blank stare.

"Do I know you from somewhere?" Ejnar asked, his Swedish accent thick as he had directly migrated from Sweden as a working adult. He scanned the professor up and down, noticing his lab wear. "From the hospital?"

"Well, not really," the professor said, struggling to explain it. He was afraid of inciting anger in another parent. It wasn't a pleasant experience, and he could only feel more guilty about chasing Alice out of his house at gunpoint. "I was part of the team that gave you and your family those free medical examinations."

"Ah yes, I see," Ejnar said with a smile. "Very grateful for that - those would have been expensive. Mighty grateful for that - please, come in, come in." The man slapped the professor on the shoulder and gestured for him to follow his family. The professor couldn't help but feel a warm, fuzzy sensation in him. Now he knew who Bubbles had inherited her sweetness from if there were genes for sweetness.

The wife, Freja Olofsson, was the first to go in, with Ester clutching her leg all the time. The professor got the sense that she was avoiding looking at him. When they were through the door, the little girl - Bubbles' genetic source - sprinted into the depth of the house, no doubt towards her room.

"Don't run too fast now!" the mother said.

Before he knew it, Professor Utonium and Ejnar Olofsson, with Freja Olofsson, were having tea around the coffee table in the living room. Milk pudding and earl grey. The Olofsson residence was a simple abode. It was a two floored bungalow, and the inside of it had a homely kind of feeling as if he was transported back in time to the 60s. Wooden floor, yellow wallpaper, a grandfather clock that was no longer working, which likely came with the place.
Having learned from his mistake, the professor didn't jump the gun. They talked. For some time, they were just talking - about work, about life and its tribulations, about their home countries. Freja Olofsson had to excuse herself five minutes into it, as she didn't dare risk leaving her daughter alone for too long.

"Fragile little flower," Freja said before leaving for her daughter's room. "She needs so much nurturing and watering…"

"So, to what do I owe the pleasure of meeting my daughter's benefactor?" Ejnar said, clapping his hands together. They were calloused from hard work, whether be it mining or security. Despite his apparently low IQ, Ejnar seemed well-spoken. The professor wasn't one to judge, but he saw it as a good sign - IQ, after all, could sometimes be increased.

"Concern. How is your daughter?" the professor finally went for what he came for. Upon hearing the question, Ejnar leaned back on his easy couch, his wide shoulders looking like they had just taken a ton of rocks. He gave a sigh as he looked out the window.

"It's… been bad," Ejnar finally said. "God has blessed her with a good, fit body, but it didn't come with as sturdy a mind. Sometimes I blame myself for my cursed seed."

"Don't. What happened is just nature," the professor tried to comfort the man, who looked like he had been hauling Sisyphus boulders for a very long time. "You found a wife, had a child - that's love, and everyone has the right to love and be loved, no matter who they are."

It came out of nowhere, but Jojo had suddenly popped into Professor Utonium's mind. Even though he had answered it, he still could not help but to keep asking the same question: 'Should I have forgiven Jojo for his crimes?'

"You're right. You're totally right," Ejnar said, but it seemed that the chip on his shoulder was still there, grafted onto the skin of his back, sucking on him like a leech. "It's just… hard."

"I know," the professor said. "What happened?"

"Today? I guess it broke the camel's back. Is that how the English metaphor goes?" Ester's father said. "Yeah, it broke Ester's back and broke my heart too, what happened to her."

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20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1103.

"Now, kids, do you remember what we're doing for art and craft today?" Miss Jones asked her class. It was a kindergarten like any other - up to snuff with so much color it would make an adult feel a little sick. Drawings decorated one wall, posters and windows another. A blackboard in front, with an overeager, young teacher.

"We're doing paper cutouts today…" the twenty or so 5-year-old kids in her class said disjointedly. All except one. Ester Olofsson.

"Very good!" the kindergarten teacher praised. "Do all of you remember the rules?"

"No running with scissors?" a boy recited.

"Yes, what else?" the teacher said.
"No playing with the paper cutters?" a girl recited.

"Good, anything else, boys and girls?" the teacher asked again. "Ester? What about you?"

Ester remained silent. Some of the children snickered, whispering to each other how stupid she was. Bubbles' DNA source couldn't hear what they said, but she could hear that they were whispering about her, and it was enough. She had grown used to her classmates' antics, but it was something she could never grow to like nor thrive on.

"Oh, Ester. You need to learn to participate a little," the teacher cooed. "Remember to watch your fingers! If any of you need help, don't wait to ask for it!"

As soon as the teacher had turned her back, a boy flung a paper ball at Ester. It hit her right in the lens of her spectacles. It didn't hurt at all, but the gesture was felt. Something else she had to survive on a daily basis. She took the paper ball and opened it up. It showed a stick figure which represented her. It was obvious from the yellow, straight hair, which was analogous to what she wore. Around the stick figure were dead bodies, red representing blood. ‘ASTER IS MORNSTER’ was written below, crude but it got the message across.

Even Ester knew about what had happened on Highway 13. She had seen it while her father was watching the news. One of 'The Three' looked exactly like her. No cookies for guessing that her classmates knew about it too.

While the teacher was attending to another group, a group of boys and girls approached her. She looked up at them, the reflection on her spectacle lens obscuring the fear in her blue eyes.

"You're a monster," one of the boys said.

"Yeah, you hurt people in your free time," one of the girls said.

"Monster!" another boy blatantly said. "Like Frankenstein!"

"I thought you were just stupid," another girl said. "You're also a monster."

Ester Olofsson happened to be gripping a paper cutter, and her hand was shaking with strong emotions as her classmates taunted her. She was not one prone to violence, but a year of torment from her classmates had the effect of making her imagine hurting them sometimes. But it wasn't something she could do.

"Monster! Monster! Monster!" the boys and girls started chanting. Ester gritted her teeth as rage and sadness coursed through her but had nowhere to go. But when something in Ester finally gave, selfish playfulness became fear and a collective gasp.

"Miss Jones!" one of the classmates screamed.

"What's going on over there!?" Miss Jones turned around and asked, only to see something that made her feel faint. "Ester!"

There was red, and it wasn't from the crayons. Gritting her teeth, Ester had started running her paper cutter repeatedly across her right wrist as she was crying, letting out a pained breath each time she did. Blood was already spattering on the table as she had already inflicted several cuts on herself.

"ESTER! STOP!" Miss Jones ran to the distressed little girl. The whole class had dropped their paper cutouts and started watching. They had never seen their teacher so afraid before. By the time Miss Jones had reached Ester, she had already cut herself five times. her last slice had split open a
vein and blood was beginning to pool on the table, soaking craft paper and instruments alike. It was only then did Ester drop the paper cutter as she gritted her teeth from the pain, her face scrunched up in agony. She gripped her injured wrist, which Miss Jones soon seized and pressed a hand over to slow the bleeding.


20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1438.

"That's…" Professor Utonium was speechless when he heard the story from Ejnar. "That's just…"

"I know. I'm moving Ester to a new school. I just wish I had done it sooner," the father said, his voice trailing off into a whisper. His face was still hard as a rock - he was a tough guy, tempered by the steel of his mining equipment and security gear, but the professor could tell that it was on the verge of cracking, and there was so much water that could seep through.

"Well, why didn't you?" the professor asked, keeping his tone respectful.

"My work. Money. Commuting time. Couldn't move from this… damn house. Stupid reasons like that," the father said, his eyes distant. "But my family's more important. I'll have to pay whatever price this will cost me."

"Aren't you going to sue the school at least?" the professor suggested, suddenly quite angry. Had this happened to one of her Girls, he would have been raging mad. Also, Ester's pain felt like something that could have easily been avoided had the teacher addressed Ester's bullying woes anytime throughout the year!

"I've thought about that, but," Ejnar said, his face somehow hardened even further. "Justice is for the rich. Lawyers are too expensive. Men like me, and little girls like my daughter, who has the misfortune of having a father like me… I guess we just have to bear with it.

Cue the cheque. Another $100,000 to be given away. Ejnar was shocked to see it, if his face softening slightly was shock. Again, the USDO logo did not go unnoticed, but Ejnar, despite looking like a human piledriver, did not go that route.

"But why? I can't take this," the former-Swede said. "I'm not rich, yes, but- taking money which isn't earned- it's wrong."

The professor considered his options for the moment. Ejnar Olofsson had been kind to him, and not so judgemental. Yet, divulging sensitive information about Project Powerpuff could have severe consequences for himself and the Girls. He decided then to tell him just enough - besides, with the Girls being on the news recently, linked to the USDO completely, rendering the organization practically naked, what was there left to hide?

"What I'm about to tell you is top secret information. Keep it to yourself. Your daughter's genetic material was used to create one of 'The Three'," the professor said it straight. "They're actually created for law enforcement, just that they are… still learning."

Ejnar had hardened into rock the moment he heard this, sitting straight up on his easy couch. The sadness in him was gone, replaced by… something else. Not anger, not betrayal. Something hard to read.

"I created them under the employ of the USDO, but I can assure you that it wasn't intended. I've taken responsibility as their caretaker now." the professor went on, hoping to get to the 'good parts'
before something drastic happened. "We're like a family - those three Girls, another caretaker and I acting as their parents. You've given me a family, and I'm here, in part, to thank you for it."

"Oh," Ejnar simply said, betraying the fact that it was all a lot to take in. "Then why else are you here?"

"I need help. My Bubbles... Ester's genetic daughter is experiencing the same thing. I've read your daughter's file. Early onset depression, and now this. How do you cope with all that?"

Ejnar leaned back on his easy chair once again, though he looked like he had aged years in a second, the way he clutched his head, the way he carried himself, as if what vitality he had was sapped from him.

"You just do, I guess. Or don't. That's how it is with me," Ejnar said, unsure. "With my work, I can hardly be there for my Ester. I wish that wasn't how it is. Maybe she's now like this because of my absence. So if you have a choice - I guess you just gotta be there for your Bubbles."

The professor stayed silent. What Ejnar had given him wasn't much to go on. He had expected some kind of magic, a silver bullet. There weren't any, and being a rusty parent who was just as experienced as Ejnar, he was prone to the occasional attack of naivety. At the very least, he had tweaked his expectations.

"I'm sorry I can't give you any real advice," Ejnar apologized.

"Don't be," the professor simply said, then kept silent once more. The tension from Ester's self-harm incident hung in the air.

"How is this Bubbles like?" Ejnar asked curiously.

"Oh, you'd like her. She has a bubbly personality, which was why I named her Bubbles. She's so sweet that you can taste it in your mouth, and she wouldn't hurt a fly," the professor described. Ejnar smiled. The dam that was his eyes finally broke, but not for long.

"Sounds exactly like Ester, until she stepped into the outside world for the first time," Ejnar said. Sensing that enough had been said, the professor stood up.

"I guess it's time for me to go," he said.

"But the money-" Ejnar protested persistently.

"Bank it. Spend it. I'll leave it up to you how you want to use it," Professor Utonium said. "Whether it's for justice or a therapist, as long as it's for your daughter's benefit."

"I don't know what to say," Ejnar said. "Thank you." That was when the rest of the family had popped into the living room. Ester Olofsson was walking in front of her mother. When the little girl saw Professor Utonium, she stopped, staring at him with wide eyes. The professor came up to her and bent down, taking a good, long look at her. The little girl seemed a little scared, confused even, but the professor thought they'd made a connection there.

"Stay strong, little one," the professor encouraged the girl as he patted her on the head. It felt exactly like Bubbles' head, except more fragile somehow. Considering that Bubbles' couldn't even be hurt by a speeding truck, there was a scientific basis for that, but still, he thought that it was a matter of perception. "Alright?"

"Y-yes, mister..." Ester said, her voice high-pitched and squeaky as Bubbles'. It was a weird
experience, meeting a stranger who looked almost exactly like his daughter but with eyes that didn't have that sense of familiarity. She said nothing more as she stared at the professor with her Bubbles-lookalike face. And then he was gone.

**Phone Recording 12201988-1450-HPSS**

**DOC: 20 DEC 1988**

**EXTRACTED: 9 JAN 1989**

-TRANSCRIPT START-

Field Researcher Utonium: (Silent)

Alice Voice Recording: You've reached the office of Head of Psychiatry and Social Services Alice. If you're hearing this, I'm probably outside because of work or something. Leave a message and I'll be sure to get back to you.

Field Researcher Utonium: Alice. Urm. This is kind of awkward but... I'm sorry about how I acted yesterday. I won't make any excuses. I was wrong and you were right. I need your help. Please. It's not just with Buttercup. The Girls - they mean the world to me and I feel... helpless as their father. I've gone to their DNA sources' parents for advice. One of them hates my guts, and the other had nothing for me. I'm still headed towards one more family. Call me back. I'm sorry again for turning you away when you were looking out for me as a friend. I- urm- nevermind. Please call back. Bye.

-TRANSCRIPT END-
Chapter 73: Solutions

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Bubbles' fate is sealed and Professor Utonium visits Buttercup's genetic father and source.

Chapter 73: Solutions

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1620.

It had been a long day. Despite wanting so much to attend to the Bubbles situation first, Alice had obligations that she wasn't able to postpone because of how she had jumped on the Utonium family case on such a short notice. She would have wanted so much to vent about how they weren't important at all compared to the life-and-death crisis surround Bubbles, but the truth was, they were. The USDO demanded a lot out of its personnel, and psychological problems would break out like rashes throughout the organization from time to time. As it just so happened, now was one of those times, especially when the USDO had become more active than it ever was before ever since getting involved with Townsville.

But the time had finally come. Walking briskly towards Director Cliff's office, she knocked on the door, heard a muffled 'come' and entered the office.

"Alice," the director greeted, neither rude nor polite. A versatile position. Smoke rose from his mouth. He was smoking a cigar. A sign that he was either very assured of his work or stressed out. "I take it that you're here to report your findings?"

"Yes," Alice said, her voice firm. She had to do this right and never take her eyes off the prize. "Very much so."

"Well? Report, then," Director Cliff ordered, straight to the point. Alice could never get used to this - the director had never allowed her to. He was often a little more approachable than this, and sometimes as uncompromising as his code name. She theorized that it was his way of throwing off any predictability in his behavior, as well as to intimidate whoever he was facing, a useful adaptation in the political arena. Alice stood there gawking at him for a moment, before fumbling for her notes.

"Urm- Bubbles. Yes. It is just as I suspected. She is currently showing signs of PTSD and depression, such as self-blame, nightmares, severe emotional reactions upon being triggered." Alice went on but was cut off by a very impatient Director Cliff, whose attention was split between her and his desktop computer.

"Yes, yes, you don't have to list all the symptoms," he said. "Just go straight to the point."

"She's going to need follow-up evaluation sessions and therapy," Alice continued, trying not to be
tripped up by Cliff's game. "I intend to set aside two sessions a week for her. Her condition is being exacerbated by frictions within her family."

"That Upton!" the Director suddenly yelled. "He can't seem to do anything right these days, can he!? While I don't approve of his methods of handling the subjects, he couldn't even play his own game well!"

"Sir, it's not his fault," Alice hurried to defend her friend. "You threw Sergeant Selicia Goodwin into the Girls' lives, and she's a sub-optimal candidate for motherhood in any form, and I am being very kind when I say this."

"If I hadn't approved of Selicia's posting to those kids, they wouldn't even be capable of functioning in their intended purpose at all," Director Cliff hissed at Alice, taking note of her audacity to question him - there would be consequences for that. It would only be a matter of how large or small it was. "Some of you seem to have forgotten that those 'girls' are weapons. Go on. I want good news from here onwards."

"Fine. I'll need several months to work with her. I believe I can improve her situation at home through both direct intervention and therapy, as well as help her cope with her duties. I believe I can stabilize her within a year, but full recovery will take longer, and relapses are possible, but with immediate follow-up sessions and medication throughout all stages of her treatment, manageable."

Director Cliff pressed a button on the cathode monitor of his desktop, switching it off. Pressing his fingers together with his elbows on his desk, he bowed his head in concentration. Alice shifted on her feet, waiting nervously on his decision. Her heart leaped when he finally looked up, and sort of paused there for a moment as if still thinking, still calculating.

"No," Director Cliff finally decided as he stared at Alice from under his eyebrows.

"No? But- but, why!?" Alice shouted disapprovingly, more out of shock than disappointment or anger. "I can fix her! You'll get your 'organic weapons platform' or whatever it is you call her, she'll get help and everyone in Townsville will be better off - everyone wins if we just treat Bubbles like a human being!"

"The fact that she needs such extensive treatment and attention, to begin with, is quite telling of her inadequacy. I can't afford to have a cannon loose like this for months and years!" Director Cliff bellowed as he rose from his seat, knocking his chair back. "I can't afford to have resources dedicated to a dead end like her! I can't afford to have her occupy you! I've already lost Utonium as a valuable Head of Research and Council member. I'm not losing you too."

"I'm flattered, but Bubbles is anything but a loose cannon. She's the least destructive of the three Girls," Alice said.

"Then you must have missed the show," Director Cliff said. "She caused a stampede during a protest today. Dozens were injured. I'm surprised no one died. How many times must we risk human lives for the sake of one soulless, inhuman thing?"

"Cliff, Sir. Don't let her be killed. Please," Alice begged.

"It's too late. I've already filed the paperwork and ordered her euthanasia. Security's planning an operation even as we speak," Director Cliff revealed, still seated in his chair, calm as a breeze even though his actions and decisions had deadly consequences. "I'm sorry, Alice. I've never put much stock in your proposal."
"Bubbles!" Alice gasped in shock as she turned around and headed for the exit. There was only one thing she could do left. Director Cliff pressed a buzzer on his desk. When Alice opened the door to Cliff's office, she found that it was already surrounded by four lightly-armed guards. She tried to squeeze past them and shove her way through, but they were able to overpower her easily. She slapped the head guard, who punched her across the cheek in return. She fell on her back from the force, clutching her cheek. She had never been hit before, not since that Foundation raid she was caught in all those years ago.

"Gentlemen!" Director Cliff said, alarmed, rising from his seat. "No need to be rough with her. She's one of our own, a human being with rights… Unlike B-49."

The men picked Alice up, slapping a handcuff on her before leading her away to the holding cells.

"No! You can't do this! She's just a child!" Alice protested, her voice trailing off. It disappeared entirely when one of the security officers closed his door. Director Cliff stood up and walked over to his window, looking out of it. There was nothing more to be done. He had hoped that Bubbles would start shining, given the opportunity, but that hadn't gone on well as planned. He would be lying if he wasn't saddened by the fact that the USDO had to resort to killing what appeared to be a biological child, but it was all for the greater good. One day, someday, Project Powerpuff would pay off and usher in a paradigm shift in both law enforcement and warfare - perhaps even usher in a new era of peace and prosperity.

The City of Townsville. Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo Suburban Prefecture East. Ito Residence.
20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1713.

Finding the Ito residence was difficult. Little Tokyo's residential prefectures were laid out differently from the suburbs of Townsville. It was literally a slice of Japan. Even the TPD's Little Tokyo branch was staffed mostly by men and women of Japanese descent and organized exactly like the police force of Japan. He was only able to find his way to the Ito residence through the police officer stationed at the neighborhood, standing at his police post.

He couldn't wait to get back to his Girls. On the way to the suburban prefecture, he had already placed a short order for a cake to celebrate their first month's birthday, bought them presents that they would no doubt love.

Professor Utonium pressed the doorbell, half-expecting himself to be at the wrong house. He couldn't read the kanji characters up front, and he had no way of telling if he had followed the police officer's instructions properly.

For some time, there was no response. He pressed the doorbell again. It took time, but he finally heard footsteps. Barefooted, heavy footsteps. The door opened to reveal a Japanese man in a formal army uniform. No, a half-Japanese man, Professor Utonium remembered. He also remembered the face from the documents.

"Hi, are you Junzō Ito?" the professor asked just to make sure. It would be embarrassing to mistake one man for someone else.

"Why yes, and you are…?" Junzō asked in return, squinting his eyes to get a better look at the professor, unable to recall when he had last seen his face.

"Professor Utonium," the man stuck out a hand for Junzō to shake, but his counterpart bowed instead. The professor then bowed awkwardly in return, but Junzō had stuck out his hand in a
delayed response to his western form of greeting. They shook hands after that.

"Do I know you from somewhere?" Junzō asked again. "You look like a man who works in a hospital. Or a mortuary."

"In a way. I was part of the team that administered the medical examinations to your daughter," Professor Utonium said. He had taken a good look at the man. Black hair, dark brown eyes. Youthful, despite being in his thirties and older than him by a year. His features were mixed, more so than Buttercup's. The eyes were sharp in the corners, but his skin was pale in comparison to those of pure Japanese heritage.

"I see. Welcome. Please, come in," Junzō brought him in. After taking off his shoes, the professor followed him into the guest room, where they sat on cushions on the floor around a low table. After ordering tea from the wife, Sonia, they started bantering first about family and duty and work. When the tea had arrived, they moved on.

"So, what brings you to my world?" Junzō asked before taking a sip of his green tea.

"The results of the medical examination. As I understand it - please do not be offended - your daughter is suffering from severe psychopathy?" the professor asked, and made sure to do it in a hushed, respectful tone.

"Unfortunately, yes," the father said bitterly and sarcastically. "And so the family legacy continues."

"How is your daughter? Is she faring well?" the professor asked. Blossom and Bubbles' DNA sources weren't exactly doing so well. He had hoped that the trend ended here.

But there seemed to be another trend going on between himself and the fathers he had visited. They all had a weight on their shoulders, all four of them, the fathers. Even Kevin Callaghan, whose family life was quite normal, was brought into the fold the moment his daughter was indirectly involved with Project Powerpuff. The trend had started with him and it was completed with Junzō as he gave an audible sigh and a hostile scoff that didn't sound like it was meant for a family member, but it was.

"I think she's faring too well," the father said. He took another sip of his green tea, a larger one, despite how steam was still rising from it. "I'm still trying to figure out a way to beat the evil inside her away."

"You're- You've been beating Scarlett?" the professor said, mouth agape. His counterpart glared at him the moment he insinuated abuse. It seemed that he didn't like his words too well.

"Not literally," Junzō said, his tone still moderate. Whatever he felt when abuse was mentioned, he chose to bury it inside him and not express it. "I've been putting her through physical training, Kendo, track-and-field. She's a little too young for most of it, but the evil in her is timeless." What he reported seemed more detailed than what the USDO researcher had uncovered. It seemed promising to Professor Utonium. "Why do you want to know about her… mental condition? Isn't that under the realm of psychiatry? Not medicine?"

"Yes, but they are linked by biology, Scarlett's, to be exact. I want- no, need to know more about Scarlett because I- urm- know some children suffering from the same mental condition. I am hoping to gain some insights to help them," the professor said, rushing through his words again as he was afraid of another Kevin Callaghan situation. But most importantly, he thought that there was something that Junzō could provide - there had to be.
The father fixed his eyes upon the professor's for a good, long time. In the meantime, steam was rising from both their cups. Outside, birds were chirping, and the winter breeze was blowing.

"Some children, or yours?" the drill sergeant asked. The professor found it surprising that what he said hadn't sent him into a panic. Instead, it was almost a relief. At first, it seemed like an impossible feat that he had seen through him completely, but on second glance, the clues were all there all along. What he was doing - visiting a stranger's house about a medical examination, asking about what was normally not covered in a standard medical examination… The way he spoke with so much emotion in it - had given him away.

"Yes," the professor bowed his head in shame at his deception. "I'm sorry. I need help with my daughter. She is suffering from the same condition. Which is why I'm trying to find out more about yours."

"Your daughter, or your experiment?" Junzō questioned further, but he didn't do it forcefully. He was as calm as the waves of Townsville's coast on a beautiful, sunny day. The professor did not reply. Cat got his tongue. He stared at the half-Japanese, his eyes wide, wondering how he had figured it out.

"I would be a fool and a lousy father if I can't recognize my own daughter's face," Junzō continued after seeing that Professor Utonium was incapable of doing so. "Even if another child is wearing it. I wish I could've found out under more ideal circumstances and not in the company of my fellow soldiers in the rec room. The shame it brought me…" Junzō took another swig of his hot tea.

"My daughter," the professor finally said. Firmly and confidently. "She's my daughter." Scarlett's father studied his face, but he didn't do it for long.

"I know," he said.

"Please tell me how I can help her," the professor was almost pleading.

"I can tell you how I couldn't help my daughter," Junzō said instead, his eyes drooping down to his table. He wasn't a very expressive man, and that made his facial expression at the moment all the more genuine. Sad. "As I said, I've been putting her through physical training and sports. I conspired against my own daughter to tire her out day after day, just to keep her out of trouble. In the process of it all, I tried to instill discipline, wisdom, and honor in her."

"It didn't work?" the professor asked.

"No. Somehow, from somewhere, she's always able to find the energy to do her worst. A little cat mutilation here, an 'accident' in school there," the father said, muscles on his face clinching and relaxing as terrible memories resurfaced in his mind. "I am ashamed to admit it to anyone, but I… would beat her sometimes out of desperation."

"But you told me- Why are you telling me this?" the professor gasped.

"Because I can tell that you're not just anyone," Junzō revealed, smiling at him briefly, though his eyes remained sad as if watching a funeral in procession. "I am ashamed of myself. In trying to combat evil, I became evil myself. I blame myself for my cursed seed."

'I blame myself for my cursed seed.' It sounded familiar to the professor. It didn't take him long to remember that Ejnar Olofsson, father of Ester and indirectly, Bubbles, had said the same thing.

"Don't. What happened is just nature," the professor said the exact same thing to Junzō as he had said to Ejnar. "You found a wife, had a child - that's love, and everyone has the right to love and be
loved, no matter who they are."

The professor was saying this to them as much as he was saying it to himself. The Girls were created by accident. They deserved to be loved no matter who they were and what they’d become. He needed his family. Comparing his present self to the man he was in the past, he thought that was he was an empty shell of a man before. On the outside, he was an inspiring force and a friend to his colleagues, but on the inside…

"Yes. I actually vowed to lead a life of solitude because of what I know. Until I met my wife," Junzō said. "I just wish my love did not give birth to such evil. That such goodness as Sonia did not give birth to such evil as Scarlett. But at the end of the day, how could I not love my daughter? She will always be my musumé, my Kimiko-san. I watch her sleep at night, and she looks so innocent then - I hope every night, thus, before I go to sleep, and even in my sleep, that that's how she would look even during the day one day…"

"But there must be something else - isn't there something else you must be doing? To help your daughter?" it was driving the professor mad. The lack of a definite answer, a complete solution.

"If there is any other way, then I am the wrong person to ask for it," Junzō said, his head still bowed in sadness. "I console myself with the fact that it would have been worse had I not done anything. I can't imagine what my daughter would be capable of if she wasn't occupied most of the time from day to night."

The sliding door of the guest room opened after that. There had been soft, rapid footsteps outside, but it had appeared quite suddenly. A little girl stepped in - Buttercup's genetic mother, similar in appearance to Buttercup in all ways except for the longer hair and smaller eyes, which were of the same color as her father's, slightly more pointed at the corners. She wore a black hairband, and a pink shirt and jeans.

"Otōsan! Watashi to asobu!" Kimiko Scarlett Ito demanded. The smile on her face seemed innocent enough, though it seemed... off. The professor couldn't decide if it was because of his knowledge of her psychopathy, or if it was an objective observation. Scarlett then stared at the professor, looking like she had just spotted an intruder. "Kore wa nan desu ka? Kono baka wa daredesu!?

"Anata wa shitsureida! Hidoi!" Junzō suddenly barked at his daughter, whirling around on his cushion to face her. The professor's knee bumped into the low table he was sitting behind when he jumped. Scarlett seemed unfazed by his temper. "And in English, please! He's a guest in our home!"

"Fine…" Scarlett said, switching over to her second language, pouting at the inconvenience. She sounded exactly like Buttercup, and it wasn't just the voice. Her mannerism seemed similar. "You promised to teach me how to play the video game. What's taking you so long?"

"Later. Scarlett, this is Professor Utonium," the father introduced the professor to his daughter. "He's one of those men who helped you with your medical examination. What do you say to a guest?"

"Good afternoon, Professor Utonium. It is nice to meet you," Scarlett greeted him reluctantly, with a frown on her face. She bowed slightly before turning to her father again. "Can we go now, kudasai?"

"I said later," the father said again. "Go up again. I'll see you upstairs. Don't barge into the guestroom like that next time."

"Fine…" Scarlett relented, before turning her back on the professor and going out of the room. Before she closed the door, she glared at the professor with hatred in her eyes, likely because he was
preventing her father from attending to her play needs immediately. The intensity of that gaze unnerved the professor, not because he thought that Scarlett was a danger to him, but because she was glaring at him with Buttercup's face.

"I apologize for that," Junzō merely said.

"No, it's fine. I have to get going anyway," the professor said. He eased his legs from underneath the table, only realizing now that his legs were aching - his bump earlier being the least of his pain. He had difficulty standing up when he tried. "Thank you for your time."

As he was being escorted out of the house, he thought about dispensing the same amount of money to the Ito family, but decided against it - unlike the Callaghans and Olofssons, the Itos were doing fine financially, as far as he could tell.

He thought about what he found out. There were no silver bullets to his troubles, still, but at least he couldn't be disappointed this time. He tried to unpack everything Junzō had said to him. The man had claimed that he didn't have the solution to his troubles. The professor begged to differ - keeping Scarlett completely occupied at all times was an effective, if blunt instrument. If she wasn't training or playing sports, she would be free to do whatever she wished - and that would likely include things only psychopaths could dream to do.

He wondered how he could do the same with Buttercup and decided that he could always have Selicia put her to work every single minute she wasn't in school, or asleep. But there had to be a more efficient way of doing it. He considered turning to medicine for a solution. Inducing drowsiness might have the same effect as tiring Buttercup out. Whichever his methods, he decided then that if he had a solution to counteract Chemical X, the first person who was going to get it was Buttercup.
Chapter 74: Twilight (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, the USDO carries out the euthanasia of Bubbles, who they deem to be a waste of resources.

A/N: Project Powerpuff: Declassified has been listed on Ficdb (as ff net does not allow website addresses to be listed, just search for it on Google and you'll find it). Ficdb is a new Goodreads-like website dedicated as a platform for user-recommended fanfictions primarily, and original content secondarily. It would be great and superb if some of you would contribute reviews to Project Powerpuff: Declassified there - but only if you want to. Also, I won't mind honest reviews, as that is what Ficdb is about.

Chapter 74: Twilight (Part 1)

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1720.

The briefing room was dark, the lights dim with only the spotlight facing a podium and board bright enough to be considered relatively normal. The room was equally quiet as if someone had died - that, however, wasn't far from the truth, as everything that was planned in the security briefing room had always involved the potential or near-certainty of someone dying, almost always guaranteed by the security officers or soldiers attending it. This time, however, the room was quiet because of the relatively few number of attendants. Captain Kate stood behind the podium, and before her was something like three or four dozen chairs, and only six were occupied by a select group of Powerpuff Task Force soldiers, the elite of elites.

"Evening, gentlemen," Captain Kate greeted the soldiers attending her briefing. "Before we get down to business, are there any questions?" Silence. "Good."

"Operation Sundered Goddess - that's the agenda tonight," Captain Kate began. "Our objective is to safely and discreetly euthanize a subject designated for disposal by the end of the operation. We will operate in our assigned groups - Kill Team 3 and Kill Team 4, to be designated Kilo Tango 3 and Kilo Tango 4. Kilo Tango 3, one of you is a sniper, right?"

"I sure am, ma'am," one of the men, a young British guy in his mid-20s, announced proudly. "I'm a gold medalist Olympic rifle shooter, proud to be serving. I'll polish off anything you want."

"Good. Kilo Tango 3, I will personally lead the three of you. Our objective is the subject itself," Captain Kate then pointed to a top-down map of the Townsville suburbs, projected onto a screen from a computer. "We will be taking position on this water tower here west of The House. There, we will get a good vantage point of the site where the subject is kept. This will place us about 300 feet from the planned position of the subject. Conditions will be windy and dark. Will that be a problem?"
"Corporal Chester, ma'am," the sniper introduced himself. "It will be no problem, ma'am. I'll just need to adjust my aim a tad."

"Excellent. Kilo Tango 4, your job is to screen us from anyone interfering with our operation. You'll be deployed below the water tower. If everything goes well, you won't have to do anything at all. However, that's no excuse for a lack of vigilance."

"Any intel on who might attack us?" one of the soldiers on Kill Team 4 asked.

"Both the usual and unusual. If we fail to euthanize the target subject, we might need to leapfrog and provide cover fire to each other to reach the extraction point. However, our weapons, except for Corporal Chester's, will be ineffective against the subject, so cover fire will serve only as deterrent or distraction. You'll also need to keep a lookout for Foundation infiltrators who might have an interest in the subject or USDO personnel who might… disagree with our operation. In all cases, you're authorized to shoot on sight. Any further questions?"

"No," the Kill Team 4 soldier asked.

"Moving on," Captain Kate said. She tapped a few buttons on her podium, flashing a different image on the screen behind her. Bubbles were in all of them. Stills from security camera footage, one of which was from her tactical training in the abandoned mall. She was decked out in full gear, shooting blanks at USDO soldiers in the exercise. Another was of her perching on top of a shelf, waiting to pounce on unsuspecting gangsters in a warehouse. Another was from a video taken by a civilian on Highway 13, jumping onto a car owned by the Lombardi and latching onto it with her hands. Finally, the slideshow moved on to a close-up shot of Bubbles, done by Professor Utonium. She was smiling toothily at the camera. "The subject to be euthanized is B-49, otherwise known as 'Bubbles'. Subject has thus far demonstrated extraordinary strength of over 3000 pounds of sustained force and is able to run at speeds of 120 miles per hour. She has been reported to be able to jump several yards into the air, and has been trained in the use of firearms and unarmed combat by Sergeant Selicia Goodwin."

The captain noticed that Corporal Chester's face had changed. Previously, he was an enthusiastic puppy. At present, he looked like he was sick. A hand from someone next to him shot up.

"So why're we killing her? She looks fine to me and successful from what you're saying," Corporal Chester's teammate said.

"She has demonstrated an unacceptable degree of rebelliousness. The failure of several operations can be attributed to her. You've seen what happened here at HQ, right? It started with her too. She was responsible for over thirty wounded civilians today, and or sixty on Highway 13," Captain Kate said. Someone whistled at the figures. Another man muttered expletives directed at Bubbles under his breath. 'Bitch', one said. 'God-damn psychopath,' another mumbled.

"Right. Should be an easy target, right, Chester?" the man said as he elbowed the sniper playfully. The sniper, on the other hand, looked like he might faint.

"Do not underestimate the target," Captain Kate warned. "I didn't give you a breakdown of her abilities to impress you! B-49 is as dangerous as the other subjects we had to put down, which is why the six of you have been chosen for this operation. We go in, we put that little bitch down, and we bug out. I want it to be a clean operation. Will that be a problem to you… Corporal Chester?"

Corporal Chester looked up at Captain Kate, his face a little pale from realizing who he would be
taking out tonight. A little girl, as it turned out, who looked as incredibly normal and happy in the
only civilian photo of her to be shown, as how incredible her enhanced abilities were. "N-no,
ma'am," he managed to blurt out with faux confidence, cold sweat pouring down his forehead.

"Good. I want the six of you to be ready at Carpark B by 1800 hours. Dismissed!"

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1833.

The last few hours had been miserable for the Girls, but mostly for Blossom and Bubbles, and it all
started when Selicia received that phone call from the USDO Headquarters about how they had
ruined another operation.

After being driven back home by Agent Blake, the Girls were immediately taken up to the
washroom by Selicia for a bath. She had then put them in their room to play and the woman was all
smiles and giggles. It was all fine and dandy as if nothing bad had ever happened at the USDO
Headquarters.

After the phone call, Selicia stomped back up to their room, just as the Girls were ready to start
another tea party.

"Girls, why don't you get down to the garage," Selicia said. "Right now!"

"But why? We just started playing," Blossom asked. Selicia did not answer her question. When the
Girls did not respond to her request, Selicia marched up to them and pulled them up to their feet.
They got the idea after that. She was serious.

Their Mom led them down to the garage. They could only wonder why she would want them to be
there. They were never allowed into the garage unless they were getting into the car.

In the garage, Selicia led them to the workshop. The Girls were short, but they could see what was
on the table. All their guns were there.

"From now on, you Girls will clean your own guns," Selicia said as she stood at the doorway behind
them, her arms folded. "Do you Girls know how to clean your own guns?"

"No…" the Girls replied in unison as they stood before her.

"Do you know why?" Selicia asked.

"I don't know…" Bubbles said. Blossom and Buttercup remained silent, but they were essentially
saying the same thing.

"Because the three of you have never done it before. You've never learned how to take care of your
own things. You didn't even ask to learn it, and that's a little disappointing," Selicia snarled and
pointed a finger at them. "The three of you will learn responsibility from now on. That includes you,
Buttercup."

"Are you mad at us, Mommy?" Bubbles asked.

"The three of you should know the answer to that. Especially you, Bubbles," Selicia said cryptically.
Linguistically helpless, the Girls understood the implications of it, but they were helpless beyond that
point.
After being shown how to clean their guns, even the ones they didn't use to unwittingly break up the protest at the USDO Headquarters, the Girls got to work. It was boring, dirty work, and the first time they showed their results to Selicia, she screeched at them about how untidy and unfinished their work was, forcing all of them back into the workshop to finish cleaning the guns. Well, all of them except for Buttercup, whom she excused from the duty. She brought her favorite up to the bathroom again for another bath while her sisters slogged to do what was supposed to be a three-girl job.

It was only after a third round of inspection that Selicia was satisfied with Blossom and Bubbles' gun-cleaning standards. But they weren't let off the hook even after that. Selicia got them to clean the living room and kitchen after that, while Buttercup got the lightest chores - helping her with the Christmas decorations.

"Don't look at me like that, Blossom and Bubbles Utonium. It's only fair, isn't it? Buttercup's doing the kind of work that requires more thinking and creativity!" she had said when Blossom pointed out the disparity in workload. So Blossom and Bubbles set to work vacuuming the floor, mopping the floor, cleaning every surface with rags while still filthy from cleaning their guns. Although Blossom and Bubbles' bodies were built to handle far more than household chores, their minds weren't. They were practically month-old babies, and the work, the state of their hygiene and the unfairness of it all grated at them.

After taking a second bath, Blossom and Bubbles were just lying in bed, while Buttercup played alone with her action figures. At the very least, Selicia hadn't asked them to help in the kitchen, where she was preparing the night's dinner for them, including more cookies based on cartoon versions of the Girls, inspired by Bubbles' doodles.

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20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1840.

Getting stuck in traffic wasn't something Professor Utonium had planned. While he chided himself for his lack of foresight, the rush hour traffic in Townsville was atrocious. He thought that he should have known, considering the huge population the city and county hosted. The radio in his car had other explanations: rush hour traffic tend to be worse in December, owing to the winter snow and workers who were in a festive mood and more likely to return to their families on time.

He could only hope that the Girls were fine without him - that they wouldn't mind having dinner a little late, considering what he had in store for them. Besides, with Selicia holding down the fort, everything would be alright.

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 4A.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1845.

"This is Kilo Tango 4, mission site is clear, over," a soldier, dressed in full battle gear - helmet and vest and pads - and heavily armed with an assault rifle, reported as he trained his rifle downrange at the entry point of a water tower. It was as empty as a ghost town. Much of the property surrounding The House where B-47, B-48, and B-49 were kept were bought out and left empty of occupants. They were only occasionally occupied by USDO personnel, who used the appropriated property as barracks.

"Message received. Kilo Tango 3 en-route," Captain Kate, who was rushing with her team towards the water tower from another angle of entry, reported into the radio.
The three soldiers of Kill Team 4 were taking cover behind the walls of a few houses surrounding the water tower, ensuring that they could never be seen from The House. Sure enough, Kill Team 3 arrived on site. The star of the show was Corporal Chester. The sniper rifle on his back was huge, and his gear specially adapted to the extraordinary weaponry he was given. He had extra padding on his right shoulder, even though the butt of his sniper rifle, a modified XM90, was already padded.

The four soldiers of Kill Team 3, which included Captain Kate, started climbing up Water Tower 4A. It was a slow climb, not because the soldiers were heavily equipped, but because of the height of the water tower and the weather. The water tower would give them a clear view of the entire neighborhood as it was several floors taller than the surrounding houses if it were a house itself.

"I'm going to make a few phone calls," Captain Kate said to her team, then gave a few orders: "Corporal Chester, set your shit up for the kill. Sergeant Quinn, watch the surrounding area. Lieutenant Cox, you're the designated spotter."

Captain Kate pulled out her flip-phone and flipped through the digital phonebook until she found it: Captain Scott - Townsville Suburbs PTF Security. She dialed it. "Captain Kate?" his voice came through after only a few seconds of cellular beeping.

"Acting Chief of Security Kate," the captain asserted her authority. "There's a situation in the Suburbs. Intelligence has uncovered an impending attack by the Foundation. I want all assets to be deployed around the perimeter of the site."

"Shouldn't we leave some at The House? They might have copters-"

"No. Our intelligence is 100% this time. They won't have air support. But you need to hurry. Our intelligence agent was only able to learn about this at the last minute. They're coming anytime now," Captain Kate lied. "I have to coordinate some things. Update me when this is over." She didn't wait for a reply.

Lieutenant Cox, the spotter, was able to observe immediate reactions from the ground troops. The security convoy parked outside The House drove away. Checkpoints were moved numerous houses over, spreading wider to cover all vantage points and possible avenues of entry. But there was another convoy that remained stubborn. Agent Blake's Lamborghinis. The Girls' royal motorcade. It sickened Captain Kate that so much resources were splurged on those lab rats. She smiled after that. She was going to make sure that they would cost less, by 'firing' one of them.

She searched her digital phonebook for Sergeant Blake's number. It was at the very bottom of it, and certainly not on the speed dial. She called the number.

"Agent Blake, reporting," the man said on the phone.

"This is Acting Chief of Security Kate. I heard from my men on the ground that you're still at The House," Captain Kate feigned nonplus and anger. She didn't have to feign all of it. "Why are you still there?"

"My job is to bring the Girls from point A to point B, and maybe support them in the field," Agent Blake said. "It's not standard security work."

"I'm going to need every available man on the perimeter," Captain Kate ordered.

"And what if the Girls need to be deployed? Like on the perimeter?" Agent Blake questioned, his tone clearly daring even though it was over the phone. "What then?"

"They won't be deployed tonight, not even at the perimeter, because we're protecting them tonight,
"not the other way around," Captain Kate lied. "I need you on the perimeter. The north might have been spread thin. Reinforce the unit there."

"Yes… Ma'am…" Agent Blake agreed reluctantly, the disgruntlement clear in his voice. Captain Kate did not wait for him to say anything more. The less said the better – she never liked the disgraced and demoted lieutenant anyway. He had destroyed himself by fraternizing with the lab rats, the same sort of things that killed many of her fellow officers.

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**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

**20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1901.**

While Selicia was setting the table in preparation for Professor Utonium's return and the start of the Girls' first-month birthday celebrations, the telephone in The House rang. Selicia turned her head in the direction of the ringing. The phone had never done that before. No one had ever called The House because as far as the public was concerned, no one lived here. All USDO-specific calls were routed through the Project Powerpuff hotline or their personal hand-held phones.

Padding towards the phone, she picked it up, half-expecting the professor, calling her on a different number, as goofy as he could be. "Hello? Utonium residence," she answered.

"This is Acting Chief of Security Captain Kate," the woman on the other end of the line said.

"Captain, ma'am," Selicia acknowledged her superior, instinctively straightening herself up as she did. Despite being in her favorite black dress, despite having been away from a security post for a long time, she hadn't lost it yet. "Are the Girls needed in some other operation?"

"No," Captain Kate replied tersely, her voice dry for some reason, bare of emotion. "I'm going to be bluntly honest with you, Sergeant Selicia. You've been a valuable asset so far, and I want to see where your loyalty lies."

"Am I to be sent on an operation instead?" Selicia guessed.

"In a way. The operation had already commenced," the detached, emotionless female voice said on the other end. "You see… Bubbles is to be euthanized today. Now."

"Bub-Bubbles?" Selicia stammered when he heard the captain. For a moment, she couldn't believe what she had heard. Sure, Bubbles had been lackluster in her combat performance, but to kill her was a step too far she didn't the USDO would take.

"Yes. You will instruct her to leave The House and stand in the lawn. No guns, no SWAT gear, understand?" Captain Kate ordered.

"Ma'am… Surely there's another way, I mean, y-you can't be serious, right?" Selicia stuttered. "I know Bubbles can be a bit of a whiny brat and a klutz, but that doesn't mean that she should be-"

"When was I ever not serious? You disappoint me with your hesitance, Selicia," Captain Kate said. "Have you fallen for that little bitch? If you've been compromised, then you should just pack your things and prepare for reassignment first thing tonight. You'll never see your freaky little family again, Selicia. I'll make sure the Girls get a dog handler who's more competent than Professor Utonium. It's either Bubbles or all of them. Take your pick."

"Captain, we've worked together on numerous occasions. We've saved each other's lives a few times," Selicia begged. Thank God the kids were upstairs. She wouldn't want them to overhear this,
and neither did she want them to see the look on her face at present. "Please, do this one favor for me. Let her go. Thomas will die of grief this way. I'm begging you, don't."

"Very well, prepare for reassignment. Our joint Institution-USDO deep-bore Duranium mine in Uganda could always use a security officer. I'll fucking stuff you deep into the Duranium mine's ass and you better hope to God that you don't suffocate in it!" Captain Kate threatened.

"Wait!" Selicia nearly screamed into the phone. "Wait. I- I'll do it. Just… Promise me that she won't suffer?"

"It'll be quick," Captain Kate promised, though Selicia did not put any stock in her promise. "I want her out in five minutes. Good girl. I knew you'd come through," The captain hung up the phone after that. Selicia let hers drop.

Fighting back tears, Selicia went up the stairs, thinking back to the last time she and Bubbles were happy together. She'd never liked Bubbles as a person, seeing her as everything she'd hated in herself, back when she was still a helpless little kid. She had dreamed of having powers like Bubbles' back in the day if only to save herself from her own parents. Bubbles had wasted the dream she was living in. Yet, there were times that she just couldn't help but love Bubbles. She was just too adorable, too lovable, and she wondered how things would have turned out for Bubbles had she been a normal little girl.

She was in the Girls' room before she knew it. She couldn't afford to waste any more time. Captain Kate wasn't kidding when she said she was serious. There was no telling what would happen in five minutes if Bubbles wasn't out. Would she take the shot while Bubbles was in her room? It was within the realm of possibility, and then she'd be sent to Uganda. 'Stuffed up the Duranium mine's ass', as Kate put it.

"Bubbles," she called out to her 'daughter' as the Girls were back to setting up their imaginary tea party.

"Mom?" Bubbles replied, looking at her with dread. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No, not at all," Selicia said. She looked at Bubbles with a sad expression she was trying desperately to mask, but even Bubbles could tell that something was wrong.

"Mommy, are you… crying?" Bubbles asked innocently.

"No, not at all," Selicia lied. "It's just the onions I was slicing in the kitchen."

"Oh," Bubbles said. "They must be some big and mean onions!"

"Yes, they were. Bubbles, Blake just called," Selicia lied further, while she wiped the remains of her tears away. 'Get a grip, Selicia,' she told herself. 'You're doing the right thing.' She steeled herself, and continued: "He said that you're needed for an operation."

"Just me? But…" Bubbles said, confused.

"Aren't we supposed to go together, as sisters?" Blossom asked from her spot at the tea table. They were surrounded by soft toys. A tiger. An elephant. Little Bo Peep and other dolls. They've even invited the playhouse for tea. In their infinite creativity, houses could eat and drink too.

"Yeah! I wanna get to punching! I didn't get to do that the last time!" Buttercup exclaimed. In her mind, she was hoping to get away from the pretend tea party at the table. It wasn't exactly her cup of tea.
"No, it's just Bubbles this time," Selicia asserted.

"But what am I supposed to do?" Bubbles asked. The mere thought of fighting crime alone was enough to set her off. She trembled at the prospect, her face turning pale. Terrible memories ran through her mind, and it was always the same - she was getting shot in the face by a shotgun over and over again. "I can't fight crime alone!"

"Duh! You can't even fight crime with us," Buttercup jabbed from the side. Blossom elbowed her in the side, which got her to shut up.

"Bubbles, it's going to be okay," Selicia lied. She had to think of something on the spot. She smiled, but her facial expression was shallow. "They want you to prevent crime this time, not fight it. You're going to meet a bunch of orphans and hand out candies and puppies to them for Christmas. They won't become criminals this way when they grow up."

It was an absurd lie, and Selicia knew it. She couldn't bear to think of anything more convoluted. It was a lie that only naive little girls would believe in, and it was good enough.

"Really!?" Bubbles exclaimed excitedly, all terrible thoughts in her mind dissipated. "I've always wanted to do that!"

"Great! Why don't you come on down with me, I'll walk you to the door this time," Selicia offered. Bubbles beamed toothily at her Mommy. Things were looking up, that was how it felt to the blue glowing-eyed girl. It was definite proof that her Mom loved her - that she wouldn't attempt to take this away from her and give it to Buttercup, or something along those lines. She dashed into the walk-in closet to pull out her gear.

"Bubbles! Hey, Bubbles," Selicia called out to her. Bubbles poked her head out of the closet, her helmet askew and unbuckled on her head. "You don't have to bring those."

"Oh. Can I bring Octi with me? The orphans will love it," Bubbles requested.

"Sure," Selicia simply said. She looked out the window. It was twilight. The sun would be setting any minute. Selicia thought that Bubbles was cute, the way she was acting when things were finally going her way (even when it wasn't). It was the wrong time to like the bubbly little girl more, when her new life was on its last chapter, like a short story written for little children.

After Bubbles ran out of the closet and fetched Octi from the tea table, Selicia stuck out a hand for her to take, and Bubbles took it. As mother and child walked out of the Girls room, the remaining two sisters stared after them.

"That's not fair. I wanna hand out candies and puppies to orphans too," Blossom said.

"Boring! I'd rather sit here and play with dolls!" Buttercup said as she folded her arms when she frowned.

"If you say so," Blossom then said, glancing slyly at Buttercup.

"I didn't mean that," Buttercup quickly corrected herself. But it was too late.

Meanwhile, Selicia was walking with Bubbles in the corridor, then down the stairs. It felt like the green mile in any prison, the final walk where a prisoner would be executed. Of course, Bubbles didn't know that.

"I'm sorry, Bubbles," Selicia said. In her mind, she wasn't just referring to any one thing, not even
Bubbles' impending 'euthanasia', but everything - how she had been harsh with her, even if it was for her own good, and how she had failed as her trainer and handler. Had Bubbles been trained properly, she wouldn't have had trouble in the field, which would have meant that euthanasia wouldn't even be on the table.

"What for, Mom?" Bubbles asked. Selicia led her to the kitchen. They stopped and they looked at each other for a moment.

"Just now, I guess, with the guns and house chore," Selicia lied. She'd been doing an awful lot of that lately. Tears were starting to well up in her eyes again. She wiped them away. Bubbles saw it and felt guilty right away.

"Aw, it's really okay, Mom," Bubbles said as she squeezed her mother's hand. "You were trying to teach us how to be useful. I like being useful. I'd love to do more cleaning next time!"

"You're the sweetest, you know that?" Selicia praised the super-powered little girl. She went over to a counter and picked up a cookie before handing it to Bubbles. It was a cookie made to resemble Bubbles' self-impression. Huge head, bug eyes, with lemon cream for hair and assorted blue, white and black frosting for the eyes. "Here you go."

"Thanks, Mom," Bubbles said. Selicia led her towards the front door, where Bubbles put on her winter gear.

"Just wait next to the mailbox and Blake will pick you up, okay? Sweetie?" Selicia gave Bubbles her final instructions as she helped Bubbles into her jacket.

"Yes, Mom," Bubbles said. Selicia opened the front door. "Mom?"

"Yes, honey?" Selicia asked. She found it hard to breathe at this point. Once Bubbles was past the threshold of the front door, she was gone forever.

"Can I have more of those cookies when I get back? Please?" Bubbles pleaded. "You're really good at making them."

"Anything you want, darling," Selicia promised, her voice weak. She wanted to nudge Bubbles towards the lawn, but she found that she was frozen. Paralyzed. She had half a mind to drag her adopted daughter back into The House, but she knew she couldn't do that. When Bubbles hugged her around her legs, she didn't expect it.

"Thanks, Mom!" Bubbles said graciously as she suddenly started towards the lawn sooner than Selicia wanted, skipping on the pavement as she tended to do when she was really cheerful.

"No problem," Selicia managed to squeak, then closed the door. She scooted over to the window. Halfway to the mailbox, Bubbles turned around and looked at her, then waved. Selicia waved back. The security officer had wanted to watch Bubbles all the way to the end, twilight to night, life to death, but she found that she couldn't do it. Didn't have the guts to. Tears and a whimper erupted in her as she turned away from the window with her face in her hands. She rushed to the kitchen, and with shaken hands, opened a cupboard and pulled out a hidden box of cigarettes and lighter.

She didn't wait to get to the washroom. She pulled a cigarette out and lit it on the way.
Chapter 75: Twilight (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

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Chapter 75: Twilight (Part 2)

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 4A.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1906.

"Tango acquired," Lieutenant Cox, the spotter of Kill Team 3, reported, both to his squadmates and into the radio for the benefit of Kill Team 4. "One o'clock, coming out of the front door, over."

"Kilo Tango 4, roger, over," a soldier down below acknowledged.

Captain Kate turned to her designated sniper and executioner, Corporal Chester, and saw that, although his equipment was prepared, he appeared to have zoned out, taking his eyes off the scope, staring into the setting sun. Twilight had nearly come and gone. In a few minutes, it would be totally dark. She grabbed him by the shoulder. He jumped.

"Corporal Chester, you with me?" she asked. They couldn't afford to screw this up - they had this one chance to kill B-49, and only two Duranium cartridges to do it, and one of them was for redundancy's sake, in case they missed entirely. "Take a good look at your target. Track it. Fire on my command."

Corporal Chester did as he was told, pointing his XM90 anti-material rifle at the little girl who had just left The House, and the sight was even worse than the photo he had seen in briefing. Bubbles looked like any other normal girl, skipping on the pavement towards the street with a smile on her face, her pigtails dancing up and down, cookie in one hand and some sort of weird octopus doll in the other that only a scientist would give to his daughter. She was so full of life, so full of hope for the future, happy - as any child could be. And he was being compelled to take it all away.

"Bravo-four-nine is moving towards our twelve," Lieutenant Cox. "Bravo-four-nine is unarmed and unequipped, over." More radio chatter in response from the ground team below.

"Good. Looks like our little mole in The House has done her job," Captain Kate said condescendingly. She had neither respect nor good opinion of Sergeant Selicia Goodwin. She was a white trash street rat the Organization made into a tool, and that was all she was to her - a good tool, not unlike a second hand branded screwdriver bought on the cheap. She then spoke into the radio: "This is Charlie Lima. Be advised that Bravo-four-nine is still dangerous in just her dress. All units, maintain high alert, over."

"Kilo Tango 4, roger," a soldier down below acknowledged again. "All's quiet down here, over."
Corporal Chester continued to observe the little girl. Bubbles, they called her. She didn't have far to travel. Soon, she stopped near the street and took a nibble out of her cookie. She was adorable, like his cousin, whom he was supposed to visit this Christmas. He kept his crosshair slightly off the mark. He couldn't help but to wish that she would dash away all of a sudden at her famous top speed.

He didn't want to do this. It wasn't what he signed up for. It wasn't what he wanted.

"Corporal Chester," Captain Kate whispered to him, her lips closer to him than before, startling the young sniper. She sounded as if she was a hunter in the wild, and her prey was closer than 300 feet away. As if that wasn't enough, she came closer to the young soldier, whispering directly into his ear. "Corporal Chester. Take your shot."

The Following is an audio log recovered from the belongings of Corporal Chester. It has been transcribed from audio format to text format pending investigation and archival.

Personal Audio Log. Corporal Chester.

Subject: A Dedication to Bubbles

Date: 21 DEC 1988 (Wednesday)

Time: 2015

-TRANSCRIPT START-

This is the audio log of Corporal Chester, designated marksman of Kill Team Three, Powerpuff Task Force Division, dated twenty-one December, one-nine-eighty-eight.

The time is twenty-fifteen… About twenty-five hours after I did it. It was the longest twenty-five hours in my entire life. Where do I even begin?

Something nasty happened yesterday. Really nasty. It started off just like any other day. A briefing, new operation, got to know what kind of uglies I need to bump off.

But it wasn't just any other day. It wasn't supposed to be. The moment I saw that picture, it ceased to be just any other day. I was really excited at first at the prospect of doing good, one dead criminal or monster at a time. And then I saw it.

It wasn't a monster I was supposed to shoot yesterday. At least, that was what I saw. It… She looked like a normal little girl. Blonde hair, pigtails, that smile, that incredible smile. It was just the eyes, but they looked lovely to me even if they were a little big, not to mention glowy.

I've heard about B-49, or at least that's how they refer to her. They called her all sorts of names. Mutant, freak, bug-eyed monster, stuff of that sort. I've heard about what she did, and I've heard about how human she was, unlike the real kind of freaks they had back before I joined up. Can't remember the name of those guys who'd put in a kind word for her- Blaine, was it? Fields? Anyway, after the briefing, I just… I have never had so much doubt in me, not since my first match at the Olympics. Not since my first mission with the SAS. When I was changing up, my colleagues told me that I just blanked out while I was leaning against my locker mid-change. Thinking back, I guess they were right. I just couldn't believe that I was shooting a little girl then, still couldn't believe what I did now. They tried to reassure me about how horrible the monster I was going to put down was. 'Looks can be deceiving' and all that- bollocks! All of it! Fucking bollocks, man! They weren't
the ones pulling the trigger! They weren't.

A-nyway. Taking the humvee there was torture. The thought of shooting the little girl ate away at me. I wished, then, that I could just turn around and walk away like a boy scout, but the USDO does not allow for such things. In their language, it's called AWOL. Dereliction of duty. Treason, punishable by death. There was nothing I could do - any chance I had of transferring away from such a deed was long past gone.

When I finally got there after what seemed like an eternity in purgatory…

-TRANSCRIPT PAUSED-

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 4A.


"Corporal Chester. Take your shot," Captain Kate had whispered into the sniper's ear, like some succubus compelling her victim to act on her behalf, or a witch entrancing a child. Corporal Chester did not do so immediately. His hands shook as he continued to watch the little girl in his scope, eating her cookie, octopus doll dangling from her other hand. She watched the empty house across the road before turning around to look at her own. That was when Corporal Chester could feel something circular and metal pressing into his side. "Corporal Chester, take your shot or I'll take mine. Your choice."

The sniper trained his rifle on the back of Bubbles. His hands shook like they never did before - he was supposed to be an Olympic-standard shooter before he joined the SAS and got into the USDO from there. He whimpered before depressing the trigger of his XM90 anti-material rifle.

"I'm sorry," he muttered softly just before he was about to take the shot.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Bubbles had turned around to look at her house. Mister Blake hadn't arrived yet, which puzzled her. The nice man who was her friend had never been late before. He was always there for her, whether times were good or bad. She looked at the wristwatch Mister Blake had given her. She couldn't quite read the time well enough, but she thought that the watch looked pretty, including the intricate digital numbers ticking away towards the night.

She took another bite out of her cookie, which was when it happened. A loud noise, like the clap of thunder. Something, or someone, had struck her in the back, and it knocked her flat to the ground. Her cookie fell out of her hand, cracking into two when it hit the pavement. She had also lost her grip on Octi, but she was more concerned about the bruising pain she was feeling on her back. For a second or two, she was just sort of lying down in the snow, moaning.

And then she tried to get up. The pain got worse when she did. "Owwie…" she cried as she managed to get on her knees. The pain didn't just get worse. It was flaring up. When she tried to get to her feet, she slipped back down to her knees, clutching her chest, bending over. Her chest felt like it was burning. And her back - it felt as if - she had never felt a sensation such as this before. It felt as if someone was driving a stake into her back, and he wasn't letting up. It was a constant, drilling sensation of agony.
With her other hand, she felt her back, until she touched it. She instinctively retracted her hand in pain. "Ow!" she cried. The moment she felt the entry wound, pain shot up on her back. A sharp pain immediately bit her in the chest and wouldn't let go. It was like the pain a person undergoing a heart attack would feel. Bubbles coughed, and something slimy came out, which she did not expect. Wiping her mouth with a hand, she looked at it to find…

Blood.

Bubbles had coughed blood out. She had tasted it too. She could barely breathe, and she breathed heavily as she screamed, but barely a sound came out. It was more like a mewl. A scared, little mewl.

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 4A.


"Bravo-Four-Nine is still up," Lieutenant Cox reported. Captain Kate knitted her eyebrows in frustration. "She is getting up."

"Ruining our operations wasn't enough, apparently - she just have to make it hard and expensive for us to kill her," Captain Kate remarked. At the very least, though, she was enjoying it. A little payback for what Bubbles did to her earlier in the afternoon. It was because of Bubbles that she had been reprimanded severely by Director Cliff. It had damaged her credibility. If there was any chance she would be permanently made Chief of Security, it was gone. "Corporal Chester. Load your second Duranium cartridge and finish her off."

"The second cartridge is for redundancy, ma'am," the sniper said, doing his bit to rebel. "In case we miss. I didn't miss. Ma'am."

"You'll use the second shell, corporal," Captain Kate said, backing her words up by jabbing the barrel of her pistol into his side harder. "Or I swear to God!"

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The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Bubbles forced herself to her feet even as the piercing, penetrative pain in her chest and back jabbed at her mercilessly. Clutching her chest with both hands, she started towards The House, but each step was a near impossibility. She could feel the pain spreading throughout her entire body. She felt the tendrils of her blood snaking down her back and sliding down her legs. "Mom!" she cried, but her voice couldn't carry very far. It was hoarse. Raspy. And it hurt even to swallow, much less to call for help.

Then there was another thunderous roar. She was hit again, sending her crashing into the ground. This time, she could feel the bullet as it tore through her, and this time, she felt it tear straight through, hitting the snow.

Even breathing itself became a laborious task after that. For a moment, Bubbles wasn't moving. But then she started coughing up blood, which spattered on the snow in shocking amounts, like a small puddle of vomit, but red.

Bubbles could feel the snow underneath her getting wet. She didn't look at what it was as she was physically unable to. With a hand, she clutched a patch of snow, trying to pull herself forward,
towards The House. Her hand slipped - her enhanced strength sapped away to nothing by the pain of two bullets that carved their way through her chest. Her breathing slowed, her crying stopped. She closed her blue eyes as it bled tears of blood when normal tears weren't enough.

Then she was still.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


"Ah!" Blossom and Buttercup yelped in pain at the same time the moment Bubbles was shot a second time. They both clutched their chest as though they, too, were shot. Sharp pain had shot up in their chest without warning, gripped them for a moment before receding as quickly as the pain had struck them. And it all came when they heard what sounded like thunder outside, for the second time.

"Did you feel that?" Blossom asked her only available sister in the room. She was breathing in and out heavily as the pain went away.

"Yeah! What was that?" Buttercup said. Few things could freak her out - and this was one of those things. The two Girls looked each other in the eyes knowingly, acknowledging that they were both afraid, for some reason.

"Mom!" Blossom screamed as she dashed out of her room, followed by Buttercup.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Bubbles opened her eyes wide in shock as she gasped for breath. Pain shot up in her chest once more when she did. She could barely see through the film of red in her eyes - she had been crying tears of blood.

"Mom…" she gasped weakly as she started forward once again, crawling towards The House, making a trail of red as she inched her way towards the safety of her home. The cold bit at her, surrounding her as her blood froze on her skin.

She was able to get to within yards away from the front door when the pain became unbearable when she couldn't even feel her legs anymore, and crawling became impossible. She flipped herself over, wondering how much the people of Townsville must have hated her to want to kill her. She actually believed that it was Townsville that did this - the police officers, the people, the protesters. To her, it was the only explanation. Who else could have done it? Those were the people she had wronged.

The dying little girl watched the stars above her, which were few because of the light pollution, but the mystery of the sky, which had finally turned dark, gave her some solace. It was beautiful - how she hadn't noticed it before, she didn't know. For a moment, she smiled, attempting to scrape together some kind of joy despite it all, despite knowing how hated she was, but memories of her sisters, her father, her mother, of the sky even, robbed her of even that, as she realized that she wouldn't be able to enjoy their company again if she dies. Tears, mixed with blood, flowed down her cheeks anew. A puddle of blood had formed below her once again.
"Dad…" she cried, and it was all she could muster before she was out of energy again.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. Water Tower 4A.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1912.

"Status of Bravo-Four-Nine, Lieutenant Cox," Captain Kate ordered.

"She appears to have stopped moving," Lieutenant Cox reported while peering through his binoculars at the same time.

"Well? Is she still breathing?" the captain pressed. "We have to make sure!"

"I got her - twice now," Corporal Chester said. "What more do you want us to do? We've expended our Duranium cartridges, fuck!"

Captain Kate didn't like the corporal's tone of voice, not at all. In fact, she never liked his attitude ever since the end of the briefing. She took him by the collar and flipped him around to face him.

"You better hope nothing goes wrong from here onwards," Captain Kate snarled at the young sniper. "I think you're deliberately trying to sabotage this operation. You said you were a good shot, and both of your shots weren't instant kills. Yeah, you better hope that little bitch is dead out there, or you'll be celebrating Christmas in a cold, hard cell." She then let go of the young sniper, who looked like he was on the verge of dying as well, from how pale his face was as if he had lost his soul the moment he gunned down Bubbles. "We're done here. Retreat to the extrication site."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 1914.

A pair of headlights went down the street towards The House after everything had happened. They grew larger, and larger until they were like two rising suns next to The House. Professor Utonium was about to turn into the driveway and garage when he saw the horror that was his lawn. A trail of blood. Bubbles' doll, Octi, abandoned in the snow. A cracked cookie on the pavement.

Bubbles on the floor, bleeding through her jacket and dress, her face pale and her eyes glassy.

"BUBBLES!?" Professor Utonium screamed as he barged out of his own car. The cake on his lap fell, hitting the snow, the content spilling out of the box. 'Happy One-Month Birthday' was still legible even after that.

"No, no, no!" the professor shouted in disbelief as he sprinted towards the form that resembled his adopted daughter, following the trail of blood. "BUBBLES!"

When he was close to her, the professor dropped and slid down next to her, picking her up and cradling her, tears falling and mingling with Bubbles'.

"Bubbles- Why you? Why did they- who would-" the professor stammered as he struggled to stay rational, but it was an impossibility. He could feel her bleeding still, covering his hands and lab coat in that precious, red fluid.

He was barely able to think at all, but when something finally moved in his mind, the thought went towards Bubbles. He placed a finger on her neck as he tried to feel for a pulse.
No. Not a thing. Not a thing at all. She's dead. DEAD.

But wait- he felt something. Something weak. Yes. A pulse. There was still something.

The professor gasped, and when he returned his eyes to Bubbles' face, he saw that she was looking at him, the expression on her face one of odd calm and peace.

"Dad..." she whispered, her voice weak and nearly inaudible - it took a father to hear it, and Professor Utonium was up to the task.

"Shhh... Honey, it's okay. Daddy's here now," Professor Utonium said lovingly to her. Bubbles coughed in response. Blood spattered on the chest of his lab coat.

"I- I'm happy, Dad," Bubbles managed. She gripped her Daddy's arm weakly. Blood dribbled down her mouth. "You're... Here..."

"Don't speak, sweetie-" the professor comforted her. Cradling her tightly in his arms, letting her head rest between his arm and chest, he stood up, carrying her and opening the door into The House. Bubbles whimpered in pain when he did. "It's going to be okay..."

Once inside, Professor Utonium crossed the living room hurriedly.

"Selicia! I need help!" he yelled, crying at the same time. "Selicia! Where the hell are you!?"

Nothing. The professor couldn't wait. He went towards his lab, but before the airlock could be opened, Selicia came out around the corner, smelling of ashes and tobacco. She looked like she had been crying, what with her red eyes.

"Thomas?" she said, then stopped when she saw what was in his arms. Bubbles, drenched in blood, pale as death, but still breathing, just barely. She didn't expect this. Captain Kate had promised a quick death, not something as messy as this. Looking behind Thomas, she saw that drips of blood had formed a dotted line across the living room. She just stood there, stunned, both by the sight of it and her role in it. "Bubbles- she-"

"I'm going to need your help," the professor said quickly. "Emergency surgery. You'll assist. Where are the-" He was about to ask for the whereabouts of his two other Girls, afraid for their safety as well, when they, too, came around the corner.

"Girls!" the professor cried when he saw them. He didn't want them to see this, but it was too late.

"Bub...bles?" Blossom muttered when she saw what had become of her sweet sister, her eyes wide.

"Woah!" Buttercup exclaimed when she saw it too - but at least her expression wasn't one of glee, but was instead one of genuine and appropriate surprise.

"Girls! I need you two to follow me!" the professor said. "It's not safe out there anymore!" But there was more that he hadn't mentioned. They were going to be blood donors if it came to that. The professor had tested their blood types before, and the result came back inconclusive. Apparently, Chemical X had changed their blood too, in that there was a lack of reaction in his blood test. The Girls were universal donors and universal recipients both.

Together, the entire family made their way down to the labs. There, the professor deposited Bubbles onto a surgical table and rushed to get his Duranium surgical kit out.

"Don't we need to scrub and put some surgical gowns on and everything?" Selicia said.
"No! No time! She's immune to infections anyway," the professor said, basing it on his observations of the Girls' blood. It was just a theory, but he was just as afraid that, by the time he had sanitized himself and Selicia and put on the appropriate surgical gear, it would already be too late. He then turned to the Girls, who stood there, the red one crying with a hand over her mouth while the green one staring at the scene, gawking with her mouth hanging open, still out of surprise. "Girls, I need you to sit in that corner where I can see you. Go!"

They complied.

Professor Utonium unzipped Bubbles' jacket. It was completely drenched in blood. How a little girl could bleed so much and yet live, the professor had no idea, but he was thankful she was still breathing.

"Lift her up!" the professor ordered Selicia. She did as she was told. "Shit!" he cursed under his breath when he found it risky to undress Bubbles. Moving her was already chancy enough. Picking up a pair of scissors, he cut through the back of Bubbles' jacket before stripping them off through Bubbles' arms.

"So… h-happy…" Bubbles moaned deliriously. Neither Selicia nor the Girls expected it - they had thought that she was unconscious. "I t-think I understand…"

"Shh… Don't talk, Bubbles. Save your energy," the professor cooed. Fighting back tears and letting his adrenaline fight half that battle of emotions, he started cutting away at Bubbles' dress, again splitting it into two parts before stripping it off. Her light blue dress was similarly completely drenched in blood, leaving almost no traces of baby blue left. The professor tossed the stained fabric onto the floor carelessly - all he cared about was his Bubbles now.

All that was left on Bubbles was her training bra, underwear, and Blake's watch, all of which were equally drenched in blood.

The professor began inspecting Bubbles' wounds, quickly, while Selicia held her up. Bubbles winced in pain. Her head lolled from lack of strength, as she wavered between consciousness and unconsciousness.

Her back had two entry wounds, large bore. The bullets that had hit her were huge, and the grouping very close. They were placed close together, but the difference was huge. However, her chest had only one exit wound, with the flesh all around it exploded outwards, all puffed up, and it had gone through Bubbles' training bra too. The professor proceeded to cut away at her training bra for a closer look. He tossed it away.

Using a flashlight, he took a closer look at the wounds. He estimated the trajectory of the two bullets through Bubbles' body based on the positions of the entrance and exit wounds. He didn't like his predictions. One bullet had gone straight through her right lung, near one side of it. The other, the one that didn't go through, had lodged itself in Bubbles' heart. It'd explain why she was coughing up blood, at least. Blood had been pooling in her right lung, and she was suffering from pneumothorax.

It was going to require one hell of a major surgery. The thought of it had shaken the professor to the core. His lab was ill-prepared for such a thing, and he was hardly the right surgeon for the job, and not because he lacked the skills. There was a very good reason why surgeons weren't encouraged to operate on their own immediate family members. The added pressure and the emotions at play weren't exactly a pleasant nor constructive thing to endure throughout an operation, especially with something as high-risk as a heart and pneumothorax surgery.

The professor instructed Selicia to lay Bubbles down. She did. First thing's first, he rushed over to
the cylindrical tanks containing his anesthetic and wheeled them over. He pulled the mask attached to them to Bubbles and was about to give her a long, concentrated dose of the anesthetic when Bubbles' hand shot up and clinched his hand in a surprisingly strong, unyielding grip.

"Bubbles? What are you doing?" the professor asked. He tried to gently push his hand, which was holding the mask, towards Bubbles' face, but he was stuck and Bubbles wouldn't let go. He was afraid of applying any strength, in case he might worsen Bubbles' condition by moving her unnecessarily.

"Dad… I… I've… been thinking," Bubbles struggled to speak. She coughed a little and had to recover her breath and energy before continuing. "M-maybe… It's better this way."

"What… What are you saying?" the professor gasped.

"N-no one… likes me," Bubbles said. "All those p-people… I hurt… Maybe it's b-better that I… Go away forever…"

"No, Bubbles," the professor disagreed, holding back tears. He had to do this right, and that involved not breaking down in the middle of surgery. "Listen to Daddy, okay? You dying does not make anything better."

"Ev-everyone h-hates me… Dad…" Bubbles repeated. "I… d-don't…"

Professor Utonium placed a finger over Bubbles mouth, shushing her. "I really like you, so does Mommy, right, Selicia?"

"I love you too, sweetie," Selicia said from the side, trying her best to remain stoic. She flashed a quick, depressing smile, and it was hard. Part of this was her fault. She had participated in the operation to euthanize her, and the horrific results - Bubbles in critical condition and extreme pain - was her responsibility.

"See?" the professor said. He then placed his hand on Bubbles' cheek, stroking it, then turned her head to her sisters, who were sitting in a corner. Blossom looked like she might flood the basement lab with her tears. Even Buttercup looked mortified - unnaturally so, considering her psychopathy. She clutched her chest as if she herself had been shot. "Your sisters, too, love you. The hell with everyone else. We'll all be very sad if you go. Bubbles, please. Let me save you."

Bubbles eventually let go. After letting go of her Daddy, the professor was able to place the mask on her face, and let the gas flow.

Sedation, however, was only the beginning.

-TRANSCRIPT RESUMED-

And then I was back in my barracks, after everything. I haven't been able to eat, and I haven't been able to sleep since. That moment in my scope when I shot her - when I shot Bubbles, just kept replaying in my head, like I was in limbo or some such. In fact, I wish I was there, in limbo, purgatory, hell, all of it! And more!

When I was at the barracks in the morning, at the cafeteria, just staring at the food in front of me, I started getting that kind of look from this guy and his detail. I remembered his name now. Blake. Sergeant Blake. He and his men looked like they were going to kill me.

I couldn't help but notice the looks I've been getting from the others. I know what they were
I was one of the newbies, and they considered me one of them now, after shooting Bubbles. One of them invited me to a party tonight. It's supposed to be… five minutes ago. I'm not going even though I agreed to join them.

How could I? What kind of social acceptance is it, if I had to kill a little girl for it?

(Whimpers) When I joined the USDO, I wanted to be somebody, you know. They even gave me a choice, told me that it was a luxury that I get to say yes or no, join them or stay in the SAS if I want to. When I agreed and signed up with them, I wanted the usual package - I wanted to see the States, get the girl, be the hero. I wanted to do some good, you know, crush some baddies and monsters. I wanted to try and save the world, but instead, I've…

(Crying) Mum, papa… If you're listening to this… I guess… I won't be joining you two for Christmas. Send my regards to the rest of the family, the relatives. Because if I come back to Surrey, it wouldn't be your son coming back. It'd just be a monster who looks like your son. A monster. A murderer. A soulless automaton.

I'm so sorry, mum, papa. I know the two of you have high hopes for me. Now I wish I wasn't even born.

Goodbye. Don't cry for me. Don't feel sorry for me. I don't deserve any of it.

-TRANSCRIPT END-

Corporal Chester was found dead in his bunk from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest. He was killed almost instantly, as he had shot himself in the heart with an XM4 assault rifle. His squadmates, who rushed to the scene upon hearing the gunshot, had rendered first-aid to no effect.
Chapter 76: Twilight (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Professor operates on Bubbles to save her life.

A/N: (12 MAR 2019) Amended the part where poor Professor Utonium drank Bubbles' blood to him accidentally drinking it. Can't believe I overlooked that.

Chapter 76: Twilight (Part 3)

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday), 1918.

In prepping for surgery, Professor Utonium hooked Bubbles up to a heart rate monitor and blood pressure monitor. Surprisingly, Bubbles' blood pressure was within tolerable levels despite losing so much blood. He estimated that she had lost as much as half the blood in her body, something which would have killed a normal adult human being, much less a little girl, but Bubbles had endured.

In the limited time he had for theorizing, he thought that Chemical X had bestowed upon her the resilience to endure such debilitation - he already knew that the Girls' blood was different from what was considered normal. It was likely that Chemical X had super-charged their red blood cells. Specifically, it was likely that the hemoglobin in them was saturated with Chemical X, allowing them to carry more oxygen. The nature of Chemical X, how it could react with numerous other substances, had something to do with it - it was either helping to carry oxygen or had manipulated the hemoglobin in such a way that it had extra capacity.

"Selicia, honey," Professor Utonium found himself using a term of endearment on his 'wife' unconsciously. But more important matters were at hand for him to care about such things. "I need you to call Doctor Simmons and anyone else who can assist - Blake. Blake has a medic in his team. Get him too."

Selicia went off to the side urgently to dial her flip-phone feverishly. Professor Utonium flipped Bubbles around on her chest to gain access to the bullet entry wounds on her back. He was going to need to operate on two major organs. The heart and a lung. The question was, which one first? Sweat poured down his forehead as he weighed his options. He gritted his teeth, knowing that one wrong move would mean that he would have one less daughter.

There was no telling how much damage the heart had sustained. All he knew was that Bubbles was still alive, which meant that it hadn't ruptured to a point of no return. Her right lung, on the other hand, was punctured twice over, was probably filling up with blood but collapsing, because her chest cavity was likely being flooded with blood and air as well.

'What do I do? What do I do?" Professor Utonium panicked inside, all the while trying to push his emotions out of the equations, trying to push what he thought he knew about Bubbles from the
The right lung; the professor decided. The heart could wait - the bullet was likely lodged there, acting as a plug. Bubbles would be dead if it wasn't the case. Nothing was plugging up the lung.

Rifling through his surgical kit, he couldn't find a chest drain to pump air and blood out of Bubbles' cavity, but he did have plastic tubes in it, originally meant for IV drips. Making a quick incision into Bubbles' side, he inserted the tube and sucked on it. The moment he tasted blood, he let the tube go. Blood was siphoned this way to reduce pressure on Bubbles' collapsing right lung. He had no place to let the blood flow into, so he allowed it to drip on the floor.

When Selicia returned, she immediately reported that Doctor Simmons and Blake's convoy were on the way. The professor put her to work immediately, getting her to hold the makeshift chest drain he had devised while he began making an incision over a spot high up on Bubbles' rib cage that would correspond with a right lung drastically reduced in profile.

Using his Duranium scalpel, he made a wide incision to give himself room to operate, and sure enough, he could see the hole in her lung. Pulling a second tube out of his bag, he used a similar procedure to drain the blood out of Bubbles' right lung... Except that he had to suck out the blood using his mouth and spit it out because there wasn't enough blood in the collapsed lung to actually create a siphoning effect. The iron taste of blood disgusted him, and he had actually accidentally drunk a bit of it. After retching and almost vomiting but managing to push the mixture of bile and blood back down to his stomach, he proceeded to stitch up the hole with his Duranium needle and biodegradable thread.

If only he had the right equipment - he couldn't help but to regret how he prioritized the equipment delivery schedule, which had put him in a disadvantage now, since the first things that came were the MRI and CT machines and all sorts of other diagnostic tools - stuff that were useless in an emergency like this. He had accidentally drank his daughter's blood because of this.

With Selicia's help, Professor Utonium flipped Bubbles to her side and repeated the surgery on the other hole in Bubbles' right lung. When he was done, he adhered Bubbles' lung to the walls of her chest cavity and re-inflated it. He sewed his incisions up after that, before sewing up the damage to her flesh and skin.

"Selicia, what's the reading on her blood pressure?" the professor asked.

"Ur... Says 60 and 40 here. Is that a good thing?" Selicia read the blood pressure monitor's readout.

"No, that's definitely not a good thing," the professor muttered. He wiped the sweat off his forehead, only to smear it with Bubbles' blood instead. It had gotten worse than before, and before, it was already lower than the lowest tolerable level by normal human standards. He then turned to the Girls. The question was, who should he use?

"Buttercup," he decided - she was the tougher one, and less likely to suffer emotional trauma because of her psychopathy. "Could you come here for a second, please? Darling?"

Buttercup jumped off her chair and scooted over to the professor. All the while, she was wearing a kind of blank look on her face. There was blood all over the floor, but she didn't even try to skip over them.

"Is she going to be alright?" Buttercup asked. The professor looked at her. Was that concern he detected in her voice? He couldn't decide, and neither was it the time for it.
"She will be," the professor promised. "Could you drag a chair over and sit down beside me?"

Buttercup did as she was told. She pulled a swivel chair from a nearby supercomputer and jumped on top of it.

"Buttercup, I'm going to need to draw your blood for a transfusion, do you understand what I mean?" the professor said. Buttercup shook her head, though she could understand half of it. Specifically, the blood drawing part. "I'm going to give your blood to Bubbles."

"All of it?" Buttercup asked, taken aback.

"No, of course not."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday), 1945.

When Blake heard the gunshots coming from the center of the site, Blake's thoughts immediately went to the Girls. His assumption was that a different part of the perimeter had been breached. He was afraid that Foundation personnel had gone deeper than anticipated, and were actually interested in assassinating the Girls.

He had asked for permission from the PTF security captain to investigate, but he was swiftly denied. The captain had claimed that he had sent someone else for the task. They were kept on the perimeter for almost half an hour before the all-clear signal was sounded.

Blake did a little investigation after that. With his convoy, he scouted out the site in the direction of the gunshot and was able to work out that it came from Water Tower 4A by himself. He and his team had combed the area for clues, but whoever had fired those shots were thorough in hiding any signs of their activities. All that was left were some footprints in the snow. He couldn't even follow it when his flip-phone started ringing. The caller ID read 'Sergeant Selicia Goodwin'.

"Hello?" he answered his phone.

"Blake! God! I need your help!" Selicia cried in the phone. "It's Bubbles! She's- she's been shot, and it's bad! Thomas needs help operating on her!"

When Blake drove back to the House, he was taken aback by the blood on the lawn. There was so much of it. From the sight alone, he was certain that Bubbles would be dead by the time he reached her. He had stopped at the lawn only to pick up Octi, which had been dropped near the mailbox. He brought his entire team into the House, but most of them were for security, in case whoever had hurt Bubbles decided to come back and finish the job. He went down to the lab with only his medic, Private Zach.

The sight in the lab was equally bad. Blood was everywhere around a surgical table. A jacket and dress, completely drenched in blood and torn apart, lay on the floor, forgotten. The professor was covered in blood as if he had just come out of a slaughterhouse - was that blood on his lips and chin? - and yet he worked on as if he was pristine. He had pulled out a blood bag, preparing for a transfusion. Private Zach went in to help with it.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday), 2005.
After the blood transfusion, the operation on Bubbles had hit a snag. A heart surgery was a far more complicated affair compared to a pneumothorax surgery and lung re-inflation. Although Professor Utonium was confident of his abilities, he did not care for the conditions he was operating Bubbles in. Although he had the equipment on hand to scan her, moving her was risky, especially after the operation he had done on her right lung. He had no machines to bypass and replace the function of the heart so that he could remove the Duranium bullet - if it was indeed lodged in the heart as he pictured.

Private Zach contributed little to the debate as did Selicia because of their lack of expertise in advanced and specialized medicine. Private Zach thought that surgery should be done immediately because of the dangers of waiting. Selicia was barely holding it together because of guilt, and Professor Utonium was unwilling to risk Bubbles' life even if it meant expediting a potential solution.

The professor and Zach began bickering about this in a heated argument while Buttercup was still feeling faint beside Bubbles, and had rested her head on the surgical table, falling in and out of consciousness. Bubbles did need a lot of blood to stay afloat. As it turned out, Buttercup wasn't too wrong to say that they needed all of her blood. They'd taken more than a quarter of it when the professor decided that normal blood was too risky to transfuse into Bubbles for the lack of Chemical X and insights.

Blossom, in the meantime, watched from the sidelines how her family was falling apart all around the critically wounded Bubbles. Blake grabbed a chair and sat down beside her.

"How're you doing, champ?" he said as he sat down.

"Bad," Blossom simply said. Despite her best efforts to remain stoic, tears were still dripping silently from her eyes. "I wish Daddy is with me. I wish I can help."

"Well, you can help by staying strong," Blake suggested. He took Blossom's hand and noticed that she was wearing his watch. It looked good on her. Blossom squeezed Blake's hand. She was strong, and the agent could actually feel some pain from it.

"It hurts, Mister Blake, it hurts so bad," Blossom sighed. "Was it supposed to hurt here? When Bubbles got hurt?" Blossom put her other hand on her heart. Blake assumed that she meant emotional trauma, not physical pain, though the little girl meant both.

"Yes, it happens when something bad happens to someone you love," Blake explained. "But you know what?"

"What?" Blossom asked. Blake held up her hand and tapped on her pink watch.

"Remember what I said when you thought I was no longer your friend? After the highway?" Agent Blake said. "Time will heal all wounds. Bubbles is going to be fine, her wounds will recover. We'll all be happy again. I know your father. Bubbles is safe in his hands."

Blossom said nothing. It was hard to believe in Mister Blake when her heart had never felt heavier in her life before. But she did try really hard to believe in him. With her Daddy busy trying to save Bubbles' life, Blossom leaned on Blake instead. The USDO agent looked warily at Professor Utonium, wondering if the professor, who was very possessive of his 'daughters', would mind. He didn't seem to even notice Blossom at all, So Blake wrapped an arm around the little girl, who cried into his combat vest.

"It's so hard," Blossom cried, her voice muffled by his magazine pouches.
"I know, I know," Agent Blake comforted. "It'll all be over soon."

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


After a protracted period of back-and-forth arguments, Professor Utonium, Selicia, and Private Zach had reached a compromise on what to do with Bubbles' heart problem. They had decided to wait for Doctor Simmons to arrive with additional equipment before starting the heart surgery. In the meantime, the professor would open up Bubbles from the back in an exploratory surgery to prepare the way for the heart bypass machine and the real operation. It wouldn't be long before Doctor Simmons arrive anyway.

Before they got started, Professor Utonium hadn't forgotten about Buttercup, who was leaning against the surgical table, half-conscious from donating a quarter of her blood. It was her first time doing it, so the shock of it was overwhelming. He picked her up and laid her down on a surgical bed next to Bubbles.

When everyone was mentally prepared to begin the surgery, they huddled around the broken body of Bubbles. Professor Utonium began the operation by drawing a dotted line down Bubbles' back, through the gunshot wound. Selicia handed a fresh Duranium scalpel to him. He began making an incision, cutting through the skin layer by layer, then the muscles. The professor stopped for a moment, afraid of what he might find, but he continued when he was able to psyche himself into doing so - he had to continue. There was no other way, no going back.

Private Zach used a towel to drain the blood that resulted from the incisions. No one had to drink the blood this way. Professor Utonium continued to cut deeper, and deeper until he could see something moving underneath.

"Clamps, here and here," the professor ordered Private Zach, who drew some clamps from the tray beside him. He hooked them onto the parted flesh of Bubbles and used it to spread them apart, exposing Bubbles' ailing heart for all to see.

Professor Utonium was right on the money. A Duranium bullet was lodged in her heart. There was less bleeding than he had anticipated. Some blood was spilling from the heart, around the bullet with each pump, but not much. The only good news was that the bullet had struck the right ventricle of the heart - if someone had to be shot in the heart, the right ventricle was one of the 'safer' spots to be shot in.

The bullet was huge. Private Zach was able to identify it. Large caliber. Sniper round. Someone had decided to assassinate Bubbles from afar - a tactically sound move, considering what the Girls were capable of at close range. The professor was able to identify the Duranium that was used to make the bullet. It had an otherworldly shine to it - it would shift the spectrum of light it chose to reflect but slightly, though the effect was barely noticeable with the naked eye.

While they waited for Doctor Simmons, Professor Utonium directed his ragtag team of surgical staff to clean the area around the heart. Bubbles had been bleeding from the heart for a long time. There was a lot of blood to clean up, some of which had already clotted.

The professor didn't have long to plan his surgery, however, when Doctor Simmons finally arrived. He had his own trained surgical staff, who carefully wheeled the heart bypass machine carefully down the lab stairs.
Initially, Doctor Simmons had wanted Professor Utonium to 'take a back seat', considering that he was the father of Bubbles, which he believed would impair the professor's judgment and bravery. The professor fought long and hard to stay beside Bubbles, and the doctor allowed him to continue the surgery, as there was no time for a debate.

Before long, Professor Utonium injected Bubbles with chemicals to thin her blood and stop her heart. Private Zach inserted breathing tubes into Bubbles' lungs to assist in her breathing. When the heart rate monitor stopped beeping and flatlined, the work began.

The bullet was removed relatively quickly, but a small incision had to be made to explore the interior of the right ventricle, to check for damage. Sure enough, the bullet had grazed the interior as well.

It was delicate work, and as such, Professor Utonium and Doctor Simmons would take turns performing the surgery. The professor would first stitch up the interior of the heart, before allowing Doctor Simmons to complete the job. He would then reshape the exterior of the right ventricle section of the heart before Professor Utonium would stitch it up.

An hour into the heart surgery and it was over - the major damage had been resolved. Bubbles' body had endured the gunshots pretty well - with normal human beings, there would have been additional damage surrounding the tissue. Heck, with normal human beings, they likely wouldn't even have survived. As such, Bubbles' surgery was more straightforward and free of consequences.

The heart bypass machine was removed, and Bubbles' heart was allowed to resume its functions. The professor would then go on to close up her pericardium, before closing up the incisions he had made to reach the heart.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 2144.

It was over. It was finally over. Professor Utonium had never felt more relieved in his entire life. Bubbles was safe. For now. With so many qualified people available to watch over Bubbles, he allowed himself the luxury of a quick shower.

But with the end of the surgery came the end of the adrenaline in his blood, the urgency of the situation overriding his sensibilities. Fear and pain returned in him; Bubbles had come so close to dying. She had endured unimaginable pain and suffering for such a little thing, for a girl her age - who was technically 5 years old but had only seen the world for a month.

He scrubbed at himself obsessively, trying his best to get the blood off him, and even after he was spotless, he just kept on scrubbing, until his skin was raw. He collapsed in the shower, not just from exhaustion, but from the sudden force of what he felt. He cried as the water ran, clutching a clump of hair as he couldn't stop seeing an image of Bubbles dying on his doorstep, the amount of blood that painted the lawn. He screamed in the shower when he realized how much he had risked Bubbles' life while trying to save her. There were numerous times when he had to second-guess himself when he couldn't tell what was objectively the right move, and what was the shortcut he conceived to cut corners in order to save Bubbles faster. Private Zach had actually been a stabilizing factor in his decision-making. If it weren't for him, he would have wasted half an hour waiting for Doctor Simmons, doing nothing, and it would have wasted time, time that Bubbles didn't have - she might have bled out had the professor had his way.

He couldn't forget the look of Bubbles on the inside. He would have been more than fine with knowing Bubbles inside out, but not literally so. It wasn't his wish to see the inside of Bubbles, not if
he could help it. It had changed things.

"Thomas?" Selicia's voice came from outside the door. The door handle turned, and the door itself actually swung open. The professor had forgotten to lock the door in his troubled state of mind.

And he didn't care that he was sitting in the bathtub, naked and crying as the shower head continued to rain on him. When Selicia saw him, she couldn't help but tear up as well. She knew that this would happen; she couldn't imagine what would have happened if Bubbles had actually died.

Coming up to Thomas, Selicia placed a hand on his cheek, and for the first time, he welcomed it. He was down-and-out, and he leaned on it. He embraced Selicia as he cried. They kissed after that, long and hard, and when Thomas opened his eyes to looked into Selicia's, he didn't just see Selicia, but someone who he believed actually, genuinely, loved him, and someone he could love in return.

The guilt in Selicia didn't go away even after hours of it. It felt worse after she had shared a genuine kiss with Thomas. She couldn't believe she had caved into Captain Kate's demand so readily.

The worse part was that she couldn't bring herself to tell Thomas, even though she knew that keeping it as a secret was wrong.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

20 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 2207.

After helping Thomas with his clothes and getting him down from their master bedroom, Selicia realized something else - the entire family had not eaten ever since Bubbles' mishap. To correct this, she sat the professor down at the dining table and brought Buttercup and Blossom up to join them. She reheated the food while they sat around the dining table, looking like they had all just gone through an entire night without sleep.

When the food was served and Selicia took her place beside Professor Utonium, no one ate for a good, long while. Not a single one of them, and not a single bite, even though dinner was overdue for four hours.

Because they knew that Bubbles wouldn't be joining them for the next few days, and that wasn't even the half of it.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, things haven't been the same ever since Bubbles is shot.

Chapter 77: Red on White

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Sleep was beyond the professor. Every time he closed his eyes, he would see bullets tearing through Bubbles. He would see parts of Bubbles where the sun didn't shine. Her chest cavity, her lungs, and heart. He would see her disassembled into her constituent organs and glands and parts, and she would still be moving. It was just as he feared when he tried to kill his own Girls, the least bloody way possible.

He couldn't tell when he had fallen asleep, and when he had woken, but when he decided to get out of bed, he saw that it was right on the minute that separated night from dawn. Looking back at his bed, he saw that Selicia and Buttercup were still asleep - he had decided yesterday that Buttercup should sleep with him and Selicia, for fear of what she might be up to at night. The professor didn't tell Buttercup that it was a precaution against her… tendencies, of course.

The professor knew what he should do. Going down, still in his Pyjamas, he took a bucket of water and a rag and started scrubbing at the floor, where the drips of blood were. They were harder to scrub away than he thought, after being left on the floor overnight. He scrubbed maniacally and feverishly, wanting the sight of Bubbles' blood to just disappear so badly.

"Thomas, honey," a voice came from behind him. He was used to it by now. It was Selicia. She hugged him from behind and kissed him in the head. He was used to that too. She had been very supportive lately, and even though she wasn't Eileen, he craved it. To bear the cross of the Girls suffering alone… he simply couldn't stand it. He needed the support. He needed the love, no matter where it came from. "Let me help you with that. I'm responsible for Bubbles too."

If only the professor knew what Selicia truly meant.

It took them the better part of an hour to scrub away Bubbles' blood from the front door to the lab, and they still weren't sure if they'd cleared all of it. When they got to the lawn outside, however, they were decently surprised to find it cleared.

Agent Blake and his men were dismissed by Professor Utonium yesterday night, and his excuse was that Bubbles and the rest of the family needed the space to recover. Before he left, Agent Blake had returned Octi to Bubbles, putting the doll on her chest and folding the kid's arm on top of it.

It was the only explanation. Agent Blake had taken it upon himself to clean up the lawn with the
help of his men. The snow covering it was thinner, so they must have scooped all the snow up and dumped them elsewhere.

"Blake," the professor mumbled, speechless. Perhaps he had misunderstood the security leader too, just like Alice.

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.


"Chief of Security Blackwater," a security officer spoke into a jail cell containing a huge figure hunched on his cot. "Director Cliff wants to see you." There was the rattle of keys, and the clanging and banging of metal as the barred gate of Blackwater's cell finally opened. It had been two days since he had been thrown into the slammer. He hadn't showered or otherwise experienced any real creature comfort since. The old soldier felt at home. It was closer in terms of the conditions to the times when he was first baptized by hard iron and hellfire, to become a firm believer in the art of war. He regretted nothing when he stood up to the baby-faced director.

"So, that little man is finally crawling back to me, huh?" Blackwater said as he picked up the top of his uniform and bullet-resistant vest, he followed the guard out.

"It's good to see you back, sir," the security officer said. Blackwater was very popular with the security wing of the USDO. He was never in any danger or trouble when he was locked up. It was merely a formality, and even the director knew it. Within the entire organization, Blackwater was the second most powerful person.

"If I'm really back," Blackwater merely remarked laconically.

The old soldier walked through the jail cell, before going into an elevator, taking it up to the ground floor. He could only wonder what had happened in the past 48 hours or so. Bubbles was no doubt dead - even without his input, the USDO was a deadly force to be reckoned with. He knew - he'd built up the security wing of the USDO for decades, and he had a lot of say in the projects it was involved in.

When he was on the ground floor, he made his way to an elevator lobby, where he took another lift upwards. Recruited shortly after World War II, he was essentially a founding member of the USDO, and for good reason. He knew the reason why he was recruited. He was there in Egypt when they found it in the ancient ruins that predated even the ancient Egyptians themselves. What they found there was everything that the Chemical X of today was based on.

At the top floor, he followed the guard to the office of Director Cliff. The guard knocked on the door a couple of times before opening it for Chief of Security Blackwater. The huge gorilla of a man went through, ducking his head as he did. Inside, he saw Director Cliff at his window, looking out.

Blackwater went all the way up to the desk if only to show that he wasn't intimidated in the slightest. He had nothing to be afraid of - not that he was ever afraid of anything since World War II, but Director Cliff had nothing on him since he had only joined the USDO in the 60s. He wasn't even afraid of being executed - he had accepted that death was coming since the second world war. Apparently, even the grim reaper had decided to stay away for the past four decades.

"So, you've done it, haven't you?" Blackwater said when no words were exchanged between them for a while, just silent. "You've got what you wanted: the obliteration of an expensive asset with a lot of potential. What do you want with me?"
"I never thought you're one to assume," Director Cliff said as he turned around to face the Chief of Security. "No, B-49 is still alive. One of your men there told me so."

"And you want me to put her to sleep? The answer is still no," Blackwater said bluntly while staring cannonballs at the director.

"Not at all… General Blackwater," Director Cliff said, hinting at something.

"General? What are you playing at?" Blackwater questioned.

"Consider it a peace offering, Blackwater," Director Cliff explained. "You know how it is, duty and all that. There will always be things that I must do that I will come to regret anyway, but it's for the greater good. Putting you in a jail cell, for example. Trying to euthanize B-49, for another. The former I can fix, but the latter…"

"And what difference does it make, whether I'm the Chief of Security, or a General? I don't hide behind titles," Blackwater said.

"I'm splitting up the responsibilities. Our organization is growing, and so, too, must our hierarchy. You'll be in charge of our forces in the field from now on. Internal security will be the Chief of Security's main concern," Cliff explained.

"And who's going to be the Chief of Security?" Blackwater asked. He could think of a few candidates of his own.

"Right behind you," Cliff simply said, waving his hand at the door. It opened shortly after that. Blackwater turned around to see who his 'replacement' was.

Captain Kate. Or Chief of Security Kate, as she had been promoted. Yet, the woman did not wear the expression of a victor. Instead, she had a perpetual frown on her face. Her entrance into her new job wasn't ideal, that much he knew. Despite being imprisoned in his own detention wing in HQ, he was able to keep tabs on recent events. The security officers guarding him were sympathetic to him, and they were able to inform him of the blunders that Kate had committed. Using Project Powerpuff to suppress a riot for one - when the Girls had, if nothing else, proven that they were quite deadly, even if unreliably so. Shooting and possibly destroying one of the Girls, for another, which was tantamount to flushing millions of dollars down the drain, by using even more money like free-flowing water to flush said millions of dollars down the drain.

"Chief of Security Kate will be your replacement," Cliff said. He then turned to the former captain. "Make no mistake, however, Kate. You won't be handling the same level of responsibility as Blackwater did before you betrayed him. It won't even be half the responsibility. Your first duty is to go on a tour to inspect all USDO facilities in the US."

Blackwater had realized then what it meant for Kate. She was basically at the dead-end of her career, condemned to taking over the more routine and menial of the duties he had to perform as Chief of Security. She was basically in charge of guard duties and base patrols, albeit at the top level. She would be barred from Townsville, the focal point of the USDO's activities. It seemed that both he and Cliff were in agreement that she was not field operations material.

Kate said nothing. She could only frown and give both men the stink eye before leaving the directorial office, presumably to pack her bags. She knew the irony of it - she had been given what she wanted, except that it was a twisted version of her wish.

"As for you, General Blackwater - get used to the title, like it or not - Your first duty in your new job
is B-49," Cliff went on.

"What about her?" Blackwater asked.

"It, Blackwater, it. I heard that it was critically injured, but Upton had successfully operated on her. The problem with that is that we're going to have a lot of discontented personnel, those who sympathized with B-49. Since you're one of them now, you should understand them better than I would. I want you to run damage control to my specifications," Cliff explained. "I have just the thing to make it all go away."

"And what makes you think that I'm going to listen to you?" Blackwater said brashly.

"Your main concern was containment, even after you started taking a shine to those lab rats. If you do not do as I say, you'll risk a breach of containment. Do you agree?" Cliff said. General Blackwater did nothing but stare at him. The director was right, even though he wished deep inside that he was wrong. Containment would be a problem. B-49 might be the lesser of 'The Three', but she was loved by quite a number of the staff, not to mention B-47 or Blossom. Any number of things could happen. Project Powerpuff and even the personnel attached to them could go rogue as a result, or they could even defect to the Foundation. They could lose control, too, if they decided to seek shelter with the Wilford administration in Townsville. Or they might even find out who shot Bubbles, and attempt to exact revenge, and that might include the entire USDO as an organization. None of those scenarios were desirable.

Something had to be done. For the greater good.

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**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

**21 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 1320.**

Ever since the surgery, Bubbles hadn't woken up. She had spent the whole night in the lab, on monitors and drips, still caked in her own blood, clothed only by the professor's blood-stained lab coat for warmth. The professor had spent the entire night beside her, after a dinner where no one finished their meals. In fact, Blossom hadn't even touched her food.

In the morning, the professor had given Bubbles a sponge bath and moved her to her room. The touch of water and soap did not wake her up either. Blossom would not eat her breakfast and had instead spent the morning with Bubbles, holding her hand, whispering for her to wake up, talking to her even though she was comatose. Life went on as per normal with Buttercup, except her appetite was voracious. What Blossom would not eat, Buttercup had taken. School was out. Selicia called Pokey Oaks Kindergarten and told Miss Keane about the incident but in vague terms.

"Bubbles was injured last night and had to undergo surgery. The Girls won't be coming today," Selicia had said in brief, giving the teacher scant details in a couple of sentences, and it was all she needed to know.

"Blossom, you have to eat," Professor Utonium was practically begging his daughter upstairs in her room. He had even brought a plate of food up. Scrambled eggs, chicken steak, s and fries. Blossom did not even look at it even though her last meal was lunch, the previous day. She simply shook her head weakly and returned to laying her head down beside Bubbles as she continued to hold her hand. "You're not helping Bubbles by starving yourself."

Blossom said nothing.
"Blossom, honey, don't do this to me, please," the professor continued to plead with her, but to no avail. He left the food on a nightstand after he failed repeatedly a few times to convince her to eat. He could only hope that the smell of his famous culinary creation, whipped up in his fervor of love, would eventually convince her to eat after she had smelled enough of it.

"Can I have it instead?" Buttercup asked. She had followed the professor up after devouring her meal, hoping for a third helping - yes, she had gone through a second plate of the stuff. Having a quarter of her blood drawn had put her appetite on overdrive as her body replaced the blood with stunning rapidity. The professor had conducted tests on Buttercup to check her blood replacement, and concluded that her body had already replaced most of her lost blood, fluid and cells both.

"No, Buttercup. Your sister needs to eat," the professor said. He took Buttercup's hand just as he was about to go.

"But can't I stay here and play with my stuff?" Buttercup asked.

"No," the professor said warily, aware that Blossom and Bubbles were vulnerable, and Buttercup was not. He was actually afraid of leaving Buttercup alone with them, owing to what he knew.

"But why not?" Buttercup pressed. Her father had changed, she just didn't know how to describe it. Something was wrong, even though it hadn't affected her in a bad way.

"Don't you want to spend some time with me?" the professor coaxed, opening his arms wide in a gesture implying that a hug was there for the taking. Buttercup smiled. In her mind, she was thinking that perhaps her Daddy was coming around to finally favoring her like how her Mom had wisely done so.

Buttercup promptly jumped into the professor's hug, wrapping her arms around him tightly. The professor did the same.

"But what are we doing, Dad?" she asked.

"It'll be a surprise," he said mysteriously, before leading her down the steps and towards the backyard. At the glass doors, he had her put on her winter gear.

"Are we building more snowmen?" Buttercup took a guess. "I like throwing snowballs at them!"

"No, keep guessing," the professor said before making a move towards the garage. "And don't go away. I'll be back in a minute."

Professor Utonium walked briskly towards the garage, afraid that leaving Buttercup alone for even a minute was a risk in itself. There was no telling what fancy she might take out of the blue, based on what Junzō Ito had said. If even a normal little girl with psychopathy could find the time to sate her twisted desires in between two or three sports, then what more for a little girl enhanced with Chemical X?

In the garage, the professor unlocked his car, and leaned into the passenger backseats. It was filled with paper bags, either down at the footrests or fastened to the seats by seat belt. Gifts for the Girls, except the two of them were probably in no mood for gifts. He had to go through a few of them to find Buttercup's going through Bubbles' painting kit, Blossom's box of puzzles, dolls, blocks and finally he found it - A baseball and a pair of baseball gloves, one larger than the other. Tearing them out of their packaging, he hurried back to Buttercup, who was thankfully still waiting by the glass doors - nothing was broken yet and no one was killed or injured.
"Ice cream?" Buttercup guessed. The professor chuckled slightly, and found it surprisingly that he could still do such a thing after everything that had happened. "Ooh, ooh! I know! Did you get me a new gun?" The professor found her latest idea off-putting, and decided to cut to the chase to banish such morbid thoughts from Buttercup's mind.

"Here, check this out," the professor said as he brought the gifts meant for Buttercup out. He thought that the little girl would love it, or that she would tell him that it was what she had always wanted. Instead, what he got was a perplexed look. And then he remembered: he hadn't taught the Girls anything about baseball yet. Sports had been the last thing on his mind when it came to the Girls. In fact, it had been the last thing on his mind period - he was never an athletic man to begin with, preferring to spend all his time studying, or doing research and experiments and reading. Sports was within the realm of his brother, Eugene Upton, instead.

"What are those things?" Buttercup asked, the look of confusion obvious on her face - there was one thing to like about Buttercup. Despite what Alice had said, she seemed very direct when it came to her feelings, at least the feelings she want to be known. The professor thought he could see the disappointment in her face.

"This is a baseball, Buttercup," the professor introduced the round object, showing it to her as if it was some priceless artifact. "and these are what you call baseball gloves. When I was young, I would play catch with my own dad. I want to pass the tradition on to you."

There was one thing he wouldn't say, though. He hated playing catch. He could barely keep up with his father, or his brother. He could barely get the ball, and by the time that wasn't the case, he was almost too old for the game. It wasn't because he had poor hand-eye coordination either. He simply did not see any worth in the game. It had served only to highlight the difference between him and his family.

"How do I play catch?" Buttercup said.

"I'm so glad you asked. Let's go and give it a try," the professor said as he opened the glass door and stepped out. Buttercup followed. After helping Buttercup put her glove on, they positioned themselves a few yards away from each other, on opposite ends of the backyard. "Now, I'm going to throw you the ball, and you catch, okay? Use the glove."

"Sure thing, Daddy-o," Buttercup concurred. The professor lobbed the ball in a fairly high arc. It was a slow ball meant for absolute beginners. Buttercup missed it. She pouted.

"It's okay, Butterfly, you'll get a hang of it," Professor Utonium encouraged his adopted daughter. "Throw it back to me." Buttercup picked the ball up before winding her arm up. "Gently, Buttercup!"

"Okay…" Buttercup said before copying her Daddy and lobbing the ball at him. It was pretty well aimed. A month of playing and physical activities and throwing grenades had improved her hand-eye coordination. Still, the professor had to move a little to get it.

"Good job, Buttercup," the professor praised his girl. For a silent few minutes, they went at it, throwing the ball back and forth. Buttercup was a fast learner. She had missed catching the first couple of balls, but was able to manage it from then on. Without telling her, the professor had sped the ball up gradually, and Buttercup had no problems intercepting it.
"How are you feeling, Buttercup?" the professor asked. The whole point of a game of catch wasn't just the game itself - he had learned that too from his father. It was family time. Back then, it was a father and son moment, though he never really liked it because his leanings towards academia was always put to question. He hoped that things would be better between him and Buttercup. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Dad," Buttercup said. The professor discreetly studied her face. Nothing. Well, almost nothing. Was that concern, like before? On her face?

"Are you sure?" the professor gently nudge the wayward girl. "Is there anything you want to tell me?" He threw the ball in her direction, but this time, she didn't even make an attempt to catch the ball. It made a cylindrical hole in the snow where it fell.

"Dad, when Bubbles was shot..." Buttercup said, and when she did, there was an odd look on her face - odd, by Buttercup's standards. "My heart hurts because of it."

It was an odd way to put it to say the least. 'Huh,' was the professor's only reaction. He couldn't remember the last time Buttercup had used an expression, but it was encouraging for him. Doctor Simmons had mentioned in his analysis of her brain that she 'might not be irredeemably psychopathic'.

"You know, Buttercup, it's okay to feel sad when Bubbles is hurt," the professor tried to comfort Buttercup. "It doesn't make you look bad, if that's what you're worried about. If anything, it's good, because it means you care about Bubbles."

Buttercup had never felt so misunderstood in her entire (one-month-long) life. Her Daddy, misunderstanding her! What more could be worse!? If it was Blossom, or Bubbles, or anyone else, it would be fine, but her Daddy!? "It's not about that, Dad! I don't care about Bubbles!" Buttercup shouted. Or did she? Her own words gave her pause, because she knew that there was a flood of emotions running through her the moment she felt Bubbles' pain in her heart. Her Daddy had wanted to say something else but what had come out of her mouth had shut him up real good. It was a reminder of everything he wanted to forget about, to the point where he had drank himself silly the first time he heard it. It made him mad, real mad. Buttercup saw the expression on her Daddy's face, and regretted it immediately, mostly because she had ruined it for herself with her impulsiveness. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean that! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Please don't be mad!"

She ran to him and hugged him around the legs. The professor was quick to calm down, especially when he knew the cause of Buttercup's insensitivity. Speechlessly, as he was still shaken by Buttercup's words, he stroked Buttercup's hair. Yet, beyond that, he wasn't sure what he could do or say. Alice hadn't returned his call, as far as he knew. The regret in him for doubting his friend on the USDO council had come back twice as hard.

"Oh, Buttercup, my sweetling..." the professor mumbled as he bent down to bring himself to the girl's eye level. "I know it's hard for you to feel for your sisters, to care about them, but I want you to try, alright?"

Buttercup searched the professor's eyes for meaning, and she did find it extremely difficult to find any. Feelings. Caring. Those were things that had been elusive to her, unless it was the kind to do with her own needs and wants.

"Yes, Dad," Buttercup simply said, but her words did not inspire much confidence in her old man. They hugged after that. The glass doors leading into The House opened while they did, and Selicia
stepped into the backyard. She was in her gym outfit.

"Thomas, the doorbell's been ringing. It's Blackwater. He's asking for you," Selicia said.

"Blackwater?" Professor Utonium said as he wondered why the Chief of Security was at The House. His face grew red, and his eyebrows and lips arched in complete hatred. "Blackwater!"

"Thomas-" Selicia tried to speak, but she wasn't given room.

"Selicia, honey," the professor said with barely-contained rage, his voice trembling with the lack of control as he was trying, with all his energy, to avoid venting his fury on the wrong person. "Take Buttercup up. I'm going to have a little talk with our guest."

"Thomas-" Selicia tried again, but it was no use.

"Go," the professor ordered firmly. Selicia, sensing that her 'husband' was losing self-control, took Buttercup by the arm, leading her back into The House. The professor followed after some time, and by that time, Selicia and Buttercup had already disappeared upstairs.

Blackwater stood at the front door. His uniform seemed slightly different. His rank insignia was different. Professor Utonium didn't care. Glaring at the ape of a man, he marched up to him and punched the gorilla across the cheek.

Blackwater didn't seem to mind, and barely flinched from the blow. After rubbing his cheek, he started: "You punch like your 'wife', Upton. But don't get me wrong. That's a compliment, not an insult. She's a fine security officer, and you're an egghead."

"What the hell are you doing here, Blackwater!?" the professor screamed his question. "Here to finish the job? Put another bullet in Bubbles? Because you'll have to kill me first!" With that, he reached for his pistol, kept in his lab coat, just in case, ever since Bubbles was shot the previous day.

"Before you do anything rash, you should know that I didn't order Bubbles' euthanasia," General Blackwater claimed, putting one of his hammy hand on the professor's gun arm, before he drew the weapon. "No one in the USDO did."

"You're lying," the professor accused.

"You may not like me, that much I know," Blackwater went on. "In fact, you despise me for what I did to your pet monkeys and human captives. But have you ever known me to be a liar? I'm here to brief you, Selicia and the Girls on who did. You want justice for Bubbles? I'll give you justice, but I can only start if you would trust me for once."

"Fine," the professor said, then relaxed his arm, letting go of the handle of his pistol. General Blackwater let go of the man. 'Fine' was a word he'd grown far too familiar with. Nothing was ever fine, and he had to accede to one too many demands he would rather not take.

What he would reveal next came as a big surprise.
Chapter 78: Burn

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom discovers a new power, but it comes with a price.

Chapter 78: Burn

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


When General Blackwater had asked to brief the Girls earlier in the day on who had attacked Bubbles, Professor Utonium had insisted that he leave, but it wasn't because the professor was outwardly hostile to him. The Girls were in a shoddy state. Bubbles was completely out, not to mention recovering from a major surgery, and Blossom hadn't eaten all day and most of the previous day. Buttercup was the only remaining girl to be available.

General Blackwater would not take no for an answer. The only compromise he made was that he would come back later to brief the Girls. He considered it a win that he had brought Professor Utonium and Selicia up to speed on who had attacked the Girls.

By the time he came back, the Girls made no improvements. Despite Bubbles' blindingly fast healing factor, she was still in recovery. The professor could only estimate how long she would need to recover Blossom had skipped out on dinner and had confined herself to her bed, lying down beside Bubbles.

Even the professor was at a loss, and it was only out of desperation that he allowed General Blackwater to speak to them. He was hoping that Blossom would fly herself out of the hole she had made for herself once she knew who had hurt her sister. Perhaps anger might replace the depression she seemed to be suffering from, so that she might eat in the process of preparing to exact vengeance on the person who had put Bubbles on a surgical bed.

Blossom had to be carried down to the living room. Even if she could walk, she wouldn't want to. The professor found it surprising that she would even let herself be separated from Bubbles. As she sat on the living room couch, she stared blankly at Blackwater, not even at his face, but at his chest, and only because he was directly in front of her. Buttercup looked excited, as she was hoping for another operation to fight in.

"Hello, Girls," General Blackwater greeted the two remaining subjects available, though one of them was only barely. Blossom's eyes flitted to Blackwater's, but it soon dropped down to his chest again.

"Hello, Mister Blackwater!" Buttercup returned the greeting. If she had a tail, she would be wagging it.

"Do you know why I'm here?" Blackwater said.
"Are we fighting crime again?" Buttercup guessed.

"No. Not yet,' Blackwater said. He opened the file he had in hand and pulled out several photos before slapping them on the table. Buttercup looked at them with interest. Blossom stared at the pictures briefly before letting her eyes drooped to the floor. "This is why I'm here."

"A monkey?" Buttercup said, confused by the content of the photos. There was a set of three photos on the table, and the main subject for each one of them was a weird-looking chimpanzee with a green face and a transparent dome over its brain, which was far too big to be contained by its skull.

"Not just any monkey," General Blackwater said, but before he revealed what he had in mind, he looked at Blossom, who wasn't paying attention at all. She had gone on to stare at her hands, which was hardly an improvement in her behavior. "Blossom, are you listening to me? Blossom! Chin up! Look at me."

Blossom shifted herself lethargically before rolling her tired, almost soulless eyes towards Blackwater.

"Look carefully at the pictures, Blossom and Buttercup," General Blackwater said. "Because this monkey is the person behind Bubbles' near-death!"

"No way! A monkey?" Buttercup giggled before picking up one of the photos. Blossom picked another photo up. 'At least she's showing some interest now,' Blackwater thought when she did.

"Not just any monkey, as I've said. It calls itself Mojo Jojo," Blackwater said. "As you might have noticed, he's different from a normal monkey. The brain, for example, is bigger than how it normally should be. It's far smarter than any monkey. You see, this monkey is able to speak and do anything a human being is capable of. And more."

He then went on to talk about Mojo Jojo's capabilities as a Chemical W and Chemical X-enhanced creature. How similar it was to them, how different it was to them. How bullets couldn't stop it, yet the strength it possessed, and the kind of intelligence it had. He would go on to tell them about who and what was abetting and assisting the creature - Naga, the Foundation, the key leadership of the Foundation. Blackwater did not expect them to absorb everything. It was all to make the ruse complete. It had to be, to save the USDO and 'motivate' the Girls, push them in the right direction.

There was a change in Blossom throughout the briefing. She seemed more alive, more responsive, and more interested in the real world rather than the smoke and ashes in her head. She was most interested in the picture of Mojo Jojo than anything else.

And she remained so even after Blackwater was gone. Quietly, Blossom padded over to the glass door, opening it. She felt numb. Hollow. She needed to feel something, even if it was a blast of cold air. She looked at the photo of Mojo Jojo again. Rage built inside her. A picture of Bubbles in bed, broken and slow to recover. Rage. The sight of blood on the floor, all over the lab. Rage. She glared angrily at the picture.

And vowed revenge. The sight of her broken Daddy, holding a broken Bubbles. Rage. She could feel her eyes burning. Tears did not drip so much as turned into steam. A little dot of darkness appeared on Mojo Jojo's face in the picture. Smoke began to rise. Rage continued to burn in Blossom's heart. The only color she could see was red now. The dot expanded, and in the middle of it, a hole appeared. Ember lit up, then fire. The Polaroid seemed to burn wherever she was looking in the picture. Soon, the picture disintegrated into ashes, but it didn't seem to disturb her.

The feeling in her heart, of utter hatred and rage, was difficult to stop. She had never felt such things
before, not with Blackwater, not with the others from the USDO. The snow in the backyard was melted wherever she looked. Her glare would sweep across the backyard, making lines of melted snow. Steam rose as the water struggled to freeze again. She searched for meaning in the walls as she struggled with the feelings inside her, but she had only scorched them.

"Blossom, are you okay?" a voice came from behind her. Male. She turned around, glaring.

Only to turn the white of her Daddy's labcoat into black, then the red of the professor's scorched flesh. Professor Utonium cried in pain as he fell backward, clutching his chest. His scream was the only thing that was able to distract Blossom from the hatred and rage in her. The burning stopped. Blossom looked down at her Daddy, shocked.

"DAD!" she screamed when she realized what she had done. The professor was on the ground, clutching a wide trail of blood, burned flesh, ash, and burning fabric. "I didn't mean it-!"

"Thomas! What's going on!?" Selicia shouted from the kitchen before she rounded the corner and came towards the professor in a brisk walk. She ran forwards the moment she saw the professor on the floor, badly wounded. "Thomas!"

"Mom! Dad- He-" Blossom could not find her words, and it was too late.

"WHAT DID YOU DO, YOU BITCH!?" Selicia screamed aloud, unrestrained, and slapped Blossom so hard that the force of the blow knocked the little girl off her feet. She fell, hitting her head on the wall.

While Blossom was down, Selicia grabbed a rug and used it to beat out the flames still remaining on the professor's lab coat. When there was no more fire left, she began dragging him away. The man was barely conscious from the shock.

Blossom was left behind, rolling on the floor as she clutched her head from the pain of her fall. When the pain subsided, she looked at her palms. No blood. Of course not. While the pain was hard to bear, her body was much stronger.

The memory of what she had inadvertently done to her father was even stronger. Walking out into the cold winter night, she made her way to the tree in the backyard and sat behind it. She looked at the mess she had made in the backyard - the fences scorched, the snow melted, with the water freezing against to form crisscrossing lines of ice - and then she cried.

Selicia had carried the professor down to the lab, where she thought she could entrench herself and her 'husband' (without the apostrophes for her) against Blossom, whom she thought must have gone rogue. Running to a safe, she entered a combination and took out her own XM4 assault rifle, loading it and leaning it against a surgical bed, where she had also laid the professor down.

She examined his wound. It was terrible. Third degree burns across the upper arm and chest. Blood pouring through. What remained of his lab coat and the shirt underneath was contaminating the wound. And this was what Blossom, a little girl she had tried to love, did to her lover! So much for gratitude, that ungrateful bitch!

Grabbing a first aid kit, she tended to Thomas, pulling off his lab coat and shirt. Some of it was stuck to his burns, so she had to actually cut the fabric around the burns. She did her best to stop the bleeding, using gauze and bandages. She then went to the phone to call for backup from her friends outside.

"Mom?" a little girl's voice called out from the stairs. Selicia ran for cover at the surgical table and
took her gun. A shadow stepped out from the stairs. She fired a few rounds. "Whoa! What was that for!?!"

It turned out to be Buttercup. Selicia wasn't able to identify the voice in her panic.

"Oh God! Buttercup! I'm so sorry!" Selicia apologized and put down her rifle. "It's your sister! She- Look at what Blossom did to your father!"

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Security was quick to act on Selicia's call. Within a minute, they had mobilized, assembled outside The House and stormed the front door. Some of them were tasked with surrounding The House, in case of a run-away scenario.

"Oh my God, what on Earth happened here?" one of the PTF soldiers remarked when they were in the living room. Part of the wall had been scorched when Blossom had turned around to look at the professor, to terrible consequences. There was fire on the wall, grown from flames and still growing. The soldiers tasked with putting them out was quick to throw pails of water at it, their implements sourced from the kitchen.

"We have a Meltdown-3 event, look sharp!" the captain of the security task force, Scott, ordered. "Our target is Bravo-four-seven. We will do a room-by-room search. Intel from Sergeant Selicia indicates that she had gone rogue, is hostile and dangerous. Sniper's on the way, but we must keep her occupied until then."

More bootsteps came from behind, from the front door. They were footsteps that Captain Scott had never heard of. Battle-hardened eyes turned to them.

Sergeant Blake, formerly a lieutenant in the same position as Captain Scott. A controversial figure, who used to be like him until he began fraternizing with the latest subjects of Project Powerpuff. His detail followed behind him. Corporal Fields and Rutherford.

"What's going on here?" Sergeant Blake asked.

"It's none of your business," Captain Scott spat at the traitorous former lieutenant. But Sergeant Blake didn't need to hear it to know what was going on. The PTF soldiers were only concerned with one thing: Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup. From what he'd heard from the now General Blackwater, Bubbles was no longer a target for euthanasia, which left only Blossom and Buttercup.

Sergeant Blake started forward, intending to find them himself, and motioned for his comrades to follow.

"You make one more step and-" Captain Scott threatened, but he couldn't even finish.

"And you'll what? Shoot us?" Sergeant Blake said. "Sure, go right ahead. You'll have to explain to General Blackwater why he'd need replacement drivers for Project Powerpuff, then, and probably write a report in triplicate too."

That got him the pass. There were whispers that even General Blackwater himself had become partial to the Girls.

It didn't take long for Agent Blake to find Blossom. In spending time with the Girls, he knew all their
best hiding spots, and that they would fall back to their frequent haunts whenever they were upset. It did take him a few tries, however, and he was racing against a competitor - Captain Scott's soldiers. Splitting up with his own squad, he went through the Girls' room, the master bedroom, and when the balcony was empty, he thought that Blossom and Buttercup must be in the backyard.

He was half right. Buttercup was unaccounted for, but he did find Blossom. Coming up to her, he plopped himself down on the snow beside her.

"Hey, little flower," he greeted. "What happened?"

Blossom didn't speak for some time. Instead, she cried into his arm.

"I hurt Daddy real bad!" Blossom finally said when she was able to. There was some regression in her speech. Not good. It must have been terrible.

"I'm sure it was an accident, right?" Agent Blake said.

"But it was bad!" she cried some more.

"Happens all the time," Agent Blake comforted the little girl. "There was this once when I hit my father's thumb with a hammer by accident." It got Blossom to look up at him, and at least stop crying.

"It sounds painful," Blossom said timidly.

"Oh, it was. He went to a hospital. I broke his thumb, and he couldn't use it for weeks," Agent Blake said. "It can't be that bad with your father, right?"

"I don't know what happened," Blossom mumbled. The memory of it was still burning in her. The sight of her Daddy afraid, burning and in pain was horrifying, most of all because she was the one who had inflicted the terror and injury on her parent. "Everything just started… Burning all around me. I burned my Daddy, too. I don't know if he's even still alive."

She cried into his arms again.

"Look, the only way we'll know for sure is if we go see your father," Blake said. After regaining control of herself, Blossom nodded. He stood up, and extended a hand for her to take. She took it, and Blake helped her up. They couldn't walk a few yards, however, when Captain Scott and his men found them, flashing their lights at the two, pointing their weapons at them. Blake got in front of Blossom.

"Stop! She's harmless!" he shouted.

"Yeah, maybe to you!" Captain Scott countered. "What about the rest of us?"

"She's harmless," Agent Blake reaffirmed his position. Blossom peeked from behind him, still holding Blake's hand. Guns were pointed in her direction. Agent Blake turned around and picked her up, carrying her in his arms. "Don't look, Blossom. Everything's going to be okay."

With her in his arms, Agent Blake walked slowly past the soldiers, who continued to point their guns at him. He did so carefully, with no sudden moves, in case he set them off. He followed his own advice - eyes forward, no looking. He wasn't even sure if his counterpart in Captain Scott and his men wouldn't just put a bullet in his head.

But he was able to walk through. They didn't put a single bullet into him.
When Blake descended down to the labs with Blossom in his arms, Selicia actually pointed her rifle at him.

"What the hell is she doing here!?!" she demanded from her colleague.

"Selicia! Put the gun down!" Blake shouted in surprise - knowing only half the story, he didn't expect another gun being pointed at his face, especially one that belonged to Selicia, someone he knew a little better than the other guys in the security division. He stopped, in case she was crazy enough to actually shoot. The problem was, she did look crazy enough, and there was little wonder why. Professor Utonium was lying in a surgical table next to her, with a medic from Captain Scott's squad tending to him, cutting away fabric that was stuck to his burns, removing dead tissue wherever he could.

"Don't let her come any closer!" Selicia screamed. Blossom cried into Blake's shoulder when she heard just how much hatred was coming from her 'Mommy'.

"It was an accident, Selicia! This isn't the first day you know Blossom! She wouldn't hurt anyone just like that, least of all Upton!" Blake defended the little girl in his arms. Selicia didn't comply at first, but after giving a frustrated yell, she finally did, laying the gun on the ground.

Things didn't improve very much after that. The adults decided to talk things out in the living room. By that, they meant having shouting matches. Selicia, Captain Scott and his men on one side, with Buttercup versus Agent Blake, his men, and Blossom on the other side.

"Thomas was all burned up because of her!" Selicia would scream and point a finger at Blossom, who somehow, despite her abilities, was afraid of her. She was huddling Agent Blake's leg, burying her face in it.

"It was an accident!" Agent Blake shouted back. "If she's as malicious as you said, we'd all be dead by now!"

"And how sure are you that it was an accident!?!" Captain Scott would contribute. The men around him were twitchy. "It could all be part of a scheme to escape!"

"If she wants to escape, she could just fly away!" Agent Blake. "But she didn't! She's just a child - do you honestly think she's capable of that?!"

"You know the rules! There will be consequences if a subject injures a USDO operative!" Captain Scott added.

"Screw the rules!" Agent Blake replied.

"You want to get demoted again? Because that can be arranged!" Captain Scott threatened.

"At least we're still human beings. I can't say the same for you," Agent Fields, Blake's second-in-command, said.

"Empty words. Our sniper, who's inbound within 10 minutes, won't be talking," a soldier on Captain Scott's side threatened.

"Child-killers! You should all burn in hell!" another soldier on Agent Blake's side shouted.

The adults broke into another argument, men, and women throwing all sorts of claims and insults at each other, and it got to a point where the two sides were pointing guns at each other. But the situation was defused when Agent Blake set his sights on the door leading down to the labs, along
with a few of his men. The other camp turned to see what they were looking at.

Professor Utonium stood at the door, dressed in bandages. His medic stood beside him, a hand on his shoulder, pulling gently, chiding him and demanding that he return to his bed, but he was ignored.

"My Girls! Please- Don't- Don't take them away from me," he pleaded as he lumbered towards the two groups.

"Thomas!" Selicia cried the moment she saw him. She rushed to his side, supporting him. He could barely walk.

"Dad!" Blossom called out to him, relieved that he was still alive. Still in tears, she ran to him, but Selicia stuck out a hand to push her away.

"Get away from him!" Selicia shouted at the little girl.

"Selicia, please," the professor said, holding her back. Selicia gave in to his demand before allowing Blossom to hug her Daddy. "It was an accident. My little Blossom wouldn't harm me intentionally. She's young - and she just needs to learn how to control her powers, just like how she had to learn to walk."

"But honey, what if she-" Selicia tried to argue her way, but the professor would have none of it.

"Forgive her, Selicia, so that we can be a family again, just like what you always wanted," the professor said. There was no answer. Selicia weighed the options, the consequences.

"I'm calling General Blackwater," Agent Blake said to fill the silence. He hurried to the phone - there was certainly no need for a second Bubbles incident.

The sniper and the PTF soldiers would later be called off. The sniper had been a precaution - there was no danger of Blossom ending up like Bubbles, to begin with. Selicia had forced herself to 'forgive' Blossom in front of the professor if only to give him some peace of mind. Deep down, however, she knew what she was going to do: Blossom was going to pay for what she had done to Thomas, one way or another.
Chapter 79: Mercy

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, a new group of villains emerges to threaten the USDO - who will also be another challenge for the Girls.

Chapter 79: Mercy

The City of Townsville. The Slums. A Temporary Foundation Safehouse.


A group of men and enhanced individuals sat around an old table, on chairs that were creaky and sounded like they could give at any moment. Mojo Jojo was used to such inconveniences, for he had worse just scant weeks ago. However, it wasn't the furniture that was making him nervous. It was the Foundation's methods he had to work with that gave him doubts, and it wasn't just the fact that they had little reservations about wounding or even killing the innocent to achieve their ends. It was the fact that they were incredibly decentralized, outsourcing much of their work to third parties - a heritage of their centuries-spanning tradition of subterfuge and guerrilla warfare. This time, it felt as if the Foundation had crossed the line with the kind of men - if they could even be called that - that they had contracted to help with his ingenious plan.

Even then, that wasn't the worst of it. For there was a force much, much worse that even these men had nothing on. But that would be a story for another day.

Naga sat beside him, training her half-crazed amber-eyed stare at him. Another thing to get used to - most of his Chemical X-enhanced peers had lost part, if not most or all of their sanity to the very elixir of life that had given them their strength, speed, and smarts. He just so happened to be the lucky one to avoid such a fate, and not so lucky that he had to see the results in others.

"Don't worry, these boys are good at what they do," Naga said to the restless Chimpanzee sitting next to her.

"Good? Good is simply not enough. I need them to be excellent, spectacular, undoubtedly superior to good! But most importantly, intelligence is what I'm looking for. Intellect, street smarts, whatever you call it, for the plan I have hatched with your help, with all your help, requires processing abilities above all!" Mojo Jojo ranted on. Naga, as well as the rest of the table, listened intently. Despite his repetitive speech patterns, he had earned the respect of his peers within a short span of time.

Their recent successes against the USDO and their new bio-weapons had been due to him. It was because of him that 'The Three' of Project Powerpuff were so hated by the City of Townsville, and it was because of him that they were in the process of undergoing a technological revolution and making huge strides in science. Mojo Jojo was able to accelerate their own version of Project Powerpuff. Before his arrival, they were decades behind the USDO, and now, they were catching up, and fast. Already, they were drafting various trials in preparation for human experimentation of
Mojo Jojo had wanted to go on, but the double doors leading into their safe house opened, revealing what appeared to be a tall and lanky man in the shadows. When he stepped into the light, his form was revealed. A green-skinned man, wearing a pair of angular and expensive shades and barely grown mustache. His hair was greased to perfection with a center parting. For clothes, he wore an orange-blue vest with a white shirt underneath, a tan pair of jeans, and boots underneath. A prominent feature of his bearing was the belt he wore, on which hung a katana on his left, and a submachine gun on his right. It was telling of what his profession was.


"Nice to meet you," the enhanced Chimpanzee merely said. He preferred to observe the strange green-skinned man first. It was the scientific way, the best way.

"My boys would object to that introduction, and so would the Village, who are grateful for my protection," Ace said in a nasally voice as he took a slight bow before coming up to the table. One of the Foundation executives gestured for him to sit, but he remained standing.

"Very well," one of the Foundation executives said. A blonde-haired man with some rather soft features, which made him look very young. "We know what you are and what you do. We will get right down to business. Do you know the USDO?"

"Those dishonorable dogs?" Ace spat. The USDO was like a foul word to him. "They've raided the Gangrene Gulag a few times. They took people who deserve justice. They also took people who've done nothing wrong. I don't like them."

"Very good then. We have an important business transaction with the Lombardi. We need special protection. Can your boys handle it?" Blonde Executive proposed. "It won't be an easy operation. The USDO has developed some powerful bio-weapons and they will likely use it against us. They are far more powerful than you and your gang. Do you know what they are?"

"Bio-weapons?" Ace asked ignorantly.

"Haven't you been watching the news? Or read the newspaper? The bio-weapons are--" the executive was about to brief him on 'The Three' when Naga grabbed him by the shoulder to stop them.

"You'll know them when you see them. They're hard to miss, even if they aren't as tall and handsome as you," Naga said slyly.

"The difficulty of the job ain't important, but your donation to the Village is," Ace said curtly.

"$25,000 now, $25,000 after the completion of the job. Take it or leave it," the executive proposed. He waved for another Foundation personnel to act, and so he did. The other man stood up, put a briefcase on the table and unlocked it. He opened the briefcase, revealing stacks of money.

"Can't it be more?" Ace asked. "It's Christmas, you know, and it's winter. Think of the children."

"It's a simple protection job," Blonde Executive said. "It would have been much lower had it not been for the bio-weapons."

"'Fraid not, Ace," Naga stepped in. "We have more jobs for you if things go well. We will pay more, and just in time for Christmas, too. We'll even throw in a sword that's far better than anything in the world right now."
"Deal."

One of the Foundation guards in the safehouse looked on nervously at the deal going down. Someone had to know about this.

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**The City of Townsville. Warehouse District. Woodpecker Lodge Storage LLC.**

**21 DEC 1988 (Wednesday). 2245.**

"Alright, remember your roles, ladies," Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin reminded his team of Powerpuff Task Force operatives just as they were just five minutes away from the free-fire zone. "Alpha, you'll scout ahead. Bravo, you're with me - we're the main assault group. Charlie, I want eyes on the roof. Do not snipe anyone out until my say so."

The mission had come out of nowhere. From what he heard from General Blackwater, an intelligence agent who had infiltrated the Foundation had overheard that an important deal between them and the Lombardi would take place within 10 minutes. He wasn't able to provide many details, as he had to stop transmitting in the middle of it. All Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin knew was that the Foundation would have a token force present, the Lombardi would put about 30 of their sort in the basket for the transaction, and that there would be mercenaries, likely hired by the Foundation.

He didn't think it would be a problem. Terrorists, gangsters, and mercenaries were a cakewalk compared to what he had to face as a veteran member of the USDO. He's had to track down and kill numerous mutated human beings, malformed, psychotic and dangerous.

When the captain's humvee stopped, Alpha team's lieutenant left the vehicle to pick up his men in the other Humvees. Charlie team did the same. They were the first ones to be deployed, to set the stage for the main assault group.

Alpha team consisted of a mere 4 individuals, all highly trained recons sourced from the US Army, Marines, and FBI SWATs. Lightly armed with MP5s, they advanced in a loose formation towards their target, Woodpecker Lodge Storage LLC, a warehouse used for storing processed wood and lumbering equipment. It was also a Lombardi front.

Charlie team consists of 6 individuals. 2 snipers, 2 spotters and 2 riflemen to guard them. They knew immediately where to go upon reaching the site. The tallest building, a combined office-warehouse complex which rose several floors higher than the surrounding warehouses, provided a good vantage point to snipe. It was all too perfect, as their target building had plenty of windows to shoot through.

Bravo team had eight individuals to form the sledgehammer of the task force. Armed to the teeth, their job was simple - eliminate as many hostiles as possible, and take whoever was left into custody for questioning and criminal processing. Assisted by Alpha and Charlie teams, Brian would even go on to say that the odds were largely in their favor. They had the element of surprise and superior firepower, training, and tactics.

Still, despite the victory to be had, Brian would have preferred that his detail not be sent out after all. Christmas was close, and that was about the only time he wanted there to be peace and quiet. As experienced as he was, or rather, because of it, he knew that the impending holiday was critical to the men's morale, and any disaster preceding it would cripple it. The reason why they were sent in the first place was because of Project Powerpuff's temporary shutdown. It had been deactivated until further notice, and someone had to pick up the slack. Specifically, him and his men. The moment he heard the *Bzz!* *Bzz!* *Bzz!* Of his office phone was the moment their fate was sealed.
Brian looked at his military-grade watch with its large dial. Two minutes elapsed. By this time, Alpha team would have entered the compound of their target building by now. Charlie team would be ascending towards their nest.

"This is Alpha-Lima," a report came in from the recons. "Minimal security outside. I see four Tangos in the yard. Five or six Tangos at the windows. Proceeding into the building, over."

"Roger, received, over," Brian replied.

Three minutes elapsed. Then four. Five minutes into the mission, and everything should be in place by then. They had done it a hundred times and went home just in time to supper. Well, usually.

"This is Charlie-Lima," a report came in from the snipers. "We have reached the designated nest. We are setting up, and will be open for business in a minute, over."

"Alpha-Lima here," another report came in from the recons, this time in a hushed tone. "At least a dozen Tangos inside, maybe more. We are moving into position for the assault, over."

"Roger. Papa-Tango-Foxtrot-Lima to all units, Bravo is moving in, over and out," Brian said into his radio, gesturing for the men inside his Humvee to get out. Opening the shotgun seat door, he stepped out with his rifle up. A man did the same at the backseat. Many others came out from the Humvees behind his.

Forming up into two files of four soldiers each, they used smaller warehouses leading up to Woodpecker Lodge as cover.

"This is Papa-Tango-Foxtrot-Lima to Charlie, cover our advance," Brian ordered the snipers.

"Roger, wilco," one of the snipers said.

The main assault group came up toward the target building. The guard house by the entrance was empty - a very bad move on the part of the Lombardi mobsters. They were probably complacent owing to their ongoing conquest of Townsville, and their denial of victory to the USDO.

"Rat at your six. Tango on scope. Tango down," one of the snipers reported on the radio in real-time. Apparently, a well-hidden gangster was on the way to shoot them in the back, only to be shot in the head. A subsonic round from a silenced sniper rifle - only the highly-trained snipers of the USDO could manage such a feat.

"Alpha, this is Papa-Tango-Foxtrot-Lima. Do not engage until my mark, do you copy?" Brian made sure to spell out the mission plan. It was how he was so successful in most of his engagements to begin with - meticulous care, leaving nothing to chance.

But this time around, this particular operation was starting to look like it wouldn't be the same as most of those clean engagements with a happy ending. No reply came from Alpha.

"Alpha, report, over," the captain said over the radio. Silence. "Alpha, I said report, over." He gestured for his assault group to halt. They ducked under the cover of some bushes and trees before the fence of the Lombardi's front.

Silence.

Dreadful silence.

"This is Alpha, over," came the recon team lead's voice over the radio. "Change of plans. I have vital
Vital intel? For some reason, Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin did not like the sound of that. But it wasn't because of the fact that it could present some additional challenges or complications for his team to overcome in the assault. He didn't like it one bit, but there was no other way but forward. He couldn't abandon the mission because of some unsubstantiated suspicion.

"Alpha, this is Bravo," Brian finally replied to the lieutenant. What could be so vital that it couldn't be shared over the radio? "I want Alpha-Lima out and the rest of Alpha adjust position for the strike, over."

"Negative, security is tight in the warehouse. My team can't move without being spotted. I will be in the lobby area, over," the leader of the recons said. Brian didn't like that either. Something was wrong - he could feel it. Yet, nothing was exploding or happening yet. He had been ambushed before, and he knew it to be a usually loud and sudden affair. Most of his team would be dead by now if there was an ambush. He'd put it down to the extra sense of vulnerability he was feeling with Christmas so close. Him, along with most of his team, had a family to return home to, after all.

Brian's main assault group picked up the pace after that. The moment a guard had passed by the entrance into the warehouse, they went past the guardhouse on the outskirts of the warehouse compound. Three guards were present outside. They were immediately put down using low-velocity rounds from silenced rifles. Without any armor on, the Lombardi guards went down quickly and quietly. A soldier was left behind to deal with the remaining guard the moment Brian and much of his team entered the building. It didn't take him very long to catch up with Brian.

When they were inside the lobby, they were met with one of their own from the Alpha team. He was facing away from them for some reason and hunched over. Something was very wrong.

"Lieutenant Norris, report your findings," Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin ordered. But the soldier who was acting oddly said nothing. "Lieutenant Norris, what are you waiting for!?"

The weird soldier turned around slowly, and when he did, Brian realized why he was acting so strange.

He wasn't the recon lieutenant at all. The moment he showed his face to the main assault group, it became obvious that they weren't facing a normal opposition. Whatever the thing was that wore Lieutenant Norris' uniform and armor wasn't human. It had green skin, and its eyes looked as if the green man was suffering from Exophthalmos or Exorbitism, which was to say, its eyes were popping out of its sockets. Except that they could rotate. And make eye contact.

"Hello, captain," the green-skinned freak greeted them, except it had mimicked Lieutenant Norris' voice very convincingly, uncannily.

"What the fuck!!" One of the men shouted in revulsion the moment they realized what they were looking at. The green-skinned hunchback gave them a taunting raspberry before lighting up a molotov cocktail and hurling it at them.

"Open fire!" the captain ordered his men. The ratatatat of gunfire soon filled the lobby as they fired on the creature, but it had run out quickly. Brian thought that he'd hit the green-skin several times in the back, but with the molotov exploding in a sea of fire in front of them, igniting carelessly neglected wooden pallets before him, he couldn't be sure.

But that wasn't the end of it. Windows at the reception area of the lobby soon broke as gunshots that were not of their own rang out. Men fell all around Captain Brian - whether they were dead or
injured, he couldn't tell.

He and his men scattered to find cover. There weren't many. They huddled behind pillars and returned fire on the ambush party. Brian could hear doors slamming shut after that. Looking at the entrance they had come from, he realized that they were slammed shut.

They had no way forward and no way back, and they were stuck in a small room against an unknown number of enemies with no sniper support or backup from the recon team. They had fallen into a trap.

"Return fire!" the captain ordered. A skirmish ensued. More bodies fell, this time on both sides. But at least this time, they weren't facing anything out of the ordinary. Brian was able to identify his attackers. Foundation fighters. Nothing he couldn't handle.

He popped out, placed a few shots over the desk. Another enemy down. One of his men hurled a grenade into the front office. The grenade bounced off the back of the office into the middle of it. Shouts came from inside. He saw one of the Foundation fighters pick up the grenade in an attempt to hurl it back at them, but it exploded before he could even throw it. A shower of blood, pulps of flesh and bone resulted. Mists of blood remained where that fighter was. There were significantly fewer gunshots after that. Brian popped out again and placed a few more shots over the desk the moment he saw where the last man was. The enemy fell backward.

The PTF operatives rushed forward into the enemy position, sweeping the reception desk and front office for any remaining survivors. There were none. Returning to the center of the lobby, he took stock of the situation. He had two wounded, one was shot multiple times in the chest and arms, and another in the leg. The former was no longer fighting fit, the latter had only sustained a flesh wound. He also had one severely wounded. He had suffered several gut shots, a bullet in the stomach and two in the large intestines. It wouldn't end well for him unless he was hospitalized, and quickly.

A fire was raging before them. Things weren't going well, but he wasn't about to call it quits yet. He didn't want to end up like Chief of Security Kate. In the end, he ordered all wounded personnel to be evacuated with the squad medic, and the remainders to pursue the mission. That meant they were down four men.

But it wasn't the first time this had happened. And it wasn't the first time they had crossed path with a freak they had to off before they return for dinner.

"This is Bravo-Lima. Alpha, please come in, over," Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin said into his radio. "Alpha, anyone from Alpha, please report, over."

Nothing. It meant only the worst. The green-skinned freak had taken down the recons' leader. Brian recognized the outfit. He'd seen the back of it dozens of times. Lieutenant Norris had been around in the USDO for a decade, drafted from another federal entity. They'd been fast friends, and there was no chance he would be seeing him alive again. The freaks created by whichever earlier iterations of Chemical X weren't known for being merciful.

After extinguishing the fire blocking their path with a fire extinguisher nearby, he positioned his team by the doors leading into the warehouse proper. He was going to get some revenge for the men he had lost even if it was the last thing he did. They leaned against the walls on either side of the double doors, the doors that were soon to be breached.

"This is Bravo-Lima. Charlie, please come in, over," the captain said into the radio. Silence all the same. Fear was beginning to creep into his heart. One fire team MIA, he could understand and expect, but two was one too many.
"Charlie? Charlie-Lima? Charlie anyone, please come in, over!" a voice in a radio screamed, almost stoic, but fear was beginning to creep into it. The radio in question was not attached to anyone. Or rather, it was no longer attached to anyone. It had fallen on the ground, spattered with blood.

There was no longer any snipers, spotters or riflemen at the sniper's nest ordered to be set up by Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin. What remained of them were all lying on the ground, lying before two strange individuals of equally strange bodily proportions, one not as tall as Ace, but even more lanky, and another incredibly short for a 17-year-old, no more than 5 feet 3 inches. The bodies were either torn up by machinegun fire or all cut up.

But one of the fallen soldiers was still moving, barely breathing. He moaned in pain as he crawled towards the talking radio, a hand over his guts, which were hanging out, spilling stomach content. The lanky stranger walked up to the dying soldier and pinned the hand he reached out by stepping on it. Pulling his pistol out, he aimed it at the soldier's neck, which was mostly unprotected by kevlar, and pulled the trigger.

It wasn't a clean, quick death. The man struggled for breath, air that would never reach his lungs, and drowned in his own blood.

"Sssleeeeep..." the lanky stranger, who was green-skinned like the hunchback who ambushed Captain Brian, comforted the dead soldier after executing him. He stuck his tongue out over and over, to taste the air. It was forked, and the air tasted of blood and victory. He twisted around at his companion, the short stranger, who was also green-skinned. He had an eye covered by well-groomed black hair. "Looksss like our job here isss done."

"Let's go help Ace with the others. I saw a few of them coming out of the warehouse," the short stranger said, his voice rough and his words sharp, his accent Mexican. But before he left the rooftop of the tall warehouse, he walked forward to one of the corpses, bent down and pulled his butterfly knife out of one of them. It wasn't hard to do so, as it was buried in one of the soldier's neck, which was all soft flesh. He reminded himself to thank Ace for showing him how to throw a knife. Ace had always been the one who showed them the way.

"Too bad we couldn't catch them by ssssurprise - I like thisss shirt," the lanky stranger complained as he pulled at his shirt, which was striped with bands of black, brown and gray. "Bertha from the Village gave it to me."

Unslinging his submachinegun, the lanky stranger jogged back down, followed by the short one, who trotted to catch up.

"Charlie? Shit," Captain Brian tried one last time to contact his sniper team, but to no avail. They would have to go in without sniper support. The scales were tipped against them, but it wasn't insurmountable. He had beaten some tough odds before. It was why he was nicknamed 'Brick' by his peers. He once took out 20 Foundation agents all on his own on one occasion, and two Project Powerpuff subjects by himself when his entire team was wiped out.
"Alright, team, we're going in hot," the captain said to his remaining team, looking at them gravely. The rest of the team knew that something evil was about to go down - their captain had always been calm. At least until now. "They probably know we're coming. We have no recon support, no sniper support. We are up against at least one enhanced individual, supported by twenty assorted gang members, Foundation agents, and mercenaries. We'll go in hard, and we'll go in fast."

Two of the remaining soldiers positioned themselves near the doors. They had brought battering rams with them, which they used to bash the doors. A single, solid and coordinated strike was all that was needed to force the doors open. They darted in, two at a time, guns blazing. The warehouse was dark, the aisles barely lit. A firing squad was already placed down the aisle to fire on them the moment they came in, but the PTF soldiers were fast. They had already darted sideways and returned fire before the men could react and confidently place shots on them.

The gangsters were obliterated quickly. Muzzle flashes lit up from the above on catwalks multiple floors up - gang members or mercenaries or Foundation fighters who would have been taken out had the Charlie snipers been operational. Shots rained down from the above. One of the PTF soldiers was caught in the shoulder, and he twirled as he fell. Brian and his team returned fire, testing their marksmanship to the breaking point. It was dark above. They had only brief flashes to go on. Still, men fell from the catwalks above, screaming all the way to the floor.

They counted eight down. They moved forward. More criminals were hunting for them on the ground, taking different aisles. They shot at them, hundreds of bullets discharged but ultimately wasted as the PTF soldiers darted from aisle to aisle, taking cover in brief intervals as they saw fit. They shot back. Bodies hit the floor. Captain Brian threw a flashbang at them, shouting for what remained of the team to take cover, and when the warehouse lit up in a flash of white, Brian prepared a fragmentary grenade and chucked it at the largest group closest to them.

He could count four dead from the screams during the blast alone. The soldiers leaped out, guns blazing again. By this time, the Lombardi and Foundation forces had likely thrown everything they had at them. They mowed them down anyway. Numbers in modern warfare tend to be very deceptive.

By the time the dust settled, Brian and his remaining soldiers counted twenty-four dead in the warehouse proper. Yet, something concerned him greatly. The green-skinned enhanced creature was nowhere to be seen. The Lombardi and Foundation leadership who were here to cut the deal between the two underground groups were nowhere to be seen. It smelled like a set-up, but for what? Was all this simply an ambush to brutally kill USDO soldiers?

They took cover in the center of the warehouse, among boxes of planks. The captain hand-signaled for them to move forward to the warehouse managerial office. He wasn't planning to stop until he'd searched every nook and crevice for the hunchbacked freak who had set them up. He would never rest until he made sure everyone in the warehouse was either dead or arrested.

They rushed towards the managerial office, down the aisle, in a single file. There were only three of them left. When they did, a single gunshot rang out from above and straight ahead, from a catwalk. A bullet whizzed by Captain Griffin's head, slamming into the soldier behind him, right in the chest. The captain had seen a brief image of the sniper. A tall and lanky man. Shades. Tactical vest. Military gear. Green-skinned. As it turned out, there were more than one enhanced individuals in the vicinity. He and his remaining man fired on the criminal sniper, but to no success - shockingly so. The green-skinned tall stranger had jumped over the railing of his catwalk and onto one of the tall shelves of the warehouse.

Just then, something busted through the door of the managerial office. A wide, huge man, also
incredibly tall, likely over six feet five - not just taking the door off its frame, but damaging the door frame and walls around it. It chuckled as stupidly as its skin was green. And it started charging towards them.

Brian fired at the lumbering fat stranger charging towards him, while his only remaining combat-fit soldier fired on the tall stranger above them.

"Man down! Help!" the downed PTF soldier called out in pain as gunshots rang out anew.

"Corporal Bilinski, evac the sergeant now! I'll cover you! Go!" Brick ordered his remaining combatant. The soldier immediately complied, taking the downed third soldier with an arm around his neck and marching him away.

The captain continued firing at the huge, fat stranger until he was out of bullets for his XM4 rifle. Somehow, it didn't so much as even slow the green-skinned boulder down. Sensing that there was no other way, he jumped through an opening in the shelf, causing the fat stranger to trip over himself as he tried to stop and fall over.

Meanwhile, the shades-wearing stranger on top of the shelf began running along the shelf, following Corporal Bilinski and his wounded sergeant. Corporal Bilinski ran as fast as he could, but being burdened by a wounded man, he could only run so far before an unburdened and enhanced individual would catch up with him. The shades-wearing stranger jumped down from above, crashing into him, sending him and his wounded sergeant sprawling on the floor. But Corporal Bilinski had planned for this - he knew that running was never the option. As he rolled over, he unpinned and activated a flashbang hanging on his vest. The shades-wearing stranger stared at him with surprise when he did.

Captain Brian Griffin reloaded his rifle quickly as he got up. The huge, fat stranger did the same, knocking over crates of planks on either shelf in his aisle. The captain opened fire on the green-skinned behemoth, point blank, but it merely laughed it off, unharmed.

"That tickles!" the jolly green giant chuckled stupidly, before knocking down the shelf between them. "Let me tickle you too!" The captain jumped out of the way of the falling shelf, which started a domino effect throughout the aisles.

Corporal Bilinski had blinded himself in the process of his desperate maneuver but he had taken note of his surroundings before the flash. He had no choice but to let go of his sergeant - whom he could, just barely, hear. He was still alive, but at the rate they were going, there was no escape. No, he would save his sergeant by defeating the shades-wearing stranger. He had always been a man who stood his ground, and today he would stand his ground and destroy his enemies as before, even if it kills him. He kept running, banging into shelves left and right, going the whole nine yards before tripping over a box. It took a while for his vision to return, but when it did, he saw something that might be his salvation; he had lost his rifle when he was jumped, but he had knocked over a box of chainsaws in his blind run. The box was labeled 'From Pokey Oaks Woodlands'. The chainsaws were a little dirty. There was a good chance they were gassed up.

Captain Brian was at his wits' end. He had reloaded his assault rifle and fired pot shots at the green-skinned behemoth once more. It didn't work, as before. The only thing going for him was the fact that his gigantic foe was clumsy and unskilled - it was only by virtue of whatever Chemical had enhanced him that he had gained an upper hand.

"Stop tickling!" the gigantic stranger roared at him, before charging again. The captain sustained his fire, until his fresh magazine ran out, too. He turned around and ran, as fast as he could. Looking back, he realized that his adversary was gaining on him - its size being no impediment to its athletic
ability, it seemed. Unclipping another frag grenade, he unpinned and primed it and threw it behind him, over the shoulder. He sprinted and leaped behind a crate. A loud, promising explosion ensued.

Corporal Bilinski took one of the chainsaws and pulled at the charging cord. It didn't work the first few times. Looking up from his promising instrument of salvation, he saw green skin immediately, not far from him. The shades-wearing stranger stood before him, holding a sniper rifle.

Shit.

Never bring a knife to a gunfight. Similarly, never bring a chainsaw to a firefight. Yet, something else happened, other than a straight-up execution on the spot. The lanky stranger dropped his sniper rifle. With a grin, it pulled out a sword from a scabbard on its hip. A samurai sword of sorts and it held it with skill and confidence. It nodded at him. Curious.

Corporal Bilinski pulled the cord on his chainsaw a few times more until eventually, it started roaring like a beast, sputtering and spitting smoke. The PTF soldier charged at the green-skinned lanky stranger, screaming bloody fury.

Captain Griffin stood up from behind the crate where he was hiding. Smoke was before him, probably from all the dust and wood. It was dark. Lights within the blast radius of his grenade were knocked out as well. Most importantly, there was silence. No stupid chuckle from the jolly green giant, no footsteps.

But it wouldn't last. The gigantic stranger came charging out of the smoke, and he was faster this time, and the distance shorter. The captain couldn't get far before the monster smashed his former hiding spot into shrapnel, and the captain could feel one such wooden shrapnel tear into his calf. He felt himself fly forward when his fat nemesis knocked into him, and he flew for many yards before he was rolling on the ground. He thought he felt something snap in his arm.

Corporal Bilinski took several furious swings at his 'honorable' adversary, but the lanky stranger simply, deftly stepped out of the way each time, effortlessly and gracefully, something his lithe body had only barely suggested. Then, with blinding speed, the shades-wearing stranger delivered a surgical cut at his upper arm, weakening a muscle. Still, the corporal tried, making a few more slow and intentional strokes with his chainsaw, which was dodged with ease. He followed it up with a quick strike - or at least something amounting to a quick strike with a chainsaw, and that took the green-skinned samurai-thing by surprise, ripping off part of its tactical vest and the top of its sleeve. But there was no blood, and no reaction from it beyond it gritting its teeth and clenching its jaw.

Spinning around, the stranger made a cut to his thigh, severing more lines of muscles, before delivering another slash at the corporal's wounded arm, this time to both his forearms, with blood trailing behind the blade, forcing him to drop his chainsaw, which grounded at the concrete floor until the chain split and the machine spoilt.

Corporal Bilinski sank to his knees, weak and in pain, looking up at his would-be executioner. He didn't know it, but his eyes were begging, hoping that this creature would, at the very least, spare his teammates somehow. The enhanced thing placed its samurai sword on his shoulder, close to his neck.

"You fought well," it said with a nasally, New York accent. "You'll die well, too, I can promise you that."

Corporal Bilinski said nothing. If his time had come, his time had come. He'd lived a good life, doing good. Doing good, even if it meant a major demotion. He used to be a lieutenant until he struck his superior officer for ordering the purge of a remote village in Afghanistan, just because they were
'contaminated' by an escaped subject during the Soviet occupation of the country.

"But not today," the shades-wearing stranger said, surprisingly. The corporal opened his eyes. Away from him, the creature shouted: "Hey Big Billy! Bring that man over here!"

"Uh, okay! He's a little broken, though!" came another voice, less refined, less elegant. Corporal Bilinski looked up at his merciful enemy (or captor, now?), wondering what on Earth was going on. Enhanced individuals weren't known for their mercy - if only because they were shot on sight, even if it wasn't the USDO hunting them down.

The shades-wearing stranger then pulled up a radio from his belt as he waited: "Yo, Snake, Arturo, stop whatever you're doing and get over here."

"But some of them are still alive outside!" a voice with a Mexican accent replied in the radio.

"Let them go," the green-skinned samurai said.

Thunderous footsteps resounded. A huge, wide giant could soon be seen in the distance, carrying his captain. There was blood all over his face. His helmet was askew. Soon, 'Big Billy' was close and he deposited Captain Brian next to him. More footsteps came up behind.

"I've overheard what you said," Shades Stranger reasoned. "The both of you are honorable men, and the organization you work for is far less than honorable. The world needs people like you. I just need a, uh, little favor."

"Yeah? And what do you want? Money? Power?" Captain Brian managed to say, despite the ringing in his head and his blurry vision. "Because you won't get none of that. The USDO does not negotiate with scum like you."

"No. You tell whoever runs your show - do not return to the Gangrene Gulag again," Shades Stranger said, arching his eyebrows, slightly offended by the captain's words. "Because I, Ace, and the Gangreen Gang, protect that place, especially the Village."

Captain Brian said nothing but merely glared at this 'Ace'.

"You're free to go," Ace finally said, waving a hand, with his katana on his shoulder.

The captain and the corporal got up, with difficulty, and went about collecting their wounded - the sergeant, not far away, and a fourth man near the entrance.

"Say, did any of you see those 'bio-weapons' they talked about?" the captain heard Ace ask his fellow chemical mutants. "Because I don't think those soldiers are it. They're too weak."

"Ah, I don't know," one of the creatures said stupidly. The captain could easily identify it as 'Big Billy'.

"Not anywhere, bossss," another reported.

"Nada, we searched everywhere. I was itching for a real fight - too bad! Those soldiers aren't even worth the effort," another reported with a Mexican accent.

A few raspberries soon followed.

Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin, on the way out, had discovered the bodies of the Alpha recons on the way out, stacked up in a corner like trash, one of them naked with only a boxer on.
Outside, they were met with survivors from the lobby. Only two of them remained - the guy who was shot in the guts, and the medic, who ended up getting shot up too. The former would soon die in a hospital, away from family and friends, his last sight being the white ceiling of the operation theatre.

So much for mercy.

Out of the eighteen of them who went in, only five of them had survived. Captain Brian 'Brick' Griffin did not like that at all. One thing was for sure though - where previously he had voiced his disdain for Project Powerpuff and 'Blossom', 'Bubbles' and 'Buttercup's performance, he now understood better what their worth was. As inexperienced, careless and clumsy as those little lab rats were, they were good for one thing - their suffering prevented casualties for soldiers like them. When they were wounded in action in a warehouse not far from here (with the exception of Bubbles), they had saved many lives by virtue of just being there.

He would have to speak to General Blackwater about this soon enough - and the old man was definitely inclined to agree, considering the rumors in the wind that he was dead set on forcing Project Powerpuff's continuation. There were also rumors that he had taken a liking to those 'girls', too. Who knows? Perhaps he might win the lottery and those lab-grown rug rats would somehow manage to kill the 'Gangreen Gang' one day.
Chapter 80: Hatred

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Utonium family struggles to recover from their tragedies. Blossom learns to control her new power.

Chapter 80: Hatred

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

22 DEC 1988 (Thursday). 1130.

When the dust settled in The House after the security officers called in by Selicia had left, the Utonium family had hardly recovered from the experience. Professor Utonium wasn't just wounded by Blossom's accidental discharge of heat - the increasing tension between the various members of his ragtag family was driving him up the wall. Selicia Goodwin was burdened by both guilt and who she saw as the guilty: Blossom.

Bubbles remained in her coma, hooked up to an IV drip. The professor had kept himself busy when he found that he couldn't sleep from both the pain in his burns and the pain of watching his family slowly being driven apart. He ran a test on Bubbles' blood, and found that she was low on Chemical X. He had tested for the chemical as a passing thought before her surgery. It had always been low ever since she was nearly killed on his doorstep. Professor Utonium theorized that the Chemical X in her blood wasn't just lost through blood loss - there would have been more in her remaining blood, and all the tissue in her body. With her body mending rapidly such that she could be safely moved after a night's rest, it could be possible that Chemical X was used up to repair her body this quickly. Through Chemical X, torn organs would reseal themselves and lost blood would be replaced in a fraction of the time it would take a normal human being.

However, it was taking far longer than before. Even the wounds on Bubbles' skin hadn't totally healed. From this observation, the professor thought that Chemical X was expended equally throughout her body. And she was running low. To help her, the professor would insert small amounts of Chemical X into her IV drip. The only reason why he didn't pump more into her blood was the fear that there would be unforeseen consequences. He had nearly lost Bubbles once - he didn't want to risk losing her again, not with what he had been through to save her.

Blossom was faring worse after the incident with her new power last night. Accidentally burning her Daddy and getting slapped by her Mom did not help at all. She hadn't eaten in two days, and wouldn't have done anything else without an intervention from the professor, who had to work harder to keep her maintained. The one thing he couldn't do, however, was to make Blossom eat. But that was only until this morning, when her crippling hunger had become terrible enough to overpower even the sheer agony of her depression. While she ate very little - to the order of a quarter of a pancake, it was an improvement. Needless to say, school was out again for the trio of enhanced little girls.
After breakfast, Selicia had wasted no time in hiding away at her gym, pumping iron to try to distract herself from her worries. Buttercup joined her, and tried the machines in the gym out, only to be bored half to death. Instead, she spent her time in the gym observing and admiring her Mom, who quickly became slick with sweat as she pushed and pulled increasingly heavy weights. Every time she stopped (briefly), she would wipe herself with a green towel. After an hour of this, she accidentally tore the green towel.

"God damn cheap shit, son of a-!" Selicia swore as she threw the towel angrily to the floor, only to remember that Buttercup was with her. She turned to look at her favorite, afraid that she might have startled the little pudding. To think that she might be setting a bad example was only an afterthought. She expected Buttercup to be shocked, but when the woman looked at her, she saw that she was still smiling dreamily at her Mom. "I'm sorry, Butterbear. I shouldn't have said that."

"Oh, it's fine," Buttercup simply said. "Can I have that, Mom?" The little girl pointed at the slightly torn green gym towel the security officer had discarded.

"Why would you want that? That thing's fit for the dustbin now," Selicia said.

"Can I? Mom? Pleeease?" Buttercup begged. It took time, but Selicia finally understood why the torn towel was such a must-have with the little girl, even without her saying it. Selicia smiled, flattered. Reaching down, she picked the towel up and handed it to Buttercup, a little disgusted by her own sweat collected by the towel.

Buttercup, however, had no such reactions. The moment she had it, she hugged it to her face. She actually enjoyed the moist on it, because it wasn't just any sweat, but it was her Mom's sweat. If only Daddy went to the gym too…

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**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

22 DEC 1988 (Thursday). 1411.

"You have to eat, Blossom," Professor Utonium continued to coax his lab-grown adopted daughter. She hadn't eaten much for breakfast at all, and she had refused to eat her lunch. He had to reheat her meal and try to get her to eat again. "Please."

Blossom merely shook her head despite the professor's ceaseless pleading. They were down in the lab, and he was hoping to feed her before investigating her new abilities. Using a fork, he scooped up some baked potato and pushed it towards her mouth, even letting the food touch her lips, but she simply turned her head away weakly, smearing the potato on her cheek.

The professor sighed. It frustrated him as much as it upset him. At the same time, he couldn't even venture to guess how different food would interact with her body. He had yet to even begin to investigate if Blossom would starve as any other human being would, or if Chemical X would step in somehow to prevent death by lack of nutrition.

"For crying out loud, Blossom!" the professor yelled in frustration, putting the plate of food down heavily, his eyes misting at how wretched the intelligent little girl had become. He didn't realize he had been too fierce until Blossom started tearing up too. "Please, at least talk to me, anything!"

Blossom turned to look at the professor. The first thing she looked at was his upper arm and chest. The professor was wearing a simple grey T-shirt, because of his third-degree burns, which thankfully didn't need a skin graft, but Blossom, of course, could see through things, including his simple grey T-shirt. She could see, clearly, the damage she had done to her Daddy, and pain she had caused him.
"I'm sorry I hurt you, Daddy…” Blossom cried, memories of yesterday still clear in her mind - she
burning her father just by looking at him, Selicia running up to her and slapping her across the face
because of it. She didn't even hold it against her Mom for slapping her - she thought she deserved it
for what she had done. "I won't do it again. I'm so sorry…"

"Oh, Blossom, c'mere," the professor pushed himself up to Blossom and hugged her. She cried into
his shoulder, afraid to even touch him for fear of hurting him again. "It was just an accident. I've
never blamed you for it, and your Mom had already forgiven you."

"But what if I… What if I lose control again?" Blossom sobbed. "I don't want to hurt you or Mom or
anyone else ever again!"

The professor let go of Blossom, before using his fingers to wipe Blossom's tears away.

"That is why we're here, sugarplum," Professor Utonium explained. "We're going to get to the
bottom of this."

To that end, the professor had set up an experiment. Using three steel weights as targets, he affixed
paper targets to each of them, each with a large, hastily drawn circle at the centre. Blossom, naturally,
was resistant to the idea of ever using her new found ability again.

He tried to drag Blossom over to the shooting line, but she wouldn't budge, just like how Bubbles
had practically anchored herself to the floor in the mall when she didn't want to go for a mission.

"But Dad! I don't want to! What if I hurt you again!" Blossom cried as she pulled away from her
father, who, try as he might, couldn't even begin to match Blossom's strength.

"You won't, Blossom," Professor Utonium reasoned with his daughter as he strained against her.
"And you'll have to face your fears - you can't avoid such things forever. What if you hurt someone
else? You have to learn how to control your powers, Blossom, just like how you've learned to pull
back your punches so people won't die when you fight crime."

Deep down, Blossom knew that the professor was right. He was always right, and she loved him.
Even if he was ever wrong, she knew that the man cared deeply about her, and sometimes that was
all that mattered.

She relented after taking a deep breath. The professor led her by a hand to the firing line, and
positioned her on it. The targets were identical, but the way they were positioned wasn't the same.
One of them was 20 feet away, another, 25. The last was at 30 feet.

The professor knelt down behind Blossom. The red-haired girl looked around at him, but the
professor placed his hands on either side of her head with care and turned it gently, to 'zero' it in on
the target, though only Blossom could ever do that, considering that whatever had hit him came from
her eyes.

"W-what do I do?" Blossom asked her Daddy, bewildered by the set up, which was reminiscent of
the target range at the USDO headquarters, but evidently home-made. But she didn't have a gun in
her hands.

"I want you to look deeply at the centre of the circle," the professor said, with his lips close to her
ear. "Are you doing it now?"

"Yes, Daddy," Blossom said, pinning her eyes directly at the centre of the circle. It was even easier
than aiming a gun, considering that it was her natural, naked eyes acting as the ironsight, without the
actual ironsight.
"Are you zooming in right now?" the professor asked. He suddenly remembered that enhanced sight-scoping ability of hers, which could be useful.

"No…” Blossom said. "Do you want me to?"

"Hmm… No, it's fine," Professor Utonium considered the idea for a second, but no, he needed a sort of control for the experiment first. "Now, do you remember how you set things on fire yesterday?"

"I was really, really angry," Blossom confessed. "Blackwater gave me a picture of the man- I mean-monkey who hurt Bubbles really badly."

Yes. Blackwater and the photo of Jojo, or, as the Chimpanzee called himself now, Mojo Jojo. Professor Utonium couldn't help but to feel responsible for what had happened yesterday. It was bad enough that Blossom was traumatized by Bubbles' severe injuries and near-death. It'd gone from bad to worse if she'd learned how deep anger and hatred could go at such a young age.

"I'm sorry, Blossom," the professor apologized.

"Why are you sorry, Dad?" Blossom asked innocently, unable to connect the dots.

"Never mind. Do you remember how it felt like?" the professor asked. Now wasn't the time to be distracted by the past.

"Yes."

"Alright. I want you to burn the paper in front of you," the professor instructed.

There were a few false starts at first. Blossom getting caught up with thinking of the effects rather than the cause of her new power. Trying to 'squeeze' it out of her eyes so hard that tears were coming up. It was until the professor reminded her of what caused her new superpower to emerge that she was set on the right path.

Thinking back to that night, Blossom remembered the hatred and anger she felt towards this 'Mojo Jojo', how she wanted to hurt him, beat him up and utterly destroy him for what he had done to Bubbles, her dear sister. She remembered how she glared at the picture of him with such intensity when she was wishing that he would be dead. She remembered all this while looking straight into the circle.

It happened even faster than before. Blossom's eyes turning red before emitting a twin beam of heat. A bullet-shaped hole appeared instantly, with flames and ashes on the edge, but that expanded quickly to the size of Blossom's fist, then to the size of her Daddy's fist. Flame rolled across the paper, fuelled by Blossom's anger and hatred. Not only that, the steel behind the paper was a dull red. If Blossom kept it up, it would soon glow a bright red.

But she didn't. Her eyes began to wander as the pain from yesterday became too much.

"Blossom, stop," the professor said to her. But she didn't stop. He could only guide her head, but her eyes were still free to roll around in its socket. She was absorbed by the bad memories, and not just of Bubbles' plight. "Blossom, stop!"

By the time she snapped out of it, the wall behind her target was already on fire. The professor had to grab a fire extinguisher to undo her mistakes.

Before attempt number two, the professor told Blossom to be more careful, to focus her sight on the paper. This time, the professor positioned Blossom behind the 25 feet target. Blossom, however, was
having second thoughts.

"But Dad, I don't want to think about it anymore," she cried. Her tears were still floating away as steam, as sadness that was nearly invisible. "I don't want to be angry, or sad, or…" She was looking for the word 'hateful', but she hadn't learned it yet. "or… upset."

"You don't have to," the professor suggested. Based on what Blossom said, it was just as he suspected - thoughts of violence and trauma had triggered what he had coined as 'heat vision'. However, he had other ideas on how it might work. "I just want you to think of the times when you had to restrain a bad guy, and think of the paper in front of you as a bad guy. Think of how you had to stop him from, say, kicking an old woman and knocking her off her feet?"

"Okay…" Blossom agreed, but only reluctantly. Her new power had caused her Daddy pain, and that was how she would see it for a long while.

They began again. The professor held Blossom's head just as before, and Blossom actually found it comforting. Cozy. False starts ground the experiment to a halt at first, but they had both learned from the first disastrous attempt in the experiment.

"How would it make you feel? A bad guy kicking an old woman?" the professor repeated himself.

"Angry. I would want that man to apologize to the old woman," Blossom said. The professor smiled. At the very least, he had successfully distracted Blossom, at least for the time being. Her pink eyes grew red once more. This time, the professor noticed vortexes forming before her eyes, just like how they would when she 'zoomed' her eyesight in. There was something else that the professor had observed to be a constant - the air around Blossom's head would grow cold when she did this. However, he believed that she couldn't just be 'harvesting' the heat from her surroundings, for it would be too little, considering that the temperature of the surrounding air did not plunge too far down. Chemical X, as usual, must have accounted for most of the energy in her 'heat vision'.

Soon, another pair of red-colored beams shot out of Blossom's eyes, hitting the paper target before her, right in the middle. Accuracy, apparently, was never the problem - the issue of focus was. It would require discipline on her part.

"Okay, sunshine, gently now… and stop," the professor instructed. Blossom couldn't stop it immediately. It took her time to calm down, but she was ready for it this time. Her beam hardly wavered because of how concentrated she was on the paper, which had completely disintegrated into ashes by now, leaving only the steel weight. She didn't want to hurt anyone else any more, and she didn't want her Dad to have to clean up after her, because of her mistakes. By the time she had stopped projecting her heat vision, the steel weight that used to bear a paper target had gone completely bright red down the middle. "Good girl." the professor caressed Blossom in the cheek and chin before coming up to the steel weight to examine the heated centre with a sensor. Her new power was no doubt effective - he just needed the hard numbers just like any other good scientist.

Blossom knew, too, that what she had done was good. It meant that she had gained some degree of control over her new power. She wouldn't be hurting anyone any more… if she didn't want to. Boiled tears rose from her eyes as the professor returned to her.

"Thank you so much, Daddy," Blossom said. The professor reached down to ruffle her hair a little, as if she had just done a home run in a game of football. There was so much more that Blossom wanted to say, but she lacked the words for it.

"No problem, honey," he said.
"My eyes hurt a little though."

"It must be from the heat. Let's go up and get some ice packs, okay, darling?"

Little did they know that her new power was going to be put to the test very quickly.
Chapter 81: Calm Before the Storm

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls were called upon to act as the defenders of Townsville, even as they themselves were vulnerable.

Chapter 81: Calm Before the Storm

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Ever since the test down at the labs, Blossom had slipped back into depression the moment she went back up to her room. Bubbles was there, still healing, the slow and steady beeping on the heartbeat monitor and the imperceptible rise and fall of her chest the only signs of her being alive. She had taken her place next to her, holding her hand. To gain control over her heat vision was cold comfort when it couldn't wake Bubbles up.

Whenever the mind-numbing cloud of sadness would lift, Blossom would think that she would have wanted Buttercup to be next to her and Bubbles, but for some reason, Buttercup had been sequestered from the rest of the girls.

It was dinner time, but Blossom could not even bring herself to go down for dinner. She wouldn't have tried to eat anyway, and whatever little food to get past her lips would have been due to her Daddy's futile attempt to force-feed her.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! The clown phone in her room rang all of the sudden, breaking the silence. The Blossom of days ago would have sprinted to the phone, a streak of pink behind her, to pick it up. Now, it hardly even registered in it.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! The only thing the clown phone had done was to make her remember the times when Bubbles was up and walking. Fresh, molten tears pricked her eyes, rolling over dried rivers of old tears.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! She remembered what fighting crime had only gotten them, what it had ultimately led to. Fighting crime had put Bubbles in bed.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! The door opened. Buttercup went through it. Professor Utonium stood at the threshold, looking on worriedly. If Blossom had any other passion beyond learning and reading, it was crime fighting. That she hardly responded to a call concerned him, even if he would have preferred that the clown phone had never existed.

"Are you gonna pick that up or what!?!" Buttercup asked impatiently. She was almost bouncing on her heels and toes, getting ready to change. She couldn't wait to get back out there and hurt some naughties who didn't deserve Christmas.
"Buttercup!" the professor warned gently. Buttercup slumped forward, her shoulder sagging. If there was any way she could feel upset, it was when her Daddy had done it again - treating her differently from Blossom and Bubbles, and every time he did this, she would remember the things her Dad would say behind closed doors, when he thought that no one was listening.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! Professor Utonium looked at Blossom again. Still nothing. She was now pressing her face against Bubbles' hand, crying into it. Having no other choice, the professor walked up to the demanding clown phone, and picked it up himself.

"Hello?" the professor greeted on the phone.

"Bloss- Upton!" it turned out to be Agent Blake. "Where's Blossom? Looks like Project Powerpuff has been reactivated. The Girls are back in business now, and they really need them."

"Here's the problem, Blake," the professor said matter-of-factly. He'd gone cold all of a sudden, upon the mere mention of Project Powerpuff. "Bubbles is still unconscious and in recovery, no thanks to your security friends, and Blossom is so upset, she hadn't been eating for the past two days. There are no 'Girls' left, Blake."

"I'm so sorry about what happened, Upton," Blake said. He thought that it was an improvement that the professor allowed him to complete his sentence.

"Save it, Blake. I don't want to hear it," the professor gibed at Blake.

"Upton, I understand how you feel-" Blake went on, but the professor cut him off - so much for an improvement.

"You don't," the professor said curtly.

"Look, I love those kids too!" Blake shouted into the phone, before realizing what he'd done. He wasn't the kind of man who would talk about what he felt so directly. "And I know what I feel for them pales in comparison to your love for Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, but please, we have to work together for the Girls' good. Now… You know General Blackwater - still gotta get used to his new rank - he's not going to take no for an answer. I won't force Blossom to go, and certainly not Bubbles, but what about Buttercup?"

"You want Buttercup to go alone!?" the professor barked, incredulous. "Didn't you see what happened even with the three of them out there?"

"I can do it, Dad! Please!" Buttercup pleaded upon overhearing the conversation, not just the professor's half of it, but the entire thing, owing to her hearing ability. "Please, you gotta let me go!"

"Settle down, Buttercup," the professor said off the side, before continuing on the phone: "If you love the kids, you wouldn't let Buttercup go alone like that."

"No, I wouldn't, but if someone doesn't go where General Blackwater wants her to, he'll strip us of our ranks and responsibility and put the Girls in someone else's care, and then they'd be worse off. You- you know that, right?" Blake explained the situation calmly. "Buttercup would be better off if Blossom's with her. If Blossom would realize that, and you could send her in with a last minute meal, I think the odds will be the best it can be. What do you say, professor?"

"I'm not going to force Blossom to go if she prefers to stay with Bubbles," the professor said, but his confidence in his own words and logic was… sub-optimal. To send Buttercup alone meant betraying Buttercup and his own love for the girl. Whether she was a clinical psychopath or not, the professor loved her to death. However, sending Blossom in with Buttercup, knowing full well that her heart
was in tatters over Bubbles was just as troubling an option.

"Look, I'm just the driver. Send Buttercup down with Blossom, or don't. You do what you think is best. I think you've made it abundantly clear that you alone knows what's right for them. I'll defend your decision before General Blackwater no matter what it is, if it's any comfort to you," Blake said, before hanging up the phone.

Professor Utonium hung up the phone. He looked at Blossom, who was leaning her head against the bed, crying into it, blubbering and stammering for Bubbles to wake up. He couldn't argue with Agent Blake's opinion. Two Girls were better than one as they could look out for each other. As powerful and full of surprises as Buttercup was, one of her abilities didn't include eyes on the back of her head.

At the same time, Blossom wasn't in the right state of mind for law enforcement. Dragged down to the rut by grief, she would likely lack confidence and be prone to carelessness. She would be a danger to herself and Buttercup. Would she? The professor had faith in her strength of character. It was just as likely that she would awaken in the heat of combat to come to the defence of her active sister.

One thing was for sure: Bubbles was safe and now Buttercup was in jeopardy. He had to focus on Buttercup now.

"Blossom," the professor called out to his clearly upset adopted daughter, putting his hand on her head as it was shaking while she was trembling and crying. He ran his hands down her hair, which resembled a waterfall of fire, now a little messy and sticky from neglect. Selicia hadn't been grooming Blossom. "Darling… Buttercup's going to fight crime."

"I am? Sweet!" Buttercup whooped in the background before diving towards the walk-in closet to get changed. The professor regarded the over-eager Buttercup for a second, momentarily given to worry about her full-blown psychopathy. But Blossom took precedence at the moment.

"Do you want to follow Buttercup? To help her fight crime?" Professor Utonium said to Blossom, but his words garnered no reaction from her, not more than Bubbles. "Blossom?"

In the meantime, Buttercup had been listening from the closet as she was putting her uniform on. Professor Utonium had been preaching to her about 'opening her heart to her sisters' and 'trying hard to feel for them', but she couldn't even begin to. Sure, she felt that her sisters were useful, and occasionally, there were strange sensations inside her that approached what her Daddy wished for her to feel, but beyond that, there was nothing. This time around, she thought that she was amazingly lucky that Blossom was in no mood to fight crime. It meant that she wouldn't be bossing her around, which meant that… she get to do whatever she wanted - within the looser limits of Mister Blackwater's request, of course. Blossom's suffering filled her with glee.

"Blossom? Blossom!" Professor Utonium said, his voice raised in urgently. He actually physically grabbed Blossom by the chin and turned her head to face him, and he did it somewhat roughly, shocking even himself. "Blossom, please. I know you're concerned about Bubbles, but you have two sisters!"

Blossom simply looked away from her Daddy's eyes. It was no use. The professor let go Blossom. If she wouldn't go, the professor was thinking, then the least he could do was to take her place - at the very least, he could help in the event that Buttercup was injured, or even try to bring her back in case of cardiac arrest by whatever cause the world could throw at her.

"Hey, Blossom, can I borrow your shotgun?" Buttercup poked her head out and asked. She received
no reply, so she took Blossom's silence as consent. She cared even less for Bubbles' permission, especially now that she couldn't even give it. "Thanks, Blossom! You're the best!" When Buttercup emerged from the walk-in closet, she was armed to the teeth. She had her machinegun in her arm, which actually stood taller than her, Bubbles' assault rifle on her back and Blossom's 'borrowed' shotgun hanging on her chest. Despite her over-abundance of weapons, she did not neglect bringing her pistol either.

Blossom took a glance at Buttercup for a second, before going back to wishing that Bubbles would wake up again.

"Let me take my vest, Buttercup and I'll meet you downstairs," the professor said even as he was still gazing at Blossom, worried sick about how she had become a shell of her former self - with all the good in her replaced by her single-minded obsession with Bubbles' fall. "Goodbye, Blossom. I'll try my best to bring your other sister back to you, if I can."

With that, Buttercup sprinted out, followed by the professor, who walked out the door. He paused for a second at the doorway to look at Blossom again, hoping against such futility that perhaps she might come around at the last minute, but she didn't even looked at him. With that, he left.

But Blossom did look at him. Slowly but eventually, his words had sunk in. He was, after all, her Daddy. It was all just so… hard, so difficult. She didn't want to leave Bubbles alone. What if she woke up while she was not there? She knew that Bubbles was the timid one, and that she would be afraid if she'd wake up to discover the state she was in, with no one to explain things or at least empathize with her and talk to her, telling her that everything was going to be alright.

But then there was her duty. What was it that Daddy said? With great power comes great responsibility? No. 'The right thing to do was often the most difficult thing to do.' That was it. Blossom looked at the door her Daddy had just gone through. She could hear her father coming out of his room, walking the corridor and going down the stairs. Yet, the bittersweet lull of sadness had been washing over her for days now, pulling her back into her place beside Bubbles, oddly comforting in a way, familiar.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

22 DEC 1988 (Thursday). 1845.

The professor had to argue his way into the Lamborghini speed transport. Apparently, it was to be another dangerous operation. He had to offer himself up as an attending field doctor and surgeon to be able to gain entry. But before he got in, he took one last look at The House, worried about Blossom. He had already informed Selicia of the mission and his intention to join it for the sake of Buttercup. She would be watching over Blossom and Bubbles in his place.

Sighing, he finally got into the car, closing the door behind him. The House felt more distant this way.

"Armed to the hilt, Buttercup?" Agent Blake greeted Buttercup.

"I'm fighting crime alone this time," Buttercup said.

"I… See," Agent Blake said, sounding a little disappointed. In the end, he understood. Whether Blossom came or not, it didn't matter in the grand scheme of things. There were risks either way, though he just liked the ones with Blossom around better. He looked out the window of the driver's seat car door one last time, before he would drive off.
And he kept looking.

"Isn't it an emergency?" the professor asked, because Agent Blake wouldn't drive off. Professor Utonium frowned at him, until he realized what the soldier was looking at. Tracing his line of sight, he followed it to see an unexpected sight outside the car.

Blossom was trotting up to them fast, though slow by the Girls' standards - she was probably inhibited by her sadness over Bubbles and hunger from two days of self-starvation. She was fully clothed in the usual uniform and armor, ready for her duty, except she was without a weapon. Buttercup looked out in disbelief, afraid that her chance at fighting and killing independently was gone. Professor Utonium opened the door to let her in.

"Blossom!" the professor uttered as she slipped into the speed transport. "I thought you weren't coming!"

Blossom did not say a word initially. Speechlessly, she sat on top of her Daddy's lap, and leaned on him, seeking comfort.

"You were right, Dad. I have another sister to look out for," Blossom finally said, but her tone was anything but confident. It felt as if she had to fight every fibre, every cell in her body to say it, as if she was fighting every natural instinct or urge there was to get into the car.

"I knew you would understand, Blossom, but…" the professor said, but couldn't finish his sentence. Before he could do that, Agent Blake drove off, turning his sirens and shrieking lights on. It really was an emergency, as it turned out.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

22 DEC 1988 (Thursday). 1853.

Selicia opened the door to the Girls' room. The first thing she saw was Bubbles in bed, her heartbeat, beeping away on the heart rate monitor, slow and steady. Bits of water, salt, nutrition and Chemical X dripped into her bloodstream from an IV, a tiny amount at a time. Every breath on her chest seemed like a struggle. For an enhanced superhuman being, who could lift cars and throw them too, she seemed so vulnerable.

Chief of Security Kate had called her after the professor was gone. Selicia knew exactly what it was about, from the way Kate's voice was just shivering with anger, from how emotionally driven her request was, obviously. Kate had wanted Bubbles killed for the dead end she had driven to.

Selicia gripped the object in her hand nervously. It wasn't just any ordinary object. It was Professor Utonium's Duranium scalpel, the same one he had used to cut Bubbles up and operate on her. Stiffly, she walked up to Bubbles, shifting the scalpel in her hand, looking down at the helpless little girl as dispassionately as she could.

But she couldn't keep the memories of Bubbles out forever. Selicia couldn't help but to tear up a little as she bent down, kneeling beside the vulnerable Bubbles, and placing the scalpel on her neck. She'd actually done it hard enough that she had nicked Bubbles in the neck and blood had begun to drip. She stopped after that, shocked at what she had done.

"I'm sorry," Selicia apologized as she broke down. She couldn't believe the depth she had sunk, in her desperate bid to keep the family together, with her in the centre, at least. She removed the Duranium scalpel and chucked it aside. At first, she didn't know what she was supposed to do with her hands -
her bloody, guilty hands - but after that, she gently hugged Bubbles to her, kissing her in the scalp even when the unconscious little girl wouldn't know it. "I'm so sorry, Bubbles, Mommy's sorry…”
Chapter 82: A Storm of Blood and Lead (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup takes on the mob alone as Blossom undergoes a crisis of confidence and Bubbles is still recovering from surgery.

Chapter 82: A Storm of Blood and Lead (Part 1)

Enroute to Townsville Port. Mission Time - 0 mins

On the way to the mission, the convoy had made a stop at an Indian convenience store in an attempt to solve Blossom's self-starvation problem before heading out. The turban-wearing Sikh store owner wasn't impressed when a squad of men took positions at the store entrance and inside, checking it for any potential ambushes from whatever criminal and illegal factions operating in Townsville, scaring the bejesus out of whatever valuable customers the store owner might have at night - they were rounded up and forced to stand in a corner.

Professor Utonium walked into the store, trying to look as non-threatening and normal as possible, and picked a few quick meals that might entice his dear Blossom into eating: hotdogs with cheese on top of it, hamburgers with a beef steak and leaves of lettuce inside - Blossom had taken to eating vegetables pretty well compared to other children of her physical age. He even deemed it a necessary sacrifice to bring some chocolate and jelly candies into the mix, which would at least give Blossom the temporary energy boost she would need for the usually short duration of an operation.

When the professor was done, the soldiers filed out of the convenience store, leaving behind a store owner who wasn't sure if he should be happy or upset, considering that the professor had paid him double for whatever he bought to compensate for the inconvenience caused.

When everyone was back at the car, the professor shook Blossom gently by the shoulder, rousing her; she was resting her eyes, something that was likely necessary because she had slept little the previous night. He pressed the hotdog and burger desperately close to her. "Blossom, you should eat before you get out there to do some good."

At least she didn't reject him outright and continue to starve herself. She looked like she was, at the very least, entertaining the idea of eating.

"Hotdog or burger?" Professor Utonium gave her a choice. Time passed as the speed transport started forward again, and for a time, it looked as if Blossom might forgo another meal, but then she leaned forward, and took a nibble out of the burger while it was still in the professor's hand.

"Would it help if I feed you?" the professor asked as he put an arm around Blossom's shoulders lovingly. Blossom nodded weakly. "Good girl."

All the while, Buttercup sat fuming in her corner of the car, looking out the window with her arms folded. She had been excited at the prospect of fighting alone and the freedom it entailed. No, more
than excited. She was ecstatic at the thought of what she could do to people to live the fantasies she
had been having, to sate her curiosities about the insides of people, and her need to hear their screams
and the dripping of their blood and entrails on the floor. The people, especially the bad guys
Blackwater would point her towards, were her playthings, and she fully intended to give them more
attention than she would give her toy cars and trucks. Except now she couldn't, all because Blossom
was so indecisive about whether she was depressed or not.

As they got under way, Blossom took nibble after nibble out of her burger, taking in small bits of
bread, lettuce and meat. It was far from what a little girl needed, but it was a start. But it seemed that
her appetite was shallow, and regression back to self-starvation a real possibility.

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**Townsville Port. Mission Time - 25 minutes.**

The convoy stopped a city block away from the docks. The doors of the speed transport swung
open, and immediately, the uncaring and deadly cold of the winter wind blasted the occupants of the
Lamborghini. Buttercup jumped out immediately. Blossom, however, was less than enthusiastic.
Despite having eaten more than she did in the past 48 hours combined, she still seemed anaemic.

"You okay there, kid?" Agent Blake asked the little girl as he turned on his seat, twisting his neck to
look at her. "I'll be accompanying you all the way to the dock - there's nothing wrong with being
afraid."

Blossom did not reply. Her mind was a battlefield, one that had returned to a stalemate, and without
any real experience to guide her charge to break the stalemate, she was stuck in an uneasy,
uncomfortable and upsetting state of uncertainty.

"It's okay Blossom. You don't have to go if you don't feel up to it," Professor Utonium said.
"Buttercup can handle it alone, I think. She's a tough girl."

As it just so happened, Buttercup's mood improved the moment she heard this. It turned out that she
was going to get her wish after all. Blossom, on the flipside, hadn't thought of that - all she was
thinking was that Bubbles' injuries were all her fault. As leader, she was ultimately responsible for
her sister. She didn't want to complete the job by putting Buttercup in a surgical bed as well. In the
end, coming to the car felt like a stupid move, but then so was remaining passive during an operation.
Blossom was stuck in a never-ending loop, a limbo of decisions where any choice she made felt like
the wrong one.

The professor got out of the car, and bent down to regard Blossom, who was still sitting in the car, at
eye level. "Blossom, I've never blamed you for what happened before and I'm not going to start now.
But promise me one thing, alright?"

"What, Daddy?" Blossom managed to croak with her eyes downcast.

"If Buttercup gets into trouble, don't blame yourself for it," the professor requested. "If anything,
since you're here, I want you to try to help her if she's ever in trouble."

It was the best compromise he could come up with, something that would benefit everyone involved.
Blossom wouldn't be involved when she didn't have the will to go on, Buttercup would have support
if she needed it, General Blackwater would have two of the three Girls available (even if one of them
was barely functional, if even that), Agent Blake's head would not roll and he, Professor Utonium,
would be able to ensure his Girls' safety and only risk their involvement in a USDO operation only
when it was absolutely necessary.
"Yes, Daddy," Blossom nodded half-heartedly. It seemed like she was melting into the seat of the car. She was a sorry sight, and she looked like no one could ever fault her for her passivity.

With that, Buttercup was led by Agent Blake towards the mission briefing site. He and his detail flanked the heavily-armed Buttercup. They had to ascend a flight of stairs to get to an office on the second floor of an office complex buildings away from the port. There, she was met with General Blackwater and... Detective Mullens!

"Mister Mullens! You're alright!" Buttercup exclaimed in surprise. It had been days since she last saw him. She had always thought that the hard-boiled detective of the Townsville Police Department was pretty cool - and she could always use a cool person, whether it be for her own amusement or education on the esoteric ways of being cool.

"As alright as a paper target at the end of the day," Mister Mullens said gruffly. To continue fighting the war against the Lombardi, he had to 'discharge' himself early from the hospital. Standing still, or in his case in the hospital ward, lying still, was basically inviting death. As long as he was staying in one place for a long time, he was vulnerable to assassination attempts straight from the Lombardi. However, moving around as if he was perfectly capable of benching hundreds of pounds or winning a firefight against ten men hadn't done wonders for his injuries. His arm was still in a sling, and there was blood from one of his wounds reopening. Buttercup's confused look prompted him to continue: "In other words, I'm not really alright and like paper targets, I need to keep standing."

Buttercup simply smiled at Mister Mullens, thinking to herself how cool and awesome he was.

"Wait, that's all there is!?!" General Blackwater bellowed in disbelief. Project Powerpuff's success rate had left too much to uncertainty even with the three of them. With only one of them, it might as well be tantamount to throwing in the towel. He turned to Sergeant Blake, who was supposed to be responsible for gathering the little critters. "What the hell is this, Blake? You promised me two on the radio," he lifted two of his fingers in the agent's face. "I see only one!" He curled one of those fingers up.

"Blossom isn't combat fit, sir. She hasn't eaten for days, and she's... well, demoralized, sir," Agent Blake reported. "She could barely even speak, much less combat crime."

General Blackwater stared at Agent Blake, their eyes meeting, and he looked as if he might gouge out his soul with his eyes alone, but Blake knew better than to break or cower. He'd worked with Blackwater for a long time, and he knew that it was just one of the ranking officer's few default expressions. But surprisingly, where the general used to frown perpetually, he softened his expression to one resembling and approaching... empathy?

"As I predicted," General Blackwater remarked. "Director Cliff has done it now, ensured Project Powerpuff's failure in trying to correct its course to head away from it. I've always known that the Girls operated as a single unit, like a team of security officers, except closer. They were a family. But Buttercup as a lone soldier will have to serve."

General Blackwater had to snap his fingers in front of her to catch her attention, as Buttercup had zoned out, her attention span cut short by the lack of action.

"Look alive, Buttercup!" General Blackwater barked. "We have work to do."

"Alright, here's the deal," Detective Mullens began briefing the tomboy. "The bad guys have been using the port to import drugs and other contrabands manufactured in the neighboring Citysville and other places. It will be heavily guarded, especially since they know about us now, and they'll certainly know about you, Buttercup."
The briefing went on for some time, with General Blackwater or Detective Mullens going into details about how she would be inserted into the Port, the approximate number of Lombardi muscle, police officers and USDO soldiers present, general orders on how she would approach the task of dispatching the criminal elements in the port, et cetera - Buttercup had zoned out in the middle of it again, and she barely listened to the other half of it.

In her mind, all she needed to do was to get in, kill everything and enjoy herself.

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**Townsville Port. Mission Time - 41 minutes.**

Buttercup cursed under her breath (with both words mild and ill-suited for her age) as she advanced towards Townsville Port under the cover of darkness. She was accompanied by Agent Blake and his men, who didn't need to take out any watchers thus far. She didn't like hiding in the shadows, as she found it as boring as it was a chore. If it was up to her, she would have just literally strolled in and started killing.

It was oddly quiet and still at the docks. Normally, the Lombardi would have put a few men around a front they owned to look out for the authorities, especially the kind they hadn't been able to pay off, but this time around, there was none. Agent Blake could only wonder at the implications, and it could only be a very good thing or a very bad thing. The Lombardi were either drastically reduced in power because of the USDO's entrance into the local law enforcement theatre, or they were planning something. Both possibilities were equally likely.

Their passage throughout the city block neighbouring the port was practically free. One would almost think that they weren't in Townsville, also known as Crimesville. The team hunkered down in an alley when there was just a street left to cross. Agent Blake reported their progress to General Blackwater before turning to Buttercup, who crouched beside him.

"Buttercup, it's your time to shine," Blake told her. Buttercup got up quickly upon hearing it, pointing her gun forward eagerly. Blake's hand shot up, pulling her down again. "Wait- Just remember to apprehend and restrain as many bad guys as you can."

"Yeah, yeah," Buttercup muttered rudely before standing up again and shouldering her Stoner light machinegun. Blake pulled her down again. "What?"

"And be careful, Buttercup. If you're having trouble, just give us a call. We'll be there for you," Blake said to the wayward little girl, who snorted at the possibility that she might encounter something she couldn't handle - even though that had happened with the lesser of the Amoeba Boys, Junior. For that, she blamed Blossom for her terrible leadership, which she thought had ended up impeding her ability to perform in combat and have fun in the process. Without Blossom to hold her back, she believed that her talent for mayhem and fun would be limitless.

"Trouble? What trouble?" Buttercup boasted before taking off, speeding up into a normal sprint, which was slow by her standards, before kicking into overdrive, as fast as a speeding car such that a streak of green could be seen behind her.

She had gone past a guard post that way, which actually housed several Lombardi enforcers lying in ambush, breaking a barrier in the process. She found herself in a maze made of cargo containers. Most of the cargo containers were singles. Some were stacked several floors high, leftovers from the day's work. The cargo area was deserted; no bad guys around. It disappointed her. She was expecting dozens of asses to kick.

But she wouldn't be disappointed for long. A multitude of men rounded the corner, several cargo
containers ahead of her. Above, rows of gangsters revealed themselves, cocking their guns. Buttercup heard footsteps behind her - and it wasn't just the few Lombardi enforcers in the guard post. More poured in from behind even more cargo containers. The tomboy hadn't learned to count very far into the double digits yet, but she didn't need to.

Because as far as she knew, these men were nothing to her, little more than zeros.

"Put down your guns and surrender!" one of the mob enforcers warned Buttercup as dozens upon dozens of men stood nervously around her. "Do that and I promise you we'll treat you real nicely! We'll even throw in a lollipop!" To sweeten the deal, no doubt.

Buttercup's only reply was a wicked, sadistic smile. A lollipop wasn't sweet enough compared to what she had in store for them. Raising her light machinegun, she blew the self-styled mob negotiator away. The Lombardi mobsters around her began firing, and bullets started flying from all directions at Buttercup. She could feel some of them punching through her helmet, her kevlar plates, and even more bouncing off of her. It made even standing difficult, as if she had suddenly found herself standing in the middle of a bus or train, but she managed. It was painful to high heaven, but nothing compared to what she would do to them.

She began unloading her light machinegun on the rows of men in front of her, putting down some of them - six or seven. The rest scattered, either running back into cover, or limping, or hopping, or crawling. She pointed upwards at the ambushers above her, on the cargo containers and did the same, though only ten or so of them fell, some screaming down to the floor. The others hid atop their cargo containers, unable to believe that shooting at Buttercup en masse did not work.

She could still hear gunshots and feel bullets drilling her back. Whirling around, she squeezed the trigger of her LMG, only to find that it was out of bullets. The ambushers, now facing her, continued firing desperately, shouting and screaming about the futility of their ambush. Buttercup dropped her machinegun and unslung Blossom's Serbu super-shorty shotgun. That gesture alone was enough to send the men howling and fleeing. Buttercup raised the shotgun and planted a cloud of pellets on the back of the slowest runner.

Despite feeling the shroud of dizziness and pain clouding her mind, Buttercup did not even think about retreating. Several men had gone out of cover and shot at her. She jumped on top of a cargo container, firing and pumping her shotgun, immediately blowing someone's head off, shocking the men who used to have the advantage of height. Bullets flew all around her, digging at her but ultimately failing to wound her.

"Buttercup, how many suspects have you detained, over?" Agent Blake's voice said on Buttercup's headphone. "Buttercup? Do you copy? Over." Buttercup did not care - in fact, Blake's voice barely even registered because she was just having too much fun. Her most recent kill was her favorite - a whole head blowing up like a watermelon she shot on the range! Too bad she couldn't videotape that! "Buttercup!"

She fired her shotgun one more time, kneecapping a gangster. Pumping it, she squeezed the trigger again - nothing. Out of ammo.

There were at least ten more mobsters on the containers. With no time to reload, she rushed at the next closest bad guy and shotgun-whipped him in the face, breaking a jaw and scattering teeth. With Buttercup closing in for the melee, her enemies found themselves at a severe disadvantage, not that they ever had it in the first place.

One of them stuck his shotgun at Buttercup's back and fired, but all he ever did was to stumble her. Buttercup recovered quickly, and did a spinning kick at him - her booted foot connected with the
side of his skull. She could hear the bone underneath cracking and splintering. She saw blood before he hit the steel floor of the cargo container.

As the remaining eight or so gangsters were backing away, with one or two of them who had a clear view of her firing submachinegun rounds at her, Buttercup unslung Bubbles' stockless XM4 carbine in mid-air. With her superior dexterity, she switched off the safety before she landed on the floor and fired the rifle from her hip at her hapless foes.

It was a slaughter, and as the muzzle of Bubbles' gun lit up, she grinned at the blood she shed and the reaction of the men. Two, three, four hit the floor while the rest fell off the container. She could hear them falling and hitting the concrete below. They sounded like sacks of butchered meat being unloaded in a meat processing factory. She could hear bones breaking and men screaming in pain and utter terror.

"Buttercup! Report!" came Agent Blake's voice once more, and he sounds frustrated. "How many captured? How many dead? Over!"

"Hi, Mister Blake!" Buttercup replied innocently as she stooped down to pick up some souvenirs - some teeth here, a few fingernails there - and stuffing them into her pockets. One of the gangsters screamed when Buttercup plucked a few fingernails from him. "One of them is alive, I think. I killed lots of them though. I didn't count how many."

"Good. Keep the survivor alive, over," Agent Blake was saying just when Buttercup stomped the surviving gangster in the face, caving it in such that a crater of gore and blood was all that remained of his face.

"Oh," Buttercup remarked when she realized she had killed the survivor contrary to Mister Blake's request. Regardless, she made no mention of it: "Sure, Mister Blake." Lifting her foot up, she observed her boot and made a face as if she had stepped on a huge bug. It was dripping with blood, and she could feel her sock inside stained with it as well, because of the damage her boot had sustained from the firefight. "Ew! These men are messy!"

"We'll count the number of prisoners and dead later!" General Blackwater's voice came through the radio after that. "Buttercup, my recons around the parameter of the mission zone reports that our targets are fleeing Townsville Port. Can you get as many of them as you can? Over!"

"No problem, Mister Blackwater," Buttercup replied as she flashed her sadistic grin once more. It had been swell so far - she had never had so much fun in her life before! Jumping off the cargo container and landing on the back of a gangster who had fallen off, the fallen gangster's scream as his back broke hardly even registered in Buttercup as she sped off towards a couple of his fellow criminals off in the distance.

They didn't stand a chance. The moment they heard the rapid patter of Buttercup's footsteps, they fired their pistols behind them, at her, but they might as well be shooting water pistols. Buttercup launched herself at one of them, foot first. He was nearly split down the middle as bone and muscles were torn. He rolled on the ground from the impact, screaming as if he was living the last seconds of his life. Reality was much more harsh. He lay on the snow-covered concrete, broken like a twig, his torso bent at an unnatural shape, twisted with the bones on his back piercing out of his skin, the two halves of his body held together only by skin and torn muscles. He wailed like a soul damned to hell.

Buttercup did not stop. With a smile that reached from ear to ear, she jumped on the other gangster's back, forcing him down with the combined weight of her body, equipment and forward momentum. They slid a distance, and Buttercup lost her grip. The panicky gangster could only crawl a few feet and flip himself onto his back before Buttercup was on top of him again.
But at least he would get the privilege to face his killer, except it didn't last for long as Buttercup shoved her thumbs into his eyes, banging his head on the concrete floor when she did. With a manic laugh, she pressed her thumbs deeper through his punctured eyes, deep into his eye sockets as he screamed in utter agony and sheer horror.

He was still alive, barely, when she withdrew her thumbs. His screams, however, was just as loud, and Buttercup didn't like that. It actually hurt her ears, so with a frown, she held her XM4 carbine and bludgeoned him in the face with it. As there was no stock, the metal part where the stock should be connected with the bloody remains of the gangster's face instead.

Despite the force behind the rifle, the gangster remained alive, and continued screaming, still, through broken or missing teeth, so Buttercup brought Bubbles' rifle down on him again and again, until the screaming stopped. Blood spurted onto her face, on her ruined gear and uniform, but she couldn't object to it. She smiled once more, proud of her handiwork. Even when the gangster finally died, she continued to bash the man's face in, growing hysterical ever more, laughing. It was only when her victim's head was completely flattened and reduced into bloody pulp as the skull was shattered into bonemeal did she stop.

It didn't occur to her immediately that she had taken far too much time pleasuring herself with her violence until she jumped on top of a cargo container, then reached her vantage point atop a stack of three cargo containers via a double-jump. She could see men and women running and piling into cars around the edges of the port before driving away in a hurry. As she didn't feel like running across a hundred miles in pursuit of a vehicle and repeating her mistake on Highway 13 (Blossom's mistake, Buttercup would maintain), she didn't even attempt to chase them down.

'There goes the fun,' Buttercup thought dejectedly. She could feel a tear dripping down her cheek when she realized that what she had killed was all she was going to get. She thought that it was stupid of her that she didn't keep the men she had at hand around for later by breaking their legs just so she could gather more criminals to toy with.

"This is Agent Blake. How are you doing, Buttercup? Over," Blake asked, concerned, over the phone.

"Are they all gone, Mister Blake?" Buttercup asked sadly. "They're all gone, aren't they?"

"Buttercup. I need to know how you're doing first. Are you hurt? I'm worried about you," Agent Blake insisted over the radio. He thought that Buttercup was hurting based on her tone.

"I'm fine," Buttercup said, though come to think of it, she did feel a little dizzy and woozy from all the gunshots. She had taken so many that her helmet and the rest of her SWAT gear was barely holding together. She could feel cold breeze infiltrating her clothes from a hundred bullet holes. The only positive thing was that it wasn't like the last time with Naga, when she had taken more than a hundred military-grade bullets all at once - she had vomited because of that, and she didn't like to vomit. The taste of stomach fluid and bile was especially horrible. "I just wish I could have… done more."

"Well, you're about to get your wish, Buttercup," General Blackwater interrupted over the radio. "My recon teams report movement in the port, still. Several of them holed up in the office. There's one guy still standing in the middle of the clearing in the cargo area."

"Really?" Buttercup asked, getting excited once more. "Where?"

General Blackwater sighed, and after thinking hard of a way to simplify his instructions, went on: "There's a huge blank place in the middle of where you are. There's a man there with a pistol. Can
you see him?"

Buttercup could not see it at first, until she turned around. That was when she saw him, just like how Mister Blackwater described. A man in the middle of a space clear of containers. It was well-lit because of the lack of obstructions to the light. Buttercup could even swear that she was able to 'zoom' her vision in a bit, because she could see pretty clearly how he looked like. Incredibly well-dressed, slim, with a slightly dreamy and calm smile on his face, which seemed out of place considering what she did to his fellow criminals. She had no idea what he was doing, standing in the middle of nowhere when everyone else was running away from her.

"I see him. Huge, blank place like you said," Buttercup said, her smile returning. "Thank you, Mister Blackwater."

With that, she leapt off her stack of cargo containers and took off towards her next victim.
Chapter 83: A Storm of Blood and Lead (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup takes on the mob alone as Blossom undergoes a crisis of confidence and Bubbles is in recovery.

Chapter 83: A Storm of Blood and Lead (Part 2)


Buttercup sped towards the man in a business suit. It didn't take long at all before they were within sight of each other. The man did not appear alarmed at her presence, even though he seemed ill-matched against her. He wore a brown striped suit, with a matching trilby hat circled by a black band. He had only a pistol in hand, which looked so non-threatening to Buttercup that she snorted and laughed at it on the way.

But as she was approaching the strange and slim but tall man, he turned tail and ran, not as fast as Buttercup at half her top speed, but fast enough to retreat into the maze of containers behind him and turn a corner, disappearing. Buttercup gave chase.

"What's the matter, mister?" Buttercup taunted as she stopped around the corner and lost track of the pinstripe-suited man. "Are you scared?" No reply came. She unslung Blossom's Serbu super-shorty shotgun and began reloading it. "Here, doggy doggy…"

It was dark. Half the lights in the section of the shipping container yard she was in was blown out for some reason. After going a fair distance, Buttercup felt something, some sort of button depressing beneath her right foot. It was metallic in nature, connected to something larger jutting out of the ground. Instinctively, her glowing green eyes lit up like a flashlight, and she observed what she had stepped on. Beneath her foot was a huge, circular plate on the concrete ground.

"Weird," she thought as she lifted her right foot off of what looked like some piece of junk to take a better look. Except it wasn't a piece of junk. The metal disk exploded the moment she did, sending her flying many yards backwards, her ears ringing and nearly deaf. Her leg, no, the entire lower half of her body felt nothing but pain. When she finally landed on her back, she looked down at her feet, only to realize that her right boot was completely gone, along with most of the right legging of her uniform. Her right knee pad was similarly MIA. What remained of her pants was on fire.

It turned out to be a landmine. And there was something else she had noticed. There were more around her - it just so happened that she didn't step or land on any of them.

Quickly, Buttercup patted down the flames on her pants, saving most of it. But she wasn't given time to recover at all. Gunshot rang out, and Buttercup could barely hear it through the ringing in her head. She could hardly even see where it was coming from. The slim man had revealed his presence not far away via the muzzle flashes from his gun. A shotgun blast knocked her back down into the snowy concrete, but she flipped herself back upright from the floor and returned fire, furiously
squeezing her trigger and pumping Blossom's shotgun.

She couldn't tell if she'd hit her target or not. She thought she did, but the slim man did not fall or even react to it. Instead, he let off another shot. Pellets slammed into her shoulder, doing little except giving her a push and slowing her advance. With that, the slim man turned tail and ran again.

"You're not getting away this time!" Buttercup yelled as she pursued the stubborn mobster. But he was fast, and Buttercup found herself expended from having to put up with so much pain, and she couldn't reach the speed of a speeding car even if she wanted to.

At not even half her full speed, she weaved past more landmines she had sighted on the ground and rounded the corner, surveying her surroundings more diligently. There were far fewer landmines in the next aisle, and for some reason, the snow was darker in color, and smelled awful.

The only problem was, she was highly visible, basically a beacon in an ocean of darkness with her eyes lit up like torches. And the slim man took advantage of that. At the end of the aisle, he revealed himself once more by firing his gun - this time, he had swapped his shotgun for some kind of submachinegun, putting down a barrage of lead down on her. But it was nothing; the bullets couldn't even break her steps. A landmine nearby exploded from a stray bullet. Buttercup started forward, running awkwardly wearing only one badly-damaged boot… which was when she felt pressure on her shin, and heard the sound of some cord or wire snapping with a loud 'twang!'

Something gave around her. Buttercup could hear it clearly, but she saw them too late. Bottles were falling from above. She had been paying too much attention to the ground that she didn't mind the sky at all. Her aisle burst into flames when the bottles hit the floor, and no amount of running could get her past the fire harmlessly as the entire aisle between containers were set entirely on fire within seconds. Molotov Cocktails, upgraded to ignite upon impact - and it had worked perfectly with the 'dark snow' turned out to be frozen gas. She remembered what they were called now: Molotov Cocktails. That was what Mommy called them during training. And she hated it.

"Not again!" Buttercup yelled in pain as she continued running forward, trying to get out of the fire. She remembered getting set on fire once before - her first mission at Townsville Central Bank. It wasn't a pleasant experience, and this time, it was ten times worse and by the time she was out of the fire and rounding another bend, she was set entirely on fire. She dropped and rolled, trying to snuff it out with snow, trying to get the burnt clothing and ashes and melted plastic and Kevlar off of her. She could feel hot plastic on her face, ruined leather and metal singing her throughout.

When the fire was mostly out, she stripped her vest off and wiped the remains of her goggles off. She had only the tattered and holey remnants of her uniform to cover her up, and she was practically barefooted by this time. She had lost Blossom's gun in her panic, so she unslung Bubbles' XM4 carbine, only to realize that she had lost all her spare ammunition in the fire. It had explained what all those explosions around her stomach was about.

The ringing in her ears were louder somehow, and her vision blurred from both exhaustion and pain. Not a single patch of her skin was spared from the lashes of the fire. Yet, she could see a silhouette in the distance, and he was shooting at her. The rounds hurt more this time, so Buttercup was able to figure out that the slim man had found a rifle somewhere. Judging from the rapid fire, an automatic rifle. She returned the favor, firing full auto. Bubbles' carbine ran out fast as she didn't reload after the last time.

The slim man turned tail and ran again. It infuriated Buttercup beyond reason. Dropping Bubbles' rifle, she took off after the rather troublesome mobster, panting and shivering from the cold, what with most of what she wore gone.
"Come back here, you stupid, cowardly, icky-" Buttercup shrieked as she rounded another corner, going berserk - she couldn't even finish her sentence when another cord broke against her shin. Something huge swung down from the front and above of her. A bundle of heavy construction steel beams, wide as the entire aisle and stacked almost as tall as her, striking her in the chest and stomach and knocking her yards backwards, smashing into a steel container, winding her. She groaned as she slid down the freezing steel wall of the cargo container, suffering the full effects of her dizziness.

Just then, a shadow rushed at her. She thought she could see it winding up its arm, so she sprang to her feet and tried to shield her face with her left forearm only for her feeble defensive posture to be circumvented entirely when the shadow drove his foot into her stomach, knocking her against the steel wall of the cargo container behind her again.

The shadow, which revealed itself to be the slim man when it came up to her, grabbed her by the pencil neck and pinned her against the cargo container. Buttercup could feel a wallop across her face after that, and blood in her mouth soon after. The steel wall behind her was dented as a result. The punch wasn't from a normal human being. There was far too much force behind it.

"Does the name 'Junior' ring a bell, little belle?" the slim man accused with an Italian accent as he walloped her again in the face. She could feel something rising in her cheek. "The name's Slim, at your service, and today's going to be the best day of your life, capiche?" With that, he took her by the shoulders and threw her along the aisle, bouncing off another cargo container with a loud, onerous thud, skidding along the snowy floor. "I'll make sure I send you off real nice and quickly like!"

Buttercup drew her pistol and fired the semi-automatic blindingly fast at Slim. Her enhanced enemy did the same. They both ran out quickly.

"You're going to pay for what you did to Junior!" Slim shouted as he ran down the aisle towards Buttercup, who was barely even able to recover from her fall, and punted her in the chest further down the aisle, closer to the offices and warehouses of the port. "He had to wade through shit in the sewers and sneak around like a common crook in his own town because of you!"

This time, Buttercup was a little more ready despite feeling winded from the kick in the chest. Getting up to her feet into a kneeling position, she formed a cross with her arms to block the incoming attack - another low kick from Slim. The kick broke her defence, so she rose up and attempted an upper-cut, only to feel her fist grazing Slim and slipping past his skin harmlessly. It was just like the last time, when her attacks, be they from using firearms or without, were ineffective.

Slim smiled, and took her by the arms as she descended and slammed her head-first into the ground. He kicked her in the stomach, sending her skiing across the aisle, further towards the building.

Buttercup clutched her stomach in pain as she gritted her teeth. She could feel all sorts of pain assailing her - especially in the chest and stomach. Dull pain where she was kicked and in her skull, sharp pain at dozens of points throughout.

And she had taken too long to get up this time, in that she couldn't even do so. Slim tried to pick her up by the collar, only for several buttons to break from damage, so he took her by the hair instead, Buttercup punching Slim in the arm futilely, and, with a full wind-up, threw her towards the building.

She landed hard. Enough to make a crater in the concrete wall. When Buttercup flipped around to lean against the wall, she could feel blood pouring down her face.

"Kill my men, will you!?!" Slim spat as he kicked her in the stomach again, with no reservations or
mercy at all. "Hurt my business, will you!?" He kicked her again. Buttercup cried in pain.

Picking Buttercup up, Slim slammed her against the wall, deepening the crater there. Then, with greater force, threw Buttercup through the wall and into the building. She landed yards into what appeared to be an office space, chest first.

The helpless little girl had little time to prepare herself. With her mind hazy from excruciating pain and injury, all she could do was to look at her reflection on a glass door. At some point, she had lost the top of her military uniform as well, so her modesty was barely preserved by ashes and soot and blood.

She didn't have long before she could feel the cold and cruel hand of Slim wrapping itself around her neck from the back - rolling around, she delivering a punch to Slim's neck, which did little except to annoy him. For a brief moment, his skin had turned from the beige of human skin to a sickly blue-green as his flesh absorbed the blow. Fear had somehow wormed its way into Buttercup's heart when she saw that disturbing imagery.

Taking her by the neck and arm, Slim threw her upwards and kicked her in mid-air as she descended, sending her flying across most of the office, breaking dividers in two and sweeping aside furniture. Papers and stationery were scattered all over the place and sent fluttering like startled birds into the air. Buttercup landed on a desk, which broke in two from the force.

"You're going to die for disrupting the natural order of things around here," Slim went on as he marched up to the beaten Buttercup, this time in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. As he approached Buttercup, the tomboy grabbed a fallen vase and smashed it in Slim's face. As the mob boss clawed at his face, trying to get rid of the shards of glass in his eyes, Buttercup picked up a filing cabinet and launched it at Slim. She took off after that, but with her vision mostly gone and her sense of balance even less present, she could only zigzag through the office, unsure of where she was going. 'As far away from him,' was her general rule of the day.

She couldn't get far before Slim caught up with her again, and when she felt his fingers closing in around her arm and the charred belt of her military trousers, she could only struggle helplessly, punching Slim in the arm, to no effect.

"I have just the thing for you, little belle," Slim said sadistically as he looked out the ceiling-to-floor window of the office facing the Pacific ocean. Out there in the waters, a storm had been raging. Slim threw Buttercup through the window, the glass shattering, and the girl hurting some more, if it was even possible.

The fall was several floors down, so the way out wasn't exactly a pain-free one. As Buttercup fell, she tried to 'jump' in mid-air, only to accidentally spin herself up because of her ruined sense of direction and balance. When she landed on a foot awkwardly against the rocky bottom of the cliff below, she could feel her ankle cracking before she crumpled into the ground, clutching it. She could still move her foot, barely, which meant that she had merely sprained her ankle. But Buttercup did not know that, and as far as she was concerned, she had broken a foot.

Her nemesis hopped off the building shortly afterwards, again, giving her little to no time to regain her bearings. He landed on his feet next to her, crouching, before straightening up again. Shaken, Buttercup tried to hop away, even did a double-jump blindly towards the ocean, in a bid to get as far away from Slim as possible. She couldn't get far, not with an injured ankle and a once-vast supply of Chemical X energy depleted. It was the first time terror had struck her, despite her psychopathy forming a near-impenetrable shield guarding against it. Slim had caught up with her within seconds.

Grabbing Buttercup by a handful of raven hair the moment she landed, Slim dragged her, kicking
and screaming, towards the shores. He took her into the water, until it was shin-high for the mob boss and waist-high for the Powerpuff subject.

"Here, have a drink on the house!" Slim taunted before plunging Buttercup's head into the water, sending her into sheer panic as she thrashed and struggled. For a moment, with a burst of strength not found in bravery but fear, she was able to overpower Slim's arm strength, but only for a moment, enough for a quick gasp of precious air.

But she was back in the water again within a second, and in a worst way if that was even possible. For whatever little footing she had gained in her struggle, Slim had tripped her over. After punching Buttercup in the side, causing her to release ever more bubbles of life into the water, he restrained Buttercup's left arm around her back.

Buttercup continued to thrash and struggle in the water. It occurred to her that she had no idea how water could be dangerous until now, where previously she had only encountered it in the bathtub and as a natural beverage in a cup. She had never considered how breathing was important to continued living, until now, where previously she had only received vague hints of it through strenuous exercises and combat.

Buttercup cried within the last minutes of her life, but her tears were mere drops in the ocean, unseen, made underwater and intermingled with the ocean. Lost forever.

Her lungs felt like exploding, and their fuses were short. Her mouth was agape, wide, in both abyssal terror and as an instinct to breathe in something, anything, into her lungs. She wanted to scream like the little girl she was, but the water around her prevented even that little privilege.

Her short life flashed before her eyes. Good times with Daddy, heaven with Mommy. Blossom came to mind too, and so did Bubbles, surprisingly. Her spectacular triumphs and terrible failures in battle haunted her. For half a second, she came to realize that Blossom might be right after all, in the way she had prosecuted the operations she was put in charge of.

Buttercup's consciousness waned, then came her first gulp of seawater, as the salty substance poured excruciatingly into her lungs, burning her on the inside despite how freezing the winter ocean water was. Her struggles and thrashing became less pronounced with each intake of water.

Until it stopped completely.

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Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 14 Minutes.

Blossom shot up from her sleep of sadness, lifting her head from Professor Utonium's lap. She clutched at her throat, taking short, shallow gasps. For some reason, breathing felt difficult all of a sudden.

"Blossom? Blossom dear, what's wrong?" the professor asked as he leaned in close to his flower, concerned, an arm around the troubled little girl.

She could only stare at her Daddy with wide, tearful eyes as she struggled to even find the words to describe her difficulties, and understanding it was just as hard a proposition. Professor Utonium took to thinking that she had, perhaps, swallowed her saliva the wrong way during her depressive nap, or were beginning to develop difficulties in her airways, brought on by a speculatively poor sleeping position. There was little the professor could do but to cradle her in his arms.

Hints of it emerged in Blossom's subconscious at first, but eventually, she made the connection. The
uncomfortable sensation reminded her of the way she had felt a nagging pain in her heart when Bubbles was shot, and wouldn't you know it: in the heart. It told Blossom that something was amiss. It wasn't just the breathing difficulty, nor the slight pain in her throat that indicated so - it was the feel of it, the power behind it.

"Buttercup's in trouble," Blossom muttered to her Daddy upon realizing the truth, her eyes still wide, as the implications of it was worse than the feeling in her now dry throat. Two days ago, by the time she felt the pain in her heart, it was already too late, and Bubbles' was shot twice in the chest. "I have to go, Dad!"

She clambered out of her Daddy's arms, trying to get out of the Lamborghini speed transport.

"Here, let me help you," the professor said when he opened a hatch on the roof of the car. Blossom lifted herself out in a panic and flew off from there, her flight path and pink light trail a zigzag, looking a little like the line on a heart rate monitor because she was still learning how to control her flight confidently.

Blossom stopped in mid-air, several floors high up. She wasn't sure where to go as she didn't attend the briefing. Clutching her orange hair, she looked all around her in a panic, but the landscape stretched on into infinity in the night, worsening her panic as it was the complete opposite of home. On one side, buildings stretched on forever, on the other, the ocean had no end. An idea took too long to click in her mind than she would have preferred.

"Mister Blackwater! Mister Blackwater! Buttercup's in big trouble!" Blossom screamed into her mic as she clutched onto it for dear life.

"Keep your voice down, damn it!" Blackwater bellowed into the mic. "Now, can you explain? Over."

"I… I don't know- I mean, I just know!" Blossom said in a panic. It felt like time was running out. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she remembered Bubbles and thought that something similar was happening to Buttercup. "Please!"

"Fine. I'm ordering Sergeant Blake to investigate your claim," General Blackwater said, his voice so calm that it actually frustrated Blossom. "He's already in the port, looking for survivors of your sister's little rampage."

"But that's too slow!" Blossom said, still panicky. She could still feel her throat constricting, a dull kind of pain spreading across her neck. "Tell me where she is! Please, Mister Blackwater!"

There was a pregnant pause, which served only to scare Blossom, as she genuinely believed for the duration of the pause that Blackwater had decided not to tell her for whatever arcane reasons adults tend to come up with.

"Fine. You see those containers near the ocean? The waters?" General Blackwater answered, much to Blossom's gratitude. Blossom turned round and round in her panic to save Buttercup, until she saw what looked like containers to her. In her mind, containers were boxes for putting toys in, and from afar, the cargo containers did look like toy boxes, except that they were boring to look at, without floral patterns or bunnies or interesting and colorful shapes.

"Yes!" Blossom shouted into the mic, floating towards it.

"My men reports that Buttercup had gone deeper into the container yard, towards the building - you see the building behind it?" Blackwater continued. "Go there and you might find her."
"Yes, yes!" Blossom shouted in triumph as she sped towards the building at breakneck speed, even faster than how fast she could sprint on the ground, leaving behind a moderately bright trail of pink light in her wake, wavy from her flight inexperience. She was able to cover lots of ground quickly this way, as being up in the air meant that she was unhampered by obstacles and buildings, and containers.

"Buttercup!" Blossom shouted as she flew over the container yard that was her sister's battleground. Below, there were numerous bodies, as well as beams of light waving about. She could just about see Mister Blake and his friends splitting up into two groups, one to round up injured criminals and the other to search for Buttercup. Zooming in on the search party, she saw that Mister Blake was leading it. They were both heading in the same direction, but her friends on the ground were far too slow; she had no time to stop and talk to them.

"Buttercup, where are you!?" Blossom shouted again as she passed over the deeper part of the container yard, where there were no bodies, but a fire had started there, somehow. There were also evidence of some explosions, which had started a secondary fire. Following the trail of destruction, she saw that there was a hole in the building, more than big enough to put Buttercup through, to push an adult human being through. Flying down to it, she landed into a run, swaying left and right from the rough landing, before passing through the hole.

The office inside was a mess. Glass doors broken, a desk split in half. Glass shards from a vase. Broken furniture and all sorts of papers and stationery were scattered all over the place. Another broken window hinted at Buttercup's destination outside the office, this one facing the ocean, reaching from floor to ceiling. Following this clue, Blossom ran towards the broken window and launched herself through it. Declining to counter gravity, she let herself fall, landing on threes in a crouched stance, feeling the soft surface of sand under her feet.

And all she found was a man on the shore, leaning forward as if carrying or holding something down. From what she had seen in the container yard, she thought it likely that he was one of them, one of the bad guys, and putting two and two together, thought it likely, too, that he had something to do with Buttercup being in trouble.

Dashing closer to the waters, fast enough to leave a faint, pink trail behind her, to where the seawater would lap at her boots, she saw that the man had turned around to face her, his thin lips stretched into a slight smile out of place in such desperate circumstances. He waded in the water towards her, unintimidated by her presence.

Something floated sideways behind him.

A small, prepubescent form, naked except for a tattered pair of dark green trousers (with one less legging) held together by charred belt.

"Buttercup!?" Blossom screamed the moment she saw her sister. "BUTTERCUP!"

By the time she could focus on Buttercup's murderer, barely, he was already out of the water, his brown business pants soaked through. He readjusted his blazer, as if he had just concluded an important meeting or a million dollar business transaction.

"Pleasure to meet you too," Slim said to the weeping Blossom.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup takes on the mob alone as Blossom undergoes a crisis of confidence and Bubbles is in recovery.

A/N: The current prologue is due to be replaced with a new one soon. A lot has changed since I wrote it, though the main plot and story are all largely the same. The old prologue will likely be updated and reused in the second arc.

Oh, and merry Christmas (belated - sorry, was busy with social stuff and writing) and happy new year too!

Chapter 84: A Storm of Blood and Lead (Part 3)

Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 20 Minutes.

"Pleasure to meet you too," Slim said to the weeping Blossom, whose eyes continued to switch between Buttercup and her assailant, this slim man in a business suit who reminded her of another smartly-dressed man who had bested both her and Buttercup in the warehouse district.

"You… you killed my sister?" Blossom said in disbelief. It was all over, and Blossom couldn't help but to blame herself, once more, despite everything her Daddy said, despite how she had agreed with him not to.

"What does it look like?" the mob boss said, remorseless, even proud of what he had done. In his mind, he had managed what his youngest blood brother, Junior, could not do. Not only was there no remorse to be found on his expression, he flashed a toothy smile, taunting Blossom and silently laughing at her loss. "You know, I've never had so much fun doing it. You know how your sister sounded like as I beat her up like a lil' bitch?"

Blossom gritted her teeth as she stifled the cries coming from her lips. She clenched her fists, hard. The storm over the ocean was coming in. Rain was starting to pour over Blossom and Slim as they glared at each other.

"She begged. Begged like a dog," Slim lied to Blossom, his smile ever more taunting. Blossom stiffened as rage built up inside her.

She could no longer contain herself. Screaming for blood and vengeance, she dashed forward, fist raised, an angry pink trail and her fiery red hair flowing behind her. Barely even thinking, she opened the fight with a series of punches, and Slim blocked them with his forearms. Whatever slipped past his defenses bounced off his flesh, or glanced off.

In her fury, Blossom thought little of it, and whatever was in her head was dedicated to Buttercup - for a second, she understood Buttercup and her bloodlust better. Perhaps she had been right all along...
to crave unleashing violence on the bad guys, even if her motivation was wrong.

When punching did not work, Blossom jumped to Slim's chest level and gave a double-kick - Slim had anticipated the first one. The second struck him in the chest, again to no effect, as if he was made of senseless putty. The moment she landed, she jumped again, avoiding a low kick from Slim and at the same time doing a spinning kick at head level. Slim, still recovering from his own attack, could not get out of the way of her spinning kick, and was struck hard such that he stumbled from the megaton force of the strike. His head was even slightly deformed from the blow, and remained blue-green.

It'd shocked Blossom momentarily out of her fury. Questions on what she was fighting crowded her mind. Slim had taken advantage of her lapse in concentrate to deliver a straight kick to her face, sending her flying backwards, forming a scar on the frozen sands of the beach, cutting through freezing rain and beads of hail.

With the time he had earned for himself, Slim concentrated on the shape and form of his face, and popped it back into its original configuration. The blue-green soon faded into the color of normal skin.

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**Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 22 Minutes.**

When Blossom claimed that Buttercup was in trouble, Professor Utonium believed her. He hadn't forgotten about Blossom and Buttercup's claims that they could feel Bubbles' pain when she was nearly assassinated by Mojo Jojo using a sniper rifle designed to kill Chemical X-enhanced little girls like her.

With Agent Blake gone, he couldn't get him to drive him into the port to help the Girls. But he wasn't going to give up on them anytime soon. Getting into the driver's seat of the Lamborghini speed transport, he ignited the engine and hit the accelerator. It took mere seconds for the vehicle to reach maximum speed, which he wasn't used to. As a result, PTF soldiers and security officers alike had to run or jump out of the way, and he had grazed several humvees and cars on the way.

"Oops…" the professor said and apologized under his breath as he continued down the road towards the port, and honked the horn several times to avoid any other accidents.

He didn't know what he was going to face on the way, but he believed that the road should be clear because of Buttercup - she had always been the tough one, and if someone had brought her down, it had to be something as tough as a mean-spirited enhanced human being. Naga, perhaps? Or even Mojo Jojo, who would surely be motivated to continue his work of dismantling his family in a fit of jealousy?

All he knew was that no one was going to stop him from seeing his daughters again. He had lost one, once upon a time, and he wasn't about to lose another again - not any of them.

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**Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 24 Minutes.**

Blossom had been on the defensive ever since Slim had gotten his kick in. Because of her small size, Slim had to aim his wallops low, but that did not stop him from putting the pressure on her. However, his moves had been predictable: a left, which Blossom blocked, a right, which Blossom had also blocked. The brown-suited man wasn't as good as his blood brother when it came to unarmed combat. But then again, neither was Blossom, who had only mere days of training and experience, and no amount of intelligence could make up for that.
The moment Slim had switched out his pattern, Blossom was caught off-guard. A left hook followed by a right sucker punch was enough to confuse her and put a bruise in her jaw. She stumbled.

Kicking herself off the ground, Blossom floated at the level of Slim's chest and began punching once more. Several left and rights in, which were all blocked, before a huge wind-up and a spinning punch that only Blossom with her anti-gravity capability was capable of - but it was all for nothing as Slim ducked out of the way.

And he didn't just avoid what was supposed to be a stunning blow. Taking Blossom by the boots, he dragged her down to the ground and began walloping her while she was down, landing quite a few punches in her face. There was a streak of blood as Slim had done it with enough force to split even Blossom's resistant skin.

With a shout, Blossom kicked the mob boss off, but her moment of respite was but a moment; by the time she was on her feet, Slim was already sprinting towards her and barreling into her, sending her flying to the rocky cliffs beneath the port's offices.

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**Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 26 Minutes.**

Professor Utonium had driven all the way up to the port's building complex. He had heard Blossom and Blackwater's exchange on the radio of the speed transport. The building was the last breadcrumb in the trail leading to his precious babies.

Hauling a first-aid kit and drawing his pistol, he held it closely and tightly, feeling incredibly afraid, considering that he was way out of his league. While every USDO member was given basic combat training, the last time he had a refresher course was a year ago, and being the distracted scientist that he was, he had only done enough to pass the refresher, and even then, he had fired his weapons and run through his urban survival scenario while mentally trying to resolve problems in his theories on Chemical X and related mathematical equations. While he had attended Selicia's weapons training program with the Girls, he'd done the same thing, going through the motions to pass the program just enough.

He was beginning to regret that now, with his Girls at stake. Sneaking his way up the building and through the front entrance of the office half of it, he knew that he was on the right track when there was a trail of destruction that only a tussle between two enhanced individuals could make.

But he wasn't alone. A gunshot rang out with a rude and shocking report. The glass door behind him shattered. He scrambled into cover behind a sturdy-looking supervisor's desk, his hands and pistol trembling. The desk he hid behind shook as it sustained more gunshots. He was getting attacked by survivors of Buttercup's rampage, seasoned criminals he had no hope of besting. He could feel himself panting, almost to the point of hyperventilating.

Everything felt hopeless. But the Girls! He was their father, and he wasn't about to fail them!

Rising out of his cover, he let off a shot from his pistol, but he had fired it without knowing where his target was, and as a result, was way off the mark. He had seen that he was up against three Lombardi enforcers, well protected by the walls of the room they were hiding behind. They were better armed than he was, two with rifles and one with a shotgun.

The moment he felt the shoulder of his lab coat getting torn by a stray round, he ducked back into cover, shaking with fear. His Girls took precedence, even over justice. It was time to try a more pacifistic tactic, one he would have preferred anyway.
"Gentlemen, stop shooting! I'm not here to fight you!" Professor Utonium negotiated. "I'm just a scientist, and I'm here to get my daughters!"

"Bullshit!" one of the men shouted, before putting buckshots into the professor's cover. He could hear his desk crack louder. It felt as if it might break in two any minute.

"But it's not bullshit!" the professor countered. "Just let me go and I'll walk away!" To be fair, the way he had explained himself did sound like bullshit - he'd come in with a gun, and scientists didn't work at ports as far as he knew, and only the worst fathers would leave their daughters at a port in the middle of the night.

"Like we'll just let you waltz in and leave so you can fucking inform on us!" another of the survivors shouted. There was more machinegun fire after that, and some of the bullets had gone right through wood and metal, nearly hitting him. They weren't going to let him go anytime soon. No. It was clear that they were going to fucking kill him if that was the last thing they do.

He could hear rapid footsteps after that. The professor frantically jumped out of his cover and shot at the closest criminal at his throat, who happened to be rushing his position. Next thing the professor knew, he had shot the man right in his centre of mass, but the gangster was just as fast, managing to get a shot off before tumbling towards the desk.

The professor could feel metal cutting through his shoulder. He slumped back down into cover to assess the damage. His lab coat was drenched in blood, but it wasn't as bad as he thought. It was a graze wound, but the canyon on his skin was huge, and it wasn't pretty to look at.

He felt faint just by looking at it, and he could barely lift his pistol because of how shocked and afraid he was - though he was more afraid that he wouldn't be able to help his Girls than the fact that he would likely die trying to fight against three seasoned warriors of the criminal underworld.

The world swirled all around him. Loose memories of his life with his daughters filled him with hope and loss simultaneously - how their idyllic childhood was cut short once they were sent out into the real world, how they thrived despite - how they could thrive again. How worried he was that at least one of them would never do so again.

He could hear his attackers plot against him in the meantime, thinking him an easy prey. In reality, he was worse than that. He was sitting ducks. Footsteps, once again, thudded against the carpeted office floor, crunching broken glass. With a final heave, he lifted his pistol with violently shivering hands and prepared to make a final stand…

But someone else had other plans. The moment he was out, the staccato of gunshots rang out, but they weren't his own or the crooks'. Men were shooting through windows and storming the office entrance, and the surviving mob enforcers fell under the glare of a multitude of lights coming from a multitude of assault weapons.

Those men wore black uniforms. One of them came up to him, and Professor Utonium recognized the face.

"Let's go get your kids, Upton," the soldier said. It was Agent Blake, in full SWAT gear.

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Townsville Port. Mission Time - 1 Hour 28 Minutes.

Blossom was breathing with shallow, raspy breaths as she was thrown against the cliff for the umpteenth time, and each time she failed to overcome Slim, she grew weaker. And now, after her
fifth attempt, she bounced painfully off the jagged and craggy natural wall and collapsed on the equally hazardous floor of the cliff foot. She wiped blood off her face, as for a moment, all she could see was red.

"Give up, darling," Slim taunted as he stood tall before her, completely unhurt from his fight with the infamous leader of 'The Three'. "But don't ever think that I'll forgive you for what you put Junior through. I'll make your death quick, I can offer you that."

The fight had been a torture thus far for Blossom. For all her rage and drive and motivation for vengeance and love for Buttercup, it was never enough. Blossom gritted her teeth and clenched her fists once more. Unbuckling her helmet, she threw it at Slim defiantly before charging.

Slim got out of the way before Blossom could hit him. The little girl fell forward into the frozen sand because of her own momentum, weakened from injury and exhaustion. Slim was quick to seize this opportunity by straddling her, pinning her wrists deep into the sand with his hands and her legs with his knee.

"So that's it, huh?" Slim insulted the girl. "That all you got?" He chortled at this - before he'd plotted the ambush against Buttercup, he had been so nervous from what he heard about 'The Three'. He had expected all three Girls to arrive, and he expected them to be better than before.

"You're going to die as a failure, bitch, for failing to save your own dear little sister. But at least you'll swim with the fishes, next to her," Slim said. Blossom struggled against him, but his hands were like manacles and his knee, a boulder..

"Please, Mister Slim! Please don't kill me! I'll do anything for you!" Slim mimicked Buttercup's voice crudely, and it infuriated Blossom more than she already was. She thought him insulting to her memory - she knew Buttercup, and Buttercup would never beg for mercy, not from a crook like him. "Oh please, Mister Slim! Anything for you, Mister Slim! Anything for you!" The mob boss laughed out loud at his own imitation.

"Well? Aren't you going to beg like your lil' sister?" Slim taunted, but Blossom wasn't going to beg anytime soon. She was mad, real mad, so mad that she couldn't control herself any longer.

Where Blossom's eyes were pink, they grew redder, and redder. The rain and hail above would sizzle and turn to steam when they landed in her eyes. By the time Slim had noticed it, with wide-eyed perplexity, it was too late for him. Blossom no longer cared if she could maim and kill with her 'heat vision', not with the character before her.

Two beams of red-tinted energy shot out from her eyes, with a loud and extended 'fwoossh!' report, which Blossom directed at Slim's face as she looked upon it with hate, causing the tall mob boss to snap his head back in pain, clutching his face, screaming, with dark smoke rising up from it. It'd sent him running unsteadily, blindly, and Blossom continued to burn him with her glare, turning his brown suit black. His wailing cries could be heard from a mile away, but seeing him became another matter quickly as he retreated, a rising trail of smoke behind him.

Blossom had wanted to pursue him, to the ends of the Earth if need be, but something else occurred to her the instant Slim was no longer in her way.

Buttercup.

With her deadly anger dissipating, concern replaced it entirely. She surveyed the shore, trying to find her sister - or her body. At first, despair set in when she thought that it was lost, carried away by the
water or something, until she saw it in the distance, floating like a log deeper into the ocean to be swallowed, something she couldn't permit.

She tried to run towards the waters, but found it difficult as she felt depleted of all energy. But she had to try, she just had to. Kicking herself off, she flew heavily towards Buttercup (or her body), her flight path especially unsteady from her exhaustion and the elements - she wasn't even emitting pink light anymore.

Buttercup was too far out, and Blossom, too tired. She found her altitude decreasing too quickly, and wasn't even halfway there. Soon, her feet were grazing the ocean water, and soon, her feet were inside the ocean. Still, she pushed herself, motivated only by love, encouraged only by her agonizingly slow progress. There was no more adrenaline from her maddening fury, so she had to push herself by sheer force of will alone, her tears disappearing with the rain even before they mingled with the ocean when fury was replaced with depressive sadness.

By the time she reached Buttercup (or her body), she was practically swimming in the ocean, though she hadn't learned how to swim. As she clutched tightly onto Buttercup's body, she felt the lull of the ocean and exhaustion pulling her in, and seriously considered giving up, and drowning beside her beloved tomboy of a sister.

But no. She remembered Bubbles and her Daddy. She couldn't fail them now. Taking Buttercup with a hand, Blossom began floating towards the shore, the difficulty of it twice as hard now. She had to physically push herself through the water as she 'flew' closer to land, her progress stalled at times because of the whims of the waters and the wind, and slow at other times because of the failing whims of the Chemical X in her.

Halfway through, she herself nearly drowned as she found herself dropping too far below the surface. Little more than that later, she went far below once more, the freezing waters singing to her a siren's song to end her suffering. It felt tempting then, with Buttercup in her arms, and the quiet dark of the ocean reminding her of her room at night - but she pushed on, fighting through it physically and mentally. Pushing, despite the pain in every part of her body telling her otherwise, ever upwards, until she could breathe once more.

And before she knew it, she drifted ashore, Buttercup (or her corpse) in tow. With her dear sister in her arms, she tried to walk, and could barely do so. She managed a few limps, just enough to get them out of the vindictive waves beckoning for them to come back, before she fell to her knees, and Buttercup tumbled to the sand lifelessly, facing the dark sky above.

"Buttercup..." Blossom called to her sister, her voice a whisper from how deathly exhausted she was.

"Buttercup, wake up, please..." Blossom cried as she shook her sister. "Wake up..."

But Buttercup didn't wake up like she wanted. When realization struck her that her sister might be dead, Blossom cried and wailed as she buried her face in her sister's neck while she hugged her desperately, wishing and hoping, and wishing and hoping some more that Buttercup would just wake up despite the odds, that she would just open her eyes and tell her that it was all just a bad dream, or a stupid prank - anything but the cruel permanence of death.

"Blossom!" a voice shouted, carried by the wind. "Blossom!"

It turned out to be Professor Utonium, descending a flight of stairs down to the beach with Agent Blake and his band of Project Powerpuff sympathizers behind him, their flashlight attachments swaying back and forth as they rushed to the aid of the Girls.
As the professor got closer, he saw that Buttercup was lying in the sand, her battle gear mostly gone, either torn or burnt away by furious combat, her hair in a mess, with speckles of frozen sand decorating it like dull sparkles that had lost their color. She wasn't moving. At first, the professor believed her to be badly wounded, but the closer he got, and the more he saw that Buttercup wasn't moving at all, his fears grew worse, turning into a father's nightmare. He broke into a sprint, superhuman for someone of his poor fitness and burden, until he was on his knees, next to Blossom.

"Oh no," the professor uttered as he realized what had happened. As much as he hated to do it, he tried to separate Blossom from Buttercup, but the former simply wouldn't let go. "Blossom, let go of her!"

Agent Blake and Corporal Rutherford came up on either side of Blossom, trying to pry her off of Buttercup. She pushed them away, still weeping.

"Blossom, let me try to save her!" Professor Utonium screamed, the burden of being the doctor and adult weighing heavily on him - he had to keep his emotions suppressed once again, for the good of his patient and daughter. "I can save her! Just let me try!"

Blossom considered her Daddy's words. She then backed away reluctantly, not because she didn't believe in his skills as a doctor, but because she didn't want to leave Buttercup alone, ever.

"You're all wet, Blossom," Agent Blake said as he crouched down beside the sitting Blossom. "Let me take you back to the car." It wasn't just Blossom's health he was worried about. He didn't want Blossom around, in case - just in case - Buttercup was gone for good. It wouldn't bode well for her mental health, and neither would it have a positive impact on Thomas Upton's image as a father to Blossom.

"No! I want to be with her!" Blossom rejected, glaring at Agent Blake for a second as if he was Slim, shrugging off the hand on her shoulder. But even during her darkest hour, she realized what she had done wrong. "I'm sorry."

"No, it's alright," Blake said. "We'll be with you."

Meanwhile, Professor Utonium had gotten to work. Putting both his hands on Buttercup's cold and pale chest, he started pumping her heart. "One, two, three…" He began counting, and when he'd stimulated her heart enough, he leaned in and blew a lungful of air into Buttercup's mouth.

Nothing.

"One, two, three, four…" the professor counted his pumps again, going up to ten, before giving Buttercup another kiss of life.

But she was still lifeless.

"One, two, three, four, five-" the professor began compressing her chest again, then breathed more air into the tomboy's mouth.


"One, two, three, four, five-" the professor applied the same technique once more, blowing air into Buttercup.

Nothing, yet again. Both the professor and Blossom were beginning to lose hope - and the professor had started to wonder if Buttercup had drowned for too long. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was,
after all, only effective within a tiny window of opportunity.

But this was his daughter, his treasured daughter he was talking about.

"One, two, three, four, five-" he tried again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

Until too much time, surely, had passed.

Until Buttercup was dead for certain.

Until the professor fell on his bum, sitting on the frozen sand, clutching his hair and crying.

"Buttercup…" Blossom uttered miserably as she realized, once more, that one of her sister was gone for good.

"Status and sitrep, over," General Blackwater demanded over the radio. Everyone with a radio, including Blossom, could hear the exchange.

"Buttercup is KIA," Agent Blake reported regretfully. Blossom screamed and wailed the moment 'KIA' was mentioned. While she hadn't learned what it meant, she understood the implication of the acronym. "I repeat, Buttercup is KIA. She gave her life to save the day, sir."

"You have my condolences," General Blackwater said respectfully. "Things are going to change around here. I'm going to make sure she gets a proper military burial and posthumous awards."

The professor shifted his gaze from the sand to Blossom, wiping his tears away. Buttercup was gone - no amount of crying and feeling sorry could change that. Reluctantly, the professor stood up and, after rounding Buttercup's corpse respectfully, took Blossom by the arm and lifted her to her feet.

"There's nothing left for us here, Blossom. Let's go," the professor said. Buttercup might be dead, but Blossom wasn't - and from the look of her pale, sickly face, it was obvious that the operation had taken too much out of her. She could barely even stand under her own power, as the professor had to carry half her weight by her arm.

"Can I say goodbye one last time?" Blossom requested. Professor Utonium nodded and let go. The little girl got on her knees, getting up next to Buttercup before kissing her in the cheek. For all the rivalry between them, they were sisters at the end of the day. Blossom would like to think that there were both good times and bad times, even if Buttercup would likely maintain that her time with Blossom was just flat out terrible. "Goodbye Buttercup. I love you."

With that, Blossom forced herself up to her feet, limping back to the professor. Together, they gazed upon Buttercup's corpse one last time.

"The two of you should return home and rest," Agent Blake said to them when he walked up to them. "We'll take care of the rest." He turned to Agent Fields and Private Zach and gestured for them to follow the professor back to the car.

"Here, let me take you back," Agent Fields, the second-in-command, said as he joined Professor Utonium and Blossom. He got up next to the enhanced subject and put a comforting hand on her
back. Private Zach got up behind them, and he was respectful enough to keep his mouth shut.

When they were far enough away, Agent Blake returned to Buttercup's corpse. Reaching behind him, he unzipped one of the pouches on his back and pulled his jacket out. Spreading it over the corpse, he covered it up, looking like he was pulling up a blanket over the cold body of a child going to sleep, as if he was tucking her in for the last time.

Blake paused for a second, taking his time. For one final moment, he studied and admired Buttercup's beautiful, perfect face. Feeling sorry for her, he leaned in and kissed her in the forehead, before pulling his jacket over her face.

The storm had stopped just before he did, having broken before it went too far inland.

The waves had retreated, falling into what seem to be a trance, turning gentle.

That was when Blake would remember for the rest of his time, how Buttercup had coughed up water.

And that happy endings were real and not confined to the half-mad, half-genius mind of Disney.

Buttercup coughed several times, each time expelling water from her mouth. Agent Blake didn't just remove his jacket, he threw it off, startled by the noise, the turn of events.

Buttercup coughed, and for the first time in more than ten minutes, breathed in the cold air as if she had just been born.

"Jesus Christ! Here, lemme-" Agent Blake uttered as he tilted Buttercup's head sideways to let the seawater flow out better. Not only did she expel water from her lungs, she'd vomited it out from her stomach as well. It seemed that she'd had more than her fair share of Slim's 'drinks on the house'. Agent Blake ended up tilting her entire body sideways to prevent her from drowning a second time in her own vomit.

Buttercup gasped, and sputtered and cried and shivered, as if a baby just out of a womb. She was just as helpless too, having been sapped of all strength. Agent Blake was just about to get up and sprint to Professor Utonium when he could feel a tiny, cold hand on his arm. He looked down, and saw the most wretched and needy little eyes he had ever seen. Buttercup was looking up sadly at him, with eyes that barely had any glow left in them. He even had difficulty telling the color of it.

"Corporal Holliday! Get them back! Now!" Agent Blake ordered frantically. The squad's most ruthless killer and amazing chef acknowledged the order and started towards the slowly disappearing figures of Professor Utonium and Blossom.

"You're fine now, Buttercup," Agent Blake cooed as Buttercup struggled for her oxygen, gasping and wheezing as she lay helplessly on the frozen sand. "Everything's okay now - you're safe."

She didn't stay conscious for long, that much Blake could tell when she released her weak grip on his arm and closed her eyes again, going limp. It actually got Blake worked up and concerned, who had to check her pulse and breathing to make sure she didn't stop being the Lazarus - but it was all still there, just incredibly weak, and slow, as was expected from someone who had drowned and should have been dead considering the time she had spent with her lungs filled with water. Wrapping his jacket tightly all around Buttercup, Agent Blake carried her in his arms, and began making for the stairs leading up.

In the distance, he could see Professor Utonium and Blossom, running towards him, looking so relieved and overjoyed that he imagined there were tears down their cheeks, if the rain hadn't
obscured them.
Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Professor Utonium rants against his superiors while writing a report when his Girls were all badly affected.

B-47, B-48 and B-49 W4 Report (Supplemental)

DOC: 23 DEC 1988

Created By: Agent Utonium

Title: Catastrophic Damage

(Attached note by General Blackwater: Agent Utonium appears to have abandoned all semblance of professionalism in this report. While his reaction to recent events is understandable, his lack of professionalism is intolerable. He has been reprimanded for this report.)

Introduction

Owing to the administration's ceaseless hounding, I have decided to sit down and produce this report for the powers that be.

The report will cover the damage that you higher-ups in the blessed council of the USDO, in your infinite wisdom, are responsible for.

Oh, and of course, I'll make sure to throw in a full update on the combat capabilities of the 1-month-old little girls you've been sending in to do our soldiers' jobs. Similarly, I will provide a summary of my research on Chemical X that will be simplified and idiot-proofed so that it will be easy to understand for you guys.

Damage Assessment

B-49 (She has a name, and it's 'Bubbles'. Get that right!): X-ray and MRI photographs have been attached in the addendum of this report so that you may appreciate the amount of damage you've done to this little girl due to negligence. It has been 3 days since our security division failed at the one job they had and allowed Mojo Jojo to shoot at her, but she remains in a coma due to blood loss and trauma. Her recovery has been slower than expected. While she can be moved, her wounds both internal and external has yet to mend fully despite previous projections estimating time of recovery at 72 hours (maximum).

Based on revised projections, she will be 'operationally ready', as you call it, in 144 hours. I would prefer to give her twice that to allow for full physiological and psychological recovery if it is even possible, but you people insist on sending her back into the grinder 'ASAP'.
B-48 (Buttercup, write that down in your notebook): Physical damage 'minimal'. She had suffered bruises and lacerations in the last operation at Townsville Port, as well as a broken rib. As of now, at 1300 hours on 23 DEC 1988, she has fully recovered from the former two and is swiftly recovering from her broken rib, and an additional 10 more hours is likely all she needs for it.

She hasn't woken up ever since her drowning incident, however. Minor brain damage from oxygen deprivation is a possible cause, but it is, likely, also due to the drain on the Chemical X in her blood incurred in her last operation. I have been able to establish, however, that there is no brain damage via MRI scan, so the latter is the likely explanation, other than the fact that you've sent a little girl into a lengthy battle against dozens of hardened criminals and their mob boss, of course.

B-47 (Blossom): Similar to Buttercup, she suffered only minor bruises and lacerations from her previous operation, all of which are fully healed. The problem is, she hasn't woken up shortly after Townsville Port, no matter how much I shook her awake, or how much I called her and cried to her and it's all your fault. The concentration of Chemical X in her blood is very low, and I think it's because of her liberal use of some of her more recently-discovered abilities.

But you know what's the leading cause of her unconsciousness? Do you want my professional medical opinion? Grief. She's gone through too much. You've put her through way too much. Both her sisters were severely injured and nearly killed and rendered unconscious, and she blames herself for everything no matter how much I told her not to. She had been suffering through some known symptoms of depression before Townsville Port, and I can only imagine it'll be worse if she wakes up. We all know who the real culprits are.

**Chemical X Research**

Beyond what I have already exhaustively documented on previous reports of my Chemical X research, there has been some development, though not much, considering the short span of time elapsed if only you people will understand the complexity of what little breakthrough my science team and I have been making. As promised, I've idiot-proofed the descriptions of whatever I have discovered in the past few days.

Chemical X replenishes itself, at least when it is triggered to. In the lab, we do it by infusing huge bursts of electrical energy, enough to run entire building complexes. In the Girls, it does so naturally, and through a study of blood samples taken from Bubbles, I have been able to determine that it replenishes slower the more it has been depleted. I have observed the same thing in Buttercup and Blossom. I have no explanation as to what triggered Chemical X to replace itself in the Girls, and anything I state can only be considered speculation and conjecture.

In a previous report, I have reported the following:

- Healthy Chemical X concentration: 1550ppm

- It takes about 24 hours for Chemical X concentration to rise from 1010ppm to 1550ppm, assuming no medical intervention in the form of Chemical X supplements.

I have observed the following:

- Bubbles' Chemical X concentration during surgery: 840ppm (Lost presumably for hemorrhaging over 50% of her blood, though blood loss does not account for everything)

- Within 12 hours, Bubbles had regained 200ppm of Chemical X before Chemical X is supplied intravenously. That's about 25% decrease in replenishment rate.
- Buttercup's Chemical X concentration during A&E checkup in The House: 420ppm (Likely from use in combat, but much of the cause for the drop in concentration is unaccounted for)

- Within 12 hours, Buttercup had regained about 150ppm of Chemical X, which is an almost 40% decrease in replenishment rate. The huge increase in replenishment rate is likely due to Buttercup having a higher concentration in her blood from increased training load. The last time I checked, the Chemical X concentration in her blood had risen to around 1600ppm.

- Blossom's Chemical X concentration after Townsville Port: 218ppm (likely from the liberal use of speed boost, flying and heat vision, though, again, I doubt this accounts for everything).

- Within 12 hours, Blossom had regained about 100 ppm of Chemical X, which is about 63% decrease in the rate.

I have further conclusions to make based on these observations. It is possible that Chemical X has been expended to expedite the healing process. There is no other explanation for their vastly superior healing factor. It could possibly explain why the Girls' Chemical X replenishment rate is much lower than before. I have begun investigating the missing factors that are affecting the Girls' recovery.

In summary, the more the Girls are exhausted or injured, the longer it takes for them to recuperate. This can be mitigated somewhat via infusions of Chemical X.

**Damage Control**

B-49 (Bubbles): Her surgery was successful. She is currently on IV drip, with Chemical X supplements regularly injected into her system for faster recovery. Examination of her wounds through conventional and advanced imaging techniques show a gradual recovery, but heavier scarring than expected. However, nothing life-threatening has developed. I will have to wait and see and hope that the damage you did doesn't have any more surprises.

B-48 (Buttercup): On IV drip, Chemical X supplements, and oxygen. MRI scans indicate no brain damage despite having drowned for more than 10 minutes, therefore, neither USDO nor Institute experimental neurosurgery methods need to be employed.

B-47 (Blossom): No actions taken except for the usual care. I have changed, bathed and put her into bed personally. Further actions might need to be taken if she does not wake up after a reasonable period of time has passed.

**Combat Readiness**

The Girls (B-47, B-48, and B-49) are completely out at this point. Maybe it's better this way since they'll get to rest. After another 72 hours, they might technically be 'combat ready' by virtue of being awake and recovered enough from their injuries and the immediate mental traumas associated with them, but no guarantees aside, I doubt that they are actually combat ready, ever.

I've dismissed Alice's findings at first, and I regretted it, but she's right on her evaluation of the Girls. I don't think they'd be ready at all for law enforcement in the months to come, judging from the long-term mental trauma they have accrued, or will gain if they are continually sent to do an adult's job. Enhanced they may be, but Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup were literally born last month, and their minds, although possessing of superhuman intellect, are essentially the mind of children, and have the needs and wants of children. They're mentally as vulnerable as any children.

They were never meant for combat. If you still haven't grown a conscience yet and realize that these are little girls you've been sending out, then let me reiterate again that Blossom, Bubbles, and
Buttercup are PROTOTYPES, and CREATED BY ACCIDENT at that. They aren't 'designed' for law enforcement and combat because we weren't even at that stage of development for Chemical X yet in Project Powerpuff, remember? We were just moving onto human cell test trials after plant and animal trials. They may be bestowed with incredible enhancements and gifts because of Chemical X, but they're still the Chemical X equivalent of civilians if I were to speak your language.

**Report on Combat Capabilities**

As you know, the Girls are all capable of similar things with some minor differences. However, I believe they have begun to differentiate themselves from one another, and this is most obvious with Blossom. However, I will cover their general capabilities as of 23 DEC 1988. Here are some stats:

**Carrying Capacity:** 3,500 pounds, sustainable only for 4 minutes, with Buttercup demonstrating 4,000 pounds for 5 minutes during a training session.

**Punch:** I have been able to measure the force behind their punches, and it can vary between a mere few pounds to 13,500 pounds. This data proves that they have incredible fine control if they need it, explaining why they don't destroy every door they try to open or break every bone in my body when they hug me, even though they are fully capable of doing so.

**Kick:** Their lower body strength is greater, which is consistent with normal human biology. Their kicks can generate up to 18,000 pounds of force.

**Other Unarmed Attacks:** It is entirely possible for them to exert the same incredible amounts of force through other attacks.

**Note:** Furthermore, the power behind their punches and kicks is likely augmented by their speed and flight. While scientifically sound, I have yet to investigate this and log any data regarding the amount of force they can generate from punching or kicking at full speed, whether on the ground or in the air.

**Jumping:** The Girls are all capable of jumping over large distances and height, likely due to strength in their legs. I have observed so far that they could reach the second floor of any building just by jumping. It is likely that they can jump higher, just that they have not tried it yet as there has not been a circumstance forcing them to do this.

**Speed:** The Girls are capable of running up to 100mph or more, faster than even a speeding car, as we have observed on Highway 13. However, video footage shows them to be emitting some kind of light behind them, which indicates a less than 100% efficiently, which is expected. My working hypothesis is that the faster they run, the less efficient they are at converting Chemical X energy into normal energy, such as kinetic energy - supported by the fact that they don't leave any light trails every time they move around.

**Agility:** They are all capable of manipulating objects with their hands or making small movements at the fraction of the time it takes normal human beings to do the same. However, the accuracy of their fine manipulation needs development, just like any other children. So stop expecting them to behave like 'little adults'.

**Bio-luminescence:** Buttercup has shown in her last ill-fated operation that she is capable of projecting light from her eyes. While I have yet to observe this ability in the other Girls, I believe them to be capable of this because of how simple it is. However, I will have to investigate this. A possible evidence of this is that all Girls possess glowing eyes, though each in different colors, which suggests bio-luminescence to be a natural part of their biology.
Flight: As of 23 DEC 1988, only Blossom is capable of real flight, in that she could do anything from floating and drifting in mid-air, to actually speeding across it at high altitudes across the sky (though I have yet to test if there is a limit to her altitude). It took her days to achieve a semblance of control over this new ability, and from what I understand, she discovered it naturally on the night of 17 DEC 1988, and within 6 days, she is streaking in the sky, albeit unsteadily. I have yet to test the full extent of her flight capability. Bubbles and Buttercup are not capable of flight yet, but I believe they will be, as they have been receiving instruction from Blossom on flight, and have come close to a breakthrough in that regard. Alternatively, they have been able to effect a short burst of thrust in mid-air, and they seem to have some control over the direction of the thrust.

Their flight speed is subject to the same diminishing returns in terms of energy efficiency, as even while floating, I can already observe emissions of light in total darkness from Blossom. Trails of light can be observed as she is speeding through the sky, which suggests lower efficiency scaled to how fast her speed is.

Hypervision: While all the Girls have senses sharper than that of the average human being, Blossom has demonstrated an extreme of this by actually being capable of 'zooming' her vision in, as she describes it. In short, her eyes double as variable-zoom binoculars, allowing her to see great distances. The theoretical maximum of her vision, using a standard optometric test, stands at 20/0.5, which means that she could zoom up to 40x that of normal vision, seeing something as if it is half a feet close to her when she is standing 20 feet away from it.

Heat Vision: Blossom is also capable of projecting concentrated heat from her eyes as a kind of directed infrared radiation beam. Preliminary tests have shown that she could do it at ranges of up to 30 feet, though I have yet to determine the maximum range of her heat projection, or if there indeed is a maximum range. However, I have been able to determine that the output of her heat vision is in the thousands of kilojoules, as she is capable of heating up steel by hundreds of degrees. The rate of this output boggles the mind too, as she can do this within a second. However, as Townsville Port has shown, this drains her immensely.

Bubbles and Buttercup have yet to demonstrate any potential for this. While I have a working hypothesis that this heat vision could be an extension of the Girls' bio-luminescence, my lack of data on what causes bio-luminescence in the Girls precludes any reasonable conclusion.

Conclusion

You were right to shut down Project Powerpuff. Please shut it down again, and this time, for a few months, at least. There's a reason why adults like us are the ones working and bringing home the bacon and not the children, or is that too much to ask for?

Classified Orders from Director Cliff to General Blackwater

Title: What a Joke

Date: 23 DEC 1988

Is Agent Utonium drunk at the time he wrote the 23 DEC report? I find his nerdy attempt at passive-aggressive intimidation and insult laughable and awkward. I will permit him to vent his frustrations on the USDO. If nothing else, that man has earned it for helping to bring Project Powerpuff this far. However, I will not shut down Project Powerpuff as he has so whimsically suggested.

If nothing else, I believe Operation Broken Trident at Townsville Port has proven some in the council wrong about the value of Project Powerpuff and its latest subjects. Where we have lost over
a dozen operatives in a previous sting operation and more in some of our more low-key missions, we lost none in Operation Broken Trident, and 'The Three', as they are so popularly known as now, have exceeded expectations by inflicting major casualties upon the Lombardi forces at the port, and from what I heard, fought one of the 'Amoeba Boys' to a stalemate despite 'The Three' being undermanned, even if B-49 is useless.

As such, Project Powerpuff will remain active, and B-47, B-48 and B-49 subject to more operations once they are judged (by you, mainly) to have recuperated enough to carry them out. You are authorized to override Agent Utonium's medical opinions if need be.

Also, please release Alice from her cell. The USDO needs its Head of Psychiatry and Social Services back. Her staff could only handle so much without her, and I believe we have soldiers and staff who could use her guidance, especially this close to Christmas.
Chapter 85: Dream

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls, locked in their own subconscious (or is it that simple?), attempts to wake up.

Chapter 85: Dream

Location Unknown

Date Unknown. Time Unknown.

The laughter of an evil man. The corpse of a little girl in the ocean. Blossom could see a shadowy silhouette standing over her as she sat on the ground, clutching her chest in pain, and all she could discern was a trilby on his head.

She willed her eyes to heat up in preparation of unleashing her most devastating move yet, but then she felt nothing in her eyes, no heat, no pain before her eyes could adjust to the intense projection of heat. She felt her chest, only to discover that her vest was gone. Looking down, she saw only the thin fabric of her everyday wear: her pink dress and black sash.

The silhouette was taking steps closer. Blossom got up on her feet and braced herself for battle, digging the heels of her Mary-Jane in and putting her fists up before bolting towards the dark shadow and launching herself at it, fist winded up for a punch. The silhouette made no attempt to block or dodge her attack, but when Blossom landed a blow right in its stomach, it did not fall back, and neither did it even falter at all. She felt no force behind her punch, as if… her powers had all been taken away. When the dark form did react, it swept its arm at Blossom, knocking her yards backward, sending her rolling on the ground - except she didn't know what kind of ground she was rolling on.

It had all become pure darkness.

Blossom sat up after getting knocked down, and quivering in fear, started running the other way when she realized that the silhouette, its laughter echoing in the dark, was still coming towards her. She ran and ran and ran…

She ran, until the pure darkness that seemed to surround her had changed color, the floor gradually from black to the green of grass, the sky to the glittering white of a trillion stars, and into the distance, the calming rolling of gentle seas. She looked back, only to find that her pursuer had disappeared.

Location Unknown

Date Unknown. Time Unknown.
Endless darkness. Bubbles rising. Bubbles, broken in her memory. Buttercup struggled against the liquid prison around her as she fought against its call for her to join it, to allow it inside her. Buttercup struggled hard to surface and break free of this dark prison, but unknown forces were pushing her down. Eternal seconds passed. She could feel herself getting tired, the need for air harder to ignore.

"I'll be here with you, Buttercup. Just sit up if you feel you can't take it anymore" she remembered her Daddy say at one time when he was testing she and her sisters' ability to hold their breath underwater, and therefore testing their oxygen requirements. She could see him now, below her in the darkness, through a portal in the water, holding a clipboard and timer above herself, smiling proudly.

Minutes had passed unknowingly, slow and yet so fast. Bubbles continued to rise from her mouth. Buttercup struggled harder but had only doomed herself further by doing so as she exhausted precious oxygen.

Until finally, she could feel the salty, dark water flooding her mouth and soon, she couldn't help it but to breathe the water in. She shuddered as the cold, foul-tasting liquid penetrated deep into her, draining her of life itself. She couldn't help but vomit what remained in her stomach fluid, before replacing it with more water. Very quickly, she felt herself becoming a part of the water around her, as her vision blurred…

And the darkness around her faded, to be replaced with maroon, then red, then a voice.

"Buttercup…" it called out to her.

"Buttercup…" a strange, ghoulish voice called out to the wayward little girl, in a sing-songy, leeringly mocking sort of way.

The City of Townsville!

_A city kept safe by the most unlikely of heroes, ever watchful for crime, ready to save the day before-

"Bubbles!" a little girl screamed.

_Oh._

"Blossom, what's wrong!?" another little girl asked from far away with a voice raspier.

The House had become unsettled from a strange turn of events. While playing with a hula hoop, Bubbles had collapsed all of a sudden, and when Blossom tried to shake her sister awake, her eyes remained closed, much to the concern of her leader sister.

Buttercup barged through the door, darting in, her game face on and a knuckle sandwich at the ready. She had expected Mojo Jojo to be around with another of his crazy schemes, but there was no big-brained chimpanzee around for her to brain. Her eyes searched the room before settling down on Bubbles.

"What's up with her?" Buttercup asked.

"I- I don't know, she just collapsed!" Blossom fumbled in her words, holding Bubbles in her arms as she was still trying to awaken her, mainly by shaking her awake. "Bubbles!"

"Urrgh…" Bubbles moaned as she opened her eyes. She had to squint it as it was so bright all
around her. She could barely focus her vision at all, and the figure above her, holding her, was a mystery to be solved.

"Bubbles! You're alright!" Blossom exclaimed in relief. With Bubbles in her arms, she flew her to their shared bed and laid her down in the middle of it, the place normally reserved for her, the leader. Buttercup followed, kneeling in bed opposite of Blossom, concerned about her sister, but afraid to show it too much. "What happened to you!?"

Bubbles did not reply, but immediately, she could feel that something was wrong. Fluttering her eyes, she tried to clear her vision. She rubbed it, and stared at Blossom again. The colors were all wrong. She fluttered her eyes again, and finally, everything came into focus.

"Blos…som?" Bubbles murmured weakly, afraid even. The Blossom before her had resembled the Blossom she knew, except she knew for certain that she wasn't.

The problem was, her head was far too big, and she had no nose nor ears. Her eyes were gigantic. She had no fingers. Worse of all, she was two dimensional. This 'Blossom' was enough to send a shiver down her spine, but then something else occurred to her. Bubbles looked around at Buttercup, only to realize that she was shaped the same way, and only her eyes and hair and dress were different. Bubbles looked down at herself, at her hands-

And screamed.

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**Location Unknown**

**Date Unknown. Time Unknown.**

Sitting before Blossom, in a serene field in the middle of nowhere, was a strange man of her dreams, and it wasn't the first time she had seen her. Tall and well-built, gracefully so in a not-so-masculine way, he was shapely, almost in a feminine manner. Blossom hadn't learned the word yet, but the closest word to describe this strange man was 'androgynous'.

Was he a threat? Was he a friend? Blossom could not tell even though she had met this man in her dreams several times now. Approaching him cautiously, she waited for him to speak, only for the man to turn his head to face her. His facial appearance hadn't changed. He had short hair, trimmed to the shape of his scalp. He wore a goatee. He had been adjusting the telescope he had set up beside him.

"Hello again, Blossom darling," the man greeted, and beckoned for her to sit down beside him. Blossom obeyed, and did just that. There was a blanket spread out as if in a picnic. "Beautiful night, isn't it?"

"Y-yes…" Blossom said, her voice a near whisper for fear that she might be conversing with a stranger with ill intent. The man shifted, such that his knee had touched her thigh. Blossom dared not move despite. It was all very strange - first getting chased by a shadow which certainly meant her harm, and now this.

"What's the matter, darling?" the man asked. Blossom looked behind her, at where she came from. The man understood.

"Ah, I see. Yes… yes..." he empathized. "You're safe now, don't worry little sweet-pie. You're safe… with me."
Buttercup was lying face-down in the sand. Upon hearing the eccentric voice, she stirred. Pulling her head out of the red sand to breathe once more, she looked right ahead, in the direction of the voice.

It was the dead cat. Buttercup's eyes went wide the moment she saw it. It had been what felt like forever since she last saw it, and despite its rejection, she still saw it as a 'friend'. After all, there weren't many who truly understood and accept her for who she was.

"Hello, Buttercup," the cat purred as it sat before her and licked the back of its paw in an attempt to groom itself. "Down in the ditch again, are you?"

"I don't know what happened," Buttercup said as she sat up, sitting in a rough seiza position, which was something like a kneel. But it was all coming back to her - the battle at Townsville Port, the men she killed or horribly mutilated and finally, her fight with a man named Slim and her drowning. She gasped when she remembered the sensation of drowning. It was as close to fear as she had felt thus far if Slim did not put it in her first. "I wish Blossom was there, I guess…"

"Poor little Buttercup…" the dead cat said, its voice a calm, serene whisper, but then it exploded as it was wont to do after that: "STILL SECOND TO BOSSY LITTLE BLOSSOM IT SEEMS!"

Buttercup jumped when the dead cat roared at her - it had been too long since she had heard it. Even after it had 'calmed down', she shuddered, still, as she reeled from its effects. She said nothing to defend herself, another surprise of her own making.

"Please don't go…” Buttercup begged, afraid to lose the dead cat again. The dead cat stared deep into Buttercup's eyes with its slit eyes.

"I suppose I can't blame you for losing to Blossom…” the cat went on purring. It cracked its neck, and it sounded as if the bone within was splintering as it did. "After all, she's veeeeery smart… and beautiful… and strong…"

With that, the dead cat got up on all fours and turned around, its broken tail swishing, as if a punctuation to its final rejection of Buttercup. It began padding away towards the horizon, which Buttercup barely acknowledged in the face of her personal crisis. There were only mountains of red, forests of twisted and gnarled trees and a sky of orange and yellow in the distance.

"Mister Kitty! Come back!" Buttercup called to her friend, her tone wavering between pleading and quivering to angry and threatening. "I said come back! Please! Or I'll-!"

"You'll what?" the dead cat looked over its broken back to say. "YOU'LL KILL ME AGAIN!?"

The dead cat's outburst had driven home a point to Buttercup, a reminder of its necromantic immortality. But then it smiled, or at least, it made an expression that approached a human smile. It was more of a snarl, but it caught Buttercup's attention.

"There is one thing you can do," the dead cat suggested. "Be who you are meant to be." The dead cat then padded back to Buttercup, making paw prints in the red sand. Buttercup could feel a wave of gratefulness unlike anything she had felt before - it was like magic, a magic that emanated from the rotting carcass of a cat.

"I won't pretend any longer that you have been such a good friend, Buttercup-" the dead cat whispered lovingly to the wayward child, who could feel a rare tear slipping down her eye. In a
second of digression in her mind, Buttercup wondered how such foreign... things - emotions - had infiltrated her. They were even stronger than the kind coming from her sisters.

As the dead cat approached Buttercup, the little girl realized how foul it smelled. In the snow, this wasn't a problem as it was frozen solid, the putrid gas locked away by cold temperatures, but here, in this strange red and warm world... Buttercup fell backward as the dead cat continued towards her, eventually jumping on top of her lap and pawing at her chest. It licked her tear away, leaving behind some kind of sticky, black substance. When the ravenette made a face, it seemed as if 'Mister Kitty' did not notice. It even went on to lick her in the lips before backing away.

"You are a good girl, Buttercup, and you've seen what Blossom is doing. It's wrong," the dead cat went on, going back to sit down on its hind. Buttercup wiped the black filth on her lips away as she listened intently. "She insists on staying on top, even when she's not fit to be in charge... Yesss... Do what you wish, Buttercup - TAKE CONTROL OF BOSSY LITTLE BLOSSOM and do what you think iss right..."

With that, the cat turned and left again, but not before looking backward and leaving Buttercup with something, a scrap of its reassurance: "You know where to find me - and although I can do little to help you, I have other friends who might..."

"Where can I find them?" Buttercup asked.

"You won't have to. They'll find you..." the dead cat instructed, and with that, a kind of white light took over everything, and Buttercup found herself engulfed by it.

Back to Townsville!

After getting over the fact that she had changed entirely in appearance, looking like her sisters; colored in hues too bright to be natural and possessing no fingers, Bubbles began telling Blossom and Buttercup about the last things she remembered. Although Bubbles was not a genius, she found it odd that her sisters knew nothing about what had happened to her.

They found it a total mystery, entirely unbelievable even, that Bubbles had been shot and wounded severely. They couldn't even believe that she had been involved in 'missions' in which they had failed spectacularly and harmed so many. In fact, they couldn't even believe Bubbles alleging that they were only born a month ago, and had to learn every single thing they had to do.

Conversely, when Blossom and Buttercup began relating everything they knew to Bubbles, Bubbles found everything she heard equally unbelievable - for how could anyone be born with the knowledge to speak, do things and use their powers? Who could become successful at fighting crime without first failing and learning the trade? In fact, Bubbles had so lovingly remembered everything her Daddy had taught her-

Dad. If there was anyone who could sort this mess out, it was him.

"Blossom, Buttercup, where's Daddy?" Bubbles asked, and all she got for a response was a weird stare from Blossom and a barely-concealed attempt not to laugh out loud from Buttercup. "What?"

"Nothing, nothing!" Buttercup lied as she folded her arms behind her and pinched herself in the forearm to keep herself from laughing at such a sensitive time. Though how she managed it without fingers was a total mystery. Bubbles found something else that was amiss: Buttercup wasn't herself. She had never known Buttercup to be that caring or even that transparent with her emotions. What Buttercup - the real Buttercup with her butter fingers, if that made sense - had done for Bubbles were
scraps and morsels next to what this fingerless, cartoonish Buttercup had expressed to her in her first five minutes in this two-dimensional hellhole.

"Come on, let's go downstairs," Blossom said. The red and green girl zipped out of the room, leaving Bubbles behind to climb off the bed and wobble on her toe-less feet as she attempted to catch up with them. That said, Blossom and Buttercup had already noticed that something was wrong, so they darted back into their room, techni-colored energy trails behind them, to find Bubbles hunched over the Girls' pink vanity, touching her own face and pulling at her own blonde pigtail as she examined it as though her body was somebody else's.

"Bubbles?" Blossom called to her, concerned.

"Come on, Bubs! We gotta go!" Buttercup said impatiently, before taking her by the arm and pulling her towards the door. She began floating, but Bubbles was weighing her down.

"Why aren't you taking off, Bubbles?" Blossom asked after she observed this other peculiarity with her drastically changed sister.

"Come on, Bubbles! Just kick off and let's go!" Buttercup hurried Bubbles impatiently.

"But I can't fly! You haven't been able to teach me that yet!" Bubbles claimed, causing Blossom and Buttercup to stare at each other, as though one of them had got to be able to explain such an oddity.

"Then we'll just have to walk her downstairs, Buttercup," Blossom said to her tough sister, before taking Bubbles by a hand. Bubbles looked at her, her face turning red and her lips wavering. It wasn't hard for Blossom to see it. "What's wrong?"

"Yeah, what is it now?" Buttercup was almost barking this time, though in this strange world, her patience, compared to the real Buttercup, could easily be considered sagely.

"I… I can't walk…" Bubbles stammered as she was on the verge of tears, feeling far worse than she did before she was shot twice in the chest and nearly killed - at least back then, she knew how to walk and jump and even double-jump. Now, it was as if she was back to day one.

"I had to crawl to the mirror - these feet… They- They're not mine," Bubbles cried.

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**Location Unknown**

**Date Unknown. Time Unknown.**

"And right about there… That should do it," the strange man Blossom had sat with said as he was looking into his telescope, which was pointed at the stars above, adjusting the direction it was pointing, as well as the focus. "This constellation right here is a little something I discovered on my free time."

The man removed himself from the telescope and gestured for Blossom to take a look. Reluctantly, Blossom sidled towards the telescope, bringing herself closer to the man. She could feel him shifting closer to her as well, their bodies touching as she peered into the telescope.

It was pitch black and unfocused at first, but even then, she knew that there were supposed to be something there for her to see - and they were giving off light, twinkling. When the diffused light came into focus, slowly, she saw that she had been looking at stars all along, forming a pattern in the sky.
It was a pattern in the shape of a heart. She could feel the strange man's arm curling around her neck, resting on her shoulders. She wasn't sure if she liked the man's touch, but since it did not harm her, she thought that it was fine, at least.

"Do you know what that shape represents?" the strange man asked.

"Love," Blossom said. The word and the very concept itself had reminded her of something that deeply upset her. Withdrawing herself from the telescope, she stared into the horizon with her naked eye, memories floating between a trillion stars looking back at her.

"Something a beautiful little girl such as yourself should know very well, yes?" the strange man said as he stroked his goatee, his smile going unnoticed by the distracted Blossom.

"I… don't know," Blossom said uncertainly.

"But why do you say that? You have two sisters, yes? And parents, too?" the strange man said.

The bare mention of her family had brought back many memories from before the silhouette who had chased her into the arms of the strange man. She remembered finding Buttercup, dead in the water. She remembered that, for the longest time, she believed her sister to be dead. She remembered overhearing her Daddy talking over the phone about how worried he was that Buttercup might never wake up again. That was before she fainted, having taken one too many shocks.

And before all that debacle, Blossom knew that Buttercup and she had never truly gotten along. Their playtime together had been forced, and left to her own devices, Buttercup would have preferred not to join her in her appreciation for dolls and stuffed animals and make-believes, nor in her attempted self-readings, studies and book-browsing. It really threw into question Buttercup's love for her - if she even loved her at all.

Then there was Mommy, who had, the last time she checked, struck her so hard that she had bounced off the wall head-first and fell, again hitting her head. She had condemned her, and set a security team loose on her.

Yet, there were those who Blossom knew truly loved her, but they were all hurt one way or another. Bubbles was shot, and hadn't been awake for the past three days. Her Daddy - well, Blossom had nearly killed her own father.

"Things are bad," Blossom said, then went on to elaborate on her thoughts to the strange man, and for a time, all her suspicions for the man in her dream had disappeared, replaced by the need for a listening ear. When she was done, she went on: "Sometimes I wish I never knew my family so they wouldn't be hurt."

The strange man simply smiled as Blossom closed her eyes, fighting back tears. She could feel him patting her on the back in an attempt to console her.

"There, there, little Blossom," the strange man said. "It's normal for you to feel that way… Yes… Yesss…"

"It is?" Blossom asked, surprised. She had always thought herself to be the odd girl out, and her way of thinking counter-intuitive - despite her Daddy's claim that she was the smartest of The Three.

"Yes, it is. But since you're already in the family, you might as well work with what you have…" the strange man gently stirred the conversation in the direction he wanted. "After all, there's no point crying over spilled milk."
"But what can I do?" Blossom asked. For the first time in a while - not that she was able to determine how much time had passed thus far - she felt a ray of hope, cutting a swathe through what felt like an endless depth of shifting, frothing trouble.

"Let's start with this Buttercup you're talking about. Have you tried being more… forceful?" the strange man suggested. Opening a picnic basket, he rummaged in it and pulled out a stack of sandwich, more than enough for the both of them. Blossom couldn't see what ingredients it was made out of, but she rejected it, having lost her appetite after talking about her family.

"What do you mean?" Blossom asked, dismayed at the implications of the word 'forceful'. As much as Buttercup was brutish, manipulative and insensitive, she didn't like the idea of being 'forceful' towards her. It simply wasn't what she believed in.

"Sometimes, my dear, being nice isn't going to work, no matter how sincere you are," the man claimed, as he took a bite out of his sandwich, which Blossom noticed was dripping with something dark, a black sauce that she wasn't sure she would ever want to taste. "Sometimes, being mean is the only way…"

"But Daddy said-"

"I know what your Daddy said. You told me the last time," the strange man cut in gracefully, before Blossom could object or argue. Somehow, it felt natural to Blossom that she didn't feel offended for being verbally hushed. "But you see, sometimes even your parents can be wrong… yes? They are, after all, human beings, each of them one person, with only two eyes and a single, limited brain. Your mother is an evidence of that, isn't she?"

"But…" Blossom tried to muster a counter argument, but the strange man had been incredibly persuasive. There was no denying, at least to Blossom, that her Mommy had been wrong in some ways. She certainly didn't like how she had been treated, and how biased she could be, always favoring Buttercup.

"I know I'll never measure up to your father, if only because I am but a stranger sitting on a crossroad with you, but…" the strange man reasoned, and as he did, he pulled out another article from his picnic basket. An apple, though it was too dark to see what color it was. "Trust me, Blossom. Your father is wrong this time, and I have no reason to deceive you, I really don't. No, not at all. Will you believe me, Blossom?"

He held out the apple to her. As it loomed closer for the little girl to see, she could see that it was dripping wet with some kind of black liquid. Despite this, it seemed so enticing. She reached out for it, lured by its inner arcane qualities...

Only for a sudden burst of white light to distract her. Looking back, she couldn't see the source of it, but she could feel herself being pulled into it. The strange man with the telescope did not seem to be surprised by this development, nor was he even agitated by it. He simply gave a sigh.

"I guess I'll see you next time then," the strange man said. "REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT BUTTERCUP!"

Meanwhile, back at The House!

"Well, I don't see anything wrong with you," Professor Utonium, or at least, what passed for Professor Utonium, said to Bubbles after removing a stethoscope from Bubbles' chest. He stood up and walked over to an X-ray print-out of Bubbles' head while putting a hand on his chin. The
Professor Utonium of this world looked just as strange as Bubbles' sisters, with a square head, and highly angular corners, but his clothes, namely his lab coat, resembled that of her Daddy. "Hmm…"

That was when it hit Bubbles - Her Daddy, Blossom, and Buttercup… They were all exactly like the drawings she had been making, except that they were perfect and alive, just like how she had imagined them.

"Tell me again the problems you're facing right now," the professor asked again as he turned back to Bubbles. "Perhaps I'm missing something."

"Oh… Well, everything looks different. Kind of flat and… simple," Bubbles struggled to articulate. She looked around at her sisters, who were sitting nearby, looking very concerned for their sister, Buttercup as well, which Bubbles had yet to get used to. "Like - we have no nose and ears and fingers. And... and I can't walk on these feet!" Bubbles pointed at her feet, which were roundish, with no toes. Her Mary-Janes looked more like black mittens for double amputees more than anything.

"Hmm, that is strange," the professor approached and held Bubbles' hand, which didn't feel like her own. "I can see your fingers just fine, Bubbles, they're right here, see?" Bubbles looked down at her own hand, but it was still as frighteningly stumpy as ever. She pulled her hand away, afraid as well of being touched by this… thing that resembled her Daddy, but was surely not. Yet, no matter who he really was, he appeared upset at the gesture, at how his Bubbles had become a stranger.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! The hotline rang all of a sudden, making everyone jump. Blossom flew over to the phone, reaching it in a blink of an eye, pink trail behind her. Bubbles was still stunned by her speed - the Blossom she knew couldn't even dream of reaching that kind of speed.

"Yes, mayor?" Blossom answered the phone the moment she picked it up. A quick, hasty reply came through the speaker, and Bubbles could vaguely recognize it as the mayor's. "What!? A portal has opened in Townsville!? Something at the portal is destroying Townsville!? We're on the way!" She turned to Bubbles and the professor after setting the handset of the hotline down, dismayed that she had to leave them behind like this.

"I'm sorry, Bubbles, but duty calls," Blossom said, before winding up in preparation to fly out of The House. Buttercup did the same.

"Wait, stop!" the professor suddenly said, causing Bubbles' weird sister analogs to halt and turn to him. "That's it! I know exactly what's going on!"

"Now's not the time, professor!" Blossom said, and Bubbles hand shot up to her mouth. It was shocking for Blossom to actually call Daddy by something else other than… Daddy.

"The portal! It has everything to do with Bubbles!" Professor Utonium explained. "I'll call it a hunch, but Bubbles' inability to perceive certain objects, such as her own fingers and toes, and your nose and ears and even the third dimension here, is due to the fact that she had come from another dimension, and as such, her senses and mind are incompatible with this universe."

"In English, professor?" Buttercup interrupted. Blossom gave her the stink eye before turning back to the professor.

"But what does that have anything to do with the portal?" Blossom asked - Bubbles couldn't help but to notice that this Blossom was far more knowledgeable than her own.

"Now isn't it a coincidence that a portal opened shortly after Bubbles - well, our otherworldly
Bubbles here, appears? I think not - there are no coincidences in science. That portal is created by a resonance pulse made by Bubbles’ arrival here, balancing out the effects of trans-dimensional travel," Professor Utonium explained, but his technical words were lost on even Blossom. All they did was to stare at him blankly, Blossom included. The professor furrowed his angular eyebrows and added, more briefly: "We need to put Bubbles through the portal to send her back home."

Bubbles, however, had a far simpler explanation for all this. These cartoonish versions of her family had all been based on her drawings and doodles, and the last thing she remembered was getting shot through the chest - and when she concentrated hard enough, she remembered being on the surgical table, being put under by her Daddy.

This was all a dream. Was it?

The idea of going back, however, terrified Bubbles. She remembered only pain, sadness, mental torment, and hostility. She remembered blood.

And Bubbles began to cry as she remembered. Her lips trembled, her face already pale from the prospect of going back to the real world.

"Bubbles, what's the matter?" Professor Utonium asked the moment he noticed. The moment he did, he pulled up a stool next to her and enveloped her with his arms. At first, Bubbles did not welcome his touch, but then she realized, from the sound of his voice and the gentle caress of his hands, his sleeves, that he cared. Whether real or based on her childish imaginations, her Daddy was her Daddy, and he was caring and kind and loving. She planted her cheek on his chest as she basked in his comforting warmth. It felt different but nice. "Hey… It's okay… You can talk to me, Bubbles."

"I don't want to go," Bubbles managed to say. "It's bad, really bad in my universe… I don't want to feel sad and be in pain again, Daddy… And it seems really nice here!"

"Oh, Bubbles… I know I'm not your real Dad, but my love for you is real enough," cartoon Professor Utonium said as he comforted the blue-eyed little girl, bouncing her on in his arms and rubbing her back. "Listen to me, sweetie, if my theory holds up, your father's waiting for you on the other side. You can't stay here forever. As much as I would welcome you, you don't belong here - it's not healthy for you to stick around. Okay?"

Very reluctantly, Bubbles nodded as she wiped her tears away with her fingerless hand, realizing that he was right as even the very act of wiping her tears was difficult. Besides, if this was a dream, what's going to happen to her if she stayed in it? Only Daddy would know of such things, and she had a feeling that she didn't want to find out.

"Can we go now? Townsville isn't going to save itself!" Buttercup howled impatiently.

"Come on, Bubbles, we'll carry you there!" Blossom said as she took Bubbles by the hand. Bubbles reluctantly allowed herself to be carried. Buttercup took her by the other arm. Gently, they floated away from Professor Utonium. Bubbles turned around, with teary eyes, to look at him one last time.

"I'll be here if you ever need me again, Bubbles," he said, sensing that Bubbles was still having second thoughts. He placed a hand on his heart. "Right here, too. We might see each other again some time."

"Goodbye…" Bubbles said to him before cartoon Blossom and Buttercup flew her out of the lab.
Chapter 86: The Greatest Gift

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom and Buttercup woke up just in time to celebrate Christmas Eve, but will Bubbles catch up with them?

A/N: Responding to the latest review for the previous chapter: Yes, I'll be putting the RRB in, but they're still a while off. I've spoiled enough so I won't say how far off they are.

Anyway, sorry for the late update. This one took some time to write because it's difficult and longer than usual, and compounded with real life things, makes for a long update cycle.

Chapter 86: The Greatest Gift

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

24 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1420.

"REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT BUTTERCUP!" the voice of the strange man with a goatee continued to echo in Blossom's mind, even as her eyes fluttered open, taking in light for the first time in days. She could hear the steady beeping of three different heart monitor machines counting she and her sisters' vital signs beside their bed, lined up like servants waiting on them.

Sensations were flooding into her like a giant wave. She felt filthier than before, and she could vaguely smell the lingering stench of disinfectants and bitter medicine. There was the pain in her right arm, and when she looked at what was causing it, she saw that a needle had been inserted into her, and it was connected to an IV drip fed by a huge bag of clear liquid. Attached to the tube was a secondary feeder with some kind of black liquid. Chemical X.

Blossom felt nausea setting in; she didn't want the needle in her anymore, so she took it by the mouth of the tube, and with gritted teeth and all sorts of alarms going off in her infantile mind, gave it a yank.

It was like getting burned in the arm. Blood poured out of the wound when it was finally clear of obstruction. Gripping her bleeding arm, she crawled out of bed, worming in between her sisters, before hopping off the bed. Without knowing it, she had disconnected the electrodes and cables connected to her, and the machine hooked to her pronounced a flat-line ominously, followed by a constant whine warning of non-existent danger.

"Dad…" Blossom tried to call out for her father, but she found her throat hoarse. She hadn't had a sip of water for a couple of days - that need had been provided for intravenously. However, she didn't need to call for her father, because her disconnected monitor was already doing it for her.

She didn't have to wait for long. Thinking that Blossom had encountered complications resulting in a
cardiac arrest, Professor Utonium had burst into the room through the door, and he wasn't alone. Doctor Simmons and a few nurses had followed up behind him, witnesses to the greatest gift their colleague could ever ask for on Christmas Eve.

Upon seeing that the middle section of the tri-colored bed was empty, Professor Utonium searched around the room, until he caught sight of Blossom on the pink-carpeted floor at the foot of her bed, her pajamas slightly askew.

"Blossom?" the professor uttered in disbelief, unsure of what else to say. Blossom stood up with difficulty, still adjusting to two days of inactivity and a still-low concentration of Chemical X in her blood. Without saying another word, he went up to her and hugged her. "You're alright."

"What happened, Dad?" Blossom asked, her voice cracked by lack of use, hugging her Daddy back, her dream still fresh in her mind. "I don't remember coming back home!"

"You fell unconscious on the way back, Blossom," the professor explained as he withdrew from the hug and looked deeply into Blossom's pink glowing eyes, not just out of love and admiration of his adopted daughter, but also to examine it. The pulsing, clearly glowing irises of Blossom's eyes was a relief. It meant that Blossom had regained a large part of her Chemical X. Back in Townsville Port two days ago, her eyes were barely even glowing, and there were only tiny speckles of 'hot spots' on her eyes at that. Thus, the professor learned that the eyes served as a good indicator of Chemical X concentration in the Girls' blood. He had even made notes of it as he measured Blossom and Buttercup's Chemical X levels using their naturally-shed cheek and skin cells, compared against observations of how it had been expressed in their eyes.

"You didn't wake up after that," he continued to explain. There was distress in his voice. The past two days or four days with Bubbles' near-death counted in, had been trying for him, and it showed, manifesting itself in his face: the crinkled forehead, the eyebags beneath his eyes, the cracked splinters of his lips' dried skin. "It's been two days, but I'm glad you're fine now."

"Wai- wait… Come back- I'll pound you!" Buttercup had started mumbling, her words snowballing into threats, directed at who, everyone present did not know. To them, they might as well be phantoms in her dreams. To them, they might as well be phantoms in her dreams. Buttercup then sat up suddenly in bed, gasping, her eyes stretched open wide. She then jumped on her feet, looking around the room even though her eyes were a blur, and she couldn't identify anyone around her. More electrodes and wires were pulled off, and a second monitor began whining.

"Buttercup!" Professor Utonium and Blossom and even Doctor Simmons yelled in surprise, in unison when the second of the Girls had awakened. Had Buttercup not recognized their voice, she would have flown into a frenzy of flesh-tearing and bone-breaking. With her track record, the staff on hand who knew her less were actually afraid and ready to bolt for their lives, but Buttercup rubbed her eyes instead and squinted at them. What was once a fuzzy half-formed image became a familiar sight.

"Dad!" Buttercup exclaimed before flying into his arms, almost literally. She didn't even mind the needle in her arm slipping off painfully in her flight to her Daddy.

The Girls' awakening had uplifted the mood of negativity in The House, but it could only go so far as Bubbles had not wakened even as everyone expected her to. Although there was no concrete scientific basis for it, the professor thought that the Girls tended to do things in their threes, especially in light of what he had uncovered during his examinations of them. For the past two days, he had wondered, as a way to distract himself from the fact that all three of his Girls were in a coma, how Blossom had known that Buttercup was in trouble. With them both alive and well again, he was able to conduct a simple test involving photos and brain scans.
Blossom and Buttercup were shown printouts of stills from security footage showing their sisters in an injured state, before being sent through the MRI machine one after the other.

All scans revealed intense activity in the same parts of their brains, and the location of this agitated bit of their brain had corresponded with the neurological anomaly in Buttercup's brain. By comparing their latest brain scans with previous ones he had taken while the Girls were in a coma, however, the activity had been far stronger when all three were in a coma. In his understanding of the brain's anatomy, this was entirely unique to the Girls, and the part of their brain that lit up had nothing to do with empathy. It could only mean that it had been rewired for another purpose: some sort of a low-key psy-link between the three of them, weak enough that they wouldn't notice it, but strong enough for small amounts of information to be transmitted between them.

Such as the fact that one or more of them were in danger. But the professor had a hunch that this 'psy-link' could do more than that. To test his hypothesis, he had both Blossom and Buttercup recite their ABCs while he scanned Buttercup in the MRI machine. Not only did they do it perfectly, but they also did it in perfect unison. All the while, Buttercup's neurological anomaly lit up like a Christmas tree. The test was repeated with Blossom in the machine with the same results.

Apparently, the 'psy-link' between them could aid in coordination as well, often without even the Girls knowing it. The professor knew - he'd seen it happen before his eyes before. He decided to coin the term 'Sister Sense' to describe this ability. He would learn later that their Sister Sense had alerted them to Bubbles' near-demise.

Back in Townsville, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup flew towards a most insidious disturbance in the center of town. What will they find there!? What kind of evil force could it be that would disturb Bubbles in her most vulnerable state!?

Blossom and Buttercup, while carrying Bubbles by a hand each, flew at breakneck speed towards the city of Townsville proper. It was far cleaner than Bubbles could ever dare to imagine or hope - at least now that she thought about it. Here, the buildings stood proudly tall and gleaming, not a single speck of dirt on them it seemed. They seemed impossibly tall, some unnaturally thin such that they looked like they might fall apart if touched.

It was day, and most weird of all, it wasn't snowing, and neither was there snow on the ground beneath them. Bubbles had never seen that before, at least in real life. The only knowledge she had of how the world looked in other seasons were gleaned from her Daddy's descriptions and picture books. Yet, it was still as cold as a Christmas winter - it just was, and Bubbles did not think to question it.

Neither had she flown that high before, up to where she could touch the clouds, not that she could fly yet. However, it seemed as if the clouds were floating lower than before. She remembered seeing how close they were just before being flown out of the circular windows of The House - or were they?

On the way to the portal in Townsville, Unreal Buttercup noticed that Bubbles was still weeping silently, her tears streaming behind her. She was still deeply upset about… many things, she imagined, and it looked like it wasn't just because she couldn't fly or walk.

"Hang in there, Bubs," Buttercup comforted her changed sister. It helped, more than she knew. The real Buttercup would never make her feel better so trivially. It took weeks before the real Buttercup did anything of that sort, and thinking back, Bubbles thought that it rang hollow as if it was done for selfish reasons.
"Buttercup?" Bubbles turned to the cartoonish version of her sister.

"What?" this Buttercup replied curtly and gruffly - some things just wouldn't change.

"Were you always this nice to me? I mean, here?" Bubbles asked, realizing that she wasn't quite making sense. If Buttercup did not understand, she showed no signs of it.

"Well…" Buttercup did not answer straight away, as if a debate was raging in her head.

"She wasn't always nice to you, Bubbles," Unreal Blossom answered for Buttercup, not that the latter would have expressed things her way. "It took her time, but she eventually became nice. Right, Buttercup?"

"Right," Buttercup simply said, a slightly annoyed look on her face. Bubbles thought it was better than the psychotic look on the real Buttercup's face whenever things did not go her way.

"She's still working on it," Blossom smirked and added just to annoy Buttercup further. "I'm glad I helped, by the way."

Bubbles fell silent after that, and so too did Unreal Buttercup, who didn't wish to pursue the subject any further. When Blossom took a sideways glance at her blue-eyed sister, she noticed the look on her face, which was one of deep despair and depression. It was a look she had never seen before, not even on the worse days of the Bubbles she knew.

"What's wrong, Bubbles?" Blossom asked, concerned.

"I'm afraid to go back," Bubbles blurted, her tears flowing anew. Here in this two-dimensional universe, she had an infinite supply of it, it seemed. "I'm just going to feel pain and sad and… and… really sad all the time. The Buttercup I know is really mean and everyone I know is always… They're always angry, or sad. Or disappointed at me."

"Oh, brother…" Buttercup uttered absentmindedly and could feel the judgemental gaze of her leader sister almost immediately. To see the angry and 'don't-even-talk' look on Blossom's face wasn't even necessary, but it was human nature for Buttercup to look. She smiled guiltily at both her sisters. "Sorry, slip of the tongue!"

"Bubbles, the Bubbles I know is the same as you. Well, almost. She's sensitive, she cries a lot, but she's sweet and she's the nicest person I know, other than the professor," Blossom began. She slipped in closer to Bubbles, allowing her to put her arm around her back while she did the same with Bubbles. It wasn't just to support Bubbles better in flight. "But she's strong in her own right, and she's usually what's keeping the three of us together. That's how we fight crime together, and that's how she fought crime for so long without falling to pieces, no matter who or how many we're up against."

"Yeah," Buttercup added, Blossom's inciting speech rousing and inspiring her as well. "And you just gotta show it to your sisters, and do the same thing with them as Bubbles did with us. You'll be kicking butts in no time!"

"Thank you," Bubbles said tearfully, though the tears this time wasn't squeezed from dark thoughts.

Together, the three girls drew a tri-colored line of pink, baby blue and lime green across the sky, and as they descended and got to the city, above the city streets. They were approaching the portal rapidly and they knew it; they could see it from a far distance, down a long avenue cutting through the city. It looked like something resembling a black hole, something Bubbles had glanced off the page of an encyclopedia Blossom had been reading.
Blossom and Buttercup stopped in unison, in awe of the strange rift before them. It seemed more 'real', from Bubbles' standpoint, in terms of its colors and dimensions and scope, but to Blossom and Buttercup, it was completely unreal, like a rendering from a computer programme.

"Whoa! You don't see that every day!" cartoon Buttercup quipped as she stared into the darkness of the portal. "Are you sure we should throw Bubbles in there, Blossom?"

"We've got to trust the professor! Let's go!" Blossom ordered. Together, Blossom and Buttercup flew Bubbles towards the portal. If only things were that simple! There was a resisting force emanating from the black-hole-like portal, pushing against them the closer they got. But it was something they could overcome. What appeared next, however, was debatable in that respect.

Something materialized before them in a fiery vortex.

"You!" Blossom and Buttercup exclaimed in unison when they saw who it was. When Bubbles tried to stare at the thing before her, pain shot up in her temples. Fighting against it, she squinted at the being regardless, only to see what appeared to be a jumble of television static and bits of the being, scrambled like puzzle pieces, never to be put together, never to be understood. The only exception was the legs, which appeared to be thigh-high leather boots.

The pain became too much, and Bubbles had to look away.

"Yesss… It's me," the being replied in a most ghoulish voice, which echoed in an otherworldly fashion, but the worse part was when it raised its voice: "YOU'RE NOT COMING ANYWHERE CLOSE TO THIS PORTAL! YOU'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH ME FIRST!"

Oh no! What is this thing that wants to stop Bubbles from going through the portal!? What kind of a dastardly denizen of Townsville would want to stop a child from reuniting with her father!?

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

24 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1734.

Dinner was going to be special, but it was going to be better than anyone anticipated... Together with Selicia, Professor Utonium had prepared for the Girls' 1-month birthday celebration the previous day, in the hopes that they would wake up soon to the welcoming tune of a birthday song, well-wishes and presents. Due to the day they woke up in, the Girls' 1-month birthday was mashed together with Christmas Eve, and it had become a celebration like no other. News of Blossom and Buttercup's awakening had spread quickly, through both official and unofficial channels.

Agent Blake had posted a few of his men in The House, and they had spread the news to him and the rest of the security convoy. The rest of the USDO had been notified via Doctor Simmons. What started as a prelude to a quiet and humble celebration with a small feast and cake became an evermore crowded as time passed. More food was ordered in, whether approved by Professor Utonium or not. Before the party started, Alice, apparently released from her cell not long ago, had arrived, and so too, did General Blackwater. Agent Blake and his squad were already there before they arrived.

Before the party started, they got together to plan an impromptu party programme for the Girls. Alice had volunteered to be the magician - apparently, she had quite the talent in her younger days, and had no problems coming out of retirement. Agent Fields, Agent Blake's second-in-command and partner, had decided on a violin performance. Agent Blake himself, who knew only martial skills, thought that his knife-throwing talents could make a good performance, though he wasn't prepared to
include a beautiful maiden girl in the performance.

"Oh, I'll go through you, alright!" Unreal Buttercup screamed before speeding towards the static-covered figure floating before the portal, a fist raised. Earlier, Blossom and Buttercup had set Bubbles down as they prepared to defeat their nemesis.

Buttercup threw a flurry of punches at the being, but it was somehow able to dodge all of them. In a fit of fury, she glared at him, point blank, before letting loose a pair of green-colored laser beam from her eyes, which was countered with an impossibly well-aimed hellish red beam from one of its static-appendages. It didn't last, however, when the cloud of static and disembodied parts pushed Buttercup into a nearby building, creating a crater in it.

"Buttercup!" Blossom screamed, fearing the worst for her sister, but the sight of her clambering out from the crater had put this fear at ease. Instead, she glared at the static creature, before zooming upwards at jet-like speeds. Piercing through the clouds like a bullet, she finally let herself fall through the same mutilated cloud, foot first… Realizing only too late that it had sidestepped her within the last few seconds of her crashing descent down upon it. She tried to stop mid-air, only to crash in a heap on the asphalt ground, forming a crater in the road. She struggled to clamber out of the hole, her head spinning, stars orbiting her head. But this Blossom wasn't done yet - recovering quickly as she was far more combat experienced and confident than the real thing, she zeroed in on the static being and fired her own brand of laser, pink like her favorite color, only for her target to - somehow - deflect the powerful beam with a wave of its hands.

From the side, Buttercup had long recovered and seized the opportunity to fly fist-first into the strange being. It seemed to retch and scream and back off, but only briefly. Raising a static-covered appendage, it had somehow pushed Buttercup backward. Manipulating its gesture, it pulled a screaming and cussing Buttercup below itself, just in time to use her as a shield against another laser beam from Blossom, who continued to snipe at it from below.

"Watch it, Blossom!" Buttercup yelled after getting a full zap from her in the hind, which darkened with soot, smoking from the heat.

"Sorry!" Blossom yelled an apology from below.

"Well, I'm not!" the distorted voice of the static entity said as it tossed Buttercup down with its magical force. Blossom, sluggish from exhaustion, wasn't able to move out of the way, and the huge pothole she had made when she was slammed into the road became even bigger. When the dust settled, and Bubbles crawled close enough to see her unreal sisters, she saw that they were out for the count, lying in their hole, still reeling from the pain, barely conscious and moaning.

A burst of distorted laughter, as if emanating from a television playing a poorly-recorded tape, had Bubbles looking up at the creature of static that had hurt her sisters. Fear gripped her like a clawed hand as she couldn't look away from the thing - a shifting mass of static and disembodied bits of somebody on two leather-booted legs. Pain shot up in her temples.

"Ow!" she cried as she cupped a hurting temple, not that it helped.

"Your will is surprisingly strong, your subconscious stronger," the being said creepily. "BUT YOU'LL BE STAYING HERE FOREVER, AND EVER, AND EVER!"
Even before the party had started, the crowd it attracted had only grown larger. With the allegiance between Townsville and the USDO being shaky as it was, it was quite unexpected that the mayoral motorcade showed up at The House; Mayor Wilford, along with Townsville Liaison Bellum had joined the party. Miss Keane, who had been worried about the Girls' absence despite her misgivings about them, had been making inquiries with the USDO about them. She had found out only a few hours ago what had been going on with the Girls. She'd stumbled upon the party when she was only visiting as a teacher on duty. Her gift, a box of Christmas-themed donuts, was added to the feast.

Blossom and Buttercup were sitting on the sofa, along with Professor Utonium and Selicia (who made sure to isolate Blossom from her Daddy), as they watched the psychiatrist, Alice, doing a card trick with a deck of cards. One of the guards from Agent Blake's detail had volunteered to be the 'victim'. Buttercup was completely distracted by this display - she found Alice's outfit to be particularly amusing. She had put on a classical magician's tuxedo, complete with a top hat and a fake mustache. Blossom, however, was watching with mild interest, as her mind was still mostly preoccupied with Bubbles, and the rough days she and her sisters had gone through, and even when Alice had pulled a rabbit out of her hat, she couldn't seem to make her worry-filled frown disappear.

The violin recital and knife-throwing performance went by, just as unsuccessful when it came to making Blossom feel better.

When the buffet started, Buttercup began eating like a horse, piling heaps of steaming food on her plate - recovery had evidently given her an appetite. Yet, it did a completely different thing with Blossom, who had taken some food on her Daddy's desperate request, but she hadn't eaten much.

Sitting at the dining table, they got to speak to most of the guests there; while the guests rotated their occupancy of the table, Blossom and Buttercup did not, as Professor Utonium, following his fatherly protective instinct, had decided that they shouldn't move around too much. Food would be brought to them whenever they finished.

House guests would sit beside them and speak with them, and rotate with another when they were done with the oddly small amount of food they had placed in their plate.

As the static being chortled, Bubbles' eyes returned to the cartoon version of her sisters - figments of her imaginations, but far more than just that. They were a representation of hope. What she wished for her sisters, what she wanted her sisters to be like. And the static monster had dashed them into the ground!

Anger replaced fear, anger Bubbles rarely felt before. The enhanced little girl gritted her teeth and clenched her fists as rare thoughts entered her mind - thoughts of violence and hatred. The two-dimensional form she inhabited had begun to change too - tearing like paper until the real her underneath began to show; her feet popping out, her fingers bursting from the mitten-like hands she couldn't use.

"Stop hurting my family, you witch!" Bubbles screeched as she got up on her feet, as cartoon skin sloughed away from her real body. The cartoon-colored skin fell to the ground before reconstituting into an Unreal Bubbles.
"Hurt them? Hurt them!!" the static being's distorted voice resounded, echoing deeply into her as if it was speaking inside of her. "I'm not going to hurt your family. I'M GOING TO BREAK IT APART AND TAKE WHAT'S MINE!"

What it said infuriated Bubbles further. Unable to bear the creature's taunts any longer, Bubbles screamed - she screamed like never before - and without knowing it, had unleashed a concentrated single-direction sonic boom at her nemesis. The static being's eyes - it had numerous around its distorted body - grew wide with fear and surprise as it blocked the sonic boom with its appendages.

"What's this!!" it screamed. Bubbles was so mad that she could scarcely even care about what came out of the static monster's randomly placed mouths. Gently at first, she lifted off the ground, and within moments, she was levitating at the same height as her enemy. A kind of bluish energy was radiating from her eyes as she glared at it, from her fists as she thought about how she would destroy it for what it had done to her idealized sisters.

In response, the creature raised four or five of its appendages and fired red beams from them at Bubbles. Instinctively, Bubbles formed a bluish shell of energy around herself, which absorbed the hellish beam entirely.

"You won't leave! You'll sleep forever! You'll never see your family again! You'll-" the creature continued to threaten Bubbles as it continued its assault on Bubbles.

It wasn't able to complete its sentence when Bubbles counterstruck with a beam of energy of her own, from her hands that were like fountains of goodness. It overpowered the static being's own beam easily, before hitting it, the pureness of the blue energy spreading across its chaotic 'body', entirely engulfing it.

"No! How can this be!? No! No!" the creature screamed, each time its tone different, wavering from womanly to masculine to something akin to demonic by the end. "NOOO!!"

Then it was all over. The thing curled up, its legs to where its chest was supposed to be. With a final sigh of resignation, it disintegrated as the television static shrouding it cannibalized on its flesh. It shrunk, and then it was no more.

With her sisters avenged, Bubbles landed next to them, whose conditions were hardly better. Blossom moaned and opened her eyes, and smiled weakly.

"Hey Bubbles- you did it- I knew you had it in you," Blossom said. Bubbles knelt down beside her, unsure of what to do. Her unreal pink sister appeared sickly. Whatever Bubbles had wanted to say was quickly forgotten when an explosion rocked the city.

Bubbles looked up at the portal. It appeared to be laboring, what with arms of strange dark energy streaking across from it. It was enlarging and shrinking randomly, but it soon became clear that it was getting smaller over time.

"Bubbles! You have to go, now!" Blossom ordered, managing to push herself up as she leaned against her elbows. Debris was falling from the buildings around them, all over.

"But what about you? What about Buttercup?" Bubbles cried. An earthquake shook the ground.

"We'll be fine. We've handled worse," Buttercup said from behind Bubbles. Without her knowing it, she had gotten up, and she was now leaning on her back.

Bubbles looked up at the portal. It was crackling and screaming, and vomiting a storm. It was suspended between what appeared to be two apartment buildings, which looked like they were about
to fall on top of them. She looked back down at her sisters.

"But I can't!" Bubbles cried. "What if this doesn't work, or- or- I'm not even sure how to fly and-

Blossom pulled Bubbles by the collar, bringing her face up close to hers. "You've got to, Bubbles! Everything depends on it! Your sisters, your father!"

"We'll toss you if that helps," Buttercup offered.

"Great idea, let's," Blossom praised Buttercup before turning back to Bubbles. "Are you ready, Bubbles?"

"Y-yes…" Bubbles said reluctantly. Given the choice, she would rather have stayed in this strange world and bear with the difficulties if she needed to, but what Blossom said was true: she could never abandon her own family, not for anything, even if she would never have to feel pain or sorrow or anger again. Blossom took her by the shoulder, and so did Buttercup, but before they launched her, she stopped them. "Blossom… Buttercup… Thank you."

"No problem, Bubbles," Blossom said. "Say hi to your sisters for me, and bring them together close, as sisters should be!"

"Yeah, it's nothing. You're part of the club, no matter which universe you're from," Buttercup added. With that, Unreal Blossom and Buttercup took Bubbles by her shoulder and threw her upwards, launching her towards the portal. Their strength, however, being diminished by their fight against the television static creature, could only take her halfway to the shrinking blackhole-like portal.

Bubbles willed herself to ascend, forced herself to, trying to power her flight with hope alone. But it didn't seem to be enough. If anything, she was slowing down in mid-air, and soon she would be falling.

Then she saw him. Her Daddy in this strange doodle-based world. He had just gotten out of his cartoonishly-small white sedan. He was there to see her off, him and his rectangular face and angular haircut. She could see his smile, as if he believed, no, knew that she could do it.

He'd given her a renewed determination. She remembered the real Blossom's advice. She pushed the 'wings' of her feet, her legs to push her up. Blue sparks sputtered from her feet. At first, she was falling, and now she was slowing down, then floating.

Bubbles looked down and saw that her faith was rewarded. It could only reinforce her love for her family. She kicked, and then she was flying upwards, her course wavy and unsteady, but her aim was true. Blue light was released beneath her as she rocketed upwards, deceptively silent considering the force and speed. Debris fell on top of her, but she punched it into pieces almost effortlessly and casually.

She waved goodbye to Unreal Blossom and Buttercup, who were tending to their own Bubbles, and their Daddy and she flew straight into the mouth of the portal, blinded at first by its event horizon before there was only darkness.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.

24 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1851.

"I'm glad you're with us again," Agent Blake had said to Blossom and Buttercup.
"Well done on the last mission," General Blackwater had admitted with difficulty when it was his
turn at the dinner table. "I have plans to make things more conducive for the two of you… and
Bubbles."

"I've heard about what you've been going through and…" Miss Keane had said when she took the
chance to sit down with them. "I'm sorry about what happened." It felt as if there was more she
wanted to say, but she had withheld it for her own reasons. In truth, she was still upset over one of
her students' accident on Highway 13.

"Admittedly, I was ready to denounce the three of you after the protest, but Miss Bellum set me
straight," Mayor Wilford said when they happened to be at the table with Blossom and Buttercup.
"She showed me security footage from the USDO headquarters. I can only imagine how much red
tape she had to cut through to get it, but... It wasn't Bubbles fault that she panicked. Someone set her
up to fail. There's a war brewing. In fact, the war had started the moment you came and change
things." He took Blossom and Buttercup by the hands. "And you'll have my unwavering support
until this is over.

Miss Bellum said nothing, as everything she needed to say had already been said. A few well-placed
words had gone a long way in garnering support for Project Powerpuff, and the Girls when it came
to the upper echelons of the Townsville administration.

"It's nice of you to say that, Mister Mayor," Blossom said, still sullen. "And the present is equally
nice." She waved a hand at the Christmas Tree, and at the bottom of it sat a huge pile of gifts from
the houseguests - the many figures in her life - and it was pushing the bottom-most branches of the
tree upwards from having grown so large. "But... I just wish Bubbles would wake up soon. That
would be the greatest gift ever."

Mayor Wilford patted her on the hand gently. "I'm sure she will. She just needs time." With that, he
got up gingerly with some help from Miss Bellum and his cane. "Well, I guess it's time someone else
gets this seat. Your father, perhaps."

But Mayor Wilford was wrong. It wasn't Blossom and Buttercup's father who would be sitting
beside them. There was a shout of surprise from someone, followed by mumbles and whispers.

"Bubbles?" someone said.

Blossom and Buttercup turned to the source of the disturbance, and so did everyone.

And they saw Bubbles floating down the stairs, before touching down at the foot of it, rubbing her
tired, pink eyes, which glowed brightly baby blue nonetheless. Blood was flowing from the wound
where her IV drip needle was inserted, but it was closing rapidly.

"Well, I'll be…" Mayor Wilford uttered, before smiling heartily.
Chapter 87: Back to Reality

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Bubbles tries to live her life and change things in reality, for better or worse.

A/N: Hmm, this one turned out to be shorter than I expected - not because of the lack of content or writer's block, but because there's a natural break in between my hypothetical chapter, so I might as well break it up.

Chapter 87: Back to Reality

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Bubbles had been staring in the mirror for the longest time ever. It wasn't the party dress that had caught her attention. In fact, she wasn't wearing anything but her panties. Her matching baby-blue dress was on her bed, waiting. It wasn't even the two bullet exit wounds on her chest that attracted her attention, though that had been a cause for distress for quite some time, and she imagined that it would be for the weeks to come, both mentally and physical, and not just for her - her Daddy had told her so, with and without saying a word.

It was something deeper than that. She was still processing what had happened in her dreams, and what happened after that. Had it really been a dream? It felt so real to her.

The previous day, during the Christmas Eve party, she had woken up in her room after entering the blackhole-like portal. She knew immediately that she had to see her Daddy and her sisters. The IV needle stuck into her arm would have stayed there in any other circumstances, but her need to see them was so strong that she tore it loose as her sisters did. A most amazing thing happened after that - but yesterday, she was in too much of a daze, too focused to think about it. For the first time in her life, she flew - not the way Blossom did, streaking across the sky like a jet, but she sort of floated unsteadily, and she hovered downstairs, the way she controlled her flight almost instinctual, learned, almost, from the harsh lesson she had to go through in her coma-induced dream.

The moment she had touched down, surprising everyone with her entrance, she ambled to her family, and they hugged. Even Selicia joined in when she realized what was going on. Later that night, when the house guests had left and the Utonium family was left alone, she told them about everything - the dream, her feelings, but most importantly...

"I just want the three of us to be closer, like real sisters," Bubbles had said to Blossom and Buttercup after Daddy and Mommy had gone away, back in their room when they were supposed to be changing and preparing for bedtime. "I want us to be happy together, instead of fighting all the time."

They were seated at their pink kiddy table, like knights of the round table, a small one at that.
Blossom and Buttercup stole glances at each other, each of them wary of the other.

Blossom remembered what the strange man in her dreams had said - that she needed to be more forceful with Buttercup, and she thought that he was right, considering how Buttercup was always slipping out of her control and doing objectionable things. Where Buttercup was too ecstatic with the idea of killing people by the masses, she had been following her Daddy's words and teachings closely. Bubbles' request wouldn't comply with that policy.

Buttercup, on the other hand, remembered what the dead cat had said - that she needed to overthrow Blossom as she was unfit to be the leader, and she thought that it was right, considering Blossom's track record and her own. Where Blossom was content with letting criminals live and run loose, she had killed so many of them. While she didn't do it out of some idealistic purpose, she was doing her job at least, making sure that they would not be shooting at anyone else again. Bubbles' request wouldn't fit in with her own agenda.

Of course, the way Blossom told her story was convenient for her, how it would maintain her leadership: she was deeply upset about Bubbles' injuries, and she wasn't sure of herself any longer until she felt that Buttercup was in trouble, and swooped in to save her. Buttercup wasn't convinced.

On the other hand, Blossom thought that Buttercup's rotten attitude, how she hadn't really talked to her or even thanked her, was just the next big hallmark of her ungratefulness.

The two rivaling sisters descended into a glaring contest, each convinced that they were right, both unwilling to back off.

"Please? For me?" Bubbles pleaded with them both.

"Don't tell me what to do, Bubbles!" Buttercup snarled at her all of a sudden, the way she snapped her head to look at her had even made Bubbles jump. "I hate being told to do things!" With that, Buttercup got up and walked away from the table, before opening the door and slamming it shut on her way out, leaving Blossom with Bubbles.

Blossom did not look pleased. In fact, the way she was looking at Bubbles was nothing like the kindly sister she knew.

"You shouldn't have talked about that, Bubbles," Blossom said as she shook her head. "You know how Buttercup is like - I think I've been nice to her long enough. She doesn't need more encouragement." With that, Blossom got up, and after taking a final look at Bubbles that implied disappointment and anger, walked away, leaving her alone with only misery for company. Well, and Octi, who Agent Blake rescued from the snow.

It was all as Bubbles had feared. Pain. Sadness. Anger. Bitterness. She had half a mind now to just slip away and go back to that amazing dreamland of hers, but she knew she had to persevere.

It wasn't much better when it came to Daddy and Mommy. She had seen it riddling their faces when they bathed her.

And it had all began so innocently. She and her sisters entered the bathroom and went on to disrobe as Dad and Mom talked – she couldn't remember what they were talking about because she was having difficulty with removing her dress. By the time she was done, her father was picking up her sisters up and putting them into the bathtub.

When he turned to her, however, he froze, and his face, once bright, had turned gloomy. A one-month-old baby could easily tell what was wrong, and as it just so happened, Bubbles and her sisters
had just celebrated their first month birthday.

He was staring at the wounds on her chest and when he realized that she had noticed, he looked away and quickly wiped a tear that had slipped out of his eyes.

The mere sight of Bubbles' wounds had reminded Professor Utonium of everything he had to do and suffer through when she was nearly killed, and the blame pinned on Mojo Jojo conveniently. Drinking the blood pooling in her lung because of the lack of draining equipment. Having to cut his very own daughter up like some dissection subject or poultry to reach for her heart and save her. As a part-time medical student while at Oxford University, he used to scoff at the policy of disallowing surgeons to operate on their own family members or close ones. Back in his youthful, foolish days, he thought the rule to be antithetical to the role of a doctor or surgeon. He would make jokes about them, but the joke's on him now. He regretted them now; the policy wasn't just some antiquated rule written by some old fart, and he had to learn it the hard way.

"I'm sorry, Dad. I'll keep it covered if you want," Bubbles offered sadly, before resting a hand over her huge, ugly gunshot wounds. They were still clear marks, reminders of what had happened, still stitched and healing at a mockingly slow rate compared to other wounds her sisters had suffered. It was still hurting.

"No, Bubbles," Professor Utonium struggled to remain coherent. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't be acting this way." Gently, he moved Bubbles' hand out of the way of her wounds. "You shouldn't have to hide it from me. I need to be stronger than this."

"But you are strong, Dad," Bubbles said. Although the professor knew that she had spoken out of naivete, he appreciated it nonetheless, even found himself agreeing with her. What else could he be if not strong? The December of 1988 had been one hell of a month, and despite it all, he hadn't backed down at all. He hadn't backed down and thrown in the towel, and he was still here instead of abandoning them to General Blackwater or Director Cliff.

'Things will get better,' he promised himself.

"Thanks, Bubbles," the professor said before lifting her, but before putting her into the bathtub, he kissed her in the cheek. "Aren't you the sweetest."

His reaction to the gunshot wounds, however, would continue to haunt Bubbles. Never had she seen her father to be so vulnerable. Despite his feeble physical strength, she had always thought him to be an unshakable pillar of support.

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


When Bubbles was done staring at the mirror and ruminating on the past, present, and future, it was Blossom's turn at the mirror. Sitting down behind the dressing table, she began brushing her hair, admiring herself, and how she had mastered enough hairdressing techniques to be self-sufficient when it came to matters of her hair.

"Buttercup, Bubbles. I see that the two of you are done. Good," Selicia's voice was just suddenly there. She didn't even hear her come in despite her acute senses. Nervously, she continued brushing her hair, looking at the mirror, at herself, trying her best not to look in the direction of the Mommy. "Here, let me tie that ribbon for you, Buttercup. Good! You look beautiful! Why don't the two of you go down and show Daddy how good you look… while I help Blossom along the way."
"Yes, Mom!" Buttercup said enthusiastically.

"And no running in your best dress!" Selicia reminded her of the rules just as Buttercup had been thinking of doing just that.

"Okay…" Buttercup said dejectedly before padding her way out, with Bubbles coming up behind her, then catching up and holding her hand. Buttercup tried to shake her off at first, but when there was some resistance due to her need for isolation, she relented, preferring not to make a scene when either of her parents could see or hear her.

When they were gone, Selicia marched up to right behind Blossom and seized her by the wrist. With her other hand, she took the hairbrush out of her hand. Blossom submitted to her immediately. Her hands fell into her lap as she stared into the mirror, afraid of what was next.

Gently, Selicia began grooming her hair after kneeling next to her, sweeping it down her cascading orange waterfall gracefully.

"How are you feeling, Blossom?" she asked, and Blossom could hear the concern in her voice.

"I- uh- I'm fine, Mom," Blossom said awkwardly as she continued to stare into her mirror, her hands gripping each other tightly as she felt her hairbrush cutting through her hair, making sure that they fell as individual strands rather than being fused together by bodily oil or water.

"Now, is that right?" Selicia said as she rested her chin on Blossom's shoulder. It made it impossible for Blossom to avoid looking at her, and when she finally made eye contact with Mommy, she seemed pleasant to look at, what with her smile and the make-up she had put on.

Until she felt her Mommy yanking her hair back violently. "Is that right!?"

"Ow!" Blossom yelped in surprise and pain when she did. Selicia had changed in a blink of an eye, her lips curling the other way, those eyes glaring deep into hers, love replaced by hatred.

"And don't you forget who made sure you're fine, Blossom!" Selicia warned her as she kept pulling at her hair. She had grabbed the whole bunch of them. Blossom had closed her eyes, and Selicia didn't like that. "Look at me. Look at me, Blossom!" Blossom obeyed. "Are you grateful that Daddy and Mommy had taken good care of you while you slumbered your way to Christmas? Are you?"

"Y-yes, Mom! Please!" Blossom begged, her hand coming up to her foster mother's (though in her mind, she was still none the wiser that Selicia wasn't her biological mother), but unwilling to apply any strength to it for fear of hurting her beloved parent. "Please don't!"

"Say it. I am grateful that Mommy and Daddy took good care of me while I slumbered my way to Christmas'. Say it!" Selicia ordered as she continued to yank at Blossom's hair.

"Mom!" Blossom cried. All Selicia did in response was to tighten her grip on her hair and pull it further downwards, forcing the little girl to snap her head upwards.

"Say it!" Selicia repeated her demand.

"I'm grateful! I'm grateful that Mommy and Daddy took good care of me while I slumbered my way to Christmas!" Blossom repeated Selicia's sentence, almost word-for-word, a perversion of her prodigious memorizing abilities.

"And don't you forget it," Selicia said, her voice narrowing into a merciless whisper. "Because I haven't forgotten how you hurt my sweetheart, who just so happens to be your daddy."
"Quit your sniveling," Selicia snapped callously as she threw Blossom's hairbrush down on her vanity table carelessly. "And brush your own hair. God, and I thought Bubbles is the crybaby. You better be downstairs in five minutes, and you better be smiling. I'll make up an excuse for you."
Chapter 88: Silent Night

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, along with her Mom and Dad, enjoy a silent night of Christmas.

Chapter 88: Silent Night

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


Christmas dinner was spent in near-total silence, with 'Silent Night' playing over the radio. Professor Utonium had started dinner by introducing the various dishes that were prepared or ordered in. They had a turkey, naturally, as well as a creamy potato salad, chicken pie and red-and-white cream spaghetti to top it off, which had brussels sprouts and chunks of meatballs sprinkled on top of them. He remarked playfully that there was a 'log' in the fridge, to which Bubbles innocently wondered how people could eat logs. Instead of revealing the surprise, the professor kept it hidden in the fridge until the main courses were done.

Selicia followed up with a Catholic prayer over dinner, which the professor disapproved of, but decided to tolerate as Christmas was a Christian holiday at its roots, after all. It reminded the professor of what she had mentioned only in passing during the days when the Girls were in a coma - that she was going to return to the good old days and bring out her good book and rosary. Catholicism had helped her in her youth, along with her aunt, when her family had done nothing but torment her, and she was intending to take Buttercup to the closest Catholic church one of these days, as a way to combat her psychopathy.

The professor did not know what to think of this development, but he could not help but to feel amused by the anachronism - the Girls, who were products of a science experiment gone amazingly wrong, who were at least decades, if not centuries, ahead of modern technology, at least when it came to public consciousness, were being exposed to a religion two millenniums old, and on the decline. Buttercup becoming Catholic would really complete the picture. A trans-human with the potential to harbor God-like powers, a Catholic. What could come next? Deity-worshiping space marines from planet X who neighbored hell?

However, Professor Utonium thought that the prospects of dragging Buttercup to a Catholic church were poor at best and disastrous at worst. Religion wasn't something that would fit someone of Buttercup's temperament. Moreover, with the Girls being known to the whole world by now, what would a Catholic church - any Catholic church - think of artificial humans? Would they even allow one through its doors? Any day now, the professor knew, there would likely be a condemnation or two blasting off in the direction of the USDO and 'the Three', for 'usurping God's position in the universe' or something along those lines. He could see the headlines already. Buttercup would either be sin incarnate or the product of sin itself and if she was to become Catholic, she would likely have
to seek penance for the rest of her living days. No, it certainly would not work.

"Amen."

When the final word of Selicia’s prayer was spoken, Professor Utonium, Selicia, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup began eating. While the professor and his ‘wife’ ate at moderate speed, Blossom and Bubbles were taking it real slow, and it wasn’t for a lack of appetite. Buttercup, however, ate as if she had just come out of an Australian desert after getting lost for months. Somewhere along the way, the professor poured each of them a cup of orange juice, with Chemical X added to ensure a swift recovery.

Silence. But some among them did not need words to express what was deep inside them. Selicia smiled at Buttercup, who, in between mouthfuls of turkey, or while chewing, smiled back. Blossom stared at Buttercup, finding her manners distasteful. Selicia stared Blossom down, and the pink-eyed little girl returned her gaze to her food instead. Bubbles looked around at each of her sisters and parents, and leaned back, closing her eyes and giving a sigh, and all she could do, besides eating reluctantly, was to hope for a better tomorrow. The professor had missed half of it, and when he did look up, all he saw was a rather upset Blossom and Bubbles.

"Blossom, Bubbles, is there something wrong with the food?" the professor asked, knowing full well that it wasn't the food.

"It's really nice, Dad," Blossom said, but volunteered nothing. She flashed a smile, though it seemed disingenuous.

"Yeah, it's really good," Bubbles added, then smiled mildly, before her smile sank once again. "I like the pie."

"Then what's wrong, sweeties?" the professor pursued. Noticing that his spoonful of potato salad was hovering all the while, he put it down as he waited for a reply. Briefly, Blossom took a glance at her Mommy, who frowned at her, promising reprisal without words, before coming back to her Daddy. The professor noticed the shift in her gaze and turned to his Selicia, only to notice nothing but the sweetest smile.

"N-nothing," Blossom maintained, smiling nervously back at her mother. "I'm just…" she could feel a stinging sensation under her eyes, her voice breaking, but she clenched her jaw to keep it all down. The unpleasant sensation of being trapped or cornered welled up. "Just tired, I guess." She didn't have to lie, there was that; she just had to tell the other half of the truth that bore the least consequence.

Professor Utonium shifted his gaze from one member of his family to the other. He had hoped that a Christmas Eve and Christmas would lift their spirits and make them forget their worries, if only just for a little while, but that hadn’t been the case. It was either something else was troubling them, or he needed to do more. But what else could possibly be making life difficult for them? Buttercup. But the professor didn't think she could do much damage at all while she was on the mend and exhausted. Besides, he'd kept up with his dogged attempts at keeping her under his or Selicia's watchful eyes, and apart from the others. No, he needed to do more.

"Do you know what's summer, Girls?" the professor asked, a knowing grin spreading across his face. He looked like he had hidden treasures in his mouth and he knew it.

"It's a… urm…" Bubbles struggled to remember what the word was associated with. She had been learning fast, but she could only go so far, and she didn't have the book smarts of Blossom, nor even Buttercup, though the latter couldn't be bothered to apply it. "Are we getting a puppy?"
The professor laughed. Selicia couldn't help but do the same. Bubbles smiled toothily, feeling silly but at the same time relieved that the mood around the dining room was lighter now.

"No, Bubbles, it's-" the professor was about to explain when Blossom remembered what it was.

"It's the season after spring and before autumn," Blossom recited the professor's words from many days ago.

"But do you know how it's like?" Professor Utonium asked.

"It's the opposite of winter?" Blossom said, though the words were largely empty. The Girls had never experienced any other kinds of seasons other than winter, no other kinds of weather other than the cold, snowy and occasionally rainy and often cloudy and gloomy.

"It gets a little hot, like being near a fireplace at all times, but it's beautiful when everything is bathed in bright light, all sunny and smiley," the professor described. "And you know what?"

"What?" Blossom asked. The anticipation of something good had curled her lips up at least, the same with Bubbles. Buttercup had been listening quietly, a sure sign of resounding success.

"We'll go on a holiday in the summer, just the five of us. We'll see the world together, and it won't just be through photos in a book or videos on a TV either," the professor promised. "The beaches and resorts of Hawaii, the deserts and pyramids of Egypt, in the cradle of human civilization... Even in the United States itself, there's so much to do! I can really show you three what you're really protecting because it's so much more than the people. A road trip, perhaps, and we'll get to sit on a plane-"

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! The clown phone in the living room interrupted. Emergency lights started flaring. The professor fell silent, and so did his eyes fall to his hands, which lay uselessly on the table after he had put down his cutlery. He had the Girls there - all three of them were looking at him and listening intently. The call had ruined it.

'No, not now!' the professor thought dismally. When he looked up at Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, he could see that they were reacting in similar ways. Even Buttercup had reservations about fighting crime on Christmas Day, if only because of material reasons - she wasn't done eating. and Bubbles, however, looked like their mood was absolutely destroyed by the mere sound of the buzzing ringing coming from the USDO-Powerpuff hotline.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! Blossom could hardly breathe. Her hands felt numb, unresponsive. She squeezed them just to feel alive. She didn't feel like she had fully recovered at all, from her exhaustion at Townsville Port, even though her Daddy had said that she was almost there. She finally looked up at her Daddy, with the saddest eyes he had ever seen.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! It was supposed to be Christmas Day, and yet duty called.

"May I be excused, Dad?" Blossom asked for permission to leave the table. The professor nodded at her, his empathy not a secret.

Bzz! Bzz! Bzz! Blossom, after hesitating for a minute, turned away reluctantly from her Daddy and jumped off her chair. With her back slouched, she floated towards the phone and picked it up.

"Hello?" Blossom answered the phone without bothering to hide the lack of spirit in her voice. Agent Blake wasn't one to find it offensive anyway. She closed her eyes, holding back tears and dark thoughts alike - she realized, in the back of her mind, that she would probably be doing that
"Hello, Blossom," Agent Blake said on the other end. "I'm sorry that it had to be now, but Detective Mullens needs to see the three of you. He said it's urgent."

"Mister Blake?" Blossom said sullenly. "Why aren't you with your family?"

Agent Blake laughed. "What family? Well, I've got my girlfriend, but she understands," he said. "A few years later maybe, after I retire. Otherwise, at least I've got you and your sisters. Right?"

"Right," Blossom laughed, and it was genuine enough. Agent Blake had been such a good friend. She smiled at what he said - she wasn't sure what a 'girlfriend' was, but it was great for Agent Blake to have another friend. She felt happy that he considered her special.

"Anyway, I'll be waiting for you. Get suited up and get in the car," Blake finally said.

"Mister Blake?" Blossom said before he could hang up.

"Yeah?"

"Thanks."

"No problem."

"And Merry Christmas," Blossom added.

"Merry Christmas," Blake said, then hung up reluctantly. Blossom could hear the steady beeping of an unconnected line, as she was still thinking about the exchange between Mister Blake and herself. Just thinking about what had gone on between them felt good. She was sure that it would be one of her sweetest memories yet, at least with Mister Blake. Nothing could ever beat her time with her Daddy.

"What is it about, Blossom?" Bubbles asked, just as fearful of what would come next.

"Mister Mullens wants to see us. It's urgent. That's what Mister Blake said," Blossom reported, her back still hunched, still downcast because of the interruption of her family time.

"It doesn't sound too bad," the professor said, though he had said it out of hope, rather than logic. "Maybe that's all there is to it - he just wants to see you."

"Make sure to take something with you to eat, darling. You wouldn't want to get hungry along the way," Selicia added while she was making eye contact with Buttercup, though she had only advised the Girls for the sake of Buttercup, not all of them.

"We'll wait for you here," Professor Utonium said. "It'll be over before you know it. Just call me if there's anything, Blossom. My number's on your phone."

Buttercup had already zipped into the Girls' room before the professor could even finish. Bubbles went away after he was done. Blossom fixed her needy eyes on her Daddy, desperate not to go, but she knew she had to. Duty called, and she had to be true to her word - she had never faltered in her wish to help people, and befriended them. She had to tear herself away from her father - and the professor knew what she was feeling, and as she ran up to her room to get ready, his eyes fell back down to their half-consumed family feast, then to the Christmas tree, which was still packed to the lowest branches with unopened presents.
He had to wonder to himself: 'How many times must Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup miss Christmas before they are done fighting crime?"
Chapter 89: The Capo

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup are taken to a shady, isolated and suspicious place in town.

Chapter 89: The Capo

The City of Townsville. Outskirts. Precinct 55.


Midway on her journey to... wherever she was going, Blossom had noticed that they were going somewhere unlike the other places in the city. In fact, they had entered it, only to reach its other border, where there was not a soul to be seen even on the streets. When their Lamborghini speed transport pulled up, the Girls found themselves facing a police station that was both small and unimpressive, unlike the USDO headquarters or the TPD headquarters they had visited. Had it not been for the light coming from the half-boarded windows, it would have appeared abandoned.

"I'll follow the three of you in," Agent Blake said as he got out from the driver's seat, and was accompanied by his second-in-command, Agent Fields. "I don't like the looks of this."

Flanked by six SWAT soldiers, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup entered the police precinct through the main doors, which weren't very wide such that they had to squeeze through as they remained in formation.

Inside, a single police officer wearing a large pair of square spectacles sat behind the reception desk, reading a book about computers. He appeared like a second-rate refuse from the bottom of the TPD, as he was scrawny and too old to be a mere patrolman without some kind of black mark on his record. The arrival of the rather uncommon guests - 6 USDO soldiers and the infamous 'The Three', had surprised him. With wide eyes staring, he closed the book carefully, as if it was rigged to explode, before setting it down deliberately, afraid to make too loud a noise in front the force standing before him.

"Er- Hello. H-how can I help you today?" the police receptionist stammered his greetings.

"Mullens. Where is he?" Agent Blake inquired. Everyone was heavily armed as if they were standing in a war zone. The police receptionist had only an old service revolver on his belt, and he knew it. "We have an appointment with him."

"The- the- uh-" the officer stuttered as he pointed a finger to his right instead. "The interrogation room. Interrogation Room C. Basement. Yeah, the basement."

The basement. A receptionist who seemed far too nervous. Something was definitely wrong. Agent Blake radioed the rest of his detail, ordering them to be on the alert, not that they would ever let their
guard down - he didn't survive twenty years of USDO service by sitting on his laurels.

Moving through the police station, another oddity was the relatively few number of police officers he had seen. There were only two others at reception, and as he took the Girls down the staircase, they had only passed by a few others, and they were all rather prone to stopping in their tracks and giving them weird looks.

By the time Agent Blake and his men got to the basement, they were all gripping their guns nervously. Even the Girls, naive as they were to most types of dangers, realized that something was wrong. At the foot of the stairs, the basement was a T-junction of corridors, and there was not a soul in sight. The mouths of the ventilation shafts howled at them, likely fed the winter wind overmuch.

Following the signs, they took the corridor leading to the interrogation rooms. They had to get through a door to do it, and they were immediately met by Officer Olivia, who looked disturbed. She was leaning against the wall opposite Interrogation Room A. B and C were further down the corridor. Something or someone had driven her away from the right interrogation room.

"Miss Olivia?" Blossom said. Officer Olivia looked up.

"Girls," the officer greeted but said nothing more. The look on her face hadn't changed.

"What's going on? Why this police station, Olivia? It looks like an abandoned motel, missy!" Agent Blake pressed the officer. The presence of someone the Girls knew (well enough) did little to reassure Agent Blake of his men and the Girls' safety.

"It's worse than that, Sergeant Blake," Olivia said, looking like she was about to puke. She got off the wall and began walking down the corridor towards Interrogation Room C, at the end of the hallway. "Let me take you to my… um, Detective Mullens. I wish I didn't have to show you what I mean, but it's important."

It didn't take long for them to get to the one-way window of Interrogation Room C. Blossom and Bubbles had to float at Agent Blake's waist height to be able to see anything. Buttercup, being unable to do the same, kept jumping to catch glimpses of what was going on, until Blake offered to carry her - but she was heavy with her excessive Kevlar on.

Detective Mullens was in the interrogation room, his arm still in a sling. But he wasn't alone. There was a man handcuffed to a chair bolted to the floor - and both his hands were handcuffed. He was a huge man, bulky with both fat and muscles - and that was obvious because he was wearing only the bottom layer of his three-piece suit, and it was drenched in sweat and some blood. His feet were tied to the chair as well. And his face - it was beaten black-and-blue with numerous cuts. Congealed blood formed a dark, crimson line snaking from his nostrils and the side of his lips.

The veteran police officer was sweating through his shirt, even with his trench coat on an opposite chair, likely exhausted from beating the snot out of his suspect. It was a shady scene, not helped by the fact that it was dimly lit, with only a lamp on the table providing any kind of bright light.

"I know you USDO and CIA have your black sites and secrets, but so does the TPD," Officer Olivia said. "This is where we drag our most important and least cooperative suspects for 'special interrogation'."

Olivia had said it with shame and remorse. It took her all to continue: "I swore to myself that I'll never come here. I can't believe I'm here now, with my… I'm sorry- Detective Mullens."

There was something about the way Olivia was referring to Detective Mullens that seemed odd to
Blossom. She had slipped up far too often, likely because of the tension and atmosphere. It took her time, but she was able to associate it with words and concepts that would shed some light on what it might be. But it wasn't enough. Curiosity overwhelmed her.

"Why is it so hard for you to talk about Mister Mullens, Miss Olivia?" Blossom asked. The young police officer stared at Blossom, not because of her question, but because she was still getting used to the fact that she was speaking to a 5-year-old who could fly like Supergirl, and from what she heard at Townsville Port when the TPD handled the crime scene jointly with the USDO, shoot beams from her eyes like the comic book hero too. And that was beside the fact that Buttercup had killed and wounded over twenty felons there.

"I guess it has to get out sooner or later, does it?" Olivia admitted. "No matter how much I want things to remain professional. Well, you see, I'm Miss Mullens."

"You mean you and Mister Mullens are married?" Blossom tried to make sense of it. Despite the horrific scene in the interrogation room, Blossom, along with Bubbles, was able to grin at discovering the relationship between Officer Olivia and Detective Mullens. Bubbles giggled as she thought they made a cute couple.

"No! No way!" Olivia denied the accusation.

"Girls, she would have been Missus Mullens if she were to be married to Detective Mullens," Agent Blake explained to the Girls.

"So you're..." Blossom struggled to make sense of it all. She wasn't used to speaking with her friends about their family.

"Yes, I'm Detective Mullens' daughter," Olivia came clean with them. It explained a lot. How they seemed to resemble each other, and the Girls had noticed ever since they visited them in their kindergarten to take them on a 'ride-along'.

"Oh..." Blossom and Bubbles said in unison. Buttercup, on the other hand, had long been distracted by the sight in the interrogation room. She thought she found it interesting.

"Mister Mullens, what's going on?" Blossom asked the detective after she entered the interrogation room. In the meantime, Bubbles looked frightened as she shifted her attention between the badly bruised gangster and the tired-out Detective Mullens. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the detective had been torturing him. Buttercup, on the other hand, smiled at the sight of it - she remembered how much pain she had to go through just fighting men like him, and how she had drowned because of one of their bosses. But it was worth it because she enjoyed hurting them too. It was a good sport if she had any, and she loved the sound of her fist upon their flesh and the cracking of bones under the force of her strikes. She had been collecting trophies from them, and the greedy, materialistic part of her loved how her jar of human teeth, fingernails, and other bits was slowly getting filled up, how her shoebox was getting heavier as she added more and more metal syringes full of 'His Secret', whatever that was, and other keepsakes from the field, like spent casings. Not to mention, she relished the idea of exploring how they looked like on the inside, just like how she opened up the dead cat and the golden retriever she killed at the neighbor's house.

The only thing she hated about her time on the field was how she had so little time to bash, break or rend each of the bad guys and gals she had fought against.

Detective Mullens walked over to the man cuffed to his chair and took him by the hair. He smelled rotten as if he hadn't showered for a week (and he likely didn't). The faint smell of piss was hard to
"You see this scumbag? This fella's from Townsville Port. You recognize him, Buttercup? He was there when you started a party there," the detective explained.

"I don't recognize him, Mister Mullens," Buttercup said earnestly. There was no cause to lie this time. She really had no idea who the man was. She had beaten and killed so many that their faces just sort of blend together. They could all be clones of each other and she wouldn't be surprised. To her, they were all just punchbags to be broken and torn apart. "Who is he?"

"He's the Capo there. The 'local leader' of the port. You really don't recognize him? He fell off a cargo container while he was fighting you, Buttercup. He sprained an ankle here and broke a rib there and couldn't get far when our boy scout over there-" he nodded at Agent Blake, who gave a quick salute in return. "Caught him. He got off lightly - he could've broken both his legs - but he's paying for that now."

"But why is he here, Mister Mullens?" Blossom asked, and couldn't help but to float at the detective's waist height - she'd been doing that more and more often lately, as if by instinct. Looking at the restrained criminal, she couldn't help but to feel a little sorry for him, considering how battered and miserable he was.

"He knows something. A lot of somethings," Detective Mullens said. "He told me something big was going to happen, but he zipped it after that. Wouldn't spill anything more no matter how much I tried to butter him up, as you can see."

"Um- Er- Mister Mullens," Bubbles said. "What if he knows nothing?"

"Yeah," Blossom reasserted. "He's hurt really badly. Shouldn't he have told you something if he knows anything?"

Buttercup hadn't said a word. All she did was to fix her eyes on the restrained suspect's and smiled. Widely. She had unnerved him enough that he'd tried to get up, only to remember that he had been cuffed and tied to the chair. The chains of his cuffs rattled. The detective watched with interest at this as she was talking to Buttercup's sisters.

Detective Mullens sighed before taking the Girls back out of the interrogation room.

"You see, girlie, this is what I meant right from the beginning. Remember what I said that day? When I picked you up for a ride-along?" Detective Mullens said severely the moment he closed the door and went out of earshot. "You can't be so naive as to think that everyone's all about flowers and bunnies! They're the enemy, and you're still making the same mistake of feeling sorry for them!"

Blossom could not believe what Detective Mullens had said. She never did. In her mind, Daddy was God, and his words were her commandments. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not hurt, unless absolutely necessary, and she understood perfectly why - she wouldn't like getting hurt or killed either, and she had experienced too much of the former and situations too close to the latter.

"But…" Blossom tried to come up with something, but she couldn't. Not in the face of Mister Mullens - that man was imposing, despite being the same, physically, like all the others. If she so chose, she could lob his head off with a single chop of her hand, but that would be wrong - and she respected the man too much to do that even if she wished to.

"Detective…" Officer Olivia came up beside them. "We talked about this." Mister Mullens stared at her, a million thoughts, many conflicting with each other, ran through his mind as he did, not that he
let it show. Any sign of it and his feelings towards his daughter was only evident because of the time he dedicated to her words, to entertain it.

"Fine," the detective relented. He turned to Blossom. "You do it your way. Go in there and ask for everything he knows. Just don't be disappointed if he clamps up on you. Well, what are you waiting for? There's no time! Whatever's going to happen could be happening now, and it's not going to be a Christmas party!"

Everything felt wrong to Blossom. The place, the interrogation room, the suspect being treated poorly. Hesitantly, she took steps timidly toward the door. Mister Mullens opened it for her and as soon as she stepped through, shut it behind her.

The Lombardi Capo hadn't moved much, and whenever he did, he winced in pain, as if there were things inside him that were broken. His eyes were most mobile, as he looked at her, shifted in his seat, trying to get away from her. He knew what Blossom was, and it didn't help that the interrogation room was dimly lit, which accentuated the unnatural glow of her eyes. The clinical and cold surface of her miniaturized SWAT gear completed the picture of something inhuman. At this point, the tortured man would rather be in the same room as the Devil.

"Urm… Mister…” Blossom said only to realize she didn't know the suspect's name. Padding gingerly forward, she had only caused the Capo to squeeze himself further into his seat. She could hear his heavy, wheezing breathing, how shallow it was, how much it trembled, betraying the fear that was likely in his veins. "I'm Blossom, what's your name?"

From outside the interrogation room, everyone could hear Blossom clearly. Mics installed all over the room fed sound into a speaker at the desk outside the room. Detective Mullens, upon hearing Blossom's starting line, was already pessimistic and rubbing his forehead.

"Why should I tell you anything?" the bruised Capo wheezed and managed to say.

"Please, mister. My friend outside said that something bad's going to happen and you know it," Blossom walked a little closer. "It's Christmas. My Dad said that it's 'a season of giving' and- and-"

Blossom was interrupted by one of the most broken and raspy laughter she had ever heard, which soon became a series of hacking coughs.

"Christmas- Jesus- That's all you got?" the Capo taunted. Blossom took even more steps closer, which inadvertently got him to shut up. "Aren't you supposed to punch my guts out or something?"

"But I don't want to," Blossom said remorsefully. Why was the man acting this way? She couldn't even venture to guess. He was hurting, and he looked uncomfortable and certainly in need of a bath, and yet it seemed as if he was looking for more punishment. "I just want to go home, mister. It's my first Christmas, and Daddy and Mommy are waiting for me. Don't you have a family too?"

The Capo stirred uncomfortably at the bare mention of family. He seemed to inflate with breath before sinking back into his seat. "Name's Marcello, by the way," he reluctantly divulged. "Since you were wonderin'."

"Well, that's one piece of useless information," Detective Mullens snorted at the 'progress' Blossom had made as he stared derisively at Blossom, who kept inching cautiously towards Capo Marcello as if he was a cornered animal. The suspect's name was already in the police database and more besides.

"I'm protecting my family this way," the criminal said. He shifted himself once more when Blossom
got up to him, close enough that she could touch him. He didn't know what to make of the bioweapon standing near him now, but then again, the look of her glowing pink eyes piercing the dark was… unnerving.

"Protecting them from who, Mister Marcello?" Blossom asked the suspect, genuinely concerned about this unseen family he was talking about. The mere thought that someone could be in trouble had upset her. Why must the world be this way? Couldn't everyone be in a house like hers? (Minus a mother like Selicia, of course, and the sibling discord among the Girls and…)

"They'll hurt my wife and son if I say anything," Capo Marcello said. "And… I owe my loyalty to the Lombardi family. They- they raised me from the streets and plucked me out of the factory. They have their reasons for being harsh."

"But… It's not good to hurt anybody," Blossom said. It didn't take long for her to piece together this brief insight into the inner workings of the Lombardi Family.

Capo Marcello merely closed his eyes and leaned back. Blossom thought that he could see a tear dripping down his face, but between the rough terrain of his injured face and the dim lighting, she couldn't quite tell, even with her superior vision, whether it was blood or tears.

"I know," the gangster said. Blossom took his hand, but it had caused him to shout and recoil in fear when she did. She quickly apologized.

"M-maybe we can protect your family, Mister Marcello," Blossom proposed, and meant it – not as an interrogation tactic – she wouldn't have known that there was tactic involved at the time.

Detective Mullens couldn't believe it, but she had gotten the Capo to talk more than he did in the past few days. Somehow, jailing the man and torturing him did less than Blossom's sweet-talking. 'How is it even possible?' he wondered. But he sensed an opportunity.

"Blossom, Blossom, come in," he pulled his radio from his belt and said. "Don't reply me, don't even move. Ask him if anyone and their families are going to get hurt because of the 'big thing that's about to happen'."

Blossom listened and thought about it. She knew the stakes when Mister Mullens mentioned the 'big thing' and his question, which involved lives.

"Mister Marcello, are people going to be hurt?" Blossom asked, feeling nervous because of the nature of the question, because of what might come next.

The criminal, still immobile as before, tried to move as much as he could. It suddenly dawned on Blossom that she didn't know how long he had been in the interrogation room. He could have been inside for a day or more.

"Yes," Mister Marcello admitted, his voice croaky and cracked. His eyes darted to the cup of water in front of him. He bit his flaky lips. Blossom noticed his body language and floated up to his eye level. Drifting towards the table, all the while followed by the frightened gaze of the overweight criminal, who had never seen her fly before, she took the cup of water, which was half-evaporated by now, and floated closer to the Capo's face.

"Blossom, stop! Do not give him the water!" Detective Mullens protested over the radio. He had placed the cup of water there for a reason, out of reach of the bastard for more than a day, like a carrot on a stick, just out of reach. The pink-eyed little girl was ruining his set-up. "I said stop!"

Blossom did not listen this time. The poor man looked incredibly thirsty. And hungry. And in need
of a good, long bath. He needed more besides. Tipping the cup, she let the man drink, and he drank, every sip of it. He even licked the brim of the plastic cup, which was transparent. Detective Mullens had chosen such a plastic cup deliberately so that the criminal could watch it evaporate over time as he continued to thirst for it.

Outside, the detective banged his fist against the concrete wall.

When Blossom was done, she sat on the table, and asked: "But what's going to happen, Mister Marcello?"

The criminal eyed her warily, a good long time, seemingly to consider betraying the Lombardi. He searched those glowing demon eyes of Blossom's. He realized, finally, that he had been talking to a little girl all along, just a little girl – not one affiliated with the USDO or the TPD, not one who was fighting against him – even if she was. He sat up, opened his mouth before clenching it again. He looked down at the empty cup of water, then back at Blossom.

"I can't tell you, Blossom. I'm sorry. I just can't," he finally said. Blossom was devastated.

"But- People are going to die!" she pleaded urgently. "Please, Mister Marcello, they have families too!"

"So do I. I'm sorry, lil' miss," he said. "It's nothin' personal. I enjoyed speaking to you, I really do."

The door to the interrogation room opened after that. Both Capo Marcello and Blossom turned to look. Detective Mullens was there, with a scowl on his face. But then again, he always did.

"You're done here, Blossom," he pointed his thumb behind him. "Get out."

"But-

"Out. Now," the detective reiterated sternly.

As Blossom shuffled out, upset that she wasn't able to find out enough, Detective Mullens marched up to the criminal and wordlessly threw a punch across his face, and Blossom had witnessed it when she turned around briefly to see what he was doing coming into the room. Just as quietly, the detective left, all the while rubbing his fist against his trench coat and shaking it to whisk away the pain.

"I told you it wouldn't do any good," the detective lectured Blossom as she sat down on a foldable chair nearby, unable to even look at him. "There's only my way or failure. And what were you thinking? Trusting a hardened criminal like that?"

"But he sounded really honest!" Blossom alleged and suddenly looked up at Detective Mullens, who stood towering over her. "Does he really have a family, Mister Mullens?"

Detective Mullens hated to be wrong, even if it was in the inconsequential things. To get something wrong was lethal out there, in the business of police investigations in a city as corrupted and rotten to the core as Townsville, and now, he hated to be wrong because it meant justifying Blossom's childish and naively forgiving attitude towards the incorrigible criminals of the city. The truth was, there was no such thing as inconsequential. There was always a consequence to everything.

"Yes- Blossom, but that doesn't mean that you're right," the detective said as he bent down and pressed his face closer to Blossom. "Lots of family men out there doing horrible things. It doesn't make them noble. It just makes them hypocritical. You know what that means, Blossom? Do I have to spell it out for you, lil' girlie?"
"No," Blossom said as she looked away from the detective, looking like she was about to cry.

"I think that's enough," Agent Blake said, storming up to him.

"I agree," Detective Mullens straightened up and said. Looking around at Bubbles and Buttercup, he evaluated his options. The suspect was afraid of Blossom, even though she was acting in a non-threatening way. Bubbles was the sweetest of them all if the reports he'd been reading holds true, so that left Buttercup. The detective knew that he couldn't keep smacking Capo Marcello any further - he was just too wounded and tired to do so, and the criminal underboss too clamped up by his presence. Buttercup was the best option - and what an option she was! The tomboy was quickly gaining a reputation for being incredibly violent and brutish… and lethal. In the criminal underworld, she had even gained a nickname.

The Teeth Collector.

That's what they had started calling her. Rumor had it that she had been collecting trophies off of people she'd attacked, and she didn't discriminate between the living and the dead. Neither did she just collect teeth. She would be perfect for an interrogation session. He'd seen the way the suspect squirmed when she looked at him.

"Tell you what, Sergeant Blake," Detective Mullens said to the USDO operative with unheard-of kindness, which betrayed his intentions. "Why don't you and my partner, Olivia, take Blossom and Bubbles on a tour around the station? They've never seen the inside of a police station, right? Now's their chance. I need to speak with Buttercup about some… police business. Alone."

"Aren't the Girls exposed to enough violence as it is?" Olivia objected. "They don't need-"

"What we don't need is blood on our hands because we can't do whatever's necessary," Detective Mullens said. "Haven't you read the reports? Buttercup's seen plenty, with or without what she'll see here today."

Blossom didn't like it. She knew what Buttercup was capable of, what she absolutely loved to do, and what she would do in her absence.

Agent Blake could not object to this - he had heard what the suspect had said. Capo Marcello had admitted that people were going to die in what came next - whatever it was. Neither could Olivia reject her own father - not just because Detective Mullens was her father, but because he had a point, an irrefutable point. It was either the scumbag or God knows how many people.

"We'll have blood on our hands either way," Officer Olivia said. With that, she took Bubbles by the hand and led her out. Agent Blake did the same with Blossom, and surprisingly, despite her fears of leaving Buttercup alone with a vulnerable man, fully endorsed to do as she pleased, she hopped off her seat and allowed herself to be taken out of the interrogation room corridor. What was there more to say? She had failed when she was given a chance…
Chapter 90: Like Jell-O

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup gets to indulge in some of her favorite activities.

Chapter 90: Like Jell-O

The City of Townsville. Outskirts. Precinct 55.


Detective Mullens did not need to brief Buttercup much at all to get things started. Unlike Blossom, Buttercup wasn't afraid to get her hands dirty and do what was necessary to truly combat crime. Although she was a little too bloodthirsty even to him, she was exactly what he needed.

All Buttercup needed to know was that she would get exactly what she wanted, and when everyone else had left behind the interrogation rooms, she had expressed, in no uncertain terms, that she wanted to do what the detective did - hurt the suspect, and for whatever end, she did not care. She just wanted to have fun.

"You'll get exactly what you want," the detective promised the grinning little girl as he led her into Interrogation Room C. Capo Marcello stared at the new presence in the room. This time, it wasn't pink irises glowing in the dark. This time, it was a pair of glowing, ghoulish green irises, and it looked as if death had personally paid him a visit.

"Okay, you worthless piece of shit," Detective Mullens shouted at the criminal as he marched up to him. "You better start talking before we do something that really smart to you." He took the man by the collar and twisted it, lifting him slightly off his seat. A button fell off as he wrenched the Capo towards him. The detective, however, did not scare the criminal. Not anymore. Instead, he laughed brokenly.

"I've made my peace," Marcello said. "You can't make me talk any more than you already did."

"Wanna bet?" Detective Mullens challenged, biting his words in a growl.

"You know, me and you - we're the same," the criminal said. Detective Mullens considered his words for a minute, before turning to Buttercup and gesturing with a nod of his head to begin her work. Buttercup understood this and padded towards the handcuffed Capo, her glowing green eyes growing bigger to the battered man.

"Buttercup, break his little finger for me, will you?" the detective requested. "Just bend it all the way back until you hear what sounds like a twig breaking."

The Capo turned quickly to the little girl. He recognized her. The face - vaguely, imperceptibly Asian, those green eyes. He knew who he was looking at. The Teeth Collector. Buttercup. The most
vicious of 'The Three'. He had faced her before, and it didn't turn out too well at Townsville Port. Immediately, he began taking deep breaths, preparing for the worst.

Without even pausing, or hesitating, Buttercup took the criminal's pinkie and turned to the detective. "You mean like this!?!" Buttercup yelled as she snapped the restrained man's little finger so far backward that it was flat against the back of his hand. The sound of joints dislocating and bones breaking was loud. The Capo screamed louder, like a stuck pig as he tried to pull his hand away, but it wasn't the handcuff that was holding his hand in place. It was Buttercup, and it was effortless to her.

"Attagirl," Detective Mullens praised his torture assistant.

Buttercup then turned to observe Marcello's reactions again, the look on her face manic. The Capo was still screaming and squirming, but it was like shouting at a vice grip and expecting the handle to rotate itself loose. Buttercup giggled at how funny he looked when he was struggling and crying and screaming like a baby. He sounded funny too. People could be so entertaining when they're in pain.

"You're like Jell-O, Mister Marcello," she laughed, and couldn't stop giggling.

"Ready to talk?" Detective Mullens asked again. The prisoner did not reply. Taking shallow breaths, he stared Mullens down defiantly. Gasp would escape his lips, but words that would put an end to the ordeal did not. The detective smiled at the futility of his resistance.

"Break the next two fingers," the detective ordered. Buttercup looked up at him gratefully before turning back to Marcello to watch his reaction to Detective Mullen's orders. The suspect looked like he was about to protest, but instead swallowed it as he continued to take shallow breaths in anticipation of the pain to come.

Letting go of the Capo's little finger, which flopped where it was as if it was boneless, Buttercup seized his ring and middle finger roughly and snapped them backward, doing the same to them as she did to his pinkie. She'd held them so hard that she had even crushed the bones inside. He screamed even louder this time, such that the sound of mutilated joints and bones simply could not compete. Capo Marcello struggled instinctively to get off the chair, but he was easily held down by ropes and handcuffs and Buttercup.

"This is fun!" Buttercup giggled. "Can I have his fingernails, Mister Mullens? Can I? Please?"

"That's a great idea, cupcake," Detective Mullens praised as he stroked Buttercup's head, more as a show of who's in charge to his interrogation subject than out of adoration of the little girl. "Kid needs a reward for good behavior. Am I right, Donny Marcello?"

Without waiting for permission because she was too ecstatic, Buttercup seized the suspect by the wrist and started digging with her other hand. To the enhanced little girl, it wasn't a hard thing to do. Fingernails weren't as firmly attached to the human skin as bones were to each other, and for Buttercup, it was like playing with putty. Or Jell-O. With her own fingernails, she was able to rip off Marcello's thumbnail in one motion. Blood poured from the exposed flesh as the man gasped in pain, lacking the energy to shout.

"Buttercup! What're you doing?" Detective Mullens scolded.

"But- but- I thought I get to take his fingernails?" Buttercup said, even as she was clutching the biggest, fattest thumb fingernail she had ever seen. "You said that I'd get a reward for good behavior?"
"Yes— but don’t do anything until I tell you to, okay?" the detective said, in a mock-fatherly kind of tone.

"I’m sorry…” Buttercup apologized, and this time, she was sincere - she looked like it too, as she bowed her head in shame and put her hands behind her. She played with her boots as the only way to distract herself (poorly) in such an awkward moment.

"It’s fine, Buttercup. You’re one fine angel, you know that? Whoever taught you your manners sure knows what he was doing," Detective Mullens said. "That said, that’s the kind of behavior that needs rewarding too. You know, I heard you collect teeth as a hobby."

Buttercup looked up at him with a smile; what he said had lit her up like a light bulb, and the grin on her face was of the kind that shouldn’t be found on a child.

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As Blossom was led through the police station half-heartedly, by an Officer Olivia who was even less inclined to leave her father and Buttercup alone with the suspect, she hardly listened to how she would drone on about what each room did. Still, her acute senses and perfect memory couldn’t help but to take it all in – the office was where all the police officers and detective worked when they’re not out in the streets, the break room was where they had their donuts, the rec room was where they played pool, the armory was where they get their guns. All the while, she was straining hard to listen beyond that. And she thought she could hear something from the basement if she tried hard enough.

Yes, she thought she could hear it, even feel it in the walls and floor. Periodic emanations of… She concentrated harder, and now it wasn’t just some abstract sensation. Screams. Distant at first, but sounded like they were coming closer. Screams. That was what they were. Mister Marcello’s screams. Imagination filled in what Blossom could not see. What could Buttercup be doing to him?

"Blossom? Blossom," Officer Olivia shook her as she was concentrating on the basement. Blossom looked at her to see that she had cups of ice-cream in her hands. "Here. Even police officers like ice-cream, I guess." They had just been led into a lounge area at the far end of the building. It made sense that she would try something like this. Reluctantly, Blossom took her share and sat on an old, creaky wooden chair behind a table. Bubbles sat beside her.

"Do you think Buttercup's going to be okay? I think it's scary if you're down there alone…” Bubbles said as she opened her cup of ice-cream hungrily, squeaking with glee when she realized that it was blueberry-flavored.

"It's not Buttercup I'm worried about," Blossom said as she hesitantly opened hers. It was strawberry-flavored, but it was crimson in color.

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Buttercup's hands were covered in blood. She had removed her gloves after Detective Mullens had given her permission to extract Capo Marcello's teeth by hand. It was the detective's suggestion.

The little girl had already collected three of the man's teeth, lining them up like precious little jewels
on the table. Standing on the suspect's lap, she pried open his mouth once more and pinched another of his teeth, getting ready to pull it out. She had already collected an incisor, a canine and premolar for herself. Although she didn't know the names of the different types of teeth, she knew the difference and wanted one of each, at least. She had reached in deep as the noisy gangster screamed, blood, mixed with saliva, spewing from his mouth as he did.

After getting a good grip on a molar, Buttercup yanked it out - the force behind her hand ensured that she didn't need a second try. With a most sickening crack, Buttercup had gotten herself a molar. The man screamed, his voice broken from having done so many times.

"Alright, I think you've given him enough dental treatment, Buttercup," Detective Mullens said, then turned to his suspect. "Ready to talk? Or do you need our little dentist here to continue her work?"

Despite the excessive blood dribbling down his lips, despite how empty his mouth now felt, Capo Marcello never wavered. The detective had to hand it to him at the very least - The Capo was resilient. Anyone else would have cracked the moment Buttercup entered the room.

In the meantime, as the detective waited just in case he had admired the criminal too hastily, Buttercup jumped off his lap before leaping up onto the table and sitting by her teeth collection. She giggled as she counted her teeth, noting that she had four - but there were so many more teeth in Marcello's mouth…

"FUCK YOU," Marcello said, though, by this point, he had difficulty pronouncing his words. Buttercup turned to him, shocked at the language. It had only made her more eager to empty his mouth of teeth.

"Fine. You have it your way - let those people die," Detective Mullens said. Picking up his trench coat, he put it on, implying that he was leaving. "But don't think that I'll let you off easy. You'll pay for what you've done."

He turned to Buttercup. "You can do whatever you want to him from now on, but on one condition, Buttercup," he offered.

"What, Mister Mullens?" Buttercup asked cheerfully.

"Make sure he takes a long time to die," the detective said. "You know how to do that?"

"My Mom taught me which parts of the body not to hurt. Miss Keane, too," Buttercup thought and reported at the same time. She remembered the homework Miss Keane had given her and her sisters too - it was one of the few things from school that she was interested in because the anatomy chart had so much detail about the insides of the human body. She couldn't wait to see for herself how they looked like - if Detective Mullens would let her.

"Good, why don't you apply what you learned in school?" Detective Mullens said, before walking away, and before he passed through the door, he turned around, as if there was something he forgot. "Oh, and I'll bring you some ice-cream. What's your favorite?"

"I like the cool one," Buttercup said.

"Mint?" the detective guessed.

"Yeah," Buttercup said. The detective smiled at her, and at the same time, he was grinning at Capo Marcello, who looked absolutely dreadful, with a foot in the grave, not from injury, but from the pain. The bravado and hatred in the Capo's face had melted away to reveal pure dread. He could easily imagine what the criminal was thinking: with supervision, Buttercup was a relentless torturer, even if she did not know the term nor even think of it as a torture session. How much worse was he
going to suffer from Buttercup being given free rein over him?

"And what's the magic word?" the detective feigned casualness candidly, just to poke fun at the Capo and less to entertain the psychopathic child.

"Please?" Buttercup said, the manic look on her face giving way to the child she was supposed to be, at least briefly. "And thanks?"

"Right back 'atcha, bud," the detective said candidly as he finally opened the interrogation room door as if he was waving goodbye to a little girl having fun with a doll. Or a boy putting together… and taking apart a Lego construct. "Enjoy yourself!"

The moment he was outside and out of view, he pulled a cigarette out and lit it. As he walked away from the interrogation room, he tried not to look at how Buttercup was greedily snapping one finger after the next, breaking the index then the thumb on the second hand. He took a puff and hurried his footsteps. Buttercup scared him; he never expected her to be that receptive to torturing a person, to the point of utter and reckless sadism. He'd never expected to have to witness such cruelty in what was little more than a kindergartener endowed with superhuman abilities. Even in a city as vile as Townsville, the youngest criminal he arrested who had killed and knowingly injured someone for selfish gains had been eight. Buttercup was a month old if he did the math correctly.

He almost felt sorry for Marcello. But it was all for the greater good. It was either him or the innocent.

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The screams grew only louder and louder the more Blossom hoped that it would stop. She had hoped that Detective Mullens and Buttercup would stop. She imagined that her sister would be involved. She would want to be involved, knowing Buttercup. Blossom's ice cream lay half-melting on the table, barely consumed.

As she continued to listen to the basement, the walls and floor spying for her, she thought she heard the loud bang of a gunshot, even through the soundproof walls of Interrogation Room C. She thought she could hear the snickering of her sister.

Blossom could not bear it any longer. Without warning Officer Olivia, who was attending to her, she dashed away towards the interrogation room.

"Blossom, stop!" Officer Olivia told the little girl, but nothing could stop her. Agent Blake couldn't even get off his chair, much less grab her.

She would zoom across rooms within seconds and open doors with the same rapidity. She stopped for nothing, not because of the protests of the police officers in the station, not even when she passed Detective Mullens by, who was on the way to the lounge.

"Hey, get back here!" he shouted fruitlessly, before turning back towards the basement and running after Blossom. "Blossom!"

He had no hope of catching up and stopping her, but he knew where she was going, and as long as he could get to Interrogation Room C, he could stop her from interrupting Buttercup… and see the horrific mess she had made out of Marcello. While Buttercup might be impervious to trauma it seemed, he knew very well that Blossom and Bubbles were not. No, they were as far from
impervious to trauma as a human being could be.

On the way to the basement, he could hear the rapid pattering of footsteps behind him. Looking back, he barely caught a glimpse of Bubbles as she sped past him, overtaking him and disappearing down the stairs leading to the interrogation rooms. "Stop! Damn it!"

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Buttercup had drawn her pistol, and now it was smoking from the barrel, having been oiled excessively by inexperienced hands, namely, her own. She beamed at her own handiwork as Marcello, her poor victim, screamed brokenly, in bursts, as he was too tired to even breathe properly.

She had shot him in the knee. One thing she learned about the human body when she had repeatedly broken it was that the joints were not only vulnerable compared to the bones around it, but also painful when destroyed.

And she had done just that. When she shot Marcello in the knee, she had heard not just bones breaking, but also his joint imploding, like a cracked walnut bashed open with a hammer. She thought it sounded unique and interesting. She laughed at how the criminal seemed to be choking on his own breath, how his eyes would roll upwards as if to read his own brains. For some reason, it was hilarious to her. And it was as if Marcello agreed with her. He would sometimes break into a fit of laughter after screaming too much. In reality, it was just another way unimaginable pain was expressed. To Buttercup, however, she thought that it was a sign that Marcello liked getting hurt.

Even before she destroyed Marcello's knee, she had done some other things to him. She had decided to practice what Detective Mullens had tasked her to do, and to that end, she had broken every single one of his fingers and tore off all of his fingernails. She never thought that she could ever get bored of pulling teeth out though, but she'd had enough of it for the time being when she removed half his teeth from the same side of his mouth. His face wasn't even recognizable as such, being covered in dried blood, his nose crooked and the shape of it different. Malformed. His hair was messier than before, and clumps of it were gone and found on the floor.

But it wasn't enough. There was more fun to be had. Buttercup pointed her pistol at Marcello's elbow.

"N-no… Please…” he begged. "I- I have a family. Don't."

Outside, Blossom attempted to open the interrogation room door, only to discover that it had been electronically locked. Floating up and next to the one-sided window to see what Buttercup was doing, she saw it - Marcello looking little more than a mutilated corpse, and Buttercup preparing to do worse. She banged on the window in an attempt to get Buttercup's attention.

It didn't work.

So Blossom smashed her way through the glass, stopping Buttercup dead in her tracks as she turned around, surprised, to see her rival sister gate-crashing the party.

"BUTTERCUP! STOP!" Blossom cried as she marched up to her sister and seized her by the pistol, pushing it out of harm's way of Marcello.

"Please… stop…” the man kept repeating. "Please…”
"What did you do, Buttercup!?" Blossom scolded as she wrenched the pistol in Buttercup's hand out of her grasp. When Buttercup turned around to look at the nuisance that had disturbed her playtime, Blossom was shocked by the look on her face. She wasn't the Buttercup she knew. There was a sadistic grin on Buttercup's face as her eyes pierced Blossom's. Speckles of blood dotted her face like rubies or glitter glue.

"Detective Mullens asked me to," she said. "I'm fighting crime, aren't I? It's fun to fight crime…"

Startled, Blossom gave her a push, and when Buttercup fell to the floor, the slight jolt of inconsequential pain seemed to wake her up a little.

"Hey, what gives!?" Buttercup growled in her usual, rough manner. Blossom did not reply, being at the loss of words. So much was still new to her, much less a torture session with her sister involved. Buttercup got up as Blossom was still trying to match words with things and concepts in her head.

"You've never allowed me to do what I want!" Buttercup growled and looked like she was about to do something nasty when Bubbles emerged through the broken window, and gasped at the sight of Marcello and Buttercup. Undeterred by the mere presence of who she considered her weakest and most useless sister, Buttercup punched Blossom in the stomach, who fell backward on her hind as she clutched her stomach.

Bubbles' hands went up to her mouth when it happened. Her sisters were fighting again. Dashing between them, she shielded Blossom from Buttercup, her hands on Buttercup's shoulders. "Buttercup! She's your sister! You shouldn't hit your sister!"

"Get out of my way!" Buttercup hollered as she pushed Bubbles aside. Bubbles screamed in surprise. Just then, the door opened, and Detective Mullens was standing in the doorway.

"What the hell is this!?" he shouted. Interrogation Room C was a mess - and he wasn't even referring to Capo Marcello. The one-sided window, which was supposed to be bulletproof, was broken, and the Girls were all over the place, amid broken shards of glass. Blossom and Bubbles scrambled to her feet. Buttercup, previously panting with rage and nearly out of control, returned to a more girlish facade. Her hands went around her back once again in an innocent posture.

"We were just playing…" Buttercup lied in a weak attempt to get out of trouble she perceived to soon be had, though Detective Mullens saw through it effortlessly.

"You shouldn't have come in here, Blossom," he reprimanded the leader of the Powerpuff subjects. "You failed when you had your chance, girlie, even when I told you exactly why you were wrong. Being nice doesn't work! I'm not running a kiddy camp here, so why don't you-"

All the while, the suspect had been watching, even as his eyes were failing him. Imprinted into his mind was Blossom, the last thing he would ever see, and it wasn't the worst sight to behold. Her presence had triggered something in him, mainly because of how gentle and truly concerned about him she had been when everyone else had wished him nothing but pain and death. His wife and son - the mafia he was a part of was going to kill them regardless. They were going to pin the blame on him for one thing or another - he'd been so blind for too long, and that was a symptom of being near the top for too long, orbiting the trinity who were the Amoeba Boys.

Only Blossom could protect them now - what remained of his legacy, what remained of his love and innocence.

"Morbucks…" Marcello wheezed with incredible difficulty. Everyone turned to look at him. It wasn't a mystery why he had such difficulty talking, considering the blood soaking his shirt after
Buttercup had given him a full makeover, and the blood pooling around the leg he'd be limping on for the rest of his life if he could even leave Interrogation Room C alive.

Blossom darted to his side, holding his hand.

"They're going after Morbucks," the underboss managed. "Please… P-protect my s-son and wife, don't- don't let them… Blossom, please."

"I will, Mister Marcello. What's Morbucks?" Blossom asked desperately, stroking his hand as tears threatened to well up once more. The man, even though he had chosen the wrong side, looked all too pitiful

"The- the-" Marcello struggled, but he could no longer go on – he had simply lost too much blood and gained too much pain. His eyes rolled shut. Detective Mullens had nothing but the break through in mind.Marching up to the restrained man, he pulled his large pistol out and drove the muzzle into Capo Marcello's forehead.

"Which Morbucks!? Where" He interrogated. But it was too late; he had passed out, and death wasn't far away. It wouldn't be, considering how Buttercup had made it so enticing. Officer Olivia appeared through the doorway. "Olive! Get the defibrillators now! Damn it!"

Even as Marcello's heart ceased to beat, Blossom held his hand, careful to avoid the fingers Buttercup had so gleefully broken. She couldn't believe it, even though his death was not the first to witness. He was different somehow. How, she couldn't quite put into words, but he was. She could feel it.

They'd tried everything, but nothing could bring Marcello back. Five minutes was all they had, and when that time elapsed, they had lost everything that was locked up inside his head, where the true soul of a person resided.

"What's Morbucks, Mister Mullens?" Buttercup asked as she was sitting on the table beside the corpse of Marcello, drinking water from a paper cup, swinging her legs playfully as if she was in a playground.

"Only the richest man in Townsville, or hell, the entire state," Detective Mullens said, but he wasn't really paying much attention to Buttercup. As he leaned against a wall, watching Officer Olivia, his daughter, putting a shroud over his suspect's corpse, his mind was on overdrive, sifting through every little piece of information he had seen, heard or talked about. "He's a widower, but he has a daughter. 'Bout your size, but five years old."

In the meantime, Blossom was crying in Bubbles arms, and all Bubbles could do was to let her cry on her shoulders.

"Well, what did he do to get rich?" Buttercup pressed the detective.

"Everything and anything. He used to be a tramp who started work as a factory worker, became a manager, and opened his own company," the detective said. Yes, he knew all about the great Morbucks. That man had quite a few charges pushed against him, all of which were dropped, of course. The only thing he found surprising was that the billionaire was otherwise clean - he had no links with the various criminal syndicates, including the Lombardi, except the kind that was incidental. Still, the detective couldn't believe it - preferring to think that he was only slippery enough to hide the evidences of his association with crime. "Started manufacturing machines and cars, then designing his own - with hundreds of brilliant minds on his payroll, of course. He's got his own R&D operation going - Morbucks Industries Research Labs is his baby just as much as Elodie
'Princess' Morbucks. Wouldn't you know it, they're both five, and as it just so happens…”

"Boring!" Buttercup moaned rudely as she hopped off the table. "When do I get to hurt someone else?"

But Detective Mullens didn't care. In fact, he looked like he'd just had a shock of electricity. Before, he was entertaining the idea of just brute-forcing the whole matter by sending police officers to every Morbucks property, but that would involve hundreds of them, and likely put innumerable holes in the net he was trying to cast because of the sheer number of corrupted police officers. The USDO wouldn't be able to manage that either, with their limited manpower. This was not to mention the fact that the Girls could only be at three places at once, and even then, it would be unwise to split them up, judging by the reports of hostile enhanced beings in the wide world… It would be like trying to shoot a fly with a cannon, except this fly was a really dangerous one.

Introducing the Morbucks to Buttercup had rung a bell somewhere in his head. It was Christmas, and that meant that the Morbucks Industries Research Labs was celebrating the fifth anniversary of its founding. And since it was the pinnacle of Mister Morbucks' achievements… They were all going to be there. It was all too perfect, like killing two birds with one stone, except in this case, it wouldn't just be two birds. The last two members of the Morbucks estate would be there, and they would be at the research labs, which would be a high-value target - not for the Lombardi - they wouldn't try to pull something like this off - but for someone else. Someone who could afford to take the heat that attacking one of the richest man in the United States would give. Someone with lots to lose, and lots to gain.

No, a greater force was at play.

"Blossom, Bubbles, Buttercup! We need to go. Now!" Detective Mullens shouted suddenly, springing into action. The research labs and the Morbucks family would be heavily guarded by private contractors - which meant that an army was likely heading towards the Morbucks.

It was going to be the mother of all battles, if the detective was right...
Chapter 91: Before Bedtime

Precinct 55. Mission Time: 45 Minutes

Blossom could not believe what she was hearing. Over a hundred bad guys would soon be attacking the innocent - that would be like ten tens or more. To her, it was an uncountable number, and what she couldn't understand, she feared. And there was little that could assure her that everything was fine.

The Lamborghini speed transport rumbled towards a place called the Morbucks Industries Research Labs. While Blossom had been feeling uneasy ever since she saw her own sister, Buttercup, hurting a man who was so helpless to the point of killing him, Buttercup herself was completely numb to the gravity of the situation, nor of what she had done - as far as she was concerned, she'd only been having fun, and on the side, taking revenge for what the Capo and his men had done to her, what they were party to. Bubbles, on the other hand, was shaking, but after taking a deep breath and digging her fingernails into her palms, she steeled herself for what might be coming. In her mind, she knew she had to stay strong, if only to fulfill her dream of bringing her sisters, her entire family, closer together.

"Daddy, I'm scared," Blossom had said to her father over the phone, just before they boarded the speed transport taking them there. Despite the urgency of the situation, Agent Blake had allowed her to take a few minutes to call her father, to prepare herself. Morale was a determinant factor in any battle; more so when the combatants were little girls literally fresh out of the crib. "Mister Mullens said that there's going to be more than a hundred of them. Lots of people are in trouble."

"Blossom, it's okay to be afraid," the disembodied voice of Professor Utonium had comforted her over the phone. "It means you're a brave girl, a good girl. Only brave, good girls save the day even when they are afraid."

"But what if I can't?" Blossom had confessed her fears; she was almost hugging the phone to her ear as if it was her Daddy's hand. "What if people die because I can't do it?" A stinging sensation prickled her eyes once again. Marcello was one of those people. She wasn't able to get through to him in time, and he'd died as a result. Buttercup had been a close call. Then there were all those people on Highway 13.

"Oh, Blossom…" the professor had said over the phone, lost for words, not because of frustration or impatience, but out of sympathy and worry. "You can't blame yourself for that - girls your age aren't
even supposed to be out there. You've always tried your hardest, Blossom, I know you did, and even General Blackwater has to admit you've done some good. You don't know it yet, but you've helped so many people. Focus on that, okay?"

"Okay," Blossom had said, as she held onto the professor's words tightly in her mind, tears welling up in her eyes. She sniffled a little, gasping for air as she was barely holding back tears.

"Hey, it's okay… Be my brave little girl, okay?" Professor Utonium had said over the phone. "Well, I'll see each other soon."

"Really soon?" Blossom sniffled.

"Really soon. Do you know where you're going?" the professor had asked over the phone.

"Someplace called the 'Morbucks Industries Research Lab'," Blossom had said.

"It'll be over before you know it," the professor had promised. "And when it is, I'll be right there waiting for you, alright?"

When Blossom was done reminiscing on this sweet recent memory of hers, she pumped her tiny shotgun again, checking to make sure that it wasn't jammed or if a shell wasn't inside before she was ready to leave the car, despite knowing that she had already checked the weapon. It was quickly becoming her nervous tic, but then she was beginning to realize something - if she could shoot beams from her eyes, what use would she have for a gun?

As the Girls' speed transport screamed towards the Morbucks property, Agent Blake was radioing in a lot of information to his security colleagues – what Detective Mullens had found out, what could happen and where it could happen. A Rapid Response Force was dispatched to the labs, well ahead of Agent Blake and the enhanced little girls he was transporting, in an attempt to deal with the threat or at least keep them at bay until the Girls' arrival. General Blackwater would mobilize what was practically an army, but they would be slow to arrive; someone had been planning this all along, and there had been many simultaneous cases of serious but comparatively petty crimes that required USDO intervention: robberies, street violence, and rioting, perpetrated by as-yet-unknown parties.


At the Morbucks Industries Research Labs lobby, a massive Christmas party had been thrown in honor of, well, many things. To the employees of Morbucks, it was all about the success of the labs' numerous projects, both publicly-known and privately-classified. To the investors attending the massive function, it was all about the profits of Morbucks Industries and its subsidiaries. However, to the still-grieving Mister Morbucks, who stood alone near a window despite his many friends, colleagues and connections, it was all about his daughter – the muse, daughter of another muse, who gave him the idea for the labs. She was born with a natural curiosity, Mister Morbucks had gathered from the way she would glance all around her and listen without crying – the research labs had been all about that, a monument to curiosity, leading to learning and innovation. A monument to his dead wife. A monument to his daughter, who might soon succumb to cancer. It was life at its worst, with its ironies and cruel jokes.

Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks was sitting at the kids’ corner, attended to by her butler and maids. Despite the cancer treatments, she had a full scalp tied into two massive, messy buns. The official story was that her scalp and hair were resilient, and no amount of cancer treatment could destroy
them. The open secret was that she was wearing a wig fashioned to look exactly like her natural hair.

Of friends, Princess Morbucks had few, but it wasn't for the lack of trying. Ever since being diagnosed with congenital cancer at the age of four, she had been plucked from her preschool and put in a hospital, where she had been going to on and off, usually living there for months on end. The hospital had become her second home, just as school became a second home to others. She was either tutored at hospital or home-schooled as a result.

Sitting at her table were a few kids her age - kids who were brought in to learn with her, who were brought in specially for companionship - in secret, her father had subsidized the children's education and living expenses just to get the parents, who were poor, to agree to this arrangement. It became an open secret rather quickly, as the children had learned about this from their indiscreet parents, and so had only continued to entertain Elodie Morbucks for the sake of their luxurious treatment. For a bunch of five-year-olds, they were good actors and she hardly took notice - though she did feel a certain emptiness whenever she would play with them, or speak to them.

Here at the Christmas party, they talked little but ate much, despite not having to walk to the buffet table to take their food - that need being attended to by the servants.

"Is it good? Daddy always orders the best for my friends…” Elodie asked, concerned about her 'friends' opinions. Not only had they been acting, but they were also in on it together, conspiring to keep Elodie dependant on them. An early childhood spent in relative poverty had taught them a few crafty tricks when it came to social situations.

"Could be worse," one would say.

"Better than nothing," another added.

"It's pretty okay," another piled on. Elodie's friends weren't even very aware of themselves and the idea of politics, but they didn't need to be.

"My mom makes the best crumpets," another would say. "How I wish we have those here…”

Their carefully-constructed opinions were all it took to put cracks in Elodie's confidence, driving home the stake into her heart, rousing her into a panic and state of urgency.

"We'll have crumpets the next time," she promised, her lips slightly shivering as she held hands with herself under the table - she had no one to hold hands with, not in front of her friends. "It'll be better the next time."

"Really? That's great!" one of them would then praise as if throwing a dog a bone.

"You're our best friend, Elodie," another added on, coaxing a smile from Elodie. The Princess smiled back, grateful for their 'understanding'. It was too perfect. The cycle would repeat itself once more, forever and ever, sooner or later.

But domestic matters would have to be put aside when a sizeable team of USDO soldiers, armed to the hilt, came through the front entrance and into the lobby where the party was held. Despite the dire warnings and urgent orders they gave in order to avoid an impending attack and resultant casualties, the vast majority of the party attendees stood rooted to where they were. What little reaction there was came from the Morbucks' private security. There, they argued - no one could believe that Morbucks, whether the family or the company, could be in any sort of danger. They had been in Townsville their whole lives, and not once had anyone plotted to take down the company or the family.
That was, until groups of masked men came through the doors, guns blazing, taking down multiple USDO soldiers and Morbucks security officers, sending the rest scrambling - the soldiers to take up positions, and the security officers to shepherd their employers and fellow employees deeper into the complex. Few of Morbucks' men stayed to fight as their loyalty was with Mister Morbucks. Teams were assigned to safeguard Mister Morbucks and Elodie.

The firefight raged on. Men, women, and children who couldn't escape from the lobby were mowed down in their best outfit. The USDO Rapid Response Force was outnumbered two to one in the lobby, having rushed to the location and spread themselves thin to cover every possible angle of assault towards the complex. Ten of them had reached the lobby, and eight lived long enough to shoot at their enemies, and there were twenty of them.

"They are Foundation! Radio in a report, STAT!" the team leader of the lobby team ordered. It was obvious, despite the unmarked combat gear and balaclava. Their tactics and training were superior to the common street thug or even the ruling gangsters of Townsville. He and most of his team were hunkered down at the reception desks, just as trapped as the receptionists there who weren't able to get out. He took occasional peeks out of his desk and saw that they were being flanked, with Foundation terrorists moving behind pillars to their left and right.

"This is Romeo-Two-Alpha, this is Romeo-Two Alpha!" the signaller of the team yelled into his radio while he was crouching low behind cover. "We have a Foxtrot-Civil-War-Three situation, over!"

That was all the radioman could send out. Above the Rapid Response Team, more Foundation operatives were streaming in, armed with sniper rifles of varying degrees of lethality, and the radioman was shot cleanly through the eye. He was dead even before his body hit the floor limply.

The rest of his team did not last very long after they were encircled from every possible angle.

**Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 12 Minutes**

By the time Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup had arrived at the parking lot of the Morbucks Industries Research Labs, reports coming from the USDO Rapid Response Force had thinned out with their numbers. The Girls, along with their chaperone, could hear it on their radio - panicked quick counts of enemy presence, a depressingly never-ending list of casualties and desperate calls for reinforcement.

The doors of the Lamborghini Speed Transport swung open, and the Girls jumped out, ready for action - Blossom wanted to help those people in need and Bubbles too. Buttercup needed the amusement, the sound of her fists pounding flesh and shattering bone.

But before they could do any of that, General Blackwater had signed in on the radio.

"Heads up, Project Powerpuff," the general said to Agent Blake on the radio, and Agent Blake set his radio to blast his voice out loud for the Girls to hear. "We are getting reports of a group of five enhanced individuals coming your way. They have already smashed through a police blockade. I'm afraid the Girls are way out of their league. Get them to fall back and regroup with the main USDO forces, over and out."

Blossom couldn't understand all of it, but she had picked out enough words from the radio to piece together what General Blackwater wanted them to do. More bad guys were coming. They were strong and so General Blackwater wanted them to run.
"But what about the people in the labs?" Blossom was almost demanding from Agent Blake, feeling an unpleasant feeling welling up in her as she could hear the sound of gunshots and, with her newfound Buttercup-like hearing ability, screams of pain and fear. "They need our help!"

"Yeah, Mister Blake, they need our help!" Buttercup echoed Blossom, but she couldn't mimic her leader sister's concern for the well-being of others, Instead, a sadistic grin on her face told of a different intention.

"Listen, Girls, sometimes… Sometimes, we just can't help everyone," Agent Blake knelt down and spoke to the Girls at their eye level. "There are some really mean folks coming your way, bad guys you can't beat. You can't help anyone if they beat you."

"But... Those really mean folks… What will they do if we don't stop them?" Bubbles asked, clearly just as concerned as Blossom, her amazing eyes filled with so much fear.

"When did these Girls grow up so fast?" Agent Blake couldn't help but wonder. He felt backed into a corner with a question he didn't want to answer. But he had to.

"They'll hurt or kill the people in the labs," Agent Blake finally replied.

"We have to stop them, Mister Blake," Blossom insisted, pleading with her eyes just as much as her words. "You've always tried your hardest', that's what Daddy said. I've helped people - he said that too. Please, Mister Blake. Let me try."

"Well, it's not like I can stop the three of you anyway," Agent Blake mused aloud. True, he had his duties and orders, but if there was one thing he had learned after meeting the Girls was that life was more than that. "Go ahead. I'll be on the radio."

"Thank you," Blossom said before flying away, leaving behind a trail of pink light, sounding like a silenced bullet. Bubbles smiled at Mister Blake before following, her trail of light more erratic.

"You're the greatest!" Buttercup shouted before sprinting off, throwing up a trail of dust in addition to light.
Chapter 92: Redemption (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom confronts Ace.

Chapter 92: Redemption (Part 1)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 14 Minutes

Blossom led Bubbles and Buttercup towards the cries of help and screams of fear coming from the Morbucks labs. She thought that Bubbles and Buttercup were lucky because they couldn't hear it. Secretly, however, Buttercup could hear it all, loud and clear, and she didn't care. What she cared about were the orders and reports coming from the less panicky. The terrorists. It meant that there were warm bodies there for her to hurt. To kill. To toy with.

"Heads up, Girls, bad guys to the right – your right!" Agent Blake warned them over the radio on the Project Powerpuff general channel. Blossom stopped, as did her sisters.

There was no need for the Girls to search for their targets or find them. They were already there, standing before them, all five of them of varying sizes and shapes, some wearing stupid looks, others sharper. They were all green-skinned as if afflicted by some serious skin disease or another, but the only infliction they had were the same ones as the Girls. One man stood in front of them, leading the rest like how Blossom led her sisters, except he was fully and confidently in charge, and it wasn't just because he looked the part, what with his lanky figure, sharp appearances and charismatic smile, or his commanding and intricately-decorated crimson-and-black sword.

As a group, the five green men were intimidating. Some of them looked like they had just crawled out of the uncanny valley, but it didn't take physical appearances to put hesitation in Blossom's heart and outright terror in Bubbles. Even Buttercup had to wonder what she was getting into, where she used to jump into combat thoughtlessly with no regard for who's on the other side. The men of the Gangreen Gang looked far too confident for men who were facing enhanced little girls like them, and they wore facial expressions that could kill. That was aside from the fact that they carried weapons that looked like they could hurt. A large caliber sniper rifle on the lanky one. Twin SMGs on the snaky one. The giant with a massive belly did not need a gun. He had a small lamp-post he'd picked up from somewhere along the way.

"When they say 'biological weapons', I didn't expect the three of you," the lanky one said. He tilted his angular shades down to look at the Girls with his naked eyes, something he rarely did with anyone else, exposing the pinkish-white of his eyes. He still couldn't believe what he was seeing. Immediately, he felt the sting of betrayal in his heart when he realized the reason why his Foundation employers did not mention what exactly the USDO's 'biological weapons' were. It was the perfect chess move, and the Foundation's council and their monkey knew exactly what they were doing. They knew that he and his Gangreen Gang wouldn't have read the news, being averse to reading of any sort and being too busy with their mercenary work.
"Are you going to hurt the people in the labs?" Blossom asked the tall leader of the green-skinned punks, more cautious than ever. Speaking to criminals hadn't worked well so far, not when they were in control.

"Yeah, I'm afraid so," the lanky leader said. He'd softened his voice to a more gentle tone after realizing who he might be up against – mere children. How low could fascist organizations like the USDO sink? In Ace's opinion, such organizations had no conscience. "You can call me Ace, by the way."

"Why, Mister Ace? They've never hurt you before, have they?" Blossom decided to go the diplomatic route again. It was Daddy's way. Her way. The only way. She knew it had to work sometime, it had to. She knew she had a chance with Marcello, and so, in her naïve mind, it was more likely than ever to work now.

Ace moved in a little closer. Cautiously, so did Blossom. The others on both sides tightened their grips on their weapons. All it would take was a lit matchstick to set the whole thing off.

"I told you my name, and I expect one in return. What's your name, lil' girl?" Ace asked, his tone still as gentle. In fact, it seemed as if he had lots of practice with children her age (or physical age, at least). Slowly so as to not provoke his opponents, Ace sheathed his newly-acquired sword. It still made Bubbles and Buttercup, who stood further behind Blossom, a little jumpy.

"My name's Blossom," the leader of 'The Three' introduced herself. "I just want to go home, Mister Ace. I don't want anyone to be hurt."

"Blossom, I'm going to be straight with you," Ace bent down and said, but he still rose high above Blossom while she had her feet on the ground. "Those people you're trying to protect? They don't deserve it. It's rich people like them who've made the world a terrible place to live in."

"But it's wrong to hurt people," Blossom insisted innocently, a mix of resolve and fear fighting through her transparent expressions.

It occurred to Ace, there and then, why the USDO might want to deploy enhanced little girls into the field, and every reason he could possibly think up was more insidious than the last. It wasn't just careless apathy to the order of things the organization had, and it wasn't just cruel practicality. Ace thought that the USDO might be leveraging on the innocence of the enhanced little girls to 'soften' their enemies even before combat had begun, or to put hesitation in them during combat. The thought that a supposedly benevolent governmental body could do such a thing disgusted Ace even further. It was despicable. Dishonorable. Ace would have gone on had he possessed a larger pool of negative vocabulary. It made him mad there and then.

"Seriously!" Ace spat at Blossom, unable to believe her. "They're putting you out here and they expect you to fight for them! You! A little girl! Protecting those big boys and old men who sit behind their desks and-!"

"You're mean!" Bubbles exclaimed as she glowered at Ace. She didn't like his tone of voice, the way she spoke to Blossom, her dear sister.

"Are we gonna fight now? Are we!" Buttercup egged the two sides on, eager to start something just so that she could get to punching again. Her time with Marcello had been an eye-opener, an ecstatic moment she couldn't wait to relive once more, and it had only made her thirst for more.

"They're not all bad," Blossom asserted firmly, hopefully, to get a grip on the situation - it wouldn't do well to have Buttercup fly into Ace and his gang - it would only start a battle that wouldn't stop
until one of them had lost, and she wasn't sure if the three of them could come out on top. Bubbles and Buttercup had both nearly died before, and she did not want history to repeat itself again. "I know many good people. Please be one of them, Mister Ace. I don't want to fight. It's Christmas."

The more Blossom tried to negotiate, the more Ace would get pissed off. He couldn't even know for sure if this 'Blossom' was merely trained to put on a facade as part of her 'little assassin' training or something, and he could hear the faint echoes of the action going on in the labs. He was supposed to be a part of that - and should he miss it, he would forfeit half his bounty.

"Enough! I don't wanna hear it no more!" Ace yelled impatiently, straightening up and gesturing angrily. "You wanna go home? Then get going! But I'm not going anywhere without going into the labs!"

Blossom's eyes were closed. Memories of past violence and hatred and fear and sadness flashed before her eyes. She saw the blood and the mangled bodies, the burning men, all over again. And it was happening again. It had all happened because she wasn't able to help, or because she had made things worse. She opened her eyes, glaring hatefully at Ace. She wasn't going to let it happen again.

"No," she said, and pumped her little shotgun, loading a shell. Bubbles and Buttercup followed suit, the former reluctantly while the latter gladly turning their safeties off. "You're not hurting anyone."

The boys on Ace's side did the same, readying the larger number of guns they had at the Girls.

Ace sighed. He hated this, and he didn't want to do it… But he and his boys would have to fight a trio of little girls, and his gang would no doubt have to kill them to get to the labs. He wasn't just fighting any kind of enhanced little girls - from what he could see, they were naive, yet honorable, at least the fiery-haired, pinky-glowy-eyed one was.

But there was always a third path.

"Blossom, wait," Ace said, putting up a hand in a 'stop' gesture, just as 'The Three' had raised their weapons at them, as did his Gangreen Gang.

"Uh, boss, why're we waiting?" Billy, the giant one, asked in his usual dull-witted way. He had raised his lamp-post club as if getting ready to hit a baseball. His question was followed by another in the form of a raspberry from Grubber.

"Shh, quiet," Ace warned them, before turning to Blossom, who did not quite lower her shotgun all the way. "Blossom, I don't want this any more than you do."

Blossom was quiet. Her eyes had turned a bright red with an angry expression as she was just barely keeping her heat vision under control. But she listened intently, the good in her prevailing over her practical side.

"I propose a duel between you and me," Ace offered. "There's five of us and three of you. We don't hurt or kill little girls. Right, boys?"

Snake, Arturo, Big Billy, and Grubber agreed one after the other, not in a chorus, but in a confused, broken mess.

"I leave my boys out, and your friends get to live," Ace explained further. It'd work out with his contract too. All the Foundation asked for was for one of the 'biological weapons' to be killed.

"They're my sisters," Blossom corrected, still giving Ace the devil glare.

"I see," Ace said. That new piece of information had only made things worst. Should he kill this
Blossom girl, he would be taking a sister away from two little girls, not that it would be any less of a tragedy if they were just friends. "Right, so we do this cleanly - you and me. And no guns. Deal?"

Would it make things a little more palatable? Ace wasn't sure.

Blossom continued to stare at Ace, utter dislike riddling her face, but reason asserted itself once more, as she usually tended towards rationality. For a bad guy, Ace had been pretty gentle, and his terms were fair enough. All she ever wanted was for her sisters to be spared from more pain, and Ace's 'deal' would do just that.

"What happens if I win?" Blossom asked.

"Then me and my boys will turn around and go home, like you wanted," Ace promised. "But if I win, you'll let me pass." Not that she would have a choice. Because she would be too dead to stop him.

"Blossom…?" Bubbles mumbled nervously.

"Don't, Blossom! I wanna fight too!" Buttercup certainly did not want to miss out. "Don't take this away from me too!"

"Fine," Blossom agreed, sounding a little like her Daddy, as she was pushed into a corner like how he usually was. "But how do I know you won't cheat?"

Without a word, and with a smile that exposed the vampire fangs standing out among his teeth, Ace unslung his rifle, removed its magazine and unbolts the bullet in its chamber. He threw it to the ground before moving on to pulling his pistol out of its holster and throwing that to the ground as well.

"Boys, give us some room, will you? Make it lots and lots of room!" Ace instructed his gang, and they listened promptly, giving Ace a wide berth, and it wasn't just because they were obedient towards him. Ace turned to Blossom after that, before gesturing for her to do the same. "Go right ahead, Miss Blossom. Don't be shy."

Blossom couldn't believe her eyes - Ace and his gang were sold to her as the bad guys, and yet they were noble, as far as she could see. She had to take a second glance at the guns the lanky green man had thrown down to the ground in honor of their agreement. It almost felt like she was hallucinating, or dreaming.

Yet, she still didn't like the odds. She had only taken the deal because it was the next best way. Blossom might be a month old, but she was smart enough to know that she was outnumbered and out of her league if she'd gone up against the Gangreen Gang as a whole with her sisters. Not that it was much of an improvement if she went against this 'Ace' solo.

Her grip on her shotgun tightened, and reluctantly, she began pumping it in rapid succession. Shells were ejected one after another until her Serbu Super-Shorty was completely emptied. She let it clatter to the ground. Unslinging her MP5, she unloaded it as well and dropped it along with her pistol.

But what she couldn't get rid of was the ear-piercing sound of screams and gunshots coming from the labs, which had turned into a battle zone. There were people there who desperately needed help. She turned to the complex not far away, wishing that she could attend to those in need immediately, before turning to Ace, who looked as if he could be reading her mind, not that she could see his eyes, which were hidden behind a pair of expensive shades.

"Mister Ace, is it okay if you let my sisters go? To help the people in the labs?" Blossom decided to
chance it by making a further request. It felt like a longshot, how she was basically asking if her sisters could beat Ace's colleagues' up. But it was all she had. Buttercup had been crossing her arms and staring at the ground as if she might split it in two, but the sound of Blossom's request had caused her to turn her head. It was promising to the sociopathic little girl, as it meant the potential for violence, no, a certainty that she could indulge in violence.

"They can go ahead, I don't care," Ace agreed to Blossom's request. "I care nothing about the honorless dogs sniffing around in the labs." As far as Ace knew, the Foundation had betrayed him by putting him in this tough spot, to begin with: either kill the 'biological weapon' who happened to be a little girl and wreak havoc in the labs or watch his village in the Gangrene Gulag starve again.

Blossom had wanted to thank the green, tall man, but she thought better of it as if doing so might set off a chain of reaction that could somehow undermine everything she had worked for so far. Instead, she fixed her eyes upon him, studying him briefly, before turning to her sisters.

"Bubbles, Buttercup," Blossom said to her sisters, her tone grave as a final goodbye, an utter abuse of her 5-year-old vocal cord. "Get to the labs and help the people there. I'll stay here and fight Mister Ace."

"But Blossom, what if-" Bubbles objected, only to be overridden by her leader sister.

"Bubbles! You nearly died the last time. I don't want that to happen again," Blossom explained. It was better to send Bubbles away to an uncertain fate in the labs than for her to face certain doom at the hands of the Gangreen Gang. The idea for it had formed in Blossom's mind when she agreed to Ace's terms, even if in a wholly unclear manner. She then turned to her other sister. "Buttercup, listen to me. Please."

Buttercup gave Blossom a patronizing look, as if some kind of animal was standing before her, not a fellow enhanced human being.

"Take care of Bubbles," Blossom demanded from her. It was painful and unsettling to have to rely on Buttercup, but she had no other choice. But what she was going to say next was much more unsettling. "Now's your chance to be the leader. Do whatever you have to do to take care of her, and save the people in the labs... Even if you have to kill."

Without her personal oversight, there was no controlling Buttercup. In the end, it was either her sisters and the innocents or the bad guys. Detective Mullens had been right all along, was he?

Buttercup blinked arrogantly at Blossom. "If you say so," she promised. Blossom's permission to kill did not go unnoticed. It'd restored what little shred of respect she had for Blossom if it was even there in the first place. She then turned to Bubbles. "Let's go."

Blossom watched as Bubbles and Buttercup zipped away in the direction of the labs far off into the distance. When they were gone, she faced her dueling opponent, who was no longer smiling. Instead, he wore a look that appeared bleak and grim, not the kind of expression found on someone who believed he was going to win.

"Come closer when you're ready," Ace instructed Blossom. She did just that, walking forward. "Just a few arm's lengths. Stop right there. Good." Blossom stopped as Ace had instructed, feeling a little lethargic as she thought about what she believed would come next.

She believed that she would have to sacrifice her life to save her sisters and the people they were protecting.
Ace took a bow. Blossom aped his etiquette.

"Now go ahead. Beat me if you can," Ace challenged. His sword was still in its scabbard, hanging on his belt. To Blossom, it seemed as if he was overconfident. Arching her eyebrows in rage and clenching her fists, Blossom launched herself towards Ace, flying at the height of his chest, and began punching. Ace was able to deflect the first few bare-handed.

Blossom was fast when she needed to be. She aimed a blow at Ace's stomach, who blocked it with his arm. Pain shot up in Ace's right arm when she did but didn't slow down when Blossom aimed another blow to his head thoughtlessly. He would duck to avoid the same kind of pain bruising his forearm, before backing away, and kicking Blossom away when she attempted to pursue. By doing this, Ace had kept a small distance between them.

Without a word, he gripped the handle of his sword, which was still sheathed, but he didn't pull it out. Blossom thought she saw hesitance or even fear, so she charged at Ace again with a fist ready.

Then there was the sound of metal slicing into flesh, of doing the unthinkable, which distracted Blossom, who missed Ace by a mile, somehow. He must have side-stepped her or moved aside when he struck her. Blossom floated down to land on her feet, before sinking further to her knees, her hands clutching her stomach.

Blood seeped through hands and fingers, but it had gone through her uniform and vest first - everything had stopped short of protecting her. Ace hadn't been hesitating after all. He had baited her into coming closer, before drawing his sword and striking at the same time in one smooth motion.

Blossom could feel it; the skin in her stomach had split across a vast distance and so much blood was spilling. It was shocking to her. How could this be? Nothing was supposed to be able to penetrate her skin, unless… A wounded and nearly dead Bubbles came to mind, how her blood would spread underneath her. Duranium shell.

She didn't dare to see the wound as she was afraid of what she might find. Her mind filled in the gaps. She recalled Miss Keane's anatomical charts, and what organs were around the stomach area. She was actually really afraid that her stomach was going to fall out.

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22 DEC 1988 (Thursday). 1130.

Before Ace stood a delegation of men and women in robes of crimson. At first, he wasn't sure if he had the right address. He certainly did not expect his benefactors to be dressed like witches. The last time he checked, they were supposed to be freedom fighters and revolutionaries. As it turned out, the Foundation had connections that extended far beyond their own kind.

They wore nothing much of anything else underneath, and their robes were only fastened around the neck. The head of the delegation, a woman, had nothing underneath at all. Her breasts were just out of sight, but her nether region was not. Ace felt like he could turn from green to red just by looking at her. The men who flanked her were more forgiving with their nakedness, as they wore loincloths.

But there was no mistaking that they were what he was looking for. In the robed woman's hand was a sword, made in the Japanese fashion. When Ace approached her cautiously, she held the sword up with both hands.

"Ace… My master is pleased with your work, your progress," the woman spoke in a slight Japanese
accent. From this fact alone, he could place her as a resident of Little Tokyo. Based on her strange vocabulary and clothes, or the lack of it, he believed her to be a member of the Cult of His Promise. Or the Cult of His Vision. Or a few others. They were all the same really. The Cult of the Pink Rose and the newly-formed Cult of the Trinity were the only ones that he knew of were different, the former because they worshiped some sort of wizard dude in a pink, sparkly robe and the latter was newly formed and he knew nothing much about it.

"And who is your master, exactly?" Ace asked. He shifted his eyes subtly down to the hands of the robed men. Each of them had the barrel of a revolver poking out of their long, flowy sleeves. It wouldn't have been a threat to him but it showed that they meant business, and unlike the family members and associates of the Lombardi and any other criminal groups, the cultists were less stingy about giving their lives to the cause that had enraptured them. "The Foundation? One of them Amoeba Boys?"

"We do not speak of His name. All we long to do is serve Him, and all you need to know is that you've gained His attention," the head cultist said. "You should be grateful to Him. Some of our numbers are envious of you."

"Right," Ace said, and couldn't help but to raise an eyebrow at how big a part of their lives the cultists had allowed their beliefs and superstitions to dictate. It was right down to their clothes and manner of speech. "Send my regards to him then. Maybe next time, he could rain manna down from the sky to feed the Gangrene Gulag."

"That can be arranged," the head cultist said. There was no humor or displeasure in her voice. She was dead serious, and it was as contagious as laughter as it had spread to Ace.

"I was just kidding – nevermind," he said. "And don't try to sell your membership to me for that manna thing."

"We won't have to," the head cultist said as she widened her eyes to regard Ace with a most intense look. Ace returned that look with a quizzical one, wondering just what on Earth – or beyond – was going on in that damaged woman's head.

"Urm, can I have the sword now?" Ace asked. Wordlessly, the head cultist handed the special-looking katana to Ace, who inspected it with the utmost care and admiration once he had it. He could almost feel it singing to him. The scabbard itself was crimson in color, detailed in black and gold. The handle itself was of the same color. Drawing the sword, it sang to Ace as if it had woken up. 'Sshhhink!' it cried.

Ace inspected the blade. It seemed to shine brighter than usual, the edge reflecting different spectrums of light at any given moment. It was almost magical. He ran his finger across the curved edge and felt a most uncommon sensation – the blade bit into him when even sniper bullets could not.

"The blade is made of what the USDO scientists call Duranium. Though it may be crude compared to what those heretics could steal and muster, it is blessed by our master's touch, and your skill will make the most out of it, I'm sure. It is why you are chosen."

'Chosen? By who?' Was Ace's final thought in that exchange. He didn't press the cultists for fear of being led on a verbal wild goose chase.

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 17 Minutes
"Well? Are you going to give up, lil' miss?" Blossom could hear the leery, nasally voice of her opponent, despite her entire world being absorbed by pain, made blurry by tears. Despite the excruciating wound and uncertainty, she rose to her feet, and let go of her wound.

"No," she merely stated.

"I don't get it. Are you seriously going to die for those people?" Ace said, unable to believe that his opponent was still able to stand up. Any other girl would have run away by now. He'd even let his sword down a little. "Do they really love you that much? You a hero to them? Huh?"

Blossom didn't answer, but in keeping quiet and gloomy, she had let slip the truth.

"Yeah, I bet you weren't, were you?" Ace guessed, and he did it accurately. Blossom's guileless reaction confirmed his suspicions, the way she had to spend all her energy to stop herself from crying out and screaming, the way she had to fight against the instincts of a little girl - her true, human self - just so that she wouldn't fall apart in the middle of the duel. "They hate you, did they?"

"It doesn't matter," Blossom muttered.

"No!" Blossom yelled, before springing into action once more, spurred on by anger towards this sword-wielding rogue who had been chipping her world apart. She flew towards the green man, before letting go a flurry of punches and kicks not unlike Buttercup's, but they were blocked every time, this time with the sword, as well as the forearm and even the leg. When conventional methods failed, Blossom let the heat build up in her eyes. Ace had backed away, but it didn't matter - it was something he couldn't run away or dodge from.

Ace could only wonder what was going on with Blossom's eyes, having never seen it lit up the way it did before. Before he knew what happened, an infrared beam colored by reddish Chemical X shot towards him at the speed of light, burning his tactical vest. He was burning before he could react, before he could drop and roll. The beam ceased as fast as it was shot, but only because Blossom needed to aim her beam once more. It was harder to see and concentrate while firing the beam.

There wasn't even time for words to be exchanged, or for Ace to shout in surprise. Realizing that he was at a disadvantage at a range, with Blossom's power revealed, he leaped diagonally towards her as Blossom fired another beam at him. When he landed on the ground, he rolled on it before going for another leap. Blossom fired a third beam, this time sustained for longer, such that her face was lighting up like a bulb, and her skull could be seen through her skin. She was really determined to win, but in her overexertion, which she really had no idea how to handle, Ace was able to flank her, close in and deliver a stroke of his sword right into the side of her skull.

The panicked blow had sent her flying backward into the asphalt ground, and she rolled for numerous revolutions before coming to a stop. Adrenaline had ensured that she could get up quickly. But it could only go so far. Blossom felt the side of her, only to realize that the left part of her helmet had been sliced off, and along with it, she could feel a ragged wound near her hairline there as well. The entire left side of her head felt wet and smelled of iron.

"I think it's time for you to accept the truth for what it is," Ace asserted once more, but instead of causing Blossom to yield, he had only made her all the more determined to fight him. Bounding forward, Blossom seized Ace by the sword-arm, hoping to take away that dreaded weapon. She attempted to twist his arm, just like how Selicia had taught her, but he had apparently anticipated that. Switching his sword from right to left, he allowed Blossom to twist his right before bringing his sword down on her underhanded with his left. He made a cut to her right upper-arm, causing her to
let go. He kicked her once more, stumbling her backward.

But she wasn't done. Recovering quickly and lunging forward, she grabbed him by the left arm, this time with incredibly selfless fervor, as she had seized the blade of his sword with her hand to prevent it from being transferred to his other hand. The Duranium edge had cut straight through her gloves and bitten into her hand. In desperation, she opened her mouth wide and chomped down on his arm. Ace screamed as tonnes of force, concentrated at the many sharp points of Blossom's milk teeth, was brought down upon his green skin, piercing it deeply.

It was a most uncouth and barbaric of moves, yet brutally effective, sending Ace into a second panic. With his right fist, Ace pounded Blossom several times in the neck, where she was unprotected by Kevlar, but she wouldn't let go.

"God damn it!" Ace screamed in utter pain as he struggled with Blossom. The little girl had also exerted her flying force downwards and pushed him into the ground, just like how she did with Buttercup when she discovered flight that fateful night, ensuring that Ace was locked in with her. But her lack of experience in unarmed combat was her undoing - thinking fast, the lanky leader of the Gangreen Gang twitched his sword forwards, digging the blade further into Blossom's hand. The pain proved to be too much for Blossom, who let go on instinct, a hand bloody from clutching the blade. Shoving at Blossom by the nose, he jockeyed for her to let go, and she did after her nose started to hurt and she was running out of breath and gasping from a lack of oxygen.

When Blossom was half an arm's length from Ace, he smacked her black-and-blue in the face before kneeing her in the stomach wound he gave her. Afraid that she might bite him so savagely again, the street samurai directed two strokes of his sword at her, putting a slash in her arm and another in her leg, both deep enough to cause massive blood loss. He backed away as Blossom was on her knees once more, with too many wounds to tend to.

"I'm serious, girl! Give up! There's nothing for you and me if we both continue like this!" Ace shouted at Blossom as he pressed down on the bite wounds she had given him.

"No," Blossom simply whispered, loud enough for Ace to hear.

"But why? Why are you still fighting, Blossom?" Ace finally said, in disbelief. "What reasons do you possibly have? To fight for those who hate you?"

And so we came full circle in this story.
Chapter 93: Redemption (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Blossom confronts Ace.

A/N: (22 FEB 2019) Added Ace's final words to Blossom before leaving her alone.

Chapter 93: Redemption (Part 2)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 25 Minutes

The story of the Girls' origin had come full circle, soon to shoot past the prologue. Blossom and Ace continued to battle, while her sisters gave her what resembled peace of mind by racing towards those who were in need at the Morbucks Industries Research Labs.

Blossom would stubbornly attempt to best Ace, only to be wounded numerous times both in body and in mind until her opponent had restrained her and put the edge of his sword to her neck. Bubbles would go on to make her leader sister proud, saving the lives of a group of receptionists and a soldier at the cavernous lobby of the Morbucks labs, while Buttercup would gain what she sought - pleasure in the heat of battle, all while reluctantly (and barely) making good on her promise to Blossom.

They would clear the lobby of foes, only for more to emerge. The lives of the remaining civilians and USDO soldier in the lab lobby was saved, only to be put in danger once more. Buttercup had gained her pleasure, and triumph, only for a crude Duranium bullet to drive home the fact that such trifles were temporary.

Bubbles had to drag a screaming Buttercup behind cover as more Foundation terrorists took up positions at the entrance leading deeper into the labs. Laying her down on the floor, Bubbles stared at the wound Buttercup had sustained, and it wasn't a pretty sight. Blood had covered her entire left sleeve. The metal of the bullet gleamed red under the light, and it looked like it hadn't gone in very deep. It wasn't a complete penetration, and it had lodged itself in Buttercup's muscle shallowly. It was minor compared to what Bubbles suffered, but she, being a one-month-old, had no idea how to triage a wound. As far as Bubbles was concerned, the seriousness of a wound could be equated to the amount of blood loss, not that she knew how much was too much or little.

Both Girls could only panic until Bubbles found it within herself to act. Pressing the speak button on her radio, she called for Agent Blake, screeching into her mic such that all who were concerned felt pain in their ears: "Mister Blake! You have to help me, please!"

"Blake here, calm down. What's your situation? Over," Blake replied immediately over the radio.

"Buttercup's hurt, Mister Blake. What did I do?" Bubbles had hardly calmed down at all.
"I'd come to you if I could; what happened to her?" Blake asked over the radio. Bubbles, in the meantime, was hugging Buttercup to her closely as the latter writhed in pain. The wildest of The Three would have objected violently had it not been for the wound she had sustained.

"She's bleeding, Mister Blake! Her arm is bleeding!" Bubbles cried. "I think she's dying!"

"She'll be fine, Bubbles. Your sister's a tough nut. Describe the wound, Bubbles," Mister Blake advised.

"Ur- urm- it's bleeding really badly," Bubbles stammered as she tried her best to remain as Blossom-like as possible, to keep her terror contained. "I can see something shiny inside."

"Okay, I think I get what you mean," Blake said over the radio. "There's a bag with a red cross on your hip. Unstrap it and open it."

Bubbles did as she was told, even as bullets were flying and burying themselves into the Greek pillar she was hiding behind. She had never noticed the red cross bag before. It had only come with the latest batch of uniforms and gear shipped to The House, to replace what they had, which was consistently destroyed with every mission because of the number of bullets and abuse they were taking.

"You done?" Blake asked and got an affirmative from Bubbles. "Good, there should be a tourniquet inside – a long tube thing. See it? Tie it tightly around Buttercup's upper arm, where the armpit is."

Blake continued to instruct Bubbles on the intricacies of first aid. Buttercup's hand had been wounding itself around Bubbles' arm tighter and tighter. By the time Bubbles was about to remove the bullet with a pair of forceps, Buttercup's hand was like a tourniquet. The tougher of the two could see the scissor-like thing hovering over the wound in her arm.

"Please don't," Buttercup cried. In the meantime, the volume of bullets pounding their position was less. There was movement out there, but not heading directly towards them. Seeing about twenty of their own dead or unconscious on the battlefield had a deterrent effect on the Foundation terrorists.

"I have to. Mister Blake said it's better for you," Bubbles said, and without waiting any longer, dug into the bullet hole in Buttercup's arm to try to secure the round. Bubbles learned then that her rough and tough sister could scream just as loud and shrill as her. She pitied her because she knew how the pain was like after getting shot – and that made Bubbles' love for Buttercup stronger, despite the abuse she suffered under her.

Bubbles had to search around inside the wound a little to get a grip on the malformed bullet. Buttercup felt her Christmas dinner rise through her gullet as the pain had reached a new level of imagination. She made a puddle with her potato salad and turkey and pasta beside Bubbles as a result, who was already queasy from all the blood herself.

Then the blonde Powerpuff subject had found it. Seizing the bullet with the forceps, she pulled the jagged metal thing out. By that time, Buttercup was barely conscious even as she felt pain shooting up, her arm getting as hot as molten iron.

"There! See them off!" Bubbles heard someone shouting from the other side of the lobby just as she was applying a bandage around Buttercup's arm. Looking up, she saw that a band of terrorists had circled around to circumvent their cover. They started firing and didn't even stop to think of Buttercup's suffering just like how she hoped people would do in her perfect world.

And they were able to get quite a few good shots in. Bubbles yelped in pain as dozens of shot
bounced off her, slid across her skin and hit her squarely in the jaw, neck, chest, and limbs. Buttercup screamed when a stray bullet had landed on the wrong arm, near her wound.

To see Buttercup 'bullied' this way was too much for Bubbles. Where fear usually took hold, anger rose up in her.

"Yo Axe! Bring that Girl-Killer up here pronto!" one of the terrorists barked his order.

Bubbles flew into them arms-first, dashing a man into the wall. The rest fired their weapons at point-blank range, to no effect – hell hath no fury as a woman scorned.

Jumping off her target, who looked like he might have broken most of his ribs, she reached out and grabbed a whole mop of hair belonging to one of her attackers and threw her into a pillar. There was the sound of a nose breaking.

She then flew feet-first into another, and like dominoes, three were launched into the center of the lobby, with more force than they were used to.

'Bam!' there was another gunshot, this time different – and not just louder. A bullet whizzed by Bubbles. Her cheek felt like it had been scalded after that. A part of her helmet was blown off. She reached up for her cheek instinctively and felt wetness. Her blood mingled with Buttercup's on her hand.

She searched for her other attacker, and it didn't take long for her to find him. A man hooded in black with a ski mask, holding what should have been a sniper rifle, repurposed for close-combat, and it didn't explode this time. The 'Girl-Killer' returned Bubbles' glare with a fearful stare, and as she started towards him, clumsily unbolted his sniper rifle to cycle in another crude Duranium rifle slug.

He was quick, however, and by the time Bubbles came close, was able to get another shot in – except that Bubbles had pushed the rifle aside, and the Duranium slug was wasted on a window. Snatching the gun from the man, she swung it at him, connecting it with the side of his face, and watched him fall with nothing but reckless vengeance on her mind; all she could think about was that these bad guys had hurt Buttercup, and they would pay for it.

Standing over the Girl-Killer, she dropped the sniper rifle and continued to glare at him, wondering what she should do next to punish him. Girl-Killer tried to crawl away, but Bubbles took him by the ankle. He screamed as she pulled him towards her, and as she sat on top of his chest, he put up his hands to shield his face. With a high-pitched scream, she forced his arms aside before throwing a punch which Buttercup would have approved, knocking teeth out.

"Stop! Hurting! My! SISTER!" she screamed with each punch, using more force than she ever did. The man's blood had mixed in with her and her sister's.

By the time she stopped, by the time she came to her senses, the Girl-Killer's face was beaten to a bloody pulp, spouting blood and occasionally twitching. With the anger in her dissipating quickly, it was replaced by the quivering mess that usually was Bubbles. Fear gripped her as she realized what she had done. Scrambling off her victim, she couldn't take her eyes off him-

Until bullets had started flying again. Bubbles looked up at the source, only to discover that there were fewer terrorists than before. Some of them had fled. Others acted as the rear guard.

The bullets didn't fly for long. Just as Bubbles had put up her arms to shield her face, she heard screaming, and fists pounding on flesh. By the time she was looking again, Buttercup had gotten rid of most of them. The rest had fled. Buttercup came up to Bubbles once she saw them off.
"Whoa! You did that, Bubbles?" Buttercup uttered in surprise when she saw how much of a plate of mincemeat Bubbles had turned the man's face into. "I didn't know you could!"

"But I-" Bubbles sputtered but couldn't figure out what to say.

"It's… Just… Beautiful!" Buttercup continued regardless, before coming up to her and sticking a hand out for her to take. Bubbles took it, and the former pulled her up to her feet.

"I was just protecting you…" Bubbles finally said. She could feel a wave of acceptance from Buttercup, but it seemed off-putting in an uncanny sort of way. Sure, it would be good if Buttercup could learn to accept her, but on the other hand - Bubbles struggled to navigate the logic of this, and she didn't have time to do so.

There were more calls coming from the radio, sent on all frequencies, practically begging for help.

Buttercup winced at the pain burning hot in her arm. She had overexerted herself and excited the nerves in her wound. Bubbles held her, afraid that she might collapse from the pain. At the very least, Buttercup did not resist her attempts at being sweet, even if her 'method' of winning her trust and respect was unsavory.

"Urm… Maybe you should stay here and rest, Buttercup?" Bubbles suggested timidly, still afraid that Buttercup would still fly into a rage all of a sudden.

"Are you kidding me?" Buttercup said, despite having retched previously and hurling the other half of her Christmas party. "I'm fine! There're more bad guys to hurt, and besides, we have people to save, right?"

Bubbles couldn't decide if Buttercup was being her old self, or if she had grown some sense of heroism. It felt as if heroism was still an excuse to Buttercup for her to do some heinous things. She didn't say it out loud, of course.

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**Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 28 Minutes**

Ace had let Blossom go and gave her a kick in the back to put some distance between them once more. He didn't want to be rough with her, but the entire affair was all about a duel possibly to the death between them, so it was all fine with him. He was doing her a favor really because the alternative would have been to slit her throat there and then.

"I won't hurt the truly innocent, Blossom," Ace promised. "The workers, the poor and the children will be safe, honest."

Blossom did not reply; that was her answer. Instead, she charged forward, screaming. But her movement had slowed: where previously she was a sports car, she was sputtering and running on fumes, like one of those old beetle cars. Ace didn't even need to work hard to defend himself any longer. When Blossom was close enough, he simply danced out of the way, landing a cut on her thigh before taking her by the collar and whirling around to toss her many yards away from him. It wasn't hard to do so considering her weight and weakened state.

Ace watched as Blossom landed on the cold, hard parking lot floor. He didn't like how she had landed head-first, how her blood spattered all over the dark asphalt and light snow. Despite all the trauma Blossom had suffered, she got up – with difficulty, considering the fresh cut on her thigh, which had gone more than skin-deep. Ace had thought that he could discourage Blossom by putting more force into his sword, but it hadn't done that.
Flying towards Ace once more, she shot another beam at him, this time much weaker and exhausted, but the tall green man had only need to leap behind a limousine to break her line of sight. A line of heated metal and melted paint was scraped across the black car. By the time Ace got to his feet, Blossom was already onto him, throwing herself at him like a desperate, wild animal.

In a panic, Ace swept his sword at her; he didn't even see what he had done until Blossom had hit the floor once more, rolling on the ground.

And it wasn't just a spatter of blood this time. The next thing Ace knew, he had opened up an artery in Blossom's neck, letting a crimson waterfall free to flow down her neck and body and floor, freezing quickly. Even the little kid knew that it was serious; all she needed to see was the copious amounts of blood she was losing, the feeling that was no longer there in her limbs. The pain was dizzying and worse than anything she felt before.

"I… I didn't mean that," Ace watched in shock as his opponent could no longer hold back tears, terrified of what he had done. There was so much more he wanted to say but couldn't or didn't know how to say it. What could he say, when he was the adult killing a kid? The man who proposed a duel with someone who wasn't old enough to enter grade school?

Despite everything, Blossom struggled to her feet, at first falling back down to her knees again, but she persevered and stood herself up, a hand still stemming the open wound on her neck.

It awed and terrified Ace at the same time, but not because she was a threat; he had long nullified her as a real threat.

"Blossom, seriously!" Ace shouted, finding himself feeling concerned for his opponent, more than ever. It broke his heart to see a little girl like this. It wasn't something he wanted to get used to, not when there were children in The Village who had suffered and died. "Go get a doctor or something! You're going to die like this!"

He wasn't even sure anymore if he could bring himself to kill Blossom. The entire battle wasn't just an exchange of blows to him. It was a meditation on the fact that he had to kill a little girl to get his bounty, and whether it was something he wanted to commit. For the greater good. For The Village, his village of needy men, women, and children cast out of society, like him.

"I'd rather," Blossom said defiantly even as she was crying, her numerous wounds still weeping blood. "I don't want people to get hurt because of me." Even speaking took effort, and her voice barely carried as it had narrowed into a shivering whisper towards the end.

"I'm walking past you," Ace declared. "And you're going to let me go. I've won. You've lost, Blossom." It would have been the perfect compromise. The contract stated that should he storm the labs without killing any of 'The Three', he would still be entitled to the bounty, but with half of it forfeited.

Ace started forward, sheathing his sword after wiping it down with a neckerchief. His gang stood where they were, however, unsure if their gang boss could even get Blossom to agree.

He wasn't even halfway towards Blossom when she fired a heat beam at his thigh. It wasn't strong enough to maim; she couldn't muster enough energy because of her wounds and exhaustion.

Ace howled in pain before backing away and had to Pat down a fire that had started on his cargo pants.

"Don't come any closer," Blossom warned. "Or it'd be your face next."
"Blossom, listen to me," Ace continued to negotiate with the leader of 'The Three'. "You'll be helping hundreds of people if you walk away. Hungry people. Desperate people with nowhere to go. Some of them are as young as you. You'll be helping yourself, Blossom. And your family, yeah, your family. I see so much good in you, Blossom, and I would hate to see you die."

"I'm getting paid for this; 500 grand if I kill you and go to the labs. Two-fifty if I let you live and two-fifty if I go to the labs. Whatever I get is going to the poor."

"Now, I'm going to take another step forward-" Ace said as he started forward again. Blossom considered his words for a moment, but she didn't take long to decide what to do. True to her words, she directed another beam at Ace's face. But she had been too honest, and he knew where to block her heat beam.

"You idiot!" Ace ran forward with his sword held at a ready stance when he realized Blossom wasn't going to give up anytime soon. Similarly, Blossom ran forward; she lacked the Chemical X to even fly. Launching herself into a flying kick, she missed when Ace faded right – he'd tried an awkward strike with the flat side of his blade, but had ended up missing too.

Landing with a trail of blood falling behind her, Blossom delivered a back kick at Ace's calf, and it struck, causing the man to bellow in pain. Spinning around, he struck Blossom in the temple with the side of his blade, but it didn't deter nor push her back. In a fit, she jumped on Ace and clawed at his face with her nails.

"Get off me, you imp!" Ace screamed as he tried to tear Blossom off him, but her fit of desperation had given her too much strength. Having leaned too far back for balance, he fell back-first to the ground, losing his shades in the process as it clattered to the ground. He'd seized Blossom by a hand, but Blossom had taken his sword-hand – and promptly bit down on it to get him to let go of it. Briefly, just briefly, Ace was able to gain the upper hand and had punched Blossom in the eye a few times while still with her little wrist in his fist. It'd stunned her enough for him to gain ground and seized her by the other wrist – only for her to lunge forward in an attempt to bite him in the neck with a shrill cry – so desperate was she to protect the people in the labs that she was literally fighting with teeth and nails like an animal. He was barely able to keep her teeth away by pushing her away by the neck with his forearm. Then, with a grunt and a burst of strength, he threw her off his chest, sending her scrambling on the ground.

Quickly, as Blossom was about to get up, Ace picked his sword up.

Blossom jumped at him in an attempt to regain her previous position of power, but this time, Ace was fast enough.

Too fast even for his own liking, in fact… As he had reacted without thought…

And plunged his sword into Blossom's chest, with a hand grabbing her by the collar. Ace stared at Blossom, shocked, but so did Blossom stare back at him, their naked eyes connecting for a second time.

Before Blossom's closed, and she went limp. Sliding off Ace's sword, she fell down to the ground lifelessly.

'What have I done?' Ace thought harshly to himself when he realized what had happened. 'What have I done?'

He backed away, hand going up to his mouth as he felt like he could puke anytime. Blood spread as
a circle around Blossom, painting snow and road. Ace let his sword clatter on the ground and sat down, feeling faint as he buried his face in his hands.

Is it worth a half million bucks? Even if it meant feeding his tribe for years to come? These questions, and more, circled in his head endlessly.

But the deed was done. There was no going back. 'Chin up, Ace. The Village depends on you. Make Blossom's life count,' he thought as he held back increasingly rare tears and got up to his feet again. He stared at the corpse of Blossom, wondering for how many decades Blossom would haunt his nightmares if it would ever stop.

He stared at the corpse of Blossom, until it was no longer a corpse. He saw her hand twitch, then clench into a fist. He saw her rise like a ghoul, her eyes having lost most of its pink glow. With a hand clutching her chest wound, she pushed herself up to her feet, all the while astounding Ace into silence and inaction. Blossom was one resilient girl - Ace had nothing but respect for her. She would have put many of his opponents to shame with her Rasputin feat or anyone who was in the business of killing - on both sides.

"Blossom?" was all Ace could muster as he looked down upon her wretched little figure, hunched because of her pain and the infiltrating cold. And it was all his fault.

"I'm not letting you go," she whispered, all the while shivering, barely able to even stand against the wind. With shaking hands, Ace picked up his sword, and held it with both hands.

"And what if I kill you?" Ace proposed. "You'll die, and I'll still be in the labs." Blossom's rolled her eyes downwards, to look at her own blood staining the snow, becoming one with it. It was her life in a nutshell - she was born with the snow, and she would die with the snow.

"Then I will. At least it'll mean that I've tried. It'll make the sadness and the pain stop," Blossom said. "I'm tired, Ace. I just want to make friends, and all I've done is to hurt people. I deserve this, and if all I can do is slow you down, then I will."

Ace raised his sword, preparing for a final swing, swishing it back and forth, feeling the weight of it again. It was an executioner's sword now, not a fighter's. If he did it right, he could sever Blossom's windpipe, and kill her for good. Enhanced or not, she would die eventually without oxygen. He took a deep breath. He couldn't help but to feel shaken to the core. He'd thought that he had killed her once, and now he had to bear with the thoughts and feelings that went with it a second time.

"Any last words, buddy?" Ace asked of his honorable opponent. It felt as if he was seeing off a friend on death row. He had seen a friend off on death row before. Someone who didn't deserve the noose.

Blossom searched the snow for answers, and she could see it right now, right there in the snow.

"Tell my Daddy I'm sorry. I couldn't stay with him for Christmas," she said.

"Sure thing, girlie," Ace promised, even as he raised his sword and pulled it back. "Look at me so I can do it right." Blossom looked up at him, barely-glowing pink eyes making contact with puffy pink and brown-irised eyes, her lips quivering, tears dripping uncontrollably. By doing so, she was exposing her neck for the final blow.

The hauntingly depressing look on her face gave him pause.

250 grands for her life. 250 grands the moment he started pig-sticking a few greedy pigs in the labs - the numbers kept dancing in his mind.
Yet, Blossom stood before him, brave and self-sacrificing despite everything she suffered, despite everything she had to lose.

Sucking in air, Ace drew back his sword again, determined to claim his bounty, wondering why he was hesitating so much. After all, this was what he signed up for - there was no room for emotions as a mercenary. Sure, he could get away with letting a good person or two go if it didn't ruin his prospects (too much), but there was no room for mercy this time. Blossom would not step aside.

*Do it, Ace. Do it.*

*The Village, Ace! Men, women, and children all - good people too!*

His thoughts were transposed on Blossom's face, which looked worse the longer he delayed her execution. While she faced death weeping and undignified, it showed strength in that she was willing to face something despite how deeply unpleasant it was for her.

"What're you waiting for, boss!" Lil' Arturo egged him on from the background.

"Ssslaughter her!" Snake did the same.

"Yeah- uh- What're we waiting for?" Big Billy unwittingly piled on. This was followed by a raspberry.

Ace gave a frustrated shout.

"Darn it!" he cursed before putting down his sword. "I can't do it!" He took a deep breath, before sheathing his sword once more. Surprised, Blossom searched Ace for answers, for explanations.

"You're really something, you know that?" Ace obliged to provide it. "I've never met a little girl like you before and…" He gave a sigh, his breath floating all around like smoke. "For what it's worth, I think I can see things your way. I'm sorry I've hurt you really badly."

"T-thank you," was all Blossom could manage. Ace nodded to her, all the while doing a quick examination of her - though she had bled lots and sustained heavy injuries - she was enhanced, and it showed. Her blood had clotted, and most of the bleeding stopped. The chest wound had been a lucky break for Blossom - his blade had slid past all major organs. In so much pain she might be, but her chances of survival were good.

After scanning her for one more second, Ace turned around, picked up his shades from the ground, and began walking away. But then he stopped, and turned around to admire Blossom again, who continued to stand where she was, even as blood continued to paint her red, dripping from her limbs.

"You didn't deserve this, Blossom," Ace added and with that, turned around and walked away. His gang came up to him, in disbelief.

"But Ace! What about Blossom!?" Lil' Arturo protested.

"Yeah, what about the prizesss money!?" Snake did the same, only to receive a backhanded strike from Ace when he stopped, offended by his gang member's remark.

"Haven't I taught you something yet? You learning or what!?" Ace barked at him. "Stay true to ourselves, no matter what! The difference between us and them-" He pointed his thumb backward at the labs. "is our honor and code. If we throw that away, we're them!"
Several raspberries came from the hunched creature they knew as Grubber.

"There are other ways to make money," Ace replied. "Many other ways."

With that, the Gangreen Gang took their leave empty-handed.

Blossom, in the meantime, could feel her body giving out. Her legs had grown totally numb, and she fell onto her knees as a result, even as she continued to watch Ace leave. Lethargy swept through her as they disappeared. But this time, it was different. This time, relief came with the lethargy.

Even as she gave herself to her exhaustion and the elements, unsure at all of whether she'd even live to see the next day, she smiled. For a while, she waved on her knees, before plunging into the snow and her frozen blood as if it was her bed. Or deathbed.

"I did it, Dad. I did it," Blossom whispered to the night sky above, as though Professor Utonium could hear her, before closing her eyes once more, this time without a care in the world, without the nightmares.
Chapter 94: Redemption (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Bubbles and Buttercup attempts to work together to fight crime without Blossom.

A/N: It seems that I've bitten off more than I can chew with this one. Originally, this chapter was projected to be about 5000 words long, but it would have become like 8000 words long had I continued. As such I've decided to split this one down the middle - which means that the next chapter will be released very quickly because the content going into the next chapter amounts to 2500 words so far, and needs only perhaps another 1500-2500 words.

Chapter 94: Redemption (Part 3)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 30 Minutes

Letting the sound of firefights and all manners of human distress guide them, Bubbles and Buttercup skimed around the fringes of the laboratory complex, crossing from the lobby to lift lobby to corridors then the west wing lobby. They were close, very close.

Closer than they knew, for when they turned around a corner at lightning speed, they were greeted by what sounded basically like a war zone - on their side was a mixed force of USDO rapid response soldiers and Morbucks private security, and on the other, covering the exit, were the Foundation terrorists.

The soldiers and security officers were pinned behind their covers along with their charges - people of all walks of life, suddenly plunged in a deep ocean way out of their leagues. Scientists, businessmen, workers, housewives in their finest dresses and crying children. And the terrorists were slowly but surely advancing towards them, undeterred by the little resistance the remaining good guys could put up.

As usual, the terrorists were flanking their positions, being able to spare the manpower. Bubbles and Buttercup hid behind a wall just outside the west wing lobby, and the latter girl was rearing to go when Bubbles pulled her back by the shoulder. Bubbles knew what Buttercup was after, and she couldn't let her shortsightedness and selfishness jeopardize what they came here to do.

"We have to save those people, Buttercup!" Bubbles reminded her sister, but Buttercup shrugged off Bubbles' hand, pushing her away irritably.

"Didn't you hear what Blossom said!?!" Buttercup snapped at Bubbles, offended that she would presume to order her around. "I'm the leader now, so don't tell me what to do!"

"But-" Bubbles wanted to argue her point but knew that it would be hopeless, or highly detrimental to her physical well-being if she pursued it too far. In her mind, Blossom didn't seem very willing to pass the mantle of leadership to Buttercup, even if temporarily - she had felt it in her very core. Didn't
Daddy say that they could feel each other's emotions sometimes? Instead, Blossom was pushed into a corner when it came to that decision - it was either a Buttercup who was zealous and tough but impulsive and bloodthirsty, or her, who was, well… Bubbles couldn't blame her smartest sister for not choosing her, because in all her time fighting crime, she knew she had always been afraid, soft and unwilling, and it had been bared for all to see at every single moment. There simply wasn't the time and opportunity to show Blossom that she wanted to change if only to help her sisters and everyone around her, to fight for a sweeter future when everyone could be nice to each other, just like in her dreams. "Are we going to save the people, then, Buttercup?"

"Now I'm the leader and I don't care!" Buttercup said coldly, unappreciative that Bubbles had continued to tell her what to do. "I say we hurt some baddies my way! If you won't help me then go cry in a corner like you always did!" With that, Buttercup sped off, leaving behind an incredibly upset and perplexed Bubbles - she had yet to wrap her head around Buttercup's way of thinking. Unlike Professor Utonium and Alice, she simply had neither the experience or expertise to understand Buttercup, much less to convince her.

When Bubbles stepped out of hiding, any hope that Buttercup would relent and hear her plea was crushed. Even as the terrorists crept closer along the sides, letting off shots that further dwindled the number of men on her side, Buttercup had sprinted into the center of the western lobby, towards the bulk of the terrorist forces. Jumping towards a masked man who happened to be in transit between furniture covers, she thrust her fist into him, the force shattering every bone in his chest, blood exploding when her fist was buried in him. He fell immediately, dead on impact with a grimace hidden by his skull mask. All attention in the core of the terrorist forces was turned to her, but the flankers remained ignorant of this development, focused on wiping out any remnants of USDO and security resistance, of which could be counted on two hands whereas there were dozens, still, of murderers and pillagers.

Bubbles immediately got to work, doing her own thing. Flying into the cover of one of the defending groups seeking refuge from the madness, she asked if everyone was alright. Her presence was still an unwelcome one after what had happened at Highway 13, and more than one of the civilians were startled by her arrival and shrank away from her, a teenage girl in a dress shouting and his mother screaming about how she didn't want her to take their lives. Bubbles tried her best to calm them down, telling them about her sincerity to help them, but the fact that she hadn't done anything unpleasant to them did most of the convincing.

"Kid, if you cover us, I'll get these civvies out of here," the only USDO soldier left guarding the people hiding behind his reception desk said. He had two security officers with him. Two others were lifeless on the floor.

"Go, I'll do it," Bubbles said bravely even as fear insinuated itself into her once more - she was never not nervous when it came to responsibilities like this. For the first time, she drew her stockless XM4 rifle with the intent to use it. Jumping on top of their reception desk cover, she opened fire on the terrorists taking pot shots at them. But her shock and remorse over taking the Girl-Killer's life had still not left her; she was firing rounds above the terrorists' head, in an attempt to scare them off. And it worked. As she forced the terrorists arrayed against her into hiding, the USDO soldier led the party attendees out of the lobby. They were unsurprisingly fast in making their exit. The only thing surprising was that no one was injured in their dash to safety, despite the stray bullets whizzing around from the other flank and Buttercup's one-sided fight.

Bubbles took a quick look over at Buttercup after she had run out of ammunition in her current magazine and had to reload.
Buttercup was unusually vicious even by her previous standards. The marble floor was slick with blood wherever she fought. In her most recent kill, she'd jumped on top of a man and, with hands on either of his jaws, didn't just dislocate them but tore the lower jaw away. The man fell, his eyes, wide with shock, implying the pain he felt as he still lived to experience his facial disfigurement. Buttercup giggled as she fell with him, but jumped to her feet quickly to run up to her next target. No amount of panicked gunshots could stop her this time - this group of terrorists had no Girl-Killers with them.

They had someone better, just not in the fray yet.

Bubbles had reloaded her rifle quickly and continued to push back the flanking terrorists on one side of the lobby on her own, all the while bravely taking shots aimed at her - which had no effect, but hurt nonetheless. When her gun was out of ammo again, she jumped off the desk and ran forward at the flankers' position, running around their Greek pillar cover and ramming her empty rifle into one of them, causing him to fall backward. She could feel shots fired automatically at her from her back and front. Shifting her rifle, she swung it like a baseball bat at a masked woman with an SMG, braining her hard, but not too hard, such that she hit her head on the pillar and fell unconscious.

Swinging around, Bubbles glared at the terrorists who had been putting shots on her back, who had just run out of ammunition. She bounded after them, sending them scrambling for their pistols, scrambling to get away from her, but being normal human beings, could not. She bowled into them, and all three of them careened on the marble floor before Bubbles delivered a knock-out punch to each of them. By the time she looked around at the rest of the flankers, all she could see were their backs in the distance as they fled from her.

Leaving behind the row of Greek pillars, she surveyed the situation with Buttercup once again: terrorists were scrambling out of the lobby and into the snow, retreating a losing battle. Buttercup was dragging one of them by the leg away from the west lobby entrance.

"Stop squirming!" she said before stomping on the terrorist's back. Even from where she was, Bubbles could hear the sound of a spine breaking cleanly at multiple points. Flipping the severely injured terrorist over, Buttercup then delivered a coup de grace in the form of a punch across the jaw, sending teeth flying, and shattering said jaw. Whether the terrorist was still alive or not, Bubbles could not tell.

Then Bubbles looked around at the other flank of the west lobby. She thought she'd heard cries and shouts and gunshots from there, but then again, she could hear it from everywhere, and her sense of hearing was becoming more sensitive by the minute.

She thought. The fact that she had to think about it was a prelude to her horrifying discovery: the left flank had collapsed while Buttercup was indulging in her blood lust and Bubbles was desperately trying to save as many people as she could. The terrorists on the left had killed the two USDO soldiers and one security officer there and massacred the civilians holed up at the desks on the left flank - men, women, children, a baby… No one was spared.

"No…” Bubbles murmured, so horrified and depressed by the sight she was that she felt actual, physical pain in her chest. And there was no way to release it. Not with vengeance, the Buttercup way, as the perpetrators of the massacre had retreated along with their comrades. Not with love, as there was no one left in the left flank. Walking over to the sea of bodies on the marble floor awash with blood, She searched them with her eyes, hoping for a miracle.

Only to find something worse than a sea of corpses. A boy, torn up by bullets in his child-sized tuxedo, his side-parting a mess. His chest heaved with shivering difficulty. Bubbles knelt down beside him, removed her helmet and took his hand. He couldn't even speak, only wheeze as a dying old man would. Their eyes searched each other's, and although the boy was a few years older than
Bubbles' physical age, they both wanted the same things - a happy ending of some sort, as the fairy tales promised, but neither would get it.

Bubbles pulled him closer into an embrace. Then the boy's breathing became difficult, as his lungs and chest cavities became too flooded with blood. He retched in his death throes, his hand tightening around Bubbles' and his stare into her eyes intensified, until…

It was all gone.

All this, while Buttercup was giggling and laughing and gloating about how many she had killed and the way she had killed the terrorists and whatever she was salvaging from the dead terrorists and how she would kill more of them the next time and - Bubbles was infuriated!

"Buttercup!" Bubbles screamed shrilly when she got up and marched up to her sister. Buttercup turned around, her mad grin still plastered on her face, though slightly muted by this unwelcome distraction from Bubbles. "They needed your help! And you just- just! Argh!" More rage than Bubbles knew what to do with filled her – she had never felt such a thing before. Buttercup was her beloved sister, and yet she had violated her sensibilities more than the average stranger. She pushed Buttercup, who stumbled backward, arms pinwheeling as she easily found her balance once more.

"I just what? I was helping, and I bet I helped more than you!" Buttercup bragged, and pushed Bubbles back, who fell on her bum. "Look around you, Bubbles! How many did I kill!? I bet it's more than you!"

"But it's not about killing!" Bubbles protested; Buttercup's maniacal devotion to death scared her. Tears prickled her eyes as she realized that she was more afraid of her sister than even some strangers, whom Daddy warned her about.

"Oh yes, it is – whoever I don't kill would have gotten to those stupid, useless people," Buttercup snapped. "Why do you even care about them anyway!? Most of them are bigger than us and yet they couldn't protect themselves! They're useless and they should die!"

"But we came here to protect them!" Bubbles insisted. Buttercup's scowl became even more prominent. Stomping up to Bubbles, she kicked her in the face, and all Bubbles could do was to cower.

"I'm the leader now! Don't tell me why we're here, you baby!"

The loud bang of doors flinging open and glass breaking shifted the Girls' attention to the entrance of the west lobby. A familiar, near-inhuman shape had just walked through the entrance, chilly winter wind and snow blowing in her entrance.

Naga. In her four hands were assault rifles. M16s. She wore a kind of armor that gave the impression of a snake. Smoke was rising from her mouth as if she was a dragon. A cigar was clenched between her jaws and her eyes, those windows to a soul that had died a long time ago were hidden behind a pair of circular-rimmed sunglasses.

Buttercup looked back around at Bubbles, the shock of a more powerful enemy entering the arena shaking her out of the heat of her bloodlust. They made eye contact, but not a real one as Bubbles' vision was clouded by tears of darkness that shouldn't be in a girl's life. Something surged in the toughest of The Three's mind, no doubt from the anomaly in her defective brain. She couldn't help but feel a tinge of Bubbles' betrayal and sadness.

"Are you going to fight Naga with me or not?" Buttercup said and extended her hand to Bubbles
once more. "Do what your leader tells you."

"I thought you were good," Bubbles said tearfully as she sniffled while on the ground, her anger unabated, but worse of all, the gnawing at her heart that was overpowering. Unable to stand Buttercup any longer, she ran out of the west lobby through the back, her baby blue trail the last reminder of the bad blood between sisters.

Buttercup stared after the blue trail, something amounting to regret welling up in her. Cold but true, it would have been better to be two against Naga than alone, even if her fellow fighter was the near-useless Bubbles. She looked around at Naga again, surprised that the four-armed lady had allowed them to talk without interrupting.

"No more Bubbles to save you now, huh?" Naga remarked as she spat her nearly-spent cigar on the ground and stomped it with her boots. "It's a shame I can't kill her for that bite she gave me, but you'll have to do."

The bite. Bubbles. Buttercup remembered now. It was Bubbles who saved Buttercup when Naga was unloading all her guns on her. Things would have gone badly had Bubbles not find it within herself to act, rather than cower in a corner. Taking more bullets would have meant losing consciousness as the pain would have overwhelmed her mind, and she would then have become vulnerable to a killing strike or capture.

Once more, Buttercup was forced to admit deep inside that she had been wrong, and now, her mistake had taken the form of Naga towering many feet above her, brimming with guns and swords and knives and explosives…
Chapter 95: Redemption (Part 4)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Bubbles meets a new friend and a new foe.

A/N: So much to write! As usual, some planned content had to be delayed from writing because this chapter became too long as is. Stay tuned!

Chapter 95: Redemption (Part 4)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 37 Minutes

Bubbles had retreated deep into the complex after running away from Buttercup, who had grown only more violent and abusive than before. She found herself busting through a door and entering some kind of a waiting room for VIPs. Slick furniture such as comfortable sofas and shiny coffee tables and coffee machines and paintings decorated the room with a mix of simplicity and futurism. She hid behind the sofa, and with Buttercup's unkind words and atrocities still fresh in her mind, she sobbed where she was, a little girl again, always had been. Her wish for a perfect family, one with the kindest sisters ever, with the loving father they already had, felt like little more than a pipe dream.

She wished for Blossom or her father to be with her more than ever, but she knew it was not possible. Her Daddy wouldn't have been allowed into a place like this, and Blossom was fighting a tall, green man. Knowing their luck, Bubbles didn't think that Blossom could win.

But she had to try. She pressed the call button on her radio.

"Blossom, are you there?" Bubbles cried into the radio. No reply. She pressed the button again. "Blossom? Answer me, please."

Silence.

"I need you," she tried again. "Please."

No reply. A gut feeling in her told her of terrible news; Blossom might be dead or dying.

Then came a girlish scream, not unlike her own, coming from even deeper in the research complex. There were gunshots, the charging, and release of some kind of energy device, though the latter noise was indecipherable to Bubbles, who had never heard such a thing before.

Someone in need of assistance. Wiping tears away, Bubbles stood up reluctantly. She couldn't help but to wonder if she would be of any use in her current state; it felt as if she could barely even help herself, much less someone else. Memories of the failures in the past had brewed the beginnings of an Imposter Syndrome in her.

But the screams. They didn't sound like they'd come from someone big. They sounded like they'd come from-
Bubbles gasped.

A little girl.

With that in mind, Bubbles dashed out of the VIP guestroom and in the direction of the scream. She didn't have to sprint for very long to come upon something.

Security officers in their dark purple shirt and black pants, all dead and lying on the floor, some with strange burns around their bodies, others with claw marks that looked like they had been made by a wild animal.

And the culprit was just ahead. A strange being wearing some kind of purple cloak obscuring most of his body, but there was one prominent feature that was impossible to miss. A brain in some kind of a translucent dome.

Bubbles couldn't breathe the moment she saw it. She knew it from somewhere, and it was connected to her most traumatic memory to date. Her near-death, which General Blackwater had told her had been orchestrated by none other than…

Mojo Jojo.

She had seen a photo of the creature. And it- he was about to claim another victim. A little girl with hair colored like Blossom's, but arranged differently in two messy buns on the sides of her head. She was on her floor, squeezed into a corner, cowering in fear as the oversized chimpanzee loomed over her.

"Come now, little human girl," the large-sized chimpanzee said in a strange impossible-to-place accent. "It's time you make me rich! Wealthy! Overflowing with resources! You'll-"

Bubbles couldn't help but take a step backward, and in her moment of fear, had accidentally knocked a discarded pistol aside, which clattered on the ground. Bubbles froze when she saw the little girl's eyes roll in her direction, and the large chimpanzee's ears twitch as if antennas picking up a signal.

Mojo Jojo whirled around without warning, pointing a handheld device at Bubbles, which looked vaguely like a gun. The device pulsed with energy, making a charging noise that suggested just as much and more danger. It had multiple tiny barrels, from which Bubbles could only assume would release something that could kill her.

"You! You who robbed him from me!" the oversized monkey hollered in rage the moment he saw Bubbles. The look on his face, with his bloodshot eyes, green complexion and dangerous-looking teeth, did not make him look any less dangerous. "You thief! Robber! Criminal! Crook!"

Bubbles could feel every cell in her body screaming for her to run away - but she knew she couldn't do it without helping the little girl with messy buns, whose purple dress, which was spattered with blood, looked like a mess, with the shoulder of her dress torn and hanging loosely, exposing her shoulder. One of her two gloves, long with sleeves, had rolled down partially. The look on her face suggested desperation, a plea for help.

Bubbles dashed for the little girl the moment Mojo Jojo pulled the trigger on his device. The moment he did, she could feel something, a reddish light, singe her shoulder. As the shoulder of her protective vest burned, she darted towards the little girl and picked her up. In one fluid move, she was already sprinting away from Mojo Jojo, who continued to howl accusations and curses, firing hurriedly-aimed bolts of energy at her, blowing up concrete and marble but Bubbles was hurt no further. Shrapnel flew everywhere, and Bubbles held onto her protectee closely and tightly, protecting her
from the dangerous shrapnel.

The blonde-haired enhanced girl went through the first door she saw. And the moment she did, she found herself face-to-face with the barrels of several guns. Bubbles put up a hand to shield her face, afraid of getting shot even if she wouldn't even get hurt from it. Some of the guns were shotguns, something she still feared irrationally because of the bad first impression she had of it on her first day fighting crime.

The men she was facing wore purple uniforms. Security guard uniforms. Several of them lowered their guns when they realized who she was carrying. Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks. One of them, bearing several bars of command, waved for the rest to lower their weapons.

Bubbles was able to take a good look at the room they're in when they did. It was like a laboratory of sorts, except that there were rows upon rows of machines. Demonstration models. It was a showroom of sorts.

"Princess! Are you alright?" the guard commander asked, concerned. "Did- did she hurt you?" the guard pointed at Bubbles, whose hand went up to her chest defensively when an accusation was thrown at her.

"No, Mister. Bubbles saved me," Elodie Morbucks said as she adjusted her wig. For some reason, Bubbles felt flattered. Had she met this little girl before? How did she know her name?

In reality, Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks had been taught by her father to read the newspaper and watch the news on television, every single day. That was where she learned of 'The Three'. The Girls' names were mentioned everywhere once it got out – whether it was overheard by an eyewitness or leaked by a police officer with loose lips, it didn't matter. Ever since seeing the Girls on television and reading about them, Princess had been fascinated by them since, and even though she'd read or heard about the questionable things they had done, secretly admired them for their powers, strength and apparent freedom.

And here they were, saving the day with Bubbles in the flesh, standing before her.

"That right?" the guard commander said, casting a suspecting eye on Bubbles even as he spoke to his employer's daughter. "We still need to get you to the panic room right away. Your father should be waiting for you there."

The Princess looked around at Bubbles. Normally outspoken, Elodie found herself out of character – after all, she didn't expect to meet someone she had been secretly admiring over the past couple of weeks. Usually, she would have been the girl with the initiative, asking her father to arrange a meeting with one celebrity or another.

"You're hurt," the Princess said, ignoring her father's employee the moment she noticed the graze wound on Bubbles' cheek, which had long clotted but remained wide and maroon and ugly, resembling a water canal flooded with filth. Timidly, the Princess put out her hand, intending to touch Bubbles, as if to see if she was real or an illusion, but on noticing that the enhanced little girl had shrunk away from her touch, realized that she had been rude. "May I?"

Bubbles nodded, just as afraid as she was confused - even naturally-born five-year-olds were ancients next to her, and their ways were just as frightening as they were mysterious. Elodie ran her fingers down Bubbles' cheek, applying forces gently to feel the muscle and bone underneath as if ascertaining if Bubbles was human, and not some alien or monstrous creature in hiding.

"Woah…" Princess uttered when she finally got to touch one of the infamous 'The Three', one of the
same entities who could run as fast as cars and lift them too. The news had painted them as either
destructive weapons or misunderstood super-humans, depending on the source, and Elodie had
touched one!

"Are you a real princess?" Bubbles couldn't help but ask. Professor Utonium had read her numerous
tales of castles and kings and knights and yes, princesses. She thought it just as fascinating as
Princess thought of her to be able to meet a real princess. When Bubbles had asked her dearest
Daddy where real princesses might be found, he told her that the closest one was in a faraway land
called the United Kingdom, wherever that was.

"Yeah, kinda," Elodie Morbucks answered at first, with her fingers frolicking in her fake messy bun
until her confidence fell flat. "No, not really, even if I'm rich like one. I wish I am. Everyone calls me
'Princess' though. How rude of me - my name's Elodie Morbucks. You can call me Princess, too, if
you want." the rich little girl stuck a hand out for Bubbles to shake, and her savior took it.

"I'm Bubbles," the blue-eyed girl said.

"I know," Elodie chuckled, still unable to get over the fact that she was speaking to one of 'The
Three', that she was touching one - again.

The moment was interrupted by the guard commander clearing his throat.

"Miss, I hate to break this up, but we have to get to the panic room as soon as we can," the guard
commander said. "And we can't bring this… thing with us." the guard gestured in the direction of
Bubbles.

"But- But- Why not?" Little Morbucks asked, genuinely surprised that her father's employees weren't
as enthusiastic about meeting an enhanced human being as she was - it wasn't something that
happened every day, and it wasn't as if the world had an endless supply of them.

"She's dangerous, sweetheart," the guard commander replied bluntly, all the while remaining
consistent by keeping his eyes on Bubbles, who became downcast immediately, upset when
reminded of what she and her sisters had done in the past to warrant such suspicions - if they weren't
outright failures, they had been outright destructive.

"But she saved me," the Princess countered. "Please, Mister. She's hurt, and there are plasters in the
panic room."

"Fine," the guard commander relented - who was he to reject his boss' daughter? Besides, if this
'Bubbles' was dangerous, shouldn't they be all dead by now? He hated to take risks, but from the
crazy things he'd heard about creatures that couldn't be killed by guns and explosives, he'd need all
the help he could get. "We have to go now! It won't be long before-"

The sound of boots stomping on the ground with uncannily inhuman gait, of strangely-accented
mumbling had reminded them of the urgency of their situation. It was coming from just outside the
door.

"Hide!" the guard commander ordered Elodie before turning to his men - five of them in all,
including himself. "Take your positions, we'll nuke whatever it is when it comes."

Princess and Bubbles stared at each other before reacting, scrambling for one hiding spot or the other
as if it was the most serious hide-and-seek game in the world. They'd seen the terror in each other's
eyes. Bubbles understood what she saw in Princess, but the latter could not - what could someone
like Bubbles be afraid of?
They were both able to find hiding spots, the both of them hiding under desks on opposite ends of an aisle dedicated to prototypical and experimental car engines, both still able to see clearly the horror in their eyes. The Princess panted, could barely stifle the cries coming from her lips - what could Bubbles be afraid of!? Her pale, sickly complexion betrayed her understandable weakness, something that even Bubbles couldn't overlook. The enhanced little girl signaled to her protectee to keep silent by putting her index finger over her lips. The Princess tried her best, even covered her mouth with both hands.

There was the sound of a door crashing open and multiple metallic crashes after that as if it had been ripped from its hinges. Gunshots resounded in the enclosed lab space - shotguns, SMGs, pistols. This was responded to the sound of something charging-up, men screaming, or giving orders, before some kind of energy discharge. Someone was hit - that was obvious from the bloodcurdling cry of terror that shouldn't have come from a modern warrior.

There were additional discharges, interspersed by conventional gunshots. Bodies hit the floor. Something exploded - likely a grenade, actually a grenade salvaged from a USDO rapid response operative.

Then silence.

Another gunshot. Rapid footsteps, coming towards Bubbles and Princess. Elodie Morbucks was shivering as if she was suffering from a deadly fever, and Bubbles wasn't far behind.

A final energy discharge was released. The final Morbucks security officer hit the floor chest first, landing between Bubbles and Princess, his eyes meeting Princess, the life in it flickering out but not completely. The security officer's 12-gauge pump-action shotgun had fallen out of reach. With his back a burnt, smoking crater, he couldn't even crawl the few inches to get it.

The nemesis was coming towards them. It was evident from the sound of boots upon tiled floor, and when it was close enough, Bubbles could see the legs of the monkey-like creature pinning the wounded security officer down, before pointing its laser device down at his head. Right before Elodie and Bubbles' eyes, the back of the man's skull had exploded when the creature executed the man where he was.

"Pah! Disgusting, filthy, unwashed human! Those were my best boots!" Mojo Jojo exclaimed in his deep, rapid-fire voice, referring to the white boots he was wearing, which had been spattered with blood and bits of grey matter and bone. "No matter."

From the perspective of the girls, Mojo Jojo was standing where he was as if refusing to leave until they came out. Out of their view, he was actually looking around for them.

"Now to claim the prize that I have been so unfairly, unjustly deprived of," the chimpanzee said to himself before finally walking away. "Come out, come out, wherever you are!"

The footsteps of Bubbles' nemesis became fainter. Peeking out of her hiding spot, the enhanced little girl could see the monkey-like creature looking under another desk, one that was closer to the entrance, perhaps thinking that a smart prey would likely hide in plain sight, rather than the most expected of well-hidden places.

In the meantime, Princess continued to look at Bubbles, searching her for answers. They stared at each other, terror still in their eyes, both of them deathly pale from shock.

"Oh Powerpuff girl…" the monkey continued to taunt the room, and he had made sure that his voice had carried - it would be hard for him not to. Beyond the fear that Bubbles felt, she found it strange
that Mojo Jojo would call her by something so strange. Powerpuff girl? But Bubbles couldn't find
distraction in curiosity for long, as she could hear the monkey sweeping lab apparatus and desk
stationery to the ground in anger. Both Bubbles and Princess jumped from the sudden noise, but
they'd admirably kept mum and quiet. "Where are you!?!"

Bubbles knew she had to act; Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks was counting on her. The sickly girl's
friends had died so that she may live, and she didn't want them to die for nothing. Crawling out of
her desk, she motioned for Princess to move.

The Princess shook her head vehemently as she quivered in her hiding spot. It didn't help that the
enraged chimpanzee had knocked over even more things from another lab workspace, sending
measurement and imaging tools falling to the ground and breaking.

Bubbles peeked over her desk briefly, and just as she did, Mojo Jojo turned around, forcing her to
duck for cover once more - she had no idea if the monkey-like monster had seen her. She could only
hope not.

There were boot stomps once more, coming closer. Bubbles crawled frantically back to her hiding
spot, bearing no hope in her heart at all that she could escape undetected and unscathed.

"If I catch you, Powerpuff, you'll pay for utterly destroying and ruining my life," the enhanced
chimpanzee muttered. 'Why does he keep calling me that?' Bubbles could only wonder. There was a
crash next, as the creature had fully lifted an experimental car engine off and thrown it single-
handedly a distance away, making a hole in the wall. It happened to be the engine sitting next to
Princess' desk. The poor, sickly little girl was trembling as if she was in the Arctic.

Then there was silence. Silence, except for the semi-regular panting of the large chimpanzee, heavy
and intense with rage barely kept in check.

What happened next left very little time for either girl to react. Mojo Jojo had ducked to check under
Princess' desk hiding spot, and he had done it so suddenly that Elodie had banged her head hard on
the ceiling of the desk's leg space as she screamed so loudly that even the enhanced chimpanzee
found the high-pitched noise ear-piercing.

"You human brat!" the chimpanzee insulted Elodie as he reached out to grab her with his free hand.
Before he could kidnap her, however, Bubbles launched out of her hiding spot like a torpedo out of
its tube, barreling into her alleged attempted-murderer, sending the both of them tumbling over
Elodie's desk, rolling over and destroying a computerized information counter in the process.

"You! Another human brat!" Mojo Jojo howled at Bubbles as he shrugged her off, tossing her
against an experimental tank engine on the other side of Princess's desk, knocking it partially off its
raised platform. "You won't ruin my life a second time!"

Raising his weapon at her, the glass-domed chimpanzee fired his device at her. A reddish beam hit
her instantly, cutting a bloody swathe across her chest as it burned through armor and cloth with
Bubbles slumped helplessly against the steel engine.

Bubbles opened her eyes when the heat storm had abated, but the moment she did, she saw Mojo
Jojo's weapon powering up with lights flickering once more, and it was pointed at her face.
Instinctively and fearfully, she threw up her hands to protect her face, and the beam, which was light
in nature, made cuts in her forearms instead, as well as cause her sleeves to catch fire.

"You're stronger than you look, Powerpuff!" Mojo Jojo commented when he stopped to let his laser
pistol recharge - he had pushed it too far and even at maximum setting, had failed to kill its intended
target. Looking at the recharge meter, it would take some time. Bubbles, in the meantime, was staring at her arms after patting down the flames. The sleeves were drenched in blood, and so was the skin underneath. She could see long cuts agonizingly carved into her flesh, snaking around both of her arms. She screamed excruciatingly the moment she saw how mangled she was, but it didn't help with the pain. Her hands trembled as the burning sensation continued unabated.

"My… name… is Bubbles!" the enhanced little girl corrected the chimpanzee, trying to work up the kind of rage she had felt earlier but failing short – 'how are feelings so elusive when they were needed?'

"Aw, this tiny little pet monkey here has a name," Mojo Jojo taunted as he waited for his device to charge again. It had thus far been his favorite invention – a reaffirmation of his memories of his father's teachings. It was powered by an energy pack filled with stolen Chemical B – inferior to Chemical X except for the fact that it stored nearly as much energy as Chemical X. Most of the device had been made from Duranium, crafted in pistol form to save on the precious little material the Foundation had at hand. The kind of energy it could discharge was enough to cut through multiple human beings altogether at once, and even wound enhanced human beings at its highest settings, as evidenced by the results he had yielded so far.

"Why did you try to kill me, Mojo Jojo?" Bubbles could still find it within herself to ask, the little girl in her prevailing over the rage she never really had. She had remembered his name just in time - General Blackwater had given it days ago. "We've never met before…"

"You mean 'why am I trying to kill you?'" Mojo Jojo corrected Bubbles, dismissive of her speech, thinking it to be poor grammar when Bubbles had made no linguistic errors in her words. "Simple. Elementary. Easy. You… ruined my life! You destroyed it! I am shocked, flabbergasted that you don't know this!"

"Has no one ever told you about what he had done? The crime, the wrong the USDO had committed?" Mojo Jojo went on, too lost in his own thoughts to explain everything clearly for his fellow enhanced being, who had nothing but questions now.

"No…" Bubbles said. "No one has ever-"

"No matter. Enough of this!" the chimpanzee cut in, realizing that time was dragging on and his objective was sitting in the very same room he was in, crying on the floor. In fact, it almost felt as if Bubbles was speaking to him purely as a diversionary tactic to slow him down so that the USDO could catch up with him. No, he was certain that there was nothing except for ill-intent and cunning in Bubbles' words. She was, after all, technically superior to him due to her creation purely via stabilized Chemical X, so why should she be as innocent as she looked? "You will die, expire, be killed, be extinguished by my flame!"

Mojo Jojo, with simian fangs bared and animal eyes widened, taking in the look and fear of his kill, he raised his energy device as it was almost done charging up and aimed it at Bubbles' face, her teary, blue eyes finding nothing in her adversary's vengeful visage.

"Stop… Please..." Bubbles pleaded with him tearfully, amidst the whine from the chimpanzee's gun. He'd set it for maximum discharge, and what would come out of the device scared her. "Stop! STOP!"

And at that moment, Bubbles' scream was as if transmuted into a weapon. The rush of wind and deafening sound had sent the chimpanzee flying over a proof-of-concept power generator and out of view, his device clattering far away. Window glass and instruments exploded everywhere; Mojo Jojo could only be thankful that his brain dome was made of sterner stuff. Even Bubbles herself was
shocked at what she had done. Her own ears were ringing from her own home-grown sonic boom.

"Bubbles?" a voice fought through the ringing in her ears. "Bubbles? Are you okay?"

Bubbles turned in the direction of the muffled voice, and it turned out to be none other than Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks, who was clutching an ear even as she reached out for Bubbles. Shockingly, she was bleeding from both her ears and her gait was unsteady as to suggest injury. She took the Princess' hand as soon as it was extended, but the terminally-ill human girl was unable to pull her up because of the weight of her savior's armor. Bubbles had to do most of the work.

"We have to go..." Bubbles said as she rubbed her own ears, but the ringing was diminishing; a good sign. But it wasn't a good sign when a gloved simian arm shot out from behind the showcase power generator, clutching it. Bubbles jumped the moment she saw it. Moans came from behind it as well. Her attempted-murderer was far from done with her. "We have to run!"

Bubbles picked Princess up and immediately sprinted, jumping through a broken window. She could still hear him; her tormentor, howling and screaming as if he was on fire.

"Curses! Curses! CURSES! CURSE YOU, POWERPUFF!"
Chapter 96: Redemption (Part 5)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Buttercup dukes it out with Naga.

Chapter 96: Redemption (Part 5)


The wailing of Detective Mullens' car siren was loud and clear in the middle of nowhere but had thus far only disturbed the local wildlife, whatever was left of it after the farmers had their way with the surroundings. Behind the detective's muscle car was a whole convoy of police cruisers, all lit up and screaming accusations at whoever would listen, if there was anyone out there. The vehicles ran up a path straight through a wheat field and up a hill, stopping a short distance from a manor overlooking the surrounding crops, not too close just in case of an ambush.

Detective Mullens thought an ambush to be unlikely - there were far too many opportunities for the Lombardi to spring something on them - from the wheat fields, or from the windows of the manor while their vehicles were slowed by the ascend, yet everything had been all but silent.

No. Either things were more uneventful than they appeared, or whatever events that had transpired was long over. Mullens was far too jaded to think it was the former. Something was up, and he knew it. Getting out of his car, he pointed his shotgun forward immediately. His partner, his daughter, Olivia, got out from the shotgun seat… holding another shotgun. With a couple of trusted veteran police officers - Canvas the scarred face and another, they rushed up to the manor's porch, leaving another eight police officers to guard their flank and rear.

The windows of the manor were lit. Someone was inside. Or used to be inside. The house was like a jack o' lantern, its windows the eyes of a spider and its door, a mouth to swallow them up. What they'll find in the guts of the beast, Mullens did not know.

"You sure you're ready to handle that shotgun?" Officer Olivia asked. There was a splotch of blood on his jacket. The wound had opened up before, and the fact that it could reopen again concerned her.

"Never felt better. Why the hell are we in the middle of nowhere when we should be at the labs doing some good, Olive?" Mullens asked his daughter, Officer Olivia, while they were flanking the main door leading into the manor. There was no point in maintaining subtlety - their entrance was less than subtle.

Mullens wasn't exactly looking for an answer. He'd known that already, even before they left the city limits, and had to invoke the TPD's emergency jurisdiction on the Pokey Oaks County.
"Because Blossom asked us to?" Officer Olivia replied, and actually tried to make her answer as nonsensical as possible just to take a jab at her father.

"There a point? A woman and a child, versus hundreds of people in the labs…" Mullens rambled on, his age showing from his words alone.

"'Course it does, Detective. They've got the labs covered - it's the least we can do for Blossom after how much she helped us with Marcello," Olivia said.

"I think you meant Buttercup," Mullens countered. "She bled the truth out of him real good."

"Blossom was nice, you know - she actually gave a damn - and Donny Marcello responded to that," Olivia maintained. "Buttercup didn't do shit except masturbate herself with his pain."

"Whatever, kiddo. You ready?" Mullens deflected. He clutched his shotgun tightly as he prepared to breach the manor. "On three." He nodded his countdown - one, two. Leaning against the wall, he gave the door a firm horse-kick before swinging around and pointing his shotgun inwards, rushing in, adrenaline pumping, ignoring the pain in his wounded arm far too easily.

There was no resistance. His daughter and fellow loyalist officers filed in, covering every single angle and potential blind spots there was inside the manor. While Canvas and his partner covered the flanks, Mullens and Olivia went deeper into the manor.

It didn't take long for them to discover why there had been a lack of gunshots and explosions, why there was only silence.

It was a grisly sight, even for Detective Mullens. The last time he'd seen such a thing had been years ago. After all, few would dare betray the Lombardi family, and even fewer had warranted such a flamboyant display of brutality - as such, such displays of their retribution were rare.

In the kitchen was Donny Marcello's family, along with the owners of Farmer Marcello's Acres. Seated around a dining table filled with Christmas dishes, the main attraction wasn't the turkey. Everyone celebrating was beheaded - Marcello's wife, son, Farmer Marcello, who was the underboss' brother, as well as his wife. Their heads had been arranged on a silver platter in a circular pattern, facing outwards, their mouths propped open by dessert forks. In another silver platter were four tongues laid out neatly in a row, one smaller than the rest. A card was laid next to the platter of heads, spattered with blood with what were clearly finger marks, but no fingerprints. The murderer or murderers had been thorough in keeping themselves unaccountable. There were already flies feasting upon the crime scene.

Covering his mouth and nose, Detective Mullens inched his way towards the dining table and picked the card up. He opened it, only to find that there wasn't much to look at. 'Merry Christmas," it read laconically.

"Shit," Detective Mullens said just as laconically. Looking at the heads on the table, particularly that of the nine-year-old boy’s, he actually felt sorry for the victims, even if they had criminal ties with one of the biggest and most cruel crime family in the US. The boy, at least, didn't deserve it. Even the youth of Townsville had a nasty streak to them, but if there was anyone who could be rehabilitated, it was them.

He'd turned out to be right and wrong at the same time, and could only hope that the Girls of Project Powerpuff was more successful than he was.
Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 35 Minutes

Buttercup was sent running even before Naga had opened fire on her. She knew what the four-armed monster was going to do the moment she saw her. The pain she felt under her four arms back in The Strip was hard to forget. At first, Buttercup jumped into cover, thinking perhaps that the reception desks might provide relief, and for a brief moment, she was right, as the innumerable sudden stings down her back had stopped.

The gunshots ceased. Then something dropped from high above, lobbed at a high angle. It resembled an egg, an olive-green egg, and it fell in between her legs as she had sat behind her cover with them splayed out.

The egg had brought back memories. It reminded her of the warehouse with Junior. It was a grenade! Buttercup's eyes grew wide on realizing how she was going to suffer.

And it wasn't something she could really get used to. After the deafening explosion, Buttercup could feel no other sensation except for pain. It had been a fragmentary grenade and as she was right smack in the middle of the kill zone, so much of her armor and clothes were shredded; it was more surprising in her cartoon-influenced mind that she hadn't been rendered naked and completely black with soot by the explosion.

At the very least, though, she had closed her eyes tight such that the glass from her goggles hadn't gone into them. Even as her ears were ringing, she swept the shards off, opening her eyes to a blurred vision. She tore the remains of her ballistic goggles off.

"Having fun, honey!?" she heard the chilling voice of the Naga taunting her as she loomed closer. Buttercup had hoped that Naga would give her time to react just as she did before, but it seemed that mercy was in short supply with her. Soon as Buttercup got to her feet, Naga was upon her, training all four of her drum-loaded M-16s at her.

Drum-loaded. Buttercup didn't like what it meant. Each of those drum magazines looked bottomless! And she had two of them taped together for quick reloading on each rifle! In reality, each drum held a hundred 5.56mm rifle rounds, which meant a total of 800, split in half by a single reloading cycle. Naga was a veritable organic flak turret.

The moment Buttercup saw Naga, she launched herself at her, aiming a fist at her round-rimmed sunshades, but Naga needed only to duck to let Buttercup sail past her, far behind her, allowing the enhanced little girl to give her the distance she needed to properly fire upon her.

Buttercup wasn't able to stop herself in time. After doing a mid-air jump against the direction she was hurtling towards and landing on her back, the damage was already done - Naga had a fair bit of breathing room, which she took advantage of immediately.

The loud bradap-bradap-bradap of Naga's gunshots had sent Buttercup sprinting and fumbling for the MP5 strapped to her back. Bullets were ripping up the surroundings as Naga tracked the green-eyed little girl around the corners of the lobby, with a snake's snarl on her face. Some of the bullets had failed to catch up - Buttercup had to endure the rest.

Following Blossom's cue, Buttercup began running on the walls, then hopping from pillar to pillar, defying gravity as concrete, plaster, and marble exploded all around her. When even acrobatics had failed to keep the bullets far behind her, Buttercup jumped off one of the pillars, launching herself up into the air, at the same time shouldering her submachinegun and taking aim.

Curiously, things seemed to slow down a little for Buttercup as her heart was pumping like a car's
engines, spreading thick adrenaline all over her body. Squeezing the trigger at full-auto, she let off a few well-placed shots in Naga's chest, but they seemed to do nothing and didn't even put holes in her scaled armor. Sensing herself dropping, Buttercup kicked off with her double-jump, which gave her the extra distance required to reach the other side of the lobby, all the while evading Naga's flak-cannon-like discharges but just barely.

Upon landing on the ground, Buttercup rolled behind the forest of Greek pillars there and stopped only briefly to scramble to her feet to start running along the pillars - which proved prudent when her surroundings there, too, were ripped up by anti-armor bullets. Buttercup let off shots between the pillars whenever she could, but nothing she did worked, the metallic clicking of her quickly-emptied gun an unwelcome reminder of that.

The battle came full circle when Buttercup circled back to the reception desks, finding herself crouching amidst the bodies of those she had refused to save.

Nothing was working. Thinking hard, Buttercup struggled to come up with a new solution, and in the process of doing so, was struck by the unwilling and unwelcome conclusion that it would have been better had she had Blossom by her side. 'What would Blossom do?' Buttercup found herself asking. That was when she remembered her time in The Strip. The answer could be found in plain sight, on her own person, when she looked down to see her chest bedecked with grenades. Quickly reloading her SMG, she unpinned a couple of grenades from her vest.

Naga, in the meantime, was advancing cautiously on Buttercup's position, careful that the enhanced little girl might try something. Sure enough, one grenade was thrown out of cover, followed by another. The half-crazed woman could easily identify the grenades.

The first had obscured the area in smoke. Naga shielded her eyes by pressing an upper arm against them when the second grenade was about to detonate. A blinding flash overtook the lobby when it did. The moment the flashbang was spent, Naga surveyed her front once more and saw the silhouette of Buttercup's head and her little helmet at the reception desks. The moment she did, she opened up with a burst from all four of her rifles. The silhouette disappeared quickly. There was a fleshy thump when Buttercup's body hit the floor, presumably. Naga raced towards the reception desks, M-16s trained on her front, determined to unload everything she had at point-blank range, just like before. But when she vaulted over the reception desk, she found it all to be a ruse - there was a helmet alright, but the wrong person had been wearing it. Buttercup's helmet had somehow found its way on the corpse of an 8-years-old boy, whose head and face had been blasted beyond recognition.

But it was no surprise. Naga, too, had remembered the use of smoke grenades and flashbangs on the part of the Girls of Project Powerpuff back in The Strip.

The moment the four-armed woman felt the air stir, she whipped her left rifles backward, but it was her fists that ended up connecting with her ambusher. The sound of flesh thumping on the ground then had been much more satisfying than the decoy. Whirling around, Naga gave Buttercup a kick, sending her rolling out of the smoke cover, and when she emerged out of it, found her opponent writhing on the ground in pain, as expected.

"Stupid little girl," Naga said as she smirked at the sight of a Buttercup in pain. "Do you really think you can beat me at my game?"

Buttercup had tried to fight back. Drawing her pistol, she was able to let off several shots, before taking a rifle-whip from Naga - her pistol was gone after that, replaced by the sensation of an enhanced foot to the face, which sent her rolling a few yards more. But Buttercup wasn't done. Far from it. She didn't need her guns - those had only been fun to use, but not a real necessity. Jumping to her feet, she sprinted towards Naga in a zigzag pattern, an exhausting affair that worked well
enough. Naga fired at her with everything she got, but her aim was consistently thrown off by the natural inconsistency of Buttercup.

When Buttercup came too close, leaping for a shoulder-tackle, Naga dropped her rifles and crossed her arms to form an impenetrable barrier. Dust was thrown up from their bodies as the two adversaries met in a multi-ton impact. Naga slid a few feet backward; bracing for impact had done its job, and the only damage she could feel were bruises on her forearms.

The moment she could feel Buttercup bounce off her, she opened her arms up and aimed two right punches at her, just as Buttercup was leaping at her for a spinning kick. Buttercup intercepted the punches with her arms, but she fell backward and had to abandon her attack, and it wasn't a soft landing.

Buttercup rolled on the ground like a ball, and Naga surged forward to kick her like one. Helpless in her forced momentum, Buttercup could feel steel toes driven into her ribs. Her entire chest was on fire. Taking advantage of this, Naga aimed another kick at Buttercup's face, but the little girl leaped out of the way - far out of the way - and kicked off of a nearby Greek pillar to aim a dropped-down hammer punch at Naga's skull.

Only for Naga to block it, and counter-attack with two left hooks, sending her from where she came from, and through the Greek pillar, which had been weakened from rifle fire, Buttercup's strength and now, Naga's reckless destruction. Unpinning and priming another frag grenade, she threw it in Buttercup's wake, her aim so accurate that the grenade had struck Buttercup in the temple. The pain of the impact had stunned the enhanced little girl, who crumpled to the ground as she clutched her head in agony.

The explosion had made it worse, headache and all. But Buttercup didn't want to lose, not when she'd had such a streak with the terrorists, not when she had to prove Blossom and Bubbles wrong. Standing up, she leaned against the Greek pillar to face Naga, who had unsheathed four swords from her back and waist.

And the sight of the blades, which sang different tunes of colors along their edges, gave Buttercup pause that she had to psyche herself up with willful ignorance and lies. What could swords do when bullets had done nothing to her?

Sprinting forward with a green trail of light flowing behind her, Buttercup leaped into Naga's flurry of steel, a fist pulled back for a punch. Serrated edges screamed towards her, but Buttercup had fallen short of her target, intentionally. Falling to the ground, she rolled under Naga, going in between her legs, and as the snake-lady whirled around, she sprung from the ground, delivering a back-kick right in her face as revenge in kind.

Naga stumbled back, her circular-rimmed military sunglasses bent and broken. And it made her mad, really mad. After sweeping the broken sunglasses off her face, Naga surged forward. She attacked Buttercup in all-out rage, her arms like giant man-eating snakes, thrashing at her. Buttercup had to back away, afraid to even try to go around the woman slashes across a wide angle, cross cuts and strokes like tidal waves were thrown at Buttercup, who had to duck, jump and fall back, each time a near-miss coaxing the fear out of her.

This continued until Buttercup was backed into a reception counter, the solid marble releasing panic from the cage of Buttercup's mind. She froze, too afraid and tactically rigid to take a new direction, and Naga took advantage of that, plunging her lower swords into the marble on either side of Buttercup and slashing at her diagonally with her upper swords…

Finally drawing blood. And Buttercup could not believe it, but she didn't need to – she could feel it
in her cheek and arm.

Buttercup wanted out – needed out! As blood poured from her wounds, she jumped upwards, tried to give Naga an uppercut, only for the four-armed monster to lean back, avoiding the blow. But that had only been a diversion. While the psychopathic little girl had flown by Naga's head, she gave her a back-kick on her way down, sending Naga crashing into the reception counter. But she had recovered quickly with a malignant shriek, and scarcely after Buttercup had found her footing did the Naga kick her to the ground. It was one-sided from there when Naga would sheath her swords and lay on her innumerable punches so strong that the marble underneath Buttercup would crack from the force.

When Buttercup had stopped her moving and mewling, Naga returned to her rifles and picked them up. Turning around, she saw that Buttercup was still active, so she trained her rifles on Buttercup and finished what she started, all those days ago in The Strip - unloading everything she got into Buttercup when she was prone.

Helpless, all Buttercup could do was to curl up into a ball, and reflect upon the mistakes that had led up to this point, wishing not that she hadn't committed them, but that she had been strong enough to win despite. By the time Naga was done, most of Buttercup's armor had disintegrated, leaving behind the tattered vestiges of her uniform, surrounded by flattened lead that used to be bullets. The only comfort Buttercup could take was that she didn't give Naga the satisfaction of hearing her scream in pain, or cry in hopelessness and fear.

But even that petty triumph, too, was taken away from Buttercup when Naga slammed her foot down on her bullet wound.

"You think you can outsmart me?" Naga repeated herself as she crushed Buttercup's arm under her foot, twisting her foot as she trampled her wound, taking delight in her puerile screams and tears. "When you're all alone?"

"ANSWER ME!" Naga shrieked at Buttercup, whose only possible expression at the time was agony.

"She's not alone!" came a voice from high above. In her gloating and revelry, Naga had overlooked her surroundings. Both green and amber eyes were turned to the walkway above the lobby.

White lab coat. Black pants. A Kevlar vest over an office shirt. It was Professor Utonium. Daddy.

And beside him was Mommy, dressed in full SWAT gear, the first time in a long while. Blossom, who looked very hurt, was in the professor's arms, very much conscious and glaring down at Naga. Surrounding them were ten or so USDO soldiers, all of whom were familiar faces – it was Agent Blake and his squad.

"Buttercup, get away from her!" Selicia shouted from above even as she was training a mean-looking giant sniper rifle at Naga. She didn't waste a moment when her baby did as she asked, rolling out of the way. She fired a shot, the boom louder than usual, the kickback ferocious. The bullet ripped through Naga's right upper arm, cutting through much of the muscle there, forcing her to drop a rifle.

"Fire!" Agent Blake ordered his men. A loud, deafening cacophony of staccato gunshots resulted. Even Professor Utonium was contributing to this with his pistol when Blossom opted to float beside him. Well aimed, Naga was given a taste of her own medicine as hundreds of bullets pounded her,
ripping her armor apart bit by bit, stumbling her, forcing the enhanced woman to retreat as she anticipated something worse than a disabling shot.

And she was right.

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin aimed her Duranium rifle right at Naga's center of mass and fired. The lethal Duranium shell buried itself in Naga's liver, but it wasn't enough to floor her, only stumble her forwards.

Blossom, who saw how battered Buttercup was, had decided to contribute to Naga's misery. Her eyes burned red-hot with rage. Tears turned to steam as she shot a steady infrared beam at Naga, who screeched in pain as she ran back out into the snow. Blossom didn't stop when she did and continued to burn Naga even when she was out. So strong was Blossom's anger and her beam that her face, once again, lit up such that part of her skull was visible.

All other attacks had stopped. Heads were turned in Blossom's direction as they bore witness to how frightening, how dreadful the fiery-haired little girl on their side could be.

When Naga had run away far enough, embers from her damaged armor still visible in the distance, Blossom stopped firing her heat beam and slumped where she floated, the fire in her glaring eyes, the fire in her belly all but spent, replaced by the all-too-familiar post-battle lethargy.

"Blossom? Are you okay?" Professor Utonium asked her when he noticed how pale she was – how spent.

Blossom said nothing, but floated down to the first floor, touching down on the lobby. From there, she limped her way towards where Buttercup was hiding.

The professor headed down the nearest staircase immediately, with Selicia, Agent Blake, Fields and Corporal Sutherland were with him, leaving the rest of his chaperone squad on the second floor, in case of a renewed attack.

Blossom limped further. She'd finally found her sister, who was hiding behind a ruined Greek pillar, leaning against the bullet-pockmarked wall, her breathing labored as she clutched her wounded arm. The wound had reopened, made worse by Naga's cruelty. Bruises peaked from underneath her shredded uniform, while some stood in full view on her face. Blood negotiated its way down her cheek and had drenched parts of her uniform.

"Blossom," Buttercup greeted her wayward sister apprehensively, though it wasn't hard to hide the fear of any repercussions from her leader sister behind her injuries and existing distress. She had done many wrongs and she knew it – abusing the power of leadership for her selfish need to satisfy her cravings for violence, failing to lead Bubbles, who was probably deeply upset and nowhere to be found, and finally, allowing the normal folks under her care to perish from her neglect. It wasn't that Buttercup was ignorant of what she had done; it was just the simple fact that she simply didn't care enough when the opportunity to placate her sadistic side was too close, too accessible and too enticing. Her blood had been rushing in her veins – the torture of Marcello still very fresh in her mind – what was she supposed to do? Buttercup didn't think she was wrong to indulge – in her mind, she was doing right by a just cause, killing the bad guys and exacting fun and entertainment as payment. Bubbles should have helped her and the helpless deserved to die considering that they couldn't survive even with herself and the useless Bubbles taking the brunt of the enemy attack.

In Buttercup's mind, she was never wrong. No! Instead, she saw herself as the victim here.

"Buttercup," Blossom greeted her wayward sister tensely, before gently lowering herself down to sit
in front Buttercup, taking care not to agitate her many wounds. She opened her mouth, wanted to say more, but shut it when she reconsidered.

"I'm hurt bad," Buttercup said, hoping to tease some compassion out of Blossom. It was something she could use at the moment. She knew that Blossom was sentimental. She knew that Blossom would overlook certain things for the sake of their sisterhood.

"Where's Bubbles?" Blossom asked coldly, completely skipping the part where she showed concern for Buttercup. She knew what Buttercup was doing, and the truth was, she was falling for it. Buttercup was a mess, even if she didn't suffer as much as her, and she was upset that she was hurt so badly and so cruelly. But she remembered what the man of her dreams had said about Buttercup. Her wayward sister needed harsher treatment, even if it wasn't what her Daddy would encourage.

"She ran away, Bloss," Buttercup cried, forcing crocodile tears out of her eyes, which overtook those from her maltreatment under Naga. "I asked her to fight with me and she ran away."

"She ran away and left those poor people here to die," Buttercup lied, nodding in the direction of the dead civilians on the left flank of the lobby. "It hurts so much, Blossom."

Blossom knew that something was up. Buttercup wasn't being truthful. Bubbles might not take crime fighting well, but she would never abandon someone in need; the timidest of them all had proven that time and time again. Daddy had mentioned it as Bubbles' core strength. She had leaped to their protection several times, including Buttercup.

As Blossom ruminated about Buttercup's insincerity, the latter girl had crawled up to her and laid her head on her lap. Blossom pulled away in disgust and stood up.

"Get up, Buttercup," Blossom ordered her coldly. Buttercup, however, had gone on with her act and wrapped her arms around Blossom's leg, hugging it, wetting it with her tears. She had to pull herself away and drag Buttercup to her feet. "We need to find Bubbles. She needs us, whether she'd run away or not."

"Anything for my dear sister, Blossom," Buttercup said, her voice bearing a hint of insincerity, but only a hint of it. Still, it was enough for Blossom to pick it up.

Her tears, for one, had dried too fast.
Chapter 97: Redemption (Part 6)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, Bubbles and her new friends are put in hot water while her family and friends race to rescue her.

Chapter 97: Redemption (Part 6)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 45 Minutes

Professor Utonium could not believe his eyes when he saw the scene of Buttercup's massacre, despite knowing of her severe psychological condition. Men and women lay broken on the floor, not just killed, but mutilated, with bones so shattered and broken that they were all too visible under or above the skin, organs were thrown about, reminding him of roadkill or slaughterhouse run-offs, rather than human beings. The floor was slick with blood, with numerous footprints and shell casings scattered around it. The lobby smelled worse than a poorly sanitized blood bank and hospital, crossed with a butcher shop and meat locker.

He watched Blossom and Buttercup as they spoke behind the Greek pillars on one side of the lobby, but he couldn't hear what they were saying. He thought about saying a few words about the sanguinary mayhem and visceral mess to Buttercup, but as the Girls finally got around to walking up to him, he saw that it wasn't the best of times for the usual parenting business. Buttercup was injured and didn't look like she was in the best of moods for a lecture.

"Dad, Bubbles is missing. We have to look for her," Blossom said to Professor Utonium, who couldn't help but to smile a little inside. How much she had grown, and in only a month! She was filling in the role of the responsible leader and caring sister quite well. The only reason the professor couldn't smile outwardly was because of the death and destruction all around him. And Buttercup. There were more things to be upset about, Bubbles included.

"Not in your condition, Blossom," the professor said. He had just bandaged Blossom up, and Buttercup looked like she might have sustained some internal injuries, though her flesh wounds were ugly enough. "That goes for you too, Buttercup."

"But we have to look for her!" Blossom insisted. She didn't say it, but guilt, once again, had taken root in her. Who else was it, after all, who had sent Bubbles into the research labs with the dangerously incapable Buttercup acting as a leader? "I've got to!"

"Me too, Blossom," Professor Utonium said, keeping his voice as calm and level as possible, even though deep inside, he couldn't help but to find Blossom a little self-centered when he himself was panicking on the inside over Bubbles being missing. Was she hurt? Was she dead? Who was she facing? There were so many questions drilling deep into him. However, he reasoned that Blossom was just a month old. "But you can't just bring Buttercup and fly off - you're hurt, and so is Buttercup. We don't know what else is in the labs with us."
"Okay…” Blossom relented, bowing her head in obedience.

"There’s a good girl," the professor said, gently stroking her hair as he led her to a less battle-damaged area of the lobby for a quick battlefield triage. He could already tell that she had overstrained herself once more. "Your bandages need changing. You’re bleeding again, Blossom. I think it’s time you leave the heavy lifting to us regular folks."

Buttercup was less affected by her Daddy's slow-and-steady approach. Bubbles could die in a ditch for all she cared. She was a coward and a softie for leaving her alone to fight against Naga.

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**Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 48 Minutes**

Directed by Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks, Bubbles had taken off in the direction of the 'safe place' the Princess claimed to exist. It begged to be believed as she claimed, too, that it was impervious to anything that could be thrown against it. While Bubbles wasn’t sure if such a place could exist in the first place, she did not question it.

The weird monkey with a glass dome over its brain, Mojo Jojo, did not follow, at least as far as she knew. Whenever she turned back to look behind her, she did not catch even a glimpse of his shadow, and neither could she hear his curses and howling - and he really did have it out for her, for reasons she still could not understand.

Bubbles had been running on empty, and she was slower than her usual sprinting speed. Much slower. Mojo Jojo had cut her with his laser device, carving up the skin and flesh of her arms. Although the wounds weren't deep and the blood she had lost wasn't as voluminous as before, they were agonizing, demoralizing. And she had to carry Elodie - though she probably weighed around fifty pounds or less, the effort was agitating her wounds, which still felt like they had just been carved out of her arms.

After a few more turns, however, they finally made it - Bubbles was directed through a door, and the two girls ended up in a kind of VIP room, and it was massive, flamboyant and generous with its luxurious creature comforts. It looked like it was built to entertain a hundred, what with its numerous sofas surrounding carpets, pool tables, games area, bar, a buffet section, a fireplace…

But most importantly, a group of people was gathered in the center of it all, near what appeared to be some sort of a massive hatch. Remnants of the Morbucks security detail in various degrees of preparedness, guests with their tuxedos and dresses in various states of dishevelment, some with children, whether their own or picked up in the middle of the pandemonium, Bubbles had no idea.

The moment Bubbles came through the door, she had attracted the attention of almost everyone in the room. Security officers rushed forward, guns out, and the unarmed backed away in fright, a collective gasp advertising their helplessness.

"Dad!" Elodie shouted the moment she saw someone in the crowd. Bubbles put her down and allowed her to run to her father. However, this deed wasn't enough to buy Bubbles the trust of the security officers in the room - about eight or so of them, whose rifles and SMGs and shotguns and pistols were all arrayed against her.

"Princess!?" a man in the crowd, huge and thickset and brimming with authority, shouted in relief the moment he saw Elodie. "My Princess! You're alright!"

The huge man had been walking towards Elodie, but he broke into a jog, then a run when the sickly little girl fell on the run, her legs too weak to carry her after she had endured terror and hardship not
meant for a cancer-stricken girl.

Bubbles smiled, glad that the Morbucks family had been reunited, what was left of it anyway - not that she knew of any tragedy except her own.

"Are you hurt? Where does it hurt?" the huge man, Elodie Morbuck's father, was soon kneeling and all over Princess, checking her for wounds, the look on his face ghastly when he noticed that there were earrings of clotted blood down her ears. Princess' slow response to her father's concern implied what had happened to her sense of hearing. The father glared at Bubbles with hatred in his eyes. "Did she - that thing - do this!?" He rose to his feet, his hands and teeth clenched, looking like he was going to pummel Bubbles.

"Dad! No!" Little Morbucks said in alarm as she was physically pushing her father back, her tiny hands reaching only knee height, her effort barely registering, but the father was sensitive enough to his daughter that he made no sudden moves. "Bubbles saved me! She saved me from an evil monkey and his ray gun!"

Daddy Morbucks knelt down again, handling his daughter with deceptively gentle hands, wiping away tears and clotted blood with an expensive silk handkerchief. Bubbles stood where she was, eyes on the ground, her favorite thing to look at these days. At least there were no guns and accusatory eyes pointing at her there, only those in her overactive imagination.

"Are you sure, Elodie?" he asked gently, afraid that this 'Bubbles' had other powers that could be affecting his fading flower. After all, what she claimed about an apparently sapient monkey holding a science-fiction gun sounded nonsensical, as childish as her apparent savior. If it was possible for girls to be created in labs within a day and have them run as fast as cars and carry them too, then anything seemed possible. Mind control or even simple coercion wasn't so far-fetched next to super-strength. He'd heard things on and off the news. He had his own informants all over Townsville. These 'Girls' were perfectly capable of some heinous acts, both against the innocent and criminal, inexcusable in both cases in his opinion.

"Yes, Dad!" Princess reaffirmed her fact once more, then launched into a vigor the father rarely saw. "We were in the room with the machines and there were men protecting us, but this big, scary monkey with a ray gun killed them all and we were hiding but Bubbles fought him off and rescued me- and- and- she was hurt and-"

But the Princess soon ran out of breath. Mr. Morbucks, however, didn't need anything more. It was clear that what she said couldn't have been forged or faked, not even by mind control. He knew his daughter inside out, and she spoke exactly how she would have. Turning to his security guards, Mr. Morbucks ordered:

"Lower your guns!" but he'd done it reservedly, saying nothing more, nothing less. Bubbles looked all around her and saw that the guards had obeyed, some pretty willingly, while others very reluctantly, and Elodie's father continued to glare at her the same way as the latter guards. "Miss Bubbles, would you kindly come closer?"

When ordered to do so, Bubbles felt compelled, for some reason, to obey. This Mr. Morbucks exuded leadership and authority, and it was more than skin deep. The way he stood proudly, straight up, after picking up his daughter and holding her closely in his arms did nothing to diminish his masculinity but instead accentuated it, the way he looked at her, his iron gaze unfettered by his bushy eyebrows, like fire above a pair of onyx framed in white, by hair - literally, as he was shaved bald. To the mind of a little child, appearances could be as powerful as the ability to melt steel with a single gaze.
"What's your full name, Miss Bubbles?" Mr. Morbucks asked. "I make an effort to know my acquaintances better."

"Bubbles, ah, Bubbles Utonium, I think," Bubbles stammered as she looked up at the huge man, distracted by his aura. "I-it's nice to meet you."

"You may call me Mister Morbucks," Elodie's father stuck a hand out, and Bubbles knew enough about manners to take it. Her hand was so small that it was swallowed up by his whale-like hand.

"Bubbles Utonium," Mr. Morbucks spoke her name, taking pains to pronounce it as steadily and perfectly as the English language allowed as if quarrying for gold in it. 'Not a very confident one, is she?' he couldn't help but to think. If there was gold coming from her, it wouldn't be much compared to her sisters. Oh yes, he knew about her sisters too. "You've saved the only thing to me that can't be bought with money, my precious Elodie. What exactly do you want? What's your price?"

"Friends would be nice," Bubbles said and flashed a toothy smile at the Morbuckses. "I just wanna make friends with everyone. The world will be a better place and everyone will get to play together all day." This she said knowing full well that at least one of them didn't care for making friends.

Mr. Morbucks considered what Bubbles said for a minute, noting that Bubbles seemed to have the mindset of an average little child - though it remained to be seen if it was all just a ruse. Having at least one of 'The Three' on his side wouldn't be a small thing either - at the very least, his daughter could use a new friend, a better one. He had been watching some security footage of Elodie with her friends, and he knew for a fact that they had become a bunch of sycophantic little bloodsuckers, useless except as examples of what the lowest common denominator looked like. The time was ripe to… rotate Elodie's roster of friends to welcome a more useful bunch.

"I don't know about the world and universal peace," Mr. Morbucks said. "But for what you did, you've earned a friend in me and my Elodie here. Right, Princess?"

"We're going to be the bestest friends ever!" Princess said. The fact that her closest friends had betrayed her during their flight from the terrorists had gnawed at her the moment the topic of friends was mentioned. When her security guards had been mowed down or separated from her, she'd looked to them as a final pillar of support. That final pillar of support had crumbled all too easily - all it took was for her to take a fall and bruise her knee. 'Just leave her, we have to run!' one of them had screamed, and not one of them took a second glance at her. 'Yeah, she's too sick to run anyway!' another had put a nail in her proverbial coffin as if to spite her for… not giving them enough, apparently.

If it weren't for a second group of security guards to find her, she wouldn't have made it as far as she did before being found by Bubbles. And those security guards didn't last long either, as they were massacred by the crazy brain-dome monkey who had intercepted them with his ray gun.

For the first time in the labs, Bubbles smiled. It almost felt as if she and her sisters had been redeemed. Almost. As if on cue, her radio crackled to life, and a most comforting voice came through, her angel in this mess.

"Bubbles, are you there? Talk to me, sweetie," a man's voice came through. A strong voice. Daddy's. Bubbles depressed the button on her radio quickly, and it felt like the next best thing to jumping into a warm, embracing hug with him.

"Dad! You're here!" she exclaimed into her mic.

"Yes I am, sweetie," Professor Utonium said from the other end. "How are you? Are you hurt?"
"I'm hurt bad, Dad," His voice brought tears to her eyes. She promptly wiped them away; she'd even forgotten that she was standing in front of the wealthiest man in Townsville, his daughter and dozens of his affluent acquaintances. "It was Mojo Jojo, Dad. I've never met him b-but he said he hated me and- and-" Bubbles couldn't hold her tears back. Why must there be so much hatred in the world?

In the meantime, this exchange had warmed the heart of anyone who was listening, including the Morbuckses. They didn't think that what was an abomination in their eyes could have a father. They didn't think that abominations could cry with joy and exude such inspiring emotions.

There had been silence at the bare mention of Mojo Jojo.

"Bubbles, listen to me. Just hang in there, alright?" Dad's voice said over the radio. "Mom's here with me, and so is Blake and his friends. Your sisters too. We're coming to get you. Are you alone? Are you safe?"

Bubbles wiped more tears away.

"I've made some new friends, Dad," Bubbles said. "I'm with them right now. Would you like to meet them?"

There was a pause. Then a reply: "Very much so, Bubbles. Just give me ten minutes, darling."

The conversation went on, though it went into much more technical territory. The professor had asked where she was. Mister Morbucks provided the directions. Agent Blake gave some news in return. The USDO and the TPD had just arrived in force and formed a joint task force on the fly. The terrorists were in the process of being driven back. Their Chemical X champions, Naga and the Gangreen Gang, had been routed. Rescue was at hand.

The conversation would have gone back to wholesome father-daughter territory had it not been for a most unfortunate interruption.

A Morbucks security officer, heavily armored with riot gear and brandishing a shotgun, had been standing guard at the door leading into the VIP area. He had seen a shadow as someone rounded a corner, and it was the oddest shadow indeed.

"Someone's coming!" he shouted to the rest of the room. Everyone, including Bubbles and Princess, turned to look at him, only to witness the man getting decapitated by a blast of laser, his heavy armor useless as ballistic glass was cut and Kevlar circumvented by good aim. His head bounced and rolled on the floor like a ball and his body crumpled to the floor. Screams erupted throughout the room. Men and women and children began rushing down into the panic room - though surprisingly, no one was trampled on the stairs.

"Dad! He's coming!" Bubbles screamed shrilly into her mic. Princess had done the same thing, except to her father. Mister Morbucks took to the heels, with his daughter in hand, but on remembering why he still had his daughter's life to worry about, turned around.

"Miss Bubbles! Are you coming with us!?" he said to Bubbles, who was still rooted to where she was, looking unsure of herself - of where she should be.

"But my Dad's coming, and my sisters and-" Bubbles babbled; she couldn't believe that things had taken a turn for the worse again when she was so close to getting reunited with her Daddy and sisters.

"I don't think they're going to make it in time!" Mister Morbucks said, and Bubbles knew it. Ten minutes - that was what her Daddy had given her. Ten minutes and they would be together. And yet
Mojo Jojo was just around the corner. "You should come with me, Bubbles! It's the least I can do!"

"We're coming, Bubbles!" Professor Utonium had shouted on the radio amid its cackling, which only served to remind Bubbles of how close and yet how far he was. "We're coming!" He sounded like he was panting. Running.

Bubbles looked at the door, then looked at Mister Morbucks, unsure of what she should do.

"Once the hatch closes, your decision's final, Miss Bubbles!" Mister Morbucks pressed her. "What's it gonna be?"

Something had to give. It was either faith in her father or the trust in her new friends.

Mister Morbucks had been too persuasive. Ten minutes meant that her father wasn't even close. By the time she had decided, Mister Morbucks and Elodie were already at the stairs. Bubbles flew after them, just as a certain green-faced large Chimpanzee emerged out of the door leading into the VIP area.

Bubbles had only begun to descend the stairs even as Mojo Jojo pointed his laser device at her and squeezed the trigger. Fast as Bubbles was, she couldn't avoid the beam of Chemical-B-enhanced concentrated light coming out of it. The beam had made a diagonal cut on her left earlobe. Blood was spilled but the rush of adrenaline had held back the pain, which would return with interest later. She merely cupped her injured ear with a hand as she helped Mister Morbucks shut the hatch to the panic room.

The panic room itself was like an underground bomb shelter, except built not to withstand atomic bombs, but as a safe zone in the case of terrorist attacks like what was happening now - sans the mutants.

"He's not getting us down here," Mister Morbucks assured both Princess and Bubbles as he led them to the foot of the stairs. "There's a foot of reinforced steel and kevlar between us and him, and the hatch can't be opened from the outside once I lock it."

Together, the tycoon and girls joined the others beneath, after crossing a supporting arch of steel to reach the foot of the stairs joined to the main floor of the panic room. The panic room itself wasn't designed for dozens of people, and as such, it was too crowded with barely any space for anyone to shift. There was a security station at the end of the room, along with a medical cabinet, Boeing-styled toilets, and supply storage.

Even the sound from the outside was blocked out.

"Bubbles? Bubbles!" Professor Utonium's voice came through once again from Bubbles' radio. "Please tell Daddy you're alright?"

"I'm fine, Dad," Bubbles said over the radio, much to the professor's relief. "I'm hiding in a basement with Mister Morbucks and he said that it's safe down here."

An explosion had rudely interrupted Bubbles as she spoke, proving Mister Morbucks and her wrong. Eyes were turned towards the security monitors showing footage of the outside world, the VIP lounge above specifically, and what was happening above.

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**Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 54 Minutes**

Mojo Jojo was frustrated, enraged beyond words, despite the tens of thousands he had already
acquired. Elodie Morbucks had been taken away from him, along with his leverage to twist Mister Morbucks' arm. That meant that he couldn't blackmail the Morbucks Estate and Morbucks Industries into giving him access to the resources he needed to destroy the USDO - whether it was in the form of money, material or technology.

To add insult to injury, one of the Powerpuffs who had stolen his father away from him had slipped away, still very much alive. He had tried to dig his way through the underground panic room's steel and kevlar ceiling, but the renewable Chemical B battery on his laser pistol was low.

But he would be a stupid Chimpanzee indeed if he didn't have a backup plan. Throwing his cloak back, he pulled a syringe-like device out of a white waist pouch on his white belt and without hesitation, unsheathed the needle and stuck it into his vein. Acting as a vacuum tube, the syringe device quickly filled up with blood - his precious blood that was filled with Chemical W and traces of Chemical X.

When it was full, he pulled the syringe-like device out of his vein with a wince and attached it to his laser pistol. Noticing a camera pointed at him, he spoke to it as if face-to-face with the hated Bubbles:

"If I can't have the Morbucks girl, then no one will! No one!" Mojo Jojo ranted at the camera and pointed the device at the ground. "You will pay for your insolence, your rude usurping of my place in this world! You will die! Perish! Expire!" This, he meant Bubbles, but in his manic rush to exact vengeance, had let go of the nuances of the human language. But Bubbles knew from the pounding words who he was referring to.

They had pushed him to this corner. Everyone. Had they given him what he wanted - he would have been content to be a lab assistant and adopted son of Professor Utonium, not an honorary member of the Foundation Council, even if the power and benefits that came with it were better by a thousand miles and a million leagues.

He knew that the USDO was coming. He had brainstormed every possible scenario, every possible direction the attack on the Morbucks Industries Research Labs could go. The one he found himself in was but one of hundreds of possible scenarios, and he already had a near-mathematical solution for it.

He had studied the floor plan of the labs in detail, and he knew exactly what to do to exact his revenge. Setting his laser pistol to maximum power, he blasted away at the panic room, and with the increased power that his blood could give to his laser device, he was able to cut through the ceiling of the panic room…

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**Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 1 Hour 55 Minutes**

Mojo Jojo's laser had gone right through into the panic room like a knife through butter. The laser beam, made visible by the noxious mixture of Chemical B, W, and X, was cutting a semi-circular line in the ceiling of the panic room, and it wasn't a pleasant sight on the ground either, as the beam was still strong enough to rend flesh, and since the room was crowded, it was unavoidable that a man's arm was lobbed off. Next to him, a woman's hand had been severed. Both victims tumbled to the floor, screaming as blood spurted from their cleanly-cut stumps.

"Dad! Please come quickly! I think Mojo Jojo is trying to come in here!" Bubbles cried over the radio, over the echoed screams within the human vault.

Another beam sizzled through the ceiling of the panic room, cutting another semi-circle, this time taking teenage girl's leg off from below the knee. She fell to the ground screaming, clutching what
remained of her leg. The smell of blood in the enclosed space had become pungent.

"Everyone keep away from the edges!" Mister Morbucks immediately commanded the crowd, noticing the pattern of the attack. Everyone immediately squeezed into the center of the panic room. There was hardly space enough to stay away from the edges. A few had taken refuge at the stairs instead. An intrepid man had ducked into the toilet.

Sure enough, another laser beam made a semi-circular swathe at a third corner of the ceiling.

"I'm almost there! Just a few more minutes!" Professor Utonium shouted into his radio. On Bubbles' end, a fourth semi-circle was made - and it was a miracle that no further limbs were amputated. The ceiling had become open-aired, held together by only a few thin strips of steel.

The silence did not last long, only mere seconds after the surgical rending of the panic room, but it was long enough for Bubbles to contemplate about what Mojo Jojo was doing. Bubbles had flown over everyone's heads, in an attempt to make space for them and so that she could see better. She saw on the security monitors what was going on: Mojo Jojo was pointing his laser pistol at the ceiling above the VIP lounge. Discharging it, he blew up the ceiling. Rubble rained down upon the weakened ceiling of the panic room. Dust and concrete rocks had gone through the slits Mojo Jojo had made. The ground shook as piles of concrete and rebar and steel fell on top of the panic room.

The strips of steel holding the ceiling of the panic room together were beginning to buckle.

"Oh, God! The monkey's trying to kill us! Trying to bury us under the labs we've been protecting!" Mister Morbucks revealed upon realizing what Mojo Jojo had been planning all along - he had to let it out, as the claustrophobic fate the mad monkey had planned for them was too terrible to keep within.

"DAD!" Bubbles screamed into her radio as the ceiling dropped another few inches when more debris fell on top of it. Explosions rocked the panic room further. It wouldn't be long before their sanctuary would become a tomb.

Bubbles' coma-induced dream returned to her at this very moment, how it had focused her real-life dream of a perfect sisterhood, the perfect family, made a pipe dream by Buttercup, rescued by her Daddy's arrival. Was she doomed to stay apart from her father forever? Bubbles didn't want that to be.

The ceiling drooped once more, unevenly. As a thread of steel broke, the ceiling swung downwards. Everyone ducked in a futile bid to avoid their subterranean doom. Bubbles, however, had other plans. Flying up against the dislodged steel ceiling, she held it up, roughly resetting it back to its original position. She'd wanted to toss it far away from the remains of the panic room, but it was far too heavy such that it wasn't far from the family car. Like Sisyphus of ancient myth, she held it up as if shouldering the burden of the world, the strain so great that the baby blue light emanating from her lower half served as a veritable replacement for the bunker light that had been going out one bulb after another.

Mister Morbucks and Elodie stared in awe as they witnessed the pure heroism in action, but it wasn't just awe as there was just as much fear. It hadn't gone unnoticed that Bubbles was straining against the load, which was more befitting of a landmover than a kindergartner.

Blood dripped from above as Bubbles' wounds reopened from the extreme agitation. A particularly religious guest of the Morbuckses, dressed in priestly garbs, made the holy sign of the Trinity before kneeling to pray.
Professor Utonium had been running alongside his 'wife' and 'friends', with Blossom floating beside him and Buttercup right behind, who found the pace too leisurely.

He had heard Bubbles' scream on the radio. Everyone did. It was broadcasted on the general USDO channel.

"Dad, can I fly to her? Please? I remember the way there," Blossom pleaded with the professor for the umpteenth time.

"Can I come with her?" Buttercup added. The professor considered it seriously this time. Previously, he had been adamant about not risking their lives any further, but with the recent developments, he feared that such a decision would mean sacrificing Bubbles.

"Go!" the professor finally said. "We'll catch up!"

Blossom launched into instant acceleration the moment he gave his blessing. Buttercup sprinted to catch up. She was able to do so within seconds, owing to her intense training and zeal, and Blossom's relative inexperience with flight.

The leader gave Buttercup a sideways glance when she'd caught up, and she didn't like what she saw.

"Don't do anything unless I tell you to, Buttercup," Blossom spat at her least beloved sister. Whatever sisterly love she had for her was locked away by too many questionable acts on the part of the green menace. "Don't think that I don't know what you did."

"And what did I do, sister?" Buttercup said her term of endearment she used spiked with sarcasm.

"You didn't have to kill everyone you see, Buttercup!" Blossom accused. It was the least of her accusations, the rest of which she was hesitant to put forward at such a time when sibling rivalry could only serve to hinder her effort to save Bubbles.

"You said that it was fine for me to kill-" Buttercup defended herself but Blossom cut in; she wasn't about to have any of that.

"I said it was fine to kill if it means protecting Bubbles, Buttercup!" Blossom snapped back at Buttercup. "You weren't protecting Bubbles, were you? Most of them wouldn't have been a danger to you, would they?"

"You weren't there, Bloss," Buttercup simply said, her words injected with so much venom it distracted Blossom from reading them like she normally would. Her masterful feat of deceit attracting more of Blossom's ire.

The only good thing was that they didn't have long to argue. After taking a turn, they saw it – the door leading into the VIP lounge. The sound of concrete and steel crashing to the ground had been growing louder and louder. Blossom and Bubbles could only wonder what was going on.

They crashed through the door together, Blossom out of urgency and Buttercup in seeking revenge for her thrashing under Naga.

They froze when they realized what was on the other side. A man, no, some beast in a purple cloak and some kind of translucent glass helmet, blasting away at the ceiling for material to destroy their sister. It was only when the beast whirled around that they realized who it was: Mojo Jojo. And it
was too late by then when the enhanced Chimpanzee pointed his laser pistol at them and fired. Fast
as the Girls were, they couldn't outrun light. The laser beam swept past them, causing both to scream
in pain. Blossom fell from where she floated, distracted by the pain of a cutting beam, and Buttercup
collapsed from the renewed agony.

Blossom had been hit diagonally, the beam cutting muscle-deep, dragging from her left ribcage down
to her right kidney. Buttercup, who stood beside Blossom, suffered the continued emission of the
beam as it cut across her face, missing her left eye by some miracle, drawing a bloody line from her
left shoulder to right armpit.

Mojo Jojo could only grin with glee at the chance to mutilate Bubbles' sisters. He would have loved
the opportunity to prod them to see if there was still life in any of them, but he knew he had to go –
there would soon be too many security humans for even him to handle, and he would like to think
that he was more logically than emotionally-driven. He would have to learn of the Girls' demise
through the news and other, more subtle, channels of information.

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 2 Hour 0 Minutes

Beneath Blossom, Buttercup and the now-leaving Mojo Jojo, Bubbles continued to bear her
Herculean burden, her torrential sweat dripping along with her blood to the crowd beneath.

It had been bad before, and it was getting worse. She remembered lifting the family car, and she
couldn't do it for more than two minutes, and what she was carrying felt heavier than the sedan. She
was way beyond her previous record, into Terra incognito, and it felt every bit like it too, as her arms
and back felt like they could shatter from the weight itself. Pain rating 10 had been the sedan for a
minute and 20 seconds. Bubbles couldn't even count how bad her pain was now, and the only reason
why she hadn't let go were the people below her – Mister Morbucks and Elodie 'Princess' Morbucks
– and the people around her: Dad, Blossom, Buttercup, Agent Blake and his friends.

The people below stared up at her in their continued awe and terror. Mister Morbucks thought
Bubbles – and everyone with her – to be in a rather tragic fate. He knew this better than anyone else,
with his own daughter sitting at death's door for the past year with the jaws of cancer relentlessly
dragging her down.

Bubbles' baby blue light burned bright as ever, but it would dim on occasion. A bad sign.

"Miss Bubbles," Mister Morbucks said to the enhanced little girl. With sweat and blood pouring
down her forehead, Bubbles turned her head ever so slightly to look at him, "If we die down here, I
won't blame you. You tried, miss, you tried. For a little girl who just wants to make friends, you've
tried harder than most I know. And for that, I'd like to thank you… from the bottom of my heart."

There were murmurs of agreement from the crowd, from whoever was still conscious. What Mister
Morbucks said had managed to coax a smile out of Bubbles, who, with renewed strength, continued
to keep the tonnes of debris from falling on their heads.

"We'll be best friends forever, Bubbles," Princess added, with tears streaking down her cheeks.
"Forever and ever."

Sweat and blood had been dripping from the ceiling, and soon it was joined by tears.

"Forever and always," Bubbles murmured, her lips dry, tasting like blood as she had bit herself in her
hardship.
'Forever and always,' Daddy had once said about his love for Bubbles. His love had been a source of strength for her ever since.
Chapter 98: Redemption (Part 7)

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this latest episode, things come to a head.

Chapter 98: Redemption (Part 7)

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 2 Hour 1 Minute

Professor Utonium had never been more exhausted in his entire life. Sure, he had gone on several all-nighters in a row long before, back when he was a youthful college professor, writing one non-euclidean paper or another, but before becoming the fortunate father of Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, before Bloome, he had never been sickened to the core and hollowed out by worries and fears for his loved ones. He did not have to suffer that and then sprint for his Girls’ lives, wearing a kevlar vest, carrying a pistol, trying to keep up with men and women trained for years to sprint in full combat gear.

He had been worried sick about Bubbles, and now he was worried sick about Blossom and Buttercup. He had sent them forward in a fit of desperation when his wits were all but gone after hearing Bubbles’ bloodcurdling scream over the radio.

Rounding the corner, he finally arrived at the double doors leading into the VIP lounge, and they were opened wide. He could not hear any further explosions where such explosions used to sound like a giant heart beating in the center of the lab complex. Had Mojo Jojo been stopped? Has the day been saved?

Agent Blake and his men were advancing in the corridors, flanking the professor on either side. Sergeant Selicia Goodwin, assigned mother to the Girls, was among them, the designated marksman of the squad. They were the first to breach the VIP lounge, and when they did, there weren’t the usual gunshots and explosions associated with the deployment of SWAT units. As Professor Utonium waited, hiding behind a wall next to the doors, he could only wonder why, but when he made a move to enter the lounge, Agent Blake had doubled back out of the lounge and barred the way to him.

“Blake, what in Einstein is going on?” Professor Utonium wondered aloud when Blake wouldn’t let him pass.

“You don’t have to see this, prof;” Blake explained, but he was being way too vague, and it didn’t sound too good for the professor. The latter man could now only wonder how far he had blundered when he allowed Blossom and Buttercup, who had looked to his fatherly wisdom, to go ahead as a vanguard.

“Let me see! I want to see my BABIES!” the professor cried as he tried to push past Blake, but the security officer was too strong, his iron grip on his upper arms too tight. But then the professor had found a kind of rare strength in him, sweeping aside Blake - his paternal instinct taking over,
outshining even Blake’s combat training and experience. Marching through the lounge doors, he was met by a scene of utter destruction, with rubble stacked in the middle, ruining furniture and decor. But looking down from this, he was met by a grisly sight. “Blossom! Buttercup!”

Selicia was kneeling beside her favorite, trying her best to apply first-aid, stripping off ruined security vest and uniform from Buttercup, trying to get to the wound before it was too late.

But the streak of burned and lacerated flesh was the least of it. The professor could literally feel his mind crack when he saw what Mojo Jojo had done to Buttercup’s face. Her left cheek had sustained a laser cut, splitting it in half, exposing the insides of her mouth, as if she was some anatomy chart in a science textbook. Her eyes were dazed, but open - she was conscious, if shell-shocked, noticing not even her Mommy.

It was all his fault.

Then he saw Blossom on her back, her hair like a mat under her, awash with renewed bleeding. She was tended to by Agent Fields and the medic, Private Zach. They had already stripped off her vest and uniform. Her chest was a ragged mess. The professor thought he could see her ribs, just little bits of it, when the skin and flesh had been cut so neatly by laser. She, too, was barely conscious, and in too much pain to even cry or move.

The professor knelt down beside Blossom. Gently, he raised her head ever so slightly, and rested it over his hand, stroking her cheek with his other. Her eyes rolled painstakingly to meet his.

“Dad…” she said weakly. “I- can’t-”

“Shh… Don’t talk, bumblebee,” the professor said. “You’ll be alright.”

“Bub- Bubbles- She-” Blossom tried to speak despite. The professor placed a finger over her lips.

“It’s our turn to do the heavy lifting,” the professor said, holding back tears. He’d had lots of practice doing that. “A heroine like you needs a break now and then.”

Bubbles. No matter how much Blossom and Buttercup was suffering, there was still Bubbles. Blossom and Buttercup were right in front of him, still breathing, even if every single little gasp had to be earned by scaling a wall of pain. He had no way of knowing if Bubbles was still alive nor well.

He looked up at the rubble before him. Could Bubbles be under there? That was when Agent Blake came up to him.

“She mentioned something about being in a hole,” Blake said. “I think she’s under the debris, buried under all that rock. Was Mojo Jojo trying to bury them alive?”

It had sounded all too likely. The professor stood up, now just as terrified for Bubbles as he was half-insane over Blossom and Buttercup.

“We could try blasting them out with explosive charges - what do you think, prof?” Agent Blake offered. The professor surveyed the surroundings, hoping against a backdrop of hopelessness that there were better solutions to be found in the environment.

But the environment had something else to offer. Something much worse. For in the shadows of another set of double doors on the opposite end of the VIP lounge was a pair of reflective simian eyes, watching intently.

“Jojo!” Professor Utonium spat the Chimpanzee’s name with so much venom that it was
uncharacteristic of him. He knew exactly what the damned chimp was thinking. The enhanced simian was probably sticking around just to catch a glimpse of his ‘father’. Walking briskly up to Selicia, he wordlessly picked up the Duranium XM90 sniper rifle she had laid down beside her.

“Thomas? What’re you doing?” Selicia said to the professor but had gotten no reply. “What do I do with Buttercup!?” She wrapped a hand around his arm, but he merely shook her off and shouldered her anti-material rifle.

Agent Blake knew well enough not to get in the way of the professor. The look on his face was… petrifying even for him. It was as if the professor was possessed, his aching heart beating with the power of a thousand suns and their fusion reactions. Instead, he began delegating tasks, knowing that he was now the next best thing to a father Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup could have while the actual father had gone insane with rage.

“Private Zach, Sergeant Selicia, stabilize Blossom and Buttercup. Corporal Holliday and Rutherford, tail the prof,” he ordered. “The rest of you, on me - we’re going to have to do some demolition work!”

Professor Utonium broke into a run, and when the simian eyes in the dark disappeared, he started sprinting, his face no longer that of a learned polymath, but one that even beasts would be afraid of. Smashing through the double doors, he screamed with rage when he saw the tail of a purple cloak whipping out of sight as Mojo Jojo turned a corner.

“JOJO! Come back here!” the professor howled in animal rage as he followed the only lead he had. Rounding another corner in the labyrinthine labs, he saw Mojo Jojo’s cloak once more. This time, he’d seen more of it. He was gaining on him.

“You want me!? Come and get me!” Professor Utonium screamed like a madman as he tore towards the Chimpanzee like he had never done so before. “Come to daddy!”

After turning another corner, his next clue had been a door that was left ajar, leading into what appeared to be a jet propulsion lab, with several scaled-down plane turbines on display. Not that the professor cared about such trivial matters of technology and science when he was tailing his Girls’ attacker and potential killer. Busting through the door, he pointed the Duranium rifle clumsily forward. The lab was dimly lit. Some of the lights were either broken or flickering. Bodies were on the floor, and the professor could only wish that Mojo Jojo was one of them.

“Nothing like a good spanking, that’s what my pops used to tell me!” Professor Utonium screamed, unhinged by everything. “It’s the American way!”

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 2 Hour 4 Minutes

Every second was agony, slow as paint drying - existence had become nothing but agony for Bubbles as she acted as a human pillar for the ceiling of the panic room. She had become as pale as paper, with the skin of her arms torn like such, from which she had bled substantially. She had been holding up a load beyond anything she had handled before, and for much longer. The family car had been about 3000 pounds. The ceiling and the rubble piled on top of it felt like twice that.

The pain was unbearable, and at some point, her mind was shattered. Cracked. She’d started hearing whispers in the dark. Evil voices bent on seeing her fail. Her own voice felt distant - her own thoughts silenced as all she could think about was the excruciating load she was holding up, and the fact that every second she held on was a second beyond what was previously considered the ceiling of her ability, and the next second could be her last - as well as her new friends’.
The ceiling groaned and yawned as it sunk and rose with Bubbles’ failing strength. Bubbles thought it was taunting her, along with the voice of her demons, her long streak of failures.

‘It's only because of people like me that you're even here, and frankly, you don't deserve it,’ the voice of the dark took the form of Blackwater. ‘Look at what your sisters went through because you were too cowardly to help them.’ That had been nearly ten days ago when she hid rather than help her sisters battle the Lombardi in the warehouse. Bubbles whimpered at the old accusation turned new - she was guilty of abandoning Buttercup to Naga. Even in her grief over Buttercup’s meanness, she wasn’t blind to that fact.

‘Ugh, that crybaby!? She's always scared!’ it then took the form of Buttercup, chastising her when she had regressed after the ‘battle’ at the bank nearly two weeks ago when she had shamefully wet herself in bed and cried like an infant. ‘Shut up, you baby! Now no one's sleeping in that bed because of you!’

“Buttercup, I’m sorry…” Bubbles muttered to the shadow as she cried under her crucifying load.

‘N-no one… likes me,’ it had even taken the form of her own voice when she had nearly died after getting gunned down outside her own home by a Duranium sniper, who General Blackwater told her was Mojo Jojo. ‘All those p-people… I hurt… Maybe it's b-better that I… Go away forever…’

“They… They don’t hate me…” Bubbles mumbled to herself as she continued to stubbornly hold the ceiling up. “They’re my friends. Best friends forever.” However, she knew in her heart that words were cheap. The last time she had made a new friend, it had been rocky because of the crime-fighting. The Mayor of Townsville, Mayor Wilford, had given her a serious tongue-lashing when she had caused the Highway 13 Incident, wounding over 60.

‘Stop crying. You don’t deserve to cry,’ it took the form of Mom.

“Mommy… Please don’t…” Bubbles mumbled, even as her arms shook in pain. She couldn’t stem the tide of her tears no matter how hard she tried. The voice in the dark had hit a nervous point. For the moment, the ceiling felt heavier than it was supposed to, and it was getting worse.

‘Mom! I’m tired!’ Bubbles had cried almost a week ago when Selicia was attempting to toughen her up by forcing her to hold a 1,500-pound load over her head.

‘No complaining!’ she’d snapped back heartlessly. Ten minutes had gone by, and despite keeping quiet except for the occasional whimper and cries and tears, she wouldn’t be placated: ‘No crying! Stop being such a wimp!’

Wimp. That was what she called her, and Bubbles knew, she just knew, that it was what everyone would call her behind her back. If even Mommy could say such a thing, then surely everyone else would too?

“I… I’m not wimp,” Bubbles cried weakly even as she fought the losing battle against the ceiling.

‘Mom please can I put it down please please please-’ she’d begged her Mom to spare her, but she wouldn’t.

‘Shut up! Just shut up!’ Selicia had scolded her. ‘You owe Buttercup for getting her injured in that warehouse!’

‘No one likes a screw-up, especially one who gets her sisters hurt,’ the voice seemed to take a life of its own.
“You’re a wimp!” it grew louder, still taking the form of Bubbles’ Mommy. “You’re a wimp and everyone will hate you for it! Wimp! Wimp! WIMP!!!”

“I’m… Not… A… Wimp!” Bubbles cried shrilly as she continued carrying her unearthly load. “I’m not a wimp!”

In the meantime, Mister Morbucks, Elodie and their guests had been observing Bubbles muttering and, now, screaming to herself. She appeared unhinged as if spiraling into insanity, becoming just as much of a mess mentally as she was physically, with her blood and sweat and tears raining down on them.

It wasn’t a reassuring sight, especially considering that she was the only thing between them and death by crushing. Fear was the only thing they could feel at the moment.

That was, until a voice, like an angel’s, came from above. A muffled voice, but one that was allowed access due to the slits in the ceiling Mojo Jojo had created.

“Hello? Is anyone down there?” the voice had said.

“B-blake?” Bubbles replied from below. His voice felt reassuring as it tore away the veil of madness surrounding her.

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 2 Hour 5 Minutes

Professor Utonium advanced deeper into the jet engine concept lab gingerly, pointing his hefty modified XM90 sniper rifle from the hip. He knew enough about guns to know that they should be fired from the shoulder, but the anti-material rifle was too heavy, and the scope useless in the confines of a lab.

There were no other doors Mojo Jojo could have passed through from – he would have heard it banging shut in the rush of the chase, and the other doors of the labs were shut.

He could hear shifting not far away. Something jumped out of cover and darted from a model jet turbine to another. The professor fired rashly at the shadow. The shot was strong enough to penetrate the jet turbine protecting what he assumed to be Mojo Jojo, ending up deep inside the wall of the lab. The recoil was strong enough that the professor stumbled backward; without the padding Selicia had to layer her armor, he had bruised his chest severely. His ribs felt broken.

But the recoil was the least of his worries. He hadn’t quite thought things through in his mad haze of patriarchal rage. He squeezed the trigger again, only to realize that the XM90 was empty, and while he was examining it, the large simian shape of Mojo Jojo darted out, coming right for him.

The Chimpanzee was fast – and although not given the speed of a car like the Girls he tore apart, could have easily outperformed a human soldier in a foot race. Barrelling into Professor Utonium, the only thing the professor could do was to throw up the flat side of his rifle in defense.

The force of the tackle had thrown the professor halfway across the lab and into a work counter. He had nearly lost his grip on his Duranium gun and consciousness when he saw Mojo Jojo running up at him. Lifting his sniper rifle up, he tried to chamber a round, only for Mojo Jojo to grab the gun by the barrel and tear it out of his grasp. The simian savant threw it across the room, before pounding the professor across the cheek.

The professor had been desperately clinging on to his consciousness. After getting a wallop across the face, he was barely even conscious. He could see enough to know that Mojo Jojo wasn’t entirely
unscathed in their exchange. The Chimpanzee was cupping his shoulder, and blood was staining the fabric over it. When he lifted his massive hand, the professor saw a graze wound; a price far below what the damned ingrate deserved.

It was only now, after getting the rage beaten out of him that the professor realized his folly. He had unwittingly abandoned Blossom and Buttercup when they needed medical attention the most and left Bubbles to her fate in some idiotic attempt to exact revenge, something he wouldn’t have encouraged in calmer times. And now, he had delivered himself into the hands of his former animal friend turned evil genius.

“You disappoint me, father,” Mojo Jojo said solemnly, and while showing his bloodied palm to his creator, continued: “I thought you were a smarter man than this, but here you are, beneath me. I didn’t think you’d hurt me when I have done nothing but lure you out.”

“You’re the one to talk!” the professor spat, incensed at the accusation, the audacity he had in asserting a higher moral ground. “You’ve hurt them! Did you know what you’ve done to my children!? How much pain you caused them, Jojo!?”

Upon hearing this, Mojo Jojo looked just about ready to howl like an enraged wild monkey and beat him into pulp. Thankfully, he was too intelligent to act the part.

“Did you see what you've done to me!? How much pain you caused me!?” the Chimpanzee howled in rage. “You abandoned me! Discarded me! Threw me away! The moment you created those three human girls! You threw me away, even though I was your first! You left me to die in the USDO!”

“I… I'd put in a request for you to join me at The House…” the professor defended himself; for the first time in a long time, he was in doubt about his convictions that Jojo, or Mojo Jojo, as he called himself now, was beyond hope. The emotions in Mojo Jojo’s words were all too real, too raw. There was agony where he expressed pain. He knew he was guilty in some ways - he had indeed given up on Jojo after he admitted to falling in with the Foundation.

“Liar! Falsehoods! You’re lying to me!” Mojo Jojo said. “You’ve become one of them!”

“At least I’m not with the Foundation. They killed my wife and daughter!” Professor Utonium started making accusations of his own. This gave him strength, reminded him of why he had decided to let go of Jojo. He shifted him, sat up and leaned against the work counter. “How many have you wounded or killed, Jojo? How many have died here because of you?”

“Do not lecture me about killing and murders, father! When your new ‘children’ have wounded and killed! Your sweet Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup - they are the same as I! Except I am on the side of justice, and not them! I am he who destroys the oppressors! I am he who frees the world of their tyranny! While you and your Powerpuffs have done nothing but enforce their reign and regime!” Mojo Jojo howled at Professor Utonium’s accusations.

“You… tried to kill my Bubbles in cold blood and you’ve come back to finish the job,” the professor said, now lost, drowning in grief. It felt as if he had failed them - every effort he had made to stir them away from violence had ended in failure. They had suffered through numerous operations as a result, each time ending up drained of either blood or spirit. It was only by virtue of their youth that they had bounced back time and again. And now, they had suffered some grievous injuries time and again, on this fateful day itself, and he had abandoned them… for a nearly non-existent chance at vengeance and righting an old wrong. “You’ve hurt my babies, all of them.”

“Enough of this,” Mojo Jojo snarled back at him. “You will cease to be their parents! You are their guardians no more! I am taking you back with me to the Foundation!” With that, he wrapped his
large hammy hand around one of his arms and started dragging him towards the door.

“Let me go, you monster!” Professor Utonium shouted as he struggled in futility against his earlier creation. In a fit of desperation, he swung the hardest punch he had ever mustered at Jojo’s face, actually causing some kind of a pained reaction that the Chimpanzee had let go of him. Mojo Jojo glared at him, deeply upset by both his name-calling and physical attack. In retaliation, he gave the professor a backhanded smack, throwing him back down to the ground.

When the professor tried to scramble away, Mojo Jojo seized him by his ankle and resumed dragging him towards the door. Remembering that he still had his pistol with him, Professor Utonium pulled it out of its holster, cocked it and aimed it at Jojo.

“I said let me go!” the professor warned his first creation.

“You wouldn’t!” Jojo said, his hand going up to shield his face instinctively. The professor maintained his aim, telling him all he needed to know. Instead of letting go, the Chimpanzee lunged for the gun.

The professor fired his pistol, following it up with two more quick shots, poorly aimed but as it was point blank, it didn’t matter. That was when he learned that bullets did little against Jojo as he seemed unfazed. The Chimpanzee wrestled the gun out of his hands - it wasn’t even a contest - and punched the lights out of him. He’d done it so hard - too hard - that he’d knocked the professor out.

Mojo Jojo looked down at himself to assess the bullet wounds his father had given him. There were three shots, squarely in the chest. Two of the shots had penetrated his armor, but couldn’t penetrate his skin, but the third one did on both counts. Nevertheless, after gently palpitating for the wound, he realized that the bullet hadn’t gone deep at all. While he could not compete with ‘The Three’, he was still bulletproofed well enough to avoid serious injuries by gunshots - of any caliber.

Pressing his vest down, he could see the bullet very clearly. It was lodged on his skin, barely penetrating it, but still causing injury nonetheless, if superficial. Unlike the Chemical X girls, his ability to resist the mundane weapons of humankind was inferior, incomplete. Picking it off and letting it drop on the floor with a tinkle, he glared at the form of his creator on the floor, his face still hauntingly wretched even in his unconsciousness.

Thoughts sped through his mind, multiple strings of it, running at the speed of light. Complex calculations involving every possible kind of data were crunched. What chance was there that his father would come around to his way of thinking? What were the probabilities that he would abandon the Girls of Project Powerpuff for him? Before Morbucks Labs, it had basically been minuscule, but he was willing to work with the improbable for nothing else but reclaiming his father’s love. Now, it seemed impossible. The probability of it had never been pushed so close to zero before.

Mojo Jojo unholstered his laser device and charged it up to maximum power and maximum dispersal for a shotgun effect. His self-designed death device sung to him, as if egging him on, celebrating his decision.

“Behold, father - an instrument of death inspired by your teachings!” Mojo Jojo gloated to himself, and his unconscious creator. “Are you not proud of me!?” He squeezed the trigger…

Stopping only halfway. He took a deep breath, and for some reason, became angry not just at his creator, but himself.

“You are selfish! Self-centered! You think only of yourself!” he chided his unconscious creator.
“You claim to love me - you claim to love your ‘children’. You lie - you trick - you deceive! Gratuitous, all of it! You took me in, just so you could pat yourself on the back! Just to call yourself a good man, a useless label!”

The Chimpanzee willed himself to pull the trigger, but for some reason, his finger was frozen.

“If I can’t have you, then no one can! Not your girls, not the USDO, not Townsville! No one!” Mojo Jojo reasoned out his own actions. Despite the simplicity in his binary choice and the simple pull of the trigger as the execution of it, his felt his brain going on overdrive, all for this binary choice and a simple pull of a trigger.

He couldn’t stop himself from remembering, with unparalleled clarity, vestigial memories of his past, pre-uplifting via Chemical X.

How his creator, Professor Utonium, had protected him right from the start. As the Head of Research of the then-named Organization, he fought for the rights of the lab animals under his care and directly intervened to prevent him from being put to sleep after he was used in the animal trials of Chemical W.

He, as an unremarkable Chimpanzee infused with Chemical W, was considered disposable for he could no longer be used for testing. No one saw that sparkle in him except for Professor Utonium, who had been the one to run tests on him, discovering the beginnings of intelligence, in addition to his increased strength and agility as a side effect. General Blackwater, as Chief of Security Blackwater then, would have had his head had it not been for the professor recruiting him as a lab assistant.

He wasn’t even able to speak then, but how patient the professor was in teaching him the alphabets and numbers! Mojo Jojo remembered playing logic games with him in his quarters whenever the polymathic man was free. He remembered sitting in the professor’s lap as he worked on the computer. Mojo Jojo would stare at the screen of the giant desktop computer, applying his father’s gift of curiosity as he watched numbers and words flashed by.

Professor Utonium had kept his biological family alive, even as more and more of them became like him, disposable in the eyes of the Organization as they became tainted with the failed Chemical W. He’d kept them alive until Chief of Security Blackwater had gone behind his back and shot them with poison darts.

He remembered his transformation and disfigurement after the accident when he was freaking out after witnessing Blackwater and his men massacring his biological family. The professor had convinced his friend, Medical Director Simmons, to provide whatever medical attention he needed. He would visit whenever he could, multiple times a day, holding his enlarged hand. He remembered being barely conscious as his mind rewired itself, but he remembered the lullabies the professor sung from night to midnight when he should have been in his quarters sleeping. He remember the professor giving him the very glass dome that would protect his enlarged and exposed brain, the very same one he was wearing now. He remembered the treats he brought him, and when his intellect had grown exponentially and he had shown the ability to speak the human language, the books he would bring to his ward.

He had devoured those books as a knowledge-aggregating supercomputer would voraciously download data from the internet. When he recovered from his wounding transformation, Blackwater would cage him, but the professor would stubbornly visit him whenever he could, bringing in more books, study guides, his own computer. Toys and trinkets. Then came the fateful day, when Professor Utonium would visit one last time because he had created the Girls.
‘We’ll be together again,’ he’d promised. He’d lied and planted the seed that would turn some of his love for the professor into hatred. Did he?

Mojo Jojo, as a Chimpanzee, could not cry, but he whimpered at the memories flashing as if right before his eyes. The laser device in his hand shook, his finger dangerously close to fully depressing the trigger…

Until he released it, gasping at what he had nearly done before turning the device off.

“Mercy, an instrument of love inspired by your teachings,” Mojo Jojo mumbled. “Are you not proud of me?”

Mojo Jojo knew the answer to that even if the professor hadn’t woken up to tell him. He knew that nothing he did now would impress his creator, not when he had cut up his other children with a perverted invention born from his intelligence. How ironic it was that treading the path of learning basic alphabets and arithmetics, which was already trodden by billions, had provided him far more joy than when he had invented his laser device - the first of its kind in the entire world, the sum of all his understanding of the universe.

With his happiest memories still fresh on his mind, Mojo Jojo turned around and ambled away, leaving the professor for Agent Blake’s men to find.
Chapter 99: Saving the World

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In the latest episode, Bubbles remain trapped in the panic room with only a slim chance of getting out...

Chapter 99: Saving the World

Morbucks Industries Research Labs. Mission Time: 2 Hour 6 Minutes

"Bubbles, hold on! We're going to blast you out!" Agent Blake shouted through the slits in the floor. He had been peeking through the holes Mojo Jojo had made to bring the ceiling down on Bubbles and the people she saved, and he could just about see the panic room, all lit up by the strange glow of Bubbles' baby blue light emissions.

"Hurry! Please!" Bubbles cried from below. Blake could only imagine what kind of hell she was going through - she was completely out of sight because of her task - but her high-pitched voice was dripping with blood and agony. "I can't hold it up much longer! Pleeease!"

"Alright, just hang on, Bubs! Give me a minute," Blake promised and found himself sounding a little like a father himself too.

"Please!" Bubbles muttered from below, barely audible. Agent Blake stood away from the crack in the ground and wasted no time in turning to his men, before regarding the rubble he had to blast away.

"Suggestions, now!" Blake barked at his men. The demolitionist attached to his team came forward. He quickly surveyed the rubble.

"I'm afraid the destruction here is complete, sir," the demolitionist said.

"I don't want bad news! Give me something, anything!" Agent Blake bellowed. Around him, his men exchanged looks. Everyone knew that he wasn't acting normally, and members of his original squad knew why.

"I was getting to that, sir," the demolitionist said, a little shaken. He was new, after all. "It's not going to be the perfect option, but I've got nothing else. I could try attaching charges around the mid-section of the rubble, clear some of the concrete slabs around the edges. Best case scenario: we blow most of it away and clear the rest by hand. Worst case scenario: we chip off a fraction of it and collapse the floor."

"There are no other options?" Agent Blake asked desperately.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Go! And on the double!" Blake ordered. The demolitionist ran up to the rubble with an assistant,
getting to work. Agent Blake returned to the laser-made slit in the ground.

"Bubbles! You still with me?" Agent Blake called out to the panic room.

"Y-yes…” Bubbles said, sounding rather faint.

"We're going to blow you out! I want you to hang on tight and push the ceiling as hard as you can, okay?"

"Please… Hurry…” was all she could say. All the while, the demolitionist, and his assistant had been digging holes into the rubble, in an attempt to shape the explosions to come.

"It's going to be okay," Blake comforted the enhanced little girl trapped within.

"Sir! Charges are set on remote! We have to go now!" the demolitionist yelled as he jumped off the rubble with his assistant.

"I'll see you later, promise," Blake said.

"Please don't leave me!" Bubbles howled deliriously from within.

"I have to, sweetie, but it won't be long," Blake promised before leaving. He could hear her shrieking and crying, but he couldn't just sit there - he would if he had Bubbles' physical resilience. He could only hope that Bubbles could find it within herself to understand and wait.

Blake sprinted down the VIP lounge to join the rest of his squad. The lounge was huge, expansive. Blake and a few of his men would collectively thank God for it, as it meant plenty of covers along with ready access to Bubbles after the explosion.

Hiding behind a line of black avant-garde sofas, he waited for the rest of his men to get behind cover and looked left and right to see if everyone was present and accounted for.

But no one was missing. Selicia had been informed and had taken a sofa for herself, Blossom and Buttercup.

Blossom and Buttercup looked almost out of it. They were barely there, and although they had braced themselves against their sofa, they had done so limply. It was more appropriate to say that they were resting against the sofa. Their eyes were closed. Had they fallen asleep?

Blake turned to his demolitionist, who held the remote detonator, looking to him for an answer. Blake nodded, and so the button was pressed.

It was as if a volcano had erupted, or an earthquake had rocked the lab at its foundations. In the midst of it, something cracked. Something large was blown away. The tumbling of those huge debris resembled that of a giant's footfalls. As dust and shrapnel plumed outwards from the rubble, Blake could only hope that his demolitionist was on the mark.

When the dust cleared, Blake peeked out of his sofa cover…

Only to see that his demolitionist wasn’t quite on the mark.

Above the ceiling that threatened to crush Bubbles sat rubble, still. It was reduced in size, but not nearly enough to be cleared by hand easily.

Where there was more than 3000 pounds of concrete and steel, only a quarter of it was blown away, perhaps slightly more if one were to make the mistake of being optimistic.
In the panic room, Bubbles had felt the explosion first-hand, literally through her failing hands. It'd added a brief surge of force pressing her down, threatening to crush her and her new friends. She'd given ground for a few feet, but with shivering arms, pushed it up once more. The reduction in weight was nigh-unnoticeable; her strength was sapped, and even a simple 500-pound weight would have been too much for her to bear at this stage.

Yet Bubbles pushed on, beyond her will, tears of blood flowing anew as if a continuation of the rivers that started when she was gunned down by those who were supposed to protect her.

Dust and pebbles of concrete had sifted into the panic room, sending everyone into a renewed panic, almost everyone. The children and babies cried an encore. Some had accepted death, kept from shooting themselves by the slim hope Bubbles provided. Others were dazed, desensitized to the violence and hopelessness by trauma. Others were unconscious: the man who had his arm lobbed off, the woman who was still holding on to her bloody stump where a hand used to be, the teenage girl who fell when Mojo Jojo had amputated her leg below the knee by an accident of malice.

As a Catholic priest and his few followers in the room continued to pray aloud, desperately directing divine blessings unto Bubbles, Mister Morbucks and Princess continued to look upwards, hoping, wishing, thankful even if they would soon die, for at least they get to be together one last time without being unceremoniously killed without exchanging any last words.

"Shit," Blake said, back up above. He turned to his demolitionist who half-expected his sergeant to rip his head off, and it wasn't just the look on his face. "Any redundant C4s left?"

"No, sir. The C4s we used to blow the rubble ARE the redundant C4s," the demolitionists said. "Our main charges were used to make an entrance when we came in, sir."

"God damn it!" Blake said. Turning to Selicia, he wondered what he was going to say to her, to Professor Utonium, about Bubbles. How could he even face them? Knowing that he had failed as the man responsible for her rescue? He looked down at Blossom and Buttercup, wondering how he was going to explain to them that they had lost a sister to the great beyond of death.

No. He had other ideas. He didn't want to have to explain his failure at rescuing Bubbles to anyone.

At first, he entertained the thought of getting Blossom and Buttercup to help, but they looked like they could barely stand on their own feet, much less carry anything, so the idea was off. No, true to their father's words, they would have to do the heavy lifting from now on.

"Squad, fall in at the rubble," Blake ordered his team over the radio urgently; they were all scattered throughout the lounge as they had all gone for the first thing they could see that would serve as cover, far enough away from the blast radius of the C4 charges. "We're digging our friend out!"

Like a plague of locusts or rats, Blake and his men set to work trying to move the rubble. With the ten of them, the weight shouldn't have been the problem. No, it was the least of their problems. The rubble might as well have been lodged in place. The floor was made of relatively soft wood with an expensive carpet over it. The rubble had pierced the floor and lodged itself into the floor at places. Moreover, unlike most kinds of rubble, Mojo Jojo had made sure that it fell in a single piece. It was all cut out from the ceiling, and the fall did not break it up into many smaller pieces.

What was worse was that Blake could feel the floor sagging the moment he and his men stepped in to try to move the rubble. Bubbles was weakening, and she couldn't support the extra weight of ten grown men with muscles, combat gear and weapons on top of her. Blake had to order everyone off when his last-ditch solution became unsustainable.
Returning to the same slit, Blake peeked into the panic room below. Bubbles' baby blue light was dimming. She was running out of energy; her life was being drained, essentially.

"Bubbles?" Blake called out to his friend, trying his best to mask the hopelessness and sadness in his voice.

"Mister… B-Blake?" Bubbles replied from below. The ceiling of the panic room rumbled, looking like it could collapse any moment.

"I'm sorry, Bubbles," Agent Blake apologized. He could actually feel tears prickling him in one eye. "I'm so sorry."

"W-what do you mean, Mister Blake?" Bubbles said from below.

"I couldn't move it. I don't know how I can help you," Blake confessed, straight to the point, honest and as respectful as he could. It felt as if time was running out. It felt as if he was even talking to a ghost, or a corpse buried in its tomb six feet under, even. "I'm sorry."

The circular cutout of the floor that was the panic room's ceiling sagged visibly when Bubbles heard it. Beyond the crumbling of concrete and the yawning of failing architecture, there was silence. Blake actually thought that he had killed Bubbles with bad news, that Bubbles might have died carrying her load there and then.

"It's… It's okay, Mister Blake," Bubbles comforted the soldier, her voice strangely calm. "I can't be happier right now. They loved me, Mister Blake. I tried to save them and they love me for it."

"Bubbles… I…" Mister Blake said, then stopped, as he was lost for words. He had already apologized, and it would be inappropriate to displace the importance of Professor Utonium's place as Bubbles' father with his declaration of love for the blonde little girl, especially when he hadn't even done half of what the good professor did to raise her and her sisters.

The ceiling of the panic room sagged even more, now a full foot below the usual height, floating up and down where it was, beating like a dying heart.

"I love you, Mister Blake," Bubbles said. "You w-were kind to me right from the b-beginning. Thank you."

From the beginning? No. Agent Blake knew better. He had been one of 'them' at the beginning. Bubbles simply did not know that Blake had known her longer than he'd let on.

"No problem, kid," Blake said, and couldn't help but notice the irony that a child had stated the truth more readily than he did. Blake, on realizing that Blossom and Buttercup were about to lose a sister, turned to where they were…

Only to find Blossom standing not far away from him, her eyes charging up, becoming brighter and brighter, red, hot, but not angry. Instead, there was lethargy in her eyes, the kind of softness that little girls tend to exude that Blossom lacked until now. Her hands were folded on her stomach as if curled up in pain from the energy lacerations she had sustained.

He quickly got out of the way when he realized what Blossom's intentions were. With a pained shriek, Blossom let loose her infrared heat beam. At first, there was no reaction in the rubble, but as heat built up, cracks began to form, and soon, there was a second explosion which sent sizeable chunks flying all over the place.

Spent, Blossom collapsed to her knees, not just pale, but with rashes breaking out across her now
paper-white skin. She felt like hurling her stomach up; her head spun like a carnival ride.

"How are you feeling, Buttercup?" back at the sofas, Selicia asked her favorite, who seemed a little more conscious than she was before.

"Bad, Mom," Buttercup said, her pronunciation slightly off because of her sliced-up cheek, which had an open slit in it. All Selicia could do was to keep her hand on it. But with Blossom out and about, she had other plans for her favorite.

"Buttercup, Bubbles needs your help," Selicia said, with a pang of guilt throbbing painfully in her heart. She had done Bubbles some harm not long ago - and she knew she had to do something for the sake of redemption.

"But I'm really tired, Mom…" Buttercup moaned.

"Do it for me? Please?" Selicia insisted. She ran a hand across Buttercup's raven hair, which was caked with dried blood. "We'll spend more time together when this is over if you do."

"Promise?" Buttercup asked.

"Promise," Selicia agreed.


"Okay," Buttercup agreed and sat up painfully, and with Selicia's help, finally stood up. She cupped her cheek, which still felt like an unbuttoned shirt, flapping up and down, and marched towards the rubble, which was further reduced in size by Blossom.

Presently, Agent Blake and his men were trying to move chunks of rubble out of the way, and they were making very little progress. Knowing that Bubbles could not handle any additional weight, he had committed only half his men to step on the collapsing floor and carrying out small chunks of debris at a time. At their present rate, Bubbles would be crushed in time. The elephant in the room, which was the main piece of rubble, although much reduced in size by explosives and Blossom's heat beam, was still beyond the soldiers' ability to push off.

Stepping up to the plate, Buttercup had solved that problem. Lighter than any of the men, she added little to Bubbles' burden. Putting her back to the main rubble, she began pushing, with difficulty at first, but when the momentum began building, it was only a matter of time. The men helped, adding fractions to the equation.

When the rubble stopped moving after getting stuck on the edge, Buttercup lifted the rubble wholesale, with telling difficulties from her wounds - it was an uphill battle from there, as she had to push it upwards from the way Bubbles was sagging underground level.

Below, Bubbles had been facing new challenges that were added to her gigantic task. She had to balance the load on her back. The groaning of the only remaining steel thread still unbroken by Mojo Jojo or the weight of the debris warned her that correction was urgently needed. With nothing but what little she learned of forces and balance from her time on the see-saw and Blossom's building blocks, she shifted herself, using her legs to balance the load better, preventing imminent collapse.

Her chest felt like splitting in two, her back felt broken and her arms were like wooden stumps on fire. She could feel the agony right to her bones as if wooden splinters were shoved into her veins.
But Agent Blake gave her hope. The man had told her about Blossom and Buttercup, and she could tell that he wasn't just trying to make her feel better. Even as the exhaustion in her lungs and veins had built up to something no little girls should ever feel, she could feel some of the weight coming off, the burden slowly lifting.

Above, Buttercup could feel her consciousness slipping away once more as she struggled against the piece of ceiling from the second floor - it weighed lighter than a car, something which she could easily lift for a few minutes - but that had been a good day with good ol' Dad without crime fighting and the injuries and mental stress that came with it.

Inch by inch, she pushed the rubble off of Bubbles', screaming as she strained against it, against gravity. And then it got lighter and lighter.

Despite suffering from overstrain and a sudden outbreak of rashes related to it, Blossom had latched onto the other end of the large debris and began pulling.

Inch by inch, the Girls and soldiers fought, until finally, the weight was lifted. Quickly, the soldiers and Buttercup got off of the panic room ceiling. Together, Blossom and Buttercup opened the panic room like a can of sardines, throwing the detached ceiling off like the lid.

Light shone into the panic room again, where once, hopeless darkness reigned. Upon seeing that they were saved, the people within cheered like they never had before, screaming their hearts out at a second chance in life.

Bubbles, however, wouldn't be seeing the light. The moment the burden was lifted, the moment she knew that the day was saved and her new friends would live, she had let herself go, falling into the arms of the people below, who laid her down on the floor.

Agent Blake rushed over to the opening over the panic room when he could. Looking down at the people below, at Bubbles, he saw that the little girl had fallen unconscious - or died, he did not know - with a peaceful smile on her face. He looked for a way down - but there was none. In the chaos, the staircase leading down to the panic room had been crushed along with a few unlucky souls there. But finding a way down was the least of his problems right now.

Bubbles! His mind was screaming her name, and he was afraid that there was a price for averting so many deaths.

"Ropes! Now!" Blake barked at his men. "Private Zach! Get down there, ASAP!"

"Blossom, Buttercup! One more thing-" he turned to the other girls, only to realize that they, too, had fallen unconscious as exhaustion and pain had taken its toll. Selicia, in the meantime, had run up to them, checking for pulses.

Meanwhile, the doors on the other end of the VIP lounge had flung open, revealing Professor Utonium, conscious but in a daze, getting carried in by Corporal Holliday and Rutherford. As if on cue, more soldiers streamed in from the other doors, their black tactical gear and crests showing clearly their affiliation with the USDO. At the head was General Blackwater.

In their rush to save Bubbles, no one in the VIP lounge had noticed that the sound of gunshots and explosions all around Morbucks' lab had ceased long ago. They had won.

For the first time ever, one could say that…

'The day is saved.'
Chapter 100: Dawn of the Three

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the Girls wake up to a new day.

Chapter 100: Dawn of the Three

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.


First light had come minutes ago. It was a new day, a new dawn in more ways than one. Buttercup stirred awake, moaning. The first thing that greeted her when she returned to the real world was the worst aches in her entire life. Her entire body felt like it was getting crushed like Bubbles would have been had she not intervened.

She'd half-expected to find herself back in the Morbucks Industries Research Labs since that was what she last remembered. But no, she was home. At last. Looking out the window, she noticed that the sky had cleared, to reveal the morning sun, which was still creeping up. She could hear humming. A lullaby that sounded familiar. Turning to the source of the sweet tune, she saw Mommy sitting beside her, dressed in the very same military formal dress she had worn the first day they met. She was reading an army magazine.

"Mom…?" Buttercup mumbled. Selicia put down her magazine immediately and looked at her, her mouth hanging slightly open in surprise. She didn't expect her favorite little tough nut to wake up so soon. Professor Utonium had estimated at least two days, judging by the severely low level of Chemical X in their blood. She immediately got off her chair, kneeling beside Buttercup, holding her hand. It was only then that Buttercup noticed that she was on the IV drip once more.

"Hey, honey," Selicia whispered to her lovingly. "How are you feeling?"

"It hurts everywhere. I don't feel like moving," Buttercup said.

"You don't have to, Butter Cracker," Selicia said. "You did really well yesterday, buddy."

"Is Bubbles alive?" Buttercup asked, though she had done so out of concern for herself than her own sister. She was afraid that she wouldn't be able to spend time with Mommy if Bubbles was killed.

"Look to your left, honey," Selicia said. Buttercup did as she asked, and she didn't just see Bubbles. Blossom was there too. Both of them were hooked up to some IV drips, something which was becoming tragically common. "You're such an angel – caring about your sister so much."

"But I d-" Buttercup had wanted to deny Selicia's assertion, but her Mom shushed her quietly by putting a finger on her lips.
"You do. That's how I want to remember it," Selicia said, before removing her finger.

"So do we get to spend more time together, Mom?" Buttercup asked with a kind of hunger in her voice.

"Of course, Butterbear," Selicia said as she played with the tomboy's button-like nose, tapping it like a button. She laughed and so did Buttercup.

A yawn broke their shared mother-daughter time. Selicia stared over Buttercup and saw that Blossom was stirring awake. The redhead stretched herself, actually putting out her arms, only to be so rudely interrupted by the aching in her own body and the disturbing sensation of a metal needle tugging at her vein.

As if in sequence, Bubbles opened her eyes next, though she did it just barely. Last night for her had been bone-breakingly exhausting, hazardously so. She had taken the worst of the three Girls; the pain that resumed its torture in her body was so debilitating that she would be feeling it for the next few days, and more, especially the scarring of her chest from her near-fatal heart and lung wounds.

"I'm going to get your father," Selicia said. Buttercup had been lifting her head off her pillow to take a better look at her Mom when she said this, and when Selicia left, it fell back into the warm embrace of the pillow. She hated her sisters for this, for taking away this moment alone with her dearest Mommy. Besides, she had been conversing with the dead cat in her dreams, and it had been right about her sisters all along. When was it ever wrong?

"Ooff… My head…" Blossom moaned as she shifted where she was, barely. She couldn't move an inch without feeling a strong, dull ache down to her bones. She could still feel the cuts that Ace had inflicted upon her. Some of them were deep enough that a night's sleep hadn't fully wiped them away yet. "What a night…"

"It hurts…" Bubbles, who wasn't even able to stretch as if most of her body had shut down from yesterday's crucible, groaned.

They didn't have to be alone for very long. The door opened, revealing Professor Utonium with Selicia behind him, having just kissed him in the neck before withdrawing herself tactically so that the Girls wouldn't know or see the loving gesture, not that they would have done so from their bed as even craning their neck was an impossibility.

"Girls!" the professor cried in joy as he came in. "Am I so glad you're all fine!" He descended upon them, hugging Buttercup first because she was the only Girl within reach.

"Dad!" the three Girls cried in unison.

"It was horrible yesterday," Bubbles said and pushed herself up to lean against the bed's headboard. It was worth the dull aches erupting throughout her body as it meant getting a better view of her Daddy.

"But we came through, didn't we?" Blossom said, sitting up with out-of-place difficulty, considering her real strength.

"And we killed lots of bad guys too!" Buttercup boasted, practically jumping up, her IV tube swinging about, and the needle in her vein reminding her harshly of her depleted condition. She winced. Buttercup had only reminded the professor of what she had done yesterday. In normal circumstances, he would have been shocked, angry even, but owing to the Girls' medical conditions, he could not bring himself to even lecture her.
"Yes, you did," the professor simply said, disguising his disappointment and sadness at Buttercup's loss of innocence with her psychopathy in full swing and questionable choices as he began unplugging the Girls from their IV drips. When that was done and each of their Girls had winced their lot, he picked them up one at a time and sat them down on the edge of their bed. Selicia opened the walk-in closet, which scared Buttercup a little as she was afraid that her collection of teeth, street drugs in syringes and various trophies would be discovered, but it was either Selicia didn't care or didn't know. Buttercup would have to find out in time. From within the walk-in closet, the Mom pulled out three little wheelchairs made for disabled children, brought in on the hurry by Wiggums. The sight of it made Professor Utonium sad and further jaded at the world, but he was at least thankful that the Girls hadn't come to that state yet - they would only likely be bedridden for half the week at most, or less if he was right about the Girls' ability to grow more Chemical X in their blood by exercise and experience.

"Girls, there's something I want the three of you to see," the professor said, before scooping up one Girl at a time and putting them into the appropriately-colored wheelchairs. "Wiggums had some good sense to choose the right colors for the girls," the professor thought while he was at it.

"What is it, Dad?" Blossom asked as she was being wheeled out alongside Bubbles. Their wheelchairs were so small that the professor could push them out side by side. Behind them, Selicia did the same with Buttercup.

"It's a surprise, honey," Professor Utonium said with a smile. They were pushed to the staircase, where something new had been installed: a prefabricated elevator next to the stairs. Professor Utonium and Selicia hadn't been able to sleep last night, and they had made sure that Wiggums wasn't able to either. The elevator was installed express-style, while the Girls slumbered after their hard-won victory. They were put in the elevator and brought down to the living room that way.

At the living room, where the Christmas decorations were still up, the Girls were seated in front of the television. Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup were speechless; they had no idea what the 'surprise' was. What could be on the television that would be a surprise?

Their first clue became evident when the professor picked up a videotape on the television and slotted it into the VCR. He switched on the television, changing the channel and hitting the 'play' button on the VCR. He then hurried to the sofa and sat down between Blossom and Bubbles, joining Selicia, who took a spot next to Buttercup.

"I expected the news channel to cover last night," the professor said cryptically as he kept his eyes pinned on the television screen while he picked up the remote and rewind it. Television static covered the screen as he did, as did images going in reverse, flashing by quickly. Talking heads, mostly. "I've recorded everything… and… there we go." he stopped the VCR and began playing the video again, right from the beginning.

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Television Recording 12261988-TNN

The following transcript is a recording of the TNN (Townsville News Network) channel from 0015-0025.

-TRANSCRIPT START-

(Logo of TNN logo shows up and fades, along with an important-sounding news tune playing)

Stanley Whitfield: -attack on the Morbucks Industries Research Labs that left 115 dead and 241 injured. Eyewitness accounts and official sources agree that the attack is perpetrated by terrorists,
though their affiliation has yet to be confirmed. Within 2 hours, the USDO and TPD were able to force a retreat of the terrorist forces. While the terrorists are defeated, the public is advised to be on the alert as many of the terrorists are still at large, armed and dangerous and the police are in the process of tracking them down to be arrested.

Sally Perth: Related to this, further, highly credible eyewitness accounts have confirmed that 'The Three', named Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup-

(Pictures of Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup appears above Sally's head)

-has appeared in the labs following the terrorist invasion of the research lab complex. Backing the claims of well-respected entrepreneurs, captains of industries and innovators are hard evidence of the interception. Viewer discretion is advised for what you are about to see.

(the screen cuts to security footage showing Buttercup tearing apart terrorists as they tried in vain to shoot her down, only for their bullets to bounce off her. At the bottom of the video, Bubbles jumps on top of a reception counter and opened fire with her modified XM4 rifle at the terrorists, allowing trapped civilians she was protecting to flee. The video continues as Sally Perth voices over the video)

Sally Perth: However, it appears that the super-powered Girls have done right by the desperate folks there, as the same eyewitness accounts have spoken up for 'The Three' right from the beginning. Once again, our very own Phil Robertson had found himself in the thick of it. Phil, are you there?

( the video cuts to another footage, this time taken from a professional handheld camera. The camera is among the bushes. In the scene, Phil Robertson and a mic man is sitting in front of it. He waves for the cameraman to lift the camera up higher, which he did. The camera zooms in, revealing a sideways view of Blossom, in SWAT gear and apparently unarmed, confronting Ace, who wields a Katana. Their guns are piled on the ground. The video continues as a video in video, put alongside a live video of Phil as a talking head, out in the streets.)

Phil Robertson (unseen and from a different location): Yeah, I'm connected.

Sally Perth: Phil, what can you tell us about your encounter with one of 'The Three' back at the Morbucks labs when you were supposed to interview Mr. Morbucks?

Phil Robertson: I saw her - Blossom, I think - out in the parking lot of the Morbucks labs, facing off against the Gangreen Gang, one of the toughest gangs in Townsville to arise in recent memory. They - uh- Blossom and the leader of the GG both spoke for some time before they started fighting. The camera did not record their voice clearly as we had to hide our mic to avoid getting spotted but - do you have the footage?

Sally Perth: Yes, we do.

Phil Robertson: Turn the volume up when they're talking.

Sally Perth: (presses earpiece deeper into her ear) Hey techs, you got that?

( the volume of the video of Blossom and Ace's confrontation is boosted all the way up. The video is then rewinded, showing Blossom with her sisters and Ace with his gang, their weapons still held in hand. Despite this, the voices of Blossom and Ace are still very soft, interrupted over and over by the wind and background noise)

Ace: When- biological weapons- didn't expect- three of you-

Blossom: Are you- hurt the people-?
Ace: -fraid so-

Blossom: Why-? They've never- have they?

Ace: I told you- (the wind here is too strong, which dies down soon after)

Blossom: I just want to go home, Mister Ace. I don't want anyone to be hurt.

Ace: Blos- going- straight with you. Those people- don't deserve- It's rich people- terrible place to live in-

Blossom: But it's wrong to hurt-

(another strong gust of winter wind, which dies down again. But it appears that they have spoken some more, and Bubbles and Buttercup appear to have contributed a little to the conversation.)

Blossom: They're not all bad. I know many good people. Please be one of them, Mister Ace. I don't want to fight. It's Christmas.

Ace: Enough! I don't wanna hear it no more! You wanna go home? Then get going! But I'm not going anywhere without going into the labs!

Blossom: No. You're not hurting anyone.

(The video is skipped forward to when they are fighting, with Blossom losing slowly but surely. The reporters voice over the video.)

Phil Robertson: What we have appears to be proof that 'The Three' are fighting on the side of Townsville knowingly, and this 'Blossom' appears to be very convinced of her conviction, as she was fighting with teeth and claws, to the death even.

Sally Perth: Did she survive the encounter with the Gangreen Gang, Phil? Is there a body for the police to identify on the crime scene?

Phil Robertson: I - uh - I can't believe I'm going to say this when - but - thank God, no. She was spared by the gang, seemingly out of respect. She - uh - was able to turn the Gangreen Gang away, potentially saving dozens, if not hundreds, of lives. The disaster at Morbucks labs would have been far worse had it not been for her - that was what Commissioner Davis said.

(The video of Blossom and Ace fighting disappears as Ace walks away from Blossom, replaced by the newsroom with Stanley Whitfield and Sally Perth)

Stanley Whitfield: Thank you, Phil. And as we know, 'The Three' had reportedly saved more lives within the lab complex itself-

(a repeat of the earlier video of Buttercup fighting and gutting terrorists and Bubbles providing cover fire is shown again)

-as eyewitness accounts say that the 'superpowered' Girls did not stop at the parking lot. We'll bring you live to the scene with Rose Bud. Rose, what can you tell me about the sentiments and situation on the scene there?

(the scene is switched to another reporter, Rose Bud, a young lady who is stunningly dressed in a white fur coat.)

Rose Bud: I'm at the heart of the Morbucks Industries Research Labs right now, and despite the time
of the year - it being Christmas and near midnight - the labs are abuzz with activity. Nearly ten teams of firefighters from several fire stations around Townsville had answered the emergency call and are putting out fires, rescuing trapped survivors and acting as paramedics at the moment. Dozens of ambulances have arrived, but they've been treating the wounded on site rather than shuttling them to the hospitals - er (turns and runs up to an important looking senior doctor who happens to be walking by)

Rose Bud of Townsville News Network (thrusts mic at the senior doctor), what can you tell me about the medical outlook of the terrorism victims as of right now? Why aren't these patients brought to the hospital?

Senior Doctor: (Looks warily at the camera) Our hospitals are filled almost to capacity - you know how it is in Townsville, and there's been a spike in crime recently. Besides, the Morbucks Labs are incredibly well-equipped for this. They have an entire branch dedicated to medicine and the biological sciences. We, uh, simply need to borrow the right equipment for the job - and Mister Morbucks have been more than generous in that department - speaking of jobs, I really need to get on with mine. (Briskly walks away to check on a patient with some nasty looking broken bones sticking out of his shin)

Rose Bud: I'm at the local disaster response center set up at the recreational center right now, and there are, like, hundreds of patients on site, and it looks like they come in various degrees of severity in terms of injuries. Despite this, I can see some of them smiling and chatting happily. Ma'am-(approaches an old lady who fits the description)

- What is your name and what can you tell me about your experience in this terrorist attack? (puts mic close to Old Lady's mouth)

Old Lady: (appears to still be trembling from shock) Why, I'm Marie Shelley - she saved us, young lady, she did.

Rose Bud: Who? What did she do?

Marie: Why, the angel of course. I was down in that horrid… panic room, they call it, and the angel saved us.

Rose Bud: Does this 'angel' have a name?

Marie: Er- oh, I'm sorry. Nerve's a little jangled, I guess. Her name is Bubbles if I heard it right. She saved us and…

Rose Bud: What did this 'Bubbles' do, Mrs. Shelley?

Marie: She held the ceiling up, my! Oh, thank the lord! She was so tiny and yet - she held the ceiling up. (Appears to shiver from remembering her time in the panic room) I was praying for her and the Lord answered my prayer! She's an angel!

Rose Bud: I- I see, Mrs. Shelley. Were there others with you in this panic room when Bubbles saved your life?

Marie: Oh, there were lots of us. Some of us did not make it, but the rest of us were chosen… chosen to live… Er - they're right over there (points at some place out of the camera's field of view) and you can speak to them if you want. God bless you, dear. He sure blessed me with his angel! On Christmas day, no less! Oh my!

(on Marie's suggestion, Rose Bud scoots over to the other survivors of the 'Panic Room Attack', as it
would go down into history. Below are snippets of the testimonials of the people Bubbles have saved)

Greg: I had my (censored) arm cut off by a (censored) laser beam but I lived, because somehow, I don't know how, that kid in her tiny-(censored) SWAT costume made sure I (censored) didn't join my arm in heaven. I (censored) swear I could kiss her if I know where she is! Even though, you know what they say, she's dangerous and (censored). I don't care. She's my hero now and I swear I'm going to build her a shrine!

Ashley: I thought we were done - my two kids and I - but thank goodness Mr. Morbucks, um, my employer, invited Bubbles in. Had she not been there, I wouldn't have been able to promise my kids that I'll stay home more often. If you see her… Thank her for me, will you?

Jamal: Holy hell! Now that's what you call world-class security! I've been in business with Mr. Morbucks for years. Years! And I've never seen anything like it! I'm putting more money into Morbucks Industries even if I'm going bankrupt because of it - well, maybe - but we all know who to thank!

Father Vincent: In my moment of desperation, I prayed to God for salvation, in the name of the holy trinity, and he answered my prayers. What is this Bubbles? If not an angel sent by God to intervene in our hour of need, saving his children against the forces of evil that have so taken root in this dark and evil-ridden city? She shined as her predecessors did in the scriptures, and she'd bled as Jesus did on the cross. Surely this is a sign! Bubbles- she- I apologize for my ramblings. Perhaps I'd need to collect my thoughts, for there's much to consider- ur- you should speak to the most prominent and blessed of my flock, Mister Morbucks, and his daughter, for they have communed with this angel who saved us. I've heard great things from them. Oh, what a time we're living in now that I may bear witness to this miracle of Christmas!

Mister Morbucks, CEO, Founder and Owner of Morbucks Industries: Bubbles, the little girl who saved our lives, had reached me in a way no one else could. The moment I met her, I sensed a kind of overflowing sincerity in her. She saved my daughters life, twice in a row now - in a day, within the span of an hour. It is a deed I can never attach a price tag on, and it is a favor she did for me that I can never repay. She'll have the support of myself and everything I represent, no questions asked. She's the kind of thing this city needs, the Christmas miracle that's been overdue for over a decade. It's time this city gets the spring cleaning and renovation it deserves.

Elodie Morbucks, Beloved Princess of Townsville: Where do I even begin? She saved me from an evil freaky monkey with a ray gun, like, twice, and we're the bestest of BFFs now. She said so herself! I've never met a friend who's so nice before! I mean, I had 'friends' who accompanied me in the lab's Christmas celebration, but they abandoned me when the bad guys came. If it weren't for Bubbles, I would have been kidnapped or something! She's my hero! And my friend! How I wish I can see her again!

(Fast forward to to the newsroom)

Stanley Whitfield: Thank you, Rosebud. Authorities have reported that the USDO has captured several terrorists responsible for the attack, and have confirmed that the deployment of 'The Three' was intentional, in order to safeguard the lives of Townsville citizens.

I don't know about you, Sally, but it looks to me like the day is saved, thanks to… 'The Three'.

Sally Perth: Oh, I agree. Totally.

-TRANSCRIPT END-
Bubbles couldn’t help but weep tears of joy when she saw the video. She smiled as she did, wiping the tears away. Blossom was almost in the same state, but she could control herself better. Most important of all, it appeared that the people of Townsville seemed to be having a change of heart. Tears pricked the leader’s eyes and she wiped them away, smiling, but she kept a mostly straight face as she continued to digest the recorded news report.

Buttercup, however, was less than pleased - her sisters had taken all the limelight, leaving little of her. Her only appearance was in single footage, and the entire fight wasn’t even shown! Beyond that, not a word was spoken about her, despite everything she did! At that moment, it felt as if the entire world was against her - well, not the entire world. There was the dead cat, and the friends it claimed it had, who would find her somehow.

"We did it! Did we?" Bubbles cried, in a happy sort of way. It all felt like a dream as if she would soon wake up from it. She had to have a second opinion.

"Did we, Dad?" Blossom turned to Professor Utonium. Buttercup's only response was to cuddle with Mom. Selicia held her tightly - she knew what was wrong.

"You sure did! The three of you have done it. You've done lots of good, saved many lives," the professor said. He was all smiles because he knew what had changed and what it meant for his enhanced little girls, his daughters. "Townsville's going to love you for it. The three of you just made lots of friends." He turned to Bubbles. "Especially you, Bubbles."

"Really?" Blossom and Bubbles asked in joyous disbelief, in unison.

"Yes, Girls," the professor said. "I'm so proud of the three of you."

"We did it!" Blossom and Bubbles celebrated, and soon they were floating despite the exhaustion, hugging each other. They pulled Buttercup into a team hug, and the feeling of it had caught Buttercup off-guard. She couldn't help but smile and giggles as she hugged her sisters. The silver lining in her sickened brain had helped slightly. "We did it!"

"Now, how about we finish that Christmas dinner we left behind for breakfast?" Selicia mentioned. The Girls smiled at her, even Blossom - with all the good seemingly shining upon them like a ray of hope and sunshine, whatever animosity between Blossom and Selicia had disappeared, at least for the time being.

"That would be nice," Blossom said, smiling.

"And let's not forget the presents," the professor added. "It's a huge pile too. Even Blackwater's got something for the three of you."

"Sw-eet!" Buttercup exclaimed. In her mind, it's got to be something cool, like a new weapon or something equally destructive or related to fighting.

Even from outside The House, the Girls' giggles, and Thomas and Selicia's laughter could be heard.
Epilogue: Project Powerpuff, Declassified

Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this epilogue, the Girls found their place in Townsville as the city's Angels of Justice - a new age appears to be dawning...

A/N: (28 MAR 2019) Another fresh coat of editing, which also adds tiny bits of content all over the chapter.

A/N: (29 MAR 2019) A missing section in the first scene has been re-included into the chapter. It will be found at the back of the first scene. The reason for this is due to a technical error that created two versions of my manuscript due to a desync of my cloud storage system. I apologize for this mistake.

Epilogue: Project Powerpuff, Declassified

The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville USDO Headquarters.

26 DEC 1988 (Tuesday). 0910.

"Alright, gentlemen, what are we looking at here?" Director Cliff asked the floor of his USDO council. For some reason, it looked different. Physically, it had all been the same, but the difference was deeper than the surface.

"Sir, my operatives' reports indicate that the underground is finally quaking in their boots," Jackard of Intelligence said, with a rather informal slant to his tone, but that was dropped rather quickly. "There are talks of abandoning plans or delaying long term goals. Crime will cool down in the coming days, I suspect, from what went down at the Morbucks labs."

"And how certain are you that your intelligence is accurate?" Director Cliff asked.

"He may be working with data and information and rumors, sir, but I don't." General Blackwater rose from his seat, a gigantic statue of a man. All eyes were turned to him. "My men have been continuing to conduct operations against the Foundation, Lombardi and other criminal syndicates in Townsville since that day. They've been reporting abandoned fronts, safehouses, drug labs, you name it. They are pulling back. They're afraid, and scared men tend to huddle in groups and consolidate their forces."

"So, a victory then?" Director Cliff said, with a satisfied smile spreading across his face. He leans back on his chair. "At long last. Seems that I'm wrong about B-49 - well, all of those lab rats in general - sounds to me like they're worth something after all."

"Victory? Sir, we've only just started fighting the war," General Blackwater said. "Hate to break it to you, sir, but a few battles does not win a war. There will be more to come, and the reports I've been receiving from my men tell me we're going to have to fight a lot more battles to win this war. The
Foundation is fielding their own enhanced individuals now, and they were plucked right out of our organization, sir. I'm talking about Naga and Mojo Jojo. And they've been doing experiments on their own too."

"Intelligence is my field, not yours, general," Jackard cut in. The General gave him a death stare before sitting down. The Chief Intelligence Officer turned to Cliff. "The Foundation is responsible for what is known as the 'Gangreen Gang', sir. Young adults and even teenagers hideously mutated by Chemical W stolen from one of our convoys."

"So we'll just send in 'The Three' and get a repeat of Morbucks Labs. Our enemies are weak now - why not sweep through the entire city and kill 'em all?" Director Cliff said. "What's the problem?"

"I'm afraid it's not as simple as that, sir," Jackard said. "We may have won or even gained the upper hand, for now, sir, but let me impress upon you our real situation. We are a small organization, elite and skilled and highly experienced and backed by our newly-grown enhanced individuals though we may be, we are surrounded by a sea of enemies. We can't trust the Townsville Police Force as its size hides too many double agents and traitors and corrupted officials. We may have taken down forty or fifty Foundation terrorists, but thousands more are spread across hundreds of cells still operating across the US. The Lombardi is pulling back and consolidating, sure, but they are the toughest criminal gang in the history of the United States, and they are rearing to strike again. And the Lombardi are just the biggest boys in town. There are still at least two hundred other gangs, large and small, operating in Townsville, including the smaller Italian mobs, a few Russian mobs, Jewish mobs, Chinese secret societies, the Yakuza clans, Mexican drug lords and many others I know all too well.

"Then there are the reports I've been receiving from my deeper field agents, sir. Apparently, we'll have to watch out for the cults in Townsville as well, as they seem to be working together with the various criminal syndicates and independents - for what ends, I don't know. All I know is they've been supplying money, resources, weapons, manpower, and drugs to the criminal underworld, in addition to the usual… mumbo jumbo they believe in. I wouldn't have considered them a major threat had it not been for the fact that somehow, they were able to get a hold of Duranium and work them. The Cult of His Promise. The Cult of His Vision. The Cult of His Splendor. The Cult of His Way. They have hundreds, if not thousands of members each, and they are growing.

"I've been filtering away some information I thought was just background noise, but owing to what we've been seeing and working with, I think there's just a chance that they might not be background noise at all," Jackard paused, looking around the room, gauging his fellow councilors' response.

"What is it, Jack?" Cliff asked, impatiently.

"We might be dealing with a threat larger than we can possibly imagine. The cults - they are responsible for funding criminal activities and supplying them, and yet my agents haven't been able to reconcile the pitiful amount of tithes the cults have been scraping together and what they've been providing the syndicates and Foundation with. There were no supply lines to speak of, much less to intercept, and their accounts aren't even nearly fat enough to justify conventional logistics. That's until one of my agents managed to breach one of their compounds, deep into it," Jackard explained almost too vaguely, too incoherently, for what he was dealing with wasn't exactly everyday business, even by USDO standards.

"What are you talking about, Jack?" Cliff repeated himself, making his displeasure at the vagueness of his subordinate's report known.

"I don't know how to say it. Human sacrifices, rituals, a portal. Exchanges. The cults - that's where they get their resources from. The object of their worship - their idol - there's a chance it might be
"You're not well, Jackard," Medical Director Simmons said. "You should probably take a break at the medical wing."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Director Cliff spat in disbelief. "We deal with hard facts and the sciences, not fringe occultism, Jackard. Now, let me give you one more chance. Straighten out your explanation and tell me again - what have you found that we can use?"

"I know it's hard to believe, but the cults - there's some element of truth in what they're doing. Duranium, Chemical X, gold, and drugs just don't appear out of nowhere. They even have a name for their deity," Jackard babbled, struggling to make heads and tails of what he saw, struggling to put it in human terms.

"And what is that?" Cliff said with a condescending smirk on his face. "Sure, I'll entertain you. What is their 'deity's' name?"

"They refer to their god as... 'Him'," Jackard spat the word out as though it was poison out of his system.

"Him'? As in the pronoun, him? Really?" Cliff snorted at his Chief Intelligence Officer. "You should take a few days off, Jack. Sounds to me like you need it."

"Sir, you don't understand," Jackard asserted, banging on the conference table with his fist. "If my reports are true - and I have too many evidence of its existence to rule it out as superstition - then we're in some serious shit here."

Instead of listening to the Chief Intelligence Officer, Cliff motioned for his guards, who moved up to Jackard.

"It's not even that far of a stretch - we have children who could fly and lift tonnes of weight and-" Jackard continued to reason with the Director, only for a security officer to snatch his sidearm from his holster and two others to restrain him by the arms. "Let me go! I've read Professor Utonium's report on Chemical X and it's possible! Possible!" the security officers tried to drag them away, but Jackard was able to throw them off. Years spent in the field had taught him a thing or two about fighting, especially when he was usually alone or with just a single partner.

One of the security officers tried again to restrain him, but he was able to counter the move and, twisting around, had slammed the security officer against the conference table, which shook due to the force. He kept the security officer there with an armlock, before letting go.

"I know where the door is," Jackard said. "I'll find my own aspirin."

With that, he took his leave, but he wasn't serious on both claims. He had to put together the hard evidence he had to convince Director Cliff of his findings - admittedly, he had done poorly by expecting the council to take him on his word when what he had to say did sound rather far fetched and out-of-this-world. More wouldn't hurt either, even if he had to sacrifice a few more of his spies and field operatives. Even if he had to go in there himself.

Cliff snapped his head to his Acting Head of Research. "What's that about Chemical X?"
"Just theories proposed by Professor Utonium yet to be tested and substantiated, sir," Doctor Vanum said. "I doubt Jack truly understands what it means."

"There's one thing Jackard do know though," General Blackwater said.

"And what is that?" Director Cliff inquired derisively.

"It's just the beginning," General Blackwater said.

“Hmph,” Cliff snorted at the remark dismissively. “Is there anything else the council wishes to discuss?”

“Yes sir,” Liaisons Head Yorkshire stood up as she was flipping through her folder and ruffling through her notes. “There’s been calls by a substantial group of Townsville and US citizens, as well as key senators to make available all USDO records to the public via the Freedom of Information Act. Should we submit to this demand?”

Director Cliff stared at Yorkshire hard enough to make her doubt herself and bring out her insecurity to the front. She swept her hair back and broke eye contact with him before sitting down, then shifting herself in her seat.

“No. Absolutely not. We’re fighting a war here!” Cliff rejected the request vehemently. “I’ll tell you who’s been making those calls. It’s the enemy. They’re hiding among the general population, and they want to bring us down. There’s already been enough leakages as it is with the Foundation infiltrators in our midst and the media watching our every move.”

“Sir, the Freedom of Information Act and the movement to push it onto us is only going to grow—” Liaison Head Yorkshire warned the Director, only to be cut off.

“Then push it back at them. I want you to hold them off as long as you can. Use every trick in the book, and out of it,” Director Cliff ordered.

“Yes sir, but one of those tricks will need us to give them something,” the liaisons head said. “preferably something insubstantial if we want to keep vital intelligence from becoming public knowledge.”

“Sure, sure,” Director Cliff agreed dismissively. “Create a new sub-department to handle this, and start sorting the least important bits of info into a new file. We’ll call it ‘Project Powerpuff: Declassified’ for starters.”

“We’ll eventually have to cave in to the Freedom of Information Act, sir.”

“Yes, we will. But only when all this is over. I want you to create a timeline for the trickle of information released to the public. Let’s make it over the course of... 30 years? To 2018. If there’s any year to release everything, it’s that year.”

“Yes, sir.”

The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House


'Week 5 Report, Addendum. The Girls have grown rapidly over the past five weeks. It is hard to imagine that just 5 weeks ago, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup had awoken with their minds as
blank as infants, unable to speak and unable to walk. And now, not only can they pass off as little girls who'd been on this Earth for five years, they could do more than what most adults are capable of." Professor Utonium typed on his computer before pausing and taking a sip of coffee. He was in his office, doing some routine work - something that had been impossible for many days before and during the battle at Morbucks Labs.

Before he could continue, the door to his office opened. On the threshold stood Selicia Goodwin - his designated wife and mother to the Girls - as well as his three beautiful angels.

"Hey Dad, we're off to fight crime now," Blossom bade farewell to the professor.

"Hugs and kisses, Dad!" Bubbles added.

"And to you too, sweetie," Professor Utonium replied, his words overflowing with love, just like his daughter's. "We'll have more of that when you get back, okay?"

"Do I get to choose the bedtime story tonight, Dad?" Buttercup asked, 'needy' was written all over her face as she was still jockeying for dear old Dad to favor her over the others. "I want something with more action and battles!"

"Sure thing, honey," the professor said with a laugh. "Now off you go, the three of you. I'll be right here in The House when you get back."

In a fit of giggles, the Girls ran off towards the front door.

"Now, now, Girls, take it easy! You've only just gotten out of bed rest!" Selicia shouted after them, nagging at them as a normal mother would during a normal day. The Girls echoed their promises to obey. "Don't forget to eat your dinner! Don't throw away the vegetables!"

When the Girls were gone, Selicia entered the professor's home office, proper. Coming up to the window, she looked outside to see the Girls off. Meanwhile, the professor continued writing his report:

'For twenty long years, we have worked to produce super soldiers, and for twenty long years, we have focused, tunnel-visioned and one-track-minded as we are, on combat performance and fighting abilities. With Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, we've finally achieved what we set out to do, 21 years since the inception of Project Powerpuff. But that isn't our - my greatest achievement - not by a long shot,' halfway from writing his report, the professor looked up once more just in time to see the Girls walking towards the street, chatting to one another. It was still strange, seeing his Girls outfitted in miniature SWAT gear, guns and grenades hanging on their tiny frames. Their helmets hung on their vest, to be put on when things get hot.

They were prototypes, accidental ones at that, and they were never intended for law enforcement, but they'd somehow made it work. Blossom was walking in the center, holding hands with both her sisters.

Professor Utonium stood up, and walked up next to the window, next to Selicia. He wrapped an arm around her waist, and Selicia reciprocated by putting an arm around his shoulder. He couldn't love Selicia like how he loved Eileen Upton, but he felt confident, at long last, that he could come to love her for who she was, not as much as Eileen - but it'd mean something. Perhaps one day, she would then become a wife for real, and a mother to Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup officially.

The Girls' hair shone brightly under the glare of the ever-stronger sun. Now, more than ever, they looked like the beacon of hope that they were, like the Angels of Justice that many had now regarded
They turned around and waved at their Daddy and Mommy, and Daddy and Mommy waved back at them. They continued walking, and just in time, their convoy of Lamborghinis pulled up. The door of the middle car opened, and Agent Blake climbed out, still wearing his shades, but what had changed after he was first attached to the Girls as their guard was his facial expression and his attitude. He had gone from being just another grunt who would shoot the Girls to kill, to being one of their closest friends.

Agent Blake tapped on his watch, reminding the Girls that time does indeed heal all wounds. As promised, the battle of Morbucks Industries Research Labs and the wounds the Girls had suffered there were all history. Blossom ran up to the friendly USDO soldier and jumped. Agent Blake caught hold of her and embraced her. Bubbles and Buttercup crowded around him, hugging him in the legs.

Soon, they were in their speed transport. The Girls waved one last time from the window of the Lamborghini and Thomas and Selicia waved back one more time. Then they were off.

The professor's heart grew heavy once more when his little babies had been spirited away to fight crime. As much as they had come through, he was always afraid, always unsatisfied as a father would of the Girls' situation when it came to their well-being. But there was nothing to be done except to keep fighting for the Girls. He could only fight, and hope. Returning to his desk, he continued writing his report:

'Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup (yes, her too, I believe) woke up with love in their eyes. Their enhanced abilities and combat capabilities aren't my greatest achievements. No. It was their goodness, their ability to love. They could pass for normal little girls - or better - because of their capacity for love. Their capacity for love and kindness have exceeded that of most adults. That's their greatest superpower, in my opinion, and without it, they wouldn't have come this far for all their enhanced strength and speed and agility. Without love to guide them, they wouldn't have learned everything they did. Without love, they would have rebelled and left destruction in their wake. Without love, they wouldn't have saved the people they saved. Without love... They could just have easily joined up with the enemies of humanity. It is that their ability to love is enhanced, it's just that most of us have chosen to abandon our capacity for love. I just wish you have all realized that.'

After finishing up the addendum of his report, he looked out the window once more, deep into the baby blue sky, which reminded him of Bubbles, and a stray thought came to mind - he began wondering how Mojo Jojo was doing, what he was thinking and how he was feeling. He began regretting some of the things he'd said to the Chimpanzee - to his first child after Bloome. He wondered if Mojo Jojo was staring deep into the baby blue sky too, and wondering the same thing about him.

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The City of Townsville. Downtown. Townsville Police Department Headquarters.


"Well, thanks for putting those robbers in jail for us, Girls," Detective Mullens said to the three well-armored and armed little forms before him, on the roof of the TPD headquarters. It was the perfect spot for his little communion with 'The Three'. They would have been swamped by fans and supporters otherwise. One of them, a little girl with glowing pink eyes and dark red SWAT gear, came forward. Her helmet was off and in her hand, same for her sisters. "It was at Townsville Central Bank, no less. Reminds me of your first day on the job, except the three of you pulled it off this time."
"Anytime, Mister Mullens," Blossom said with a confident smile on her face. Her gear and uniform were largely pristine after her first bout of crime-fighting since Morbucks Labs - it was the first time ever that they were unscathed. If anything, it would result in some penny savings for the USDO. "We can't let them hurt anyone, after all."

"Like our new friends," Bubbles added as she came forward and put an arm around Blossom's neck. Blossom smiled and giggled at her. Her eyes glowed a cheery baby blue in the dimly lit rooftop of the TPD headquarters.

"It's fun punching them out anyways," Buttercup added with her arms crossed, refusing to engage in another group hug. Her angry green eyes glowed strongly, her spirit electrified by the action she had gotten. Not that it would last. She needed more... More!

"Would have been more fun if I actually get to punch through them..." she muttered to herself with a frown on her face. Blossom had been hard at work, using well-placed words and threats and blackmails to keep Buttercup's behavior angelic during their crime-fighting, and the tomboy didn't appreciate it one bit. Because of this, she felt empty and unfulfilled most of the time when she should be experiencing the very height of ecstasy.

"But..." Mister Mullens came down on a knee, bringing himself to a height closer to his city's new defenders. "How are the three of you feeling? It's only been three days since Morbucks Labs. The three of you were in wheelchairs the last time I visited."

"I'm okay. I'm still aching and woozy though, but my Daddy said it'll pass," Blossom said. "I feel kinda bad for poor Mister Marcello..."

"You know what they say: crime does not pay. It's harsh when even his kid is dead, but we're living in a harsh city," Detective Mullens said, then turned to Bubbles and Buttercup. "Two of you still okay?"

"I don't know... I don't like fighting, but if it's for my friends..." Bubbles muttered, still unsure of herself. She shivered at the thought of spilling blood once more. Her wounds might have healed, but deep inside her, the battles of days past had left a mark on her, something that would never go away, not for a long time. Even her near-fatal chest wound would mend fully long before her psyche would.

"You'll be fine," the detective encouraged the blonde little girl. "That's how it was for me back when I was a fresh-faced beat cop."

Bubbles smiled at him toothily. This Detective Mullens was nicer, unlike how he was when he first met. He was also better groomed and didn't smell like sweat, tobacco, and alcohol as strongly. The only thing she didn't like about him now was the cologne he was wearing, which made her even more nauseous than just her Chemical X deficiency did.

"It didn't take much effort this time around, hah," Buttercup boasted, still with her arms crossed, but this time with a hazardous smirk on her face as she reminisced on her most recent victory, even if it was a minor one. There was still a scar on her cheek where her Dad had sewn her cheek back together, but it was faint and fading quickly. It would be gone by first light the next day. "There were just twenty of them, and most of them went down in one hit."

"Attagirl," the detective praised as he ruffled Buttercup's hair. Buttercup giggled as she enjoyed the warm and pleasant sensation of the detective's hand. He straightened up and turned to a young woman by a searchlight. "Olivia, you ready with that thing?"
Officer Olivia was bending over a giant searchlight, finishing up with a rather special lens covering the entire searchlight. "Just... One... More... There! All done! The filter should stay on even if Godzilla decided to pay Townsville a visit."

"What is that?" Blossom asked with genuine interest that only a child could express. The world was still new and full of surprises for her, and she was learning as she go. "Is it a toy?"

"Let's just call it a surprise," Detective Mullens said, before motioning for his daughter to work the searchlight. "Light it up!"

Officer Olivia switched the searchlight on and orientated the huge lighting device to paint a cloud over Townsville with its light. The Girls looked up and smiled one after another. Blossom first, then Bubbles and finally, Buttercup. The searchlight had painted a pink circle on a nearby cloud, and in that pink circle was a Matryoshka doll of a heart, with each successively smaller heart a different shade of red or pink.

"Cool, huh?" Detective Mullens said as he stared at what amounted to his first piece of art (that wasn't painted with bullets and blood) - first drawn by his daughter, of course, but it was a joint father-daughter project. "Reminds me of that old superhero comic. Batman, I think."

"It's... beautiful..." Blossom marveled at the heart icon painted into the sky, meaning every single syllable she uttered.

"It's really cute..." Bubbles meant it too.

"So what's it for?" Buttercup asked - her ability to appreciate aesthetics dulled by her less mainstream preoccupations.

"It's going to be installed on some special SWAT vans too," Detective Mullens explained further. "There will come another day when we really need you, and when it does, we'll use it to signal you. That's what it's for. I think I can speak for the people of Townsville, at least the good people, but we trust you now."

Blossom smiled at the detective's kind words.

"But trust needs to be maintained. Don't let us down," Detective Mullens added sternly, before smiling once more. But after a while, his smile disappeared. His eyes returned to the ground.

"What's wrong, Mister Mullens?" Blossom asked; despite being young, she knew the look on Mullens' face. She had seen too many adults wear that face in her short life.

"Nothing, it's just..." Detective Mullens said, his voice trailing off. How could he put it in terms that a month-old child could understand? "As strong as you and your sisters are, as strong as me and my closest police buddies are... do you get the feeling that it feels impossible?"

It took Blossom some time to understand what he meant, but owing to her high intelligence, it had clicked faster in her mind than it would have done in another child's mind.

"This city is more rotten than you know, Blossom," Detective Mullens let slip everything in his mind - it had been a good, long time since he could trust someone completely and utterly. He thought it funny that it should come from a child. "Hundreds of criminal gangs that's been around for decades, a century even. There's thousands upon thousands of them, and too few of us, the good people, I mean. They're not going down without a fight."

"Then we'll fight them," Buttercup added, unable to resist saying it. She did love a good fight.
Blossom smiled at her, agreeing for once. "I don't mind making a few thousand more knuckle sandwiches!"

"Just a few weeks ago, I didn't think I could fight crime. I didn't think I could fight crime for this long, until now." Blossom struggled to put her point across - she was going to need more time in school. "I wanted to give up but my Dad was there for me whenever I'm sad, and I did it. I'm here with you, Mister Mullens."

"I didn't think we could make so many friends in Townsville a few weeks ago," Bubbles added. Mister Mullens laughed flatly but fell silent again. Despite having turned his life around - mostly - the weight on his shoulders was still there as if surgically attached. Had been since he joined the police force over 30 years ago.

"What's the matter, Mister Mullens?" Blossom asked once more, deeply concerned. She floated up to his chest level. Her shyness prevented her from touching him and reassuring him that way. It wasn't like Mullens to be this way, but then again, he'd changed since the battle at Morbucks Industries Research Labs.

"I'm just worried about escalation," Mullens muttered. He couldn't find any way to express it simple enough for a kindergartner.

"What does that mean?" Blossom asked.

"Back in the day, we replaced revolvers with semi-automatics, and they started using automatics. We wore armor, and they started firing armor-piercing rounds. The USDO came in with military hardware, and now we're up against fanatical terrorists, a four-armed killer lady, and a supercomputer monkey," Detective Mullens said. "And now we have the three of you, streaking across the sky like fighter jets, shooting laser eye beams… I don't want to know what's coming next."

"It'll be fine, Mister Mullens," Blossom said. "We'll protect Townsville no matter what. Right, sisters?" Bubbles and Buttercup murmured their agreement, each with their own reasons for doing so. Just then, Blossom's radio crackled alive once more. The enhanced little girl's glowing pink eyes darted away from Mullens' and to the ground as she listened to Blake, who was on the other end.

"Looks like evil never sleeps," Blossom quipped. It was one of her favorite lines, picked up in between operations while she actually had time to learn.

"Another operation?" Detective Mullens asked.

"It's something about a huge man covered in purple fur," Blossom explained. "I'm sure we'll get home before bedtime."

"He sounds funny," Bubbles giggled - the image in her head was one of a teddy-bear-like creature who was warm and cuddly. "Maybe we'll hug him and this time, it'll be alright?"

"Urgh, no way! I wanna punch more stuff!" Buttercup exclaimed in excitement. Bubbles raised an eyebrow at her tomboy sister, glaring at her - she still hadn't forgiven her for being so obsessed with violence to the point of abandoning her and the Townsville citizens who were in need of help.

"Well, don't let us keep you," The detective said. His daughter, Officer Olivia came up beside him, sliding into his arm.

Blossom smiled at her friends in the TPD one last time before donning her helmet and turning around. Bubbles and Buttercup followed. Together, the Three went towards the edge of the roof.
And one last thing, Girls," Detective Mullens added quickly, just before the Girls could take off. "In all this time, I've never said thank you… For everything."

Blossom stopped, turning to regard the detective and his daughter from the corner of her eyes with a smile. "I'm just glad to help."

And with that, Blossom took off, followed by Bubbles and Buttercup, streaking upwards into the sky, creating what looked like a tri-colored ribbon made of light in the night sky.

"Try to fly straight and keep up Buttercup," the detective could still hear Blossom instructing her sister. "I don't want to have to push you off another skyscraper again."

"Yeah? How about I race the two of you?" Buttercup replied, and with that, the voices of the three trailed off.

The two police officers continued watching as the city's new Angels of Justice disappeared into the distance, becoming a welcoming pyrotechnic display, until they arc downwards and landed somewhere in the city, presumably to meet with their chaperone convoy to take them to their next operation.

A new age had dawned. The night was still young, and the morning felt closer than ever. Townsville had been languishing in a kind of purgatory for decades, and yet, a new golden age seemed like it would creep up from the horizon, like the light of a young sun.

At least, that was what it felt like then.

The Girls had landed on a deserted street, where business was slow or non-existent. Agent Blake had been waiting, and so the Girls got into their transport promptly, exchanging quick greetings with him.

On the opposite side of the road, a nondescript man was watching. A man of native American descent, considering the darker skin tone and the clothing he was wearing, barring his jeans and cowboy boots. The man's most prominent facial features were his goatee and short hair, which was almost a buzz cut.

As Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup were driven off to another crime scene, the strange man smiled wryly, before turning around to check out the storefront of a failing shop. Displayed before him was a red dress with a puffy collar and hem, secured with a buckle, likely made with the twisted version of the Christmas spirit in mind. Beside it was a wall of television, and in the television, the news was on, TNN to be exact – it was the next big trend, the one thing that would attract some kind of commerce these days.

"-the most recent robbery at the Townsville Central Bank is thwarted by The Three, with no lives and limb and money lost and all of the perpetrators in custody," Stanley Whitfield, the eye on Townsville, reported. "So once again, the day is saved, thanks to The Three."

"Now that's never going to get old, is it, Stanley?" Sally Perth, Stanley's fellow star anchor, said.

"No, Sally Perth. In fact, analysts predict that crime rates will begin to drop gradually to pre-60s levels. In other words, peaceful. Analysts are also predicting a new period of economic and cultural growth that will begin to take root within months or a year as businesses and tourism will begin a process of renewal for the city. A new age of prosperity is dawning…"

"These pathetic mortals… Oh, how tragically short-sighted…" the strange man condescended, his voice calm despite the venom that was his words. A cat meowed in the distance and he turned to it. It was the dead cat, hobbling along towards him. He picked it up and held it in his hands. It licked him
in the chin, leaving black slime in the wake of its tongue. He turned back to the television, which had
started showing pictures of Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup.

"If only they know WHAT'S COMING!" the strange man said, his voice transforming in the middle
of his speech, into something ghoulish and spine-tingling at first, then demonic and loud after.
Putting his free hand on the glass of the storefront, as if stroking Buttercup's chin, he continued
speaking to no one in particular, except his cat: "Those poor little children… So innocent and sweet
and purty... So misguided and weakened by these ants… Don't worry… Daddy's coming…"

He began laughing, at first restrained before he lost himself to the absolute pleasure of knowing what
was to come.

THE END

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Chapter Summary

Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, the credits roll, as well as some news articles.

Credit Roll: Media Package 29121988

The following set of media extracts have been collected as they are of interest to the USDO and the evaluation of Project Powerpuff.

Project Powerpuff: Declassified Main Muses

The Powerpuff Girls Original Series by(&) Craig McKraken (Source, Canon, Motivation & Main Inspiration)

Stephen King (Horror Elements, Writing Style)

H.P. Lovecraft (Cosmic Horror Elements, Writing Style)

SCP Foundation (In-Universe Documents Writing Style, World-Building)

The Powerpuff Girls: Reimagined by(&) Rossowinch (Inspiration & Influence)

Immortality Syndrome by(&) Parsec (Inspiration)

The Powerpuff Boy by(&) Tortured Artist (Inspiration)

Townsville Tribune Extract 27 DEC 1988

GIRL WOUNDED MORTALLY IN FREAK POLICE SHOOTING WAKES UP FROM COMA

18 December 1988, a date in Townsville's recent history that will be remembered in the years to come. Aislinn Callaghan, a girl of five, was severely wounded in a police shooting that added to the forlorn the city is already suffering from. She was nearly killed because of a case of misidentification when the police officers involved had mistaken her for Blossom, one of The Three. She is understood to have survived Emily Deschain, also 5, who was fatally killed by the police officer involved in the shooting, who committed suicide by a shot to the head after gunning down the two girls. However, following complications in hospital, she had fallen into a coma on that day and has remained in it ever since.

But not for long. On the 25 December 1988, shooting victim Aislinn Callaghan had woken up to the joy of her parents, Kevin and Coleen Callaghan, just in time for Christmas. But, as if Father Christmas has visited them, that is not the end of the good tidings that the Callaghan family had been
receiving.

"This man from the USDO came into our ward and handed me a cheque for $100,000," Kevin, father of Aislinn, remarked. But even that is not the end of the good fortune to come their way. Owing to Blossom and The Three's intervention at Morbucks Industries Research Labs, it is as if a veil of mistrust surrounding Aislinn's near-identical look to Blossom had lifted. Well wishes and donations are pouring in the direction of the Callaghan family even as this newspaper is being read.

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**Project Powerpuff: Declassified Staff**

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Minor Editing:

E (of AO3)

Tziput13 (of AO3)

A+person (of AO3)

Guest Reviewer (of Fanfiction net)

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**The Daily Scoop Extract 29 DEC 1988**

**TALKING DOG FOUND WANDERING TOWNSVILLE DOCKS**

To add to a string of strange phenomenons in Townsville, our three kindergarten defenders aside, from the discovery of a four-armed assassin and a sentient chimpanzee within the ranks of a terrorist organization operating in and around the city, citizens report the discovery of a ridiculous notion or every boy's dream come true. A dog, reportedly capable of human speech, was found in the Townsville docks today.

A German Shepherd by breed, the talking dog had been found scavenging for food in the dumpsters of the dock's office space and was taken in by a homeless man. The man, one John Walker, gave it a hotdog and the dog reportedly thanked the man in English.

'I was taken aback, man. Nearly had a heart attack too, and I'm not kidding. I'm getting on in the years,' John had said when interviewed. 'You don't exactly get to meet a dog that can talk every day.'

The dog soon attracted more attention from the public. While some advocated calling animal control, cooler heads prevailed and recognized sentience in the German Shepherd when it pleaded not to be returned to the 'slammer' and even whined in abject misery when faced with the prospect. The police were called in instead.

'Of course, we didn't believe what despatch cited at first, but owing to recent events, I wouldn't be surprised if we're invaded by sentient cockroaches or something too, you know,' Patrolman Bailey, the first responder attending to the call, reportedly said. 'There was a lot of confusion as to what to do. Clearly, there was no crime committed but there was the question of human - or sentient rights - that we had to address. We had to literally work out the kinks on the spot when it comes to
reconciling the contradictions posed when both animal rights and human rights could apply both at once.'

The talking dog had also attracted the USDO's attention as well. A patrol humvee was dispatched to the talking dog soon after, and there was some struggle as to what to do with the dog between the TPD and the USDO. A spokesperson with the USDO claims that the dog is USDO property, and poses a degree of threat and must, therefore, be 'processed'. A witness had described the scene as such:

'There was a standoff between the police officers and the USDO officers, and the policemen were outnumbered. I can't believe that law enforcement infighting was possible especially when they should be fighting crime in Townsville, but thank God that didn't happen. Good things are finally happening in my town and it wouldn't be a good omen if our law enforcers are killing each other.'

'They wanted to kill me, always have,' the talking dog had reportedly said when interviewed. 'So I asked for ownership by the police.' This was construed to mean, in human terms, that the dog wishes for police protection and asylum against the USDO. A growing crowd of talking dog supporters was instantly formed on the scene. The situation was resolved by higher-ranking officers from both the TPD and USDO and an agreement was reached.

What was last heard was that the talking dog is now in TPD custody, with some insider information hinting that it has expressed a desire to work with the TPD, an offer the TPD will likely not be able to resist. K9 units have long been in use in law enforcement. The idea of having a K9 dog that could speak and think as humans do would have boundless applications.

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**Reviewers (Fanfiction net) in order of the first review**

BeingCapricious

Traverse the Portal

Guests (Multiple)

Hunter (Guest)

Some thing (Guest)

The Central Metric

Aisha m b (Guest)

Amber rose (Guest)

Alone Soldier

TheEarthTiger

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**Commentators (AO3) in order of the first review**

KatKit52

Lia

A+person
THE THREE SAVES SUICIDAL MAN FROM JUMPING BEFORE NEW YEAR

The day Townsville survives another year of rampant crime should have been heralded with the new year celebrations as a joyous occasion. This year, however, even more so yet because of the dawn of a new era - when actual superheroes walk before our eyes when a new age of peace and prosperity is at hand.

It wasn't so for one young man, Lionel (real name withheld pending police investigations), aged 22, is a college senior attending a local university. The year has not been so kind to him as it has for Townsville in its final month of 1988. Having already lost both his parents to a drive-by in the late 70s, he has endured ostracization, bullying, and crime since. Despite pulling himself by his bootstraps ever since, studying while he was not working and working while he was not studying, life has remained a challenge as he has gained almost no social support - the kind that many folks take for granted.

'My foster parents cared little about me - left me to choose my school and I chose the wrong one. I have few friends, and they're hardly friends, y'know? I feel like a third wheel every time. When I look at them and I look at me, all I see in me is a needy little orphan begging for attention, and what are they? One of them is a local film star now. Another's an American football player on the Townsville team. They're all on the way to getting married, and I'm still alone. They are all pretty and flawless and talented and what am I? A geek from a bad neighborhood with a dead-end job and
even deader degree,' Lionel spilled his life's woes at length when interviewed, still in tears from his near death experience. 'The only person who gives a damn about me now is my grandma, and she... doesn't have long in this world.'

It is also understood that he works a low-paying fast food cashier job that couldn't even cover all his expenses, and has been the subject of abuse there, besides the stress that such a job incurs. He has been working over a period of two years to find a new job, especially one related to his fine arts degree, but to no success. Lionel has been contemplating suicide for years. With his debts mounting and an even bigger college tuition debt on the horizon, he decided to make good on his contemplation.

That was when the now-famous The Three, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup, found him. While patrolling the city in the sky, Blossom, allegedly the leader of The Three, spotted Lionel on the rooftop of an apartment building at downtown, dangling from the edge. The police and firefighters had already arrived on the scene and had yet to do anything when The Three swooped down next to him.

'I was looking around for bad guys when I saw him,' Blossom reported when interviewed. 'My Dad said that I have good eyesight and I could see that something was wrong. He was crying, and it made me sad too. He looked like he was in trouble, so we went down to take a look.'

'He was crying really hard so I wanted to hug him but he told us to stay away or he'd jump,' Bubbles said when she was interviewed next.

'Why would he even jump? It's not like he could fly like us!' Buttercup, the third member of The Three, added during the interview of The Three.

'So I asked him what was wrong;' Blossom reasserted herself during the interview. What followed is a worthy conversation of our time, when a young man of humble background becomes a representative of the everyman of our fine city, for who in Townsville could admit to not being affected by the less-than-ideal conditions the local urban landscape provides?

'I don't know why I did it. I don't know why I opened up to the infamous Three,' Lionel remarked with a burst of bitter laughter when interviewed. It is worthy to note that he has not been kept up to speed about the recent developments surrounding The Three due to his recent misery-induced isolation. 'Maybe it's how they looked, and how honest and sincere they were when they opened up to me. I don't remember the last time someone has done that for me.'

'They told me about what they've been through, that's what they did,' Lionel recounted his conversation with the city's champion defenders with fondness. Based on his account, it is likely that he was referring to The Three's numerous battles against crime, which is still ongoing to this day. 'And they said that they understood how it's like to feel like the world's against them. They said that it got better for them, and they promised that it will get better for me too. That there's light at the end of the tunnel. How silly I must have looked when I cried like a baby in front of them. I believed them. They have a father to go back to, and I guess I'm going to see my grandma soon. I don't know why I ever stopped seeing her. I guess I was ashamed of myself, I guess.'

Eyewitnesses say that Lionel was escorted directly to safety by The Three, who carried him down to the sidewalk of the apartment building by flight. Bubbles and Blossom proceeded to hug him after that, to the adoration of the cheering crowd.

It seems that all it takes to save a life is kindness, sweetness and a few words sometimes. Let us hope this happens more often in the Townsville of the future.
Told in a mix of declassified/stolen documents and narratives from many perspectives, Project Powerpuff: Declassified is a gritty and mostly realistic re-imagining of The Powerpuff Girls, chronicling the days from long before the creation to long after. In this episode, we jump forward in time when the Girls, newly christened 'The Powerpuff Girls', do battle with the mob.

A/N: For the benefit of long-time readers, I'm going to put this at the back of the story for a couple of days first before I move it to the top. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all my supporters, vocal or silent, it doesn't matter. Thank you for reading this! And if you would like to help, let me know what you like about the story, and if you have any suggestions and feedback for it.

"He who fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." - Friedrich Nietzsche

Prologue: Nostalgia

Townsville. The Outskirts. Lombardi Family Estate.

"10-4, sir. Yes, they knew we're coming, sir, but it doesn't really matter," Agent Blake, long-time member of the USDO, replied into his humvee radio. "Project Powerpuff has already been deployed into the Playground ahead of us. Can't do anything about that if we want it done ASAP. No, sir, I can't reach them via the phone. They might've tossed them. Yeah, but they're not on Tantrum-3 or Meltdown-3 as they've done no damage to the city."

Around him, there were more white humvees bearing the eagle and shield seal of the USDO, and around those white humvees were the black, white and blue of the Townsville Police Department squad cruisers and SWAT vans. Security officers in grey uniforms, SWAT officers of the USDO in black-and-grey and PTF soldiers in all-black were forming up behind their vehicles, getting ready to storm the Lombardi mansion. Next to them, their local counterparts, TPD officers in the classic dark blue and SWAT cops in similar color were doing the same.

They were expecting heavy resistance, even if Project Powerpuff had already been deployed long ahead of them. After all, they were here to put an end to the ancient threat of the Lombardi crime family, which meant that there would be hundreds of gum-chewing, trench-coat-and-fedora-wearing gangsters protecting their bosses. But no one had opened fire from the windows of the grand mansion built on dirty money. Not even a single pistol shot to signal the start of battle.

Agent Blake knew why. The Girls were getting good at their jobs, what they were essentially born to do. Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup were in there. An evidence of that was the busted front door - and they were supposed to be reinforced double doors, more like gates leading into a castle.

"I'm scared for them," a familiar voice said from behind him. Agent Blake turned around to regard
whoever spoke it. Professor Utonium, in his lab coat - he was essentially on a 24/7 duty as field researcher and caretaker of the subjects of Project Powerpuff.

"You don't have to be. They can take care of themselves," Agent Blake reassured his colleague.

"I can still remember a time when they couldn't, and it's not that far from now," Professor Utonium said, his voice shaking just as much from worry and fear, as it was from the cold. "I still remember it like it was yesterday, the days when they couldn't even talk, when they were still in diapers. Sometimes I wish they had to grow up like normal little kids…"

"Do you want that for yourself, or them?" Agent Blake questioned as he pulled an assault rifle out of his vehicle. An XM4 Carbine - latest tech that even the US military did not have.

"For them as much as me," Professor Utonium contended.

"I understand why you love them, Thomas. I really do, but you'd have to learn to let go," Agent Blake said. "Eventually, I mean. We're going in there anyway. I don't know when it'd be the day when we'd let the Girls do their job alone. Even lone wolves travel in packs sometimes, Thomas, what more for social creatures like them?"

"I'm coming with you," Professor Utonium asserted. "I'm ready when you are."

"The hell you are! You know how important you are to the Girls and the USDO!" Agent Blake refused.

"You're going to need a doctor, Blake. The Girls might need a doctor," Professor Utonium countered. "I've heard about what the Amoeba Boys have accomplished. They have something up their sleeves, I just know it. I'm afraid for the Girls."

"Fine. You've always have your way, Upton," Agent Blake said. "You prepared?"

"Always. For my Girls," the professor said. He reached below his lab coat and unholstered a pistol. Once upon a time, it'd been a danger to himself and the Girls. Now, it might just be the thing that could save them. Agent Blake scanned him from head to toe. The professor had a bullet-resistant vest on as well.

"Just keep your head down, alright? The Girls may not go down easy, but one bullet to your brain, and they'd definitely go down crying," Agent Blake said. He then turned to his squads. "Let's move in to the Playground! Sierra-Tango-1, on me! PTF, give me an Alpha-2 before the rest of us head in. Sierra-Tango-2 and Sierra-Tango-3, I want you to patrol the boundaries on the remaining three sides. Sierra-Tango-4, follow up with us."

15 Minutes Earlier…

Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup zipped through the air, with what the professor termed 'X-energy contrails' in their wake, which looked like a simplified rainbow. It was the result of hyper-concentrated focus on flight, resulting in a burst of speed that could be anything from half a mach to the sound barrier depending on the level of Chemical X invested - as the professor would explain it. The tri-colored trail was drawn straight towards the Lombardi Family Estate. They were mad, really mad. Even Bubbles wore a frown on her face, and she was supposed to be the sweetest, most forgiving one of them all. Their eidetic memories were polluted by images of their friends, slaughtered by the bad guys of Townsville. They intend to make sure that wouldn't happen again.

They didn't wait or stop when they got to the mansion. They simply plough through the double-
doors of the old mansion with their shoulders, their 'sister-sense' allowing such synchronized feats at such critical moments. It was only when they were inside that they stopped… Briefly. They were greeted by a Grand Foyer with two great, curved stairwells leading up to a second floor. The stairwells were filled with what were essentially firing squads of the biggest mob of Townsville. Three men stood waiting for them in the centre of the grand foyer, one burly and smoking a cigar, exuding leadership, the next slim but looking slimy, and a third who was short but looked like he had far more up his sleeves than he could physically pack. Bossman was armed with a Tommy-gun that had been in the Lombardi crime family for forty years, passed down from one crime boss to the next. Slim had an M16, likely bought from a corrupted army officer, and Junior had a pair of Uzis. They looked human (for now), but the three Girls knew exactly what they were underneath.

"Well, if it isn't the Powerpuff Girls. That what they call you now?" Bossman, the head of the Amoeba Boys, mocked. "Sounds cute to me. But I prefer it when you three were just 'The Three'. We were friends back then, don't you remember?"

"Oh, we remember alright. It was a mistake," Blossom said, taking a strong step forward, as if getting ready to charge. "We're taking you in--"

"-Amoeba Boys!" Bubbles completed Blossom's sentence for her sister, sister-sense in the works.

"Can't we just kill them? I'd like to kill them!" Buttercup said to her supposed 'leader'. Her eyes were filled with rage, most of the three Girls, unnaturally so, more so than what the eyes of a child should or could contain. The only thing keeping her from going berserk was a loose sense of camaraderie and family with her siblings and parents, which was already, at this point, a frayed thread threatening to break.

"No, Buttercup! We can't be like them!" Blossom turned angrily to her sister and ordered.

"That's right, Blossom, keep your bitch sister on a leash," Slim, the thin man on Bossman's right, taunted. "But we all know, don't we? She's exactly like us!"

"Hahaha, nice one," Junior, the smallest of the Amoeba Boys, praised. "Bitch sister', hahaha." Bossman expressed his approval with a simple, toothy grin.

The Girls were taken aback by the foul language, their angry looks replaced momentarily with the wide eyes and mouth of shock, but they recovered quickly, and were back to being angry.

"I'm nothing like you!" Buttercup claimed, though even she knew that there was some truth to what Slim had said, and it was something she was… Okay with, at least on the inside.

"When this is all over, you'll be eating soap for the rest of your life in prison!" Blossom countered.

"Come and get us then, Blossom darling," Bossman dared.

"I'm giving you one chance, mister-" Blossom said.

"Come quietly-" Bubbles continued with her high-pitched voice.

"Or else!" Buttercup completed the Girls' sentence with a raspy threat.

The Amoeba Boys responded to their offer by opening fire. The entire twin stairwells full of armed thugs followed suit. The Girls threw their arms up in front of them, blocking the shots - although they were bulletproof, even more so than the toughest-made kevlar plates, they were still hurting. It was only by dint of experience that they hadn't retreated with their tails tucked between their legs or fainted from the shearing pain.
The Girls took to the air, dodging bullets like raindrops. But before they realized it, the Amoeba Boys were already running away, through the doors leading to the back of the mansion. They could just see them disappearing behind the doors.

"Buttercup, right! Bubbles, left!" Blossom ordered as she flew straight for the centre doors. But before she could go through them, out came another dozen men with assault weapons, a combination of rifles and shotguns and submachineguns, their guns blazing.

"Watch out! It's the Teeth Collector!" one of the mobsters on the right stairwell cried just as Buttercup plough into them, sending men flying or scurrying. She'd taken down half a dozen that way, before she got into the thick of things. As if to acknowledge that nickname the criminal underground had given her, she wound herself up on the way and threw a 'megaton punch' at the beefiest gangster she could find, dislodging and shattering his jaw like glass and sending most of his teeth flying through the air with spits of blood following.

Bubbles on the left flew to the top of the left stairwell, all the while blocking what shots she could by crossing her arms over her chest and face, but some of the shots managed to slip through her arm-shield, hitting her in the chest, which stung more than usual. Taking deep, pained breaths, she made a roundabout and shoved an entire column of men downwards, sending the lot of them, at least half of them, tumbling down the stairs like bowling pins in a silly party game. She then hovered to the rest, and started punching and kicking, making sure to pull back her punches - these were bad men, but she didn't like to hurt people.

Blossom was caught off-guard by the extra squad of mob enforcers, their extra firepower stinging her like wasps, even slowing her down, pushing her back. Another man, this one armed with a rocket-propelled grenade, came forward and fired his heavy weapon when she was far enough. The explosion caught the attention of everyone involved.

"Blossom!" Bubbles shouted as she was dispatching the last few of those standing on her side. Buttercup had landed on the back of one of the gangsters, put her arms around his neck and snapped it, killing the man by internal decapitation. She then threw a gaze over her shoulders.

There was fire briefly, then smoke where Blossom was. From the smoke, two red, glowing orbs appeared, before two heat rays, their paths made visible by dust and smoke, shot at the gangsters who'd hurt her, tracing a path across several of them, burning them and knocking them out. She emerged out of the smoke after that like a jet airplane, her dress still on fire, bowling into her attackers. She'd only held back just enough not to kill them, first knocking men into the cold, hard walls of the cold, hard mansion they were defending, then beating the snot out of the rest, who could only panic and fire wild shots at the indestructible girl at close quarters, doing absolutely nothing but enraging the red-head who was both literally and figuratively on fire. She took the last man standing by the collar and threw him to the ceiling, knocking the wind out of him. The fall did the rest and knocked him unconscious - and possibly breaking his back. Blossom could hear a sickening crack, but she cared little because of how much pain they'd caused her.

Panting and shaking, Blossom finally landed, before heading back to the centre to see her sisters. She patted down the fire that was still burning through her pink dress, realizing in dismay that the top-left quarter of it was completely burnt off, leaving the dress hanging only by a blackened shoulder and the belt. Half the remaining fabric was a sooty black, leaving very little pink left. The undergarment covering her chest survived, albeit singed with spots of black and brown and holes as well. One of her socks was similarly burned up, turning it from a knee-high sock to a calf-length sock. Both of her socks were a mix of white, brown and black. Her red bow was singed, and one of its 'ear' was slightly disfigured, tattered.
She was looking for Buttercup, and it didn't take long to find her. All she had to do was to look straight and follow the screams. This time, Buttercup was standing before a man who was on the floor, dragging himself away from her.

"No! Please! Don't kill me!" the man, who was in an unbuttoned trench coat and Fedora hat, the latter of which was askew. His leg was bent in the wrong shape at multiple places, the result of Buttercup's ruthless policy of zero compassion for crime. "No! Mercy!"

Buttercup, however, did not appear to have heard him, coming closer step by step, a victorious, unbridled smirk on her face. She particularly liked the way the once proud and confident mobster was now begging for her to show mercy. She loved how the blood of the gangster's friends were spattered all over her dress, all over her. The warm, warm blood felt good on her skin.

"Here, doggy, doggy…" Buttercup taunted the wounded gangster with a vicious smile that'd spread from ear to ear, her voice shivering with ecstasy as she raised a fist, only to feel a hand seizing her by the wrist.

"Buttercup! Stop!" it turned out to be Blossom, who immediately shot a mild heat ray at the hurt gangster to knock him out. "Did you kill all of them?"

"Well…" Buttercup said, unsure if she should tell. They both turned to look at her handiwork. The men on the right stairwell were all motionless except perhaps one, or two. They strewn about the scene randomly, their bodies broken, and it was clear who had twisted them. "Not all of them, I think…"

In the middle of the grand foyer, Buttercup had met her with damage to her dress as well, which was full of holes and scorch marks from the gunshots. There was a rip on her right side where she had sustained the most bullet impacts. Despite this, she didn't look as worn out as Blossom. In fact, she looked energized from all the fighting she had done, from all the manslaughter she had committed.

"Buttercup, the professor said that it's wrong to kill!" Blossom said. She wanted to do more, to really chastise Buttercup for her callous attitude to life - but she was too exhausted and in pain to do anything of that sort.

"He also said that we'll be forced to kill sometimes!" Buttercup countered.

"But this isn't one of those times! You could have tapped those men and they'd still go down!" Blossom argued. "Like what Bubbles-"

Just the mere mention of Bubbles' name has had Blossom remember about her other sister's welfare.

"Buttercup, where's Bubbles?" Blossom asked, noticing that her blue-eyed sister was missing. She clutched her head - she could feel a headache coming on. They were invulnerable to (almost all) physical threats from punches and kicks to even anti-tank shells, yes, but their minds were relatively fragile. Blossom remembered that the professor had warned them just as much, and too much pain from enough of them could be bad for them - and Blossom was discovering that, again. She felt like vomiting and fainting. Buttercup held her up. The RPG was the worst - for an instant, it felt as if she really was blown apart, only to remain whole.

"I'm fine," Blossom said. She was able to swallow the urge to vomit, and she looked around the place, the left stairwell, where she'd ordered her to. It pained her every time she had to do that, knowing that Bubbles had never taken well to crime-fighting.

"Bubbles! Where are you!? We gotta go kick some butts!" Buttercup yelled.
And they saw her, sitting on the steps of the left stairwell, clutching her chest, her face pale, her other hand holding onto the banister as she leaned on it.

"Bubbles!" Blossom cried as she flew to her. "It's all my fault! I'm so sorry!"

Bubbles lifted her head with difficulty to regard her lovingly. She smiled at her to reassure her, but the fact that she couldn't even speak made it a moot effort.

"Bubbles!" Buttercup came up next, appearing concerned despite her earlier revelry in destruction. "It's the old wound isn't it?" Bubbles nodded.

The old wound. The Girls weren't invulnerable to everything. Mojo Jojo had proven that, all without ever being seen when he inflicted the wound. It had taken Bubbles a few harrowing days to heal up even with her healing factor, and their Daddy, Professor Utonium, had estimated that it would be weeks before it would disappear completely. It was nothing a human being could survive, and even if the person did, it would have taken months for him to convalesce from the surgeries involved and then months more for rehabilitation, and finally, years the pain from the damaged nerves would stop, if it ever would. That Bubbles could even manage to fight in battle against the Amoeba Boys was a miracle, considering.

Her dress was similarly powdered with black and riddled with holes. One of her pigtails had come undone, probably ruined by a stray bullet through the ribbon. It had been a hard day, but far from over.

No, more pain awaited them. Blossom could only think back to the earlier days, when it wasn't like this, when life was free of worry, free from pain. Sure, there were times when they were miserable, but those did not last very long, and were soon buried by happier things. Daddy and Mommy were always there with them to make things right. With her eidetic memory, she could remember those days, right up to the very second she had awakened for the first time…
Chapter Summary

A bonus feature featuring an early chapter removed from the story, a deleted scene and a part that was never fully produced.

**Bonus Feature: Deleted Scenes**

The following is one of the first files to be leaked.

**File 33: The Powerpuff Girls Media Complex**

**DOC: 24 DEC 1992**

**Updated: 1 DEC 1998**

Following the numerous incidents involving the subjects of Project Powerpuff, the Director has authorised the machinery of the organization to blanket the media with propaganda to nullify the effects of their actions, creating a more positive image of the subjects of Project Powerpuff and indirectly, anyone who may be involved with the Project, whether such links are real or imagined.

The insertion of propaganda took much longer than expected, with the package prototyped only in 1992 and introduced to a media outlet known as 'Cartoon Network' that same year. Impact was minimal.

It was only in the November of 1998 that full-scale deployment of media package could be rendered. The media package includes a fictional misrepresentation of Project Powerpuff based on hand-drawn images rendered by one of the subjects of Project Powerpuff, Bubbles (code-name in force). Similarities to actual events in 'The Powerpuff Girls' cartoon series are intentional, but everyone who are concerned has been instructed to treat it as semi-biographical. The objective is to endear target audience (projected to be the entire world) with the propaganda cartoon, defang witnesses to the actual events involving the subjects of Project Powerpuff, using plausible deniability to further render their claims and opinions moot. Add to this the efforts of our agents in journalism, the Organisation is essentially in near-total control of public opinions on the actual subjects of Project Powerpuff.

**Note On Instructions To All Who Are Concerned:** 'The Powerpuff Girls' cartoon series is to be treated as semi-biographical. The characters, based on subjects of Project Powerpuff, are portrayed in a positive light and are happy all the time. This is to be presented as facts in PR, especially when the subjects of Project Powerpuff is living in a sub-optimal psychological, sociological and familial state. Furthermore, the villains, representing the adversaries and mistakes encountered by subjects of Project Powerpuff, is portrayed as incompetent, and even sympathetic, and therefore easy to overcome - While some aspects of this may not be intended in the beginning of the project, committee members have decided to let it be, as it plays to the agenda in that it will prevent panic and boost the already positive image of the subjects of Project Powerpuff as shown in 'The Powerpuff Girls' cartoon series.
Chapter 9:
The City of Townsville Suburbs. The House.

3 DEC 1988. 2119.

Buttercup was sitting on her white cot, her waist-length black hair splayed out haphazardly under her as she crossed her arms, burning holes with her eyes into the white wall (not literally of course, not yet). She hated what had happened in the lab before, and her waist-length hair was making things even more hairy for her - she had seen people getting rid of it on TV before, in a magical place called the 'hair salon' - and she thought that she should get a haircut, just so it wouldn't bother her so much.

"Daddy hates us," Buttercup said, her raspy voice grating with resentment. Blossom was building playing with a Bo-Peep doll while Bubbles was having fun with the Octi soft toy the professor had given her on their belated birthday when they heard it.

"No, he doesn't," Blossom said, stopping her play. Bubbles was mostly ignoring the negativity, obsessed with her new favourite, Octi. The blonde blue-eyed girl swept her waist-length pig tails out of the way as she pranced the octopus around on the tabletop. She, too, felt a little too hairy, that she needed a haircut.

"Yes, he does. Why else would he hurt us? He said he was going to do something else next time." Buttercup countered, then saw Bubbles existing in a bubble of her own. Angered by this, the green-eyed girl practically jumped out of bed, and after rushing to the table, took Octi and threw it against the wall. Had it not been a soft toy, it would have broke into a million pieces.

"Hey!" Bubbles protested, rising to her feet.

"Buttercup!" Blossom rose to her feet as well, alarmed by Buttercup's behaviour. "Daddy said that hate is wrong and he said that he was doing it for our own good."

"Pain is not good, Blossom! I hate it, and I hate you, Bubbles!" Buttercup yelled, then shoved Bubbles into the ground. She had been keeping the fact that Bubbles had told on her earlier bottled up inside, and it was driving her insane. How could Bubbles do such a thing to her own sister?

Bubbles was practically having a melt down when she Buttercup had pushed her. She cried loudly, shrilly, that even Buttercup was having second thoughts about what she had done.

"Buttercup! Apologise to Bubbles, now!" Blossom ordered, trying to take after her father.

"And why should I? You're not my daddy!" Buttercup rebelled. Blossom gritted her teeth in anger, looking like she was ready to pounce on her. "What are you going to do? Hit me?"

And Blossom did just that. She leaped at Buttercup, tackling her to the ground. They began wrestling each other unskilled, both just as able to gain the upper hand. They were practically rolling across the room, sweeping toys and crayon and paper everywhere.

Then the door to the Girl's room opened. The professor, who looked rather dishevelled with his hair a mess and the day's stubbles uncleared, looked in. At first, he looked tired, but upon seeing that his Girls were fighting each other for the first time, wore a shocked expression. "Girls! What is going on here!"
By the time the professor had come in, Buttercup had gained the upper hand, and had even raised a fist, getting ready to strike Blossom when the professor put a stop to it. Bubbles was still crying on the floor after getting pushed. "Girls, I want an explanation right now!"

A cacophony of messy explanations resulted after that:

"She's bossy!" Buttercup had said at the same time Blossom had said: "She's hating!"

"But she acts like she's in charge-" Buttercup went on as Blossom explained: "She said she hates you!" On the side, Bubbles cried: "She pushed me!"

"Girls, Girls, please!" the professor pleaded with the Girls, unable to make sense of anything when everything was being said at once. He wasn't feeling good - his earlier impromptu experiment with the Girls had affected him deeply - he could even say that he felt traumatized by what he had to do to the Girls.

"I did not say that!" Buttercup countered as Blossom counter-countered: "I was just trying to make things right!" Bubbles continued crying on the side: "She was being mean!"

Then it all devolved into Buttercup and Blossom telling each other to shut up.

The following document was a planned scene which never made it into full production because it would have disrupted the pacing of the chapter it would have been embedded in.

**Audio Recording H2FB-08121988**

**DOC: 8 DEC 1988**

**Timestamp: 2011**

The following has been recorded through the use of an audio recording device embedded in the wall of The House inside the second floor common bathroom.

**-TRANSCRIPT START-**

(The sound of water gushing out of a faucet)

Field Researcher Utonium: And that just about does it - all nice and hot for a good bath.

B-49: I love bathing!

B-48: Why do we have to bathe anyway? I'd rather carry those metal blocks all day long! (Struggling with the dress)

Field Researcher Utonium: (Laughs) Believe me, Girls, you don't want to know how it feels like to be dirty for days. You can play with your trucks after a bath, Butterbear. Here, let me help.

(The sound of clothes getting removed and falling to the floor)

Field Researcher Utonium: Be gentle, Buttercup, or you'd rip your dress right off.

(Giggles from B-47)

Field Researcher Utonium: Do you need help, Blossom?
B-47: I'm fine, Dad. It's just like how you taught me.

(The sound of more clothes getting removed and falling to the floor)

Field Researcher Utonium: Upsie Daisy! (There was the sound of a splash in water)

B-48: Fine… Me next…

Field Researcher Utonium: Ha-ha, that's the spirit, Buttercup. (There was the sound of another splash)

B-49: Can I come too?

Field Researcher Utonium: It sure isn't the 'bubbles express' without you, Bubbles! (Another sound of the splash of water)

(Giggling can be heard as water is being splashed left and right.)

Field Researcher Utonium: How's the water feeling, Girls?

B-47 and B-49: (in unison) It's really good, Dad!

Field Researcher Utonium: Good.

(Silence)

B-47: Is something wrong, Dad?

Field Researcher Utonium: Nothing, it's just… A lot of things have been happening all at once. There's… Something I need to ask the three of you.

B-49: What is it, Dad?

Field Researcher Utonium: It's just… Blake. Did he- urm- did he touched the three of you the wrong way? When, you know, he was taking care of the three of you? Like when he bathed the three of you?

B-48: What do you mean, Dad? You're not making any sense…

Field Researcher Utonium: Did he- this is really awkward - Did he put his hand on your… down there? And on your legs too?

B-49: He was really shy when he tried to bathe us…

Field Researcher Utonium: What do you mean?

B-48: It's more like he was really icky about it.

Field Researcher Utonium: Wait, slow down a bit. What did the two of you mean?

B-47: He's really good at it. He would rub soap on us, Dad, but only on our arms and back and chest and he wanted us to learn by rubbing soap on our legs, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: So he didn't touch you the wrong way? Remember what I've taught you about the way people could touch you?

B-47: No, Dad. He didn't.
B-48: Nah, he didn't.

B-49: He's really good at washing our hair too - the way he puts shampoo in our hair…

Field Researcher Utonium: Bubbles? Did you touch you where he's not supposed to?

B-49: No, Dad. He didn't. Are you mad at us, Dad?

Field Researcher Utonium: No. (Sighs) I'm sorry, Girls. I didn't mean to be so blunt about it. I just… I'm just afraid for the three of you. I was out of it for a long time, and I wasn't there when I need to be.

B-47: Mister Blake's nice. He cares about us.

Field Researcher Utonium: I'm not so sure about that.

B-48: He got Mister Holliday to cook for us, and his stuff is tasty.

B-49: He played with us, Dad.

Field Researcher Utonium: Girls, I know he's done some… good things for the three of you, but that doesn't mean he's good.

B-49: I don't understand…

B-47: But he's really nice, Dad. He read us some bedtime stories too.

Field Researcher Utonium: (After a pause) Maybe he is, maybe he did, but… We'll talk about this later, alright? Now, who wants the shampoo first?

B-47 and B-49 in unison: Me! Me! I wanna go first!

B-47: You went the last time! With Mister Blake!

B-49: But- That was Mister Blake…

B-48: Yeah, they want to go first. I'll wait.

-TRANSCRIPT END-
Bonus Feature: Character Snippets

Chapter Summary

A new bonus feature showcasing some of the ensemble characters.

Bonus Feature: Character Snippets

General Blackwater (Then Chief-of-Security Blackwater)

Extract from a speech given to ranking security officers on assumption of command position as Chief-of-Security. 5 JAN 1978.

Most of you know me as Colonel Blackwater, now Chief-of-Security Blackwater. Some of you knew me when I bore the rank of major, lieutenant, master sergeant, and staff sergeant. The few of you in the old guard - what's left of it - knew me when I was a sergeant and below. What none of you know is why I was given the code name 'Blackwater' - those who did are dead, either fallen to gunshots and insidious attacks made by the Foundation, or worse things.

It may surprise some of you, but there was a time when I wasn't an old bear, growling orders and criticisms. 4 July 1921. That was the year I was born, but that is inconsequential. I was a naive little brat then, napping away in the ashes of the first world war. What I am now - what I have been for the past 30 or so years - I owe to my rebirth during the second world war.

But it wasn't the blasted craters and smoking ruins and burned steel of tanks that characterized the second world war that made me. No, there are worse things out there, and what we have created pale in comparison to what I encountered… in Egypt.

It was 1942. That was the year when all this started. I was a simple private back then, part of the infantry guarding the few U.S airplanes stationed in Egypt back when Erwin Rommel, the desert fox, was romping around the sand dunes there.

It was brutal then. There were constant shortages of manpower and when there was intel that the Nazis had sent a deep recon unit far to the [REDACTED], my squad volunteered alongside some ANZACs and French soldiers.

The drive down [REDACTED] took days. The march, longer. We happened upon some ruins. We knew we had caught up with the Nazis and their Italian allies when we saw their jeeps abandoned among the millennia-old masonry. There were footprints leading underground, into an ancient labyrinthine tomb of some kind.

I remember hieroglyphs, and writing I know was much, much older. I remember depictions of strange events, but I couldn't make heads and tails of them. Warriors with spears, bows and kopesh engaging some kind of human-scorpion hybrids, led by some kind of devil-like being. Probably ancient legend.

We continued to explore the ancient labyrinth, and we discovered signs of the Germans and Italians along the way. Expended rounds. Empty magazines on the floor. Scraps of uniform. Then there was
blood and flesh on the floor, then organs and severed limbs. Severed heads, some with helmets still on. By the time we caught up with the bastards, we found out the hard way that there were worse bastards out there.

When the Nazis had opened the way into the underground tomb with explosives, they had awakened... something. A being as depicted on the walls - a kind of human-scorpion thing, large as an elephant with claws like crabs, tentacles everywhere... it [REDACTED] My squad and the ANZACs and French, and whatever smattering of Nazis and Italians were left tried to fight it off. We were massacred, forced to head deeper into the labyrinthine tomb.

That was only the beginning of our troubles. We were beset by the husks of explorers from before - whether they were dead or alive, I don't know. There were fewer and fewer of us left until we were a motley crew left. Three ANZACs, I remember. Two French. Three of my pals. An SS officer and an Italian legionary. I remember because we were all recruited into the Organization.

We eventually came upon a chamber housing a spear made of Duranium. The carvings around it depicted it as an important artifact and weapon. We made a last stand behind that room, in the middle of a huge chamber flooded to our knees with black water. I armed myself with the spear - I believed it to be the key to our salvation.

And I was right. Right there in the black water, my remaining friends distracted the scorpion creature with supporting fire, and I jumped on top of him from the back. I plunged the spear deep into it, and then it fell, into the murky black water.

It was all hazy after that. We returned back to base, and the journey back was harder and tougher. Our truck was intercepted by the Nazis, and we had to sneak all the way back. We ran out of food for three days, and water for two. But we made it back.

When World War Two was over, I was recruited by the Organization, back when it was newly formed. When I filed my first report with them, they became interested in the location, in the scorpion thing, in my spear. That's how they settled on my code name. I was Blackwater ever since.

Now, the reason why I told you this story is not to tell you the origin of my code name. No. There are things out there in the dark and beyond, and we've only begun to scratch the surface with our experiments with the chemical we found from that tomb. We have fought against the results of our failures, but we must be ready to fight something worse.

As your Chief-of-Security, I will prepare us to do that, and more.

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Test Subject B-31 Case File

Date Updated: 8 AUG 1985

Subject Name: Michelle Adelina Snyder

Age: 28

Aliases: The Viper, Naga

Source: Subject was sourced from a maximum security prison, the W.J. Estelle Unit, in Texas. The subject was on death row when she was transferred. As she was considered to be sufficiently mentally sound and cooperative, in addition to being proficient in skills important to the Organization, she was offered a position in the Organization on the condition that the experiment she was subjected to was successful in turning her into a 'super soldier' under Project Powerpuff.
Background: Subject was once a hit-woman, mercenary and assassin working in and out of the US before being arrested and sent to the W.J. Estelle Unit in Texas on 47 counts of murder, 8 counts of assault with intent to murder, 33 counts of accessory to murder, 203 counts of possessions of illegal firearms and weapons and 31 counts of illegal drug use and/or possession, 17 counts of arson and 3 counts of petty theft.

The subject was considered mentally stable despite her crimes. She was described by her defendant in court as a troubled young lady with a difficult childhood, having been raised in a poor neighborhood by parents who were involved in crime and drug use.

Experiment Description: Subject B-31 was injected with Chemical U, a refined version of Chemical T, under the supervision of Head of Research Utonium. The subject was to be conscious during the procedure. Use of anesthetic was denied despite objections from Head of Research Utonium. The subject was to be euthanized immediately by security officers present on site using cyanide darts should she present a threat upon injection of Chemical U.

Attending Personnel:

Head of Research Utonium - the subject appears most responsive to Utonium due to extended interaction and close proximity. B-31 has been observed to readily speak to Utonium on a various range of matters from the personal to the sciences, religion, and culture.

2 Research Assistants

8 Security Officers

2 Doctors

4 Medics

Experiment Results: The subject experienced severe convulsions and bleeding from every orifice followed by epileptic shock the moment Chemical U has spread deep enough into her body. Subject's eyes appear to change in color to glowing amber. Two new arms are observed to grow below her existing arms, something which the subject, in her limited consciousness, described as incredibly debilitating and excruciating (as much as how slow the process was) until Head of Research Utonium defied orders and injected her with a large dose of painkillers and anesthetic. The subject loses consciousness soon after.

Follow-Up: Subject B-31 continues to experience pain and delirium over the course of several days. The subject has been tested for combat performance under the careful supervision of Head of Research Utonium, who is still able to effect a degree of control over her.

Subject B-31 has been confirmed to have full use and articulation of her new limbs and is able to quickly learn their use. Within 3 days, the subject is able to perform daily chores with her new limbs. Within 5 days, the subject has learned how to write with her new right arm. The subject has been growing erratic but has shown that she has begun exploring the use of her new arms in unarmed combat situations in her holding cell. This is officially pursued with the help of Utonium, leading to many more discoveries: she has gained greater strength by the order of 5 times that of a trained male combatant, greater stamina, which allows her to run at a maximum speed over several hours, as well as better eyesight. Her eyes are examined and found to have gained a compound arrangement within the irises, increasing hand-eye coordination and visual acuity.

Interviews with the subject in this state suggest a change in behavior, and even identity, as she has begun to refer to herself as Naga. Psychiatrist Alice has conducted mental tests on her, and ruled out
any possibility of the subject's use as a field agent, as she has developed severe acute psychopathy
(among other things. See Alice's psychological evaluation for a full report) in the process of her
transformation. Brain scans support this theory.

Conclusion: The subject is scheduled for execution following the establishment of her lack of utility.
Chemical U to be tested on several more subjects for the possibility of varied results.

Update: Subject escaped due to the 'negligence' of Head of Research Utonium. The subject is
observed to have spared his life and that of several others during her breakout. A manhunt has been
authorized on search pattern Rho-5.

__________________________________________________________

Security Personnel Dossier SG051988

Date Updated: 08 DEC 1988

(For full personnel details, contact administration with a request in writing)

Name: Selicia Goodwin

Previous Aliases: Jailbait, Blackbird

Codename: Medusa

Rank: Sergeant

Age: 25

Years of service: 9 (including 2 years spent as a ward and recruit of the agency)

VOCATIONAL HISTORY

1979 – Security Recruit

1981 - Security Officer

1982 - Security Officer, Covert Infiltration

1985 – Mobile Field Officer, Covert Infiltration

1988 - Converted to SWAT Officer. Covert Infiltration.

Transferred to The House as Experimental Subjects Handler.

BACKGROUND

Selicia Goodwin was a jewel thief, among other things, with multiple successes under her belt. When
she set her sights on an experimental device, called the [REDACTED], housed in an organization
warehouse owned by the Organization, she was caught only after a lengthy pursuit outside the
warehouse.

Impressed with her abilities and the opportunities she presented, she was given the opportunity to act
as a double agent when she revealed that she was hired by the Foundation to steal the device. Her
cooperation led to the arrest of a Foundation cell.

She was offered a place in the Organization after that. The manpower projected desertion within
months, but Selicia had proven the department wrong. It was believed by some concerned that she had stayed because of good treatment: a roof over her head, safety, food, water, allowances, and company. The new incumbent Chief-of-Security Blackwater believed, however, that it was her need for a purpose and redemption that drove her to stay.

**CITATIONS**

15 MAR 1981 - Awarded the Organization Induction Ribbon for official entry into Organization security

15 MAR 1981 - Awarded the Pistol Marksmanship Medal as best pistol marksman in her batch.

20 MAY 1981 - Awarded the Rifle Marksmanship Medal, 2nd place in the Organization marksmanship competition, behind Agent Blake.

12 JUN 1981 - Awarded the Purple Heart for injury on duty in destroying Subject B-12.

5 MAR 1982 - Awarded the Medal of Honor for detecting and thwarting Foundation attempt at assassinating key members of the Organization.

24 AUG 1982 - Awarded the Shadow Medal for infiltration and dismantlement of a Foundation cell.

24 AUG 1982 - Awarded the Purple Heart for injury during the infiltration of Foundation cell.

10 JUN 1983 - Awarded the Legion of Merit for deep infiltration of Foundation and elimination of a key Foundation leader. 'Note by Chief-of-Security Blackwater: If there's a female version of James Bond, it's her. She sure knows how to use her feminine wiles and surgical strikes in equal measure.'

27 SEP 1984 - Awarded the Purple Heart during the defense of an Institute research lab in a combination of foreign attack and subject containment breach.

27 SEP 1984 - Awarded the Bronze Star for bravery in action.

17 APR 1985 - Awarded the Desert Fox Decoration for helping to track down and kill Subject B-28 in Afghanistan. (Note by then Lieutenant Bilinski: She deserves it. I may be the hammer, but she's the hand that pushed it into my strike zone. Without her, I would have missed it by a mile.)

8 AUG 1985 - Awarded the Purple Heart during the attempt to destroy subject B-31. She was shot multiple times but avoided death due to Head of Research Utonium's intervention.

3 FEB 1985 - Awarded the Organization Commendation Award for detecting and thwarting Foundation attempts to infiltrate the Organization's security department.

15 MAR 1986 - Awarded the 5-years Service Award for surviving and giving 5 years of service.


22 DEC 1987 - Awarded the Organization Expeditionary Medal for locating and killing an old escapee - Subject A-55 - in Japan. Her help was cited by the Japanese agency responsible for detecting A-55 as being particularly helpful.

19 JAN 1988 - Awarded the Logistics Excellence Award for numerous counts of providing and/or augmenting excellent comestibles in and out of the base.

3 MAY 1988 - Awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for assisting the FBI in their investigations, leading to the destruction of subject B-46.
1 JAN 1989 - Awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for continued success in pacification and control of subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49, as well as involvement in Project Powerpuff-related operations.

REPRIMANDS

1979 - 'As Selicia is under-aged and uninitiated into the ranks of the Organization, this is more of a slap on the wrist: Selicia has been caught stealing, and her kleptomania extends to food, personal effects, and even ammunition. This has been escalated to Psychiatrist Alice.'

1980 - 'Let it be recorded that Recruit Selicia Goodwin is hereby formally reprimanded for involvement in a hazing incident. While there will be no punishments for the crime, any further infringements will be met with more than just a written statement.'

1981 - 'Private Selicia Goodwin is hereby reprimanded for sexual misconduct with a recruit. Extra duties dispensed.'

1982 - 'On 20 FEB 1982, Private Selicia Goodwin is to be given extra duties for striking a civilian member of the Organization over an argument.'

1982 - '11 SEP 1982. Private Selicia Goodwin is hereby formally reprimanded for the mistreatment and abuse of a recruit under her charge. The council predicking on this matter has decided that punishment is unwarranted due to Private Selicia Goodwin's past history as an abuse victim as well as her exemplary performance and honors attained for her heroic service. She will be submitted for counseling under an Organization psychiatrist, Alice.'

1983 - 'On 18 DEC 1983, Private First Class Selicia Goodwin is hereby reprimanded for inappropriate sexual relations with a superior officer as well as non-target Foundation personnel while undercover. No punishments will be exacted due to her low rank and the inexact circumstances of her undercover work.'

1984 - 'Private First Class Selicia Goodwin is reprimanded for assaulting a civilian in the course of her duties.'

1985 - 'Corporal Selicia Goodwin is reprimanded for the prolonged abuse of Subject B-29. The case is notable in that subject B-29, a Hispanic 10-years-old girl of illegal immigration origin, is relatively benign, even if scheduled for disposal in the coming week. No actions are to be taken - the animosity between test subjects and security is at an all-time high, and while Selicia's actions are reprehensible, it is understandable in our terms.'

1986 - 'Corporal Selicia Goodwin is hereby reprimanded for sexual misconduct with a fellow security officer of the Organization. Note by Chief-of-Security Blackwater: I'm sick of her shit. I'm starting to think that we should have a 'Department of Dating' just to marry her off to a suitor so I won't have to deal with her promiscuity. Not that that would stop her.'

1987 - 'Reprimanded for injuring civilians on the line of duty. Due to the circumstances, while tracking an escaped subject, no consequences have been arranged for Sergeant Selicia Goodwin.'

1988 - 'Sergeant Selicia Goodwin is hereby barred from attaining any command positions in the near future due to allegations of her exchanging sexual favors in return for favorable personnel reviews. Investigations into the matter were dropped following a signed confession by Sergeant Selicia Goodwin.'

Addendum by Chief-of-Security Blackwater: (7 DEC 1988) Despite her past records and because of
it, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin is the only security officer I could trust to handle B-47, B-48 and B-49. I cannot trust the women of other departments to train the Project Powerpuff subjects for law enforcement duty, and there are very few candidates in the security department. I can count the number of them on one hand.

Captain Kate might seem like the natural choice owing to her leadership and combat abilities, not to mention that she could pass off as Professor Utonium's wife and the kids' mother, but she's too high up, too valuable and too ambitious - she's one of the candidates for Chief-of-Security should I kick it. The rest are either too old or far less capable than Sergeant Selicia.

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin will toughen those kids up and tell them what's what. I doubt she could do a worse job at it than Professor Utonium. At least I won't have to put up with her mess any longer.

Alice, however, is going to be a major thorn in my side because of this. She considers Selicia to be completely incapable of motherhood and has put herself forward as a prime candidate for a transfer to The House as B-47, B-48, and B-49's handler, but we all know she's needed in HQ.
Bonus Feature: Deleted Scenes II

Chapter Summary

More contents cut from the story - these didn't quite make it into the story mainly because of the pacing problems they would introduce to the story.

Bonus Feature: Deleted Scenes II

The following scene was planned as early as Chapter 29: Family Dynamics and had floated downwards ever since, reaching here. There simply wasn't a place for it.

Location Classified. Organization HQ. Secured ICU 3.

22 NOV 1988 (Tuesday). 0615.

Sergeant Selicia Goodwin had been standing guard next to a fresh batch of Project Powerpuff subjects for the past 15 minutes or so. Well, she and nine of her squadmates. Had she been working anywhere else, she would have found it very strange that an entire squad of security officers was required to guard what appeared to be three little girls who were fast asleep. Then there was the fact that all ten of them were armed with shotguns, and there were ten more security officers outside, some of whom were armed with rare assault weapons such as the M16A1 and MP5 that were normally reserved for the mobile teams.

But she knew better. Throughout her life in the Organization, she'd seen crazy things. Subject B-46, for example, had been the worst. Who would've known that a little bit of black goop would have turned a little black kid into a telekinetic psycho killing machine? It had been a pleasure for her to off B-46, and she thought to herself that if it came to it, she would be happy to execute B-47, B-48, and B-49. There were people she'd lost because of the experimental subjects of Project Powerpuff - and people who were willing to befriend her, even after they knew about her… predispositions were rare.

But Sergeant Selicia Goodwin and her fellow security goons weren't alone with the little freaks. Head of Research Utonium, who was no less than the second most powerful man in the Organization, was in the room with them. He'd just been sitting there, right up next to B-47, just… looking at her. For some reason. But from the look on his face that she was able to glimpse from the corner of her eyes, she could tell what's up.

Head of Research Utonium had fallen for the lab-born creatures, and she knew why. They weren't very close, but Selicia knew a lot about the scientist. In fact, she thought she might perhaps get to know him better, maybe catch him for a beer, and then get to work creating some kind of a future for herself.

Having lost a wife and child, the professor had become just like her - someone longing for a family, a happily ever after. While it would be crazy to think that the Head of Research would seriously think of forming a family unit with B-47, B-48 and B-49, subjects who would likely get incinerated anyway by the end of the month, she thought that his behavior was an expression for his longing for a return to the American Dream.

That was when the phone in the room rang, and Sergeant Selicia Goodwin moved to pick it up.
"This is the Chief. Where’s the Head of Research?" her superior’s voice boomed into her ear - and there were no greetings, no waiting. It was the venerable and respectable Chief of Security Blackwater. She straightened up upon hearing his voice as if he was in the same room as her.

"Sir. He's still in ICU 3, sir," Sergeant Selicia Goodwin reported over the phone.

"I see," Chief of Security Blackwater said, sounding for a minute as if reasonable, but Selicia knew better.

"He's been staying with the subjects B-47, B-48 and B-49, sir," the security officer added.

"Uh-huh," the Chief said, before projecting his voice aloud again: "Well, don't just stand there!"

"Sir, I reminded him of the conference as per your orders but-" Selicia tried to add, but was interrupted by the uninterested superior.

"Then go get him again!" Chief of Security Blackwater bellowed in the phone, before hanging it up, leaving Selicia with the hum of a disconnected line.

Reluctantly, Sergeant Selicia Goodwin went up to Head of Research Utonium and tapped him on the shoulder. Initially, he had his face in his hands, and he didn't respond immediately. It was only after he'd turned to look at Selicia did the lady realize why. The eyebags and red eyes reminded her that he hadn't slept the entire night, having observed the birth of B-47, B-48, and B-49. But she had seen enough weary faces to know that that wasn't the only thing. Had he been crying? She wasn't sure, though she wouldn't put it past him to do so. The old geek, after all, had lost a wife and child years ago. Grief could easily be triggered anywhere, anytime.

"Utonium sir, Chief of Security Blackwater is asking for you," Selicia said, all the while studying his pained face. She had only seen the man occasionally and once in a while - they were, after all, working in different departments - but she couldn't help but to think of how handsome he was, and it wasn't just that. She could augur intelligence and kindness in his face from her experience with her numerous boyfriends and bed-warmers. She couldn't help but stare into those eyes - though it wasn't the first time she had stared at him. Whenever he'd pass by her, she'd look, and thought to herself how this 'Utonium' stood out from the rest of them, and not just because of his rank too.

"Oh, right," the Head of Research said absentmindedly. "Thanks, miss-" he'd wanted to refer to Selicia by name but he could not remember it. Instead, he rose up from his chair to leave in an attempt to escape the awkwardness, but it was mostly because he needed the walk to the conference room. What he was about to propose to the Organization council was going to be radical, something that was unheard of in the entire history of the federal agency. "I - uh - I should get going then."

He was about halfway across the ICU when the silence was broken.

"It's Miss Selicia Goodwin, sir," the security officer reminded the professor. He stopped and turned to look at her.

"I see. I… apologize for that, I'm just…” the Head of Research muttered, then stopped, before starting up again. "Tired and... lots of other things."

Selicia had learned more about the professor within these 5 minutes than she did in the past 5 years. She liked what she was looking at, and she knew she wasn't looking at a one night stand.

He went on his way after that, but before he could pass through the door, Selicia came forward and posed another question: "Sir, I was wondering if…"
"If we could grab something to eat one of these days? Together, I mean," Selicia offered. He seemed to be considering it, the way he didn't just walk away, shaking his head.

"Maybe," the professor said absentmindedly, his mind no doubt occupied by something greater. And then he was gone. The door closed behind him with a thud and the mechanical sound of internal locks falling into place.

"Looks like somebody's in love," one of her squadmates teased.

"Shut up!" she warned the man before returning to her post. But before she did, she stopped and looked at the little girls who were unconscious in their hospital beds. She found herself fascinated with them, and so, walking up to one of them, so-labeled by a tag with B-48 on it, she stared closely at it.

B-48 was vaguely Japanese, likely of mixed American-Japanese heritage. She reached out for her face…

"Sergeant Selicia Goodwin! What in the hell are you doing?" Her superior, Captain Scott, shouted, though it was in a lower volume - they were all afraid of waking the test subjects if they could be awakened.

Selicia didn't care. She removed her glove and ran her hand down B-48's cheek. Her bold move had caused a few of her fellow security officers to pump their shotguns in preparation. Some of them became guarded as if things could blow up at any second.

As if that wasn't enough, the lady then proceeded to open one of B-48's eyes… To find that it was glowing lime green, and Selicia thought it to be beautiful.

It was then that she understood Professor Utonium much better.

The following scene was removed from the drawing board of Chapter 86: The Greatest Gift

**The City of Townsville. Suburbs. The House.**

**24 DEC 1988 (Saturday). 1410.**

Professor Utonium was sitting behind his desk in his bedroom staring at nothing, with only doom and gloom for company. Selicia had been nothing but the good wife she wasn't, but he was practically inconsolable in the face of the situation - Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, all three of his little babies, were incapacitated, and if the vagaries of Chemical X and its effects on Human biology was unkind enough, permanently in coma.

Then there was a knock on the door. The professor did not answer it. In fact, he didn't even hear it. The innocent giggles of his three special children were louder in his memory than the door knocks. But whoever it was on the other side opened it anyway.

"What do you want?" the professor asked brusquely in a brittle voice, rough from lack of water and sleep, all the while still watching an imaginary video of his kids in the blank wall in front of him.

"Thomas?" it wasn't just about anyone from the USDO. It was Alice. The difference was enough to snap him out of the mental and emotional casket he had found himself in. He turned to regard the senior psychiatrist with reddish eyes before turning away again, as if unable to believe that she was
there. The grief he felt had been so powerful as of late that he couldn't be sure of what was real and what wasn't, compounded by the fact that he had predicted all this - that his Girls would suffer terribly fighting crime, and he couldn't do anything to alter the course they were set in.

"I, uh, got your message. A little late, but then again I was in a holding cell, so…" Alice tried to break the ice with a little dark humor, but it fell flat hard and quickly.

The professor said nothing as she stood in the middle of his master bedroom. Alice had only reminded him of his other mistake, and it was one of his worse. Alice came up to him, fighting back fears that he might react unpredictably just like the last time. She was fighting it back hard, because she knew she couldn't let her reaction be seen least it might plunge the professor even deeper into his hole.

It felt like an eternity, getting up beside him. That was when she noticed the thin strips of reflection on his cheeks, made easily visible by the table lamp beside him.

"You've been crying, Upton," she said, and tried to wipe the tears away from his cheeks when Professor Utonium brushed her hands away.

"Don't, Alice," the professor cried, his voice shaky from the lack of energy and drive.

"It's fine, Thomas," Alice comforted him. "You don't have to be alone in this."

"I'm ashamed," he confessed with renewed sobbing. "About everything. I… I'm sorry about what I did to you."

"You were only trying to be a great dad to your kids," Alice reasoned with the professor. She turned his head so that she could get a good look at his eyes. His eyes revealed everything. The pain, the shame, his honesty. "You shouldn't be ashamed of that."

"I've failed," the professor sobbed. "And all I've done is hurt everyone around me."

"You overestimate yourself, professor," Alice said, running her finger down the professor's cheek, wiping away tears. It was depressing to Alice, how a man of Thomas Upton's stature, once a Head of Research for a powerful and clandestine federal agency and now the caretaker of three of the most powerful kids on the planet, had been reduced to. "You can't hurt anyone even if you tried. It's never you, Tom. You're just protecting them, against those who're really doing harm. The criminals, even the USDO. You're one man against thousands, but you've been doing so well."

They hugged for a while after that. It had been a long time since they last did that. It had been years since the professor had to put a bit of necessary distance between himself and everyone else as Head of Research - though that requirement had lifted since he resigned and took up the mantle as a Field Researcher and Caretaker, a father, to Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup instead.

"What am I supposed to do with Buttercup?" the professor cried into her jacket.

"Be the best father you've always been," Alice said, squeezing his shoulder. "She'll always be your daughter. I'm sure she knows this. I'll help you along with her, and I won't stop as long as I'm around. It's not her fault she's born with psychopathy - and I'll make sure she nor anyone else has to pay the price for it."

That was when an alarm was going off. The professor jerked his head to the door in shock. Only he knew what it meant.

"No no, no! Blossom!" he screamed when he jumped up, knocking his swivel chair down before
racing for the door. Alice, even more concerned, took off after him, but she didn't have the speed of a terrified father and couldn't catch up.

The professor had rushed into the Girls' room, leaving opened doors in his wake. Alice followed and deciding that she shouldn't get in the way, peeked into the Girls' room from outside the door.

"Blossom?" the professor said in disbelief, unsure of what to say. It felt like a dream to him - good news had been far and few in between lately, after all. But he wasn't dreaming. Blossom had woken up, safe and sound. Alice had seen her too. Smiling, she decided to let father and daughter have their moment. Quietly, she swung the door shut, and padded towards the stairs.

She knew exactly what would cheer Blossom up. After all, kids, enhanced or not, were bound to love a bit of abracadabra.

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**Security Report: Christmas Gift Packages**

**DOC: 24 DEC 1988**

**Prepared by: Sergeant Blake (Project Powerpuff Convoy Commander)**

Note: The following is a manifest of the gifts arranged under the Christmas tree deployed by Sergeant Selicia and Professor Utonium. My men and I, with permission to take over from Captain Scott, have scanned every one of them to ensure the kids' security, safety, and well-being. They are vulnerable in their current state. If I were a Foundation agent or someone in the pocket of the mafia, this is when I'd strike. The scan is done using an X-ray machine sourced from a nearby security checkpoint in the suburbs. Some of the scans are a formality, others not so much.

**Gifts #1 - #3**

*From: Professor Utonium*

*Desc:* Medium-sized chess set, an Octi wardrobe conversion kit, and a model TPD police cruiser.

*Threat lvl:* None

**Gifts #4 - #6**

*From: Sergeant Selicia Goodwin*

*Desc:* US Marines replica uniform (child sized), Polly Pockets doll, Townsville snowglobe.

*Threat lvl:* None

**Gifts #7 - #9**

*From: General Blackwater*

*Desc:* 3x Purple Hearts medals (1 each), 1 pair of cadet-rank patches, 2 pairs of recruit-rank patches (1 each)

*Threat lvl:* None

**Gifts #10 - #12**

*From: Sergeant Blake*
Desc: Group Photo (Security Team & Girls, Dated 8 DEC 1988), Fake plastic snowball containing plastic bubbles, Swiss army knife

Threat lvl: Passive, minimal

Gifts #13 - #15

From: Project Powerpuff Convoy Team (arranged by Corporal Fields)

Desc: Tire swing set (originally a disposed USDO Humvee tire), 'My Treehouse' carpentry kit, child's chemistry set

Threat lvl: Passive, minimal

Gifts #16 - #18

From: Medical Director Simmons

Desc: Doctor playset, kid's animal encyclopedia, kid's golf clubs, and balls

Threat lvl: Passive, minimal

Gifts #19 - #21

From: Psychiatrist Alice

Desc: Rubik's cube, stress hugger, punchbag

Threat lvl: None

Gifts #22 - #24

From: Chief of Logistics Wiggums

Desc: Lego construction set, dollhouse, a big book of crossword puzzles

Threat lvl: None

(...)

(For a full list of gifts, including those redacted from this document, consult administration)

(...)

Gift #35

From: Mayor Wilford and Townsville Liaison Bellum

Desc: Box of expensive chocolate

Threat lvl: None

Note: The box of chocolate had to be opened and tested for poison. I volunteered. The chocolate is fine in every sense of the word.

Gift #36
From: Unknown

Desc: On being scanned, the present containing the gift contains a huge lump of plastic explosive wired to explode on opening the lid.

Threat lvl: High

Note: the present was safely detonated in the backyard of a USDO-purchased house with no occupants in the same neighborhood.

Gifts #37 - #39

From: Unknown

Desc: Contains crudely-made dolls in the image of Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup.

Threat lvl: None

Note: Due to the lack of attribution, the present was removed from the pile and sent to the labs to be analyzed for toxins or poisons. None were found. They were, however, found to be smeared with a substance resembling Chemical X. My guess is one of the lab staff at HQ forgot to put a tag on the present, and probably his gloves, too, when he was working in the labs. I have escalated this possible breach of standard procedures to Captain Scott.

After some consideration, I've decided not to release the presents to the Girls, as I suspect any number of intentions other than something generous.

Gifts #40 - #42

[REDACTED]

Gift #43

[REDACTED]
The Powerpuff Girls: Declassified Preview

Chapter Summary

We get a glimpse of what is to come.

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"Buttercup, right! Bubbles, left!" Blossom screamed her orders, which were followed promptly by her sisters, who darted up into the air at high speeds, leaving behind a baby blue and light green trail behind them.

Bossman opened fire after that. Slim and Junior followed suit. Blossom knelt down on a knee and did a cross-block with her arms – better her arms than face and chest. The stream of bullets did not let up immediately, but though some inevitably slipped by, Blossom held on even as Bossman fulfilled his promise, and decorated her pink dress with some shiny lead. Bullets rained down from above as well, and Blossom knew that something had to be done about the weather.

The moment the torrent of bullets from the front let up, Blossom charged up her eyes, letting the heat build, and within the space of a second, let off a twin beam of Chemical X enhanced heat. Sweeping the beams across the second floor, she'd forced the gangsters above to duck, scramble and run for cover, as she burned the ancient architecture with her rage.

Buttercup bowled into her side of the hall, into the gallery of men arrayed on the right stairwell. She was too fast, and even against a wall of bullets, relatively few had struck her. Dozens shredded her dress as tackled several men at once. Getting up, she upper-cut a Russian gangster in the elbow when he pointed his pistol at her, shattering it. In a fluid motion, as half a dozen other bad guys were struggling to aim and shoot at her, Buttercup drove her foot into another man's chest, shattering every bone in it, pulverizing heart and lungs. This slowed her momentum, and soon, she could feel the angry sting of multiple assault weapons on her back, though the only thing hurt was her dress and psyche.

Whirling around, her eyes became red, as if in anger made manifest, and a pair of laser beams swept past a dozen gangsters. Half of them fell backward with deep lacerations through stomach or chest cavity, blood staining everything - the others collapsed where they were, with one of them holding his intestines before his eyes.

Bubbles on the left stairwell had circled around her fifty or so opponents instead, who fired into the air at her, but she was too fast that only a tiny fraction of the bullets had hit home. Zipping behind them, she had outmaneuvered the column of gun-toting gangsters and landed at the top of the stairs, most of whom were on lower steps and couldn't even see past their higher friends. Charging into the gangsters, she pushed them down the stairs, causing cascades of gangsters rolling down to the foot.

But not all of them were caught in the human waterfall. A Sicilian mafioso pointed his shotgun at Bubbles, but she pushed the gun out of the way before he could fire, mainly out of fear of the
weapon, before punching him out and sending him tumbling down the stairs with his friends. Another Sicilian pointed a Scorpion submachinegun at her, but he was too close - he could only get a few shots off before she was right up his face, delivering a sucker punch and sending him rolling.

Blossom charged towards the Amoeba Boys immediately after she had set fire to the entire second floor, but their sustained fire had slowed her down as she needed to cover her face. Backtracking, the leaders of the Lombardi crime family retreated towards a door in between the hall's grand staircases, replaced by another group of gangsters, this time heavily armed with machineguns meant for suppressing hundreds in a war.

Opening fire, they pushed Blossom back, before another Italian mobster came forward with a rocket-propelled grenade on his shoulder, which Blossom noticed too late - when the rocket grenade was fired at her. All she could do was to throw her arms up in front of her once more, but she felt it in her shoulder.

An explosion resulted. Buttercup and Bubbles turned from where they were to look at their leader sister, but all they could see in her place was smoke. The machinegunners stopped while the gangster with his RPG began sticking a new rocket grenade in its tube. It was a bad mistake on their part. From the smoke, two red, glowing orbs appeared, before two heat rays, their paths made clearly visible by dust and smoke, shot at the gangsters who'd hurt her, tracing a path across several of them, burning them and knocking them out.

Buttercup returned her attention back to battle when it was apparent with a bullet bouncing off her skull that it wasn't over on her side. Flying towards the shooter, she smacked aside his pistol arm, sending the pistol flying across the hall, and gave him a multi-ton punch in the jaw. The sound of bones shattering and teeth scattering on the floor sent shivers of thrill and excitement up Buttercup's spine. Rebuilding her teeth collection, however, would have to come later as she could feel a spray of bullets down her back. Warping elsewhere with her near-sound-barrier speed of flight, she fired a well-placed laser eyebeam at her attacker, straight to his neck. The gangster was beheaded immediately, with his head bouncing down the steps. His body's hand had reached up to his neck, only to find that there nothing above the neck left, squirting blood. The body collapsed after that.

There were still more gangsters on Bubbles' side - she had merely sent half of them tumbling down the stairs like bowling pins in a party game. Flying backward, she surveyed the human terrain, which was when she could feel goosebumps.

Duranium.

One of the bad guys had it. Even as bullet rattled off her as she threw up her arms in self-defense, she searched them with her keen eyes for any sign of Duranium - after getting shot one too many times with it, she had developed some kind of sense for detecting it, as arcane as it sounded. Even Professor Utonium couldn't fully explain it yet. That was when she saw it - something vaguely shimmering in the sniper rifle of one of the thugs as if the chamber of the gun was invisible.

Before she was prepared, the Duranium Thug fired his Girl-Killer shell. Bubbles burst with energy at the same time, throwing up a baby blue bubble of protection around her - a bit of an overkill, but she still remembered how she nearly died from a couple of Duranium bullets, and it wasn't pleasant.

The Duranium shell punched through her light blue Chem-X shield regardless, burying itself in her chest, with blood spraying out. In response, she sucked in a prodigious amount of air, and let loose a deafening scream, breaking any glass windows that were intact, blowing eardrums and knocking the remaining gangsters she was fighting down.

Blossom, in the meantime, emerged out of the smoke after that like a jet airplane, her dress still on
fire, charging into her attackers. She'd only held back just enough not to kill them, first knocking men into the cold, hard walls of the cold, hard mansion they were defending, then beating the snot out of the rest, who could only panic and fire wild shots at the indestructible girl at close quarters, doing absolutely nothing but enraging the red-head who was both literally and figuratively on fire. She took the last man standing by the collar and threw him to the ceiling, knocking the wind out of him. The fall did the rest and knocked him unconscious - and possibly breaking his back. Blossom could hear a sickening crack, but she cared little because of how much pain they'd caused her.

Panting and shaking, Blossom finally landed, before heading back to the center to see her sisters. She patted down the fire that was still burning through her pink dress, realizing in dismay that the top-left quarter of it was completely burnt off, leaving the dress hanging only by a blackened shoulder and the belt. Half the remaining fabric was a sooty black, leaving very little pink left. The rest of her dress was pockmarked with holes; she couldn't just see it, she could feel it as it was colder than before. The undergarment covering her chest survived, albeit singed with spots of black and brown and holes as well. One of her socks was similarly burned up, turning it from a knee-high sock to a calf-length sock. Both of her socks were a mix of white, brown and black. Her red bow was singed, and one of its ears was slightly disfigured, tattered.

THE POWERPUFF GIRLS: DECLASSIFIED

RELEASE DATE: 1 MAY 2019

Below are some early sketches of the story art.
Early concept art of The Powerpuff Girls: Declassified Arc 2 Comic Book (showing the Girls on
Early concept art of The Powerpuff Girls: Declassified Arc 2 Comic Book (Cover 2) by Powerpuff

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