

SAD-MAN

A Play

Written by

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Characters:

<b>Dr. Dread/Maxwell Myer.</b>	Male. 30s'. The menace of Casper, Wyoming.
<b>The Crimson Defender/Damian Dunn.</b>	Male. 30's. Casper's resident hero.
<b>Linus.</b>	Male. Late 20's. Dr. Dread's loyal assistant.
<b>Sharon Shelley.</b>	Female. 30's. Ace reporter for the Casper Chronicle.
<b>Quinn O'Leary.</b>	Male. 40's. Correspondent for POW News.

Setting:	Casper, Wyoming. Some point in time.
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Locations:

<b>Casper Chemicals.</b>	A fuming, industrial quagmire.
<b>Dr. Dread's Dungeon.</b>	Natural cave system. Repurposed as a workshop.
<b>The Crimson Defender's Apartment.</b>	Cramped, without style or taste.
<b>Casper Chronicle Offices.</b>	Quaint. Sincere.
<b>The Graveyard.</b>	Barren. Dour.
<b>Streets of Casper.</b>	Seedy. Dirty.
<b>J's Diner.</b>	Classic. Greasy.

## Notes

This play is written with a proscenium stage in mind.

/ indicates an interruption in dialogue.

- indicates a sharp cutoff of dialogue.

The production is responsible for all projected materials.

**On the world:** This is the world of a silver-age comic book brought to life on the stage. We're in a place out of time. No cell phones, no email. Magic, mad science, and larger-than-life heroes and villains populate the world's cities. Bright costumes and colorful characters pop up everywhere you look.

**The Criminal Coalition:** The global outfit of evil itself. Comprised of villains of all experience levels. This legion of evildoers seeks to overturn the free world and rule with an iron fist.

**The Super Society:** The mighty hand of justice, and the world's last hope against the Coalition. This team of heroes is spread throughout the globe, with members populating many of the major cities in each nation.

**On the Sets:** They should marry the works of Edward Hopper and Darwyn Cooke in their design. Utilize projection to depict the world as faithfully to its comic roots as possible. The sets need to be flown in and out quickly, so only employ the minimum number of set-pieces and props.

**On the Costumes:** Unless otherwise noted, Dr. Dread and Crimson Defender will be clothed in their full super-attire, masks and all.

- **Dr. Dread:** Wears a black trench coat with a green trim, and tricked out welding goggles.
- **Crimson Defender:** Wears a red tactical suit with black trim at the seams, a heavy red cape, and a red domino mask. Majestic from afar. Cheap up close.
- **Linus:** Wears a black mechanic's jumpsuit with a green, knit beanie. As "Lethal Linus," he sews a bright yellow cape onto his jumpsuit and dons a matching helmet that has a green "L" on the forehead. He should have a big, bushy mustache.

**Scene Transitions:** Projected material should be kinetic, and colorful. O'Leary will occasionally present news during these sections. In these instances, the relevant news bumpers on screen.

**On the Action:** Big, bold, and brazen. The blocking and choreography should be iconographic, impractical, and poke fun at the costumes (cape pulling, mask tugging, etc.).

**The Family Portrait:** A young Maxwell Myer flanked by his father, Gabriel, and his mother, Frances, by a Victorian fireplace. Gabriel and Frances smile. Maxwell does not.

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## Pre-Show

*(As the audience settles...)*

*(PROJECTED: A POW news reel with photos and THE CRIMSON DEFENDER in action. He punches thugs. Leaps across buildings.)*

*(QUINN O'LEARY enters.)*

QUINN

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I'm Quinn O'Leary, your host for POW news's annual CRIMSON RECAP! It's been five years since the Crimson Defender swooped into town. And tonight, we celebrate his accomplishments! His triumphs! His sensational stunts! And don't worry, no recap would be complete without his gallery of baddies, ne'er-do-wells, VILLAINS! We'll get to them in due time.

Of course, our story begins with Crimson Defender's daring rescue of beloved Mayor Bronson. The scene: city hall! Dawn! Mayor Bronson was ready to hand the key of the city to the late Count Courageous when, from out of nowhere, PA-POW! The dishonorable, the disgusting DOCTOR DREAD appears from beneath the steps! He grabbed Bronson by the throat!

*(PROJECTED: Pictures of DR. DREAD laughing maniacally.)*

DR. DREAD (O.S.)

Try this on for size, you ignorant —

QUINN

BUT THEN!

*(An unseen punch SWOOSHES. CRACKLES throughout. DR. DREAD tumbles in.)*

DR. DREAD

OW! What? WHO?

QUINN

Who indeed! Who was that? Who could it be? Why so much red? Why, it was no other than —

*(Crimson enters. Strikes a heroic pose.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER

Call me: The Crimson Defender!

*(Dread rises.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER

*(to audience)*

No need to thank me. I'm just here to help.

*(Dread swipes at Crimson. He dodges out of the way.)*

DR. DREAD

Agh! You've ruined it! You ruined everything you – you / idiot!

CRIMSON DEFENDER

/ Stand down!

*(Dread lunges. They battle. Quinn circles them.)*

QUINN

POW! BAM! KERPLOOEY! ZING! A glorious debut! From that day forward, be it a cat stuck in a tree, or a bus full of orphans dangling off a cliff-side, which happens a lot more than one would think, the Crimson Defender has been there to save the day! Thick or thin! High or low! Nothing could stand in the way of our caped, crimson protector.

*(Crimson knocks Dread unconscious. Drags him off stage.)*

QUINN

No hero is complete without his villain, however, and that attack on the mayor not only marked Crimson's first appearance, but also the birth of his arch-nemesis: Doctor Dread!

*(PROJECTED: Dread's mugshot. Photos of him in action follow.)*

QUINN

AKA Maxwell Myer. The sole heir to the Myer family fortune, and the former head of the Myers Corporation, who dedicated his time and money to funding studies and research in the fields of alternative energy resources and advanced combat engineering.

*(PROJECTED: Photos of Dread and LINUS in action.)*

QUINN

Little is known about his turn to evil, besides the murder of the aforementioned Count Courageous, or where he lurks about, but now - with the help of an unnamed accomplice - Doctor Dread has earned his menacing reputation through his villainous schemes to terrorize our way of life.

Now, with our hero descending from the heavens above, our villain emerging from the depths below, the stage is set for the rest of our story tonight! We begin with the Bighorn Blitz! First -

What? Who? Now? It's happening now? RIGHT NOW!? End the show. RIGHT NOW! END IT NOW! Cut to commercial! CUT TO COMMERICAL!

*(Quinn exits.)*

## Scene 1

Setting: Casper Chemicals.

*(PROJECTED: The POW News bumper.)*

*(An urgent news jingle plays. Quinn enters. Slides to a stop.)*

QUINN

BREAKING NEWS! Ladies and gentlemen, grab your loved ones and lock your doors. Something DREADFUL comes this way. THAT'S RIGHT, the nefarious Dr. Dread has struck once again! Police have been unsuccessful in their attempts to track him down in the weeks since the former techie turned baddie escaped Padden Penitentiary. And now, according to our reporters on the ground, all of Casper Chemicals is rigged to blow!

*(Quinn spins around to reveal--)*

*(PROJECTED: Casper Chemicals! It's bathed in explosives. The Defende-signal shines above.)*

*(Casper Chemicals flies together. Linus enters. He holds SHARON SHELLEY, gagged, over his shoulder. He drops her. Ties her to a chain pulley. He pulls her up over a vat of acid. Sharon struggles with her bindings.)*

*(Quinn paces through Casper Chemicals, outside of the scene.)*

QUINN

Police have formed a perimeter around the scene, but somehow, things have taken a turn for the worse! According to eye witnesses, the entire facility is rigged to blow!

*(Linus pulls out a detonator. He flips its switch. The explosives light up. Quinn leaps back.)*

QUINN

Now, in the face of fear, in the face of defeat, we can only look to the skies, hope for a hero. That's right - you know where I'm going with this. We must look up to our scarlet overseer - our very own, homegrown hero! Ladies and gentlemen: THE CRIMSON DEFENDER!



*(An explosion rocks the stage. The jingle stops. Quinn exits. Dread emerges from the smoke. He throws his arms up.)*

DR. DREAD

Too long! Too long have I waited! Too long have I been imprisoned! For three long, aching, months, have I been shackled behind Padden's stone walls. But, no longer! This city, *my city*, it needs me. It calls to me: *Casper, Wyoming*. It speaks my name! And now, Crimson Defender, to thank you for imprisoning me once again, I've taken the liberty of inviting our mutual friend to this little get-together: Sharon Shelley! Oh, she's written so many lovely little white lies about me.

*(to Sharon)*

And I mean that. They were lovely. I enjoyed reading them. However, despite the fun, the scrumptious fun of it all, I'm afraid this story has reached its final chapter. It was bound to blow up in your face sometime, darling!

*(Dread snaps his fingers. Linus slowly lowers Sharon into the vat. Dread pulls an obscenely large pistol from his pants. He points it around the room.)*

DR. DREAD

Don't take me for a fool, Crimson. I know you're out there, lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce! You better be quick, though. I'd say you have five seconds...

Four...

Three...

Two...

One...

...

...

One...

...

**ONE!!!**

*(Linus stalls Sharon's descent. Dread inspects the room. Stomps his feet.)*

DR. DREAD

LINUS!

LINUS

Yes, doctor?

*(Linus angles Sharon away from the vat Slightly lowers her. He secures the chain on a girder. Rushes to Dread. He trips on his way over. Dread paces back and forth.)*

DR. DREAD

It's 11:16pm.

LINUS

Yes. Yes, it is, doctor.

DR. DREAD

Do you know what that means?

LINUS

The time?

DR. DREAD

Yes, the time!

LINUS

He's...late?

DR. DREAD

He's LATE! He's never late!

LINUS

He's been late a few times.

DR. DREAD

Perhaps - BUT THAT'S NOT THE RULE! The Inflatable-Man was in town and stealing our spotlight!

LINUS

Right you are, doctor.

DR. DREAD

*this doesn't make sense, this doesn't make sense, THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE, LINUS!* The cops lit the signal,

we're on primetime, and he's a no show? No, no! That's not how this works. You left a clue, right? A clue at Ms. Shelley's apartment?

LINUS

Yes, doc.

DR. DREAD

And it was precise?

LINUS

Yes, of course / doctor?

DR. DREAD

/ And it wasn't obtuse? You have a tendency to prep them a tad too inscrutably, sometimes.

LINUS

Doctor, if you wanted me to be any more precise, I'd literally have to find Crimson Defender, grab him by the shoulders, and scream right into his face: CASPER CHEMICALS! WE'RE GOING TO CASPER CHEMICALS! BE THERE! AT 11 O'CLOCK!

DR. DREAD

I suppose you would, wouldn't you? Oh, now I'm starting to second guess the explosives.

LINUS

Don't second guess the explosives.

DR. DREAD

It's just - they just seem like a bit much now that I'm waiting around, twiddling my thumbs like an idiot! I'M A FOOL!

LINUS

No, you're not. They were a great / idea.

SHARON

*(indiscernible, muffled)*

/ Hey, jackass! It's not Crimson Defender you need to be worried about, it's me! Just you wait till I get free!

*(She wriggles violently. Dread pokes at her with his pistol.)*

DR. DREAD

Ah! Ah! Ah! Not another sound out of you! Planning death traps is hard enough as is. We'll get to you when we're good and ready.

*(She doubles her efforts, screaming. Dread holsters his pistol. Linus marches to her.)*

LINUS

Hey! The doctor said that's enough!

*(She kicks him in the face. Linus fumbles back. Grabs his nose. Retreats.)*

LINUS

I HATE IT WHEN WE GRAB HER! Why can't we, I don't know, like, like, like, like, grab somebody who's less handsy!? Like the photographer! The photographer for the Chronicle. What's his name? Er - Dennis! We should've grabbed Dennis.

*(Sharon screams.)*

DR. DREAD

Oh, Linus, you sweet, naive infant. This is why I'm the one who makes the plans. Forget Dennis! Don't you see it? Don't you see that Ms. Shelley here, she's different? Sure, a bus full of orphans always gets his attention, but the way our crimson clown looks at her, the way he - stutters when she interviews him - she's clearly the apple of his eye! Hence, why we grabbed her. Hence, why Dennis is irrelevant! Hence, despite everything I've just said, he STILL - ISN'T - HERE!!

*(They jump at the sound of a MOTORCYCLE screeching to halt. It crashes into a trash can. Then, the sound of a grapnel gun rings out. The wire WHIRS.)*

LINUS

Could that be / him?

DR. DREAD

/ The Defende-cycle! Hurry!

*(They scramble to their marks. Linus grabs the chain, angles Sharon back over the vat.)*

LINUS

Doctor!

DR. DREAD

What!?

LINUS

Your, uh...

*(He gestures to Dread's pants.)*

DR. DREAD

Right!

*(Dread whips the pistol back out. Points it around the room. Footsteps echo from up above. Linus lowers Sharon again.)*

DR. DREAD

too - \*herm\* - Too long! Too long have I waited! Too long have I been imprisoned! For three long, aching months, have I been shackled behind Padden's stone walls. But, no longer! This city, *my city*, it needs me. It calls to me: Casper --

*(Crimson plummets from above. He faceplants onto the stage. Dread, Linus, and Sharon stare, dead silent.)*

*(Crimson stirs back to life. Staggers upright. Sways.)*

DR. DREAD

A - And now, to thank you f - for imprisoning me once again, I've taken the liberty of inviting our mutual friend to this little get-toge / ther.

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
*(slurred)*

/ Show yourself!

*(He spins around. Speaks in the wrong direction.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER

Whatever have you done - did - this time, doctor...Dread! The Crimson Defender will \*hiccup\* will, uh, put an end -  
CONCLUSION - to, ah, er, whatever it is.

SHARON  
*(indiscernible)*

Oh, god.

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
 Hm? Whatsit?

*(He turns to Sharon.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
 Sharon? Sharon! Oh my - hey! Whu - what're what are you doing here? This's crazy, I was just in the area and I saw the signal and was all...all...

*(He notices Dread.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
 Oh. Oh! Oh no! No! Sharon! He's got a gun! Don't - don't you worry. I won't let him shoot you, not in your face. No. I'll be there, er, whenever I get there. I don't know.

DR. DREAD  
*(sotto)*  
 What on earth?

LINUS  
*(sotto)*  
 Hey!

*(Linus motions to the chain, then the vat. Dread shakes his head. Crimson musters what nobility he can. Hobbles towards Sharon. Trips on his cape. Falls. Everyone winces.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
 Have fear! Wait - No fear! It'll take more than that to down a crimson defendant...yessir. That's - that's my name.  
 THE CRIMSON DEFENDER!

*(Crimson falls once more. He staggers back up.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER  
 Good will triumph once again! It always does! It's in the, uh, the catchphrase. What was it again?

*(As he speaks, Dread crosses to him. He thrusts the barrel of the pistol into Crimson's chest. Gives it a gentle push. Crimson falls backward, stiff as a board. He groans, rolls over, assumes a crawl.)*

CRIMSON DEFENDER

Just need to... Just need some... some...sleep.

*(His head bonks to the ground. He lies there. Dread pokes him with his pistol. Linus walks up. Kicks him.)*

LINUS

On a silver platter. How about that, doc!?

*(Dread leans in close. Picks Crimson's head up off the ground. Inspects him. Shakes his head.)*

DR. DREAD

Kill the explosives.

LINUS

But, doc / we can blow him to smithereens!

DR. DREAD

/ Lose the girl, too.

LINUS

Doctor!

DR. DREAD

Did I stutter, Linus!? We don't need them.

LINUS

ARGH!

*(Linus deactivates the explosives. Their lights blink off. He moves Sharon to safety. Undoes her ties. She leaps up. Kicks Linus away.)*

SHARON

Get back, you freaks! You psychopaths! When the cops get in / I hope you're shot on the spot!

DR. DREAD

/ I'll be arrested for abduction, ransom, blackmail, and all my other crimes against humanity, yada, yada, yada, whatever. I get it. Now run along, Ms. Shelley, or I'll

follow you home, kill that sweet, little corgi of yours,  
and all the other people you know and love. I'm busy.

*(Sharon goes to exit. Turns back.)*

SHARON

You know what, Dread? Make it hurt, ok? Ring 'em out for a  
week for all I care!

*(Sharon exits. Dread scratches his chin.)*

LINUS

Now's our chance, doc. Let's blow his brains out and beat  
it!

...

DR. DREAD

No.

LINUS

NO?

DR. DREAD

No. Too easy. Besides, there are more enjoyable ways to carry  
this out within the dungeon.

LINUS

Ah! Ok, doc, ok. I like how you're thinking.

DR. DREAD

Of course, you do. I'm a genius.

*(Linus drags Crimson off. Casper Chemicals  
flies away. A POLICE SIREN BLARES.)*

DR. DREAD

Oh, right. Good lord, I wish I could just skip this part.

*(to Police)*

Not today boys! Nobody wins!

*(Dread disappears in flash of smoke.)*