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A large, faint watermark of the 'COH Comics' logo is visible in the background, consisting of the letters 'COH' above the word 'COMICS' in a stylized font, all enclosed within a thin oval border.

THE ADVENTURES OF PIOUS HUNTER

PRIEST

ISSUE #3 - BATTLE OF THE CLONES

INFIRMARY

Hmm. Frontotemporal neuroreceptor activity present.

Limbic system beta waves, check.

Reticular activating system now functional.

In conclusion, patient is awake.

If you can hear me, please sit up.



Force Commander?



Unequivocally.
You've been in an induced
coma for half a year Pious.
Delighted to have you
with us again.

I'm sorry Reverend,
what is the last thing
you remember?

My God! How did
this happen?

I was on a Portal
Corps assignment with
the team.



Militia?


Yes, we were
exploring a world ruled by
the African Pantheons.



Try and recall
what happened on
that mission.

We encountered
Adomastor. Took a great
deal of teamwork to
finally defeat him.

Wait, I think
that's it. I remember
being hit by a sort of
displacement aura!



Hmm, usually I would tell you that it's all a Nemesis plot, but according to the Portent's research, Crey Industries were behind your kidnapping. Of course, we assumed you were dead, but last year, identical copies of you started showing up at crime scenes.

The first introduced himself to the Militia as 'the Sentry' but failed to infiltrate the team. He joined the New Heroes Union instead but later died trying to arrest the mad scientist Doctor Mechano.

Wait, I don't understand. Nobody knows about my brothers, what identical copies are you talking about?



Why, and why me?

Crey Industries were being paid to clone you. They've made soldiers from your DNA, similar to their Paragon Protectors programme.

We don't know what they were trying to do, but you were probably targeted for your unique DNA, your mutant ability to replicate on a cellular level.

Force Commander, that was a highly classified secret between three very specific people. My wife, myself and you.

I haven't betrayed your family's trust Reverend. Crey Industries learnt about you some other way. You have to know that after your rescue, your wife tried to sue Countess Crey, but she lost the case.

We think something bigger is going on, someone else is involved somehow. Someone much more dangerous than Crey Industries, if that were even possible.



My wife, she is pregnant.

Not anymore.
I paged her as soon as you woke up, she should be here any minute.



I'm here doctor.

Rachel

Thank God you're awake!



Well, that's the good news at least.

Oh my God, what's the bad news?

The test results just came back. I'm afraid his DNA hasn't changed since regaining consciousness.
I'm sorry.

Wait, I don't understand, what's wrong with me?

I'm afraid your mutant powers are all gone, Reverend.

No, that's impossible. There must be some mistake.



This is the metahuman era Reverend, nothing is impossible. The evidence in your deoxyribonucleic acids suggests that Crey have purposely altered your sequencing to remove your mutation.

The abilities you were born with, cellular absorption, duplication and even cellular reconstruction, it's all missing.

But doctor, you said you knew a procedure you could try?

Several possibilities present themselves. Retroactive polycloning of previous DNA, or RNA counter-replication in bone marrow stem cells.

At best, the results would be unpredictable. There would be a high chance of lethal mutation, or creation of equally lethal prions.

If you were prepared to take the risk, I might even consider it, but unfortunately, the risk would not just be to you.

Given the Reverend's unique DNA, such a procedure could lead to a horizontal genetic transfer and cause an epidemic of infectious disease so virulent it would make the Bubonic plague look like the common cold.

Moreover, in comparison to the last time I analysed your DNA, I've discovered over forty new alien chromosomes which I deduce are from abilities you've absorbed over the years. That's forty separate DNA types, and those're just the ones I recognize. You know, most heroes have to make do with the one ability, coupled with a skill or two.

Rachel, if I can't absorb acids anymore, then that's not bad news at all it'll mean I can finally touch, and I won't need my gloves, or, or you know, IVF.

Yes but baby, without your cellular reconstruction, you're vulnerable. And with the ever-increasing number of enemies you have, maybe, maybe we should start considering early retirement.

I'm a terrible husband aren't I, and a useless father. I am so sorry I wasn't able to be there with you.

Don't say that, that's not what I meant. You're a wonderful man Pious and I love you, okay?

I don't even know what my baby looks like, what gender what age.

Hazel is four months old and she's been in here to see you every day of her life. She knows who her father is and can't wait to see you awake.

Hazel

Yes. Pious, when we were stranded in the Northern Universe, that's what we decided on for a girl.

I know, I remember.

All I'm saying is that we consider it, at least. Leave this war on crime behind, forget about the Rikti Invasion, forget about trying to rebuild this city, because really, it's not our fight.

We could move far away, and start a new life as, I don't know, missionaries or something, in Africa or the Middle East. Just you, me and our baby.

Lets talk about it another time. Right now, I just want to see my little girl.



She sounds perfect.
Who is with her while
you're here with me?

We have a day
care center?

Altair's babysitting
her at the Cathedral's day care
center. Oh, that girl is wonderful
with kids. She sits Sabine's
little boy as well.

Meriam!

Father Pious,
I come as soon as I
heard. It's good to see
you up and about.

Thank you
Meriam.

The Circle
of Thorns?

Yeah, we couldn't get
past that army of clones any other
way. Militia held a small meeting to plan a
final strike and when I mentioned your
mortal enemies in the Devil's court,
genius over here put two and
two together.


Masked Angel here was
instrumental in your rescue.
It was her idea to get
the Thorns involved.



I'm not a genius,
you're too kind.



So, exactly what
happened?



--Before we knew it,
their spectral demons went after you.
They raided Crey Labs and eventually
overpowered the clone army.

Codename and Dragonfly
assaulted Oranbenga, seeding
news that you were alive and
currently at Crey Labs--

It was a
nightmare.

Meriam and I were
barely able to carry
you out of there.

The clones were so crazy,
throwing around all those powers, and
the Circle of Thorns just kept coming
out of nowhere. I got the feeling they
really wanted you dead, Father.

So now they actually
believe they've killed you.
Twenty-four times.

That's really
is applaudable.

Does this
mean I'm free
of the Devil?

Wow, no demons,
no curse, no mutation.
It feels like a whole new
life all together.

Yes, we think so.
No demon among the Princes
of Hell has hunted for you since
the escape. I say we keep a
low profile from now on.

Yeah, it's as if
you could start over
in Africa.

I'm going
to look for Force
Commander.

Nothing.

Oh no you
don't. I'll go.

What?

Oh, I totally forgot.
I ran into him in the hallway, he
asked me to tell you that it's okay to
leave. He says he will come by the
Moth Cathedral monastery
for routine checks.




Then let's go.



Sorry, I'm so sorry.

It's okay.
By the way Meriam, are you free this weekend? It's just, I fancy learning a bit of your martial arts.



Yeah, okay, absolutely. Not sure how good I'll be at teaching though, but I'll give it a try.

Well, as long as my memory doesn't play up, I can mimic your skills by just watching.

Oh wow, that's really amazing. So you're both power mimics?



No. I copy, he steals.

Well apparently I no longer can. I'm just a power bank, jack of all and master at none.

Oh whatever Pius.

We were keeping you at Chiron Medical but someone tried to kill you there.

So why was I brought to a Vanguard hospital of all places?

What?

Meriam! Don't mind her babes, she's kidding. Bad joke! Okay, let's get you home.

Pater noster, qui
es in caelis; sanctificetur
Nomen Tuum;

adveniat Regnum Tuum;
fiat voluntas Tua, sicut in
caelo, et in terra.

Panem nostrum
cotidianum da nobis
hodie; et dimitte nobis
debita nostra,

Sicut et nos dimittimus
debitoribus nostris; et ne
nos inducas in tentationem;
sed libera nos a Malo.



I didn't see you in there for dinner. Is everything alright?

Yes, I just got back from patrol and suddenly felt like coming out here to pray.

Hm, alright. I'll leave you to it, but please be careful out here!



What about your lesson with the Masked Angel?

Well that's where I'm going, dressed all sporty. Do you like it?

Yes, I do. It suits you well, beautiful and athletic.



Aw, aren't you a romantic hero, priest.

Be careful, and have fun.

I will sweetheart. See you in a couple of hours. Finish your prayers and get back inside, okay? It's getting dark.

The Lord is my Shepherd:
I shall not want. He maketh me to lie
down in green pastures: He leadeth
me beside the still waters.



He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths
of righteousness for His
name's sake.

North Cathedral Basement.

Friday February 6th 2009.

Okey, how
do you want me
to start?

Alright, let's
do this.

Show me some
basic movies.

**CITY
HEROES**

THE MILITIA





You're good.



Thanks.



How long have you been doing this then?



My mum trained me since I was a kid.

Yeah?

Yeah, its sort of a family tradition.



Okay, err, do you
want to practice balance
or technique?

My mum?

Alright, watch
my footwork and
repeat after me.

Alright, training.
I'll copy you.

Whichever.
What would your
mother do?

Yes Meriam,
be like your mum.
Come on lets go.

Got it!



Remember, you are **expressing** the technique, not **doing** the technique.

Expressing, not doing. Got it!



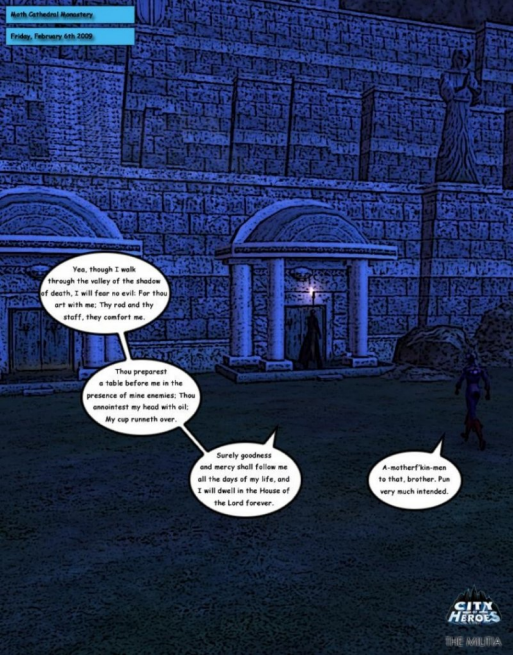
Hear what I say, but you may forget it.

See what I say and you will remember it.



Do what I say and you will understand it.

Alright, you go girl.



Yes, though I walk
through the valley of the shadow
of death, I will fear no evil: For thou
art with me; Thy rod and thy
staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest
a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies: Thou
annointest my head with oil:
My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness
and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and
I will dwell in the House of
the Lord forever.

A-motherf'kin-men
to that, brother. Pun
very much intended.



We meet at last Pious, or should I say Captain Harlem.

Some f'kin priest you are, you know that? We were brothers, man, all thirteen of us, same blood, same lives.

You precognitive smart arse! You knew I was coming for you.

Yes I did.

Then you must have seen how you die!

Not in your hands.

You were all never meant to exist. I'm sorry.

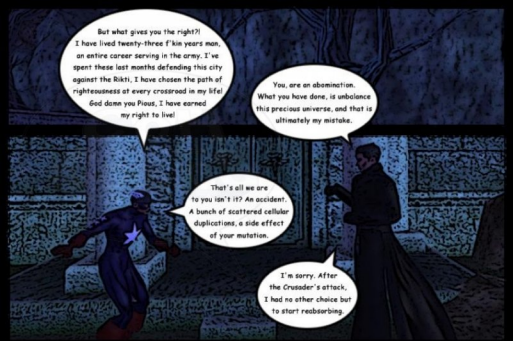
We're not clones like the ones Grey manufactured, man, we're real people! Born from your ribs when you were a baby. Look, I have spent years doing my research, investigating who I am, who you are! I've met everybody!

The Sentinel, no, he wasn't a Grey clone, he was your brother. Marcus Civil, the one Doctors thought died at birth. Your five brothers who died in the second Rikti War: Axel, Sinn, Jackson, Jason and little Donte you grew up with them all.

Y. Freeza! Yeah, he was another duplicate, but you didn't know that, did you? The ones you did know about, you hunted and killed didn't you, oh-so-holy Priest? Commander Pious from the Army, Officer Pious from the PPD and the Crusader, the one who first tracked you.

Freeza was captured by the Rikti, so actually, Marcus and I are the only ones left! You gonna kill us too? Because that's why I'm here. If you're gonna do it man, you better do it quick.

I didn't kill anyone. I reabsorbed them. And thanks to Grey, I can't do that anymore.



But what gives you the right?
I have lived twenty-three f'kin years man,
an entire career serving in the army. I've
spent these last months defending this city
against the Rikti, I have chosen the path of
righteousness at every crossroad in my life!
God damn you Pious, I have earned
my right to live!

You, are an abomination.
What you have done, is unbalance
this precious universe, and that is
ultimately my mistake.

That's all we are
to you isn't it? An accident.
A bunch of scattered cellular
duplications, a side effect
of your mutation.

I'm sorry. After
the Crusader's attack,
I had no other choice but
to start reabsorbing.



But not any
more. I mean, you're
powerless now.

You know what
gets me?

Nothing really proves
that you're the original baby Pious.
You're probably thinking, "oh but I am".
Well, no. The Hunter family assumed
that you were. For all we know, I'm
the original Pious Hunter!



Pain is the best instructor, but no one wants to go to his class.

Damn right.

Wrong. You must train your body to regenerate faster.

But how?



We are what we repeatedly do. Mastery therefore, is not an act, but a habit.



Ah, I see. Well, I'll just copy you, if that's okay.



Well done. That's perfect chi flow.



Teachers open doors, but it is the student who must choose to enter.



This is true, for a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.



And the harder we train, the harder it becomes to surrender.



I think I could take you on now. Let's go!



Holy shit!
That a motherf'kin
threat?

Coming from a
motherf'kin washed-up,
depowered mutant?

That's a very
dangerous line to cross,
Captain Harlem.





I'm sorry Father
for I have sinned.

I killed a man.
And that man was you,
nother'fer.



North Cathedral Basement

Friday February 6th 2009

I think
I'm enjoying
this

**CITY
HEROES**

THE MILITIA



It is not whether you get knocked down.

...It's whether you get up to fight again.



Bring it on sister!



...



I used to know a woman who suffered domestic abuse in silence.

That's horrible.



Oh my god!



It wasn't so bad. Nobody could really hurt her. Not without consent.



She sounds admirable.



She is.



Phew! Shall we conclude?



Thank you for doing this, I had a really good time.

It is I who is grateful sensei.

Sensei? Okay then, if we're still pretending...

...Always remember that given enough time, any person may master the physical...

...and with enough knowledge, any person may become wise, but...

It is the true warrior who master both, and surpass the result.

Oh you ruined it, so you already knew that one!

I have a pretty good photographic memory, at the best of times.

So what do we do now?

We better go back and check on my husband.

North Cathedral Monastery

Friday, February 6th 2009

Fight me.
Fight back!

**CITY
HEROES**

THE MILITIA



If you still have power, show me!



Fight me!



Use your powers!

The greatest power is often simple patience.

You must've really hurt your head, 'cos you obviously not thinking straight Priest.



Thinking is the
hardest work there is,
Captain Harlem, which is
why so few engage in it.
Heads up!



Oh that's a lot of
water to be wasting man,
there are thirsty children
dying around the world,
you know!

A character in a red and black suit with glowing wings stands in a stone courtyard. The character is surrounded by a red and white energy field. The background is a large stone building with a central doorway. The ground is covered in rubble and debris. Two speech bubbles are positioned above the character.

You were in
the army Captain Harlem,
they say strategy without
tactics is the slowest
route to victory.

I was merely
distracting you, so that
I could do THIS!

Where are we? What trick is this?

This is Outbreak. A zone contaminated with a berserker virus. The longer you're here, the deadlier it is.

I am not going to kill you, but neither must I save you.

Lies! It's a trick! I can feel you inside my head.

If you repent, God might have a plan for you after all.

Damn you to hell Priest!

I am the real Pious Hunter and you are the one to die!

I'll take that as a no.



Phantom!
This is a psychic
illusion. Ha!

Motherf*cker, I've
had extensive training
in anti-telepathy. This
shit won't work.

Well if you can
SEE them, then it's
already too late.

Galaxy City, Rhode Island, USA

Saturday, February 7th, 2009



I'm so sorry, that man was the same person who tried to kill you in Chiron Medical.

Really? I thought you said the Masked Angel was joking.

**CITY
HEROES**

THE MILITIA



Captain Harlem was a real threat, I should have been honest. I'm sorry.

It's okay. He's been taken care of.


This is exactly what I mean Pious, we should just leave this city. It's too hazardous, the wars, the crime, it isn't any place to raise a child. Have you given it any thought yet?

I understand where you're coming from Rachel but I just can't do that.

Why not?

Two reasons, one is duty. It is our calling as metahuman citizens to put the welfare of the nation before our own and that means doing whatever we can to help the people of this city live happier, safer lives.


Yes, it's voluntary work but the job description includes things like protecting civilians from the ongoing war and doing what we can to discourage street crime.



I understand that Pius and I agree, but stand up and take a good look around you. These are not our people, America is not our nation, this war with Rikti is not our fight.

There is virtually no alien presence in West Africa, our countries are safe, our land unspoiled, our skies and oceans, always bright blue.

Rachel when I said nation, I didn't just mean America. As true Christians, we have to look at the wider picture.



Which brings me to my second reason for doing what we do. My destiny is to spread the love of Christ, I know that one for sure, and no matter where we go, no matter where we live, our destiny is always the same. No wait, I think I just argued YOUR point.



Exactly! Pious,
why are we even having
this discussion?

Because I really
don't want us to leave this
country, Rachel. I've lived my
adult life in Paragon City.
It's a beautiful place.

And at best, the
standard of education is
unrivaled. It's why we both
came in the first place.
Besides that...

... I want Hazel to grow
up here, maybe even be part
of the whole superhero
vigilantism effort.

Oh really?

Well, I mean.
You know, not if you
don't want it.

Good. Because
it's not safe, right?
Right? Pious!!

Okay, okay,
alright. Lets, lets talk
about it later.

NO!

Okay. No
problem. After
dinner.

I SAID
NO!

I don't believe this.
Right here is a whole year's
work, a whole f'king year Odin!
Neurocide! Status report!
Now, please!

It's no use
Pistol. We've been at
this for over a month,
there is simply nothing
left to salvage.

The good doctor is
correct Madam Pistol, all the
information we had concerning
Project Holy Man was lost in the
raid. Perhaps a change of
direction is called for?

I'm with Ravenna Krone.
With all these Crey scientists
at our disposal, I'm sure we could
work something out. We just need
to find the right approach.

I can't believe I'm
saying this, but the Lab Bunny
is right, we have a lot of scientist
working with us, we should try
this from a new angle!

Odin, in this lab, are some of the greatest scientific minds in the Union Universe, and out of them all, you should've really known better.

Do you have any idea, the ramifications of being powerless among the Illuminati? My mutation died with me in Virtue Universe and the demon who brought me back to life has now been banished! Gone! Forever!

Yes, I do.


The Illuminati's Upper Echelon is probably plotting my assassination right this f'king moment! Do you understand my predicament?

I don't want to die, Odin, not again, not in a million years. But I can feel it, I swear to God, I can feel the life force draining out of me each day. Each f'king day, Odin.

And now that I've lost all connections to the Netherworld, how am I to survive?

This project was supposed to give me all of the Priest's abilities, but it's failed! You failed me, again Odin! You failed me!

There was nothing any of us could have done Pistol, I truly am sorry. The lab was completely overrun with Circle of Thorns.



See that's the part I don't understand. The Family have ties with the Circle of Thorns, why would they attack Crey Labs while I'm leading the research team?

We weren't the target, the Priest was.

So where do we go from here Odin?

We should investigate the attack, I'm suspicious of Countess Crey. She may have tipped off the Thorns, how else would they have known the Priest was still alive, and being held here?

Actually, the Militia found that out too, you think they may have done this? Tricked the Thorns into attacking us?

How did the Militia get involved?

Long story. Come along Odin, I'm going to question security.



Everything alright?





Shattered Reflection, you're my eyes and ears in this lab and in Crey Industries.

Did you see or hear anything at all suspicious during the Thorn's attack?

Sabotage may be Crey's specialty, but I don't think they had anything to do with this one. I haven't heard anything about the attack, but it doesn't help that I don't have full access.

Did you see any heroes in here at any time? Perhaps even during the raid?



Hey! He asked you a question!

No, sorry I didn't see anything but demons and sorcerers.

Useless!

Well the operation hasn't gone without it's achievements. We did de-power the Priest, and if he didn't die in the raid, Oranbengo won't show him mercy.

My concern right now is power. Where's that lunatic roboticist?

Lord Crow?

He's here today just hiding behind his machines.





Pistol may be dying, she needs something to sustain her health.

What is it, cancer?!

Not exactly.

Gaaaa! You get HIV?!

Doctor Crow, please calm down

Aaah! HIV! Get the hell away FROM ME!

What?! War! No! I don't want to die! Stop!

Analysing Panic Code.
Voice Command Confirmed:
Crow. Now Engaging Active
Emergency Protocol.

Self Destruct
in T minus Ten
Seconds.



THIS is not good.

Tony, put me through to Arachnos now, please.

END

CoH
COMICS

Does it
contain her HIV?
You know she has
AIDS right?!

Not bad for
two day's work.



I don't know about AIDS, Lord Crow, but this is immortality in a bio-mechanical suit. Built in weapons holsters, for her handguns, multiplied strength and durability.

With more funds Ms Barzini, we could build multiple suits to combat virtually all situations.

I'll take it.

Not so fast Pistol. In exchange for the suit, I'll need you to take care of a little problem for me.

• Pistol, a British superhero group formed in England UK, during the second world war to perform lightning raids on enemy strongholds. However, after the war ended they turned there attention to combating criminal groups that sprung up in the following years.

They've always operated by locating and then destroying enemy bases, storage or training facilities. Sixty years on, they've become a sort of highly trained, freelance, special ops group, serving hero organizations globally.

They work on a smaller scale than the likes of Longbow and the Vanguard which in a way makes them more nuisance. They've struck at Nemesis, the Malta Group, the Council and recently they've been attacking us here at Arachnos and Rogue Isle's elite team, EVIL.

That was an online message from me, displayed on your internal screen there, just so you know. You'll have to get used to it. Anyway...

In the past few months, they have established an offshoot group composed of all-stars veteran members who now act as a training cadre, situated in Paragon City, our neighbouring state.

Anyway, according to Intel, their numbers were depleted after the second Rikti War and are now rebuilding their team, training new members to fill in the ranks. • Scorpion



These heroes
call themselves the
Art of War.

And your job is
to send them a very
specific message.

TO BE CONTINUED...

#4 THE ART OF WAR

CoH
COMICS