

GUARDIANS OF THE DAWN



Spotlight on... *MidKnight X*



Paragon City: the City of Heroes! The only place in the world where the hero-to-problem ratio is almost one-to-one. If you need a hero in this city, you just have to look around the corner.

But not all heroes are the same. Some are more mercenary than the others. But there are some who see the calling as a sign of brighter days ahead for all mankind. These are the heroes who fight for something better. They are the...

GUARDIANS OF THE DAWN



Guardian Exiles



MidKnight X
Dark Melee
Willpower



Galatea Powers
Super-Strength
Invulnerable



Ryder Lightning
Electricity
Kinetics

In 2007, Paragon City was infested with breaches from another universe. Fearing another Rikti invasion, or something worse, members of the **Vanguard** along with **Positron** from the **Freedom Phalanx** moved quickly to contain the breaches. But instead of an invasion, the tears in reality deposited several injured beings from another universe.

Jason Rich, Karen Powers, and Bart Wallace all came from a world that was violently torn apart by an extra-dimensional madman. By circumstance or by cosmic design, they were spared oblivion and instead arrived in the Paragon Universe. Their wounds were eventually healed, but they discovered they were heroes without a home and little memory of who they once were. They each took on new names that reflected their nature. Jason became **MidKnight X**, Karen became **Galatea Powers**, and Bart became **Ryder Lightning**. They learned their powers had also changed, some making them more powerful than ever.

To help them assimilate in our society, **Captain Paragonna** invited them to join the **Guardians of the Dawn**. With the help of Galatea's long-lost cousin, the legendary **Icon Powers**, the three heroes began to piece together their lives and rediscover who they really are other than just what they can do.

For one of the three exiles, a fresh start is exactly what they need to cover up a deep dark secret...

Paragon City, Rhode Island

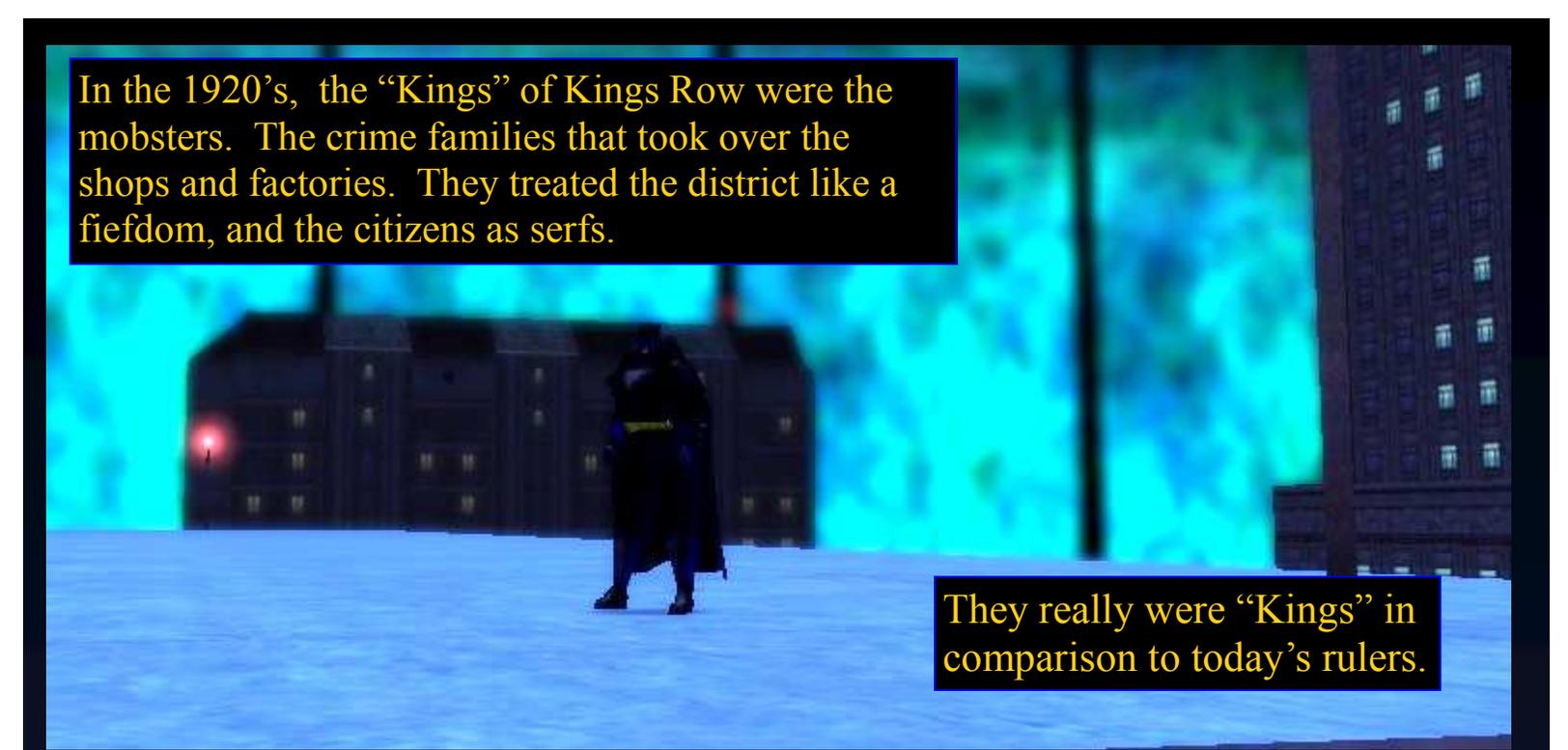
Kings Row.

Kings Row was supposedly named after a garment factory. King Garment Works. Factory workers lived here. Hard-working people just struggling to live the American Dream.

Those kinds of people are still down there. They're still trying to live the American Dream.

I know this because I still hear their screams and their cries for help. I still hear them begging to hold on to that dream for one more week, one more day...



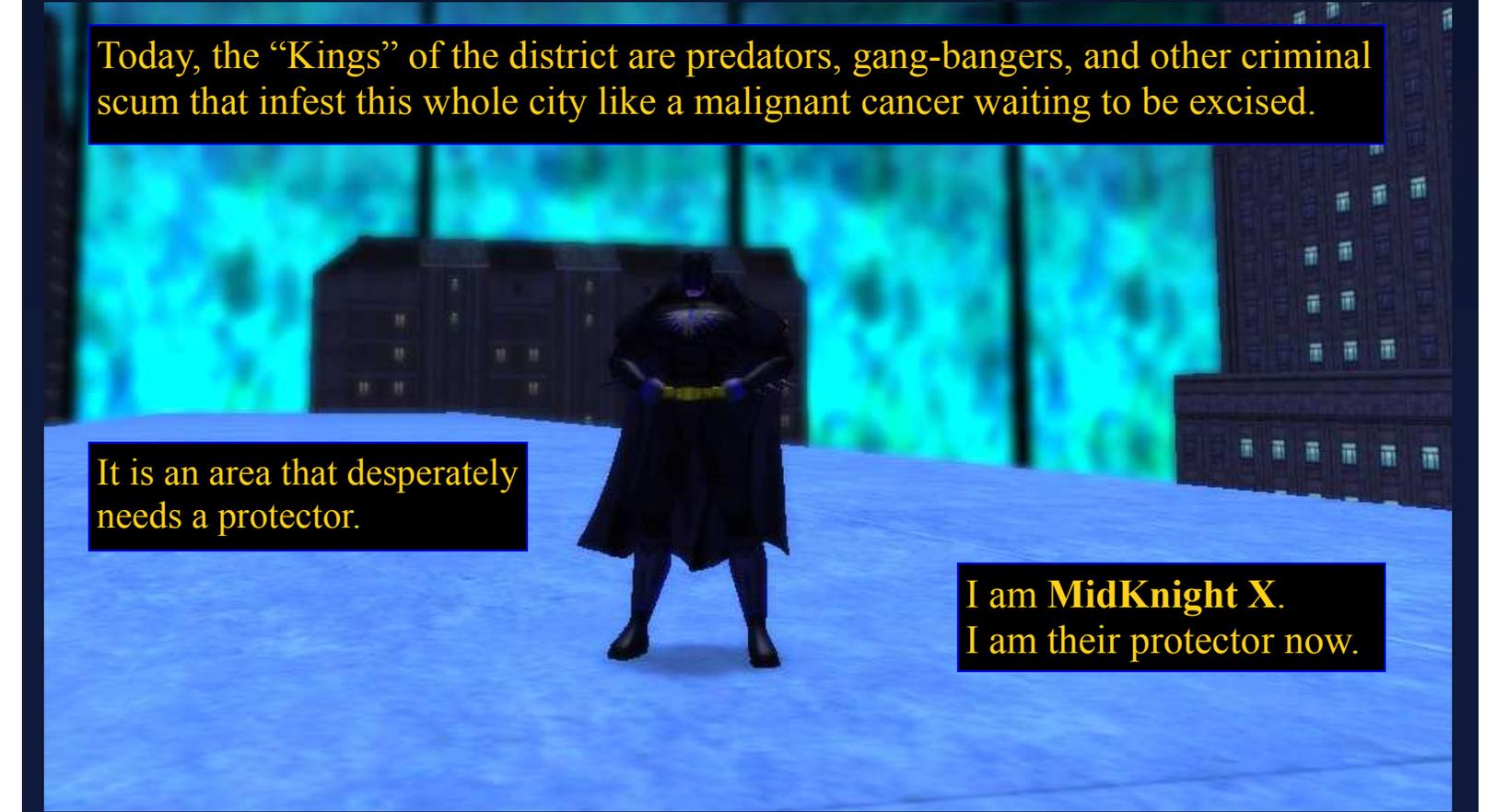


In the 1920's, the "Kings" of Kings Row were the mobsters. The crime families that took over the shops and factories. They treated the district like a fiefdom, and the citizens as serfs.

They really were "Kings" in comparison to today's rulers.

"Knight of the City"

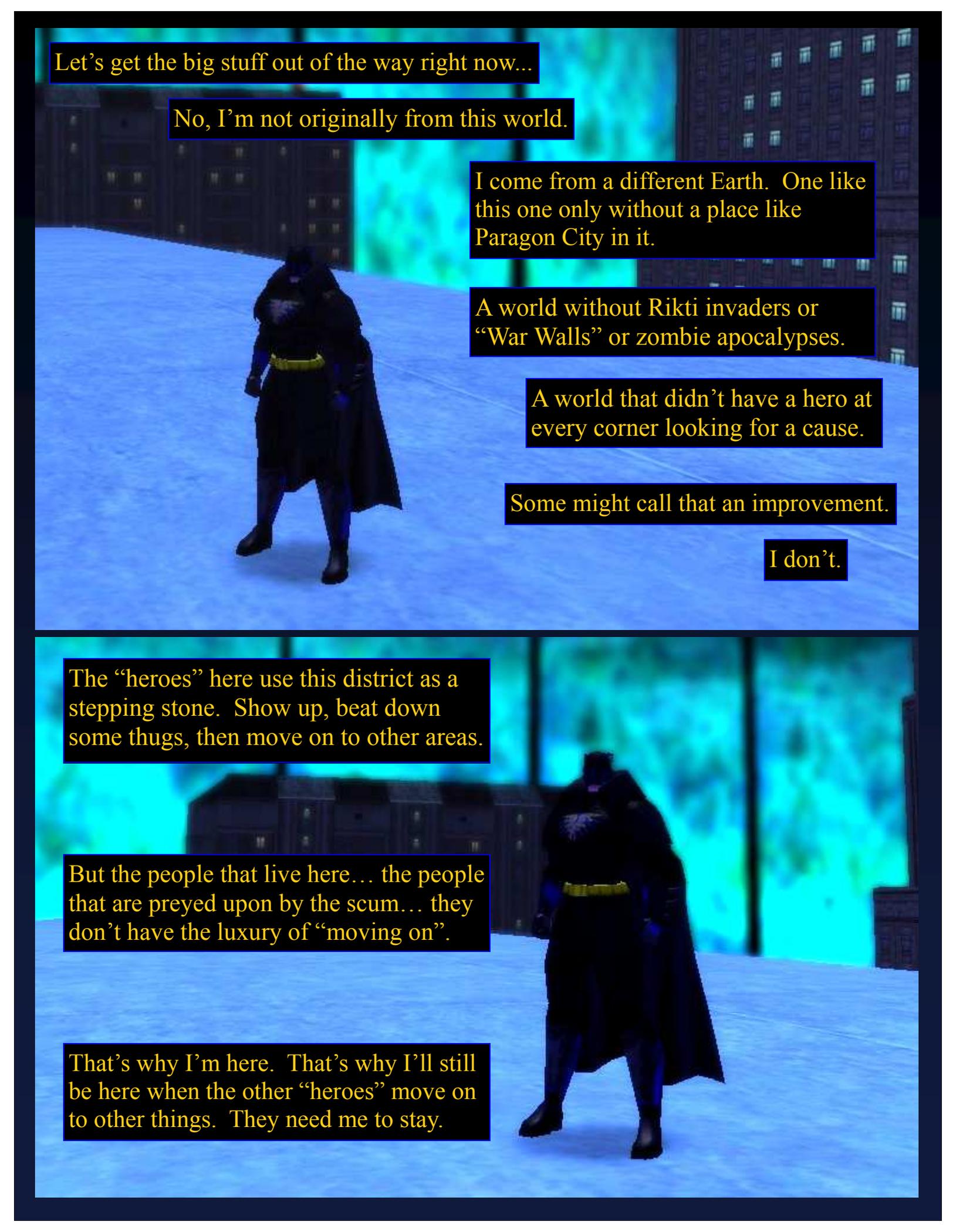
- a City of Heroes story by David 2



Today, the "Kings" of the district are predators, gang-bangers, and other criminal scum that infest this whole city like a malignant cancer waiting to be excised.

It is an area that desperately needs a protector.

I am **MidKnight X**.
I am their protector now.



Let's get the big stuff out of the way right now...

No, I'm not originally from this world.

I come from a different Earth. One like this one only without a place like Paragon City in it.

A world without Rikti invaders or "War Walls" or zombie apocalypses.

A world that didn't have a hero at every corner looking for a cause.

Some might call that an improvement.

I don't.

The "heroes" here use this district as a stepping stone. Show up, beat down some thugs, then move on to other areas.

But the people that live here... the people that are preyed upon by the scum... they don't have the luxury of "moving on".

That's why I'm here. That's why I'll still be here when the other "heroes" move on to other things. They need me to stay.



In the daytime, I go by a different name. I go by the name of **Jason Knight**. This was the identity given to me by a group called the **Vanguard**.

Even after I found out that my real name was **Jason Rich**, I still preferred the name they gave me.

That other name belonged to a world that no longer exists. A world that was destroyed back in 2007.



In that other world, Jason Rich was an orphan. A child of the street, just struggling to survive.

I took care of myself the best I could for a child that age. But it wasn't enough.

Some drug dealers decided the abandoned warehouse I was living in would be a good drug factory. They decided to evict me from my "home"... and evict me from my life.

That was when I first encountered Damian Wilson...

... the *original* MidKnight

I found out he was just like me once... a crime victim. He was adopted by the police officer that had saved him from the scum that killed his parents.

Damian was a street vigilante. He used his skills to bring the scum to justice, and he wore a mask to hide his connection to the police.



Eventually he was confident enough to share his secret identity with me.

I trained for years before he thought I was ready for the streets. But even then I was just his "shadow". No real identity of my own.

It wasn't that he didn't trust me. Quite the opposite. He trusted me with his life.

He was just preparing me to one day *replace* him.





I wasn't around when it happened. It's all a little fuzzy.



This ends **NOW!**



There was a riot. Some crime-lord broke open the rhetorical Pandora's Box and all the scum came out to take advantage of it.



Cops were on strike. The scum were hopped up on some free super-steroid that made their eyes glow.



They would all be dead in a matter of days, but it didn't matter to the crime-lord. Just as long as they took the whole city down with them.



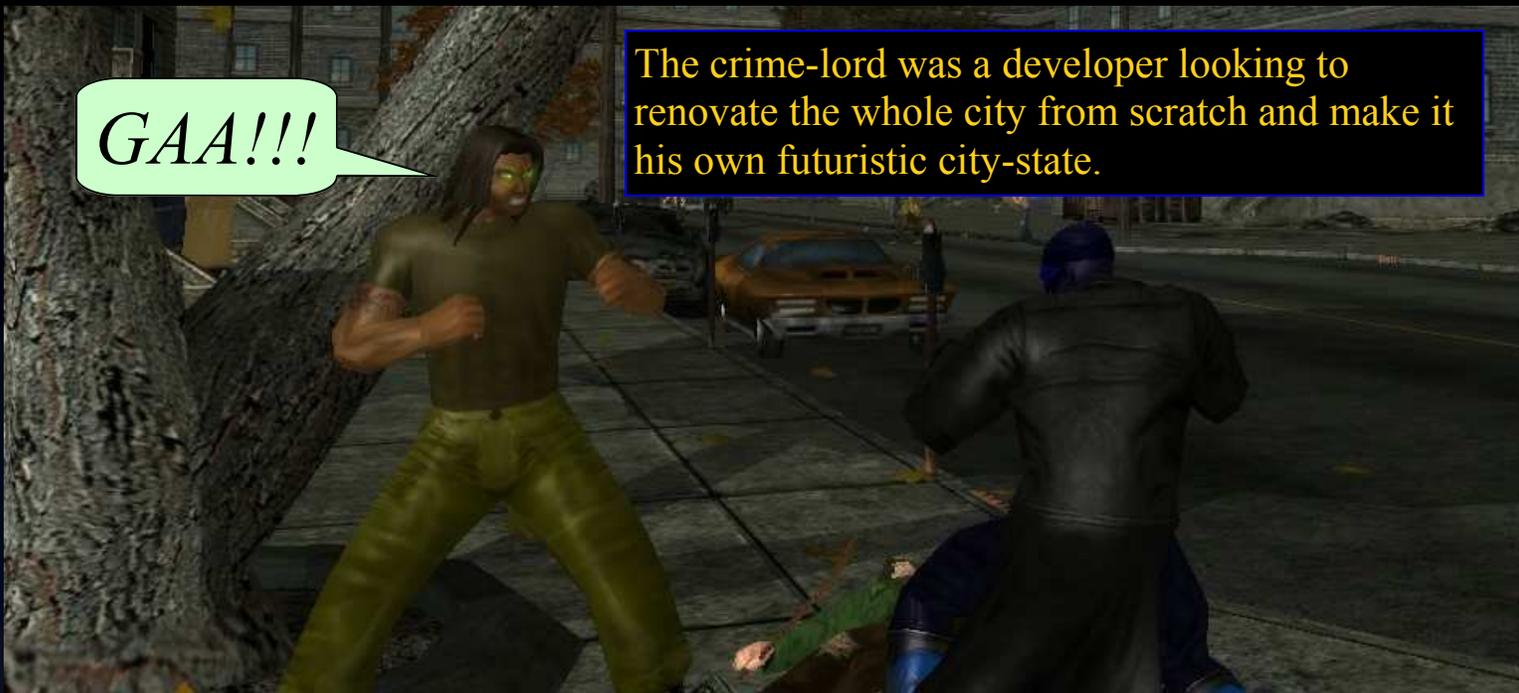
There was a 10-million dollar bounty on MidKnight's head.



That money is MINE!



Even without the drugs, that was a good enough reason for them all to take a shot at him.



GAA!!!

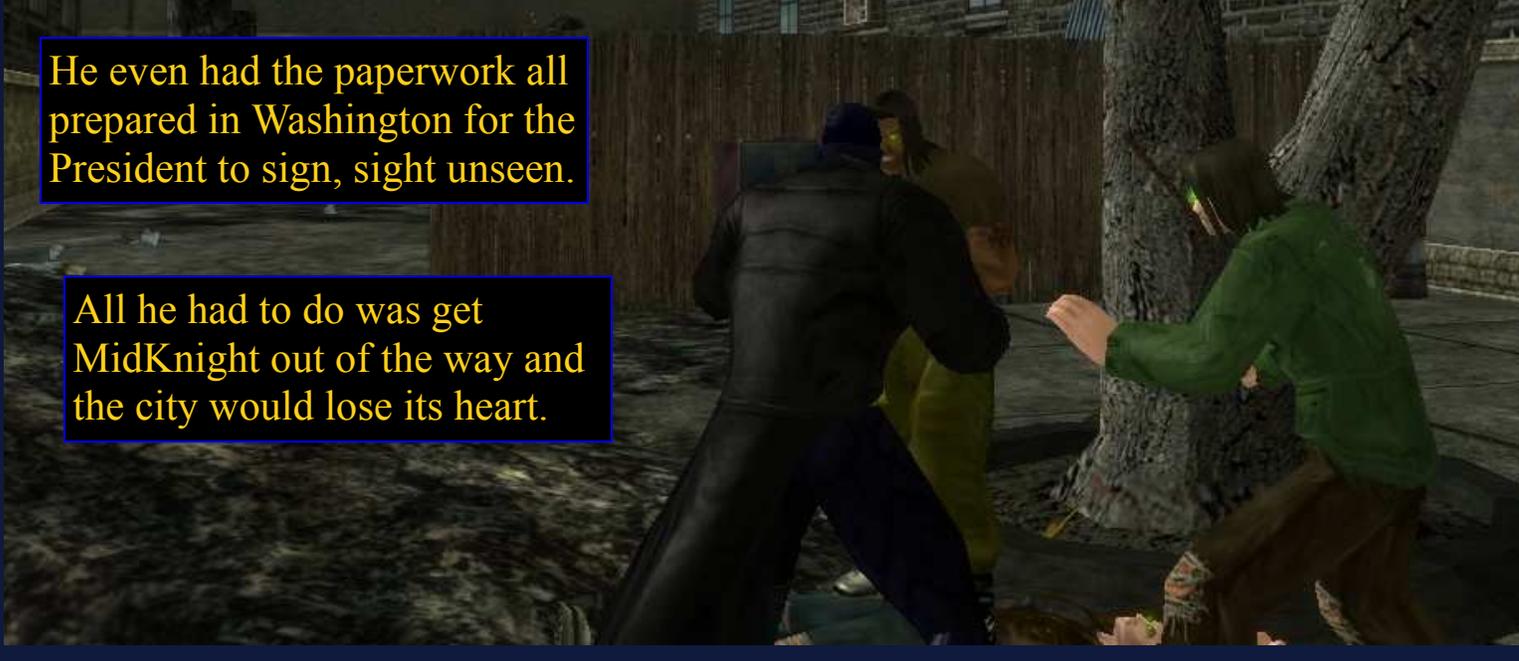
The crime-lord was a developer looking to renovate the whole city from scratch and make it his own futuristic city-state.



He orchestrated everything... the strike, the jailbreaks, the riot...

You can't hurt me!

All so he could get the city declared a disaster area and renovate it all in a no-bid contract.



He even had the paperwork all prepared in Washington for the President to sign, sight unseen.

All he had to do was get MidKnight out of the way and the city would lose its heart.

Damian fought them with everything that he had.



But it wasn't enough. It would never be enough. Not against that much scum.



It was only a matter of time before the unthinkable happened.

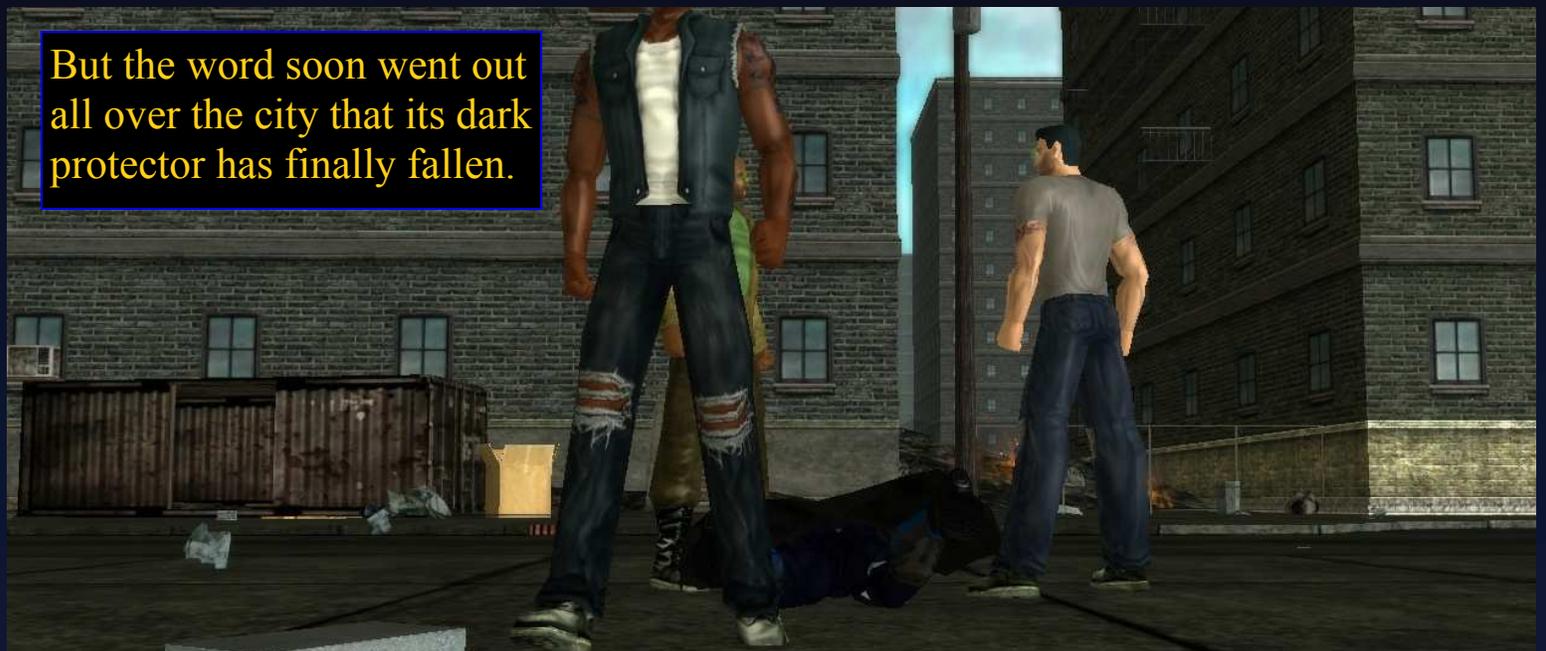


There were no cameras to record the moment that it happened.



The only eye-witnesses to the event would be dead in a day or two from the drugs that they took.

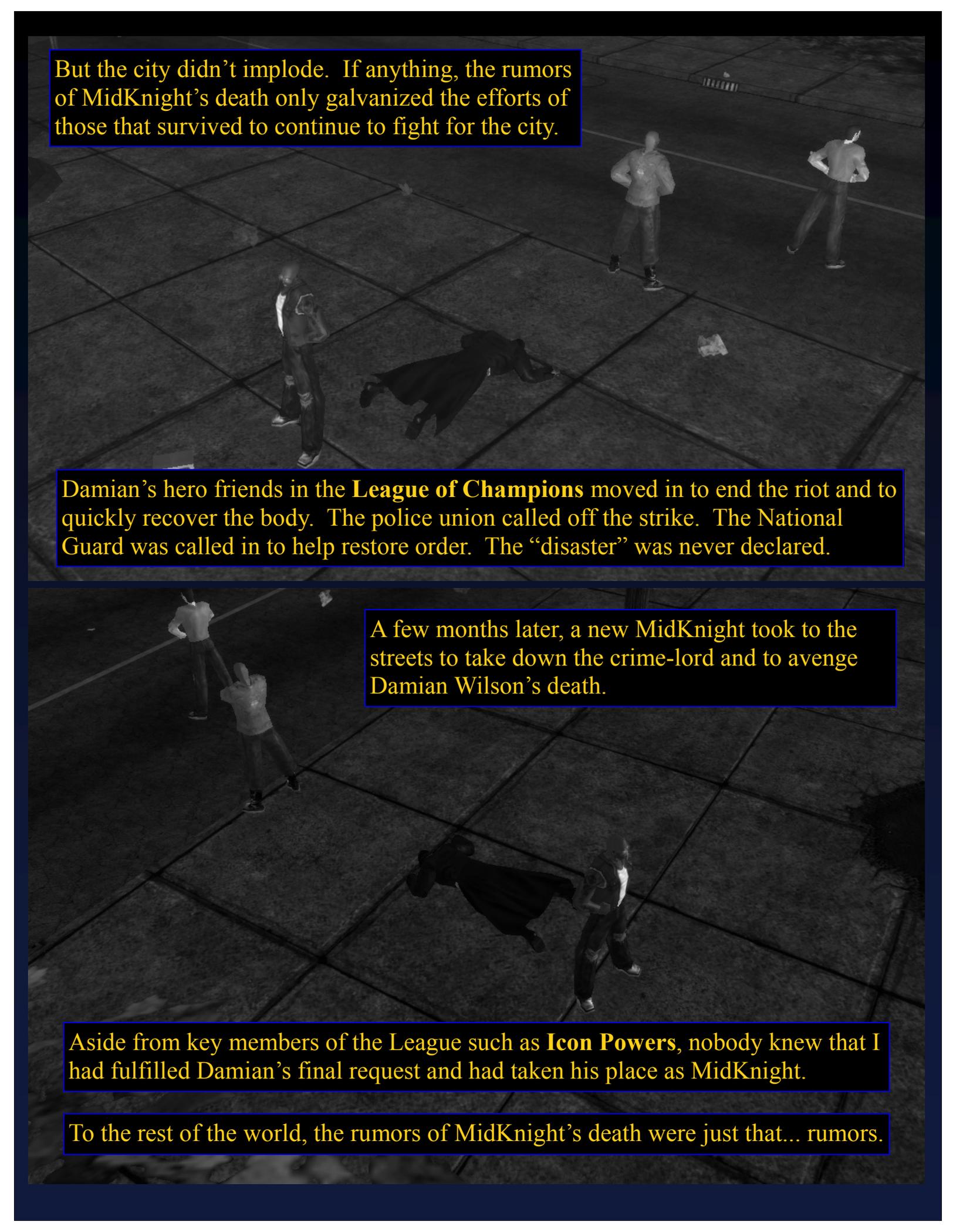
But the word soon went out all over the city that its dark protector has finally fallen.



Damian Wilson, a.k.a. MidKnight...



... was dead.



But the city didn't implode. If anything, the rumors of MidKnight's death only galvanized the efforts of those that survived to continue to fight for the city.

Damian's hero friends in the **League of Champions** moved in to end the riot and to quickly recover the body. The police union called off the strike. The National Guard was called in to help restore order. The "disaster" was never declared.

A few months later, a new MidKnight took to the streets to take down the crime-lord and to avenge Damian Wilson's death.

Aside from key members of the League such as **Icon Powers**, nobody knew that I had fulfilled Damian's final request and had taken his place as MidKnight.

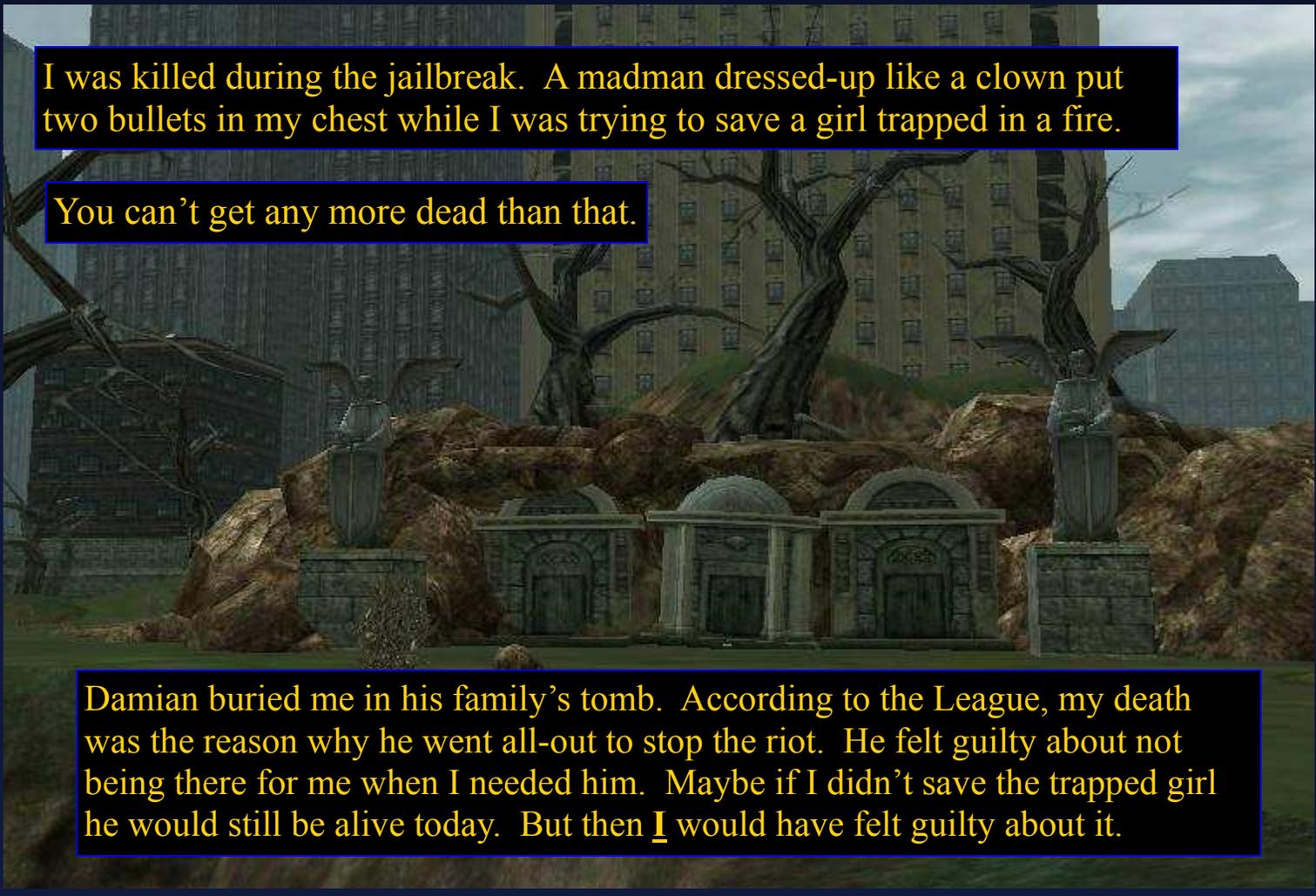
To the rest of the world, the rumors of MidKnight's death were just that... rumors.



But that wasn't the whole story.

The real reason why Jason Rich couldn't help his mentor and adopted father when it was needed the most...

... was because at that time, Jason Rich was dead.



I was killed during the jailbreak. A madman dressed-up like a clown put two bullets in my chest while I was trying to save a girl trapped in a fire.

You can't get any more dead than that.

Damian buried me in his family's tomb. According to the League, my death was the reason why he went all-out to stop the riot. He felt guilty about not being there for me when I needed him. Maybe if I didn't save the trapped girl he would still be alive today. But then I would have felt guilty about it.

Bear with me, because this is where it really gets weird...

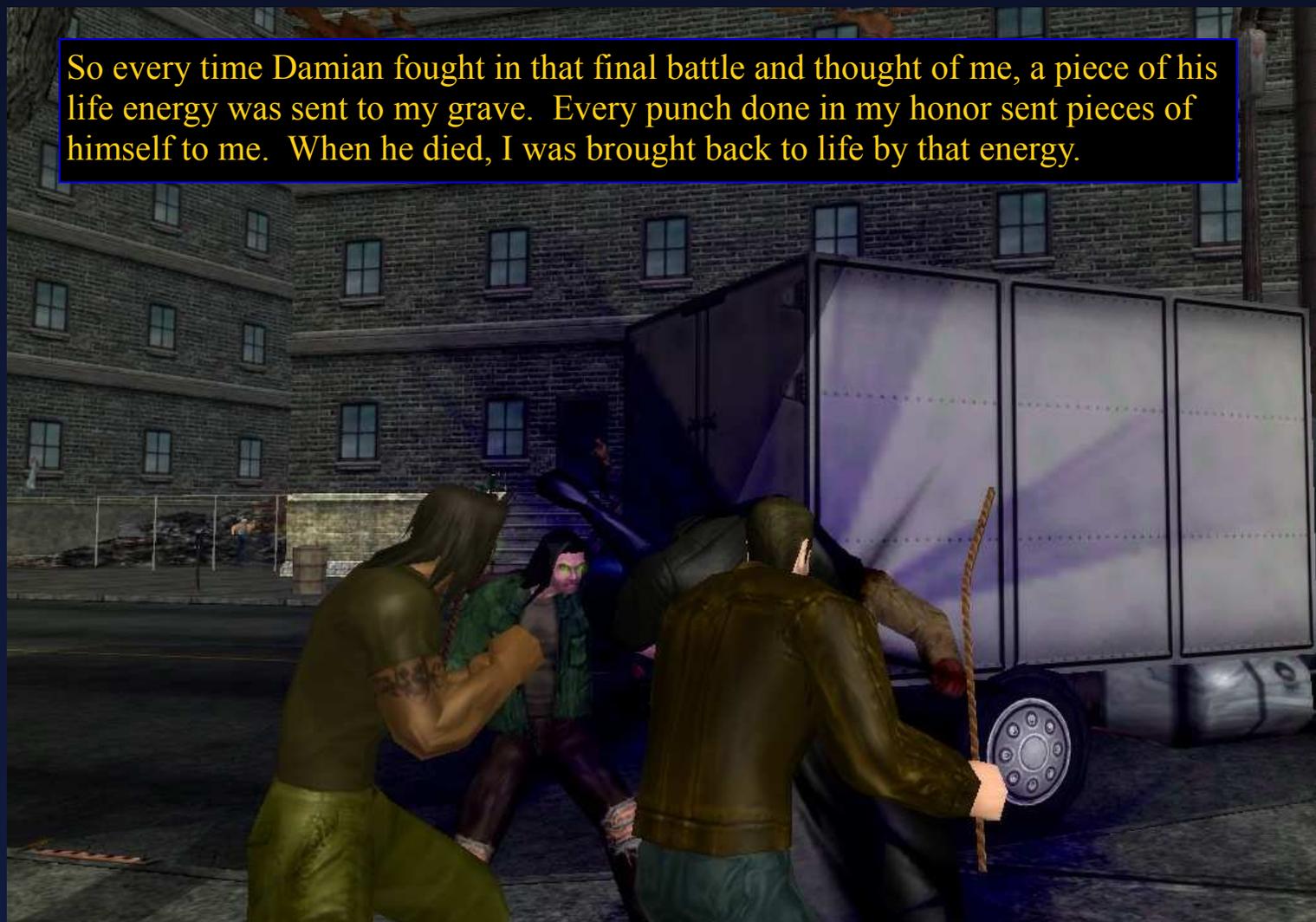
Damian had a pendant from his birth parents. A memento that he wore every time he wore his MidKnight outfit.

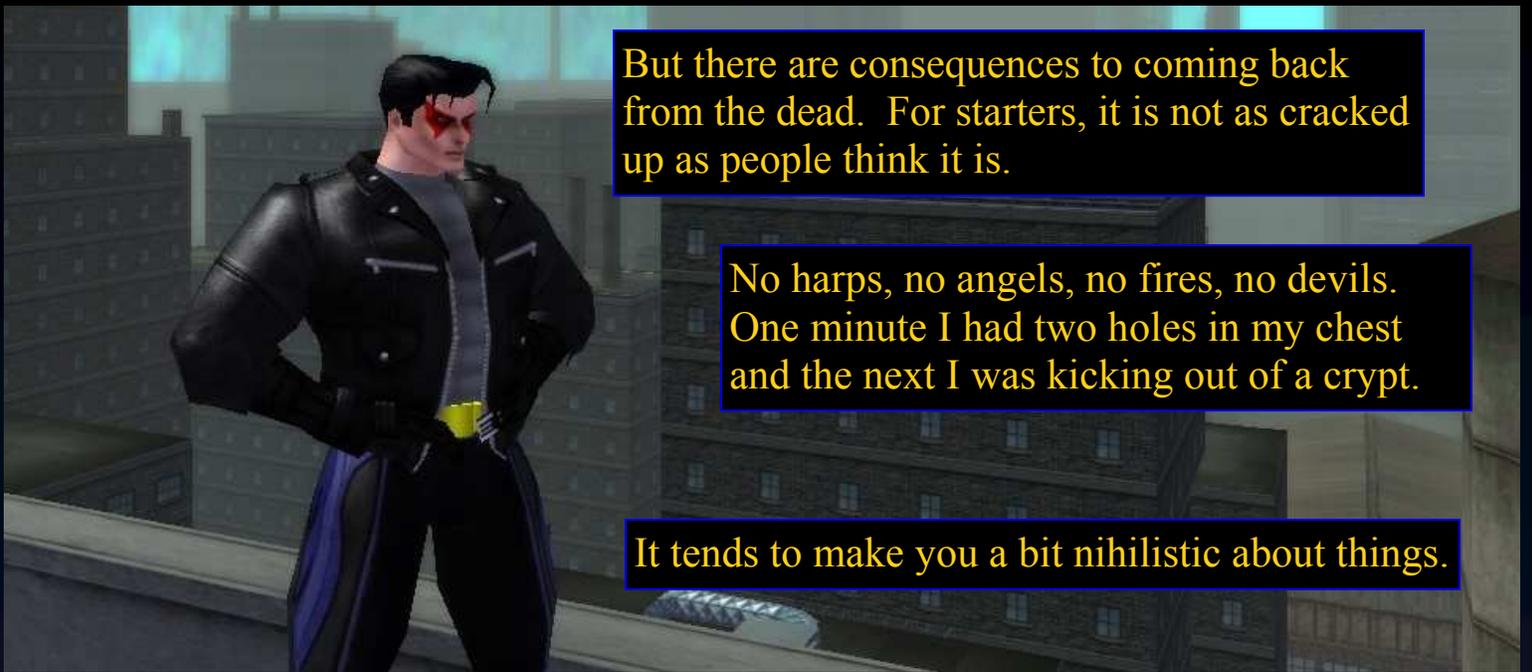
Apparently this pendant had a piece of meteor from the 1938 shower. The same kind of meteor that gave certain people their super-powers.

This meteor connected the holder to the people most strongest in his life. Since I was recently killed, that person was me.



So every time Damian fought in that final battle and thought of me, a piece of his life energy was sent to my grave. Every punch done in my honor sent pieces of himself to me. When he died, I was brought back to life by that energy.

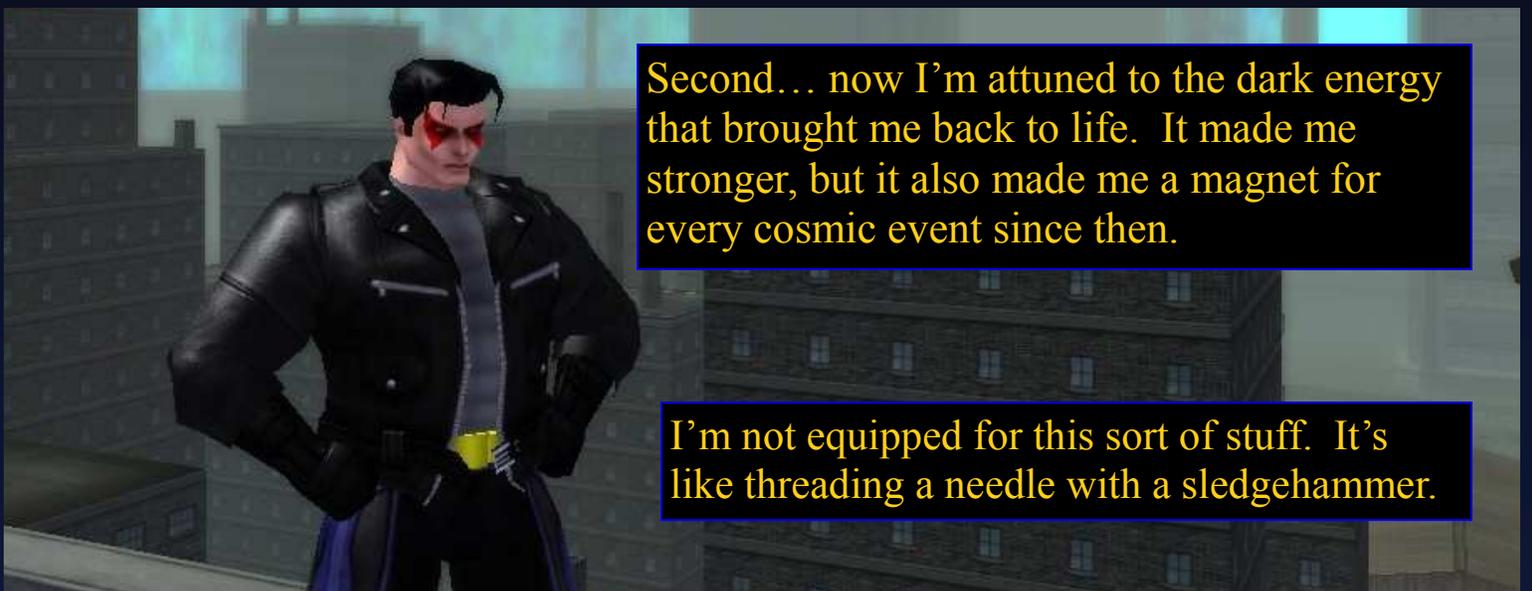




But there are consequences to coming back from the dead. For starters, it is not as cracked up as people think it is.

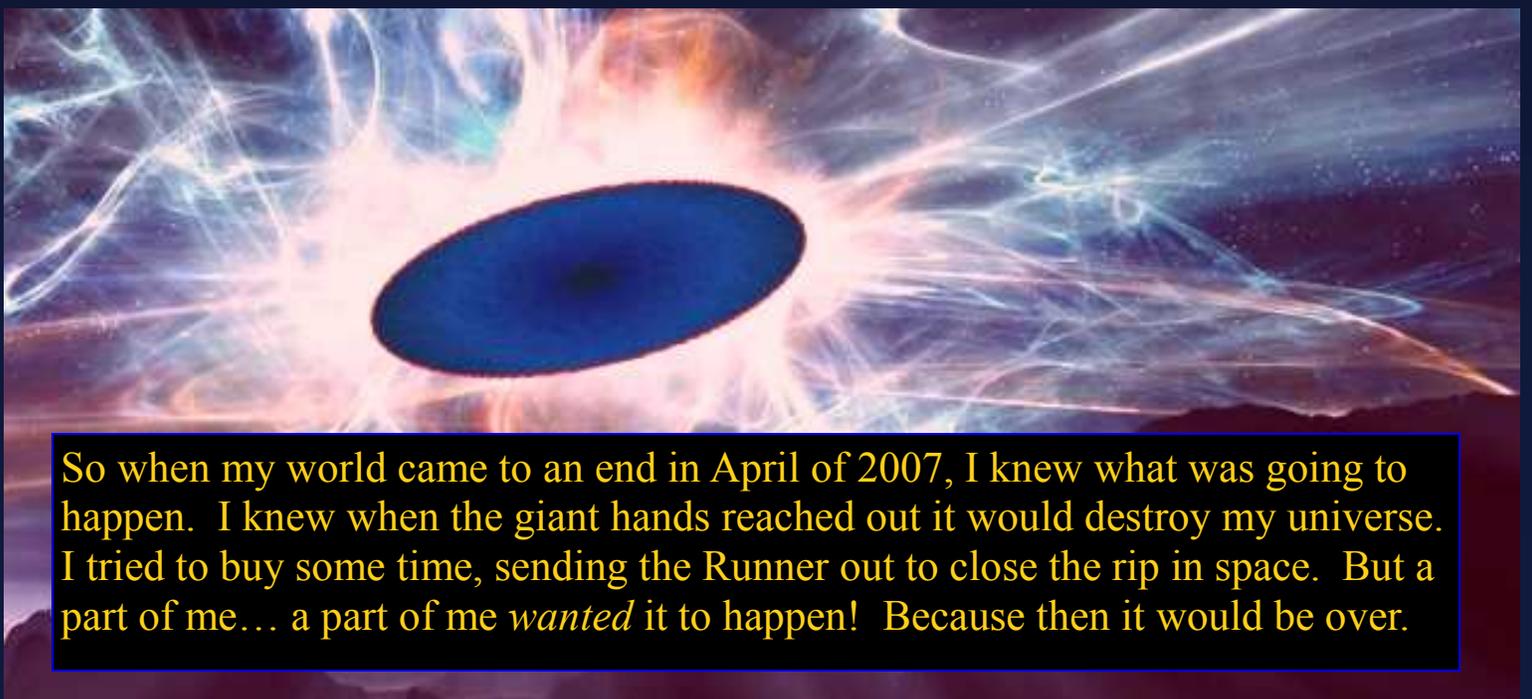
No harps, no angels, no fires, no devils. One minute I had two holes in my chest and the next I was kicking out of a crypt.

It tends to make you a bit nihilistic about things.

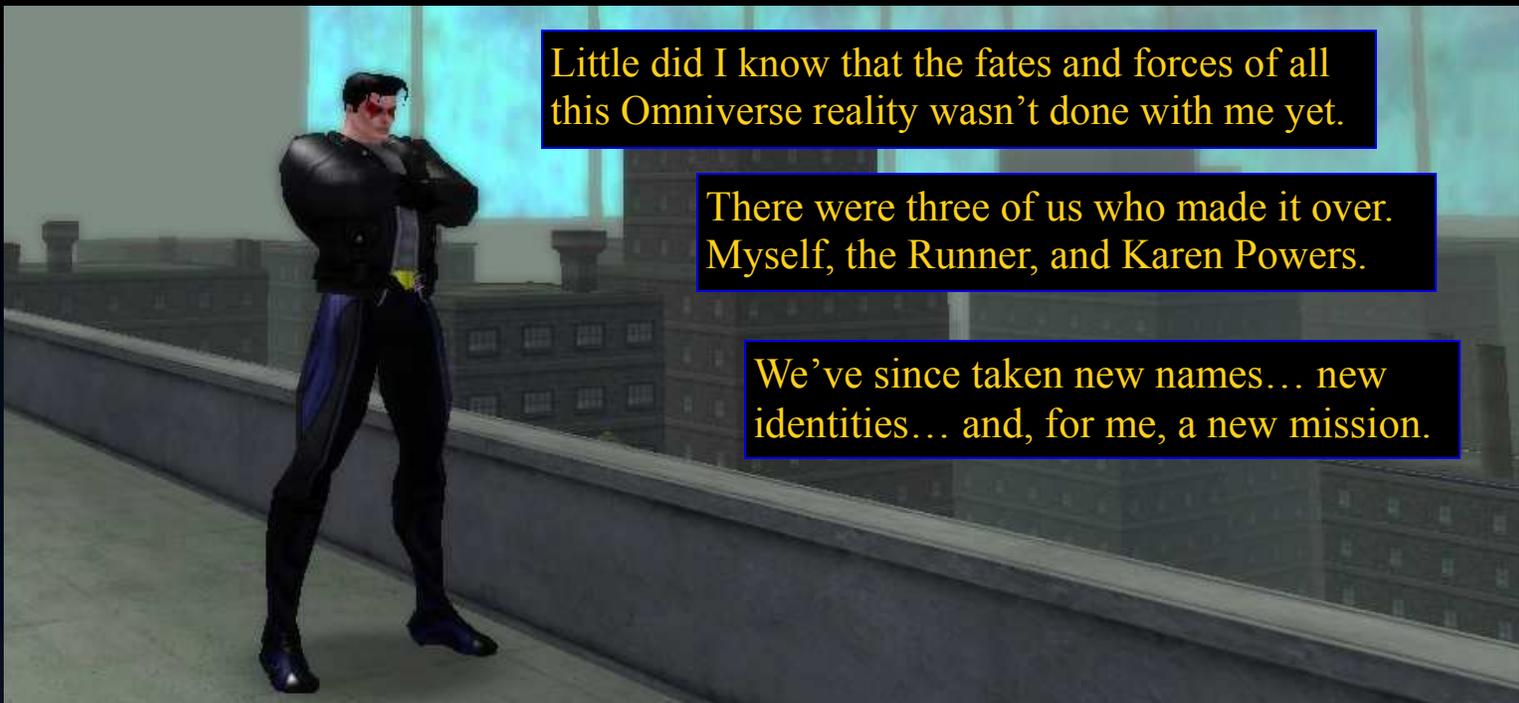


Second... now I'm attuned to the dark energy that brought me back to life. It made me stronger, but it also made me a magnet for every cosmic event since then.

I'm not equipped for this sort of stuff. It's like threading a needle with a sledgehammer.



So when my world came to an end in April of 2007, I knew what was going to happen. I knew when the giant hands reached out it would destroy my universe. I tried to buy some time, sending the Runner out to close the rip in space. But a part of me... a part of me *wanted* it to happen! Because then it would be over.



Little did I know that the fates and forces of all this Omniverse reality wasn't done with me yet.

There were three of us who made it over. Myself, the Runner, and Karen Powers.

We've since taken new names... new identities... and, for me, a new mission.

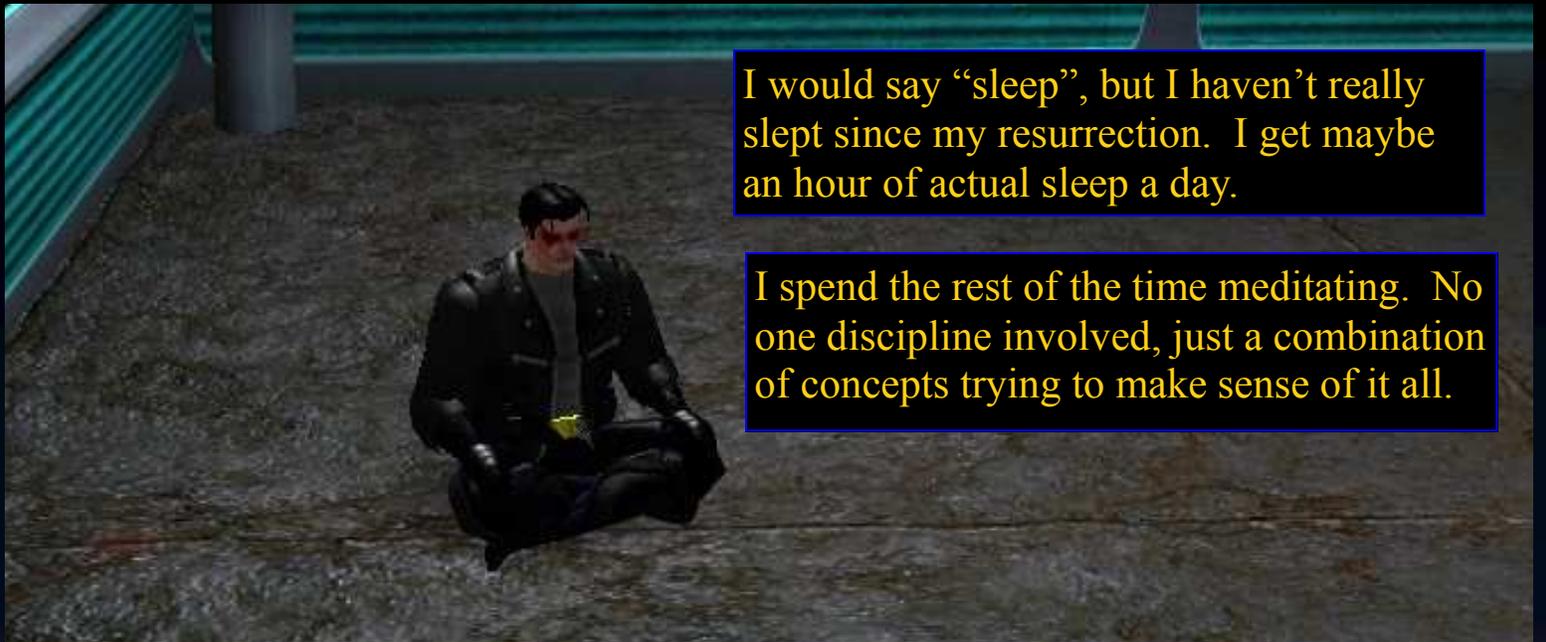


We joined a new group called the **Guardians of the Dawn**.

It gave us a place to stay and the resources to keep doing what we do.

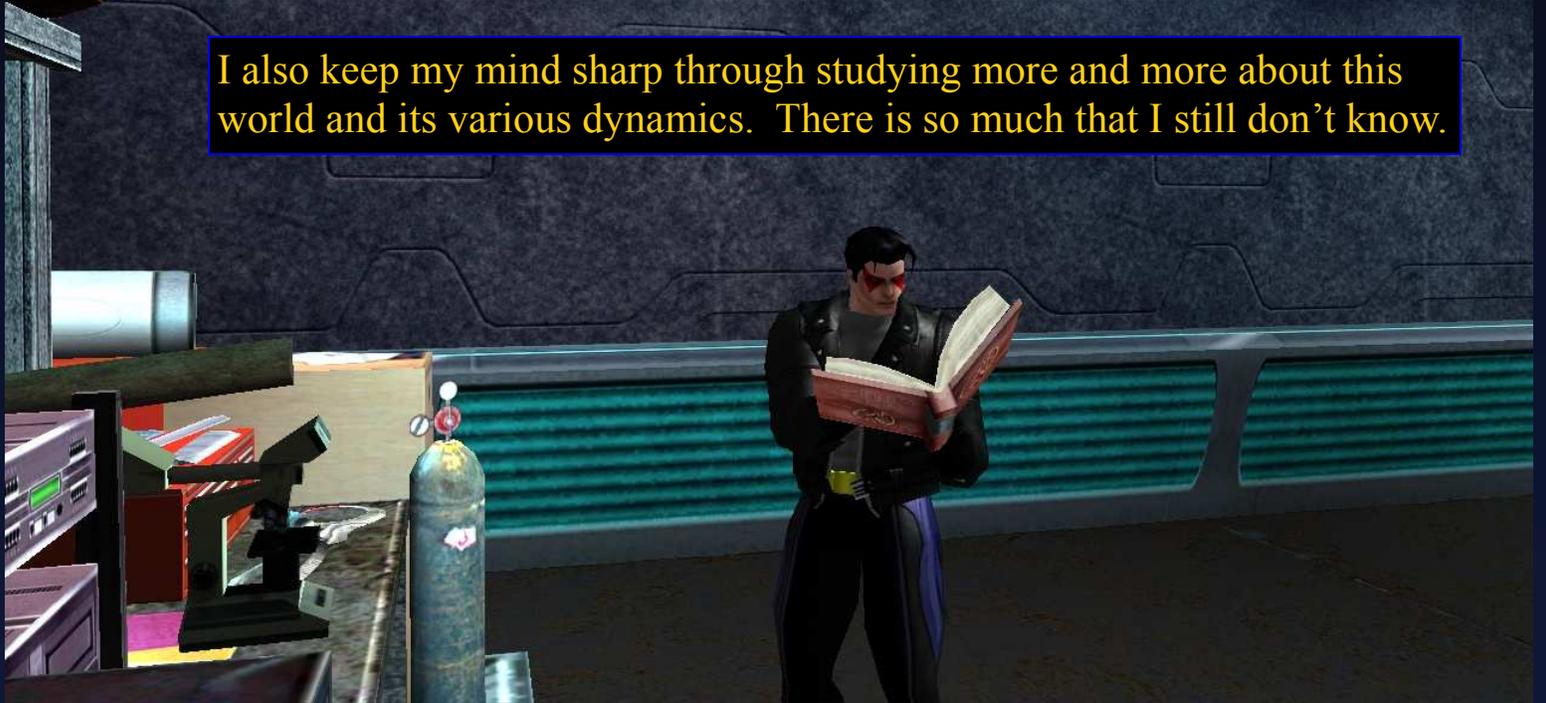


The amenities here are good. At least I can use the down-time to eat and to train to keep my body sharp.



I would say “sleep”, but I haven’t really slept since my resurrection. I get maybe an hour of actual sleep a day.

I spend the rest of the time meditating. No one discipline involved, just a combination of concepts trying to make sense of it all.



I also keep my mind sharp through studying more and more about this world and its various dynamics. There is so much that I still don’t know.



Improving my outfit cuts down on the need for me to be dependant on that dark energy.

Maybe then I won’t be such a magnet for all of that cosmic trouble that I hate.

The rest of my time belong to the night, and to keeping this district safe from the scum that infest it. Scum like the Circle of Thorns, who only work at night.

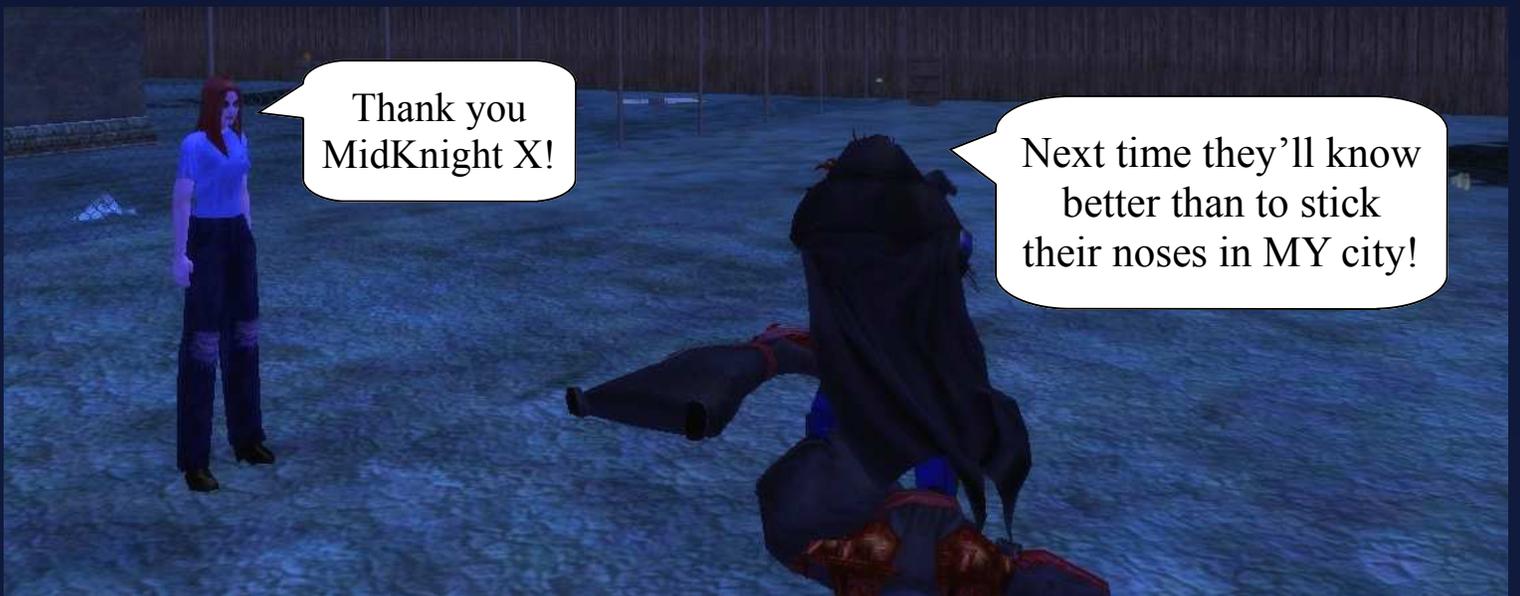


HELP!



Kill the heretic!

Aaakkkk!



Thank you
MidKnight X!

Next time they'll know
better than to stick
their noses in MY city!

Kings Row used to be ruled by the self-styled “Kings” of the underworld. Mobsters, gang leaders, drug lords, robot masterminds... criminals one and all.

That now ends.

I don't know why I survived the end of the world when others didn't, or why I was brought back to life to continue the fight of my predecessor.

But I know that Kings Row has been neglected for far too long and that is an error that needs to be corrected.

My name is **Jason Knight**, also known as **MidKnight X**.

I AM the Knight...

... and this is MY kingdom to protect.



There she is. I hope she doesn't cause too much of a fuss. This 24-hour darkness is a serious drain on my powers.*

 Galatea Powers

Oi... 'ere's the little hussy now. Prolly thinks she's trying to intimidate me by flying in. Well, tough!

One way or another, I'm going to get to the bottom of this whole imposter game.

 Lyon Powers

She's gonna find out that you don't mess with the Powers family and get away with it!

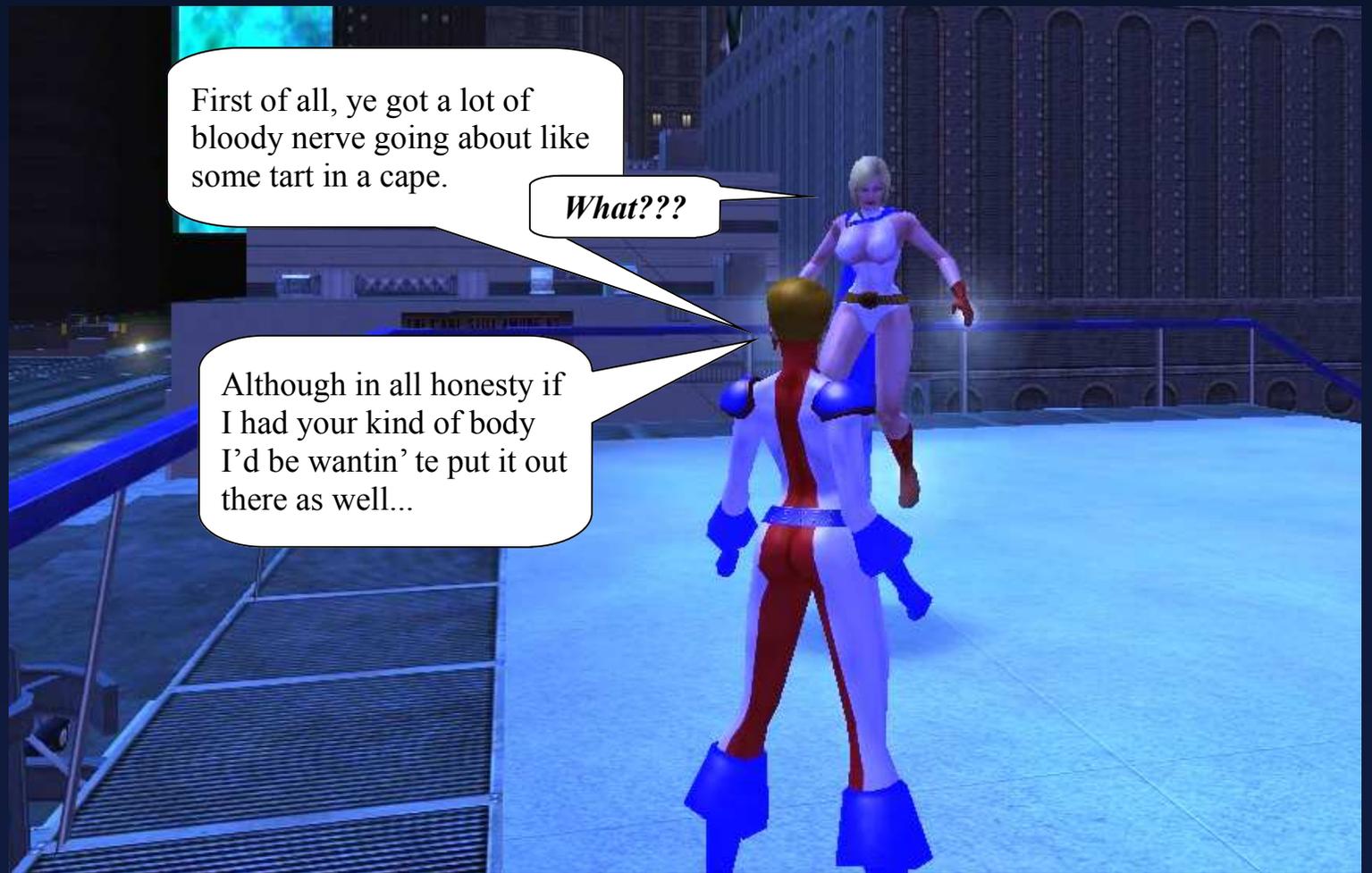


Hi. Thanks for meeting me here.

Don't be thanking me yet. You 'ave a lot of 'splaining to do before we're done.

She looks like she's about ready to take my head off.

How can she stay upright with those things?



First of all, ye got a lot of bloody nerve going about like some tart in a cape.

What???

Although in all honesty if I had your kind of body I'd be wantin' te put it out there as well...



At least let me get my feet on the ground first before you start in.

Oh I hadn't e'en begun to get started in yet...



I've got news for you missy... we Powers are a proud family! We take pride in what we do!

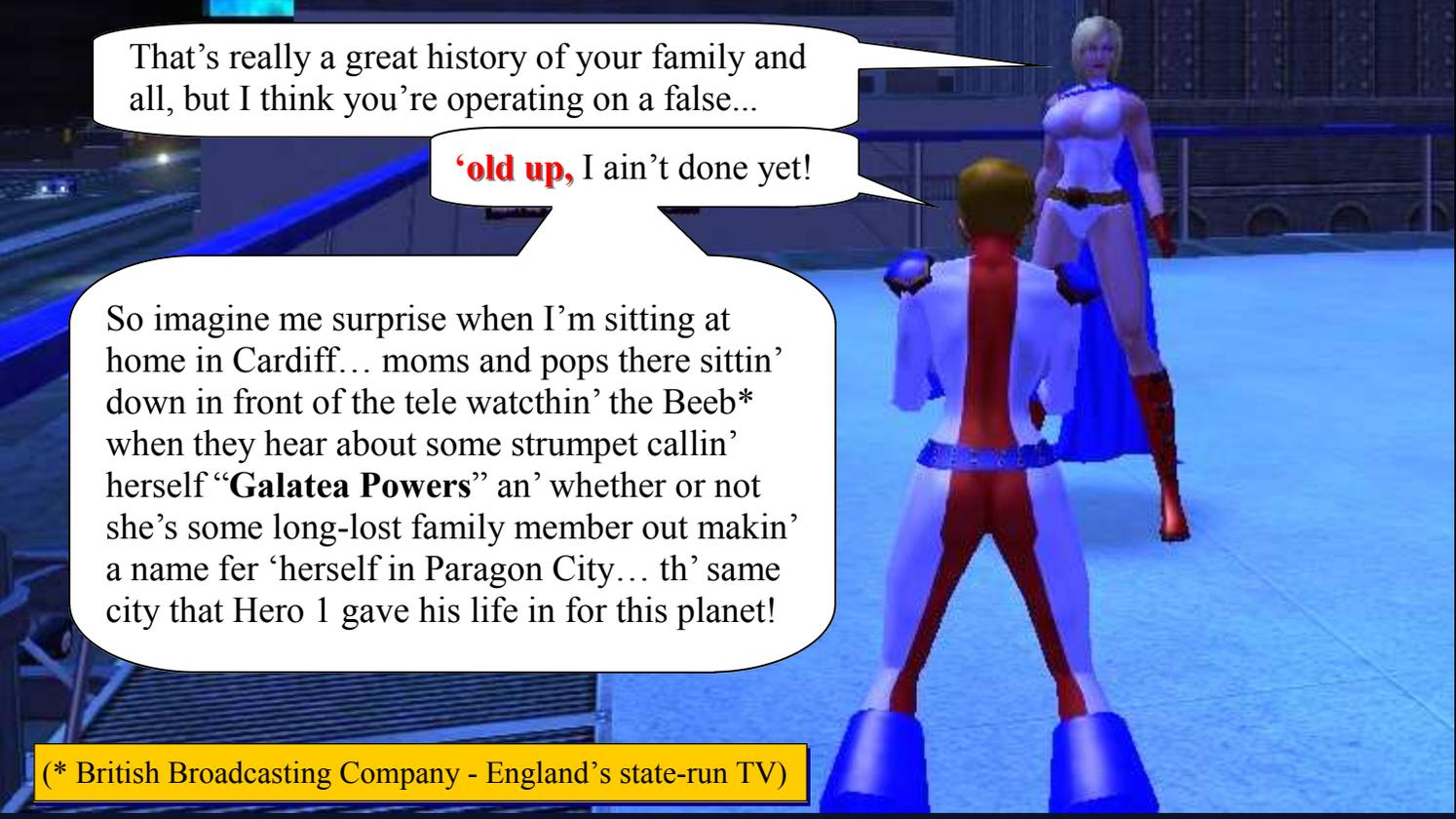


THREE BLOODY GENERATIONS of service to Queen and Country! That's what th' Powers family put in! Parents, gran'parents, an me brothers 'n sisters as well! We ALL contributed, no matter how small th' role we played!



Me grandpappy served with the first Hero One and with Statesman in World War II. He defended Buckingham Palace during the Blitz.

Me pops served with the second Hero 1 in th' Dawn Patrol... an' Hero 1 trained me himself b'fore getting' killed in th' Rikti War in 2002.

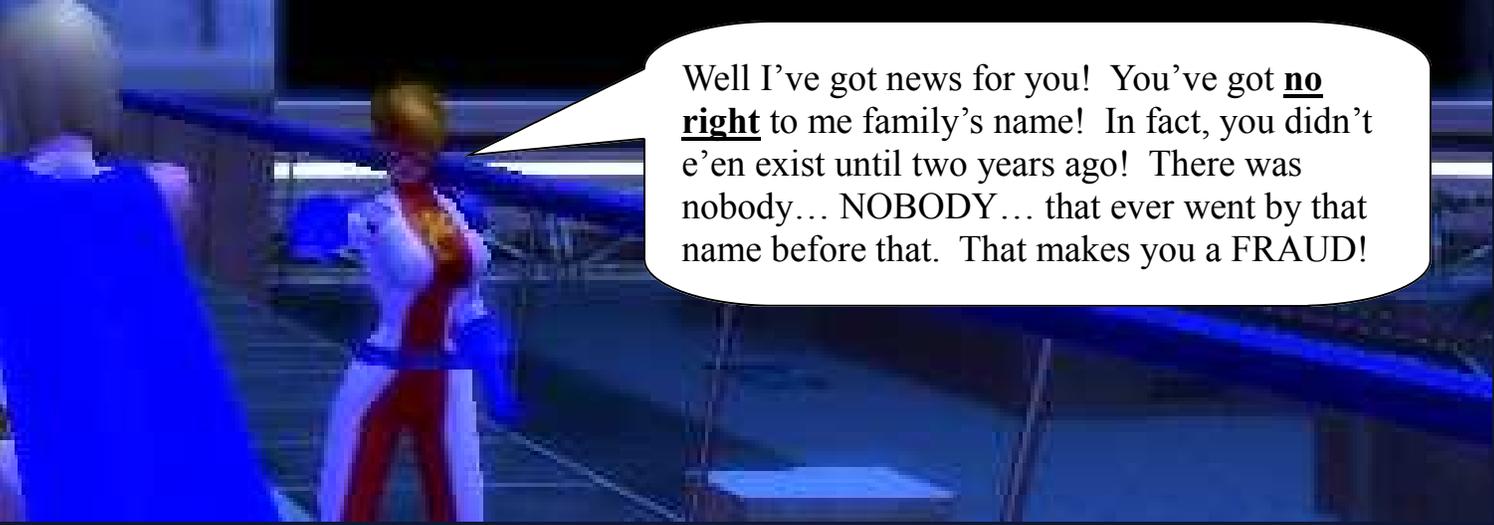


That's really a great history of your family and all, but I think you're operating on a false...

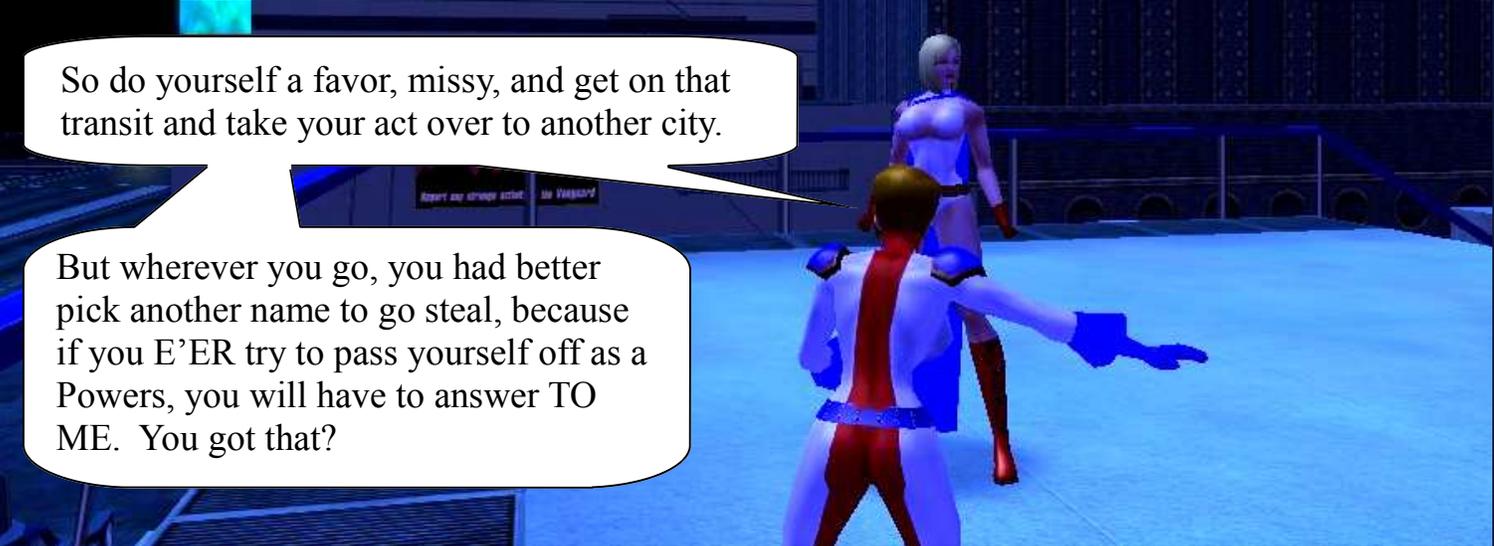
'old up, I ain't done yet!

So imagine me surprise when I'm sitting at home in Cardiff... moms and pops there sittin' down in front of the tele watchin' the Beeb* when they hear about some strumpet callin' herself "**Galatea Powers**" an' whether or not she's some long-lost family member out makin' a name fer 'herself in Paragon City... th' same city that Hero 1 gave his life in for this planet!

(* British Broadcasting Company - England's state-run TV)



Well I've got news for you! You've got **no right** to me family's name! In fact, you didn't e'en exist until two years ago! There was nobody... **NOBODY**... that ever went by that name before that. That makes you a **FRAUD!**



So do yourself a favor, missy, and get on that transit and take your act over to another city.

But wherever you go, you had better pick another name to go steal, because if you E'ER try to pass yourself off as a Powers, you will have to answer **TO ME**. You got that?



Are you done yet? Got it all out of your system? Good.

Tell you what... how about we continue this conversation inside? That way we're not giving the civilians any more of an entertainment than they are already getting from your tirade.



Okay, so we're inside...

First of all, you have a lot of nerve pulling a stunt like that, especially to someone who is at least three times more powerful than you.

If I was even half the person that I am I probably would have put you over my knee and give you what your parents apparently didn't.

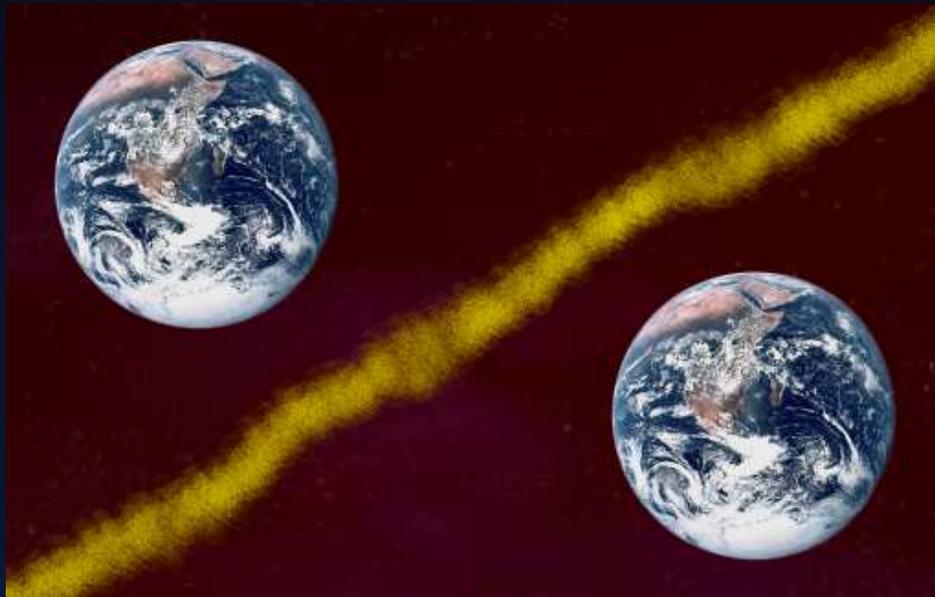


Second off... I'm not trying to "sell" anyone ANYTHING about myself! I call myself "Galatea Powers" because that IS my name!

I have never tried to claim that I was connected to your family in any way, and I have no plans on it.



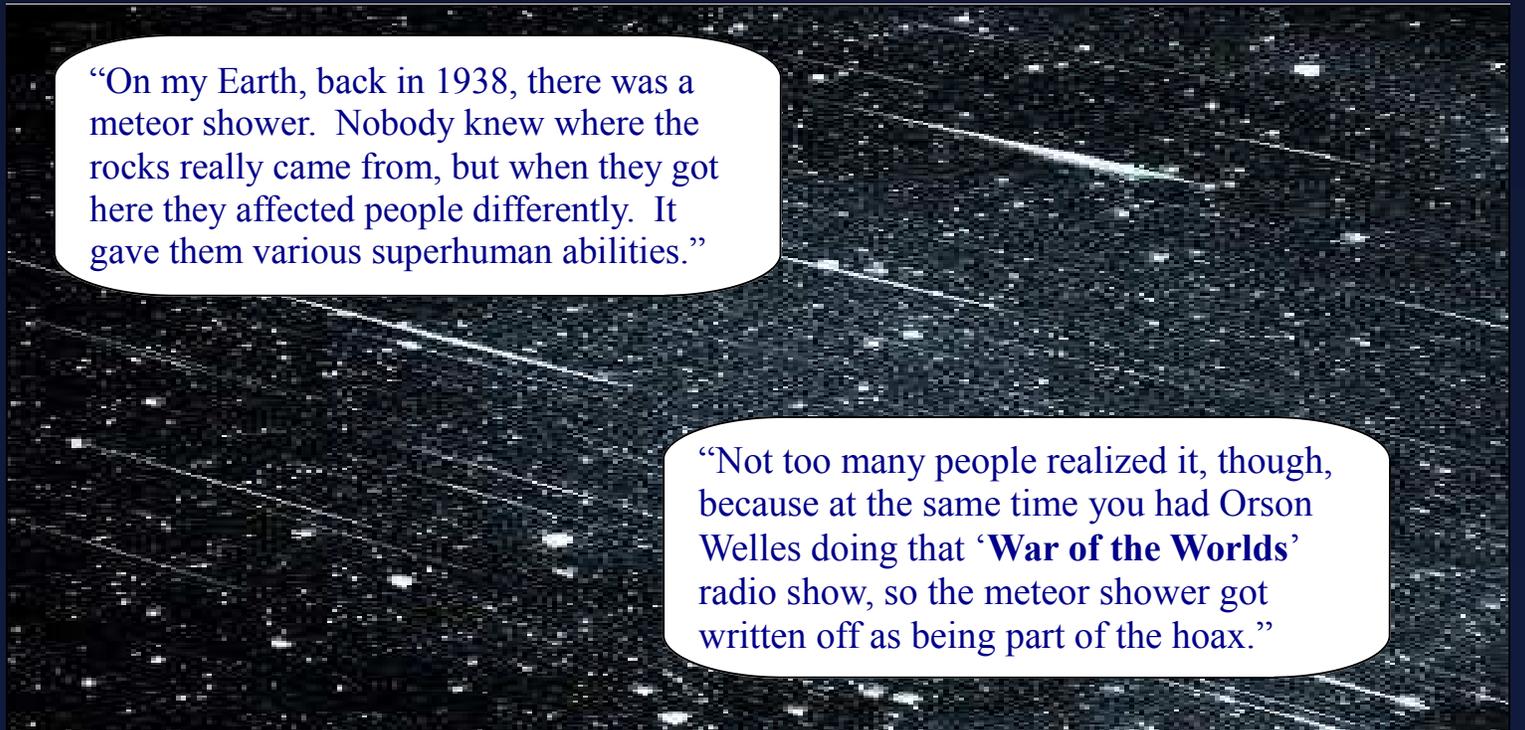
Look, I'll try to explain as much of this as I can. I certainly don't want you carrying a grudge about this for no reason other than for family pride. My own family was pretty messed up because of that sort of stuff.



"I know you're familiar with the concept of alternate dimensions. The whole portal system comes from that. Well, I'm from a world that is sort of like this one, only a few things different about it."

"Oi, you mean like that Praetorian Earth place?"

"Something like that... only without all the Statesman-like stuff."



"On my Earth, back in 1938, there was a meteor shower. Nobody knew where the rocks really came from, but when they got here they affected people differently. It gave them various superhuman abilities."

"Not too many people realized it, though, because at the same time you had Orson Welles doing that 'War of the Worlds' radio show, so the meteor shower got written off as being part of the hoax."

“My father and my uncle were the first, but soon others discovered they had powers.”

“My uncle formed a group of heroes. Kind of like the Freedom Phalanx or Dawn Patrol.”

“My father... well, let's just say that my father saw things a little differently than my uncle did.”

“Eventually I decided to follow my uncle's path and become a hero.”

“My cousin Kent, otherwise known there as **Icon Powers**, introduced me to the world.”

I give you... Karen Powers!

“It was the happiest day of my life.”

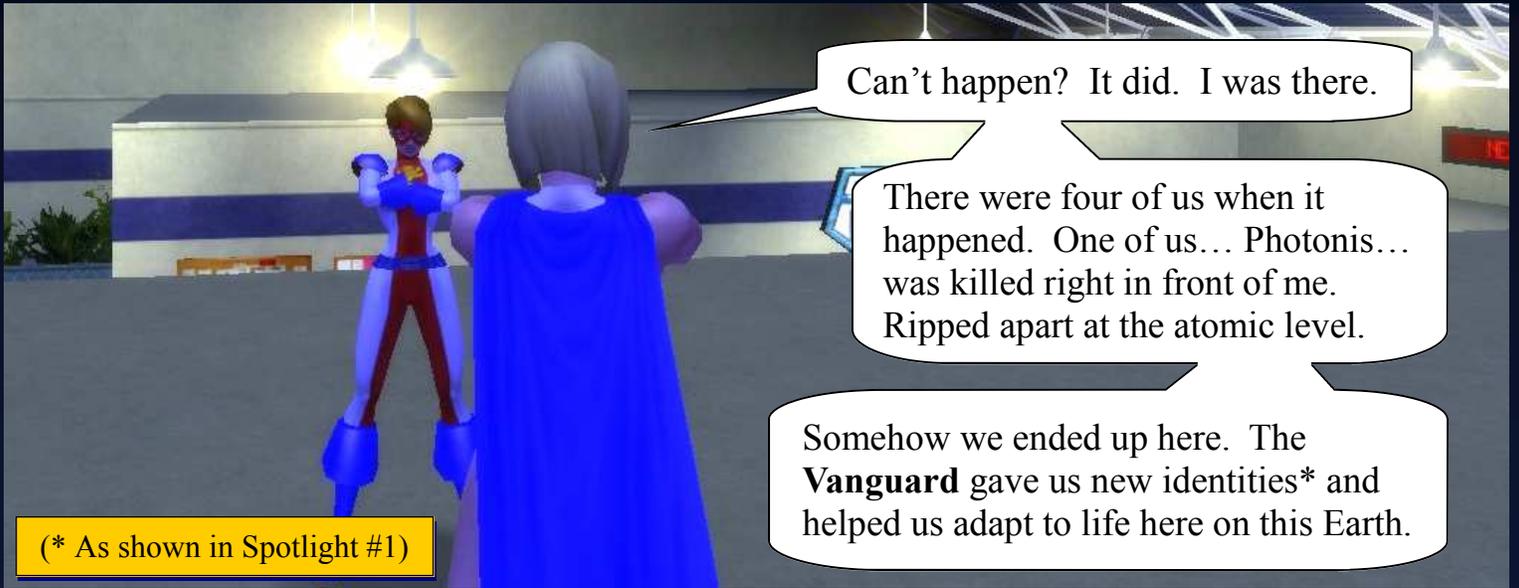


“April 2007 was the worst.”



“There was some sort of great crisis. Some power-mad monster who reached into my universe and smashed it into nothingness.”

“Oi now... get real. That can't...”



Can't happen? It did. I was there.

There were four of us when it happened. One of us... Photonis... was killed right in front of me. Ripped apart at the atomic level.

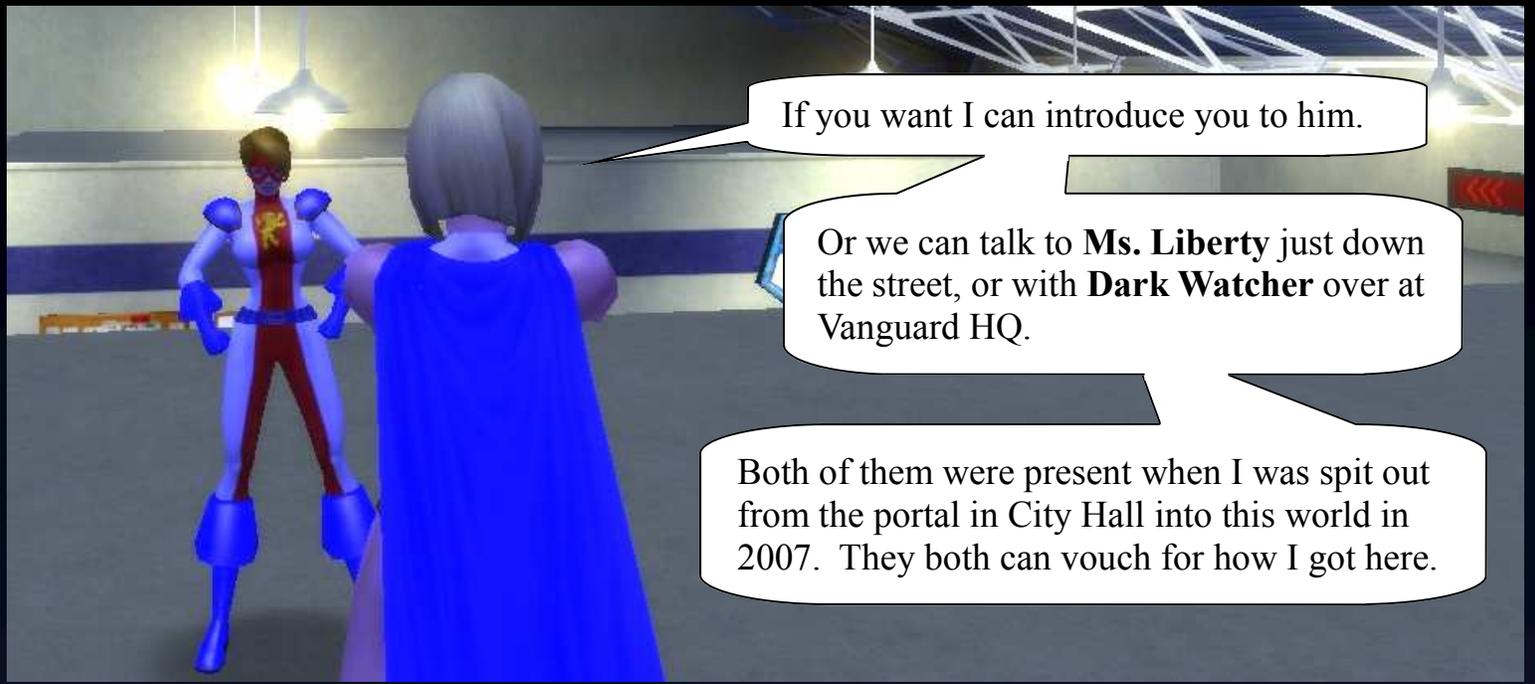
Somehow we ended up here. The **Vanguard** gave us new identities* and helped us adapt to life here on this Earth.

(* As shown in Spotlight #1)

“I later found out that my cousin Kent had also survived. He helped me piece together what had happened to us and helped to restore our knowledge of who we really were.”

“Sounds a little fishy to me...”

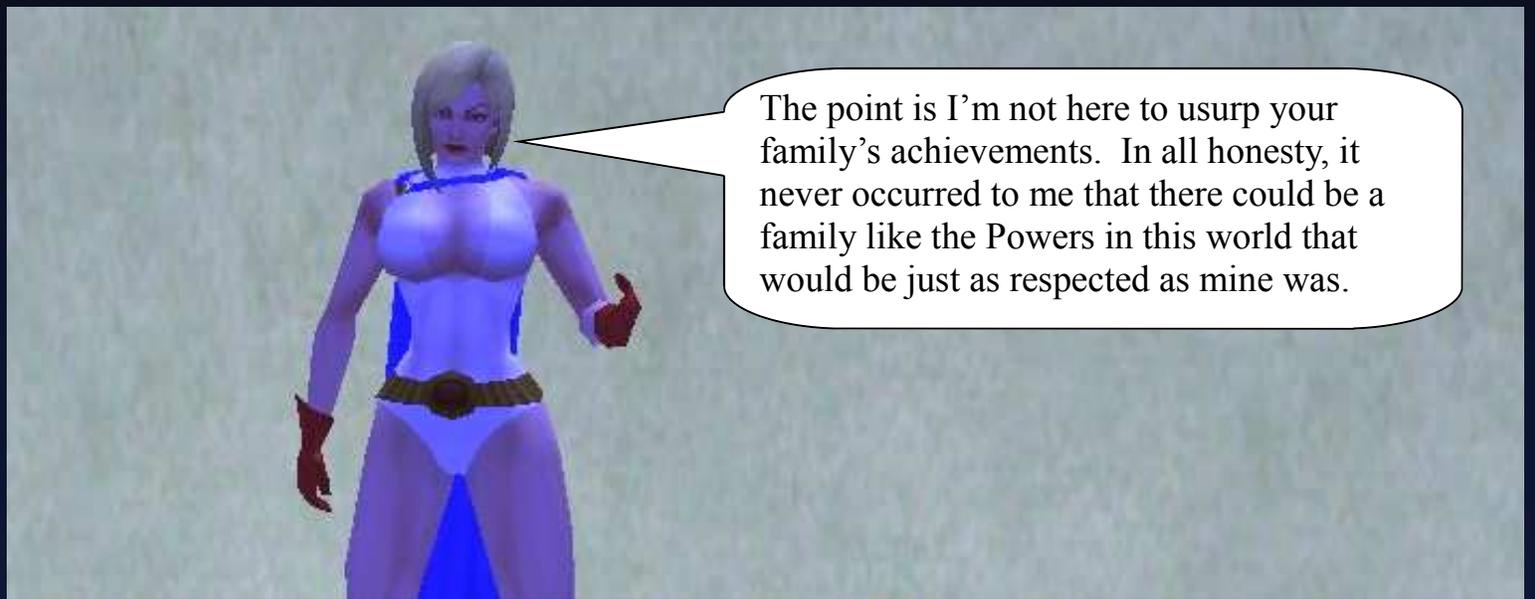




If you want I can introduce you to him.

Or we can talk to **Ms. Liberty** just down the street, or with **Dark Watcher** over at Vanguard HQ.

Both of them were present when I was spit out from the portal in City Hall into this world in 2007. They both can vouch for how I got here.



The point is I'm not here to usurp your family's achievements. In all honesty, it never occurred to me that there could be a family like the Powers in this world that would be just as respected as mine was.



After your call, I did some research. I found all of the things that your family did going back to your grandfather in World War II.

I also talked with Lady Jane at the Dawn Patrol. She had some good things to say about you, although she **DID** warn me about you being a little headstrong about things, especially when it pertained to your family.



Yeah, well I think you kin understand why I'd be a little touchy about 'at subject.

I spent the better part of my childhood bein' reminded of what me family did all these years. Constantly bein' told about the standards I had to uphold, bein' pro-active about defendin' me family's honor an' such.



Constantly held up to expectations? Being compared to other family members? Sounds like we have something in common.

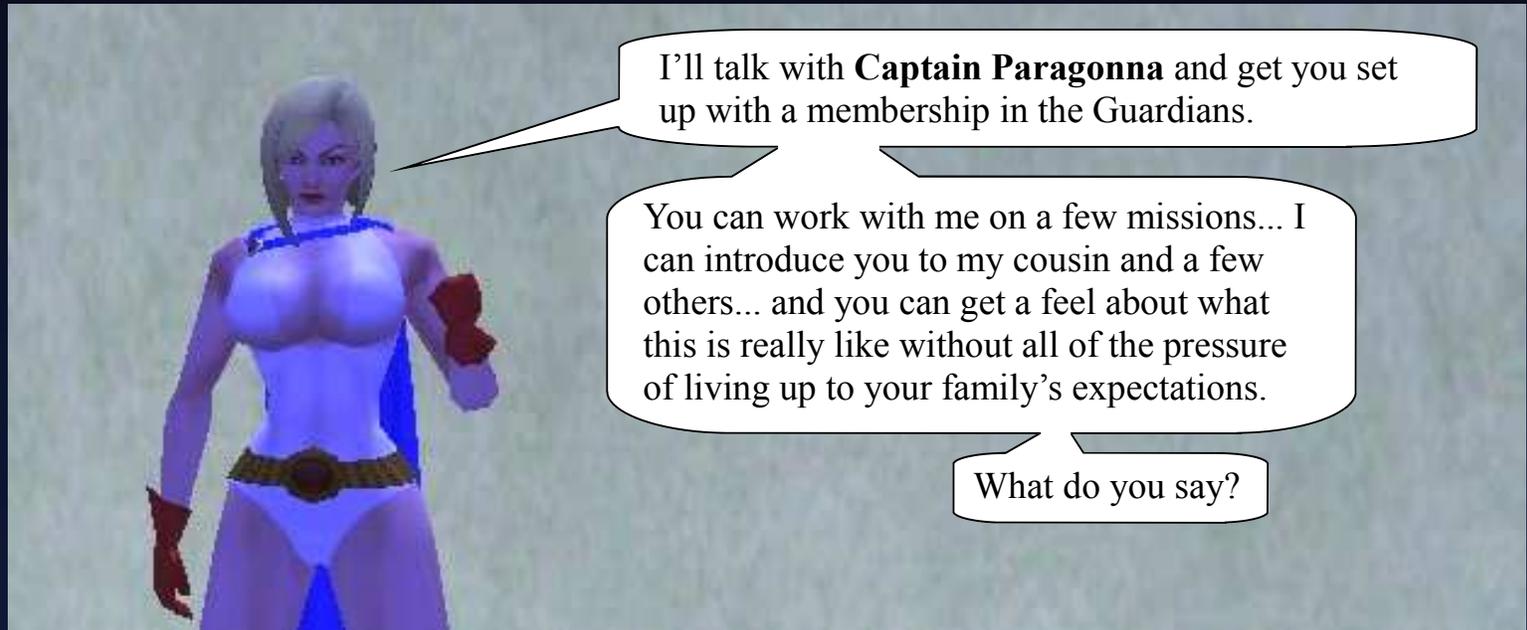


Tell you what... how about you stick around here in Paragon City for a little while?



I'd think ye'd be a bit daft after that little speech that I just embarrassed me-self with.

No, I'm serious. I really think that we have a lot in common besides our last names.



I'll talk with **Captain Paragonna** and get you set up with a membership in the Guardians.

You can work with me on a few missions... I can introduce you to my cousin and a few others... and you can get a feel about what this is really like without all of the pressure of living up to your family's expectations.

What do you say?



... Do you at least have a tele?

Big plasma with all the channels...

Not big on sidekicks...

You'd have plenty of equals.

Not really good at apologies either...

Say "Yes" and I'll let it count as your apology.



Words of wisdom from writer and creator David 2.

“It’s too DARK...”

That was my general complaint when working on this issue.

The darkness helps when it comes to certain characters like **MidKnight X**, of course. He was the third of my “Guardian Exile” pastiche characters.

Okay, who is he based on? No big surprise... Batman quickly comes to mind in DC Comics... but a few others as well. We have Obsidian from that same company, we have Jason Todd/Red Hood, Midnighter from Wildstorm’s Authority (or more like his replacement, “Last Call”), The Shadow from radio and motion pictures, The Phantom, Green Hornet, “The Captain” or US Agent from Marvel, the older Comedian from “Watchmen”, and let’s not forget Neo from “The Matrix”.

Basically it’s anyone in a trenchcoat or cape wearing dark colors and preferring to work at night or in the shadows.

But he’s not just darker in terms of color. He’s darker because of his nature. He’s come back from the dead, and he’s not exactly better because of it.

We have expectations when we die. Either it’s clouds and harps or it’s hellfire and brimstone, and our dark champion saw neither. No bright light, no loved ones, no angels or demons... just gone one minute and alive the next. Not only that, but the person he considered his adopted father is killed in the meantime and that man’s death is somehow responsible for his return. I think that would be enough to make anyone a bit jaded about their outlook on life, wouldn’t you agree?

But, no, the complaint about being too dark had nothing to do with MidKnight X. In fact, being dark works quite well for that character.

It instead had to do with our backstory... the much-anticipated meeting between Lyon Powers and Galatea Powers. And why is it so dark?

Well the darkness has to do with the fact that the scene was done during Paragon City’s darkest time of the year... the **HALLOWEEN EVENT!**

Okay, so what IS the “Halloween Event”, you ask? Well it’s the time when all of the supernatural beings take over Paragon City... and the Rogue Isles as well. You have all your typical Halloween monsters... zombies, witches, vampires, werewolves, pumpkin-head plant monsters, and ghosts, plus some giant monsters as well. We have the giant Eochai Pumpkin monster (think a fifty-foot Great Pumpkin) who sprout pumpkins everywhere it goes. We have the Jack-in-Irons, a huge freakish man carrying a chain-wrapped club. You have a Zombie Apocalypse, where

Continues on next page...

zombies literally crawl out of the ground around you to attack anything that moves. And now there is the **Deadly Apocalypse** where even more mystical-based monsters show up at random times to protect mystical banners.

The fun part of the event, though is the Trick-or-Treating. This is where you go from door-to-door looking for treats. If you're lucky you get a "Treat", in the form of a temporary costume or some other nice goody. Or if you're unlucky, you get a "Trick", which means one of the lesser Halloween monsters come out to attack you and you have to fight them for their goodies. But at least they're worth the fight.

But the key element to this event is that all of these things can only come out... **AT NIGHT**. So the forces in the Paragon Universe have cast a spell forcing 24-hour night in Paragon City and the Rogue Isles.

Don't worry, the sun is still where it is. The normal rules of the physical universe still apply. It's still daylight everywhere else in the world, when it is supposed to be daylight, just not in those two places. It's also daylight in a few other places too, but for most of the heroes and villains in the Paragon Universe, it's nighttime for about two or three weeks.

But as you saw, working with two bright-and-sunny characters with bright colors doesn't exactly work well in 24-hour nighttime. There is that perpetual "blueness" that comes out at night that really can't be fixed.

The good news is it's temporary. After a while the sun will come back out and things will be right as rain (or lack thereof) in Paragon City and the Rogue Isles. And it'll be just in time for Issue 4, which deals with a completely original character in the Guardian Paraverse.

NEXT ISSUE...

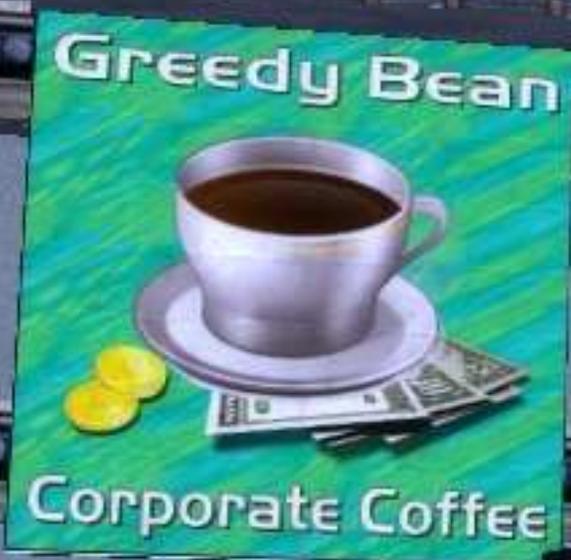


Her name is Captain Paragonna...

*Guardian leader,
Paragon City's star-spangled super-cop,
and... housewife?*



"I don't have time to waste waiting on baristas."



"I can't afford to wait ten minutes for some barista to figure out how to brew a cup of regular coffee. In my line of work, wasted time wastes lives."

"That's why when I need a quick cup of coffee, I visit the nearest **Greedy Bean Coffeehouse**. Because I know that Greedy Bean's corporate coffee is not only the best that money can buy, but it's also ready the moment I order it, hot and fresh, just like coffee should be."



Greedy Bean

With several locations in Paragon City, as well as served at all **Drenched Donuts** stores