



T FOR TEENS

FUTURE'S GUARDIAN



**ISSUE 22
2021**

Is *Starlett*
over her head?



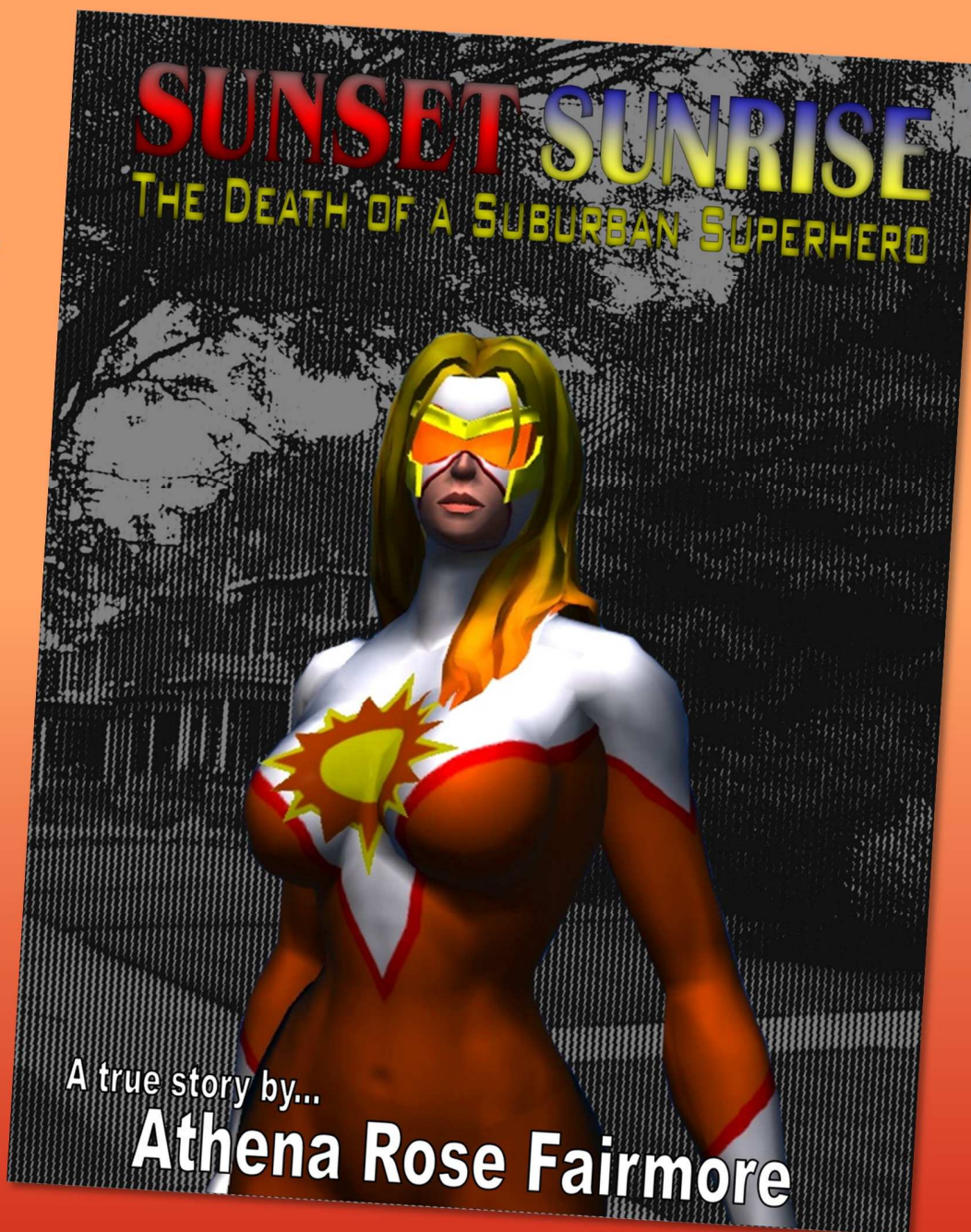
**CHAMPIONS
ONLINE**

**PERFECT
WORLD**

Soccer practice, school recitals, parent-teacher meetings, carpooling, barbeques, supervillain battles...

Just the day in the life of a suburban housewife and superhero... **Until someone discovered her secret.**

"Athena Rose Fairmore has shown that real-life can be just as perilous as her fictional worlds."
- Books 102



"I didn't want to believe it could happen, but it did."
- Hero Reader Today

"I cried. I honestly cried when I finished reading."
- Ella Bransfield

A real-life tragedy from bestselling author Athena Rose Fairmore.
Available at bookstores and online now!

From another time and from another world, Galatea Future arrived in the world of the Champions to do the one thing she tried so desperately to avoid before... to live.

It's not easy, though, when you're over a thousand years old and suddenly you're given a new life in more ways than one. Life is literally starting over again for her, and yet she is still doing what she does best: serving humanity as...

FUTURE'S GUARDIAN

"PUSHING BOUNDARIES" ***- A CHAMPIONS ONLINE STORY BY DAVID 2***

FOR YEARS, DEE RISK HAS KEPT HER DUAL LIFE AS A CLUB DEEJAY AND AS STARLETT SEPARATE.

NOW, TWO MEN KNOW WHO SHE IS, AND THEY ARE USING THAT INFORMATION TO BLACKMAIL HER.

SHE'S FORCED TO GO ON PATROL WITH ONE OF HER BLACKMAILERS, WHILE THE OTHER TAUNTS HER VIA PRIVATE CELLPHONE.

SHE HOPES THAT THE VIGILANTE RED SINNER WILL UNCOVER THE OTHER BLACKMAILER SOON SO THEY CAN PUT THIS TWO-MAN TEAM TO AN END.

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"WELCOME BACK TO 'GOOD MORNING MILLENNIUM CITY!'"

Good Morning MILLENNIUM CITY

"FILLING IN FOR VICTORIA CROWNSTONE IS GLORIA ROOT."

8 WCOG

WELCOME BACK.

WE'RE HERE IN THE POWERHOUSE THEATER TALKING WITH FAMED BESTSELLING AUTHOR ATHENA ROSE FAIRMORE.

ATHENA, WELCOME BACK TO G.M.M.C.



GLORIA ROOT
WCOG REPORTER



IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO BE HERE, GLORIA.



ATHENA ROSE FAIRMORE
AKA: GALATEA FUTURE



YOUR NEW BOOK, "SUNSET SUNRISE: THE DEATH OF A SUBURBAN SUPERHERO" WAS JUST RELEASED YESTERDAY, AND IT'S ALREADY NUMBER ONE ON THE BEST-SELLING LISTS.



"AND, UNLIKE YOUR OTHER BOOKS, THIS ONE IS ACTUALLY BASED ON REAL EVENTS."



YES, SUNRISE WAS AN ACTUAL SUPERHERO WHO LIVED AND OPERATED IN THE TOWN OF NOVI, NOT TOO FAR FROM MILLENNIUM CITY.

SHE HAD A JOB, A HUSBAND, TWO KIDS, AND SHE WOULD ONLY BE A HERO DURING CERTAIN CRISIS SITUATIONS.



I WAS CONTACTED BY SUNRISE'S FAMILY TO TELL HER STORY, GIVEN MY PAST EXPERIENCES WITH SUPERHEROES.


THEY BELIEVE THAT HER STORY NEEDED TO BE TOLD, GIVEN THE MORE SALACIOUS RUMORS ABOUT HER.



YES, THE BOOK DOES GO INTO
DETAIL ABOUT SOME OF THE
THINGS SUNRISE HAD TO DO
WHEN A NEIGHBOR'S SON
DISCOVERED HER IDENTITY.


THERE'S MENTION OF VIDEO
FILES PEERING INTO HER
BEDROOM WINDOW AND SOME
ACTIVITY THAT WE CAN'T
DISCUSS ON THIS PROGRAM.

SOME OF IT WAS
TRUE, BUT SOME
OF WHAT WAS
RUMORED WERE
JUST THAT...
RUMORS.



I WAS GIVEN
PERMISSION TO
INTERVIEW CHAD
YOUNG, THE TEENAGER
WHO BLACKMAILED
SUNRISE.

HE ADMITTED THAT A
LOT OF WHAT WAS
RUMORED ABOUT
THEIR "RELATIONSHIP"
WAS EXAGGERATED.




I SHOULD POINT OUT
THAT IT IS ILLEGAL TO
EXPOSE THE IDENTITY OF
A SUPERHERO, AND CHAD
YOUNG WAS CONVICTED
FOR HIS CRIMES AND
HE'S STILL IN PRISON
PAYING FOR THEM.



WELL I HOPE YOU CAN
CONFIRM ONE RUMOR...

I HEAR THAT THERE IS A
MOVIE IN THE WORKS
BASED ON YOUR BOOK.

IS THAT TRUE?



YES, THE HEROIC
LIFESTYLES CHANNEL WILL
BE AIRING A MOVIE BASED
ON THE EVENTS IN "SUNSET
SUNRISE".

THIS WAS AN AGREEMENT
MADE WITH SUNRISE'S
FAMILY, AND PRODUCTION
SHOULD START SOMETIME
NEXT MONTH.



WELL THAT I LOOK
FORWARD TO SEEING.

AND "SUNSET SUNRISE: THE
DEATH OF A SUBURBAN
SUPERHERO" IS AVAILABLE
NOW IN BOOKSTORES
EVERYWHERE.

ATHENA ROSE FAIRMORE,
AS ALWAYS, GREAT TO
TALK WITH YOU.

AND WE'LL BE BACK.

CLUB CAPRICE NIGHTCLUB

RENAISSANCE CENTER
MILLENNIUM CITY, MI, USA

A CLUB DEDICATED
TO HEROES, OPEN
24 HOURS A DAY,
7 DAYS A WEEK..

WHICH IS HELPFUL IF YOU'RE
A HERO THAT HAS TO BE A
HERO AT NIGHT.

DJ RISQUÉ, THE ONE IN THE
MIDDLE, NORMALLY WORKS NIGHTS.

BUT FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS, SHE
ASKED TO WORK THE DAY SHIFT.

NOT BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO,
BUT BECAUSE SHE NEEDED TO
SPEND HER NIGHTS WORKING
HER "OTHER" JOB.

VERY FEW PEOPLE
KNOW THAT SHE IS
ALSO THE VIGILANTE
STARLETT.

UNFORTUNATELY,
ONE OF THOSE FEW
IS STALKING HER.



DJ RISQUÉ
AKA: DEE RISK/STARLETT

HE IS CALLED THE "HOMETOWN HERO",
A SELF-DESCRIBED CONSERVATIVE
CRIME-FIGHTER WHO TRANSFERRED
HIS HATE-GRUDGE AGAINST JOHN
BATTLE TO BATTLE'S GIRLFRIEND.

HE KNOWS DJ RISQUÉ
IS STARLETT, HAVING
DISCOVERED IT
THROUGH BREAKING
INTO HER APARTMENT.*

NOW HE IS
USING THAT
AS LEVERAGE.



HOMETOWN HERO
STREET VIGILANTE

(* ISSUE #19)



HEY RJ, I'M
GOING TO GET
SOME MORE
WATER, OKAY?



JUST DON'T
TAKE TOO
LONG GETTING
IT THIS TIME.



SHE SEEM A
LITTLE OFF TO
YOU, BOBBY?

IT'S THE DAY
SHIFT, RJ.

EVERYONE IS
A LITTLE OFF.



CAN YOU GET
ME A COUPLE
OF BOTTLES
OF WATER?



CAN YOU HURRY
UP WITH THAT,
PLEASE?



FANCY MEETING
YOU HERE AGAIN.



I'M BUSY.
GO AWAY.



LOOK, YOU DON'T
HAVE TO PRETEND.
NOT WHEN IT'S
JUST BETWEEN US.



I'LL MAKE THIS
SIMPLE...



IN HERE... I'M NOT
THAT OTHER PERSON.
I DON'T KNOW YOU
AND YOU DON'T
KNOW ME.



OUT THERE YOU CAN
GO ON PATROLS WITH
HER ALL YOU WANT.
BUT SHE DOES NOT
EXIST IN HERE.
SHE CAN'T EXIST IN
HERE. DO YOU
UNDERSTAND THAT?



SO YOU WANT
ME TO LEAVE
YOU ALONE
IN HERE.

COMPLETELY.

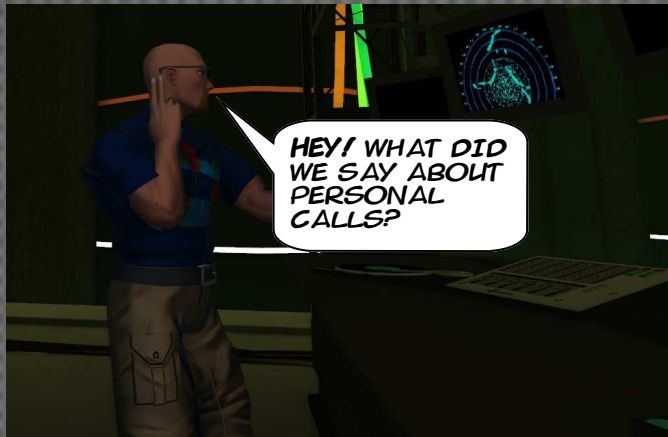


FINE.
THEN I GUESS
I'LL SEE "HER"
OUT THERE
LATER.



OUT OF
WATER...
SORRY.

BEE-DOO-DEE
BEE-DOO-DEE



HEY! WHAT DID WE SAY ABOUT PERSONAL CALLS?



I'M SORRY! I JUST GOTTA TAKE THIS AND THEN I'LL TURN IT OFF!

LOOK, I'M AT WORK AND I CAN'T TALK RIGHT NOW.



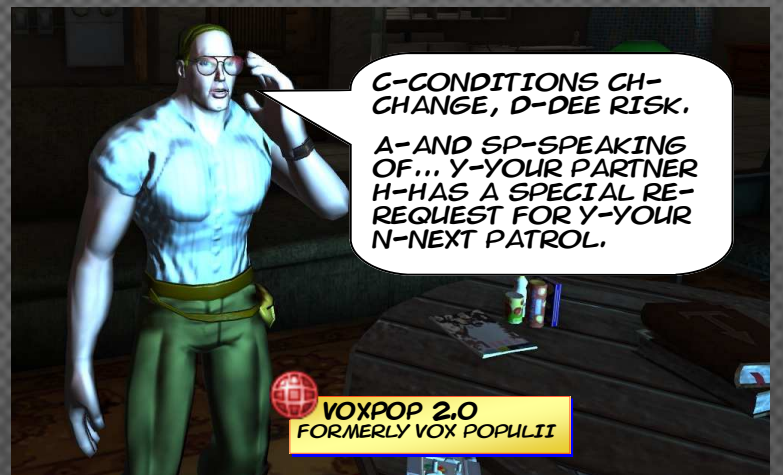
T-TH-THAT'S NOT H-HOW IT W-WORKS, DJ... RI-RISQUÉ. ST-STARLETT. WE C-CALL... Y-YOU ANSWER. A-ANYTIME OF THE DA-DAY OR NIGHT.

Y-YOU'VE BEEN D-D-DOING WELL S-SINCE YOUR BO-BOY-BOYFRIEND LEFT*. H-HATE T-TO RU-RUI-RUIN A G-600-GOOD THING B-B-BY LETTING T-THE WORLD K-KNOW WHO Y-Y-YOU ARE.

(* LAST ISSUE)

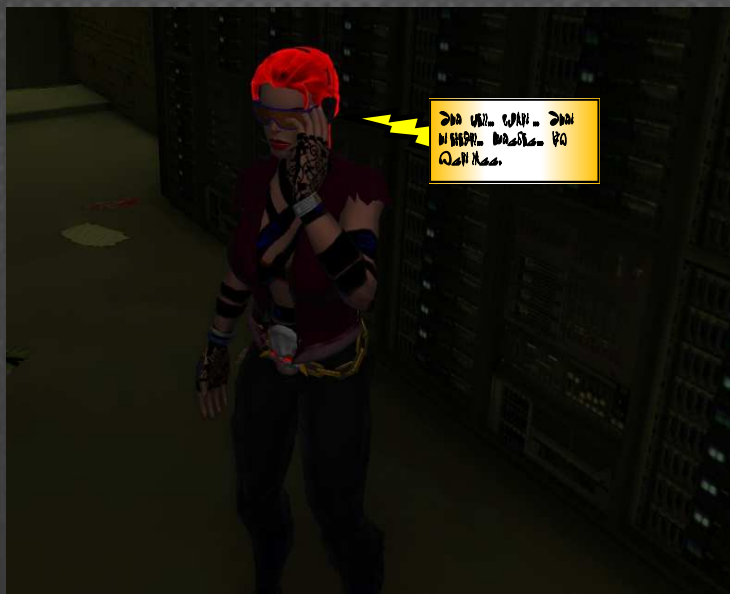


THEN TELL YOUR PARTNER TO STOP HASSLING ME IN HERE. YOU KNOW THAT WAS MY ONE CONDITION.



C-CONDITIONS CH-CHANGE, D-DEE RISK. A-AND SP-SPEAKING OF... Y-YOUR PARTNER H-HAS A SPECIAL RE-REQUEST FOR Y-YOUR N-NEXT PATROL.

VOXPOP 2.0
FORMERLY VOX POPULII



DO YOU WANT TO
HASSLE ME?
OR NOT?



YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING!

MEANWHILE, BENEATH THE RAVEN TOWER...

... A CERTAIN VIGILANTE WORKS DEEP IN THE RAVEN'S NEST.

"YOU WILL...
DO... IT OR
YOUR...
OTHER LIFE...
WILL BE...
EXPOSED."

CONNECTION
TERMINATED.

<ZA ZHONG!>*

THEY'RE REALLY
PUTTING THE SCREWS
TO STARLETT.

(* CHINESE CURSE WORD.)

RED SINNER
(AKA CASSIE DARE)

AND I CAN'T HELP
HER IF I CAN'T
TRACE THOSE
CALLS BACK TO
HER MYSTERY
BLACKMAILER.

I THOUGHT IT WOULD
BE A SIMPLE TRACE,
BUT I DON'T HAVE THE
EQUIPMENT NEEDED
TO BACKTRACK ALL
OF THE PROXY
SERVERS.

BEEP
CASSIE,
IT'S SAM.

I'M HERE.
WHAT'S UP,
SAM?

WE'VE PICKED UP SOME ACTIVITY
UPSTAIRS THAT MAY BE
CONNECTED TO WHAT YOU'RE
WORKING ON.

I'M FINISHING UP ON A
MEETING BUT MEET ME IN THE
STUDY IN A FEW HOURS.

FEW HOURS.
GOT IT.

BEEP

I HOPE YOU'RE
BRINGING DINNER
AS WELL.

HOURS LATER... BETWEEN THE RENAISSANCE
CENTER AND MERCY HOSPITAL...



SHE'S NOT HERE.
PING HER PHONE.



T-THE GPS S-S-
SAYS SHE I-IS IN
YOU-YOUR AREA.



WELL SHE BETTER
BE HERE IN THE
NEXT THIRTY
SECONDS OR...

... OR I'LL...





MEANWHILE IN THE UPSTAIRS
STUDY OF THE RAVEN TOWER...

I WAS REALLY
HOPING YOU
BROUGHT
SOME DINNER.



CASSIE DARE
AKA: RED SINNER

SORRY... PITFALLS
OF BEING THE CEO.
I'M SURE MY WIFE
HAS SOMETHING IN
THE FRIDGE FOR ME.
I HEAR YOUR OTHER
JOB'S BEEN A LITTLE
CHALLENGING.



SAMUEL DE RAVEN
CEO, MILLENNIUM INSURANCE

YOU COULD SAY THAT.
I WAS ASKED TO HELP A
HERO WITH A BLACKMAIL
PROBLEM.

IT'S A TWO-PERP TEAM.
WE KNOW THE ONE WHO
IS IN-PERSON, BUT THE
OTHER ONE WORKS IN
CYBERSPACE.

AND THE NEST
DOESN'T HAVE THE
TECH YOU NEED TO
GO THROUGH ALL
THE PROXY SERVERS
AND SHADOW
ACCOUNTS.

YEAH... I KNOW THAT
PROBLEM.

WHEN MY BROTHER
WAS DOING THIS AS
RAVENCLAW, HE WAS,
AS THE KIDS SAY,
OLD SCHOOL.

HUNTING DOWN
FUGITIVES DIDN'T
REQUIRE MAD TECH
SKILLS. IT TOOK
GUTS AND FISTS
AND CHASING
PEOPLE ON FOOT.

AND NORMALLY I'D BE OUT
THERE PUTTING THE FEAR OF
GOD INTO THESE PUNKS.

BUT WITH ONE OF THEM
WORKING ONLY ONLINE, I
CAN'T MAKE A MOVE WITHOUT
THAT ONE PULLING THE
BLACKMAIL TRIGGER.

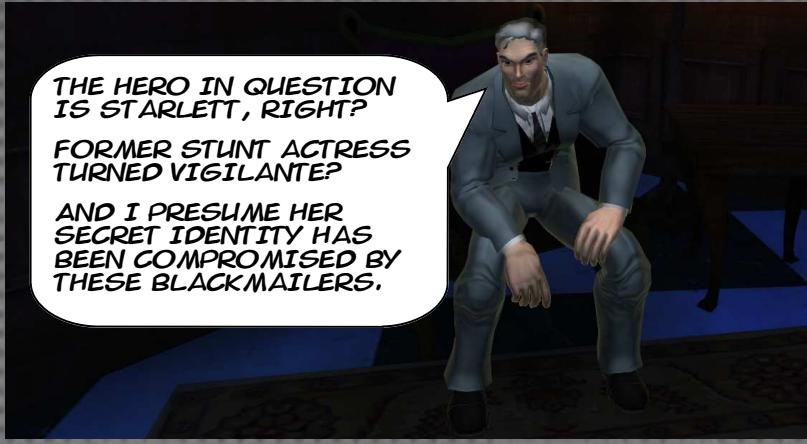
MAYBE YOU CAN FRONT SOME
UPGRADES TO THE NEST TECH?

THE PROBLEM ISN'T
THE TECHNOLOGY.

THE PROBLEM IS
THE PERSON TRYING
TO SOLVE THIS.



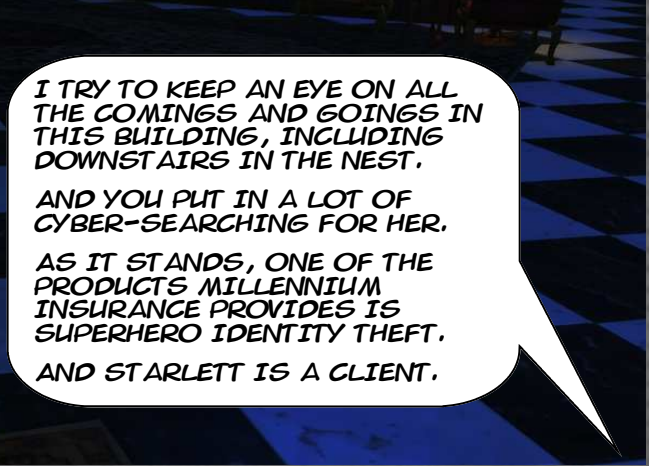
EXCUSE ME?



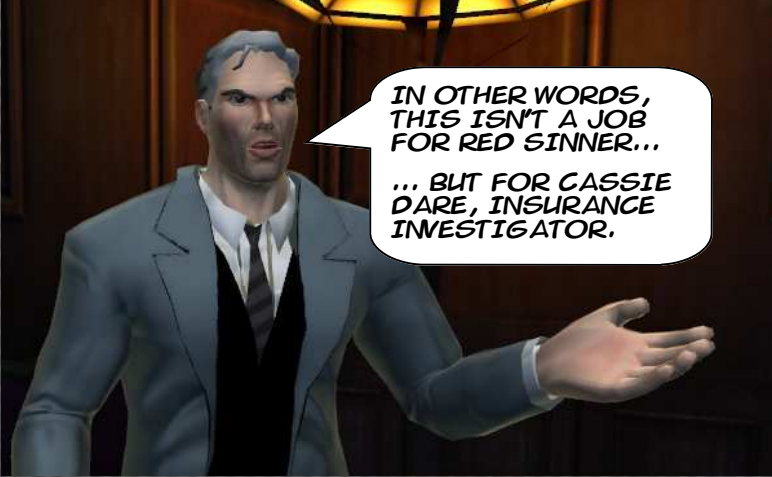
THE HERO IN QUESTION
IS STARLETT, RIGHT?
FORMER STUNT ACTRESS
TURNED VIGILANTE?
AND I PRESUME HER
SECRET IDENTITY HAS
BEEN COMPROMISED BY
THESE BLACKMAILERS.




YES, BUT HOW DID
YOU KNOW ABOUT
THIS?



I TRY TO KEEP AN EYE ON ALL
THE COMINGS AND GOINGS IN
THIS BUILDING, INCLUDING
DOWNSTAIRS IN THE NEST.
AND YOU PUT IN A LOT OF
CYBER-SEARCHING FOR HER.
AS IT STANDS, ONE OF THE
PRODUCTS MILLENNIUM
INSURANCE PROVIDES IS
SUPERHERO IDENTITY THEFT.
AND STARLETT IS A CLIENT.




IN OTHER WORDS,
THIS ISN'T A JOB
FOR RED SINNER...
... BUT FOR CASSIE
DARE, INSURANCE
INVESTIGATOR.



AND, AS YOUR
BOSS, I HAVE
SOMETHING TO
SHOW YOU THAT
MAY HAVE BEEN
SKIPPED DURING
ORIENTATION.



IS THERE DINNER
INVOLVED?



NO, BUT YOU WILL BE
ABLE TO ORDER
SPEED-E-PIZZA
FROM WHERE YOU'LL
BE AND HAVE IT
DELIVERED TO THE
LOBBY.

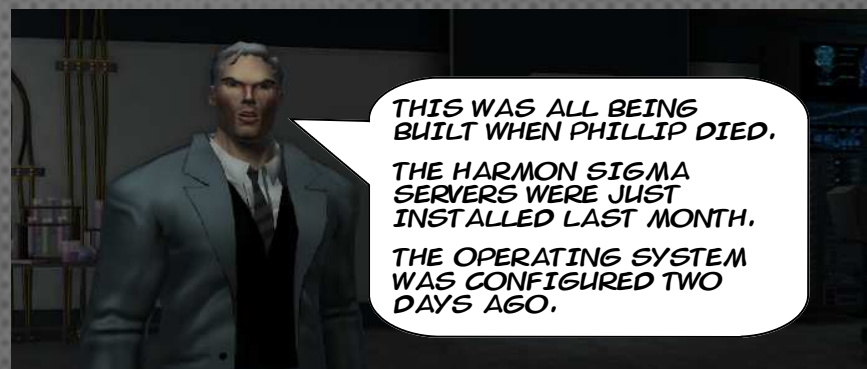
A FEW MINUTES (AND A FEW FLOORS) LATER...



YOU HAD THIS
ALL THIS TIME
AND NEVER SAID
ANYTHING?



THIS WAS ALL BEING
BUILT WHEN PHILLIP DIED.
THE HARMON SIGMA
SERVERS WERE JUST
INSTALLED LAST MONTH.
THE OPERATING SYSTEM
WAS CONFIGURED TWO
DAYS AGO.



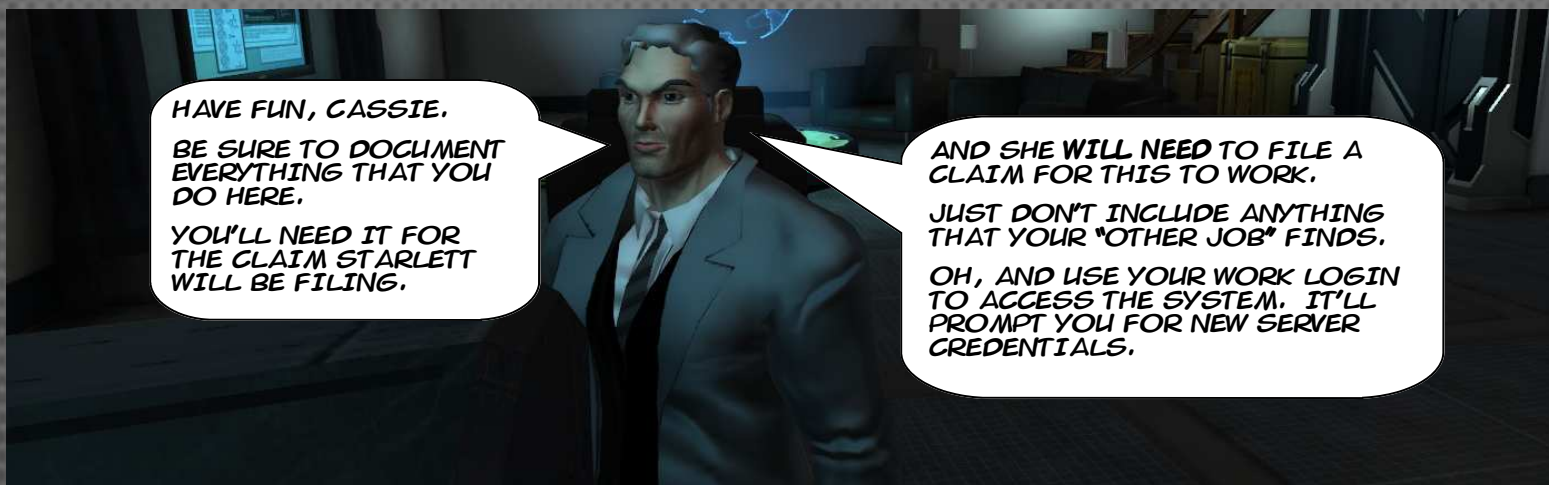
OUR TECH EXPERT
SAYS IT'S READY
FOR ANYONE WHO
IS TRAINED.
WHAT'S YOUR
HARMON TECH
RATING?



FIVE.
I THINK.



FIVE SHOULD BE ENOUGH.
JUST BE SURE TO BRUSH
UP ON YOUR HEX-LAYER
SKILLS AT SOME POINT.
GOING THROUGH THOSE
BOTS AND PROXY
SERVERS WILL BE TRICKY.





I'VE TIMED MY
BLADE TO EXTEND
AND CHARGE UP
BEFORE HE COULD
PULL THE TRIGGER.



AND I HIT HIM WITH
THE FOCUSED SLASH
THAT I LEARNED
FROM ONE OF THE
BEST SWORDSMAN IN
THE CITY.



THE STRIKE KNOCKED HIM INTO
THE BRICK WALL AND THEN
BOUNCED HIM TO THE CONCRETE.

"BIG LOU" IS
DOWN BUT
NOT DEAD.

BUT THIS WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE
A "TEAM" EFFORT.



WHAT THE HELL
WERE YOU DOING
STANDING THERE
WATCHING?



HONESTLY?
I WAS JUST... IN
AWE... OF YOUR
FIGHTING SKILL.



"TV..."
GET THIS IN
YOUR HEAD...



... THIS IS NOT SOME
SIDESHOW THAT YOU CAN
WATCH TO YOUR HEART'S
CONTENT!
THIS IS REAL! I COUNTED
ON YOU TO HAVE MY BACK.
THAT IS WHAT HEROES DO!



YOU CLEARLY HAD
HIM. YOU TOOK HIM
DOWN BEFORE I
COULD EVEN GET TO
THE OTHER SIDE OF
THE ALLEYWAY.



I HAD NOTHING BUT A TARGET
ON MY BRA-COVERED CHEST!
I HAD TO IMPROVISE BECAUSE
YOU DIDN'T FOLLOW THE PLAN.



THAT'S
ONE.



NOW IF YOU'RE
DONE GAWKING,
YOU CALL FOR A
WAGON TO PICK
LOU UP BEFORE
HE WAKES UP.

Hungry? Need your pizza fast and hot?

That's the only way we know how!

SPEED-E PIZZA

THE ONLY PIZZA MADE AND DELIVERED BY SPEEDSTERS!

We promise that if your order isn't delivered to you still piping hot in 5 minutes or less, the next one is on us!

313-SPEED-ZA

WWW.SPEDEPIZZA.MILL

Only applicable to locations within Millennium City. Redeemable order must be of the same or lesser amount. 5-minute guarantee not applicable during alien or multidimensional invasions, giant monsters, or supervillain rampages. Not a real business. This kind of business only exists in the world of Champions Online MMO. Not a real ad.

Crump's Costume Shoppe

**Premium Costumes and Costume Pieces
without paying premium costs!**

Return to the days when heroes didn't deal with expensive designer tailors out in the open, but instead with a neighborhood shop that got you whatever you needed to make your super-suit stand out and functional. You can have all the bells and whistles you want, but without designer names and without the designer costs.

Crump's small team of tailors and tailor apprentices will work with you to make sure you look your best when you are fighting crime or saving the day. Your satisfaction and privacy are guaranteed before you leave our store!

Ask about our costume exchange program! Turn that confiscated armor or weapon into a free upgrade!

303-555-7463

City Center, Millennium City, Mi.

This is a fictional business in the world of Champions Online. Not a real ad.

BRANSFIELD BOOKS



The latest titles from Rowling, Fairmore, Clancy, King, Woodward, and others.

The newest editions of the best-sellers.



The classics from mythology to science-fiction.

Newspapers from around the world. Magazines and graphic novels. Audio books.

You name it, we have it! And if we don't, we will get it for you!

City Center, Millennium City

333-555-BOOK

Bransfield Books is a fictional business in the world of Champions Online. Not a real ad.

Harmon Sigma **The ultimate in business mainframes**

Process data 12 times faster than any other mainframe system!

Next generation cyber-security and firewall protection!

Hex-layer encoding for multi-level storage and hosting!

PLATO artificial assistance program included!

"This is the most powerful computer available to the business world today. Truly Champions-level technology!"

- Businessworld Tech Magazine

**Harmon
Tech**
A Subsidiary of Harmon Industries

Call 1-800-555-8924 to schedule a consultation.

Harmon Tech is a fictional business in the world of Champions Online. Not a real product. Not a real ad.

H-HELLO...

M-MARKET RE-
RESEAR-RESEARCH.

MISTER VOXPOP,
I HOPE I AM NOT
INTERRUPTING.

M-MISTER V-VAN
CLEEF... SIR... W-
WHAT CAN I-I-I
DO FOR Y-Y-YOU?

I'LL GET TO THE POINT.
WE ARE AWARE OF YOUR
ONGOING ACTIVITY
CONCERNING STARLETT.
VARTECH DOES NOT CONDONE
OR CONDEMN YOUR ACTIVITY.
WE ARE AWARE OF YOUR...
PERSONAL... MOTIVATION
FOR HER DEGRADATION.

HOWEVER, WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE
YOUR ACTIVITIES ARE BEING TRACED.
UNDERSTAND THAT IF YOUR BUSINESS
IS DISCOVERED, VARTECH WILL NOT
PROTECT YOU OR YOUR ASSOCIATE.

I-I-I UNDER-
-ST-STAND.

GOOD.
BEEP

LATER...

OKAY, SEE
THOSE THREE?

THEY CALL IT THE
"NEIGHBORHOOD
WATCH" GAME.

THEY SHAKEDOWN
PEOPLE WHO WALK
BY THEM, SAYING
THAT THEY'RE
PROTECTING THE
NEIGHBORHOOD.

THE GANGS IN MY
HOMETOWN DID THAT TOO.
THE HEROES IN MY TOWN DID
NOTHING WHEN THEY WENT
AFTER MY FATHER'S
CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS.
THAT'S WHY I BECAME A
VIGILANTE.

THEN YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND WHY WE
NEED TO BREAK THIS
GAME UP.

HELL, THESE GANG
MEMBERS DON'T EVEN
LIVE IN THE AREA!

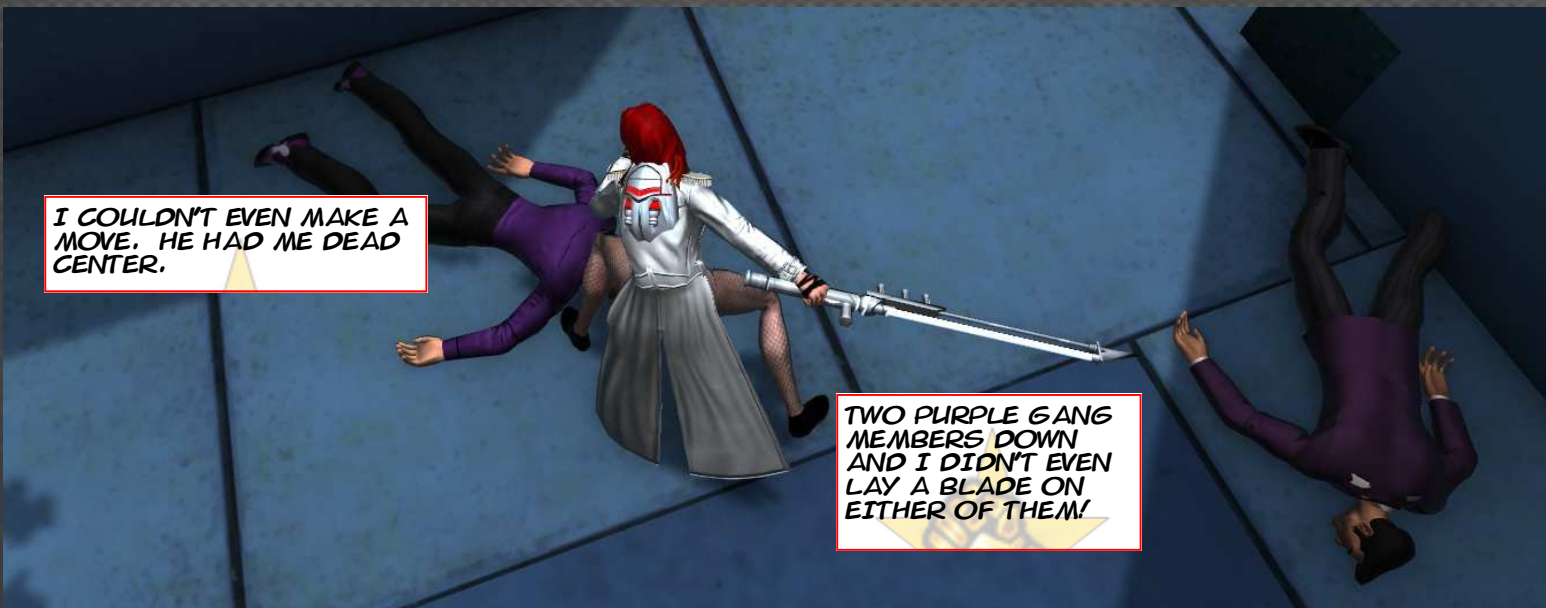
WHAT'S
THE PLAN?
SNEAK
AROUND?

NOT AFTER THE
LAST TIME.

HEAD-ON RUSH.
HARD AND FAST
BEFORE THEY CAN
GET THEIR
WEAPONS OUT.

READY?

I GOT THE BLADE
SO I'LL LEAD.
YOU BETTER BE
RIGHT BEHIND ME.





THE THIRD
ONE FLED.

IF THESE ARE
THE WORK OF
THE HOMETOWN
HERO, I'D BE...



I DON'T
BELIEVE IT!



ARE YOU OUT
OF YOUR
GODDAMNED
MIND?!



WHAT?
FOOT CRAMP.
I WAS ABOUT READY
TO MOVE WHEN MY
FOOT JUST CRAMPED
RIGHT UP.



YOU HAD ALREADY
CHARGED AHEAD,
SO THE BEST I
COULD DO WAS TO
HOLD BACK AND
WAIT UNTIL THE
CRAMP WORKED ITS
WAY OUT.



AND HAS IT
WORKED ITS
WAY OUT?

YEAH, I
THINK
IT DID.



OH HH YEAH,
MUCH BETTER.



HAVE ANY OTHER
"CONVENIENT" INJURIES
I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT
BEFORE RISKING MY
BUTT AGAIN?

TENNIS ELBOW? DRY
EYE? BONE SPURS?



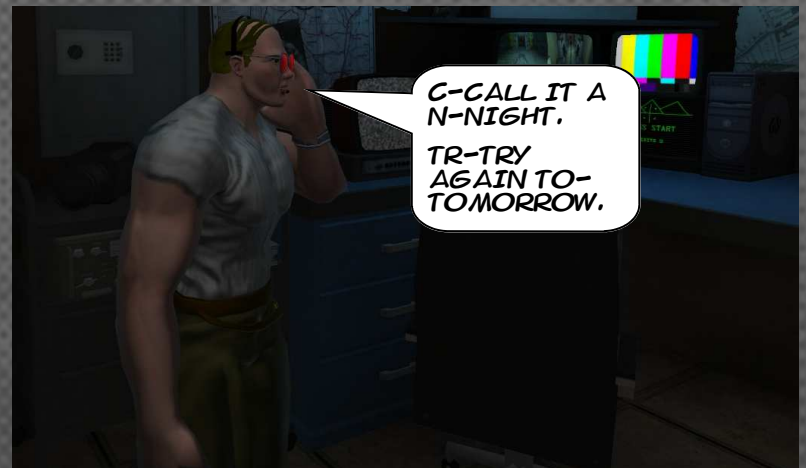
I DON'T THINK
I CARE FOR
YOUR TONE.



AND I DON'T CARE
FOR YOUR
WILLINGNESS TO
LEAVE ME TO FEND
FOR MYSELF
WHILE YOU HIDE
LIKE A COWARD.



THAT'S TWO!
YOU DON'T
WANT TO SEE
WHAT HAPPENS
AT THREE.



C-CALL IT A
N-NIGHT.

TR-TRY
AGAIN TO-
TOMORROW.



A FEW HOURS
(AND PIZZA)
LATER...



THIS GUY'S GOOD.
HE'S REALLY GOOD.
NO WONDER SAM
ASKED ME ABOUT
HEX-LAYERING.



WHOEVER THIS GUY IS,
HE'S GOT BOT RELAYS
BOUNCING AROUND
EVERYWHERE.
HE COULD CAUSE
SOME SERIOUS
ONLINE DAMAGE, IF
HE HASN'T ALREADY.

BUT... I THINK I'M ABOUT ONE
OR TWO CALLS AWAY FROM
GETTING TO THE ORIGIN.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT
UNTIL HE CONTACTS
STARLETT AGAIN.



THE BASEMENT APARTMENT
OF DEE RISK...



WHERE
IS SHE?



I... I... I C-CAN'T
FIND H-HER
PHONE. IT... IT'S
LIKE IT VAN-VAN-
VANISHED.



WHERE THE HELL
COULD SHE GO
WHERE YOU CAN'T
TRACE HER THROUGH
THAT PHONE?



THE NEXT MORNING...

GOOD MORNING!



DEE RISK
AKA: STARLETT

DID YOU WATCH
OVER ME LAST
NIGHT, MISS
LADY?

GRROW?



MISS LADY
TRAVEL CAT

MISS LADY
WOULDN'T BE A
GOOD TRAVEL CAT
IF SHE DIDN'T
WATCH OVER HER
GUESTS.

HOW WAS THE
CHAIR?



RONIN OMEGA
COSMIC TRAVELER

YOU'RE RIGHT,
IT'S INCREDIBLY
COMFORTABLE.
THANK YOU FOR
LETTING ME SLEEP
HERE LAST NIGHT.

THE CHAIR IS
ALWAYS YOURS IF
YOU NEED IT, DEE.
ALTHOUGH I WAS
CURIOUS WHY YOU
WOULD CALL ON IT
NOW.

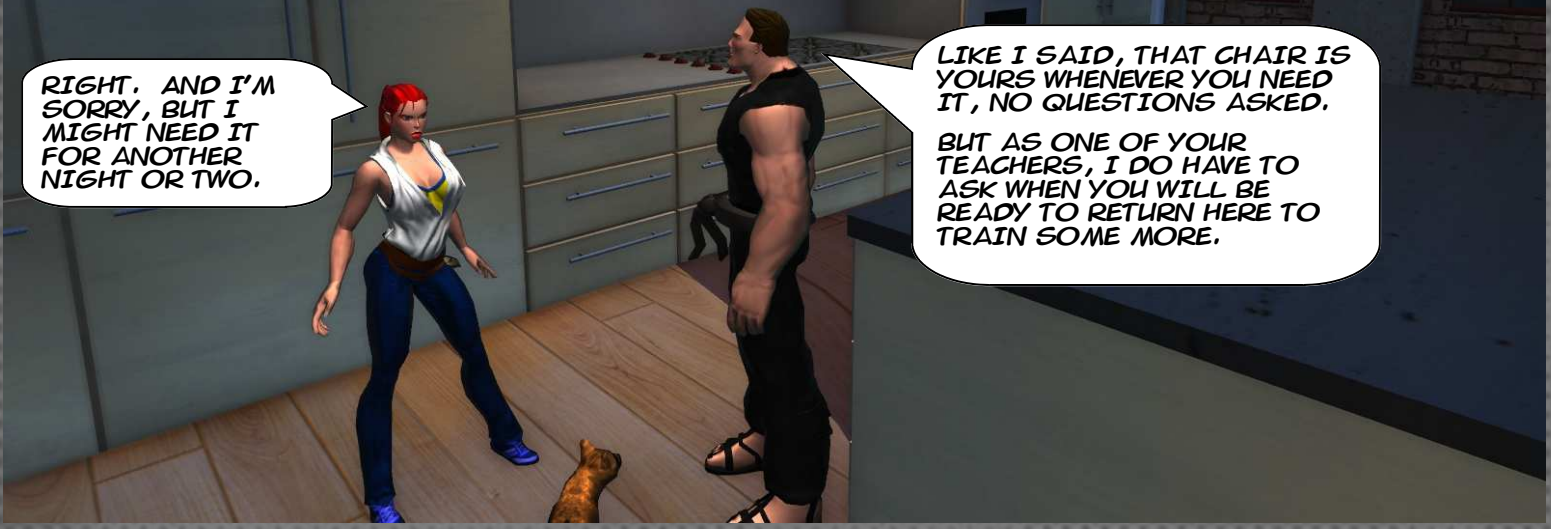
AREN'T YOU AND
JOHN...?

NOT REALLY AN
OPTION RIGHT NOW.

PLUS, I NEEDED
SOMEPLACE WHERE
I COULD JUST...
VANISH.

YOU KNOW... OFF
ALL TRACKERS.

AND YOU
REMEMBERED THAT
ALL TRAVEL LOFTS
ARE SHIELDED
FROM ELECTRONIC
TRACKING.



RIGHT. AND I'M SORRY, BUT I MIGHT NEED IT FOR ANOTHER NIGHT OR TWO.


LIKE I SAID, THAT CHAIR IS YOURS WHENEVER YOU NEED IT, NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

BUT AS ONE OF YOUR TEACHERS, I DO HAVE TO ASK WHEN YOU WILL BE READY TO RETURN HERE TO TRAIN SOME MORE.



I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT MY TRAINING.

IN FACT IT'S BEEN THE ONLY THING KEEPING ME ALIVE LATELY.




WHEN WHAT I HAVE GOING ON IS DONE... YES, I'D LIKE TO CONTINUE MY TRAINING WITH YOU.




THAT'S GOOD.

WHATEVER TRIALS YOU ARE GOING THROUGH, KNOW THAT YOU WILL GET THROUGH THEM IF YOU ARE MINDFUL OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT AND OF WHAT YOU CAN DO.



I KNOW... IT SOUNDS LIKE A FORTUNE COOKIE SAYING, BUT THAT'S WHAT MY TEACHERS TOLD ME WHEN I WAS ON THE PATH TO BEING A TRAVELER.



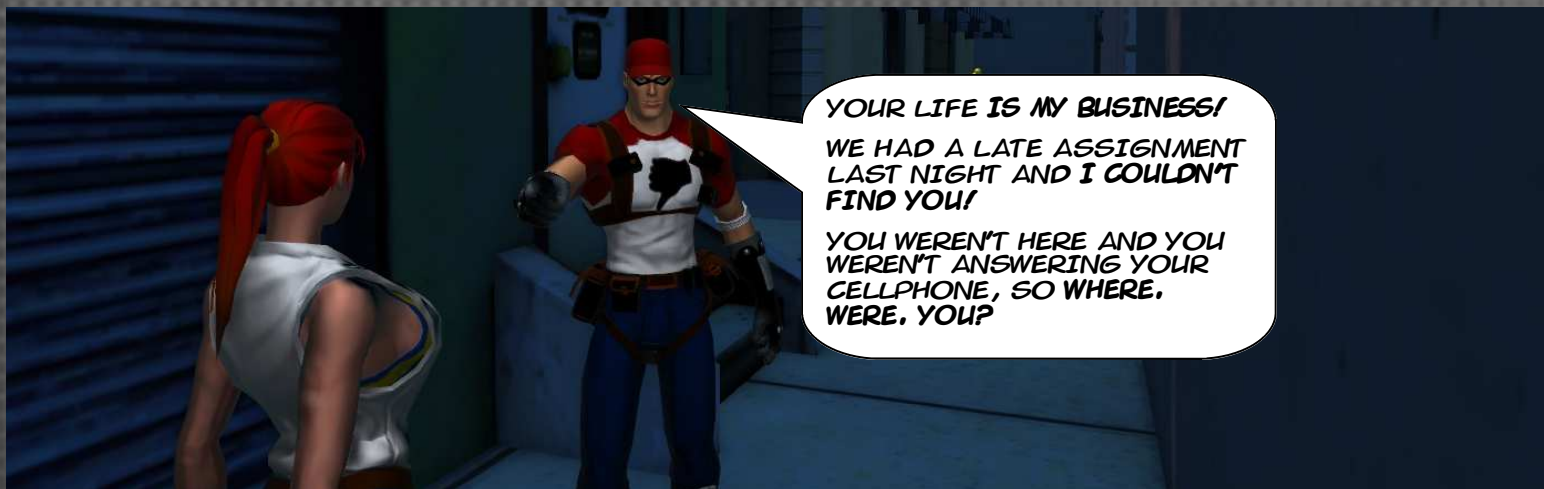
AND NOW I'M WONDERING IF THERE'S A PLACE THAT SELLS BREAKFAST NOODLES BETWEEN HERE AND MY APARTMENT.



WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?



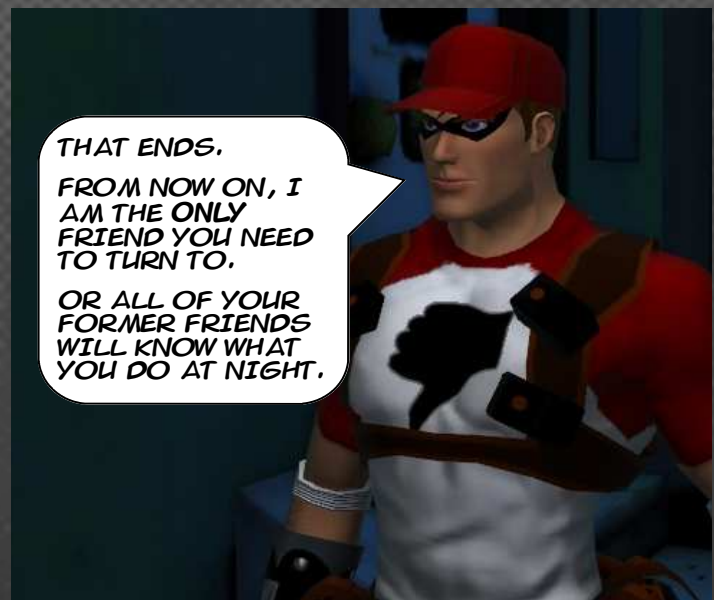
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.



YOUR LIFE IS MY BUSINESS!
WE HAD A LATE ASSIGNMENT
LAST NIGHT AND I COULDN'T
FIND YOU!
YOU WEREN'T HERE AND YOU
WEREN'T ANSWERING YOUR
CELLPHONE, SO WHERE
WERE, YOU?



A SPENT THE NIGHT
WITH SOME FRIENDS.
THEY LET ME CRASH
ON THEIR CHAIR.



THAT ENDS.
FROM NOW ON, I
AM THE ONLY
FRIEND YOU NEED
TO TURN TO.
OR ALL OF YOUR
FORMER FRIENDS
WILL KNOW WHAT
YOU DO AT NIGHT.

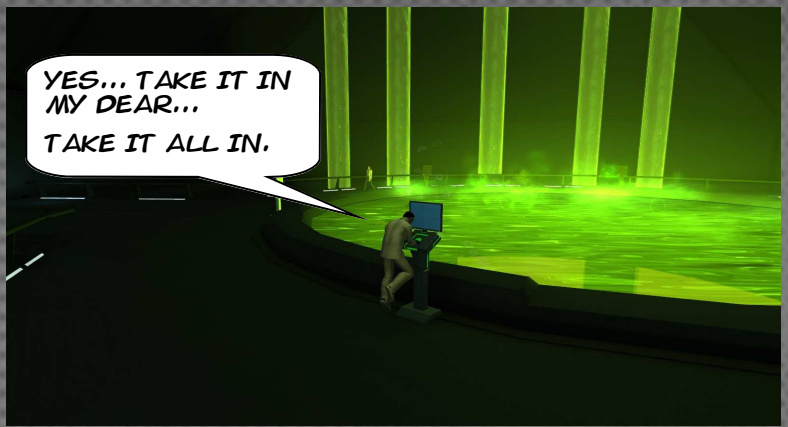


EPILOGUE

IN A LEASED LABORATORY...



YES... TAKE IT IN
MY DEAR...
TAKE IT ALL IN.



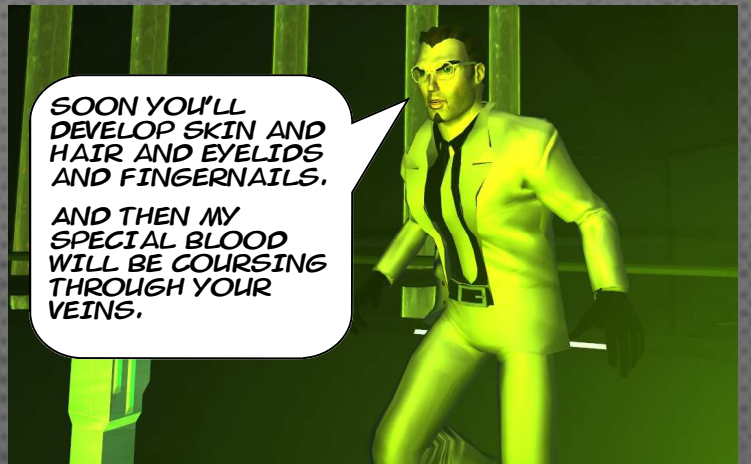
MY SPECIAL
NANITES WILL
TRANSFORM YOUR
METAL FORM INTO
BIO-MECHANICAL
FLESH AND ORGANS
NOT UNLIKE THOSE
OF THE HUMAN BODY.

 **DR. WILLIAM FOSWELL**
(SUPER-GENIUS COUSIN OF FOXBAT)



SOON YOU'LL
DEVELOP SKIN AND
HAIR AND EYELIDS
AND FINGERNAILS.

AND THEN MY
SPECIAL BLOOD
WILL BE COURSEING
THROUGH YOUR
VEINS.



THEN... WHEN I ADD MY
LATEST INVENTION, YOU
WILL BE MORE THAN JUST
A BIO-SYNTHETIC MARVEL
FOR PEOPLE TO OGLE AT.

YOU WILL BE MY PERFECT
COMPANION AND
BODYGUARD.



YOU WILL BE...
A TRUE GALATEA!



**NEXT:
THE TAKEDOWN!**

GUARDIAN WORDS

Words of wisdom from writer and creator David 2.

“Outing” Heroes

There’s been a lot of talk in the last few years about “outing” heroes, be it their secret identity or of their preferences.

We can blame it on the folks at Marvel for starting the trend. In 2006, Marvel had their big comic crisis story called “Civil War”. A young trendy group of heroes called the New Warriors try to take down a supervillain called Nitro. When cornered, Nitro lived up to his name and blew himself up, killing himself, almost all of the New Warriors, and 600 others, including schoolchildren. And all of this was filmed and livestreamed online. The outcry over the devastation led to more violence and a demand for heroes to be reigned in, unmasked, and regulated by the government. This leads to a federal registration law passed, and it divides the heroes as to whether or not they would comply. One of the pivotal moments was when Iron Man convinced Spider-Man to unmask in front of the media and proudly proclaim that he is Peter Parker. It would be a decision he would later regret and the undoing of it led to the most morally compromised story ever told by Marvel.

Two years later, Marvel launched their cinematic universe with the release of “Iron Man”, where, at the end of the movie (*spoilers*), Tony Stark openly admits that he is Iron Man. From that point on, the Marvel Cinematic Universe basically did away with secret identities. People knew that Tony Stark was Iron Man, Steve Rodgers was Captain America, Natasha Romanov was Black Widow, Bruce Banner was the Hulk, and so on. Only Spider-Man was allowed to keep his identity secret until the events of “Spider-Man: Far From Home” when he was outed by Mysterio. This made the impact of the MCU version of “Civil War” meaningless since the key point of contention was the revealing of secret identities, and, at that time, only Spider-Man was the one that still had a secret identity.

Lately DC has been doing some “outing” of their own. The house that Superman built exposed Clark Kent’s secret identity not once but twice in recent years. In 2015, during the reign of the New 52, Lois Lane revealed Superman’s identity to the world in order to prevent a terrorist group from continuing to blackmail him. This was undone by the events of “Resurgence”, but five years later, Superman revealed himself to the world as Clark Kent. This was supposedly done with the approval of his loved ones, including his wife and son.

But at least this time around he was the one that outed himself.

How many of Batman’s villains know or find out that he is Bruce Wayne? Last year the Joker waged his “Joker War” on the city of Gotham starting with the stealing of Bruce Wayne’s money and resources. He did everything but announce on TV that Bruce Wayne was Batman. He’s long known all of Batman’s allies and extended bat-family, even gloating to Batgirl during “Joker War” on how he was able to shoot her in the spine and to strip her and take pictures to torment her father. Bane, the villain that broke Batman’s back, knew who Batman was. Ra’s al Ghoul, of course, figured it out a long time ago. In the HBO Max series “Titans”, Scarecrow knew that Batman was Bruce Wayne, and soon he was moving into the mansion with the help of the Gotham City police. How many corrupt cops knew that Bruce Wayne was Batman?

Nightwing had his identity revealed during the New 52’s “Forever Evil”, but they found a sly way to put that genie back in the bottle without making deals with the devil.

The Flash is another hero that has a problem with his secret identity. Sure, he’s tried to keep it a secret in the comics, but the “Flash” series on the CW certainly has a problem with keeping that mask on Barry Allen when he’s working. How many of Flash’s villains discovered his secret? And the comics have a similar problem of late, with Reverse Flash all but telling the rest of the Flash’s villains who he is during their supposed “final” battle. And then Trickster put camera contacts on the Flash’s eyes that allowed villains to see what he sees. Didn’t take long for villains like Doctor Alchemy to discover that Flash is Barry Allen.

Speaking of the Flash, there was a funny scene in “Justice League Unlimited” when Lex Luthor took over the Flash’s body. So when he had a moment in a restroom, he took off the mask and saw the face of Wally West and said “I have no idea who this is.”

The Green Lantern Corps are supposedly masked when “on duty”, but John Stewart

Continues on next page...

and Guy Gardner did away with their masks a long time ago. Jessica Cruz doesn't have a mask, but she has been a chronic agoraphobic for so long that people don't know who she is. That leaves Hal Jordan, Kyle Rayner, and Simon Baz still the only ones in the Corps wearing masks.

Personally I'm on the side of needing that secret identity to keep a hero's life private. Yes, there is the threat of supervillains targeting everyone a hero loves or cares for, but there's also the problem of just having a life outside of their hero-life. You can't go out with your significant other to take in a movie or go to a restaurant without having fans hounding them everywhere they go. Paparazzi have tormented celebrities for years, but imagine having them targeting superheroes and their loved ones day and night.

Picture being a publicly-known hero, stepping out of your gated community in your civilian clothes, and even if you can somehow avoid the paparazzi, you still get people approaching you with book deals, movie deals, offers to market your name and likeness and whatever symbol you wear. Everyone wants to be your agent and business manager that tell you how much money you could make promoting soda and clothing and airlines.

Imagine being sued constantly by the villains you take down for "abuse of power", or their lawyers finding some questionable activity by you or a loved one and using that to take down your credibility. Or having the family of someone who died because of a tragedy hound you because you didn't save that person, like Tony Stark experienced in "Civil War".

It's not easy living two lives, and maybe it helps when someone close to you knows, but like Starlett said at the start of this issue, she has to mentally keep that division at all times. "She", being Starlett, cannot be in Club Caprice, because that is where her personal life operates. That's the only way she can mentally keep things together, especially since her boyfriend, John Battle, doesn't have a secret identity, which is why he is hounded even when he goes to get coffee.

Not all heroes can operate 24/7. Those who can, more power to them. But if you need that time to be yourself and not a hero all the time, you certainly need that secret identity.

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NEXT ISSUE...

**CHAMPIONS
ONLINE**



**IT'S TIME FOR STARLETT
AND RED SINNER TO
BRING THE BLACKMAIL
DUO TO AN END.**

**BUT WILL JUSTICE BE
SERVED?**



Insert Inside Cover Ad here

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AND BLACK HARLEQUIN EXCLAIMS "OH MY WHAT A
PITY!"**

**"THE HEROES ARE GOOD, THE VILLAINS ARE BAD,
AND THERE'S STILL MORE CHAOS FOR THERE TO BE HAD!"**

**"I'LL MUST GIVE THEM ALL A SHINY NEW REASON,
WHY THEY SHOULD FEAR THIS COLD WINTER SEASON!"**

**"SOME FRIENDS I'LL BRING UP FROM MY TRUSTY TOY
SHOP,
THAT WILL BRING THE CITY TO SUPER-FAST STOP!"**

**"AND JUST WHEN THEY THINK THEY'VE SEEN THE WORST
FROM THIS LOUSE,
I'LL SEND CLARENCE IN TO BRING DOWN THE HOUSE!"**



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UNLOCK HOLIDAY GIFTS!
BUILD YOUR OWN TOYS!**



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