

GUARDIANS OF THE DAWN



Spotlight on... *RYDER LIGHTNING*



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



Ryder Lightning
Electricity Kinetics



MidKnight X
Dark Melee Willpower



Galatea Powers
Super-Strength Invulnerable

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.

Bart Wallace, **Jason Rich**, and **Karen Powers** 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. Bart became **Ryder Lightning**, Jason became **MidKnight X**, and Karen became **Galatea Powers**. 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.

But once their personal Pandora's Boxes were opened, not everyone was content with making do with the world they are currently in...

It's a swirl of light.

At this speed it's always light, no sound.

It's light that transverses boundaries, not sound.

But if you spend enough time watching the Vortex...

"Go. Hunt. Kill Skuls."

"PUSH my Awesome button..."

"Save me Mister Superhero!
And ka-POW!"

"Cave missions? I HATE
cave missions!"

*"Well, we're NOT calling my
secret headquarters the A-Hole,
Saul, and that's final."*

... you can hear the voices.

"TF ONLY..."

- a City of Heroes story by David 2



My name is **Ryder Lightning**.
Or at least that is what I call
myself here... right now...

At the time it seemed to fit who
I was and what I could do.



But I discovered my real
name... **Bart Wallace**. And
the name of who I once was.

I was **The Runner**. It was
who I was and what I could do.



I had a life then... I had a wife
and friends and future...

All of that is gone.



Now all that is left...
... all that I have left...

... is the call of the Vortex.

The Vortex is the place where light and time meet, where the basic elements of reality itself “bleed” together.

It is said that once you get into the Vortex itself that you can cross between universes... cross between realities. That you can vibrate yourself from one universe right into another.



But I've actually only been inside the Vortex once...

It was the day when everything I had and everyone I knew were taken away from me.

It was the day that The Runner made his final race... ran as fast as he ever thought possible... and still ended up losing.





I stay in Steel Canyon because this is where they found me.

Battered, tattered, torn, bleeding, and looking like I was running for months...

If this is where they found me...

... then this is where I will get back home.



You might say that I'm getting ahead of myself...

Goes with the territory I'm afraid...



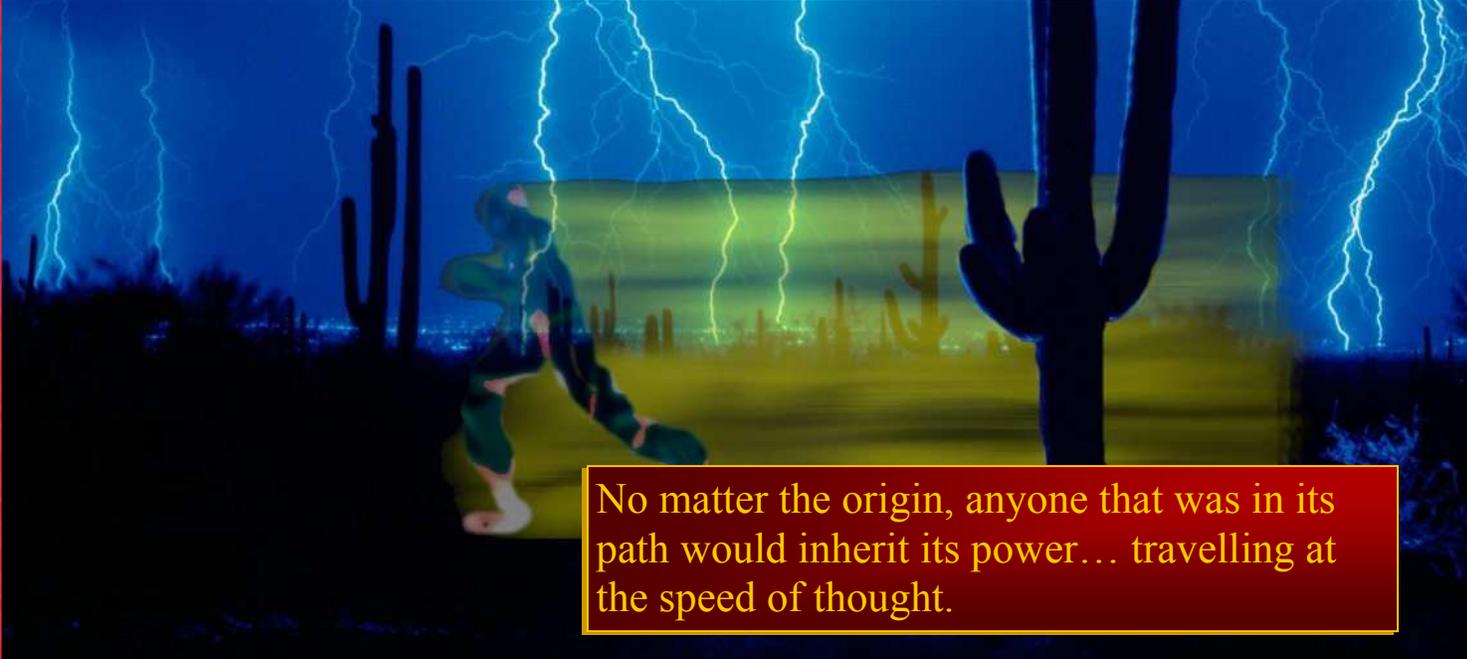
My story really starts in that other universe that I called home... on MY Earth...



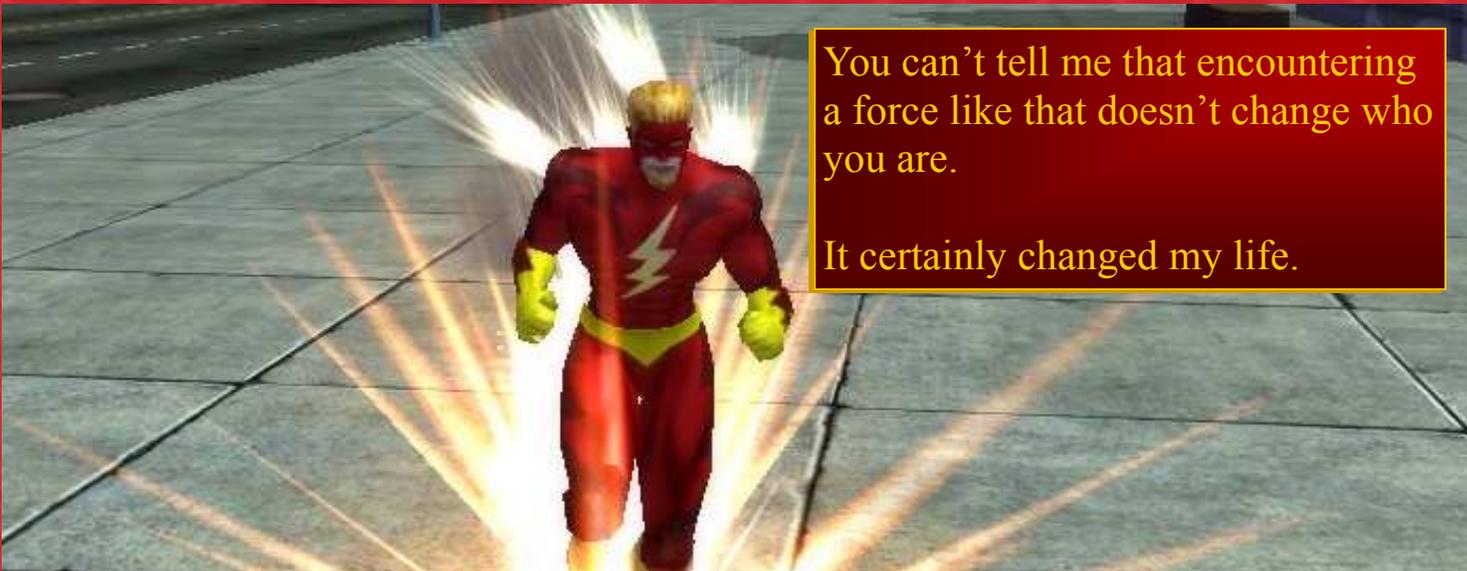
Long, long, time ago there was a restless spirit.

Some say that it is all that is left of the god Hermes. Others say it is the ghost of a runaway slave from the Civil War.

Another rumor is that it was the spirit of someone who was hit and killed by one of the meteors from 1938.



No matter the origin, anyone that was in its path would inherit its power... travelling at the speed of thought.



You can't tell me that encountering a force like that doesn't change who you are.

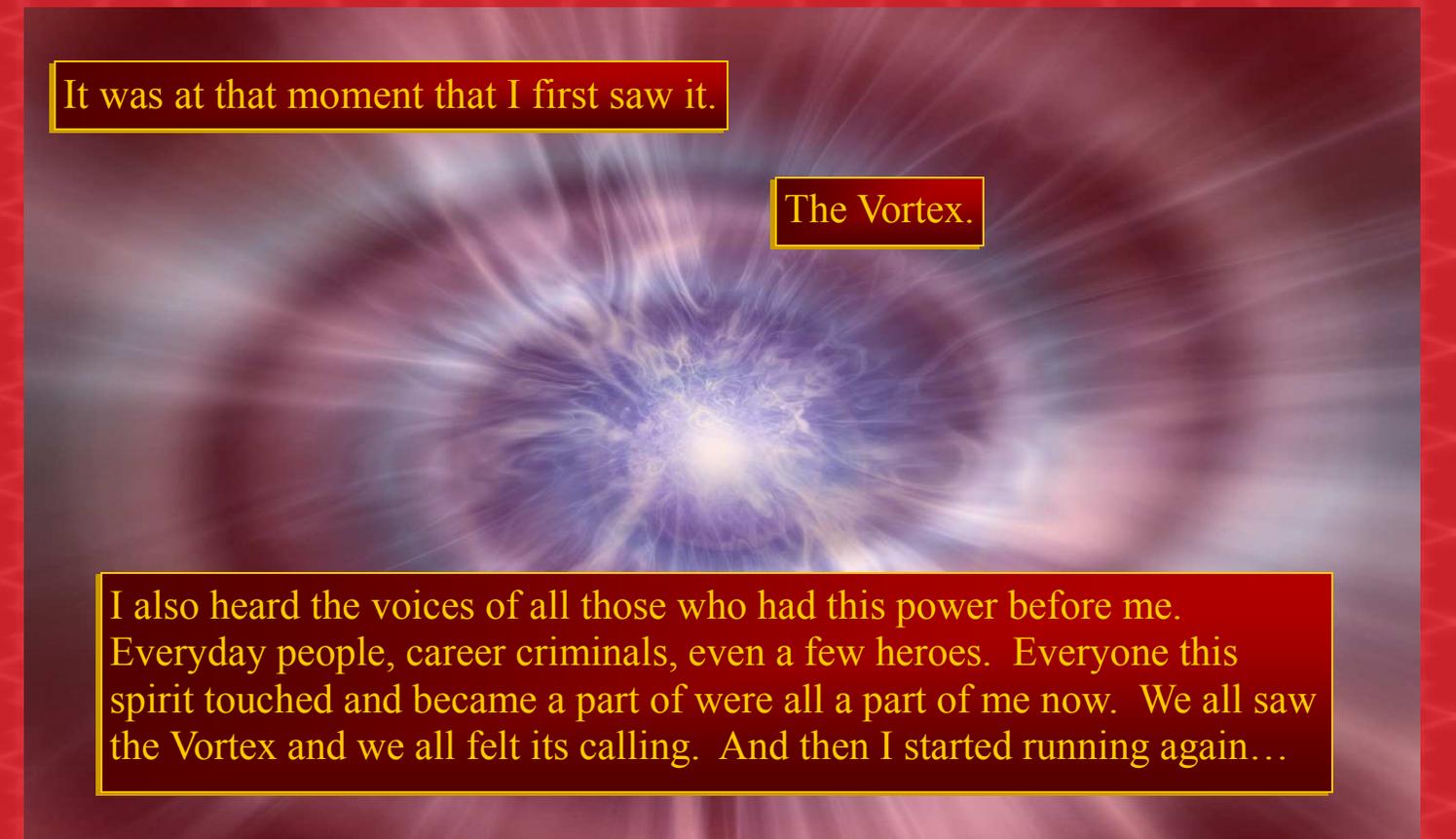
It certainly changed my life.



I lived just outside Philadelphia when I encountered it.

I was a teenager from a broken home. I ran away a lot just to escape it. I just wanted to escape everything.

I was running away yet again when I found myself in the path of the restless spirit. I didn't even see it coming. I didn't even know it was there until it hit me like a speeding locomotive.



It was at that moment that I first saw it.

The Vortex.

I also heard the voices of all those who had this power before me. Everyday people, career criminals, even a few heroes. Everyone this spirit touched and became a part of were all a part of me now. We all saw the Vortex and we all felt its calling. And then I started running again...

The next thing I knew, I was in Washington DC, looking up at the Lincoln Memorial.

Philly to DC in just ten minutes.

That's how **The Runner** got started.

Well it certainly beats saying it was being electrocuted into a wall of chemicals or being overcome by some toxic fumes or having the Liberty Bell hit you.

Actually the Liberty Bell idea was kind of cool. I toyed with saying that I got my powers because of that.

I tried out several outfits. Mostly track uniforms, but a few diving suits as well. The problem was that most people don't SEE me when I'm running. They just see a blur of colors.

Plus it's not easy changing clothes at hyper-speed. They tend to tear easily.

Oh, and don't get me started about that whole stupid "ring" idea.



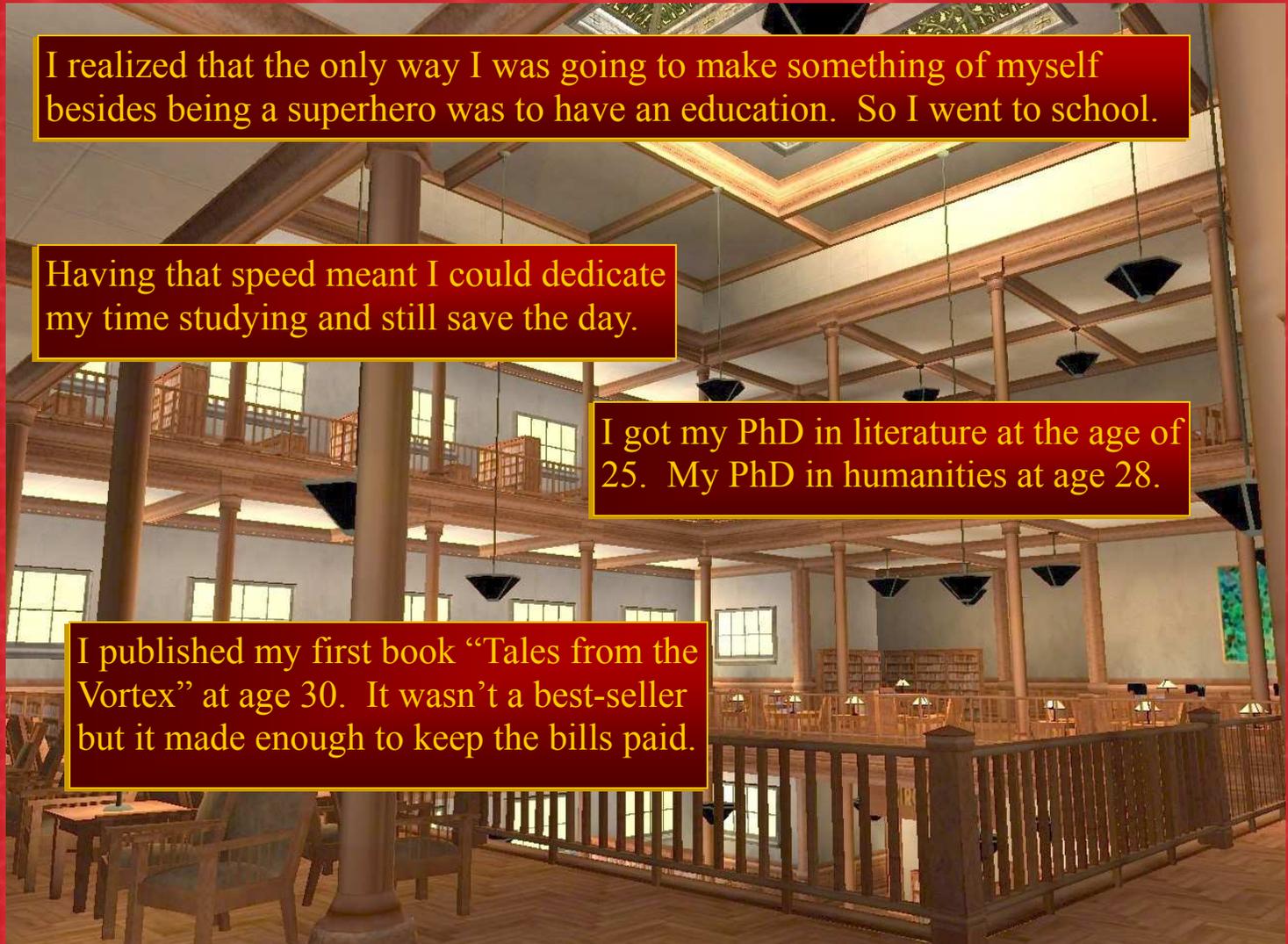
I soon joined others who were like me.

I was one of the founding members of the **League of Champions**, a team of super-powered heroes led by **Icon Powers** himself.

I just turned eighteen and I was already respected by my peers.

I tried the whole “merchandising” route. T-shirts, children’s toys, health products... Didn’t work. I just moved too fast to be easily recognized.

The “running” joke was that there was a semi in Philly that had all of the failed products. If you could find it, you could keep anything it had in it.



I realized that the only way I was going to make something of myself besides being a superhero was to have an education. So I went to school.

Having that speed meant I could dedicate my time studying and still save the day.

I got my PhD in literature at the age of 25. My PhD in humanities at age 28.

I published my first book “Tales from the Vortex” at age 30. It wasn’t a best-seller but it made enough to keep the bills paid.

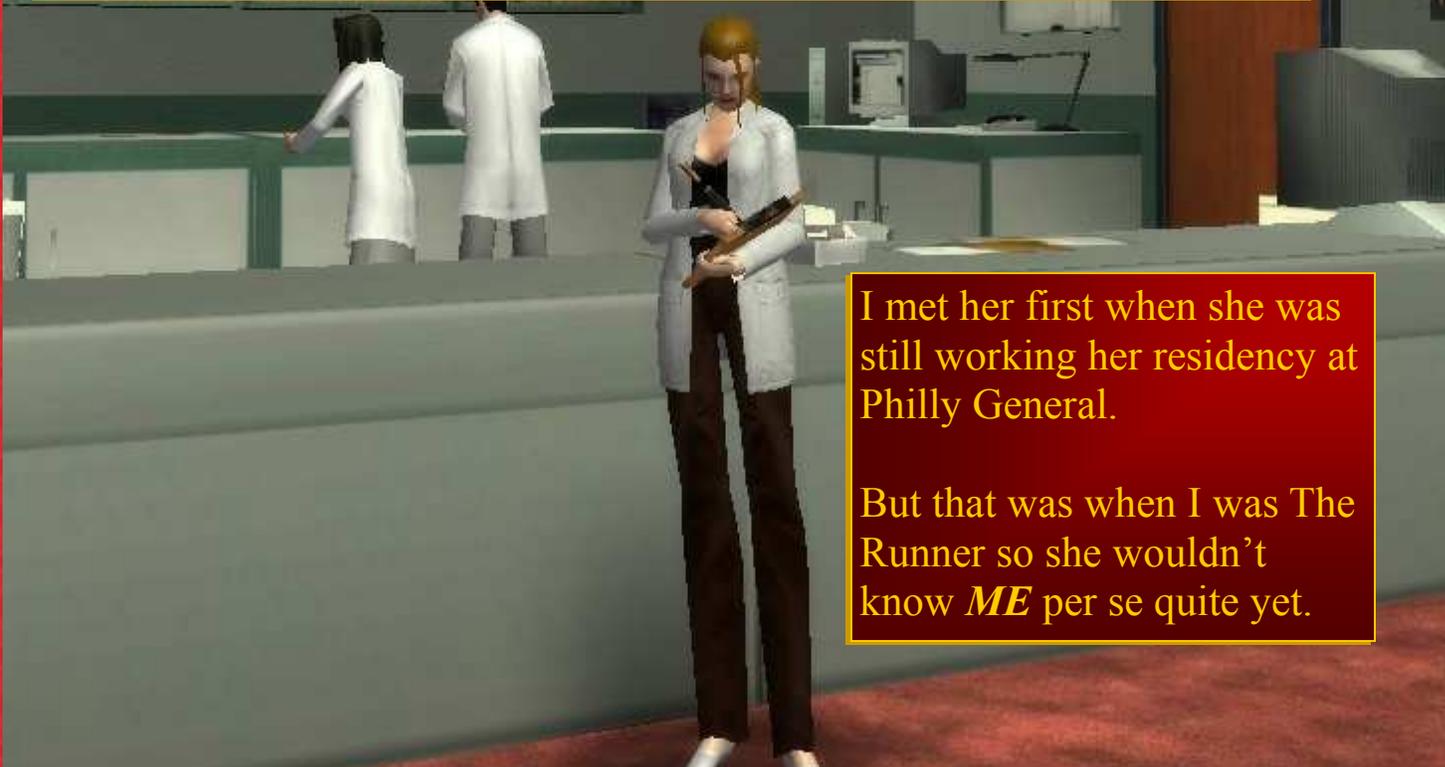


And then I fell in love...

Hey handsome... you're late.

... with the woman of my dreams.

Her name was Kristanna Demitriov. The daughter of Russian dissidents that came here seeking political asylum and then stayed after she was born.

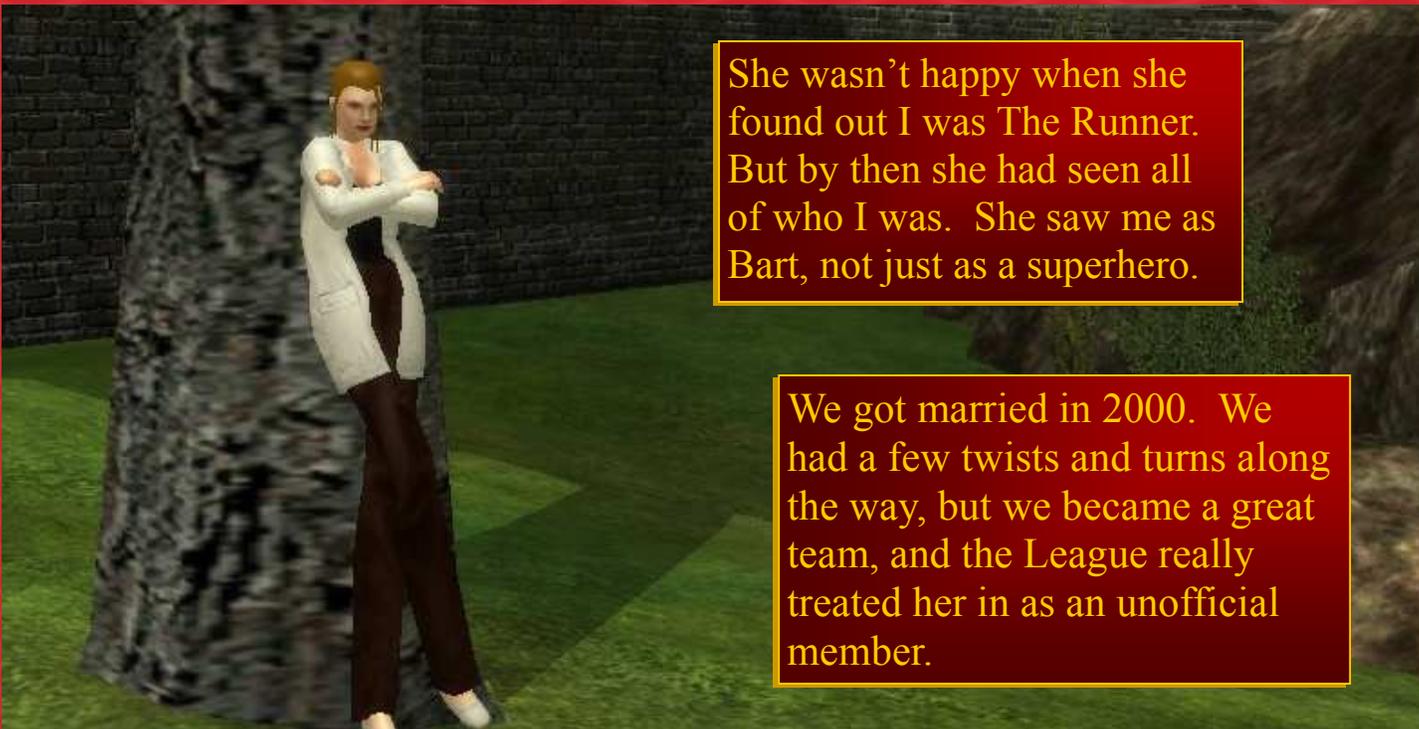


I met her first when she was still working her residency at Philly General.

But that was when I was *The Runner* so she wouldn't know *ME* per se quite yet.



She would later know me as Bart when she attended one of my book readings. I was relieved she could get to know me not just as a fleet-footed hero who dumped injured people off at the Emergency Room.



She wasn't happy when she found out I was The Runner. But by then she had seen all of who I was. She saw me as Bart, not just as a superhero.

We got married in 2000. We had a few twists and turns along the way, but we became a great team, and the League really treated her in as an unofficial member.



Such a beautiful day today!

She was the only person who got me to slow down and appreciate the world around me instead of having to run everywhere.



I wish this day could go on forever...

We talked about kids once, but she was nervous between my powers and her family's medical history to even consider having a child.

I can't believe I could even forget what happened on that day...

April, 2007

Yes, this is Doctor Wallace...

Oh hi! Listen, I'm sorry about working the extra shift here...

No I haven't had time to turn on the TV. Why?

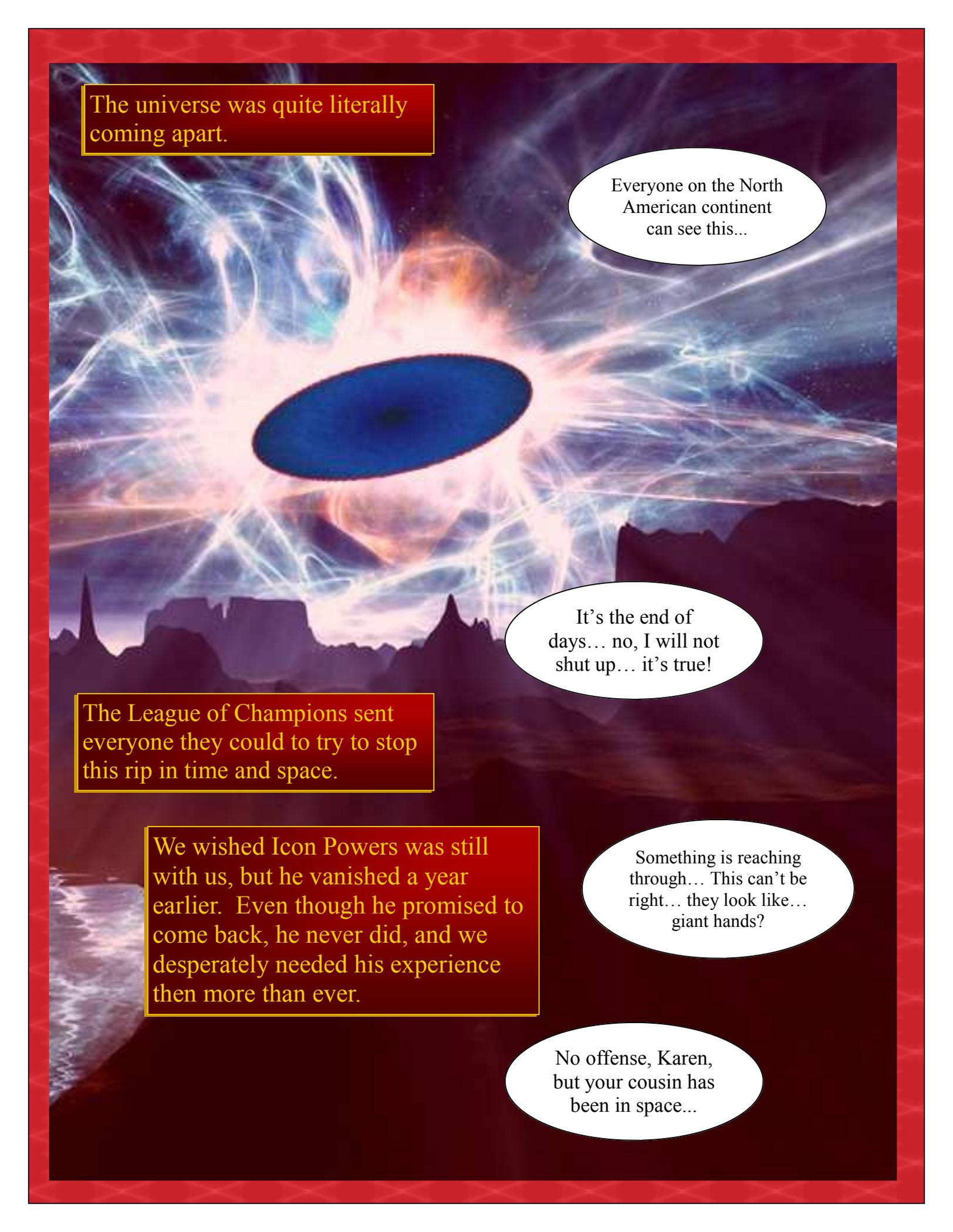
What? The sky is... what? Well can you do something? Oh, you are...

No, no... We have a bomb shelter here... I'll send everyone down there to be safe.

No, don't worry about me. I know what to do.

You just do what you do best, and you come home to me afterwards, okay?

I love you. Bye...



The universe was quite literally coming apart.

Everyone on the North American continent can see this...

It's the end of days... no, I will not shut up... it's true!

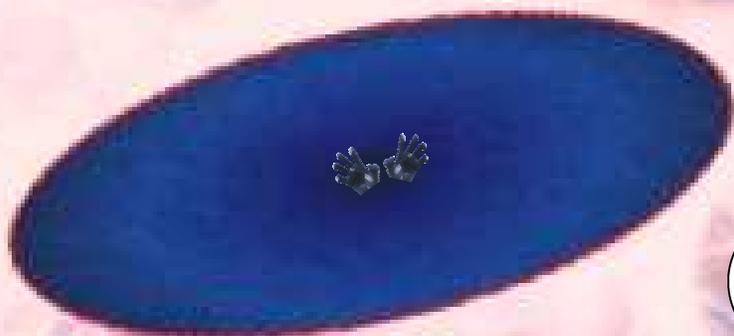
The League of Champions sent everyone they could to try to stop this rip in time and space.

We wished Icon Powers was still with us, but he vanished a year earlier. Even though he promised to come back, he never did, and we desperately needed his experience then more than ever.

Something is reaching through... This can't be right... they look like... giant hands?

No offense, Karen, but your cousin has been in space...

It was **MidKnight** that came up with the plan...



You have to run, Bart... you have to run faster than you ever have in your life.

Photonis would create the pathway. **Karen Powers** would get me there.

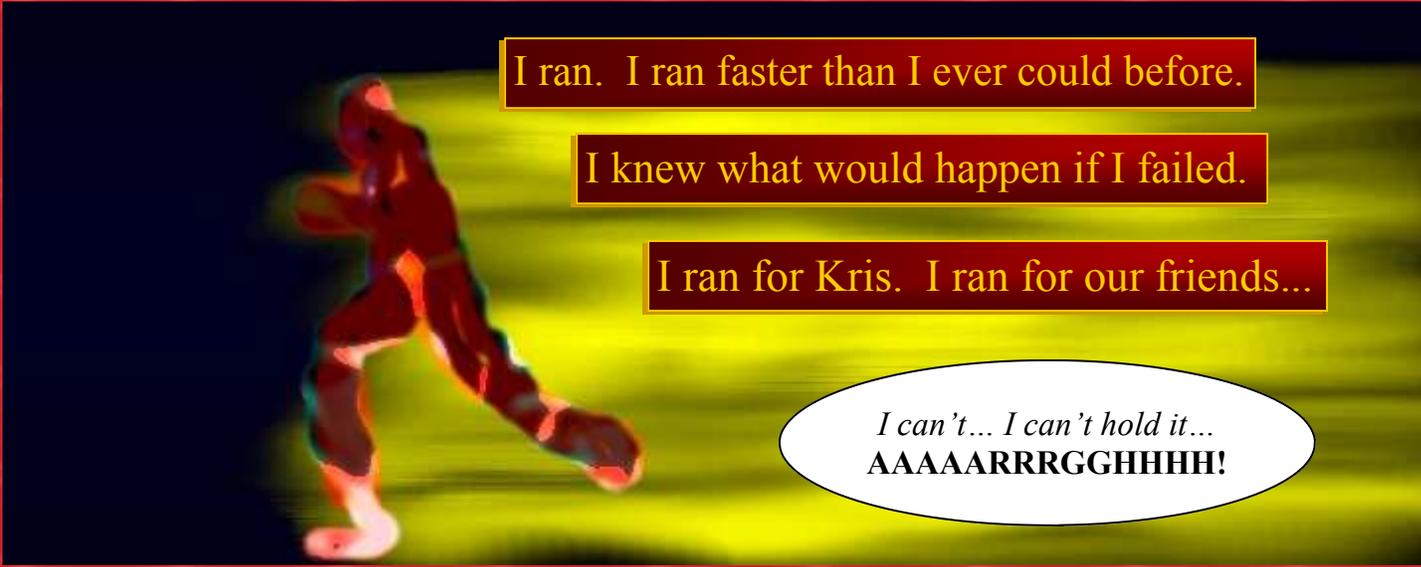


You have to create a vortex around it powerful enough to force the maw to close up.

MidKnight would generate the dark energy himself.



If those hands break the event horizon, we're all dead.

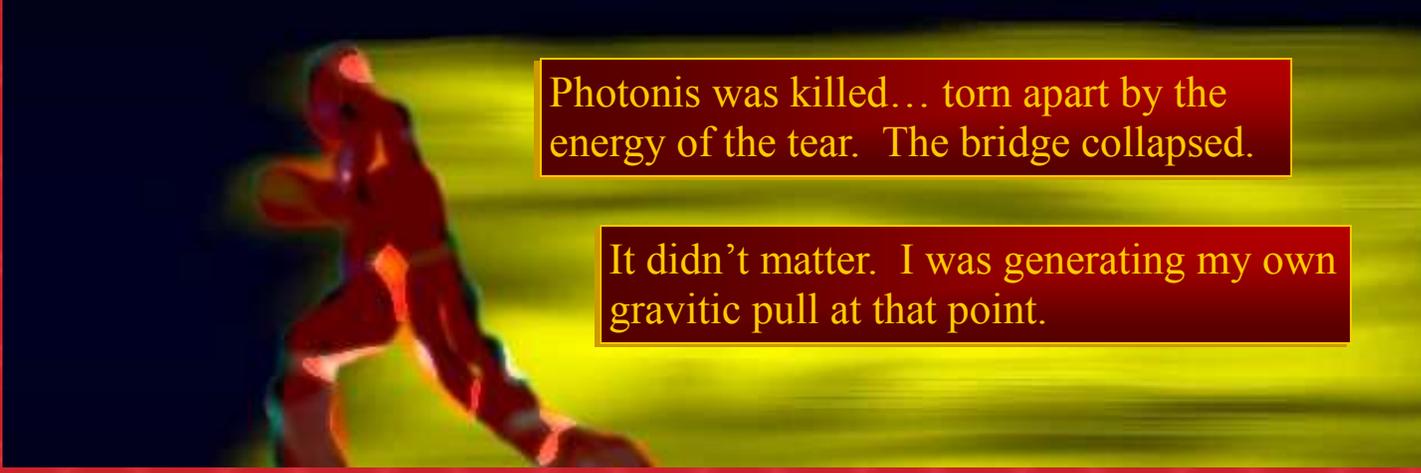


I ran. I ran faster than I ever could before.

I knew what would happen if I failed.

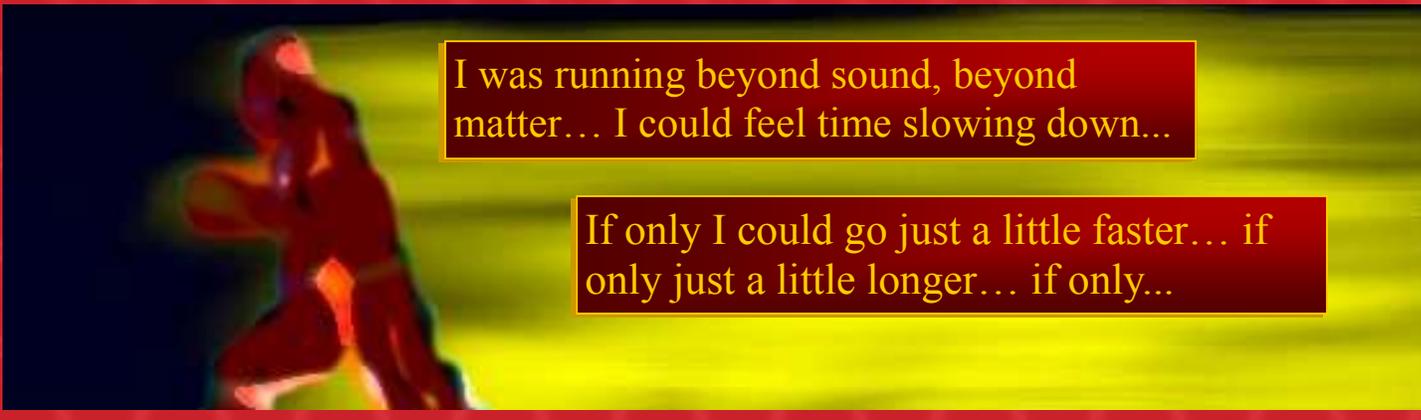
I ran for Kris. I ran for our friends...

I can't... I can't hold it...
AAAAARRRGHHH!



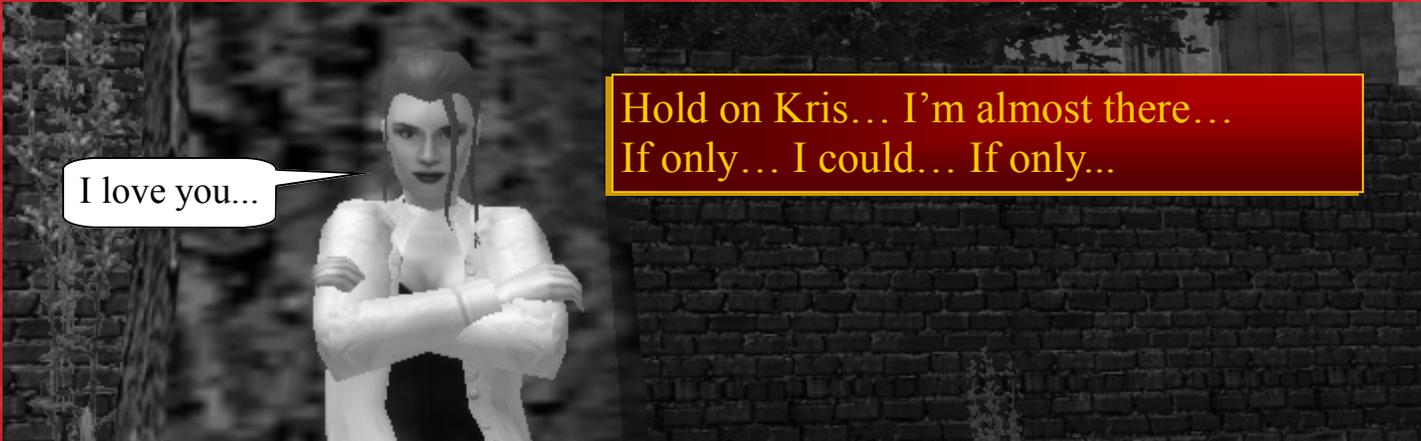
Photonis was killed... torn apart by the energy of the tear. The bridge collapsed.

It didn't matter. I was generating my own gravitic pull at that point.



I was running beyond sound, beyond matter... I could feel time slowing down...

If only I could go just a little faster... if only just a little longer... if only...



I love you...

Hold on Kris... I'm almost there...
If only... I could... If only...

Suddenly I was in it...

The Vortex itself!

Not watching it, not seeing it...
I was INSIDE the Vortex!

“What are they?”
“I don’t know, Dru...”

“Giant hands moving
closer...”

“YOU KILLED
MY WIFE!”

“It was always
about him...”

“Can’t keep running...
sorry...”

There were others here too... voices
from other worlds, other planes of
existence in trouble like ours...

If only I could summon the ones like
me... get us all to work together on
this... if only...

NO. THIS WILL NOT DO...

I love you...



No! NOT NOW!

I was found in Steel Canyon, battered, tattered, bloody...

A hero named **Positron** said that it looked like I was running nonstop for months.

They took me to **Steel Canyon Medical Center** for help. I was in shock... catatonic for days...

Everything was just a blur. A jumbled-up mess of images and sounds in my head...

They asked me my name... I could only think... "Buried Alien Walking".

I know it doesn't make sense.

I was told there were others who arrived the same way that I did. A stranger in black... and a woman...



They didn't know who they were either. And that gave me some hope...



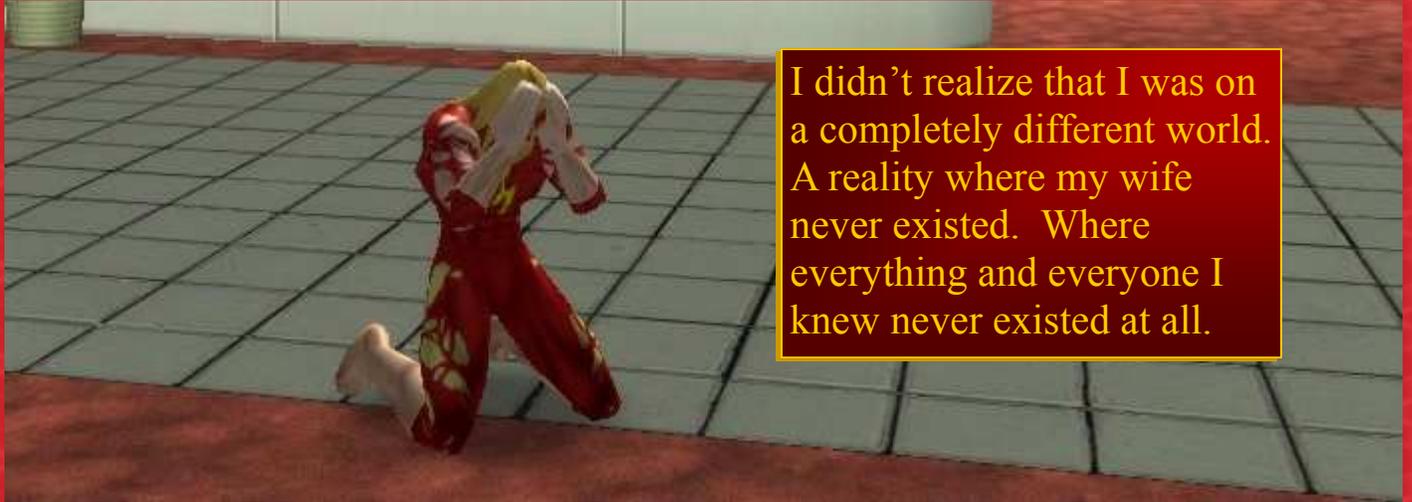
Because when I realized that I was in a hospital...

I suddenly had a name come across my mind...



Kris?





I didn't realize that I was on a completely different world. A reality where my wife never existed. Where everything and everyone I knew never existed at all.



Her name was the only thing in my mind that kept me going. My whole reason to be was to get back to her... to be with her again.



It would be more than a year before I would learn that our whole world... our whole reality... was not just gone...

... it was completely obliterated.

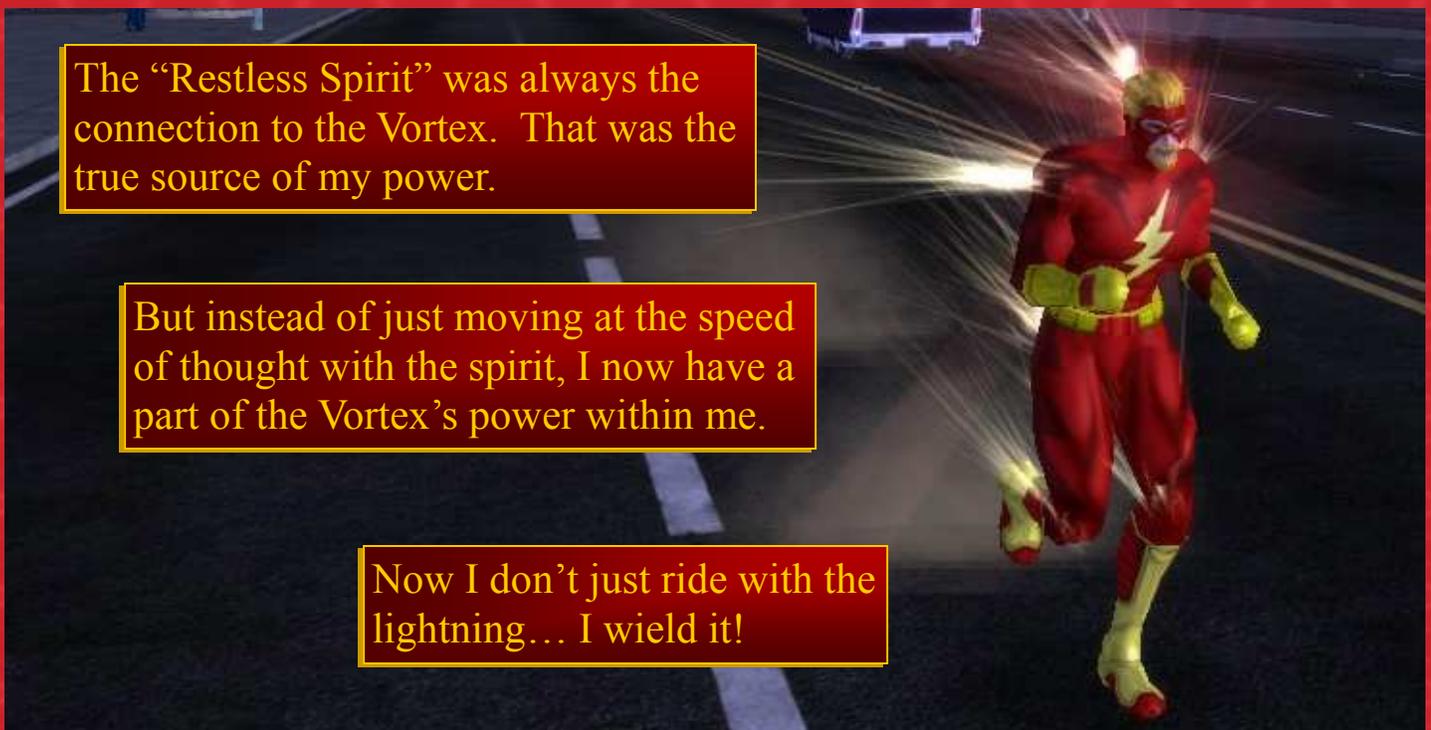


It took a while, but an organization named **Vanguard** helped us to assimilate into this world.



But I realized that something about me was different here.

The nature of my powers had changed by me coming here.



The “Restless Spirit” was always the connection to the Vortex. That was the true source of my power.

But instead of just moving at the speed of thought with the spirit, I now have a part of the Vortex’s power within me.

Now I don’t just ride with the lightning... I wield it!

The other two who made it through with me were Karen and Jason. The Vanguard gave them new names and identities. They became **Galatea Powers** and **MidKnight X**. Close enough to their original identities.

They even gave Galatea a “secret identity” package so she could better assimilate into this world. They offered one to myself and Jason as well.

Jason said no. I also declined it. I wasn't ready to give up yet.

I continued to run in Steel Canyon, continued to push myself even further...

Because I believed that I just had to reach the right speed...

And then I would be back inside the Vortex.

And from there I could find the path back to my world. Back to Kris. Back to the life that I knew.

I believed it was all still possible.



I modified my outfit, and I became more powerful than I ever was before...



FRAG
THAT
MASK!

I AM the lightning now!



But there was more to it...



I could also use the power of the Vortex to reach out and take the speed away from others. Take away their strength. Use *their* strength to power my own.

I'm still not ready to give up on them all quite yet...



Because every time I run, I still see it in front of me...



The Vortex is still there...

"Always a Nemesis plot!"

"The Great Face!"

"Zombie Apocalypse..."

... and as long as it is...

... there is still hope.



Right... Looks like the ships are a lot closer to the ground here than in Wales...

... I just hope it doesn't mean a lot of ground forces to fight off.



Five minutes later...

CRIPES!



For Hero 1!



VANGUARD ALERT: RIKTI FORCES ARE RETREATING FROM GALAXY CITY.

Ten minutes (and a change of knickers) later...

Nicely done, Lyon. I can see the Dawn Patrol trained you well.

Yeah, well that had more to do with Hero 1 than with me Dawnies.

You have the right kind of spirit. Kind of reminds me when I was your age back in the Eighties. You just need to control your cockiness.

Yeah... I suppose I do get a little cocky 'ere and there. Anyway, about that trollop with me family's name?

Galatea Powers is with the **Guardians of the Dawn**. You can check with the Registrar inside on how to contact her.

Oh, that's great. Thank you Mister Brawler.

Cute kid... wrong attitude.

Supergroup Registry - Freedom Corps HQ

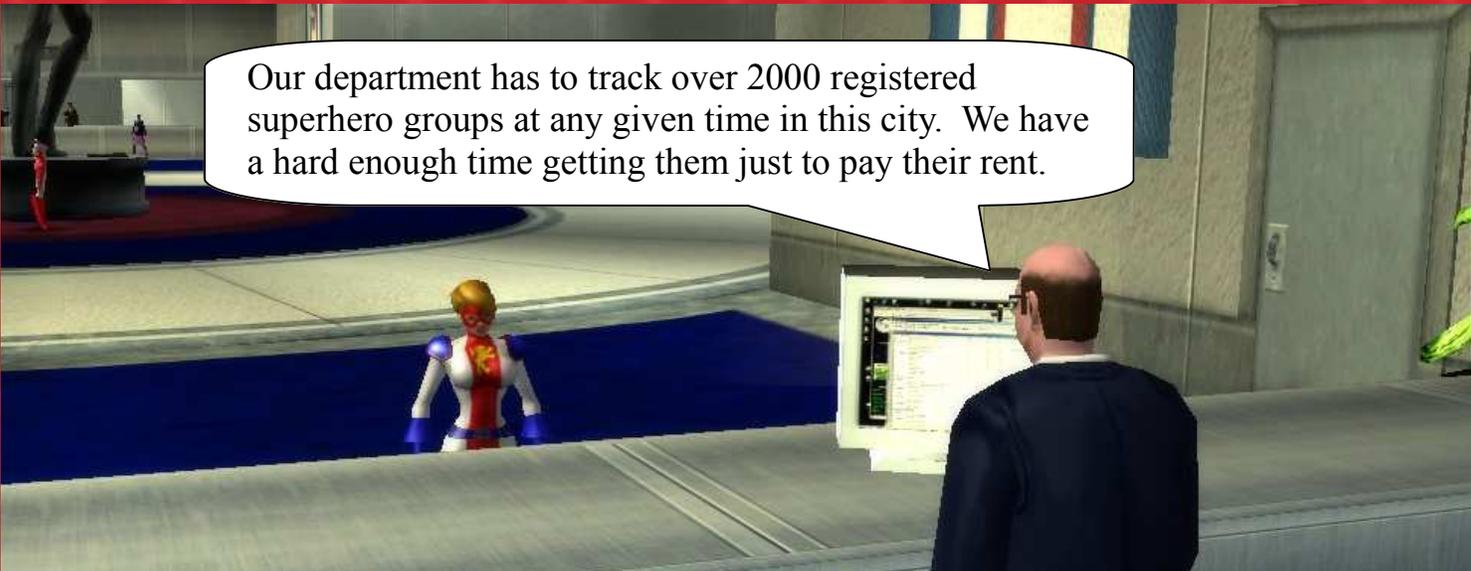


I'm sorry, but we can't provide you with the whereabouts of specific supergroup members.

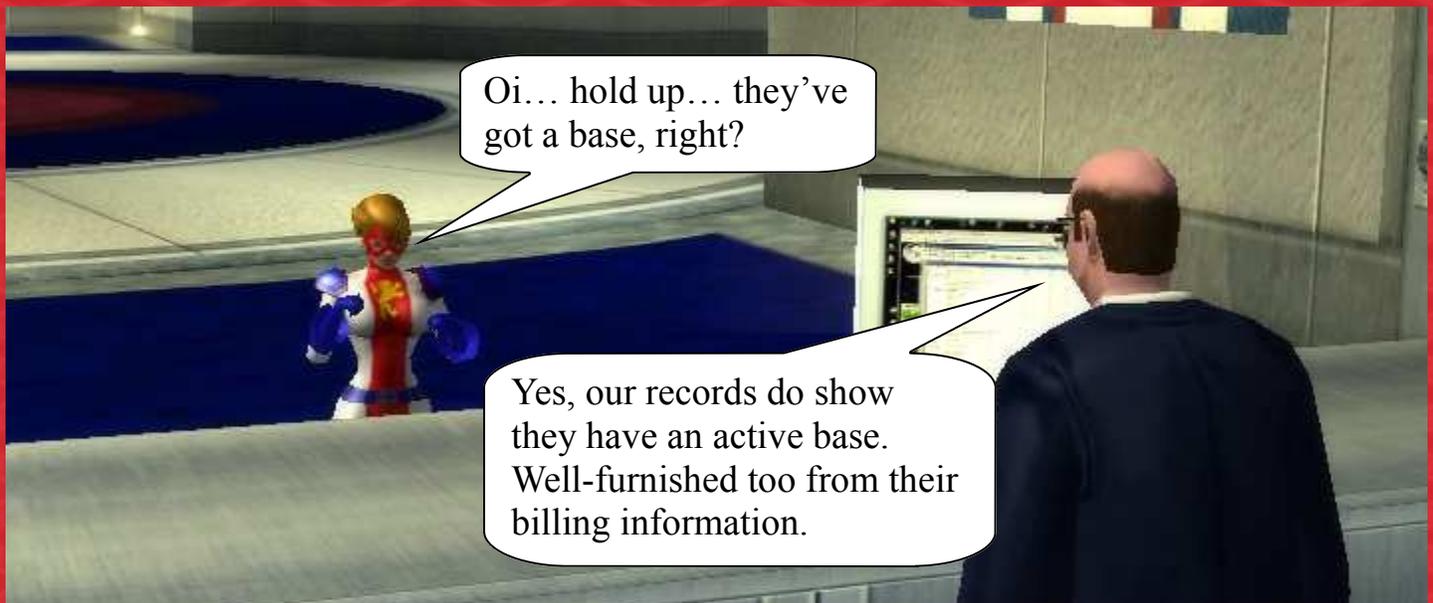


Say what now? Over in the Dawn Patrol you could find any member you want to... 'cept of course for Lady Jane... e'en after she got married and all... *oh wait, that was supposed to be a secret...*

Yes, well this isn't Great Britain.



Our department has to track over 2000 registered superhero groups at any given time in this city. We have a hard enough time getting them just to pay their rent.



Oi... hold up... they've got a base, right?

Yes, our records do show they have an active base. Well-furnished too from their billing information.



Well then they gotta have a phone, yes?

Guardians of the Dawn Supergroup Base



Guardian HQ. This is Galatea Powers...

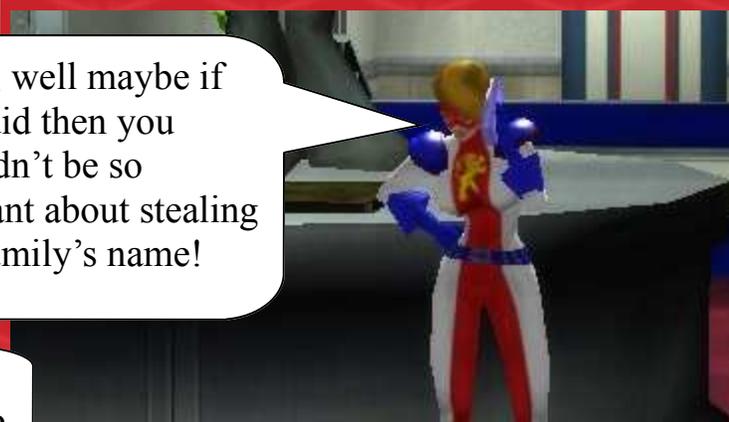
Galatea Powers



Oi... yer a hard bird
to track down, Miss
Galatea Powers.



I'm sorry... do I know you?



Yeah, well maybe if
you did then you
wouldn't be so
flippant about stealing
me family's name!



I don't think I care for
your tone. Who are you?

The name is Powers.

Lyon
Powers

And I think it's high time
we met face-to-face so you
can explain why you think
you can use my family's
name and reputation and
not have us know!



TO BE CONTINUED...
(did someone say "catfight"?)

GUARDIAN LOG

Words of wisdom from writer and creator David 2.

What is it about speed demons? What drives them?

This issue deals with another pastiche character named Ryder Lightning. There are quite a few characters that he's based off of. Again, the obvious ones are all the speeders in DC Comics, but then there are also the speeders in Marvel, and even a few from Image to mention.

But I don't think any of them have the kind of origin story that Ryder has.

There is an event that is common for all of these pastiche characters that make up the "Guardian Exiles". Specifically a certain meteor shower from 1938. If you remember your history you would know that on October 30th of that year, an actor/writer/director named Orson Wells led a team of performers to do a live broadcast called "The War of the Worlds". The audio play starts with mention of a meteor shower, but where the performers lead that into an alien invasion, I used it as the origin for super-powered beings on this fictional Earth.

I combine the "Restless Spirit" aspect with, for the first time, an explanation of HOW the "Guardian Exiles" got into the Guardian Paraverse of the City of Heroes. I explain that there IS someplace where this wandering spirit is trying to get to, but just can't reach it. And this "someplace" ends up saving the "Guardian Exiles" from certain oblivion.

Obsession is a pretty powerful emotion and it is a common theme in this issue. For the spirit that powered Ryder's speed, it was the obsession to reach the "Vortex" that drove it to continually run and to find those that could help it go faster. Then, after the "event", it's Ryder's human desires to return to the woman he loves that drives him to keep on running to try to get back INTO the Vortex.

Either way, this is a pretty "driven" character. You can see why he's running around all of the time.

Here's a good question: The whole "ring" thing with the costume. You know which company-owned character I'm talking about. The costume is in the ring, right? Shrank down, compressed, expands when the ring is opened so the speeder can change into it at hyper-speed. What happened to his regular street clothes? They're not worn UNDER the outfit. Are you saying that they're also "specially treated" so they would shrink down to fit into the ring? That must be one HECK of a wardrobe expense!

Okay, so how about in the City of Heroes? How do we do the whole "costume change" bit here? Well, we have a few possible explanations about how heroes and villains change clothes.

Continues on next page...

Magic: Wave of a hand and, presto-changeo, you're in your new duds. It's a cheap explanation but it works. (And it's a legitimate option in the game.)

Dimensional manipulation: The world of City of Heroes deals with dimensional manipulation, so why not shift the outfit into an alternate dimension? Sounds good until you start asking which dimension it is and if anyone else is doing things to your clothes while you're not wearing them. Can you imagine a whole bunch of people in an alternate dimension continually changing clothes without any control?

Digital teleportation: My personal favorite. Okay, so you're in Icon. Serge or Lauren or one of their people (maybe Kara?) scans your body into their system. Your costume is generated and is custom-fitted to you. Then it is digitally recorded into their system. So every time you go through a teleporter, like the hospital teleporters, it fixes any tears or defects in the outfit. Then when you get additional slots to your account, you can pull up your City of Heroes ID card, select the outfit from the file, and then activate it and it is digitally teleported on you in place of the original outfit.

It sounds pretty complicated, but at least it's a little more plausible than the whole "ring" concept, and it explains why some people have all these different outfits to choose from.

Oh, and don't forget: join the fight! Be a hero or villain at www.CityOfHeroes.com!



NEXT ISSUE...



*He is the Knight...
and he is the most
dangerous of the
Guardian Exiles.*

