

Home-Made Heroes  
Issue #4  
All Our Yesterdays

CHAPTER ONE

To the passing crowds in the street, the business men and women, the blue collar workers, the single parent hurriedly trying to get their children to school on time, the large grey painted delivery van parked up and sticking out slightly from the alleyway between the buildings was nothing more than that but inside was a different story.

Inside this seemly normal van was the best listening and surveillance equipment the government could make or buy. Information was being digitally recorded, saved and analysed by computers. Every inch possible was used for storing a piece of the latest hi-tech machinery and sitting amongst all of this were two unshaven black ring eyed men wearing crumpled, food and coffee stained, suits.

The first man just sat in his leather swivel chair a small pair of earphones clamped to the side of his face listening in on what they were recording.

He was a middle-aged man heavy set with a protruding middle-aged spread, a large cigar drooping from one corner of his mouth. The second man was a lot younger aged in his mid twenties a straight laced pencil pusher type, which was something people in the department where already inclined to calling him.

The young man was hunched over and rummaging around in a cardboard box but finally he found what he was looking for and pulled out a can of aerosol. He looked at it for a second reading the label and then looked at his colleague, getting up off his knees he began spraying inside the van.

“Man it’s bad enough being cooped up in this tin can for the last three days with you not washing as it is without you smoking those damn things as well”

The older man looked up and took the earphones off his head.

“What was that junior? You say something?”

The young man gives a reluctant “NO”

The older agents placed the earphones down and proceed to relight his cigar, which had gone out.

“You know son they may make you awfully smart at these modern day crime schools and colleges but they sure don’t teach you resilience, you getting stir crazy already I’ve been in tin cans like this a lot longer than three days boy!”

The younger agent slumped down into the chair next to him.

“YEP”

“Did I ever tell you about the time I spent three weeks in one these things following the millionaire business tycoon and international playboy Garth Greenwood around?”

“Yes, you did”

“When?”

The young agent looked down at his watch.

“About thirty six hours ago”

“You sure?”

“Yep, you were following him because the department thought that millionaire playboy Garth Greenwood was secretly the vigilante crime fighter THE RAVEN. When in fact just as you and your team burst into mister Greenwood’s bedroom hoping to catch him in the act of mid changing into The Raven. You in reality caught him in mid flow of giving a back door delivery to the wife of a high ranking government senator who was also in the room watching them at the same time.”

“Oh”

Replied the older agent who turned back round and put his ear phones back in, only to turn around again to the younger agent and take them out again.

“Ah yes...but did I tell you about the time I was put on surveillance duty of the German female power house known as BERTHA BOOMBLAST?”

“No”

Answered the young agent faining interest.

“Well boy have I got some stories to tell you about her! She was also known as the THIGHS OF THUNDER and the BOSOMS OF BERYLLIUM, but of course this was all in the good old days before everything got so goddamn P.C, anyway there I was...”

The young agent sat there, propping himself up against the ridge of the small desk area behind him, knowing full well he was a captive audience.

Meanwhile, high above them, the talk about the past was of days filled with not so happy playful memories.

“YOU were ok...the rest of us weren’t so lucky”

“I didn’t know the drug would have been additive”

“I know James, but you didn’t do anything about it when you did find out...you just followed orders”

“What else was I supposed to do?”

“Question”

“I tried”

“Not hard enough James, not nearly as hard as you should have”

#### FLASHBACK #1

A young early twenty something Michael Hemmings stands nervously in the darkened government laboratory. In front of him is a large heavy thick oak table on which stands all manner of Bunsen burners under test tubes, electrical equipment plus other strange out of this world type scientific apparatus. Next to him stands the strong and powerful form of Captain Cody.

“Gee wiz Captain Cody, I haven’t seen stuff like this since I went to the movies and saw that last Boris Karloff picture!”

Cody looked down to his young friend and smiled.

“Please Michael you don’t need to call me Captain, call me James”

“Sure, but what is all this stuff?”

Cody lent over and reached past Michael, picking up one of the test tubes filled with a bubbling liquid from off one of the Bunsen burners.

“This is the secret of Society Six”

“Yeah BUT what is it?”

“Something that will help you fight the powers of evil forever, something that will help you and the other members of Society Six fight the powers of evil in the present and for the future”

Michael looks round to Cody.

“Seven”

Cody looks down to the young man.

“Pardon?”

“Society Seven...now”

Cody places his hand onto Michael’s shoulder.

“Yes, forgive me, something that will help Society SEVEN fight the powers of evil in the present and for the future”

## FLASHBACK #2

The metal chair looked cold and uninviting but the young Michael sat down without a second's thought. A white-coated doctor stepped out from the shadows cast by the single over hanging lamp above the chair.

The doctor got Michael to roll up his shirt sleeve and picked up a long black box from off the table next to him, he open it slowly, carefully. Lying inside on the velvet interior is a syringe filled with the test tube liquid. The doctor wiped a small swab across a section of Michael's arm then placed the needle into it, injecting him with the drug.

## FLASHBACK #3

The young boys smiles beamed across their features strong and solidly as the cinema screen images flashed across their faces lighting them and the rest of the crowd who all watched intensely the newsreel playing to them, both boys sitting as far forward in the padded cinema seats as possible whilst the reporters commentary echoed around the hall

*“And here we see the newest member of the now newly titled Society Seven, a young man from the lower east side of Manhattan who's already been christened by members of the press as BUDDY BOY!”*

The now aged and withered figure of Michael stood still staring solemnly out to the world around them.

“Christ what a terrible sidekick name that was...no wonder we never lasted...well some of us...not with cornball names like that one.”

## FLASHBACK #4

The beautiful tall elegant young woman in a long flowing pink cocktail dress looked out of place amongst the dirty muddled huddle of German soldiers which surrounded her but she carried on fighting with an army issue automatic .45's blazing away in each hand.

“Mary had a worse name than mine and she always felt she was just a token team member, even by the rest of our names STAR SPANGLED BEAUTY sounds outdated and patronizing not patriotic”

“Does she still feel bitter?”

“She's still the same...if that's what you mean?”

## FLASHBACK #5 (SOME YEARS AFTER THE WAR)

The large black newspaper headlines told their stories.

On the front page of one newspaper a picture of the same woman lying on a stretcher being lifted into an ambulance, a crowd of people around her the headline reading EX-SUPER HEROINE SHOT BY MUGGER.

The next headline from another daily newspaper reads EX-SOCIETY SEVEN MEMBER CRIPPLED BY MUGGING”

“She never got over it James”

Michael, his old bones wary of standing now sits on a fragile, part broken, office stool.

“And then there’s what happen to Steve”

“Why are you telling me all this Michael? I know everything that happened”

Michael looked up to this friend of yesterday.

“Because you need to be told, because you need to be reminded”

FLASHBACK #6

More newspaper headlines these read.

AMERICAN MARVEL DIES IN HELICOPTER CRASH

The sub heading carries on the story.

Steve Harris A.K.A American Marvel died today following a tragic helicopter crash yesterday, whilst trying to help escaping American Soldiers, fighting in Vietnam.

FLASHBACK #7

A middle-aged man sat almost motionless in his wheelchair apart from the constant shaking of his hands. His dressed in a hospital gown the life in his eyes gone just staring endlessly.

“And then there was poor Matt...but his condition could have been helped, by the government doctors...by you! But the doctors turned a blind eye and you didn’t want to believe it...NO NOT MATT, HE’D NEVER LOOSE HIS NERVES, that’s what I think you said at the time.”

“I tried to help Matt, but he didn’t want to help himself and he wouldn’t take mine...people need to want to be helped”

Cody stood by the large windows, the day now dulling as the sun moves round casting deep black shadows in the room.

“Well they could have mentioned the fears they had about the so called ANTI-AGING SERIUM... they could have mentioned it might be additive...I was lucky to beat it but the news that DR

JUSTICE loses his nerve and becomes a junkie doesn't sit to well in the eyes of a nation, especially when you're a symbol to millions of children"

"I know what people say about me. I know that they think of me as outdated and old fashioned, someone living in the past with values that are dead but I'm still here...I'm still helping people, I'm still fighting for what I think is right and I'll going on fighting and doing the best I can"

"Please don't get me wrong James there's nothing wrong with having a code of honour but not one that's still set in the 1940's or 1950's! People are different now, so you have to be different too... and that's what you never learned, but it's what you're going to have to learn"

"And...?"

Cody stops himself

"And what James?"

"Have you seen William lately?"

"William's fine, he asked how you were the last time I visited him"

"Is he ok in there?"

"As good as he can be"

FLASHBACK #8

The Television newsreader, dressed in clothes marking him as being on the cutting edge of 1970's fashion, stared straight into the camera unflinching as he read the news, which has all the nation watching. Americans, from coast to coast were glued to their television sets watching, waiting, to find out what would happen next.

*"And tonight's headlines again. The case goes on for William Campbell also known as costumed superhero Fancy Dan former member of the now disbanded Society Seven. Who faces charges of murdering a fourteen year old girl named as Sarah Matthews, today Campbell's lawyer read a short statement which contained...."*

The sky had turned darker as storm clouds gathered overhead and the first spots of rain hit the office block windows.

"The media really roasted William, they weren't interested in the facts only the story, he never stood a chance of a fair hearing"

Michael turned, swivelling the rickety chair around and watching as the raindrops ran down the window.

"And then of course there was Monument...a mystery to us all"

“Yep...not even I was told the truth about him...even today his records are restricted”

#### FLASHBACK # 9

An extremely tall, muscular figure, silver in colour stands like a glistening beacon. His pale blue eyes glinting like blue topaz, his large powerful arms holding up the collapsing steel and concrete bridge on which shocked and scared motorists huddled in their cars and lorries.

Michael continued watching the rain, which had grown heavier, running down the windows as the memory played in his mind.

“The rumours about him just grow and grow”

“Some said he was a robot. Later that changed to an alien...I was and never have been told you know, some say when he disappeared he went off a joined a hippy commune...who knows?”

Replied Cody

#### FLASHBACK # 10

The tall glittering figure of Monument stands outside the Whitehouse, with him is a Group of hippies and anti government/anti war protesters.

Cody walked across the room and joined his friend in watching the rain.

“I went looking for him...but I couldn’t find him, I suppose even someone like Monument can hide if he doesn’t want to be found”

“That covers the past James but what about the future?”

“The future? The only thing I can guarantee for the future is the job, Janice is gone, Edward is dying, and I feel my life is coming full circle yet I’m still the age I was when I was first given these powers. Yes the world has changed, but if I am to carry on I can only carry on as the man I was...as the man I am”

“You were a puppet then and you’re still a puppet now! America’s number one hero, but as a man, as a friend maybe even as a husband, you’re a number one failure...DON’T COME TO MY FUNERAL JAMES.”

Michael got up from his chair slowly, in pain as he did so and slowly moved his way over to the elevators. James watched as his old friend left him standing in the cold dark room the rain outside falling so hard that the other buildings across the street were now impossible to make out.

#### CHAPTER TWO

The sky was clear blue and the sun radiated on the white sandy beaches filled with sun worshippers, crowds playing beach games and those just watching the blue sea crashing against the shore. Cody drifted up and over these people as they played and rested, he watched them as he silently made his way along the coastline.

Inside the musky smelling Miami bungalow an old man sat. He didn't feel the heat of outside at his age all he felt was cold. He sat in his old high backed armchair his dressing gown wrapped around his thin fragile body. He sat, head back, eyes closed, rasping breathing coming from his open mouth and small patches of moisture had formed in the corners.

Suddenly without warning his doorbell rang loudly waking him from his mid day slumber, he looked up at the clock on the wall opposite.

“Come on in James it's open”

His voice croaked as he tidied himself up before his visitor reached the living room.

“It's about time you showed up, you're running late you said you'd be here an hour ago”

“Things, get in the way, you know how it is...how are you Stephan?”

Answered Cody.

“Ok I guess, so what can an old super-villain like me do for a hero like you today?”

“More than he thinks”

“Well then boy sit down for God sake you'll give me a crick in the neck if I have to keep looking up at yah”

Cody walked over to a second old high backed armchair, as he sat down small puffs of dust danced into the air from under the cushion.

“How are you coping?”

Asked Cody his head turning looking around the dusty cluttered house.

“I'm ok if I need any extra cash or if things get a little tight I get by living off an old issue one”

“Issue one?”

Stephan pointed to the wall behind Cody.

Framed and mounted, hanging on the wall was an original 1960's comic book, an action packed front cover showing a colourfully costumed magician fighting a fearsome creature with the bold red titles presenting DR DIABOLICALS TALES OF THE STRANGE all drawn in a very Steve Ditkoisque way.

“When the comic book hit the stands in ‘64 the publisher gave me a whole stack of copies of the first one...didn’t think anything of them then, now issue one goes for about fifteen thousand dollars. But it’s got to be in top grade and currently some company has gone and started reprinting the old issues into collected editions! But people still want the originals, I’ve got a kid down the block who sticks one onto some internet auction thingamajig every now and then when I do need the money he gets about 10 per cent of the final selling price for doing the favour. Of course I don’t earn a cent for any of the legit stuff not since they went and passed that bill in congress in the early 1980’s stating no super powered, super enhanced person, good or bad, could directly profit from any merchandising, television, movie or other media related products, and that twenty per cent of any profit earned by any such company using the image of such a person must go to helping rebuild lives or property damaged/and or destroyed by such activity! I can still remember the words when they drafted the damn thing but do you know what?”

“What”

Replied Cody sitting still in the armchair watching his old enemy shift in his chair as he spoke.

“The worst thing about it is that they have never updated that bill, now days superhero movies are being made that make one hundred, even two hundred million dollars or more and out of that the good causes still only get a tiny speak of that money whilst some big wig hotshot Hollywood fat cat pats himself on the back with a big fat cheque...what a world we live in.”

“How long have you been stuck in this house Stephen?”

Cody’s ex-nemesis looked up and over to James.

“Too long I guess...a few years back I used to go and do special appearances at these comic convention things but I’m too old for that now. My old legs don’t let me get around so good. Did you know? That there are guys and girls now at these places 30...40...even older collecting books like that, they have all the issues, know all the stories off by heart and even dress up in handmade costumes, but they still like to hear the stories being told in person, the one in particular that always went down well, was the time you and Buddy Boy stopped me from using my miniaturizing ray to steal the national gold reserve.”

“That only seems like yesterday to me Stephen”

“I spent nearly 40 years trying to take over the world using freezing guns, giant lasers, mutant apes, fake alien invasions, but villains these days don’t need to crash into banks with their bare hands or using some sonic distributor ray, all they need to do is sit in front of a computer screen and punch a few buttons...the days of POW, ZAP superheroes and super villains is coming to an end”

James Cody sat quietly for a few moments before the voice of the old man opposite him spoke again.

“You ok James?”

“My life has been so empty”

“All of ours have”

Silence fell between the ex-enemies, now friends

“Well I still keep up with what’s been going on with that thing”

Stephen raised his arm slowly and pointed a bony finger at the corner of his living room and James looked round.

Sitting in the darkened corner was a television set and VCR machine, turning to his side Stephen picked up a remote control unit off a small table, his crumpled fingers grabbing clumsily at the small box.

James goes to get up and out of his chair but Stephen stops him.

“It’s ok James I can get it”

As the old worn fingers hold the remote control Stephan loses his grip and it falls to the floor.

“And to think I was once known as THE MASTER OF TECHNOLOGY”

Stephen slowly bends down from his chair and picks it up again.

“Now days I can’t even change the channel of the God damn television set”

He points it at the television and presses the buttons and the television burst’s into life.

The first channel that comes on is broadcasting the news and the screen is filled with an image of James Cody, which then jumps to a female newsreader.

“Looks like you’ve made the news again boy”

Cody leaned forward in his chair.

*“And now with more shocking news about the latest scandal to hit captain Cody we cross over to our on the spot news reporter Helen Hunter for this exclusive report”*

The picture jumped to a young attractive woman standing outside what looked to be Cody’s house.

*“Today has seen this reporter come in contact with both shocking and disturbing evidence into the private world of America’s number one superhero. Photographs which have come into the possession of this reporter show that, at some stage in his career, the symbol of honour to this nations young had previously taken part in a relationship of a sexual nature with the former child super heroine Kathy Summers A.K.A Lighting Lass”*

The Screen image changed to a series of black and white photos showing James and Kathy in intimate positions together with some portions of the photos blurred out.

*“Who suddenly reappeared and then disappeared earlier this week during a battle between Darkhalf and Captain Cody. She seemed no older than when she had originally disappeared some 15 years ago”*

The screen cut back to the young news reporter.

*“As yet no contact has been made with Captain Cody or any government official representing him this follows on from adverts earlier this week involving the death of one of Lord Montague’s gang members during a bank robbery. As yet nothing has been released on that investigation, but now these claims have opened a whole new can of worms for America’s FORMER number one superhero...I’m Helen Hunter and now back to the studio”*

The television set in Stephan’s living room went black as the former super-villain turned it off and slumped back into his chair.

“My God James”

Stephen looked up only to find himself alone and staring at an empty chair.

END OF ISSUE FOUR

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