

Home-Made Heroes
Issue #6
Here and Now

It stood tall and wide in the centre of the city, it had given aid and help to hundreds, thousands of people since it was first built almost 30 years earlier but now the majestic figure of the Bruce Kent Memorial Hospital was showing it's age, sandwiched between the gleaming, towering office blocks.

Crowded around the main street entrance was a large group of people of all races, all ages, but all joining together, all protesting about the same thing, many carrying and holding plaque cards high above them.

Some said

JUSTICE

Others;

TRAIL AND JURY

REMEMBER THE VICTIMS

GUILTY

Standing near the crowd of protesters stood a television news crew.

“This is Helen Hunter reporting from outside the Bruce Kent Memorial Hospital where a feeling of anger fills the air as doctors still refuse to confirm or comment that they are treating the recently transformed super villain Darkhalf, who has reportedly been turned back into human form. This too has yet to be confirmed but word has already got out and now those victims who have suffered and the relatives of those killed at the hands of Darkhalf have started to picket the hospital. Most are calling for his immediate arrest and imprisonment, the general feeling being that now one of Americas most dangerous of foes is now answerable for his crimes, that he should be held in custody and made to stand trial for ALL his crimes against the human lives his so easily destroyed. BUT one question remains WHAT TO DO WITH SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS COST THE WORLD SO MUCH? But as he is no longer the man he once used to be...this will be the moral dilemma facing the courts I’m Helen Hunter at the Bruce Kent Memorial Hospital.”

The television news programme followed the reporter Helen Hunter’s news report with a montage of people on the streets reactions.

The first was a white middle-aged well-dressed man.

"I don't want to say anything until I've heard all of the facts"

The second interviewee was a young African American man.

"One less super freak off the streets! They should bring in more of these costumed bozos"

The next a slightly snobbish, white fat man.

"I think they should kill the son of a bitch"

Followed by an elderly white woman.

"Well yes he should be arrested and placed in jail, for our safety...as well as his then put on trial, after all he is a murderer"

A Hispanic man.

"He's pure evil. If they want someone to pull the switch I'm their man"

A young white woman;

"I don't know...it's all...it's all kind of confusing"

A young Asian woman.

"No matter what they do with him it can't bring back the people he killed"

Edward Cody stood by his hospital room window many floors above the streets below and watched the angry mob screaming and shouting as they waved their banners to passing motorists and pedestrians, He closed his eyes and again was touched by memories once long forgotten.

FLASHBCK #1

Edward sat alone, the only person in the whole of the hospital ward. He sat on the edge of the bed almost completely naked apart from a pair of boxer shorts. Suddenly the sound of the heavy ward doors being swung open and closed was heard as from around the corner the figures of two young doctors emerged, marching their way toward Edward.

"How are you feeling today Edward?"

Asked the first doctor as they reached the side of the bed he was sitting on.

“Fine just wanting to get this over and done with...find out what’s going to happen!”

“Us too”

Replied the second Doctor.

“But don’t worry Edward...”

He continued

“The process is almost completely painless and previous test subjects showed only positive responses.”

Edward looked towards the two doctors.

“All I know is Doc...if it helps out the people of this country then it’s worth it”

FLASHBACK #2

The two Cody brother stood side by side ready to be strapped onto the Human Accelerator Unit pausing for a moment to pose for photographs, taken by the surrounding army and white coated lab assistants, the two brothers shook hands and held that pose while blinding flashbulbs filled the room.

“Well little brother there’s no turning back now the future...our future...starts here”

Stated Edward to his brother James.

“All I know is that I feel like it’s the right thing for me to do”

A young spotty male lab assistant leaned in close to the brothers and took one final photograph.

FLASHBACK #3

The two Cody brothers, one very much the typical all round American hero was dressed in a battle torn and tatty costume, James. Standing in rubble filled crater locked in battle with another figure, that of his brother, Edward, now transformed into the form of Darkhalf.

“Come back...with...me...Edward, let the doctors help...you”

Spat out James through gritted teeth, fighting to get the words out as he struggled with his brother

“I LIKE BEING ME TOO MUCH JAMES, WE ARE LIKE GODS TO THESE PEOPLE...THESE INSECTS! IT’S YOU WHO SHOULD BE JOINING ME”

Two large forms of black mist spread out from the sides of Darkhalf and grab at Captain Cody pulling him off of Darkhalf and solidifying around him, squeezing him tighter and tighter.

IN HIS HOSPITAL ROOM;

Edward Cody turned his back to the window and the world outside, glancing down once more to the photo album lying on top of the bed.

Outside on the streets below amongst the crowds of shouting protesters television news reporter Helen Hunter began another monologue to the camera in front of her.

“Hello and welcome back to the Bruce Kent Memorial hospital where we bring you a special report on the topic which has gripped the nation; the question of the trial and punishment of Edward Cody, formally known as the menace DARKHALF”

The walk and elevator ride down to the hospitals busy lobby area didn’t take Edward as long as he thought it was going too and he soon found himself staring out through the glass sliding doors, his face reflected back in at himself watching the crowds outside.

He hadn’t bothered to change his clothes if indeed he had other clothes to change into. He just stood there in his hospital issued pyjamas and dressing gown, which a lot of other people were doing in this hospital so nobody paid him too much attention.

He watched for a few moments the people coming and going through the sliding doors before taking the few hesitant steps he needed to be outside for himself. He found the sudden noise of the cars, vans, planes flying overhead and the people rushing about overwhelming and confusing at first but soon began to look and stare at things he saw with the wonder of a child.

“THERE HE IS”

The shout from the crowd rang out as loud as could be heard and those in the crowd who heard it stopped and turned to face the person shouting. A young man in his mid twenties holding a banner that read GUILTY in crudely written black letters.

“THERE HE IS”

Shouted the protester again pointing at Edward Cody.

This time the people turned their heads and saw the figure standing outside the hospital and immediately broke ranks and rushed over to Edward, surrounding him. A small group of policemen who had been standing to one side trying not to be noticed, suddenly broke up and starting to run over as well, pushing their way through the crowd as best as possible.

Before Edward knew what was happening found himself surround by an angry jostling mob. He was pushed and pulled back and forth then grabbed by various members of the heated crowd.

“The kids right...it is him!”

Shouted one of the crowd.

On hearing this, another crowd member reached over and punched Edward in the face knocking him backwards onto another person who himself hit Edward as well. The blow forced Edward down onto the street, where he was kicked and grabbed at by a mass of arms and legs until, eventually, the police officers managed to fight their way through the crowd and to Edward, forcing the crowd back and away from him.

Edward lay still and unmoving on the street, a thin circle of police surrounding him and surrounding the circle of police the angry mob still jostling, still shouting as paramedics from the hospital rushed over and started their own fight to get into the inner circle and help the wounded Edward Cody.

He forced his eyes open, slowly at first then blinking them rapidly as he vision went from blurred to clear, he was back in his hospital room, standing over him were two nurses and two doctors.

“Good, he’s coming around”

Stated the doctor furthest away, his tone sounding not all too convincing

“Just lay still Mr Cody...you’ve got a mild concussion”

Said the second doctors bending over to him, pulling Edwards eyelids down one at a time and shining a small light into his eyes.

The bruised Edward Cody watched as both doctors proceeded to write things down on various charts and hang them at the end of his bed. Edward raised a hand up to his forehead and felt the stitches that ran along one side.

“Ok people lets give the man some rest”

Stated the first doctor bluntly and authoritatively.

The two nurses turned and followed the doctors out of Edward’s room

Edward leaned forward in his bed and stopped the brash doctor as he reached the door.

“Doctor”

The Doctor signalled for the others to carry on without him then turned back round and stood at the foot of the bed.

“YES”

“Why?”

“Because it was our job...because we all took an oath to save lives even someone who was as evil and as twisted as you were and BECAUSE I want to see it done properly by the law, your going to be put on trial and if found guilty convicted and then...executed”

The doctor turned away again and walked out of the room, Edward laid his head back on the pillows, turned his head to one side and stared out of the windows.

Later Edward sat on the edge of the bed as the nicer of the two doctors treating him sat directly opposite him; he was undoing a blood pressure machine from Edward’s arm.

“Everything seems to be ok and in order, how do you feel in yourself?”

Edward’s eyes gazed up at the doctor

“Really?”

“Really?” Answered the doctor

“Out of place”

“What do you mean?”

“Like I don’t deserve this”

“What exactly?”

“Life! I don’t deserve life, I’ve brought pain and misery to so many...I’ve killed innocent people, men, women...children, lives which meant so much to others and yet here I am alive and well, the same as I was before I became the creature known as Darkhalf”

“But that was a different you, if indeed it was you? You’re a completely different man”

“I’m not...I was Darkhalf, it was me who did all those things that cheated so many people out of a life which I don’t deserve”

“Have you talked to your brother about this?”

“No...not yet...he hasn’t been into visit me but with all the trouble his been having in the news lately, from what I’ve seen on television, I don’t blame him...he’ll come as soon as he can”

“Yes, I’ve seen the news”

The doctor got up from off the bed and stood looking down at Edward

“But you know what I mean doc, I lie here awake thinking about this second chance, I look the same, I feel the same as I did all those years ago, but I could never undo all that I’ve done”

“Perhaps you shouldn’t think about the past, perhaps you should just think about the future you are Edward Cody and that’s all you are...just a man like the rest of us now. What you were can never be changed but what you are here and now...today, that’s what you must be judged on...so think to yourself about what you can do NOW, not what you did then.”

A silent pause entered their conversation

“Anyway Edward I’ve got to go...I’ve got other patients to see, but before I go I’ll say this; maybe you should stop judging yourself...as there’s already enough people out there doing that without you doing their job for them. Maybe you should consider more about letting them SEE you for who you are now and then, hopefully they may judge you better and when they start to judge you better, you might just start to judge yourself better”

The doctor turned and made his way to the door

“Thanks Doc”

The Doctor turned his head.

“All part of the service”

He turned back and walked through the door leaving Edward all alone.

Nothing but blackness filled his vision, a thick black void as his body twisted and turned around and around as if falling from a great height but never being able to reach the bottom. Then as he fell, in the distance the perpetual darkness was broken by two faint red dots that increased in brightness and ferocity the closer he rushed towards them.

Suddenly and without warning, the black void twisted and bent itself out of shape and the outline of a large gaping hole like a mouth opened up underneath him like the imprint of a face in a sheet, featureless and ghostly.

Edward awoke at that point his face dripping in sweat he wiped a hand over his face and breathed out hard. After a few moments to collect himself he kicked the bed covers off and got up out of bed walking over into the small bathroom, which was adjacent to his private room.

Inside he clicked the switch and the overhead strip light slowly flicked on. He turned on the taps and ran his hands under them, then washed his face. He stood for a moment watching his reflection in the mirror above the sink.

The night air blew cold against James Cody face as he flew along the city skyline but he couldn't feel it, he never did, he wished he could, he wished he could feel a lot of things like the hot summer sun burning his skin, the feeling of goose bumps forming across his arms when he got cold on autumn nights but all that was gone a long time ago.

The roof of the hospital was directly in front of him; even without his supervision the large white paint marked helicopter pad was visible from some way away. He couldn't put this visit off any longer.

He landed gracefully silently stepping down onto the concrete surface and then walking over to the large elevator, which took him down into the hospital itself.

The elevator pinged and the doors opened into the world of white polished corridors and heavy swinging doors. Cody walked slowly through the hospital trying not to bring too much attention to himself, as best he could being who and what he was. Luckily the hospital was quiet and the doctors, nurses and patients he passed limited themselves to whispering and pointing about his arrival.

James reached the desk of the ward he knew his brother to be in and spoke to a young female nurse behind it.

“Hello miss...I’m here to see my brother if that’s possible...I know I should have come earlier but it’s not been that easy to come and see him”

“He’s resting at the moment Captain Cody but I’m sure we can make an exception in your case”

She walked around from behind the desk.

“Please follow me”

She continued leading Captain Cody down one of the other corridors.

“I’m glad you’ve come we’ve been all so worried about him...I think at the moment your brother needs to see you...he needs somebody who he can really talk to...here we are”

She stopped outside the door marked with Edward Cody’s name on it.

“I’ll let you go in on your own; you’ve probably both got a lot of catching up to do”

“Thank you nurse”

Replied James.

He raised his hand towards the door handle and hesitated for a moment before taking hold of it and opening the door. He stepped slowly and quietly inside the darkened room only lit by the light coming from the bathroom.

“Edward”

He called quietly not wishing to scare his brother but only silence greeted his call. He walked across the room and around the bed, making his way toward the bathroom.

As he did so he came across the site of torn pages of newspaper scattered about the floor, the up turned photo album lying amongst them.

Anxiety gripped James Cody as he slowly nudged open the bathroom door to find the limp body of his brother Edward laying on the floor below him his wrists cut open; a pool of darkened blood sticking to the floor, James Cody fell to his knees holding his hand out to his brother.

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