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**P**ARAGON CITY IS A CITY OF HEROES, AND IF YOU WALK DOWN THE STREET ON AN AVERAGE DAY, YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND...

...JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.

## SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Part 1 of 3

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CRY HAVOC,  
HEROES...





DON'T GET  
OVERCONFIDENT  
JUST BECAUSE  
THEY'RE TROLLS.  
THERE ARE  
PEOPLE HERE TO  
PROTECT!



WHAT? SUPERHEROES  
PROTECTING PEOPLE?  
GIVE IT UP FOR CAPTAIN  
OBVIOUS, LADIES AND  
GENTLEMEN!



I TEAR  
YOU OUT  
OF TIN CAN!



NO, I  
DON'T THINK  
YOU WANT TO  
DO THAT. NOT  
AT ALL.









ALL RIGHT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ORDER HAS BEEN RESTORED. RETURN TO YOUR BUSINESS.

"RETURN TO YOUR BUSINESS"? WHO THE @#%\$ TALKS LIKE THAT?

MAN, I WORKED UP A FAIR THIRST ON THOSE CREEPS. I COULD USE A BREW OR TWENTY.

I'M NOT QUITE SURE I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN PHENOMENON OF IMBIBING ALCOHOL, SYNAPSE.

MOST DO IT FOR A BUZZ, CITADEL. WITH MY ENHANCED METABOLISM, THOUGH, I COULD DRINK AN OCEAN OF EVERCLEAR, AND STILL BE AS SOBER AS A JUDGE.

ONE MORE THING I HAVE TO THANK CREY INDUSTRIES FOR...

WHY DON'T YOU COME WITH ME TO A CLUB SOME NIGHT AND YOU CAN CHECK OUT THE "PHENOMENON" FIRST HAND?

THE LADIES WOULD LOVE A BIG HUNKA MUSCLE LIKE YOU...

NOT THAT I NEED ANY HELP. I'M A PRETTY FAST TALKER...



PROBLEMS, POSITRON?

NO, JUST FINE TUNING THE ARMOR A BIT. I CALCULATE I CAN INCREASE THE RANGE OF MY ENERGY BLASTS BY ALMOST HALF A PERCENT WITH JUST A MINOR ADJUSTMENT...



HE NEVER LETS UP, DOES HE?

IT'S HIS WAY. HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH ELSE, SO HE DOES WHAT HE ALWAYS DOES...

...HE MAKES THE BEST OF IT AND DOES SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE. I WISH WE HAD A LOT MORE LIKE HIM.





EXACTLY. THEY'RE USUALLY SATISFIED WITH JUST ROUSTING NOVICE HEROES AS THEY PASS THROUGH THE HOLLOWS.

YEAH, BUT WHO CARES IF A BUNCH OF POINDEXTERS IN SPANDEX LOSE THEIR MILK MONEY TO 'EM? I SAY-- WAIT!

WHAT IS IT? DID YOU GET SOMETHING ELSE FROM THE TROLLS' MINDS?

NOTHING THAT PENICILLIN WOULDN'T FIX.

NO, I'M GETTING AN INCOMING MENTAL MESSAGE FROM NUMINA. SHE'S AT MAGI HEADQUARTERS, AND THEY WANT ALL AVAILABLE PHALANX MEMBERS THERE ON THE DOUBLE.

Y'KNOW, I REALLY WANTED TO JUST GO HOME TODAY AND DROWN MY TROUBLES IN A BAG OF CHEETOS AND A SURREAL LIFE MARATHON.

LATER, CHARO...

OK, I'M BACK, AND READY TO--

OH.  
DARN.



THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR IT IS ONE MOON CYCLE, HOWEVER. IF WE CAN GET THESE THREE PEOPLE, AND KEEP THEM IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH, THE THORNS WILL HAVE LOST THEIR CHANCE.

UH-HUH, AND YOU JUST FOUND OUT ABOUT ALL THIS NOW? Y'KNOW, I'VE SEEN THIS KINDA STUFF IN MOVIES, AND USUALLY IT'S BEEN FORETOLD IN PROPHECY FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, YADA YADA YADA.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE MACHINATIONS INHERENT IN THE CELESTIAL BALANCE. WHEN THE PLANETARY ALIGNMENT IS--

YEAH, YEAH, SAVE IT FOR SHIRLEY MACLAIN... JUST TELL ME WHO TO ZAP.

HE'S GOT A BIG MOUTH, BUT THE RIGHT IDEA. WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO?

HERE ARE THE CURRENT LOCATIONS OF THE THREE PEOPLE IN QUESTION.

IF YOU CAN BRING THEM IN, WE CAN CAST A PROTECTIVE AURA AROUND THEM AND THE PREMISES, AND KEEP THEM SAFE UNTIL THE CONCORDANCE TIME HAS PASSED.

THAT PROBABLY EXPLAINS THE TROLLS EARLIER. THEN, THE THORNS TRIED TO USE THEM AS A DISTRACTION, PROBABLY HOPING TO BEAT US TO THESE PEOPLE.

ALL RIGHT, PHALANX, YOU HEARD HER. PSYCHE, YOU COME WITH ME. MANTICORE, YOU AND CITADEL HEAD TOWARD KING'S ROW. POSITRON, YOU TAKE SYNAPSE AND GO TO STEEL CANYON.

WHY ARE WE--HEY, WHAT DO YOU MEAN "TAKE SYNAPSE"?

GO!



SO YOU'RE SURE WE'LL FIND THIS MAN, THIS CYRUS THOMPSON, HERE AT THE YELLOW LINE, RATHER THAN THE ADDRESS WE WERE GIVEN?

DO YOU EVEN NEED TO ASK?

I'LL MAKE YOU A DEAL. I'LL HANDLE THE PSYCHIC STUFF, AND YOU JUST KEEP PICKING UP HEAVY THINGS AND THROWING THEM, OK?

THERE'S NO NEED TO HAVE THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE ALL THE TIME. IT'S COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

ATTITUDE? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH WHAT I DO. WITH THESE POWERS, EVERY TIME SOMEONE ANYWHERE CLOSE TO ME HAS A THOUGHT, I HAVE TO HEAR ABOUT IT.

EVERY TIME SOME JACKASS STEALS TOILET PAPER FROM THE BATHROOM AT WORK, IT'S FRONT PAGE NEWS IN MY HEAD.

AND THESE DAYS, EVEN BEING A PSYCHIC MAKES PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE A LIAR, LIKE THOSE PHONY JERKS WHO TALK TO THE DEAD ON TV.

"IS THERE AN 'M' IN YOUR DECEASED LOVED ONE'S NAME?" GIVE ME A FREAKIN' BREAK!

LOOK, YOU'RE A BIG SLAB OF INDESTRUCTIBLE BEEF. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GOOD YOU'VE GOT IT.

YOU THINK IT'S EASY BEING ME, DO YOU?

COMPARED TO ME, IT'S LIKE BEING ON A GRAVY TRAIN WITH BISCUIT WHEELS...

IF YOU ONLY KNEW.

YOU KNOW, BECAUSE I'VE BEEN AROUND SO LONG, I'VE BECOME SOMETHING OF A YARDSTICK BY WHICH OTHER HEROES MEASURE THEMSELVES. THAT CAN LEAD TO RESENTMENT.

"AND I TEND TO BE THE FIRST TARGET OF ROOKIE VILLAINS WANTING TO MAKE A NAME FOR THEMSELVES. IF IT WEARS SPANDEX AND IT'S LAME, IT COMES LOOKING FOR ME."

"THE GREEN BEATNIK, EGGMASTER, THE LIVING ANACHRONISM, EMU QUEEN. I'VE HAD TO WADE THROUGH EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM."

AND, WELL, WHAT WITH THE PATRIOTIC COSTUME AND ALL, I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY PEOPLE WITH POLITICAL OPINIONS WANT TO GET ME INTO ARGUMENTS WITH THEM.

EVERY LOUDMOUTH CARRYING A TWELVE DOLLAR GRUDGE IN HIS TWO DOLLAR HAT WANTS TO TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE SYSTEM.

AT LEAST YOU CAN TURN THEIR VOICES OFF BY FLYING AWAY. I KEEP HEARING THEM, TWENTY-FOUR SEVEN.

OKAY, THERE'S THE GEEZER IN QUESTION. THAT'S CYRUS THOMPSON.

HMMW, HE MUST BE NINETY, IF HE'S A DAY. SURE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SOMEONE ON WHOM THE FATE OF THE WORLD WOULD REST, DOES HE?

YOU'RE CYRUS THOMPSON, AREN'T YOU? I'M--

SISTER PSYCHE, RIGHT? I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM THE TELEVISION. AND THAT THERE IS STATESMAN. KNOW HIM ANYWHERE.

YES, SIR, THAT'S RIGHT, MR. THOMPSON. THE REASON WE'RE HERE IS--

OH, I KNOW THAT, TOO. YOU'RE HERE FOR THE SUPERHERO STUFF, MORE THAN LIKELY. LOOK, I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU YOUNG PEOPLE WITH WHATEVER, BUT MY DAYS AS A CRIMEFIGHTIN' TYPE ARE OVER.

CRIMEFIGHTING?

YOU TRYING TO TELL US YOU WERE A SUPERHERO BACK WHEN GRANT TOOK RICHMOND?

WELL, WHETHER I WAS A HERO IS SOMETHIN' SOMEONE ELSE WILL HAVE TO DECIDE. I DID MY BEST, THOUGH.

IS HE TELLING THE TRUTH?

HARD TO SAY. HE DOES HAVE MEMORIES IN HIS HEAD OF BEING A SUPERHERO.

BUT IF HE'S GOT SOME SORT OF DEMENTIA, THOSE MEMORIES COULD BE FALSE AND HE'D BELIEVE THEY'RE TRUE. FRUITCAKES DON'T REALIZE THEY'RE FRUITCAKES.

YOU TELL US, POPS. THIS HERO STUFF TRUE, OR ARE YOU PLAYING WITH A FIFTY-ONE CARD DECK?

SISTER,  
I THINK YOU'VE  
GOT YOURSELF  
SOME ISSUES.

ANYWAY, YEAH. BACK JUST  
BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD  
WAR, I WAS PART OF SOME  
GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENT.  
LONG STORY SHORT,  
I BECAME FASTER THAN  
ANY MAN HAD A RIGHT  
TO BE.

SO I PUT  
ON A COSTUME,  
AND STARTED  
CALLING MYSELF  
"BREAKNECK."

AH, BECAUSE YOU  
COULD MOVE AT  
BREAKNECK  
SPEED, EH?

WELL,  
THAT'S WHAT FOLKS  
THOUGHT. TRUTH BE  
TOLD, IT WAS BECAUSE  
MY WIFE VICTORIA ONCE  
TOLD ME "IF YOU  
DON'T GIVE UP THIS  
NONSENSE, YOU'RE  
GONNA BREAK YOUR  
FOOL NECK."

BUT I DIDN'T  
GIVE IT UP, THOUGH.  
I FOUGHT THE GOOD  
FIGHT FOR NIGH ON  
TO THIRTY YEARS.  
IT WAS A GOOD  
RUN.

SO WHY DON'T I  
REMEMBER YOU? I'VE  
BEEN AROUND A LOT  
OF YEARS MYSELF, AND  
I JUST DON'T SEEM  
TO RECALL ANY  
BREAKNECK.

WELL, I COULDN'T TELL  
YOU THAT. MAYBE WE  
JUST HUNG AROUND  
IN DIFFERENT  
CIRCLES.

THEY SAY I WAS ONE OF THE  
FIRST BLACK CRIMEFIGHTERS,  
Y'KNOW. MAYBE NOT AS EARLY  
AS ELEMENTAR AND A FEW  
OTHERS, BUT RIGHT UP  
THERE.

SOME FOLKS  
DIDN'T LIKE THAT  
IDEA, BUT MOST  
DIDN'T KNOW,  
CAUSE I WORE A  
MASK OVER MY  
WHOLE FACE.

"BOUT THE TIME  
THE FIFTIES CAME  
AROUND, THOUGH, I  
FIGURED "THE HECK  
WITH THIS," AND  
STOPPED TRYING TO  
COVER UP.

"MATTER OF FACT, IT WAS ABOUT THAT TIME THAT YOU AND ME TEAMED UP ON A MISSION. STATESMAN, TOOK OUT THE DIAMOND MASK GANG. THAT RING A BELL?"

NO, SIR, I CAN'T SAY THAT IT DOES. I DO REMEMBER THE DIAMOND MASK GANG, BUT I REALLY DON'T RECALL ALL THE DETAILS.

YOU HAVE TO REALIZE, THOUGH, THAT I'VE HAD LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF MISSIONS, AND--

WELL, DON'T LET IT TROUBLE YOU NONE. I GUESS IT'S ALL A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.

ANYHOW, MY DAYS AS A CRIMEFIGHTER ARE OVER. FACT IS, THE DOCTORS TOLD ME THAT IF I EVER USED MY SPEED AGAIN, IT'D KILL ME DEAD ON THE SPOT.

SO THESE DAYS, I SPEND MY TIME JUST RIDIN' THE YELLOW LINE. IT'S A FINE TIME, TOO. I SEE A LOT OF INTERESTIN' PEOPLE AND MY SENIOR PASS LETS ME RIDE 'TIL THE COWS COME HOME.

LOOK, WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO GET YOUR HELP WITH CRIMEFIGHTING, OR HEAR YOUR MEMOIRS.

WELL...WHAT THEN? I GOT ME A TRAIN TO CATCH.

YOU SEE, SIR, AS STRANGE AS IT MAY SOUND, YOU'RE THE KEY TO A PLOT TO BRING A...WELL, A DEMON INTO OUR REALITY.

IT'S A PLOT CONCEIVED BY--

THE CIRCLE OF THORNS?

YES! HOW DID YOU KNOW?

WELL, MY FIRST CLUE IS RIGHT OVER THERE.



WHETHER HE'S A LOON OR NOT, YOU'RE NOT TAKING HIM ON MY WATCH.

TAKE A NAP, JERKS. JUST WISH IT COULD BE A DIRT NAP!

AAAAAAA!

PSYCHE!

SEE? THERE HE GOES... ALWAYS THROWING THE HEAVY STUFF.

PSYCHE,  
DON'T TRY TO  
GET UP YET!  
REST, AND--

STATESMAN,  
LOOK OUT! IT'S  
ONE OF THOSE  
KAMIKAZE MAGES!  
HE'S--

WHA--

NO...  
NO...





ELSEWHERE...

DEAR  
LORD...  
WHAT'S  
GOING ON?

KEEP  
QUIET, OLD  
MAN. YOU'RE  
HERE TO BE  
USED, AND  
NOTHING  
MORE.

I'LL  
GIVE YOU  
SOMETHING TO  
USE, YOU NO-  
GOOD SACK OF...

YES,  
MILORD. THE  
CIRCLES HAVE  
BEEN SET, AND  
THE PREPARATION  
SPELLS HAVE BEEN  
INITIATED. AS SOON  
AS WE HAVE THE  
OTHER TWO, THE  
PORTAL CAN  
BE OPENED  
ENTIRELY.

EXCELLENT.  
BEFORE THIS  
DAY IS DONE,  
OUR MASTER  
WILL COME  
INTO THIS  
REALM...

IS  
EVERYTHING  
READY?

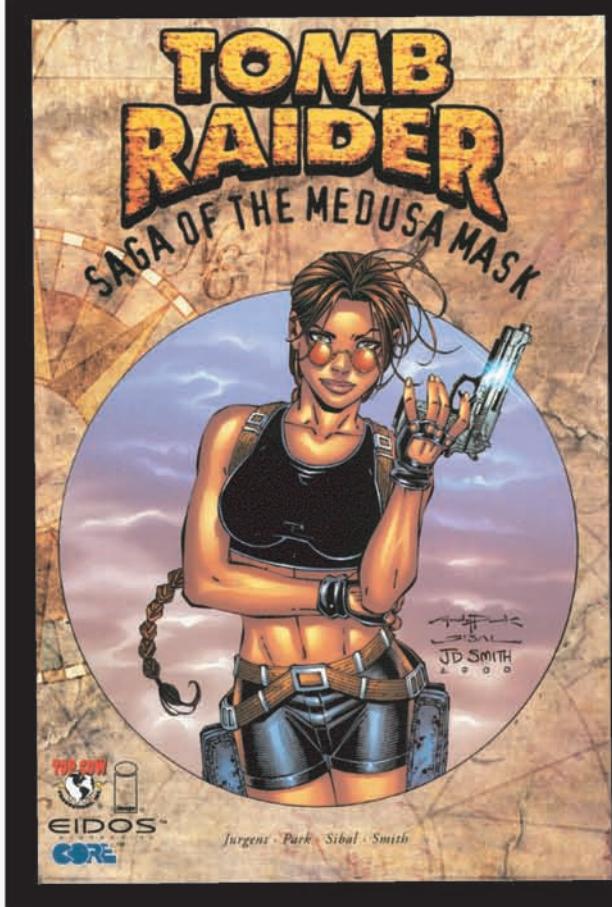
...AND  
THEN THE AGE  
OF MAN ENDS  
FOREVER!

OH,  
VICTORIA.  
WHAT  
KIND OF A FIX  
DID I GET  
MYSELF INTO  
THIS TIME?

**TO BE CONTINUED...**

# TOMB RAIDER: SAGA OF THE MEDUSA MASK

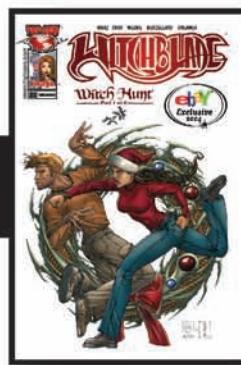
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