



## **Suicide Squad #6**

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"Black Orchid" "Calendar Man" Comics DC2 Dolphin Vixen Nightshade  
Nocturna

## *Suicide Squad*

Issue 5: "All Consuming Fire, Part Three: Handcuffs for Houdini"

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Cover by Kevin Hill

Edited by David Charlton

### Suicide Squad Roll Call:

*Amanda Waller*- The 'Wall' is the head of the Suicide Squad.

*General Wade Eiling*- Was the Government liaison for the Squad, member of the criminal organization the Council, and head of the Atom project that created Captain Atom.

*Colonel Rick Flagg*- Missions leader and former member of the Forgotten Heroes.

*Bronze Tiger/Ben Turner*- Second in command, martial arts expert trained by the League of Assassins.

*Nightshade/Eve Eden*- Government agent. Can become a tangible shadow for short periods of time. She can create dimensional warps and teleport herself and others.

*Nemesis/ Tom Tresser*- Vigilante turned operative for the U.S. government and a master of disguise. Blames the Council for the disappearance and apparent death of his brother.

*Manhunter/ Mark Shaw*- Bounty Hunter with enhanced strength, speed, stamina, agility, and limited healing powers.

*Enchantress/June Moone*- Vast magical power, which can be called upon by saying the word "Enchantress." Powers include levitation and the animation of objects. She also has an immeasurable amount of mystic tricks concealed in her witch's hat.

*Deadshot/ Floyd Lawton-* Deadshot is an expert marksman with any type of weapon. His weapon of choice is wrist-mounted rapid-fire magnums. He wears body armor, and always keeps weaponry and ammunition on his person.

*Vixen/ Mari Jiwe McCabe-* Tatu Totem grants her the ability to mimic the powers of any animal.

*Black Orchid/Susan Linden-* Powers include flight, near invulnerability, persuasion powers, and master of disguise.

*Captain Boomerang/George "Digger" Harkness-* Captain Boomerang is an unparalleled master of the boomerang. He uses a number of trick boomerangs, including sonic boomerangs, remote-controlled fleets of boomerangs, exploding boomerangs and grappling hook boomerangs.

*Oracle-* A mysterious figure that claims to be an ally of the Squads much to Amanda Waller's distrust. Oracle has only made contact thus far, through the Belle Reve computer network.

### **Suicide Notes:**

#### **Previously in Suicide Squad #5...**

Someone dressed like the Batman broke into Belle Reve and orchestrated the escape of a prisoner named Nocturna. 'Batman' was captured after a quick battle with the Bronze Tiger while Nocturna safely escaped into the night.

Nemesis interrogated Wade Eiling. Eiling unwilling to roll over on the Council, instead warned Nemesis, someone is out to start World War three by taking on the mysterious group known as the Ten.

Rick Flagg and Dolphin met up with Buddy Baker, Animal Man. Rick and Buddy soon discovered that their memories revolving around the Forgotten Heroes final mission were very different, until the real truth was realized and Flagg remembered everything, including his own death.

Waller's plan to draw Oracle out into the open succeeded as a redheaded woman and someone in a wheelchair were brought to Belle Reve...

"I demand to see a lawyer right now!" The man in the wheelchair hollered. "I have been falsely arrested! I have not been read my rights nor has anyone told me what I am being charged with!"

Amanda Waller stood across from the man but had yet to respond to his outburst. One of the government operatives handed Waller two files before he joined the other two armed men near the door. She opened one of the files and began to look through it.

"We are not the police Mr. Marshall. But you will be answering some questions here today."

"Like hell I will!" he yelled back at her.

"We'll see about that." Waller said while flipping through the other file. She set both files down on the conference table in front of her and looked up at the young woman who sat quietly in the chair next to Mr. Marshall. "What is your involvement with Mr. Marshall here?"

"She has nothing to do with this!" Marshall shouted.

"You better be sure what this is before you speak out of turn again" Waller stated, looking at Marshall then back at the woman. "Again Miss, who are you and what is your involvement with Mr. Marshall?"

The woman looked terrified for a brief moment but then attempted to answer as she nervously twirled her long red hair. "My name is Belle Haney and I am a student at the college...Mr. Marshall.... Mr. Marshall teaches at in Gotham...I just...just was trying to get some extra credit... I just transferred from Keystone this semester and was..."

"That's fine." Waller said cutting her off. "You check out. You're free to go."

“Go? Go where? What is going to happen to Jack...Mr. Marshall?” Belle tensely replied.

“Transportation will be arranged to take you back to Gotham City.” Waller said looking over at Marshall. “As for Jack here, well that’s up to him.”

Amanda nodded and the three men began to escort Belle Haney from the room.

“Don’t worry Belle. This is all just a big misunderstanding. Everything will be cleared up soon enough.” Marshall said forcing a smile as Belle left the room. “I will see you in class on Monday.”

Marshall turned back to face Waller. “Listen. She is just a student of mine. Sure she came on strong but I would never...”

“Can it. I really don’t care...Oracle.”

Jack took pause with Amanda’s comment. “I...that’s the second time you made reference to the Greek soothsayer.”

The smile on Amanda Waller’s face faded as she pulled a gun out from under the table and pointed it Jack Marshall. “I am only going to ask this once before I shoot you, why did you infiltrate my computer network masquerading as Oracle.”

“I do not know what you are talking about!” Marshall said squirming in his wheel chair.

“Wrong, answer.” Waller declared cocking the hammer on the gun.

### *Peru, South America – Ten months ago...*

Rick Flagg had been with the Forgotten Heroes nearly two months now. Cave Carson and Congo Bill had spent weeks researching all of the information they had gathered on the mysterious pyramids each of them had come across recently. They determined that a seventh pyramid existed. The group, consisting of Carson, Bill, Animal Man, Dolphin, Dane

Dorrance, and Flagg, now found themselves deep in the Andes Mountains in search of the seventh pyramid.

"Rick, you seem nervous." Dolphin whispered as she walked alongside Flagg.

"I am not nervous. I am just concentrating."

"On what?"

"I looked over the map before the plane landed. Carson and Bill had a specific spot where they thought this pyramid was suppose to be at."

"Well maybe we haven't reached it yet."

"That location was at least a half a mile back. Something is not right here."

"Rick. I know it is hard for you to accept this as true, but I believe the six of us were brought together for a reason. This pyramid will give us the answers we are looking for."

"Why, because Carson or Bill told you that? Dol, I know you are desperate to find out about where you came from and why you are here and I am truly sorry that you got involved in this. But this isn't the answer."

"Why are you talking to me like this? Is it true what they say of you?" Dolphin softly uttered.

"What who are saying?" Rick stopped walking and reached for Dolphins arm.

"Congo Bill and Cave. I overheard them talking a few days back. They say you are working for your uncle and can't be trusted." She replied nervously.

"Son of a bitch." Flagg said gritting his teeth.

"It is true then?"

"Yes and no. I don't have time to explain so you're just going to have to

trust me for now okay?" Rick said gentle caressing Dolphins arm.

"I do trust you, Rick Flagg." Dolphin answered.

"Hey you two!" Cave Carson yelled back at them, "Get up here! Bill thinks we are almost there."

Rick followed Dolphin back toward the rest of the group. He casually brushed his hand alongside his holstered pistol.

Mark Shaw stood in the doorway and watched Vixen as she briskly walked on the treadmill.

"Are you going to stand there and watch me all day?" She asked, glancing over at where he stood.

"Sorry." He said slowly walking into the small gymnasium inside Belle Reve. "I didn't want to disturb you."

"What is it about men that they don't know how to apologize appropriately?" Mari stated pressing a button on the treadmill forcing her to walk faster.

"What do you mean?" Mark asked as walked toward her.

"Men apologize over and over again for the stupidest things but are usually too pigheaded to say sorry when they really need to."

"Mari I..." He began to say.

"Mark stop. It's not your fault." She said as she pressed the stop button on the treadmill and stepped off. "I got hurt. It's all part of the job okay?"

"Well Ben seems to think otherwise." Mark replied unable to look her in the eye as she stood in front of him.

"Yeah, well, Ben has nothing to do with this." She said. "We were in the field and you would have done the same thing given the chance. I got

hurt but I am getting better.”

“I am glad to see that.” He said with a nervous smile on his face.

“I am glad your glad.” She said, brushing her hand under his chin. “Now did you just come down here to ease your guilty conscience or was there something else on your mind?”

“I have to leave.” He said without hesitation.

“Leave? Where?”

“Something in my...previous life needs to be taken care of. Something I’ve put off for too long now. I am leaving tonight.”

“Does Waller know?”

“No. But I wanted to tell you before I left.”

“Are you coming back?”

“I hope so.” He said as their eyes met.

“I hope so too.” She said as moved closer toward him. “Just know that you have a life here to come back to.”

Ben Turner silently watched from the doorway as Mark and Mari kissed. He immediately left without saying a word.

George Harkness felt that everything in life was about timing. He grew up in a small town called Kurrumburra, Australia. His family was poor by all means you use to define it. But George never thought of himself that way. He had big dreams and knew it was only a matter of time before he was able to rise up above his current circumstances. The problem always seemed that people would take him for granted. They were sure he would amount to nothing, including his family. He would prove them all wrong of course, he just needed to find a way out. George never made his own opportunities, he felt he didn’t have to. It was just a

matter of time before opportunity found him and he would seize it.

It was that type of reasoning that lead him to come to America, where he adopted the name Captain Boomerang. He soon found that the life of a hero didn't quiet lead to the lap of luxury he was hoping for. He was much too smart and cunning and soon found that crime really did pay. In fact it paid quiet well. Until he crossed paths with the Flash, that is. The Flash stopped several of his schemes, the last of which landed him in Belle Reve. Of course, like the rest of his life, George waited, and opportunity presented itself once again in the form of the Suicide Squad and a chance to earn his freedom. Once his sentence had been reduced to time served, Boomerang chose to stick around for a while waiting for the next opportunity to come along.

A few days back while still recovering from a gunshot wound inflicted upon him by Deadshot, Boomerang received a note that was slipped under his door:

*I believe a man of your talents deserves more respect. I think our combined efforts could really shake this place up a bit. I know a way for you to get back at Deadshot and take down the entire Suicide Squad in the process. Interested? Speak to no one of this. We will be in contact soon. - D.*

A few days had passed and he received another note that said someone would meet him in his room tonight. He was anxiously waiting for his mysterious visitor when there was a knock on his door.

"Come in." He said, sitting up in his chair twirling a boomerang in his hand.

The door opened and a man walked in.

"What the bloody hell? You!?" Boomerang stated in utter disbelief.

A few days back, Amanda Waller decided that it was time to discover who had infiltrated her computer network going by the name of Oracle. This person made contact with her and, in the guise of an ally, helped her determine that Wade Eiling was a traitor working for a criminal

organization. Though she appreciated the end result, she was still very suspicious of Oracle and what was behind his or her motives for helping her and the squad. Oracle again had made contact on Amanda's computer soon after Eiling was locked up. When Amanda attempted to press Oracle for information as to why he or she chose to help, Oracle responded with "I wanted to prove to you that I could be useful". Ignoring further questions that Amanda asked, Oracle stated that when the time was right they would be in contact again and warned that there would be consequences if anyone at Belle Reve attempted to contact or locate them.

This did not sit well with Waller. She soon flipped through what she called her body count index, and found that there was a prisoner locked up at Belle Reve that could possibly help her.

Bernard Bonner, otherwise known as Bug, has the ability to enter any computer system and trace it back to its source. Working with his sister Blythe, who preferred the name Byte, used Bernard's powers to swindle corporations out of millions until they were caught. Blythe turned on her brother and cut a deal with the police. She was serving time in a minimum-security prison until it was discovered she had the ability to manipulate electricity through her body. She escaped after killing seven inmates and five guards. Bernard, who was wrongly assumed to be the mastermind of the two siblings, was locked up in Belle Reve.

Amanda presented Bug with a deal, trace Oracle to his or her location and she would make sure that Byte would be tracked down and placed in a cell next to him. With a chance to pay his sister back for betraying him, he willingly agreed. Though he didn't appear all that bright, Bug assured Amanda that he could find Oracle by back tracing through the network using a thread left behind from Oracle's last contact. To insure that he didn't back out of his end of the deal, Waller falsely claimed that he had been fitted with a device that would scramble his brain causing him a painful death if he decided to get sidetracked and not return. The gamble paid off and Bug reappeared minutes after he left. He told Waller everything she needed to know. She picked up the phone and placed the order to pick up Jack Marshall in Gotham City. Now Marshall sat across from Waller with a gun pointed in his face.

"Not so brave when you're hiding behind a computer now are you?"

Waller said as she causally waved the gun in front of Marshall.

Jack Marshall attempted to stay calm but was obviously disturbed by the gun in Waller's possession. "If this has to do with Digitronix, the Justice Department cleared me of all charges."

"You want to play dumb Mr. Marshall, that's fine. But be aware that you are not the only one who is good with computers. As we speak you no longer have a job at Gotham University. You no longer have an apartment in Gotham Heights. In fact you no longer exist to the outside world and not a single soul will miss you after today. Not even the little tramp that just left here. So, there is no reason why you can't stay here as a permanent guest of federal government until you decide to change your mind. I have to imagine that an eight-by-ten cell is gonna seem awfully cramped with you in a wheelchair." Waller nodded and two prison guards came into the room.

"Show Mr. Marshall here to his new home."

"You can't do this!" He yelled as the guards wheeled him out of the room. "I know my rights!"

"You gave up your rights the moment you decided to mess with me!" Waller yelled back as she set the gun down on the table.

*Peru, South America – Ten months ago...*

"I can't believe it." Animal Man declared looking around him, "This is truly amazing!"

"I have to admit I had my doubts as well." Dane Dorrance said as he and the others began to move inside the pyramid made of golden stone.

"I was beginning to believe the doubters myself Dane. I thought maybe I had only dreamt that this or the six other pyramids existed. Thanks to Bill here he kept us on track all along." He said patting Congo Bill on the back. "This is truly the greatest archeological find of our time."

"Now that we are here, what are we looking for?" Animal Man asked as

he sniffed the musky air.

"I will know it when I see it." Congo Bill stated as we moved his flashlight across the inside walls of the pyramid

Rick Flagg watched closely as the five others began to spread out and search the large seemingly empty cavern. He took a few steps forward and felt a crackling sound below him. He took a step back and shown his light near his feet. There was loose brick tile on the floor. He bent down and pulled it up. Under the tile was a small opening with an object inside. He reached down and pulled it out. It was a small pyramid made of gold.

"Hey Rick found something!" Buddy said shining his light in Flagg's direction.

"Give it to me." Congo Bill demanded as he moved toward Flagg.

"Stop right there, Bill." Flagg said pulling out his pistol and pointed it at Congo Bill, who now stood about ten feet away from him, "Your just a little to anxious for my tastes."

"Rick what the hell are you doing?" Cave Carson asked.

"Sorry Cave but nobody makes a move until Bill here tells me what's going on."

"Tell you what's going on?" Bill repeated, "Tell you so you can go report back to your precious government just like you've been doing all along?"

"That may be true but it seems to me I am not the only one keeping secrets now am I? You tried to hide it but you knew where this pyramid was all along. You strung Cave along just enough to make it seem like you two found it together!"

"You're being ridiculous Flagg and a tad bit paranoid." Bill said taking a small step toward Flagg.

"Being paranoid has kept me alive this long. I suggest you stay where you are if you want to do the same." Flagg ordered, "I just don't get

what the point of this has been all along? Why us?"

"You, me the others we are inconsequential to the grand scheme of things. We're just here to fulfill the roles that the prophecy foretold, that six would come together to find everlasting life." Congo Bill stated as his demeanor changed. "It's unfortunate but the prophecy choose only one to deliver this gift onto him."

"Bill what prophecy are you babbling about?" Cave Carson yelled out.

"Shut up old man. You and your idiotic exploring and adventuring. This was about my destiny! I was the chosen one and the rest of you were merely pawns." Bill shouted as he slowly reached back toward the shotgun strapped to his back.

"Do not ..." Flagg began to say as Congo Bill pulled out the gun and shot Flagg in the chest.

Rick Flagg still holding his gun in one hand and the statue in the other, fell to the ground, dead.

"This some kinda joke?" Boomerang exclaimed to the man who walked into his room.

"You have me confused with another Gothamite my dear boy. This is most certainly no joke." The man responded closing the door behind him. "My name is Julian Day."

"I know who you are! You're that whack job the Calendar Man!"

"This coming from the man who throws boomerang's at the fastest man alive?" Day retorted.

"Regardless." Boomerang muttered, "How the hell did you get out of your cell and why aren't they busting the door down right now to drag you back?"

"There are certain people within these walls that realize the value of

compensation for turning a blind eye. That is how I operate.”

“I just can’t believe it. Didn’t you recently turn down Waller for a squad mission? Not that we needed another crazy dag on the team.”

“I am as crazy as I need to be.” Day beamed.

“So if you’re the all powerful Oz hiding behind the curtain then why don’t you bust out of here?”

“When the time is right. For now I am best served within these walls.”

“Suit yourself mate. Me, I am looking to get out soon.”

“I have been authorized make you an offer that might persuade you to change your mind.” Day leaned down toward the sitting Captain Boomerang, “I need you to kill someone for me.”

“Rack off mate! If you are so bloody powerful here, do it yourself.” Harkness said setting his boomerang down on the table in front of him.

“You are the only one who can get close enough. Then perhaps we can work on taking care other some of the other menaces who roam the Belle’s halls, namely Floyd Lawton.”

“Forget it. If the Wall catches wind of this we’re all dead.”

“Mrs. Waller will continue to be preoccupied with other matters. But if you need to be convinced of the seriousness of the offer...” Julian Day paused as he pulled out a folded piece of paper and set it in front of Boomerang. “Here are five hundred thousand reasons to reconsider. The money is already in an offshore account with your name on it.”

“I think you and I can have a go at this.” Boomerang said as he carefully studied the bank transfer notice. He began to smile as he slowly pulled himself to his feet. “Who do you want dead?”

Sarge Steel walked into his office and found Eve Eden standing in front

of his desk.

“My they grow up so fast.” Eve said holding a picture of Steels daughter,  
“What is Angela now? Eighteen?”

“She will be nineteen in the fall and yes they do grow up fast. But I am sure you didn’t come all this way to discuss my family.”

“No. No I didn’t. How very astute of you.”

“Take a seat Eve and tell me what’s on your mind.” Steel said, sitting on the edge of his desk.

“I am tired; just sick and tired of the whole thing!” She said falling into the office chair as dark shadows cropped up around her.

“We already went over this. What happened in Qurac was an unfortunate incident.”

“Unfortunate? That’s such political bullshit Sarge and you know it! Nate died!”

“We had no idea that Marlo was holding him!”

“You had no idea because all this time you had me spying of Amanda Waller when I should have been watching Eiling!”

“There was no way of knowing that Eiling was involved with the Council or Marlo!”

Steel took a deep breath “What did Eiling say when Tresser interrogated him?”

“He responded exactly like you thought he would. He diverted attention away from himself and the Council by offering up a threat on the Ten.”

“What did Waller do?”

“She didn’t bite and Eiling hasn’t been out of his cell since.”

“Good. Eiling knows just enough to be dangerous and we don’t need

Waller asking anymore questions then she already has.”

“No. She hasn’t said anything but I am certain she knows I killed Marlo.”

“It was only a matter of time before she figured that out anyways.”

“Why didn’t you tell me Marlo was a member of the Ten?”

“There wasn’t time, besides, would it have mattered under the circumstances?”

“Probably not.”

“Eve I need you to go back to Belle Reve.”

“What and act like nothings happened? Just go back to spying on Waller and the Squad?”

“For now, yes. The President wants to have a sit down later this week to discuss the future of the Squad. I have to convince him that the Squad is no longer a liability now that Eiling is out of the picture. I need you on the team, Eve. Can you do that for me?”

“Only for now.” She casually replied, “But how is the President going to react when the other members of the Ten discover it was one of his op teams that was responsible for the death of Marlo?”

“They won’t find out. Marlo’s replacement will be appointed in the fall and it will be business as usually for the world.”

“And what if there’s truly is someone out there looking to take out members of the Ten?” She asked.

“There hasn’t been a successful assassination on a member of the Ten since Kennedy and you know what happened after that. There is a reason why they survive. If someone is out there gunning for them, The Ten have ways to shut them down.”

"Did you get anywhere with our Oracle yet?" Daniel Murphy asked as Amanda Waller entered the Belle Reve security office.

"Not yet but the night is still young." She said sitting down next to him. Amanda noticed a face on a video monitor in front of her. "Is that our mysterious Batman?"

"Yep. His name is Anton Knight, the Night Stalker." Daniel Murphy said "His step-sister is Natalia Knight or Nocturna if you may. Up till recently she was a resident here at Belle Reve."

"So he breaks in here dressed like the Bat to breakout his sister. She gets away and he gets caught."

"Something like that." Murphy replied.

"He say anything about how he was able to break into the most secure prison in the country and know exactly how are where to find her?"

"He hasn't said a word, but prisons have flaws, Amanda. No security system is perfect if you know how to exploit them."

"Well it's your job as head of security to prevent things like this from happening." Amanda said obviously getting angry. "That's what I pay you for."

"The federal government pays me Amanda." He said as she shot him a nasty look, "Besides, this guy's record doesn't indicate that he was bright enough to pull off something this intricate on his own. He had to have been feed information on the prisons specs and supplied the gear to pull this off."

"You let me know the moment this guy utters even a vowel understand?" She said as she stood up and walked toward the door. She paused and then turned around pointing a finger down at the seated Murphy, "And so help me god if security around here doesn't improve immensely you won't be able to get a job checking for minors at a rated R movie, I don't care who's paying your salary! Are we clear?"

"Yes ma'am." Murphy managed to utter while he held his breath until Waller left the room.

Jack Marshall nervously tapped his fingers against the wall as he lay in the bed of the small cell he was placed in a few hours ago. He gave up yelling for help a short while back. No one was coming. He would have to figure out what his next move would be to get out of his current situation. He was startled at the sound of the cell door as it slowly slid open.

"Who's there?" He said as he leaned up and squinted at the dark figure that entered the dimly lit cell.

"Don't make a sound. This will be over quick enough." The man said as he cupped his hand over Marshall's mouth forcing his head back down onto the bed. Marshall began to panic as he watched the man pull out a sharp angled piece of metal and press it up against his neck. With one quick motion, the man standing over him slit his throat.

"Easy as cake." Harkness stated, wiping the blood off of his boomerang before quietly exiting the cell.

Amanda was looking over files in her office when her phone rang. She took off her glasses and reached for the phone.

"Waller its Economos! He's dead Amanda. Jack Marshall is dead!"

"What? How?" She snapped into the receiver.

"We aren't able to pull up the video feed from his cell block but the guards found him with his throat slit during bed checks a few minutes ago.

"I want this place lit up and locked down now! I will be down there in two minutes. Oh and John, make sure Murphy is somewhere I can't find him or he's a dead man as well!" Waller yelled before slamming the

phone down. She pushed her chair back and began to stand up when she heard her computer ding and a message box appeared on her monitor.

"You picked up the wrong guy Amanda." The message blinked in front of her. "I told you there should be no attempts to try and find me. Now an innocent man is dead. This will be your one and only warning. Next time I won't play so nice."

Amanda reached out and knocked the computer monitor off her desk.

"He pulled the shotgun out so fast and then BANG! He shot you Rick. He just moved so fast!" Buddy Baker exclaimed. "The rest of us stood there in disbelief or whatever, but Dolphin charged toward where you lay on the ground."

"There...there was a hole in your chest but I knew... I just knew..." Dolphin spoke out.

"Knew? Knew what." Rick questioned.

"I knew it as well. I leapt at Bill, knocking him to the ground while Dolphin reached out and took the golden statue from your hand. She placed it on...on the hole in your chest." Buddy recited the memory as quickly as it came to him. "It began to glow. I swear to god it seemed like the entire room began to light up until it was so bright I had to close my eyes. And then, like that, it was gone. The wound in your chest, the statue, the pyramid, everything was gone!" Buddy yelled as he leapt to his feet.

"I saw you...die Rick. I had to do something." Dolphin said as she began to cry.

Rick reached out and held her hand unable to look up.

"That's it. The next thing I remember I was back home telling Ellen that we gave up our search like nothing had happened. But the truth is we all had somehow had been given false memories about the entire event."

"But it seemed real." Rick finally said spoke. "It wasn't until Dolphin

and I saw each other again...”

“Wait! I remember one more thing. The last thing Congo Bill said before he too disappeared. He said...savage.”

Rick Flagg let go of Dolphins hand and slowly stood up.

“What do we do now?” Buddy asked.

“I’m not sure.” Flagg said wiping the sweat from his forehead, “But this is far from over.”

*Somewhere half way around the world...*

A man reached up and muted the sound on the video feed on the screen in front of him.

“So now you know the truth.” Another man, who was seated next to him, stated.

“The truth? Perhaps. The fact is that I waited almost four thousand years for the prophecy of the golden sculpture of Khafra to come to pass. The truth does not give me any such pleasure.”

“Ah but there is an advantage to being immortal such as we are. We exude with patient don’t we, Vandal Savage?”

“Perhaps. But one thing the young mister Flagg stated was true. This is far from over.”

*Somewhere in Gotham City...*

He finished typing and the man at the computer sat back and smiled. Everything had worked out perfectly. A woman walked over and put her arms around the man.

“You wanted me to let you know when Blythe Bonner got back to Gotham?”

"Thank you my love." He said turning around to face her, "Tell her that her payment is already posted."

"I have to admit I was uncertain how things would play out with her involved. Having her hook up with Jack Marshall weeks before this all started was a nice touch. Whose idea was it to use her mothers maiden name for her cover?"

"It's the little touches that make things work." He said standing up raising his arms in the air. "Our dear Byte almost participated for free when I told her that her brother would be involved. Like your brother, all anyone needs is the proper motivation."

"You knew he would get caught didn't you, Noah? What if Anton talks while he's locked up?"

"Well it was a calculated risk, Natalia, but I have people inside of Belle Reve who will take care of him if the need arises." He said putting his arms around her, "Besides any risk was worth taking to see you free of that place."

"Tonight I will show how much it was worth to you... Oracle." She said kissing him.

"Please Natalia, Oracle is dead. You can call me the Calculator."

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH WHEN THE DC2 LAUNCHES  
THE CONTINUITY-WIDE MEGA-CROSSOVER EVENT, *CRISIS:  
THE APOKOLIPS IMPERATIVE!***

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*Black Orchid*

"Nothing But Flowers, Conclusion: The Only Thing That's Real"

Written by John Elbe

Edited by John Elbe

**Now**

Black Orchid watched as Philip Sylvia's entire body began to shake. She wondered how long it would take before blood would begin to seep out of his body. She could stand there and watch him die but it wouldn't be enough. She needed to know the truth.

"You now have twenty-six seconds." She leaned down and whispered into his ear.

He attempted to speak but he was unable to utter a sound. Susan reached out and pressed two fingers into the side of his neck. Doctor Sylvia gasped for air and began to breathe again.

"If I let go of this spot on your neck your body will begin to shut down again. If you tell me everything I want to know I can reverse the process entirely. Choose your words carefully, Doctor."

"Who...who are you? What do you want from me?" He managed to utter under labored breath.

"You were in charge of the Black Orchid project at Lex Corp, yes?"

"Yes." He answered.

"After being fired you changed your name and began to work for Wayne enterprises under an assumed name where you expanded on the project yes?"

"Yes."

"See how easy this is?" She said reaching up with her other hand and patted him on the cheek. "Now here comes another one that may be a little tougher. What was the purpose of the project?"

He didn't hesitate as he answered her. "I was told to create the perfect spy. Someone who could change their appearance at will and uses pheromone powers to persuade those she could get close to..."

"Why me? Why did you choose me to experiment on?"

"I...I...don't know who you are. There were so many."

"How many?" Susan demanded.

"Eighty, maybe a hundred girls. I lost track. They kept dying." He began to cry "But she kept sending more girls until I couldn't take it anymore. I left and went into hiding. But she found me and sent you here to kill me."

"Her? What is her name?"

"I never wanted any of this!" He said finding it harder to speak.

"The person who ordered you to perform the experiments, tell me her goddamned name!" Susan screamed. Susan leaned down as he muttered a name.

"Please God forgive me." He pleaded.

Susan spoke softly into his ear "God is going to have to wait. Where you are going you will have to face each and every innocent girl who's lives you stole. Maybe, just maybe one of them will forgive you."

She stood up and released her fingers from his neck. "I am not sorry when I tell you that I lied. There is no way to reverse the death touch. But know this, your death will be mild compared to what I have in store for her."

Black Orchid left Philip Sylvia to die alone in his home as she disappeared into the Gotham City night.

### **Then**

Three weeks had passed since Susan Linden encountered Batman in Gotham city. Clayton Stoner noticed a severe change in Susan. She would disappear for days on end and then return like nothing had

happened. When he pushed her to tell him where she was or what she was doing she would respond with, 'I was working'. She was no longer interested in working on cases with Clayton.

Clayton watched as Susan came into his office and sat down across from him at his desk.

"Clay we need your help." Susan said.

"By the way I assume you mean you and the other female vigilante you've been roaming the streets of Metropolis with these last few nights?" Clayton responded, without looking up at her. "Why don't you ask Superman for help?"

"Superman? He is a figured head in this city! He flies high above the city looking down on us. But he has his head so high in the clouds he never sees the true crime that exists. Even if he did, I am sure he would feel it was above him in his god-like state!"

"Susan I was joking. But it does seem that your new friends influence is rubbing off on you."

"Thorn is not a friend. We understand each other. We want the same thing for our city."

"And what would that be?" Clayton asked finally looking up from his computer. "Now your dogging this cities greatest hero and taking to the streets in that crazy purple get-up to defend your city. Did you forget why you came to me in the first place?"

"Of course I do, but things have changed. I am more focused. I have a purpose for the first time and I am doing what I was meant to do. I am the Black Orchid!"

"Suzy, I can understand and appreciate what you are trying to do but you are going about it the wrong way. Busting low-level street thugs and smashing up hideouts in hopes of catching bad guys isn't working. All you are doing is stirring up a hornets nest with no forethought of getting stung."

"That isn't true. Thorn and I have been working our way up from the bottom. Moving upstream looking for the bigger fish. That is why I came to you for help. We found one, possibly the biggest fish in the pond. Henry Ballard."

"Henry Ballard? The U.S. senator?" Clayton quickly answered back.

"Word is that he is the top dog in a group called the 100. The 100 is..." Susan began to say.

"Stop. Just stop right there. Do you think in my line of work that I wouldn't know who the major criminal organization is here in this city? I am able to operate and survive by avoiding anything connected with them."

"We want to take them down." Susan replied. "And I need you to dig up everything you can on the senator so we can prepare our next move."

"Your next move is to not draw anymore attention to yourself and just walk away from the whole thing."

"I can't do that and you know it!"

"I understand that your friend or whoever, lost her father when he got himself murdered because he started to get too close to the 100. Revenge is a powerful motivator but you do not need to get yourself killed because of this. Walk away now!"

"We will shut them down with or without you. I am asking you as a favor to get us the information we need so we are better prepared. Isn't that your number one rule, always be prepared."

"No. My number one rule is to stay alive." Clayton paused, "Okay I will look into this guy for you on one condition. If afterward I discover that this is too big for the two of you to handle, you will consider holding off for the time being?"

"I won't make any promises but I will consider it."

## **Now**

### *Paris, France 4 a.m.*

"I fear zat you are in over your head fille." The woman said before striking Black Orchid from behind. Susan turned and faced her attacker. It was a tall woman dressed in a tan and burgundy costume with a hood trailed off like a tail. It was a stupid mistake. She was so focused on getting inside the building that she never saw her coming.

Susan had now been awake for nearly thirty-six hours. After getting the name from Philip Sylvia, she was on a plane to Paris France. Everything had come full circle. She was in France just two weeks ago when she received the message that sent her on a journey to discover the truth about who she was and how she became that way. Now she stood outside the corporate headquarters of Revson, a major Parisian perfume company. The intel she uncovered led her to believe that the woman she sought out was inside this building. All that stood in her way was a crazy french woman with American superhero envy.

Susan easily dodged the next assault as the woman charged past her.

"You are American, no?" The woman said as she spin back around, "Well, you will find zat France has her own defender. I am zee Crimson Fox and you will not be allowed to continue yor criminal intentions anymore zes..."

Susan charged the Crimson Fox and punched her in the jaw, stopping her midsentence and knocking her to the ground. She watched to see if she was going to get back up. When she determined that Crimson Fox was down for good, she continued to search for a way to enter the building unnoticed.

## **Then**

Thirty minutes ago she received a call from Clayton on her cell phone. He uncovered information that linked Senator Henry Ballard with not only the 100 group, but his previous election campaign was financed by Lex Luthor. The fear in his voice was something Susan had never head

before. She immediately raced back to the office but it was too late.

Susan looked on from a distance as the office building of Clayton Stoner investigations burned. She watched as the Metropolis fire department attempted to contain the fire but the four-story building was engulfed in flames. It was her fault. He warned her that she shouldn't get involved with the 100. But she didn't listen and forced him to get involved as well.

Susan moved closer toward the building but was stopped by a police officer, "Sorry miss, it's too dangerous here."

"But I work in that building!" She yelled. "My...friend could have been in there."

"Well for their sake, I hope not today. Witnesses said they heard an explosion as the building went up. No one alive is coming out of that building now."

Susan contemplated what she was going to do next when there was a tap on her shoulder. She turned and saw a man behind her with a hooded sweatshirt on, pulled tightly around his head and face.

"Clayton!" she said with relief in her voice.

"Suzy there isn't time." He said pulling her close to him, "They are probably watching us right now. It's time to cut our losses."

"I don't understand. We need to go after whoever did this."

"No. It's much bigger than even I imagined. They won't stop until we are both dead. You have to leave town now."

"I am not leaving without you. We will go together and when the time is right we will come back and fight."

"It's too late for me Suzy. I don't have any fight left in me. We need to separate. Use my contact in Vegas. He can set you up with a new life there where you can be safe."

"What about you?"

"I will be fine. I can disappear where no one can find me. Promise me Suzy you will do this for me."

"I've ruined everything. Your business, your life, everything." Susan uttered as she fought back the tears as they welled up in her eyes.

"No Suzy, you didn't. I only wish I could have helped you more. Now do what I said okay? I want you to wait a few minutes after I am gone. Then leave yourself and don't look back."

There wasn't anything left to say. Clayton was gone. Susan turned around and waited a few minutes and then she too disappeared. She hadn't noticed but someone had been watching her. That person continued to follow her long after she left Metropolis that night.

### **Now**

Black Orchid quickly moved through the Revson building toward the top floor. Adrenalin carried her up each flight of stairs. Does the woman she is after know that she's here? She must know by now. It's almost as if she lead her here.

Susan reached the top floor and swung the door open from the stairwell. She braced herself as she went down the long hallway and through the doorway into the only lit room on the floor. Susan stopped when she saw the woman she was after, with her back turned looking out the window.

"Constance D'Aramis!" Black Orchid shouted out to the woman.

### **Then**

It was nearly three am on a Wednesday and the crowds in the casino had died down. A man sat down at the empty \$100 minimum blackjack table. He smiles at the dealer as he pulled out a handful of chips and placed a stack in front of her. The woman didn't look up as she dealt him his cards.

"Been doing this long?" He asked while motioning her to give him another card.

"I've been here all night if that's what you mean." She replied, flipping over another card in front of him. "Bust."

"It's hard to imagine a world that exists outside of Las Vegas." He said casually as she dealt him another hand. "But there is of course. I personally believe that everyone has an important part to play in it. You just have to know your role. Do you know your role...Susan?"

The dealer finally looked up at him and smiled, "Sorry sir. My name is Monica."

"Of course, of course." He said waving off another card. "Well, the Susan I heard of knows how to impersonate anyone and can kick ass with the best of them. She disappeared a few months back after some bad stuff went down in Metropolis."

Her smile faded and she began to panic and looked around the room.

"Don't worry Susan. I am sure with your instincts you would have pegged me for a hostile long before I sat down if I was. But I am not." He said reaching over and pulling the glove off of his left hand to reveal a mechanical limb. "My name is Sarge Steel and I am here to offer you a job."

## **Now**

The woman turned around to see Black Orchid staring at her from across the room. "You don't have to be so dramatic Suzy. I just watched you beat-up my sister across the street. Her and that silly costume. Crimson Fox, please!"

Susan stood there and watched as the woman walked over and sat down at the desk across from her. "Have a seat Suzy, we have a lot of catching up to do."

"You know I came here to kill you." Susan said in a low discerning voice.

"Did you now?" Constance replied as she sat back in her chair and crossed her arms "Are you sure? I mean of course you may have thought that at first but now you're not so sure. You are home now Susan. You are home."

"I am going to give you only one chance to tell me everything."

"And then what? Kill me like you did Doctor Sylvia? You won't have to torture me Suzy. I will gladly tell you everything you want to know."

Black Orchid took a few steps towards Constance and sat down across from her.

"There you go." Constance smiled

"What are you doing to me?" Susan said in a daze after she realized she had sat down. There was something familiar in the air that was suddenly clouding Susan's mind.

"Something I have been doing ever since it appeared I had finally succeed with your creation, I have been testing you. You see, my sister Vivian may have a rosy view of things but I understand and appreciate the complexities of the world. I may appear to be a woman content to run her own perfume company, but I am a woman of vision. All I needed was the perfect instrument to help me reshape the landscape of global power. It took nearly three years before we had our first real success but alas there you were. With my design, Doctor Sylvia had created the perfect spy."

Susan clinched her fist but she was unable to move out of the chair.

"But I had to make sure you would be able to perform any task I required of you. So I decided to let you lose to see how you would adapt in the world. I admit at first I was somewhat disappointed. But after the incident in Metropolis sent you into hiding I decided to help you get on track. I fed information that found it's way into Sarge Steels hands, which eventually led him to you. From there I must say I have been

impressed. You have become everything I could have hoped for." Constance stood up and walked around to where Black Orchid was seated. "The test phase is now over which is why I contacted you a few weeks back. Now it is time for you to fully embrace what you were created for Suzy."

Susan slowly rose from her seat and stood face to face with Constance D'Aramis.

"I... would rather... die." Susan finally said. With a blurring motion, Susan reached up and put her hands around Constance's neck and slowly began to squeeze. "But I am taking you with me."

Constance struggled against Black Orchid's grasp, "You are stronger than I gave you credit for." Constance choked "I emitted enough pheromones in this room to overtake ten men."

Susan picked the flailing woman up by the neck and threw her across the room. "I am really sorry it has to be like this Suzy." Constance shouted as she pulled herself up off the floor.

Susan shook her head as she attempted to fight off another wave of pheromones in the air. She felt dizzy and barely able to stand as she slowly moved toward Constance. She heard a noise behind her and turned around to see Constance's sister charge toward her. Susan was unable to move out of the way in time and as the Crimson Fox lifted her right hand to reveal razor sharp claws on her costume. She watched as the woman slashed into her with her claws. The pain was more than she could bear as she felt her flesh tear open. Everything began to go black as she hit the floor.

Susan lay on the floor clutching the open wound at her side. She's afraid if she lets go her insides will spill out onto the floor next to her. It may not matter. There is so much blood. How can there be this much blood? How can someone live while losing this much blood? She finally had the answers she was looking for. She knows who she is and who was responsible for what she has become. She finally had the answers about her life. Now she was going to die...

## Epilogue

*"...I remember when  
I remember, I remember when I lost my mind  
There was something so pleasant about that phase..."*

Susan gradually awoke to the sound of a woman singing. She blinked a few times as her eyes began to focus on her surroundings. The singing continued as she slowly sat up on the edge of the bed.

*"Yeah I was out of touch  
But it wasn't because I didn't know enough  
I just knew too much"  
Does that make me crazy?  
Does that make me crazy?  
Does that make me crazy?  
Probably!"*

Susan looked around the small dark room. Where was she? She slowly stood up and felt a twinge on her right side. She moved her hand across her hip and toward her stomach. It hurt to the touch. The wound had scared over. Had she recently been operated on? Why couldn't she remember anything? She listened as heard the woman continue to sing.

*"Come on now  
Who do you, who do you, who do you, who do you think you are?  
Ha ha ha!  
Bless your soul  
You really think you're in control  
Well,  
I think you're crazy  
I think you're crazy  
I think you're crazy  
Just like me!"*

She took a few steps and put her hand against the wall. The singing came from the other side.

"Why...why are you singing?" she asked.

“Ahh, you are awake!” The woman said through the wall. “It’s get so dreary in here. It’s almost numbing when I can’t hear the birds chirping or the plants growing. Singing usually passes the time. My name is Pamela by the way. What’s yours?”

Susan thought for a moment before she answered. “Susan, I think?”

“Well Susan, welcome to Arkham Asylum.”

“Arkham Asylum?” Susan asked. “How did I get here? Why can’t I remember?”

“That would most likely be our gracious hosts. They like to keep their pets submissive. But lucky for me I have a friend who is a doctor. Her name is Harley and she’s coming to get me out soon. I think a good old-fashioned road trip is in order. Care to join us?”

Susan again thought for a moment before she answered. “Sure. That could be fun.”

*The end, for now!*

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## From the same author on Feedbooks

### Rogues Gallery #2 (2006)

Rogues Gallery: Deadshot vs. Deathstroke.

Floyd Lawton is brought out of hiding to protect a man that Slade Wilson has been hired to take down. A shocking secret is revealed and a deadly decision is made as the two preeminent assassins face off for the first time. Before it's over, a single shot will be fired that will have far reaching effects across the entire DC2 universe.

### Suicide Squad #3 (2006)

Suicide Squad: Bang and Blame, Part 3 (of 3).

More than one member of the Suicide Squad must make the ultimate sacrifice to salvage a mission gone horribly wrong as the battle concludes. Secrets are revealed and hidden alliances come to light. And in the end someone on the Squad is changed forever when four little words are whispered.

### Suicide Squad #4 (2006)

Suicide Squad: All Consuming Fire, Part 1.

"Bang and Blame" is over and the Squad begins to pick up the pieces. Rick Flagg looks into his past for clues to his death. Oracle returns and Amanda Waller wants answers! Also, who is breaking into Belle Reve and why? The answer will shock you!

Also Black Orchid's back-up tale begins here. Susan Linden doesn't know who she is, where she came from, or how she became Black Orchid. The search for the truth begins in Metropolis.

### Suicide Squad #0 (2006)

Suicide Squad: Bang and Blame, Prologue.

Amanda Waller has taken on Washington and won! Now she's ready to take on a new challenge, forming a Squad of misfits, outcasts, and super villains to do the governments dirty work. The only thing standing in her way is The President of the United States himself, Maxwell Lord! Is the Suicide Squad finished before it begins?

### Suicide Squad #1 (2006)

Suicide Squad: Bang and Blame, Part 1.

Events in Qurac lead to the Squad preparing for their deadly new mission. Manhunter and Vixen are on the trail of a killer. Rick Flagg is confronted with his past. And a classic member of the Suicide Squad makes their debut in the DC2 universe! Or do they?

*Suicide Squad #2 (2006)*

*Suicide Squad: Bang and Blame, Part 2 (of 3).*

The Squad enters a foreign country in hopes of stopping a deadly weapon, but run into the lethal team known as Onslaught.

Someone makes a shocking discovery that alters the entire mission for the worse. And a secret agenda leads to death for someone!

*Suicide Squad #5 (2006)*

*Suicide Squad: All Consuming Fire, Part 2.*

Someone has already broken into Belle Reve and now the break-out begins! Wade Eiling proposes a deal to Nemesis that could destroy the Squad. Rick Flagg rejoins the Forgotten Heroes? The mystery of Oracle deepens.

Black Orchid's back-up tale continues, as Susan Linden gets closer to discovering the truth about her secret origin. Will she find the answers when she travels to Gotham City?

*Suicide Squad #7 (2006)*

*Suicide Squad: Gods of War.*

*Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 8!*

As the war rages across the planet, the struggle against Apokolips reaches the halls of power in Washington, D.C. A coup in the White House puts the US government at the mercy of agents of Darkseid, and the countdown to nuclear annihilation begins! This one has it all: The Wall versus Granny Goodness! The Squad versus the Female Furies! And when the smoke clears, who will be left standing?

*Suicide Squad #8 (2006)*

*Suicide Squad: Always With Me, Always With You.*

The war is over and the aftermath begins! The Squad was changed forever by the events of the Crisis and a new team rises from the ashes of the old. Plus, someone faced down their destiny during the Crisis and now has discovered truth in the saying: Be careful what you wish for...

Green Lantern #4 (2007)

Green Lantern: Eye of the Beholder, Part 1 (of 3): Paint it Black.

Green Lantern #5 (2007)

Green Lantern: Eye of the Beholder, Part 2: Even Better Than the Real Thing.

Green Lantern #6 (2007)

Green Lantern: Eye of the Beholder, Part 3 (of 3): Be Yourself.

Suicide Squad Annual #1.5 (2007)

Suicide Squad Annual: Burning Down the House, Part 2.

Suicide Squad #9 (2007)

Suicide Squad: Die Hard the Hunter, Part One.

Manhunter, Mark Shaw's past finally catches up with him. Is he hero, villain, or something else? And will clues from his past give answers about why he left the Squad a year ago, not to be heard or seen from again? Part one of a three-part tale that exposes the Manhunter legacy begins here.

Suicide Squad #10 (2007)

Suicide Squad: Die Hard the Hunter, Part 2.

The events of his past are finally exposed as the origin of Mark Shaw continues. Shawn Marcus dies and Mark Shaw is born along with several identity's that will force him to decide what path he will ultimately follow.

Back in the present, Sarge Steel orders the Suicide Squad back into action.

And while Shaw is being held captive by Paul Kirk, he soon discovers that the Manhunters cult hold a bigger threat than anyone had ever imagined.

Suicide Squad Annual #1 (2007)

Suicide Squad: Burning Down the House, Part 1.

Justice League vs. America #3 (2007)

Justice League vs. America: False Pretenses.

A new organization is finally revealed! The President calls for all available heroes to support their country as the hunt for the Justice League reaches fever pitch. It's hero versus hero as the League struggles to reclaim their name and reputation. Yet, one question still remains: who is actually pulling the strings?

*Blue Devil: Hollywood Nights (2008)*

Daniel Patrick Cassidy is about to accept a role that will change his life forever on the new movie, *Blue Devil*. But soon after being trapped in a special effects costume, Cassidy finds he's in the battle of his life. When it's over his life will be changed forever. Will he be able to embrace his destiny when he discovers the truth about why he has become *Blue Devil*?



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