



Titans #1
Boris Mihajlovic

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Roll Call

Nightwing: Richard Grayson, former first sidekick of Batman, grown up to be the born leader

Cyborg: Victor Stone, half man, half machine with a heart of gold

Hotspot: Isaiah Crockett, controls heat thanks to being half an alien.

Argent: Antonia Monetti-Crockett, can create any weapon she wants with her silver plasma energy.

Jericho: Joseph Wilson, can possess a person after making eye contact with them.

Ravager: Rose Wilson has the precognitive ability to see a few seconds into the future, combined with her martial artistic abilities she's a fighter who searches the likes of her.

The Titans

Issue #1: "Like an Onion"

Story and Art by Boris Mihajlovic

Written by: Brian Burchette

Edited by: Samantha Chapman

Now

Two bursts of energy struck the wall next to Nightwing, who had thankfully ducked for cover barely a second before, or his guts would now be plastered along the wall.

"Get down!" He shouted as he did a summer-salt that landed him near a doorway— just enough cover to keep from getting blown to bits. "Ravager! Jericho! They're coming from all sides! We've got to move,

and I mean now!”

He swung himself out of the archway, again barely dodging an energy weapon as he tossed two pellets onto the ground and a cloud of smoke began to fill the eastern corridor.

The laser blasts continued, more wildly now, as Nightwing turned his attention to the west wing and his team-mates. Ravager had acquired a gun from a downed guard, and was firing into the approaching army of H.I.V.E. troops.

“They are, Really? I thought we were caught in the middle of some kind of Cult Pride Parade,” She sniped back to him.

Nightwing ignored the comment. He was getting used to doing that. “Jericho, is there any way—?”

With a shake of his curly blond head, the hero gave his leader a frustrated look, and then waved a hand over his eyes. Nightwing caught on immediately to what he was trying to tell him. They were all wearing dark, shaded goggles. No way for Joey to make eye contact.

A guard fell to the ground with a cry of pain as Ravager struck him in the thigh. “So what’s plan B, El Capitan?”

Dick threw another concussive grenade at the troops coming down the east wing, blowing several back through the air. “Why do you always expect me to have a backup plan?”

“Cause you wouldn’t be you without one,” She quipped as she struck another guard in the shoulder.

“Wound only!” he reminded her, noting how close she had come to the guard’s neck on that last shot.

“Trust me, this would be a helluva lot easier if I wasn’t trying to wound them.”

Jericho’s fingers moved swiftly to ask what plan B was, seeing that they were outnumbered ten to one.

“To be honest,” Nightwing said, “Plan B is to surrender.”

“You have got to be kidding me!” Ravager screamed in frustration and Jericho stared at him in shock.

“We can’t win this one. The odds are stacked too high against us. We have nowhere to retreat to anyway, and my guess is that the H.I.V.E. leader is going to want to know what we’ve actually learned, and if we were able to transmit it out, before he kills us.”

“Okay, bird-boy, little flaw in that plan. They only need one of us to get those answers from.”

“Doubt it, he won’t know which one of us would be the one to crack...Though I admit I’m guessing on that last part.”

Ravager narrowly missed getting struck by a blast. “And if your guess is wrong?”

“Well, then, I’m hoping Joey is the one they keep alive.”

“Oh that’s *real* funny. Damn, I knew we should have brought Argent with us.”

Two Months Ago:

It was massive and hovering several miles off the Eastern Atlantic coastline. It was nearly two miles long and two stories high, the width of three football fields. It was called *The Ark*: the home of The Titans.

The Ark was more advanced in technology than anything else on the planet, and possibly several other planets. Where it came from, how the Titans acquired it, and all of its capabilities were unknown by all but two of the team-members themselves, and they refused to talk about it.

The aft middle deck was where the quarters for the team had been established, and where the voice of Isaiah Crockett echoed as he marched down the metal-floored corridor with his bag strapped to his back. He

was followed closely by Nightwing and Cyborg.

“Don’t even try to talk me out of it, Dick. I’m quitting, I’ve just got to get out of here. I can’t be in the same room with Toni, let alone on the same team, not after what she’s done!”

Dick said nothing as they reached the elevator. There really was nothing that he could say. When trust had been shattered in a marriage, sometimes distance was the logical choice. He couldn’t disagree with the man called Hotspot.

Vic, however, couldn’t keep quiet. “Isaiah, man, just hang in here. I know what Toni did was wrong, but I know for a fact that she does love you.”

“She cheated on me with some stranger in a bar! Can you honestly call that love?”

“But she’s still your wife, you need to stay here and work this out with her,” Vic pleaded.

“The wife I know wouldn’t have done what she done! I’m out of here. Don’t call me, don’t send me any messages, cause I ain’t responding until I want to be found. That goes for you too, Dick!” Isaiah turned, but the leader of the Titans had disappeared.

“Well at least one of you gets it,” Hotspot said as they both entered the elevator and headed down to level three.

The door to Antonia Monetti-Crockett’s room opened and Dick stepped in to find his colleague on her bed, sobbing.

She looked up when she saw him. “I didn’t mean to do it, Dick. I swear to you, I didn’t! Please, don’t let him go.”

“He’s a grown man, Argent. He’ll do what he wants. I have no control over who stays and who goes.”

Toni stood up, the tears running down her face. "Yes, yes you do, and you know it! Please, make him stay. I'm begging you. Don't let him go! I'm so sorry."

"Don't tell me any of this, tell him," Dick said coldly as he walked out of the room, leaving Toni to collapse in tears.

Vic Stone had just finished setting up his unique attachment when Dick walked into his lab. He said nothing to the young man, preferring to stand stone-faced and in the corner of the room with Isaiah.

"I'm going to miss you," Vic told Isaiah. "You're like a brother to me. You ever need anything... *anything*, just call. And you know, you'll always have a place here, if you decide to come back."

"Thanks Vic, for everything." Hotspot said with a sincere handshake.

Cyborg released the power in his attachment and the unmistakable sound of a boom tube roared as it appeared. Isaiah turned and gave Dick one more look before he stepped through and disappeared.

"Where was he going?" Toni asked, peeking in from the doorway.

Before Vic could answer, Dick cut him off. "If he had wanted you to know that, he would have told you himself."

Toni turned around and walked out of the lab.

"That was pretty cold, Dick. You could have at least told her that he was dropping his stuff off at his dad's before he headed out."

"Like I said, if he had wanted her to know, he would have told her. She made her bed, now she has to lie in it."

"You sure you're not projecting your own issues onto her?"

Dick turned on his old friend with a flash of anger. "I'll pretend that you didn't say that. Infidelity is what it is. I have no tolerance for betrayal of

any sort, I didn't then, and I don't now." He left without saying another word.

Now:

Toni stepped into the communications room to find Vic sitting back in the chair with his feet up. The light in the room was muted, the glow of the control panels and radar screens illuminating the room more than the actual lights.

"Any word?" She asked him.

"Yep, they've had to go with plan B. Just waiting for Dick's signal to come back, so we can hopefully get what we need to know."

"I should have been there... should have gone with them."

"Not what the boss, wanted, Toni. And you know how it is, what Dick wants, Dick gets."

There was a moment of silence before Toni spoke again, her voice shaking. "Do you hate me too?"

"What?! No! I don't hate you, I ain't here to judge anyone. Anyway, it's none of my business. Far as I see it, you and Isaiah have to work this out on your own. It is a damn shame that he's not here, though, we could use the extra help, what with Bette and Gar both on leave at the moment."

"I think Nightwing was wrong," she stated.

Vic put his feet down and looked at her, his one red eye gleaming in the near darkness of the room. "I ain't saying he was right or wrong, but what you did, well, it struck way too close to home for him. But, Dick isn't the kind to put personal feelings in the way of a mission, we both know that."

"There's always a first time," Toni mumbled as she sat down hard in the chair next to Vic.

Two Months Ago:

Several hours after the sudden ending of yet another marriage in the Titan's history books, the alarm went off in The Ark. The remaining Titans were out of their beds and in the meeting room within minutes, and Nightwing was waiting for them.

"This better be good," Vic said, yawning. "I was having a perfect dream about Halle Berry and a nice white beach..."

Nightwing flipped a switch on his chair and a holographic image of Mount Rushmore appeared before them. "I'm assuming you all know what this is?"

"Oh good, a geography lesson," Vic muttered.

Joseph moved his fingers rapidly in Cyborg's direction. Vic's eyes narrowed. "Hey, you take that back!"

"This," Dick said as he interrupted them, "is where H.I.V.E. has built their new base. We know this because earlier today they broke into a Cadmus Lab research facility and stole several items; what they didn't know was that two of them had hidden locator devices implanted in them."

"What did they steal?" Vic asked; his curiosity piqued.

"Cadmus didn't tell us."

"Of course not," Rose said. "We never get the full story, *they* make sure of that, don't they?"

The others grumbled in agreement but Nightwing raised his hand to silence them. "I'm not disagreeing with you, but we all knew the rules when we signed on. However, that doesn't mean we can't find out on our own."

Rose's eyebrow arched. "Well now, this is a sudden turn of events. The

Boy Scout is actually going to investigate, for once.”

Ignoring the remark, Dick continued. “We’re going to infiltrate their base, find the missing items, figure out what they are and why H.I.V.E. wants them, however long it takes. Rose and Joey, you’re going with me. Be ready to leave in an hour.”

The two Titans nodded as they quickly left the room to prepare.

“I should be going too.” Argent said. “With Gar and Bette on leave, we’re down quite a few Titans and you’re going to need all the help you can get.”

Dick turned away from her as he spoke, “No, you’re staying here. At the moment I don’t think you’re fit for field duty. You and Vic will be our back up, if something goes wrong.”

Toni’s face flushed in anger. “That’s not fair! I’m more than fit to go with you. You’re just punishing me for what I did... for Isaiah leaving!”

She was startled when Dick turned suddenly and stood barely an inch away from her. “This has nothing to do with your marriage! This has to do with what I feel is best for the entire team, and at the moment, *you* are not in the right state of mind for this kind of operation. I am not going to put the rest of my team in danger. If you can’t sit here and wait, then there’s the door... use it!” He shouted.

Toni tried to stare him down; fighting back tears that she refused to allow him to see. Finally she turned and ran out of the room, and back to her own.

The room lay silent until Vic spoke up. “So what’s the real reason?”

Dick swung around. “Don’t you start!”

“No, not that. I want to know why you’re so interested in what this stuff is that The H.I.V.E. stole. Ravager was right about one thing, you rarely ask questions.”

Dick took a long breath to control himself. “Because I was told to bring

back all the items in one piece, which is our main objective. The fact that they were stolen from Cadmus makes me uncomfortable.”

Vic nodded, “Understandable. I’ll get the Boom Tube ready,” he said as he left the room, stopping at the door. “And for the record, no matter how long we’ve been working together, you ever get it in your head to talk to me the way you just talked to Argent, and I’ll put you right out a port hole and into the ocean.”

The door shut behind him, leaving Dick alone.

Now:

Nightwing, Jericho, and Ravager were being led through the corridors by the guards. The items that Dick had retrieved were back in the H.I.V.E.’s possession. The Titans were escorted to a large meeting hall, where they found themselves surrounded by hundreds of H.I.V.E. members, all cloaked and sitting in chairs on tiers above them. At the end of the room stood the newest leader of the terrorist organization, a young man they had only seen briefly once or twice in their months of infiltration. He was extremely charismatic and handsome, with a commanding presence that had impressed even Nightwing.

“Our traitors have finally been discovered,” The leader announced as he raised his hand to present the enemy to his followers. “Did you really think that you would get away with this charade? Did you think that The H.I.V.E. would not discover your treachery? We have not become the greatest fear of the most powerful countries in the world by being naïve and foolish.”

“Don’t you actually have to accomplish something to become such a world wide threat? H.I.V.E.’s track record hasn’t been that impressive,” Ravager said nonchalantly.

“Oh good, make him mad,” Nightwing said under his breath. “When did that become part of plan B?”

“Just wanted to draw their attention away from you while you turned on your little hidden camera,” Rose whispered back. “I thought that would

do the trick.”

“How dare you speak to Damien Darhk like that!” The leader shouted in a fit of rage. He snapped his finger and watched as one of the guards struck Ravager in the back with some kind of cattle prod. He smiled when she cried out in pain and fell to her knees.

“You three are known to us, but we have yet to figure out who exactly The Titans work for,” Darhk mused. “I will ask you this only once: Who sent you?”

Silence filled the room and the three Titans stared up at Damien, none speaking.

“Sir!” Came a H.I.V.E. member as he ran into the large chamber. “The one in the middle, we picked up a signal from him—he’s got some kind of hidden transmitter on him. He’s been broadcasting all of this!”

Damien Darhk’s eyes widened. “SHIELDS, NOW!” He shouted.

Now: *The Ark*

The two backup Titans had received the visual and watched the entire dialogue play out. Vic noted the bag that had been handed to the leader, surmising that it contained the equipment that had been stolen from Cadmus.

They watched the scene in silence until the man named Damien Darhk revealed himself. Argent gasped out loud.

Cyborg turned to her. “What? What’s wrong?”

“Oh God! Vic... that man... Damien... he’s the one!”

“The one? Which one?”

“The one in the bar.”

“Oh... OH! That one.”

Toni's stomach twisted into knots as she realized the man who she had so foolishly succumbed to, the man who had destroyed her marriage, was the new leader of H.I.V.E.

"I think I'm going to be sick," she whispered.

"Save it, sweetheart. We have to be ready to—"

Cyborg never finished his sentence. They heard Damien give the order to raise their shields, and a second later, the transmission was cut off at the source.

"Oh no..." Argent moaned.

"Well that sucks." Cyborg muttered.

Now: *H.I.V.E. Base*

Three of the guards grabbed Nightwing and began to search him from top to bottom.

"Whatever your demented plan is, you won't get away with it," Dick hissed.

"Shut up," Damien snapped as he left his podium and walked down to the three of them. He watched as one of the guards tore a small device from the front of Nightwing's costume, practically ripping off his shirt.

"Huh, no money to keep this place heated?" Dick sneered in defiance as Damien came face to face with him.

"Personally, I say good riddance," Ravager said. "I mean what kind of hero wears lavender to begin with?"

"Hey, I put a lot of thought into this outfit," Dick managed to smile at her.

"SHUT UP!" Damien screamed. "You people are idiots! You cannot even

fathom how close to death you really are.”

Ravager laughed. “Yeah, cause we ain’t ever been there before.”

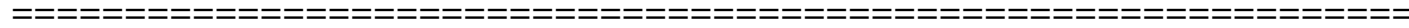
Damien grabbed a gun from a nearby guard and shoved the barrel right into Rose’s chest. “You are finished.” He declared.

“Whoa!” Dick said, raising his hands. “Hold on a minute, pal. You haven’t even acknowledged our friend here,” he said, jabbing his finger to his left. “You could at least say hello to Jericho.”

A look of disgust came over Damien’s face. “What are you talking about?” He demanded as his gaze fell onto the young blond man.

CONTACT!

To Be Continued...



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