

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss

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Super Heroes

Four weeks ago I was standing at a table talking with three ladies that I work with, drinking a gin and tonic, and talking about my writing. One of them, Kyra, asked if I could write a story with her in it. I asked, “What kind of story?” She said, “A super hero story. I want to have bionic strength.”

There was some discussion on what type of bionic grip she wanted and we settled on strength in her hands. I asked the other two, Mary and Dena, what super powers they would want. Mary said she wanted to be persuasive and Dena said she just wanted to be cool. So started this month’s story.

I did a little research and found a website where you can type in your name and it will tell you your super hero name and tell you what your powers are. So were born Diamond Bat, Mega Spider and Simon Says.

This is my first super hero story and it was a bit challenging as I wrote it. I’ve read super hero stories and I’ve gone to a few panels at Comic-com over the years that talked about the challenges of super heroes. San Lee once said “super heroes are easy, its the villains that are hard” – making a villain that is powerful enough to be a challenge, but who can still be defeated in the end.

I found this to be true. I had the three heroes and I started to work on the villain. I wanted a single villain so did that mean he or she had to be three times stronger to be a challenge? I ended up with a villain that wasn’t very powerful – in fact in a straight up fight he would probably lose to any one of the heroes – but he ended up with the element of surprise and he knew what the plan was, while the heros had to figure it out.

Without giving any more away, here for you pleasure, is the story of three women who will use both their super human powers and their human compassion to save the night.

Ratman

The three woman sat at the bar of a dimly lit tavern, drinks in hand, discussing the day’s travels. The jukebox blared a 90’s tune, the men by the pool table boasted of previous exploits, and the television sports caster reported on the levels to which some fans would go to support their teams. Outside, the rain fell softly, washing the grime of the city away, gathering into rivulets to plunge into the darkness under the city.

Far below – beyond the reach of the rains, the sun, the society of man – he plotted. His beady eyes reflected the red of the candle light. His ears heard the scurrying of his companions, his army, gathering to follow him up, to freedom.

“Come to me,” he called out in a voice that almost squeaked. “Come to me, my brethren. Tonight we take what is ours.”

He stood and started the long climb to the street. Past sewer pipes and storm drains. Past abandoned subways and forgotten basements. A journey back to where he had come from, where he had fled from – from the pain. But that was the past. This time they would feel the pain.

As one, their purses began to vibrate. A glance passed between them, saying without words what a thousand couldn’t, that there was no chance that all three would be called at the same time without it meaning that something very wrong

was happening. Despite having the largest and fullest purse, Dena pulled out her phone first. Kyra and Mary stopped rummaging through theirs as the three of them stared at the hour-glass on Dena’s phone, the grains of sand falling through it like their hopes for an evening of peace.

Dena pressed her thumb to the phone’s sensor and the hour glass was replaced with the mayor’s face. “Are they with you?” the mayor asked.

Dena’s eyes flicked to the other two faces and then back to the mayors. “Yes, Madam Mayor.”

“Good. Someone has broken into Westview High School. They’re

posting student records and the contents of their lockers on the internet. The police haven't been able to get past the school's security. We need You."

"We'll be there in ten." Dena broke the connection. "Looks like we've got work to do." She picked up her glass in a salute, "to duty," and downed her drink. Kyra and Mary did the same and then, with a thunk, all three glasses hit the table.

Ten minutes later, after a quick change in the lady's room, Mega Spider, Simon Says, and the Diamond Bat tumbled out of Diamond Bat's green VW super beetle into the parking lot of Westview High School and into chaos. Police were attacking the main gate with a battering ram. Teenage girls were screaming that their lives were over as they stared at Tumblr pictures of them smoking by the dumpsters and rolling with jocks under the bleachers. Lawyers gathered by the door, with subpoenas in hand, ready to sue the school for breach of privacy.

Simon Says flipped her black robe behind her, and straightened her back. "Students, Simon Says stop talking." The girls stopped their yelling and looked at her, tears streaming down their cheeks. Encouraged with her success, Simon Says, pulled on the bottom of her white dress shirt and adjusted her tie, then looked at the lawyers. "Simon says, there is no case here." The lawyers looked at her and saw a judge. With a look of loss in their eyes, they turned and walked away.

Diamond Bat held out her arms, thumbs hooked into her cloak, causing it to billow like wings. Her platinum blonde hair brushed her shoulders and she took three steps

and then leapt into the air. With the rush of wind she sailed up and over the fence of the school. Turrets swung pointing at her and then she was bathed in the red light of lasers. Her skin turned to diamond – reflecting the light and scattering it across the crowd. Screams of pain and the smell of burnt flesh filled the parking lot. She dove and flew back across the fence line escaping the lasers.

"Let me give it a try," Mega Spider said. She walked over to the gate and began to work the keypad. "They've jammed the system, but give me a second." She continued to work the keys – in a few minutes the red LED turned green and the gate unlocked. The police stepped back as she swung the battered gate open, but she just as quickly closed it again. "Rats."

"What?" said diamond bat.

"Hundreds of rats"

Diamond Bat addressed the Policemen, "Better let us take care of this." She turned back to the gate and slipped inside the school. Rats ran towards her, they jumped from the roofs and the trees above her, they swarmed over her and tried to bite her, but their teeth glanced harmlessly off of her diamond skin. She started to run, and undeterred they ran after her.

Simon Says and Mega Spider slipped past the gate and into the empty courtyard.

"There!" Mega Spider pointed at a camera swiveling towards them.

"Run!" Simon Says yelled as she headed towards the office doors. Mega Spider ran after her – behind

them the asphalt burst into flames as two lasers sliced deep grooves into it. They hit the door together and tumbled into the lobby.

"Principle's office"

Mega Spider nodded in agreement, sprung to her feet and sprinted down the hall – staying on her toes so her stilettos' heels wouldn't announce her arrival. Simon Says leapt up and did a series of hand-springs down the hall, her hair whipping back and forth.

The two crouched on either side of the door. From within came a whimpering. Simon Says reached up and grasped the doorknob. Her body convulsed. A gasp left her lips. Her eyes grew wide. Mega Spider leapt up and raised her hands to the door. When her thumbs touched, her hands glowed with a blue light and then the light flew towards and through the door, leaving in its wake a shower of sparks.

Simon Says collapsed to the ground, her right hand blackened and smoking. Mega Spider dropped to her knees. "Are you all right, Mary?" Simon Says nodded, then motioned towards the door. "I'll get'm," whispered Mega Spider. She turned the now harmless doorknob, swung open the door, and rolled into the room.

Smoke curled up from the computers sitting on desks in the room. Light filtered in through the shaded windows. Standing in the corner, obscured in the shadows, a man stood waiting for her – a smile on his face and his hands on his hips.

"Welcome. It was so nice of you to come."

“I didn’t come to be nice,” Mega Spider said with an edge in her voice. “Surrender now and things might not be too hard on you.”

“Surrender? Now why would I do that? It’s you who needs to surrender.” With a smile he raised the gun that had been hanging at his side, then fired.

Mega Spider screamed when the dart struck her neck, but her scream was cut short as her body went limp and the floor raced up to meet her. She fell as blackness embraced her. The man walked out the door and towered over Simon Says.

“Simon Says, on your knees!” she yelled.

The man wavered, but stayed on his feet. “I have long given up rules, you have no power over me.” He pointed his gun at her and darkness took her.

* * *

The world came swimming back into Mega Spiders mind, a dim world filled with shadows and pipes and scurrying shapes. An upside-down world. She tried to move and found that she couldn’t – her arms were bound. Her struggles caused her to start swinging and to slowly spin.

“Diamond Bat,” she gasped when her hanging body came into view. “He got you, too?”

Diamond Bat sighed. “There were just too many of them. They couldn’t hurt me, but when thousands of those rats swarmed me, I couldn’t move.”

“Simon Says?”

“She’s here, too. You’ll see her in a minute when you finish your rotation.”

She continued to struggle, the rope digging into her wrists. She wasn’t ready for the sight that greeted her. Simon Says hung from the ceiling, her black cloak in a pool below her head, her skirt hanging in the wrong direction.

Blackness took her again, releasing her from the pounding in her head

* * *

“Time to wake.”

The voice cut through the blackness, then a bucket of water yanked her back to reality. In the dim light Simon Says saw an upside-down funny little man throw another bucket of water onto Mega Spider. As she watched the water washing over Mega Spider, she felt the water running down her own body, felt her cloths sticking to her skin, the chill of the air on her exposed arms and legs.

“Good, you’re all awake. I wouldn’t want you to sleep through your end.”

“Who are you?” asked Diamond Bat, “Why are you doing this.”

“Who am I? That is a good question that has no answer.” The man paused for a second. “Who was I might be a better question, but since the world stole who I was from me it really doesn’t mater any more. The world threw me away, forgot me. Now only the rats care who I am, only they accept me. Now I’m one of them. I guess, if you want to

know who I am in your last minutes on earth, I am Ratman.”

“Ratman? You dishonor those noble beasts by taking their name,” said Simon Says.

“You may be right, but those noble beasts will be your destruction.” Ratman pulled a lever and the floor below the three women fell away revealing an oozing, reeking sewer. The end of Simon Says’ cloak fell into it. A gasp escaped from Mega Spiders lips.

“As I go to finish the job you interrupted, a few of my friends will finish you.” Ratman snapped his fingers and two rats leapt from the walls onto each of the women. Simon Says screamed as the rats claws gave them purchase as they climbed up her legs.

“So long, I wish I could say it has been a pleasure to have met you beautiful women.” Ratman turned and walked away. The rats sitting on their feet started nibbling on the ropes holding each woman up. A door clanged shut leaving them alone to their fates. Thread by thread the rats chewed through the ropes. Minute by agonizing minute passed.

* * *

Ratman lifted the storm-drain cover and a stream of rats spewed forth into the alley behind the courthouse. Up the walls and into the windows the hundreds of rats raced. The lights on the courthouse went out, plunging it into darkness. Ratman lifted himself up onto the street and walked towards the service entrance. The security light beside the door flipped from red to green at the touch of the button on the controller

in his hand and he stepped inside. Once on the fourth floor in the records office he set himself down and flipped on the computer. His fingers danced across the keys and records started popping up across the internet. Records of victims, of witnesses, of lawyers and judges.

* * *

Diamond Bat dropped a quarter of an inch as one of the strands of the rope snapped, but it felt like a foot. The rats continued their chewing as the women inched closer to their doom. Mega Spider continued to concentrate, trying to feel the spiders near her. Try as she might, she knew that they were probably too deep for spiders, but she didn't know what else to do. Then she felt it. It was just one, but it could be used to call others.

Five minutes later a blanket of black covered the dark walls and flowed down the ropes. The rats leapt to safety, leaving the three to swing in the darkness. Diamond Bat started to swing herself back and forth, gaining height with each swing, until she bumped Mega Spider. With her bound hand she grasped for the ropes holding Mega Spider. Her fingers touched the ropes, but slipped off. On the next swing she grasped again. On the third, one of her fingers snagged the rope.

With one finger she twisted the rope and pulled her other fingers closer. "This might hurt," she said to Mega Spider.

"Don't worry about me," Mega Spider replied, but grunted as the rope around her wrists tightened as Diamond Bat used her hand's bionic strength to stretch the rope

to its breaking point. With a sudden snap the rope broke. Mega Spider reached up and pulled herself up onto the pipe that ran above them. In moments her feet were free, and then so were Diamond Bat and Simon Says.

* * *

Like three cats, the heroes silently approached the courthouse. Black leather hugged each body, as each hugged the shadows.

Simon Says motioned up with her head. A light shone from a fourth floor window, alone in the blackness of the night.

Diamond Bat pulled a gun from its holster on her back, aimed it at the building's roof, and fired. A bolt streaked through the night, pulling a thin metal wire behind it. With a quiet thunk, the bolt sank into wall and the gun pulled the wire taught.

"Hang on ladies," Diamond Bat whispered. Simon Says and Mega Spider each threw an arm around Diamond Bat's neck. Diamond Bat attached the gun to her belt and pulled the trigger. The gun whined and the three women flew into the darkness above the street lights.

They rose above the fourth floor and Diamond Bat pressed a button on the gun with a click. For moments they fell, then they smashed through the glass and wood of the fourth story window. As a tumbling mass they rolled three times and then were on their feet – scanning the room.

The room was filled with computers, their screens giving the room its only light. Running from keyboard to keyboard Ratman typed

a few lines on each, before moving onto the next. Lines of text flew across each screen.

Mega Spider raised her hands so that she could send an electronic blast into the computers to destroy them, but before she could, Ratman paused and met Mega Spiders eyes.

"I wouldn't do that Dena!" said Ratman. "I have a deadman's program set up and you wouldn't want the world to know that you're Mega Spider." Ratman laughed a low rough laugh. "Wouldn't life be so much easier without all of these secrets?"

Mega Spider lowered her hands. "These aren't just secrets, you're ruining people's lives. You're putting people's lives at risk."

"That's what the world did to me. They took my life and shared it. They picked it apart. They used it against me. I lost all my friends. They drove me away."

"I've had years to think about it and I figured it out. I'm better off without all my secrets and my false friends. I now have hundreds of friends, and they're honest with me – we have no secrets, and now my ex-friends will not have any secrets either."

Diamond Bat stepped forward. "You're going to share Dena's identity when you're done anyway, right?"

"No Kyra. I may not believe in secrets, but I still have my honor."

"Honor?" Simon Says said. "You posted the details of a young girl's rape. How is there any honor in that?"

“That young girl spat on me. She found me on the street and thought so little of me that she decided to spit on me as well. Does she deserve my honor?”

“And the girls sneaking a smoke?”

“Filthy habit. Did you know they steal the cigarettes?”

“The judges, the teachers, lawyers?”

“The hypocrites, the polluters of the minds, the leaches of other people’s suffering?”

“Well...”

Diamond Bat pulled the plug from one of the computers. “You have no right to decided what happens to other people’s lives.”

“And you do? Maybe you don’t care if the world knows that Kyra is Diamond Bat. But, are you going to make the decision for Mary? Do you have the right to make that decision for her? Are you going to tell the world she is Simon Says?”

“You told me before that you had given up on rules. I think that’s a lie.” said Simon Says.

“Bah.”

“No? You don’t think that people should follow rules? That people should treat you with respect? That there are standards of conduct? That you have been wronged?”

Ratman tensed as he looked into Simon Says’ eyes.

“You’ve been hurt because others have not followed the rules.”

Ratman looked down.

“Delete the deadman program, stop the uploads.”

Ratman looked up. “You’re not going to try and force me?”

“No, I’m asking, because I think you know it’s wrong.”

Ratman glanced at Diamond Bat and Mega Spider. They both nodded. His shoulders drooped and he sighed deeply. “Fine.” Ratman typed a command on the nearest computer and its screen froze. One by one he stopped each computer.

Mega Spider sat at one of the computers and typed in some commands. “I can purge some of the data, but I can’t get it all. The internet isn’t that ordered.”

As Mega Spider continued to work, Ratman slumped in the corner, defeated.

“I’ve done all I can.” Simon Says said, as she turned off the computer. “What are we going to do with Ratman.”

Mega Spider looked down at the shell of man below her. “I don’t think he’s going to cause any more problems.”

Diamond Bat knelt besides him. “You want to go get a drink? My name’s Kyra.”

Ratman looked up and met her eyes. “You would have a drink with someone like me?”

Diamond Bat nodded. “We’ve all got our stories, our pains. We’ve all done things we wish we hadn’t. Your’s aren’t any worse than mine.”

A glimmer of hope sparked in Ratman’s eyes. “I’d like that, but what about the thousand rats I brought with me?”

“They can come, too. I know just the dive – they’ll fit right in.”

Simon Says extended her hand down to him and helped him up.

“Thanks. My name’s Mark.”

“Good to meet you Mark. Now lets go get that drink, I can use one.”

Mega Spider flipped off the power to the last computer and the four of them headed down the stairs and then into the night. They hurried as they walked, last call would be coming soon and they had some catching up to do.

Douglas G. Clarke

I hope you enjoyed this story and I’d love to hear your comments and thoughts – you can send me e-mail at doug@agoodtale.com. Also, it would be great if you could share this newsletter with a few friends – I’ve been sitting at 60 subscribers for way too long and it is only by word of mouth that the number will grow. Sign-up at <http://www.douglasclarke.com/lists/?p=subscribe> to make sure you get next months newsletter.