

The Fall of Mr Magnificent

A Public City story

Mr Magnificent froze with shock when he flicked on the lights to the basement. It was the first time this fearless, experienced vigilante had ever seen something so horrific, so disturbing that he did not know how to react. He simply stood there, feet frozen in place, jaw hanging open staring at the scene around him.

Slowly he slid his hand up to his chest across the shining red and white surface of his costume to where a small camera had been hooked up. A winking red light glowed near the lens, blissfully unaware of the horror it was recording. In complete silence, Mr Magnificent unclipped the device from its mount and pressed a rubber button on the back, terminating the light before its eye could see too much more. Though this may seem like a fairly unassuming thing to do when faced with extreme shock, those who knew Mr Magnificent better would realise he had just broken one of his top-three rules: never resort to violence unless absolutely necessary, never kill a criminal, and never turn off the camera when on a job so the police always had evidence later.

This was not the only rule the veteran vigilante would break that night.

Slowly he began moving forwards, letting the camera drop lifelessly from his hand. Around him were the lifeless, naked bodies of three young girls, barely in their teens, who had been kidnapped in Southcross recently. Each was chained to the wall, wrists bound together above their heads. They had clearly been underfed, as their fat had all but disappeared from their bones and their muscles were following close behind. What remained of their clothing was scattered in rags around them, mixed in with bloodstains and shit.

Tears began to well in the Mr Magnificent's eyes, steaming his goggles up. He quietly pulled them off, clenching them in his large fist. His secret identity no longer seemed of any importance. You see, Mr.

Magnificent had the chance to burst into this house three days ago, but he had decided to wait and sit on it for longer, hoping to be able to sneak in when nobody was home.

Three days ago these girls might have been alive...

The thought kept playing over and over again in his head. He was the invulnerable man; he could have burst through the door, marched down the stairs and carried the girls out one by one without taking so much as a scratch! But he didn't.

Three days ago...

Suddenly, noises upstairs.

Somebody had arrived home, clattering open the front door and guffawing a great bout of laughter with their friend! Mr Magnificent's tears turned to rage. How dare they laugh knowing this was beneath their house!? His eyes grew wide and he ground his teeth together. Breathing heavily, he turned back towards the stairs leading up from the basement, placing his goggles back on his face.

"Hey, did you leave this door unlocked?" a voice above spoke.

The shapely muscles in his arm tensed when the vigilante unhooked a small, black stick from his belt. Upon pressing a plastic switch with his thumb, the tip extended about a foot further, a loud crackle of electricity forming at the end.

"Did you hear that?!"

Mr Magnificent began slowly making his way towards the stairs.

Next, the basement door creaked open and two shadows appeared, brandishing a handgun each.

"Whoever's down there is about to be sorry!"

"You stumbled into the wrong house, buddy!"

The shadows progressed down the stairs confidently, waving their guns in front of them. However, they froze immediately when they saw Mr Magnificent walking towards them, stun-baton drawn. "Oh shit!" they cried, letting off a few shots each. The bullets bounced harmlessly off the unflinching vigilante's torso as he picked up his pace towards them.

Suddenly he leapt forwards at near-superhuman speed, slamming into the slower of the kidnappers with all his weight. In a tangle of limbs they both burst through the wall with a loud crash, a cloud of dust and debris scattering out behind them. It was a few minutes before either figure reappeared, but the noises coming from inside suggested the

unfortunate kidnapper was figuring out what being repeatedly struck with a stun-baton by an enraged superhero felt like.

The other man grew desperate, backing up the steps. He thrust a trembling hand into one pocket and fumbled out his cellphone, smashing buttons with clumsy hands, trying to make a phone call.

"Whadda you want?" snarled a tired voice at the other end.

"Send everybody! Mr. Magnificent is here and he's- oh god!" The mere sight of the blood-soaked vigilante had caused him to drop his phone.

"Don't come any closer!" the man demanded, now waving his gun at Mr. Magnificent.

"Or what?" spoke the vigilante, his voice – normally a beacon of hope and light for the long-suffering people of Public City – cold, calm, devoid of emotion. His stun-baton was nowhere to be seen, but the red and white costume of the invulnerable man had grown mostly red.

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Police quickly surrounded the small, unassuming house. Unknown to most of the citizens of this city, their calls were being monitored for any mention of specific vigilantes, Mr. Magnificent being one of them. It didn't take long for the Masked Crime Unit to have a full SWAT team organised and on their way after his name was yelled down the line. Felix West led the team, one of the few men capable of going toe-to-toe with the invulnerable man.

With everybody's weapon pointed at the building, West burst in first – one heavy boot smashing the door's flimsy hinge in a shower of splinters. With his fast healing abilities, he didn't much care if he took a few bullets or stun-baton to the chest in a surprise assault. Catching Mr Magnificent was worth the pain.

What he saw, however, surprised even him. The incorruptible invulnerable man knelt in the centre of the room, hands on his head, waiting. He stared at the ground, a look of shame across his normally confident face. In the corner lay another man, broken and bloodied. Felix couldn't make out who he was, but felt he could safely assume the poor sod had done something befitting his punishment. Mr Magnificent was not one to deal out such a beating without good reason. Not normally, anyway. Oh how West had no idea.

“Not putting up a fight this time, Magnificent?” he mocked as he came to a halt just inside the smashed entrance, tapping out a cigarette into one big palm and stuffing it into his lips.

“Not this time, Felix. Not this time...”

That night was the night Mr Magnificent ceased to exist.