

MASTER DEFENDERS 2

CODES OF CORRUPTION

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MASTER DEFENDERS 2: (Recommended for ages 12 and up)

FICTION

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MATT BHANKS

**MASTER
DEFENDERS**
CODES OF CORRUPTION



THE YEAR OF THE STAR-PIX CRISIS

EIGHT YEARS AGO

REMEMBERING GREAT LEADERS

It was all over the news, the torment that shadowed Earth's newcomers. Brutality rang through the streets of Cyclohoma City, a metropolis just outside of Los Angeles. But within the city of angels, there was a funeral for great leaders to the nation. And a man named Cyphrus Abel Reid was sent by his mentor, Euro, to gain information about the leaders' sudden demises.

As many gathered around to watch the bodies of great minds being lowered to their graves, Cyphrus was tapped by a dark-haired man.

"Let's talk away from all of this," the man said. Cyphrus looked surprised when the man didn't introduce himself. Trusting him, he left the area of mourning supporters. The two went far from the tears, walking up a grassy hill and then stopping upon seeing the view of Cyclohoma City.

"I'm guessing you're the one Euro wanted me to meet?"

"Indeed I am, Cyphrus Reid." It didn't stun Cyphrus too much about the man's knowledge of his name.

"Actually," Cyphrus said. "I prefer Captain Cyfreid."

"Ah, you're an officer? That's quite exceptional, lad."

"It is, I know. And who am I speaking to?" The dark-haired man chuckled and said, "Well, I thought my face explained it all. My name is Governor Cain X."

"I had a feeling it was you," said Cyphrus with a smile. "Euro told me all about you."

"Euro is a man of boldness. And like most bold men, they operate with unlimited schemes." Cain showed Cyphrus a picture of a rock, shining with brilliance.

"That's one of the stones Richard Rageous got from the planet," said Cyphrus.

"Did he tell you how lethal it actually was?"

"Different creatures informed me of some things, but yes, I generally know its side effects." Cain X put the photo in his coat pocket and looked back at the crowd of mourners.

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“The Lasher family had to suffer from its side effects. I feel sorry for the ones who have to go through this turmoil. William, Tanya, and Hank Lasher are gone.”

“I know. I wish I could’ve done something to change all of this. Euro and I both have strong views for this league.” The news of every police department joining together recently came to Cain’s attention. He asked, “What is it called?”

“What is what called?”

“I’m talking about the league. William Lasher knew about the name, but I hadn’t gotten the chance to speak with him about it before his death.” As more of the mourners said goodbye to the Lasher bodies, Cyphrus noticed something quite odd. There were only two coffins and one was missing.

“Where’s the other body?” asked Cyphrus avoiding Cain’s question about the league.

“Oh, you didn’t hear?” responded Cain. “One of the Lashers was reportedly consumed by a Pixalian.”

“Consumed? As in eaten?”

“That’s right. It’s quite the story actually. And if you must know, it was the son, Hank. So much was said about that young man, but now he would be known as the boy who got consumed by a Pixalian full of corruption.”

Cyphrus was silent for two minutes. Both he and Cain X witnessed the people close their eyes and say the Lord’s Prayer. In their minds, they agreed that too much was happening. Aliens, or Pixalians as they liked to be called, fled to Earth for revenge on humans. Among such creatures was one that was already developing a dreaded reputation. Cain showed Cyphrus a photo of the menace.

“Who’s that?” wondered Cyphrus glaring at the creature’s appearance.

“Well, I don’t consider it a ‘who’. It wasn’t the cause for the death of the Lasher family, but this thing is one of the reasons why people fled their homes. Edmund Fitts is in hiding.”

“I never knew that. Edmund Fitts is the man who was supposed to lead the league. But his idea for the legion had too many immoral codes.” Cain waited for Cyphrus to finally reveal the name. He did by continuing, “It’s called the Alien Investigative Agency. And I think you should join, Cain.”

“Please, I’m just the Governor of Illinois. I can’t see myself joining a faction that—”

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“Protects this proud nation by hunting aliens? These days might as well be considered the last days. But if I’m going to die, then I’m going to die defending. What about you?”

Cain shook Cyphrus’ hand and said, “I’ll give it some thought.”

“That’s more like it.”

“But I never really appreciated subordinate roles. If I do join, I want a high rank.”

“You’ll have to work your way up for that.”

“Or, with the right monetary persuasion, I can just take Edmund Fitts’ place. I don’t think he’ll be back for a while.”

“Well when he returns, he’ll want the central sector position.”

The prayers ceased and some people began to leave the funeral. Cyphrus took another glance at the photo of the most wanted alien. It had gold skin and three antlers. Its eyes were outsized and black as obsidian.

“Don’t worry,” said Cain. “If I become the leader of the central department, I’ll make sure creatures like this never breathe in Earth’s air. I will kill all of them. It’ll all be done in honour for William, Tanya, and Hank Lasher. Edmund Fitts would be thanking me in time.”

“I think you and I are going to be great friends,” said Cyphrus.

“Indeed we will...Captain Cyfreid.”

The officer admired when others called him by his preferable name. He patted Governor Cain X on the shoulder, being contented for meeting him. There was still more to learn about the rock, but no matter what, Captain Cyfreid knew that Pixalian corruption had its limit.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Corruption. We see it daily, being mostly from agencies in power. But what causes this to grow in alliances? Can we have the traits of true heroes and bring out the 'good' in people? There is a legitimate cure, but like most remedies, only a few take it.

The story continues...

-Matt Bhanks

MATT BHANKS

MASTER DEFENDERS

CODES OF CORRUPTION



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PART 1

MEMORIES UNVEILED



I

ELITES ORDER

THE DEFENDERS OF A SUBSTANTIAL metropolis that was desperately crying for help are now the masters of achieving freedom from the constant threats on Earth. Any vile criminal and any creature that loved to hunt for humans stood no match. Just like the super police known as the Alien Investigative Agency, the powerful unit that was an addition to AIA East protected humans like no ordinary operative could imagine. Only two agents in particular knew the skills of the gallant force. Both of them were ordered to represent AIA East in a crucial meeting of all of the sectors in the nation.

The AIA Council called the gathering with hopes to become more familiar about the specialized squad of heroes. In addition, some of the high-ranked representatives wished to present the new leader of AIA Central.

Wherever people resided, it was almost impossible to have no idea about the Xaliemer issue that happened in Cyclohoma City. It has been four months since the western Pixalian apocalypse and the citizens, especially the children, only thought about one team: The Master Defenders.

Summer was now the season of autumn. Daytime skies were bright blue and nights contained swift and tender breezes. The leaves were crisp and greenish russet. Although the season demonstrated the relief that some of the people now had because of the defenders, certain individuals didn't quite seem to accept the alliance. Some categorized them to be very similar to extraterrestrials. It happened to be somewhat of a true comparison—considering that the team was led by the famous Pixalian warrior named Canavin. As of the moment, he

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still remained on the planet Star-Pix, which meant that the cunning Valor experienced his chance as the field leader.

In Denver, Colorado, nearly one hundred AIA representatives attended a conference in an underground facility. They awaited the words from a north department mediator named Walter Chapmann. Walter was an older gentleman with thick snowy sideburns. Known as the prime negotiator, he was the main operative of the AIA Council.

“Attention everyone,” he began to speak. The agents from the several divisions communed with one another. It made Walter repeat himself.

“I said, attention everyone!” They all halted and kept their eyes on him. “Thank you. Now, you all know why we called this meeting, right? If you’re thinking that it has nothing to do with the Cyclohoma issue, then your intelligence quotients might as well be in the negatives.” The group laughed while they sat.

“No, but seriously,” said Walter. “That was close. And I mean real close! But at the same time, I saw a union of the world’s most talented beings. They were in league with AIA East if I’m correct.” He sighted Commander Cyfreid in the front row. Captain Tina Truman sat next to him and to her side was another well-trained member.

“What do you have to say about this, Cyfreid? We specifically said—”

“All of you specifically said a bunch of garbage,” said Cyfreid. “I did the right thing and I’m not apologizing.” Walter turned to Tina.

“Miss Truman, what are your thoughts?” The chestnut brown haired woman had smirking jade eyes.

“To be honest, y’all almost led the world to hell. Do you really think that American forces had any effect? In order to defeat an extraordinary power, you need extraordinary people. And that my friend, is the Master Defenders.” Everyone from the other sectors remained quiet. Walter looked back at the council agents. He wanted to introduce one of them; he was the only one who was considered a patriotic

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officer. Before any introductions, Walter saw the man beside Tina.

“Okay, what about you mister...” He paused when he noticed how the man’s fingers grew a bit.

“Curtis, not now,” whispered Tina. He retracted them upon hearing her voice. Walter slowly swallowed a gulp, taking in the disgust and partial fright. He repeated, “Mister...”

“My associate isn’t very talkative,” Cyfreid explained.

“Then he shouldn’t be here as a representative of the east sector. Young man, what is your name?”

“The name’s Curtis,” he said. Each member of the council and every operative in the room were confused. Some mumbled with one another to give clarifications.

“Curtis?” said Walter. “As in, Curtis Kareem?”

“That’s right wise guy.”

“I-I thought you resigned from AIA East?”

“I did. But now I’m back. I don’t see how that’s hard to understand.”

“You see,” Cyfreid started. “Curt is a very special agent. When I asked him to come back, he couldn’t refuse.”

“Don’t push it, Cyfreid,” said Curtis as he remembered the way he tried to decline the offer.

“Right of course. Anyways, regardless of what you say Mister Chapmann, AIA East did what was truly necessary. Four months ago, I thought for sure that you and the rest of the council would thank me later. Well, it’s *later* now, so I’m waiting.”

Walter sighed and sarcastically said, “Thank you.”

“There you go. Now was that so hard?”

“But I still want the Master Defenders project to be shut down.”

“That’s not an option,” the Commander continued.

“And why not?” wondered Walter.

“Because I don’t own the group of heroes. They preferred to be their own unit. It’s sort of like an extension of

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my sector.” Once more, Walter looked at the man he so frantically wanted to introduce.

“Who on Earth is in charge of the unit?” he asked Cyfreid.

“Apparently he’s not on Earth. He hasn’t been here since the battle of Cyclohoma. It’s Canavin, but that should be obvious.”

“Who is leading the team right now?”

“That would be Valor. However, if you wish to be shocked by voltages, then I suggest you tell him what you’re telling me right now.” Cyfreid’s words taunted Walter.

“I don’t take threats Cyfreid.”

“And neither does Valor.” More silence filled the crowded room.

“Alright,” said Walter. “I think that I am speaking on behalf of the rest of the union when saying that it’s finally time to introduce the new leader of the central base.”

The man among the council agents stood up and was ready to take a bow.

“Ladies and gentleman—believe it or not—I present to you, the return of Edmund Fitts!”

The group of agents faced the elites and clapped for Edmund Fitts. He wasn’t much of a strong man, but had a mind that Walter believed would lead the central sector in a better direction. The past of the base in Illinois reminded Walter of the felon who was responsible for numerous crimes. Walter gazed down the walkway and shouted, “Open the doors!”

Two guards rapidly obeyed. They opened the doors and there he was—the real person to be questioned about his ways of uniting a legion of fierce assassins. Governor Cain X was back.

“Cain?” said Cyfreid. It was the first time seeing him in months.

Cain X was secured in tight handcuffs and was forcefully brought to face the council. He sighted Cyfreid and only nodded his head in a greeting fashion.

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“Cain X!” yelled Walter. “You have been charged for the irresponsible use of an alien substance and yet again, the unification of what you call, the ‘X’ Viles.”

“Don’t forget having meetings with the shapeshifting creature named Identymous,” said Cyfreid butting in. It was as if Walter’s eyes almost came out of its sockets when he asked, “You had meetings with Identymous?!” The displeased look that Walter gave was one that Cain hated to see.

“Look Walter,” said Cain, trying to defend himself. “What I did back then now feels like it was done so long ago. You understand, right?”

“Are you kidding me? Identymous? Forget this meeting, Cain. You’re staying in prison for eternity.”

“I don’t think that’s your call.”

“You’re absolutely correct. Mister Fitts, what’s your thought on the situation?” The new leader analyzed Cain’s emotions. Everything about the cruel man fitted the description. He smiled and looked at Cyfreid and then compared the two of them. From his own opinion, he found no difference.

“Well,” Edmund said. “I feel that Cain is a person who should be punished.”

“Well that’s the obvious,” said Walter.

“I’m not finished. Cain will be under temporary lock down in my new institution.”

“Edmund, the ‘X’ Center will be transformed into a personal tower just for you. Chicago has always been the city of the elites. You can’t ruin tradition.”

“I’m not talking about a useless tower. I’m talking about a place where lads such as Cain can learn to calm their minds and end their continuous mistakes.” Cain’s replacement stared him down. Then he went to the criminal’s counterpart.

“As the new leader of the central sector in Illinois, I personally feel that a simple warning is the best solution.”

“You can’t be serious?” said Walter. The entire union felt the same way as Edmund gave an emotion that reflected his

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solemnity. It made Tina Truman ask herself, “*What is this official doing?*”

“I am serious,” he stated. “I practically run the agency.”

“Well the council and I won’t approve. This man needs to be behind bars for life!”

“Really? So what about the other crooks running around the streets of Denver, Chicago, Cyclohome, and every other major city in this nation?! These are mere pawns! The real threats are the extraterrestrials!”

“Actually, they like to be called Pixalians,” said Tina trying to voice her thought.

“If it’s not a human...it’s called an alien. I hope you keep that in mind Miss Truman. The agency should put more emphasis on its title. The AIA Memorial Festival is right around the corner, so we need to get back to doing what we do best. We are here to hunt creatures and that’s it. This is why I am starting a new amendment. The traditional police before the Star-Pix circumstance shall be restored. The AIA needs to be a separate organization.”

Edmund’s perceived change was proposed to balance the authority much better than it was currently doing. With a split alliance, ordinary cops would take care of offenders such as Cain X. The more specialized police would handle the Pixalians. Edmund Fitts continued his vision.

“However, according to a previous law that was passed, my new amendment needs one thing.”

“Okay, what exactly do you need?” asked Walter.

“I need a signature. In fact, it has to be an approval from the previous leader of AIA Central, which in this case happens to be none other than Cain.”

“You need me?” wondered Cain as he too was shocked.

“Now wait just a damn minute!” Curtis shouted. “You can’t trust this man!”

Walter also agreed with Curtis Kareem, but it only made Edmund laugh.

“I can’t trust Cain X?” he asked. “Well then, why don’t you look at your AIA official and tell me about people who shouldn’t be trusted.”

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It was a memory—one in particular that Curtis hated to recall. The thought of Brute-Spine intensified Curtis Kareem's vengeful views. Curtis could still hear the voice of his lost friend Gary, screaming his name as a vengeful brute. After Gary's death, Curtis got better at forgetting the entire situation. The question which he tried to figure out was, "*How on earth did Edmund know about it?*"

"I see that everyone is quiet now," said Edmund. "Well then, I guess I made my point. Cain X will reside at my institution until further notice. Tomorrow, I'll have him sign the accord. Do I make myself clear?"

The representatives nodded their heads. As for the members of the eastern alliance, they hesitated to agree.

"We will discuss matters about Xaliemer's demolition another time."

After the crucial meeting was over, the members left the room and scouted the area for the elevators to ground level. Making her way through the number of people that crowded the hallways, Tina Truman found Edmund.

"Mister Fitts, I need to talk to you."

"Ah yes, Trina Truman."

"Actually it's Tina Truman."

"I see no difference. Now what do you want because you're holding up time I may never get back." Of course, the visionary was exaggerating.

"Edmund, I think you're making a big mistake by letting Cain reside in some facility that I and the other agents of the league are only hearing about now. Don't you think it's absurd to have him out of AIA cells? And to make matters more strange, you're putting him under a temporary lockdown?"

"Tell me something Tina. If Cain X—the former Governor of Illinois—deserves to be behind bars, then what about Cyfreid?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," she claimed. However, Edmund dared to contradict her statement.

"I think you do know what I mean. Cyfreid formed a group of trained assassins without AIA consent."

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“They’re heroes!” shouted Tina.

“They’re dangerous! Also, you think I don’t know what he did to Gary Herman? And that’s not even the half of it. Cyfreid has been questioned by the council a number of times, but for some reason, none of those times involved Curtis’s little accident.” Tina understood what Edmund was able to do.

“That’s right, Tina. I know all about Cyfreid and his old illegal acts. I know that you would do nothing to stop him. Why is this? Is it because he allowed you to join the agency even after you and your little ‘*girl clan*’ broke into AIA East all those years ago? I know that you’re a fugitive.”

“Shut up right now.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Is the drug dealer angry?” Tina’s hand moved to her side. Her fingers touched her gun.

“Shoot me Tina. Heck, you could’ve saved yourself the trouble if you killed Cyfreid when you had the chance.” Her temper was put on hold.

“You know what, I’m not mad. I just know that men like you can’t handle women like me.” She looked at a folder that he held. The moment when she was about to depart from the official, a number of agents accidentally bumped Edmund. Mister Fitts dropped the folder and Tina gradually picked it up upon noticing the loose papers. One of the files in particular said, *ARPANOID*.

When she handed him the folder, she asked, “What’s ARPANOID?”

“None of your business,” he said. “You have yourself a nice day.” The man quickly left. Even though the council believed that AIA Central was headed in the right direction, Tina thought the opposite.

She returned to where Cyfreid and Curtis stood. The Commander’s eyes were still placed on Cain who winked and gave Cyfreid a devious smile while he was walked out of the room.

“I don’t trust him,” Cyfreid said to Curtis.

“So what else is new?”

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“I don’t think Cain is who we should be worrying about,” said Tina as she approached them. “This Edmund Fitts guy is hiding something.”

“Actually, Edmund might have a point about separating the force,” explained Cyfreid.

“I understand that, but it’s just the way he acts.”

“You only met him today,” said Curtis.

“Yeah and I remember the day I met you.”

“What did you think of me?”

“I’ll rather not say. What did you think of our son? You know, the one you made me kill?” Curtis cleared his throat and pretended to ignore.

“Curtis.”

“I told you, Tina. He wasn’t himself.”

“Tell that nonsense to your animal claws.”

“Both of you stop it!” shouted Cyfreid. “You’re worrying about something we all settled years ago. Tina, your boy is dead. It’s over, so move on.”

“Oh, so you’re taking his side, aren’t you Cyfreid?”

“Look, leave that stuff in the past. I loved your son too, but as Curtis mentioned, he was infected. That’s another reason why Curtis left the league and I had to wait years before I could go to his mansion and get him back. So leave the dark attitude for slaying creatures. I think that special wine of yours is going to your head.”

“You introduced me to *Dark Essence*.”

“That’s very true. Anyways, as much as Edmund Fitts seems suspicious, we know what Cain is capable of doing.” He looked at Curtis Kareem and added, “Curt, you up for a little task?”

“Name it Cyfreid.”

“After we get the coordinates to Edmund’s new institution, I need you to head there and watch over Cain.”

“You want me to go there and spy on Cain? What about their security cameras?”

“Do what you do best. Slash them.”

“I like the sound of that.” Curtis grew his long claws.

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“What are you crazy?” asked Tina. “We’re in public!”

“Sorry, I forgot,” he said retracting them. He was anxious to be the credited hunter of Pixalians for AIA East. Curtis, otherwise known as Sharp, followed Cyfreid and Tina back to ground level. They desired to uncover the new secrets that were slowly arising. There was more than what they knew and if the situation was to get worse, Cyfreid understood that some help would be the answer. This was whether the council and the new leader of the central sector liked it or not.



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**MASTER DEFENDERS 3
COMING SOON**

