



Challengers of the Unknown #1
Kevin Hill

Published: 2006

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): "Swamp Thing" "Multi Man" "Challengers of the Unknown"
Comics DC2

Challengers of the Unknown

Issue 1: "Out of Time"

Written by Kevin Hill

Cover by Kevin Hill

Finishes by Borize

Edited by David Charlton

Somewhere else.....

The Midday sun beats down on the vast plain. The wind blows the three-foot tall grass as birds of prey circle overhead. In the distance, ringing the large field, the encircling Jungle beckons just out of reach like some long desired shelter. It's been several days since it last rained but that isn't unusual for this time of year and the ground is cracked with the lack of moisture. Soon the lakes and riverbeds will start to dry and then the struggle for water will truly begin.

Quickly running through the tall grass Ace Morgan glances back over his shoulder! He can hear the sounds of his pursuer getting closer even as he speeds up! To his far left he hears the sound of gunfire! His teammate Rocky Davis expelling the last of his ammo into an unseen foe!

"Damn him!" Ace had warned everybody not to get separated!

Their best chance against multiple opponents was to keep a tight formation so that they could cover all angles of attack! His many years as a Fighter Pilot had taught him many things especially those of fundamental combat techniques!

Suddenly to his right he hears a loud scream! The bastards had cornered the Professor and evidently his days of challenging the Unknown had just come to a quick, yet horrible, conclusion!

"These devils! They have routed us and lead us to exactly where they have wanted!"

Morgan thought as he sprang over a rock to avoid having to slow his pace!

If he could make it to the Jungle then he might have a chance! He could climb into a tree to gain the vantage point and eliminate the chance of getting surrounded! Without losing pace he checks the twin .45's in each hand! If his memory is correct he has three shells in one and two in the other but from the sounds of his deadly opponents he was going to be way short on bullets!

Suddenly he notices a blur of motion to his right! They're making they're move! One of the quicker ones is trying to cut him off! A clearing is up ahead between him and the much needed dense covering of the Jungle refuge. They'll attack him there! He knows, because that is exactly what he would do! Jumping into the clearing Morgan does a dive and roll landing on his back to avoid the attack that was aimed for his blind side! Pouncing on top of him, each leg straddling on either side of the Blonde haired fighter, the six-foot tall Dromaeosaurid goes in for the kill!

Utilizing his training, Morgan puts two well-placed Bullets into the Raptors skull, ripping its Brain to pieces! Kicking the lifeless carcass off of him, Ace cautiously rises to his knees! The other Hunters will hold back now that their Leader has been killed. Using the hesitation to his advantage, Ace makes a mad dash for the nearby vegetation! Slowing his pace to avoid running head long into one of the many trees that populate the region he takes a moment to acclimate himself to his surroundings and looks for a suitable tree to make his final stand. He knows that his pursuers will also slow their pace because with the new environment their combat tactics must also change. The game is now hunt and search not simply pursuit! Breaking the Golden rule of Combat by not keeping your head in the Game, Morgan searches his memory for the clues necessary to figure out how he and his friends ended up in this God Forsaken valley.

Quicker than thought, a Vice like Jaw rips through the bushes and clamps down on the Pilot's right arm with a wet crunch!

Panicking and forgetting his training, Morgan unloads his Pistol into the scaly Beast's face, splintering Teeth and Bone fragments in a bloody haze! Screaming in agony a second Hunter grabs Ace's leg with a sickening Twist motion that brings the mighty fighter to the ground! Pulling a twelve-inch long survival knife from his belt, the Challenger repeatedly plunges the deadly blade into the hungry Devils snout and neck! Even as

the blood drains from his now numb body, Morgan still attempts in vain to beat his attackers back! A third Raptor joins in the feast and rips his claim away from the almost lifeless body.

As the last traces of life leaks from his soul Ace Morgan, Fighter Pilot, Astronaut and Leader of the Challengers of the Unknown can't help but think back on all the many adventures he and his friends endured. He laughs to himself. If only he had treated June different then things would have worked out for them. The irony of it all is that as the last bit of consciousness leaves his soul Morgan realizes that the greatest Challenge of all is the Challenge of - - - Love

Duncan Pramble stood backstage just out of eyesight behind the huge Curtains that framed the stage.

"Pramble"

"Pramble"

"Pramble"

Nineteen Thousand fans screamed and cheered as they awaited his entrance. The ego boosting roar echoed from wall to wall, but he deserved it did he not? Pramble was a man like no other. He was a man destined to rule the World!

He had made his first Millions writing and promoting his best selling Motivational Books all over the Planet! By the time he had reached the Hundred Million mark he had already surrounded himself with the smartest scientist in the World! His "Think Tank" was responsible for creating Hundreds of Patents for him that resulted in making him a Billionaire. By the mid-Eighties he was instrumental in the production of the Personal computer as well as one of the most recognized People in the World.

Today he is loved and admired by Millions and he is without peer, the richest man in the history of Mankind! He can personally buy several small countries as well as a few of the larger ones too!

The World today has forgotten and forgiven his long ago past as the second rate villain "Multi Man" and his many attempts at destroying the Planet. He has been given a fresh start and he is making the most of it!

The Announcer confidently walks to the center of the stage as the crowd wildly cheers in anticipation!

" Ladies and Gentlemen, without further ado, I give you the Worlds most Popular Man, as well as the Richest!" The Announcer pauses for the laughter to infectiously spread-" Your man and Ours, the next President of these United States.....Duncan Pramble !!!"

The Arena's foundation shakes as the crowd simultaneously jumps to its feet and bellows a voracious cheer! Balloons and confetti fills the air and everyone knows that they are witnessing History in the making. They know that this man will soon become the most powerful person on the entire planet Earth.

Duncan Pramble- Multi man, villain, Billionaire and Arch Nemesis to the Challengers of the Unknown steps onto the stage with a smile and a wave of his well-manicured hand.

"It's Showtime!" He says through a perfect smile.

At 3:45 the Telephone rang - -

June Robbins, mumbling to herself, grabbed the receiver with a startled jerk.

" Hello - - " she said as she vigorously rubbed sleep from her left eye.

" The - — Challengers are - - — - alive -" a voice like wet seaweed slapping against concrete sounded from out of the darkness on the other end of the phone line.

" What? I told you to stop calling me!!" June said, instantly awake.

She had quickly sat up in bed and swung her feet around to where she was half way standing and sitting. The swift motion had barely disturbed her Boyfriend who was asleep beside her.

“ The –Challengers –are alive. I need you to help — — free—them—” that voice again!

Shivers ran down her spine and she pulled on her nightgown in an attempt to drive the chills away that were beginning to eat into her soul.

“I don’t know who you are or why you keep calling me but I want you to stop! Don’t call me again!” she said as she motioned to hang up the receiver.

“Wait—your Mother was always— a cautious woman—too—” the words were barely recognizable as June struggled to make out every syllable.

“My Mother has been dead for Eleven years! How dare you bring her up to me like this!!” She said not realizing that it had been that long since her Mom had passed away.

“I’m—sorry—desperate—I know where the—Challengers are—we must help—them. They deserve better—I can go—to no one—else—please—” the pleading voice echoed through the phone.

She hesitated; in all her years as a Reporter she had learned a thing or two about people. She fancied herself a good judge of character and she could always smell a con when it was around her.

“Just meet me—and—all will be — explained—” The phone said.

Before thinking she said “Where?”

“You know—where—the only—place” The mysterious voice said with more than a little hint of irony.

“Three Days from now—Midnight—I don’t like the—daylight—” The wet seaweed said without allowing her to second-guess herself.

The Phone went dead without waiting for an answer. The pretty young woman stood up and walked out of the Bedroom closing the door behind her to avoid disturbing her lover.

As she walked into the kitchen of her modest Apartment her memories started flooding back about all the things that she knew about the Challengers and about the connection between them and her Mother!

They had vanished one day without a trace right after their return from the future with her Mom. Everyone just assumed that they had gone off on another trip through time to stop one World devastating Crisis or another. Mom didn't think anything of it because they were always leaving at a moments notice.

"When your saving the World there isn't always time to call and say goodbye." Ace Morgan would always tell her Mom.

But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, it was pretty clear something had gone wrong. The first June Robbins spent Five years searching for the Chals. She herself was no slouch when it came to Science. She was in fact one of the most prolific and brilliant Women of her time. She had several offers from major Universities to join staff, but she was like all the other challengers, she loved the adventure! After Five long and exhaustive years June broke down and turned to the only shoulder that had been there for her all along, Dustin Clayburne.

Her Mom and Dad were married in nineteen eighty-Three, four months before her birth. Her father's riches made their life comfortable and coupled with the brains she inherited from her Mom the second June Robbins graduated early and went to the finest school money could buy. She majored in Literature and Criminology because, like her famous Mom, she also found herself drawn to the more adventurous side of life! She now is a very admired and sought after Reporter who specializes in the Occult and darker side of this crazy world. Even for her young years many feel that her Investigative Reports are as close to brilliant as possible.

The coffee brewed as she stood in silence beside her Kitchen counter. It could all be a trap, but why? Why now? Why the Challengers?

It still hurts to remember the night in Nineteen Ninety Five when her Parents died. Dad had always been the best Driver and had always spared no expense on his vehicles but it's hard to avoid another Driver determined to kill himself! The head on collision had killed both Mom and Dad instantly and she was left with no one in the world! She finished the rest of her young years living in fortune with grandmother Clayburne. At eighteen she dropped Clayburne as her last name to use her middle name-Robbins- as her new last name in honor her great Mother. Dad was a good provider but Mother was the inspiration to June the second's life!

Sipping her coffee, June scratched her long Blonde hair and let it fall back down her back. The gravely voice had said to meet her at the "only place". A new shiver ran down her spine.

"Challenger Mountain"-She said under her breath knowing that the voice was real and that she was about to get the biggest story of her life!

Miles away a Seven-foot tall hulking figure walked away from the Pay Phone. His huge bulk barely disguised under the long overcoat and wide brimmed hat. He shambled across the highway as rain pelted down bouncing off of his broad shoulders. The rain had started two weeks ago and had not quit yet. But that's not unusual for this time of the year in this area.

He would have to make his way through the Swamp and into the Train Yard. He would jump from Train to Train to barely make it to Colorado in time for his meeting with the young Woman. As he stepped off the road and onto the wet soil his body instinctively started to suck up moisture from the soaked dirt. He could feel his strength grow leaps and bounds as the miracle fluid filled his every fiber. The Water is his life! Without it he would dry up, crack and wither to his death. Such is the life of a Swamp Thing.

Alec Holland was no longer human but that didn't stop him from having Human emotions! The Challengers had been one of the few people to care about him and even though their time together was short they were some of the most cherished memories the Mud encrusted Scientist had! He would do whatever it took to help them. He would destroy any foe,

fight any battle but he would free his friends!

As lightning flashed across the sky and Thunder boomed all around him the Swamp Thing slowly disappears among the thick, moss covered Trees of the Louisiana Swamp

To be continued!

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Action Comics: This Looks Like a Job For...

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All-Star Comics #6 (2006)

All-Star Comics: Firestorm the Nuclear Man.

Meet college freshman Ronnie Raymond, DC2's newest superstar! When a nuclear accident gives Ronnie incredible powers, he does what any red-blooded American teenager would do - he becomes a superhero! But will real life and the savage Hyena get in the way of his fun and games? Look out World, here comes Firestorm the Nuclear Man!

Challengers of the Unknown #2 (2006)

Challengers of the Unknown: Out of Time, Part 2.

Challengers of the Unknown #3 (2006)

Challengers of the Unknown: Out of Time, Part 3.

Challengers of the Unknown #4 (2006)

Challengers of the Unknown: Out of Time, Part 4.

Crisis: The Apokolips Imperative, Part 5!

The Challengers have teleported into the heart of Apokolips. Now they must battle their way to freedom against an unstoppable Army and the devious Dr. Bedlam!

Challengers of the Unknown #5 (2006)

Challengers of the Unknown: Out of Time, Part 5.

Having escaped the clutches of Dr. Bedlam on Apokolips, The Challengers and their friends now find themselves trapped in the past. How far into the past? You've got to read it, to believe it! It's another heart pounding tale of high adventure!



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