



Blue Beetle Vol. 2 #1
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Blue Beetle

Issue #1: "Interview With a Superhero"

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The Blue Beetle moved quickly along a path through brush and trees. The path was old and had grown over. Ted's costume snagged thorn after thorn tearing holes in the blue fabric that covered his suit's bottom layer of armor. His pace quickened by increments until he was soon running at a full sprint. Beads of sweat formed underneath his goggles running into his eyes until they burned making it difficult to see the overgrown path. As he tried to pull them off he tripped over a vine. He laid there for just a moment before taking his goggles off and wiping his eyes.

"Where...Where am I?" Beetle said barely audible even to himself. He looked around and saw that he was now in a desert. Sand clung to the sweat on his head and he leaned forward to catch his breathe. Ted took another look around but couldn't remember why he had started running to begin with.

Ted jolted straight up in bed. It was the same nightmare plaguing him every night for weeks now and every time he woke from the nightmare only one word clung to his mind.

"Reach...?"

Ted entered the museum in Central City in a suit and tie. It wasn't his first visit back since joining Powers, Inc. but it was a bittersweet visit. Beetle had decided to move on to a new city and had come back to make arrangements to have his business relocated.

"Hello Mr. Kord", a voice said that Ted recognized as Arnold Beck. Beck had been overseeing the museum in Ted's absence.

"Hi there, Arnold. How are you?" Ted said smoothly extending his hand to Arnold.

"Very good. What brings you to Central City sir?" Beck replied almost suspiciously before smiling nervously. The two started to walk slowly across the museum as they talked.

"I'm relocating Arnold, moving to Midway City to set up shop. I'm having quite a bit of the museum moved to one I just bought in Midway. In fact I wanted to come by in person to offer you a position at the Midway Museum. A promotion really, you would be handling the move and then after that both museums. "

Arnold was awash with surprise. "Wow, that's very generous Mr. Kord."

"You do a great job here. I have a private jet that would shuttle you between cities and I've contacted a temp service to provide you with a moving crew."

"I'll take it." Beck said with a big smile. "You had me at promotion." He added and laughed.

"Sounds great. I have everything all set up in Midway. I'll have the team there contact you in the next day or so." They stopped walking and stood in front of the display with Dan Garret's sarcophagus. Ted looked up at and took a deep breath. "This is the most important display. I'd like to have special attention to care on this one."

"Sure thing, Mr. Kord." Arnold said as Ted turned back toward him.

"I have to get moving. I'm expected at some meetings in Midway today

as well. Give my best to your Mom and Dad okay.”

“I will, and thank you.”

Ted arrived at the Midway City News studios in full costume and landed the bug on a helipad usually reserved for news choppers. He was to appear on the Gary Bing Live show for his first nationally televised interview. When Ted decided to take a leave of absence from Powers, Inc. he set his sights on Midway City for his new home. Ted had thought about going back home to Central City but ultimately decided that he could do more good in Midway. Central City was Flash territory and Midway was one of the few cities left without a superhero protector. Due to conditions placed on the City by the fact that its budget was entirely federal, Midway was the perfect technology friendly city for a guy like Ted. Every building in the city was outfitted by the government with the most advanced technology to date. Part of the federal funding meant that the government was allowed to test new technologies in any state owned buildings. Most of the private industry in Midway followed suit and were allowed tax exemptions for their cooperation.

Ted’s intention was to start his new business venture in Midway and also to relocate some of the Central City businesses to Midway. Most notable was the contents of the museum he owned moved to a new museum he had just purchased in Midway.

Ted settled into the chair behind the microphone sitting in the chair across from where Gary would be sitting. A young spiky-haired intern handed Ted a lapel microphone and he clipped it onto his costume. Gary Bing strolled into the news room and took his seat across from Ted before reaching over to shake his hand. He seemed pleasant enough and Ted became relaxed after exchanging niceties with the host.

The countdown started as they were about to go live.

The lights became brighter.

4

It seems to be getting hotter in here... Ted thought to himself.

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Gary pulled out a stack of cards from beneath the table. He tapped them on the table and made eye contact with Ted and smiled.

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“Action.” Gary said with a wink.

1

Gary Bing came to life if it could be called that. After forty years on television it was starting to show. Gary was becoming irrelevant in the news business. It was time to try and change that.

“Welcome to the Gary Bing Live show. I am your host Gary Bing and tonight well be talking to the new “protector” of Midway City. The Blue Beetle is with us. You may have seen his previous exploits as a masked hero for hire in the former Powers, Inc. and tonight we hope to set the rumors straight. Who is the Blue Beetle? Is he the same Blue Beetle from before? Is he Blue Beetle’s sidekick from the eighties, Sparky, all grown up? The answers to these questions and more on tonight’s Gary Bing Live.”

Gary took his seat and the camera panned out to include a very confused Blue Beetle.

“Beetle, can I call you Beetle?” Gary asked.

Ted still not sure what to think replied, “Sure. Yeah, Beetle is fine.”

“Excellent. Beetle, we have lots of questions for you. I’d like to start out with some questions sent in via e-mail from a third grade class right here

in Midway City. Sound good?"

"Sounds great."

"The first question is from Jimmy Bennington who asks 'Can superheroes eat their desert before dinner?'"

Beetle laughed and replied, "No unfortunately that is against the superhero code, Jimmy."

"Adorable." Gary said and then continued, "The next one comes from Mikey Carter, who wants to know 'Is Booster Gold as cool as he seems in person?'"

Beetle rolled his eyes. *I should have never taught Booster how to hack into e-mails*, he thought to himself before answering. "Sure, he's pretty cool. I would venture to say that he'd fit right into your class."

"Cute." Gary said. "If you don't mind we're going to move along now."

"No problem, Gary."

"Please, it's Mr. Bing."

"O...kay."

"Getting right into this, you are obviously not the original Blue Beetle. What happened to the the older guy?"

"Well...um, see there was time travel involved. It's sort of hard to explain really. He...the original Blue Beetle that is, was summoned into the time stream to help prevent some anomalies. He was injured and lost in ancient Egypt. He was eventually nursed back to health and lived among the ancient Egyptians." Ted answered the question, but still wasn't sure he'd pieced it all together himself.

"That sounds like something out of a science fiction novel. How did you come to be the new Blue Beetle in all of this?"

"There was a note in a pyramid where I found the Blue Beetle's...um his

mummified remains in a sarcophagus. In the note he urged me to take up the Blue Beetle name.”

“Beetle, there are some people who say that there never was any note. That you are maybe not what you say you are. Comment?”

“There is a display in a museum that houses the sarcophagus. The police are more than welcome to do carbon dating and DNA testing to put that rumor to rest.” Ted answered and to tell the truth it was one question he had been ready to answer. Ted had often felt that the story was so unbelievable that he should be prepared to prove it scientifically.

“Next question, in the mid eighties the original Blue Beetle had a sidekick for a short time. His name was Sparky. Were you Sparky?”

“Sparky?” Ted had heard the name before, but only knew what little about Sparky that everyone else knew. “No I was not Sparky. The ah, the first Beetle and I never spoke about him really.” Ted answered thoughtfully.

“Did the original Beetle keep any kind of files, or journal?”

“There were some files, mostly just information on villains he’d faced. Obviously, in the superhero business you can only keep so much of a paper trail on yourself.” Ted answered calmly.

“Funny you should call it a business, Beetle. You were in Powers, Inc. a superhero team for hire. How do you justify getting paid for helping people?”

“Wow...um Gary, we all had reservations about that, but I guess Power Girl put it best early on. Policemen get paid, Firemen get paid and what about private investigators? Besides that we never walked away from a person in need, money or not. Most of the money any of us made with Powers, Inc. was for endorsements and such anyways.”

“The tabloids tend to have a field day speculating on secret identities. There are rumors...”

Beetle cut him off with a nervous laugh. “Well, Gary I can put that to

rest. I am definitely not Zac Efron.” He said with a smile hoping to avoid the actual question being asked.

“On the subject of secret identities, don’t you think the public has a right to know who is behind the masks? All these super powered beings traveling time, fighting giant robots that attack our cities... Aren’t teams like Powers, Inc. and the Justice League putting a target on the rest of us? Don’t you have a certain amount of responsibility to inform the people you supposedly protect? Shouldn’t there be a way to hold you people accountable?”

Beetle squirmed in his seat. He had not expected these kinds of questions. There was no right answer, at least not coming from someone in a mask. Ted had asked himself this question before.

“Well Gary...” Blue Beetle looked around the studio. The lights seemed to get even brighter. He could feel the sweat building up beneath his mask.

“How do you respond Beetle?” Gary pushed and Ted felt himself becoming angry with the smug self satisfied look on his face. Why was he doing this?

Ted weighed his options and smiled as a calm came over him.

“How do you respond Beetle?” He asked again with a harsher tone this time.

“You’re right Gary.” He answered.

“Excuse me?” Gary Bing was confused.

“I said you’re right Gary.” Ted repeated. He reached up and pulled off his goggles first, then slowly removed the rest of his cowl. “I’m Ted Kord.”

The television set filled with a collective sound of shock and amazement. Gary Bing leaned back in his chair in a rare moment of speechlessness for a man who had built a career by running his mouth. Finally he leaned forward and spoke.

“That’s a Gary Bing Live exclusive! The Blue Beetle is really the inventor/entrepreneur Ted Kord. Don’t touch those dials folks. More after the break.”

“We’re clear Mr. Bing.” Shouted the heavysset production manager.

“Hot damn! That’s brilliant television.” Exclaimed Gary.

Ted wiped the sweat from his brow and picked up his goggles. “When we come back from commercial this interview ends.”

“What? Why? You just made history here. Why did you do it?”

“You already knew. I don’t know how but you already knew didn’t you?” Ted asked quizzically.

The heavysset production manager piped up again. “Back on in five seconds.”

Gary Bing arched an eyebrow toward Ted and picked up his cards then turned toward the camera.

3

2

And 1

“Welcome back to the Gary Bing Live show. If you are just joining us...”

Gary looked around at the crew as they moved about frantically behind the cameras.

“We have a problem Mr. Bing.” The production manager reported. “We’re not coming on. There’s...” He stopped as he looked at the screens and his jaw dropped. “What the hell?”

Gary stood up and walked over towards the equipment consoles where the live feed could be viewed. Ted looked around anxiously. He was quite ready to leave.

“What the hell is this?” Gary asked loudly. The whole crew was fixated on the screens on the console.

Ted walked over to see what was going on. As he approached the consoles he felt his heart drop into his stomach. The image on the screen was that of Father of the Nuclear Family, a family of rogue robots built at S.T.A.R. Labs.

“You have perverted your rights, you have filled the airwaves with smut and rot, you have torn apart the family unit and it will no longer be allowed. From now on Father is in control of your television and your internets and *Father knows best.*”

The screens faded to black before switching over to an old episode of Leave it to Beaver.

Ted reached up and turned to another channel. It was the same thing on every channel.

“Something’s...wrong, different...” Ted said to himself.

“You think?” Said Gary overhearing him.

“No I mean, they shouldn’t be able to do this. The Nuclear Family, their programming, the tech involved. Someone’s reprogrammed them, upgraded them.” Ted pulled a device out from his utility belt and looked around. “You! I need that computer.” He said pointing at a crewmember with a laptop.

Beetle took the computer and plugged his device into the drive. After several moments of frantic typing he gave the laptop back to the man and then pulled his cowl and goggles back on. “Get to the police. Tell them to go to that location.” He said pointing to the monitor and ran out of the building.

As he ran out Gary Bing shouted, “You owe me half an hour of television Kord!”

The crewmen looked at the screen which had a map on it.

"Well what are you waiting for?" Gary said to the crewmember who in turn set down the computer and ran out of the building as well.

The Bug soared across the Midway City skyline towards the outskirts of town and was faster than it had ever been. This was the point. Ted didn't want to be easy-pickings. He wanted to be able to fight and he wanted to be strong.

Beetle kept one eye on the skies and one on his monitor. He was tracking the signal he had pinpointed back at the studios. The signal wasn't even masked; it was too easy to track for Ted to feel comfortable. Something was off.

The Nuclear Family were never hackers, they never had this kind of power, so why now? And how? *Too many questions*, Ted thought, as the satellite stations came into view on the outskirts of Midway City. The sensors picked up Father immediately, easily, and Ted brought the Bug to a stop. He breathed in. This was it. And then he leapt out of the Bug, rolled to a stop a few meters away from his enemy.

"Leave it to Beaver?"

"Theodore Kord. You call yourself Blue Beetle." Father brought up his arm, the limb suddenly transforming into a cannon-shaped transmitter. "You carry the symbol, but you are certainly not him."

Ted rolled with the blast, crackling energy colliding with the ground behind him as he narrowly dodged the beam.

Last year, he wouldn't have been able to make that move but a couple of hours under Dick Grayson's wing, and not only does your body scream at you for hating it, but it also becomes sharper.

"You were expecting someone else?" Ted asked as he stood up from a

roll. "You've had an upgrade, who did it?"

As Ted spoke the words he noticed something protruding from Father's back. A blue scarab. In Ted's surprise to see this he let his guard down for a second too long.

Father rocketed towards him with a very solid, very robotic right hook. Beetle went flying towards the bug. He pulled himself to his feet and was forced to dodge a second blow almost immediately.

Ted needed to get in close, shut down the scarab and find out where it came from. Unfortunately Father was quick. He was on top of Ted within seconds of dodging the second punch.

Father wailed on Ted who was still dizzy from the original blow. Father raised his hands to deliver a devastating blow. Ted quickly reached to his side to pull his BB gun. He managed to point and fire the gun knocking Father to the ground. This particular BB gun was one of several he kept in the bug and was equipped with an Electronic disrupter.

"I should write a thank you letter to those guys at Popular Science." Ted commented as he stood up from the ground.

Beetle walked over to Father and leaned in to make sure he was offline. "Well, that wasn't so hard." It was too easy. Ted Kord was not an idiot, and he knew that the Nuclear Family was tougher than that.

The jamming device he used was Plan A, Plan B was the handful of C4 in his other hand, ready to attach and detonate by remote. Plan A... should have been impossible. Their circuits should have been wholly reinforced, not just... kind of. And where was the rest of the Nuclear Family? The Bug didn't pick up any other signals, no other evidence of the Family being nearby

"What the hell is going on with you?" Ted mumbled as he attempted to turn Father over to get a look at the scarab. Father was heavier, denser than Ted assumed he would be.

Father's eyes opened. "Secondary systems are rebooting" His hand shot up, grabbed Ted Kord by the throat and lifted him up as Father began to

rise up off the ground. "You won't stop it."

Unexpectedly, Father's head exploded in a swirl of pyrotechnics and shrapnel. His grip jerked open, and Blue Beetle dropped to the floor.

"You're a damned idiot, Kord," said his rescuer, who was standing there with a double barreled shotgun. Both barrels were smoking. "Revealing your identity on live television? I thought you were supposed to be a super-genius or something."

Blue Beetle pulled himself up and aimed his BB Gun at the stranger.

"A... common... misconception..." He rubbed his throat; he could feel a bruise forming already. "And... you are?"

"Peacemaker. How about you put that silly thing down and tend to your throat?"

Ted eyed the man up and down before returning the BB gun to his holster.

"Thanks for the save." Ted finally said as he walked over to the junk pile that used to be Father. He dug through some of the scrap and picked up the scarab that was attached to Father's back. He glanced back over to Peacemaker. "I assume you know what's going on here."

"Let me ask you something before I answer that."

"Sure." Ted replied slowly as he took apart the scarab. It was different than Dan's. This one was made of the most fascinating tech Ted had seen outside of the Apokolips tech he had studied with Bruce Wayne after the Invasion.

"How have you been sleeping?" Peacemaker asked. Ted looked at him sharply and thought about the nightmares he'd been having.

On a hunch, he asked, "What is the Reach?" He was now taking a small circuit from the scarab with a pair of tweezers from his utility belt.

Peacemaker smiled. "Have I got a story for you..."

TO BE CONTINUED... !

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