



All-Star Comics #6
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All-Star Comics

Issue #6: "Firestorm, the Nuclear Man"

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College student Ronnie Raymond had forgotten all about his research papers and the interview he had come to the Hudson Nuclear power plant to do. He was supposed to talk with physics professor Martin Stein but all of that had changed. As he was walking into the main entrance he noticed three suspicious-looking men running out the emergency door. Two of the terrorists, as he would later find out they were, were carrying pistols and the other a duffel bag. He didn't know what was going on, but as he dashed into Stein's lab he could sense something wrong. Martin Stein lay unconscious on the floor, obviously struck from behind, judging by his positioning. Ronnie ran to the Professor's side and tried to revive him. As the college student labored hard to awaken the older man he noticed something out of the corner of his eye that made his blood run cold.

A large amount of explosives had been placed across the room against the far wall. On the explosives was a series of wires all leading to an ominous-looking timer. The timer's clock was counting down and all that remained was fifteen seconds! Ronnie quickly abandoned his efforts to revive the scientist and bent to pick the gentleman up. The athletic boy had been called on more than one occasion a "Jock" and he was in college on a basketball scholarship so he was able to carry the unconscious man, albeit with extreme effort. Sweat beaded on the young man's forehead as he slowly made his way to the lab's doorway and their salvation. He could subconsciously see the clock continue its deadly countdown.

Not much time remaining, if only he could make it to the front entrance they might be safe. He needed to put as much space and obstacles between themselves and the bomb as he could.

As the handsome young man continued to make his way out of the room he thought how ironic it was that he wouldn't be able to make it to his date with Doreen even after that jerk Carmichael swore that she was way out of his league. Just as Ronnie began to feel hope that he might actually make it, his world exploded! In a wild flash of deafening sound and blinding light the explosives detonated taking the Nuclear power plant up in a wave of sizzling fury! A wall of nuclear energy, that seemed to explode inside their every cell, slammed into Ronnie and the Professor. As the skin peeled away from Ronnie's bones he felt another presence enter his mind. Both men's bodies seemed to melt together in a swirling mass of flesh and bone. Their cells mixing and rearranging into a single component.

Ronnie screamed in raging pain as every molecule of his being was racked by wave after wave of incredible power.

Three months later...

Martin Stein woke up as he always did, falling onto the floor off of his bed or couch and landing in a pile of books, student papers and empty pill bottles. It had been three months since the nuclear power plant accident and several weeks since the investigation had cleared him of all wrong doings. He had gotten his job back but only as an associate instead of project head. He was still plagued by bouts of blackouts and amnesia all of which the doctors could not explain. The pills were needed to control his constant migraines and to help him cope with the miserable wreck that his life had become!

As he weakly stood up, the dizziness almost overcame him as he walked to the bathroom. Stein cursed his luck. He was once one of the most respected physicists in the world. Plenty of money, nice house and a beautiful girlfriend, but now it was all gone.

As Martin looked at his scruffy face in the mirror he tried to remember what he did yesterday. He couldn't recall a single detail after his trip to

the pharmacist. Suddenly he felt his skin tingle. Feeling as if he was about to vomit Stein raced to the toilet. His skin began to heat up and he felt as if his body had lost its mass. Without warning Martin Stein vanished in a flash of sizzling bright lights!

“Yahoo! Time to kick some butt!” Firestorm screamed in joyous triumph.

The young flaming haired superhero zipped through the afternoon sky leaving a twinkling trail behind him.

“Ronald! What is the meaning of this? “ The disembodied Martin Stein said.” You had better not be using Firestorm to save on bus fare again!”

For some unexplained reason because of Stein being unconscious during the merger of Ronnie and the professor, Martin existed only inside Ronnie’s head when they were combined into the awesome fighting figure of Firestorm. The young teenager was the one in control and the professor was only along for the ride, to offer advice and his expertise into all things nuclear.

Ronnie secretly liked this arrangement very much. It made his life so much greater being the newest hotheaded superhero in town!

“Chill, prof.! We’re on a real mission here.” The superhero said as he angled into a dive, positioning himself just above the oncoming traffic of the busy highway. “I was walking to school when a car full of bad guys shot past me, followed by a couple of cop cars. If we’re going to make a name for ourselves we’ve got to help whenever possible.”

“Not to mention the fact that you adore any opportunity to become Firestorm.” Stein said bitterly.

“Hey, can I help it if it’s a blast being me!” The teenager smugly said while increasing his speed to catch the wildly driving car several yards away.

“As I have been trying to explain to you this past month, you have got to accept greater responsibility for this arrangement.” Stein pleaded.” Even

though being Firestorm is enjoyable for you, I find my role in this whole merger to be quite repulsive. It is literally wrecking my life!”

Firestorm passed the pursuing police patrol cars and maneuvered directly behind the car full of fleeing bad guys.

“Watch this, professor! Time to work some molecular magic.” Firestorm said with a smile while unleashing an incredible display of energy through his raised right hand.

“Ronald wait! Don’t do that!” Stein warned too late as he simultaneously realized what transformation Ronnie was going to perform.

Energy flashed around Firestorm as he used his power to rearrange the molecules of any inanimate object on the get away car. The moving automobile twisted and swirled into an atomic mixture that changed its original structure.

Instantly, the entire form of the car transformed into cherry gelatin. The sudden change of mass and design caused the car to careen into a skidding blob of goo. All four passengers were violently slung from side to side as the red transparent car began to flip end over end due to the loss of the drive shaft and wheels. Uncontrollably the ‘car’ rolled toward a concrete pillar of the nearby overpass.

“Quickly, Ronald! You got to save those men!” Stein yelled inside Ronnie’s head.

“I’m on it!” Firestorm said as he once again used his powers to change nearby garbage cans into giant pillows of silicon.

The gelatinous car collided harmlessly into the soft barricade and sufficiently stopped the uncontrollable getaway.

Another blast of Firestorm power transformed the car into running puddles of water allowing the police on the scene to incarcerate the fleeing foursome. As Firestorm landed to the applause of the growing crowd, Stein noticed the obvious reason for the thug’s deadly race from the law.

“Ronald, look! In the trunk: crates of weapons. Assault rifles, to be precise!” Martin Stein said.

Firestorm walked over to the half dissolved car and lifted out one of the weapons from a partially opened crate. Ronnie didn’t know much about guns but he recognized this one from all of the news stories about the war over seas. He also realized that with this many weapons on the street that a lot of damage could be done. A lot of lives could be lost.

In a sudden rage Firestorm reduced the several dozen weapons into harmless plastic toys.

“Hey! You’re destroying our evidence!” The nearest police officer said while pulling on Firestorm’s left arm. “We’ve been working for months on this gun smuggling case!”

“Huh? Sorry... Sorry, officer.” The embarrassed Firestorm said as he quickly lifted into the air to get as much space between him and the angry cops.

“Ronald. That’s what I’ve been talking to you about! You’ve got to think before...” Stein began to say.

“Not now, prof.! I feel stupid enough without you lecturing me.”

Minutes later, Firestorm landed in an inconspicuous alley across the street from his school’s entrance. In a flash of light the flaming haired superhero separated into the two bodies of Ronnie Raymond and Prof. Martin Stein.

“Where ...where am I?” The bewildered physicist said while stumbling from the entrance of the alley. He was shocked to realize that he had experienced one of his blackouts again.

“Here’s ten bucks, prof. Take a cab. I’m late for class!” The absent-minded teen said as he ran across the street to join his fellow students as they filed into the University.

“Who are you? Where am I?” Stein said as he wandered down the street still wearing his pajama bottoms from earlier this morning.

Hours later, across town at one of the most luxurious midtown office buildings ever built, in a building owned by long time crime lord Shoe Shine and his wife, Ma...! This ruthless couple has been the top Mob family in New York for twenty-five years, even during the time when Shoe was sent to Prison for fifteen years. A time during which Ma assumed control of the Family along with their son Spit. During their reign, they carved a bloody path through the city’s underworld’ to take uncontested domination of the vast criminal empire.

“Damn that flaming freak!” Ma Shine said as she slammed her oversized fist down on Shoe’s desk breaking the corner off in a shower of wood and splinters. “That’s the second time this week he’s wrecked one of our operations!”

“Calm down, Ma.” Boss Shoe Shine said trying to calm his six and a half foot tall football player-sized bride. “Our boy Spit has gotten himself a good idea. Tell your Mama all about it son.”

Spit Shine proudly stepped closer to his father’s desk. He was more fashionably dressed than his old fashioned parents. He wore only the most expensive suits and his slicked back jet-black hair was never out of place. His well-manicured hands were always adorned with a variety of beautiful rings and he spared no expense to entertain his various super model girlfriends. His day was coming and he would lead this family into the future, though his parents remained forever trapped in the past.

“I have taken the liberty to enlist the aide of some out-of-town help.” Spit said with a smile. “He should arrive here tonight and by tomorrow, our little Firestorm problem will be eliminated!”

“How are we going to make sure the freak shows his ugly mug? What if he’s on vacation or something?” Ma asked while she fidgeted with her antique tommy gun.

“We’ve done some research and found that the freak stays pretty close to

the area around the university." Shoe said while leaning back in his huge leather seat. "We've arranged a little trap to get our boy's attention!"

"Shoe, you're a genius!" Ma said as she flipped over the top of the desk to lovingly kiss her husband soundly upon the lips.

"That I am, Ma! That I am!" He said with pride.

Later, Doreen Day and her boyfriend Ronnie Raymond walked down the busy sidewalk. The movie had just let out and the young couple was on their way over to eat at the Big Belly Burgers fast food restaurant. The pretty blonde squeezed her uncharacteristically silent boyfriend's hand.

"Hey did I tell you that my sister Summer was back in town?" Doreen said with a cute little smile. "She's thinking about taking a teaching job at the university! Wouldn't that be awesome to have her back around?"

"Huh? Yeah, awesome." Ronnie said with his mind half a world away.

"Did you even hear what I said?" Doreen said, dropping her hands and facing the young man while the rest of the crowd separated around them. "Are you all right? You've been quiet all night."

"Hey! Muscle brain, did you forget how to walk and chew gum at the same time?" Said a voice from behind the young couple.

Clifford Carmichael, resident wisecracking smart aleck, walked up and slapped Ronnie roughly on the back.

"Hey, Doreen. When are you going to dump meathead here and go for a real man like your's truly?" Carmichael said while tussling Ronnie's brown hair.

"Don't be a jerk, Cliff!" Doreen defensively said while pushing Carmichael away.

"I'm not in the mood for your crap tonight, Carmichael." Raymond said through clenched teeth.

“Ooooooh. Is the Neanderthal getting mad?” Teased the Glasses wearing ‘A’ student.

“I’m warning you! Don’t push me... ” Ronnie started.

Before Ronnie could finish his sentence a tremendous explosion erupted three blocks over at one of the older buildings. The sky lit up as the eruption engulfed half of the block.

“Oh my god!” Doreen gasped. “That’s over by the university! We’ve got to get over there; someone might be hurt!”

As the pretty teenager turned to grab Ronnie’s hand, she noticed that he had mysteriously disappeared!

“Clifford! Where did Ronnie go?” She questioned the stunned Carmichael.

“I... I don’t know. He was here a second ago!” Clifford said not believing what they had just seen. “Figures he’d run off to his Daddy at the first sign of danger!”

As the two teenagers fought their way through the rushing crowd, Ronnie had other plans. He had made his way to one of the side streets and first making sure no one was around, he began the transformation that would change him into the composite hero known as Firestorm.

Seconds later the colorful hero was streaking toward the quickly spreading fire.

“Now what Ronald? I do have to work sometimes you know, to pay my rent and bills— or are you going to make sure I spend all my time inside your head?!” Martin Stein said bitterly.

“Sorry, professor. Really. There was a big explosion at the university! Someone could be hurt!” Firestorm said as he passed the running crowd. Everyone was going in the same direction, toward the university.

“Hey, there’s that jerk Firestorm!” Carmichael said while pointing at the yellow and red-garbed hero.

“Shut up Clifford!” Was all Doreen said as they rounded the corner to see the devastation that the explosion had created.

One of the men’s dorms had been completely engulfed in the destructive flames of the fire. Two more were dangerously close to being burnt to the ground by the quickly spreading inferno. Firestorm levitated directly in front of the burning buildings.

“This should be a piece of cake transforming the flame into something harmless.” Firestorm began to say.

Suddenly he was slammed hard from behind. Something big and hairy had jumped onto his back from a rooftop above him! Firestorm hit the ground and rolled onto his back to see his attacker. Quicker than the eye could follow a large man-sized Hyena launched itself on top of the young hero, and began to slash at his chest with its razor sharp claws.

“Ronald, quick! You’ve got to get away!” Stein said in a panic. “We have no idea what would happen if your body was to be cut and Firestorm’s nuclear energy was to leak out!”

“Get off of me!” Firestorm screamed as he blasted the man shaped animal into the air.

Firestorm stood up even as the Hyena reached out in mid-flight, grabbed a nearby flagpole and spun around three times before he shot himself back at the brightly colored superhero with amazing speed. With a savage kick the furry beast slammed into Firestorm’s chest, sending him flying backwards into the burning building! Flames swirled all around him as the composite hero tried to make his way back outside to the fresh air and freedom. In a lightning quick tackle the Hyena vaulted into the burning dormitory and smashed the hero through a partially burnt wall sending sparks and flames everywhere! Through the smoke and soot, the violent villain tore into Firestorm and bashed his body against a solid staircase, sending both fighters tumbling into the burnt out basement. In a swirling blur of motion, the Hyena scooped up a broke wooden beam

and struck the young crime fighter against his back and continued to pound on Firestorm as he fell to his knees. In a flash of nuclear energy, two huge concrete hands formed from the floor and slammed together, crushing the dazed Hyena in its grasp.

Through the thick smoke the Nuclear Man made his way to a clearing in the burnt-out basement where the ceiling had already fallen through, exposing the outside sky.

“Ronald, who is this, and why does he want to kill us?” Stein said inside Firestorm’s head.

“Beats me! But while I’m in here I better take care of this fire!” Firestorm said as he once again used his molecule changing powers to turn all the flames into carbon dioxide effectively smothering out the inferno.

“Good thinking, Ronald!” Stein praised. “Now, let’s get airborne so that we’ll be out of that crazy man-animals reach!”

No sooner than Stein said it, Firestorm shot into the air to hover just above the smoldering building.

“That’s not going to save you from the fury of the Hyena!” The savage villain said as he jumped out of the smoking dorm onto the hood of a car to use it as a springboard.

The furry projectile squarely struck Firestorm in the stomach and latched onto his costume, sinking his blade-like claws in to keep his grip. With his free hand, Hyena slashed through the young hero’s shirt and into his chest! With a wild punch, Firestorm’s fist crushed into the clawing enemy’s face.

“What gives!?” Firestorm said. “His face is soft like a mask!”

“He must be wearing a costume Ronald!” Stein said in sudden realization. “He’s not real; he’s just a man in a costume!”

“You know what that means!” Firestorm said with a smile as he blasted the Hyena square in the face.

In a flash of nuclear rearrangement, the Hyena's costume changed into a shower of packing peanuts. Instantly the hourglass shaped figure inside the Hyena costume fell towards the ground only to land in the smoldering building with a wet crunch.

"Wait a minute! The Hyena wasn't a man! He was a woman!" Firestorm said astonishingly.

"Your right, Ronald!" Stein added." Even with all the smoke and debris the Hyena clearly had a feminine shape!"

Firestorm quickly shot down to the smoking building and zapped the whole area into oxygen molecules basically clearing the entire lot to the ground, but to his surprise the Hyena was gone!

"How did she get away?!" Puzzled the young hero. "No one can move that fast!"

"Obviously this one can!" Martin Stein shot back." I have a feeling that we haven't seen the last of our furry friend."

As the fire department and police began to arrive, Firestorm shot into the air and made his way back to the side street that he had original come from. But having a second thought, he continued his flight until he was standing outside of Stein's house. With a flash of Nuclear energy Firestorm once again separated into the two men.

"Not again!" Stein screamed falling to his knees. "I can't take this anymore!"

Sensitive to the physicist's pain, Ronnie pondered the consequences of what he was about to do. The young man looked at the Professor who was in great agony over this whole situation. The teenager went over to Stein and helped him to his feet.

"Professor Stein." Ronnie said as he helped the professor walk to his back door." My name is Ronnie Raymond, and I've got something to tell you... "

The beginning... !

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

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Challengers of the Unknown #1 (2006)

Challengers of the Unknown: Out of Time.

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

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

Challengers of the Unknown #4 (2006)

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Having escaped the clutches of Dr. Bedlam on Apokolips, The Challengers and their friends now find themselves trapped in the

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