

The Blue Mantis #3 - "A Secret Shared"

Written by Steven Bland

The Blue Mantis was being attacked by a horde of monsters, but his mind was on other matters. The horde of monsters took advantage of the superhero's distraction and soon overwhelmed him. By the time the Blue Mantis started to focus on the battle at hand, it was too late.

Suddenly, the monsters disappeared and the setting was soon changed to the virtual reality training room in Stanley Stevens's underground lab.

"What wrong, Wesley?" A concerned Stanley asked. "You weren't focusing on the simulation." Feeling down, the Blue Mantis unmasked.

"I was thinking about last night," Wesley responded. "I was on my way to Carly Connors's house for her party, but Tina Madison kidnapped me. She was wearing an armored exoskeleton and riding a high-tech hoverboard when she rendered me unconscious and brought me to her secret lab."

"When I regained consciousness, I managed to break free," Wesley continued. "Then, we fought. With her armored exoskeleton, she was stronger than me. But, then I remembered the judo lessons you and Mortimer taught me, and I gained the upper hand. With Madison defeated, I used the argon matrix laser sickle claws to destroy her equipment, so that she could never use it again."

"Suddenly, there was an explosion," he added. "I managed to escape. But as I was flying away as fast as I could, the blast knocked me unconscious. I was out for a few hours. When I recovered, I tried to save Madison, but I couldn't find her. There was no body."

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"Then, she must be alive somewhere," Stanley said.

"And she could still be planning another way to capture me," a worried Wesley said. "I can never relax as long as she's still out there."

"Well, she seems to be laying low right now," Stanley said. "We'll worry about her when the time comes."

"Then, I remember Carly's party, I flew to her house as quickly as I could," Wesley said.

"When I got there, everyone was leaving. Because of Tina Madison, I missed Carly's party."

"Stanley, I really like Carly," Wesley told his mentor. "What should I do?"

"You're more than welcome to share your secret with her," Stanley advised with a smile.

"You mean, let her know that I'm the Blue Mantis?" Wesley asked.

"Of course," Stanley said. "But, you'll have to ask her to promise not to tell anyone else."

Wesley clapped his hands in glee.

"Thank you, Stanley," an overjoyed Wesley said. "Thank you."

"And when you see her," Stanley said as he dug into his right pocket.

"Give her this," he said as he gave Wesley a special ring-like device.

"What is it?" Wesley asked.

"It's a special signal device that will allow her to summon you if she's ever in trouble," Stanley replied. "All she has to do is press the center of the ring and it will send out a signal - -"

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Stanley then got out a small hearing aid like device.

"- - which will be picked up by this special hearing aid I designed," Stanley said as he showed it to Wesley. "It fits easily and comfortably in your ear and is hardly noticeable."

"Thank you, Stanley," Wesley said as he placed the special ring in his pocket.

Stanley gave Wesley the special hearing aid which the latter put into his right ear.

The next morning, the Blue Mantis was flying through the city on his way to Ditko High. Suddenly, he came across a jewelry store named Micheline's which had a big hole in the wall and saw a muscular man wearing a full-head mask emerging from the hole in the wall carrying a stolen diamond necklace.

Looks like I'm going to be a bit late, the superhero thought as he went to investigate.

"Hold it," the Blue Mantis told the big, strapping crook as the former landed in front of the latter. The superhero got a good look at what the superhuman crook stole.

He busted into this jewelry store just to steal only one diamond necklace, the Blue Mantis wondered. Why?

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I'll find out once I stop him, the superhero thought as he flew toward the masked crook, who put the diamond necklace he stole in one of his pockets. Then, the crook grabbed a nearby streetlight. After uprooting it, he swung the streetlight at the Blue Mantis, sending him flying backward into the wall of a nearby building behind him. Using superhuman agility, the crook leapt away.

Minutes later, the Blue Mantis regained consciousness. Realizing that he needed to be at Ditko High, he flew off.

Later, at school, Wesley saw Carly in the hallway.

"Carly," Wesley called out, attracting her attention.

"Wesley, why didn't you come to my party Saturday night?" Carly asked.

"I can explain. But first, can you keep a secret?" Wesley asked.

Carly nodded.

"Okay," Wesley said. "I am the Bl - -"

Suddenly, Mark came and interrupted.

Mark smacked the books down from Wesley's hands.

"Mark, what the hell?" Carly asked

"What are you doing?" Wesley asked Mark.

"I'm just going to quietly snap your wrist, you freak," Mark replied before grabbing Wesley's hand.

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"Mark, stop it," Carly demanded. "Stop it, right now!"

"Nnnnggg," Mark moaned as he struggled to snap Wesley's wrist.

Mark tried to headbutt Wesley, only to knock himself out. Amazed, Carly turned her attention to Wesley.

"Wesley, that was amazing," Carly told him. "How did you - - ?"

Wesley took Carly to a secluded area where he pulled up his shirt to reveal part of the Blue Mantis costume he was wearing underneath.

"Wesley, y-you're the Blue Mantis?" A stunned Carly asked with a whisper.

"Yes," Wesley told Carly as he pulled his shirt back down again to conceal his costume. "And this is a secret that we and Stanley must share."

"Who's Stanley?" Carly asked.

"A very good friend," Wesley answered. "I'd like for you to meet him sometime."

"I think I'd like that, too," Carly said. "How about tonight?"

"Really," Wesley asked happily.

"Yes," a smiling Carly answered

"Okay," Wesley told her, before pulling out Stanley's special ring and showing it to Carly.

"Here, this is for you," Wesley said as gave it to Carly.

"It's a ring," Carly said as she looked at it.

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"It's a special signal device that will allow you to contact me, the Blue Mantis, if you're ever in trouble," Wesley told her. "All you have to do is press the ring's center, and it will send a unique, audible signal that I can pick up. When I hear it, I will know that you need me."

"Thank you, Wesley," Carly said as she put the ring on.

"Hey, Carly," a male voice called out, attracting Carly's attention. Carly turned around and saw a skinny boy dressed in a nice expensive suit.

"Remember me?" The skinny boy asked.

"Todd?" A surprised Carly asked. "Todd Braverman?"

"Do you know him?" Wesley asked Carly.

"Todd and I went to summer camp, together," Carly answered.

"Todd, this is my friend, Wesley Walker," Carly said as she introduced Todd to Wesley. Todd and Wesley shook hands. Carly soon turned her attention back to Todd.

"So, what do you do now?" Carly asked.

"I work as an intern for Dr. Andru at Skyline Labs," Todd answered.

"Dr. Gerald Andru?" Carly asked. "Didn't he create a special super-soldier formula that could grant superhuman strength, durability, and speed to anyone who took it?"

"Yes," Todd answered. "It was called Globulin Omega. Yesterday, he was taking the formula with him to the airport, where he was to take a plane to the Pentagon to turn over his discovery.

Unfortunately, on the way to the airport, his car crashed and he was seriously injured."

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"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that," Carly said.

"So am I," Todd said.

"I have a very special gift, just for you, Carly," Todd said.

"For me?" Carly asked. "You really shouldn't have."

"Oh, but I want to," Todd said as he dug inside his right front pants pocket and pulled out the diamond necklace that was stolen from Micheline's. Wesley recognized the necklace immediately.

I-It's the diamond necklace that was stolen from Micheline's Jewelry store, Wesley thought. I wonder how he could've gotten it?

"It's - - *beautiful*," Carly said.

"So are you," Todd gushed as he gave the diamond necklace to Carly.

I wish I could tell Carly that the diamond necklace was stolen from Micheline's this morning, but Todd would suspect that I'm the Blue Mantis.

"Uh, can you two excuse me for a second?" Wesley asked.

"Sure," Carly answered.

"Of course," Todd added.

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Wesley quietly went to a secluded spot where he got out his cell phone and dialed Stanley's number.

"Stanley? Do you know of a scientist named Dr. Gerald Andru from Skyline Labs?" Wesley asked. "He created a super-soldier formula called 'Globulin Omega' and, yesterday, he was on his way to the airport to take a plane to Washington where he would turn over his discovery to the Pentagon. Unfortunately, on the way to the airport, he was in a car crash which left him seriously injured. Which hospital is he in?"

There was a pause, Soon, Wesley got his answer.

"Newhope Memorial Hospital?" Wesley asked.

"Thanks, Stanley. I'll pay Dr. Andru a visit after school," Wesley said before hanging up.

Later that afternoon, the Blue Mantis arrived at Newhope Memorial Hospital. Inside the hospital, the superhero changed into his civilian clothes and used his camouflage power to search for Dr. Andru's hospital room. Upon finding the room, he entered it.

Once inside, Wesley dropped his camouflage power.

"Dr. Andru?" Wesley asked. "I really hope you're up for a visitor, because I have to ask you something."

"Who are you?" Dr. Andru asked.

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"My name is Wesley," Wesley answered. "I read that you created a super-soldier formula called 'Globulin Omega'. I met your intern Todd Braverman. He said that you tried to sell it to the government but you were in a plane crash which put you in this coma."

"Todd was my intern. I did create the Globulin Omega formula which I planned to sell to the government," Dr. Andru said. "But, when I was in my car on the way to the airport, Todd, who had taken some Globulin Omega, caught up to me. He smashed my car and attacked me. I fear that he is using my formula for his own personal gain."

And I'm even more fearful of what he'll do - - or *try* to do - - to Carly, Wesley thought.

Meanwhile, Carly entered her house and was greeted by her parents.

"Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad. I'm home," Carly said with a smile.

Mr. and Mrs. Connors soon noticed the diamond necklace around their daughter's neck.

"Where did you get that diamond necklace?" Mrs. Connors asked her daughter.

"Todd Braverman gave it to me," Carly answered

"Todd Braverman?" Mrs. Connors asked. "That boy who went to summer camp with you years ago?"

"Yes," Carly answered.

Mr. Connors got a good look at the diamond necklace.

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"Unfortunately, you can't keep it," Mr. Connors told his daughter. "I saw on the news that a hulking man in a costume stole only a diamond necklace from Micheline's Jewelry Store. And the diamond necklace looked exactly like the one you're wearing now."

Carly went into her room, deep in thought. Shutting the door behind her, she got out her cell phone and dialed Todd Braverman's number.

"Todd?" Carly asked. "This is Carly. Would it be all right if I can come over?"

There was a pause. Carly got her answer.

"It is?" Carly asked. "Okay, I'll see you soon."

Later, back at Newhope Memorial Hospital, Wesley Walker, using his camouflage power, quickly moves through the people in the hall, looking for a secluded area where he could change into his costume. Upon finding one, he immediately went inside and closed the door behind him.

In minutes, the Blue Mantis flew out of one of the hospital's windows.

Once he was outside, the superhero got out his cell phone and dialed Stanley's number. Soon, he got an answer.

"Stanley, I just visited Dr. Andru at Newhope Memorial Hospital," the Blue Mantis said. "I just found out that his stay in the hospital was due to Todd Braverman. Todd stole the Globulin Omega and used it to smash Dr. Andru's car and seriously injure him, before the good doctor could go to the airport yesterday."

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"That means Carly's in serious danger. I'll check her home," the superhero added before flying off.

Soon, the Blue Mantis arrived at Carly's home and discreetly looked inside every window. She wasn't inside.

"Where could she be? The superhero thought. I've got to warn her before it's too late.

Meanwhile, Carly arrived at Todd Braverman's apartment and knocked on his door. The door opened and he answered.

"Hello, Carly," Todd said.

"Can I come in?" Carly asked. "We need to talk."

"Sure," Todd said as he invited Carly inside. Once Carly was inside, Todd closed the door.

"What do you want to talk about?" Todd asked.

"It's about this diamond necklace you gave me," Carly said as she removed it from her neck.

"I can't keep it," Carly said as she placed the diamond necklace in Todd's hands. Todd was stunned.

"But I gave it to you as a gift," Todd protested. "I love you."

"But I *don't* love you," Carly protested. "I don't even *think* of you as a *friend*!"

"But, you were so nice to me when we were at summer camp together," Todd argued.

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"The kindness I showed you was only out of *pity*, nothing more," Carly said sternly. "Another reason I don't want this necklace is because you stole it from Michelinie's Jewelry Store, using that Globulin Omega formula."

Todd took out a vial of Globulin Omega from his right front pocket.

"YES," exclaimed an angry Todd. "WITH GLOBULIN OMEGA, I HAD THE POWER TO BUST INTO MICHELINIE'S JEWELRY STORE!"

Todd pressed the vial containing the formula to his lips and drank it. After finishing the draught, he tossed the vial aside. The vial shattered.

"AND, WITH GLOBULIN OMEGA, I HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE YOU LOVE ME," Todd exclaimed as he transformed.

"AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME," the transformed Todd told Carly as he advanced toward her.

Maybe I can't, but Wesley - - or the Blue Mantis, can, Carly thought as she pressed the center of the ring which Wesley had given her.

Elsewhere, the Blue Mantis, by means of his special hearing aid, picked up the signals from Carly's ring.

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It's Carly, the superhero thought. She's activated the signal from the ring Stanley and I gave her. All I have to do is follow it, and then I'll find her.

Soon, the Blue Mantis arrived at Todd Braverman's apartment. As he went inside, the superhero used his camouflage power to look for Carly. He found her tied to a chair.

"It's okay, Carly. It's me," the camouflaged Blue Mantis whispered to Carly as he snapped the girl's bonds with his superhuman strength.

"Wesley, I'm so glad you're here," Carly whispered after she was freed.

Todd soon noticed that Carly was freed. The Blue Mantis revealed himself.

"YOU," the transformed Todd exclaimed as he saw the superhero.

"RUN, CARLY! RUN," the Blue Mantis told the girl, before attempting to stop Todd by grabbing each of his arms with a pincer grip.

"I'LL HOLD HIM OFF," the superhero told Carly while grappling with Todd.

"But I can't just *leave* you," Carly protested.

"I'll be fine," the Blue Mantis assured her. "Now, *go!* Get *out* of here!"

Carly bolted out the door and ran away as far as she could.

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"CARLY! CARLY, COME BACK," Todd called out as loudly as he could.

Todd tried to headbutt the Blue Mantis, but the superhero used his super-fast reflexes to dodge and to use judo to throw his opponent hard into the wall, staggering him.

Moving with dazzling speed, the Blue Mantis punched Todd, knocking him unconscious.

Grabbing and carrying Todd, the superhero rushed to the window and leaped out. As he did so, the superhero unsheathed his wings and flew off, high into the sky.

Soon, Todd regained consciousness. Upon opening his eyes, he saw the Blue Mantis and the former's eyes were filled with hatred.

"I'LL KILL YOU FOR TAKING CARLY AWAY FROM ME! DO YOU HEAR ME?!" A raging Todd asked. "I'LL KILL YOU!"

"I wouldn't recommend that," the Blue Mantis warned. "We're at 1,046 feet."

Todd looked around and found himself near the top of the Chrysler Building's spire.

"So, if you kill me right now, you'll have a *very nasty* fall," the superhero warned.

"O-OKAY," the frightened Todd cried out. "LET ME DOWN! PLEASE!"

"Only if you promise to leave Carly Connors alone and never bother her again," the Blue Mantis said.

"But, I love Carly," Todd protested.

"Let's go higher, shall we?" The superhero asked as he started to fly upward.

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"N-NO! NO NO NO," a frightened Todd cried out. "I'LL LEAVE CARLY ALONE! I PROMISE! I'LL EVEN LEAVE NEW YORK ALTOGETHER! JUST - - PLEASE LET ME DOWN! PLEASE!"

"Okay," Blue Mantis said as he descended slowly with Todd. Soon, both reached the ground and alighted.

"Oh, thank God," a relieved Todd muttered.

"Now, remember your promise," the superhero warned.

"Y-Yes. I'll go now. *Far away* from New York," Todd promised. "You and Carly *won't* see me anymore. I *swear* it."

The Blue Mantis watched as a scared Todd ran off. Underneath his mask, the superhero smiled.

That night, Wesley, as the Blue Mantis, brought Carly to Stanley Stevens's secret underground laboratory.

Once they were inside, the Blue Mantis removed his mask. He saw Stanley talking on the telephone.

"Okay. That would be great. Thanks," Stanley said over the phone.

"Take care of yourself. Bye," Stanley said, before he hung up. Noticing Wesley and Carly near him, he turned around.

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"Hello, Stanley," Wesley said with a smile.

"Hey, Wesley," Stanley said as he cheerfully greeted the young costumed teenager. Then, Stanley turned his attention to Carly.

"And you must be Carly. Wesley's told me so much about you," Stanley said with a smile as he proffered his hand for a handshake. Carly shook Stanley's hand.

"He also told me about that Todd Braverman fella who was hassling you," Stanley added. "I just got off the phone with his former employer, Dr. Andru. Dr. Andru said that he will destroy all of the Globulin Omega he made as well as all of his notes on the formula to make sure that it will never fall into the wrong hands again."

"Thank you, Stanley," said a smiling Carly.

"Carly, how about Wesley and I give you a tour of my lab?" Stanley asked Carly.

"Sounds great," Carly answered enthusiastically.

Stanley and Wesley then proceeded to give Carly a tour of the laboratory.

Later, the Blue Mantis was flying Carly back to her home.

"So, what did you think of Stanley's lab, Carly," the Blue Mantis asked his passenger.

"It was *amazing*," a gushing Carly asked. "Stanley's inventions were absolutely *brilliant!*"

"I'm glad you had a good time," the superhero told Carly.

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"Do you think Stanley would allow me to come to his lab another time?" Carly asked.

"I don't see why not," the Blue Mantis replied.

"I'm glad you shared your secret identity with me," Carly said. "I feel so much safer now.

Thank you. And your secret will be safe with me. Always."

The Blue Mantis started to fly off.

"Wait," Carly called out, stopping the superhero, who soon turned toward her.

"Would it be all right if I give you a kiss? A peck on the lips?" Carly asked.

"Okay," the Blue Mantis replied. He lifted up the lower part of his mask. Carly moved closer.

Soon, Carly gave the superhero a peck on the lips. The Blue Mantis and Carly both smiled.

The Blue Mantis pulled his mask back down and flew off, smiling underneath his mask.

THE END

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