

The Blue Mantis #7 - "Lashing Out"

Written by Steven Bland

On a Friday night, three weeks ago, in Los Angeles, California, an armored car was pulling up to a bank on Melrose Place and two guards emerged from the vehicle to go to the back doors to unload the money. Once the two guards made it to the back doors of the armored vehicle, a big, strapping, costumed man wearing a full-head mask, arrived on the scene carrying a whip as well as an empty satchel.

"Thank you for bringing my money to me," the costumed criminal said, prompting the two guards to draw their guns and aim them at the criminal.

"Forget it," one of the guards said. "You'll have to go through *us*, first."

"Have it your way," the costumed thief said before using his whip to disarm the guards and put them out of commission.

Then, the costumed thief turned his attention to the back doors of the armored car and cracked them open with the whip. The doors fell off and the criminal went inside.

"Come to poppa," he said greedily as he loaded up his satchel.

Suddenly, he heard the wail of a siren from a police car. He turned around and saw two police officers getting out of the car and getting out their guns.

"FREEZE," one of the officers said as he and his partner aimed their guns at the costumed thief. "Put the money down, now!"

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"Very well," the criminal said before setting down his satchel. Then, he got out his whip and cracked it at the officers' guns, knocking them out of their hands. Then, the criminal used his whip to ensnare the policemen and toss them toward a nearby wall, knocking them unconscious.

The costumed thief quickly picked up his satchel and used the opportunity to escape.

On a Friday night, two weeks ago, in Orlando, Florida, an armored car was pulling up to a bank on 62 West Jefferson Street and two guards emerged from the vehicle to go to the back doors to unload the money. Once the two guards made it to the back doors of the armored vehicle, that same costumed criminal wearing the full-head mask, arrived on the scene carrying his whip as well as an empty satchel.

"I'll just relieve you of that money, if you don't mind," the costumed criminal said, prompting the two guards to draw their guns and aim them at the criminal.

"Never," one of the guards said. "This money goes to the bank. We're not letting you take it."

"My whip here says otherwise," the costumed thief said before using his whip to disarm the guards, ensnare them, and toss them toward a nearby brick wall, knocking them unconscious.

Then, the costumed thief turned his attention to the back doors of the armored car and cracked them open with his whip. The doors fell off and the criminal went inside to load up his satchel.

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"Oh, yeaahhh," he sighed with a greedy smile as he loaded up his satchel.

Suddenly, he heard the wail of a siren from a police car. He turned around and saw two police officers getting out of the car and getting out their guns.

"FREEZE," one of the officers said as he and his partner aimed their guns at the costumed thief. "DROP THE SACHEL, *NOW!*"

"Okay," the criminal said before placing his satchel down. Then he got out his whip and cracked it at the officers' guns, which were knocked out of their hands. Then, the criminal ensnared one of the policemen and tossed him toward a nearby brick wall, knocking him unconscious, before doing the same with the other cop.

"YYEEOOOWWW!" The officers screamed in pain. The costumed thief used the opportunity to escape.

Meanwhile, people were out on the streets near a burning building in Midtown Manhattan, speculating the view. Trapped within the building were a woman and her child surrounded by the flames. To make their situation worse, they looked up to see the ceiling about to collapse on them. They braced for impact only for the Blue Mantis to come and catch the falling ceiling and set it aside.

"Hang on," the superhero told the woman and her child as he grabbed them.

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"I'll get you out of here," he said as he took them to an open window. Upon reaching the window, they leaped out.

As they started to fall, the Blue Mantis sprouted large insectoid wings from his shoulder blades and flew his passengers safely to the ground.

"You're that superhero, the Blue Mantis, aren't you?" The woman asked the superhero.

"Yes, I am," he replied.

A police car arrived on the scene and the two officers emerged from the vehicle to see the firefighters.

"Is everyone okay?" The first policeman asked.

"Yes," one of the firefighters answered. "We managed to get everyone outside safely, and we had the Blue Mantis helping us out."

"Now, we can get to work putting out this fire," another firefighter said.

"You do that," the second policeman said. "Now we've got to get going. The fire was started as a diversion so that a couple of thieves could rob a jewelry store."

The policemen hurried to their vehicle. Once they were inside, they sped off, with their siren blaring.

I can get to those thieves much faster, the Blue Mantis thought as he took off.

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In minutes, the superhero caught up to the two thieves who were in a speeding car. One of the thieves was driving the car while the other was riding shotgun.

The thief who was driving the car, glanced in his rear-view mirror and saw the Blue Mantis closing in on them.

"AH, GEEZ, IT'S THE BLUE MANTIS," the thief said.

"I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM," said the thief riding shotgun. He got out his gun, got out of his window, and fired his gun at the Blue Mantis, who managed to dodge the bullets.

Maybe this will go better if they don't see me, the superhero thought as he used his camouflage power.

"HAH, HE'S GONE," the driving thief crowed. "WE'RE IN THE CLEAR!"

Over the car, the camouflaged Blue Mantis landed on the roof of the car and used his pincer-like fingers to grab a firm hold on the roof, before using his superhuman strength to rip it off.

The Blue Mantis grabbed each thief with one hand and flew off with them, carrying them toward the police car that was pursuing them.

"Hey, Adam. Do you see what I see?" The police officer riding shotgun asked.

"Yeah, Burt. It's the Blue Mantis," said the police officer in the driver's seat. "And it looks like he caught the perps for us."

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The police car stopped. As the policemen got out of the car, the Blue Mantis descended towards them with the thieves.

"Here you are," the superhero said as he handed the thieves to the officers.

"Many thanks, Mr. Mantis," Adam said as he and Burt each cuffed one of the thieves.

"Say, Mantis," Burt said. "Do you think you can help us catch another crook?"

"Which one?" The superhero asked.

"Well, we've been hearing news reports about some costumed nutjob robbing armored cars in Los Angeles, California and Orlando, Florida with nothing more than a whip. With that whip, he was able to crack open those locked doors very easily and cause them to fall off. This masked man *could* come here to New York City next," Burt said.

"I'll see what I can do," the Blue Mantis said.

"And if you need any help," Adam said before pulling out a small card.

"Call this guy," he said as he handed the card to the superhero. "His name's Dave Romita, he's a detective down at the 57th Precinct. You catch that costumed crook, you call Dave and let him know, capice?"

"Got it. I'll see what I can do," the Blue Mantis said before flying off.

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"You guys have the right to remain silent," Burt said as he and his partner took the thieves into custody.

But right now, I've got to head for home or Mom will worry about me, the Blue Mantis thought as he traveled the sky.

Soon, the superhero arrived at his home. After opening the window to his room, he retracted his wings and quickly climbed inside. After closing the window behind him, the Blue Mantis changed out of his costume and got dressed in his pajamas.

Wesley's cell phone rang and he answered it.

"Hello?" Wesley asked.

There was a pause and Wesley soon had a smile on his face.

"Carly. How are you?" He asked.

"Wesley," Carly said over the phone. "I have two tickets to Coney Island tomorrow. Would you like to go with me?"

"Absolutely," Wesley said with a smile.

"Great," a smiling Carly said. "I'll pick you up tomorrow. See ya."

An excited Wesley went down the stairs to see his mother.

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"Mom, Carly invited me to go with her to Coney Island tomorrow," he told her.

"That's wonderful, sweetheart," Mrs. Walker said. "You and Carly have a good time, okay?"

"We will," Wesley said with a smile.

The next day, Wesley Walker and Carly Connors were walking through the Midway at Coney Island. Soon, they encountered a barker at the Slotz Carnival.

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" The barker cried. "Step right up, folks! See the one, - - the only, - - the amazing Lashmaster, the wonder of the age. The man who can command his whip like it was a part of his own body!"

"This Lashmaster sounds amazing, Wesley," Carly gushed. "Let's see his show."

Soon, Wesley and Carly went to see the Lashmaster, a performer who was a big, strapping man displaying skills with the whip for the audience. From 22 feet away, the Lashmaster used his whip to grab an apple and bring it to him. Wesley and Carly were impressed.

"Wow," Wesley said.

"Isn't he *amazing*?" Carly asked.

"I'll say," Wesley answered, as he and Carly continued to watch the performer.

"If you thought *that* was impressive, folks," the Lashmaster said. "You haven't see *anything* yet."

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"I will now slice this apple in half like a knife, using only my whip," the Lashmaster added.

"But I'm going to need a volunteer."

Carly raised her hand to volunteer. She was acknowledged by the performer.

"What's your name, my dear?" The Lashmaster asked.

"Carly," Carly replied.

"Alright, Carly, come on up," the performer told her. Wesley couldn't help but be concerned for Carly.

"Careful, Carly," Wesley told her. Carly went up on the stage, feeling nervous and excited at the same time.

"Nervous, Carly?" The showman asked.

"Just a little," Carly answered.

"It's all right, my dear," the Lashmaster told her. "I assure you that I have performed these tricks with skill and precision many times."

The showman gave Carly a helmet to put on.

"This helmet will protect both your head and your ears," the Lashmaster told Carly as she put on the helmet.

"Are you ready, Carly? Is your helmet in place?" The Lashmaster asked Carly.

"Yes, and yes," Carly responded.

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"Now, I'm going to place the apple on your head," the performer added, before moving over 20 feet away.

"From over 20 feet away, I will slice the apple in half like a knife, using only my whip," the Lashmaster said before turning his attention to the audience.

"Kids, don't try this at home," he said with a smile, before turning his attention back to Carly.

"Ready, Carly?" The performer asked.

"As I'll ever be," Carly responded.

Wesley watched nervously.

"Then, let's get on with it, shall we?" The Lashmaster asked with a smile before cracking his whip. The whip succeeded in slicing the apple in half. The crowd was impressed and applauded.

Carly picked up the apple halves, looked at them, and was impressed. Then, she looked up at the Lashmaster.

"That was amazing," Carly gushed before handing the apple halves to the performer.

"Thank you for your assistance, Carly," the Lashmaster said before setting the apple halves on the table while Carly unfastened and removed her helmet. Then, Carly set the helmet on the same table.

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After shaking hands with the performer, Carly left the stage to rejoin the audience.

Soon, a female assistant for the Lashmaster lined up five cans in a row which are at a distance of 12 feet from him.

"As you can see, my lovely assistant has lined up five cans which are at a distance of 12 feet," the performer told the audience. "Again, using only my whip, I will take out each can."

The Lashmaster hit the first three with a single crack and took out the other two with another. Wesley and the rest of the audience were very impressed.

"Did you see *that*?" Carly quietly told Wesley. "He took out five cans with only two whip cracks. It's as if his skill is *superhuman*."

Superhuman? Hmmm, Wesley thought. Just like that masked man with the whip those police officers told me about last night.

"Carly, can you excuse me for a moment?" Wesley asked Carly. "I need to make a phone call. It'll only take a minute."

"Sure, Carly answered. Wesley went for a private place that was nearby. Once he was out of sight, he got out his cell phone and dialed a number.

There was a brief pause, but he got an answer.

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"Detective Romita?" Wesley asked. "This is the Blue Mantis. I found this Lashmaster person. He's working at Coney Island as a showman."

"Good work," Detective Romita said over the phone. "An armored car will be delivering money to the Bank of America on Fifth Avenue tonight. That's where the perp will strike."

"I'll be there," Wesley said before hanging up.

Then, Wesley rejoined Carly and, together, they took in more attractions, and had some more fun.

Later that night, a camouflaged Blue Mantis was staking out the Bank of America on Fifth Avenue. The superhero saw an armored car pull up to the bank. He watched as two guards exited the car and walked to the back doors.

Suddenly, the masked man with the whip arrived on the scene. The armored car's guards drew and aimed their guns at him.

"Hello, gents. I'm here to make a withdrawal," he said, before using his whip to disarm the guards and trip them. "And you can't stop me."

"But I can, Lashmaster," the Blue Mantis said as he dropped his camouflage, revealing himself to the costumed criminal. "Your withdrawal request has been denied."

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"Who are you?" The Lashmaster asked.

"My name's the Blue Mantis," the costumed hero answered. "*Remember it!*"

"Don't worry, I'll be sure to write it down," Lashmaster said.

"- - ON YOUR *TOMBSTONE!*" He added as he cracked his whip at the superhero who used his superhuman agility to leap out of the way.

The Blue Mantis activated his argon matrix sickle claws. The Lashmaster cracked his whip again at the superhero who used one of his sickle claws to slice the whip before it could strike him.

"HAH! NICE TRY," the Lashmaster said as he dropped the damaged whip.

"BUT I ALWAYS CARRY A SPARE," he added as he brought out another whip, which he used to snap the high-tech vambraces off of the Blue Mantis's wrists.

Incredible, the stunned superhero thought. He snapped my vambraces off my wrists with amazing speed and skill.

Taking advantage of the Blue Mantis's surprise and momentary confusion, the costumed criminal quickly cracked his whip, causing it to entangle the superhero, binding his arms at their sides.

"WHICH I WILL USE TO SQUEEZE THE VERY LIFE OUT OF YOU," the whip-wielding villain exclaimed as he commanded his whip to constrict the Blue Mantis.

His whip! It's - - tightening - - around - - me! Can't - - take - - much - - more - - of - - this, the superhero thought as he struggled. However, he managed to get back on his feet.

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The Blue Mantis sprouted his large insectoid wings from his shoulder blades and started flying. As he flew, he dragged Lashmaster with him.

The costumed superhero kept flying until he reached a speed of six miles per hour. At that speed, the Blue Mantis flew toward the wall of a nearby building.

"YOU'RE *CRAZY*," the Lashmaster cried out. "*STOP, PLEEEASE!!*"

"Sorry, Lashmaster," the Blue Mantis told his opponent. "*I'm* not stopping."

"But *you* are," the superhero said as he made a sharp turn, using his opponent's momentum to slam him into the building's wall, knocking him out.

The Blue Mantis quickly grabbed the Lashmaster and descended gently with him.

"I guess *this* is what skaters call 'Cracking the whip'," the superhero said as he set his opponent down on the ground. After freeing himself from the villain's whip, the Blue Mantis picked up the unconscious Lashmaster and flew him to Detective Romita's office at the 57th Precinct.

Arriving at his destination, the Blue Mantis went inside, carrying the Lashmaster with him to Detective Dave Romita's office.

"He's all yours, Detective," the costumed hero said as he handed the thief to the policeman.

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"Thank you, Mantis. Good work, kid," Detective Romita said as he took the Lashmaster. The policeman unmasked the costumed criminal who was indeed revealed as the performer with the Slotz Carnival.

"Yep, he's definitely that performer from the Slotz Carnival at Coney Island earlier this morning. "His name's Evan Marcus," Detective Romita confirmed. "And he won't be doing any more shows at other carnivals for a long time to come."

"Officer Kane?" Detective Romita asked one of the officers.

"Yes, Detective?" Officer Kane responded.

"Escort this perp to lock-up, will you?" Detective Romia asked as he handed Marcus to Officer Kane.

"You got it," Officer Kane answered before turning his attention to the captured and unmasked Lashmaster.

"C'mon, you," Officer Kane told Marcus as the former ushered the latter away.

"The Lashmaster was a successful performer," the Blue Mantis said. "Why would he turn to a life of crime?"

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"Probably because he felt that the money he made wasn't enough. He wanted more and, as such, he felt that robbing armored cars was the fastest way to achieve that extra wealth," Detective Romita answered. "Remember when Lashmaster robbed one armored car in Los Angeles, California and another in Orlando, Florida? It turned out that the Slotz Carnival had stops in both those cities before coming here to the Big Apple."

"Now, if you'll excuse me," Detective Romita said. "I've got some paperwork to do."

"Oh, and stop by my office sometime Monday afternoon," he added. "I'll have something I want to discuss with you."

"Uh, sure thing," the Blue Mantis replied.

That Monday afternoon, the Blue Mantis arrived at the 57th Precinct. Once inside, he headed for Detective Romita's office.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" The superhero asked.

"Yeah, I just talked to the captain this morning and asked him if I can get him to make you a duly deputized agent of the law," Detective Romita said. "He gave the okay."

"That's great," the Blue Mantis said, smiling underneath his mask.

"Uh, I was wondering? How was Marcus able to make a simple leather whip crack open the steel doors of an armored car?" The superhero asked.

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"When I questioned him, I found out that he has the ability to infuse his whip with chi energy,"

Detective Romita answered.

"Wow," an impressed Blue Mantis said.

"Wow, indeed," Detective Romita added.

"Again, great job last Saturday night, kid," the detective said. "Keep it up."

"I will," the Blue Mantis said before leaving.

Once he was outside the building, the superhero sprouted his large insectoid wings from his shoulder blades and took off.

Me, a superhero *and* a deputized agent of the law, he thought with a smile.

"WAAHH-HOOOOO!" He joyously shouted.

THE END

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