



Action Comics #25
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Published: 2007

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): Comics DC2 Superman "Kryptonite Man"

Action Comics

Issue #25: "Message in a Bottle"

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Now:

Superman set the timer and dropped the Thanagarian-explosive into the hole that he had just dug into Xenon, the lost moon of Krypton... three more to go.

4 Hours Earlier:

Superman stared at the readouts that flashed across the view screen, inside the fortress of solitude.

"Are you sure of this?" He asked. "How is this possible?"

Keelex floated over to the console. "I have checked and re-checked the numbers, Kal-el and the findings are accurate. Your second query however I am afraid I do not comprehend the nature of the answer."

"Where did a moon of Krypton come from and why is it now entering earth's solar system?"

Keelex touched some crystals on the control panel and the screen buzzed and faded; replaced by a simulation of Krypton and its moons.

"Early in Krypton's history", Keelex began, "Krypton was orbited by four moons. Argo, Wegthor, Thoron and Xenon. Records indicate that the destruction of the moon Argo by Jax-ur disrupted the gravitational balance of the

system and after several more orbits Xenon passed far enough from the gravitational range of Krypton that Rao's gravity slung it into deep space several years before Krypton's destruction, where it has apparently wandered the universe since. Until coming close enough to earth's Sun, Sol, that its gravitational tug has pulled it into this solar system.

Metropolis:

Metropolis' history was cataloged in several ways, through volumes of books, newspapers, it's people, the transit lines, the police force, every where you looked there was some evidence of Metropolis' past, where it had come from, what had been before, and nowhere was that more evident than in its buildings. Tall gleaming skyscrapers stretched to touch the sky, the new expanding Metropolis. Down at the street level the buildings were older, more modest, but still grand in their architecture and design. Metropolis had always been a city striving to reach for tomorrow. Unfortunately for some of these old grand buildings time and progress had marched ahead and left them behind to crumble and eventually be marked for the wrecking ball so that new metropolis could grow on top of them from their seed, reaching for tomorrow. The Burnely building was now one such building. Accountant and lawyers had vacated the building long ago and now its tenants were 4 teenage boys that called themselves the Metropolis Manglers.

"How many you got Rip?"

Rip held out his hand to show 3 small blue pills. "I got three left, Killz. How many you got Toad." Toad was stretched out on an old mattress contemplating the rust colored water stained ceiling tiles.

"Looks like he's taken all he got!"

Rip and Killz, looked at each other, then at the boy who had spoken.

"Didn't nobody axe you a damn thing, K. What you talking for?"

The boy called K, sat down on a dirty chair and hung his head low.

"That's what I thought." said Killz. "You gonna be a member of this

gang you got to know how to keep your mouth shut till I tell you to open it and for whatever reason I say so!" He punched Rip in the arm and gave him a look. Rip laughed, getting the joke.

Killz, plopped down in an old office chair. "Stuff from that last drugstore is gone, we need to get some more."

"Hey, Killz, I knows where we can get some really good stuff. I'll bet that place that has all them freaky people and does all them experiments would have some good stuff."

"Star Labs, are you kidding? That place is tighter than Lacy Parker."

Rip stood up. "Not now it isn't," he laughed. "Sides I have an idea and I know just the person for the job." He looked over to K who still had his head down and was fidgeting with the bright green crystal on the chain around his neck.

Now:

Superman erupted from the interior of Xenon, a plume of dust and debris shot out behind him. The second explosive was set at the co-ordinates that Keel-ex had provided.

Three Hours Earlier:

"I have calculated the precise points that four explosive devices could be planted in order to split Xenon into more manageable sizes that you could then push to a new trajectory," Keel-ex said. Superman watched the screen as the simulation played out. Smaller chunks of the planet burned up entering the larger middle planets atmospheres.

"The explosives", Keel-ex continued, "would have to be very powerful."

Superman floated over to another console, he touched the crystals and the screen came to life, the Justice League symbol flashed on the screen.

"Member code KLKR1938, priority 2 Epsilon." Superman spoke into the air.

Security access granted. The screen flashed and Ray Palmer, The Atom, appeared on screen.

"Hello, Mr. Palmer."

"Superman, please, it's Ray. Whatsup?"

I'm having the fortress computer download all the information on a potentially threatening planetary event. I don't think it's anything I can't handle; I just wanted the League to be aware, just in case."

"Absolutely Superman, no problem."

"There is one other thing mister, I mean, Ray. I need to borrow a few Thanagarian explosives. Oh, and please, it's Kal."

Metropolis:

"Ok, Toad, there he goes, that's him right there." Rip pointed as a man came out of Star Labs. He fit the quintessential scientist mold. Brown slacks, mustard color shirt, thin black tie and a brown tweed jacket. He stuffed his security card into his jacket.

The four boys skirted around the parked cars and ducked into the coffee shop across from Star Labs. The staff behind the counter eyed them suspiciously, until a group of tourist came in wearing superman tee-shirts and visors with his "S" logo on them. The staff was put to work making Super-Latte's and Flying Frappe's.

"Does the same thing every day", Rip said. Comes over here and buys one of those froo-froo drinks and then gets in his car. The most important thing is he always puts his card key thing, in his pocket. That's where you come in Toad. Lift that card out of his pocket."

"Ok, the usual. Killz, you do the bump, I'll do the grab, Rip, I'll hand off to you."

"What do I do?" K asked eager to be in on the thrill of the grab.

"You keep your mouth shut and stay out of sight dumb-ass, your part comes later." Killz said. The three boys split up, each taking their position.

Smooth as clockwork, as Melvin McNew entered the coffee shop, Killz, on his way out clipped him on his shoulder and kept going out the door, right behind him Toad stopped short of running into Melvin himself, "scuse me, Sorry." He said. Toad stepped out the door as Rip walked by him on the sidewalk.

Melvin ordered his usual peanut butter mocha latte, no whip cream, never realizing that Toad had lifted his security card from his pocket.

Now:

Superman flew down into a large cavern and began spinning into the ground. A tone sounded in the small receiver set in his ear signaling that he was at the proper co-ordinates to plant the charge. He planted the explosive, deftly tapped several small buttons arming the device and planted it at the bottom of his tunnel. Three down, one to go.

Now:

Superman set the last charge. Kryptonian crystals vibrating at rates higher than any known earth frequency carried Keel-ex's robotic voice to the small crystal imbedded in his ear.

"Kal-el, I have picked up a transmission coming from Xenon's surface."

"A transmission? Of what, is there someone on this planet?"

"It appears to be environmental information so therefore likely an automated probe."

"Likely, a probe, so you're not sure."

"No."

“Can you pinpoint its location?”

“There is a lot on interference; the beacon is coming from approximately 500 miles from the first charge site.”

Superman looked down at the red display on the charge he just set. 15 minutes. Keel-ex squawked in his ear. “You do realize Kal-el that the time limits on the charges are set for you to get a minimum safe distance before they detonate.”

Superman flew outward from the planets surface matching the planets speed and exceeding it. He reached the site of the first charge.

Metropolis, S.T.A.R. Labs:

K slid the keycard through the slot. There was a momentary hesitation and the door beeped and opened with a hiss. He turned around, hoping the others had gone and he could shut the door and run, meet them back at the crib and say he didn't find anything.

They were standing at the road, just in the shadows, he could see them waving at him to go inside

Space:

Superman stood at the charge site and scanned the horizon. There, he could see the broadcast waves emanating from something hidden in a small crevice.

Metropolis, S.T.A.R. Labs:

K walked down the narrow corridor. At the end of the hall there was a large door with a card key reader. He swiped the card and the door clicked open. Inside the room behind a large thick glass window sat what looked like a large generator, wires snaked off it and ran like worms wiggling into computer terminals and monitors. In the small

control rooms banks of monitors sat silent and cold. K didn't see anything that looked at all like anything that Toad, Killz or Rip could ingest for a high.

Space:

Superman found the small round metallic sphere. There were several openings, placed around it that Superman could only assume were sensors. There was a small hexagonal design on the probe that looked vaguely familiar to him. He picked up and put it in the pouch under his arm. "Keel-ex, I have the probe. How much time do I have?"

"Not enough that you can waste time asking."

Superman pushed off from the planets surface in the opposite direction it was traveling, hoping to put as much distance as he could between himself and the explosion.

"I don't remember your programming including pithy comments."

"I do have a basic learning program, Kal-el, and we do receive television via satellite."

"Great." Superman thought as he sped off into space watching Xenon pull further and further away.

Metropolis, S.T.A.R. Labs:

K turned to the door to leave. The guys would just have to hit another drug store, there was nothing in here. K slid the card through the reader. It beeped but different this time, a darker, off key beep. The door remained closed. He slid the card again, with same results, again, again, again. Damn, he thought, that guy must have found it missing and called it in while he was in the freaking room! K looked around the room for another way out, nothing. The room was suddenly filled with the blare of a siren. The lights went out and threw the room into blackness. High up on a wall, one red light blinked on and off, throwing the room into a staccato reality. K could see him self moving like a character in an old

silent movie. He ran to the computer consoles and began punching keys hoping one would shut off the alarm, open the door, turn off the light, anything. The computer screen came to life filling the room with a blue glow, diluting the harsh blinking of the red security light. The room began to hum. The generator behind the glass began to spin. K continued slapping the keyboard hoping the door would open. K heard another humming sound and another light filled the room. He looked down at his chest; it was coming from the green crystal. The one he had found several weeks ago about to be swept down the storm drain. At first he had thought it might be valuable and tried to hock it but nobody wanted it. He thought it was too cool looking to just throw away, so he wrapped it with wire and wore it on a chain. Now it lifted stood straight out from his body pulling on the chain around his neck, straining toward the thick glass and the giant generator that was now glowing green as well.

Space:

Superman shielded his eyes as explosive charges detonated. Xenon shuddered huge cracks fell from the surface cutting the planet into chunks. The concussion wave reached the man of steel smacking him around like a housefly in a tornado. He kept his head down and his arms outstretched turning into the wave like a boat trying to cut through a wave to keep from capsizing.

Metropolis:

Toad, Killz and Rip watched as police screeched up to the curb in front of Star Labs. The explosion ripped through the black night like a fleshy green scar. Chunks of concrete and metal pelted the officers. The boys shrunk back into the shadows.

“Holy crap” Toad shouted. “Let’s get the hell out of here.”

“What about K” Rip protested.

“Who gives a rat’s ass; let’s get out of here before the cops see us.”

Space:

Superman pushed forward through the compression wave overtaking the largest chunk of Xenon. The chunk glowed from the heat of the remaining gases inside and surrounding the remnant, ignited by the heat of explosion. The heat was so intense that he could feel it as he lowered his head and put his shoulder to the surface and pushed. The fragment responded and slowly began to turn. Superman felt the tug of gravity lessen and inertia take over. This shard of Xenon was on its way out of the solar system.

Metropolis:

K didn't know what hit him. One minute he was desperately looking for a way out the next he saw a bright green flash and felt as if he was on fire. He held out his hand at the door to push to see if it would open. His hand wasn't his own it glowed a bright green and energy erupted from it blasting the door off its hinges. There was rubble all around; K looked down at his hands and his feet. They were no longer there, only the shape of his limbs, in their place was a glowing green energy that crackled and spit like a flame alive. His mind panicked and locked on to one purpose, escape. K erupted from the building like a green bottle rocket and shot up into the night sky.

Space:

Superman pushed the last of the remnants of Xenon out of the solar system. A few smaller ones he changed just enough so their trajectory would take them into the dense atmosphere of Jupiter where they would harmlessly burn up. A few smaller pieces would eventually make it to earth, but they were small enough that they wouldn't do any damage. Superman turned, focusing on the small blue orb in the distance and headed for home.

Metropolis:

Kills, Rip and Toad scrambled up the drain pipe and into the second

story window of the Burnley building. They sprawled onto the floor. Their breaths ragged and heavy from running where they had just watched the lab that K was in explode. Dumbass probably knocked something over, Killz thought.

“What the hell is that”, asked Toad. The others looked to where Toad was pointing. A green energy in the shape of a human cowered in a corner. It’s mass pulsing and swirling, like water around rocks in a river.

“Guys, it’s me”, the green energy gurgled, “It’s K.”

Superman stepped into the radiation chamber. Anything he might have picked up in his space travel would be burned off by the harsh radiation emitted from the chamber. He stepped out and placed the re-breather into a crystalline compartment that clicked shut.

I’ll have to ask Ms. Faulkner if she minds me keeping that, He thought.

Keel-ex floated into the room. “Kal-el I have examined the probe you returned with, it is one of your fathers, Jor-el; he sent the probes out in his early space travel experiments. There is some data recorded that you should see.” Superman watched the screen. There was Krypton shuddering in its death throes. There was a spark and Superman watched as his rocket separated from the planet and hurtled off into space. A second later there was another spark, Superman watched, astonished as another small craft sped from the planets surface and flew off in the opposite direction. Krypton exploded.

“I have taken the liberty of calculating the second crafts trajectory and have found several inhabitable planets along its projected route, where a kryptonian might survive.” They are far, astronomically speaking and would take several weeks at your top speed to reach them.” Keel-ex said.

“I have to find out Keel-ex, I have to see if there might be another Kryptonian out there.”

“Before you leave Kal-el I would suggest implementing contingency plan CK27 and dealing with the current situation in Metropolis.”

“What situation in Metropolis?”

The monitor screen switched to a view in front of the Daily Planet. Three young boys were firing weapons into a cordon of police cars. A green glowing humanoid fired a blast of green energy at one of the cars; it exploded and flew up into the air.

“This is our turf now, anybody want to challenge that”! The green energy gurgled.

To be continued

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