



All-Star Comics #7
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All Star Comics
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"I'm Animal Man." Buddy Baker let out a sigh as he sat in the rocking chair.

"I know this sounds crazy, but you're going to have to bear with me. I'm Animal Man, the same superhero that we watched on the news today. I kept this a secret from you for two weeks, but I can't handle this alone. I'm experiencing the most amazing things, and I just can't keep this to myself anymore."

"It all started on the day that I went on that hunting trip. I came across— get this!— an alien spaceship. Of course I was curious, so I approached it, and when I placed my hand on it, I blacked out. I woke up hours later feeling so strange; maybe you noticed that I was acting differently when I came home. That's not even the weirdest part. I began having a bizarre feeling in my stomach around animals, almost as if I could sense them. I knew everything about them just by being in close proximity to them. I soon realized that this connection gave me extraordinary powers that depended on what talents each animal had. Now, as much as I would like to say that I immediately chose to become a 'superhero', it wasn't an overnight thing. The powers themselves didn't make me want to do this, it was this feeling... I'll just tell you the whole story. It all started earlier today when I went out to get the paper... ."

After having these powers for a couple weeks, I was beginning to get used to

them. I woke up at six in the morning along with the sound of birds chirping... a sound that I used to find annoying, and like I said, I went out to get the paper. I dropped it onto the kitchen counter and flipped through the sections looking for some interesting stories, then something caught my eye: a headline that read 'Stolen Snakes'.

Like many others this past week, Moriss research facility has fallen victim to theft of their test snakes. "These vipers are extremely important to our research, though the police have not put much effort towards finding out who did this," Dr. Moriss, son of owner Grant Moriss, said in light of these events.

As I read those words I began to squeeze the paper in my hands. I usually don't get so worked up about articles in the paper, but when I read that the police didn't care about these crimes, it just made me so angry. Knowing that there was no one willing to help these snakes, I decided to take matters into my own hands.

Obviously I couldn't just walk into a crime scene as Buddy Baker. I needed to get a genuine superhero costume.

Buddy arrived at the costume shop and began perusing the selections. An orange wet suit with a large blue 'A' on the front stood out to him in the clearance rack.

"This could be useful for going underwater." He whispered to himself. Next to the suit was a pair of goggles that he picked up as well. "I don't want to be walking around in just a wet suit though." After quickly scanning the store, he grabbed a jean jacket from a biker costume and a pair of strong blue gloves.

I made my way over to the lab where the crime took place with the help of some nearby seagulls. Well, okay, they weren't nearby, I had to look for them. I can't

help but enjoy flying though, it's just so... liberating.

Anyway, I showed up at the lab, flexed my chest muscles, lowered my voice a couple octaves, threw on a fake smile, and approached the rent-a-cop standing outside the yellow tape.

“Good morning officer, what do we have here, and how can I help?” Buddy said to the out of shape police officer guarding the crime scene. The man scratched his head and relayed with little concern his description of the crime.

“Some guy's been stealin' snakes or somethin'.”

“Mind if I take a look?” Buddy asked.

“I don't know, mister... I didn't catch yer name.”

“It's uh... ” Buddy looked down at the orange wetsuit with a large 'A' on it. “Aquaman. The name's Aquaman.” The guard's eyes widened as he heard Buddy's words.

“Aquaman!? Well if the Justice League's involved, this must be big! Go ahead and check it out for yerself.” He said with enthusiasm, gesturing towards the entrance to the lab.

Buddy made his way inside and began sifting through shards of broken glass with his gloved hands.

“Why would someone steal a bunch'a snakes? Is he planning to release 'em on a plane like that movie?” The guard asked with a befuddled look on his face.

“That's what I'd like to know.” Buddy spotted a small orange object resembling snake skin caught on a piece of broken glass and picked it up. “I thought this was from a snake, but it feels like it's from a piece of clothing.” He examined it more with his hands. “And it's got some slippery gel on it.”

“Well how are we s'posed to find out who did it with a piece of cloth, unless you're part bloodhound.” The guard joked. Buddy turned his head to the guard and a smile formed on his face.

“You're a genius. Thanks for you're help!” Buddy said as he ran towards the exit.

As Buddy ran out of the lab, a frisbee flew through the air towards him.

“Hey mister, watch out!” A child yelled out, warning him of the oncoming disc. A split-second before he was hit, Buddy dodged it. Looking around, Buddy noticed a fly buzzing around.

Apparently, flies have a highly evolved evasion system, and can feel the air current change when something an object is coming towards them. Unfortunately, I learned of another trait belonging to flies...

“Ugh, what is that taste?” Buddy made a disgusted face.

They also have taste receptors on their leg hairs, and I was essentially tasting the sweat from my legs inside that hot costume. Hey, not all of these animal powers are fun. Either way, both of these characteristics are good to know for the next time I take a fly's powers.

The kid and the dog that he threw the frisbee to jogged over to Buddy.

“Are you alright mister?” He asked.

“Yeah, I'm fine.” Buddy picked the frisbee and handed it to the kid. He made the connection with the boy's dog, sniffed the air, and began running, finding dogs along the way to keep the smell.

The smell eventually led Buddy to an abandoned laboratory about three miles east of Moriss Labs. He entered the lab and immediately felt a connection with different species of snake.

I made my way through a room full of the caged vipers until I could hear the sound of two men talking. One of them spoke with a hiss in his voice, just like a

snake. I opened the door and saw what looked like a man-sized snake and a scientist. When it turned around, I saw that it was a man in an orange, scaly costume with scales that matched the piece of clothing I had found earlier and a hood in the shape of a snake's head.

"What the hell are *you* supposed to be?" Buddy said.

"I am Copperhead, and you have made a misstake coming here." As Copperhead spoke, his long, reptilian-like tongue flickered up and down.

"Help me." The scientist whimpered. Copperhead grabbed him and threw him across the room.

"No, you made a mistake kidnapping these helpless animals." Buddy pointed his finger accusingly at the criminal.

"What are you, sssome crazy PETA repressentitive?"

"Hey, I'm not the one in a snake costume."

I guess I wasn't thinking about how silly I must have looked saying that with my wet suit and goggles on, but I didn't care. I'll admit, the hero-villain banter was kind of fun.

"For your information, I need thesse copperheadsss to develop venom for myself."

"Enough talk, let's skip to the part where I kick your scaly butt. That is, unless you're too scared to—"

Before Buddy could finish his sentence, Copperhead quickly charged at him and tackled him to the ground. Buddy tried grabbing him, but he could not get a grip on the slippery substance that coated the villain's entire suit. Copperhead stood and began to playfully egg Buddy on.

There weren't any animals in this room, and I wasn't in any way capable of taking this guy on myself. I had to think smaller, so I looked around towards the

walls. I saw a mouse hole, concentrated, and made a connection with the rodent. The next thing I knew, my vision was weird, and I couldn't see the color red.

Copperhead whipped his tail at Buddy and struck him to the ground.

I looked it up today, and it seems that mice have bi-chromatic vision, and only see blue and yellow colors. I'll be happy when I'm more knowledgeable in animal traits so I'm not blindly using animal powers and hoping for the best.

Buddy stood back up, and noticed a fly buzzing around the room. Copperhead swung his tail once again, only this time Buddy dodged the blow. The snake made a few more attempts, but each resulted the same as Buddy bobbed and weaved.

"Jeez, don't get in a hissy fit."

His opponent caught his breath and glared at Buddy.

"You may have snakes on your side, but I have the entire animal and insect kingdom at my disposal, so come get some snake skin." Frustrated, Copperhead sprinted towards Buddy, jumped over him, and wrapped his tail around him.

"No more gamesss! Now you sssleep." The tail constricted and around Buddy all the way up to his throat, completely cutting off his air supply.

I was too cocky, and now I was trapped. My brain was getting cut off from oxygen and blood, and I figured I had anywhere from five to fifteen seconds before I passed out – I know this from experience after being put in the sleeper hold plenty of times when messing around with friends in college. I looked around, hoping for another rodent, a snake that had somehow freed itself from the other room, anything. I saw a cockroach run by my feet, but it wouldn't do me any good. I stopped breathing, and slowly I felt my heart rate slow down...

As Buddy's body went limp, Copperhead released him and the costumed hero fell to the floor.

"He will be down for the time being." Copperhead said to the scientist hiding in a corner on the opposite side of the room. "We mussst gather the sssnakesss and move them to another location." He looked back at

the lifeless body on the floor. "I exssspected more from all that talk. It ssseemsss you are all bark, and no bite."

The scientist led the way to the snake holding room and Copperhead followed. All of a sudden, Copperhead's hood was pulled back, revealing his head and neck. He turned around to see Buddy standing in front of him.

"No bite, huh?" Buddy pulled Copperhead in and sank his teeth into his neck until the skin broke. The villain pushed away and backed up, increasing the distance between the two.

It was a weird feeling. I wasn't breathing, my heart rate was slowing, but I was conscious. I didn't even know that cockroaches possessed those abilities, but my fight or flight instinct kicked in when he choked me and I instantly knew that I would be alright. I still hate blindly using animal powers without knowing what I'm getting myself into, but when it works out for the better, it's a damn good feeling.

"Wh... what the hell did you do to me?" Copperhead felt his neck and gazed at his bloody hand as his vision blurred.

"You just got a taste of your own medicine, a poisonous bite containing venom from a copperhead."

"What are you, sssome, human zoo?" Copperhead, stumbled backwards and fell to the floor.

"Oh my God, what have I done?" Buddy ran to the body on the floor and turned to the scientist in the room. "Help him!"

"You say that... you bit him, and now he has been poisoned with copperhead venom?"

Buddy nodded his head.

"Well there's nothing to worry about then. Copperhead poison is not enough to kill a healthy human."

The guy was a scumbag, but I knew he didn't deserve to die. There was this

animalistic rage that came over me, and it really scared me, but it gave me the strength to take care of him. Up until the scientist informed of just how deadly the venom was, I felt horrible. I suppose that's a good thing, it shows that I'm still human.

Later, paramedics carried Copperhead out of the lab into an ambulance.

"He's been bitten by a copperhead snake, so he's just going to need antibiotics and medical supervision." One of the EMT's instructed another as the gurney was set up in the vehicle.

"Holy... how big was the snake that bit him?"

Buddy returned to the scene and was met with excited reporters bombarding him with questions.

"Who are you?"

"Where are the snakes?"

"Why did you risk your life to save these snakes?"

Buddy opened his mouth and the crowd hushed.

I got home that night completely exhausted. All I wanted to do was sit down with my family, and put this day behind me. When I flipped on the TV, I saw it. I saw him.

"I'm just a man who cares about all life, not just my own kind. Unlike those who dismissed the case just because it didn't involve the lives of humans, I used my abilities to fight for those who couldn't fight for themselves. I've been gifted with these amazing powers that allow me to temporarily gain animal abilities, and I tend to use them to protect living things... all living things. Oh, and the snakes... I just got done flying all of them back to the wild where they belong. Have a nice night." Buddy sighted an owl and took to the skies.

“And there you have it. This city may have gained a new hero in this mysterious animal man.”

“And right then and there, I made up my mind. I looked at the man on screen, and I was proud of him. He brought freedom to those snakes and the scientist when no one else would, risking his life for others. I realized that that man was me, and it was one of the most beautiful feelings I have ever experienced, and I've decided that I want to continue to feel this way.

"Basically what I'm saying is, I'm going to continue doing this superhero thing. With these powers, I think I can make a difference, but I couldn't go on any longer without telling you. I mean, you are the most important thing in my life.

"You're my *son*, Cliff.”

Buddy stood up and gazed into the crib, watching his one year old son squirm. He picked the baby up and began to rock him back and forth.

“Now comes the hard part. Now I have to tell your mother.”

The End!

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more tales of your favorite DC heroes at DC2 Universe.

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All-Star Comics #8 (2007)

All-Star Comics: Deadman: God's Lonely Man, Part 1 (of 2).

Hill's Circus is about to experience its biggest night ever, but little do the audience and performers know, star acrobat Boston Brand's performance will land the circus on the front page of the Daily Planet!

All-Star Comics #9 (2007)

All-Star Comics: Deadman: God's Lonely Man, Part 2 (of 2)

Black Lightning and Static #1 (2007)

Black Lightning and Static: Blackout.

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Black Lightning and Static: Out of the Frying Pan.

Black Lightning and Static #4 (2007)

Black Lightning and Static: Crossing the Line.

Black Lightning and Static #5 (2007)

Black Lightning and Static: How the Mighty Have Fallen.

This is it! In this action packed finale, Static is caught in the middle of a second gang war between the two Bang Baby gangs - The Heat and The Bangers - while Black Lightning and Robert Hawkins must fight off Polaris and Edwin Alva from exacting their plan to perform a science experiment on Star City using the gas that caused the Big Bang! Robert's secret will be revealed, Black Lightning and Static will take the next steps in their lives, and by the end of this issue the mayor of Star City will be revealed...in one way or another...

THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF BLACK LIGHTNING AND STATIC.



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