



**All-Star Comics #8**  
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*All Star Comics*  
Issue #8: "Deadman"  
God's Lonely Man Part 1 (of 2)  
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"This isn't real. Nothing feels right."

He stared into the empty grave as if he was staring into the abyss. The man's skin was as pale as a ghost.

"I need to make sense of what has happened in the last 24 hours."

*I remember I had been having this dream. I'm surrounded by people, yet I felt completely alone. It was like I didn't even exist. I grabbed a gun, I pointed it to my temple, but no matter how hard I pulled the trigger, it wouldn't budge. I realized that I'm doomed to being lonely forever. That's when I usually woke up.*

"Boston!"

And that was usually the reason I woke up.

"What?"

"You were supposed to be in the tent thirty minutes ago! Get up! We need to practice for tonight!"

*My brother, Cleveland. It took me a while to realize that when he came down*

*hard on me, it was just because he was trying to be responsible. If Cleveland hadn't been setting a good example for me all these years, who knows what kind of soulless excuse for a human being I could've become. Y'see, when I was four years old and Cleveland was seven, our parents left us behind at Hill's Circus.*

*I don't remember much about our parents. When we found out that our father had died, we went to the funeral. God forgive me, I was happy. I walked up to the open casket, and I smiled looking at his lifeless body. I smiled because the man I spent my whole life hating was dead, and I wasn't. He abandoned me, and now he's rotting in hell where he belonged.*

Fifteen minutes later, Boston entered the enormous circus tent, wearing a red body suit. He saw his brother and the rest of the acrobats tapping their feet impatiently. He let out a yawn and scratched his jet-black hair.

"Sorry I'm late guys." His apology was met with his fellow trapeze artists rolling their eyes in unison.

*I could tell that the team was pissed at me. Oh well, nothing's new there. All work and no play for those rubes.*

"Alright you guys, this is a big night for Boston, we'll let this one slide." Cleveland directed the group to the bleachers to sit down.

Boston looked to the platform resting 50 feet up on a pole. After letting another yawn escape his tired body, he approached the ladder that led to the platform.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" Cleveland shouted out before Boston could start climbing.

"I told you Cleve, I don't need a wire."

"It's bad enough that you don't have a net, this is way too dangerous."

"C'mon, I can handle it. Besides, if someone spotted the wire, it would kill the illusion." Boston continued climbing upwards before his brother was able to add anything else to the argument.

*I reached the top, took a deep breath, and grabbed hold of the trapeze. Before I*

*started swinging, I always looked down. For most people, looking down from high up instills fear, even to those who don't have a fear of heights. It's like staring death in the face and laughing, or better yet, it's like gazing into the eyes of my dead father. It pumped my adrenaline, instantly waking me up, and without even thinking about it I leapt off the platform.*

Boston swung back and forth like a pendulum, doing various flips from one trapeze to another as his large collar flapped in the wind and a spotlight chased him wherever he went. Down on the ground below him, a group of percussionists pounded their instruments. All of a sudden, his hand began to slip.

Simultaneously with all of the drummers striking one last, loud hit on their drum, Boston's hands released the bar and he fell towards the ground. As he straightened his body and gained speed, the spotlight lost him.

"Where has he fallen? Did he survive?" The ringleader entered the ring carrying a microphone. He looked over to where Boston Brand was to see him laying side by side with his brother Cleveland. From the stands, it appeared that there was only one man dressed in a red body suit.

"Oh my—Boston Brand is dead!" He exclaimed with a faux surprise in his voice.

A red spotlight appeared on Cleveland, and a figure stood up from beside him wearing a ghostly white mask.

"The Deadman rises from his body!" The ringleader gestured his hand towards Boston.

The sound of someone clapping was heard and everyone turned their heads to see a woman standing there.

*Lorna Hill: owner of Hill's circus, and the sexiest redhead I've ever laid eyes on. It's not so much her body that I'm attracted to—though that helps too—it's the way she carries herself. Her confidence makes up for the fact that she is only 5'5" and has a voice that sounds like a stereotypical high pitched, helpless woman that you might see in a superhero cartoon tied to train tracks. I guess she has to be confident, seeing that she inherited the responsibility of running an*

*entire circus. Her father died from two things—smoking cigarettes, and disappointment over the fact that his baby girl was dating me, or that “goddamn lazy good-for-nothing acrobat”, as he used to refer to me as. When he died, Lorna and I decided to take a break from each other, at least until she gets used to running a whole circus by herself. I can wait though, Lorna Hill is well worth the wait. I love her, and I always will. She used to always laugh when I said that even death couldn’t keep me from her. I may joke around a lot, but my love for her is the one thing that I would never joke about.*

Boston walked over to Lorna and leaned in towards her.

“A kiss for the Deadman?”

“Knock it off Boston, I—Hey! Where's your wire?” Lorna exclaimed while pushing Boston away.

“I already told Cleve over here, it would kill the illusion and—”

“Yeah, yeah, I've heard it before. I'd try to talk you out of this, but I know you. I swear, if you get yourself killed over this constant game of chicken you're playing with death, I'm bringing you back to life so I can kill you myself.”

*5'5", squeaky voice, and more commanding than anyone I've ever met. God I love this girl.*

*Hours later, Hill's Circus was packed with people who had come to see the first appearance of The Deadman. I remember thinking that it must have been our biggest night ever, so I wanted to give them a show they'd never forget. Heh, famous last words, right?*

*On my way into the tent for the big act, I was approached by a mysterious (at least he was at the time) Japanese man wearing a bizarre purple robe and an assortment of large gold rings on his fingers.*

“You must be Boston Brand. I would like to congratulate you on your performance.” He spoke with a raspy voice.

“Well, I haven't performed yet but—”

“I think I’ll be seeing a lot of you after today.”

“Uh, okay. I’m not sure what that means but—”

“You’ll know what I am talking about tomorrow.” The mysterious man made his way towards the big tent as Boston was left confused.

*I figured he was a reporter for a big magazine or newspaper who was going to write a nice article on me. It was a nice ego boost at the time, but it still gave me this ominous feeling.*

“For your viewing pleasure, I bring you the main attraction. You know him as a man without fear that laughs in the face of the grim reaper, but tonight, he will perform his most death-defying stunt yet. I give you—Boston Brand!” The crowd roared and the announcer waved his hand over to Boston, who was 50 feet above the ground.

*Before I jumped off the platform, I looked down once more. Every light was turned off except for the spotlight on me, and a light shone in my eyes. I looked over to my left to see a guy with a hook for a hand waving at me, something that will be etched into my memory forever. I waved back at the poor guy and jump off.*

*All of a sudden, a chill went up my spine. I heard a gunshot, and everything started getting blurry. I couldn’t even tell looking down at my blood red uniform. I let go of the trapeze, and seconds later I was out cold. I didn’t blackout, instead, I saw my father laughing at me.*

*I woke up hours later. Looking around, I realized that I didn’t get shot, I just got spooked by the drums banging and screwed up my landing. The tent was empty, and when I turned around to saw a chalk outline around where I was lying.*

“Cute, I wonder which one of those jokers did this.”

Boston stood up and walked out of the tent, disoriented by the sun shining bright. Looking off to his right, there was a dark cloud ominously creeping towards the circus. He entered his trailer to see Lorna sitting on his bed, gazing into a framed picture.

“Look, Lorna—”

“Oh Boston, why did this have to happen!” She exclaimed as tears started to run down her face.

“I know, I know. I should've had the wire on while I did my act. But hey, this must have been our biggest night ever!” He looked on the bed to see a newspaper. “‘Deadman shot dead’, front page news!”

*‘Story by Arnold Drake’, I figured that must have been the Asian guy that was talking to me before the show.*

“I wish it could be for better circumstances, but I guess any publicity is good publicity, right?” Lorna let out another sob. “I guess not.”

Boston reached out to wrap his arm around her when Cleveland bursts into the room.

“Cleveland?” She wiped her eyes as she got off the bed.

“I just got a call from the morgue.”

“The morgue? For the love of—Cleveland, this joke has gone on long enough, somebody just tell me what's going on here.” Boston told the two with a smirk on his face.

“The doctor, he said... oh God...” Cleveland paused for a second, “He said that Boston's body... is gone.”

Boston walked over to the bed to look at the newspaper again. He skimmed over the words on the page and his eyes slowly opened wide.

“Boston Brand... ‘Deadman’... shot...”

*I think that was when it really hit me.*

“No. No. No! Lorna! Cleveland!” He moved his hand towards Lorna, only to completely pass through her.

*It wasn't just a joke that they were playing on me.*

He stumbled backwards in shock, eventually running into the bed and passing through it. Once he gained his footing, he lunged towards Lorna and found himself in control of her body.

"Cleveland! Help me!" Lorna yelled.

"Help you? With what? Lorna what's wrong?" Cleveland replied confused.

Boston fell out of Lorna's body and stumbles towards the wall, completely passing through the trailer and landing on the grass outside. When he looked back at the trailer, he saw the dark cloud carrying rain-fall towards him. He got up and attempted to outrun it, but the rain reached him and passed through his body.

"Lornaaa!" As he collapsed to the ground, he let out an agonizing scream only heard by him as the rain poured down onto the circus. "I can't... I can't breathe! I'm not breathing! I don't have a pulse! My heart... I... I... I'm dead!"

*Yeah. I was dead.*

*Hours later, a few police revisited the crime scene. I felt like I had been there an eternity, watching people walk past me like I wasn't here. At that point, I wasn't even sure if I was there.*

Boston walked inside of the large tent where he had last performed. Two cops stood over the chalk outline.

"It's a damn shame. My son was talking about this Deadman character all week. If I didn't have to work a double last night we would have been at that show." The cop in a suit and tie was noticeably larger than the other and spoke with a fat cigar on the side of his mouth. He removed it from his mouth.

"Noble!"

“Huh?” The younger looking officer broke out of his concentration on the various circus workers in the tent.

“The hell is wrong with you? We're trying to solve a case here.”

“Oh, uh, sorry Detective Jackson. I just get freaked out by the circus.” He said nervously. “But that redhead over there doesn't look like she belongs here.” He pointed over towards Lorna Hill. “Maybe I'll go over there and ... comfort her.”

Boston began to make a beeline for the officer. Before he reached him, Detective Jackson stepped in his path.

“If you lay one finger on her, I swear to God I'll—” Jackson screamed at Officer Noble.

“Sir?” Noble interrupted. Jackson looked around, confused by his surroundings.

“Uh, sorry. I think I need to take a break.”

*I entered his body and had control over him, just like earlier in Lorna's body. It's not much, but it's better than not being able to communicate with the living at all.*

Boston exited the body of Detective Jackson. Soon after, he noticed the younger officer making his way to his vehicle. As he followed him, he began to hear a voice coming from the radio inside of his car.

“Hot on the trail of a robbery by a male, mid-20s, Caucasian, and a hook for a hand heading towards an abandoned warehouse in Suicide Slums. The address is... .” Though filled with static, Boston heard the message clearly. He quickly jumped into the body of Officer Noble and ran to the car.

The man with the hook. It couldn't have been a coincidence, and it's not like I had anything better to do back at the circus. I had to go. If there was any chance that I could get revenge for my murder... I just felt like killing him at that point. I raced through the streets with no regard for

traffic. It's a miracle I didn't get this kid killed, because my one-track mind was fixated only my own selfish desires.

When I arrived, I pulled his gun out of its holster and crept into the building.

"I know you're in here." He yelled out, his words echoing off the walls of the empty room. "I'm going to give you one chance to show yourself." With no response, Boston continued through to the next room in the young officer's body.

There was no light in the room as he slowly stepped through the doorway. He heard the sound of footsteps behind him and spun around to blindly fire two shots. As the light bulb hung in the middle of the room illuminated

"Either this is your first day on the force, or the Deadman has finally risen." Boston spun back around to see the man with a hook for a hand standing next to a light switch. He aimed his berretta at him, but the man with the hook did not react. "My name is Hook, and I'm sure by now you have figured out that I was the one who killed you."

"Funny you should mention that." Boston pulled back the hammer. "Because I'm here to return the favor. Any last words?"

"It's amusing that you think this is personal, as if you were of some great importance. Look at your hands trembling, you're so hell bent on revenge that you can't even aim that weapon."

"You aren't going to talk your way out of this. I don't care why you did it, all I need to know is that you did it."

"Oh I did shoot you, but you and I are nothing more than pawns in a demented game between powerful beings. We're expendable. So go ahead, get your revenge, and see if it changes anything." As Hook told him this, Boston slowly squeezed the gun's handle harder and harder.

"If I'm going to kill you anyway, tell me who hired you to do this to me, if you are in fact just a pawn."

"I believe he approached you before your performance. I won't tell you more than that, after seeing what he has done with you even beyond death, I wouldn't dare betray him any more than that."

"Death?" Boston lowered his weapon. "I can't even give you the satisfaction of dying. You aren't worth it."

Boston exited the officer's body and entered Hook's.

"What the hell?" Officer Noble exclaimed as he regained control of his body with his gun pointed at Hook.

"It was me. I killed Boston Brand." The criminal spoke.

*I was right. I killed Boston Brand. The police took the wrong man to jail.*

*I had no other business at the crime scene, or among any other living people for that matter, so I went where a dead man belongs: his grave.*

"And that brings me here. Pathetically wallowing in sorrow over my own empty grave. The man who approached me before my performance... how the hell am I supposed to find him? I don't know anything about why this has happened to me, and I'm completely alone. I guess there's nothing left for me to do in this world but lay in this grave for the rest of eternity." Boston spoke to himself as he sat next to the pile of dirt.

"You are not alone Boston Brand, and your story is not over yet." A mysterious figure in the shadows spoke. Deadman spun his head around.

"You... can hear me? Who the hell are you? What do you want with me?" He interrogated the stranger.

"I have come to guide you away from Chaos. I have no name... " The man stepped out of the shadows into the moonlight, revealing a blue suit and hat. "... But some have referred to me as the Phantom Stranger."

*To be continued!*

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**THIS IS THE FINAL ISSUE OF BLACK LIGHTNING AND STATIC.**



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