

The BLUE BEETLE

Charles Nicholas



The HOLIDAY OF DEATH

THE SCENE OPENS... A SUNNY MORNING ON A CROWDED CITY BLOCK...

..AND I'M TELLING YOU, MRS. MURPHY ... EGGS ... FORTY CENTS A DOZEN!! I SHOULD LIVE SO LONG!!

SURE.. AN' IT IS A SHAME, MRS. COHEN, BUT...

IN ALL THE THRILL-PACKED ANNALS OF THE BLUE BEETLE'S UNCEASING FIGHT AGAINST EVIL.. NO CASE WAS EVER MORE GRUESOME OR MORE FANTASTICALLY HORRIBLE THAN THAT OF THE HOLIDAY OF DEATH... WHEN THE MASTER OF HADES HIMSELF CAME TO GRIPS WITH THE MASTER FIGHTER IN THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY...



BUT.. FAR BENEATH THIS SCENE THERE SITS A FRIGHTFUL FIGURE, DEATH!!



COME, SLAVES.. IT IS TIME THAT WE WENT FORTH UPON THE EARTH ONCE MORE..



YES, MASTER!

..AND OVER THE TEEMING CITY BLOCK.. DEATH SUDDENLY APPEARS...



HA! HA! MORTALS!! YOU FEAR ME, EH?



..AND YOU SHALL HAVE REASON TO FEAR ME!

OH! GLORY BE IT.. IT'S DEATH HIMSELF!!



NO! NO YOU SHOULDN'T DO IT! GO AWAY!

FAITH.. AN' I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY...

THE HORRIBLE FIGURE PASSES, BUT LATER IN THE POLICE STATION...



WHAT? WOMAN, YE'RE EITHER LYIN' OR CRAZY, I'M THINKIN'!

AN' I TELL YE.. ME OWN EYES SAW IT!

..AN IF YE'D RATHER NOT BELIEVE ME.. THEN TELL ME WHAT DID BECOME OF MRS. COHEN AN' THE LITTLE GIRL ?



..FOR IT WAS SOMETHIN' CAME AN' TOOK 'EM AWAY AN' THEY'VE NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE!!



HMM SOME STORY!

WELL.. AN' I TELL YE EVEN IF IT'S TRUE, I WON'T BELIEVE IT!

BUT AS THE DAYS PASS -- DEATH STRIKES ON THE DOOMED BLOCK AGAIN -- AGAIN!!



OH..WHAT... WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I WANT YOU!

AGAINST THIS GRIM MONSTER FROM ANOTHER WORLD--THE POLICE ARE HELPLESS!



I TELL YOU-- SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!!

BUT, MR. MAYOR WHAT CAN WE DO? THIS IS SUPER-NATURAL!



COME, WOMAN-- YOUR WORK IS FINISHED!

BUT.. BUT YOU ARE.. OH!!

QUICK! PREPARE YOURSELVES! DEATH CANNOT BE KEPT WAITING!



OH, NO-- PLEASE! HAVE MERCY!!

THE NEWSPAPERS ARE EQUALLY MYSTIFIED--



IT'S SO HORRIBLE, NOT MR. GREELY! SO CAN'T WE GET FAR, ANYTHING ON IT? WE'RE COMPLETELY IN THE DARK!

-STAR- DEATH STRIKES AGAIN CITY BLOCK IN TERROR! RESIDENTS FLEE!

ROOKIE DAN GARRET TALKS IT OVER WITH DR. FRANZ--



I KNOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, BUT--PEOPLE HAVE SEEN IT! WELL, DAN--IT'S HARD TO SAY WHAT'S IMPOSSIBLE IN THIS WORLD!

-- BUT THERE IS ONE ANGLE THAT STRIKES ME ABOUT THIS 'WHY HAS IT CONFINED IT- SELF TO JUST ONE CITY BLOCK? THAT SEEMS STRANGE!



HMM.. I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN!

YOU KNOW--I THINK I'LL TALK IT ALL OVER WITH MRS. MURPHY! SHE'S THE FIRST ONE THAT SAW IT!--SHE MIGHT RECALL SOMETHING!



..AND YOU SAY IT SEEMED TO COME FROM NO-WHERE, MRS. MURPHY? OH, GLORY, YES IT DID! BUT DON'T LET ME BE THINKIN' OF IT!



BUT AT THIS VERY MOMENT..IN THE STREET BELOW...

WHEN SUDDENLY..THE DOUGHTY FORM OF MIKE MANNIGAN APPEARS UPON THE SCENE...

YES, I DO 'BE YE MAN OR DIVVLE.. BE GONE WITH YE NOW ' BE OFF!

YOU ' YOU WOULD STAND IN THE PATH OF DEATH HIMSELF?

OH.. HELP! HELP!

HEY.. YOU ' LEAVE THE WOMAN ' BE!

EH? YOU DARE TO INTERFERE?

AH.. COME! YOU ARE GOING ON A JOURNEY WITH DEATH!!

THEN YOU, TOO SHALL DIE, FOOL!

OW-W! LET ME GO!!

.. BUT AS THE SHADOW OF DEATH FALLS OVER MIKE MANNIGAN, HIS CRY FOR HELP IS HEARD...

HUH? WHAT'S THAT? WHY.. IT SOUNDS LIKE MIKE!

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT DEATH HAS STRUCK AT HIM, TOO? THEN IT'S TIME THE BLUE BEETLE GOT TO WORK HERE!

AH.. IT IS DEATH! I WAS RIGHT!

LOOK, MASTER! THE BLUE BEETLE!!

EH?

YES, MISTER DEATH! .. AND THE BLUE BEETLE IS READY TO GIVE YOU A REAL FIGHT, THIS TIME!

WHAT! MADMAN! YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!



OKAY--THEN YOU CAN PUT THIS ONE ON THE BILL, TOO!

UGH! GET HIM, SLAVES!



PERHAPS THIS WILL CURE YOU OF YOUR EAGERNESS TO QUARREL WITH THE MASTER!

GOOD! THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HIM!

OH!



NO, BOYS-- I'M NOT THROUGH YET! JUST, KEEP COMING!

LEAVE HIM, SLAVES! WE SHALL MEET AGAIN, LATER!

..BUT THE BLUE BEETLE, THOUGH DAZED, STAYS ON HIS FEET--



WHY, THEY-- THEY'VE GONE! VANISHED!!

EH? THE BLUE BEETLE? NOW WHERE DID HE COME FROM?



..AN' NOW HE'S GONE, TOO! SURE--AN' ALL THE SPOOKS IN THE WORLD WAS HERE JUST A MINUTE AGO--OR--OR WAS THEY?



OY!--AN' NOW I'M WONDERIN' IF I EVER SAW A SINGLE THING AT ALL?

MIKE! WHAT'S THE MATTER? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN HERE?

FAITH-- DAN, ME BOY-- AN' I DON'T KNOW IF IT DID OR NOT!



MEANWHILE-- DEATH GOES BACK TO HIS FEARFUL ABODE--RAGING AT THOSE WHO HAVE ESCAPED HIM!



THE BLUE BEETLE, EH? THAT MEDDLING FOOL! WE MUST DEVISE SOME MEANS OF BRINGING HIM HERE--WHERE DEATH CAN MEET HIM IN HIS OWN WAY--

YES, MASTER!



THERE IS A GIRL--JOAN MASON-- HE HAS ALWAYS HELPED HER OUT OF TROUBLE BEFORE! PERHAPS IF WE BRING HER HERE--

YES, MASTER-- HE WILL SURELY COME IF SHE'S IN DANGER--

AND THE NEXT DAY--AS JOAN IS LOOKING THROUGH THE DOOMED BLOCK, NOW ALL BUT DESERTED--

LOOK! IT IS THE GIRL! GOOD! GOOD!



COME, MISS MASON--WE WISH TO TAKE YOU ALONG ON A TRIP! HA! HA!

OH-- PLEASE--



AND LATER--

DAN! WILLYE! LOOK HERE! THAT MURDERIN' DIVYLE OF A WHAT-IS-IT HAS CARRIED OFF MISS JOAN, HE HAS--

WHAT! HE--HE'S TAKEN JOAN AWAY--? BUT--UH--



SHUCKS, MIKE I DON'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S JUST SOME PIECE OF NEWS-PAPER PUBLICITY! SHE'S AROUND SOMEWHERE--

HUH? WELL BEGORRA AN' I THOUGHT THE BOY WAS IN LOVE WITH HER! HE'S A COOL ONE NOW!

BUT--MIKE'S BACK ONCE TURNED--DAN LOSES NO TIME IN GETTING TO DR. FRANZ'S...

--AND SO THAT FIEND'S GOT JOAN IN HIS CLUTCHES! --BUT HE WON'T KEEP HER LONG!

IT'S A RACE, BLUE BEETLE-- BETWEEN YOU AND DEATH



YES, IT'S A RACE-- AND YOU CAN BE SURE OF THIS... DEATH ISN'T GOING TO WIN WHILE I LIVE!

I KNOW THE PLACE TO START--THOSE OLD TENEMENT HOUSES--



BUT--NOW THAT I'M HERE, I DON'T SEE ANY CLUES TO GO ON!



SUDDENLY--FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE DOOMED BLOCK A WEIRD FIGURE APPEARS--

AH--THE BLUE BEETLE, I BELIEVE--?

YES--BUT WHO ARE YOU--?



YOU MAY CALL ME DR. NECROW! I AM A STUDENT OF THE SUPERNATURAL-- LOOKING FOR DEATH!

--FOR DEATH? AND YOU HAVE SEEN HIM?

YES.. JUST A MOMENT AGO.. HE WAS CARRYING OFF A YOUNG GIRL.. AND, IN FACT..

--I WAS JUST ABOUT TO FOLLOW HIM-- WHEN YOU CAME ALONG!

WHAT! YOU SAW WHERE HE WENT?

COME ON! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR ANGLE IS, HERE!-- BUT IF YOU WANT COMPANY, YOU'RE GETTING IT! LEAD THE WAY!!

EH-- SO YOU WISH TO FOLLOW ON THE HEELS OF DEATH! VERY WELL!!

IT WAS DOWN HERE THAT HE WENT.. AND.. LOOK!! HE HAS EVEN LEFT THE DOOR OPEN BEHIND HIM!

WELL.. IF HE DID IT ON PURPOSE, HE'S NOT GOING TO BE DISAPPOINTED.

HA! HA! NO, BLUE BEETLE IN THE END... DEATH IS NEVER DISAPPOINTED

PHEW! THIS IS A NICE PLACE!

YES-- THE KINGDOM OF DEATH!!

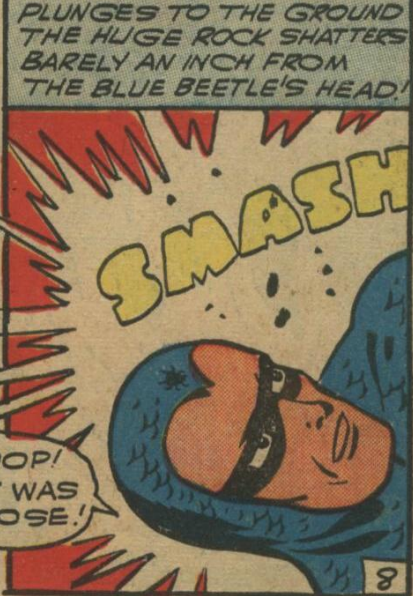
IT IS HARDLY A PLACE OF PLEASURE, NATURALLY--

PLEASURE! GOOD GRIEF, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, ANYWAY--?

MORE OR LESS WHAT I EXPECTED, MY FRIEND! YES-- JUST SO..

HUH? WELL-- YOU'RE A COOL ONE! BUT NEVER MIND--







..BUT NOW, PAL... LET'S TAKE CARE THAT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN!

OH-HHH..



..AND AT THE SAME TIME ..LET'S HAVE AN EXPLANATION, HUH?

CRASH!

NO..PLEASE! I'LL TELL EVERYTHING!



..I..I WANTED TO EXPLORE THIS PLACE ALONE, TO KEEP ITS SECRET..BUT ..OH, LOOK! LOOK!!

LOOK.. AT WHAT?



LOOK.. BLUE BEETLE, INTO THE VERY FACE OF DEATH!!

OH, GREAT SCOT! NOW WHAT?



YOU WISHED TO COME TO MY KINGDOM, EH? WELL... YOU SHALL NEVER LEAVE IT! YOU, TOO, SHALL SUFFER THE SAME FATE AS THE INQUISITIVE NECROW!



SEE..? BEHIND YOU, BLUE BEETLE!

IT-IT IS NECROW.. ON THE GALLOWES!



..BUT WHO PUT HIM THERE..?

..WHO PUT HIM THERE? THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF DEATH, BLUE BEETLE ..STRANGE THINGS MAY HAPPEN HERE...



..AS YOU SHALL LEARN! LOOK! MY FIRES ARE ALREADY RISING ABOUT YOU!

YEAH?..WELL JUST COME WITH- IN RANGE OF MY FIST, AND...

AND AS THE SKULL SPEAKS--
THE FLAMES OF HADES
RISE ALL AROUND THE
BLUE BEETLE...

THE BLUE BEETLE
STAGGERS BACK FROM
THE SEARING ATTACK
OF THE INFERNAL FIRES--

WHEN SUDDENLY--THE GROUND
GIVES WAY BENEATH HIS FEET
AND HE FALLS HEADLONG--
DOWN...DOWN...



-- WHILE DEATH SITS ONCE
MORE ON HIS GHASTLY
THRONE-- GRINNING
WITH TRIUMPH--



WHILE--IN ANOTHER
PART OF THE WEIRD
KINGDOM--

YOU--YOU, DEMONS!
LET ME GO! LET ME
GO, I TELL YOU!



IMPERTINENT
WOMAN! YOU
REFUSE TO
OBEY THE
ORDERS OF
THE MASTER!

YOU SHALL
PAY THE
PRICE...
OF DEATH!



--OH, NO, I WON'T!-- AND
I SAID--LET ME GO--
HELP! HELP!



.. AND JOAN'S CRY DOES NOT GO UNANSWERED AS A BRUISED FIGURE STRUGGLES PAINFULLY UPWARD THROUGH A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SHAFT..

.. AND IF SHE'S HERE I'M GOING TO FIND HER! I'M BEGINNING TO GET SOME IDEAS ABOUT THIS PLACE, ANYWAY..

I THINK THAT CRY CAME FROM OVER HERE..



WHAT WAS THAT? A CRY.. AND JOAN'S VOICE! SHE IS HERE THEN..!



LOOK! THE BLUE BEETLE!

RIGHT YOU ARE! NOW TURN AROUND, YOU DEVILS...



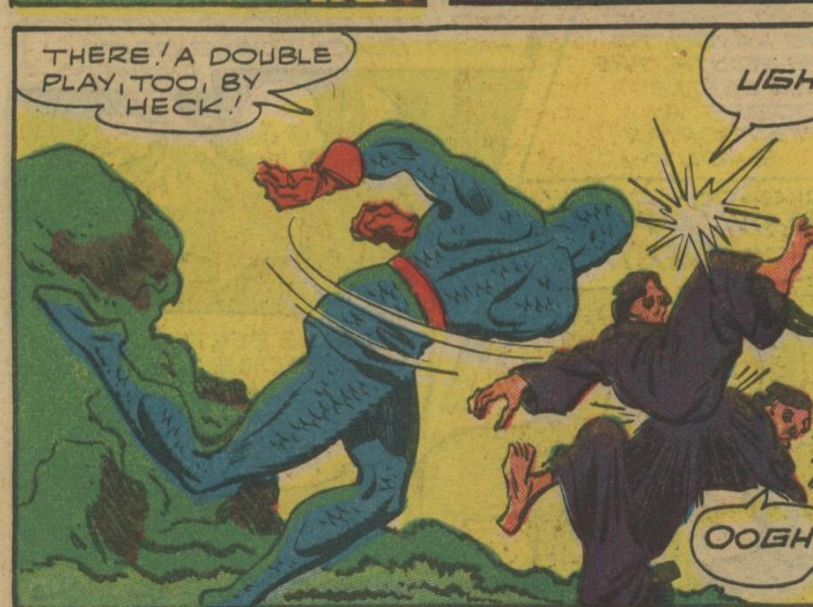
YOU WISH TO MEET US AGAIN, YES?

I SURE DO! .. AND THIS TIME.. IS GOING TO BE THE LAST TIME!



OUCH!

.. BECAUSE NEXT TIME.. YOU JUST WON'T BE AROUND ANY MORE!



THERE! A DOUBLE PLAY, TOO, BY HECK!

UGH!

OOGH!



JOAN.. AT LAST! I WAS AFRAID I'D NEVER GET TO YOU THROUGH ALL THIS CRAZY MASQUERADING!

THANK HEAVEN YOU DID, BLUE BEETLE.. AND YOU'VE FOUND OUT IT'S ALL A HOAX, TOO?

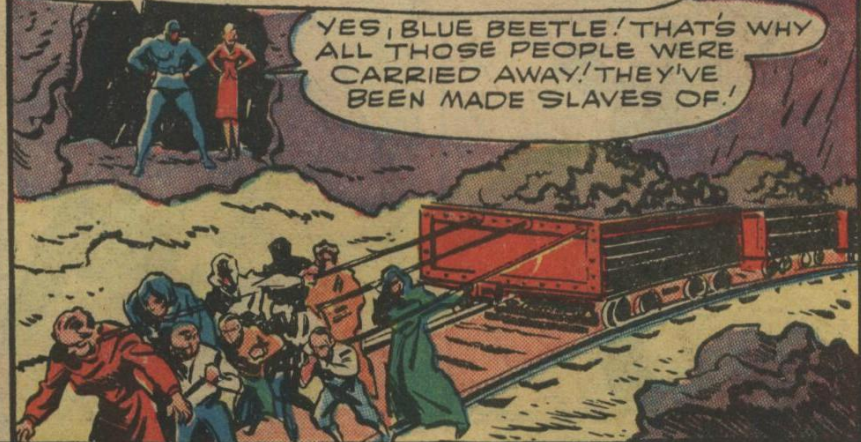


YES.. BUT WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

I DON'T KNOW.. BUT LOOK AT THIS! CARS LOADED WITH SOME KIND OF ORE THAT'S BEING MINED HERE!

..AND AS JOAN AND THE BLUE BEETLE EXPLORE THE CAVES FURTHER..A NEW AND STILL MORE FRIGHTFUL SIGHT APPEARS BEFORE THEM...

GREAT SCOT! WOMEN AND CHILDREN WORKING THE MINE..!!... I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT!!



YES, BLUE BEETLE! THAT'S WHY ALL THOSE PEOPLE WERE CARRIED AWAY! THEY'VE BEEN MADE SLAVES OF!



..AND STILL MORE..KEPT AT THIS HARD LABOR UNDER-GROUND! ..AND CHAINED!

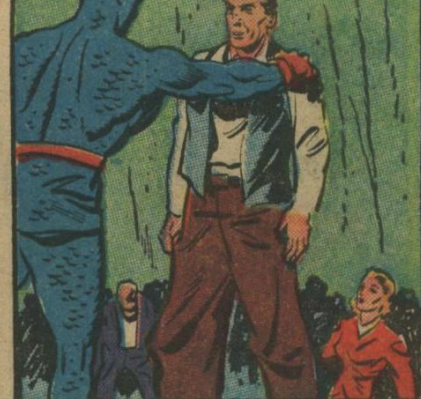
.. BUT YOU CAN SET THEM FREE, BLUE BEETLE!

USING HIS GIGANTIC STRENGTH,THE BLUE BEETLE QUICKLY BREAKS THE SHACKLES FROM THE EN-SLAVED WORKERS OF THE SECRET MINE ...

..AND SELECTS A LEADER TO TAKE THEM TO THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH AGAIN...



CRACK



THE CRY ECHOES EERILY THROUGH THE NOW DESERTED CAVERNS .. AND WITH A HIDEOUS FLUTTER OF NIGHT BLACK ROBES DEATH ANSWERS...

..BUT JOAN REFUSES TO GO WITH THEM...!



PLEASE.. I WANT TO STAY WITH YOU, BLUE BEETLE!

WELL..I CAN'T FORCE YOU TO GO.. BUT YOU'RE GOING TO SEE A PRETTY UGLY SIGHT!

..AND, CUPPING HIS HANDS TO HIS MOUTH, THE BLUE BEETLE LOOSES A STENTORIAN SHOUT...

OHO..OO.. DEATH! DEATH! DEATH!! OHOO..DEATH!!!



THE BLUE BEETLE WISHES ONCE MORE TO MEET DEATH, EH? WELL... AND THIS TIME HE SHALL REALLY HAVE HIS WISH!





WITH A GUN, TOO, HUH? AT LAST WE'RE GETTING DOWN TO CASES!



-- BUT THAT GUN HAPPENS TO BE SOMETHING THAT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD AT ALL--



THERE! TRY SOME OF YOUR PHONEY STAGE TRICKS ON THAT!



-- AND NOW-- THE MASQUERADE IS OVER! WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A LOOK BEHIND THAT FALSE FACE!!



BUT-- WHO IS HE?

-- NECROW!! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED IT! -- ALTHOUGH-- YOU WERE HANGED--



-- BUT-- IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN, MAN-- WHY ALL THIS STAGE-SETTING AND TERRORIZING?

WHAT! YOU DON'T KNOW EVEN YET? IMBECILE! THIS MINE CONTAINS URANIUM ORE-- THE BASE OF RADIUM!

FOOL!! THAT WAS A DUMMY ON THE GALLOWS-- TO THROW YOU OFF THE TRACK!



I CONCEALED THE ENTRANCE TO THE MINE, BUT I WAS STILL AFRAID SOMEONE MIGHT STUMBLE ON IT! THAT'S WHY I DROVE THE PEOPLE AWAY BY TERROR--



LATER IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I COULD CARRY MY VICTIMS AWAY AND USE THEM TO WORK THE MINE FOR ME! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU, BLUE BEETLE, I'D BE A MILLIONAIRE NOW---



-- BUT ANYWAY, YOU'LL NEVER GET ME ALIVE, BLUE BEETLE! I-- I WON'T LET YOU TAKE THE MINE AWAY FROM ME!

THE SINISTER NECROW RAISES A PHIAL OF POISON TO HIS LIPS--

..AND BEFORE THE BLUE BEETLE CAN INTERVENE, HE FALLS, LIFELESS...

OH.. HE.. HE'S DEAD!!

BRR..I'M GLAD TO GET OUT OF HERE..

YES, THE CAVES OF DEATH AREN'T A VERY PLEASANT PLACE!

..AND AS MIKE MANNIGAN PASSES BY THE HAUNTED BLOCK, ON PATROL DUTY, A FAMILIAR BUT GHASTLY SIGHT GREET'S HIS EYES...

HERE, JOAN.. TAKE MY HAND..

UGH.. IT'S A HIGH STEP!

OH..H..H

..AND I CAN'T SAY I REGRET IT, JOAN! COME ON.. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE..

Oooo... IT'S THAT SKULL AGAIN!!

OH, GLORY BE! I'LL NOT BE ABLE TO STAND IT AGAIN, I KNOW! I'M GOING TO FAINT!

WHOOIEEE

WELL, AN' I TELL YE CHIEF, THE DIVVLE GAVE OUT A HORRIBLE SCREECH.. 'T WAS UNCANNY.. AN' WITH A WHOOSH, AWAY HE FLEW, LEAVIN' ROBES AN' SKULL AT ME FEET..

STOP IT! YE'RE MAD, MANNIGAN!!

AND LATER.. THE STATION HOUSE

WHILE AT FRANZ'S

YOU MEAN TO SAY.. THAT PLACE IS A SOURCE OF RADIUM..? BUT, MAN...

I KNOW, DOCTOR! IT CAN BE OF TREMENDOUS BENEFIT TO HUMANITY!

.. AND IT WILL BE!! BECAUSE I'M PUTTING THE SECRET OF IT IN THE RIGHT HANDS... YOURS, FRANZ!

.. AND NOW WE KNOW THAT IT WILL BE USED ONLY FOR GOOD!

..AND AGAIN, THE BLUE BEETLE HAS BROUGHT ABOUT THE TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL!! FOLLOW HIM IN EVERY ISSUE OF.. *Mystery Men Comics*

YE'RE STARK RAVIN' MAD.. AN' MOREOVER, IF YE WERE SANE.. WHICH YE ARE NOT.. I'D STILL NOT BELIEVE YE.. FOR ME OWN SAKE! NOW.. GIT OUTTA HERE! GIT!!!

ULP!

MYSTERY MEN COMICS IS ON SALE THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH

