

# Phantom Girl's Startling Secret

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*A tale of the Legion of Super-Heroes*

*by David Meadows*

Jo Nah, Ultra Boy of the Legion of Super-Heroes, fell bonelessly from his lover's embrace. He looked up at her in surprise and confusion, but Phantom Girl only smiled triumphantly back at him.

"Why, Tinya? Why?"

Why indeed? What has caused Phantom Girl, a Legionnaire of hitherto impeccable character (albeit a poor taste in men), to turn on her boyfriend? Read on to learn... **Phantom Girl's Startling Secret!**

## Part 1: Ambushed!

A meeting was underway at the clubhouse of the Legion of Super-Heroes in 30<sup>th</sup> century Metropolis. Superboy, Mon-El, Ultra Boy, and Wildfire were present, and had just unanimously agreed on a point of Legion procedure. Suddenly, without warning, Tinya Wazzo, the Legionnaire known as Phantom Girl, burst into the room. Such was her hurry that she didn't wait for the door to open, instead using her phantom power to slip through the solid wall.

"Quick!" she cried, without waiting for a proper greeting. "Several children have been trapped underground in North Metropolis! I have located them but I need the help of one of you boys to dig them out!"

"I'll help, Phantom Girl," said Superboy, leaping to his feet.

"Strange there hasn't been a message over our Disaster Alert Monitor," said Mon-El.

"It only just happened! I was lucky enough to be passing at the time. Hurry, Superboy, they don't have much air down there! Follow me and I will lead you to them."

In a flash, the heroic Legionnaires were gone, speeding towards North Metropolis.

"It was a school outing to the old mining tunnels," Phantom Girl explained as they flew. "Part of the tunnels collapsed, leaving the children trapped in an air pocket. But the air won't last long!"

Such was their speed that they were already over the location of the old tunnels. Phantom Girl pointed down at the ground.

"I don't see them!" said Superboy as he scanned the ground with his x-ray vision. "The ground here is thick with lead and that blocks my vision powers!"

"Don't worry, I know where they are. I will fly towards them in phantom form and you can follow me."

"Of course! Lead on, Phantom Girl!"

Phantom Girl dived into the solid earth, with Superboy on her heels. Such was the speed and power of the Teen of Steel that he was able to excavate a tunnel through the rock as he flew, without losing sight of the slim girl in front of him.

“Just beyond this huge slab of lead!” cried Phantom Girl. Without a moment’s hesitation, Superboy tore into the metal as if it were tissue paper. But then...

“Phantom Girl, wait! I feel...” Superboy’s next words died off as the strength fled from his body. No children lay beneath the lead slab... but something deadly did! Bathed in a green glow, Superboy fell weakly to his knees.

“Kryptonite... it’s a pocket of kryptonite, the only substance that can harm me...” gasped the stricken teen. “Phantom Girl, help me back up the tunnel...”

Phantom Girl stood over him, hands on hips and laughed.

“Me help you?” she scoffed. “Why should I do that? After all, I’m one of the weakest Legionnaires and you are one of the strongest! Come on, Superboy, help yourself!”

But strain as he might, the rapidly weakening Superboy was unable to rise even to his knees. With his last strength, he mumbled some faint words.

“What was that, Superboy? I couldn’t catch it, speak up! Oh... you can’t, can you? Well, goodbye then!”

Leaving the stricken Kryptonian, Phantom Girl flew up the tunnel he had excavated. But a nasty surprise awaited her on the surface—Mon-El, standing firm and greeting her with a brooding, angry expression.

“What is the meaning of this, Phantom Girl?”

“Mon-El—Oh! You—you must help Superboy, there has been an acc—”

“Don’t try to fool me, Phantom Girl. I was suspicious when no word of the trapped children came up on our Disaster Alert Monitor, so I followed your progress with my telescopic vision. I lost you in the lead seams, but Superboy used his last breath to tell me what had happened, using his super-ventriloquism!”

Mon-El’s eyes narrowed dangerously as he scanned Phantom Girl’s form.

“Don’t think you can trap me in the same way, you traitor! I may have all of Superboy’s powers, but I don’t have his weakness to kryptonite. And that piece of lead you are trying to conceal in your fist? Don’t make me laugh! Lead may be poisonous to a Daxamite but the anti-lead serum I take keeps me safe from such a small lump! Even if you were fast enough to scratch me with it, I would barely notice!”

“It’s a stalemate then, Mon-El,” said Phantom Girl sweetly. “I can’t hurt you but you also can’t hurt me in my phantom form.”

“Perhaps so, but my super-hearing can detect the slightest rustle of your cape in the wind—wind that wouldn’t touch you unless you were SOLID!”

As he cried out that last word, Mon-El moved to grapple her. Just as Phantom Girl had planned. Indeed, she had counted on Mon-El realising she was solid, as she would never be able to catch him unless she made him come to her.

Mon-El moved at a speed no normal man could match, crossing the several feet between them faster than the eye could follow. Were she not ready, Phantom Girl could have made no response before he overpowered her.

But Phantom Girl had been born with her power, as all Bgztlans are, had lived with it her whole life, and could control it as easily and swiftly as we humans can blink. Mon-El moved with the speed of light, but Phantom Girl reacted with the speed of thought. As he closed with her, she became immaterial and passed right through him. But more than that, as he moved, she

opened her right fist and released the tiny fragment of lead that she had clutched there. As Mon-El fell through her, the lead solidified and lodged within his body.

She turned, half expecting a counter attack, but the Daxamite knelt on the floor, his arms wrapped around his chest.

“Phantom Girl... what have you done... to me...”

“As I was hoping, the intense concentration of lead deep within your body is too much for your serum to neutralise!”

“But I—I’ll die...”

“No, you won’t. The serum will keep you alive, but the lead will strip your powers as long as it remains there. How does it feel, Mon-El, to be so... weak?”

“Please... Tinya... we were friends... don’t... do... this...”

But Phantom Girl merely laughed as she flew off back towards the club house.

As she flew, she activated the communicator built into her flight ring and placed a call to Ultra Boy.

“Jo? It’s me, Tinya.”

“Hi, sweetheart. How is the mission going?”

“Superboy and Mon-El are finishing off so I’m no longer needed there. How about you and I meet at our favourite park?”

“Sure! I’ll head there now!”

Tinya waited a few extra minutes to make sure Ultra Boy had left the club house. Wildfire was her next target and he would be a tough enough nut to crack without Ultra Boy lurking around too!

She didn’t have far to go to find Wildfire. He was standing inside the clubhouse entrance, his expression inscrutable within his all-concealing containment suit.

“What’s the meaning of this, Phantom Girl?” he demanded. “I just received an emergency signal from Mon-El. Apparently, you tried to kill him?”

“Kill him? Don’t be stupid, Wildfire. If I had wanted to kill him, I would have succeeded!”

Before the startled Wildfire could act, she dived through the clubhouse floor and into the labyrinth complex below it. She wasn’t yet ready to deal with the powerful Wildfire, but hopefully her bare-faced admission of guilt had rattled him enough to buy her some time.

A loud blast of energy behind her told her that Wildfire had recovered quickly from his surprise. The ceiling vaporised as he blasted his way through in hot pursuit. Phantom Girl slipped through a wall, but she knew he had spotted her. Pouring her considerable willpower into her flight ring, she willed the device to carry her as fast as it possibly could. She flashed down the corridor as Wildfire destroyed the wall and followed hot on her tail.

“Surrender, Phantom Girl! Don’t make me hurt you!”

“You hurt me? Don’t make me laugh Drake Burroughs,” she taunted. She needed the hot-headed Legionnaire riled enough to leave her an opening. She faked left, then slipped through the floor to a lower level. Wildfire lost her trail momentarily, but soon cornered her in Brainiac 5’s science lab. Phantom Girl had stopped running and was facing him.

“You think you’re one of the most powerful Legionnaires, but you can’t hurt me, can you?”

“Oh yeah? One thing you all forget, PG, is that I have total control over my anti-energy, and I can do a lot more than brute-force blasts with it.” He experimentally flicked a small bolt of her energy her way, and naturally it passed right through her. “Hmm. All I need to do is find the right energy level to emit and I know I will be able to...” Zap. “... Nope, but give me a minute and I’ll...” Zap.

“Nice plan, but your time’s up, Wildfire.” Phantom Girl pointed at an array of gas cylinders. “You see that one? It’s Hexafluxadrixamine, the most powerful universal solvent in the universe. And I opened the valve just before you came in.”

“That’s your plan? Stupid, I’m pure energy, immune to—” He stopped and looked down at where the seams of his containment suit were smoking. “Oh, spr—”

The suit ruptured along the rapidly-dissolving seams, and Wildfire’s anti-energy dispersed with an explosion that devastated the lab. Phantom Girl surveyed the damage and shrugged. It was no worse than one of Brainy’s experiments.

Several minutes later, Phantom Girl landed in the Metropolis park where Ultra Boy was waiting for her. She ran over and into his arms.

“Oh, Jo! You won’t believe what’s been happening!” she cried.

“What? What’s the matter, sweetheart?”

“Hug me, Jo! No, not with your invulnerability on... I want you to feel me properly... yes, that’s better.” She plunged a sedative injector, taken from Brainy’s lab, into his neck. Jo Nah, Ultra Boy of the Legion of Super-Heroes, fell bonelessly from his lover’s embrace. He looked up at her in surprise and confusion, but Phantom Girl only smiled triumphantly back at him.

“Why, Tinya? Why?”

“Yes,” a new voice called out. “WHY, Phantom Girl?”

With a sinking feeling, Phantom Girl turned to face the new arrivals. Cosmic Boy, Lightning Lad, Colossal Boy and Sun Boy were descending into the park, taking positions to surround her. She could see other Legionnaires approaching fast.

“What’s going on here?” Cosmic Boy demanded.

“She’m stuck’m withel needee,” mumbled Ultra Boy from the ground.

“I can explain—” began Phantom Girl.

“And can you explain Superboy and Mon-El? Not to mention the explosion in the clubhouse—was that Wildfire? I’m sorry, Phantom Girl, nothing can explain your behaviour today. Under the law of our Constitution, I am forced to expel you from—”

“Wait!” Saturn Girl’s voice cut across Cosmic Boy’s, as she flew into the park. She was followed by Superboy and Mon-El! The two boys looked weak but recovered enough to fly under their own power. “Phantom Girl telepathically alerted me to what she was doing,” said Saturn Girl briskly, quickly taking charge of the situation, “and acted with my full blessing!”

“*What?*” Cosmic Boy, and indeed the other Legionnaires, looked stunned. “For what reason?”

“For that answer, we must ask Superboy and Mon-El what they were discussing, just before Phantom Girl flew into their meeting.”

Superboy looked ashamed. “Well, it’s like this...”

## Part 2: Fifteen Minutes Earlier

Superboy banged the leader's gavel on the table and looked round at his fellow Legionnaires, Mon-El, Wildfire and Ultra Boy.

"So, that's what I've been thinking over. What do you think?"

"The threats we face as a team get bigger and more deadly with each passing year," Mon-El commented.

"We've lost a couple of weaker members over the years," Ultra Boy noted sadly.

"Let's face it, none of the others can stand up to the level of power that we can," was Wildfire's contribution.

"I think we're agreed, then," said Superboy. "I hate that it's come to this, but the boys and girls with weak or defensive powers don't have a place in today's Legion. For their own good, we are going to have to expel the weaker members from the Legion." He looked round and saw that his fellows were in unanimous agreement.

Without warning, Tinya Wazzo, the Legionnaire known as Phantom Girl, burst into the room. Such was her hurry that she didn't wait for the door to open, instead using her phantom power to slip through the solid wall.

"Quick!" she cried...

## Part 3: Denouement

"Phantom Girl hasn't turned bad at all!" gasped Cosmic Boy. "It was a demonstration!"

"Um knewee gril umnt bad," mumbled Ultra Boy from the floor.

"Exactly!" crowed Saturn Girl. "With just a 'defensive' power she has faced, and defeated, four of our most powerful members!"

"Gee, I guess we feel pretty stupid now," said Superboy, blushing.

"Umnt stooped," chipped in Ultra Boy.

"You sure showed us, Phantom Girl," said Mon-El.

Embarrassed, Phantom Girl tried to wave off their admiring words. "It was nothing... nothing that *any* prepared Legionnaire couldn't have done. You boys seem to forget that raw power isn't everything. The rest of us might have to work a bit harder, but that doesn't mean we can't handle the job. And as for the danger... well, even the most powerful of us have weaknesses."

"I'm sorry, Phantom Girl," said Superboy. "It's been preying on my mind, with the loss of Ferro and now Lyle... but you're right, it's not the power that makes a Legionnaire. It's much more than that. And you all deserve your places."

"So say we all!"