



MARVEL
PREMIERE
EDITION

X-FACTOR

THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

DAVID • RAIMONDI • DE LANDRO

GLENN FABRY

Mutant Town is burning, and only X-Factor can save it — but only if they can save themselves first!

In the wake of the Decimation that saw more than 90 percent of the world's mutants depowered, X-Factor Investigations swore to protect Mutant Town and its inhabitants, powered and depowered alike. But recent events have left the team at its lowest ebb: Layla Miller is missing, lost in a nightmarish future timeline; team leader Jamie Madrox is haunted by memories of his own trip to that world; and Wolfsbane is quitting to join X-Force, terrified she will fulfill a prophecy and murder those dearest to her if she remains. To X-Factor, the future seems to hold nothing but fear and death. Surely things couldn't get worse for the beleaguered team? They sure can, because the master assassin Arcade has X-Factor firmly in his sights! With Mutant Town sealed off, its every street now part of Arcade's lethal Murderworld, can the members of X-Factor save themselves and the remaining residents before Arcade turns their world to ash? And even if they succeed, what sort of future awaits them? Government agent Val Cooper has an idea about that — but X-Factor's not going to like it!

And what about Decimation's unwitting architect, Pietro Maximoff? Like his one-time friends in X-Factor, the former Quicksilver appears to have hit rock bottom. He's lost everything: his friends, his family, his powers both mutant and Terrigen Mist derived, his freedom, maybe even his sanity. As Pietro languishes in prison, he is haunted by visions from his past. Is it too late for redemption? Can he return to being the hero he once was, or is he destined to follow his father Magneto's path into infamy? Will he choose life, or give into his demons? Will he be the quick — or the dead?



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X-FACTOR



THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN



X-FACTOR

THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Writer: PETER DAVID PREVIOUSLY:

Art, Issues #28, 31 & The Quick and the Dead:

PABLO RAIMONDI

Pencils, Issues #29-30 & 32:

VALENTINE DE LANDRO

Inks, Issues #29-30 & 32: ANDREW HENNESSY

WITH CRAIG YEUNG (ISSUE #32)

Colors: JEROMY COX

WITH CHRIS SOTOMAYOR (ISSUE #32)

Letters: VIRTUAL CALLIGRAPHY'S CORY PETIT

Covers, Issues #28-32: GLENN FABRY

Cover, The Quick and the Dead: BOO COOK

Editors: AUBREY SITTERSON WITH WILL PANZO

Collection Editor: JENNIFER GRÜNWALD

Editorial Assistant: ALEX STARBUCK

Assistant Editors: CORY LEVINE & JOHN DENNING

Editor, Special Projects: MARK D. BEAZLEY

Senior Editor, Special Projects: JEFF YOUNGQUIST

Senior Vice President of Sales: DAVID GABRIEL

Production: JERRY KALINOWSKI

Vice President of Creative: TOM MARVELLI

Editor in Chief: JOE QUESADA

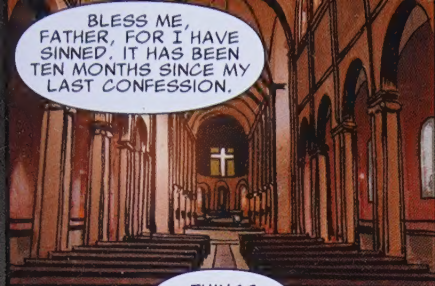
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In a society where mutants and non-mutants alike feel threatened by the hostile world around them, they turn to their first, best line of defense whenever trouble arises: X-Factor, the private detective agency founded by Madrox, the Multiple Man.

Mutantkind was nearing extinction, until for the first time since before M-Day, a mutant baby was born. A race to get control of the child followed, with different groups hoping to protect, manipulate, destroy and even devour the new mutant. In an attempt to learn about what the future held for the baby, Cyclops sent one of Jamie Madrox's duplicates into the future. Though it wasn't part of the plan, Layla Miller tagged along with the dupe, while in the present, Cyclops assembled the new X-Force team — a secret strike-force that Wolfsbane is unable to talk about.

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BLESS ME, FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED. IT HAS BEEN TEN MONTHS SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION.

THINGS HAVE BEEN... WELL... KIND OF AWFUL, HONESTLY.

IT SEEMS LATELY ALL THAT MY FRIENDS AND I HAVE BEEN DOING IS FIGHTING JUST TO SURVIVE. FIGHTING AND FIGHTING AND--

FIGHTING WHOM, MY CHILD?

PEOPLE WHO HATE US... BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE WERE BORN.



YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING PREJUDICE.

AND PEOPLE WHOSE PREJUDICE MAKES THEM WANT TO DESTROY US.

THAT'S A WORTHY GOAL, MY CHILD. HARDLY SOMETHING YOU NEED REPENT... UNLESS THERE ARE OTHER THINGS YOU'VE...?

OH, WELL. UH... I TOOK THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN. A LOT.



AND, UH... I COVETED MY FRIEND'S NEW IPHONE. BIG-TIME COVETING.

AND I HAD IMPURE THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS GUY, JAMIE.

I SEE. ANYTHING ELSE?

NOT REALLY.

VERY WELL. TWO HAIL MARYS AND AN ACT OF CONTRI--



AND I GOT MYSELF KNOCKED UP WITH JAMIE'S CHILD.

...

AH.

YEAH.



AFTERMATH

"DOES THIS JAMIE
KNOW ABOUT YOUR...
CONDITION?"

"NOT, UH...NOT YET.
THINGS HAVE BEEN SO...
I MEAN, HE'S JUST BEEN
SO STRESSED. IF I TELL
HIM, HE'LL BE..."

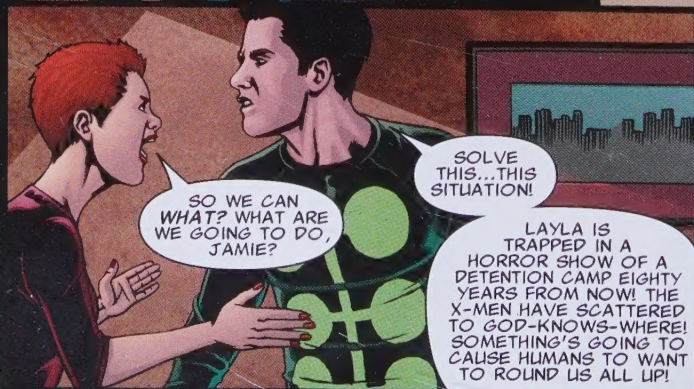
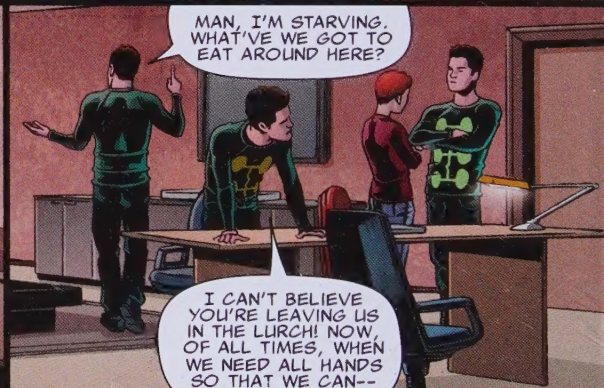
"HE'LL BE WHAT,
MY CHILD? UPSET?
BESIDE HIMSELF?"

"YOU COULD
SAY THAT."

HOW CAN
YOU DO THIS
TO US, RAHNEE?
DAMMIT--!

I'M
NOT DOING
ANYTHING TO YE,
JAMIE! IF YOU'D
JUST LISTEN...

SHE'S
NOT BEING
UNREASONABLE,
YOU KNOW, TO
ASK THAT
YOU--





I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T FREAKING KNOW! OKAY? HAPPY? I--

STOP YELLING AT HER! DON'T YOU SEE THAT THIS WILL JUST DRIVE HER AWAY FASTER!

DID YOU EVER THINK MAYBE IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT SHE'S LEAVING IN THE--



YEAH, OKAY, YOU'RE DONE.



JAMIE...

WHAT?

WE'VE BEEN GOING BACK AND FORTH ON THIS FOR HALF AN HOUR. CAN'T YE RESPECT THAT I'VE MADE UP MY MIND, THAT I HAVE MUH REASONS, THAT...



NO. I'M SORRY, RAHNE. I CAN'T RESPECT THAT.

I CAN'T RESPECT SOMEONE WHO BAILS ON HER FRIENDS AND WON'T SAY WHY.

ESPECIALLY WHEN I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED HER THE MOST SINCERE... THE MOST HONEST... THE MOST SPIRITUALLY ANCHORED PERSON I'VE EVER KNOWN.

I CAN'T RESPECT A HYPOCRITE.



GO. GO AND BE DAMNED. SEE WHAT I CARE.



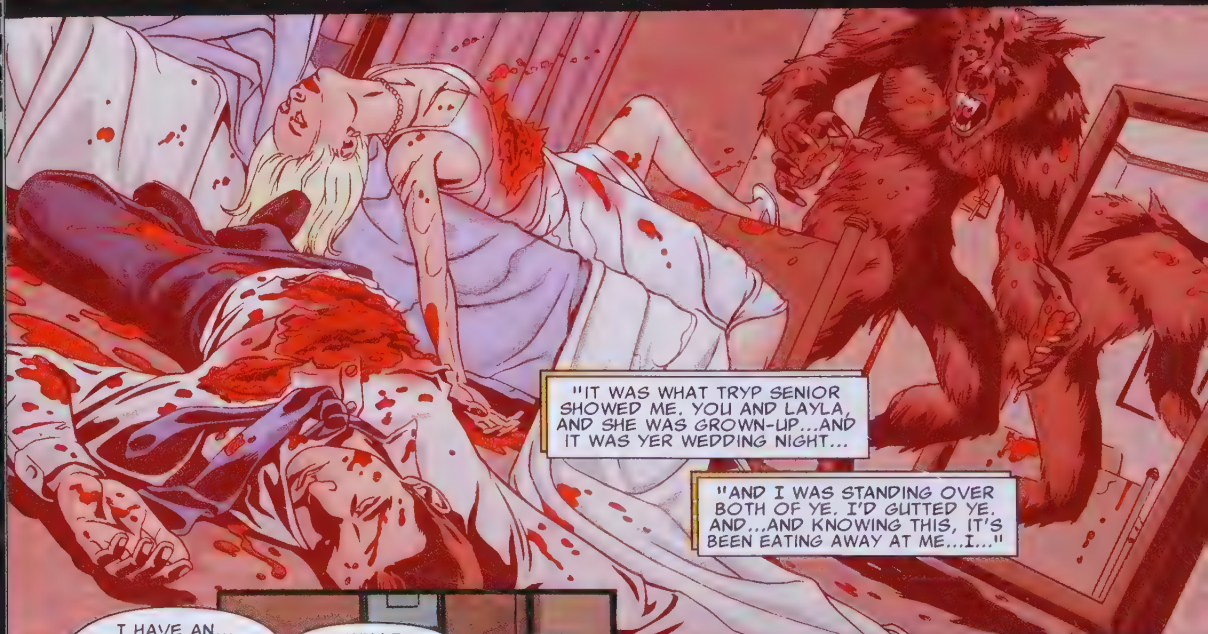
YE BLOODY--!
HOW DARE YE! WHO
THE HELL DO YE
THINK YE ARE!

I THOUGHT I
WAS YOUR FRIEND!
OBVIOUSLY, I THOUGHT
WRONG! BUT DON'T
WORRY, YOU'RE MAKING
IT ABUNDANTLY
CLEAR THAT--



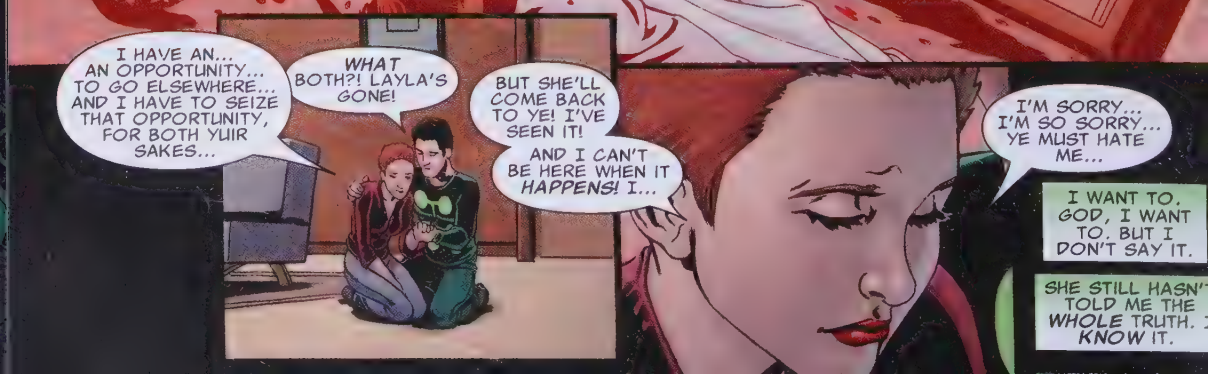
I KILLED
YE! THE BOTH
OF YE!

UH...
WHAT?



"IT WAS WHAT TRY'P SENIOR
SHOWED ME, YOU AND LAYLA,
AND SHE WAS GROWN-UP...AND
IT WAS YER WEDDING NIGHT...

"AND I WAS STANDING OVER
BOTH OF YE. I'D GUTTED YE.
AND...AND KNOWING THIS, IT'S
BEEN EATING AWAY AT ME...I..."



I HAVE AN...
AN OPPORTUNITY...
TO GO ELSEWHERE...
AND I HAVE TO SEIZE
THAT OPPORTUNITY,
FOR BOTH YUIR
SAKES...

WHAT
BOTH?! LAYLA'S
GONE!

BUT SHE'LL
COME BACK
TO YE! I'VE
SEEN IT!

AND I CAN'T
BE HERE WHEN IT
HAPPENS! I...

I'M SORRY...
I'M SO SORRY...
YE MUST HATE
ME...

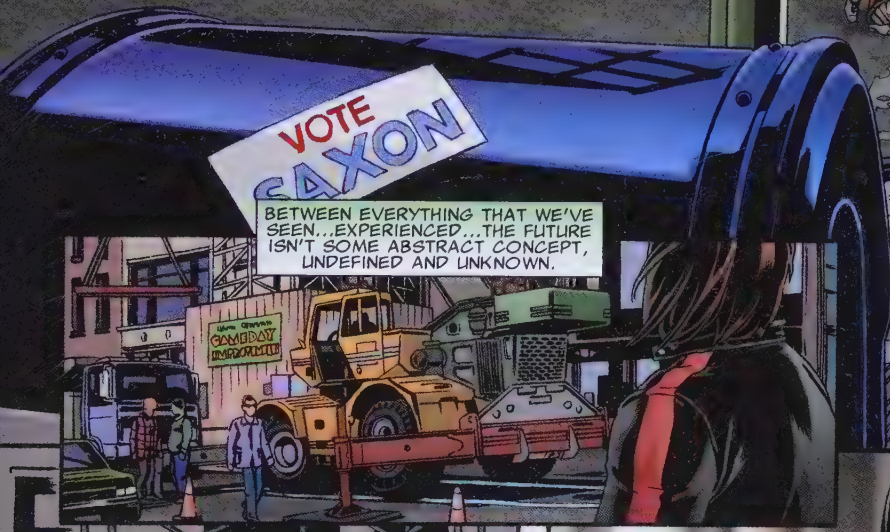
I WANT TO.
GOD, I WANT
TO. BUT I
DON'T SAY IT.

SHE STILL HASN'T
TOLD ME THE
WHOLE TRUTH.
I KNOW IT.

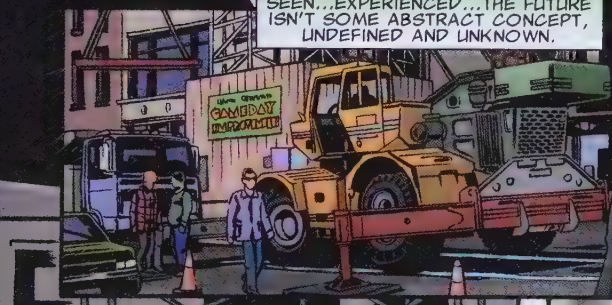


JUST AS SHE HASN'T TOLD ME ABOUT HER INVOLVEMENT WITH RICTOR...EXCEPT SHE DOESN'T KNOW I FIGURED IT OUT.

I SHOULD BE ANGRY AT HER... BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I KNOW HOW SHE FEELS.



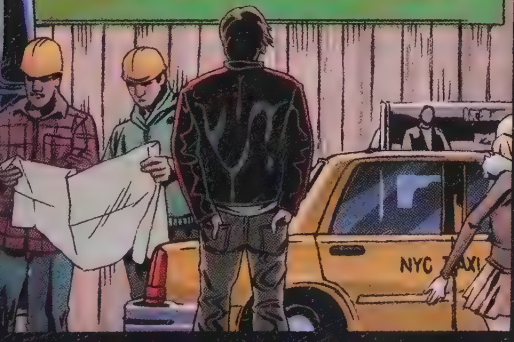
BETWEEN EVERYTHING THAT WE'VE SEEN...EXPERIENCED...THE FUTURE ISN'T SOME ABSTRACT CONCEPT, UNDEFINED AND UNKNOWN.



IT'S BEARING DOWN ON US LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN. WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO FIND SOME MEANS OF GETTING OUT OF ITS WAY?

STILL, IN THE END, I CAN'T BE TOO ANGRY WITH HER FOR THE THINGS SHE'S HELD BACK... THANKS TO THE HOPE THAT SHE'S GIVEN ME.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION:
GAMEDAY IMPROVEMENTS



WE'RE GOING TO GET LAYLA BACK.

BUT MY HOPE IS TEMPERED WITH BURNING FURY BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW HOW TO BRING THAT ABOUT.

I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY. I'VE GOT TO FIND--

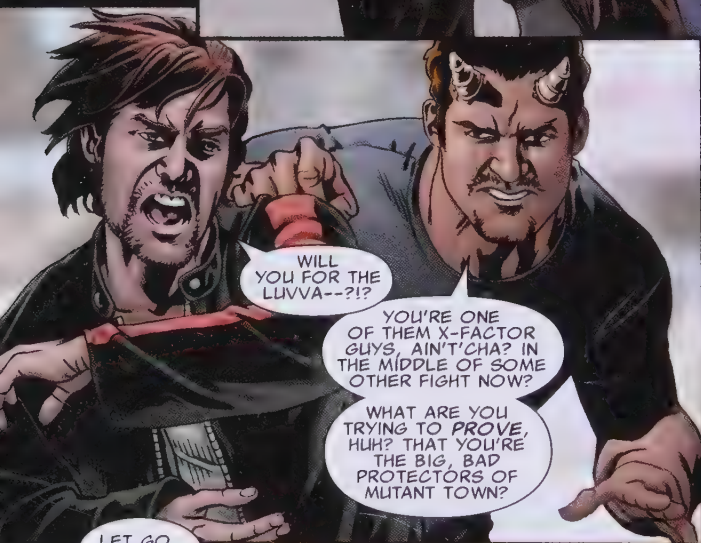




LAYLA!

WATCH IT, JERK!

LAYLA!!!



WILL YOU FOR THE LUVVA--?!?

YOU'RE ONE OF THEM X-FACTOR GUYS, AIN'T'CHA? IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME OTHER FIGHT NOW?

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE, HUH? THAT YOU'RE THE BIG, BAD PROTECTORS OF MUTANT TOWN?

LET GO, IMBECIL!



WHY DON'T YOU JUST CLEAR OUT WITH THE REST OF THE PANS AND LEAVE US OUT OF--

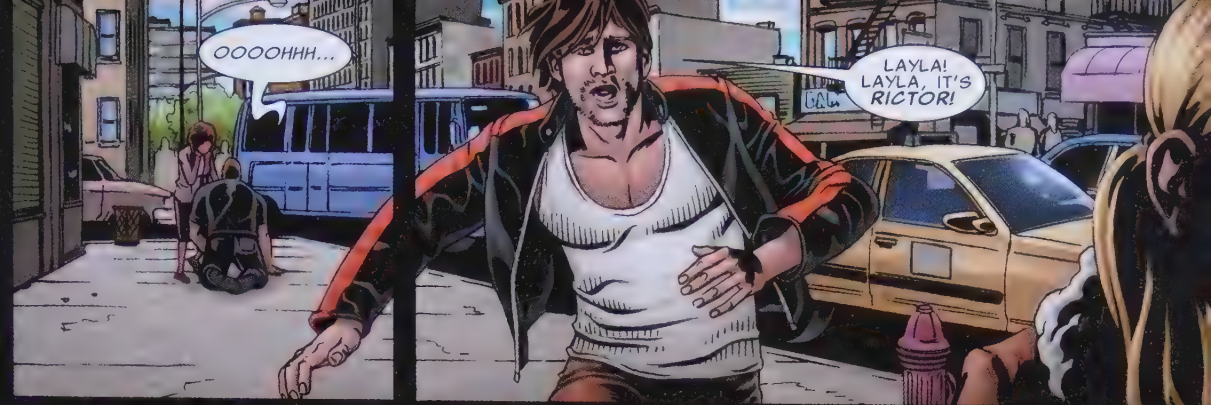
UNNFFFFF!



YOU TELL HIM, HONEY!

HELLO! LOOK AROUND! THERE AIN'T NO MORE MUTANTS!

NO ONE'S EVEN CALLING IT MUTANT TOWN! IT'S THE MIDDLE EAST SIDE!



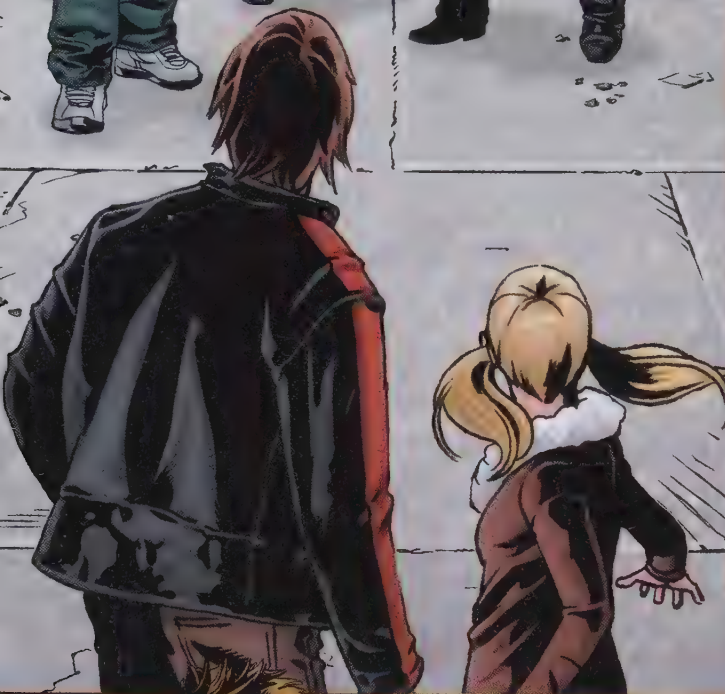


NOBODY
ROUGHS UP MY
GIRLS! ESPECIALLY
WHEN THEY
HAVEN'T PAID
FOR IT!

YOUR GIRLS?
YOU GOT MORE
LIKE HER?

GUY'S GOTTA
MAKE A LIVING,
HOTSHOT.

NOW
I SUGGEST
YOU JUST
BACK OFF...



AND I
SUGGEST
YOU KISS
MY--

HEY FELLAS!
LOOKS LIKE WE
GOT US A HERO.



LOOKS
LIKE YOU
DO.

YOU
LOOKING
FOR TROUBLE,
HERO?

MORE
THAN YOU CAN
BELIEVE.

WELL,
THEN, YOU
FOUND MORE
THAN YOU--



UNNNHHHHH!!!!

KRAK!



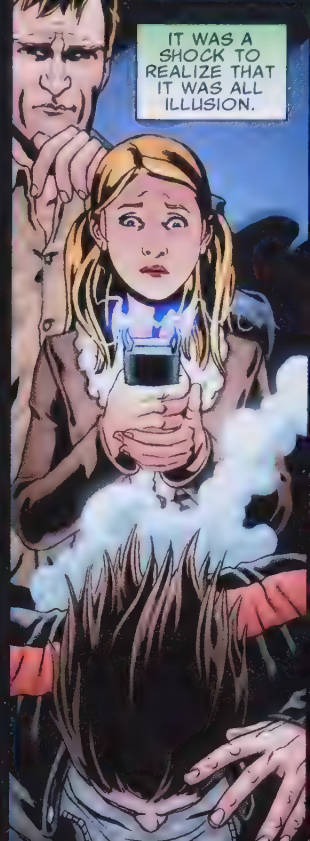
WE NEEDED SOMETHING
TO BELIEVE IN. ME, RICTOR,
THE REST OF THE TEAM.

NEEDED TO BELIEVE
WE WERE FIGHTING
FOR SOMETHING.



FOR ACCEPTANCE
OF MUTANTS. FOR THE
FUTURE OF OUR RACE.

OR EVEN JUST MAKING
OUR OWN LITTLE PIECE OF
THE WORLD A BIT SAFER.



IT WAS A
SHOCK TO
REALIZE THAT
IT WAS ALL
ILLUSION.



THAT NOT ONLY
COULD WE NOT MAKE
MUTANT TOWN SAFER...

...WE COULDN'T
EVEN KEEP
OURSELVES SAFE.

SIRYN KIDNAPPED...
GUIDO BRAINWASHED...
RAHNE MENTALLY
TRAUMATIZED...

BUT LOSING
LAYLA...IT
WAS LIKE...



MY GOD, HOW MUCH
PUNISHMENT ARE WE
SUPPOSED TO ENDURE?

WHEN LAYLA WAS HERE,
WE LAUGHED AT HER WHOLE
"I KNOW STUFF" THING.

BUT WE ALSO HAD
FAITH THAT WHAT SHE
KNEW WOULD HELP US.

WHO'LL
HELP US
NOW?

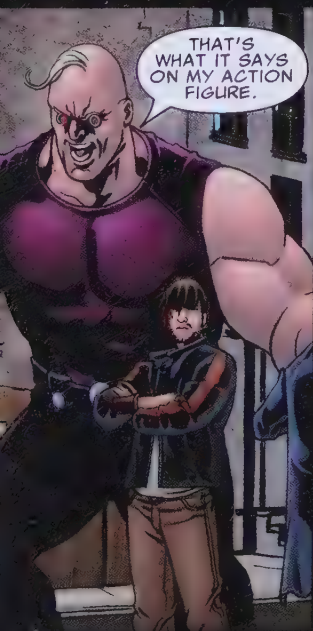




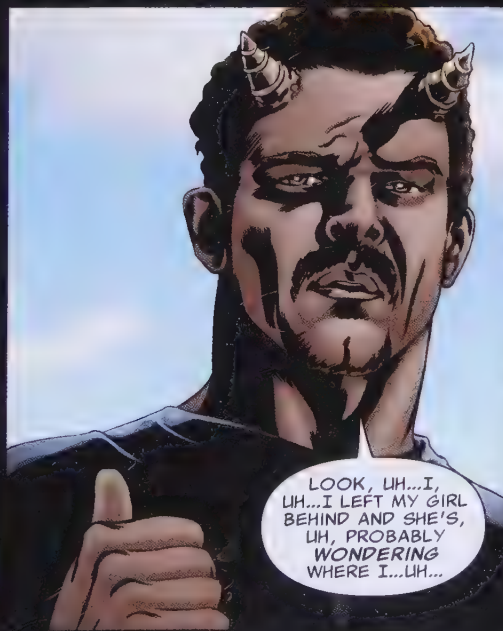
PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS SAYIN' I SHOULD PICK ON SOMEBODY MY OWN SIZE. SO HOWZABOUT THIS?

I MUSH ALL OF YOU GUYS TOGETHER INTO ONE BIG GUY AND THEN WE CAN FIGHT.

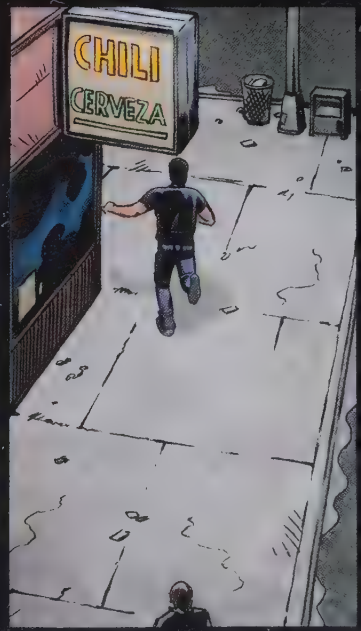
THAT WORK FOR YOU?



THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS ON MY ACTION FIGURE.



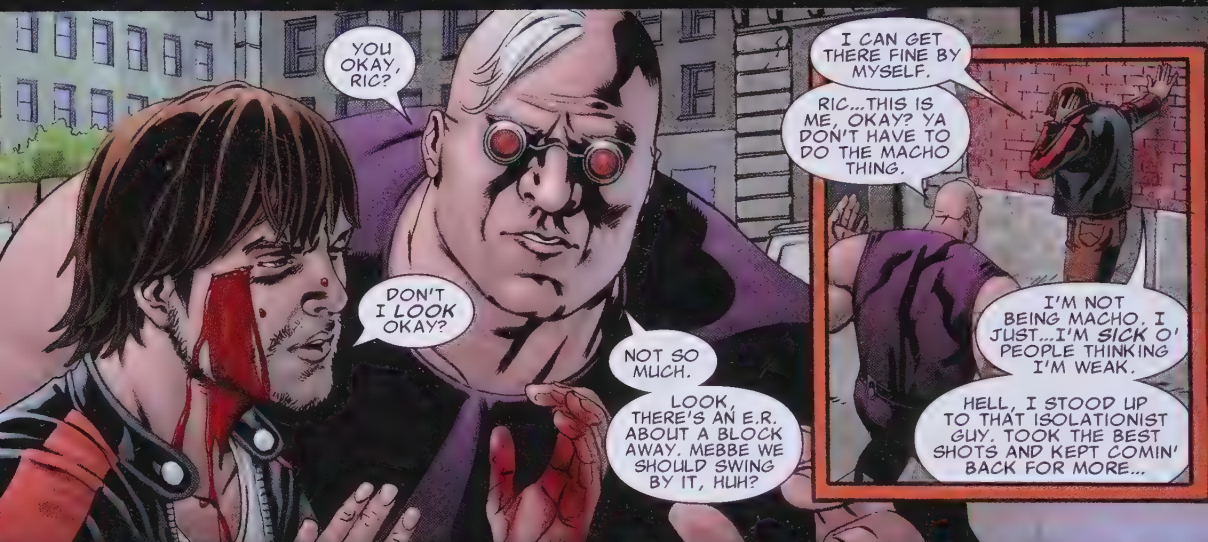
LOOK, UH...I, UH...I LEFT MY GIRL BEHIND AND SHE'S, UH, PROBABLY WONDERING WHERE I...UH...





GET OUT
OF MUTANT
TOWN.

AND STAY
OUT.



YOU
OKAY, RIC?

DON'T
I LOOK
OKAY?

NOT SO
MUCH.

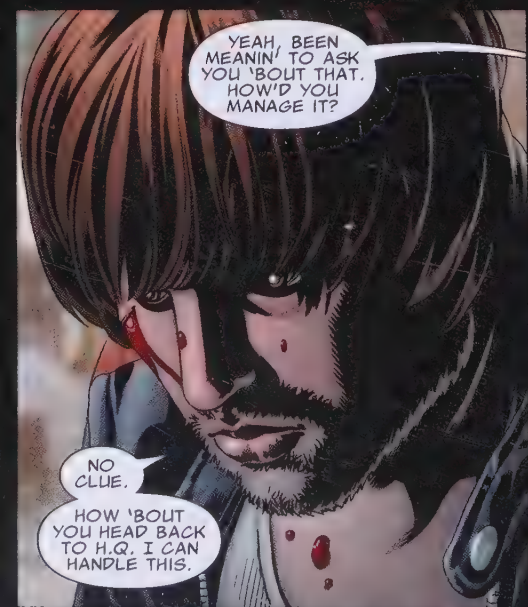
LOOK,
THERE'S AN E.R.
ABOUT A BLOCK
AWAY. MEBBE WE
SHOULD SWING
BY IT, HUH?

I CAN GET
THERE FINE BY
MYSELF.

RIC...THIS IS
ME, OKAY? YA
DON'T HAVE TO
DO THE MACHO
THING.

I'M NOT
BEING MACHO. I
JUST...I'M SICK O'
PEOPLE THINKING
I'M WEAK.

HELL, I STOOD UP
TO THAT ISOLATIONIST
GUY. TOOK THE BEST
SHOTS AND KEPT COMIN'
BACK FOR MORE...



YEAH, BEEN
MEANIN' TO ASK
YOU 'BOUT THAT.
HOW'D YOU
MANAGE IT?

NO
CLUE.

HOW 'BOUT
YOU HEAD BACK
TO H.Q. I CAN
HANDLE THIS.



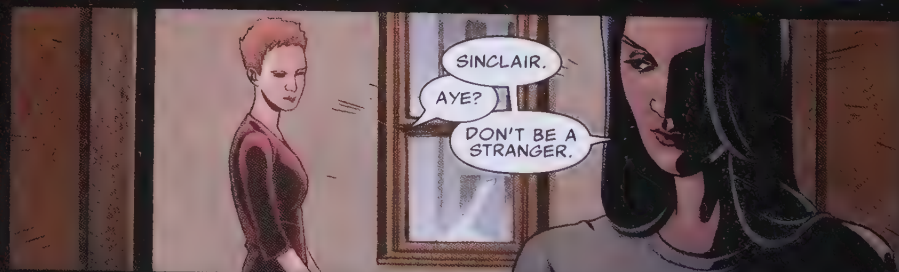
MAN, I WISH
I COULD. I WISH
I KNEW HOW TO
QUIT YOU.

YOU'RE A
RIOT,
GUIDO.



YEAH,
I'M A MILLION
LAUGHS.





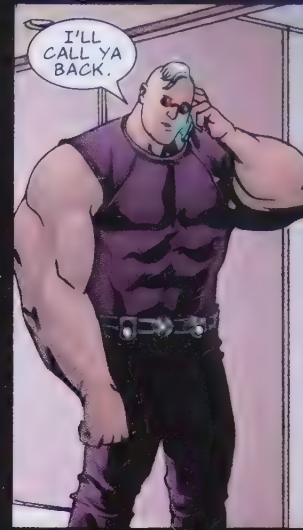
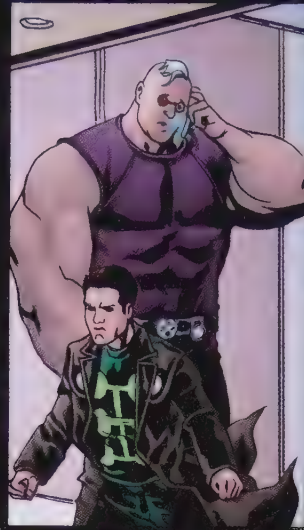


THIS IS MADROX. ACTUALLY, THIS IS HIS VOICEMAIL. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE. ♪CLICK♪

YEAH, MADROX? THIS IS GUIDO.

WHICH YA PROBL'Y FIGURED WHEN YA HEARD IT, 'CAUSE MY VOICE IS...Y'KNOW, KINDA...

LOOK, ANYWAY, I FIGURED YOU'D WANNA KNOW THAT RICTOR IS--



I'LL CALL YA BACK.



YO, MADROX.

WHERE YA GOING?

I'M LOOKING FOR SOME GUYS TO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF.

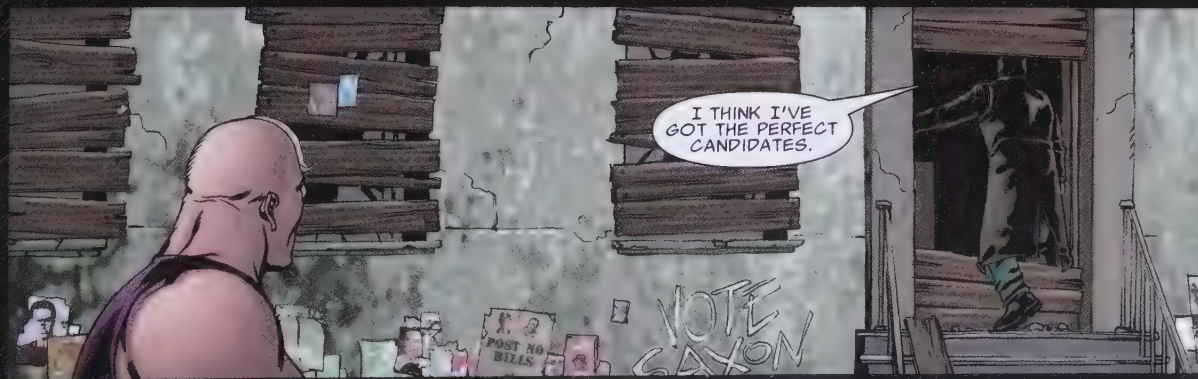
WELL, I ALREADY BEAT THE CRAP OUTTA SOME GUYS, SO I FILLED MY QUOTA FOR T'DAY, BUT SOMETIMES I JUST LIKE T'WATCH.

I CAN RELATE.

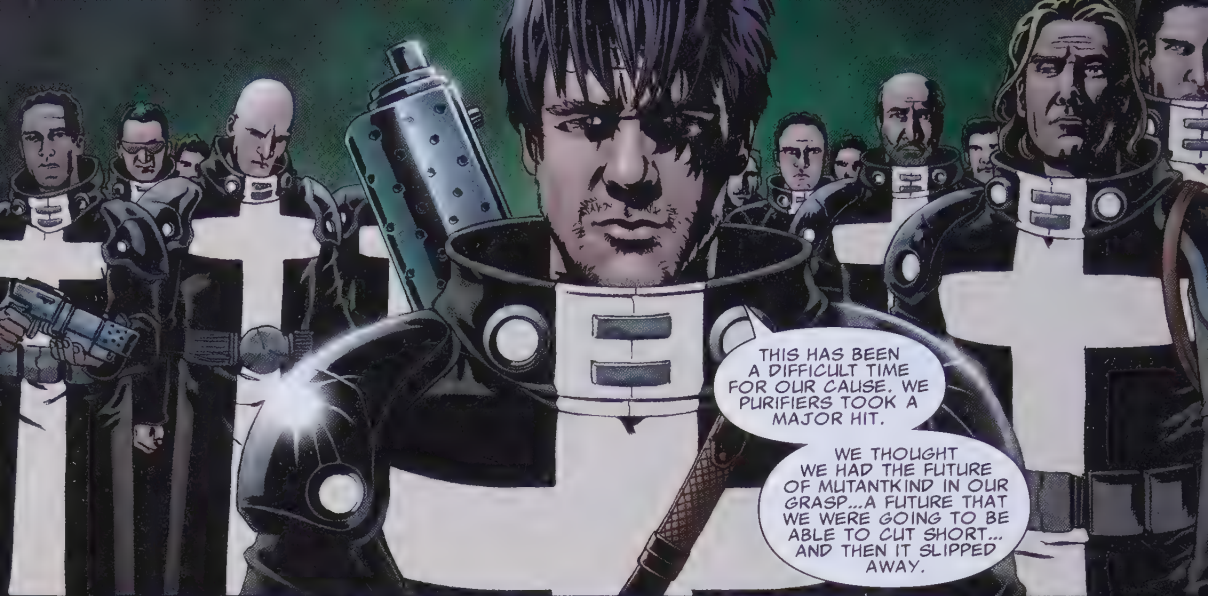


LOOKING FOR ANY GUYS IN PARTICULAR TO BEAT UP?

ACTUALLY, FROM SOME THINGS I'VE BEEN HEARING AROUND THE POWER PLANT...



I THINK I'VE GOT THE PERFECT CANDIDATES.



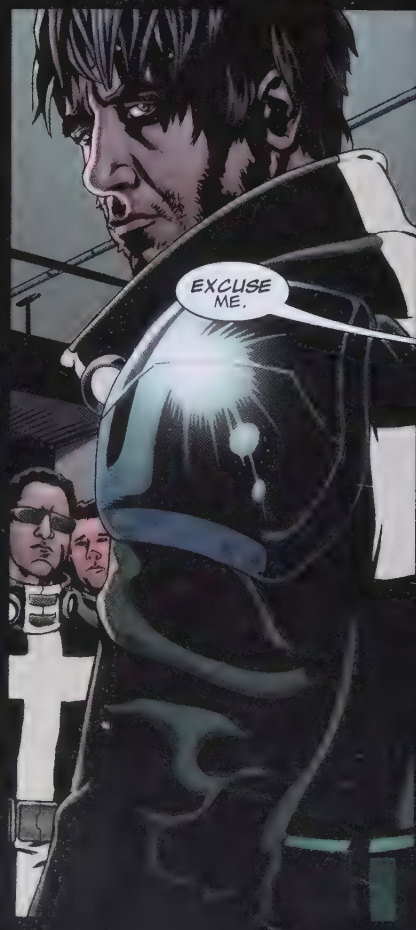
THIS HAS BEEN
A DIFFICULT TIME
FOR OUR CAUSE. WE
PURIFIERS TOOK A
MAJOR HIT.

WE THOUGHT
WE HAD THE FUTURE
OF MUTANTKIND IN OUR
GRASP...A FUTURE THAT
WE WERE GOING TO BE
ABLE TO CUT SHORT...
AND THEN IT SLIPPED
AWAY.

BUT TAKE HEART,
MY BROTHERS,
TAKE HEART.

BECAUSE I AM ASSURED
BY OUR LEADERSHIP THAT
THIS IS NOT OVER. NOT
IN THE LEAST.

WE ARE GOING TO TAKE
BACK THIS AREA...THIS SO-
CALLED MUTANT TOWN...AND
TRANSFORM IT BACK INTO THE
MIDDLE EAST SIDE, AS IT WAS
BEFORE THE UNHOLY
CREATURES--



EXCUSE
ME.



HEY THERE.
HOW YOU DOING?
LOVE WHAT YOU'VE
DONE WITH THE
PLACE.

LOOK,
I'D LIKE TO SAY
SOMETHING TO YOU
GUYS, AND I'D REALLY
APPRECIATE IT IF
YOU LISTENED.



I KNOW YOU!
YOU'RE MADROXI! HOW
DARE YOU PROFANE OUR
GATHERING WITH YOUR
FOUL PRESENCE!

I SHOULD
HAVE KILLED
YOU THE INSTANT
I SAW YOU--!

BOOM

YOU'RE
RIGHT.
YOU
SHOULD
HAVE.

WUMF-WUMF-WUMF

I USED TO
HAVE SUCH HOPE
THAT, SOONER OR
LATER, IT WOULD
WORK OUT.

SUCH FAITH
THAT EVENTUALLY
OUR TWO RACES
WOULD COME TO AN
UNDERSTANDING.

THAT DARK
PREMONITIONS
OF THE FUTURE
COULD BE
AVOIDED.

AND I'VE COME
TO REALIZE THAT PART
OF THE REASON I'VE
FELT LIKE THAT LATELY...
WAS BECAUSE OF
ONE GIRL.

BECAUSE SHE
WAS SO BRIGHT, SO
CHEERY AND FUNNY AND
SOMEHOW SHE WAS
ALWAYS SECURE IN THE
KNOWLEDGE THAT THINGS
WERE GOING TO
WORK OUT.

BECAUSE
SHE KNEW
STUFF.



AND
NOW SHE'S
GONE.

AND THE
ONLY FUTURE I
KNOW IS FILLED
WITH DESPAIR.

AND I...I
HAVE TO STOP
IT. AND I DON'T
KNOW WHERE
TO START.

DOESN'T
MEAN I WON'T
GIVE IT A TRY.



OH,
THANK
GOD.

REINFORCEMENTS.



AND HERE I
THOUGHT THIS
WAS GOING
TO BE BORING.




MADROX!
YOU OKAY IN
THERE?

I THOUGHT I
HEARD A NOISE
FROM AROUND THE
BACK! DO YOU
NEED ANY--?

THERE IS NO
HOPE ANYMORE.
LAYLA IS GONE.

THERE IS NO
FAITH ANYMORE.
RAHNE IS GONE.



WITHOUT THEM, THE ONLY
THING THAT REMAINS IS
TAKING ACTION. EVEN IF IT'S
MINDLESS...AND BRUTAL...AND
DESIGNED ONLY TO RELIEVE
THE FURY THAT MAKES EVERY
PART OF MY BRAIN
FEEL LIKE IT'S ON FIRE.

THESE PURIFIERS PROBABLY
THINK THEIR LEADER IS DEAD.
THEY DON'T KNOW I WAS
ONLY FIRING TRANQ BULLETS.

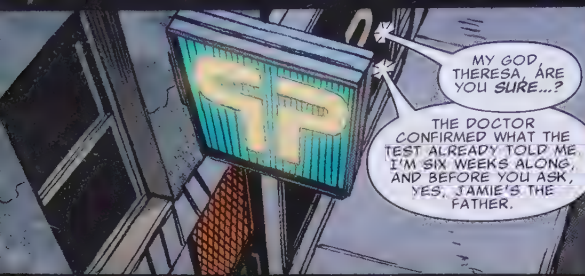
NO FAITH, NO HOPE...BUT
I STILL HAVE COMPASSION.
IT'S THE ONE THING THAT
STILL SEPARATES
ME FROM MY ENEMIES.

AND AS I SWEAT
THROUGH THE MAKEUP
THAT I'VE BEEN USING
TO COVER MY TATTOO...

I FIND MYSELF WONDERING
WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED...
TO TAKE MY COMPASSION
AWAY AS WELL.

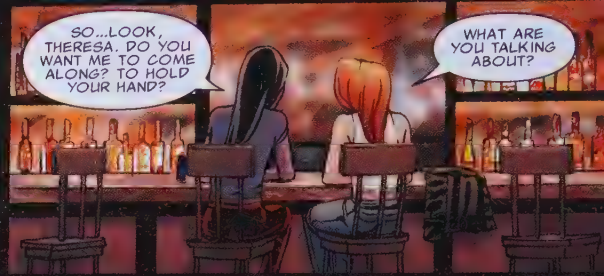
WHAT WILL THE
FINAL THING BE...
THAT DESTROYS
EVERYTHING I AM.





MY GOD, THERESA, ARE YOU SURE...?

THE DOCTOR CONFIRMED WHAT THE TEST ALREADY TOLD ME. I'M SIX WEEKS ALONG, AND BEFORE YOU ASK, YES, JAMIE'S THE FATHER.



SO...LOOK, THERESA. DO YOU WANT ME TO COME ALONG? TO HOLD YOUR HAND?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



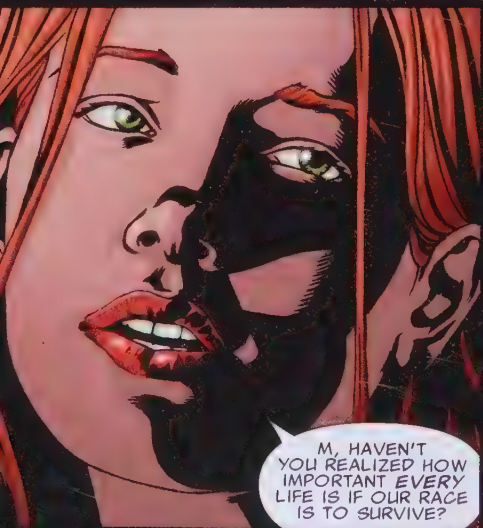
WELL, WHEN YOU GO FOR THE... YOU KNOW.

WAIT...M! YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY THINK I'D...CRIPES! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A LIFE!

WHAT ABOUT YOUR LIFE, HUH? YOU DON'T NEED IT SADDLED WITH...I MEAN, COME ON! YOU'RE TOO YOUNG...!

I'M THE SAME AGE MY MOTHER WAS, MONET.

AND I'M SURE HER BEST FRIEND TOLD HER WHAT I'M TELLING YOU, EXCEPT MAYBE YOU'LL BE SMART ENOUGH TO LISTEN.



M, HAVEN'T YOU REALIZED HOW IMPORTANT EVERY LIFE IS IF OUR RACE IS TO SURVIVE?



OH, SO YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM. WONDERFUL.

AND MADROX? A FATHER? PLEASE. YOUR EMBRYO IS MORE MATURE.

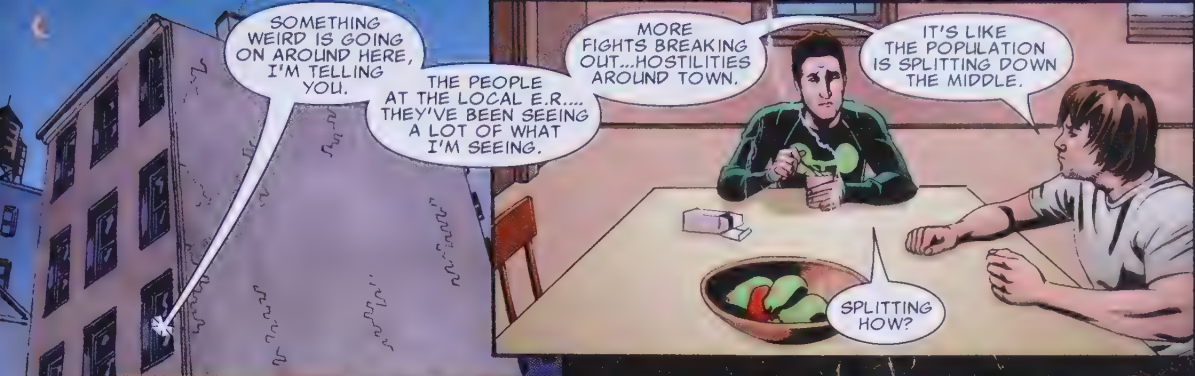
MAYBE HE'LL SURPRISE YOU. AND SINCE WHEN ARE YOU MY BEST FRIEND?

WELL, WITH RAHNE GONE, I'M THE CLOSEST YOU'VE GOT.



RAHNE'S GONE? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?





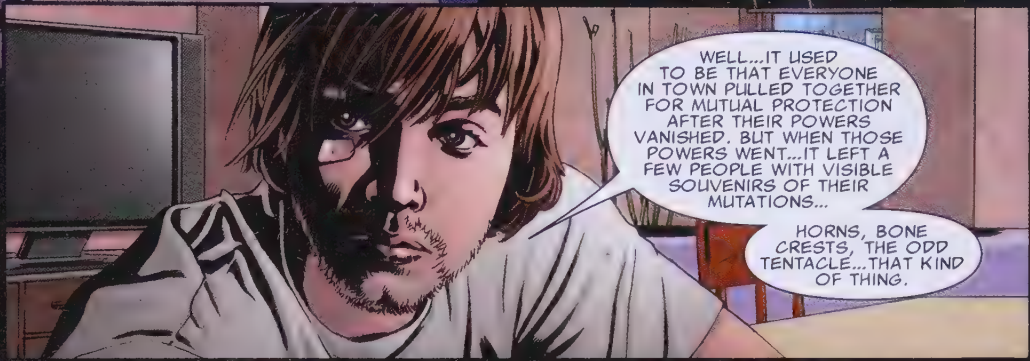
SOMETHING WEIRD IS GOING ON AROUND HERE, I'M TELLING YOU.

THE PEOPLE AT THE LOCAL E.R.... THEY'VE BEEN SEEING A LOT OF WHAT I'M SEEING.

MORE FIGHTS BREAKING OUT...HOSTILITIES AROUND TOWN.

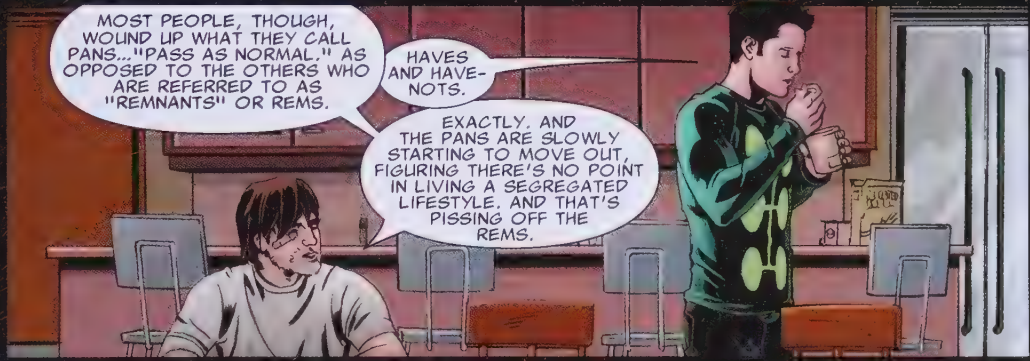
IT'S LIKE THE POPULATION IS SPLITTING DOWN THE MIDDLE.

SPLITTING HOW?



WELL...IT USED TO BE THAT EVERYONE IN TOWN PULLED TOGETHER FOR MUTUAL PROTECTION AFTER THEIR POWERS VANISHED. BUT WHEN THOSE POWERS WENT...IT LEFT A FEW PEOPLE WITH VISIBLE SOLVENIRS OF THEIR MUTATIONS...

HORNS, BONE CRESTS, THE ODD TENTACLE...THAT KIND OF THING.



MOST PEOPLE, THOUGH, WOUND UP WHAT THEY CALL PANS..."PASS AS NORMAL." AS OPPOSED TO THE OTHERS WHO ARE REFERRED TO AS "REMNANTS" OR REMS.

HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS.

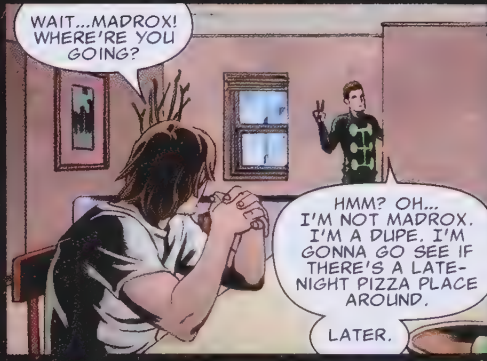
EXACTLY. AND THE PANS ARE SLOWLY STARTING TO MOVE OUT, FIGURING THERE'S NO POINT IN LIVING A SEGREGATED LIFESTYLE. AND THAT'S PISSING OFF THE REMS.



AND THEN THERE'S THIS CONTRACTOR WHO'S SPRUNG UP EVERYWHERE. I DUNNO WHAT'S UP WITH THAT.

WHAT'S THE REST OF THE TEAM SAY?

NO ONE WILL LISTEN TO ME. SIRYN AND MONET WERE IN THE BAR ACROSS THE STREET AND ALMOST TOOK MY HEAD OFF WHEN I TRIED TO INTERRUPT. GUIDO DITCHED ME AT THE E.R.



WAIT...MADROX! WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

HMM? OH... I'M NOT MADROX. I'M A DUPE. I'M GONNA GO SEE IF THERE'S A LATE-NIGHT PIZZA PLACE AROUND.

LATER.

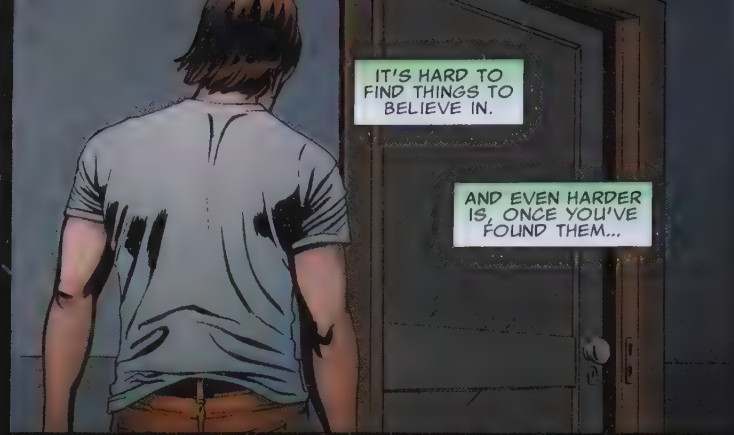


GREAT.



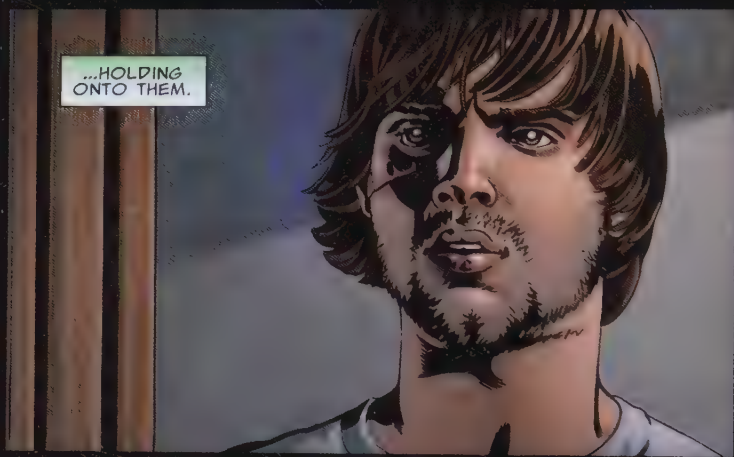
FINE. SO NO
ONE ELSE WILL
LISTEN TO ME.

BUT RAHNE
WILL. I KNOW IT.
WE'RE ON THE
SAME WAVELENGTH.
ALWAYS HAVE
BEEN.

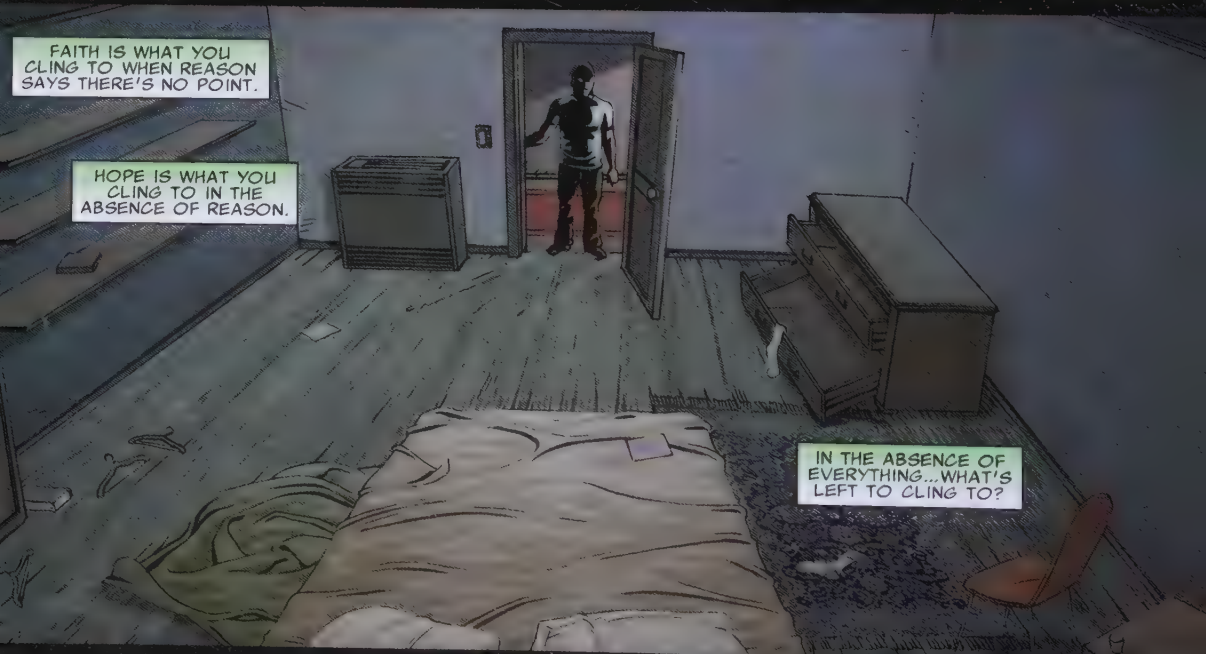


IT'S HARD TO
FIND THINGS TO
BELIEVE IN.

AND EVEN HARDER
IS, ONCE YOU'VE
FOUND THEM...



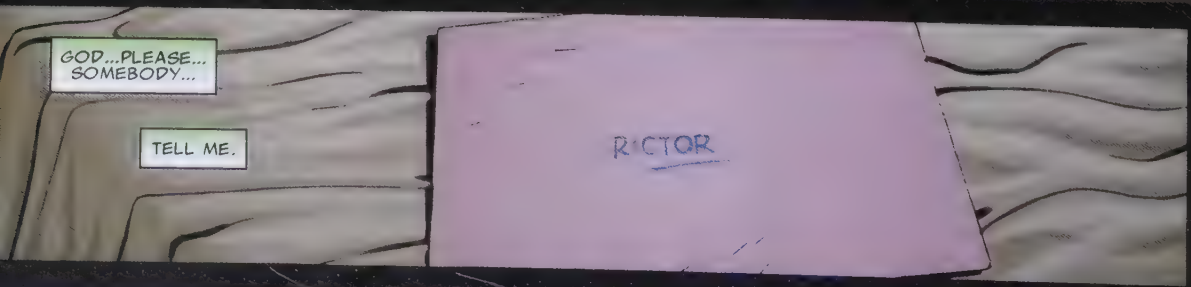
...HOLDING
ONTO THEM.



FAITH IS WHAT YOU
CLING TO WHEN REASON
SAYS THERE'S NO POINT.

HOPE IS WHAT YOU
CLING TO IN THE
ABSENCE OF REASON.

IN THE ABSENCE OF
EVERYTHING...WHAT'S
LEFT TO CLING TO?



GOD...PLEASE...
SOMEBODY...

TELL ME.

RICKTOR

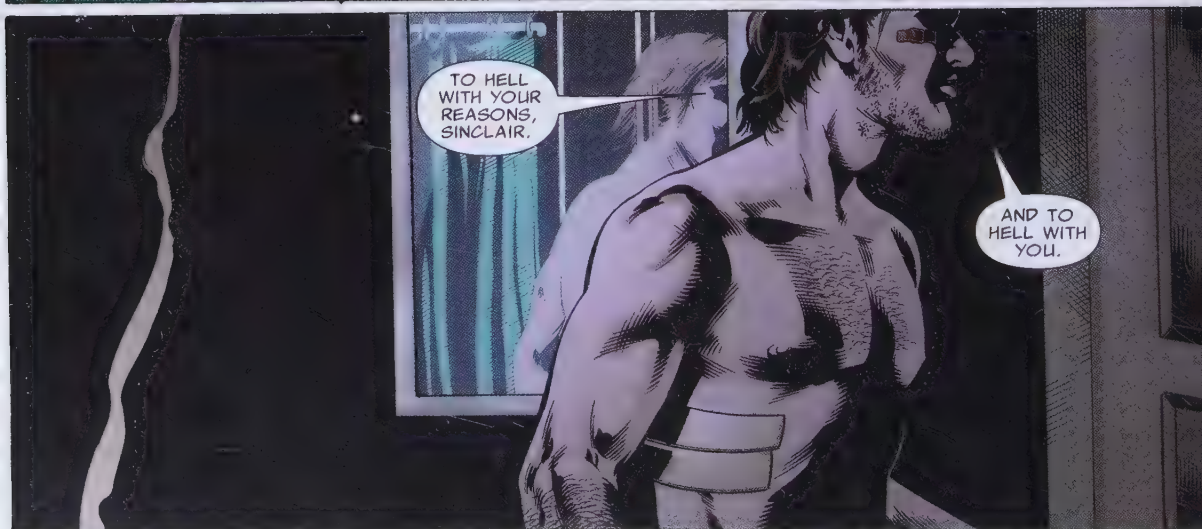
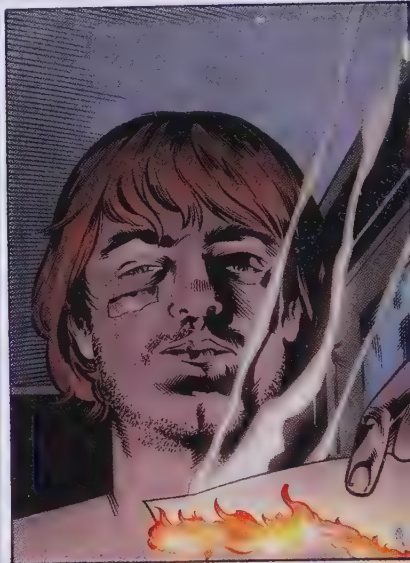
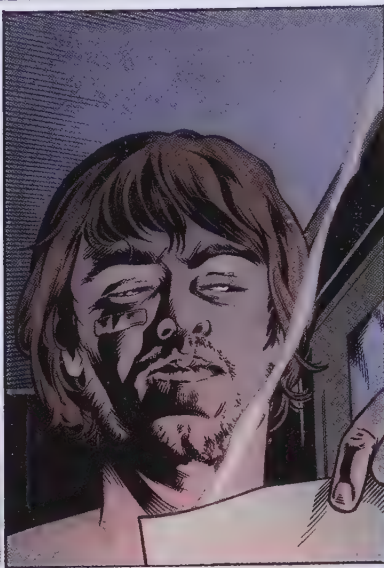




Dear Rictor,

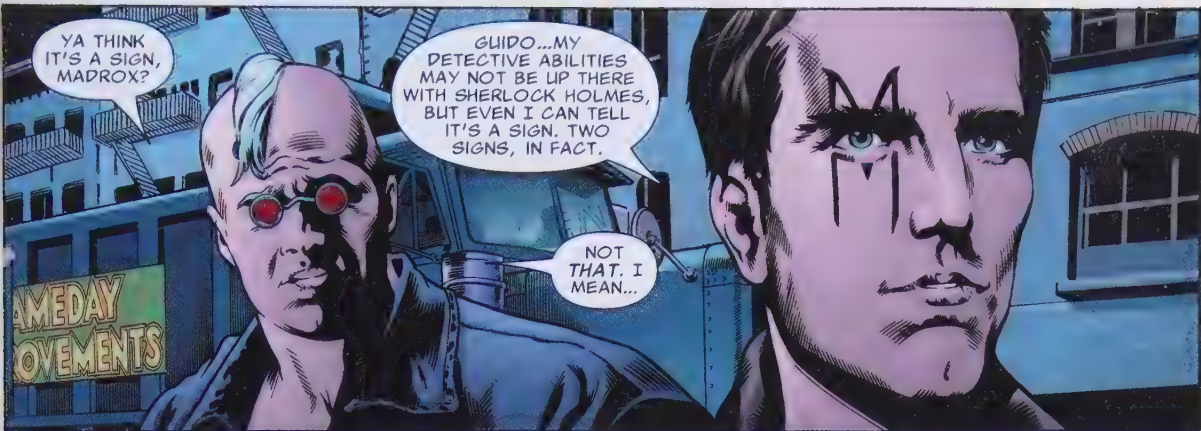
By the time you read this, I'll be gone.

And I think it's important that you understand the reasons why I--



TO HELL
WITH YOUR
REASONS,
SINCLAIR.

AND TO
HELL WITH
YOU.



YA THINK
IT'S A SIGN,
MADROX?

GUIDO...MY
DETECTIVE ABILITIES
MAY NOT BE UP THERE
WITH SHERLOCK HOLMES,
BUT EVEN I CAN TELL
IT'S A SIGN. TWO
SIGNS, IN FACT.

NOT
THAT. I
MEAN...



MAYBE IT'S
A SIGN THAT WE
SHOULD RETHINK
THINGS.

THE POWER
PLANT'S BEEN THE
MIDDLE EAST SIDE'S
WATERIN' HOLE SINCE
FOREVER. IF EVEN
THEY'RE PACKIN'
IT IN...

THE
"MIDDLE EAST
SIDE"?



THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE CALLIN'
MUTANT TOWN THESE DAYS.
GUESS IT MAKES SENSE, WHAT
WITH THE LACK OF...WHAT'S
THE WORD...?

MUTANTS.

YEAH,
THEM.



JAMIE,
DID'JA
THINK THAT
MAYBE...?

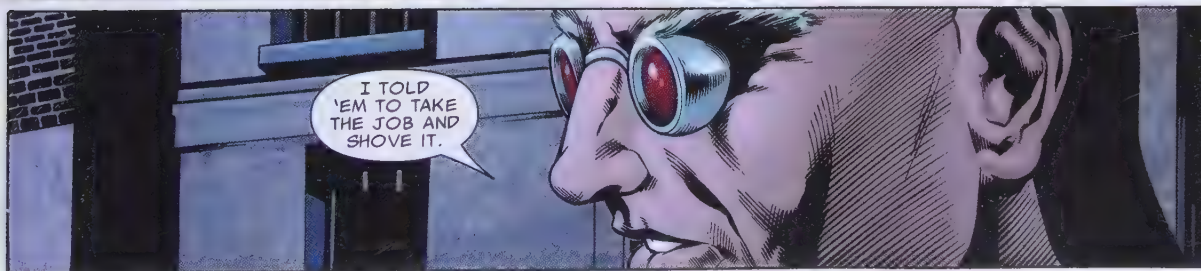
NO.

I'M JUST
SAYING THAT
WE MIGHT DO
MORE GOOD
ELSEWH--

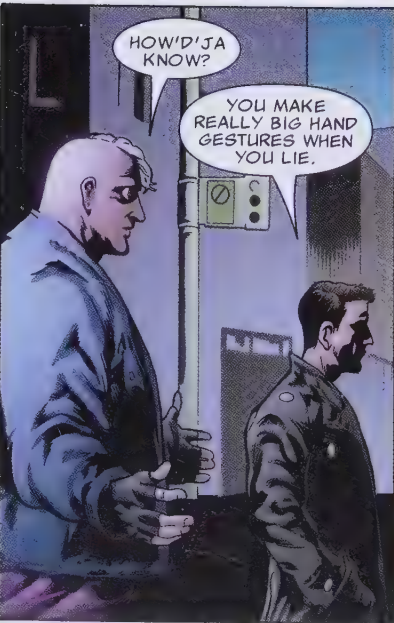
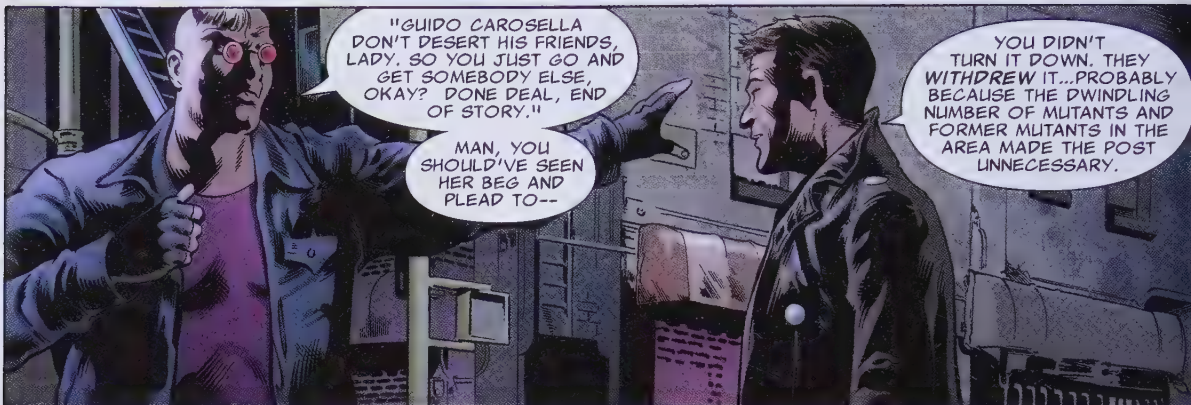


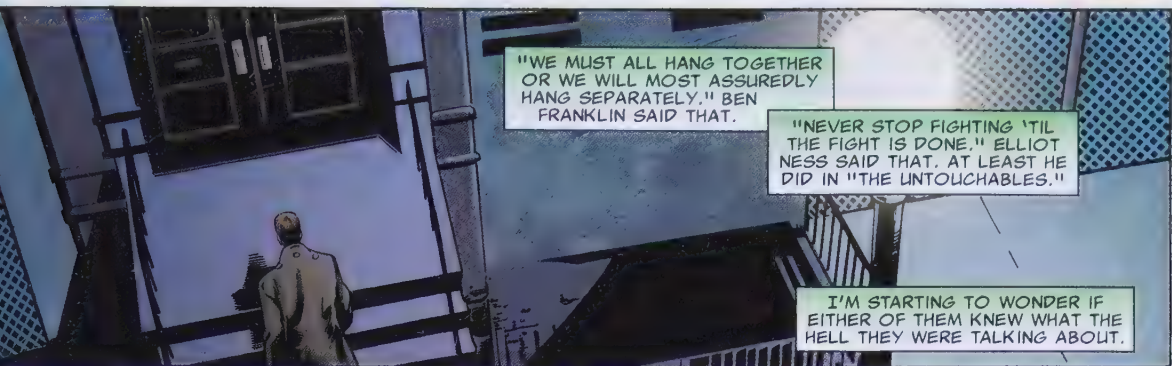
WE? ARE
WE EVEN A "WE"
ANYMORE?

YOU TOLD ME
YOU WERE LEAVING.
BECOMING SHERIFF OF
MUTANT TOWN. WHAT
HAPPENED WITH
THAT?



I TOLD
'EM TO TAKE
THE JOB AND
SHOVE IT.

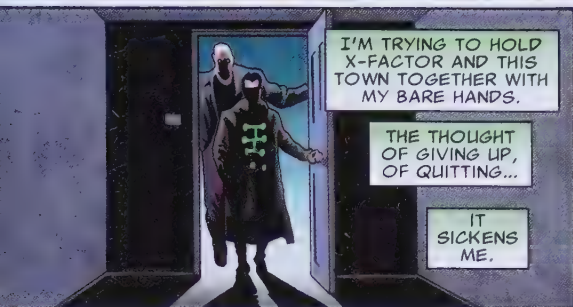




"WE MUST ALL HANG TOGETHER OR WE WILL MOST ASSUREDLY HANG SEPARATELY." BEN FRANKLIN SAID THAT.

"NEVER STOP FIGHTING 'TIL THE FIGHT IS DONE." ELLIOTNESS SAID THAT. AT LEAST HE DID IN "THE UNTOUCHABLES."

I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF EITHER OF THEM KNEW WHAT THE HELL THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT.



I'M TRYING TO HOLD X-FACTOR AND THIS TOWN TOGETHER WITH MY BARE HANDS.

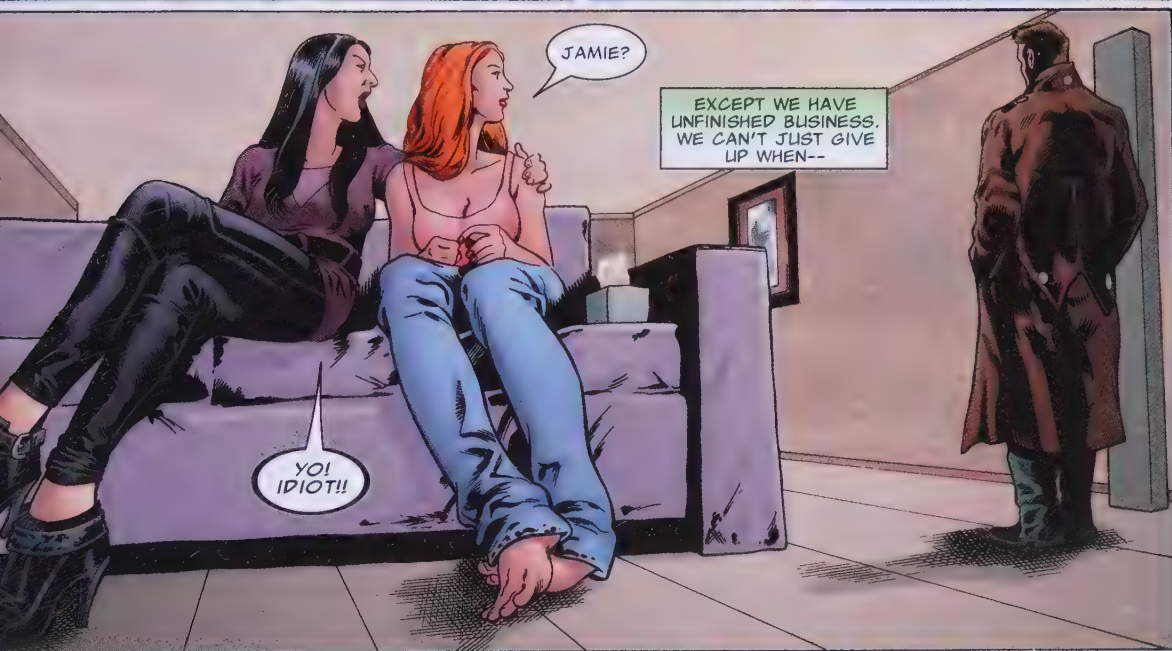
THE THOUGHT OF GIVING UP, OF QUITTING...

IT SICKENS ME.



BUT IF YOU'RE PLAYING A LOSING GAME OF CHESS, THERE'S NO DISHONOR IN CONCEDED WHEN YOU'VE LOST.

YOU DON'T KEEP PLAYING WHEN THE PIECES ARE ALL GONE.



JAMIE?

EXCEPT WE HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS. WE CAN'T JUST GIVE UP WHEN--

YO! IDIOT!!



WHAT, MONET?

FIGURES. THAT HE RESPONDS TO. LOOK, THERESA'S GOT SOMETHING TO SAY.



YEAH, UH... JAMIE... THIS MAY NOT BE THE BEST TIME TO TELL YOU THIS...

GREAT. SHE'S
QUITTING, TOO.
FIRST RAHNE BOLTS,
NOW THIS.

I KNEW
IT. I KNEW THIS
WAS COMING.

YOU...
KNEW?

IF HE SAYS
HE KNEW, I'D BELIEVE
'IM. HE'S GOT KILLER
GUESSING MOVES
THESE DAYS.

BUT...HOW
COULD YOU
TELL?

TRUST ME.
IF NOTHING ELSE,
IT WAS WRITTEN
ALL OVER YOUR
FACE.

WELL...HOW
DO YOU FEEL
ABOUT IT...?

HOW
DO I...?

FOR CRYING
OUT LOUD, THERESA,
HOW DO YOU THINK I
FEEL? THIS COULDN'T
HAVE COME AT A
WORSE TIME!

I KNOW OUR HISTORY
HAS ITS UPS AND
DOWNS, BUT GEEZ,
I EXPECTED MORE
FROM YOU!

MY GOD, JAMIE,
WILL YOU LISTEN
TO YOURSELF?

I MEAN,
HONESTLY, I WAS
HOPING YOU MIGHT
BE SUPPORTIVE! AFTER
ALL, YOU DID HAVE A
LITTLE SOMETHING
TO DO WITH IT!

RIGHT!
SURE! BLAME IT
ON ME!

WELL, WHO
ELSE!?

NOBODY
ELSE! OF COURSE
NOT! EVERYTHING IN
THE WHOLE DAMNED
WORLD IS MY
FAULT!

HEY, MADROX.
JUST WANTED TO
SAY, I'M OUTTA
HERE.

YEAH, FINE,
RIC, SEE YOU
LATER.

NO, YOU
WON'T. I'M
QUITTING.



RICTOR!
HOLD UP!



THIS
SEEMED VAGUELY
FAMILIAR TO ME.
HOLD ON...

"BLAME
IT ON ME!" HE'S
THE FATHER, FOR
GOD'S SAKE!

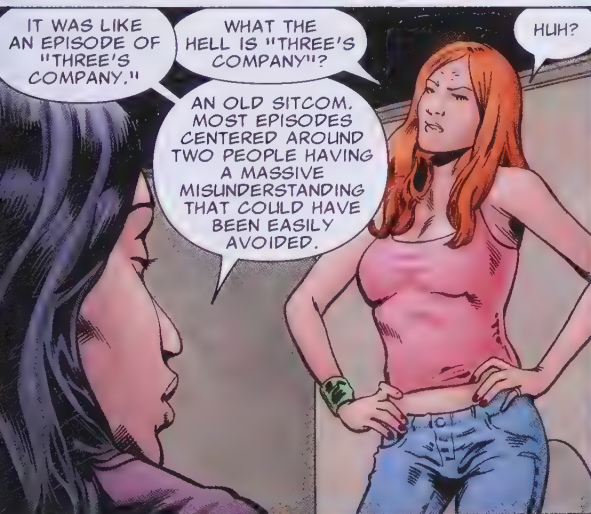
THE WAY
YOU TWO WERE
TALKING...IT'S SO
FAMILIAR...

A LITTLE
SYMPATHY FROM
HIM! THAT'S ALL I
WAS ASK--



GOT IT.
"THREE'S
COMPANY."

HUH?



IT WAS LIKE
AN EPISODE OF
"THREE'S
COMPANY."

WHAT THE
HELL IS "THREE'S
COMPANY"?

HUH?

AN OLD SITCOM.
MOST EPISODES
CENTERED AROUND
TWO PEOPLE HAVING
A MASSIVE
MISUNDERSTANDING
THAT COULD HAVE
BEEN EASILY
AVOIDED.



STOP SAYING "HUH."
YOU'RE PRACTICALLY
HEMORRHAGING IQ.

SIRYN, OBVIOUSLY
MADROX *DIDN'T* KNOW
WHAT YOU WERE
TALKING ABOUT.

BUT
HE SAID
HE--

HE WAS WRONG!
HE'S WRONG A LOT!
AND IF YOU WEREN'T
BLINDED BY BEING IN
LOVE WITH HIM, YOU'D
REALIZE THAT!

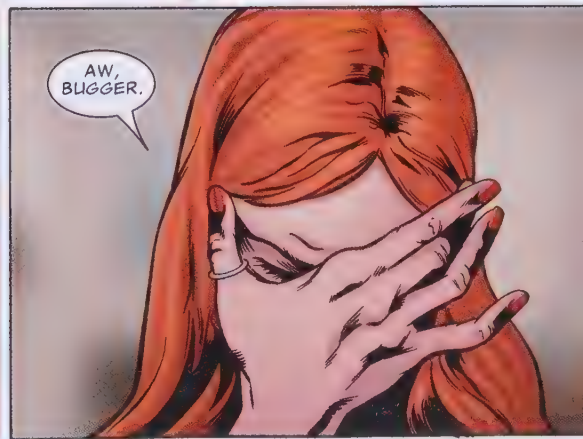


I'M IN
LOVE WITH
HIM?

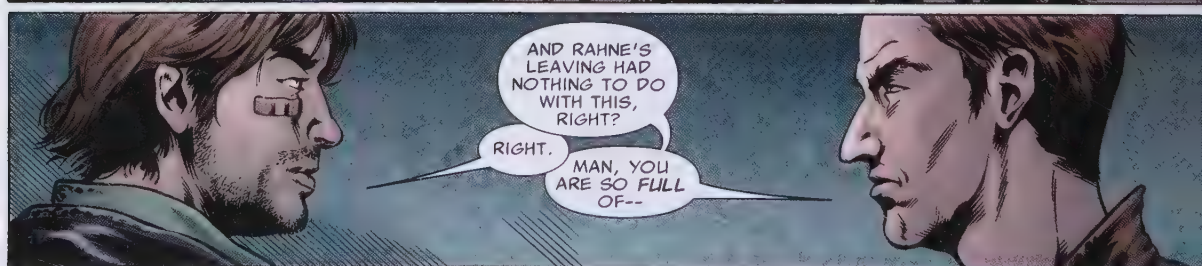
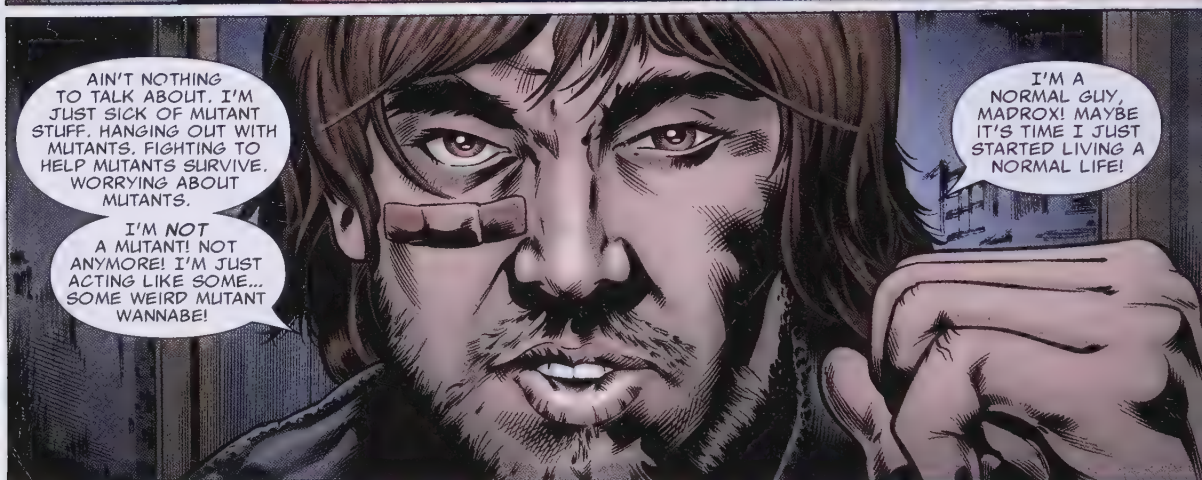
OBVIOUSLY.
STILL.

NO...

YES.



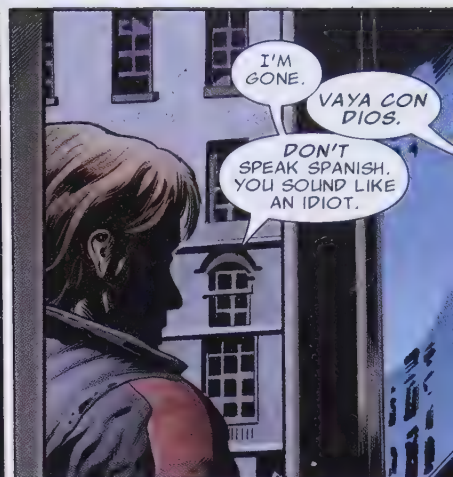
AW,
BUGGER.





AIN'T I GONNA
WHAT? TRY TO MAKE
HIM STAY WHEN
HE'S OBVIOUSLY
MISERABLE?

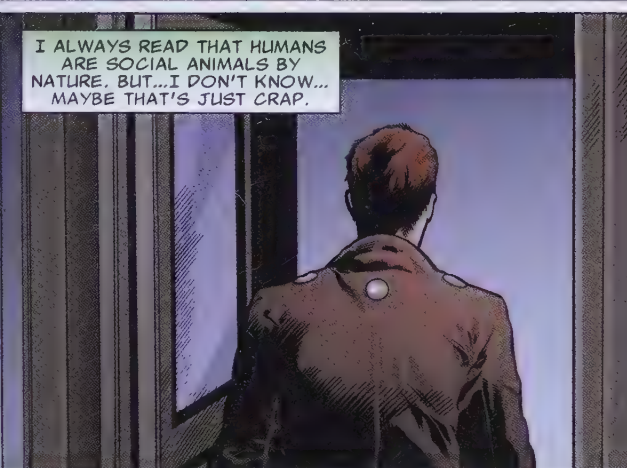
YOU
WANT TO
GO, RICTOR?
GO.



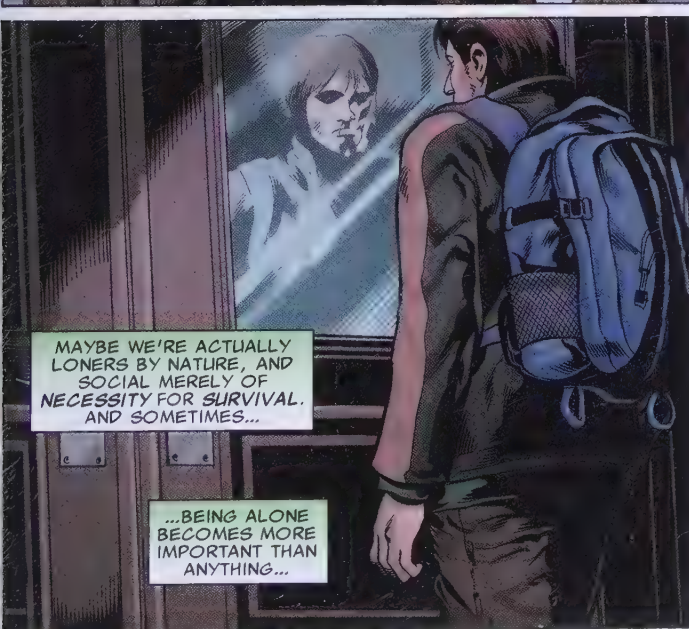
I'M
GONE.

VAYA CON
DIOS.

DON'T
SPEAK SPANISH.
YOU SOUND LIKE
AN IDIOT.



I ALWAYS READ THAT HUMANS
ARE SOCIAL ANIMALS BY
NATURE. BUT...I DON'T KNOW...
MAYBE THAT'S JUST CRAP.



MAYBE WE'RE ACTUALLY
LONERS BY NATURE, AND
SOCIAL MERELY OF
NECESSITY FOR SURVIVAL.
AND SOMETIMES...

...BEING ALONE
BECOMES MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
ANYTHING...



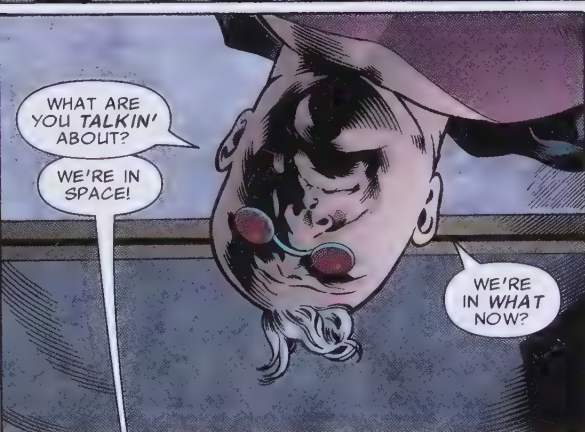
...EVEN
SURVIVAL.

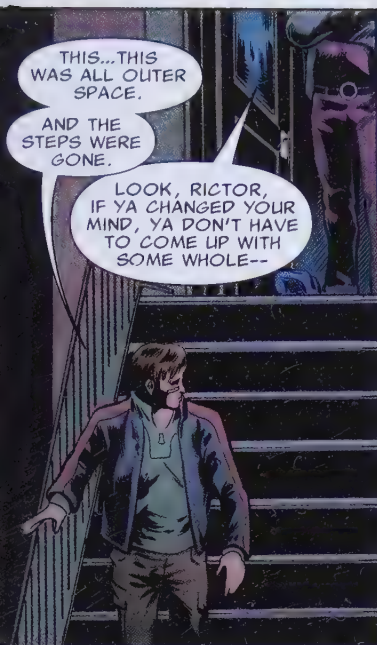


IDIOS
SANTO--!

The Only Game in Town PART 1







THIS...THIS WAS ALL OUTER SPACE.

AND THE STEPS WERE GONE.

LOOK, RICTOR, IF YA CHANGED YOUR MIND, YA DON'T HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOME WHOLE--



I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP, GUIDO!

RIC, LOOK AROUND! WE'RE NOT IN OUTER SPACE.

I CAN SEE THAT! YOU THINK I CAN'T SEE THAT?

BUT IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BEFORE!

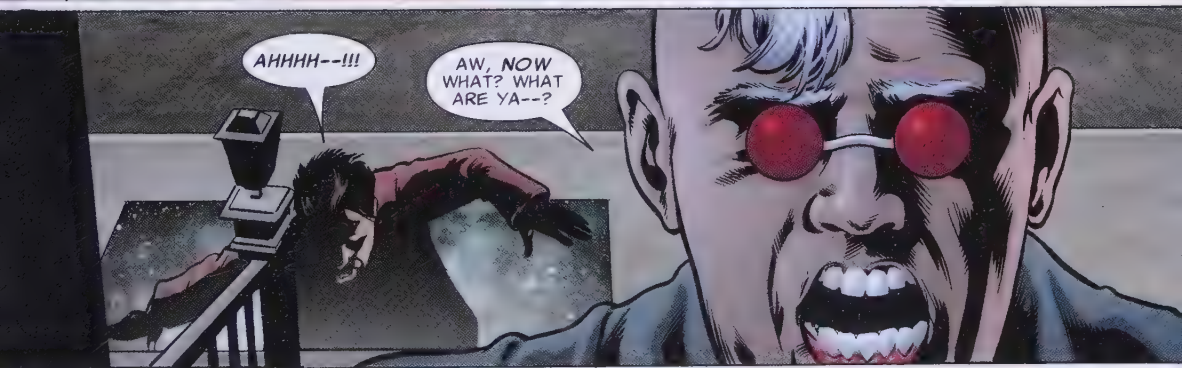


OKAY. WHATEVER.



DON'T "WHATEVER" ME, MAN! I'M TELLING YOU--

RICTOR, JUST DROP IT, OKAY?



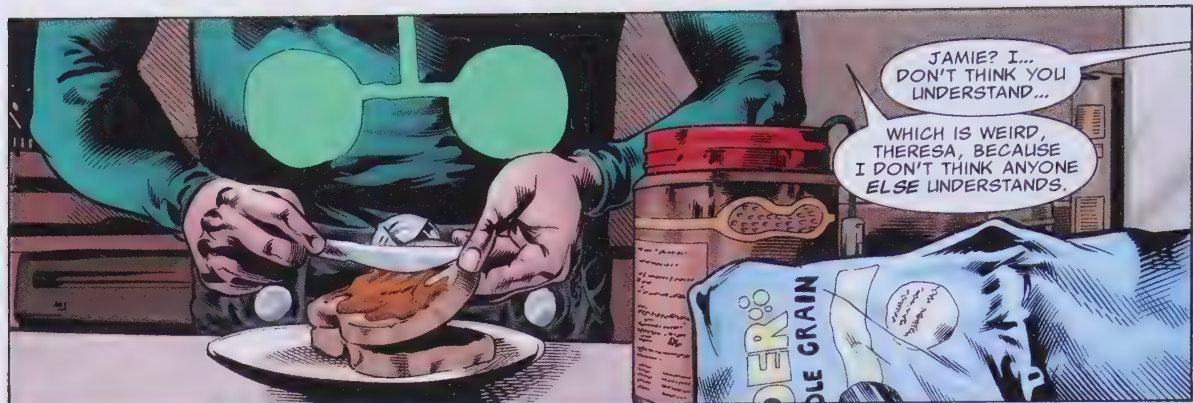
AHHHH--!!!

AW, NOW WHAT? WHAT ARE YA--?



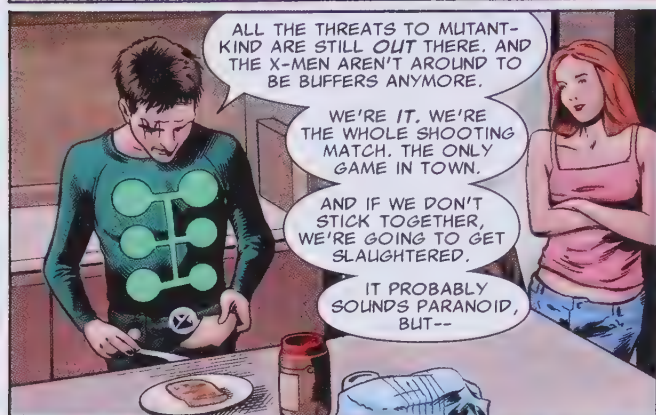
HUHH...

OKAY. NOT GOOD.



JAMIE? I...
DON'T THINK YOU
UNDERSTAND...

WHICH IS WEIRD,
THERESA, BECAUSE
I DON'T THINK ANYONE
ELSE UNDERSTANDS.



ALL THE THREATS TO MUTANT-
KIND ARE STILL OUT THERE. AND
THE X-MEN AREN'T AROUND TO
BE BUFFERS ANYMORE.

WE'RE IT. WE'RE
THE WHOLE SHOOTING
MATCH. THE ONLY
GAME IN TOWN.

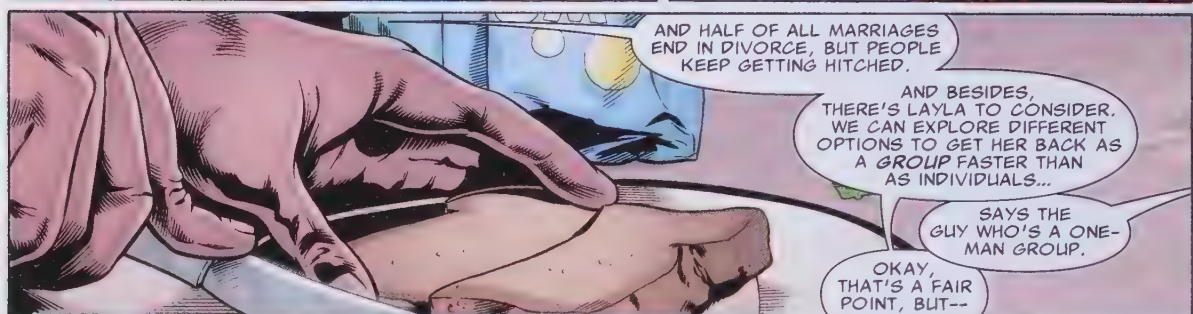
AND IF WE DON'T
STICK TOGETHER,
WE'RE GOING TO GET
SLAUGHTERED.

IT PROBABLY
SOUNDS PARANOID,
BUT--



BUT JUST
BECAUSE YOU'RE
PARANOID DOESN'T
MEAN THEY'RE NOT
OUT TO GET YOU.
YES, I KNOW.

EXCEPT...WELL,
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED
THAT IF EVEN THE X-MEN
HAVE SPLIT UP, THEN
MAYBE THE WHOLE NOTION
OF MUTANT TEAMS HAS
RUN ITS COURSE?



AND HALF OF ALL MARRIAGES
END IN DIVORCE, BUT PEOPLE
KEEP GETTING HITCHED.

AND BESIDES,
THERE'S LAYLA TO CONSIDER.
WE CAN EXPLORE DIFFERENT
OPTIONS TO GET HER BACK AS
A GROUP FASTER THAN
AS INDIVIDUALS...

SAYS THE
GUY WHO'S A ONE-
MAN GROUP.

OKAY,
THAT'S A FAIR
POINT, BUT--



LOOK, JAMIE...I KNOW
WE HAVE ISSUES. I KNOW
THERE'S A LOT GOING
ON. BUT...

WHAT I'M
TRYING TO TELL
YOU IS...I'M--

MADPROXI GET
OUT HERE! WE GOT
A PROBLEM!



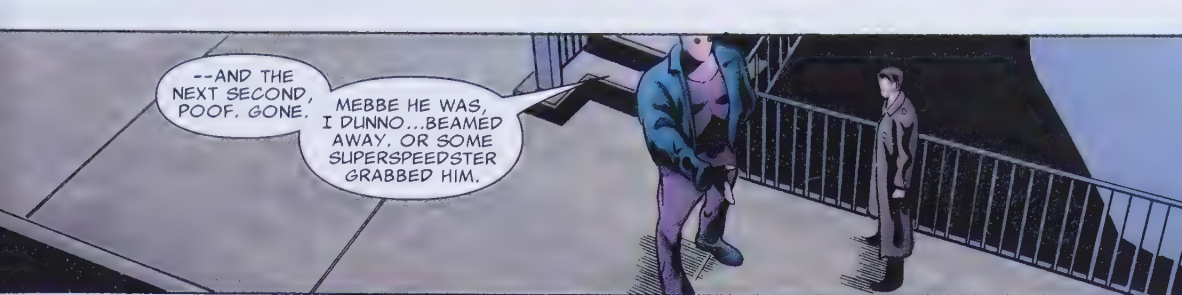
COMING!

BUT
JAMIE,
I'M--!

RAIN CHECK,
THERESA!



DON'T WORRY, KID.
I'M SURE I'LL MANAGE
TO TELL HIM BEFORE
YOU GRADUATE
HIGH SCHOOL.



--AND THE
NEXT SECOND,
POOF. GONE.

MEBBE HE WAS,
I DUNNO...BEAMED
AWAY, OR SOME
SUPERSPEEDSTER
GRABBED HIM.



OCCAM'S
RAZOR, GUIDO.

YA THINK HE
WENT TO GET
A SHAVE?

NOOO...
IT MEANS
THE SIMPLEST
EXPLANATION--

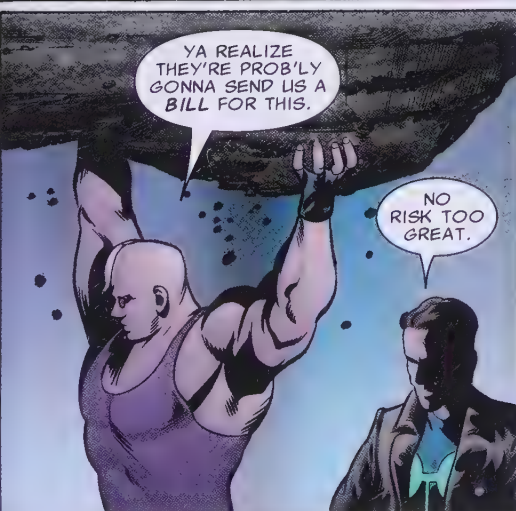


--TENDS TO BE
THE CORRECT ONE.
TRAP DOOR.

IN THE
SIDEWALK?

WOULDN'T BE
THE WEIRDEST THING
WE'VE EVER SEEN.

GOOD
POINT. OKAY,
THEN--



YA REALIZE
THEY'RE PROBL'Y
GONNA SEND US A
BILL FOR THIS.

NO
RISK TOO
GREAT.



THERE'S
SOMETHING
DOWN HERE,
ALL RIGHT.

WANT
ME TO RUN
BACK, GET A
FLASHLIGHT?

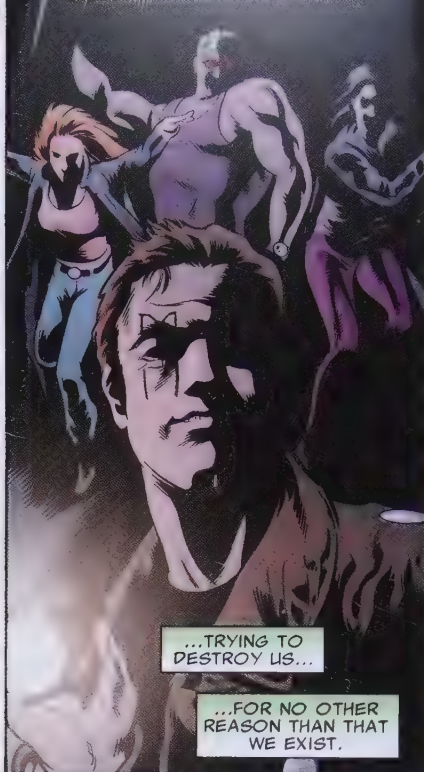
GOT ONE.
ALWAYS CARRY ONE,
TO BE PREPARED. ONE
OF MY DUPES WAS A
SCOUTMASTER FOR
A YEAR.

YEAH, I WAS
IN THE SCOUTS WHEN
I WAS A KID. I NEVER
GOT MY "CLIMB INTO
DARK HOLES" MERIT
BADGE THOUGH.

THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I
WAS TALKING ABOUT. WE
CAN'T LET OUR GUARD
DOWN EVEN FOR A SECOND.



WE CAN'T QUIT BECAUSE
THEY WILL NEVER QUIT.
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE MORE
OF THEM, AND MORE...

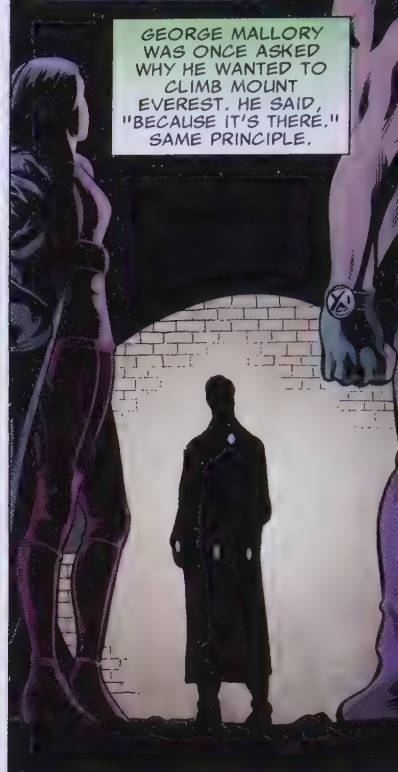


...TRYING TO
DESTROY US...

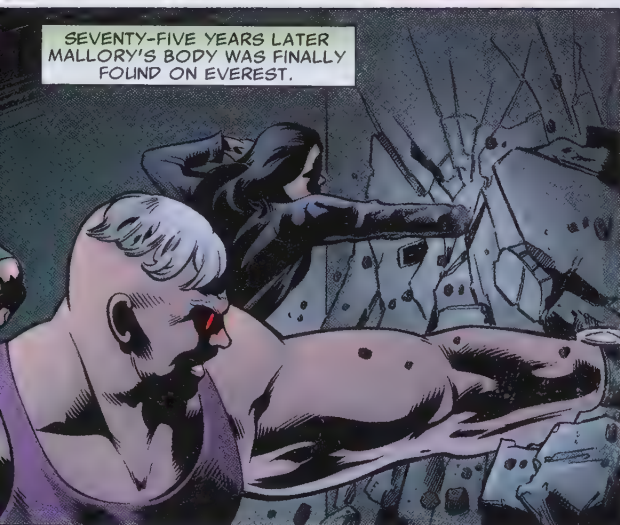
...FOR NO OTHER
REASON THAN THAT
WE EXIST.

THEN AGAIN...WHAT
OTHER REASON HAS
ANYONE EVER NEEDED
TO DESTROY OTHERS?

GEORGE MALLORY
WAS ONCE ASKED
WHY HE WANTED TO
CLIMB MOUNT
EVEREST. HE SAID,
"BECAUSE IT'S THERE."
SAME PRINCIPLE.



SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER
MALLORY'S BODY WAS FINALLY
FOUND ON EVEREST.



THERE'S A
LESSON IN THERE
SOMEWHERE.



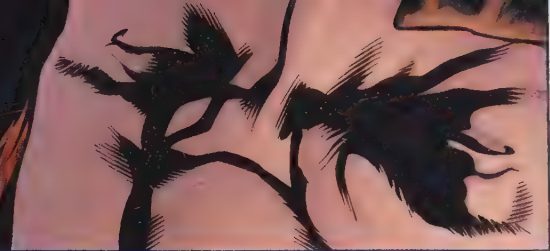
WHAT THE
HELL...?

GIVE ME A
GUN. LET ME JUST
SHOOT HIM.

NOW, NOW...
WHERE'S THE
ARTISTRY IN THAT?
THE STYLE?
THE FUN?

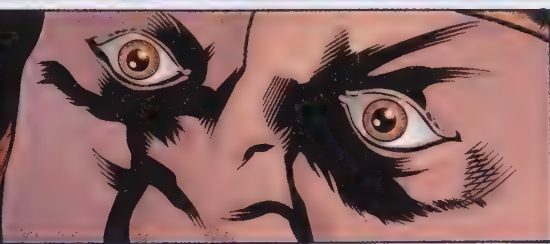
DEVIL TAKE
YOUR GAMES! I'M
THE CLIENT!

AND I'M
THE ONE YOU
HIRED TO EXECUTE
YOUR DESIRES,
SO ALLOW ME TO
DO MY JOB AS
I SEE FIT.



EHH...?

WHAT...?



**OH, YOU
GOTTA BE
KIDDING
ME!!!!**



HELLO,
MR. RICTOR.

GO TO
HELL!!!

OH, WHAT'S
THE MATTER?
FEELING A LITTLE
CROSS?

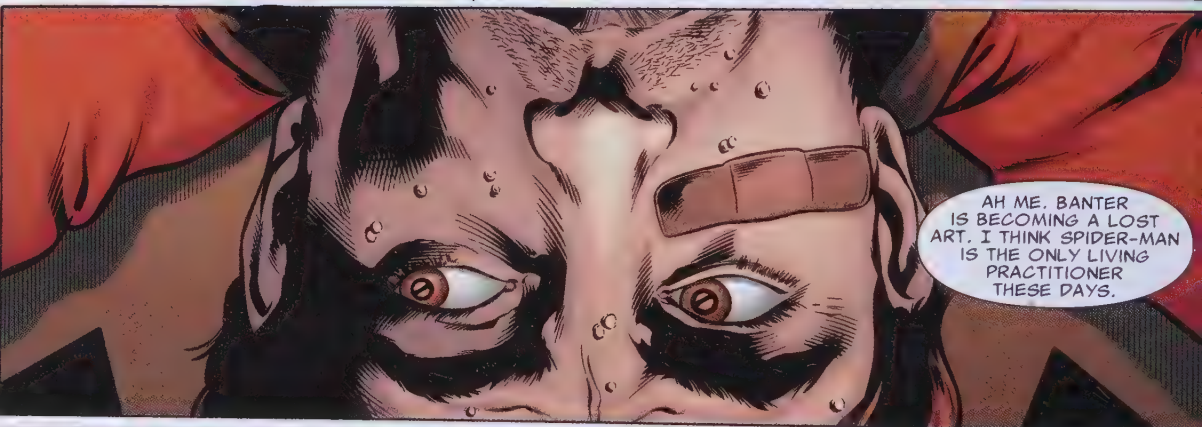
COME OUT
FROM WHEREVER
YOU'RE HIDING AND
YOU'LL FEEL MY
RIGHT CROSS!



COME ON...
YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE
THIS JUST A LITTLE. I
WAS READING POE WHILE
WATCHING "GOLDFINGER"
AND CAME UP WITH
THIS DEVICE.

ASK ME IF
I EXPECT YOU
TO TALK. GO
AHEAD. IT'LL
BE FUN.

BITE
ME!



AH ME. BANTER
IS BECOMING A LOST
ART. I THINK SPIDER-MAN
IS THE ONLY LIVING
PRACTITIONER
THESE DAYS.



MONET...



MONET!!!



THIS IS
RIDICULOUS. WHO
COULD HAVE
POSSIBLY--



WHAT THE---?
MONET! WHERE
ARE--

I HEAR
HIM!

SHE
HEARS HIM?
HOW DOES
SHE--



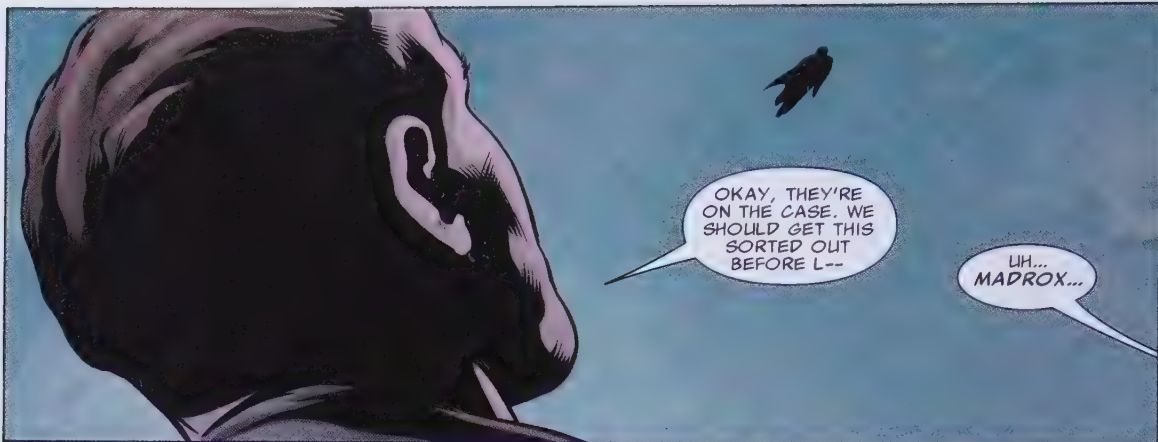
SIRYNI! GO
AFTER HER! AND
TAKE ME WITH YOU
FOR BACKUP!

STAMP!



SCREEEEEEEE!

DO NOT
WORRY, RICTOR!
WE SHALL FIND YOU!
FIND YOU AND PUNISH
THE MISCREANTS WHO
HAVE DONE THIS
FOUL DEED!

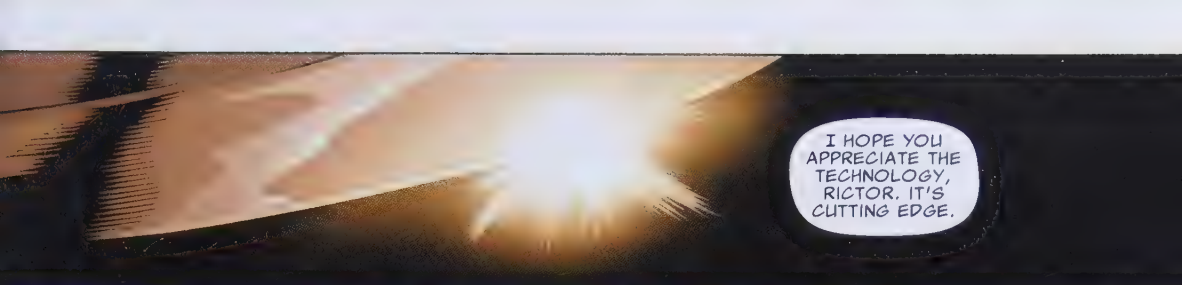


OKAY, THEY'RE
ON THE CASE. WE
SHOULD GET THIS
SORTED OUT
BEFORE L--


UH...
MADROX...




AW,
SWELL.




I HOPE YOU
APPRECIATE THE
TECHNOLOGY,
RICTOR. IT'S
CUTTING EDGE.



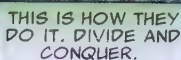
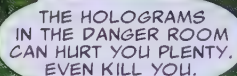
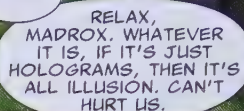
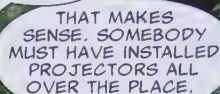
OHhh, THAT
WAS CLOSE. ARE YOU
GOING TO SCREAM,
RICTOR? MY EMPLOYER
WOULD REALLY LIKE
TO HEAR YOU
SCREAM.



AH. GOING
TO TOUGH IT OUT.
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE
COJONES...



...FOR
ANOTHER FEW
SECONDS,
ANYWAY.



BECAUSE UNLIKE THE HEROES...
THE VILLAINS DON'T SEEM TO KNOW
THE MEANING OF THE WORD "QUIT."

THE SAME ONES JUST KEEP
COMING BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN,
HOPING TO WEAR US DOWN, LIKE
WATER DRIPPING ON A ROCK.



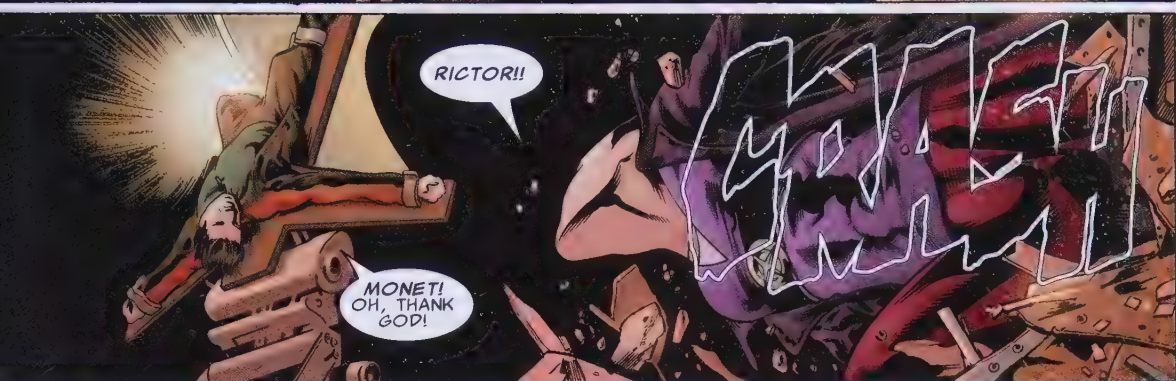
AND WORST
OF ALL...

GAMEDAY IS HERE!



...THEY JUST LOVE
LETTING YOU KNOW
IT WAS THEM.







THAT WAS CLOSE! SHE COULD HAVE--

SHE COULD HAVE NOTHING, AS YOU SEE, I WAS PREPARED FOR A RESCUE ATTEMPT.

LISTEN! I HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH RICTOR AND HIS MUTANT PALS! THEY COST ME MY POSITION WITH THE PURIFIERS--!

FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME, MR. TAYLOR, YOU DID THAT ALL BY YOURSELF, ENLISTING LITTLE JULIO INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION WITHOUT PROPERLY CHECKING HIS BACKGROUND.

AND BESIDES...

PEOPLE DON'T COME TO ARCADE IF THEY MERELY HAVE "SCORES TO SETTLE." THEY COME TO ME TO WATCH THEIR ENEMIES WRIGGLE LIKE WORMS ON HOOKS.

FURTHERMORE, YOU EXPRESSED MORE THAN JUST IRE WITH DEAR JULIO. YOU WERE POSITIVELY FUMING ABOUT THE WHOLE OF "MUTANT TOWN."

YOUR REASONING AS TO WHY THEY STILL PRESENT A THREAT WAS MOST COMPELLING.

"YOU ASSERTED THAT RECENT EVENTS HAVE SHOWN THE MUTANT GENE IS STILL ALIVE, WELL, AND CAPABLE OF MANIFESTING."

"WHO BETTER TO CAUSE THAT MANIFESTATION THAN A MAN AND WOMAN BOTH OF WHOM ARE CARRYING THE RECESSIVE MUTANT GENE?"

"BEST TO BE RID OF THE LOT OF THEM. SO WHY SETTLE ON AVENGING YOURSELF ON RICTOR..."

"...WHEN WITH MY AID, YOU CAN DISPOSE OF THE LOT OF THEM? WHY THINK SMALL WHEN YOU CAN THINK BIG?"

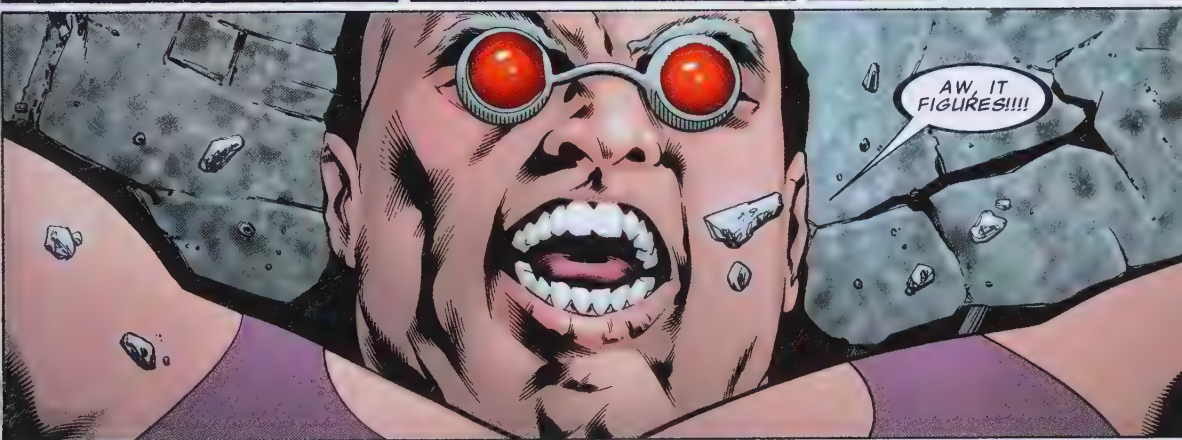
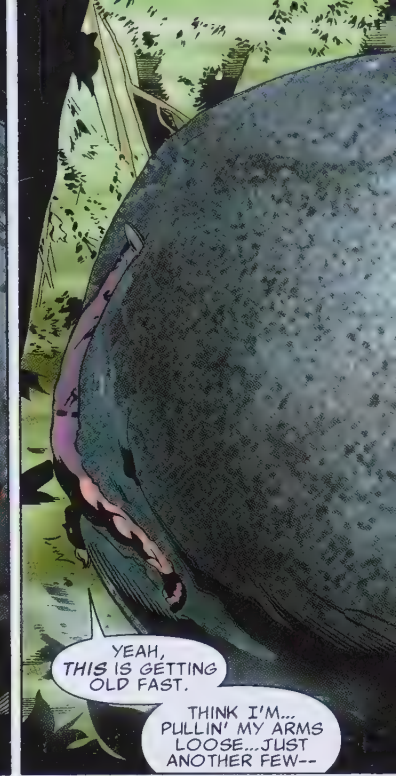
"WHY BE TIMID..."

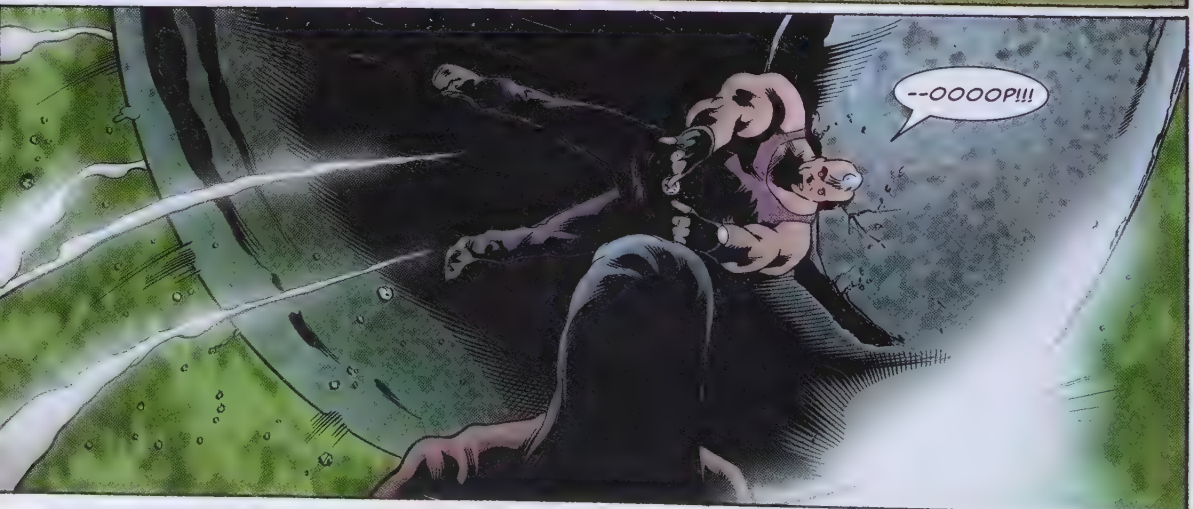
"...WHEN YOU CAN BE BOLDER?"

"BOLDER? BOLDER? GET IT?"

"~~SIGH~~ NEVER MIND."

The
Only Game in Town **PART 2**





WE'VE NEVER BEEN MORE VULNERABLE.

WE'RE DOWN TWO MEMBERS...

...EVERY OTHER X-GROUP IN THE AREA HAS VANISHED...

...AND OUR LOCATION IS PUBLICLY KNOWN.

WE'VE NEVER BEEN MORE VULNERABLE.

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WE'VE NEVER BEEN MORE VULNERABLE.

WE'RE DOWN TWO MEMBERS...

...EVERY OTHER X-GROUP IN THE AREA HAS VANISHED...

...AND OUR LOCATION IS PUBLICLY KNOWN.

AT ANY GIVEN TIME,
SOMEONE CAN ATTACK US
IN SOME UNEXPECTED--

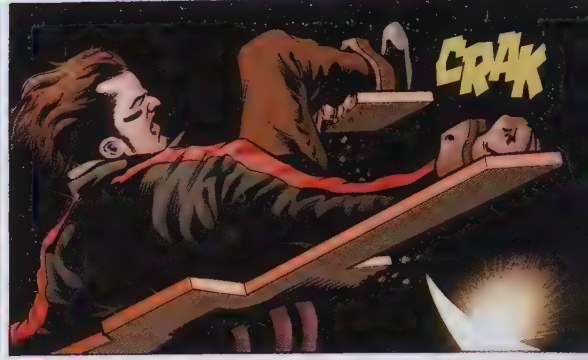
A comic book panel showing a woman with long dark hair and a pink shirt, looking distressed and holding a handgun. A speech bubble says "OH, HELL."



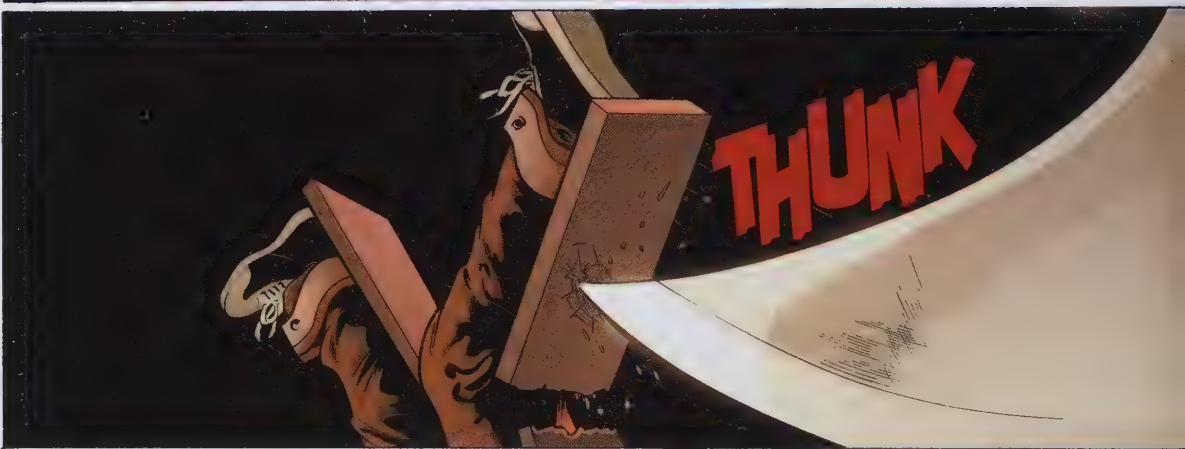
OH, THAT ONE
MISSED BY MICROMETERS,
RICTOR. I REALLY DO THINK
THE NEXT PASS IS GOING TO
DIVIDE AND CONQUER.



ANY LAST
WORDS AS
A MAN?



CRAK



THUNK

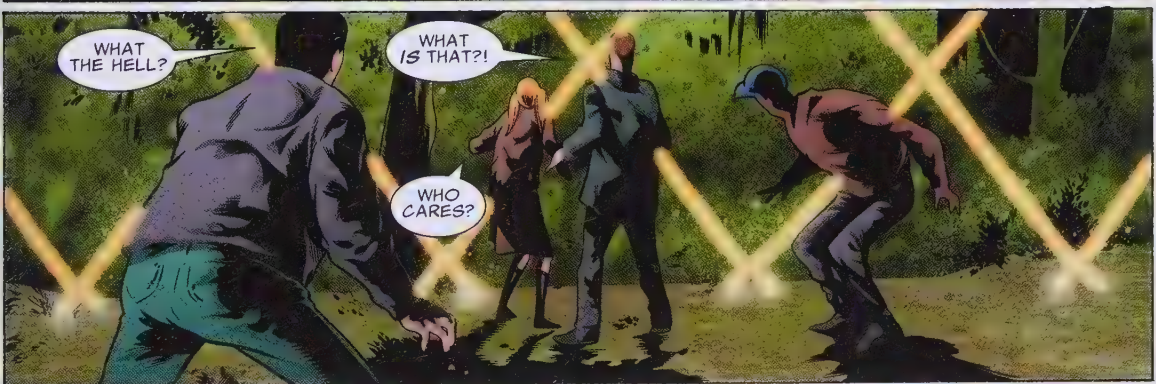
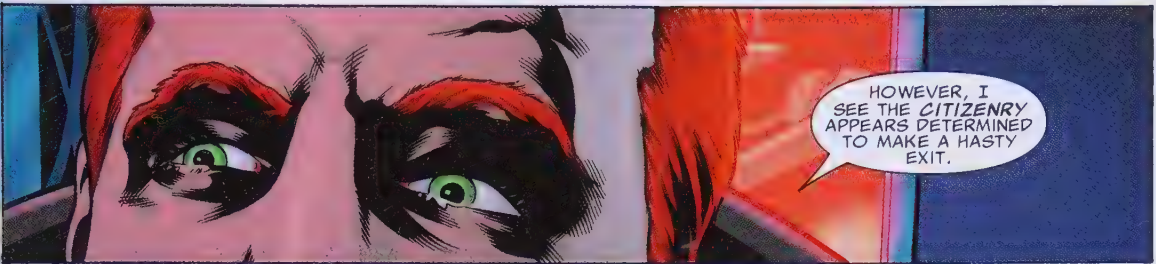
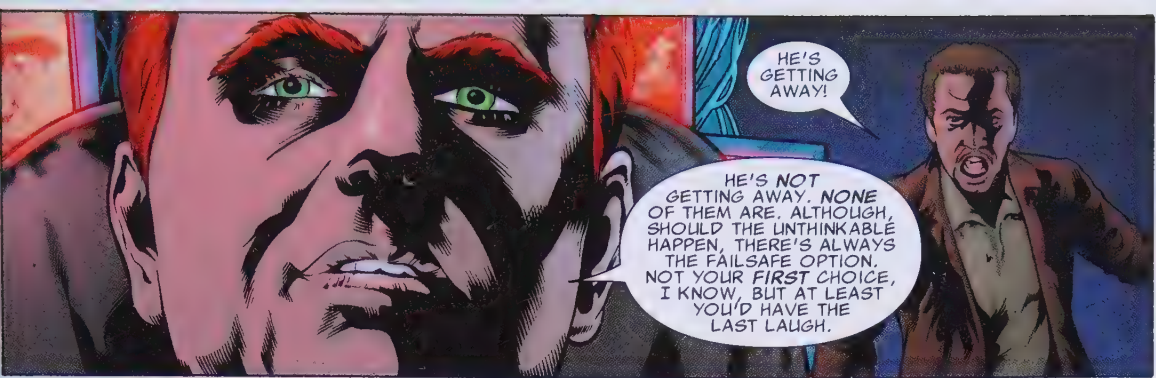


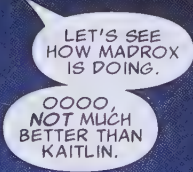
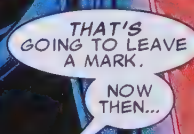
HOLY--!!

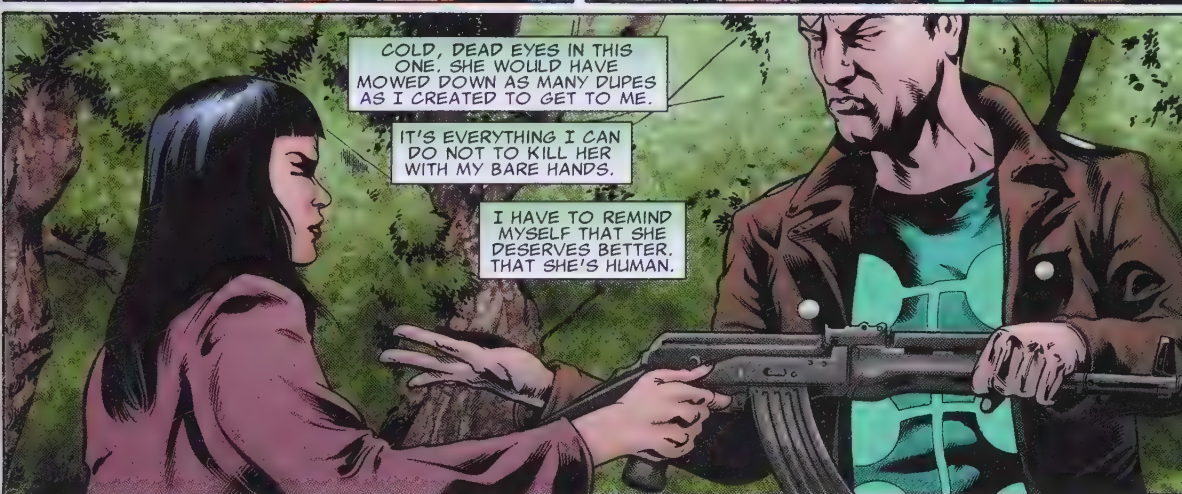
ZOUNDS!
WHAT FOUL
BUSINESS IS
THIS?!

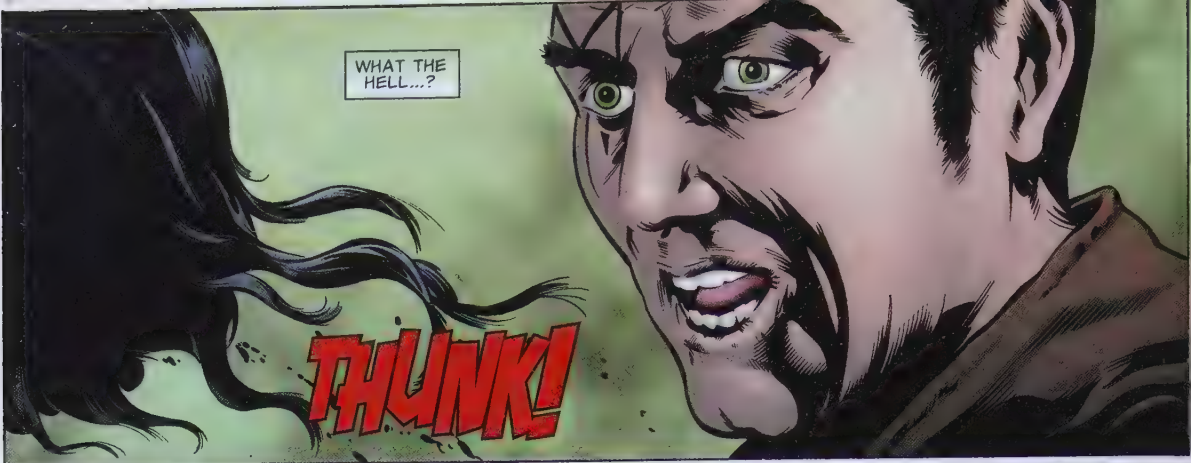
ARE
YOU OKAY,
RICTOR?

DOES IT
LOOK LIKE I'M
OKAY?!?



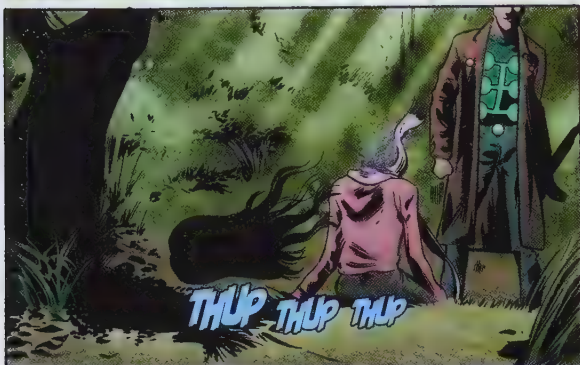






WHAT THE
HELL...?

THUNK!



THUP THUP THUP



A ROBOT.
A FREAKING
ROBOT.

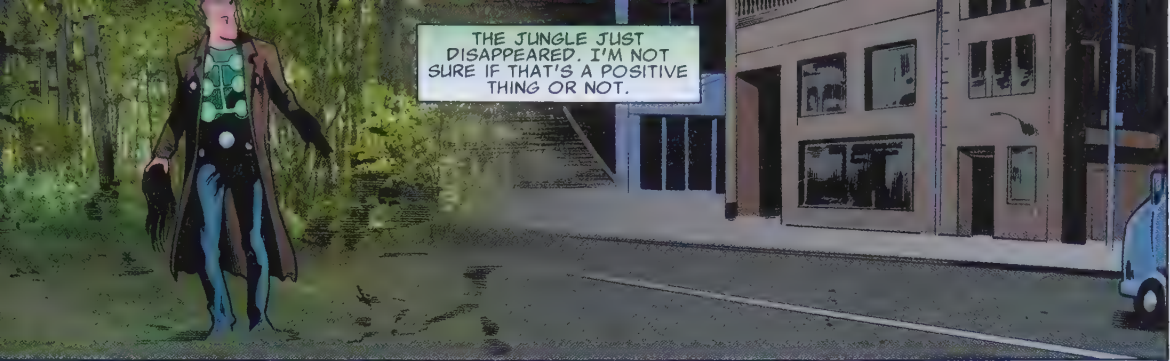
A FREAKING LIFELIKE
ROBOT IN AN ENVIRONMENT
CONSISTING OF EVER-
SHIFTING DEATHTRAPS.



HE MAY HAVE MOVED
BEYOND THE STANDARD
AMUSEMENT PARK MOTIF
HE USED TO FAVOR...

BUT MY KEEN
DEDUCTIVE MIND
SAYS THAT **ARCADE**
IS BEHIND THIS.

THAT AND HE HAD HIS
FACE AND NAME
SCRAWLED ON THE
BIG ROCK. THAT WAS
ALSO A TIP-OFF.



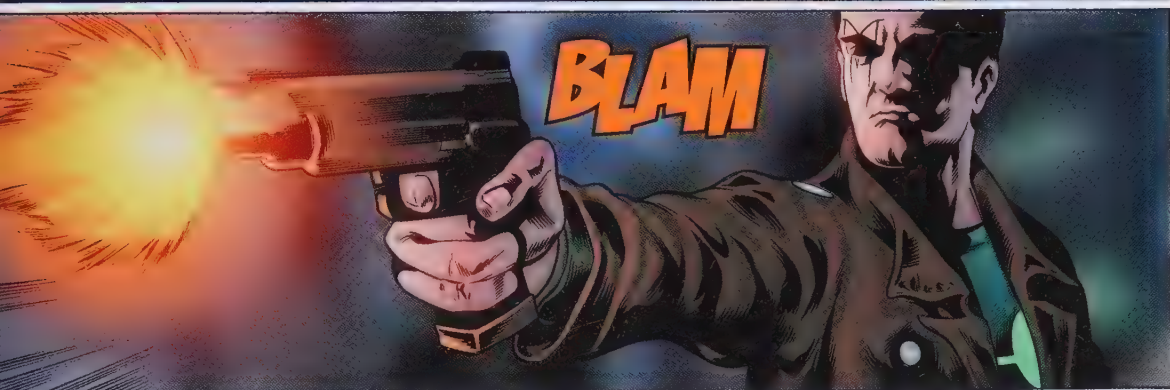
THE JUNGLE JUST
DISAPPEARED. I'M NOT
SURE IF THAT'S A POSITIVE
THING OR NOT.



HELP ME...
PLEASE...

OH JEEZ...IF I ABSORB
HIM, IT'S GOING TO
HURT LIKE HELL, EVEN
WEAKEN ME.

BUT AM I JUST
SUPPOSED TO STAND
HERE AND LET HIM--



BLAM



ARRHHHH!!!



STUPID. STUPID STUPID STUPID.

SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THAT I WASN'T FEELING ANY PSYCHIC LINK TO HIM...TO IT. IT'S ANOTHER ROBOT.

I LET MYSELF GET DISTRACTED AND NOW--

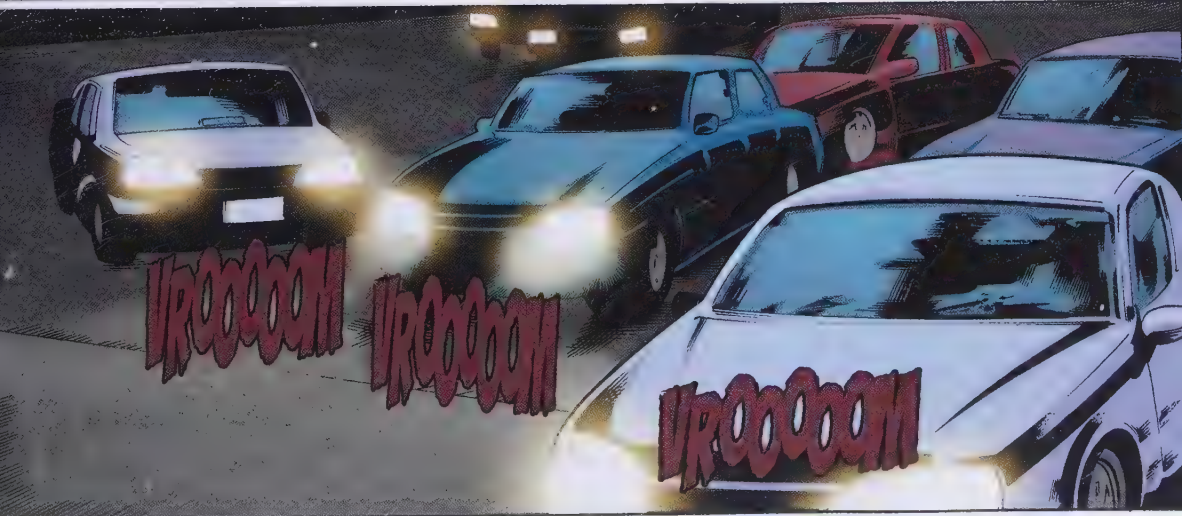
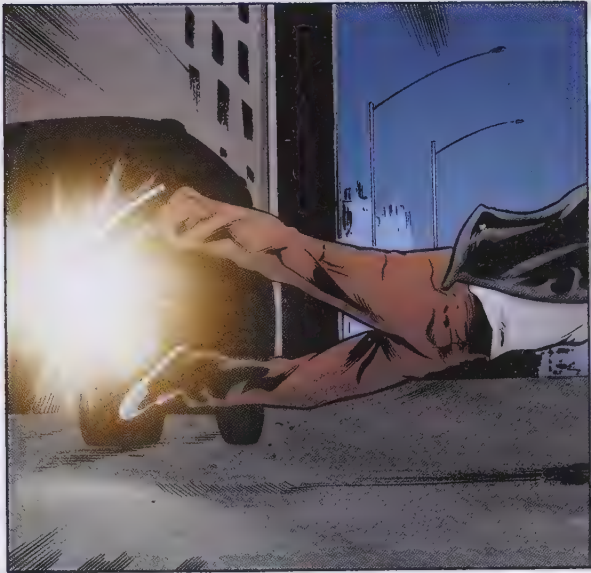
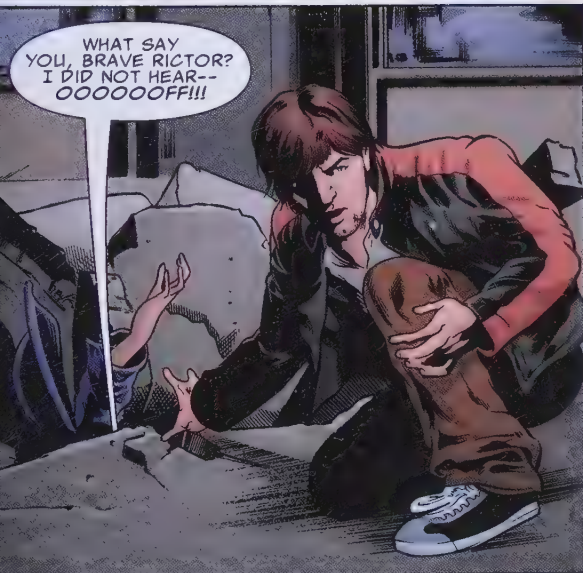
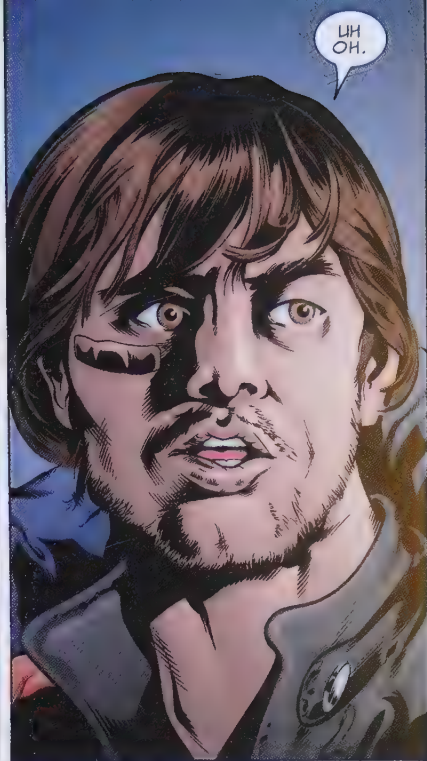


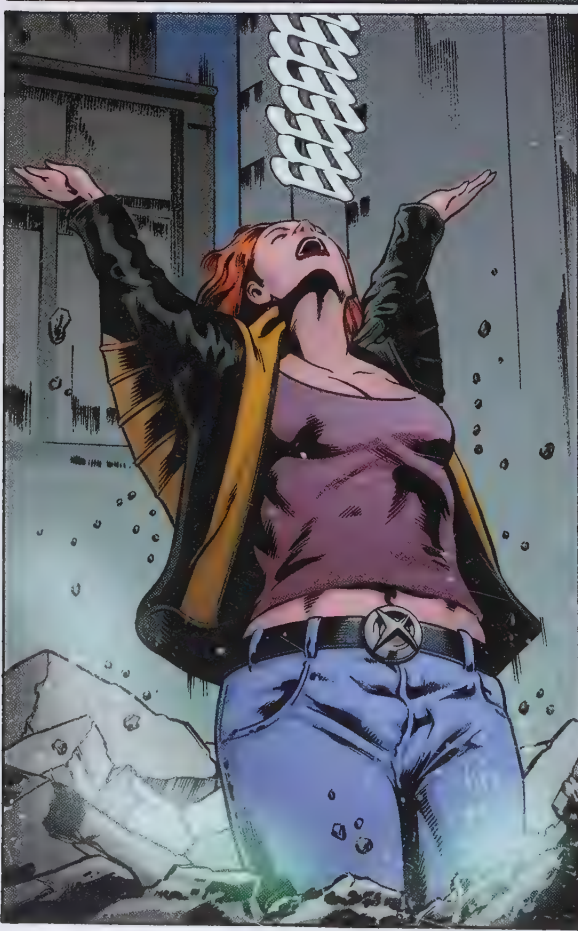
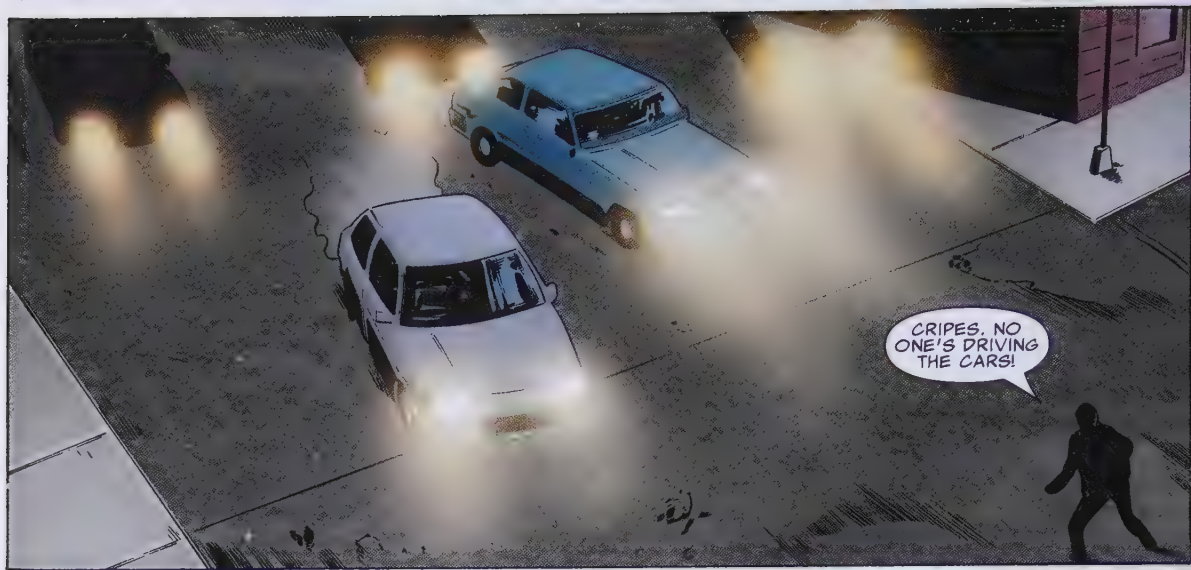
HEY THERE.

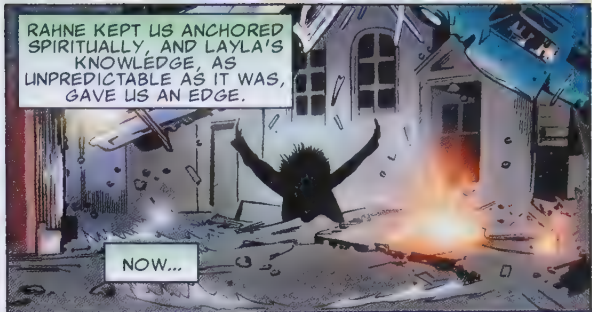
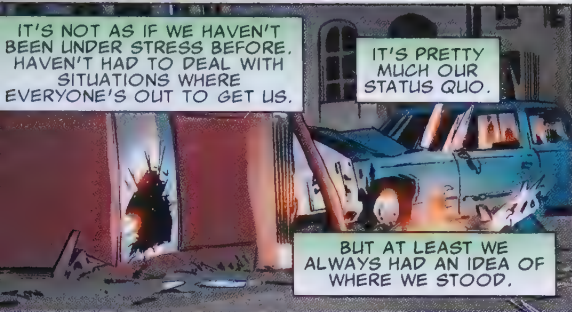


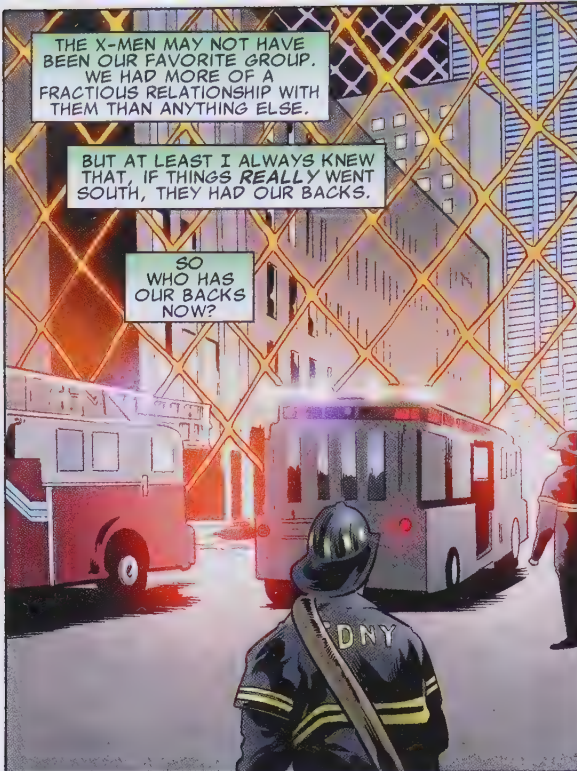
ROCK OUT.

CRUNCH









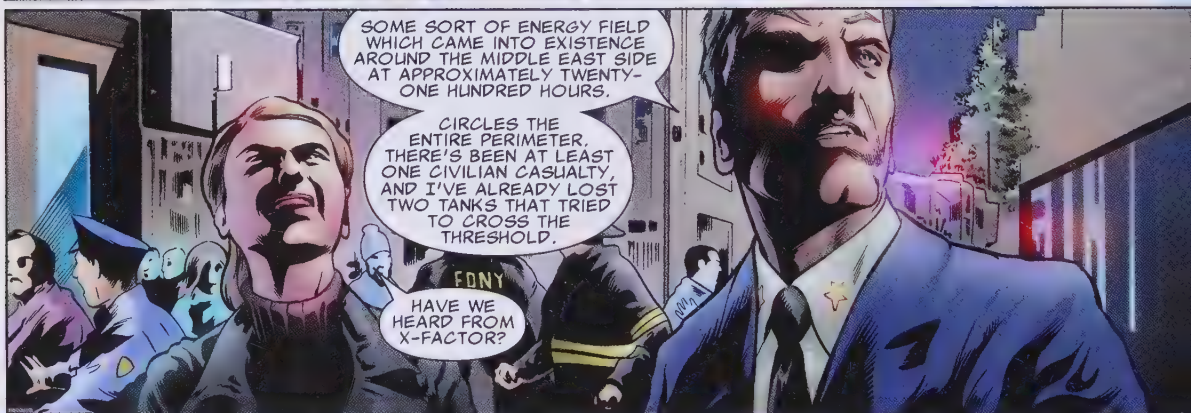
THE X-MEN MAY NOT HAVE BEEN OUR FAVORITE GROUP. WE HAD MORE OF A FRACTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

BUT AT LEAST I ALWAYS KNEW THAT, IF THINGS REALLY WENT SOUTH, THEY HAD OUR BACKS.

SO WHO HAS OUR BACKS NOW?



MAJORI VALERIE COOPER, O*N*K*, GIVE ME A SITREP, PLEASE.



SOME SORT OF ENERGY FIELD WHICH CAME INTO EXISTENCE AROUND THE MIDDLE EAST SIDE AT APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-ONE HUNDRED HOURS.

CIRCLES THE ENTIRE PERIMETER. THERE'S BEEN AT LEAST ONE CIVILIAN CASUALTY, AND I'VE ALREADY LOST TWO TANKS THAT TRIED TO CROSS THE THRESHOLD.

HAVE WE HEARD FROM X-FACTOR?



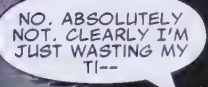
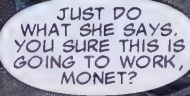
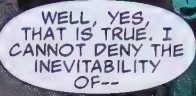
ISN'T THAT THE MUTIE GROUP THAT CAME OUT AGAINST THE REGISTRATION ACT?

YES.

NOT A WORD. YOU THINK THEY'RE BEHIND THIS?



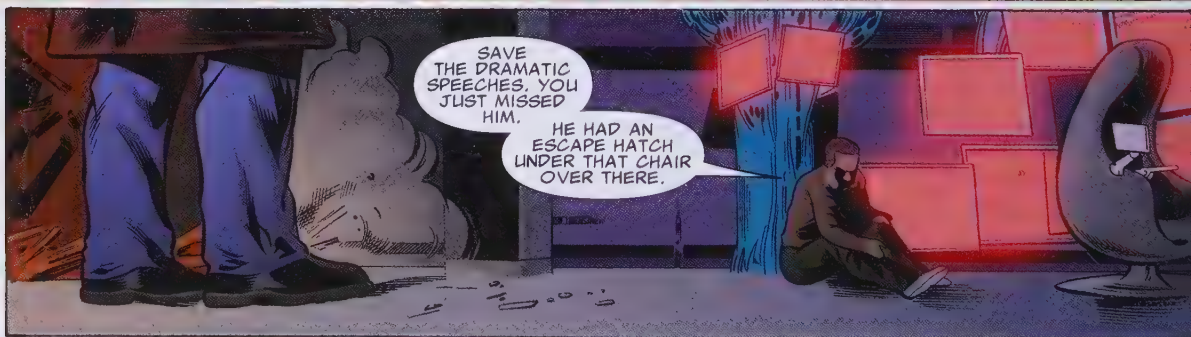
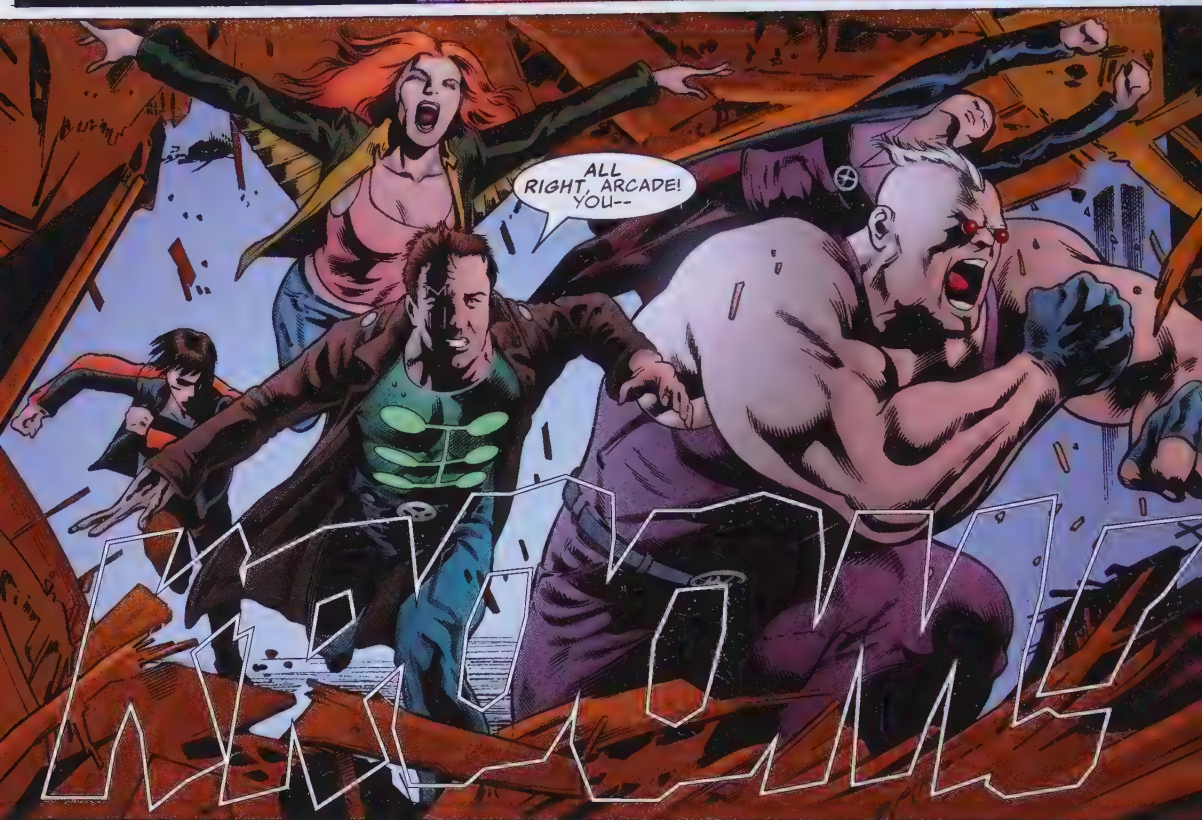
MY GUESS IS THEY'RE SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF IT.

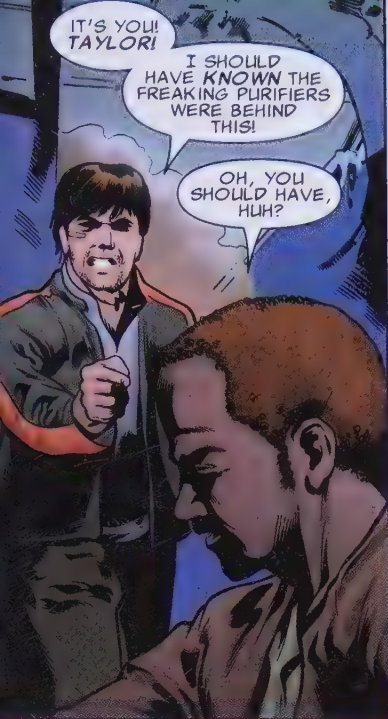


AS MUCH AS I HATE THE
IDEA OF DEATH, DESTRUCTION
AND MAYHEM...

...I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT,
IN A SICK WAY, WE OWE
ARCADE A DEBT.

THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT
WE NEEDED TO PULL
TOGETHER AS A TEAM.





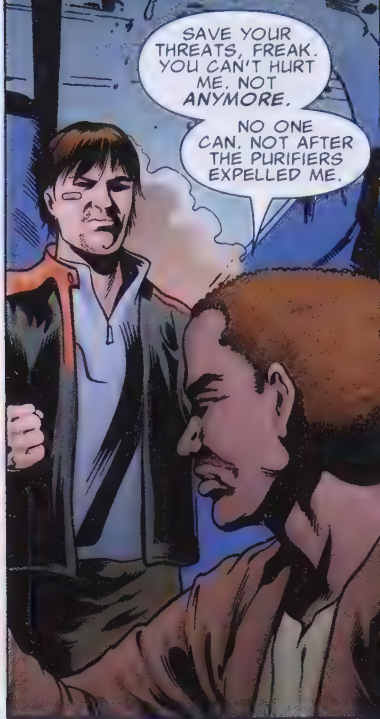
IT'S YOU!!
TAYLOR!

I SHOULD
HAVE KNOWN THE
FREAKING PURIFIERS
WERE BEHIND
THIS!

OH, YOU
SHOULD HAVE,
HUH?



GET UP!
GET UP SO I
CAN POUND
THE--



SAVE YOUR
THREATS, FREAK.
YOU CAN'T HURT
ME. NOT
ANYMORE.

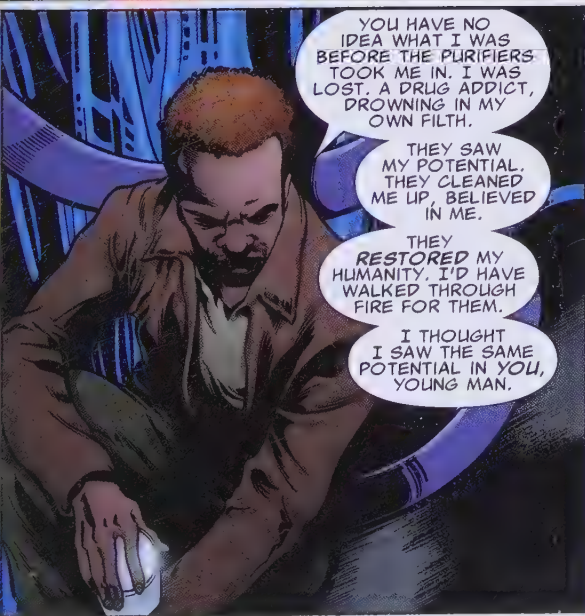
NO ONE
CAN. NOT AFTER
THE PURIFIERS
EXPELLED ME.



BECAUSE OF
ME, RIGHT?
I GET TO TAKE
CREDIT FOR
THAT.

YEAH, RIGHT. AS
IF A MURDEROUS
SLIME LIKE YOU
HAS A SOUL.

YOU WANT TO
TAKE CREDIT FOR
KILLING MY SOUL?
GO RIGHT AHEAD.

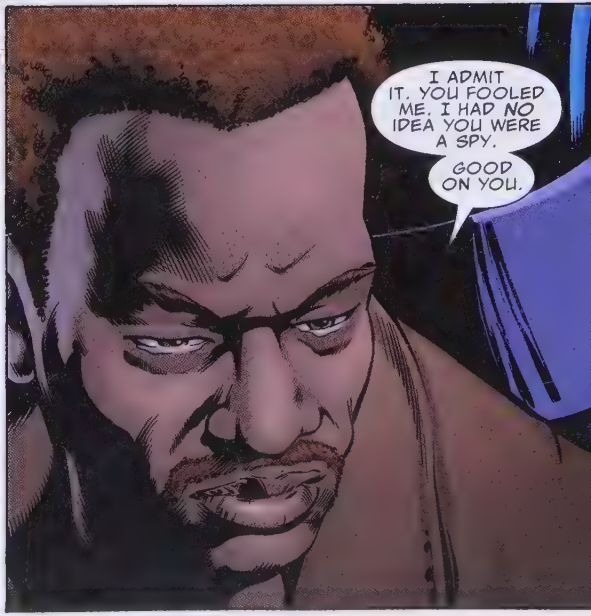


YOU HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT I WAS
BEFORE THE PURIFIERS
TOOK ME IN. I WAS
LOST, A DRUG ADDICT,
DROWNING IN MY
OWN FILTH.

THEY SAW
MY POTENTIAL.
THEY CLEANED
ME UP, BELIEVED
IN ME.

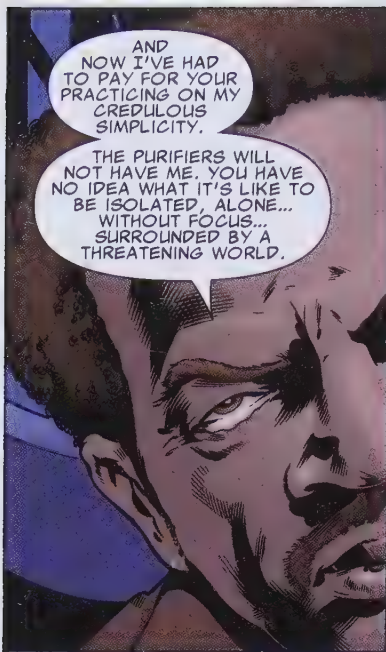
THEY
RESTORED MY
HUMANITY. I'D HAVE
WALKED THROUGH
FIRE FOR THEM.

I THOUGHT
I SAW THE SAME
POTENTIAL IN YOU,
YOUNG MAN.



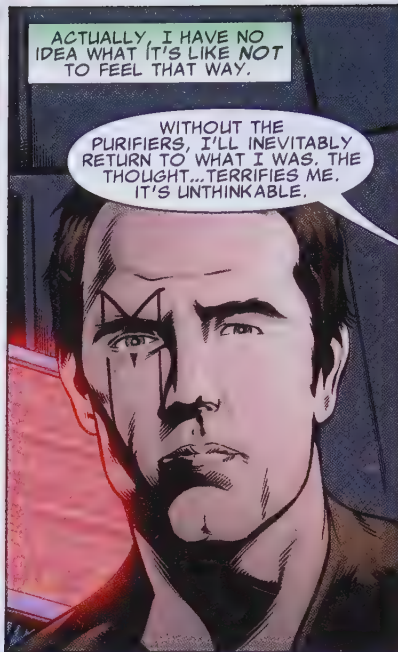
I ADMIT
IT. YOU FOOLED
ME. I HAD NO
IDEA YOU WERE
A SPY.

GOOD
ON YOU.



AND NOW I'VE HAD TO PAY FOR YOUR PRACTICING ON MY CREDULOUS SIMPLICITY.

THE PURIFIERS WILL NOT HAVE ME. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ISOLATED. ALONE... WITHOUT FOCUS... SURROUNDED BY A THREATENING WORLD.



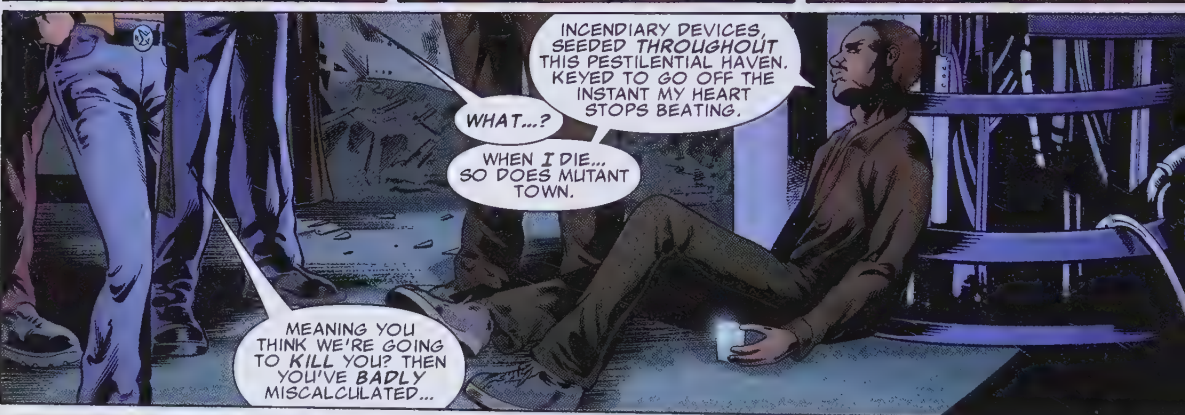
ACTUALLY, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE NOT TO FEEL THAT WAY.

WITHOUT THE PURIFIERS, I'LL INEVITABLY RETURN TO WHAT I WAS. THE THOUGHT... TERRIFIES ME. IT'S UNTHINKABLE.



I CANNOT GO BACK OR FORWARD. FORTUNATELY, THANKS TO ARCADE AND HIS "FAILSAFE" PLAN, I SHALL HAVE TO DO NEITHER.

FAILSAFE PLAN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

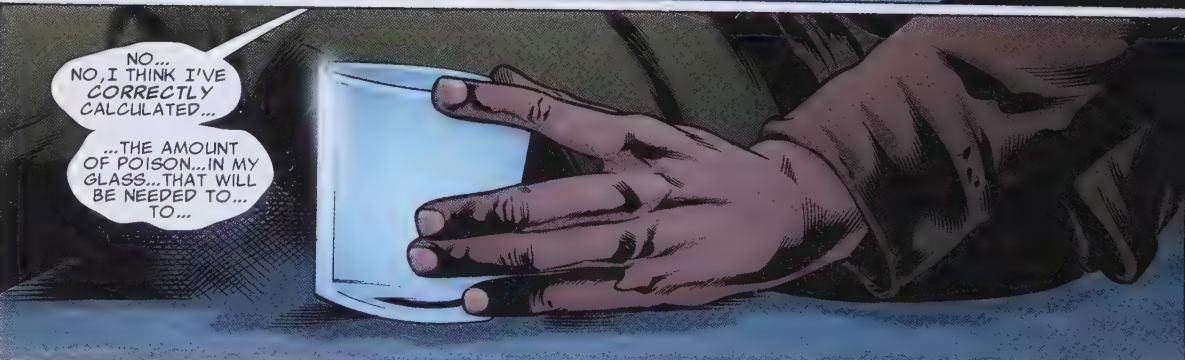


INCENDIARY DEVICES, SEEDS THROUGHOUT THIS PESTILENTIAL HAVEN. KEYS TO GO OFF THE INSTANT MY HEART STOPS BEATING.

WHAT...?

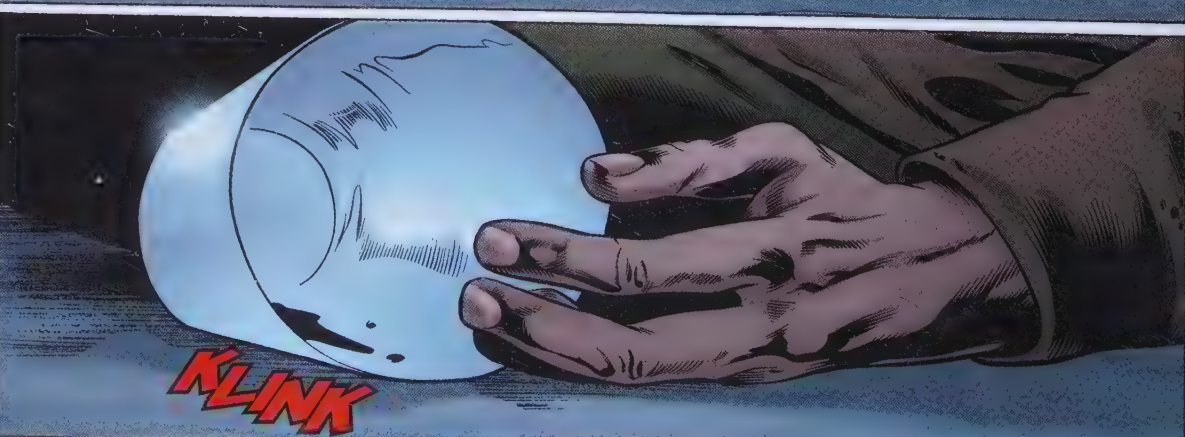
WHEN I DIE... SO DOES MUTANT TOWN.

MEANING YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU? THEN YOU'VE BADLY MISCALCULATED...



NO... NO, I THINK I'VE CORRECTLY CALCULATED...

...THE AMOUNT OF POISON... IN MY GLASS... THAT WILL BE NEEDED TO... TO...



KLINK

WELCOME TO
MUTANT TOWN

POPULATION - ~~743~~
0



YOU SEE IT,
SHIRLEY? YOU
SEE THIS?

NOT ENOUGH
THAT WE'RE LIVING
IN THE GHETTO. THAT
I'VE GOTTEN
USED TO.

BUT
NOW...



...NOW
THE WALLS ARE
BACK.

AHHH, SHIRLEY.
IT'S LIKE YOU ALWAYS
SAID: THIS IS WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN YOU LIVE
LONG ENOUGH.

NOTHING NEW
HAPPENS. YOU JUST
WATCH THE SAME
HISTORY OVER AND
OVER.



WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE, DRAY? PLACE STILL GOING CRAZY?

LOOKS LIKE IT'S CALMED DOWN, MAN. WHOLE JUNGLE THING IS GONE, NO GIANT ROCKS AND CRAP.

WHAT ABOUT X-FACTOR?

NO SIGN.



GOOD. THEY WERE NEVER ANY DAMNED GOOD, THE LOT OF 'EM.

SETTIN' THEMSELVES UP IN OUR TOWN. ACTING LIKE THEY'RE OUR PROTECTORS.

WE DON'T NEED THEIR DAMNED PROTECTION.

DAMNED STRAIGHT, ROC. WE'RE THE X/M'S. WE CAN LOOK OUT FOR OURSELVES. MUTANT TOWN IS OUR TURF.

MIDDLE EAST SIDE, MAN.

WHAT?

WHY KEEP CALLING IT "MUTANT TOWN?" AIN'T NO MORE MUTANTS. SHOULD JUST CALL IT THE MIDDLE EAST SIDE LIKE OTHER PEOPLE--



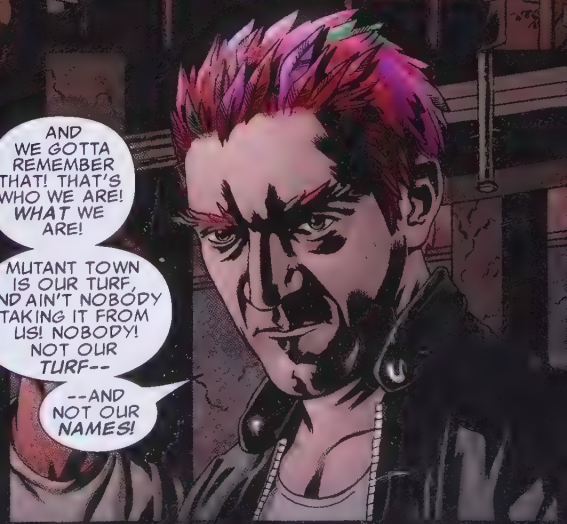
UNFFFFF!!!!

WE AIN'T OTHER PEOPLE, MAN! WE'RE THE X/M'S! THE EX-MUTANTS!

AND WE GOTTA REMEMBER THAT! THAT'S WHO WE ARE! WHAT WE ARE!

MUTANT TOWN IS OUR TURF, AND AIN'T NOBODY TAKING IT FROM US! NOBODY! NOT OUR TURF--

--AND NOT OUR NAMES!





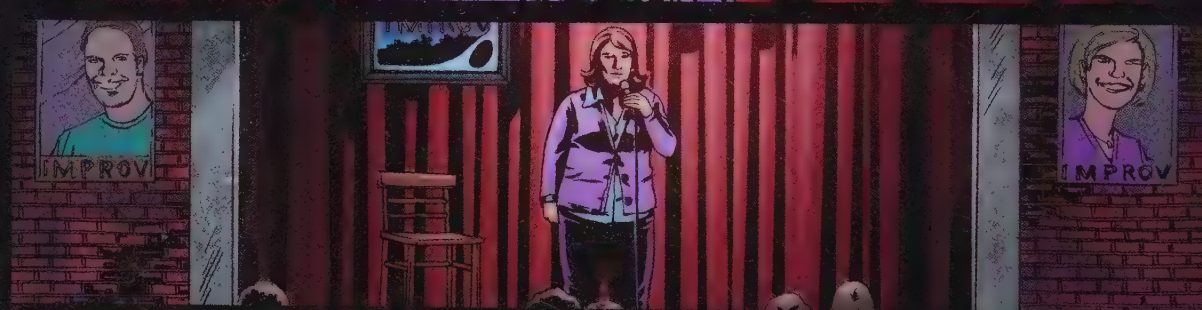
DOCTOR SAYS
TO THIS GUY, "I'M
SORRY TO SAY, I
HAVE BAD NEWS AND
WORSE NEWS."

"THE BAD
NEWS IS: YOU
HAVE CANCER."



"AND THE
WORSE NEWS
IS: YOU HAVE
ALZHEIMER'S."

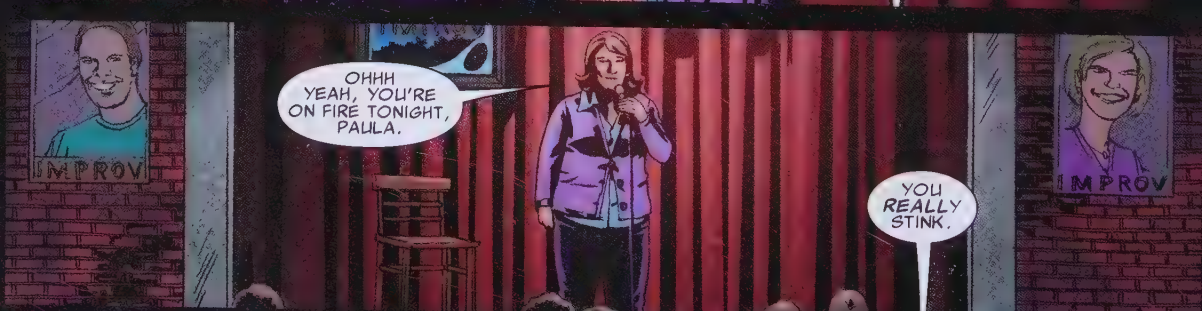
GUY SITS FOR
A MINUTE AND THEN
SAYS, "WELL, AT
LEAST I DON'T HAVE
CANCER."



SEE, THE
GUY'S GOT
ALZHEIMER'S, SO
HE DOESN'T
REMEMBER
THAT--

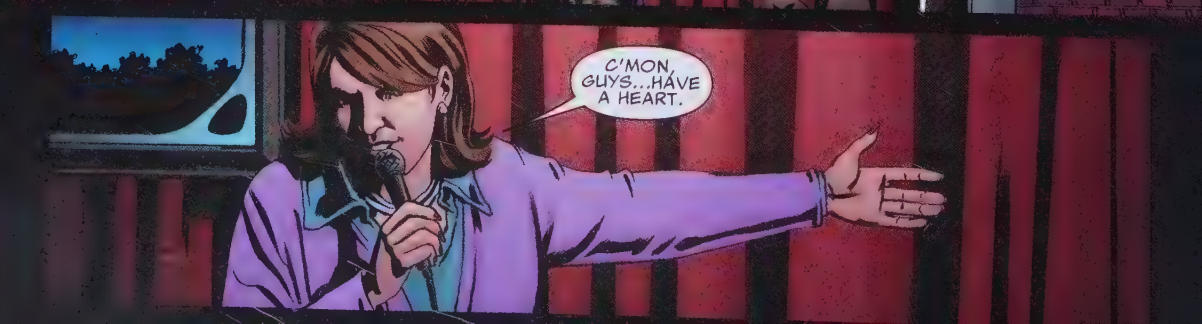


YOU
STINK.



OHhh
YEAH, YOU'RE
ON FIRE TONIGHT,
PAULA.

YOU
REALLY
STINK.



C'MON,
GUYS...HAVE
A HEART.



MAYBE HE WAS LYING!

NOT ESPECIALLY, NO.

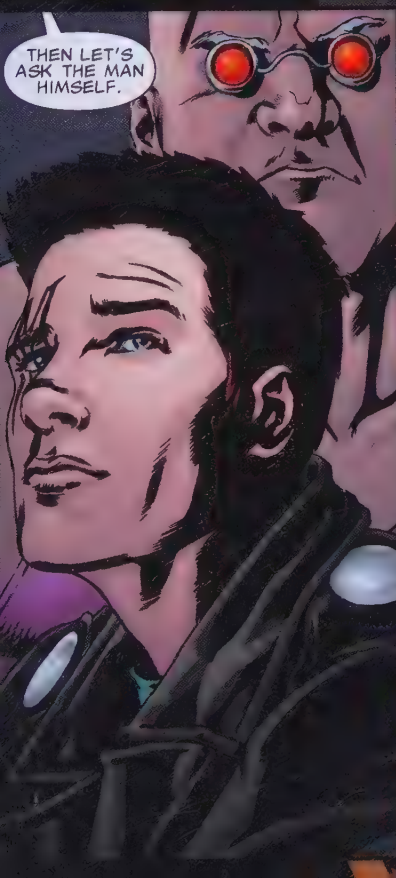
YOU WANT TO ROLL THOSE DICE?

COME ON! COME ON!

RICTOR! HOW YOU COMING WITH THE CONTROL SYSTEM?

TERRIFIC! GIMME ABOUT A DAY OR TWO AND I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT HOW THIS WHOLE THING WORKS!

I'M NO TECHNO-DUMMY, BUT C'MON! ARCADE'S IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN!



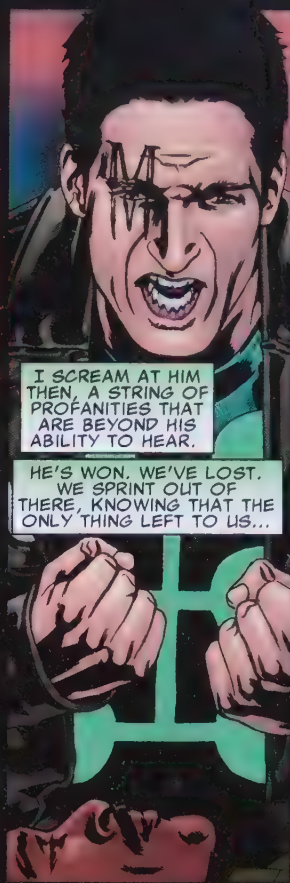
THEN LET'S ASK THE MAN HIMSELF.



NOW, NOW... LET'S REMEMBER THAT VIOLENCE HAS NEVER SOLVED ANYTHING.

PERHAPS. BUT RIGHT NOW I'D SETTLE FOR IT BEING AN END INTO ITSELF.





THE MIDDLE EAST SIDE IS BURNING

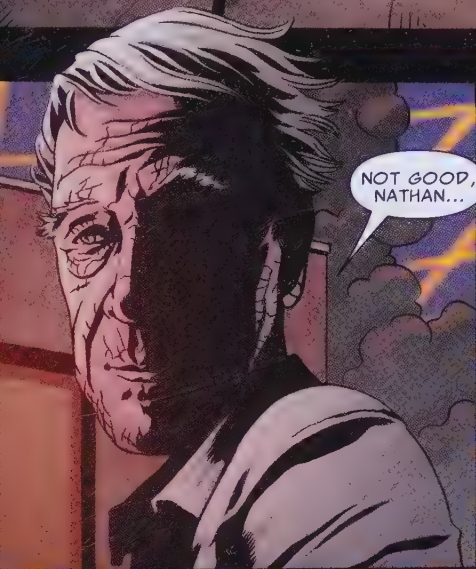
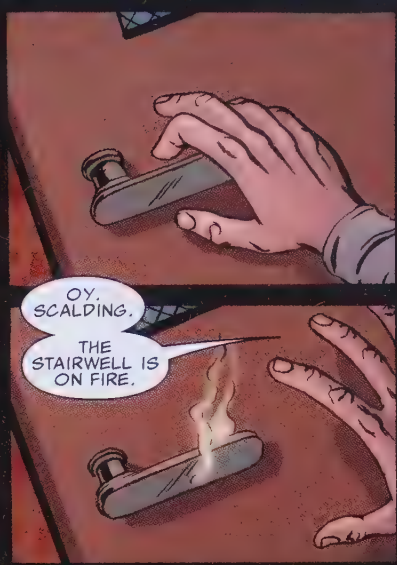


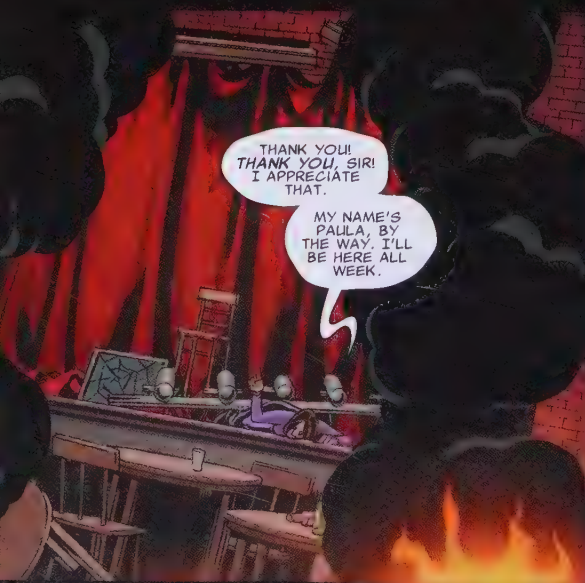


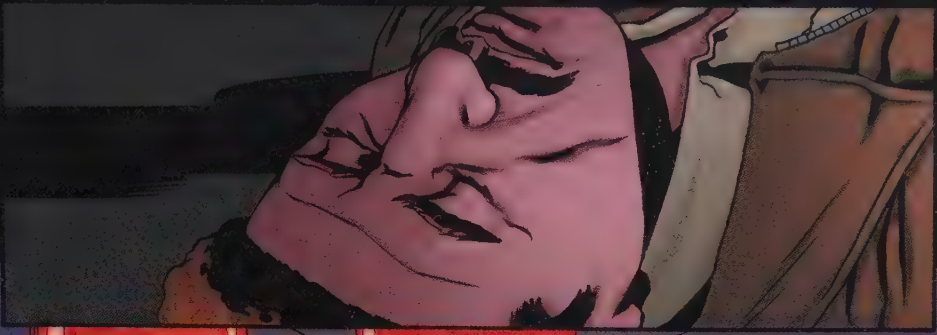










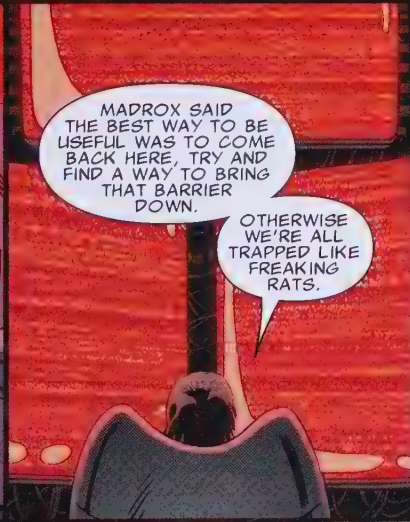


PURIFIER
CREEP. I'D
KILL YOU IF
YOU WEREN'T
ALREADY
DEAD.



WONDER
WHERE THE
ROBOT
WENT?

MUST'VE HAD
SOME SORT OF
BUILT-IN SELF-
DESTRUCT THING
OR SOMETHING.



MADROX SAID
THE BEST WAY TO BE
USEFUL WAS TO COME
BACK HERE, TRY AND
FIND A WAY TO BRING
THAT BARRIER
DOWN.

OTHERWISE
WE'RE ALL
TRAPPED LIKE
FREAKING
RATS.



SO
C'MON,
RICTOR...



MAKE
THE EARTH
MOVE.



HELLO!
ANYONE IN
HERE!?

HOLD
ON!

NOPE...
NOTHIN' TO
SEE HERE...
MOVE
ALONG...

TO
WHAT?



STOP ME
IF YOU'VE HEARD
THIS ONE...

A PAIR OF
JUMPER CABLES
WALKS INTO A
BAR...



BARTENDER SAYS,
"OKAY, I'LL SERVE
YOU, BUT DON'T
START ANYTHING."

CAN YOU
STAND?

DAMN.

NOT
WITH MY
LEGS.



ALL RIGHT. HANG
ON. I'LL GET YOU
OUT OF HERE.

YOU
SOUND IRISH.
LEPRECHAUN
WALKS INTO
A BAR.

OH
LORD.

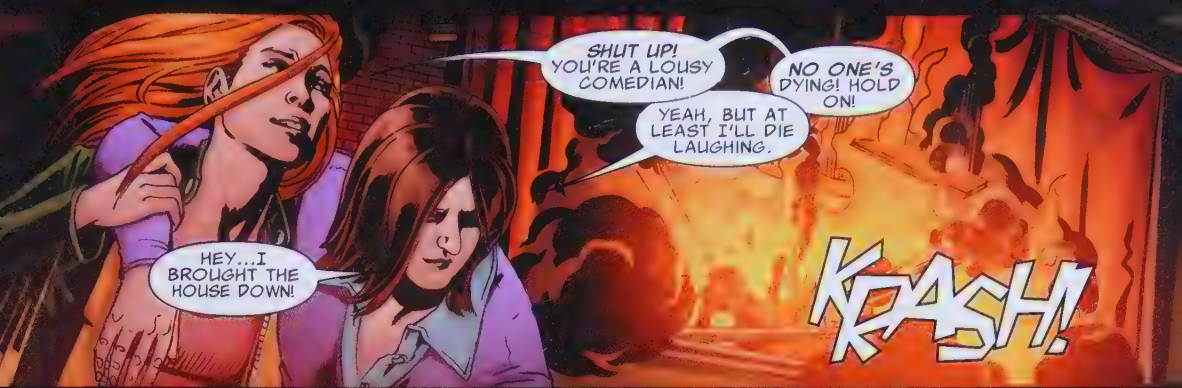
HE BUYS A
BEER THAT COSTS
THREE BUCKS AND
ONLY PUTS DOWN
TWO DOLLARS.

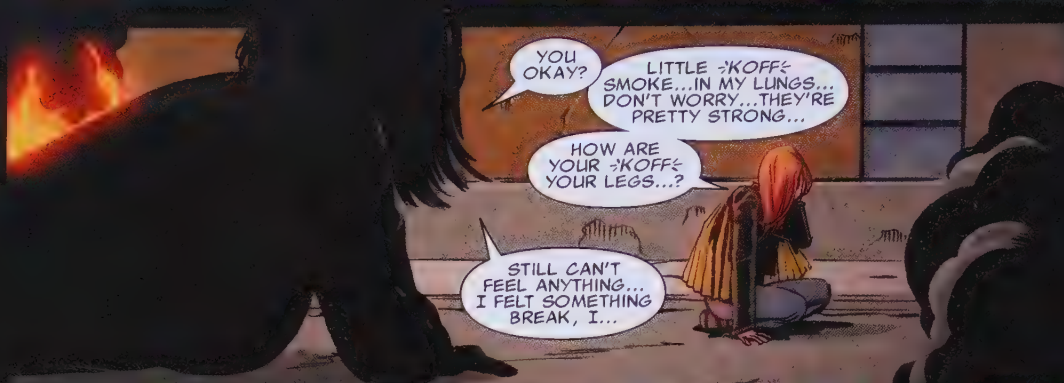


BARTENDER
SAYS, "HEY,
YOU'RE A LITTLE
SHORT!"

DAMN.

TRUST ME,
I'VE HEARD EVERY
BAR JOKE THERE--
AW, HELL.



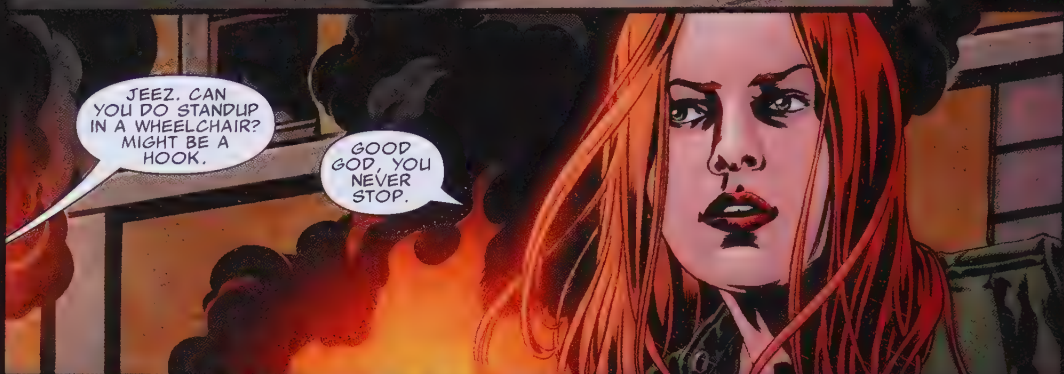


YOU
OKAY?

LITTLE :KOFF:
SMOKE...IN MY LUNGS...
DON'T WORRY...THEY'RE
PRETTY STRONG...

HOW ARE
YOUR :KOFF:
YOUR LEGS...?

STILL CAN'T
FEEL ANYTHING...
I FELT SOMETHING
BREAK, I...



JEEZ. CAN
YOU DO STANDUP
IN A WHEELCHAIR?
MIGHT BE A
HOOK.

GOOD
GOD, YOU
NEVER
STOP.

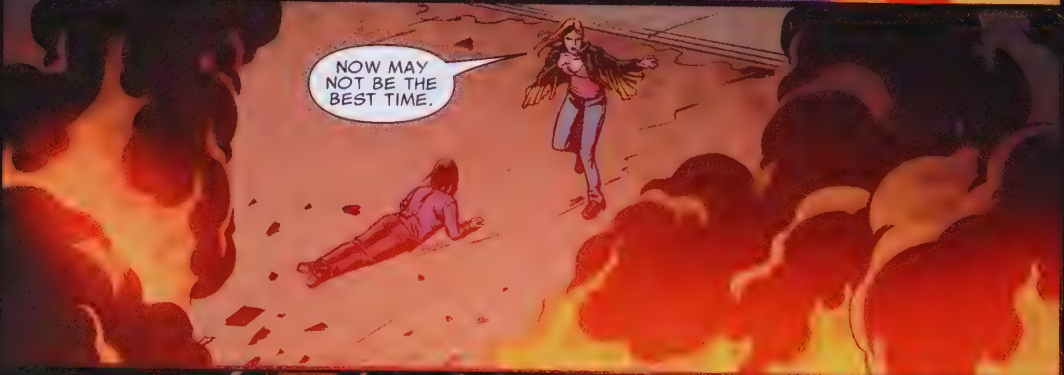


BEFORE THE
DECIMATION, I
COULD MAKE PEOPLE
LAUGH. ANYTHING I
SAID STIMULATED
THE PLEASURE
CENTERS. NOW...

NOW I HAVE
TO WORK TWICE AS
HARD FOR HALF THE
LAUGHS.

SO I
JUST SHUT MY
BRAIN DOWN...
KEEP MAKING
JOKES...

YOU
KNOW
WHAT--?



NOW MAY
NOT BE THE
BEST TIME.



HEY! IT'S
RAINING!

NO,
NO, IT'S
NOT.



SY! YOU
OKAY?

I'M
FINE!
GO!

FWOOOSH!



THE THING IS, WHEN
YOU'RE FACED WITH A
TOTAL SENSE OF
HOPELESSNESS, YOU
JUST HAVE TO FIGHT
THROUGH IT.



COME UP WITH
NEW ANGLES,
NEW IDEAS...



DO ANYTHING
YOU CAN.



SOMETIMES IT'S JUST
A MATTER OF TAKING
A LEAP OF FAITH--



--AND BEING
THERE WHEN
PEOPLE
NEED YOU.



WE DON'T
NEED YOU,
Y'HEAR?
THE X/M'S
DON'T NEED
NOBODY!



THAT'S GREAT
TO HEAR. REALLY.
I'M IMPRESSED.



NOW GET THE
HELL OUT OF HERE
BEFORE I CHANGE MY
MIND AND LET THIS
PLACE COLLAPSE
ON TOP OF YOUR
POINTY HEADS!



SHIRLEY...
SHIRLEY, IT'S
GOING TO BE
"KOFF"
OKAY...

I'M GOING
TO "KOFF"
BE WITH YOU
SOON...

I'M NOT
SHIRLEY...

...BUT
WILL I
DO?

WHO...
WHO ARE
YOU? YOU
CAN FLY?

WELL,
NO.

BUT I'VE
GOT A KICKIN'
SUPPORT
SYSTEM.

COULD WE
MOVE THIS
ALONG?
PLEASE?

ENDED
OF PLAYING

ACCESS DENIED
THANK YOU FOR PLAYING

DAMMIT!

STUPID
PIECE OF
USELESS...

NO, IT'S
NOT USELESS.
I AM.

USELESS,
POWERLESS,
USELESS--!

MAYBE IN THE END,
WHAT MAKES HEROES
INTO HEROES...

...IS THAT
WE'RE JUST TOO
STUPID TO QUIT.

AND AS A RESULT,
EVEN IN THE FACE OF
TOTAL DEFEAT...

OH, RUSSMI
SYSTEMS OVERLOAD !!!

...WE OCCASIONALLY
LUCK INTO A WIN.

HE'S BUSY
FIGHTING WHO?
DOESN'T HE
HAVE AN ENTIRE
HELICARRIER
FOR THAT TYPE
OF THING?

MS.
COOPER!
LOOK!

EH...?

I'LL BE
DAMNED.

ALL
UNITS! GO!
GO!

THE MIDDLE
EAST SIDE IS
BURNING! LET'S
PUT IT OUT!

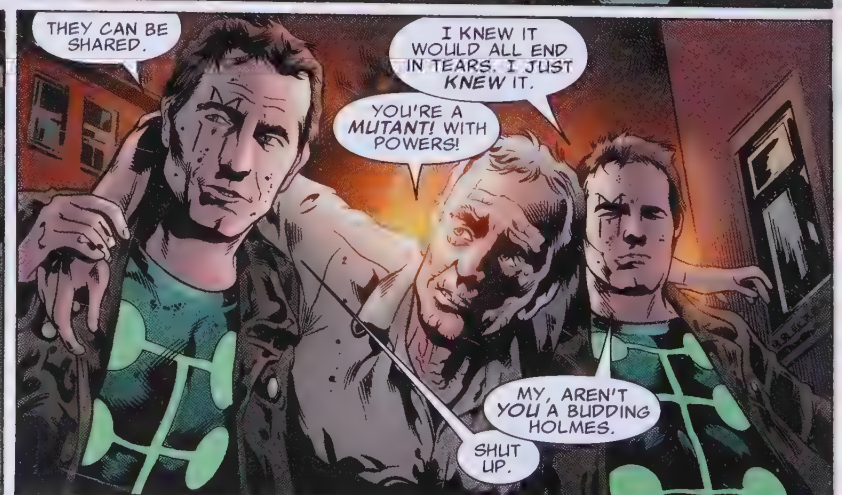
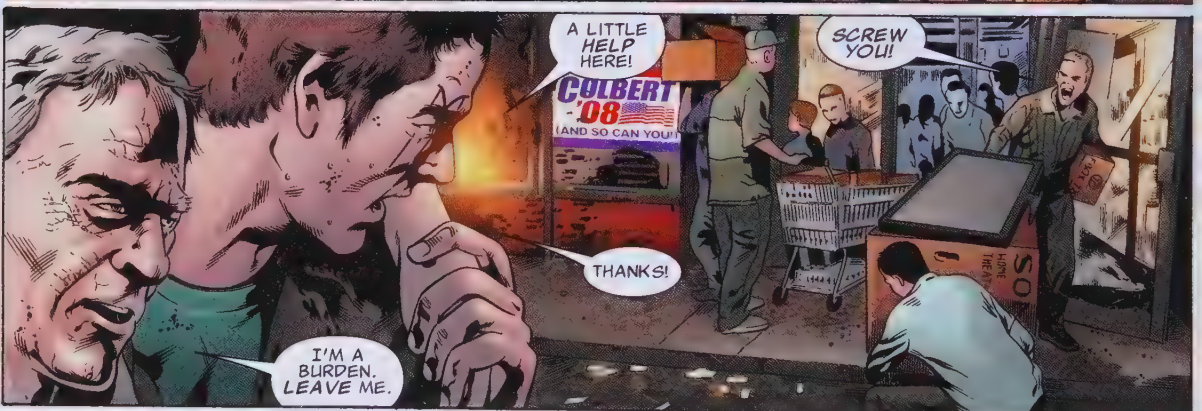
FORGET IT.
WE DON'T NEED
TONY STARK
ANYMORE.

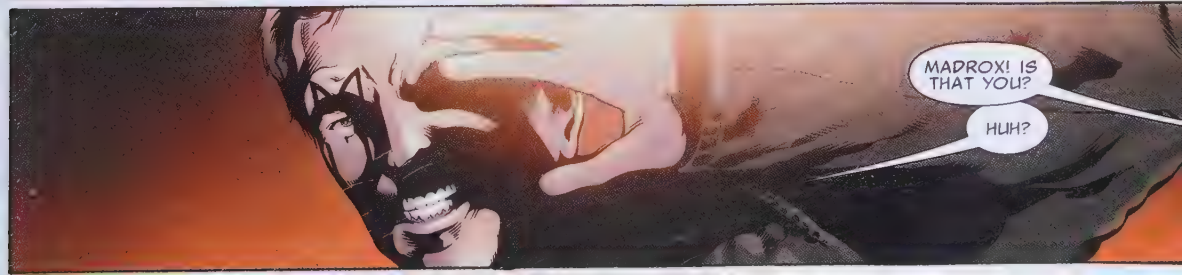
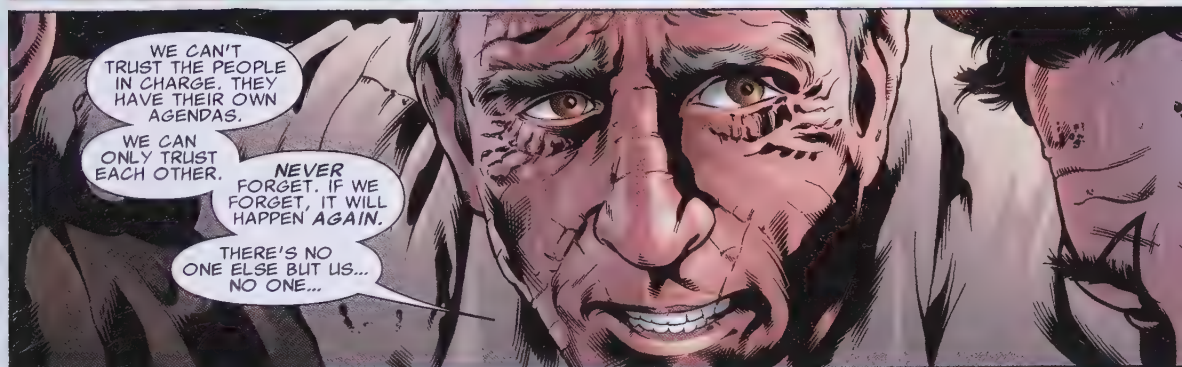
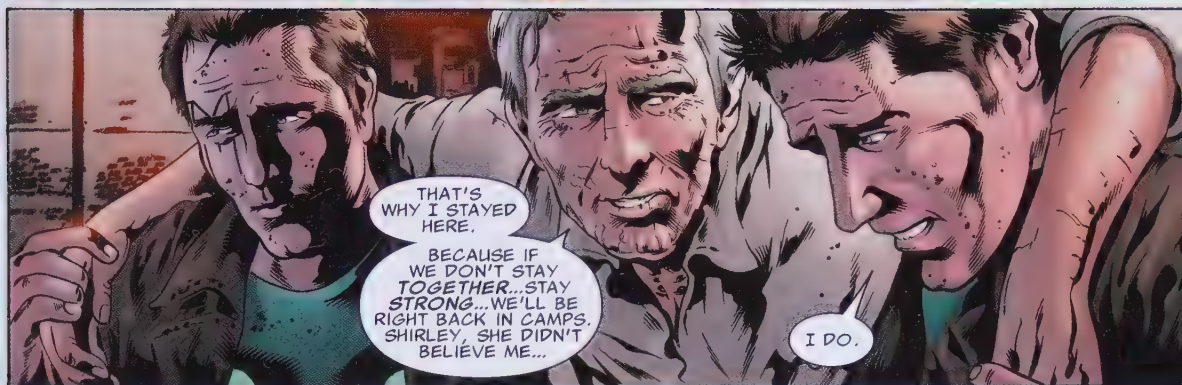
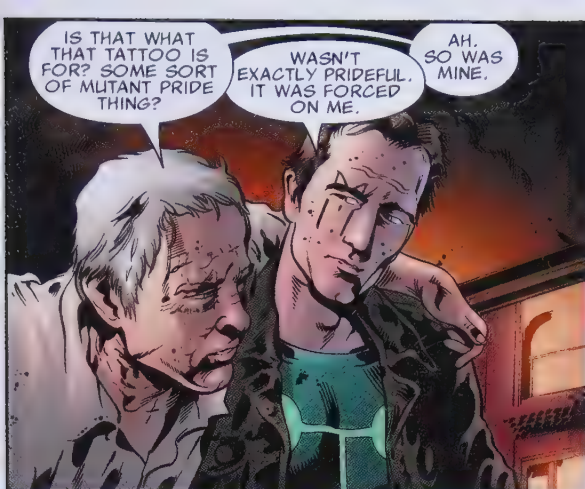
NOW I
WORK ON FINDING
MADROX...


AND TELL
HIM HOW THINGS
ARE GOING TO BE
FROM NOW ON.












OH, THANK GOD.
THE CAVALRY.

THE BARRIER THAT ARCADE
CREATED AROUND MUTANT TOWN...
I *THOUGHT* IT HAD COLLAPSED...
BUT WITH THE SMOKE, THE HAZE...
I COULDN'T BE SURE.

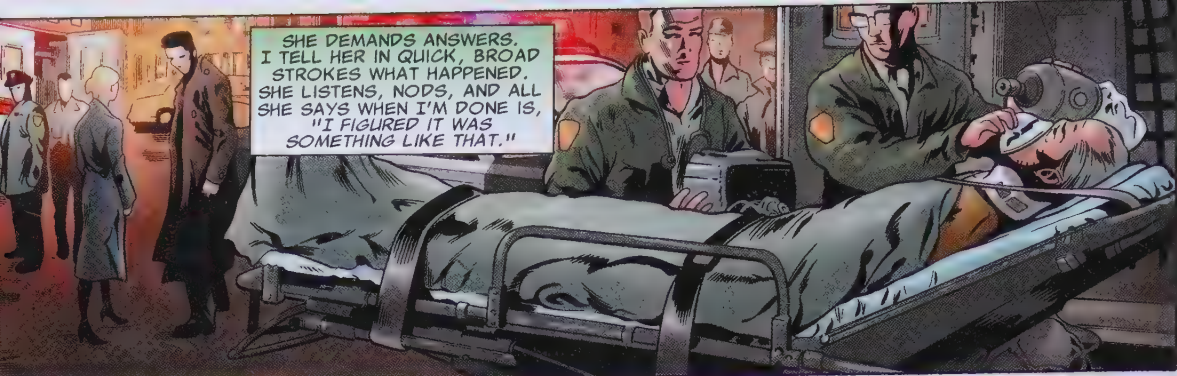
A full-page comic book illustration. A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red turtleneck dress and a long black coat, is running towards the viewer. She has a determined expression. In the background, a city street is engulfed in flames and smoke. To her left, a firefighter in full gear is running. To her right, two men in suits are running away from her. The scene is chaotic and dangerous.

BUT, LO AND
BEHOLD, HERE
THEY ARE...

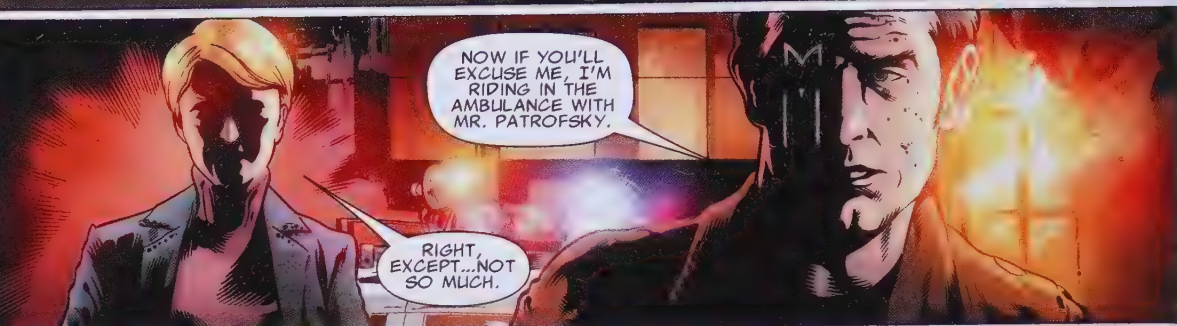
...WITH VAL COOPER OF
O**N*E LEADING THE WAY,
AND NARY A SENTINEL IN
SIGHT. I GUESS I SHOULD
BE FLATTERED.

OR ANNOYED. MAYBE SHE
FEELS WE JUST AREN'T A BIG
ENOUGH THREAT TO WARRANT
A BIG HONKIN' ROBOT.

X-IT STRATEGY



SHE DEMANDS ANSWERS. I TELL HER IN QUICK, BROAD STROKES WHAT HAPPENED. SHE LISTENS, NODS, AND ALL SHE SAYS WHEN I'M DONE IS, "I FIGURED IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE THAT."



NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'M RIDING IN THE AMBULANCE WITH MR. PATROFSKY.

RIGHT, EXCEPT...NOT SO MUCH.



YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING.

AGAIN: NOT SO MUCH.

YOU THINK I CAN'T GET AROUND THESE GUYS?

I THINK YOU DON'T WANT TO ADD "FUGITIVE" TO YOUR RESUME.



WHERE'S THE REST OF YOUR TEAM?

HELPING PEOPLE. THAT'S WHAT WE DO.

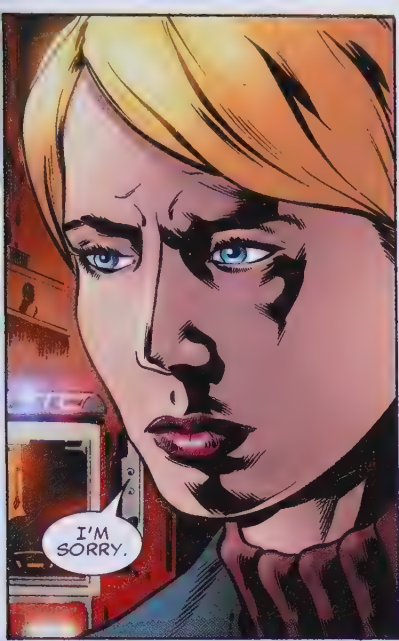
YOU MEAN WHEN YOU'RE NOT GETTING THEM KILLED.

THAT'S NOT FAIR--!



I KNOW.

NOW TELL ME IT'S NOT ACCURATE.





WHO THE HELL DOES SHE THINK SHE IS?

WELL, SHE PROBABLY THINKS SHE'S YOUR OLD BOSS, FROM BACK IN THE DAYS WHEN X-FACTOR WAS A GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED TEAM.



AND MAYBE SHE THINKS THAT SHE HAS YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART.



HOW CAN SHE POSSIBLY KNOW WHAT MY BEST INTERESTS ARE?

SHE'S NOT ONE OF US.



ONE OF US. ONE OF US.

CUTE, LAYLA. VERY CUTE.

CAN'T HELP IT; I WAS BORN THIS WAY.



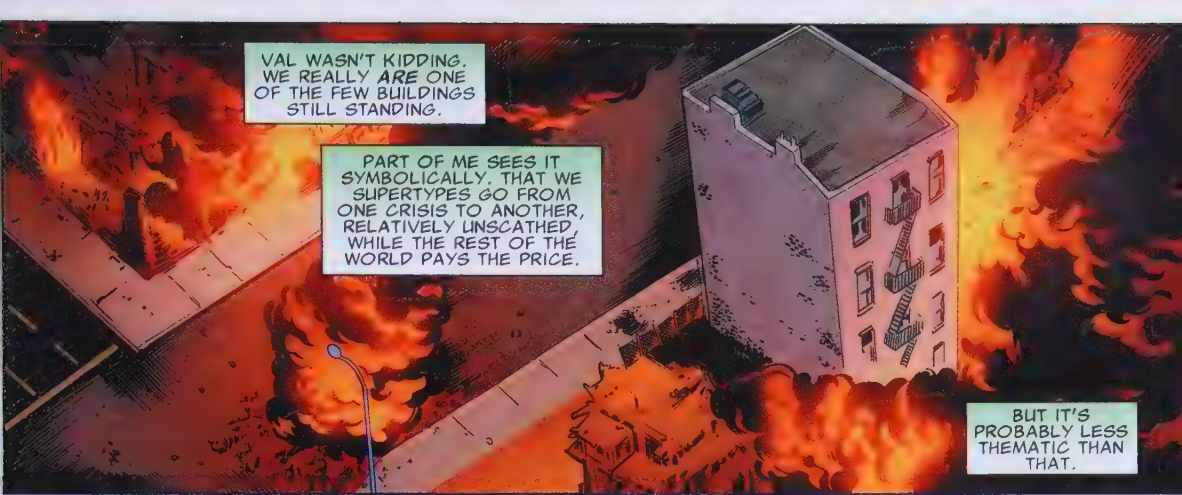
JAMIE? PLEASE? THERE'S A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.



FINE, WHATEVER.

LATER, JAMIE.

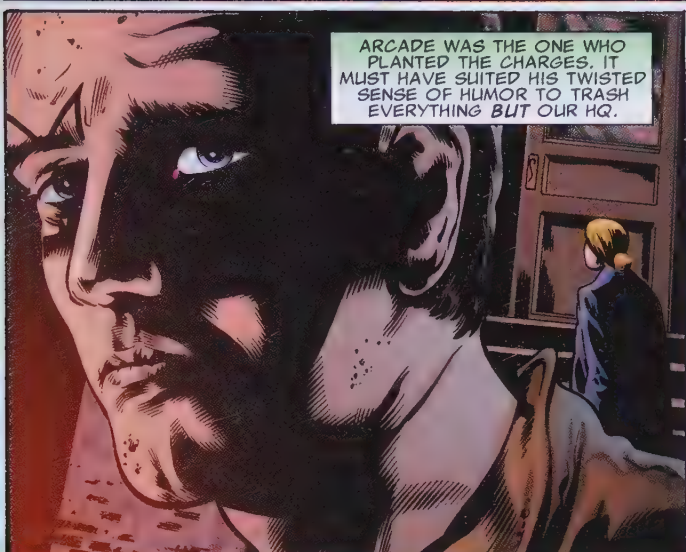
YEAH, LATER.



VAL WASN'T KIDDING.
WE REALLY ARE ONE
OF THE FEW BUILDINGS
STILL STANDING.

PART OF ME SEES IT
SYMBOLICALLY. THAT WE
SUPERTYPES GO FROM
ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER,
RELATIVELY UNSCATHED,
WHILE THE REST OF THE
WORLD PAYS THE PRICE.

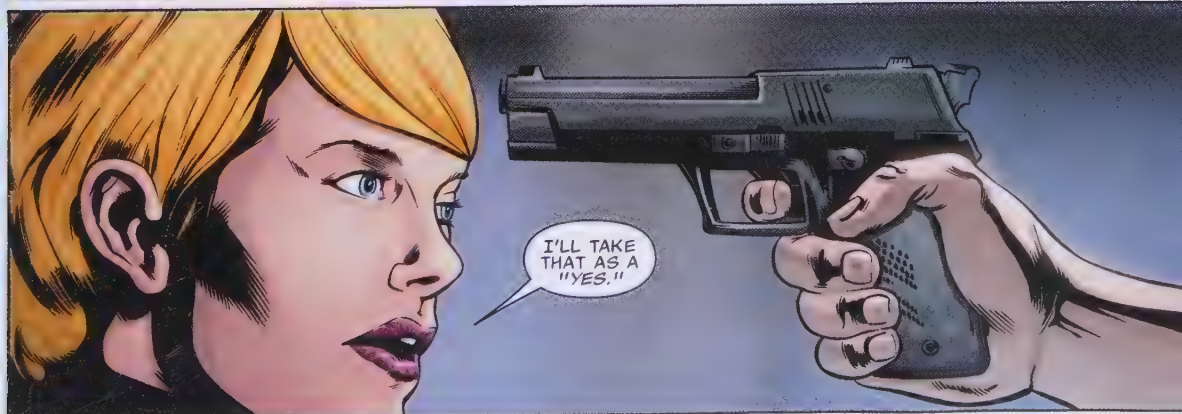
BUT IT'S
PROBABLY LESS
THEMATIC THAN
THAT.

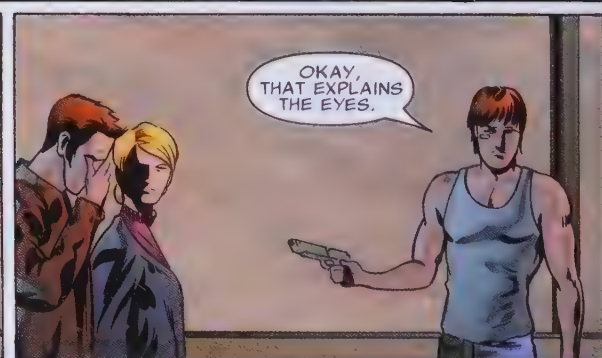
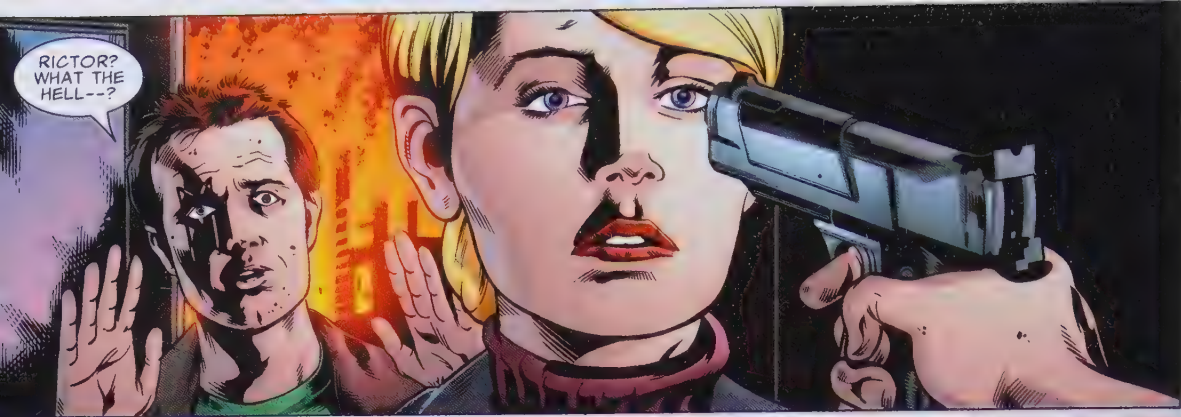


ARCADE WAS THE ONE WHO
PLANTED THE CHARGES. IT
MUST HAVE SUITED HIS TWISTED
SENSE OF HUMOR TO TRASH
EVERYTHING BUT OUR HQ.

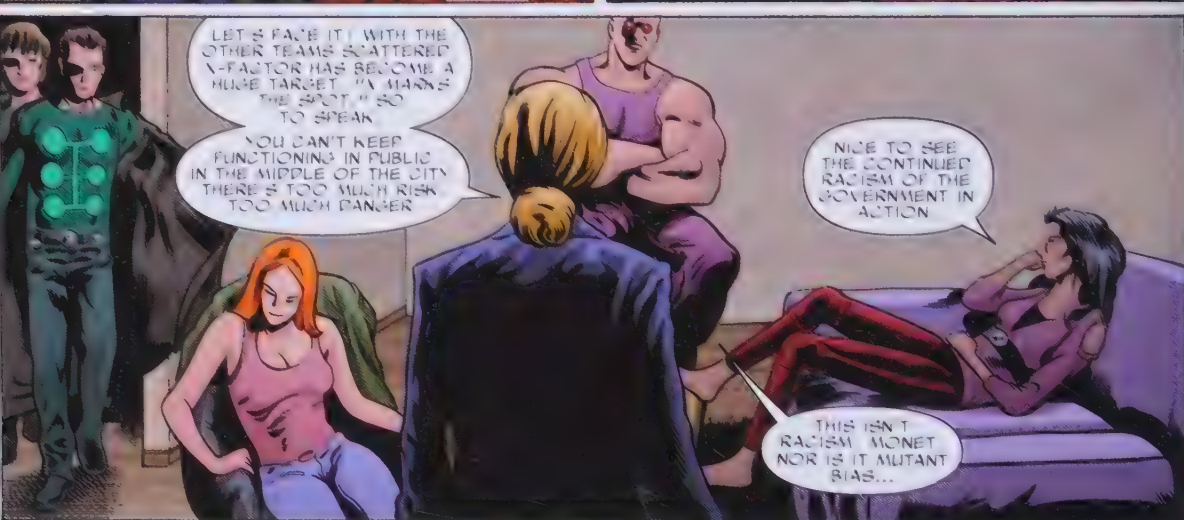
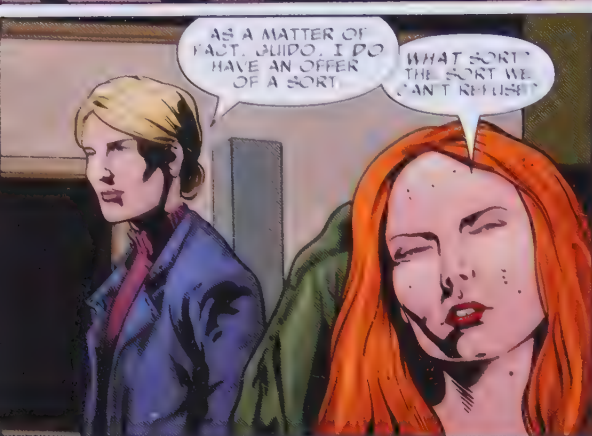


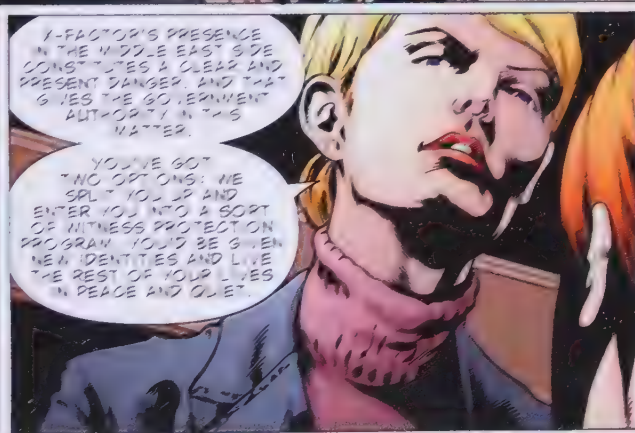
HELLO?
ANYONE
HERE--?

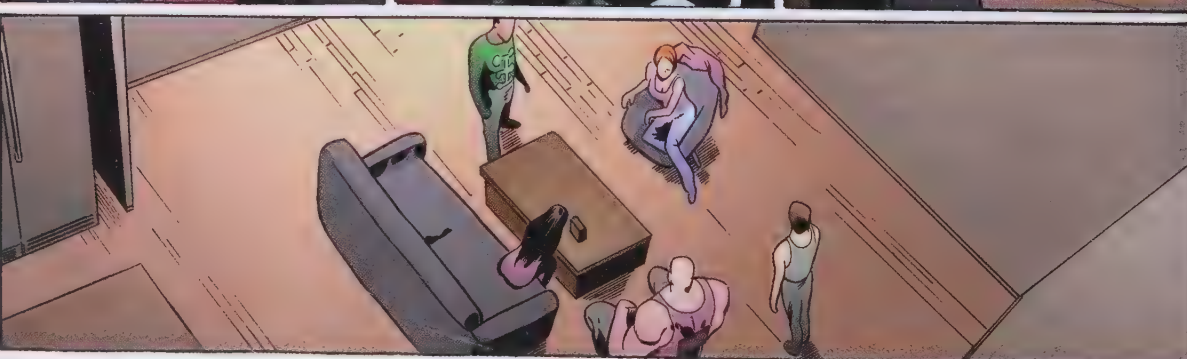
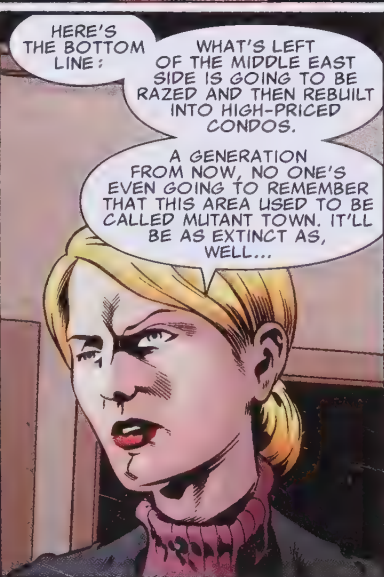
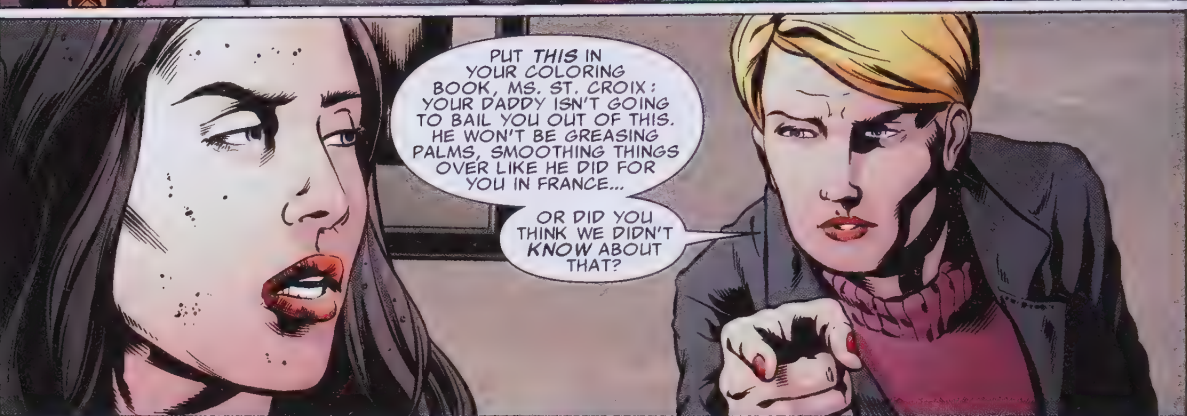
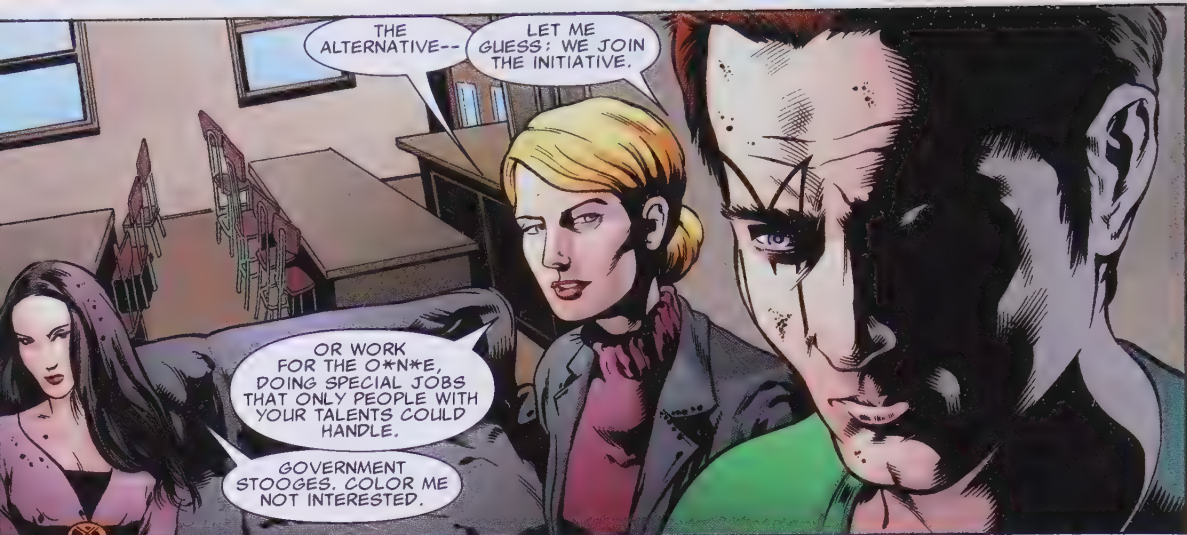


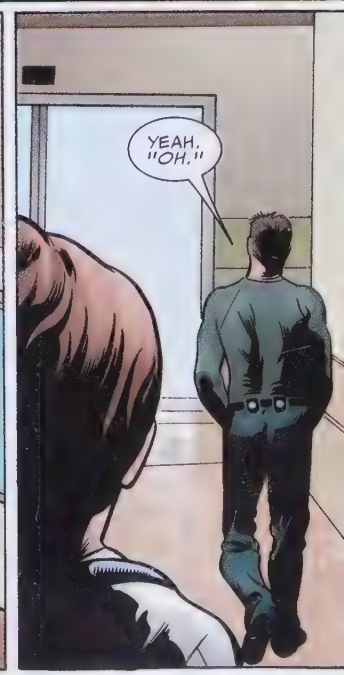
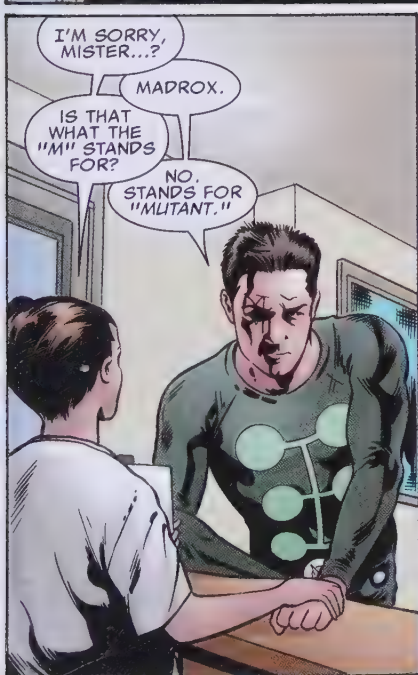
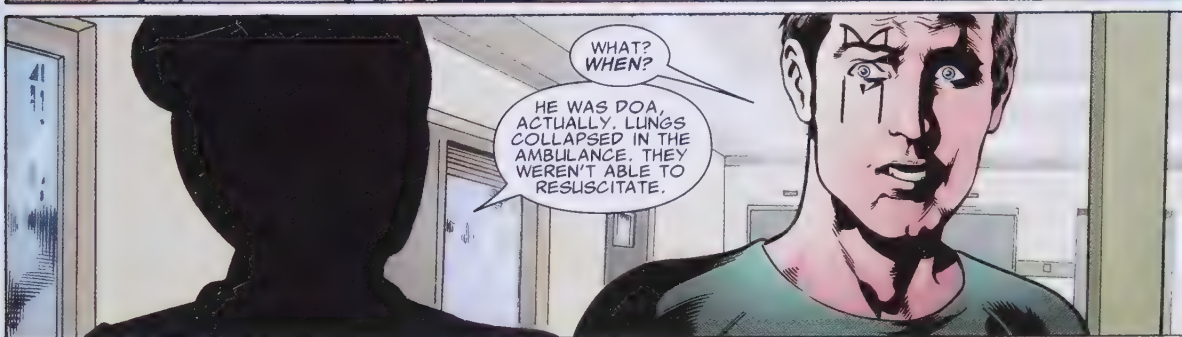
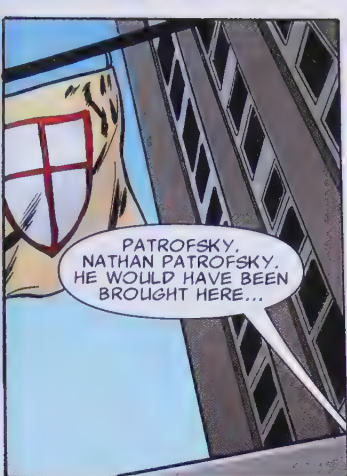












HE WAS JUST
ONE MAN. ONE
OLD MAN.

IT WASN'T
WHO HE WAS. IT
WAS WHAT HE WENT
THROUGH. WHAT
YOU WENT
THROUGH.

AND WHAT
YOU'RE
STILL GOING
THROUGH.

I'M FINE.
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT ME.

HOW
CAN I
NOT?

BECAUSE
YOU'VE GOT STUFF
THAT *ISN'T* IN YOUR
IMAGINATION TO
WORRY ABOUT.

YOU
MEAN LIKE
VAL.

WELL, THAT,
YEAH. AND LIKE
THAT SIRYN'S
PREGNANT WITH
YOUR KID.

WH-WHAT? THAT'S
NOT...HOW COULD
YOU KNOW--?

BECAUSE YOU
KNOW, DEEP DOWN, AND
RIGHT NOW, THAT'S WHAT I
AM: THE STUFF YOU KNOW
DEEP DOWN.

THERE'S A
DOZEN LITTLE PHYSICAL
INDICATIONS THAT ADD UP
TO HER BEING PREGGERS.
ON SOME LEVEL YOU *KNEW*
SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL
YOU THAT THE OTHER DAY,
AND YOU RAN TO AVOID
DEALING WITH IT.

OH MY
GOD. I...I THINK
YOU'RE RIGHT...

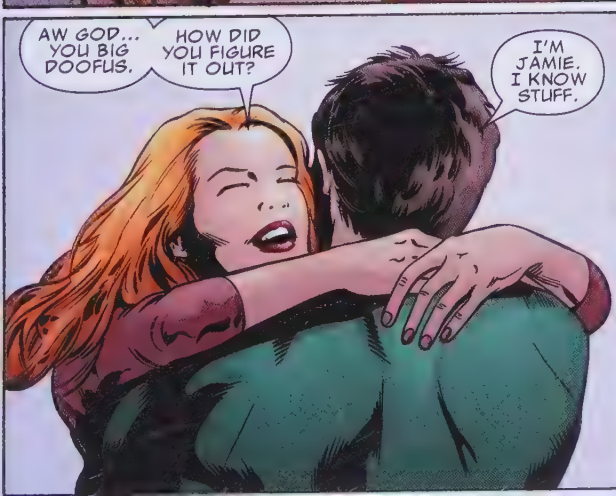
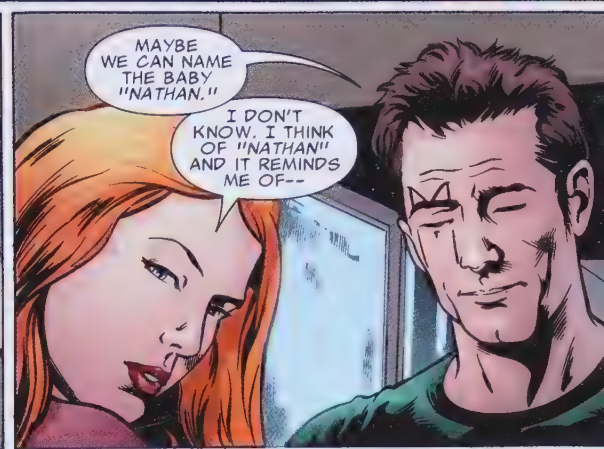
OF
COURSE I'M
RIGHT.

AND WHEN
HE'S BORN, HE'LL
BE ONE OF US.
ONE OF US.

WHY DO
YOU KEEP
QUOTING
THAT?

BECAUSE OF
THE MOVIE IT'S
FROM. YOU
REMEMBER,
DON'T YOU?

"FREAKS."



WE HAVE A LONG TALK, THEN, AS WE WALK BACK THROUGH THE SMASHED REMAINS OF MUTANT TOWN. WE TALK AS A TEAM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE...

...AND AS FRIENDS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN EVEN LONGER TIME. MAYBE EVER.

WE TALK ABOUT THE PAST...AND OUR FUTURE...AND HOW THE PAST HAS THIS FUNNY HABIT OF BECOMING THE FUTURE IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL...

...IF YOU FORGET.



WE TALK ABOUT WORKING FOR VAL AND FEAR WHAT WE WILL BECOME IF WE'RE ABSORBED INTO THE SYSTEM. PLUS THE STRONG-ARM TACTICS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE USA--UNITED STARK ARMY--RUB US THE WRONG WAY.

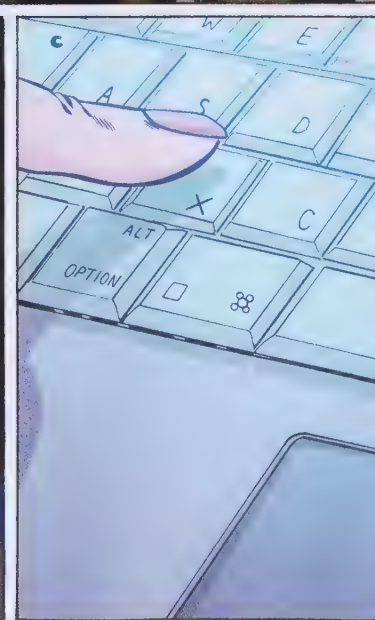
ULTIMATELY, IT'S THE GOVERNMENT THAT PUTS US INTO CAMPS. HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO PUT OUR FAITH IN THE ORGANIZATION THAT BETRAYS US?

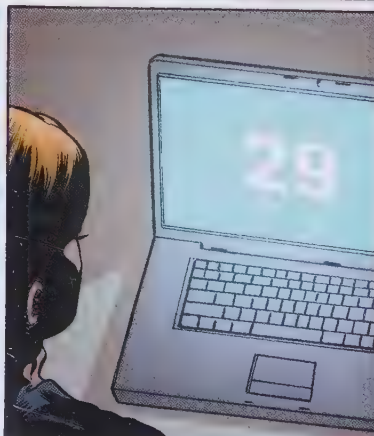
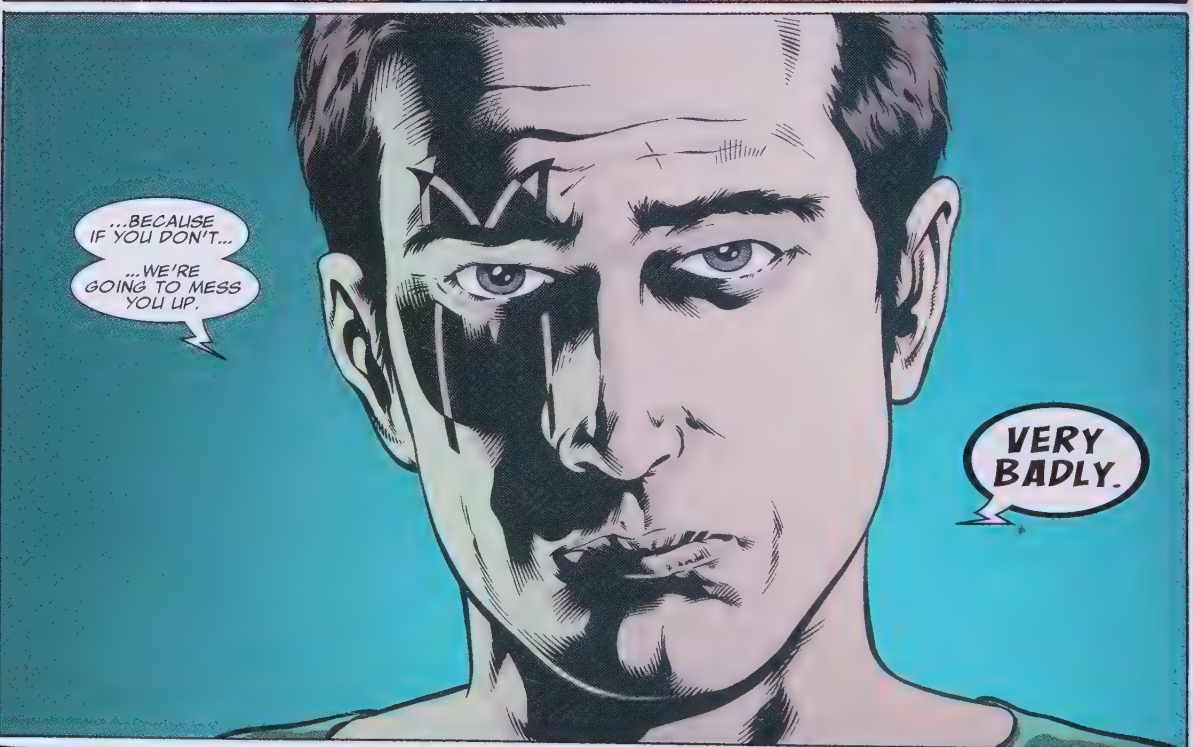
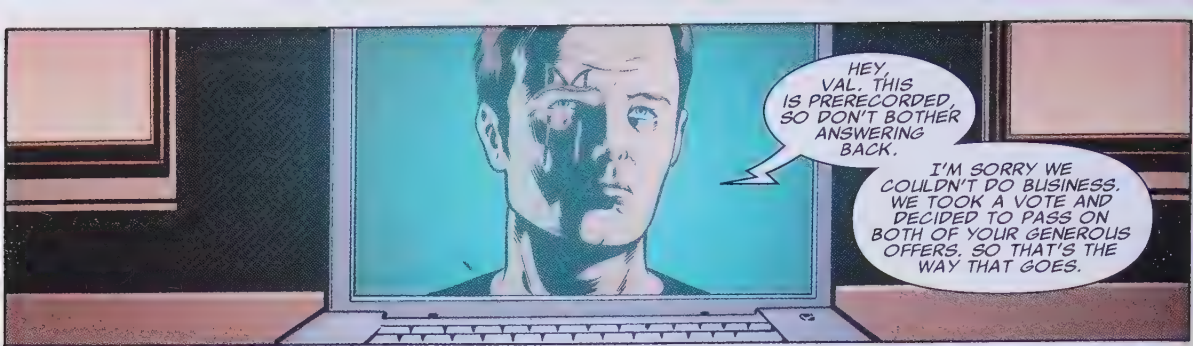
AND SPEAKING OF CAMPS, IF WE'RE SPLIT UP, WELL...

I KEEP THINKING THAT IF, IN THE FUTURE, SOMEONE COMES TO DRAG MUTANTS AWAY TO CAMPS, THEY'LL DO IT ONE BY ONE. A LOT EASIER TO ACCOMPLISH IF WE'RE NO LONGER A GROUP.

LIKE BEN FRANKLIN SAID, IF WE DON'T HANG TOGETHER, THEN WE'LL HANG SEPARATELY.

WE DESERVE BETTER THAN THAT. OUR BABY DESERVES BETTER THAN TO BE TREATED LIKE...LIKE...







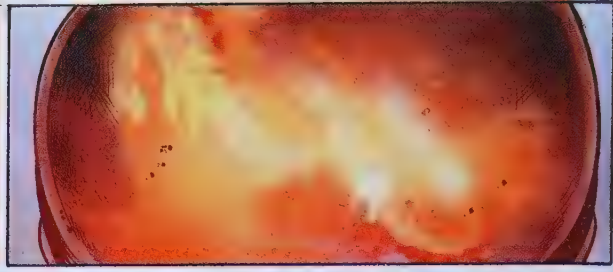
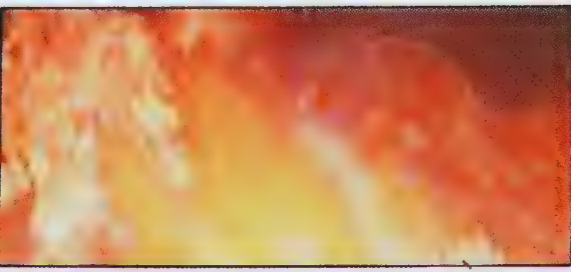
"IS
EVERYBODY
CLEAR?!?"

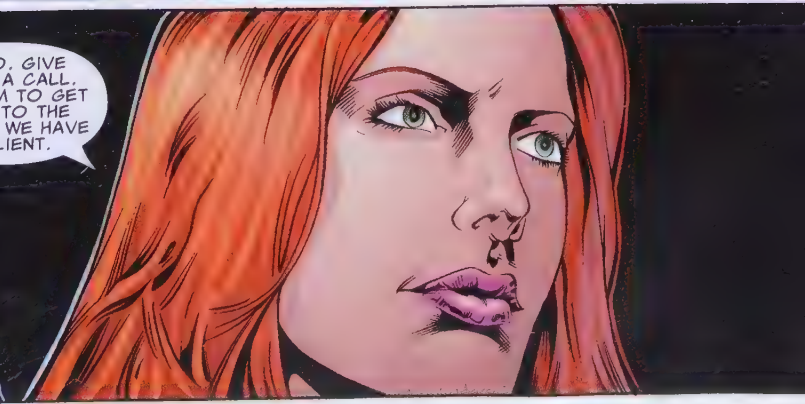
"ALL CLEAR!
MS. COOPER,
WHAT THE HELL
IS GOING ON?!"

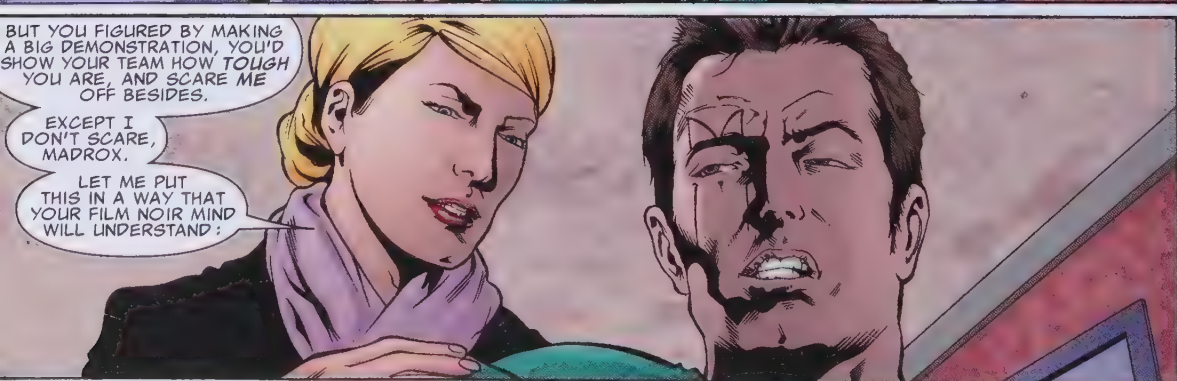
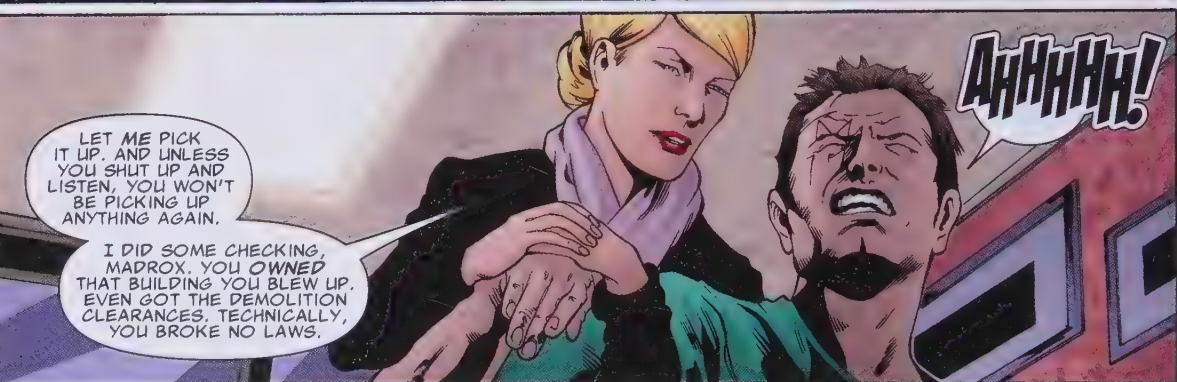
1

NEVER FORGET










THE QUICK AND THE DEAD





"LOVE IS LIKE
QUICKSILVER IN THE HAND.
LEAVE THE FINGERS OPEN
AND IT STAYS. CLUTCH
IT AND IT DARTS AWAY."

Dorothy Parker



Wanda...

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD



WHERE
THE HELL'S MY
LAWYER?

I'M SURE
HE'S RIGHT ON HIS
WAY OVER, T-BAR.
AFTER ALL, YOU PROB'LY
GOT HIM ON...WHAT?
A MILLION BUCK
RETAINER?

YOU'RE
A RIOT.



WELL, WELL!
THE BAR IS IN
THE HOUSE.

RUFUS.
M'MAN.



WHAT'D
THEY NAIL
YOUR SORRY
BUTT FOR,
T-BAR?

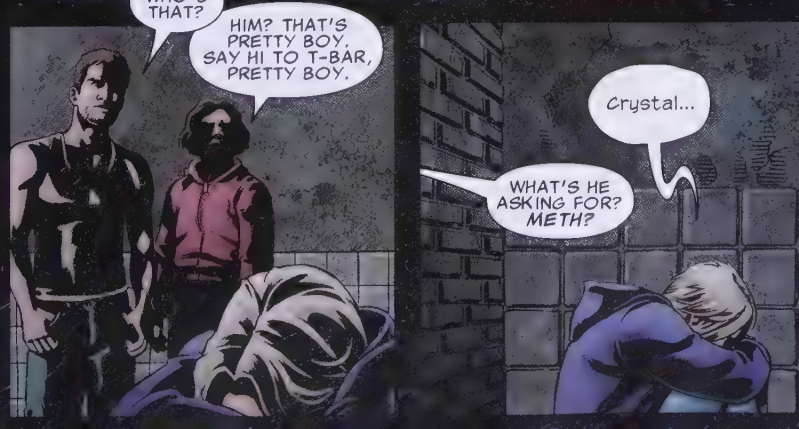


B&E.
YOU?

KICKED THE
CRAP OUTTA A
DUDE WHO GOT
IN MY FACE.

ALLEGEDLY.

YEAH,
SAME. TOTALLY
ALLEGEDLY FOR
ME TOO.



WHO'S
THAT?

HIM? THAT'S
PRETTY BOY.
SAY HI TO T-BAR,
PRETTY BOY.



Crystal...

WHAT'S HE
ASKING FOR?
METH?

NAH. HE JUST
KEEPS MUTTERING
GIRL'S NAMES, OVER AND
OVER. "WANDA," ONE
SOUNDED LIKE "MAGGIE."
"CRYSTAL." "LUNA."
"LAYLA."

WHO ARE
THEY?

DUNNO.
I THINK THIS
"LAYLA" IS HIS
EX-WIFE. ALWAYS
SOUNDS PISSED
WHEN HE SAYS
THAT ONE.

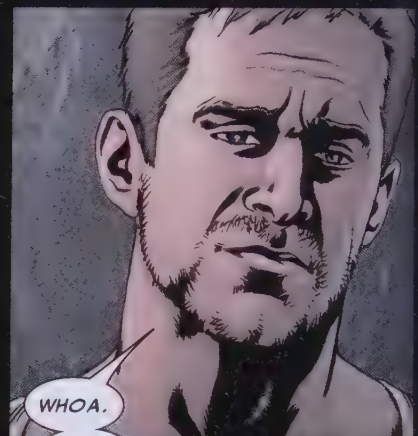


HEY.
PRETTY
BOY. GOT
COMPANY. SAY
HI.



I AIN'T PLAYIN'
WIT'CHOO
PRETTY BOY.

WHY
YOU CALLING
HIM "PRETTY
BOY?"



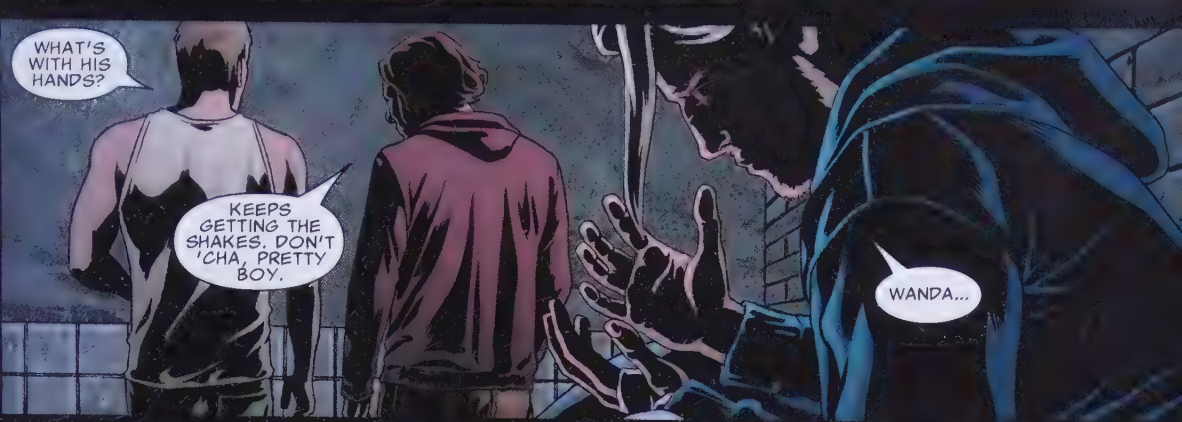
WHOA.

DAMN.
YOU DO
THIS?



HELL NO.
HE WAS LIKE
THIS WHEN I
GOT HERE.

COPS
PICKED HIM UP
FOR VAGRANCY OR
SOMETHING LIKE
THAT. NO I.D. NO
NOTHIN'.



WHAT'S WITH HIS HANDS?

KEEPS GETTING THE SHAKES. DON'T 'CHA, PRETTY BOY.

WANDA...



IT'S TOO MUCH. I CAN'T... I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.

IT'S ALMOST OVER, MY DARLING BROTHER.

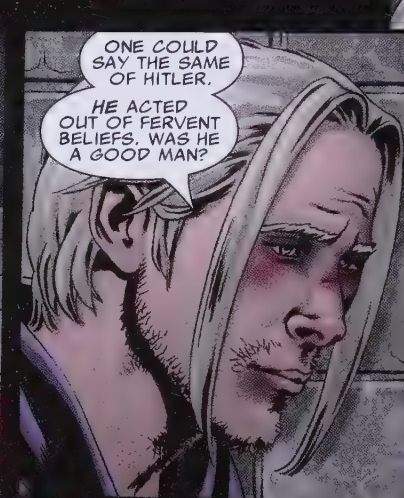
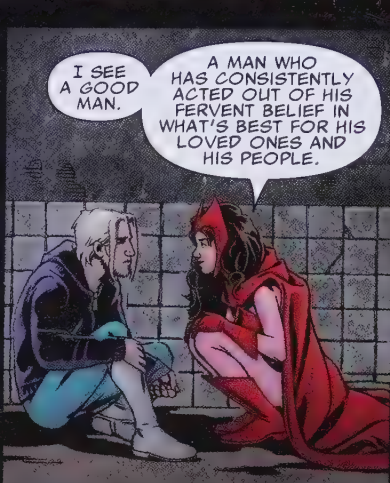


THE TRIALS THAT YOU'VE BEEN PUT THROUGH... ALL THAT YOU'VE ENDURED...

...YOU'RE ABOUT TO COME THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE.

AND BEST OF ALL...

YOU'VE BEEN JUDGED WORTHY.



YOU ALWAYS BELIEVED
YOU KNEW MORE THAN I.
THAT YOU WERE MY
SUPERIOR, BOTH
INTELLECTUALLY AND
MORALLY.

STILL
BELIEVE THAT,
DO YOU?

WELL?
ANSWER
ME!



I...
DON'T
KNOW...

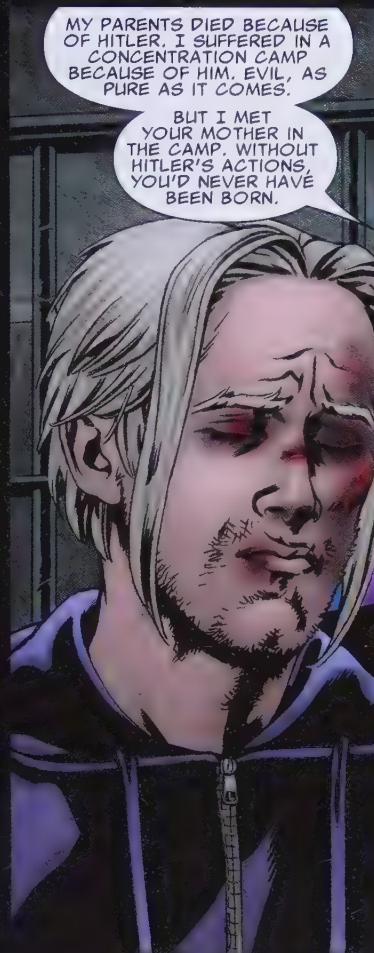


A MORE HONEST
ANSWER THAN
I'D HAVE
EXPECTED
QUICKSILVER.



MY PARENTS DIED BECAUSE
OF HITLER, I SUFFERED IN A
CONCENTRATION CAMP
BECAUSE OF HIM. EVIL, AS
PURE AS IT COMES.

BUT I MET
YOUR MOTHER IN
THE CAMP. WITHOUT
HITLER'S ACTIONS,
YOU'D NEVER HAVE
BEEN BORN.



PERHAPS
THAT WOULD
HAVE BEEN
BEST.



DON'T PLAY
THE SELF-PITY
CARD WITH
MAGNETO!

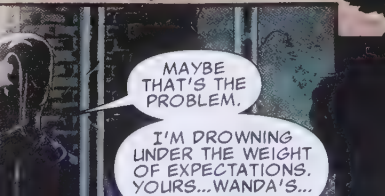
I'VE HAD
MORE HARDSHIPS,
MORE SETBACKS,
THAN YOU'LL EVER
KNOW! AND I SEEK
NO ONE'S PITY!

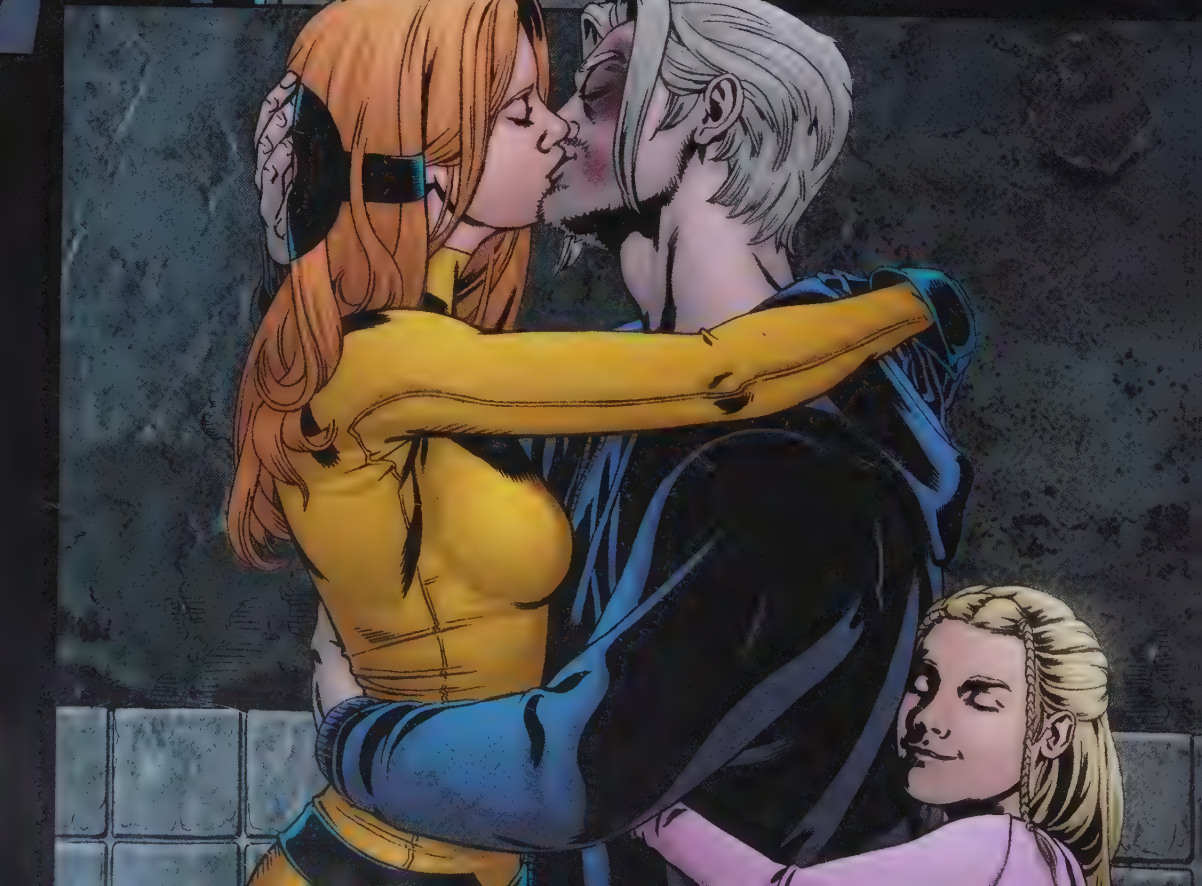
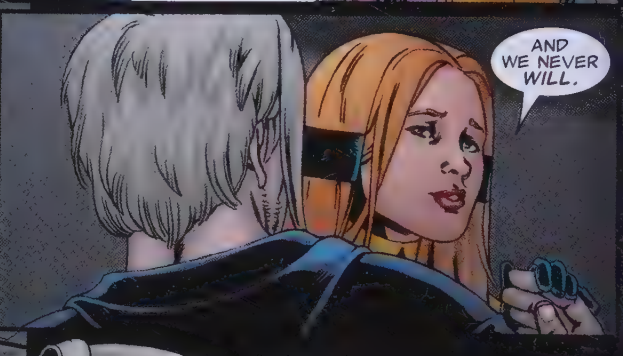
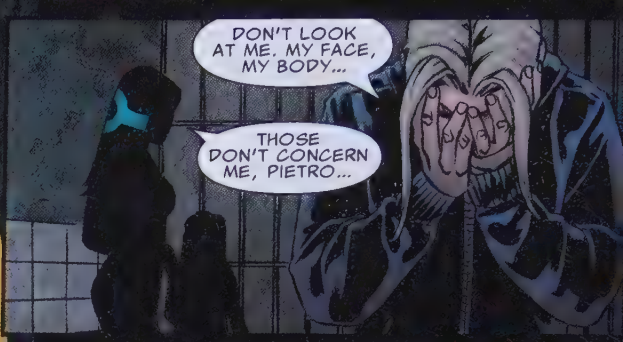
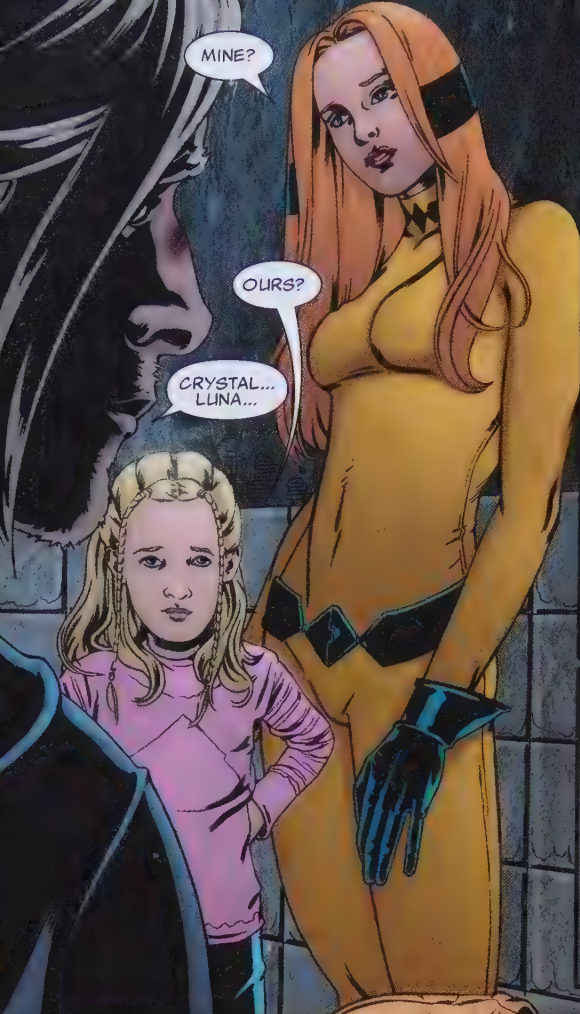
I EXPECT
NO LESS FROM
YOU!!

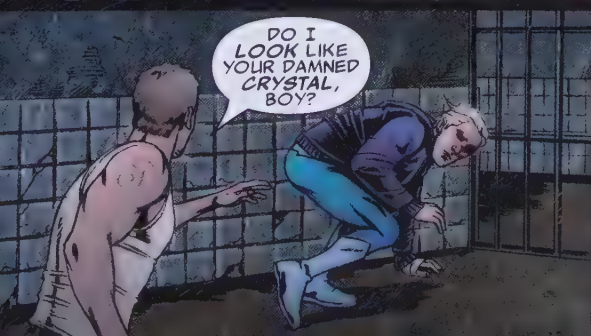
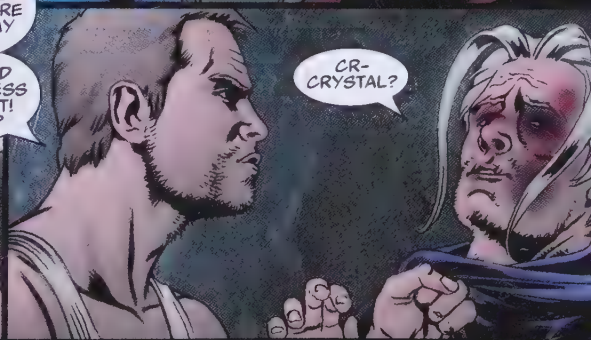
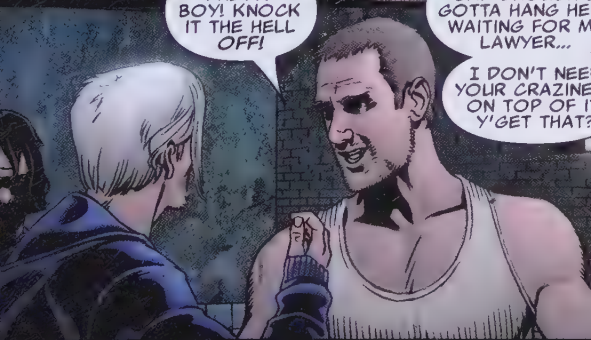


MAYBE
THAT'S THE
PROBLEM.

I'M DROWNING
UNDER THE WEIGHT
OF EXPECTATIONS.
YOURS...WANDA'S...



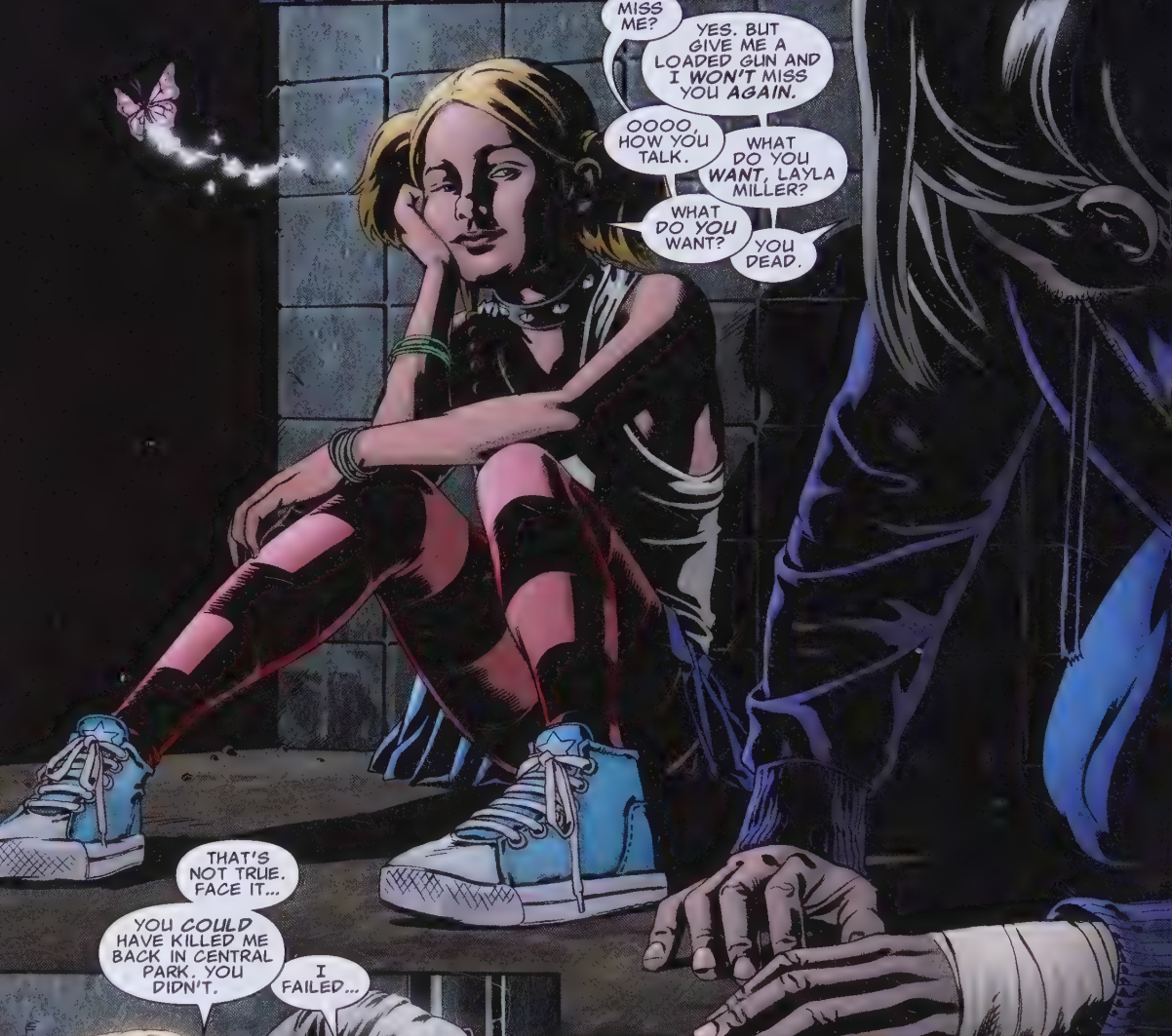






WOW.
YOU'RE REALLY
HAVING A BAD
DAY, HUH.

OH
GOD...NOT
YOU...



MISS
ME?

YES. BUT
GIVE ME A
LOADED GUN AND
I WON'T MISS
YOU AGAIN.

OOOO,
HOW YOU
TALK.

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT, LAYLA
MILLER?

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

YOU
DEAD.

THAT'S
NOT TRUE.
FACE IT...

YOU COULD
HAVE KILLED ME
BACK IN CENTRAL
PARK. YOU
DIDN'T.

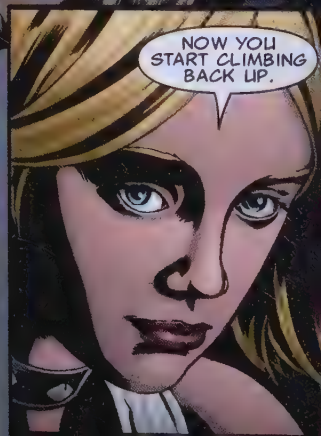
I
FAILED...



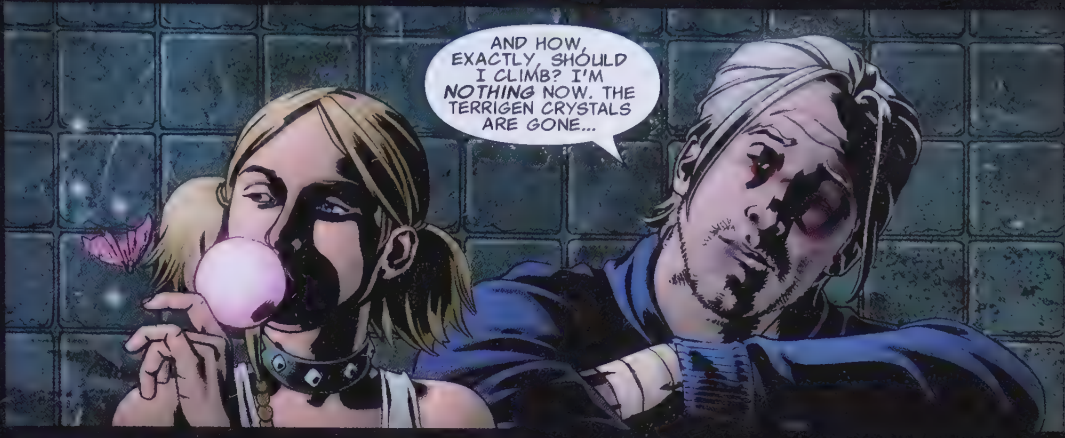
YOUR SPIRIT
FAILED BECAUSE IT
WASN'T IN YOU. YOU
FOUND HOW LOW YOU'D
GO, BUT NO LOWER.
BASICALLY YOU HIT
BOTTOM.



AND
NOW?



NOW YOU
START CLIMBING
BACK UP.



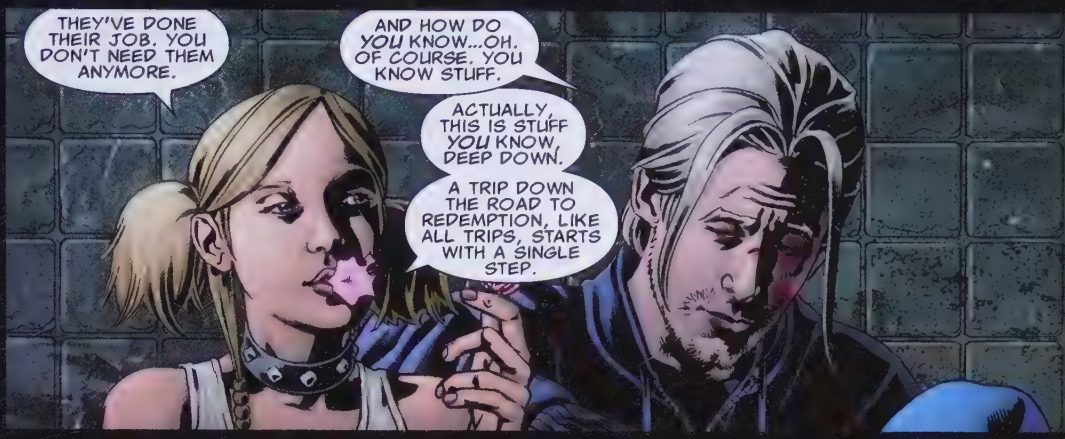
AND HOW,
EXACTLY, SHOULD
I CLIMB? I'M
NOTHING NOW. THE
TERRIGEN CRYSTALS
ARE GONE...

THEY'VE DONE
THEIR JOB. YOU
DON'T NEED THEM
ANYMORE.

AND HOW DO
YOU KNOW...OH.
OF COURSE. YOU
KNOW STUFF.

ACTUALLY
THIS IS STUFF
YOU KNOW,
DEEP DOWN.

A TRIP DOWN
THE ROAD TO
REDEMPTION, LIKE
ALL TRIPS, STARTS
WITH A SINGLE
STEP.




AND HOW
DOES ONE AS
PATHETIC AS I
TAKE THAT FIRST
STEP?

CATERPILLARS
ARE PRETTY PATHETIC.
LOOK WHAT THEY
TURN INTO.

A PHILOSOPHER
ONCE DREAMT ABOUT
BEING A BUTTERFLY
AND WHEN HE AWOKE,
HE WONDERED IF HE WAS
A MAN WHO HAD
DREAMT HE WAS A
BUTTERFLY...

...OR A
BUTTERFLY NOW
DREAMING THAT HE
WAS A MAN.



SO ARE YOU
A MUTANT
DREAMING YOU'RE
A HUMAN...OR THE
OTHER WAY
AROUND?

FOLLOW
THE BUTTERFLY,
QUICKSILVER.

SHE'LL
POINT YOU
IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION.
BUTTERFLIES
ALWAYS DO.



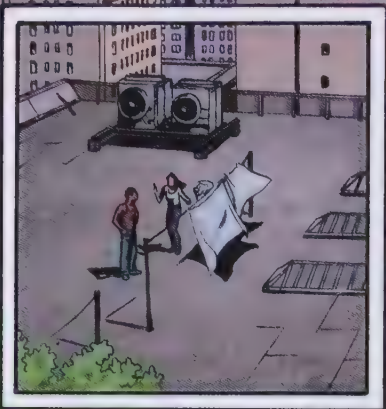
THIS IS
RIDICULOUS.
I...



EH?

AH, TRUE
LOVE. I WONDER
WHAT THEY'RE
ARGUING ABOUT.

IT PROBABLY
WON'T END WELL.
LOVE NEVER
DOES. IT...



HEY!
OH MY
GOD!

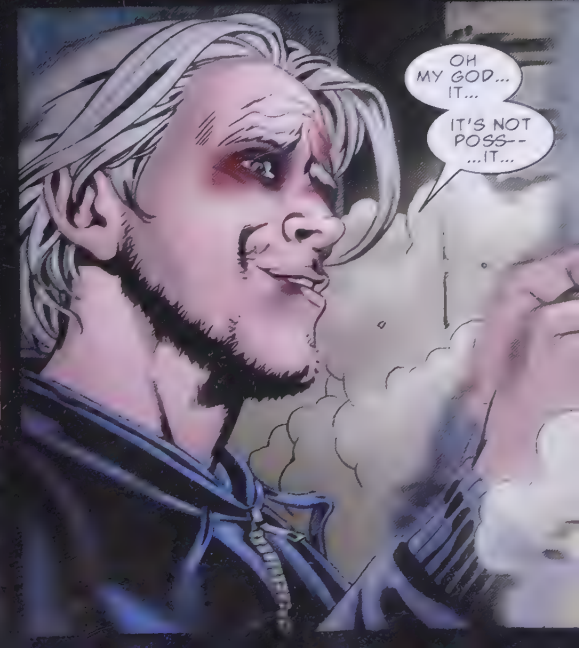
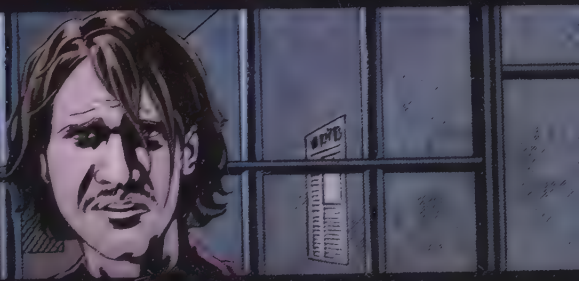
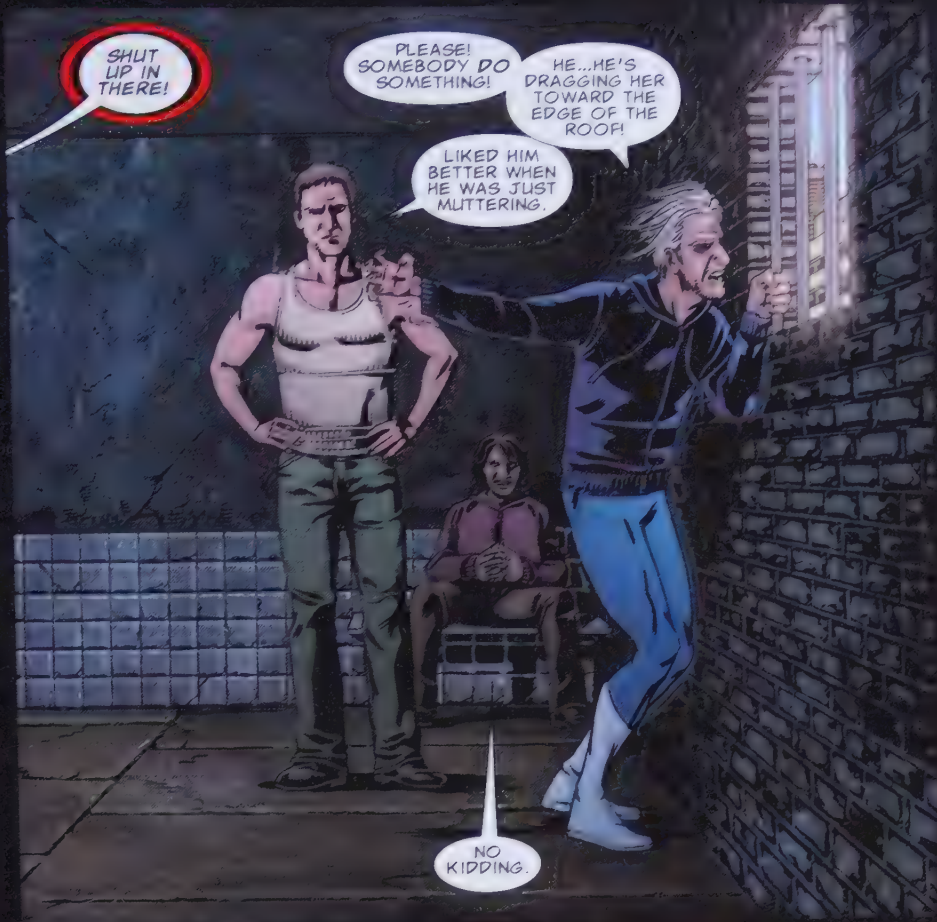


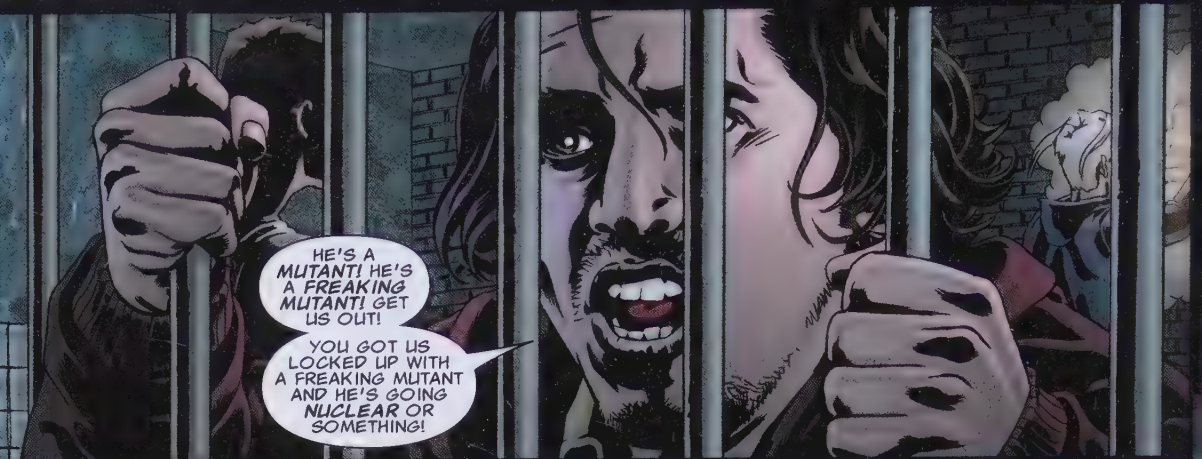
POLICE!
OFFICER!

GET OVER
HERE! I MEAN
THERE! I
MEAN--



A WOMAN'S
ABOUT TO BE
MURDERED!





HE'S A
MUTANT! HE'S
A FREAKING
MUTANT! GET
US OUT!

YOU GOT US
LOCKED UP WITH
A FREAKING MUTANT
AND HE'S GOING
NUCLEAR OR
SOMETHING!

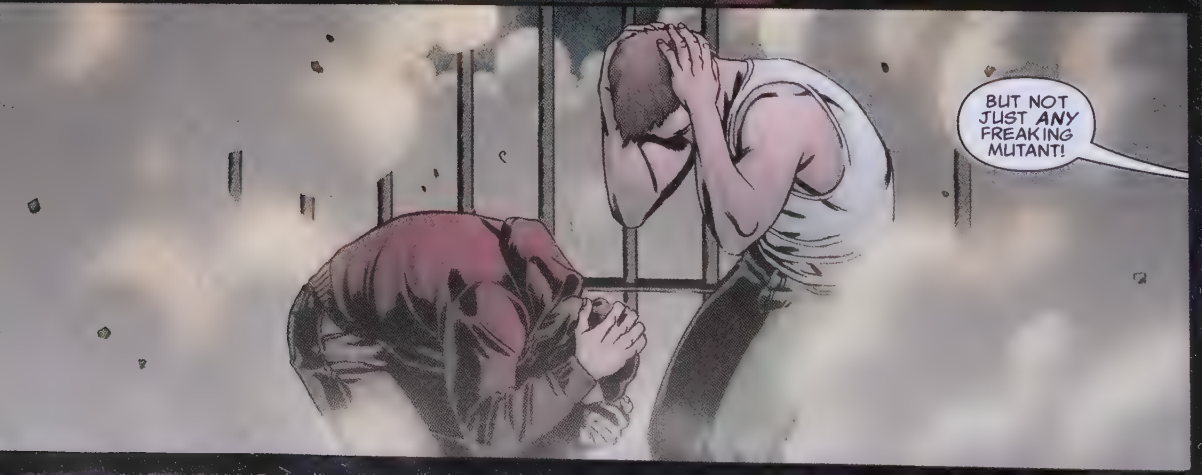


YOU'RE
RIGHT!

HAHAA
HAAAAHAA
HAAAA!

YOU'RE
RIGHT!!

I'M A
FREAKING
MUTANT!



BUT NOT
JUST ANY
FREAKING
MUTANT!

I'M FREAKING
QUICKSILVER!!!
AND YOU CAN EAT
MY FREAKING
DUST!





WH-
WHO...?!

IT'S ALL
RIGHT. YOU'LL
BE FINE.

I'M
QUICKSILVER.
I'M...

A
HERO.

I WOULDN'T
GO BACK TO YOUR
BOYFRIEND, BY THE
WAY, HE OBVIOUSLY
DOESN'T LOVE
YOU, AND TRUST ME,
I KNOW A BIT
ABOUT--

CA-CAN'T...
BREATHE...
I...

RIGHT. OF
COURSE. SORRY.
I'LL DROP YOU
OFF RIGHT--

"...NOW."

DAD?
WHERE'D
SHE COME
FROM?

WHERE...
AM I?!? AM
I DEAD? IS...IS
THIS HEAVEN?

UH...NO.
IT'S MONTAUK
POINT.

MONTAUK
POINT?! ON
LONG
ISLAND?!

NO, THEY
MOVED IT TO
DELAWARE, YES,
ON LONG
ISLAND.

BUT I...I
WAS JUST IN
MANHATTAN. THAT'S
LIKE, TWO HOURS
AWAY! IT'S...
IT'S...

A
MIRACLE.

IT'S A
MIRACLE.

WHEN I THINK
OF HOW
PRESUMPTUOUS
I WAS...

BELIEVING
THAT I KNEW
GOD'S WILL...





THAT I WAS
HIS VESSEL
ON EARTH...

...OPERATING
ON HIS BEHALF...



I DIDN'T
KNOW MY
OWN MIND.

HOW COULD I
HAVE PRESUMED
TO KNOW HIS?

OF ALL MY
SINS...PERHAPS
THAT WAS THE
GREATEST.

AND WHAT
HAS HE
DONE?

HE'S
FORGIVEN
ME.



I, WHOSE
ARRÓGANCE HAS
BEEN TOWERING...

...AM HUMBLD IN
THE FACE OF SUCH
GREATNESS...SUCH
PLUISSANCE...

...SUCH
INFINITE
MER--

--CEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!

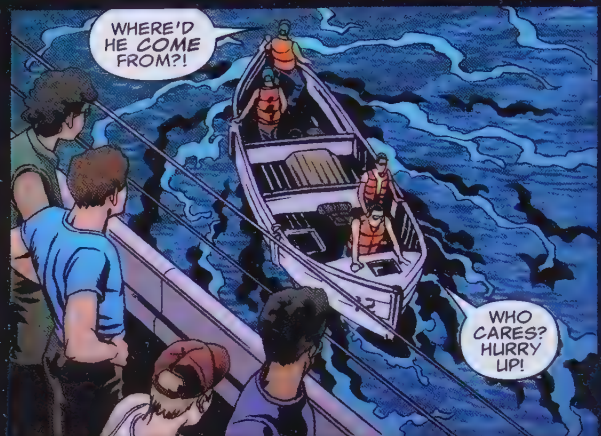
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AS WE PREPARE TO START OUR DESCENT TOWARD--



WUMF

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!



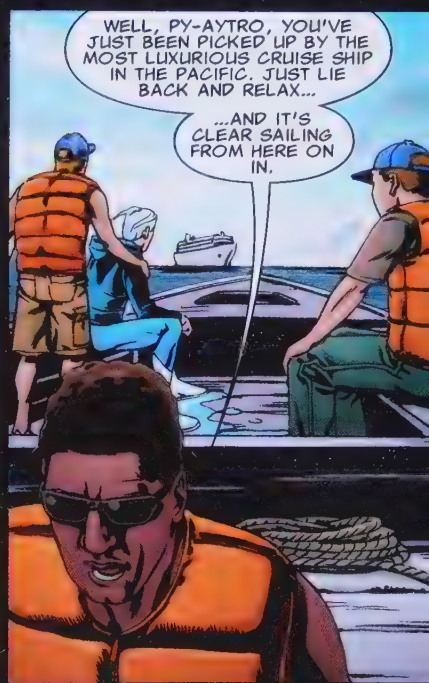
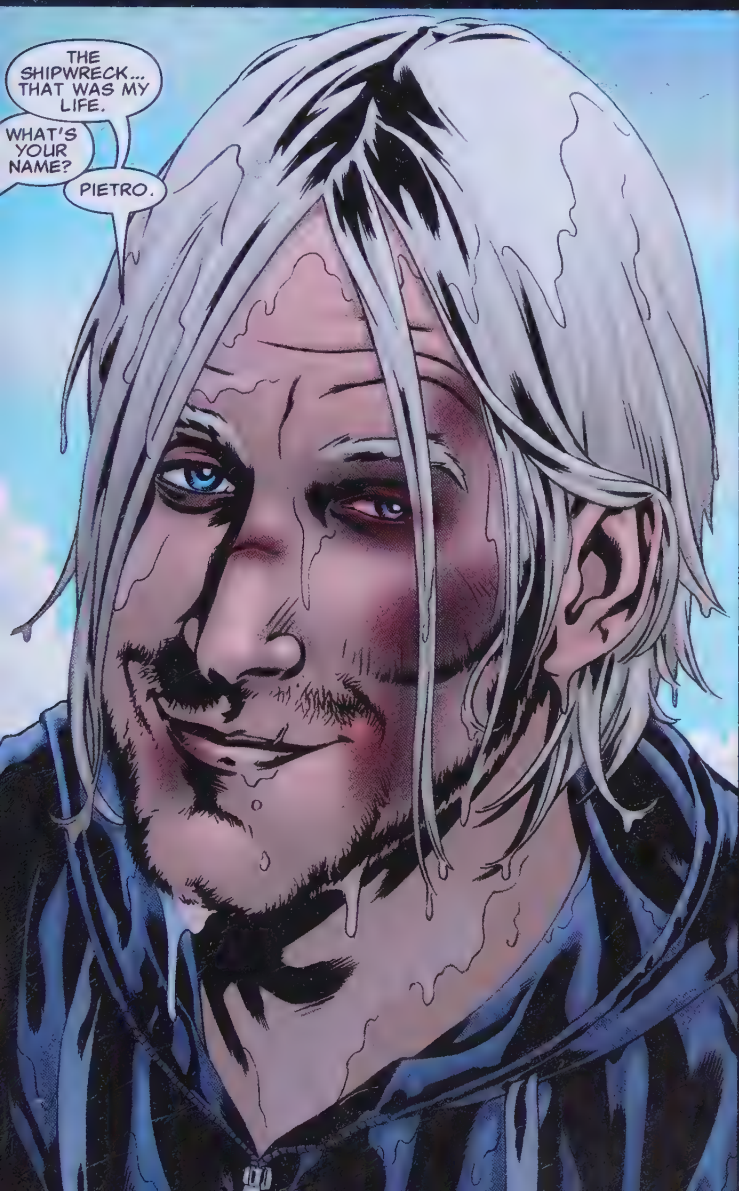
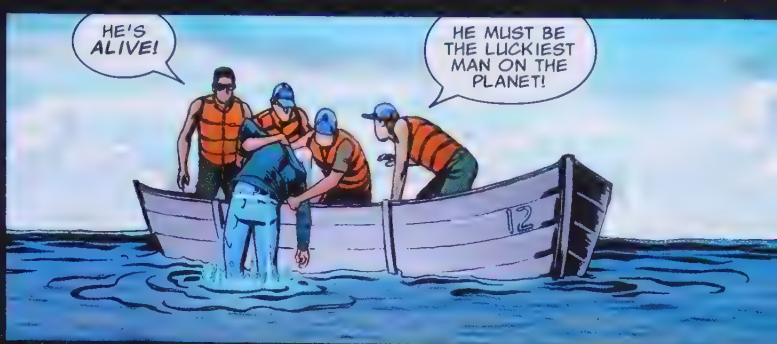


THANK
YOU...FOR
EVERYTHING...

WHETHER
I LIVE...OR
DIE...

...I AM...
CONTENT...
KNOWING
THAT...

...I...AM
LOVED...





THE CREATORS

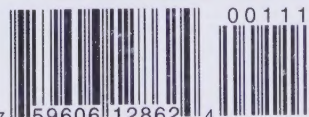
Peter David is one of the industry's most prolific and versatile writers, whose record-breaking stint on *Incredible Hulk* remains a fan favorite to this day. His other comics work includes *Justice*, *Spider-Man 2099* and *Captain Marvel* for Marvel; *Aquaman*, *Supergirl* and *Young Justice* for DC; *Dreadstar* for First Comics; *Spy Boy* for Dark Horse; and the creator-owned *Soulsearchers and Company* and *Fallen Angel*. David is also a successful novelist and screenwriter. Among his credits are more than 70 books, including some 40 *Star Trek* tie-ins, and original novels such as *Sir Apropos of Nothing*, *Howling Mad* and *Knight Life*; movies *Trancers 4* and *Trancers 5*; and episodes of *Babylon 5* and *Crusade*. He also co-created the TV show *Space Cases* with actor-writer Bill Mumy. Perhaps no other projects in David's career have been as big as *Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born* and *The Long Road Home*, in which he helped bring novelist Stephen King's magnum opus to the comic-book page.

A native of Argentina, **Pablo Raimondi's** pursuit of a professional comic-book career brought him to New York City, where the artist took on high-profile work drawing the quintessential American heroes Superman and Batman for DC Comics. For Marvel, Raimondi has collaborated with writer Ben Raab on *Excalibur*, and writer Peter David on *Madrox* and *X-Factor*. He is also well known for his outstanding work alongside writer Ed Brubaker on *Books of Doom*. In addition, Raimondi has paired with famed *G.I. Joe* and *Wolverine* writer Larry Hama on the original sci-fi comic-book series *Oxido*, published by Devil's Due. Already recognized as a rising star in the industry, Raimondi's work has earned widespread praise from such sources as *Ain't It Cool News*, *The X-Axis*, *The Fourth Rail* and *IGN.com*.

Valentine De Landro is a Toronto-based illustrator who has been working in the comic-book industry since 2000 on titles as diverse as Dark Horse's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Oz*, Devil's Due Publishing's *G.I. Joe Declassified* and *G.I. Joe Special Missions*, and Image's *Noble Causes*. Before joining Peter David on *X-Factor*, his work for Marvel included *Spider-Man Loves Mary Jane*, *Marvel Knights 4* and *Marvel Age Spider-Man*.



DIRECT EDITION

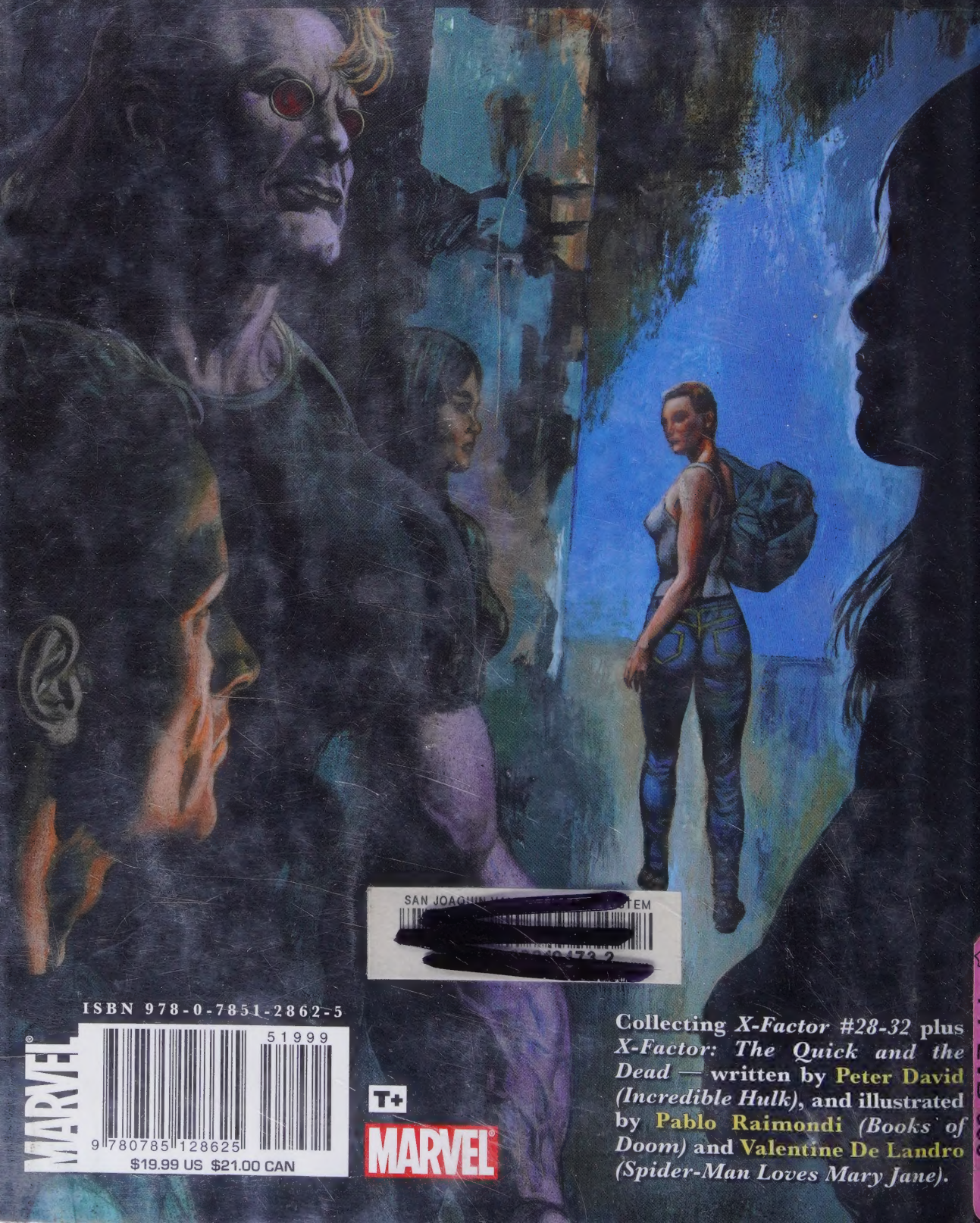


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MARVEL

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