

MARVEL

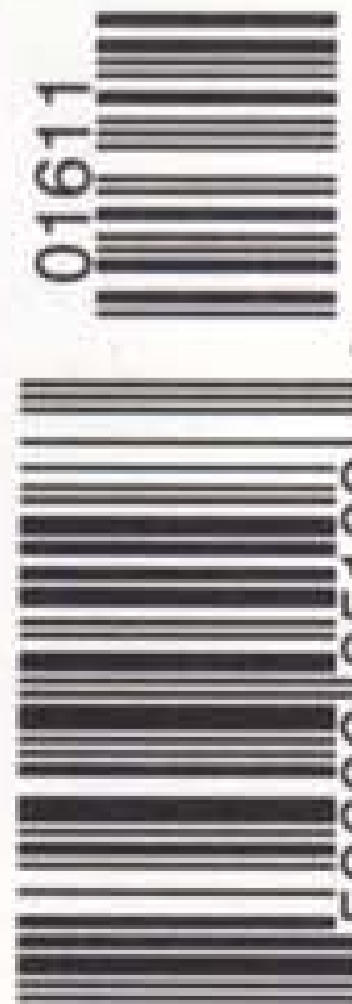
EXILES 16

WINICK ■ CALAFIORE ■ CANNON

MARVEL PG



DIRECT EDITION



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# EXILES



*Calafiore* *McKenna* *Staff* *uoOn*

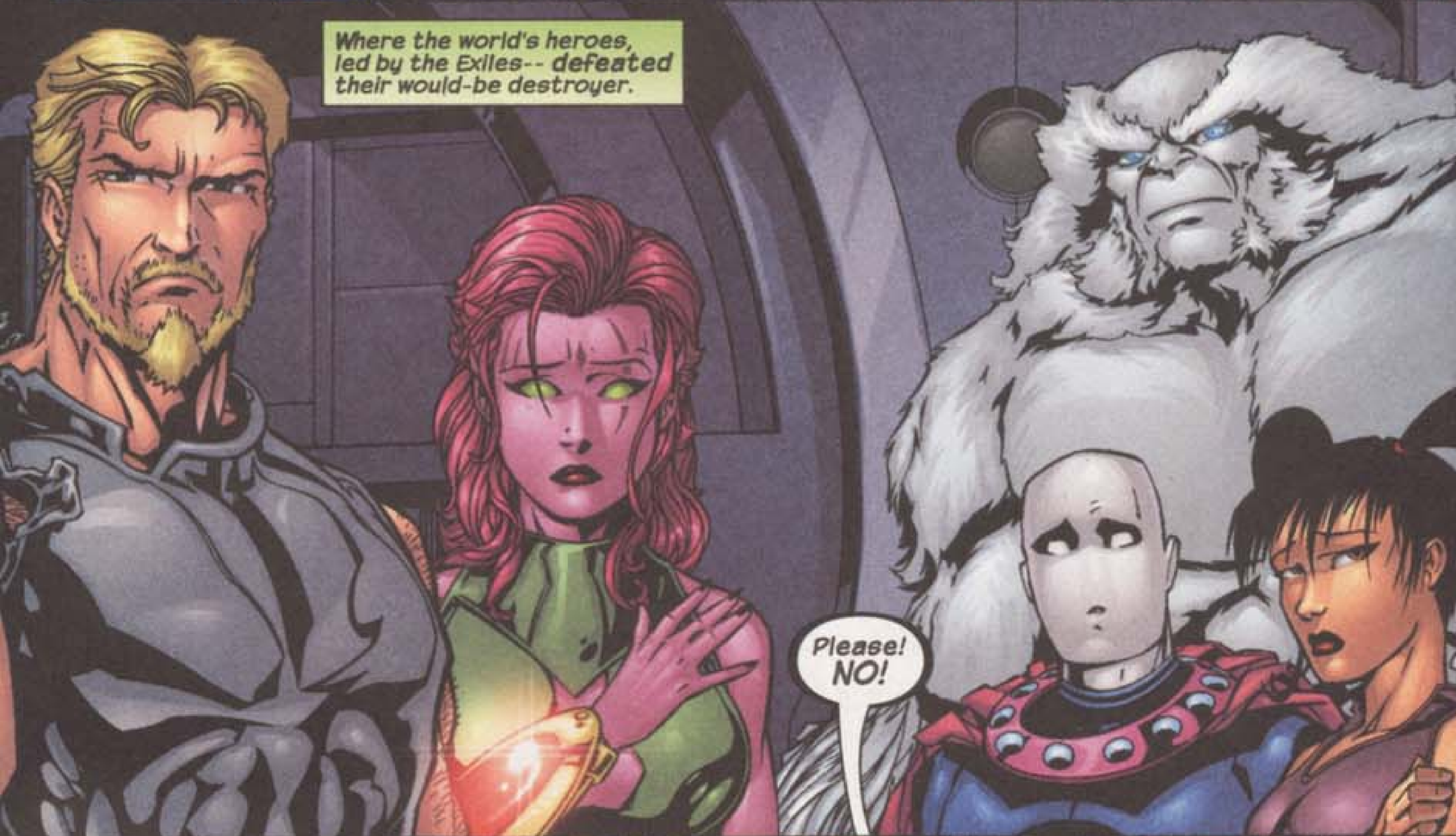


**A** while back, in a reality where the Skrulls ruled the Earth for over a century.

Where Galactus came to feed on the planet.



Where the world's heroes, led by the Exiles-- defeated their would-be destroyer.



Please!  
NO!

At the price of one of their own.

John--  
John-- please!  
Noooo!!!



JOOOOOOOOOOOHHNNNN--E



Many worlds later...



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Talla Josephine Wagner!  
Throw on your party thong-- we are all gonna get big, fat, crazy!



**CLUCK PARTY  
-U-  
CHICKEN  
NAKED**





Well, not that crazy. Medium crazy.

Okay, small crazy. But like cappuccino-- small and full of pep.



The gang-- and when I say *gang*, one could take that *literally*-- we are a team of nomadic super monkeys--

--we beat people up all the time--

--we hang.

That's a gang.



Anyway, we're going to get room service and watch pay movies.

I was hoping one of those talking animal movies, but the ladies are *demanding* we watch *porn*.

So, c'mon. Chicken fingers and pornography. You coming?



No.

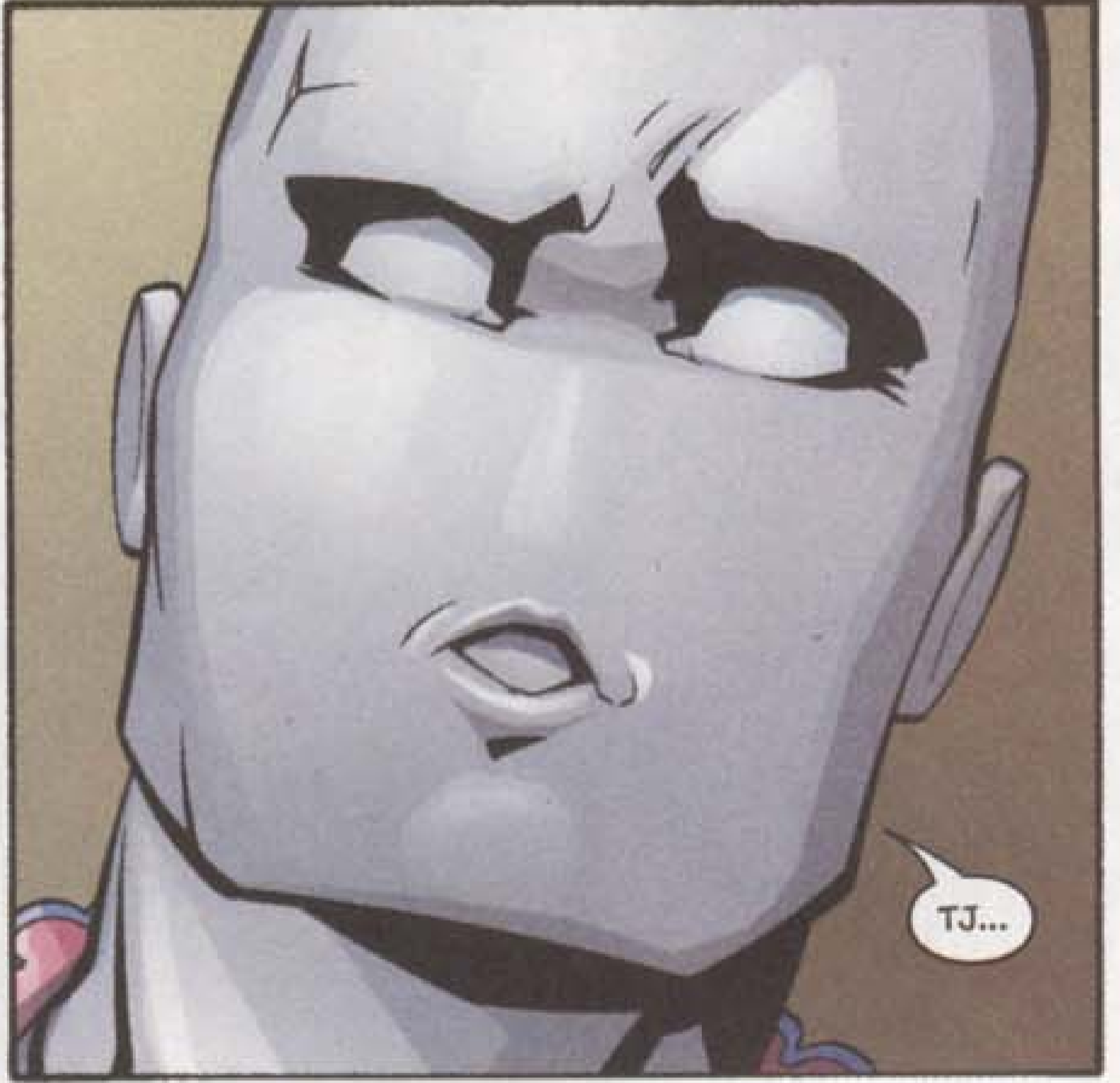




Seriously, TJ... come on over. It'll be fun.



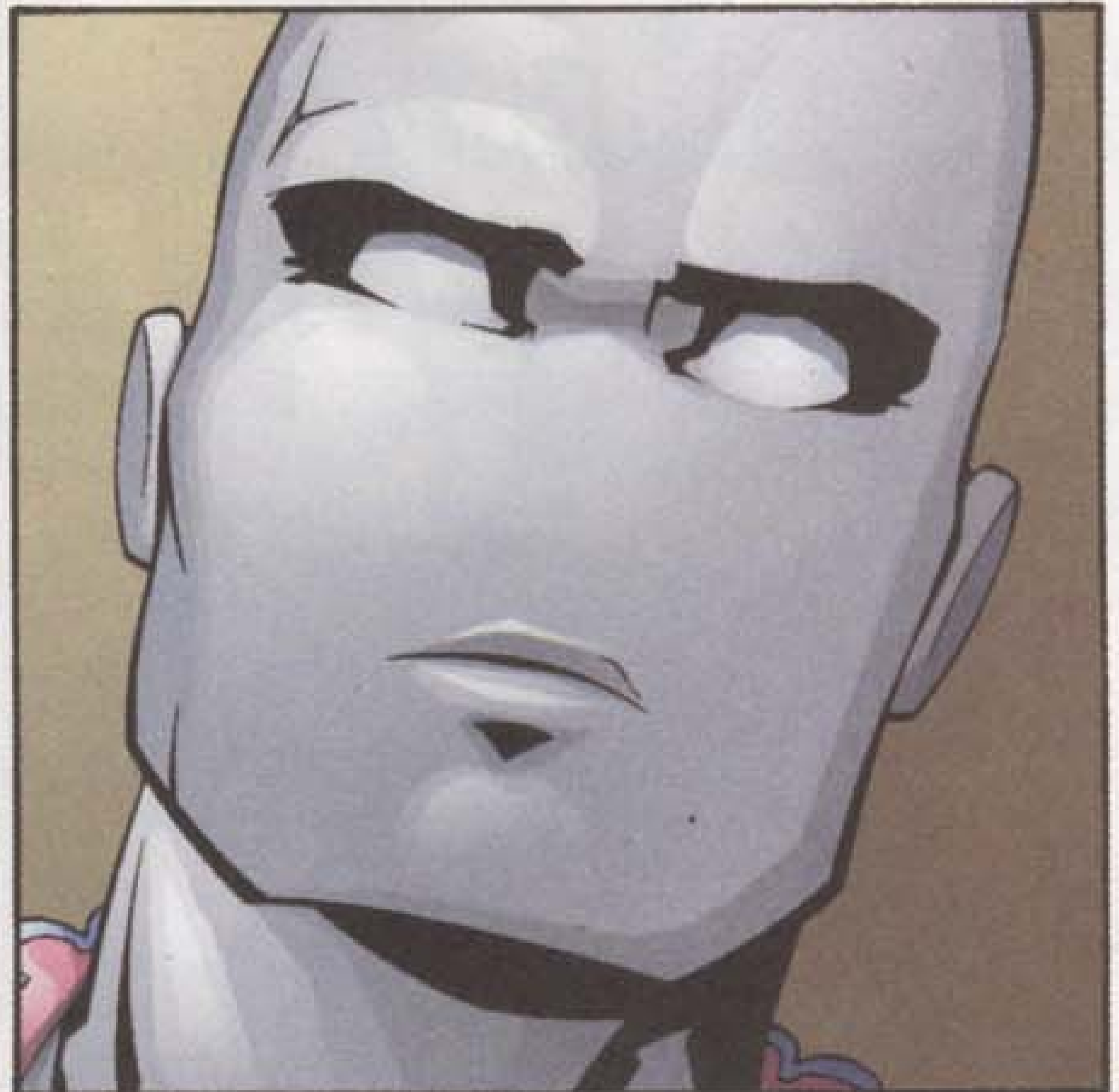
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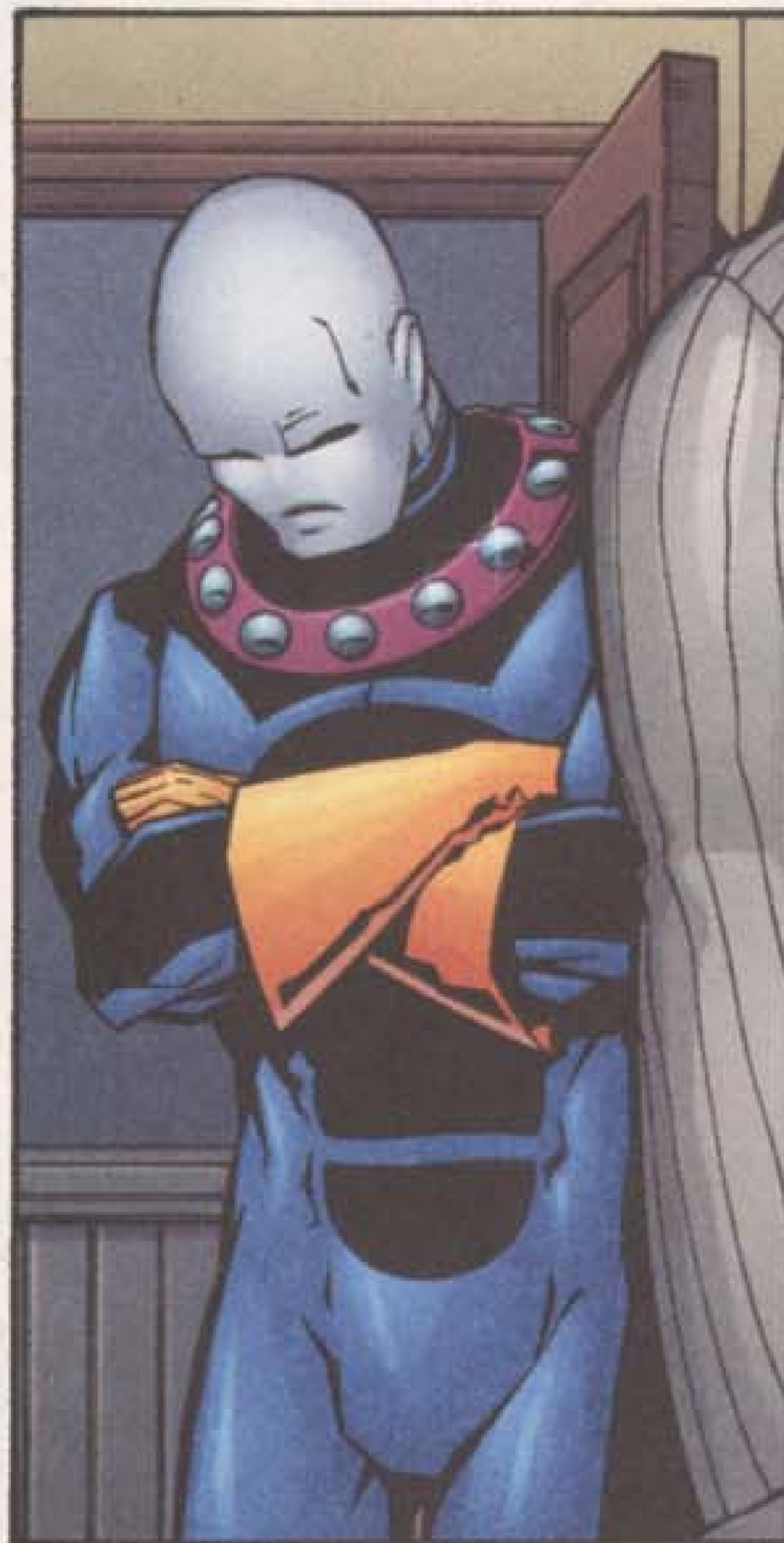


TJ...



What did I say, Morph?







Long ago. Twelve hours before the Exiles participated in the Battle of Phoenix.







Hello, Nocturne.



You like these flowers, huh?



I like *most* flowers, Nocturne.



You don't seem like the type, T-bird.

I suppose. Just me and *Ferdinand the Bull*, I guess.



But Ferdinand was *afraid* to be in the bullfights, right? That doesn't seem to be your problem.



Ferdinand wasn't *scared*. He *preferred* to lie in the fields and smell the flowers.

There's a *difference*.



You seem to know a lot about Ferdinand the Bull.



My mother liked it. I think she enjoyed the idea of a docile beast. Between my father, my brother and myself, well...



Not a lot of feminine energy floating around the Proudstar household, huh?

I'd say there was a black hole of testosterone sucking out any and all other forms of life.



Sounds like fun.

It was. Like *The Great Santini* except with alcohol and hunting.



What are you smiling at?



You. You are being *funny* and hence I smiled. It happens sometimes, John.



Ah. I'll have to watch out for that.

You do that.



This one smells like *bread*.

Uh-huh. Try it.

Really?



Their next mission. A new reality. The Team found itself in Canada, teaming up with Alpha Flight and hunting the Hulk.

My father didn't care so much-- he saw the value in me attending a public high school. It was Uncle Logan who was having puppies.



That *man*-- he would throw himself into a *pit of acid*, filled with acid-resistant vampire *piranha* that hadn't been fed for a *year* to get someone out of a *Jam*--

--but me attending Kennedy High-- you'd think I was volunteering to carry *Brood Eggs* in my butt.

Brood Eggs in your butt. Charming. You've been hanging out with *Morph* too much.

Morph thinks you *hate* him.

I do hate him.

Oh c'mon-- he's *funny*. I know, I know-- he *never* stops talking, but he bats about five hundred on the funny.

I don't really *hate* Morph.

I just envy him.

Yeah?

Sure. He's *free*.

I can't imagine what that's like.

After T-Bird brought down the Hulk.

You are a rock star! A massive, hundred thousand seat coliseum, heavy-weight @#&%& rock star!

You knocked out the Hulk!

The Hulk who was at a diminished strength because he was separated from Bruce Banner.

John! Don't ruin it. It's still cool. The Hulk, baby. The biggest of the big! No one is mightier than the Hulk! Except John Proudstar!

I suppose...

John... how weird is it meeting... an alternate version of yourself?

This John Proudstar, Shaman of Alpha Flight.

It's odd...

...I look at him and I see... well, not me, but a me that I couldn't become. It's hard.

As strange as it is to say-- he's a good guy.

I'm glad I could meet him.

It sort of felt like having my brother James around... in a way...



How well did you know my brother James?



Very well.



How well?



He was my boyfriend.



Oh.




What's he like?



James.... James is a *lot* like you but *completely* different. As an X-Man-- he's brave, smart in the field, a leader.


He's also a stubborn *ass*. We argued a lot. Not about anything important... just *fought*. He couldn't *ever* let me get the last word, he could never admit he was *wrong*...



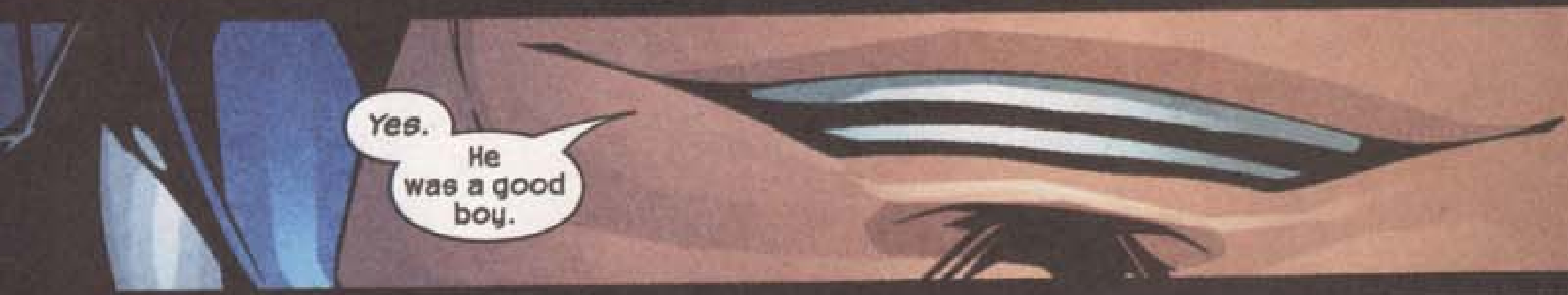
Do you miss him?



I suppose.




Do you?  
He's...  
dead in your  
reality?



Yes.  
He  
was a good  
boy.

And *yes*,  
a stubborn  
ass.



I miss  
him *very*  
much.





For me. Maybe the next one is for you.

Um... what was that for?



Don't.



Weeks later.  
A reality where the Savage Land covers an entire continent.

Why don't? Why shouldn't we?

We're not... we're not *doing* this again... with our lives being what they are, so unpredictable, so unsure... we shouldn't.



Blink and Mimic don't seem to think so. They're a full-fledged couple and they lead the team.



Blink and Mimic are being *stupid* and immature.

Look at our lives! This *isn't* a time to bind yourself up in emotional entanglements.

At *any* moment one of us could finish our missions and be sent home. We could be *injured*. We could be *killed*. It could all be over in an *instant*.

I *refuse* to let myself seek *distractions* from our plight. I'd rather just face what we go through without looking for some... *refuge*.



Refuge... a distraction?



Wait, Talia-- that *isn't* what I meant at all... I just--



No. You've made yourself clear. You *uptight* e#6%.



Talia!



Stop calling me Talia!



What do you want, John?

I just want to talk for a minute, TJ.



Later.

In a reality where the Exiles served under President Tony Stark.

Last week... back at the lagoon--

--I was being unfair to Calvin and Clarice. I don't know what they have... I just...

...TJ... I wouldn't want to be with you if it was... transient...

It's hard enough to be in this thing-- to be an Exile. Every aspect of our lives is just piles and piles of uncertainty... and...

...that's crap... that's not the reason...

...God... I just...

Fine. What?



What the hell do you want with me anyway?

John...



I'm a monster.

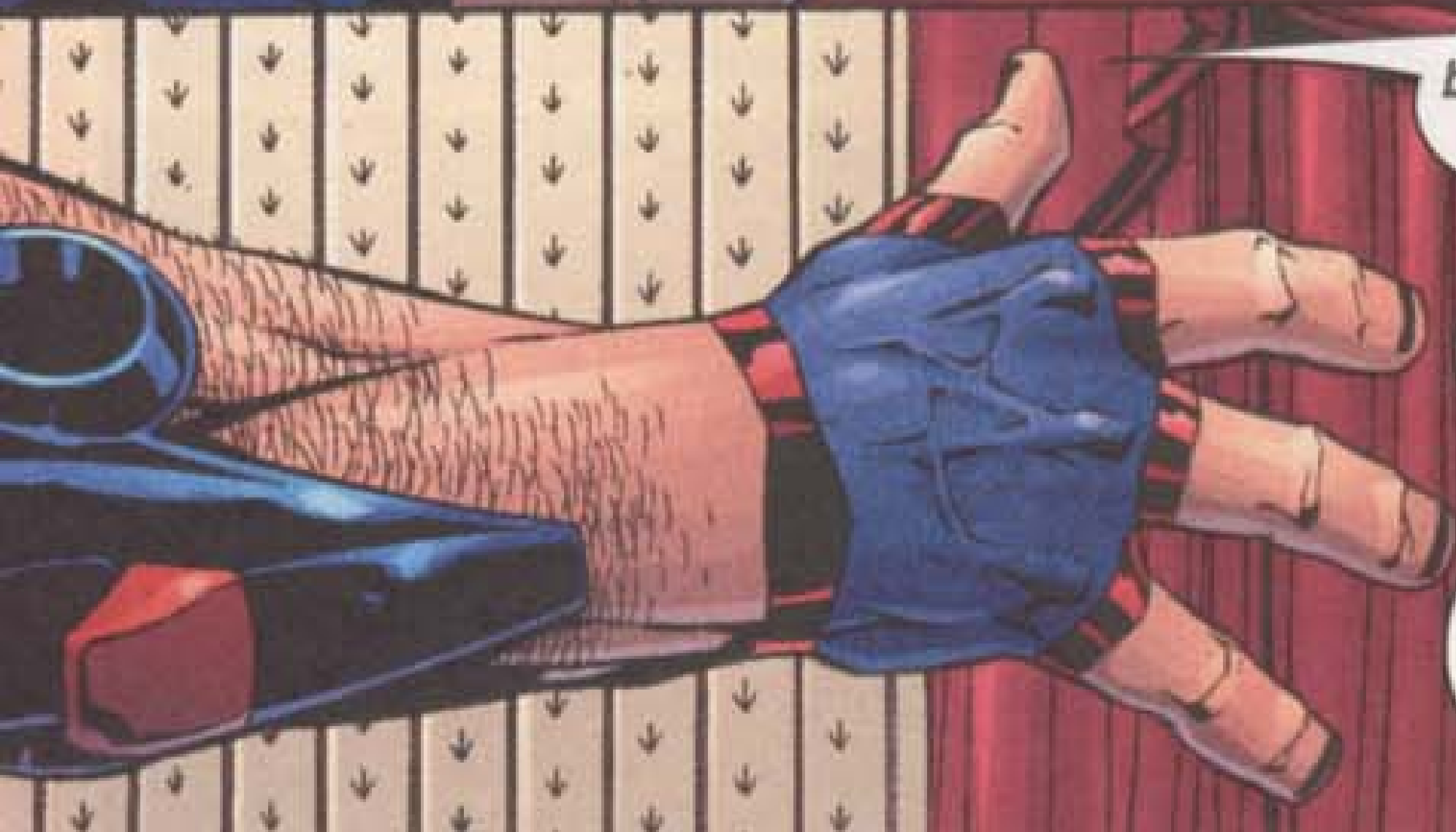
John...



Look at me.

Look at me, damn it!

I'm barely a human being.




You... you're beautiful... free... everything about you. You're...

...if you were in your home reality, you wouldn't have to settle for a half ton of twisted cyborg executioner.

You'd be with James. Or with anybody. Anyone normal. Someone beautiful... like you.





You deserve better than something like me.



I am lucky-- so lucky-- that I found you.

And I don't want anyone else.

On the Skrull World.

Before the end...



Are you sure?  
Yeah. I'm sure.  
You're pregnant?  
Yes. I'm sure.



I can't think of a worse time for this...  
Yeah.



Why are you smiling?



I can't help it.



You're carrying our baby.



John, what are we going to do?

Fight.  
Fight to stay alive.  
Fight to stay together.



Fight to... to find the day where I can read the baby the story of *Ferdinand*. The big beast who likes to smell flowers.



You're so sappy.  
True.



I hope it's a boy.  
You would...



Today.

After John.



I just  
couldn't fight  
without  
you.



I'm so  
sorry...

# Nocturne and Evensong

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