

M A R V E L C O M I C S

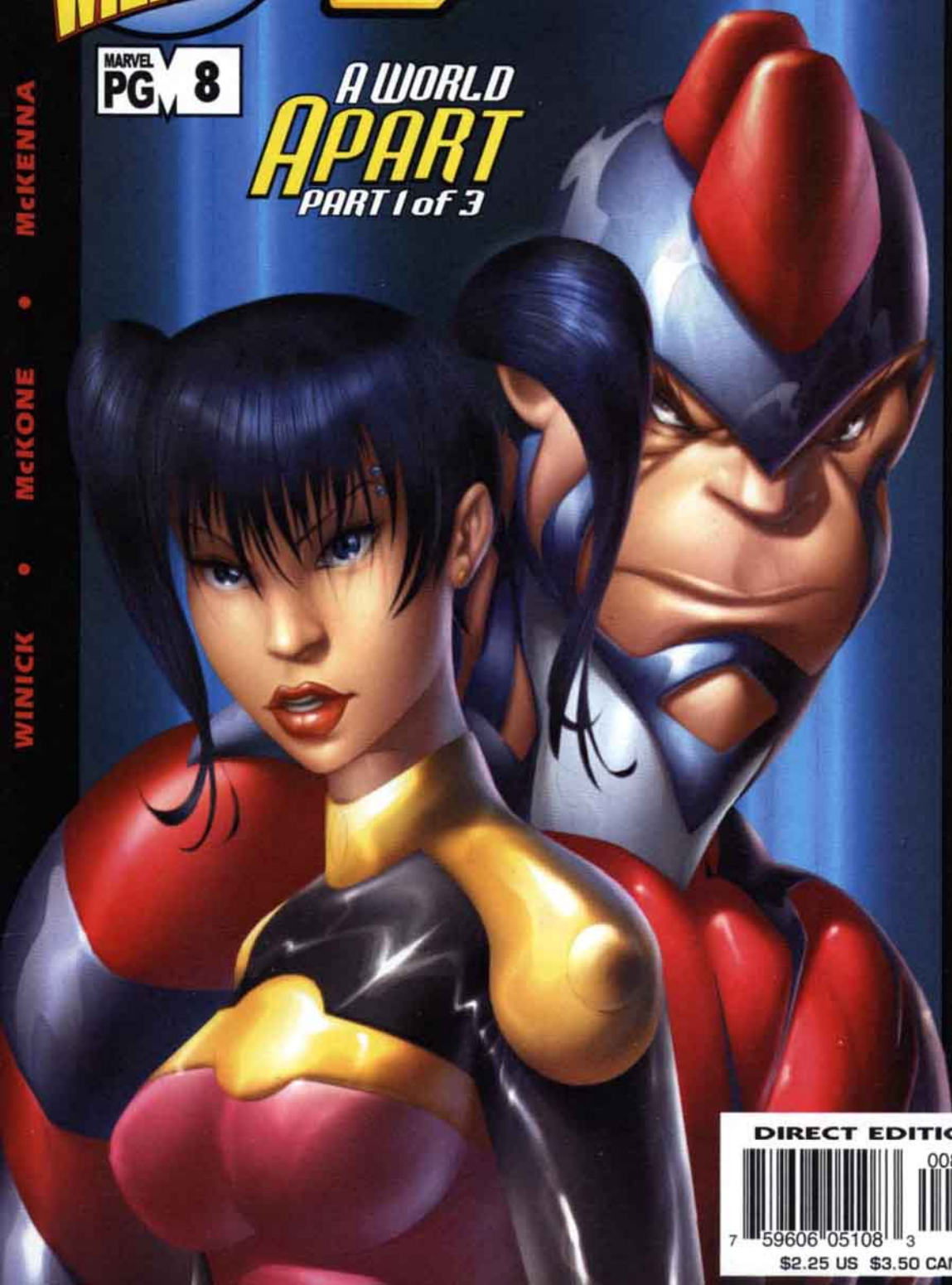
NAMED
BEST COMIC
OF THE MONTH BY
WIZARD

EXILES

MARVEL
PG 8

A WORLD
APART
PART 1 of 3

WINICK • McKONE • McKENNA



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"I am without a home, and in that I find my place in it all."
-Jonathan Michael Barry
The Steps of the Lords

It's been a while since we last visited them.

Somewhere along the way, they got into calling themselves *The Exiles*.

It was a joke *Morph* made at first. Then later, *Dark Phoenix* taunted them with it.

Apparently the name had been bouncing around the backs of their heads.

And the longer they live this way of life, the more the name seems appropriate.

They have been *thrown out* of their own existences, and are trying to make their way *back*.

And for the most part, they are succeeding... at least they *think* so.

They save, destroy, create, discover, salvage, fight, persevere-- whatever is called for-- to fix the broken chain in time and *move forward* to the next new reality.

And there have been *many*.

A trip to the *Savage Land*...



...one that spanned *two continents*.

They fell into the service of *President Tony Stark*...


...until he was *assassinated*.



There was also the reality they referred to as "*The Gamma Planet*"...




...with Gamma radiation present in the atmosphere at such *remarkable* levels that nearly all the world's inhabitants were *enhanced*.




They aided in the downfall of the Spider Demon, who had ruled over an entire city for close to a decade.

It was Morph who finally defeated it.



Then there were the X-Babies.

The less said, the better.



And an excruciating week with the Antelope Men.

Believe me, you don't even want to know.

And many other realities...

The team has no control over how long they stay in each world.

When they accomplish their task, the Talus-- the mysterious device that teleports them from reality to reality-- spirits them away almost instantly.

Sometimes, however, they're granted a bit of *respite*.



Hours, maybe days... they can never really anticipate how long.

Once, even a *week*.

They were given the simple assignment of "*thwarting a bank robbery*."

It took them less than an *hour* to accomplish their task, so they enjoyed the remainder of their time on an isolated island off the coast of Australia.

Isolated enough for some to go "*native*..."



...that is, once Sunfire got rid of Morph by convincing him to help her shop for *lingerie*. Again, it's a *long story*.

And over the months, they've all become *closer*.




Some more than others.


Their most recent excursion, however, has proven to be the most *difficult*.



The Exiles were caught by *surprise*...




...and now each of them has adopted an approach of attaining *small victories*.




Weeks ago, Nocturne had been going *easier* on her competitors.


Despite their lack of diplomacy, TJ saw no reason to give in to *barbarism*.



She saw how *poorly* she was judging the situation. She had to *survive*. She had to *move on*.



And if it meant seriously injuring her opponents—*so be it*.



She was left with *no alternative*.

They've been prisoners of the Skrulls for over a month.

SIX STRANGERS, EACH AN X-MAN FROM A DIFFERENT REALITY, BROUGHT TOGETHER TO INSURE THAT LIFE AS WE KNOW IT DOESN'T CEASE TO EXIST! BLINK — TELEPORTER; MIMIC — POWERED BY HIS REALITY'S X-MEN; SUNFIRE — MISTRESS OF FLAME; T-BIRD — SUPER-STRENGTH AND SENSES; NOCTURNE — DAUGHTER OF NIGHTCRAWLER; AND MORPH — SHAPE-CHANGING FUNNY MAN. DESTINED TO FIX THE KINKS IN THE CHAINS OF REALITY, STAN LEE PRESENTS THE

EXILES IN

A WORLD APART

PART ONE OF THREE

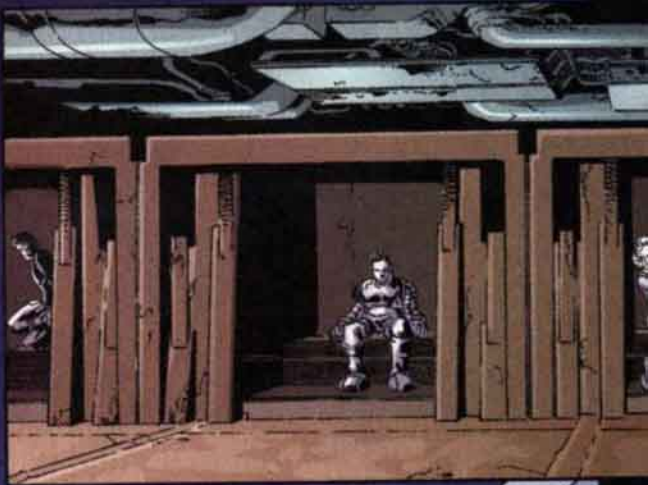
This is Earth...



SCRIBE/JUDD WINICK
PENCILS/MIKE MCKONE
INKS/MARK MCKENNA
COLORS/TRANSPARENCY DIGITAL
LETTERS/SHARPEFONT'S PAUL TUTRONE
ASSISTANT EDITOR/MIKE RAICHT
EDITOR/MIKE MARTS
CHIEF/JOE QUESADA
PRESIDENT/BILL JEMAS

...and it's under
the rule of the
Skrull Empire.

It's been this way
for over a *century*.



GOOD.

Like Nocturne, *Mimic*
has won all his bouts,
as well.


He intends to keep
racking up victories.
Buying time is their only
and last alternative.



WHO'S SHE FIGHTING NEXT? THAT CAT WOMAN?

NO. SHE'S FIGHTING THE AFRICAN FEMALE. WITH THE WHITE HAIR.

BUT SHE'S A FLYER. SINCE WHEN DO THEY MIX FLYERS IN WITH GROUNDERS?



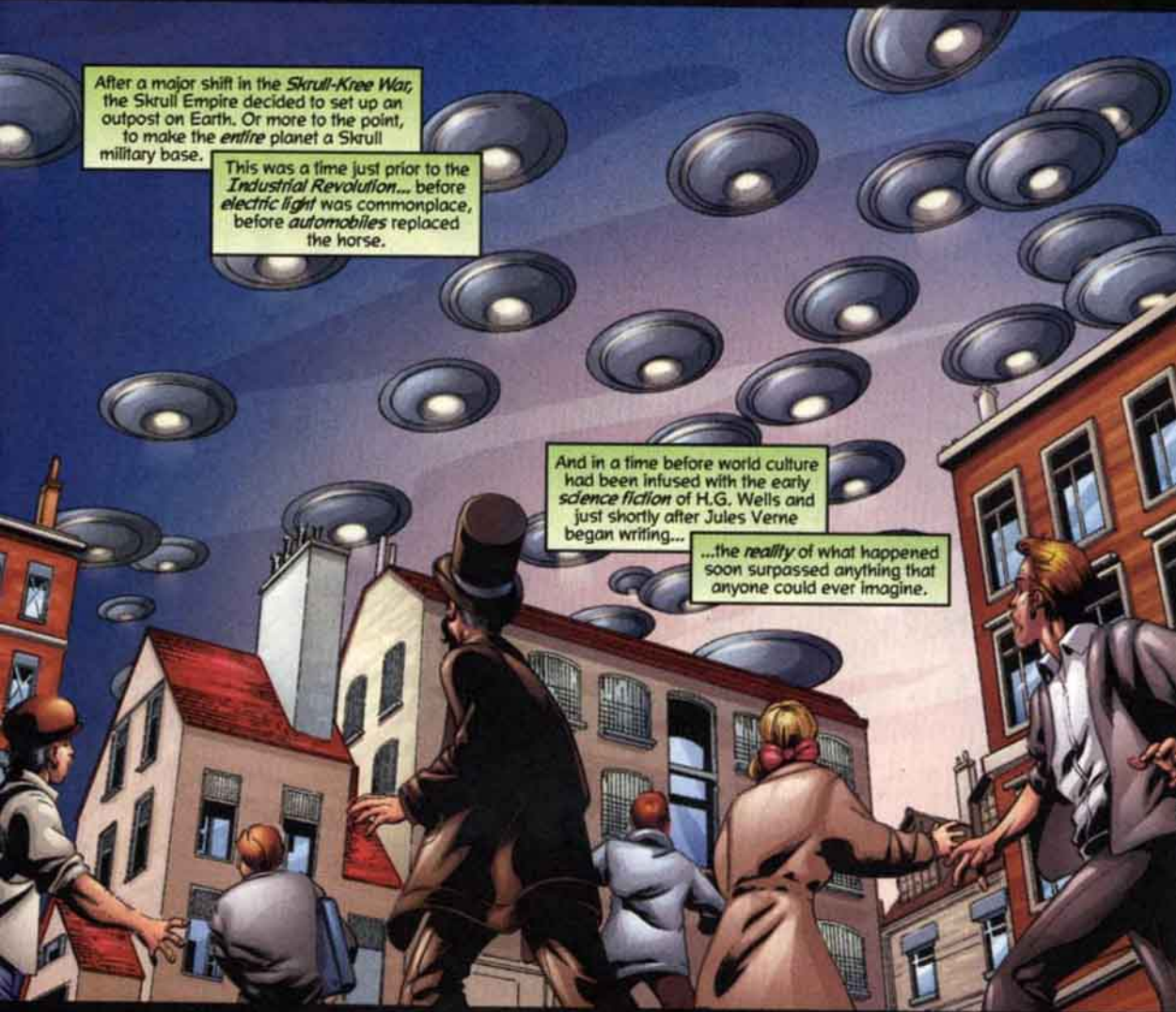
SINCE THIS ONE BEAT THE HELL OUT OF EVERYONE IN HER WEIGHT CLASS.

YOU'RE A TOUGH LI'L THING FOR A FREAK HUMAN SOLID.

DROP DEAD.

HA!

YEAH, SHE'S A TOUGH ONE. WE'LL SEE HOW YOU MANAGE THE WEATHER-WITCH, THOUGH. SHE THROWS LIGHTNING!




After a major shift in the *Skrull-Kree War*, the Skrull Empire decided to set up an outpost on Earth. Or more to the point, to make the *entire* planet a Skrull military base.

This was a time just prior to the *Industrial Revolution*... before *electric light* was commonplace, before *automobiles* replaced the horse.

And in a time before world culture had been infused with the early *science fiction* of H.G. Wells and just shortly after Jules Verne began writing...


...the *reality* of what happened soon surpassed anything that anyone could ever imagine.



Humanity was *less* than helpless. Before any kind of fight could be mobilized, it was *over*.

For the Skrulls, it wasn't considered a challenge or even a true "takeover". This wasn't a world to conquer, it was a place to *park*.


There were no instructions, no orders, no rules. Human beings were simply told to "GO."



And within just a *decade*, the cities and towns that had been leveled to make room for military outposts were converted into *Skrull colonies*.

But the tide of the great Skrull-Kree War eventually turned again, and Earth's military usefulness became *outdated*.

But the mild climate, good agriculture and weak inhabitants seemed *far too good* to let go of.



The people of Earth *adapted*. Their culture became one *without* technology. The planet they were destined to rule instead became one where they lived on the *fringes*.

Humans finally had their place-- the *unseen underclass*.

And with the exception of human servants, the red light districts, and the tendency for Skrull teenagers to enrage their parents by exploring human art and music, there was very little *interaction* between the humans and their oppressors.




Except for *The Games*.

Fifty years ago they began *popping up*.


Superhumans. Some different by birth, others by accidental exposures to radiation, still others from aberrant genes shocked into life by physiological trauma.

But the reasons made *no difference*. The earliest ones were *destroyed* before rebellion was even an *inkling*. But as their numbers grew, an idea was *hatched--entertainment*.


The Skrulls were a *warlike* people--they enjoyed a good fight. So, for close to thirty years, the Skrull colony of Earth has been known for *The Games*.



When the Exiles teleported into this world, they landed right in the middle of a *busy city block*.




Overpowered and captured within moments, they were immediately sent to the *competitor camp*.



At first they were *reluctant* to fight. But death being the only alternative, their *survival instincts* soon took over.

And now they *walk*.



They hold out hope for *rescue*.

Unfortunately, their hope is beginning to *run out*.

YOU THERE-- WHO IS THAT PRISONER?

THIS ONE? A COMPETITOR.

WHAT'S IT DOING OUT OF THE COMPOUND? ESCAPED COMPS ARE KILLED ON SITE, SOLDIER. IS THIS ONE A RUNNER?

NO SIR-- SHE'S NEW. WE FOUND HER AT ONE OF THE OUTLYING HUMAN CAMPS. IT WAS A SURPRISE, I MUST SAY, SHE'S A BIG ONE.

IT DOESN'T HAVE SOME CLOAKING ABILITY THAT GOT PAST OUR SENSORS, DOES IT?

EVEN THE ONES THAT TURN INVISIBLE OR CHANGE SHAPE CAN'T GET PAST THE DENSITY APPARATOR ON A FULL SPECTRUM BURST.

BIG INDEED. FULLY GROWN. HOW DID IT SLIP PAST THE RAIDS ALL THESE YEARS?

WHERE WERE THEY HIDING HER? UNDER THIRTY FEET OF ROCK?

NOT MUCH OF A READING... LEVEL FOUR MUTANT. HER GENETIC CODE DOESN'T MATCH WITH ANY IN CAPTIVITY...

SIR, WHAT'S THAT SECOND READING?

SECOND? WAIT, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S AS IF THERE'S ANOTHER... MUTANT...



NICE CHATTING!
GOTTA BAIL!

CLARICE! I FIGURE I CAN BUY US ONE SECOND!

WE'RE GONE, MORPH!

HOLD, HUMAN!

SUBDUE HER-- WE'LL BRING HER BEFORE THE COMMANDER!

MORPH--! A LITTLE HELP!



I'M BUSY MYSELF, CLARICE-- I'M NOT THE ONLY CHANGELING ON THE BLOCK AT THE MOMENT!

AAH! SCRATCHING! VERY GIRLIE FOR WARRIORS, YA KNOW!





ALL
RIGHT,
KIDS.
TIME
TO MEET THE
MAN.



OH! AND ANOTHER STUNNING
BLOW FROM *CAROSELLA*!
THIS COULD BE THE END OF
THUNDERBIRD!

HE'S REALLY BEEN *DISAPPOINTING*
THIS ROWDY CROWD TODAY! THEY
DEMAND HE SHAPESHIFT INTO HIS
ANIMAL MODE!




I'M AFRAID THE AUDIENCE
MIGHT LEAVE *DISSATISFIED*
WITH TODAY'S PERFORMANCE...
AND THUNDERBIRD WILL BE LEFT
WITH *ANOTHER MAJOR LOSS*!



Another
major loss and
half rations for
a week.

C'mon,
John. You need
to eat.



AH, I SEE THE JUDGES HAVE ILLUMINATED THE BLUE LEVEL WARNING BEACON! WE'RE ONLY MOMENTS AWAY FROM THIS BOUT BEING TERMINATED!

"GET UP, JOHN, YOU STUBBORN SON OF A--"

BOOM!

OOOH! HE COMES ALIVE! THUNDERBIRD COMES ALIVE!

YOU COULD HEAR THAT BLOW ALL THE WAY UP HERE, CITIZENS! ANOTHER AMAZING COME-FROM-BEHIND ATTACK FROM THE FREAKISH, BRUTE-HUMAN SOLID NAMED THUNDERBIRD!

GOOD BOY.

LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T BE HEARING FROM CAROSELLA ANY TIME SOON, THOUGH.

BUT THUNDERBIRD WILL BE BACK IN TWO SUN CYCLES TO FACE OFF AGAINST THE DREADED MAMMOTH. WORD HAS IT THAT A BITTER RIVALRY HAS ARISEN BETWEEN THE TWO MONSTROUS CREATURES...

...PERHAPS OVER A FEMALE!
OR PERHAPS OVER WHO WILL
HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO
TAKE ON THE MAXI-HEAVYWEIGHT
CHAMPION, **BANNER BEAST!**
IT ALL REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

"**BANNER BEAST**" SHOULDN'T
BE A PROBLEM. HUH,
JOHN? TOOK ONE
OF THEM DOWN
BEFORE.

COMING UP NOW...
THE WILY **MIMIC** AND
THE FUR-BACKED
BEASTLING!

SHOVE
IT, CAL.

I HOPE
YOUR MATCH
GOES BETTER
THAN YOUR "**PEP
TALK**" WITH
T-BIRD DID,
CALVIN.

AND HERE COMES
MIMIC!

YEAH,
WELL, HAVE
SOME **FAITH**,
MARIKO...

BY THE WAY,
I WAS IN CLEAN-
UP WITH **NOCTURNE**
THIS MORNING... SHE'S
GETTING SQUIRRELLY
ABOUT SOMETHING. SHE
SEEMED... **PANICKED**. I
THINK WE'RE RUNNING
OUT OF TIME.

"...THAT'S WHAT
KEEPS ME GOING."

WHY EXACTLY
SHOULD WE
BELIEVE
YOU?

YEAH. WE'VE
BEEN **BEGGING** FOR
HELP FROM ANYONE
WITHOUT **GREEN**
SKIN AND A RIDGED CHIN
SINCE WE GOT HERE.

AND ALL
WE'VE GOTTEN IN
RETURN IS A LOT
OF **CURSING**...
THE REAL **BAD**
WORDS, TOO.

HEY, THEY'RE AFRAID OF YOU-- AND CAN YOU BLAME THEM? ANYONE WITH ABILITIES GETS DRAGGED TO THE GAMES. AND HARBORING ANY ADVANCED HUMAN MEANS PUNISHMENT.

BUT THAT'S JUST BEING HOPEFUL. 'CUZ "PUNISHMENT" USUALLY EQUALS "DEATH".

OKAY. SO WHY ARE YOU THE CAT WITH ALL THE INTESTINAL FORTITUDE?

HE TALKS FUNNY, DOESN'T HE?

I'M GLAD SOMEONE ELSE THINKS SO.

AS FAR AS WHY I'D BOTHER WITH YOU, WELL, I'M THE MAN WITH THE PROPER CONNECTIONS.

THE NAME'S SAM WILSON.

BLINK AND MORPH. LEAD ON, BUT BE WARNED WE'RE HAVING A BAD DAY.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN. YOU YELLED AT ME, BLINK! THIS PLANET IS A HARD ENOUGH BLOW TO MY EGO--

--a world full of shape-shifters, a kid's gotta have his own bag y'know--

--WITHOUT YOU GETTING ALL SNARKY.

"WHO'S ON TODAY?"

"AT LEAST HE WON. TORCH SHOULD MAKE FOR AN INTERESTING BATTLE WITH THIS ONE. WE HAVEN'T HAD A DECENT MATCH BETWEEN TWO FLAME-WIELDERS SINCE... WELL, SINCE TORCH KILLED FIRE LASS.

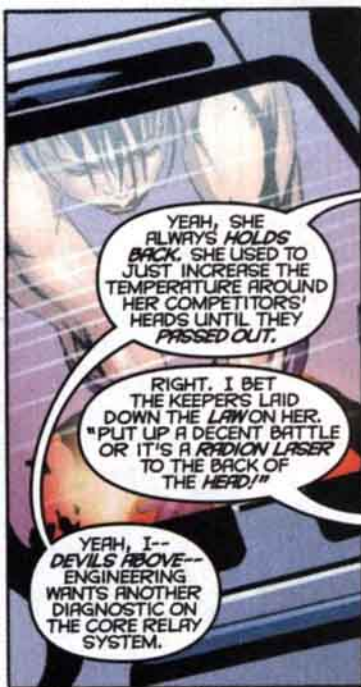
"THAT WAS A GOOD FIGHT."

"SUNFIRE VS. AVALANCHE. REAL LINEVEN IF YOU ASK ME. SHE'S GONNA DESTROY HIM."

"THINK SO?"

"ABSOLUTELY. SHE'S A FLYER. THE ONLY REASON THEY MATCHED THEM UP IN THE FIRST PLACE WAS TO GIVE STORM-TORCH A CHANCE TO RECOVER FROM HIS BOLT WITH BANSHEE."

"YES, IT WAS. THIS IS AWFUL."



YEAH, SHE ALWAYS HOLDS BACK. SHE USED TO JUST INCREASE THE TEMPERATURE AROUND HER COMPETITORS' HEADS UNTIL THEY PASSED OUT.

RIGHT. I BET THE KEEPERS LAID DOWN THE LAW ON HER. "PUT UP A DECENT BATTLE OR IT'S A RADION LASER TO THE BACK OF THE HEAD!"

YEAH, I-- DEVILS ABOVE-- ENGINEERING WANTS ANOTHER DIAGNOSTIC ON THE CORE RELAY SYSTEM.



Aboard the Skrull master scout vessel, *The Day Catcher*.

One light year from Earth.

AGAIN? IT MISFIRE A SINGLE TIME IN THE LAST CONFIGURATION. **ONCE!** WE'VE CHECKED IT **SEVEN** TIMES SINCE THEN.

WELL, I'M NOT RAISING MY VOICE IN PROTEST. THIS TOUR OF DUTY ENDS IN **THREE** ROTATIONS AND THEN WE GET LEAVE-TIME. DON'T WANT TO BOTCH THAT UP.



WHERE ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO? **EARTH** AGAIN? WE'RE SO CLOSE YOU CAN SAVE TRAVEL TIME AND USE IT TOWARDS YOUR LEAVE.

I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT IT. I HEAR THEY'VE LOOSENED THE RESTRICTIONS ON THE RED LIGHT ZONE. I'VE BEEN A LITTLE CURIOUS ABOUT "TAKING IN THE SIGHTS."

YOU ARE TRUE SCUM, MIKALLA. I DON'T--



BA-DOOM!!

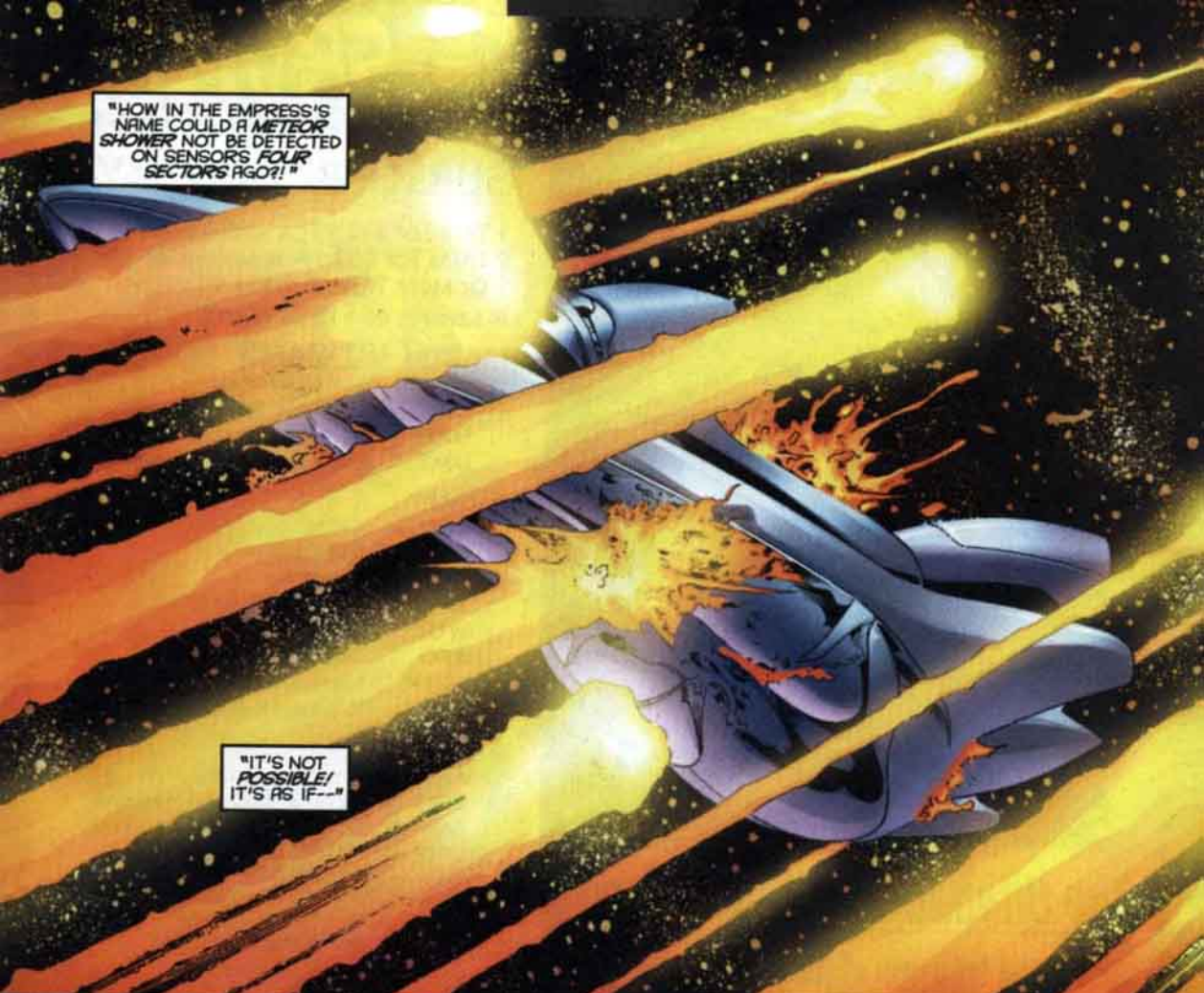
BY THE EMPIRE!

WE'RE BEING ATTACKED!




WE HAVE HULL BREACHES ON BOTH LOWER DECKS!! I CAN'T REACH THE BRIDGE ON COM LINK--

WAIT! WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A METEOR SHOWER!



"HOW IN THE EMPRESS'S NAME COULD A METEOR SHOWER NOT BE DETECTED ON SENSORS FOUR SECTORS AGO?!"

"IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
IT'S AS IF--"



By the names of the mother.




SEND A
DISTRESS
BEACON
TO EARTH!

TELL
THEM TO
EVACUATE
THE
PLANET!



NOW!
NOW!
BEFORE
HE--



The message was never sent. It happened too fast.

It's *ironic*, really. His purpose is to prepare for the *greater arrival*.

Almost like *announcing* the upcoming event.

He is *Terrax the Tamer*. In his past life he was a *warrior*. A *ruler*.

He answered to nothing but his *own will*.

Now, he is a *Herald*.

He seeks out *sustenance* for his *master*.



His master is

GALACTUS

The eater
of worlds.

They are coming
for Earth.





ARE WE ALMOST THERE? IF NOT, COULD WE PULL OVER AND GET A HAPPY MEAL OR SOMETHING?

THESE UNSTABLE MOLECULES DON'T FEED THEMSELVES Y'KNOW.

OUR HOST WILL HAVE SOME EXCELLENT FOOD... BEST AROUND, TRUTH BE TOLD.

LOOK, WE'VE GIVEN YOU JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING ON US, SAM... IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND, I'M A LITTLE CURIOUS ABOUT WHO EXACTLY WE'RE MEETING.

IS HE THE "LEADER OF THE UNDERGROUND" OR SOMETHING?



WELL, WE DON'T REALLY HAVE AN UNDERGROUND. THAT IS, IF YOU MEAN ONE THAT'S PLANNING A REBELLION.

WE'RE MOSTLY INTERESTED IN SURVIVAL. HE'S BEEN A GREAT HELP IN THAT AREA.



AND I'D SAY THE BEST WAY TO DESCRIBE THE BIG MAN IS... WELL, HE'S AN INVENTOR.

HE'S CREATED BETTER FARMING TECHNIQUES. BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENTS. AND HEALTH, OH MAN, HAS HE EVER BEEN A GODSEND WHEN IT COMES TO MEDICINE.



HE'S BEEN PRETTY ISOLATED THE LAST TEN YEARS, THOUGH. SEE, HE HEADED UP AN ESCAPE PLAN THAT WENT SOUR.

HE AND A THREE-MAN CREW STOLE A SKRULL SHIP AND LIT OUT OF ORBIT. BUT THEY RAN INTO TROUBLE. ONE OF THEM DIED.



THE OTHER TWO CAME BACK CHANGED.

CHANGED?

YEAH. LIKE Y'ALL. ADVANCED HUMANS. THEY GOT TAKEN OFF TO THE GAMES...

...HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE.



OH, HEY--
HERE'S OUR
BOY.

OH,
WOW.

HELLO,
SO GLAD
YOU COULD
JOIN US.



I'M REED
RICHARDS.

Continued...