

MARVEL
PG

1 OF 6

The Marvel logo, featuring the word "MARVEL" in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol, set against a solid red background.

DIRECT EDITION

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JIM STARLIN

AL MILGROM

You
missed
it.

All reality
has come to
an end.

Yes, I,
Thanos of Titan,
am responsible.

But I did not
destroy the universe
for the *reasons* you
would *assume*.

You see,
I gained *complete*
mastery
over all there *was*,
and then...

...discovered
my *achievements*
were naught but an
insane joke.



Of course
I was *destined*
to annihilate the
universe.

From that first
moment I laid eyes
on *Mistress
Death*, destruction
has been my art.

Nearly my
entire existence
has been devoted
to amassing
power and dealing
out death.

For a time,
I proudly proclaimed
myself the *ultimate
nihilist*.

Twice I
became the
most *powerful
being* in our reality,
only to have
unlimited might
slip from my
grasp.

I even *died* once
and served as Death's
loyal servant.

But the *fates*
had a *dark role* mapped
out for me that could
not be *denied*.

So life
was restored to
me to fulfill my
part in this *final
drama*.

You
wonder *how*
and *why*?

I shall tell
you. But *where*
do I begin?

I know...





Akhenaten.

He was an 18th dynasty **pharaoh** in ancient Egypt.

Being the product of **selective inbreeding**, Akhenaten believed himself the **spokesman** for the god Aten.

So he ordered the **closing** of the temples of **Amun** and moved Egypt's capital from **Thebes** to the newly-built city of **Akhetaten**.

Like all pharaohs, his power was **slave-based** and his rule **ruthless**.

"His **insane reign** lasted nearly **17 years**."

"How he **died**, nobody knows."



"For in death, Akhenaten became a **mystery**."



"Modern archeologists have *found* and *identified* most of Egypt's ancient rulers.

"Akhenaten is sort of the *missing link* of pharaohs, his *mummy* never located.

"His *crypt* was discovered *empty*, as if never used.

"...seeking to *expunge* Akhenaten from history.

"Some say *Horemheb*, a later pharaoh, ordered the tomb *emptied*...

"Others speculate simple *grave robbers* were responsible.

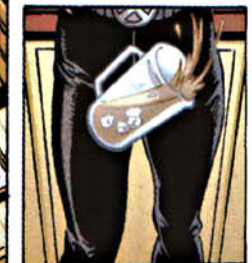
"Myself, I *don't buy* either explanation."

I just *feel* that *something else* happened.

What?

I don't know.





You dropped the iced tea!

I didn't think Jean Grey was capable of dropping anything.

Dizzy.

Are you all right?

I don't know.
Feel strange.



And where did all that stuff about Akhenaten come from?

Research I did back when we were dealing with the Living Pharaoh.

Hank, I hadn't thought about it in years.

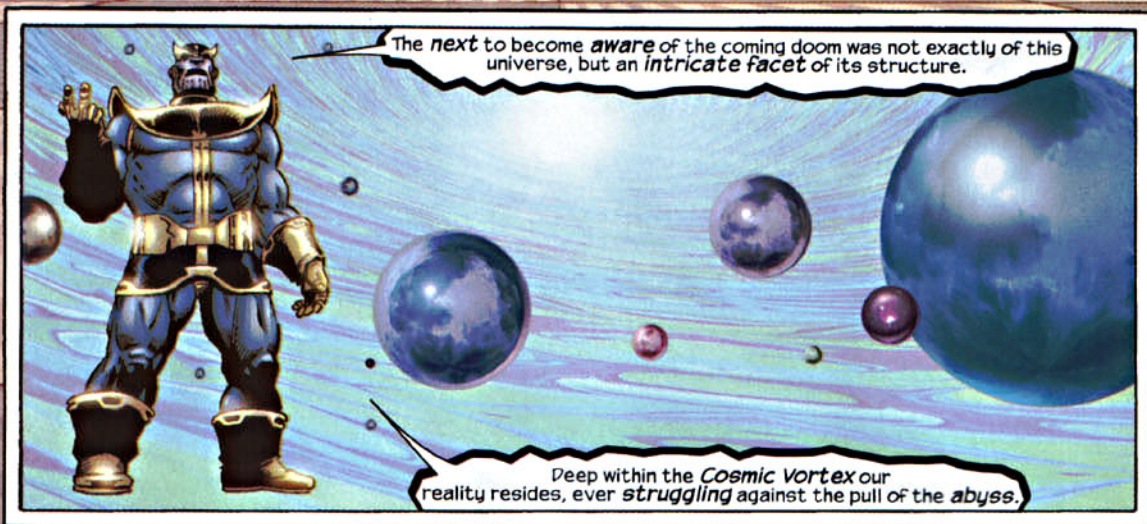
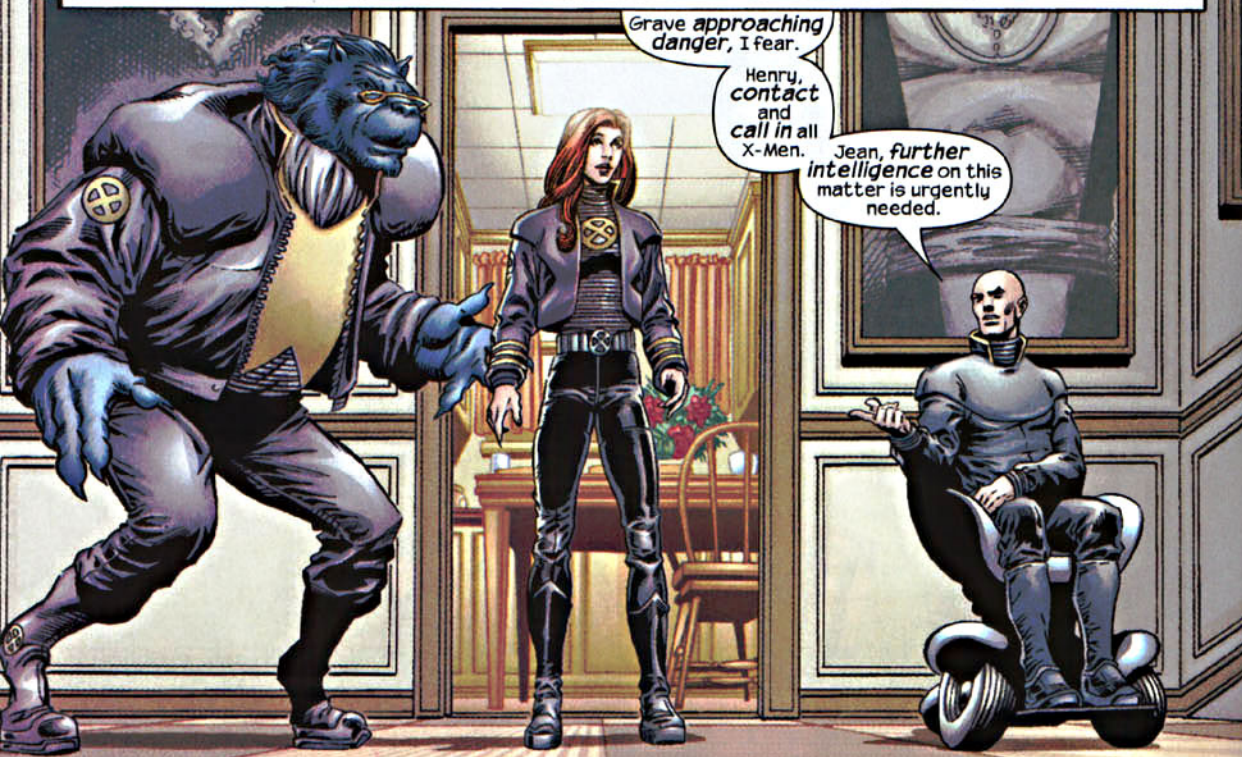



It just sort of popped out, unbidden.

Perhaps you ought to let Professor X know.


Why?
It's nothing.

Jean, I would have a word with you.







We are *anchored*
in place by *arcane*
forces emanating
from a mere *child*.



Atleza shoulders this
burden from a *pavilion*
deep within a *sphere*
of darkness.




She has two very
unique guardians.



Gamora,
look how *complex*
Atleza's spells are
becoming.

Soon she will
no longer require our
presence.



Adam Warlock,
are you getting tired of
babysitting?


No, but...



Atleza!
What's
wrong?

A new
element...

Shifting
balances of
power...



Everything
is about to
change.



The first to actually **make contact** with the gathering cosmic storm was the ruler of fabled **Asgard**.

This supposed god was still **uncertain** as to how he should wield his **newfound** **might** and depended heavily on the guidance of his **vizier**.

It is said that a **fine** **veneer** doth require a **gentle** **touch**.

Wise words, **Thialfi**, but yonder realm is a **troubled** **land**.

My **heart** spurs me to use the **Odinforce** to simply **eradicate** all the **evil** **forces** that threaten **Asgard**.

Why then did your **father** not do thus?

Perhaps because **Odin** recognized the **need** of balancing **Asgard's** **safety** against the **rights** of those who do **oppose** it?

Then what be the **benefit** of possessing almost **limitless** **power** if--

Sire!

Hear me, Lord **Thor**!

I give thee notice and **warning**!

Who?





I have returned for what is rightfully mine!

Astounding!

Know that my claim to the lands you call Midgard predates Asgard's!

You are given notice that any interference in my rule will be dealt with harshly!

My liege, who be this knave, to so challenge you?

I know not.

But I be not blind, Thiafi.

This mysterious newcomer is no boastful fool.

In truth, he doth wield energies that might dwarf even the Odinpower.

And deep within the domain of the proud Shi'ar Empire...





By the stars!

The Silver Surfer's shock was quite understandable.

The mighty Shi'ar Armada had secured the empire's rule for centuries.



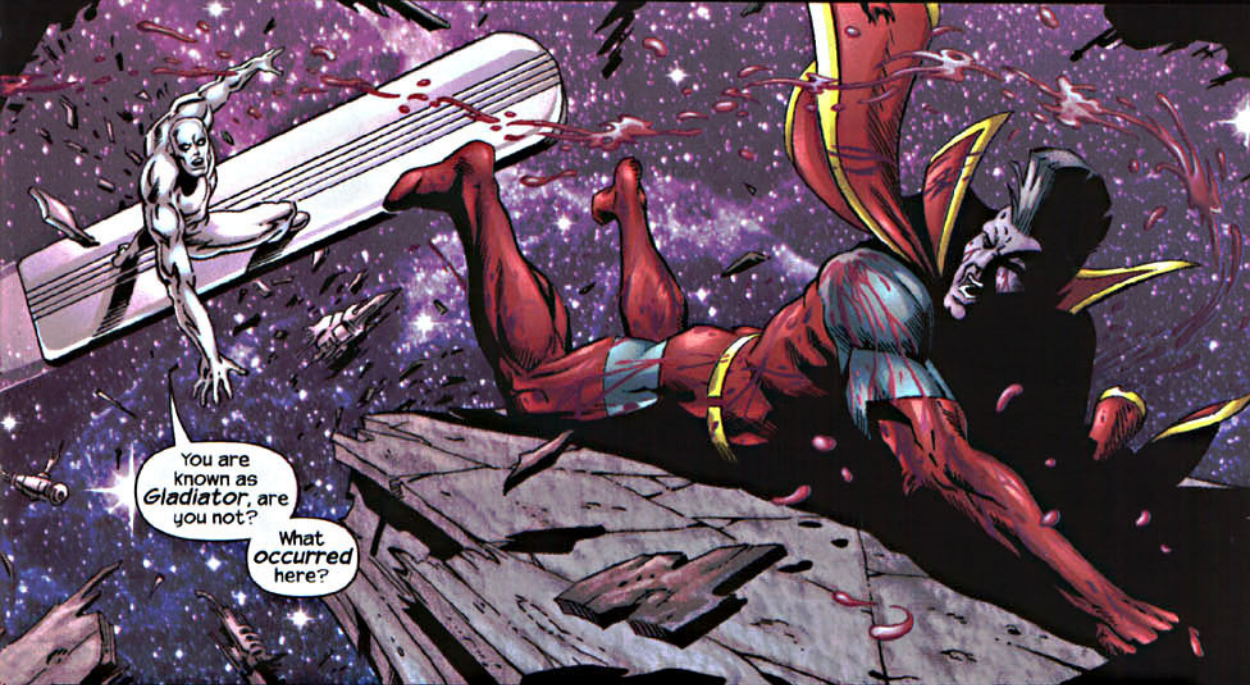
But now...

How?

Wait!

A survivor!





You are known as *Gladiator*, are you not?

What occurred here?



The *fleet* was sent out to *investigate*.

The *force* didn't even *slow* its pace as it *decimated* our ranks.

Shi'ar Command sensors registered an approaching *energy signature* of a *disturbing* nature.



It *continued* on its *way* as if we were *nothing*.

Heading *which way*?

Gladiator?



As you likely suspect, I was **already aware** of the existence of this **mysterious power**.

In fact, for the past year or so, I had been actively **seeking** it.

For despite my **forsaking** any efforts to either **dominate** or **destroy** all life in the universe, I felt possessing such might was **advisable**.

A **centuries-long** existence, some **miscalculations** and an **unyielding disposition** have rewarded me with scores of **powerful enemies** and few **allies**.

My thinking was that such power would **deter** anyone seeking **righteous retribution** for some perceived **past misdeed** on my part.

But the **source** of these awesome energies proved **elusive**.

My **scanners** would continuously detect the unique **energy emanation** and then **lose** it.

I began to despair that mine was a **futile quest**.



But only yesterday I was searching a sector of the **Herculean Galaxy** when ...

...the desired **energy signature** came through loud and clear...

...and did **not vanish**.

But the **joy of success** was tempered by the realization...

...that the **source** of these emanations was heading directly toward...

...the planet **Earth**.





Dr. Richards, the Avengers' instrumentation has come upon a rather enigmatic *radiation emanation*.

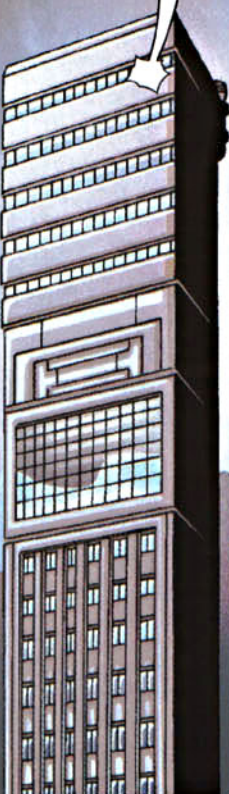
And it appears to be *approaching the Earth*.

Been tracking it: constantly modulating *multiple frequencies* with *peaks and valleys* going off the chart.

Of course, this awesome *cosmic event* didn't escape the notice of that planet's *finer minds*.

As at the *Baxter Building*.

Reed, the *Vision's* on-line.



Something *extremely powerful* is heading our way, *Ben*.

And I have *no idea* what it is.

How about in *English*, Stretch?



I believe it should be treated as a *potential threat*.

I agree, and suggest we *join forces* to deal with it.

Your place or mine?



And at that same moment, an *ill-advised reunion* was taking place at the estate of one *Professor Charles Xavier*.



A gathering of so-called *X-Men*.





'Bout time the rest of Warren's group showed up.

How's this going to shake down, Rogue?

Now, Angel, we find out if there's some *real danger* out there whose *tail* needs kicking...

...or if this call up is the Professor's *clever way* of springing a *surprise birthday party* on one of us.

Wouldn't bet on the *chocolate cake*, Bobby.

Emma, why isn't Hank operating Cerebra?

Don't know, Scott. The Professor *only* wanted Jean with him.

Think they're *trying* something a bit different.



What transpires?

And where's the Professor?

Apparently trying to make some sort of *off-world contact*, Warren.

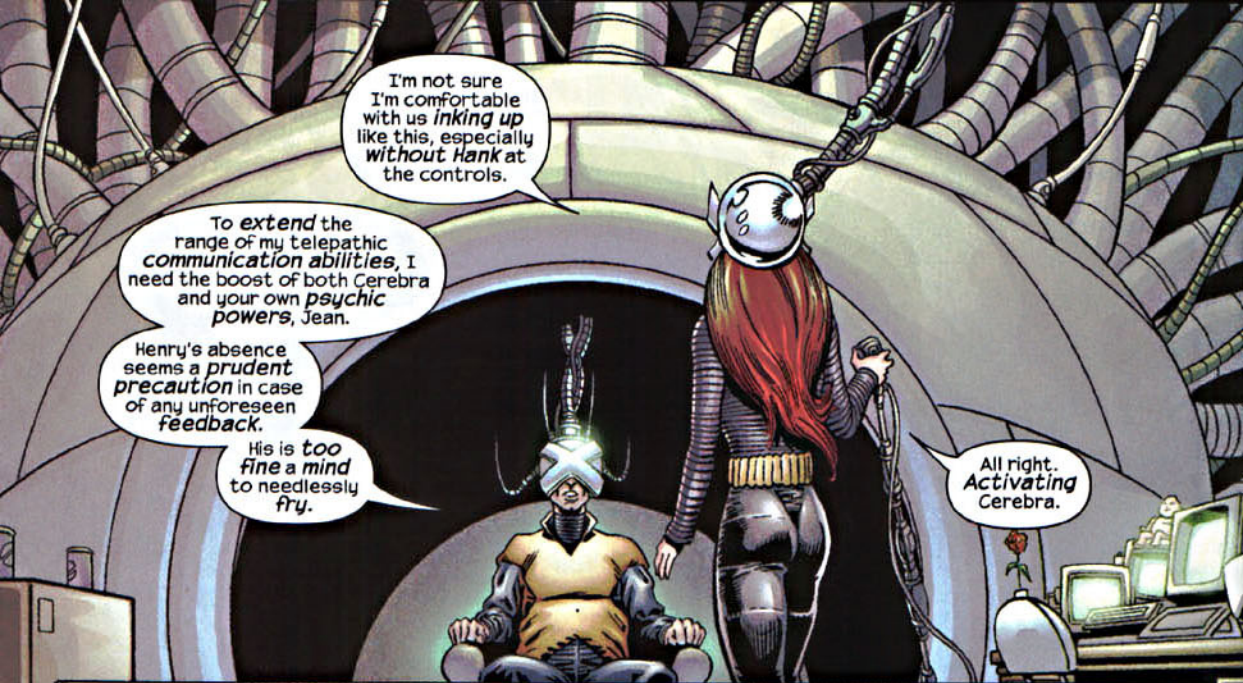
We've been called in to *fight aliens*?

Anyone we know?

I'm afraid the Professor was *rather vague* about what's going down, Gambit.

But he looked *worried*.

And when he worries, I start *tightening* my *safety belt*.



I'm not sure I'm comfortable with us *inking up* like this, especially *without Hank* at the controls.

To extend the range of my telepathic communication abilities, I need the boost of both Cerebra and your own *psychic* powers, Jean.

Henry's absence seems a *prudent precaution* in case of any unforeseen feedback.

His is *too fine a mind* to needlessly fry.

All right. Activating Cerebra.



Now relax, Jean.



Allow me to tap into your well of *psi-energy* and add it to my own.



We'll be reaching out now, *beyond* the confines of the estate...



...beyond the limits of our planet and into the depths of space.



I'm beginning to *feel something* as we near the edge of our solar system...



We have made contact!



My God!

Exactly.



I am truly touched by this warm reception.

Greetings, my subjects.



I, the great
Pharaoh Akhenaten,
have returned to claim
what is *mine*.

My rule will be
Just and my reign
prosperous.

As the
chosen agent of
the *grand council*, I
welcome you to the
Celestial Order.

Chaos is now
banned from this
sector and a *new*
day begins.

Henceforth, the
faithful will be richly
rewarded and those
who *turn their back*
to the *light*...



...will be
cast into the
darkness.

Unfortunately,
looking into your
hearts...



...I see that you will **never**
accept the *truth*
I bring you.

So...



We have to
get out of here.
Professor!

Too
late.





Just in! The sprawling Westchester, New York estate of the world famous Professor Charles Xavier has reportedly been engulfed within a towering fireball.

Witnesses state that **no one** could have possibly survived the explosion.

Tremors from the blast were felt as far away as New York City.

A spokesman has informed us that the FBI is currently treating the incident as an **act of terrorism** and will investigate it accordingly.

But it should be pointed out that the estate was the home of the Xavier Institute...

The so-called mutant school.

So many are already questioning whether the school was the intended target of the blast or...



...somehow fell victim to one of their own kind.

There was one who viewed this televised report but *knew better* than to pay any attention to the newscaster's *homo superior* bigotry.

There were few *Earthmen* I had any respect for and fewer still I kept under *constant surveillance*.

But DOCTOR DOOM was one of his world's *towering intellects*, a brilliant *strategist* and admirably *ruthless*.



The BLIND FOOLS!

Such precise devastation, using a means *unknown* on Earth, indicates an *off-world assailant*.

This is clearly a *situation* I must continue to *monitor*.

Who knows what *opportunities* might arise?

Terrorists! Self-destruction! How can they be so delusional?





Tell-el-Amarna,
one of hundreds of
archeological sites
that dot Egypt.

But what
made this particular
site *significant* was
the fact that in
ancient days this
is where...

...the
once-capital
city of
Akhetaten
stood.

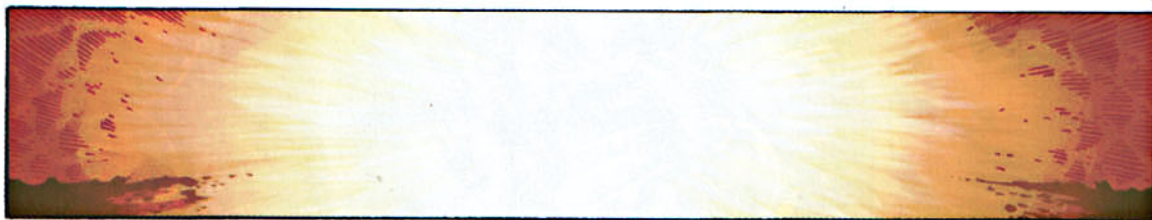
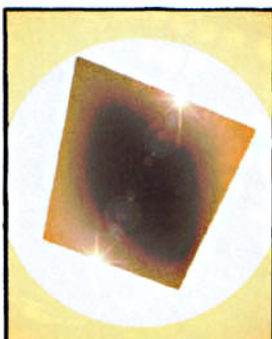
You're
right,
Yassar!



There is
something
in front of
the sun.

Too big
and *slow* for
a plane...

It
almost
looks like
a...



An hour later, in
Washington D.C....

...in the office
of the supposed
most powerful
man on Earth...

...a lesson
in *relativity*
was about to be
illustrated.

NO
MORE
ENRONS!

NO
WAR
WITH
IRAQ!

COME
CLEAN ON
HALLIBURTON!

SAVE
OUR
PLANET!



Defense reports no traces of radiation emanating from the Westchester blast site.

And this isn't looking like the work of terrorists.

Then maybe we ought to bring the Avengers into this.

Always make these things so hard to open.

My guess is they already know more about what went down than we do.

I'll contact their liaison officer.

What about casualties?



They appear to be limited to the school grounds.

The institute was extremely private, so we're going to have trouble getting a complete list of fatalities.

There will be children included among the dead.



Pear God.

Anything else?

We're getting some odd reports out of Egypt.



There may have been another strange explosion there.



But we've apparently lost contact with--



MR. PRESIDENT!



Where'd he go?!

He just vanished!



Much to President Bush's horror, he discovered that he was but one of the many world leaders that Akhetaten chose to abduct and transport to his newly-rebuilt capital city of Akhetaten.

Needless to say, it was a situation none of the hostages were prepared to deal with.

What are we doing here?

Better question is *how* we get here?

Condoleeza?

Mr. President, is this some kind of terrorist plot?

Doubt it. Cheney never tried me on bin Laden being able to teleport things.

Preposterous!

Doctor Doom kidnapped like some common lout?

A costume party?

It's like an ancient Egyptian Pienegland!

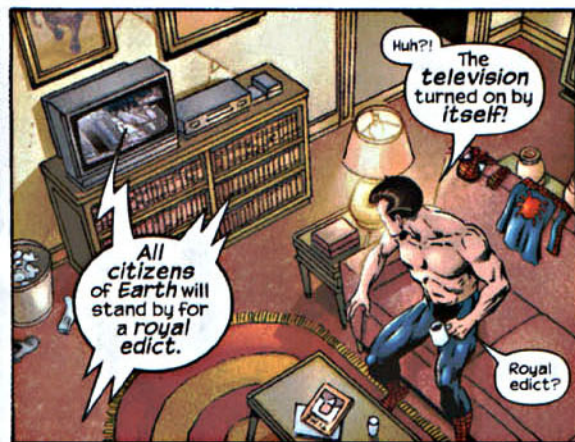
This is the big joke, no?

I want to know who's responsible for this bloody outrage!

It's clearly an insidious Zionist scheme.

More likely an Arab trick. After all this is Egypt! Isn't it?





I, the great *Pharaoh Akhenaten*, have returned to claim Earth and its adjoining territories.

My rule will be just and my reign prosperous.

As the chosen agent of the grand council, I welcome you to the Celestial Order.

Mubarak, are you involved in this nonsense?

Certainly not.

It's back to building pyramids for someone.

Piq.

And I'm not at all sure it is nonsense.

From this point on, your respective governments will be answerable directly to me.

I have looked upon what you have done to this world in my absence...

... and I am displeased.

The Empire will be restored to its former glory and beyond.



Resist me
in these efforts
and many will die
horribly.

Submit to
my righteous authority
and the rewards will be
wondrous.

This
can't be
happening!

Where's
Bush?!

This
has to be his
doing!



To illustrate
the benefits of
unquestioning
obedience, I give
you the remedy
for the diseases
of cancer and
AIDS.

All
who suffer
from these
afflictions
are now
cured.



So return
to your minor
capitals
and await my
pleasure.

Each
country will
shortly be given
work assignments.



Conquest
and notification
are complete.

Now I
must prepare for
resistance...



...and the
merciless
crushing of
it.

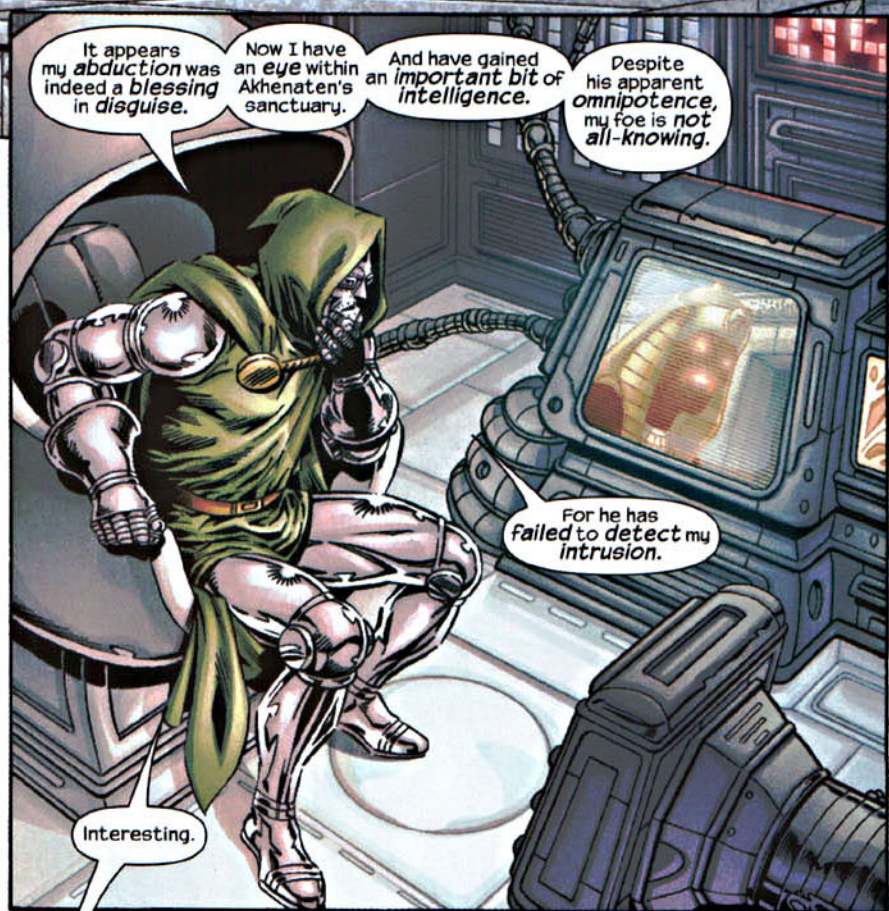


But as Akhenaten returned to his private quarters, he went not alone.



Unbeknownst to the pharaoh, he was accompanied by a miniature flying spy camera...

...no bigger than a pea.



It appears my abduction was indeed a blessing in disguise.

Now I have an eye within Akhenaten's sanctuary.

And have gained an important bit of intelligence.

Despite his apparent omnipotence, my foe is not all-knowing.

For he has failed to detect my intrusion.

Interesting.



The deeper we go into the royal palace the more alien it becomes.

Yes, here is where I will find the means to defeat this usurper.



And, on the far side of this doomed planet, others were plotting futile resistance.

The Avengers and the Fantastic Four had joined forces.

And the President has been returned to the White House, safe and sound.

As the Black Panther waits for us, Colonel Fury.

It's beginning to look like this Avenger has some kind of wish-fulfilling power.

Anything his envisioning becomes reality.

How do we fight that?

Cap, the Falcon's returned with the rest of the reservists.

Fill them in on the situation, Hank.

Never before seen such weird readings.

What a gathering of powerhouses!

I almost feel sorry for whomever it is we're going up against.

Don't.

Cap, here's the latest satellite photos of Tell-el-Amarna.

Benjamin J. Grimm, if you let Hercules take you into one of his useless brawls you'll also receive a wasp-sting.

At full force, they're quite painful.

'Tis true, friend Grimm.

Beware!

Sure, whatever.

Remember when this job used to have a height requirement?



Warriors, be aware that you are in the royal presence.

How?

Let it be known that Akhenaten the Just comes to you with a proposition.

Become my loyal bodyguards and live... Or refuse and die.

Some offer.



I give you one hour to consider my proposal.

Don't need it.

Take your job offer and...

Ben, don't!



...SHOVE IT!

So be it.



Alas, I knew
their *pride* would
blind them to the
truth.

But, even in
death, they shall
prove *useful* to
the *empire*.

Let them
illuminate the *folly* of
disobedience.

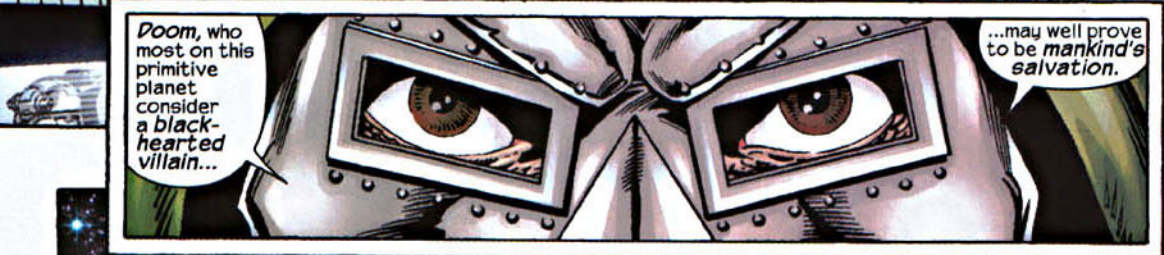




Colonel Fury, you and your world should thank heaven that Doctor Doom stands with you in this danger.

For I alone have a window into Akhenaten's fortress and mind.

Pity you can't fully appreciate the irony of that situation.



Doom, who most on this primitive planet consider a black-hearted villain...

...may well prove to be mankind's salvation.



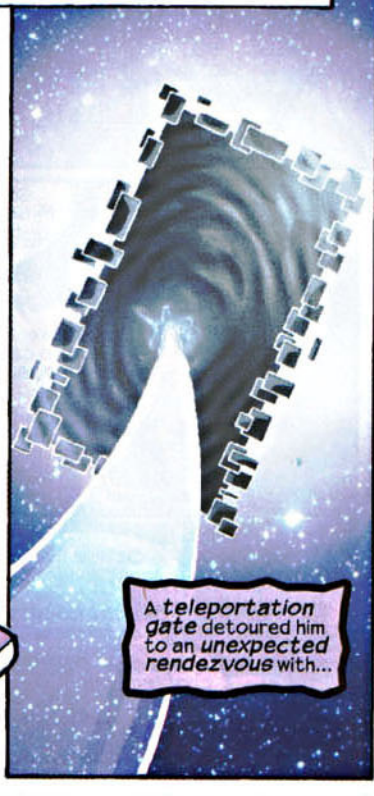
Meanwhile, the Silver Surfer was returning to a certain primitive planet...

...in order to warn its defenders of a menace that had already conquered it.

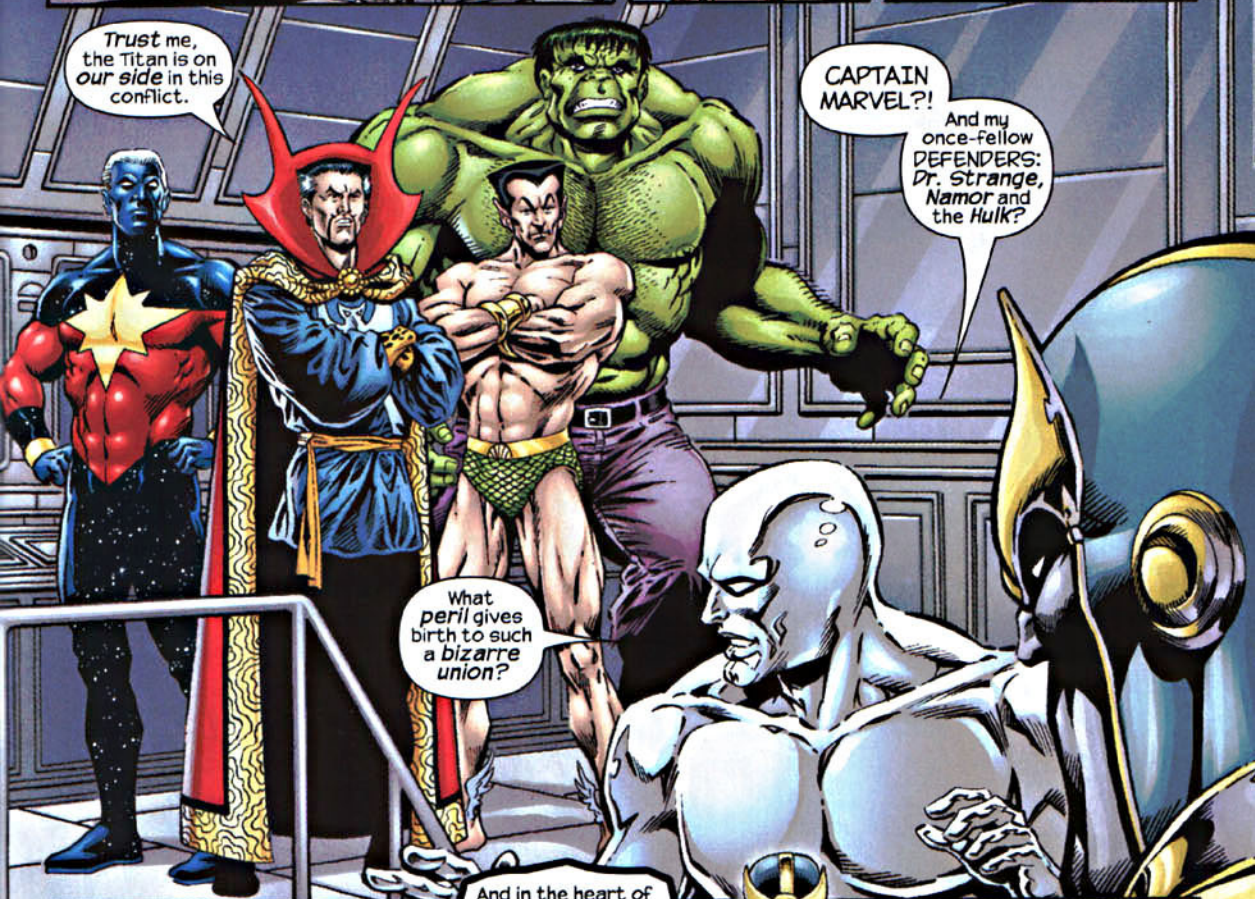


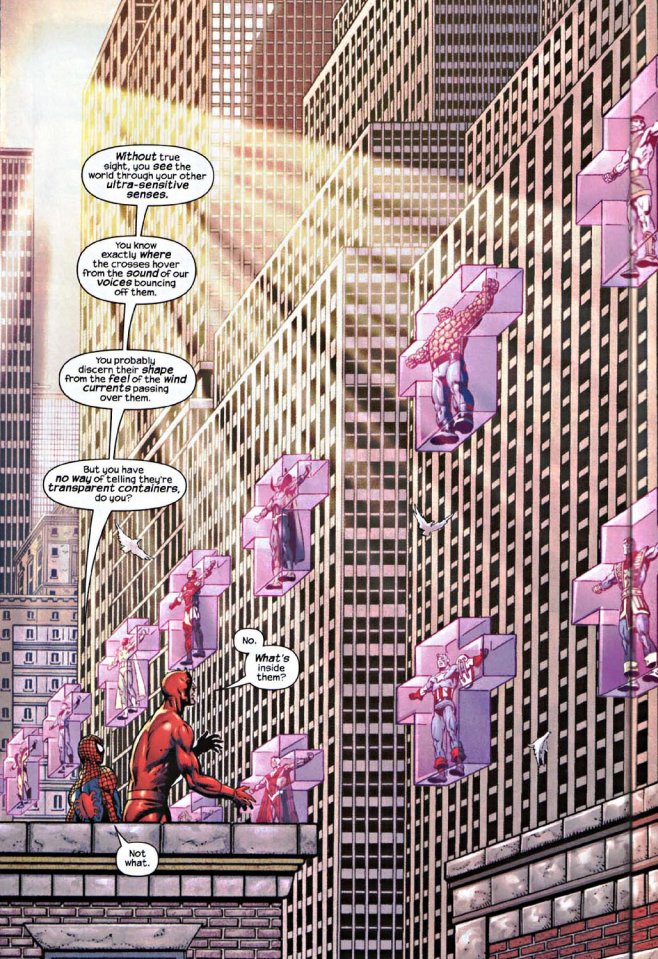
But the space traveler never reached his intended destination.

What?



A teleportation gate detoured him to an unexpected rendezvous with...





Without true sight, you see the world through your other ultra-sensitive senses.

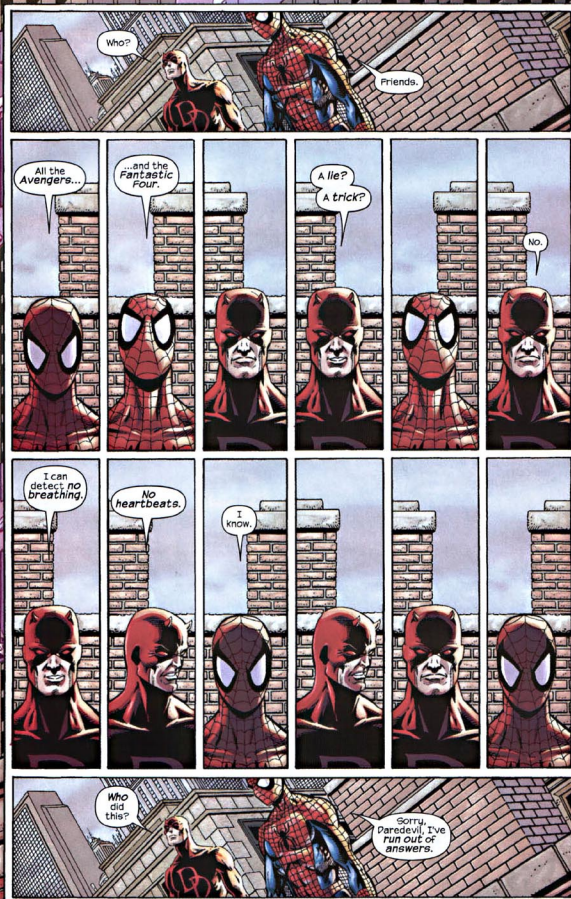
You know exactly where the crosses hover from the sound of our voices bouncing off them.

You probably discern their shape from the feel of the wind currents passing over them.

But you have no way of telling they're transparent containers, do you?

No.
What's inside them?

Not what.



Who?

Friends.

All the Avengers...

...and the Fantastic Four.

A lie?
A trick?

No.

I can detect no breathing.

No heartbeats.

I know.

Who did this?

Sorry, Paradise! I've run out of answers.



In fabled *Olympus*, another sought *answers* and an *ally*.

Lord Zeus,
I come to you with
grave tidings.



Noble *Thor*, I be already sadly
aware of our *perilous*
situation.

My loving son,
Hercules, hath moments
ago fallen to the *Pharaoh*
Akhenaten's evil.

I loathe to
inform you that he did
perish with your fellow
Avengers.

Damnation!
Then this *Akhenaten*
has much to
atone for.

A task I fear
that may prove *beyond* our
capabilities.



Our foe's strength *surpasses* even that of
the *Odinpower* and your own *Olympian*
might combined?

Aye, 'tis
seemingly *unlimited*
energies this villain
wields.

Then
what...?



We gather
allies of great
power who have
as much to *lose*
as we.

Together,
we may yet *prevail*
against *gathering*
darkness.



A darkness
that *worried*
forces even greater
than *mankind*
and *gods*.

Worried
and
perplexed.



We have
sensed a
perilous imbalance
in the *cosmic* flow but
cannot discern the
disruption's
cause.

So we
came to warn
you of our
concern.



And to seek
your wise council, great
Eternity.

Infinity
and I also perceive
the shifting of astral
priorities.

Alas, like you,
Master Order,
and your opposite
number, **Lord Chaos**,
we cannot determine
the reason for
this disorder.

How
can that
be?!

You and
Infinity are the
personifications
of all time and
space!

Yet, still,
the answer to
this mystery
eludes us.

A most
unsettling
development.

Tragically,
there is one truth
hidden from the least
to the greatest of
all beings.

None can
fully appreciate or
accurately
predict his final
moment.



And so, amidst foreboding and ignorance, the planet Earth fell to the might of the all-powerful *Celestial Order* before any even truly perceived the presence of the *galactic conqueror*.

The *Pharaoh Akhenaten* had returned, his *four thousand-year-old regime* resurrected, and now prepared to *extend its rule* throughout the heavens.

This was but the *start of our grand tragedy*.

A mere puddle compared to the *ocean of sorrowful tears* to come.

The *dying* had just begun.

PREDESTINATION

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