

THE ULTIMATES™ 2

ISSUE
1



PARENTAL ADVISORY



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DIRECT EDITION

MILLAR
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MARVEL

When faced with Nazi Germany's military advances, the U.S. government decided that the best weapon against them was a person, not a bomb. With this in mind, Steve Rogers volunteered for a covert military experiment that turned him into Captain America. After a few years of exemplary service, Captain America fell in battle—his body wasn't recovered. Years passed and Captain America was found frozen in suspended animation. When he awoke, he was convinced to join Iron Man, The Wasp, Giant Man, Black Widow, Hawkeye, and Thor in forming the superhuman defense initiative run by Nick Fury, called The Ultimates.

T H E R E S E R V E S



S T A N L E E P R E S E N T S :

THE ULTIMATES

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"We didn't stop the atomic bomb with Robert Oppenheimer, so why stop super-soldiers with The Ultimates?"



"Truth is that The Reserves have been in the cards right from the beginning."





Oh, stop crying. Didn't you hear? We're flying into *Paris* to refuel. Aren't women supposed to *love Paris*?

Ashraf! Quit messing around and get them back in their seats! No more *toilet breaks!*



You hear him? Back in your seats or I start popping heads! No more toilet breaks until I say so!

Your attention, please. This is *Captain America* speaking via the in-flight communication system.

The Ultimates have secured control of this aircraft and would urge all passengers to fasten their *safety belts* at the earliest opportunity--

Wh-what?





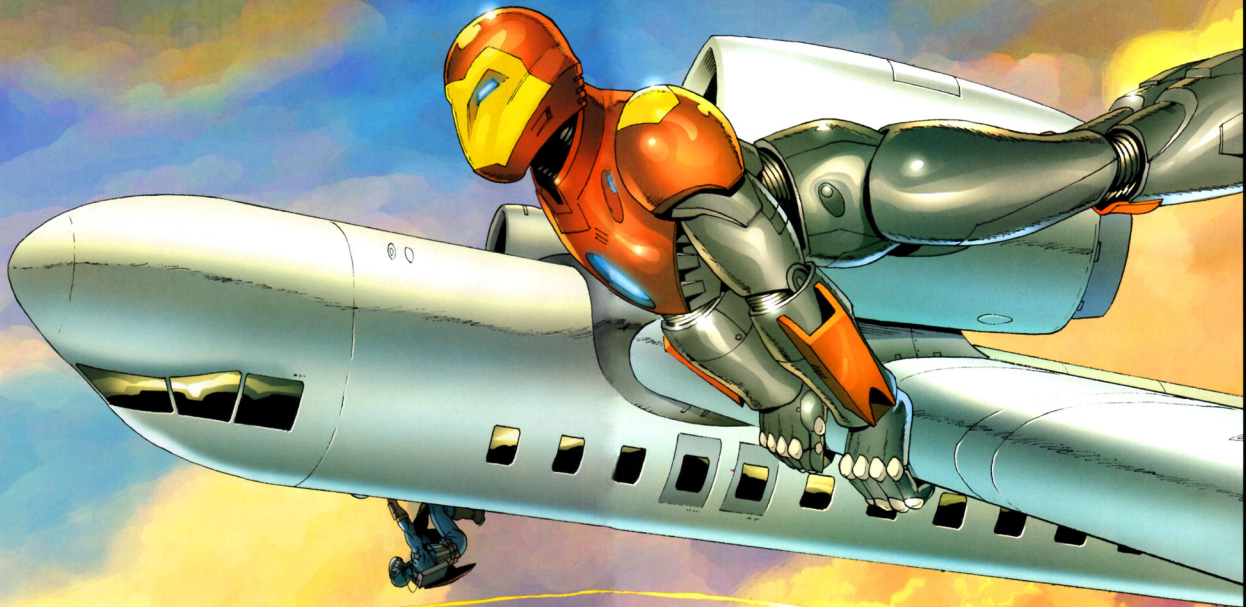
Things are about to get rocky.



Muhammad! What are we going to do?



Ngh!



An apology
might be a good
place to start.



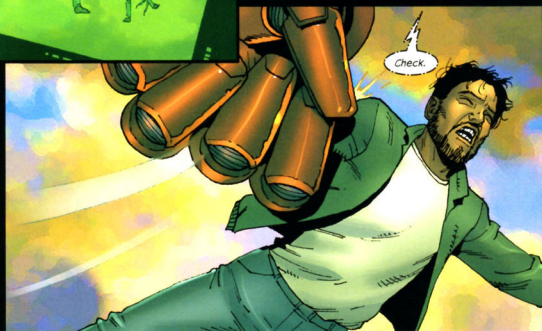
Man, this is awesome.



Okay, terrorists are disarmed, but they're still a threat. Somebody want to put some distance between them and the passengers?



Time to show the world what you can do, boys.





Rocketman
Three?

Hit a wind-
pocket and
lost them for
a second...



...relax.
Everything's
cool now.



He ain't
kidding.

"Phase One had only *nine*
super-soldiers, but that was
just to get people *used* to
the idea. The President and I
want to increase this to a full
twenty-six for Phase Two.

"The Five Goliaths already saw action in The Gulf a few weeks back and there's seven or eight *others* ready to go public as soon as Dr. Brankin signs off on them.



"Rocketmen One, Two and Three were customized from some of the early *Iron Man* designs we finally convinced Tony Stark to part with.



"The Four Seasons are just about ready; four marines from Wisconsin who all signed up on the same day and couldn't believe their *luck* when I handed them for The Reserves.

"Thunderbolt still needs a few tweaks, Intangi-Girl's still a month away from being ready and we haven't even finalized what we're doing with Owen, Rusk and O'Ponohue.



"But the one that *really* has us psyched is *Lieberman*.

"Outside of the Giant Men, he's the only one whose powers aren't completely dependent on the *uniforms* we've put together.



"Enhanced *speed*, enhanced *strength*, skin close to *indestructible* and his brain hard-wired to the S.H.I.E.L.D. super-computer...

"No wonder other countries are losing sleep at night."

When we first met, you were as *skinny* as a *rake*, General Fury. Too much *fine wines* and *rich food* since you become head of S.H.I.E.L.D., eh?

How you *doing*, Viktor? Secretary of State said you wanted a *word* with me, man.

We need to talk about these cowboy adventures you've been having in *nice, peaceful* countries.


This new team of *ultimate Reserves* you have formed are causing me enormous problems with my *superiors*.

What kinda *nice, peaceful* country has a secret *nuclear weapons* stash, Vik?

There are protocols we follow in such situations. United Nations charters we have adhered to for over half a century.


We do not, without warning, send super-soldiers into *volatile* situations in *sovereign* states.

We sent my boys in to *avoid* a volatile situation...




Your expansion of the **Super-Soldier Program** is in direct violation of the **test-ban treaties**.

We turned a blind eye to The Ultimates as a gesture of goodwill after 9-11, but we cannot ignore these **new monsters**.



Hell, don't give me **that** garbage. Only difference between you and me is that S.H.I.E.L.D. **openly admits** to our super-soldier program.


Don't think we don't know what you're trying to put together in Asia.



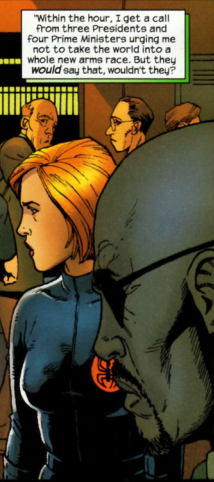
Just give me your assurance, that this was a one-off. Just promise me that you'll never deploy these super-men on foreign soil again.



Don't make promises I can't **keep**, fat man.



Then I am afraid I cannot be held responsible for whatever happens next. Excuse me, Mister President.



"Within the hour, I get a call from three Presidents and Four Prime Ministers urging me not to take the world into a whole new arms race. But they **would** say that, wouldn't they?"



"They want the world all to themselves."

I thought I told you not to *call* me anymore.



But this is **big**, Mister Nix. This could be the biggest assignment of your **entire** career.



I don't *have* a career, Miss Malone. I look after my **grandchildren** now so my daughter can go to work without employing **strangers** to look after them.

And I respect that, sir, I really do. But this assignment should appeal to your strong sense of righteousness and we thought we should speak to you before we made any other calls.



Who's the mark?

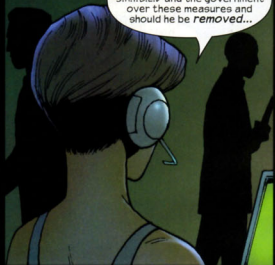
General Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D.



Reason?

Well, I'm afraid our client didn't specify, but there's a strong indication that this massive enlargement of the super-soldier program he's conducting is a very personal project.

General Fury has a lot of opposition within S.H.I.E.L.D. and the government over these measures and should he be removed...



...this superhero arms race he's initiating could be stopped in its tracks. A new head of S.H.I.E.L.D. with less hawkish tendencies could be hired and cooler heads would prevail.

Morally, you make quite a convincing argument, Miss Malone. Would you excuse me for a second, please?



Darlene, honey?

You think you could get someone to watch the kids next week while Paddy helps a friend?



"During breakfast there's a crisis in Sierra Leone. At lunchtime Janet Pym appears and tells me she's worried she isn't getting as much newspaper coverage as the rest of The Ultimates.

"At two p.m. there's some worrying troop movements near the Gaza Strip and at three Summer has a costume fitting..."

Well, what do you think?

Frankly, I think it looks very effeminate.



Relax, Summer. You look fantastic, man.

We got some of the best artists and designers in the world working on this stuff and market research says the next wave of superheroes is gonna be really colorful.



Why can't I have **black leathers** and stuff like super heroes have in the movies?


Because Summer means blue skies and golden rays. Besides, black leather's been as dead as the dodo since *Matrix Revolutions* obliterated it for everyone.



Intel just confirmed there's a **price** on your head, sir. Word is the Russians or the Chinese have hired a **Mister Nix** for the job.

Mister who?





World's greatest hit-man for over half a century. Never missed a target, never been caught and disappeared four years ago, much to S.H.I.E.L.D.'s annoyance.

What makes him unique is that he doesn't ask for money... just one good reason why the world would be a better place without whoever he's been asked to off.

Top of the class, Mister Lieberman.



Operation Green Man on the line now too, sir...

Patch me through.


The Himalayas:



How many bodies are we talking this time, Rocketman One?

Eleven, as far as we can tell...and all well-known bandits, according to the locals.

The three survivors were French-Canadian climbers and said the guy who saved 'em was small and white and spoke with an American accent--



--all three also confirmed that this little man changed shape when the fighting broke out.

Oh God.

Any tracks this time?



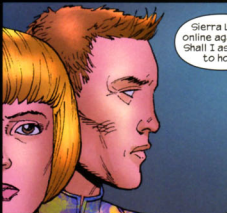
The Gollaths reckon there's a trail heading North, but we got something better than footprints, sir. One of the climbers snapped a picture.



Downloading now, General Fury.



Aw, hell...



Sierra Leone online again, sir. Shall I ask them to hold?



Yeah, gimme a minute here, huh?

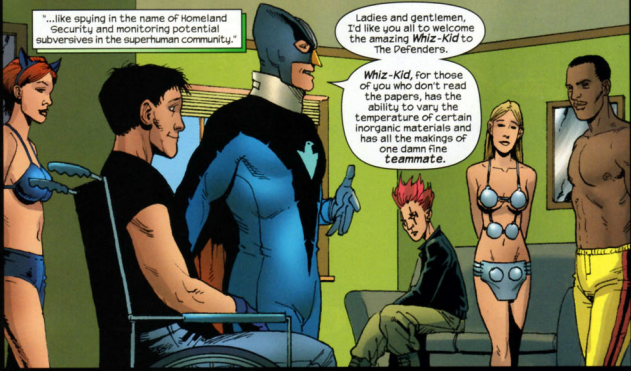


"Of course, a couple of Reserves were ready months ago and we've had them out there taking care of more *minor* operations..."

"...like spying in the name of Homeland Security and monitoring potential subversives in the superhuman community."

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you all to welcome the amazing *Whiz-Kid* to The Defenders.

Whiz-Kid, for those of you who don't read the papers, has the ability to vary the temperature of certain inorganic materials and has all the makings of one damn fine teammate.



Very kind of you to say so, Nighthawk.

This little guy, I should point out, expects to play a full part in our adventures and doesn't want to be treated any differently just because of his horrific situation.



What do you mean "horrific situation"?

Well, y'know, you being a poor, little wheel-fellow and everything...

Don't worry. I know what you're going through, *Whiz-Kid*. I fell off my cousin's bike when I was ten and spent **six whole weeks** with my leg in a cast.





To be honest, I think *polio* is a little different from--

What's the word on Giant Man, Nighthawk? Only reason I even showed up for this crap is because you said he was *quest-chairing* this meeting.

Well, Dr. Pym's been really busy working for this new *robotics company* lately, Damien, but I'm pretty sure we'll get a call when he hears the big news.



What big news?

That *USA Today* wants to talk to us about the hard line we took against superhumans being deployed in *the Gulf*.


Get *Outta* here!

Not to mention the fact that *Spin* magazine wants to do a feature on the one and only super-team with a prominent African-American in their ranks.



Spin magazine wants to talk about *me*? Man, wait'll they hear we've got a little wheel-fellow *too*.

Would you please stop calling me that?



And then, of course, there's my *other* big surprise. You remember all those letters I wrote asking local companies for a little sponsorship?

Sure, the *disability* thing. You said we needed transport because one of our new teammates was confined to a wheelchair, right?

What?!




Well, guys, it looks like corporate America just delivered to the tune of **four thousand dollars**.

Dude, that is **awesome**.



The Defenders are officially **mobile**, folks.



Wow. That's a **Pontiac Firebird**. My dad used to have one of them.

Lh, I don't want to be a pain or anything, but it doesn't look particularly practical for someone in a wheelchair.



Relax, little guy. I'm **sure** we can get a **roof rack** or something...



Somebody's going to **die** for putting me on this assignment.

You have to understand that I take no *pleasure* in pouring all these billions of dollars into persons of mass destruction.

"I'm just looking after you and the people you love in a crazy, old world that gets crazier by the second."

"Take this guy, for example. Back in the old days, getting hit by a wave of radiation just meant dying in a cancer ward."

"Now you turn into a three-hundred foot monster that wants to eat the nearest *nuclear reactor*."

"Who would we send if we weren't building super-soldiers?" "Chuck Norris?"

He's all yours, Scarlet Witch! Take it from here!



Scarlet Witch? God, I *hate* Scarlet Witch. What the hell does she do anyway? Seriously, can anybody even *begin* to explain her powers?

At least she *has* powers, Winter. I can't believe they've got *us* on the bench and *The Wasp* out there against that thing.

Skeev wouldn't even *be* on the team if she wasn't shackled up with Captain America.



What the hell are you *smokin'*, soldier? Janet Pym took down *The Hulk* last year and earned her stripes *ten times over* far as I'm concerned.



Just bide your time, man. We got the *Giant Men* up next and if they don't work out you guys are definitely *OH*.

We're not trying to be *pushy*, General. I guess we're all just keen to get out there and show you what we can do, sir.



Just be *patient*, Dexter.

Like the General *says*...we do as we're *told* and we could be bigger than *any* of those guys before too long.

Now you're
just *ticking me
off*, fella.



San Francisco:

You're really gonna kill Nick Fury?



Say it a little louder, Saul. I don't think Tom Ridge heard you all the way back in Washington.

Gorry, buddy. It's just I thought you'd hung up your holster for good, you know what I'm saying? I thought the big idea was to quit the assassination game while you was ahead.



Yeah, well, that was before this lunatic appeared and threw the world into some kind of **superhuman arms race**.

All the money that should be going to schools and hospitals funding this initiative that makes nuclear weapons look like bows and arrows. It's horrific.



What have you got for me anyway?

A thing of beauty, pal. A thing of genuine beauty. High-velocity rifle ten times more powerful than anything you've ever worked with **before**.

More accurate than an M-16 and lighter than a Steyr Assault... but the best part's gotta be this **magic bullet** feature.



Magic bullet?





Oh, yeah. Rifle sight not only has X-ray capability up to a mile, but the bullet's guaranteed to phase through anything it meets along the way without leaving as much as a mark.

Walls, cars, people. It doesn't even *impact* until it hits its target.



Where the hell did you find this?

New thing S.H.I.E.L.D.'s been working on. Only two in the world...



S.H.I.E.L.D. prototype? Oh, that's good, Saul. That's just *too damn funny*.

As you know, they don't let Nick Fury sleep in the same place *twice*, but we uncovered details of where he's booked *eighteen days* from now.



Perfect.

It's good to have you back, Mister Nix.



Good to be back, Saul.

THE TRISKELION:

Curious how your costume's gonna look, Lieberman?

Kinda, I guess. It was weird seeing everybody else getting suits and nobody making one for me. I was starting to think I'd maybe failed a test or something.

Failed a test? Oh, I love this guy. Tell him how much he failed his test, Dr. Brankin.

You're the first subject in over fifty years who's body didn't reject the super-soldier serum, Captain Lieberman.

We don't know why, but your cells have embraced it as readily as Steve Rogers' body did back in nineteen forty-two.

And that's good, right? It's a good thing my cells haven't rejected the serum?

Oh, it's very good, soldier. In fact, it's exactly what we've been waiting for...

...because now you'll understand why we couldn't let the others see your costume yet.





That
what I
think
is?

That's
exactly
what you
think it
is.



But we've
already got
a Captain
America.




Nothing lasts
forever.




Steve Rogers is employed in the world's most high-risk occupation. Best-case scenario we get another five years out of him, but the truth is we could lose the guy *anytime*.

You imagine the effect on the national psyche if we don't have someone on stand-by to fill those boots? It'd be like the Statue of Liberty tumbling down.




Then, of course, there's the more *sinister* possibilities...

Sir?



Captain America brainwashed. Captain America compromised. Captain America goes over to the other side. These are all the things I gotta *prepare for* in this job, Lieberman.

It ain't nice, but it's reality and somebody's gotta make sure all those little kiddies sleep soundly in their beds.



You figure you could make that shot if the situation presented itself?



Yes, sir.

I think so, sir.



Good boy.

Downtown Manhattan:

You hear about this TV crew that's gonna be following us around?

The Next Top Model guys?

Miss Ross says they're gonna do this America's Next Big Hero show and they're gonna be *living* with us for the next three months.

Oh, man. That's awesome.


Are you *retarded*? I hate those shows. They're just an excuse for cheap TV where producers save money on writers and professional actors.

What are you *talking* about? A show like that means we get to be rich and famous.

You're one of the *Rocketmen* , Dexter. That means you're *already* going to be rich and famous.

Trust me, those shows are just a sign of the *apocalypse* .






"Riots in Eurasia, a hostage situation in the Middle East and a septuagenarian hit man who's come out of retirement to put a **bullet** in my head?"

"Naturally, the only sensible thing to do under these circumstances is go to Iron Man's **bachelor party**."

Is Cap still standing outside?"

He really strike you as the kinda guy who's gonna be **caught dead** in a strip club, Tony?"




So why doesn't he just go home? If he's trying to appeal to my conscience in some way he's absolutely wasting his time.

Says he just wants to make sure **Jan** gets home okay.




Strange cat.




So what about this whole marriage thing, man? You really going through with this? You really think it's a good idea to marry a chick with a nickname like **The Black Widow**?"

So she's been married a few times and her husbands all met with unfortunate accidents. These things happen, Nick. One of my **uncles** took his own head off with a chainsaw.




Listen, it's not that I don't *like* Natasha. I think she's one of the coolest girls I ever met. It's just I'm not sure if I see you two doing the whole "Honey, I'm home" stuff.



Really? Because I think that's exactly what I *need* right now.

I've dated seven girls a week since I was fifteen years old and haven't been sober since the day I took my driving test.


Natasha's the first woman I've met who's managed to *keep up* with me, Nick. And you know something? You know something *really* weird?



She's the only *second date* I've ever had in my life. Isn't that *incredible*? Isn't that *romantic*?



Wait a second.



What's the *matter*, General? Are you as nauseated by all this as I am? The very *thought* of them lying there naked and *nuzzling* each other like two *awful, hairless apes*...

It makes me want to bring back that entire bottle of *sherry* I just downed.

But I *love* her, Jarvis. I truly, truly *love* this little mix...



There's something wrong back at base.

THE TRISKELION:



There was a big fire uptown. Four fire engines whizzing past and Lieberman chased them, hoping he could help...



What about you? You guys help too?

We couldn't. Our powers are in our costumes and we just had our street-clothes on. The *Giant Men* are the only other guys with innate superpowers.

You should have seen this *blaze*, sir. I never saw anything like it. Even the *fire-fighters* couldn't get close to those families trapped inside.



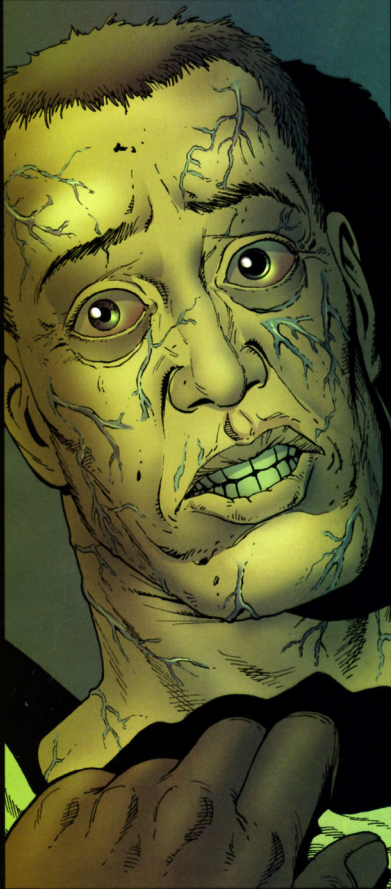
Fire take him out?

No, he didn't go down until *after* he'd rescued everybody. All fifty-seven people. He didn't keel over until he was absolutely sure that everyone was *safe*.

Most awesome thing I ever saw.







What's so special about Steve Rogers, huh? How come he's the only guy in over fifty years this never happened to?

If we knew that we wouldn't need any more *volunteers*.



Put Lieberman with the *others*, Doctor.

I'll notify the parents as usual.

"Like I said, I take no pleasure in this job. I just do what needs to be done to keep the system ticking and, like it or not, America's still pretty much as good as it gets right now."

"I've done a lot of things I'm not especially proud of over the years, but *somebody's* got to be the world's Daddy."

"Somebody's got to keep this country safe for all those bearded weirdos and media pundits just so they can tell us how much we *suck* on a daily basis."

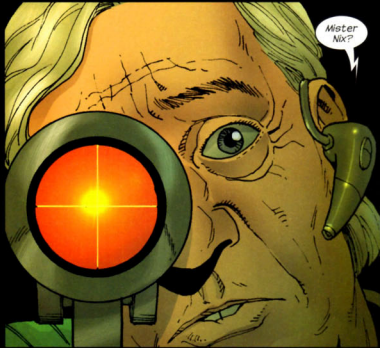


Mister Nix?

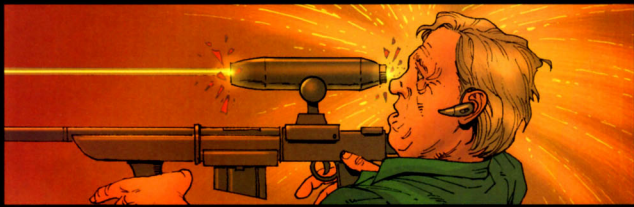
Quiet, Miss Malone. This'll only take a second...

Mister Nix,
we need to talk.
Please...

We found
out who **hired**
you, sir.




Mister
Nix?







Only two of these guns in the world, homie...and I got the *other* one.



Fury to base; Mister Nix is precisely where I *booked* him to be. Close that *unsolved file* of ours and send a team around to *fetch* him, huh?



"My critics say I'm paranoid, but I have to be paranoid. The papers say I'm crazy, but it's a crazy world I'm trying to protect you from.



"There's a gun at your head twenty-four hours a day and it's my job to make sure that the bad guys don't ever pull that trigger.



"I'm building this army for your own good..."



"Trust me."

END.