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COMICS GROUP

THE UNCANNY

X-MEN™



DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND,
COLOSSUS?
WE'RE YOUR
FRIENDS!



HE WAS ONE OF THE X-MEN--
NOW, HE'S THE **POWER-MAD**
PROLETARIAN!

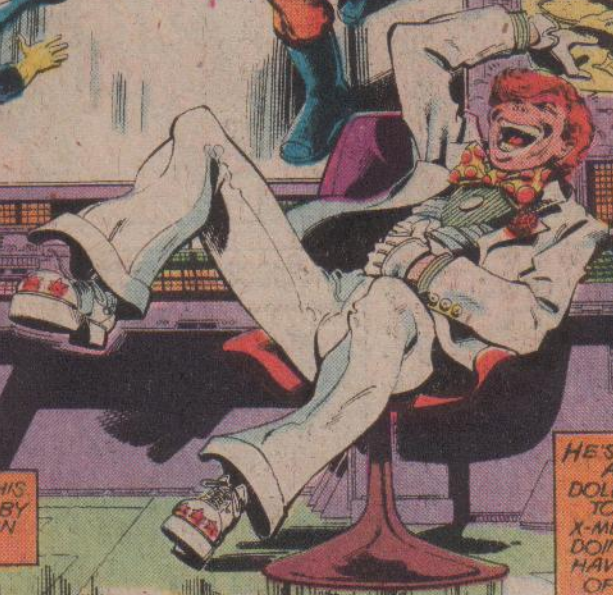
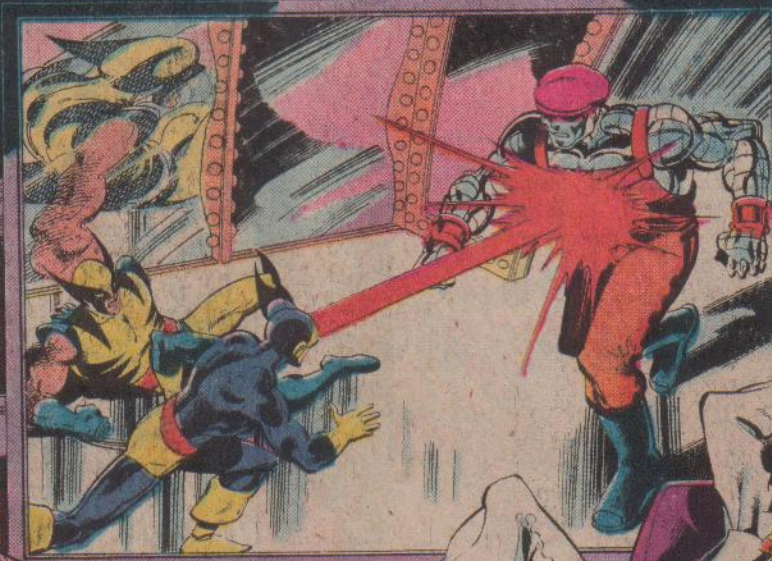
Cyclops, Storm, Banshee, Nightcrawler, Wolverine, Colossus, Children of the atom, students of Charles Xavier, **MUTANTS**—feared and hated by the world they have sworn to protect. These are the **STRANGEST** heroes of all!

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

THE UNCANNY X-MEN!™

CHRIS CLAREMONT & JOHN BYRNE * TERRY AUSTIN | TOM ORZECZOWSKI, letterer | ROGER STERN | JIM SHOOTER
AUTHOR / CO-PLOTTERS / PENCILER | INKER | GLYNIS WEIN, colorist | EDITOR | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

He only laughs when I HURT!



TO STATE THE OBVIOUS: THE X-MEN ARE IN A LOT OF TROUBLE...

...COURTESY OF THIS MAN--ARCADE BY NAME, ASSASSIN BY TRADE.

HE'S BEING PAID A MILLION DOLLARS A HEAD TO KILL THE X-MEN, AND IN DOING SO, HE'S HAVING THE TIME OF HIS LIFE!

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HOOOO-HAH!
I'M LAUGHING SO HARD IT'S MAKING ME CRY.

THOSE X-MEN ARE PUTTING ON ONE HECKUVA SHOW. I SURE HOPE YOU FINE FILLIES ARE ENJOYING IT AS MUCH AS I AM.

Oh, SURE! NOTHING LIKE WATCHING PEOPLE YOU LOVE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL THEM, AT LEAST HAVE THE DECENCY TO DO IT QUICKLY, CLEANLY!



DECENCY'S DULL. 'SIDES, MISS COLLEEN WING-- YOUR WAY, THEY'RE DEAD AND THAT'S THE END OF IT. MY WAY, AT LEAST, THEY HAVE A CHANCE.

NOT MUCH OF ONE, BUT A CHANCE.

YOU'RE INSANE!



CRAZY AS A LOON. BEEN THAT WAY FOR YEARS.

GIVE US A KISS, huh, TOOTS?

SMOOCH



IF MY HANDS WERE FREE, ARCADE, I'D GIVE YOU SOMETHING A LOT STRONGER THAN A KISS!

TEMPER, TEMPER. Y'KNOW, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY.



YOU--! WHAT KIND OF SEWER DID YOU CRAWL OUT OF, ANYWAY?

BEVERLY HILLS.



"I WAS YOUR BASIC POOR LITTLE RICH KID-- SPOILED ROTTEN. WHEN I TURNED 21, DADDY SAID I WAS NO GOOD..."

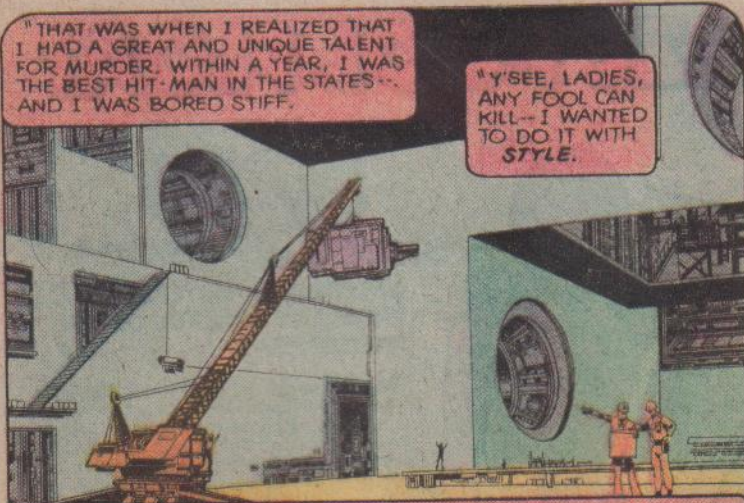
"... AND CUT OFF MY ALLOWANCE.



"THE NEXT DAY, I CUT OFF DADDY'S LIFE.

BOOM!

"THAT WAS WHEN I REALIZED THAT I HAD A GREAT AND UNIQUE TALENT FOR MURDER. WITHIN A YEAR, I WAS THE BEST HIT-MAN IN THE STATES-- AND I WAS BORED STIFF.



"Y'SEE, LADIES, ANY FOOL CAN KILL-- I WANTED TO DO IT WITH STYLE.

"IT WAS AN INSTANT SUCCESS. BUT BEFORE LONG, I WAS BORED AGAIN. SURE, I'D BUILT MY DISNEYLAND OF DEATH.



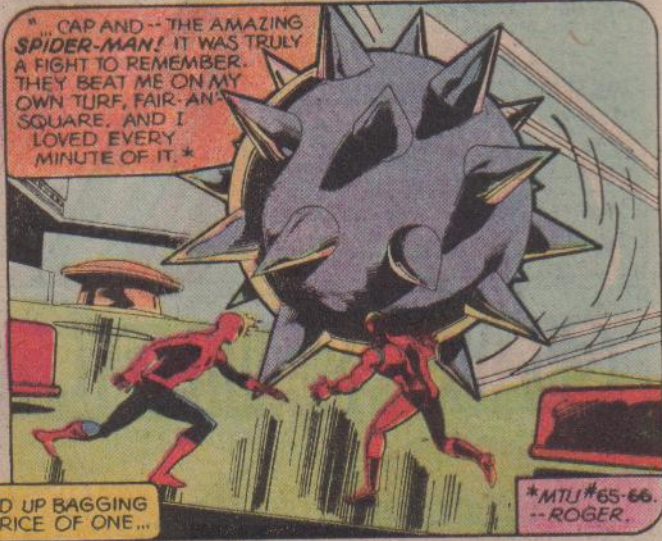
"SO, I COMBINED MY GENIUS WITH DADDY'S FORTUNE AND CREATED MURDERWORLD-- THE FIRST ASSASSINATION AMUSEMENT PARK.

"WHAT I NEEDED NOW WAS A FOE WORTHY OF IT-- AND ME.

"THEN, ALONG CAME MESSERS. ROAK AND MORAN, MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN MAGGIA HEIRARCHY-- OFFERING A CONTRACT ON AN ENGLISH SUPERHERO, CAP'N BRITAIN.



"... CAP AND-- THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN! IT WAS TRULY A FIGHT TO REMEMBER. THEY BEAT ME ON MY OWN TURF, FAIR-AND-SQUARE, AND I LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT.*

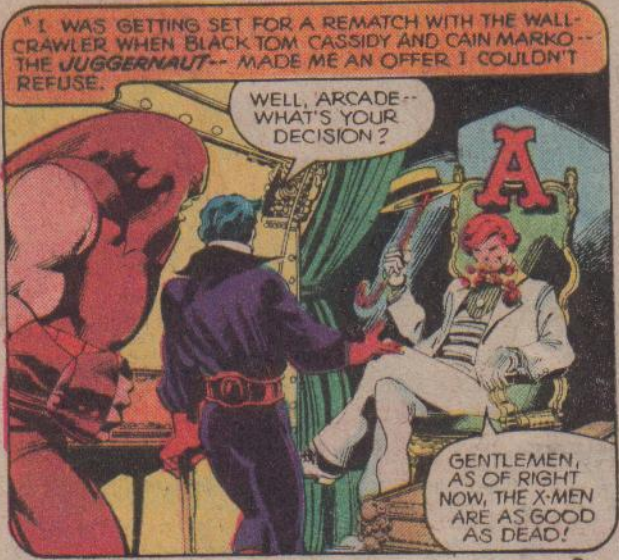


"I SAID YES, AND ENDED UP BAGGING TWO HEROES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE...

*MTU #65-66. --ROGER.

"I WAS GETTING SET FOR A REMATCH WITH THE WALL-CRAWLER WHEN BLACK TOM CASSIDY AND CAIN MARKO-- THE JUGGERNAUT-- MADE ME AN OFFER I COULDN'T REFUSE.

WELL, ARCADE-- WHAT'S YOUR DECISION?



GENTLEMEN, AS OF RIGHT NOW, THE X-MEN ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD!

CAPTURING THEM TURNED OUT TO BE A CINCH. START TO FINISH, I CORRALLED THE ENTIRE TEAM-- WITH YOU LOVELY LADIES AS AN UNEXPECTED BONUS-- INSIDE OF AN HOUR.*

THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT THEM.



*LAST ISSUE. --R.

I HAD HIGH HOPES FOR TONIGHT'S GAME -- AND, SO FAR, I'VE NOT BEEN DISAPPOINTED. BUT ENOUGH BABBLE.

IT'S TIME WE LOOKED IN ON OUR MERRY MUTANTS, TO CHECK UP ON HOW THEY'RE DOING--

-- STARTING WITH *CYCLOPS*, *WOLVERINE*, AND..."

COLOSSUS, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I TOLD YOU, I AM *COLOSSUS* NO LONGER. I AM THE *PROLETARIAN*-- HERO OF THE SOVIET UNION!

YOU TURNED ME AGAINST MY MOTHERLAND, TRICKED ME INTO BETRAYING ALL I EVER LOVED OR BELIEVED IN! FOR THAT, YOU WILL PAY!

YOU'RE *CRAZY*! YOU JOINED THE X-MEN THE SAME AS WE ALL DID-- OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL! IF YOU'VE BETRAYED ANYONE'S TRUST, BUB--

-- YOU'VE BETRAYED OURS!

I ALWAYS WONDERED IF MY ADAMANTIUM CLAWS WOULD CUT YOUR STEEL HIDE, RUSSKIE.

NOW I'M GONNA FIND -- *URRRGH!*

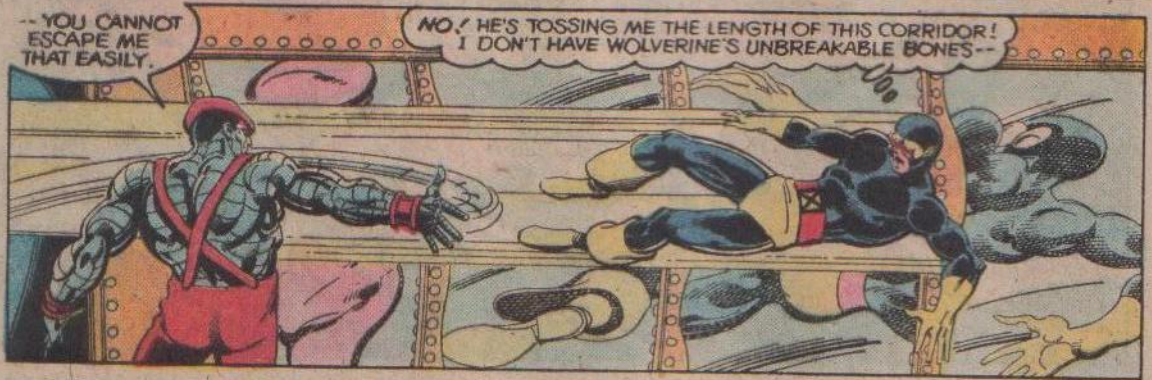
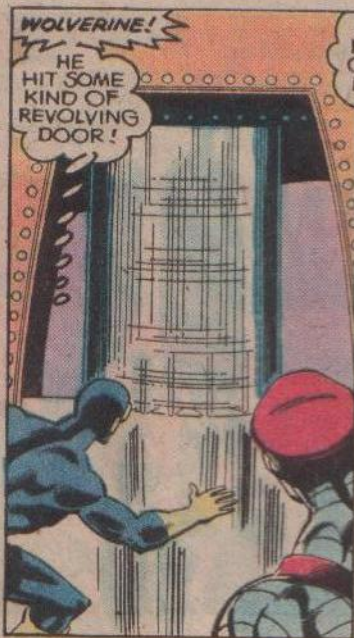
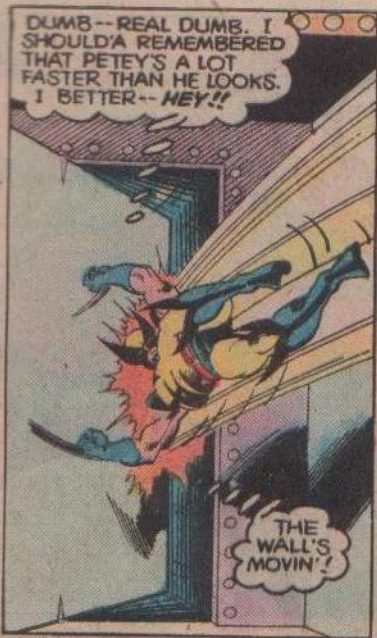
I THINK NOT, LITTLE MADMAN.

COLOSSUS-- LET HIM GO! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!

OF COURSE! MY MISSION IS TO DESTROY THE X-MEN. HOWEVER, SINCE YOU WANT *WOLVERINE* SO BADLY, BY ALL MEANS HAVE HIM!

WHAT NOW?! WORDS AREN'T STOPPING PETER-- MY ONLY REAL CHANCE IS TO USE A FULL STRENGTH, TIGHT-BEAM OPTIC BLAST!

BUT THAT MUCH CONCENTRATED POWER COULD CRIPPLE HIM... OR WORSE.





POOR SAP.

HE MUST HAVE SOME REAL, FUNDAMENTAL DOUBTS ABOUT BEING AN X-MAN FOR ME TO HAVE BRAINWASHED HIM SO QUICKLY AND COMPLETELY.

WHO TO LOOK IN ON NEXT, I WONDER? I KNOW--



--STORM!

I JUST BARELY MANAGED TO DEFLECT ARCADE'S LIGHTNING TRAP.

SOMEHOW, HE CAN MANIPULATE THE ENVIRONMENT IN THIS ROOM-- ARTIFICIALLY COUNTERING MY NATURAL ABILITY TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS.



OH! HE'S CREATING A VICIOUS DOWN-DRAFT AGAIN!

IT'S TOO POWERFUL -- I CAN'T STAY AIRBORNE!



LAST TIME... I BELLY-FLOPPED LIKE THAT, I WAS A CHILD. I'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH IT HURT.

LANDING KNOCKED THE WIND OUT OF ME, TOO.



I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE SURFACE.

WATER'S A MUCH HEAVIER MEDIUM THAN AIR -- IT'S MUCH HARDER FOR ME TO MANIPULATE. BUT AS SOON AS I CATCH MY BREATH, I'LL...



NO -- OK, NO! THE WATER LEVEL'S RISEN ALMOST TO THE CEILING!

ANOTHER FEW INCHES, AND I'LL DROWN!



ELSEWHERE... I'M GOING LIKE A ROCKET DOWN THIS CHUTE!

I HOPE THERE'S NOTHING IN THE WAY WHEN I HIT BOTTOM!



MADE IT-- BUT WHERE?! THIS ROOM IS SHAPED LIKE A GIANT CHROMIUM GOLDFISH BOWL. AND--!

NIGHT-CRAWLER!



HE'S ABOUT TO BE TOTALLED BY A RUNAWAY BUMPER-CAR WITH BUZZ-SAW ACCESSORIES!

SHKOW

SORRY, ARCADE-- NOT WHILE I CAN HELP IT!



KURT, ARE YOU OKAY? YOU'RE BLEEDING!

IT'S ONLY A SCRATCH. ONE OF THOSE MANIC DODGE-'EM CARS CAME A LITTLE TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT.

IF I KNEW WHERE WE WERE, I'D TELEPORT OUT OF THIS VERDAMMT NIGHTMARE!



I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU THERE, BUT AT LEAST ONE WORRY JUST BIT THE DUST. I ZAPPED THE CAR.

YOU MISUNDERSTAND, MEIN FREUND-- IT'S NOT "THE" CAR, IT'S "A" CAR. LOOK!



WARRRAAAMMM

TILL NOW, THEY'VE BEEN COMING AFTER ME ONE AT A TIME.

OH, BROTHER! WELL, THEY'RE HUNTING IN A PACK NOW!



I TRULY LOVE MY "DEATH-RACE" MOSTLY 'CAUSE THE SCREAMS I HEAR ARE REAL.

SO MUCH FOR CYCLOPS -- HOW ABOUT HIS PINT-SIZE PSYCHOPATHIC PARTNER?



"AHA! HE'S JOINED BANSHEE IN THE LATEST EPISODE OF *BATTLESTARWARS: 1999!*"

WHAT THE FLAMIN'--?!

WOLVERINE-- ARE YE REAL, MAN?

REAL CONFUSED, IRISH!



I KNOW THE FEELIN' WE'RE INSIDE A MONSTROUS HOLOGRAM, BUT SOME OF THOSE SHIPS ARE REAL, FIRIN' REAL LASERS!

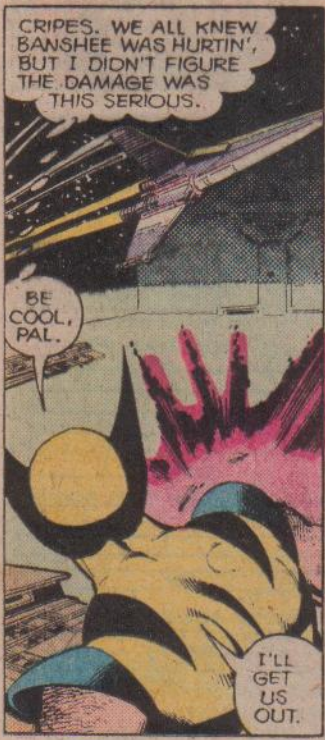
IF ME THROAT WERE FULLY HEALED, I COULD USE ME SONIC SCREAM AS A RADAR, TO TELL WHICH WAS WHICH.



WITHOUT IT, THOUGH, I'M HELPLESS.

I'M NOT!

HIT THE DECK!



CRIPES. WE ALL KNEW BANSHEE WAS HURTIN', BUT I DIDN'T FIGURE THE DAMAGE WAS THIS SERIOUS.

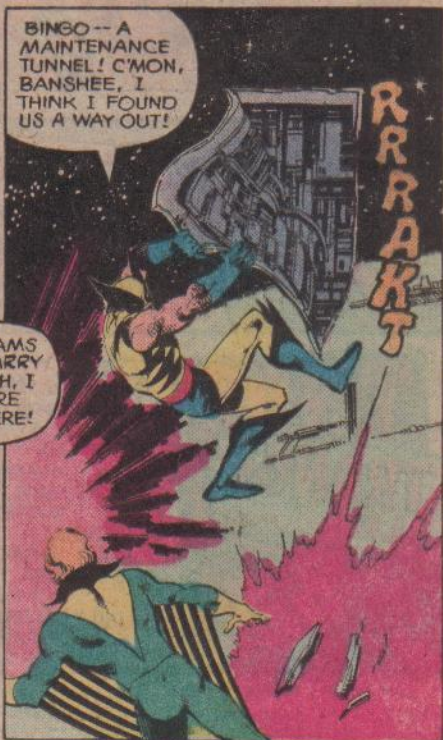
BE COOL, PAL.

I'LL GET US OUT.



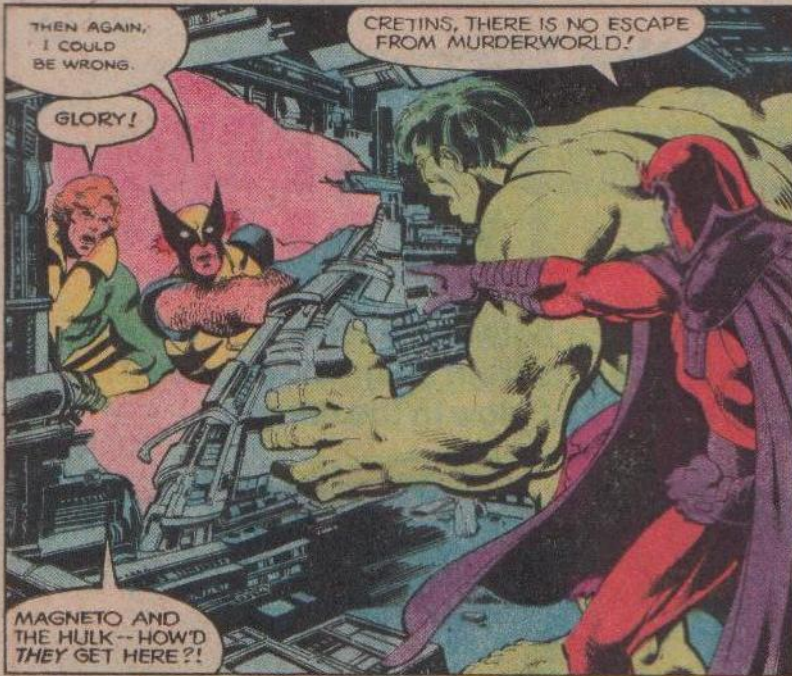
I DON'T JUST "SEE" WITH MY EYES ALONE. I USE ALL MY SENSES.

AND HOLOGRAMS JUST DON'T CARRY A SCENT! YEAH, I THOUGHT THERE WAS A WALL HERE!



BINGO -- A MAINTENANCE TUNNEL! C'MON, BANSHEE, I THINK I FOUND US A WAY OUT!

RRRAKT



THEN AGAIN, I COULD BE WRONG.

CRETINS, THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM MURDERWORLD!

GLORY!

MAGNETO AND THE HULK--HOW'D THEY GET HERE?!



SORRY 'BOUT THIS, X-CHUMPS, BUT SPIDER-MAN ALREADY USED THAT PARTICULAR ROUTE--AND NO ONE GETS TO FAKE OUT ARCADE THE SAME WAY TWICE.

TEK



MEANWHILE, IN WHAT COULD WELL BECOME A WATERY GRAVE...

I HAVE TO MOVE FAST-- BUT I MUSTN'T PANIC.

MUST REMEMBER MY TRAINING--STAY "IN CONTROL, STAY ALIVE!"

FIRST, I'VE GOT TO DUMP MY CAPE AND BOOTS. I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE THEIR DRAG SLOW ME DOWN.



NOW-- SLOW, DEEP BREATHS, AS MANY AS I CAN GET.

LIKE A PEARL DIVER, I HAVE TO SATURATE MY LUNGS, MY BODY, WITH OXYGEN BEFORE I TAKE MY FINAL BREATH.



THE WATER HAS TO BE ENTERING THE ROOM THROUGH A PIPE OR VENT.

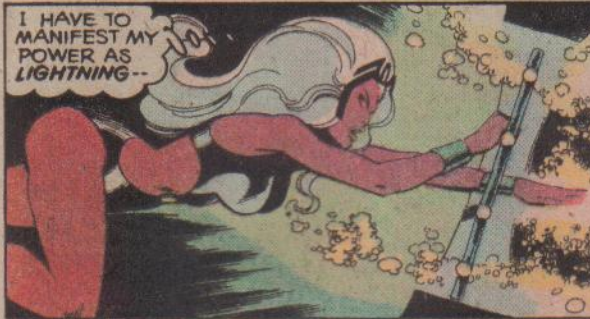
THAT'S IT-- EITHER I FIND AN EXIT IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, OR I DIE.



ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW THIS FAINT CURRENT BACK TO ITS SOURCE.

...THERE!

I HAVE TO MANIFEST MY POWER AS LIGHTNING--

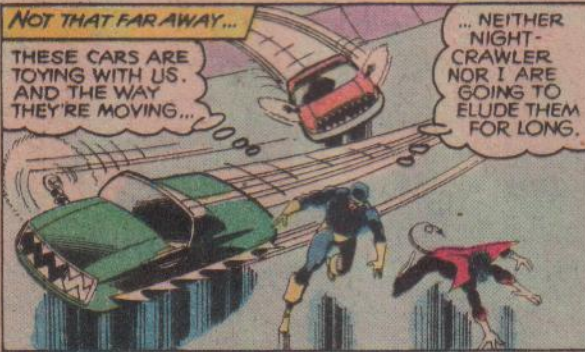


-- AND SHOOT A SINGLE, CONTINUOUS BOLT DIRECTLY INTO THE PIPE WALLS. HOPEFULLY, THE ELECTRICAL ARC WILL MELT THE WELDS THAT SEAL IT TOGETHER, RUPTURING THE PIPE AND WASHING ME TO FREEDOM.

THE QUESTION IS, WHICH WILL GIVE OUT FIRST-- THE PIPE, OR MY LUNGS?

NOT THAT FAR AWAY...

THESE CARS ARE TOYING WITH US. AND THE WAY THEY'RE MOVING...



... NEITHER NIGHT-CRAWLER NOR I ARE GOING TO ELUDE THEM FOR LONG.

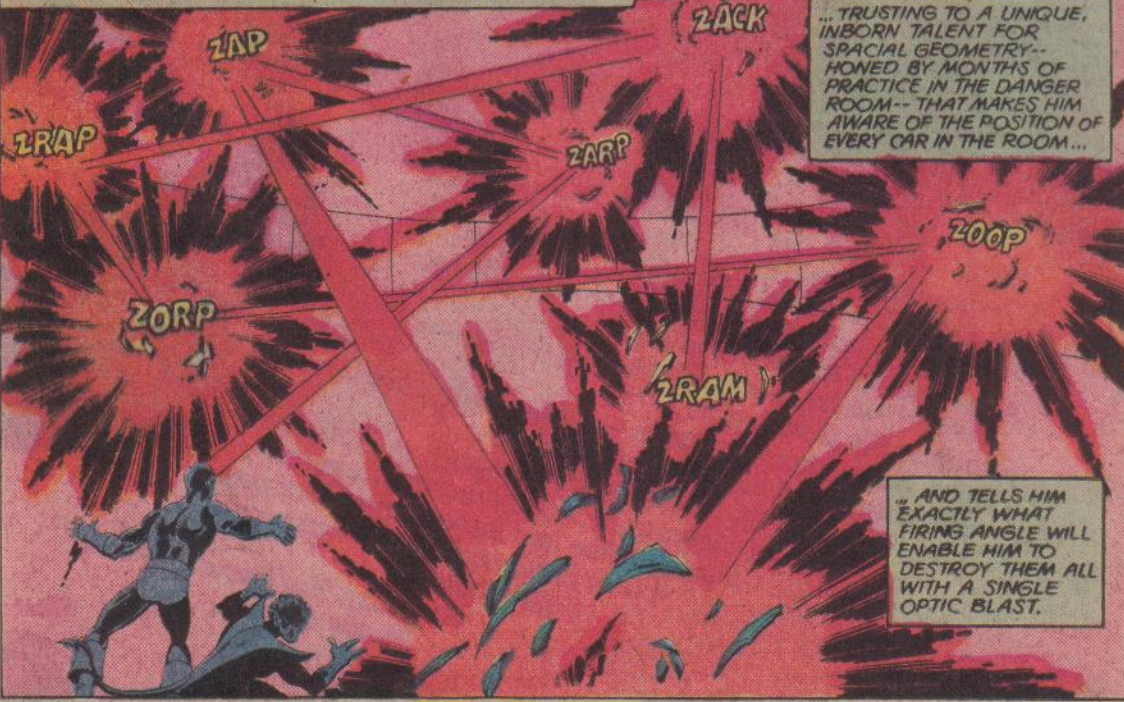
ARCADE'S HAD US ON THE DEFENSIVE SINCE HE CAPTURED US-- AND WE'VE BEEN GETTING CREAMED.

THAT HAS TO CHANGE.



NIGHT-CRAWLER... GET BEHIND ME!

HE AIMS AND FIRES WITH BARELY A CONSCIOUS THOUGHT...



... TRUSTING TO A UNIQUE, INBORN TALENT FOR SPACIAL GEOMETRY-- HONED BY MONTHS OF PRACTICE IN THE DANGER ROOM-- THAT MAKES HIM AWARE OF THE POSITION OF EVERY CAR IN THE ROOM...

... AND TELLS HIM EXACTLY WHAT FIRING ANGLE WILL ENABLE HIM TO DESTROY THEM ALL WITH A SINGLE OPTIC BLAST.

CYCLOPS, HOW DID YOU--?



I HAVEN'T TRIED THAT STUNT IN AGES.

ZKOW

IT'S NICE TO KNOW THE OLD SKILLS HAVEN'T ATROPHIED.

PERFECT. MY FIRST SHOT TOOK CARE OF THE CARS-- MY SECOND MADE US AN INSTANT EXIT.

AFTER YOU, NIGHTCRAWLER.

DANKE. I THINK.

THIS IS SOME KIND OF MAINTENANCE TUNNEL-- LOOKS DESERTED, TOO.

I HATE TO SPLIT US UP, BUT WE'VE NO ALTERNATIVE.

YOU TAKE THE MAIN TUNNEL UP THERE--

--AND I'LL TAKE THIS BRANCH LINE. IF YOU FIND ANY OTHER X-MEN, TRY TO HELP THEM. IF YOU FIND ARCADE'S CONTROL CENTER...

I KNOW!! TRASH IT!

TROUBLE, ARCADE.

STORM'S GENERATING MORE POWER THAN THE SYSTEM CAN ABSORB. WE CAN'T HOLD HER MUCH LONGER.

PERMANENTLY, I HOPE. START A COMPUTER SEARCH PATTERN, MISS LOCKE-- I'VE LOST NIGHTCRAWLER AND CYCLOPS!

YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE GIRLS, ARCADE. I'VE TAKEN CARE OF THEM.

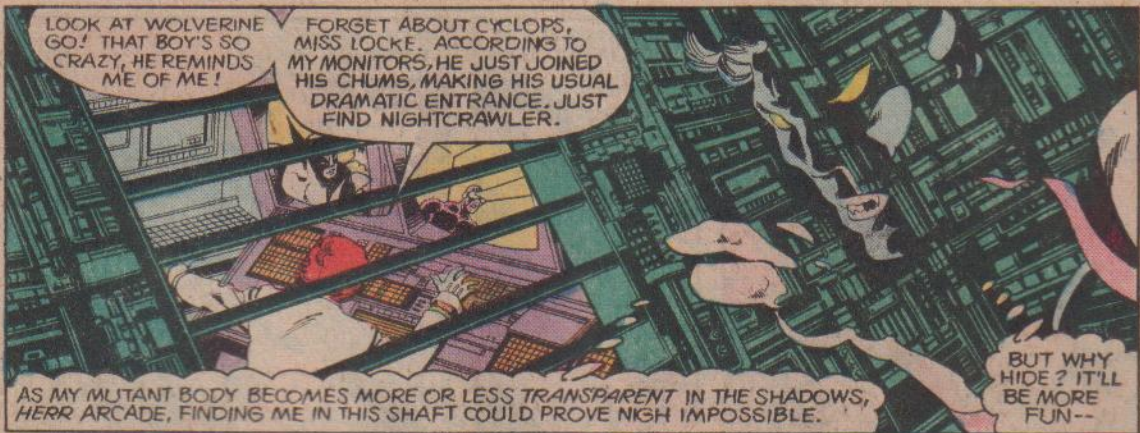
THE TUNNEL'S PROBABLY CRAMMED WITH SENSORS-- SOONER OR LATER, ARCADE'S BOUND TO FIND US.

BUT IT'S --HM?! SOUNDS LIKE A FIGHT.

I TRIED USIN' ME SONIC SCREAM ON THIS ROBOT MAGNETO, BUT THE PAIN WAS TOO GREAT. ME POWER'S... USELESS!

I BEEN WAITIN' MONTHS FOR A REMATCH WITH THE HULK! * TOO BAD YOU AIN'T THE REAL THING!

*SINCE HULK #181. --ROGER.



LOOK AT WOLVERINE GO! THAT BOY'S SO CRAZY, HE REMINDS ME OF ME!

FORGET ABOUT CYCLOPS, MISS LOCKE. ACCORDING TO MY MONITORS, HE JUST JOINED HIS CHUMS, MAKING HIS USUAL DRAMATIC ENTRANCE. JUST FIND NIGHTCRAWLER.

AS MY MUTANT BODY BECOMES MORE OR LESS TRANSPARENT IN THE SHADOWS, HERR ARCADE, FINDING ME IN THIS SHAFT COULD PROVE NIGH IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT WHY HIDE? IT'LL BE MORE FUN--



--TELEPORTING OUT HERE TO GO--

--BOO!!

HOLY JUMPIN'-- YIKES!

SOMEBODY, ANYBODY-- HELP!



STAY CALM, ARCADE. I'LL DEAL WITH HIM!

BAM



TO BE HONEST, FRAULEIN LOCKE, I DON'T USUALLY MAKE A HABIT OF STRIKING THE BEAUTIFUL WOMEN I MEET--

-- BUT I'VE A NEED FOR YOUR SOUPED-UP SHOTGUN.



BTHAM

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME USING IT TO BLAST THIS PLACE TO SMITHEREENS!

CHAMBERS! THE GAS!

YES, SIR!



WAS IST--? ANOTHER MAN! IN MY HASTE, I MISSED HIM!



GOOD! NOW, MISS LOCKE, DO WITH NIGHTCRAWLER WHAT YOU DID WITH THE GIRLS!

AT THAT MOMENT, UNAWARE OF NIGHTCRAWLER'S FATE...



WOLVERINE'S DOING FINE ON HIS OWN, BUT BANSHEE'S IN TROUBLE.

SEAN, YOU OKAY?

AYE, CYCLOPS. FOR BETTER OR WORSE, I'LL LIVE.

WHAT GIVES?! I'VE NEVER HEARD SEAN SOUND SO DISPIRITED.

CYKE -- LISTEN. D'YE HEAR SOMETHIN'?



YEAH -- AND IT'S COMING THIS WAY.

LOOK OUT!



IN PART AT LEAST, STORM'S GAMBLE HAS FINALLY PAID OFF, HER LIGHTNING BOLTS SHATTERING NOT ONLY THE WATER PIPE...

... BUT THE WALLS OF HER CELL AS WELL, SENDING THOUSANDS OF GALLONS OF WATER CASCADING THROUGH MURDER-WORLD'S ENTIRE CORRIDOR SYSTEM.



AS THE DELUGE SUBSIDES...



STORM!

SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS -- BARELY BREATHING. IF I DON'T ACT FAST, SHE'LL DIE!



C'MON, ORORO, BREATHE! BREATHE!

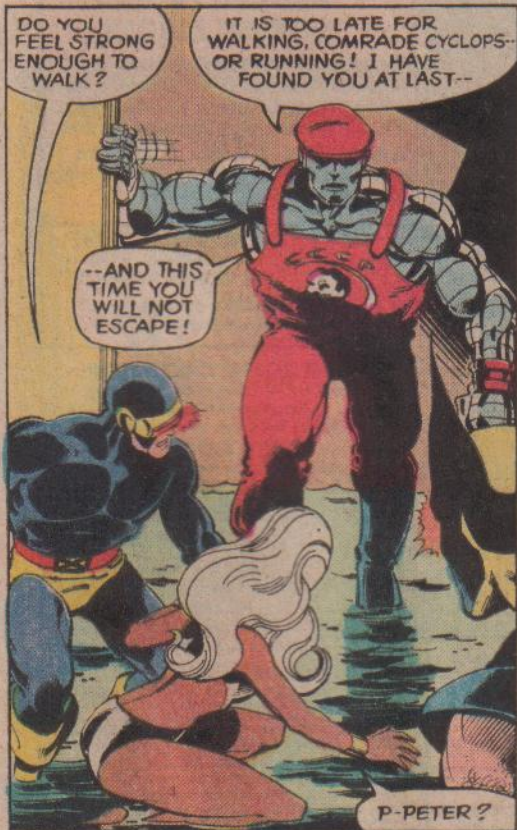


FOR A LONG TIME -- TOO LONG, CYCLOPS FEARS -- NOTHING HAPPENS. AND THEN...

C-cy-εkloff!ε



EASY, ORORO, DON'T TRY TO SPEAK.





SOMEHOW, ARCADE'S BRAINWASHED PETER. WE HAVE TO TALK HIM OUT OF IT, WHILE WE'VE GOT THE CHANCE.

GOT TO BE CAREFUL, THOUGH... HE'S CHOKING US SLOWLY... A FLICK OF HIS WRIST COULD SNAP OUR NECKS!

COLOSSUS, REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE. THIS IS MURDERWORLD-- EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN TOLD COMES FROM ARCADE!

PETER-- LISTEN... TO ME!



WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I GREW UP ALONE-- NO FAMILY, NO REAL FRIENDS...



... THAT ALL CHANGED WHEN I JOINED THE X-MEN.

IT CHANGED FOR ALL OF US, PETER!



THE X-MEN IS MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL FOR MUTANTS-- DEEP DOWN, YOU MUST KNOW THAT!



WE'RE... ALMOST LIKE A FAMILY, I GUESS.

SCOTT IS RIGHT, PETER... YOU ARE ALL MY FAMILY!



WE COULD NEVER LIE TO YOU... OR BETRAY YOU, PETER...



... WE LOVE YOU! DON'T YOU SEE, PETER? YOU ARE LIKE THE BROTHER I NEVER HAD!

ME? LIKE A BROTHER?

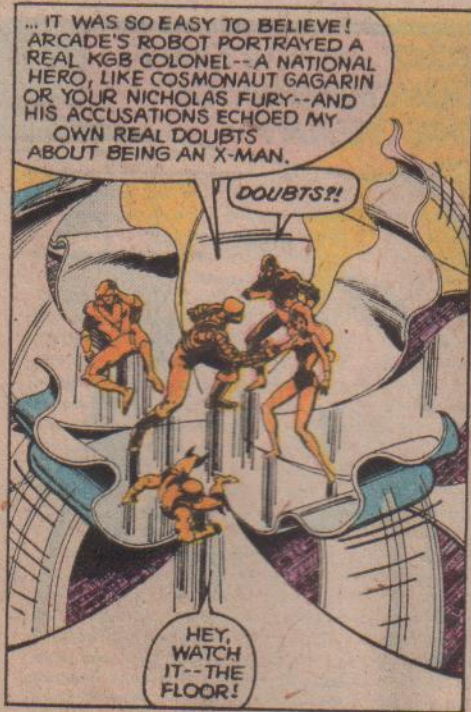
YES... YES, IT'S TRUE!



OH, MY FRIENDS! MY DEAR FRIENDS, CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?!



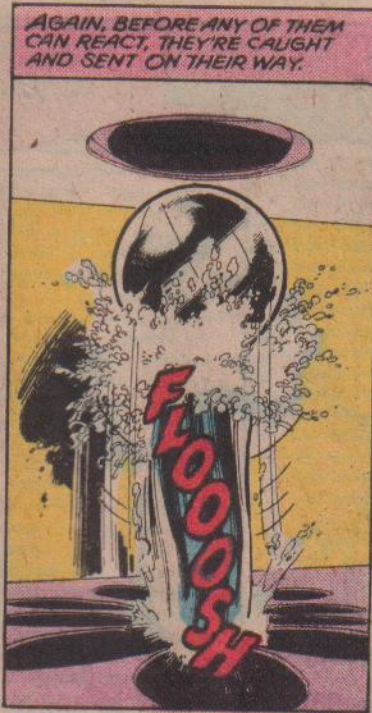
AH, WELL-- YOU CAN'T WIN THEM ALL!



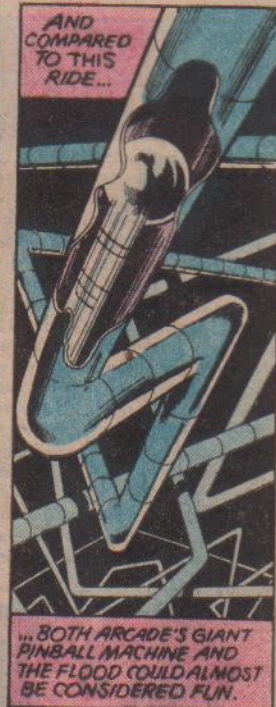
... IT WAS SO EASY TO BELIEVE! ARCADE'S ROBOT PORTRAYED A REAL KGB COLONEL-- A NATIONAL HERO, LIKE COSMONAUT GAGARIN OR YOUR NICHOLAS FURY-- AND HIS ACCUSATIONS ECHOED MY OWN REAL DOUBTS ABOUT BEING AN X-MAN.

DOUBTS?!

HEY, WATCH IT-- THE FLOOR!

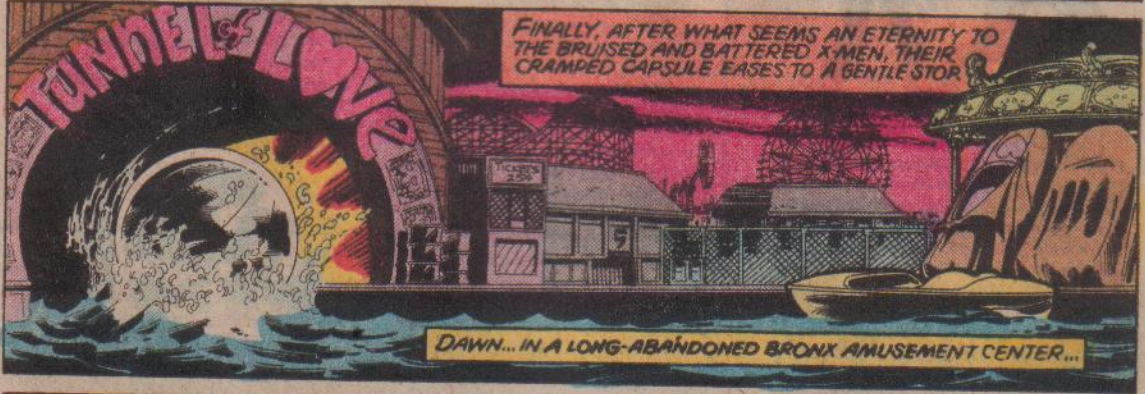


AGAIN, BEFORE ANY OF THEM CAN REACT, THEY'RE CAUGHT AND SENT ON THEIR WAY.



AND COMPARED TO THIS RIDE...

... BOTH ARCADE'S GIANT PINBALL MACHINE AND THE FLOOD COULD ALMOST BE CONSIDERED FUN.



FINALLY, AFTER WHAT SEEMS AN ETERNITY TO THE BRUISED AND BATTERED X-MEN, THEIR CRAMPED CAPSULE EASES TO A GENTLE STOP.

DAWN... IN A LONG-ABANDONED BRONX AMUSEMENT CENTER...



FOR A LONG MOMENT, THE METAL BALL BOBS LAZILY IN THE STILL WATERS. AND THEN...

SKRAMM



AM I DREAMING? WE ARE ON THE SURFACE, IN SOME SORT OF AMUSEMENT PARK!

HERE, ORORO, LET ME HELP YOU.

SCOTTY-- BEHIND YE, MAN!

FIREWORKS?!



NO, IT'S THE GIRLS-- COLLEEN, BETSY AND AMANDA-- AND NIGHTCRAWLER! WRAPPED UP LIKE CHRISTMAS PACKAGES!

NIGHT-CRAWLER--?

I'M FINE, CYCLOPS-- JUST CONFUSED.

CYKE, LOOK! THERE'S A NOTE PINNED TO HIS BACK!



HMM, ARCADE DOES SEEM TO HAVE A CRAZY SENSE OF HONOR. I THINK THE FIGHT'S OVER.

A

ROUND ONE TO YOU, X-MEN.

-TIL NEXT TIME!

Arcade



NOT FOR ME IT AIN'T. ARCADE OWES ME FOR ALL THE LUMPS I'VE TAKEN TONIGHT, AN' I AIM TO COLLECT.



WOLVERINE-- THINK! DON'T TALK, JUST THINK.

THE NOTE-- IT'S DISINTEGRATIN'!



HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND HIM?! IS MURDERWORLD BENEATH OUR FEET, OR A HUNDRED MILES AWAY?! THIS PARK IS PRIVATE PROPERTY. WE HAVE NO LEGAL RIGHT TO CONDUCT A SEARCH, NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE AN ARREST.



SO WHAT?! WHO'S TALKIN' ARRESTS?!

WOLVERINE, HE LET US ALL GO. WE CAN'T EVEN PROVE HE'S COMMITTED A CRIME!

IF WE TACKLE HIM NOW-- WE'LL PROBABLY BE THE ONES WHO GET BUSTED. SO LET'S QUIT WHILE WE'RE AHEAD.



YOU CALL THIS AHEAD? I DON'T LIKE LOSIN', BUB-- OR RUNNIN'.

NEITHER DO I-- BUT SOMETIMES, THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO PLAY THE CARDS.

ARCADE WANTED US DEAD. WE TRASHED HIS SET-UP AND FORCED HIM TO LET US GO. LIKE IT OR NOT, WE'LL HAVE TO BE CONTENT WITH THAT... THIS TIME!

X-MAIL

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

ROGER STERN
EDITOR
JIM SALICRUP
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Chris and John,

X-MEN #118, like all the other issues you two turn out, was perfect. John's fluid artwork coupled with Chris's brilliant characterizations gives the X-MEN a humane quality so lacking in other comics today. Perhaps what I enjoy the most about them is their closeness and friendship with each other despite their occasional bickerings. Friendship is one of the greatest attributes of mankind and it is so refreshing to see it exemplified through the X-Men. Moving along, my first reaction to Sunfire—what an egomaniac! I hope his having to be saved by the X-Men during the fight brought him down a peg or two. Also, I want to thank you for finally letting Nightcrawler get in on the action. I suspect he was becoming rather disenchanting with his role as shown by the dirty look he gave Cyclops on page 7 of X-MEN #115. Finally, I would like to place my nomination for best scene of the year. What else could it be but the scene where a rough, sometimes crude Wolverine meets a timid, gentle Mariko, and promptly loses his heart to her. Please let their friendship develop further and leave Jean to Scott. Wolverine needs the tenderness of Mariko, not the raging fury of Phoenix, to quell the bestial side of him. Also, could you please clear up the mystery surrounding Wolverine? Each issue brings the reader some new insight into his past and it would be nice if you would pull it all together.

Kathy Smith
Danvers, MA

Dear Marvel,

If not for your beautiful cover and dynamic artwork, I doubt if I would truly have enjoyed X-MEN #118. The plot had me terribly confused, trying to decide whether the firestorm had been caused by an earthquake (as stated by Wolverine) or by firebombing (as extrapolated by Matsunaga, Nightcrawler's sailor friend). Things moved too quickly and without reason; the X-Men are travelling to the Yashida ancestral mansion without helping any Japanese along the way, Sunfire pouncing on them as if they were fugitives, the Prime Minister wanting to talk to the X-Men but never getting around to it, all the X-Men wandering off in the mansion when they should've been trying to get home, and countless other things. You're lucky I let them pass by this month; I'm hoping there'll be a rational explanation next month, 'cause I don't feel like degrading my favorite comic now.

David C. Zimmermann
157 Lemay Gardens Ct.
St. Louis, MO 63125

Neither do we, David. To take your points in order: the firestorm was caused by the earthquake rupturing oil, gasoline and natural gas pipelines and storage tanks and then the contents of those tanks being ignited. A firestorm, by the way (for those of you who wondered why Storm couldn't put it out), is a monumental fire, so huge and powerful that it cannot be

extinguished by normal means. Its core is literally a pillar of flame hundreds of feet tall, that turns the area around it into something akin to an open-air blast furnace. To combat such a holocaust, Storm would have had to create a typhoon over the city, which would itself have caused far more damage over a far greater area. Anyway, Chris thought he made it clear that the earthquake was responsible; guess he was wrong. Regarding the trek to Sunfire's house—page 7, panel 1, caption 1 mentions them being delayed again and again by their efforts to help local rescue teams; there just wasn't room to show it. Re: Sunfire's greeting—you'd probably be pretty antsy, too, if a madman had just made good on a threat to destroy St. Louis. Also, Scott is in conference with the Prime Minister on page 15. And, finally, why shouldn't the X-Men wander off and relax. In that kind of situation, one assumes they figured—or were told by Cyclops—to assume a low profile and stay out of people's way. All clear, Dave?

Sirs:

Bravo! Brenda Robinett's emotive letter deserves our support and was enough to wake me up, and give her minal Jean Grey has been getting the short end of the stick lately, and I think you should either quit it or at least tell us what's going on!

More so than most Marvel characters, Jeanie has paid her share of dues—as Marvel Girl her telekinetic powers were often overtaxed, despite her being trained by Prof. X until her psi powers were close to his own. Her romance with Scott has given both of them years of emotional strain with few rewards. Finally, she's no mere 'Child of the Atom' anymore—she actually gave her life to save her fellow X-Men in the shuttlecraft! Her incredible powers seemed a fitting reward for this ultimate sacrifice—her miraculous rebirth is the source of her new identity, after all! Let's get into her head a little more.

I've been an X-MEN reader since #1, and while I can't deny that you're the leader in concept and artwork nowadays, I'd sure like to see Jean get her share of power and happiness—it's been long overdue. Give Phoenix her full potential without these "burnouts"! Her powers are new and versatile, if erratic. She's not just a slugger. Since the incident, her mental powers have multiplied to who-knows-what! PLEASE let her actualize this potential.

Ian Deeley
5th Special Forces
Ft. Bragg, NC 28307

We'll do our best, Ian. But along the way, we feel obliged to point out a misconception that seems to be causing no end of trouble for our readers. Time and again, we read and hear references to Scott and Jean's 14 year romance. If that were the case—assuming they were 18 and 17 years old respectively when they met—both of them would be in their early to middle thirties! However, as they aren't in their thirties, they can't possibly have been together 14 years. In fact, the rule of thumb used at Marvel is that it's been maybe five or six years since Xavier founded the X-Men, if that—which means that Jean and Scott have been together and in love for maybe three or four years. So, there are still a lot of things each has to learn about the other, and a lot of things that can go wrong. That's not to say that they will...but they might.

NEXT ISSUE: For those of you who may be wondering what the fuss is all about, we proudly re-introduce—in her considerable glory—Phoenix! Hang onto your hats, people, because the X-Men are about to be reunited—but first, Jean Grey, Moira MacTaggart, Lorna Dane, Alex Summers and Jamie Madrox have to discover: "THERE'S SOMETHING AWFUL ON MUIR ISLAND!"

