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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP

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SEPT

X-MEN

IND.

"THE PLAGUE OF
THE
LOCUST!"

ROTH
A786

X-MEN! THE MOST UNUSUAL FIGHTING TEAM OF ALL TIME!

"THE PLAGUE OF... THE LOCUST!"

I HOPE YOU WON'T MIND, PROFESSOR, IF I BORROW THESE VOLUMES ON TELEKINETIC RESEARCH! WITH THEM, I CAN CONTINUE TO STUDY WAYS TO UTILIZE MY MUTANT POWER, EVEN WHEN I'M... GONE!

I'LL RETURN THEM TO YOU... AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

THE SCHOOL WON'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT MARVEL GIRL, WILL IT, SCOTT?

NO, BOBBY, I... GUESS NOT!

AND, NEITHER WILL I... EVER!

FOR MONTHS, I'VE WANTED JEAN TO RETURN MY AFFECTION FOR HER! AND NOW, JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE, I MAY HAVE LOST HER... FOR GOOD!

YOU MAY KEEP THEM, JEAN... WITH OUR COMPLIMENTS! CONSIDER THEM A PARTING GIFT FROM... THE X-MEN!

SHAKESPEARE EXPOSTULATED THAT PARTING IS SWEET SORROW... I WONDER IF PERCHANCE THE BARD MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MUTANT!

JUST IN CASE THIS EMOTION-DRENCHED SCENE LEAVES ANY MIXED-UP MARVELITES FEELING AS IF THEY'VE MISSED SOMETHING, ALLOW US TO QUICKLY FILL YOU IN! AT THE CONCLUSION OF LAST ISH'S EPIC BATTLE WITH THE MALEVOLENT MAGGIA, A SADDENED JEAN GREY RECEIVED A SHOCKING LETTER!

UNAWARE OF HER DUAL ROLE AS ONE OF THE SUPER-POWERED X-MEN, HER PARENTS HAVE WITHDRAWN HER FROM PROFESSOR XAVIER'S PRIVATE SCHOOL... AND ARE SENDING HER TO A MORE CONVENTIONAL COLLEGE!

EDITING BY: STAN (BUSY BEE) LEE

SCRIPT BY: ROY (BOOK-WORM) THOMAS

ART BY: WERNER (WORKER-ANT) ROTH

INKING BY: DICK (DOODLE-BUG) AYERS

LETTERING BY: SAM (PUSSY-CAT) ROSEN

MOM AND DAD FEEL THAT, SINCE WE FORMALLY GRADUATED SOME TIME AGO*, IT'S TIME I PURSUED A COLLEGE DEGREE... ELSE-WHERE!

PERHAPS THEY ARE RIGHT! BESIDES, SINCE YOU'LL BE ATTENDING METRO COLLEGE, WHICH ISN'T FAR AWAY, YOU CAN VISIT US OFTEN!

* IN ISH #7-- WE THINK! ...INSECURE STAN.

YES...I CAN! NOW, EXCUSE ME, PLEASE.. I MUST-- CHANGE!

CHANGE, MY EYE! THOSE WERE TEAR-DROPS I SAW AS SHE RAN UPSTAIRS! PROFESSOR! CAN'T WE...?

NO, WARREN... WE CAN DO NOTHING! THIS MATTER IS BETWEEN JEAN AND HER PARENTS! WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT ONE DAY SHE RETURNS... TO STAY!

MEANWHILE, WHEN SHE COMES DOWN, WE MUST TRY TO MAKE LEAVING EASIER FOR HER!

BOBBY BRING ME OUR PRESENT, PLEASE!

AND SO, WHEN AN OUTWARDLY-COMPOSED MARVEL GIRL REJOINS THE DECEPTIVELY JOVIAL GROUP...

SAY, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WERE MADE TO WEAR THOSE COLLEGIATE THREADS!

WHY, THANK YOU, WARREN! BUT... WHAT'S THAT, PROFESSOR?

YOU DIDN'T THINK WE'D LET YOU GO WITH JUST A COUPLE OF MUSTY TEXT-BOOKS TO REMEMBER US BY, DIDJA?

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS CORSAGE, JEAN... IT'S FROM ALL OF US!

THE BEAST ECHOES ICEMAN'S SENTIMENTS... THOUGH I SEE NO REASON FOR HIS UNSEEMLY SLUR AGAINST TEXTBOOKS!

I'LL TREASURE IT... ALWAYS!

I WON'T CRY IN FRONT OF THEM... I WON'T!

BUT, ALL MY LIFE, I'LL REMEMBER THIS DAY... AND BE GLAD THAT I WAS PRIVILEGED, FOR A TIME AT LEAST, TO BE ONE OF THEM!

THEN, AFTER THE OTHERS HAVE SAID THEIR FAREWELLS TO JEAN, SCOTT AND WARREN SILENTLY DRIVE THE GIRL THEY BOTH LOVE TOWARDS METRO COLLEGE, AS ALL THREE THINK THEIR OWN INNERMOST THOUGHTS...

JOHNNY STORM GOES TO METRO! HE CAN FLY, JUST LIKE I CAN! I WONDER IF JEANIE'LL GET INTERESTED IN HIM?!

ALL THE X-MEN SEEMED SO SORRY I WAS GOING... EXCEPT SCOTT! HE HASN'T SPOKEN TEN WORDS ALL MORNING!

CAN'T HE SEE THAT I'LL MISS HIM... MORE THAN ANYONE?

IF ONLY I DARED HOLD HER IN MY ARMS... AND TELL HER HOW MUCH I NEED HER! BUT I CAN'T... NOT UNTIL I'M CURED OF THE CURSE OF MY DEADLY EYES!

FINALLY, AS THE TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR CONTINUES, THE SOMBRE, REGAL SEDAN ARRIVES AT THE ENROLLMENT CENTER...

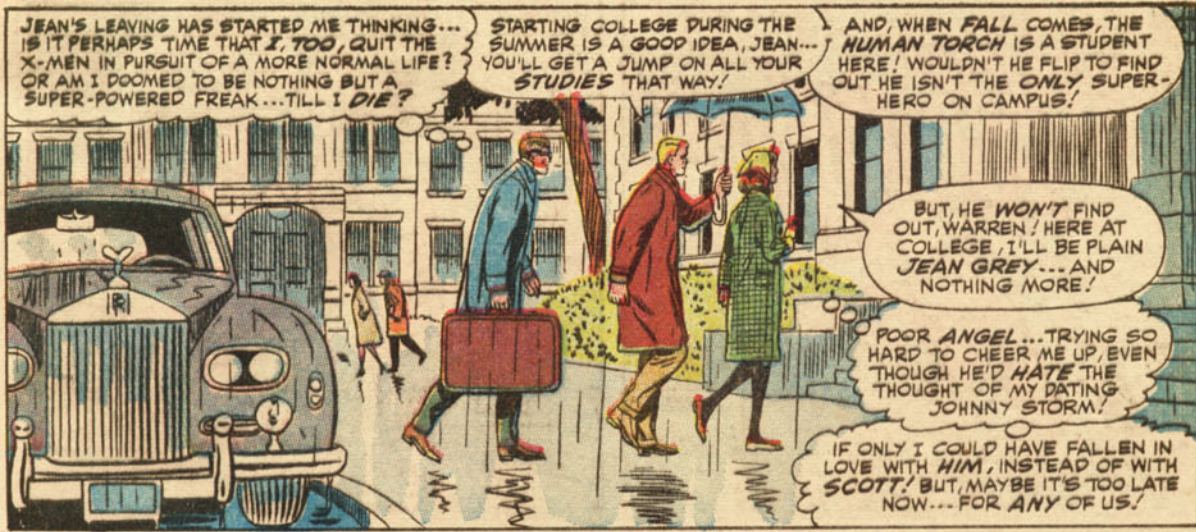
HERE, JEAN... LET ME TAKE YOUR SUIT-CASE!

THANK YOU, SCOTT!

THAT TONE IN HIS VOICE... ALMOST AS IF HE... BUT, I'M IMAGINING THINGS! HE NEVER CARED FOR ME... AND NEVER WILL!

LET'S HURRY INSIDE, JEAN... YOU'LL CATCH A COLD OUT HERE IN THE RAIN!

2.



JEAN'S LEAVING HAS STARTED ME THINKING... IS IT PERHAPS TIME THAT I, TOO, QUIT THE X-MEN IN PURSUIT OF A MORE NORMAL LIFE? OR AM I DOOMED TO BE NOTHING BUT A SUPER-POWERED FREAK...TILL I DIE?

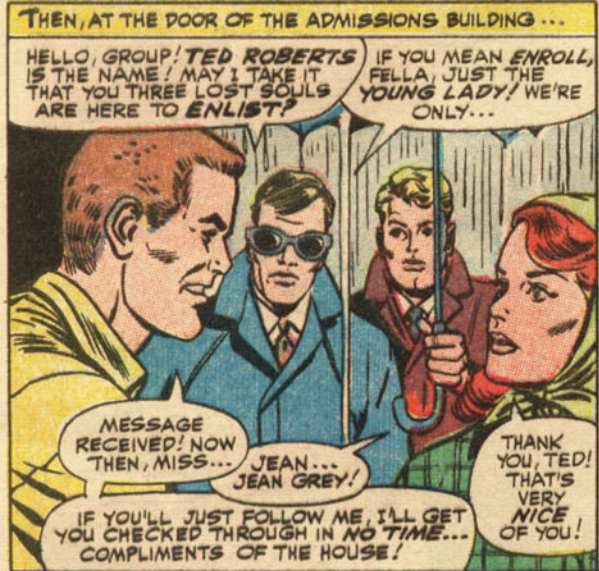
STARTING COLLEGE DURING THE SUMMER IS A GOOD IDEA, JEAN... YOU'LL GET A JUMP ON ALL YOUR STUDIES THAT WAY!

AND, WHEN FALL COMES, THE HUMAN TORCH IS A STUDENT HERE! WOULDN'T HE FLIP TO FIND OUT HE ISN'T THE ONLY SUPER-HERO ON CAMPUS!

BUT, HE WON'T FIND OUT, WARREN! HERE AT COLLEGE, I'LL BE PLAIN JEAN GREY... AND NOTHING MORE!

POOR ANGEL... TRYING SO HARD TO CHEER ME UP, EVEN THOUGH HE'D HATE THE THOUGHT OF MY DATING JOHNNY STORM!

IF ONLY I COULD HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HIM, INSTEAD OF WITH SCOTT! BUT, MAYBE IT'S TOO LATE NOW... FOR ANY OF US!



THEN, AT THE DOOR OF THE ADMISSIONS BUILDING ...

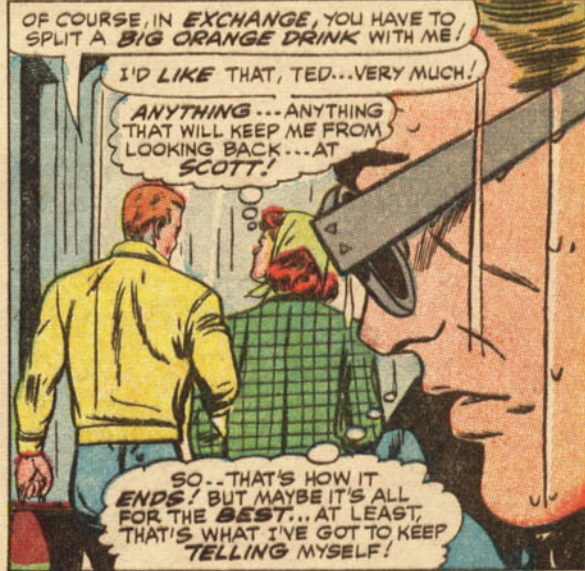
HELLO, GROUP! TED ROBERTS IS THE NAME! MAY I TAKE IT THAT YOU THREE LOST SOULS ARE HERE TO ENLIST?

IF YOU MEAN ENROLL, FELLA, JUST THE YOUNG LADY! WE'RE ONLY...

MESSAGE RECEIVED! NOW THEN, MISS... JEAN... JEAN GREY!

THANK YOU, TED! THAT'S VERY NICE OF YOU!

IF YOU'LL JUST FOLLOW ME, I'LL GET YOU CHECKED THROUGH IN NO TIME... COMPLIMENTS OF THE HOUSE!



OF COURSE, IN EXCHANGE, YOU HAVE TO SPLIT A BIG ORANGE DRINK WITH ME!

I'D LIKE THAT, TED...VERY MUCH!

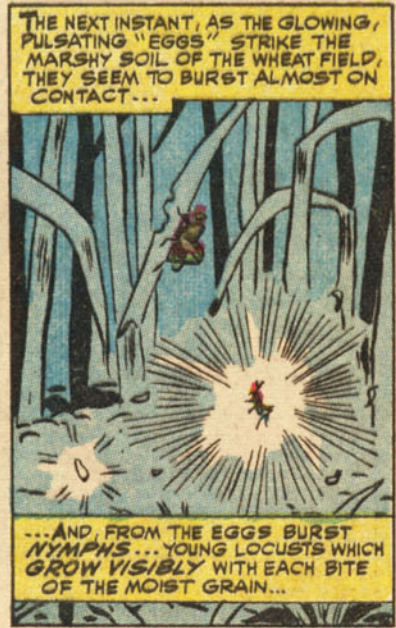
ANYTHING... ANYTHING THAT WILL KEEP ME FROM LOOKING BACK... AT SCOTT!

SO... THAT'S HOW IT ENDS! BUT MAYBE IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST... AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO KEEP TELLING MYSELF!



SO MUCH FOR SMALL TALK THIS MONTH... WE'VE A REAL ODDBALL BADDIE WAITING FOR YOU... FOR, AT THAT VERY SECOND, MILES AWAY...

THE SOIL CONDITIONS ARE IDEAL FOR HATCHING MY IONICALLY-TREATED INSECT EGGS! AND SO, THIS IS THE DAY OF... THE LOCUST!



THE NEXT INSTANT, AS THE GLOWING, PULSATING "EGGS" STRIKE THE MARSHY SOIL OF THE WHEAT FIELD, THEY SEEM TO BURST ALMOST ON CONTACT...

...AND, FROM THE EGGS BURST NYMPHS... YOUNG LOCUSTS WHICH GROW VISIBLY WITH EACH BITE OF THE MOST GRAIN...



FEED WELL, MY PRETTIES... FEED WELL! NOW, ONLY I, YOUR LEADER, AM PRESENT TO HEAR YOUR SONG OF MOUNTING MENACE!

BUT SOON, THE WORLD SHALL KNOW THE MEANING OF THAT SOUND... AND LIVE IN TERROR OF IT!

KRUNCH! KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

AND, INDEED, THE WORLD *BEGINS* TO LEARN OF ITS FANTASTIC DANGER ALMOST AT ONCE, AS...

KRUNCH! KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

LISTEN--! DO YOU HEAR THAT *CHOMPING* SOUND, CORA?

MMM? I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU HAVING AN EARLY BREAK-FAST!

IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING.. GO BACK TO SLEEP!

BUT, CURIOSITY IS A POWERFUL FORCE, AND...

NOW, WE'LL JUST SEE WHAT...

WHAT IS IT, HENRY? WHAT'S WRONG?

CORA! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, COME HERE.. QUICK!

I...I CAN'T DESCRIBE IT! YOU'VE GOT TO SEE FOR YOURSELF!

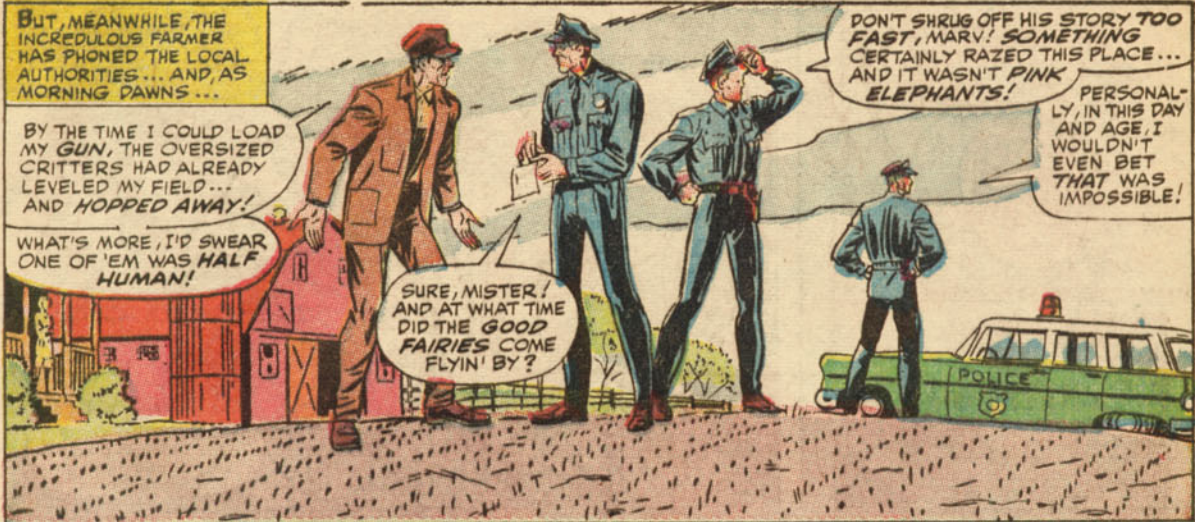
PERHAPS TRUER WORDS WERE NEVER SPOKEN, FOR, AS THE FARMER AND HIS WIFE GAZE IN UTTER ASTONISHMENT, AN INCREDIBLE, ALMOST NIGHTMARISH SCENE MEETS THEIR STARTLED EYES...

EAT HEARTILY, MY SIX-LEGGED SUBJECTS!

FOR, WITH EACH TENDER MORSEL THAT YOU DEVOUR, YOU INCREASE IN SIZE! ALREADY, YOU ARE HUNDREDS OF TIMES LARGER THAN YOUR FELLOW INSECTS...AND THAT IS BUT THE BEGINNING!

TOO LONG HAVE LESSER MORTALS LORDED IT OVER THIS ABUNDANT PLANET! IT IS NOT THE WEAK WHO MUST INHERIT THE EARTH, BUT THE STRONG...AND WE ARE THE STRONG!

NOTE TO ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGISTS: IF, AS YOU READ ON, IT SEEMS TO YOU THAT OUR ORTHOPTEROUS ANTAGONIST HAS A DISTINCT FASCIST FIXATION, PLEASE FORWARD ALL ANALYSES TO MIGHTY MARVEL...WE'RE STILL TRYIN' TO FIGURE HIM OUT!
... STAN AND THE GANG.



BUT, MEANWHILE, THE INCREDULOUS FARMER HAS PHONED THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES... AND, AS MORNING DAWNS...

BY THE TIME I COULD LOAD MY GUN, THE OVERSIZED CRITTERS HAD ALREADY LEVELED MY FIELD... AND HOPPED AWAY!

WHAT'S MORE, I'D SWEAR ONE OF 'EM WAS HALF HUMAN!

SURE, MISTER! AND AT WHAT TIME DID THE GOOD FAIRIES COME FLYIN' BY?

DON'T SHRUG OFF HIS STORY TOO FAST, MARV! SOMETHING CERTAINLY RAZED THIS PLACE... AND IT WASN'T PINK ELEPHANTS!

PERSONALLY, IN THIS DAY AND AGE, I WOULDN'T EVEN BET THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE!



A FEW HOURS LATER, AS THE X-MEN GO THROUGH THEIR PACES IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY...

LOOK ALIVE, ANGEL! YOU BARELY CLEARED ICEMAN'S HOOD!

KEEP YOUR GOGGLES ON, CYKE! THE WORLD WOULDN'T CRUMBLE IF I HIT IT!

TRANSLATION: WITH JEAN ABSENT, THERE'S NO ONE TO HEAP APPROBATION UPON HIS PEERLESS PERFORMANCE!

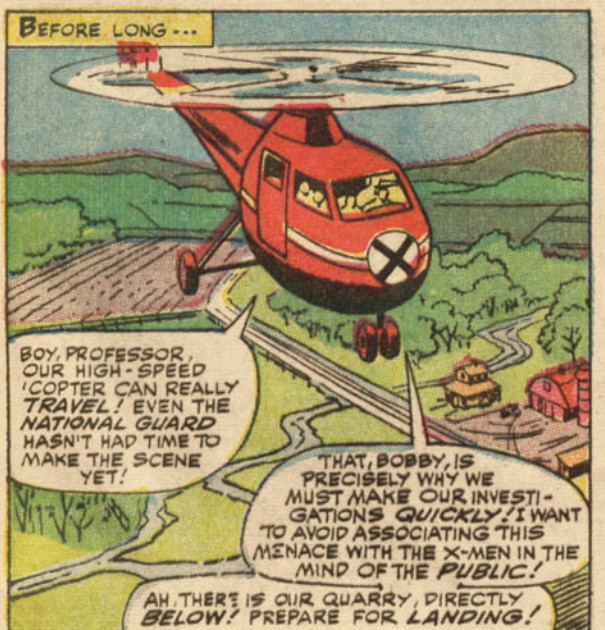
THANKS, BEAST! NOW IF SOMEBODY'LL JUST TRANSLATE YOUR TRANSLATION!



OH OH! HEADS UP, COMPATRIOTS! HERE COMES THE PROFESSOR!

I'M AFRAID YOUR TRAINING SESSION IS OVER FOR THE PRESENT! I'VE JUST HEARD ALARMING REPORTS ON THE RADIO... REPORTS OF GIANT LOCUSTS DEVASTATING A SERIES OF FARMS UPSTATE!

IF THIS INFORMATION IS TRUE, THESE HUGE INSECTS ARE POSSIBLY MUTATIONS... AND THAT MAKES THEM THE BUSINESS OF... THE X-MEN!



BEFORE LONG...

BOY, PROFESSOR, OUR HIGH-SPEED 'COPTER CAN REALLY TRAVEL! EVEN THE NATIONAL GUARD HASN'T HAD TIME TO MAKE THE SCENE YET!

THAT, BOBBY, IS PRECISELY WHY WE MUST MAKE OUR INVESTIGATIONS QUICKLY! I WANT TO AVOID ASSOCIATING THIS MENACE WITH THE X-MEN IN THE MIND OF THE PUBLIC!

AH, THERE IS OUR QUARRY, DIRECTLY BELOW! PREPARE FOR LANDING!



HOLY COW... LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THOSE BABIES!

BUT, THERE ARE ONLY A DOZEN OF 'EM, AT MOST!

PERHAPS, FOR NOW. BUT, THOSE IN TURN MIGHT BREED COUNTLESS OTHERS!

AND THEN WHERE WOULD MANKIND BE?

KRUNCH! KRAK!

WHILE, UNOBSERVED BY THE MARVELOUS MUTANTS, IN A NEARBY GROVE...

THE X-MEN! I AM NOT YET PREPARED TO FACE THEM! BUT, NO MATTER....



THIS EXPERIMENT HAS SERVED ITS PURPOSE! I SHALL BIDE MY TIME... AND STRIKE AGAIN!

GOSH, IT SEEMS STRANGE TO BE GOING INTO ACTION WITHOUT MARVEL GIRL!



NO TIME TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, ICEMAN! PROFESSOR XAVIER WANTS ONE OF THESE CREATURES FOR STUDY!

NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE, DAUNTLESS DEPUTY LEADER!

NOTICE, GROUP, WITH WHAT GUILTY GRACE THE GRANDILOQUENT BEAST ACCOSTS HIS PERPLEXED PREY!



THUMP!

RESTRAIN YOURSELF, INVERTEBRATE! I'M SUPPOSED TO BE APPREHENDING YOU!



KUH-PWANG!

HMMM... THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE MORE IN YOUR DEPARTMENT, ANGEL! CARE TO LEND AN ASSIST?



JUST HANG ON, BEASTIE! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE HARD PART!

THEN, SWIFTLY ASCENDING TO A GREATER HEIGHT, THE WINGED WARRIOR SWOOPS AT HIS TARGET WITH DAZZLING SPEED...

A GOOD POWER-DIVE SHOULD GIVE ME ENOUGH FORCE TO BUG OUR LITTLE PLAYMATE!

UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MY BIRD-LIKE BENEFACTOR, I'LL FORGIVE YOUR SOMEWHAT UN-IMAGINATIVE ATTEMPT AT HUMOR!

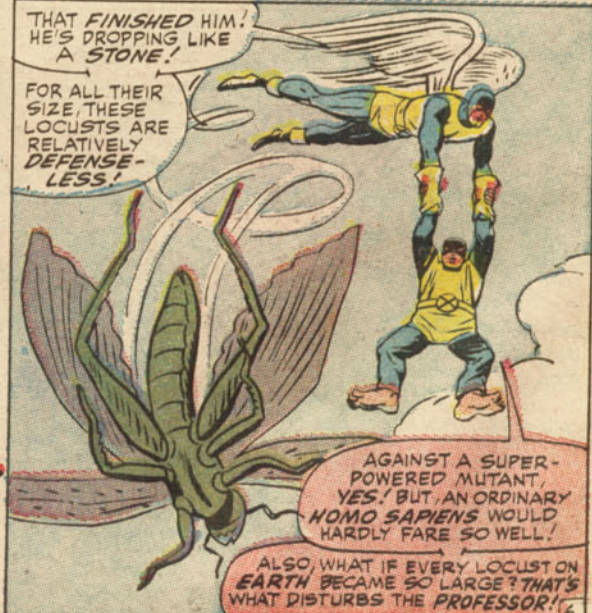


THANKS MUCHLY!

BWAK!

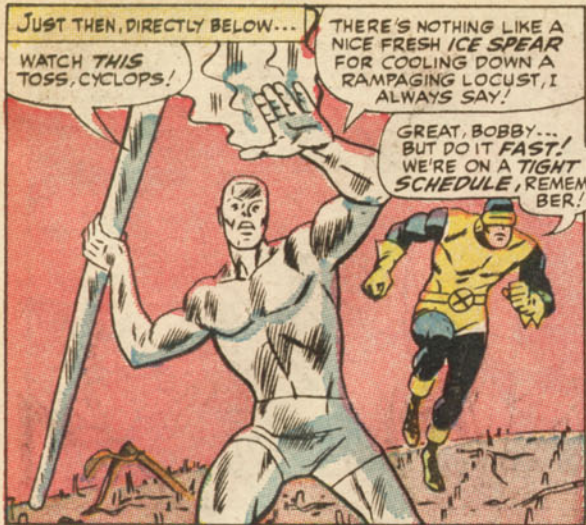
THAT FINISHED HIM! HE'S DROPPING LIKE A STONE!

FOR ALL THEIR SIZE, THESE LOCUSTS ARE RELATIVELY DEFENSELESS!



AGAINST A SUPER-POWERED MUTANT, YES! BUT, AN ORDINARY HOMO SAPIENS WOULD HARDLY FARE SO WELL!

ALSO, WHAT IF EVERY LOCUST ON EARTH BECAME SO LARGE? THAT'S WHAT DISTURBS THE PROFESSOR!



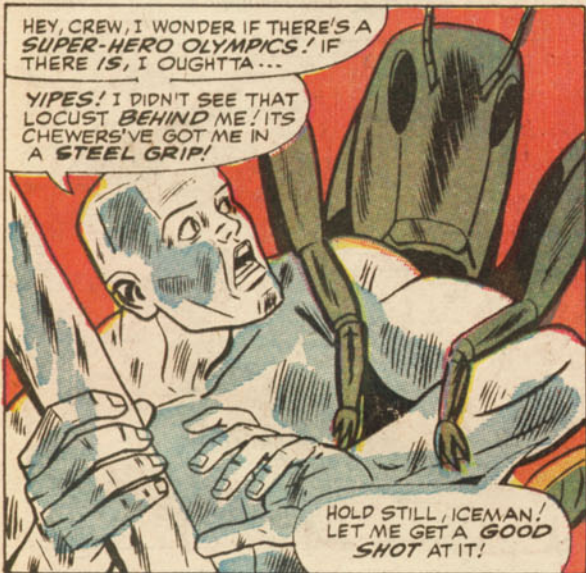
JUST THEN, DIRECTLY BELOW...
WATCH THIS TOSS, CYCLOPS!

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A NICE FRESH ICE SPEAR FOR COOLING DOWN A RAMPAGING LOCUST, I ALWAYS SAY!

GREAT, BOBBY... BUT DO IT FAST! WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE, REMEMBER!



GOT ONE! JUST LIKE SHOOTIN' FISH IN A BARREL! I'M GETTIN' TO BE A REGULAR HAWKEYE!



HEY, CREW, I WONDER IF THERE'S A SUPER-HERO OLYMPICS! IF THERE IS, I OUGHTTA...

YIPES! I DIDN'T SEE THAT LOCUST BEHIND ME! ITS CHEWERS'VE GOT ME IN A STEEL GRIP!

HOLD STILL, ICEMAN! LET ME GET A GOOD SHOT AT IT!



THAT'S ONE MORE INSECT WHOSE MUNCHING DAYS ARE OVER!

THANKS, CYKE, HE WOULDN'T HAVE CARED MUCH FOR ICEMAN A LA MODE, ANYWAY!

NOW, LET'S TAKE CARE OF THE REST OF 'EM!



BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE LENDS A HAND... IN THE SHAPE OF AN APPROACHING HELICOPTER...

WE CAN'T BE SURE THAT THIS PESTICIDE WILL HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THOSE OVERGROWN MONSTERS, BUT ANYTHING IS WORTH A TRY!

THE NATIONAL GUARD'S COMING RIGHT BEHIND ME, BUT FIRST THEY WANT TO SEE IF THIS NEW CHEMICAL SPRAY HAS ANY EFFECT!

OH-OH! WE'RE IN FOR IT! THAT PILOT DOESN'T SEE US... AND HE'S DUSTING THE FIELD!



COVER YOUR FACES! KOFF!! THIS STUFF IS STRONG!

KOFF!! WHEN ARE THE X-MEN GONNA STOP BEIN' THE HARD-LUCK HARRYS OF HERODOM?

CAN'T SEE... IT'S THICK AS PEA SOUP!

ANGEL... USE YOUR WINGS AS A FAN, TO CLEAR A BREATHING SPACE FOR ALL OF YOU!

A TELEPATHIC THOUGHT FROM PROFESSOR X! AS ALWAYS, HE'S IN KOFF! RELATIVE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION!

AND AS THE HIGH-FLYING ANGEL CARRIES OUT HIS ORDERS...

YOU'RE A FRIEND IN NEED, WARRY BOY!

BUT, I'M AFRAID OUR BUDDY STRUCK OUT! THE INSECTS WEREN'T FAZED!

X-MEN... I SENSE SOLDIERS DRAWING NEAR! RETURN TO THE COPTER... WITH ONE OF THE SPECIMENS!

A PLEASURE, SIR! THE AUTHORITIES ALREADY HAVE A PROPENSITY FOR SUSPECTING US OF UNLAWFUL ACTIVITY!

EXACTLY ONE MINUTE LATER, AS ARMED TROOPS APPEAR ON THE SCENE...

THE FLAME-THROWERS WILL DISPOSE OF THE FEW REMAINING LOCUSTS! IT IS FORTUNATE THEY WERE NOT NUMEROUS!

BUT, WILL MANKIND BE SO LUCKY NEXT TIME?

OKAY, MEN... LET'S MOP UP THOSE SIX-LEGGED MENACES!

Fwoosh!

BUT NOW, JUST FOR A CHANGE OF PACE, LET'S SKIP AHEAD A FEW DAYS... AND SHIFT THE SCENE TO METRO COLLEGE...

WELL, IF IT ISN'T IT'S GREAT, TED... AL-THOUGH I'M STILL JUST A BIT... LONELY!

JEAN GREY! AND HOW'S THE CUTEST COED ADJUSTING TO THE SCENT OF IVY?

NOTE: NO, THIS ISN'T REALLY JOHNNY STORM AND WYATT WINGFOOT... THEY'RE IN THE HIMALAYAS! WE JUST WANTED TO SEE IF YOU WERE PAYING ATTENTION! ...SNEAKY STAN.

I GUESSED AS MUCH! LET'S FALL BY THE COFFEE SHOP AND YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

SOON, IN THE CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE METRO STUDENT CENTER...

NOW, THEN, SUPPOSE YOU FILL ME IN ON YOUR PROBLEMS IN ADJUSTING TO AN UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT!

LOOK, CHUCK... THERE'S MR. MAD SCIENTIST HIMSELF... OL' DOC HOPPER!

IN CASE YOU COULDN'T TELL FROM THAT SPEECH, I'M A PSYCHOLOGY MINOR IN MY SPARE TIME!

KEEP IT DOWN, MAN... HE'LL HEAR YA!

I WONDER WHY THOSE STUDENTS ARE MAKING FUN OF THAT BEARDED MAN?

KEEP IT DOWN? WHAT FOR, CHUCK? OL' HOPPER DOESN'T CARE WHAT WE THINK ABOUT 'IM!

HE'S GOT HIS BUGS TO KEEP HIM HAPPY!

IGNORANT, IMPUDENT FOOLS! WHEN YOU ARE ALL IN YOUR GRAVES, THE NAME OF AUGUST HOPPER WILL SHINE MORE BRIGHTLY THAN ANY OTHER! SCOFF WHILE YOU MAY... FOR THE DAY IS COMING WHEN...

BAH! WHY DO I WASTE MY TIME ON PRATTLING DOLTS? YOU WILL LEARN... ALL OF YOU!

LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT, BOB... HE'S STILL AS KOOKIE AS EVER!

IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD THING THAT METRO COLLEGE FIRED HIM LAST SEMESTER!

TED... WHO IS THAT MAN? HE LOOKS SO FAMILIAR, SOMEHOW...

THAT'S DR. HOPPER, DOLL! HE LIVES NEAR-BY AND EATS HERE OCCASIONALLY...

HE WAS A TOP NAME IN ENTEMOLOGY... THE STUDY OF INSECTS... TILL SOME OF HIS CRACKPOT THEORIES GOT HIM FIRED!

DON'T SHED TOO MANY TEARS FOR HIM, THOUGH! HE WORKS FOR RYAN CHEMICALS NOW, I HEAR! WHY?

NOTHING... IT'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT HIM... SOMETHING IN HIS VOICE...

I MUST STOP LOOKING FOR DANGER... AS IF I WERE STILL ONE OF THE X-MEN!

6.

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

HOWEVER, IF JEAN COULD FOLLOW THE TEMPESTUOUS DR. HOPPER TO HIS RYAN CHEMICALS LAB, SHE WOULD SOON OBSERVE...

SO...IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY PROFESSORSHIP... DEPRIVED MY INSECT-MUTATION THEORIES OF AN AUDIENCE OF RECEPTIVE MINDS!

THEY MUST MOCK ME, AS WELL... CALL ME "CRACKPOT" AND "MAD SCIENTIST"!

I... MAD!! THAT IS THE SUPREME IRONY!

FOR, IT IS I WHO AM THE SANEST OF ALL! ONLY I HAVE HAD THE SHEER GENIUS TO DEVELOP THE MOST POTENT INSECTICIDES KNOWN TO MAN!

BUT, ALWAYS IN THE PAST, OTHERS HAVE TAKEN CREDIT FOR MY DISCOVERIES... FIRST METRO COLLEGE, AND NOW RYAN CHEMICALS! I HAVE REMAINED UNKNOWN!

NO MORE!! SOON, THE NAME OF AUGUST HOPPER WILL BE KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD... AS THE SAVIOR OF THE HUMAN RACE!

AND NOW, IT IS TIME TO TEST THE LATEST IMPROVEMENTS ON MY NEW FORMULA!

EXCELLENT! JUST AS BEFORE, THE NEWLY-HATCHED LARVA BEGINS TO FEED... AND INCREASES ITS BULK IMMEDIATELY AS IT DEVOURS ORDINARY LEAVES!

BUT, SINCE THAT MEETING, I HAVE REFINED THE MAGNO-RAY... AND DEVELOPED THIS PORTABLE VERSION OF IT!

FZZT!
FIRST, I ACTIVATE THIS SINGLE INSECT EGG WITH MY ORIGINAL MAGNO-RAY!

CHOMP!
CHOMP!
IT WAS THUS THAT I, IN MY INGENUOUS GUISE OF THE LOCUST, CREATED THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY ARMY OF INSECTS WHICH THE ACCURSED X-MEN ATTACKED!

BZIK!
AND IT WORKS... AS I KNEW IT WOULD! THE RAY ALONE NOW INCREASED THAT BEETLE'S SIZE!

NOW, THE CARNIVOROUS BEETLE ATTACKS THE CATERPILLAR! IN THIS WAY, NATURE HAS ALWAYS CONTROLLED A BALANCE OF SPECIES!

BUT, THERE WILL BE NO SUCH CONTROL ACTING UPON MY GIANT INSECTS... AND MANKIND WILL BE HELPLESS BEFORE THEM!

THUS, AT LAST, I WILL BE GIVEN THE CREDIT WHICH HAS BEEN SO LONG DENIED ME! MY FAME SHALL ENDURE FOREVER!

MEANWHILE, I MUST DIS-INTEGRATE THESE TWO SPECIMENS... LEST THEY BE DISCOVERED AND MY PURPOSE THWARTED!

IN A MATTER OF HOURS, MY INSECT LEGIONS WILL ATTACK ANEW... MORE POWERFUL, MORE NUMEROUS THAN BEFORE!

PZISST!
AND, IF THE X-MEN INTERFERE AGAIN... THEY WILL BE RUTHLESSLY DESTROYED, BY... THE LOCUST!

THEN, I... DR. HOPPER... SHALL "DISCOVER" THE WAY TO DESTROY THEM... AND I SHALL RECEIVE THE PLAUDITS OF A DESPERATELY THANKFUL WORLD!

THE NEXT MORNING, IN THE LABORATORY OF PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS...

HUMAN AGENT? THAT JIBES WITH ONE FARMER'S CLAIM TO SEEING A MAN DIRECTING THE INSECTS' ACTIONS!



I HOPE THE PROF FINISHES HIS EXAMINATION OF THE GIANT LOCUST PRETTY SOON! I'VE GOT A DATE WITH ZELDA TONIGHT!

AND I WITH VERA!

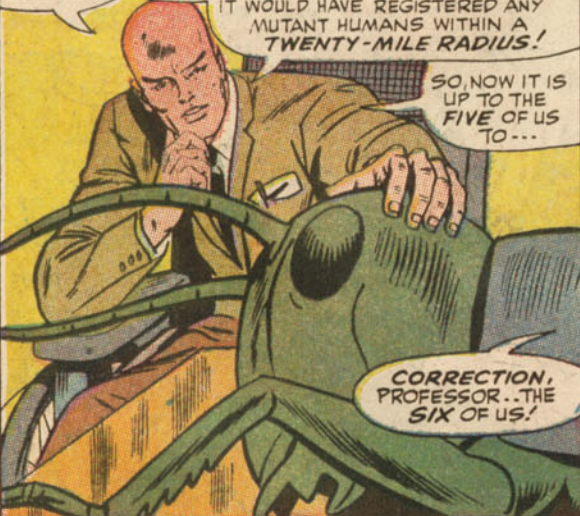
WHAT'S THE VERDICT, PROFESSOR? IS THIS OVERSIZED ORTHOPTERAN A MUTATION?

IN A SENSE, HANK! HOWEVER, MY STUDY INDICATES THAT SOME ARTIFICIAL MEANS WAS USED TO INCREASE ITS STATURE!

IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE IS SOME HUMAN AGENT BEHIND THESE FANTASTIC CREATURES!

BUT WHAT KIND OF MAN, PROFESSOR? COULD IT BE THAT SOME EVIL MUTANT IS ON THE PROWL?

NEGATIVE, WARREN! THE X-COPTER IS EQUIPPED WITH A PORTABLE VERSION OF CEREBRO, AND IT WOULD HAVE REGISTERED ANY MUTANT HUMANS WITHIN A TWENTY-MILE RADIUS!



SO, NOW IT IS UP TO THE FIVE OF US TO...

CORRECTION, PROFESSOR... THE SIX OF US!



MARVEL GIRL! WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?

IT'S THE WEEKEND, YOU KNOW! WELL, MAY I COME IN, OR...?

WHERE DID YOU PICK UP THE GIANT LOCUST? I HAD HEARD REPORTS OF SOME UPSTATE, BUT...

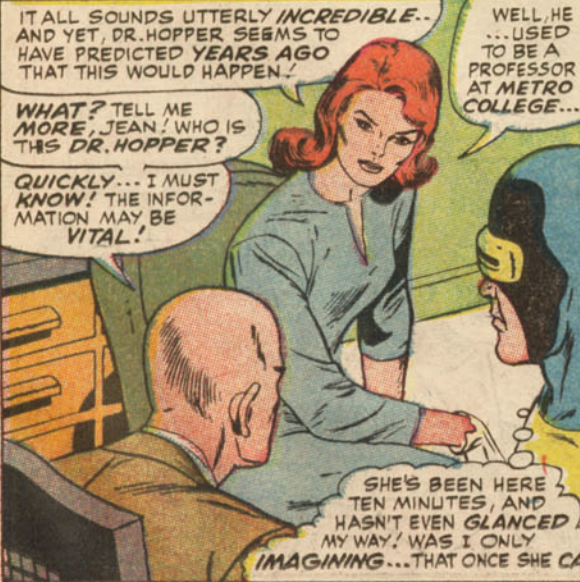
WHAT DO YOU THINK? I WAS ALREADY GETTIN' TIRED OF LOOKING AT THE BEAST!

LIKE-WISE, MY FROSTY FRIEND!

HAVE A CHAIR, LADY, AND WE'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT!

PERHAPS I'D BEST TAKE CARE OF THE EXPLANATIONS, ANGEL!

THEN, AFTER JEAN GREY IS FILLED IN, HURRIEDLY...



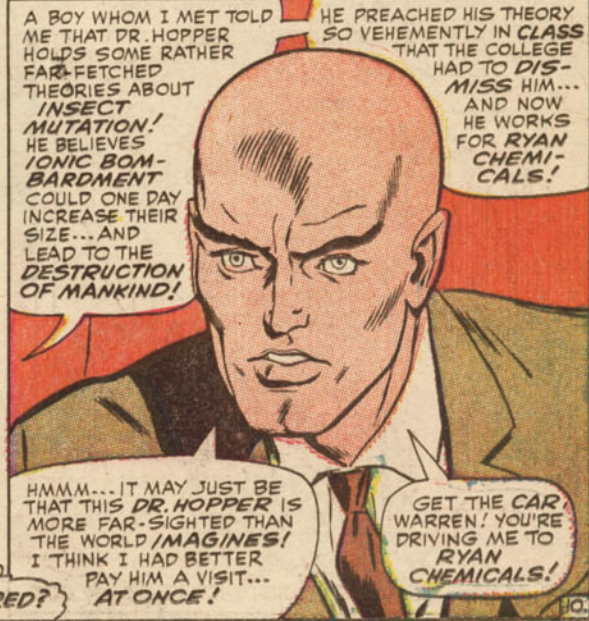
IT ALL SOUNDS UTTERLY INCREDIBLE... AND YET, DR. HOPPER SEEMS TO HAVE PREDICTED YEARS AGO THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN!

WHAT? TELL ME MORE, JEAN! WHO IS THIS DR. HOPPER?

QUICKLY... I MUST KNOW! THE INFORMATION MAY BE VITAL!

WELL, HE ...USED TO BE A PROFESSOR AT METRO COLLEGE...

SHE'S BEEN HERE TEN MINUTES, AND HASN'T EVEN GLANCED MY WAY! WAS I ONLY IMAGINING... THAT ONCE SHE CARED?



A BOY WHOM I MET TOLD ME THAT DR. HOPPER HOLDS SOME RATHER FAR-FETCHED THEORIES ABOUT INSECT MUTATION! HE BELIEVES IONIC BOMBARDMENT COULD ONE DAY INCREASE THEIR SIZE... AND LEAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF MANKIND!

HE PREACHED HIS THEORY SO VEHEMENTLY IN CLASS THAT THE COLLEGE HAD TO DISMISS HIM... AND NOW HE WORKS FOR RYAN CHEMICALS!

HMMM... IT MAY JUST BE THAT THIS DR. HOPPER IS MORE FAR-SIGHTED THAN THE WORLD IMAGINES! I THINK I HAD BETTER PAY HIM A VISIT... AT ONCE!

GET THE CAR, WARREN! YOU'RE DRIVING ME TO RYAN CHEMICALS!

A SHORT TIME LATER, THE MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR PLANT WHICH EMPLOYS DR. AUGUST HOPPER RECEIVES A FATEFUL VISITOR...

I'M MR. HAMILTON, PLANT SUPERVISOR! I'M SORRY DR. HOPPER ISN'T HERE, BUT HE LEFT YESTERDAY ON A SHORT LEAVE OF ABSENCE!

I'M SURE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HONORED TO MEET AN AUTHORITY ON MUTANTS, SUCH AS YOURSELF, PROFESSOR XAVIER!

THE PLEASURE WOULD HAVE BEEN MINE, MR. HAMILTON! BUT, DO YOU SUPPOSE I COULD SEE HIS LABORATORY?

WELL, HE'S USUALLY VERY POSSESSIVE ABOUT IT, BUT... I'M SURE IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT IN YOUR CASE!

MINUTES AFTERWARD, IN THE LAB WHICH THE AMBITIOUS ENTOMOLOGIST UTILIZES FOR HIS SINISTER STUDIES...

THIS IS DR. HOPPER'S CASTLE... ALMOST HIS HOME! SOMETIMES HE DOESN'T LEAVE IT FOR DAYS ON END!

HE IS EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO LET OTHERS ENTER IT AT THOSE TIMES... AND, IN VIEW OF THE TRULY FANTASTIC PESTICIDES HE HAS DEVELOPED, WE TRY TO RESPECT HIS WISHES!

I SEE! AND, YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I COULD CONTACT HIM NOW?

I'M AFRAID NOT! HIS CONTRACT PROVIDES FOR SUCH LEAVES OF ABSENCE DURING WHICH HE USUALLY TAKES ALONG HIS MOBILE LAB!

IN FACT, FOR ALL WE KNOW, HE MAY BE INVESTIGATING THOSE REPORTS OF MAMMOTH LOCUSTS NEAR HERE!

A COMFORTING THOUGHT, MR. HAMILTON! OR IS IT? I WONDER...

MY MENTAL PROBING OF SOME OF DR. HOPPER'S EQUIPMENT IS BEGINNING TO REVEAL SOME VERY INTERESTING DISCOVERIES!

AND HERE... THERE ARE SEVERAL CANNISTERS MISSING... CANNISTERS WHICH THE LABELS SAY CONTAINED LOCUST EGGS!

COULD IT BE THAT DR. HOPPER HAS A FAR MORE INTEGRAL, FAR MORE PERSONAL PART IN THE MENAGE OF THOSE RAMPAGING INSECTS THAN ANYONE HAS SUSPECTED?

THEN, AS THE INVALID MUTANT TURNS HIS ATTENTION TO A PREVIOUSLY UNNOTICED WALL...

THAT MAP... IT MAY JUST BE THE CLINCHER!

THAT LARGE "X" PIN-POINTS THE AREA WHERE THE LOCUST SWARM APPEARED... AND THERE ARE OTHER X'S INDICATED AS WELL!

I BELIEVE I'VE SEEN ENOUGH, MR. HAMILTON... IF YOU'LL JUST SHOW ME THE WAY OUT...

CERTAINLY, PROFESSOR! I HOPE THE STILL, I'M SORRY YOU COULDN'T MEET DR. HOPPER! HE'S A BRILLIANT MAN, DESPITE HIS, ER, SOMEWHAT UN-BELIEVABLE THEORIES ABOUT INSECT MUTATION!

I MIGHT WANT TO TALK WITH HIM ABOUT WASN'T TOO URGENT!

UH, NO, NOT REALLY! IN FACT, I THINK I'VE LEARNED ALL I NEED TO KNOW!

I CAN'T WAIT TO RETURN TO THE SCHOOL... I MUST CONTACT THE X-MEN... NOW!!



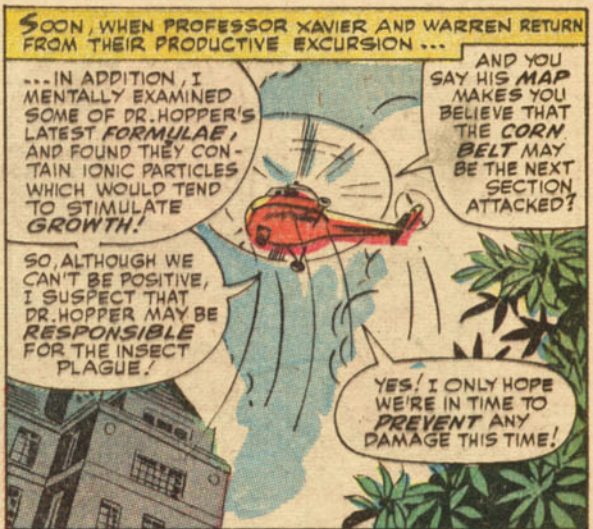
ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY, SOME MILES AWAY... I'VE ONLY BEEN AWAY A FEW DAYS, BUT IT'LL BE GREAT TO GET INTO COSTUME AGAIN!

ATTENTION, X-MEN! PREPARE FOR THE HELICOPTER FOR A MISSION, AS SOON AS WE RETURN! IT'S THE PROFESSOR!

WE'LL BE READY AND WAITING, SIR!

I'VE ONLY BEEN AWAY A FEW DAYS, BUT IT'LL BE GREAT TO GET INTO COSTUME AGAIN!

LET'S MAKE ALL DELIBERATE HASTE, BOBBY BOY!



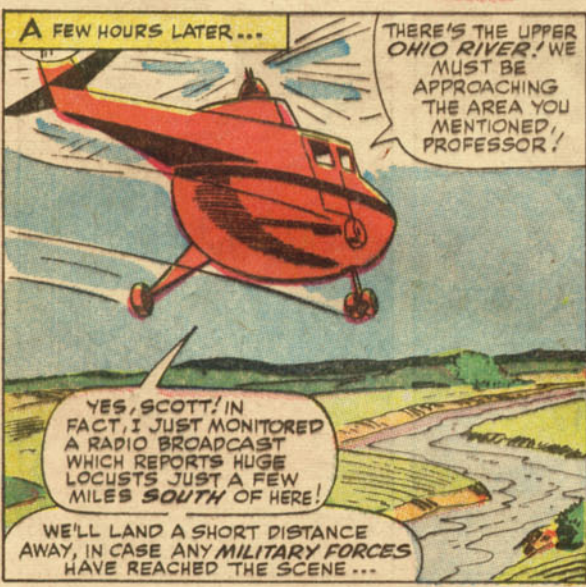
SOON, WHEN PROFESSOR XAVIER AND WARREN RETURN FROM THEIR PRODUCTIVE EXCURSION ...

... IN ADDITION, I MENTALLY EXAMINED SOME OF DR. HOPPER'S LATEST FORMULAE, AND FOUND THEY CONTAIN IONIC PARTICLES WHICH WOULD TEND TO STIMULATE GROWTH!

AND YOU SAY HIS MAP MAKES YOU BELIEVE THAT THE CORN BELT MAY BE THE NEXT SECTION ATTACKED?

SO, ALTHOUGH WE CAN'T BE POSITIVE, I SUSPECT THAT DR. HOPPER MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INSECT PLAGUE!

YES! I ONLY HOPE WE'RE IN TIME TO PREVENT ANY DAMAGE THIS TIME!

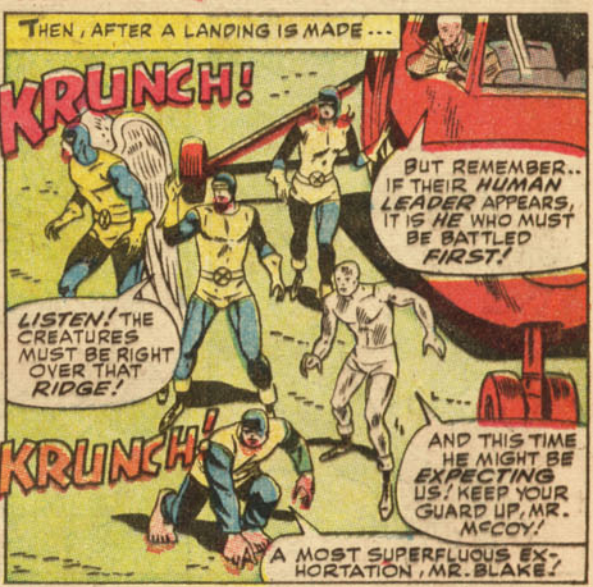


A FEW HOURS LATER...

THERE'S THE UPPER OHIO RIVER! WE MUST BE APPROACHING THE AREA YOU MENTIONED, PROFESSOR!

YES, SCOTT! IN FACT, I JUST MONITORED A RADIO BROADCAST WHICH REPORTS HUGE LOCUSTS JUST A FEW MILES SOUTH OF HERE!

WE'LL LAND A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, IN CASE ANY MILITARY FORCES HAVE REACHED THE SCENE...



THEN, AFTER A LANDING IS MADE...

KRUNCH!

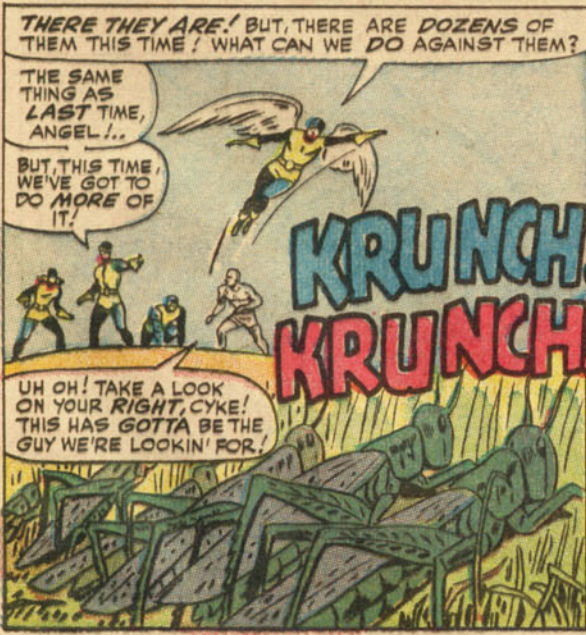
BUT REMEMBER.. IF THEIR HUMAN LEADER APPEARS, IT IS HE WHO MUST BE BATTLED FIRST!

LISTEN! THE CREATURES MUST BE RIGHT OVER THAT RIDGE!

KRUNCH!

AND THIS TIME HE MIGHT BE EXPECTING US! KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, MR. MCCOY!

A MOST SUPERFLUOUS EXHORTATION, MR. BLAKE?



THERE THEY ARE! BUT, THERE ARE DOZENS OF THEM THIS TIME! WHAT CAN WE DO AGAINST THEM?

THE SAME THING AS LAST TIME, ANGEL!..

BUT, THIS TIME, WE'VE GOT TO DO MORE OF IT!

KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

UH OH! TAKE A LOOK ON YOUR RIGHT, CYKE! THIS HAS GOTTA BE THE GUY WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR!



CORRECTION, MY SUPER-POWERED SIMPLETONS! RATHER, IT IS I WHO HAVE BEEN PATIENTLY WAITING FOR YOU!

FOR, IN DEFEATING YOU, I SHALL DEMONSTRATE THE FOLLY OF OPPOSING... THE LOCUST!



LOOK, MISTER, WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH WITH THESE GRASS-HOPPER PALS OF YOURS, BUT WE'RE HERE TO PUT AN END TO IT!

PRESUMPTUOUS FOOL! DO YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE APPEARED BEFORE YOU, IF I WERE NOT PREPARED TO DISPOSE OF YOU?



THE ONLY DISPOSING YOU'RE GOING TO DO, LOCUST, IS TO GET RID OF THAT NUTTY COSTUME! I...: UHHHN!:

AWAY, CLOR! YOU SHALL BE THE FIRST TO FEEL THE BITE OF THE LOCUST!

WOK!

OOOOF!
CAUGHT ME... OFF-GUARD!



ALL RIGHT, GROUP, OUR BUG-EYED BUDDY HAS OPENED THE HOSTILITIES! NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE NOBLE BEAST TO GET INTO THE ACT!

HMM... YOU SEEM MORE AGILE THAN YOUR COWLED COMPANIONS...



HOWEVER, AGILITY IS OF NO AVAIL... IF YOU CAN'T GRASP YOUR ANTAGONIST!

WHAT THE...? HE SPREAD HIS WINGS... AND TOOK OFF!

IT'S UP TO YOU NOW, ANGEL!



IT'S NO CONTEST, BEAST! HIS MECHANICAL WINGS ARE NO MATCH FOR MY REAL ONES!

HE'S RIGHT! IT WILL TAKE HIM MERE SECONDS TO OVERTAKE ME! BUT, THE VICTORY CAN STILL BE MINE!



SUDDENLY...

MY CREATIVE GENIUS ALSO DEVELOPED THIS IONIC STUN-DEVICE, TO KEEP ANY REBELLIOUS INSECTS IN LINE...

HOWEVER, IT SEEMS TO WORK ON ANGELS, AS WELL!

FRAP!

MMMFFF! I'M RECEIVING A TERRIFIC JOLT FROM THAT GIZMO... CAN'T STAY ALOFT!



BUT, AS THE STRICKEN X-MAN TOPPLES HELPLESSLY FROM THE SKY, ANOTHER MUTANT COMES TO HIS AID...

THANKS, MARVEL GIRL!

MY PLEASURE, ANGEL! I'M ONLY SORRY I DIDN'T GET A SHOT AT THE LOCUST!

STICK AROUND, FAIR LADY! YOUR OPPORTUNITY MAY COME SOON!

SOONER THAN YOU THINK, BEASTIE! HE'S FLUTTERING TO EARTH NOT FIFTY YARDS AWAY!

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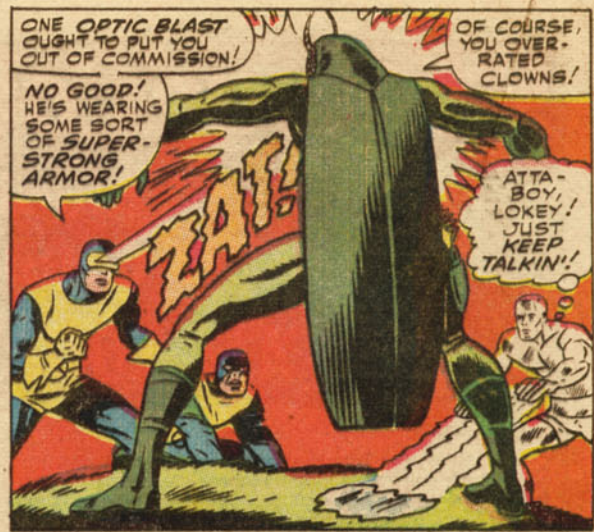
JEAN... COULD YOU TELL IF THAT MASKED CREEP IS THE DR. HOPPER YOU SAW?

I CAN'T BE POSITIVE... BUT, FROM THE BEARD AND VOICE, I'M PRETTY SURE IT IS!

YOU TWO COME ALONG AS FAST AS YOU CAN!

I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE IN LOCUST'S SHOES! CYKES' FIGHTING MAD!

BEAST... ICEMAN... THE THREE OF US MUST ATTACK HIM BEFORE HE ESCAPES!

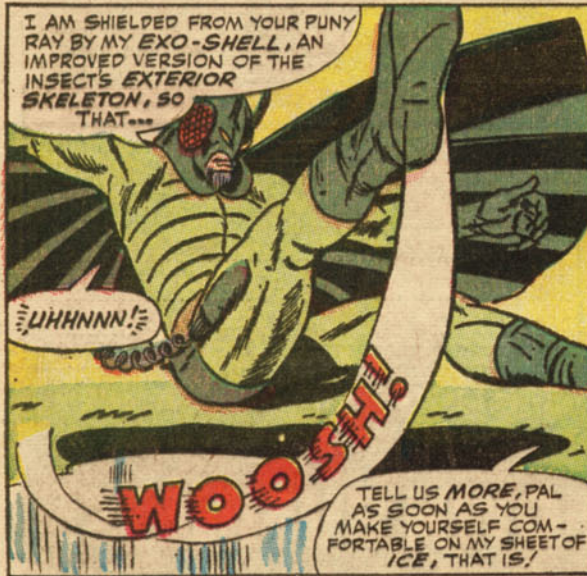


ONE OPTIC BLAST OUGHT TO PUT YOU OUT OF COMMISSION!

OF COURSE, YOU OVER-RATED CLOWNS!

NO GOOD! HE'S WEARING SOME SORT OF SUPER-STRONG ARMOR!

ATTA-BOY, LOKEY! JUST KEEP TALKIN'!

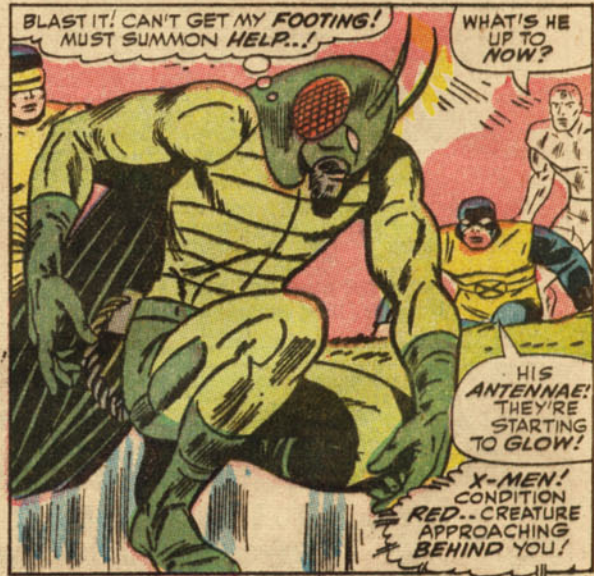


I AM SHIELDED FROM YOUR PUNY RAY BY MY EXO-SHELL, AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THE INSECTS EXTERIOR SKELETON, SO THAT...

UHHNNN!

WOOSH!

TELL US MORE, PAL AS SOON AS YOU MAKE YOURSELF COM-FORTABLE ON MY SHEET OF ICE, THAT IS!

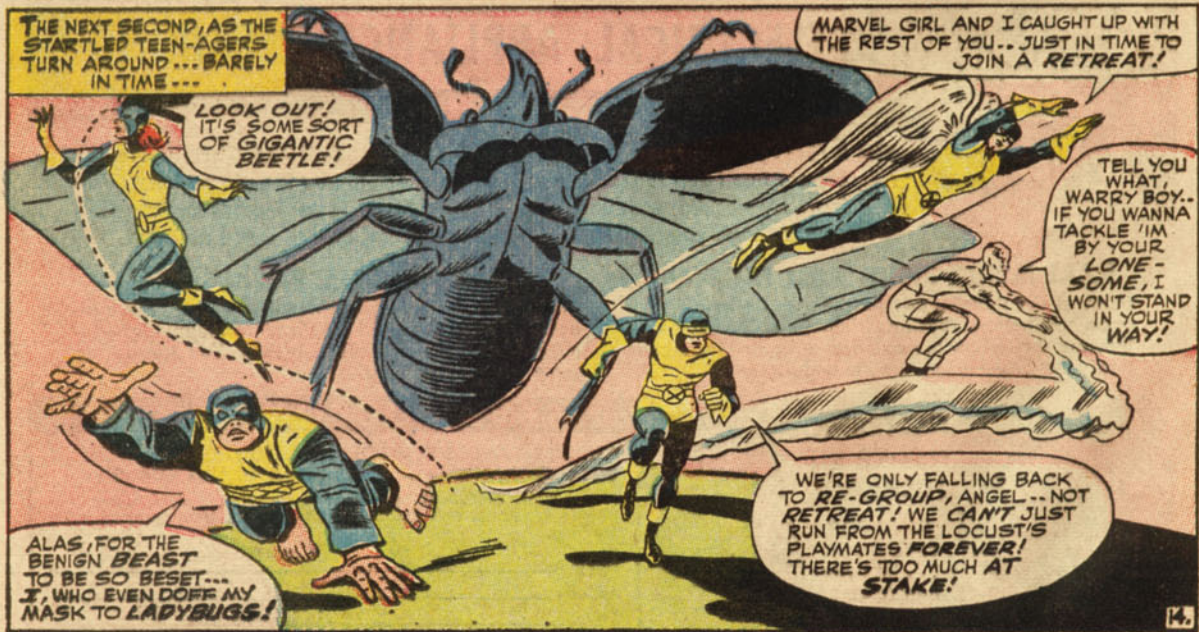


BLAST IT! CAN'T GET MY FOOTING! MUST SUMMON HELP..!

WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?

HIS ANTENNAE! THEY'RE STARTING TO GLOW!

X-MEN! CONDITION RED.. CREATURE APPROACHING BEHIND YOU!



THE NEXT SECOND, AS THE STARTLED TEEN-AGERS TURN AROUND... BARELY IN TIME...

LOOK OUT! IT'S SOME SORT OF GIGANTIC BEETLE!

MARVEL GIRL AND I CAUGHT UP WITH THE REST OF YOU... JUST IN TIME TO JOIN A RETREAT!

TELL YOU WHAT, WARRY BOY.. IF YOU WANNA TACKLE 'IM BY YOUR LONE-SOME, I WON'T STAND IN YOUR WAY!

ALAS, FOR THE BENIGN BEAST TO BE SO BESET... I, WHO EVEN DOFF MY MASK TO LADYBUGS!

WE'RE ONLY FALLING BACK TO RE-GROUP, ANGEL... NOT RETREAT! WE CAN'T JUST RUN FROM THE LOCUST'S PLAYMATES FOREVER! THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!

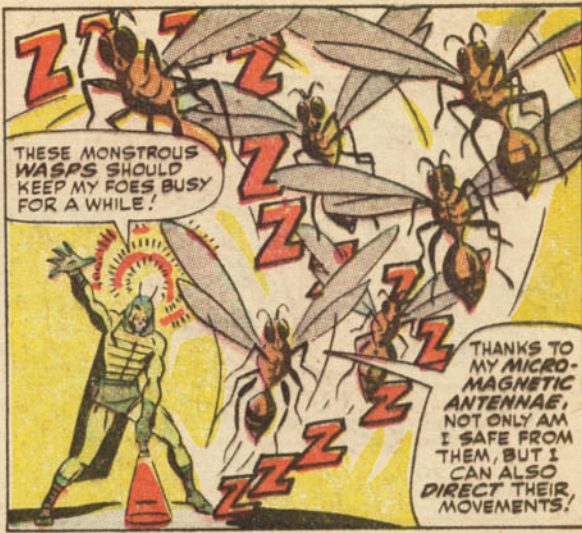


MEANWHILE, THE HOODED DR. HOPPER MAKES GOOD USE OF HIS BRIEF RESPITE...

IT'S FORTUNATE THAT I HAD ENLARGED THAT CARNIVOROUS BEETLE IN ADVANCE, FOR JUST SUCH AN EMERGENCY!

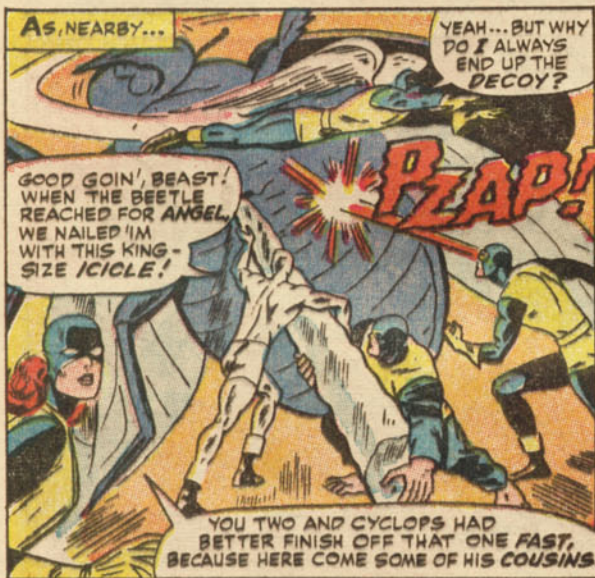
NOW FOR MY SECOND LITTLE SURPRISE FOR THE VAUNTED X-MEN!

I HAD PLANNED TO HATCH THESE EGGS IN CATTLE-BREEDING COUNTRY... BUT, I CAN ALWAYS ACTIVATE OTHERS!



THESE MONSTROUS WASPS SHOULD KEEP MY FOES BUSY FOR A WHILE!

THANKS TO MY MICRO-MAGNETIC ANTENNAE, NOT ONLY AM I SAFE FROM THEM, BUT I CAN ALSO DIRECT THEIR MOVEMENTS!



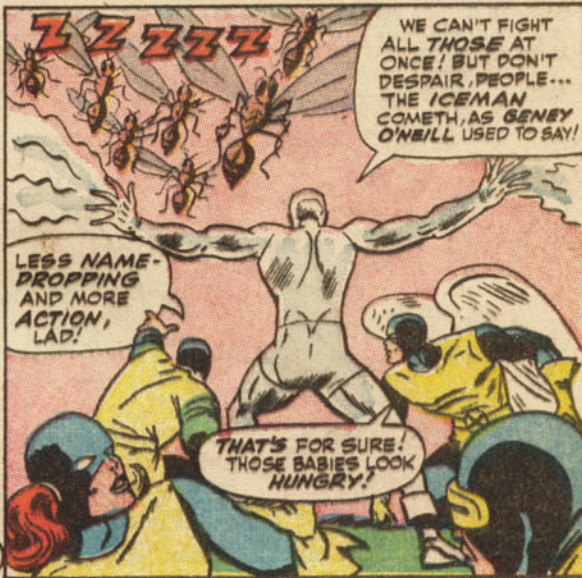
AS NEARBY...

YEAH... BUT WHY DO I ALWAYS END UP THE DECOY?

GOOD GOIN', BEAST! WHEN THE BEETLE REACHED FOR ANGEL WE NAILED 'IM WITH THIS KING-SIZE ICICLE!

PZAP!

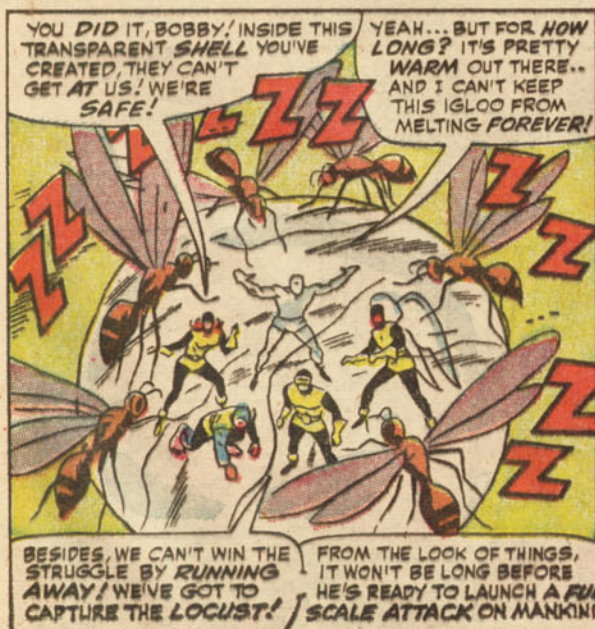
YOU TWO AND CYCLOPS HAD BETTER FINISH OFF THAT ONE FAST, BECAUSE HERE COME SOME OF HIS COUSINS!



WE CAN'T FIGHT ALL THOSE AT ONCE! BUT DON'T DESPAIR, PEOPLE... THE ICEMAN COMETH, AS GENY O'NEILL USED TO SAY!

LESS NAME-DROPPING AND MORE ACTION, LAD!

THAT'S FOR SURE! THOSE BABIES LOOK HUNGRY!

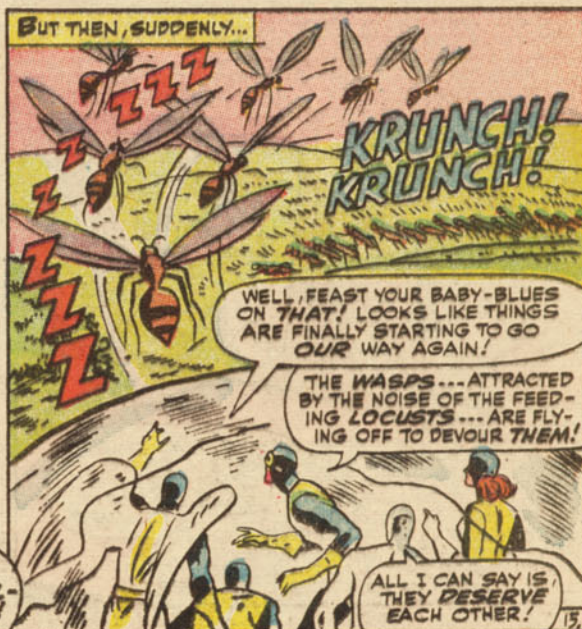


YOU DID IT, BOBBY! INSIDE THIS TRANSPARENT SHELL YOU'VE CREATED, THEY CAN'T GET AT US! WE'RE SAFE!

YEAH... BUT FOR HOW LONG? IT'S PRETTY WARM OUT THERE... AND I CAN'T KEEP THIS IGLOO FROM MELTING FOREVER!

BESIDES, WE CAN'T WIN THE STRUGGLE BY RUNNING AWAY! WE'VE GOT TO CAPTURE THE LOCUST!

FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE HE'S READY TO LAUNCH A FULL-SCALE ATTACK ON MANKIND!



BUT THEN, SUDDENLY...

KRUNCH! KRUNCH!

WELL, FEAST YOUR BABY-BLUES ON THAT! LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE FINALLY STARTING TO GO OUR WAY AGAIN!

THE WASPS... ATTRACTED BY THE NOISE OF THE FEEDING LOCUSTS... ARE FLYING OFF TO DEVOUR THEM!

ALL I CAN SAY IS THEY DESERVE EACH OTHER!

WATCH OUT FOR FLYING ICE, ALL! I'M BLASTING OUR WAY OUT OF THIS FRIGID FISHBOWL... NOW!



WOW! I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON OUR SIDE, CYKE!

MOMENTS LATER, AS THE ICY COVERING FALLS BEFORE SCOTT SUMMERS' POTENT EYE-BEAMS...



OKAY, SO WE'RE OUT! THAT STILL LEAVES THE LOCUST'S INSECT-BUDDIES FOR US TO WALTZ AROUND WITH!

DON'T BE SO SURE! LOOKS LIKE THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS TAKEN CHARGE OF THINGS HERE, TOO!

IF THEY KEEP THAT UP, WE'LL BE OUT OF WORK!

PROFESSOR XAVIER SEEMS TO FEEL DIFFERENTLY, BEAST! HE'S REVVING UP THE 'COPTER!

THEN, HE MUST HAVE A LEAD ON THE LOCUST! LET'S MOVE OUT!

AND, AS THE DAUNTLESS X-MEN TAKE TO THE SKIES ONCE AGAIN, AN AWESOME BUT HEARTENING SCENE TRANSPIRES BELOW...



THEY CAN'T TAKE THIS FLAME-THROWER, EITHER! BUT, WHAT WOULD WE HAVE DONE IF THERE'D BEEN THOUSANDS OF 'EM, INSTEAD OF JUST DOZENS?

THESE M-2'S ARE DOIN' THE TRICK! JUST KEEP FIRIN'!

WHILE, PASSING SWIFTLY OVER THE SCENE A FEW HUNDRED FEET ABOVE, PROFESSOR X AND HIS SUPER-POWERED STUDENTS ARE PLAGUED BY SIMILAR THOUGHTS...



DEPRIVED OF THE LOCUST'S HUMAN BRAIN, THOSE GIANT INSECTS FELL PREY TO MODERN WEAPONS! BUT, IF HE HADN'T BEEN FORCED TO FLEE, THE STORY MIGHT HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE!

WHAT'S OUR NEXT STEP, PROFESSOR?

IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME CORRECTLY, I SEEM TO RECALL THAT THE NEXT "X" ON THE MAP AT RYAN CHEMICALS WAS ONLY ABOUT FIFTY MILES FROM HERE! WE'RE HEADING FOR THAT SPOT... BUT, WE MUST ALLOW HIM TO ARRIVE THERE FIRST!

AND, THIS TIME, THERE'LL BE NO QUARTER! IT'S THE LOCUST... OR US!!

SOON, AS THE SEARCHING X-COPTER FOLLOWS THE WINDING OF THE PLACID OHIO RIVER...



THAT TRAILER... IT'S PARKED IN A PLACE WHERE THE OWNER ISN'T LIKELY TO BE DOING ANY HUNTING OR FISHING!

WITH OUR LUCK, IT'S PROBABLY THE VANGUARD OF AN ANTI-MUTANTS CONVENTION!

STILL, WE MUST BE AT ALMOST THE EXACT PLACE WHICH DR. HOPPER HAD MARKED ON HIS CHART! WE'LL SET DOWN QUIETLY NEARBY, AND HAVE A LOOK!

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MEANWHILE, EVEN AS THE X-MEN'S SLEEK CRAFT LANDS IN A WOODED GROVE... INSIDE THE TRAILER WHICH SERVES AS A "MOBILE LAB"...

ALREADY, THE HAVOC WREAKED BY MY FIRST CREATIONS PREPARES THE WORLD TO ACCEPT THE INSECT-MUTATION THEORIES OF DR. AUGUST HOPPER!

AND SOON, AFTER MORE FORAYS BY MY GIANT PETS IN THE CORN BELT, I SHALL STEP FORWARD TO DESTROY THEM... AND RECEIVE THE ACCLAIM WHICH THE WORLD HAS SO LONG HELD FROM ME!

IN ADDITION, BECAUSE OF THEIR OFFENSIVE MEDDLING, I SHALL USE MY NEW-FOUND INFLUENCE TO TURN THE PEOPLE MORE THAN EVER AGAINST THE ACCURSED X-MEN!

BUT, ENOUGH TALK! THE NEWEST BATCH OF EGGS SHOULD BE IONICALLY ACTIVATED BY NOW... AND IN GREATER NUMBERS THAN EITHER PREVIOUS TIME!

HOWEVER, AS THE LOCUST STEPS OUTSIDE THE TRAILER, HE IS STARTLED TO BEHOLD...

SOME SORT OF HERMIT... IN THE GARB OF A PAST CENTURY! WHAT IS HE DOING HERE?

I HAVE COME AS A FRIEND... TO SAVE YOU FROM YOUR OWN FOLLY!

BEGONE! THE LOCUST NEEDS NO FRIENDS!

EVERY MAN HAS NEED OF FRIENDS, LOCUST... WHETHER HE REALIZES IT OR NOT! YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO TO SET YOURSELF AGAINST HUMANITY... WHY??

WITH THE POWER YOU POSSESS, YOU COULD BE A BENEFACTOR OF MANKIND, INSTEAD OF ITS OPPRESSOR! WHY DO YOU CHOOSE THE COURSE OF EVIL?

BABBLING FOOL! WHAT DO YOU... OR ANYONE... KNOW OF... THE LOCUST?

A THOUSAND YEARS HENCE, MY NAME SHALL BE REVERED... WHEN THE TOMBS OF KINGS ARE BUT DUST!

I FEEL THAT YOU ARE TRULY NOT AN EVIL MAN... MERELY A DELUDED ONE!

FORGET YOUR SENSELESS PLANS... AND TURN YOUR GREAT KNOWLEDGE TO THE GOOD OF THE HUMAN RACE!

FORGET MY PLANS? NO... NOT WHILE I LIVE! I SHALL TOIL NO MORE FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF OTHERS!

THE WORLD SHALL PAY HOMAGE TO ME... OR MY INSECT HORDES WILL LAY WASTE TO IT!

WAIT! COME BACK!

NEVER! AND, THIS TIME I SHALL UNLEASH HUNDREDS OF RAVAGING LOCUSTS!

NO USE! IT'S UP TO THE X-MEN TO STOP HIM NOW! I ONLY PRAY THAT... IF THEY SUCCEED... DEFEAT WILL SHOCK HIM TO HIS SENSES!

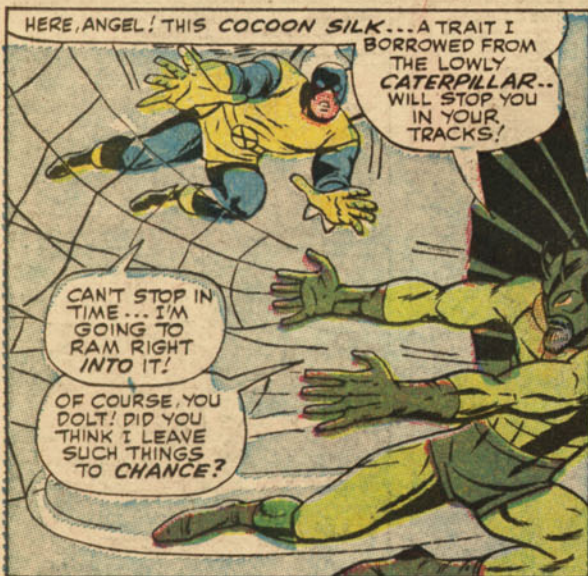
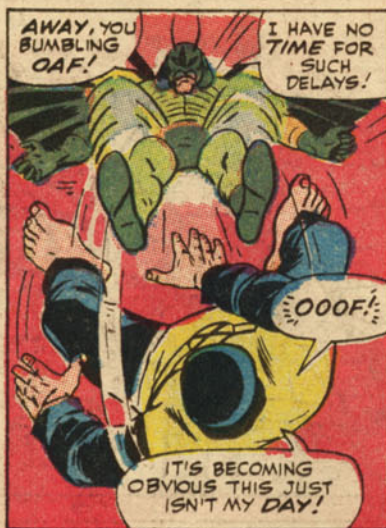
THEN, AS THE COLORFULLY-GARBED SCIENTIST FLUTTERS TO A LANDING, NOT FAR AWAY...

THE X-MEN! BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE FOUND ME SO QUICKLY?

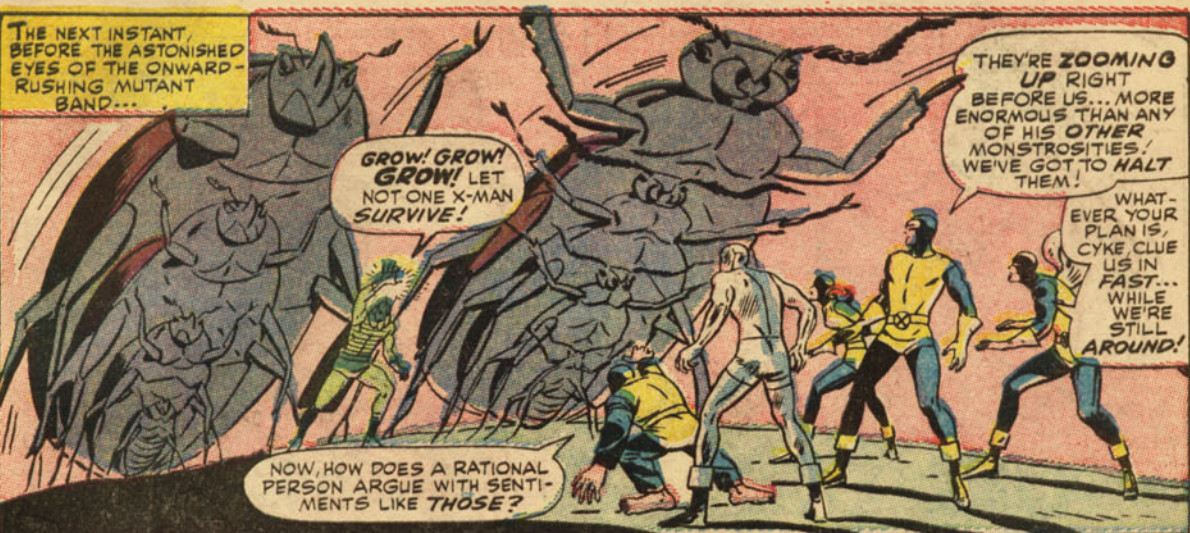
TRADE SECRET, CHUM!

MAYBE WE'LL WRITE YOU A LETTER ABOUT IT... WHEN YOU'RE SAFELY IN JAIL!

PERFECT PLANNING! THE PROFESSOR... IN HIS "HERMIT" GARB AND MECHANICAL LEGS... GOT THE LOCUST INCENSED ENOUGH TO HOP OFF... RIGHT INTO OUR ARMS!



THE NEXT INSTANT, BEFORE THE ASTONISHED EYES OF THE ONWARD-RUSHING MUTANT BAND...



GROW! GROW! LET NOT ONE X-MAN SURVIVE!

THEY'RE ZOOMING UP RIGHT BEFORE US... MORE ENORMOUS THAN ANY OF HIS OTHER MONSTROSITIES! WE'VE GOT TO HALT THEM!

WHAT- EVER YOUR PLAN IS, CYKE CLUE US IN FAST... WHILE WE'RE STILL AROUND!

NOW, HOW DOES A RATIONAL PERSON ARGUE WITH SENTIMENTS LIKE THOSE?

SUDDENLY, THE RESOURCEFUL MARVEL GIRL STEPS TO THE FORE, AND...



HIS ANTENNAE! IT'S THROUGH THEM THAT HE CONTROLS HIS CREATURES! IF ONLY I CAN...

SO! IN DESPERATION, THE FEMALE X-MAN HURLS HERSELF AGAINST ME!

DO NOT THINK TO STIR MY HEART TO MERCY! FOR, STILL I ORDER MY GIANT SUBJECTS TO DESTROY ALL OF YOU!



BUT... THEY ARE LUMBERING TOWARDS ME!

STOP! I, YOUR RULER, COMMAND YOU TO STOP!

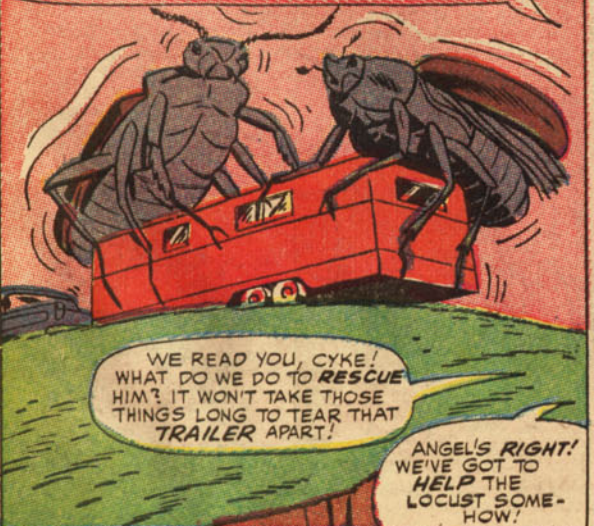
IT...IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! BOTH OF MY INSECT CREATIONS ARE ATTACKING ME! BUT, I CAN YET ESCAPE!



IN MY MOBILE LAB... IS AN ANTIDOTE WHICH WILL MAKE THEM SMALL AGAIN!

GREAT WORK, JEAN! HE DIDN'T SEE YOU TELEKINETICALLY KNOTTING HIS ANTENNAE!

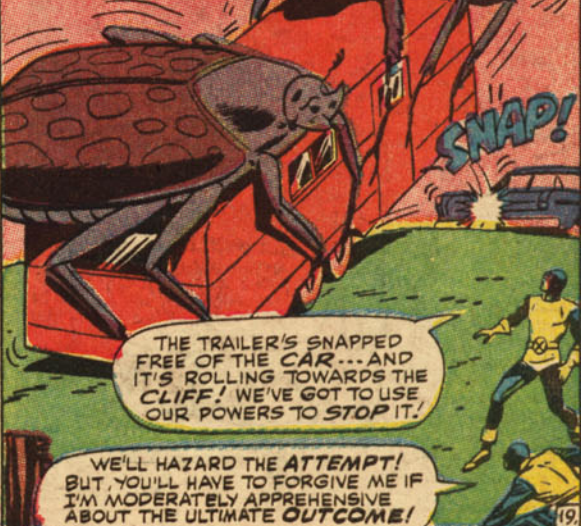
...AND, WITHOUT HIS COMMANDS TO GUIDE THEM, THE CONFUSED BEETLES ATTACKED HIM... PERHAPS BECAUSE, IN HIS LOCUST COSTUME, HE SO RESEMBLES ONE OF THE TINY INSECTS THEY NORMALLY PREY UPON!



WE READ YOU, CYKE! WHAT DO WE DO TO RESCUE HIM? IT WON'T TAKE THOSE THINGS LONG TO TEAR THAT TRAILER APART!

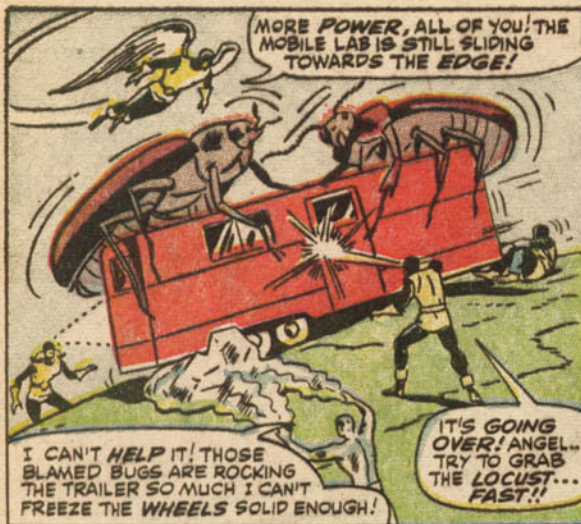
ANGEL'S RIGHT! WE'VE GOT TO HELP THE LOCUST SOME-HOW!

BUT, BEFORE THEY CAN SUIT ACTION TO THEIR WORDS... DISASTER STRIKES...



THE TRAILER'S SNAPPED FREE OF THE CAR... AND IT'S ROLLING TOWARDS THE CLIFF! WE'VE GOT TO USE OUR POWERS TO STOP IT!

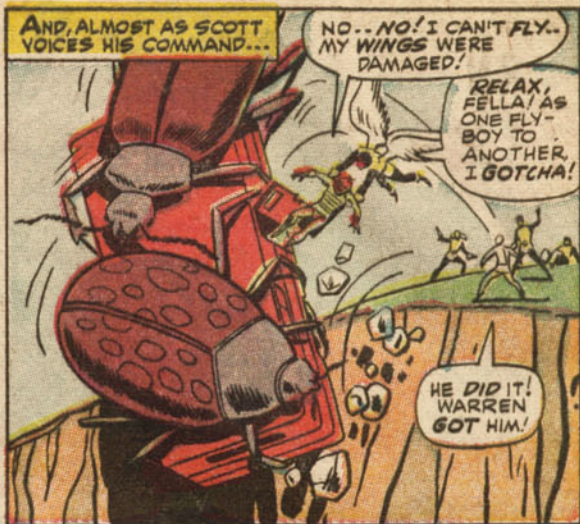
WE'LL HAZARD THE ATTEMPT! BUT, YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME IF I'M MODERATELY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME!



MORE POWER, ALL OF YOU! THE MOBILE LAB IS STILL SLIDING TOWARDS THE EDGE!

I CAN'T HELP IT! THOSE BLAMED BUGS ARE ROCKING THE TRAILER SO MUCH I CAN'T FREEZE THE WHEELS SOLID ENOUGH!

IT'S GOING OVER! ANGEL... TRY TO GRAB THE LOCUST... FAST!!



AND, ALMOST AS SCOTT VOICES HIS COMMAND...

NO... NO! I CAN'T FLY... MY WINGS WERE DAMAGED!

RELAX, FELLA! AS ONE FLY-BOY TO ANOTHER, I GOTCHA!

HE DID IT! WARREN GOT HIM!



BUT... MY MOBILE LAB... PRICELESS, IRREPLACEABLE EQUIPMENT! ALL GONE... DASHED IN THE RIVER BELOW!

MISTER, IF YOU DON'T SEE HOW LUCKY YOU ARE, I'M TEMPTED TO LET YOU JOIN IT!

YES, LOCUST... LOOK AROUND AND SEE THE ERROR OF YOUR PATH! THE X-MEN COULD HAVE LET YOU DIE... YET, THEY SAVED YOU FROM YOUR OWN CREATIONS!

PERHAPS... I UNDERSTAND AT LAST, OLD MAN! I HAVE BEEN... ILL!

BUT, I CAN YET ATONE FOR THE EVIL I HAVE CAUSED!



LET THESE DEVILISH DEVICES... MY SOLE REMAINING MAGNORAY AND STUN-WEAPON... JOIN MY OTHER INVENTIONS BENEATH THE WATERS!

I MUST SURRENDER TO THE AUTHORITIES... AND PAY MY DEBT FOR THE HARM I HAVE CAUSED!

AND PERHAPS, ONE DAY, THAT HARM WILL BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY THE GOOD YOU MIGHT ACCOMPLISH!



THEN, AS THE SOLITARY COSTUMED FIGURE OF DR. HOPPER DISAPPEARS IN THE DISTANCE...

NOW THAT THE THREAT IS OVER, JEAN WILL RETURN TO COLLEGE! HOW LONG WILL IT BE BEFORE SHE FORGETS THE X-MEN COMPLETELY?

I THOUGHT THAT, IN THIS GUISE, I COULD SOMEHOW REASON WITH OUR FOE!

AFTER THIS CASE, I COULD USE A BIT OF RELAXATION AS A "MERE" COLLEGE STUDENT!

YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN AN ACTOR, PROFESSOR!

WHAT OF DR. HOPPER, PROFESSOR? DO YOU THINK WE'LL SEE MORE OF... THE LOCUST?



IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, HANK! WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT HE HAS LEARNED HIS LESSON PERMANENTLY!

FOR, IF THE LOCUST RETURNED... LEADING AN ARMY OF GIANT INSECTS, EVEN WE MIGHT NOT, BE ABLE TO STOP HIM.

NEXT ISH:

WHO IS THIS MENACING FIGURE... AND WHAT INCREDIBLE POWER DOES HE STAND READY TO UNLEASH UPON AN UNSUSPECTING WORLD?



LET'S ALL FIND OUT TOGETHER... IN X-MEN #24! OKAY, PUSSYCAT? 20