

MARVEL
COMICS

THE UNCANNY

X-MEN



\$1.00 US
\$1.25 CAN
263
EARLY JULY
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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

**THE
AGONY
OF
FORGE!**

**NOW ON SALE
TWICE A MONTH!**



LONG TIME GONE, I TOLD MYSELF
I WAS DONE FIGHTING.

PAID MY BELLYFUL OF WAR.

TOO MANY
GHOSTS ON MY
CONSCIENCE
ALREADY.
I WANTED
NO MORE.

SO WHAT
AM I DOING
HERE...

STAN LEE
PRESENTS

THE LOWER DEPTHS

... IN A
MANHATTAN
SEWER, A MILE
BENEATH
OPEN SKY...

... LOADED
FOR BEAR?

AND WHY
DO I FEEL
LIKE I'VE
COME
HOME?

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EYE-SPYS SCAN CLEAR, I'VE
SOME TIME TO MYSELF.

SO I PULL OUT THE
HARDWARE AND
START TO WORK.

I MAKE THINGS,
Y'SEE.

IT'S A
KNACK.



MIND YOU, WHEN THE CRUNCH CAME— WHY BACK
WHEN— THAT WASN'T WHAT DID THE JOB.

ALWAYS
WONDERED
ABOUT
THAT.

AND HATED
IT, I THINK,
FOR LETTING
ME DOWN
WHEN I
NEEDED IT
MOST.

STRAIGHT
DOPE,
SARGE?

'FRAID
SO,
BILLY.



CENTRAL
HIGHLANDS,
SOUTH
VIETNAM.



WHAT'RE YOU SAYIN',
MAN? THE BRASS IS
JUST GONNA LET US
DIE?!

WE'RE
EXPENDABLE.



A WHOLE
LIFETIME
AGO.



YO,
FORGE--

--YOU
SAID
YOU'D SEE
US SAFE
BACK TO THE
WORLD!

I SAID
I'D TRY
MY BEST,
BILLY.



SOMETIMES,
I GUESS,
THAT'S NOT
ENOUGH.



SEEMS LIKE ONLY
YESTERDAY.

?!?

You!
TRYIN' TO GET YOURSELF KILLED, LADY--
--SNEAKING UP ON A BODY LIKE THAT?!

MORE ANGRY AT MYSELF THAN HER. HOSTILE WOULD'VE HAD ME COLD.

TOO LOST IN MY MEMORIES-- AND MY WORK-- FIGURING MY GIZMO'D SQUAWK IF THEY SAW TROUBLE.

BEEN OUT OF THE BUSH TOO LONG. I GOTTA GET BETTER.

I'M SORRY, FORGE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU.

I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW THINGS WERE.

RED'S NAME IS JEAN GREY...

... FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE OUTFIT I'VE PRETTY MUCH HOOKED UP WITH. A TEAM OF MUTANTS CALLED THE X-MEN.

THEY'VE SEEN BETTER DAYS. SO HAS SHE.





PRETTY QUIET, NOBODY'S CLOSE.

SURPRISED TO FIND ANYONE SUPER-POWERED LEFT DOWN HERE.

I THOUGHT ALL THE MORLOCKS HAD BEEN EVAC'D TO MUIR ISLE.



SO HAD WE.

THIS USED TO BE A THRIVING COMMUNITY, UNTIL THE MARAUDERS CAME TO SLAUGHTER EVERY MUTANT THEY FOUND HERE.

DID A BRUTALLY EFFICIENT JOB OF IT, TOO, AMONG THE MORLOCKS...

AND THOSE-- OF THE X-MEN AND X-FACTOR-- WHO TRIED TO HELP. *

I THOUGHT-- I HOPED-- THAT PARTICULAR NIGHTMARE ENDED WITH THE DEATHS OF THOSE MURDERERS AND THEIR BOSS, MR. SINISTER.

* IN THE MUTANT MASSACRE, CIRCA X-MEN #211. -- Bob



BUT YOU SAY THEY'VE BEEN REPLACED...

... BY SOMEONE WORSE.

THAT'S RIGHT--THE REAVERS.



WILL IT NEVER END?

IS THIS WHAT OUR FUTURE HOLDS, FORGE--

--KILL OR BE KILLED?

IN THAT KIND OF CHARNEL HOUSE WORLD...



...WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DREAM THAT BROUGHT THE X-MEN TOGETHER--

--OF AN EARTH WHERE ALL ITS CHILDREN, MUTANT AND NOT, CAN LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE?

BEATS ME, RED.



IN THE WHOLE OF HUMAN HISTORY, *HOMO SAPIENS* HASN'T EVEN MANAGED THAT ONE FOR ITSELF. WHY CHANGE FOR US?

I HAVE EYE-SPY'S CHARTING THE TUNNELS, SCOPING THE BEST ROUTE TO THE SURFACE. WITH A LITTLE LUCK...

...WE'LL BE OFF MORLOCK TURF BEFORE THEY'RE ANY THE WISER.

DON'T LOOK TOO THRILLED BY THAT, RED.

SHOULD I BE?

WHAT, YOU FIGURE YOUR LIFE IS RUINED...

'CAUSE OF HOW YOU LOOK?



SOMETIMES, BEING "DIFFERENT" HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH BEING A MUTANT.

I HAVE A LEG JUST LIKE THIS HAND, WITH SCARS TO MATCH--

-- AND TRUST ME ON THIS, LADY, YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO SEE ME AT THE BEACH, STRIPPED DOWN TO MY SHORTS. NEITHER DOES ANYONE ELSE.

BUT YOU LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT.

OKAY, 'STEAD OF ARMS, YOU HAVE TENTACLES--



--WHAT ABOUT YOUR TELE-PATHIC POWER?

THAT STILL WORK?



IN A MANNER OF SPEAK--

--ohWh!



THE PART OF MY MIND THAT CONTROLS MY TK ALSO MANIPULATES MY... YOU KNOW. EITHER / OR PROPOSITION-- ONE WORKS, THE OTHER DOESN'T.

ONLY-- THE MASS OF LIMBS IS TOO GREAT AND UNWIELDY THAT IF THEY GO LIMP...

...I'M PRETTY MUCH STUCK.

STILL, THEY DO SEEM TO POSSESS...



EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH AND DEXTERITY.

COULD BE A WORSE TRADE-OFF-- WELL!

"EYE-SPY'S FOUND SOMETHING!"

WELCOME, DEAR CHILDREN, WELCOME--

--TO MASQUE'S HAUNT OF HAPPINESS!

I TRUST YOUR JOURNEY HASN'T LEFT YOU UNDULY FATIGUED?

WHERE ARE WE?

WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE, HOW DID WE COME HERE?! ONE MOMENT, WE WERE STANDING IN MY DOORWAY--!



WHEN YOU ADDRESS ME, BOY, YOU'LL KEEP A CIVIL-- RESPECTFUL-- TONGUE IN YOUR HEAD...

...IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU.

TO MY ENCHANTED TOUCH...

...FLESH IS BLIT THE MOST MALLEABLE WAX--

--TO BE SHAPED AS I WILL.



A TELEPORTER BROUGHT YOU HERE...

...FOR US TO PLAY WITH.

THE QUESTION IS, PRECISELY HOW?

WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH ME...



...AT LEAST, LET THE LADY GO!

WHY, CALLISTO, YOU HAVE A CHAMPION!

BUT "LADY"-- REALLY, MY DEAR, IF YOUR POOR, DELUDED SWAIN BUT KNEW...

A MOST ADMIRABLE OFFER, SWEETNESS...

...BUT YOU'RE HARDLY DEALING FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH.

QUITE THE OPPOSITE.

I'M TOLD, PETER NICHOLAS, YOU'RE SOMETHING OF AN ARTIST.

PERHAPS THIS WILL GIVE YOU A BRAND NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD.

MY EYES!

IF NOTHING ELSE...

...CERTAINLY A UNIQUE ONE.

CURSE YOU, MASQUE!

YOU HAVEN'T THE RIGHT!!

BLISS!

NO!

HAVEN'T LEARNED YET, eh, CAL?

YOU DON'T RULE THE ALLEY ANYMORE.

THESE TUNNELS-- AND EVERYONE IN 'EM--

...ARE MINE!



LIKE THAT, DO YOU?

MAYBE LATER, IF YOU'RE VERY GOOD, YOU'LL GET ANOTHER "KISS." WON'T THAT BE NICE?

BUT WHAT MAKES THIS BOY SO SPECIAL THAT YOU HAVE TO KEEP RETURNING TO HIM...

...LIKE A MOTH TO THE FLAME--

--OF COURSE!

SILLY ME, I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE RESEMBLANCE FROM THE START!

(THEN AGAIN, WHY? SINCE I'VE NEVER MET THE X-MAN COLOSSUS, SO TO SPEAK, IN THE FLESH.)

PETER RASPUTIN, PETER NICHOLAS, THEY MIGHT ALMOST BE TWINS.

YOU REALIZE, DON'T YOU, MY PET, THE REAL COLOSSUS IS DEAD.

SLAIN ALONG WITH THE REST OF HIS WRETCHED TEAM.

WHICH MAKES THIS MERELY SOME POOR, UNFORTUNATE LOOKALIKE.

STILL, ONE MUST MAKE DO WITH THE MATERIAL AT HAND.

AND IF THIS ILLUSION MAKES YOU HAPPY, CAL--

--BECAUSE AS YOU KNOW, I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO SEE YOU HAPPY--

--IT SEEMS ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER--

...THAT YOUR PROUD YOUNG LOCHINVAR LOOK THE PART!



MIND YOU, THE RESEMBLANCE IS ONLY SKIN-DEEP.

FLESH, NOT METAL. COLOSSUS'S ARMORED LOOKS, BUT NONE OF HIS STRENGTH OR INVULNERABILITY.



CUT HIM, HE'LL BLEED.

SO IT'LL BE UP TO YOU, BRAVE CALLISTO, TO PROTECT HIM.

SUPPOSE WE REFUSE TO PLAY.

EASY CHOICE FOR YOU, DEAR, SINCE YOU KNOW WE WON'T DO A THING TO HARM OUR BESTEST TOY.



BUT PETEY'S ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY.

WE CATCH HIM...

YOU WANT HIM SAFE, YOU GET HIM TO THE STREET.

BETTER RUN, SWEETINGS, IN AN HOUR, WE START HUNTING.



MAJOR MISTAKE, MASQUE.



CALLISTO FOUNDED THE MORLOCKS.

NOBODY KNOWS THESE TUNNELS BETTER THAN HER.

LOOK AROUND YOU, RED. IN SOME WAY, MASQUE'S AFFECTING THIS LABYRINTH SAME AS HE DOES PEOPLE.

AND FROM THE WAY HE TALKS, THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE PLAYED THIS GAME.

ON THEIR OWN, I'D SAY THOSE TWO DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.

MAYBE. GOOD THING THEN, THEY AREN'T.



WASHINGTON, DC.

MAJOR ATTITUDES...

...WITH CLOTHES TO MATCH.

WANNABE'S!

WITHIN THE BELTWAY, THE PLACE TO GO-- ESPECIALLY IF YOU FIT THE DESCRIPTION.

EVERYONE STRIKING POSES, LOOKING TO SCORE POINTS, DETERMINED TO HAVE THE BEST OF TIMES!

VAL COOPER-- P.D. DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER (FOR PARAHUMAN AFFAIRS) TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES-- WOULDN'T BE SEEN DEAD IN A MEAT RACK LIKE THIS.

WHICH IS, OF COURSE, PRECISELY WHY SHE'S BEEN BROUGHT HERE.

MY APOLOGIES, DR. COOPER...

FOR THE MANNER OF MY INVITATION TO THIS MEETING.

EVEN IN THESE HEADY DAYS OF GLASGOW, A KGB COLONEL CAN HARDLY PHONE THE WHITE HOUSE FOR AN APPOINTMENT.

I APPRECIATE YOUR NEED FOR DISCRETION, COLONEL VAZHIN...

BUT WHY THIS--?!

TOO MUCH NOISE TO EAVESDROP ON A CONVERSATION.

MY ASSOCIATE, MAJOR LEVIN, PROVIDED YOUR NEW WARDROBE PARTLY FOR CAMOUFLAGE-- IT BEING TOTALLY UNLIKE YOUR NORMAL ATTIRE--

--BUT ALSO TO ASSURE US YOU CARRY NO RECORDING OR TRACKING DEVICES. THIS ASSIGNATION MUST BE TOTALLY OFF THE RECORD.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT, THE GREAT ALEXEI VAZHIN-- JAMES BOND, NICK FURY, AND GEORGE SMILEY ROLLED INTO ONE-- YOU'RE ACTUALLY SCARED!

BUT OF WHAT?!

WITHOUT HYPERBOLE, DOCTOR--

--THE POSSIBLE END OF HUMAN LIFE AS WE KNOW IT ON THE EARTH.

TOO MANY FRENZIED THOUGHTS FOR A TELEPATH.

MUTANTS ARE RESOLVING THEMSELVES INTO FACTIONS, CHOOSING UP SIDES, EACH WITH ITS OWN AGENDA AND GOALS.

TO NAME BUT A FEW OF THE MAJOR PLAYERS: THE MUTANT LIBERATION FRONT, A CREATURE WHO CALLS HIMSELF APOCALYPSE, ANOTHER KNOWN AS MR. SINISTER...

PLUS ANOTHER WHO REMAINS AS YET UNIDENTIFIED.

IT IS NO LONGER A QUESTION OF CRIMINALS...



...ACTING TO GAIN FOR THEMSELVES A MODICUM OF WEALTH AND POWER...



...BUT OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY FORCES SEEKING DOMINION OVER THE GLOBE ITSELF.

AND IN THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD, DR. COOPER...

...ORDINARY, NON-SUPER-POWERED HUMANITY MAY WELL HAVE NO PLACE.

MAGNETO WAS THE FIRST...

...BUT HE AT LEAST PRESUMED THAT WE WOULD ALL CO-EXIST.

SIMPLY WITH MUTANT-KIND ON TOP.



GENOSHA EXEMPLIFIES HIS WORST NIGHTMARE, A COUNTRY WHEREIN MUTANTS ARE LITTLE BETTER THAN SLAVES.

BUT WHO ALSO GIVE IT POWER AND INFLUENCE FAR OUT OF PROPORTION TO ITS SIZE.

PLEASE, COLONEL-- DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT ISLAND TO BE A MATCH FOR THE AVENGERS, OR FREEDOM FORCE, OR YOUR OWN SOVIET SUPER-BEINGS?



TO BE HONEST, I'D RATHER NOT FIND OUT.

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF OPEN WARFARE BETWEEN SUCH TEAMS?

IMAGINE BEIRUT, ON A GLOBAL SCALE.

IMAGINE A COMPARATIVE HANDFUL OF PEOPLE, HAVING THE SAME EFFECT ON THE BIOSPHERE AS A FULL-FLEDGED, STRATEGIC NUCLEAR EXCHANGE.

IMAGINE THE DEATH, DOCTOR, THE DEVASTATION.

IN THE PAST, THE SUPER HEROES SOMEHOW ENFORCED A CODE OF CONDUCT THAT PREVENTED THINGS FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND. BUT THAT OLD ORDER IS BREAKING DOWN.

NOT SO LONG AGO, MANY OF THE WORLD'S SUPER-VILLAINS UNITED IN A CONCERTED, COORDINATED ASSAULT ON THE HEROES. * IT WAS REPULSED. THIS TIME.

I FEAR THIS IS A NEW GAME, DOCTOR COOPER, WITH NO RULES AT ALL. AND NO MATTER WHICH FACTION WINS...



...WE-- HOMO SAPIENS-- WILL LOSE.

* ACTS OF VENGEANCE - 1944

...I COULD EASILY BELIEVE THIS TO BE ANOTHER PLACE ALTOGETHER.

THE MAIN TUNNEL OF THIS COMPLEX--THEY CALL IT "THE ALLEY"--IS BURIED A MILE DEEP AND RUNS THE LENGTH OF MANHATTAN.

PROBABLY AN OLD-TIME NUCLEAR BOMB SHELTER, DECOMMISSIONED AND FORGOTTEN ALMOST AS SOON AS IT WAS BUILT.

IN THIS WARM, DAMP DARKNESS, CHANGE THE STONE TO JUNGLE...



ANYONE SEE A FLICK CALLED THE "300 SPARTANS"?

WELL, BROS, THAT'S US.

SPOOKSHOW FIGURES MAIN FORCE NVA, DIVISION OR BETTER, IS GONNA ROLL DOWN THIS VALLEY TONIGHT.

THEY PUNCH THROUGH, THERE'S NOTHING MUCH AFTER THAT TO STOP THEM REACHING THE COAST. SPLIT THE COUNTRY IN HALF, CHANGE THE FACE OF THE WAR.

KILL A LOT OF OUR GUYS IN THE PROCESS.

ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY. VALLEY'S SMALL, EASILY DEFENSIBLE

AND THERE'S NO OTHER WAY THROUGH THESE MOUNTAINS.

HANDFUL OF MEN COULD KEEP AN ARMY BOTTLED UP.

WEATHER'S SO LOUSY, THERE'S NO CLOSE-AIR SUPPORT, NO HUEY'S FOR RE-ENFORCEMENTS OR EVAC.



YEAH, TILL THE AMMO RUNS OUT.

TRUE FACT. BUT BY THEN, THE BUFFS'LL BE HERE FROM GUAM. B-52'S DON'T MIND GRUNT WEATHER, THEY FLY ABOVE IT.

THEY'LL ARLIGHT THE VALLEY FROM END TO END. CRATER IT LIKE THE MOON.

AN' US ALONG WITH IT, SARGE!



HMMH?!?
BLAST
BLAST
BLAST!

LEAVE THE DREAM-TIME FOR WHEN YOU CAN AFFORD IT, MAN!

OR YOU'LL END UP AS DEAD AS THEM!

BANSHEE'S POWER IS A SONIC SCREAM. ALLOWS HIM TO FLY. AND, WHEN HE PUSHES TO THE MAX, PUNCH A HOLE THROUGH MOST MOUNTAINS.

MASQUE TOOK CARE OF THAT.

BY TAKING AWAY HIS TOTAL CAPACITY TO MAKE VOCAL SOUNDS.

OR EAT. OR DRINK. MOST LIKELY, MASQUE'S WAY OF KEEPING HIM ON A SHORT LEASH.

CONTACT!

PETER AND CAL, THEY'RE CLOSE-- BUT SO ARE THE MORLOCKS ON THEIR TAIL.

IF WE'RE GOING TO DO ANY GOOD...

WITHOUT A MOUTH, APOLOGIES TO HARLAN ELLISON, HE CAN'T SCREAM.

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT MY ABILITY TO KEEP PACE, FORGE...

...WE'VE GOT TO ROLL?

BUT I DON'T WANT TO SPLIT US UP.

...YOU NEEDN'T BOTHER.

THIS IS INCREDIBLE!

I JUST THINK OF WHAT I WANT TO DO...

...AND MY...

...WELL, THEY RESPOND INSTINCTIVELY. SAME AS NORMAL ARMS OR LEGS WOULD.

SHE STILL HAS TROUBLE ACCEPTING THE TENTACLES.

BUT THEIR USE IS BECOMING SECOND-NATURE. SHE'S ADAPTING-- AND, IN SOME WAYS I SUSPECT, STARTING TO LIKE IT.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF MASQUE'S METAMORPHOSES? THAT, NO MATTER WHAT HE DOES TO YOU, IT BECOMES THE NORM-- AND YOUR OLD APPEARANCE, THE FREAK?

CAREFUL! YOU SHOULDN'T PUSH SO HARD!

WITH ONLY ONE EYE, YOU HAVE NO DEPTH PERCEPTION.

TIME WAS, I SAW BETTER WITH ONE THAN MOST DID WITH BOTH.

TRUST ME, THAT ISN'T THE PROBLEM.

CALLISTO--
--SOMETHING ABOUT YOU-- YOUR VOICE-- IT'S DIFFERENT!

NO!

ROT YOU, MASQUE, IT'S TOO SOON!

NO-- ROT ME FOR NOT KILLING YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE.

WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY--

-- BECAUSE HE MADE YOU BEAUTIFUL?

THAT BEAUTY ISN'T ME-- IT'S A LIE, DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, A MASK THAT DEFINES MY LIFE AND BEING, THAT I CAN'T EVER BE RID OF.

MASQUE GETS HIS GIGGLES BY GIVING ME THE ILLUSION THAT I CAN STILL BE WHO AND WHAT I WAS.

BUT IT NEVER LASTS.

AND EACH REVERSION COMES QUICKER THAN THE LAST.

I KEEP FIGHTING TO HOLD ONTO MYSELF, BUT MORE AND MORE, THE FORM DEFINES THE CONTENT. THE FAKE BECOMES REALITY.

THE PACKAGE DOESN'T MATTER, CALLISTO, ONLY WHAT'S INSIDE.

ALL I AM ANYMORE, PETER, IS A PACKAGE.

I WON'T BELIEVE THAT, I REFUSE!

ALL RIGHT, SO YOU'RE NOT THE WOMAN YOU WERE. PART OF YOUR LIFE IS LOST TO YOU. THAT HAPPENS. DOES THAT MEAN YOU GIVE UP? DOES IT HAVE TO CHANGE WHO YOU ARE?!



DUCK, BIG GUY!

WAIEDOH!



SORRY 'BOUT THAT--



...BUT THIS MOMENT...



...IS ALL MINE!

KRAK!



SOMETHING ON THE ORDER, I THINK...

OH!



...OF A LAST HURRAH.

PITY ABOUT MY 'ANGEL.'



PERHAPS, DEAR CAL, YOUR 'ARTIST' HERE WILL SERVE AS A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT...



AGKOH!

...ONCE HE'S LEARNED HIS LESSON...

...ABOUT WHO'S IN CHARGE.



NOW ISN'T THAT STRANGE.

Awwk!



I WAS JUST FIGURING PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING...

-ABOUT YOU!

SOK!



CONTACT CAME EARLY.

GOT REAL NASTY, REAL FAST.

TRIED OUR BEST TO MAKE THE NVA BELIEVE WE WERE A MAJOR OUTFIT, STEAD OF A HANDFUL OF WORN-OUT FOOT-SLOGGERS. MUST'VE WORKED, TOO, 'CAUSE FROM THE START, THEY TOOK US SERIOUS.



OPPOSITE HOLDS HERE.

MASQUE KNOWS OUR NUMBERS AND CAPABILITIES A LOT MORE THAN WE DO HIS.

BUT IT'S QUICKLY CLEAR HIS FOLKS AREN'T USED TO PREY THAT FIGHTS BACK.



WE DID ALL SAIGON ASKED AND MORE.

MOST OF US WERE EVEN STILL ALIVE...

WHEN ZERO-HOUR CAME FOR THE AIRLIGHT.



FIGURED WE'D MAKE OUR BREAK...

WHEN THE BOMBS STARTED FALLING.

BUT THE BUFFS WERE LATE.



WE PAID THE PRICE.



NEVER BEEN STABBED BEFORE.

SHOULDN'T IT HURT MORE?

SHOCK, PROBABLY IN SHOCK, MUST BE IN SHOCK.

FEEL SO WEIRD.

WAS THE KNIFE POISONED?



NO BLOOD FROM THE WOUND!

BURNING UNDER MY SKIN, LIKE MY BLOOD'S RED-HOT.

NO SIGN OF ANY WOUND AT ALL!



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?!

WHO CARES...
--SO LONG AS I CAN HELP!



SAW A FLASH OF ENERGY AS THE BOY GOT UP.

THOUGHT HE LOOKED FAMILIAR.

NOW I KNOW.



MORLOCKS NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT 'EM, THEY EXPECTED MASQUE'S "PAINTED" FLESH.

NOT THE ARMORED MASS OF THE TRUE COLOSSUS.



IN THE END, WAY BACK WHEN, IT WAS JUST ME.

TOTALLY ALONE.

TOTALLY GONE.

DETERMINED TO AVENGE MY MEN'S DEATHS, WHATEVER THE COST. AND, CALLING ON MY POWERS AS A SHAMAN, USING A SPELL SO OBSCENE IT STILL SHAMES ME TO THINK OF IT...



I DID.

I'M OLDER NOW.

LIKE TO THINK, WISER.



HOPEFULLY, I'VE FOUND A BETTER WAY.



FOLLOW THE PATH-FINDER!

IT'LL LEAD YOU OUT!



I'LL COVER YOU!

SEE, I'M A MUTANT, SAME AS MY FRIENDS.



MY POWER'S TO MAKE THINGS.

TOM SWIFT AND TOM EDISON, ROLLED INTO ONE. IF I CAN IMAGINE A THING, I CAN BUILD IT.

THAT WAS WHAT I NEEDED IN THE 'NAM.

THE SPIRIT-SPELL WAS KNOWLEDGE LEFT IN TRUST, NEVER REALLY MEANT TO BE USED.

BUT I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER.



AND EVEN NOW...

...THERE ARE TIMES I STILL FIND MYSELF SORELY TEMPTED.



MY GAME, INDIAN...

...AND I DON'T PLAY TO LOSE.

BUSS GOT 'EM ALL--
EVEN PETER.

NOW
IT'S MY
TURN.



ONE OF THE
ADVANTAGES
OF A BIONIC
HAND, THOUGH--



--HER BITE
HAS NO
EFFECT.



ME NEITHER,
MORLOCK!

POW!



ONE PALTRY METAL
HAND WON'T PROTECT
YOU FROM MY
TOUCH, X-MAN.

TRUE.



BUT
THEN
AGAIN...



OURNUGH!

...MINE ISN'T THE
HAND TO WORRY
ABOUT.



SLAM!

QUICK ON THE UPTAKE, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT-- KNEW RIGHT FROM THE FIRST WHERE HE'D GONE WRONG.

I'M ALL THE HOPE YOU HAVE. KILL ME AND THERE'S NOTHING!

SOMETIMES, NOTHING'S PREFERABLE.

BRAVE TALK!

BUT THE MOMENT CALLISTO LEAVES HERE, BOY, YOUR LOVE IS DOOMED!

BECAUSE EVERYONE WILL WANT TO POSSESS SUCH PERFECTION-- AND SOME WON'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER.

WITHOUT ME, BANSHEE'S A DEAD MAN-- AND HOW LONG BEFORE JEAN GREY WISHES SHE COULD JOIN HIM? WHAT PRICE SCOTT SUMMERS' LOVE NOW, eh, MY DEAR?

YOUR ONLY LIFE, YOUR ONLY HOME, IS HERE WITH ME.

NOT A CHANCE.

WAIT! MY LIFE THEN FOR YOUR FREEDOM!

WE'RE FREE NOW.

AND YOU'VE MADE IT PLAIN...

...WE'VE NOTHING TO LOSE.

BOUNCER!

TELE-PORT THESE FOOLS OUT OF MY FACE!

THROW 'EM BACK WHERE THEY BELONG!

BAMF!

THEY'LL SEE...

THEY'LL LEARN...

IN NO TIME AT ALL...

...THEY'LL COME CRAWLING TO ME FOR MERCY?

PETER NICHOLAS'S SONO LOFT.

"BEST BLUFF I EVER PULLED, I REALLY HAD MASQUE CONVINCED."

WORKED, TOO, HE CUT US LOOSE."

"I'LL TELL YOU, THOUGH, SEAN-- HAPPY AS I AM TO HAVE MY ARMS AGAIN, EVERY SO OFTEN I FIND MYSELF MISSING, Y'KNOW, WHAT I HAD."

"THAT'S A YEARNIN', LASS, YE'RE WELCOME TO."

"ME, I'M GLAD T' BE ONCE MORE AS THE LORD GOD MADE ME."

"THAT WAS NO TETANUS SHOT FORGE GAVE US, BACK BEFORE WE GOT NABBED, HE WAS TAKING CELL SAMPLES."

"AYE, HE KNEW OF MASQUE'S CAPABILITIES AN' JUST T' BE SAFE, MADE A RECORD OF OUR TRUE GENETIC PATTERN, A TEMPLATE HE COULD USE, SHOULD THE WORST HAPPEN-- WHICH IT DID--"

"-- T' RESTORE US T' NORMAL."

"THAT WAS WHAT HE WAS TINKERING WITH DOWN IN THE TUNNELS."

"BUT WHY NOT TELL US?"

"AN' GET OUR HOPES UP?"

"WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST GUARANTEE OF SUCCESS? SAVE HIS FAITH IN HIS OWN ABILITIES?"

"I SEE YOUR POINT."

"THAT COVERS US, WHAT ABOUT PETER?"

"EVIDENTLY, WHEN HE TRULY TRANSFORMED INTO COLOSSUS, THERE AT THE END, HIS BODY REVERTED TO ITS PRIMARY GENETIC MATRIX."

"TRANSFORMING HIM BACK, WHEN CUED, INTO THE ALTERNATE FORM IT REMEMBERED."

"USING HIS MUTANT POWER TO INVENT THE DEVICE NECESSARY TO BRING IT OFF."

THE BODY REMEMBERS, NOT PETER HIMSELF.

"DOESN'T SEEM SO."

"NO RECOGNITION OF US, OR MEM'RIES OF HIS LIFE WITH THE X-MEN."

"AN', I'LL TELL YE STRAIGHT, JEAN, I'M WON'DRIN' IF THAT'S SO BAD A THING."

"OR WOULD THE CRIME BE DRAGGIN' HIM BACK TO THIS MURDEROUS, MADCAP LIFE OF OURS?"

"I WISH I KNEW."

"HAVE YE SEEN FORGE ABOUT?"

"ON THE ROOF."



"SAID HE HAD TO SAY SOME GOOD-BYES."



I GOT 'EM OUT, BROG.



THIS TIME, THIS OUTFIT, I KEPT MY WORD.

I DIDN'T BREAK FAITH.

ALIVE AND SAFE AND WHOLE...

I BROUGHT MY PEOPLE HOME!

NEXT IN TWO WEEKS: **HOT PURSUIT!**