

# THE UNCANNY

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MARVEL COMICS



X-MEN

FEB '97 341

# X-MEN



## ALONE AGAINST THE POWER OF GLADIATOR!

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MADUREIRA  
&  
Pruitt  
IN LOVING MEMORY  
OF  
RAYMOND ELORIDGE  
NOV. 17, 1917 - OCT. 12, 1996 -  
SB

# STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE UNCANNY X-MEN

NOT THAT IT IS MY UNABASHED INTENT TO RAISE THE HOPES OR WARM THE COOKIES OF MY COMPATRIOTS' HEARTS --

-- BUT WITHIN MY ADMITTEDLY LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF ALL THINGS METEOROLOGICAL...

... MY POSTULATIONS NEAR POSITIVELY PREDICT THAT THE CURRENT CONDENSATION WILL COINCIDE CORRECTLY WITH THE MOST DESIRED OF CHRONOLOGICAL OCCURRENCES!

GREAT.

AH GUESS. WHAT'S THAT MEAN IN ENGLISH, HANK?

AH'M GONNA GUESS:

"IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE HAVIN' A WHITE CHRISTMAS?"

X-ACTLY!

## When strikes a GLADIATOR!

A DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT X-MEN TALE BROUGHT TO YOU BY:  
SCOTT LOBDELL JOE MADUREIRA TIM TOWNSEND

RICHARD STARKINGS with COMICRAFT

STEVE BUCCELLATO with TEAM BUCCE!

BOB HARRAS

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AS WE'VE ALL DECIDED TO DIVEST OURSELVES OF THE YOLK OF MUTANTDOM IN GENERAL AND X-MENESS IN PARTICULAR ON THIS CHRISTMAS EVE...

... WHO WOULD LIKE TO JOIN ME -- MY IMAGE-INDUCED FORM NOTWITHSTANDING -- AND THE TEMPTING TRISH TILBY FOR DINNER?

"TEMPTING TRISH TILBY"?



SORRY, MON AMI. OTHER PLANS.

?!  
BUT, REMY... AH HOPED --  
AH MEAN... AH THOUGHT...



MERCI, ANYWAY, CHERE.  
'SIDES, ROGUE -- POPPA ALWAYS TAUGHT ME, "THREE'S A CROWD..."

->ACHEM->



WELL, THEN... I GUESS --

SORRY, DR. MCCOY, BUT WE'VE GOT OTHER PLANS AS WELL.

WE DO?

YES.

WHEN?

NOW.

WHAT?

Shhh.



MERRY CHRISTMAS, SIR!  
WOULD YOU AND THE MISSUS CARE FOR A RIDE?

NO, BUT IF YOU'D CARE TO CHAUFFEUR MY FRIEND AND I FOR A WHILE --

-- WE'D APPRECIATE IT.

JOSEPH, AH'D RATHER --

SULK?

POINT.



DO I NEED TO COME UP WITH A POLITE EXCUSE --

-- OR IS IT ENOUGH TO SAY THAT AFTER THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS, I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EVENING ALONE?

YOUR HONESTY IS APPRECIATED, BISHOP.

OH? LIKE AFTER GUNSLAUGHT, THE DEPARTURE OF NAUIGER, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EARTH'S HIGHEST HEROES, AND THE ASSASSINATION OF CRAWFORD CREEK... YOU WOULDN'T BE EXHAUSTED TOO? BOB



INDEED. I'LL SEE YOU ALL BACK AT THE MANSION?



ET TU, SAM?

ACTUALLY, AH'D LOVE TO JOIN Y'ALL! AH JUST GOT A FEW THINGS T'PICK UP FOR MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, FIRST.



AH'M JUST GONNA HOP IN T'THE TOY STORE RIGHT QUICK AND PICK 'EM.



IT SHOULDN'T TAKE FIVE MINUTES. AH'LL SEE YA AT THE RESTAURANT?

RIIIGHT. FIVE MINUTES.

WE'LL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN.

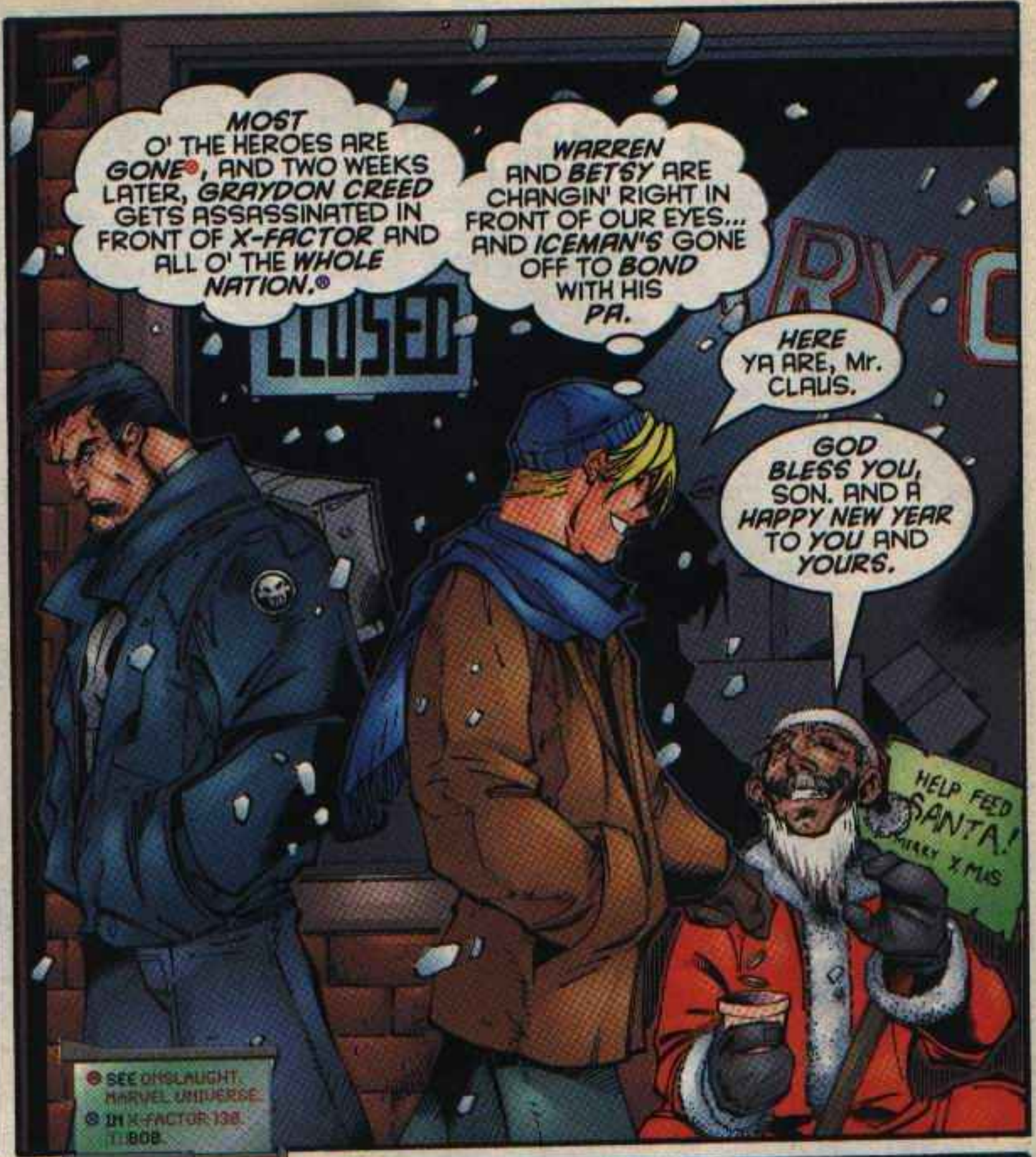


AH HAVE TO ADMIT -- IF AH WASN'T SO FAR INTO THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT...

... AH RECKON AH'D BE PRETTY DEPRESSED.

AH MEAN, THIS AIN'T EXACTLY BEEN A BANNER YEAR FOR MUTANTS.

PROFESSOR XAVIER SLIPS A GEAR OR TWO, MAGNETO JOINS THE X-MEN AND ONSLAUGHT PRACTICALLY DESTROYS THE WORLD.



MOST O' THE HEROES ARE GONE, AND TWO WEEKS LATER, GRAYDON CREED GETS ASSASSINATED IN FRONT OF X-FACTOR AND ALL O' THE WHOLE NATION.

WARREN AND BETSY ARE CHANGIN' RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR EYES... AND ICEMAN'S GONE OFF TO BOND WITH HIS PA.

HERE YA ARE, Mr. CLAUS.

GOD BLESS YOU, SON. AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOURS.

SEE ONSLAUGHT, MARVEL UNIVERSE. © 2011 X-FACTOR 138. T. BOB.



BELIEVE ME, SANTA...  
... IT CAN ONLY GET BETTER.

NOT THAT AH MEAN TO COMPLAIN.

SURE AH MISS MA, JOSH, JED, JOELLE AND PAIGE...

... AND O' COURSE, PA...



... BUT AH'M STILL A REALLY LUCKY GUY.

AH GOT ANOTHER FAMILY RIGHT HERE...

... A REAL SPECIAL ONE.

IF'N AH DON'T COUNT ALL THE PEOPLE WHO'RE ALWAYS TRYIN' TO KILL ME --



-- AH LEAD --

-- A PRETTY --  
-- CHARMED --

-- LIFE? --



HO.  
HO.  
AND HO.

ANOTHER FIFTY DOLLARS IN BATTERIES?!

MAY I WRAP THAT FOR YOU, SIR?

BUT DONDI HAS ONE!

BUY IT FOR HER THEN I'LL PLAY WITH IT!

JUMBO!

... ANY IN THE BACK?

SOLD OUT! MY KID'LL KILL ME!

DEEP BREATHS, SAM.  
JUS' THINK OF IT AS A DANGER ROOM WITH KIDS.

CAN I HELP YOU, SIR?

AH HOPE SO.

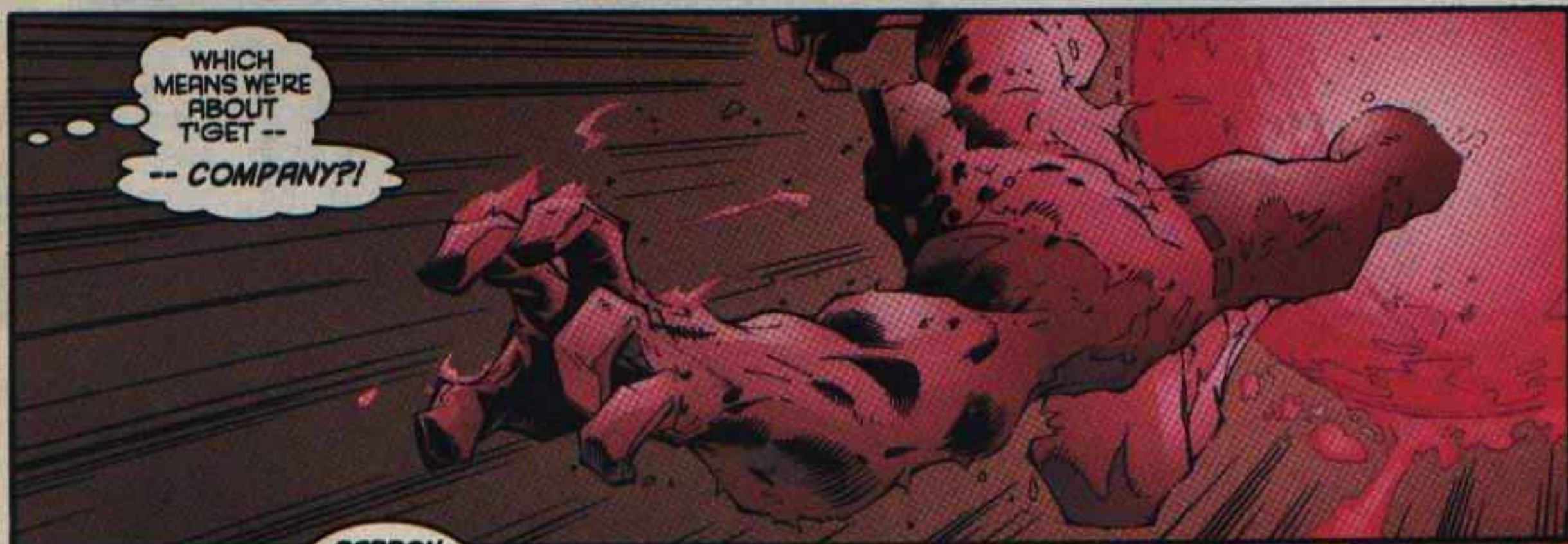
WE SOLD OUT --  
-- ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO.

CAN I INTEREST YOU IN ANYTHING ELSE?

AH RECKON.

DO YOU SELL MONGOZOID'S 3000 CARTRIDGES?

ANY SUGGESTIONS?



WELL, THAT WORKED OUT BETTER THAN IT HAD ANY RIGHT TO.

SHE'S FINE.

AH'M FINE.

BUT THE STORE'S STILL FULL'A KIDS.

MEANS AH GOTTA...  
... FIND...

GRAB

?!

GLADIATOR...

... OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD?!

YES, "CANNONBALL"...  
PREATOR OF THE ROYAL GALACTIC HOUSE OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE.

I CAME IN SEARCH OF THE X-MEN.

YOU WILL DO.



**MEANWHILE...**

NOT THE MOST DISCREET USE O' YOUR MAGNETIC POWERS.

YA REALIZE CYCLOPS WOULD HAVE BOTH OUR HEADS FOR THIS?

THEN IT IS A GOOD THING HE'S NOT HERE.

Um... I'M GOING TO GO OUT ON A LIMB HERE...

... MUTANTS, RIGHT?

THAT OBVIOUS?

WE'RE SORRY, SIR. WE'LL PUT YOU DOWN AND --

YOU'LL DO NO SUCH THING, MA'AM.

I'VE READ THE PAPERS... I'VE SEEN THE TELEVISION REPORTS ABOUT MUTANTS.

WHAT'S MORE, I'VE COME TO MY OWN CONCLUSIONS.

I THINK YOU'RE ALL TRYING YOUR BEST TO LEAD YOUR OWN LIVES...

... A LOT OF TIMES GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE SURE US NORMAL FOLK CAN LIVE OURS.

WHAT I'M SAYING IS, IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE YOU IN MY CAB.

I MEAN, CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR MIRACLES, RIGHT..?

I'D LIKE TO ENJOY THIS ONE.

JUST AS SOON AS I CAN GET MY FINGERNAILS OUT OF MY KNEECAPS, THAT IS.

WHY... THANK YOU, SIR.

THAT MEANS A LOT.

IF YOU COULD DROP US OFF AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER -- THAT WOULD BE PERFECT.

NOT TERRIBLY FAR AWAY...

... AT 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH...

I WOULD LOVE FOR ME TO BE HOME TOO, ANNE --

-- BUT I HAVE BOOKS THREE DAYS FROM SHIPPING --

-- AND SCOTT AND JOE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED THE NEXT ISSUE!

GIVE THE BOYS A KISS GOODNIGHT FOR ME AND...

...

Um.

Uh.

Mm.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.

I HAVE BEEN WORKING TOO HARD.

I'LL, UH... BE HOME SOON.

LOVE YOU.

OPTOWN...

BACK OFF -- SIR!

FA  
HOOOM

YOU DARE..P!

AH'M GONNA DO A LOT MORE'N DARE!

LIKE MAYBE BLEED --

-- OR BRUISE --

-- OR GET BATTED AROUND SOME, PROB'LY!

ACCORDIN' TO THE PROFESSOR'S FILES --

-- THIS FELLA TOOK ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR... AND WON!

BUT IF IT'S UP T'ME T'STOP HIS RAMPAGE... AH RECKON AH'M GONNA HAVETA RISE TO THE OCCASION.

AH'D LIKE WORDS WITH YOU, GLADIATOR --

EhP



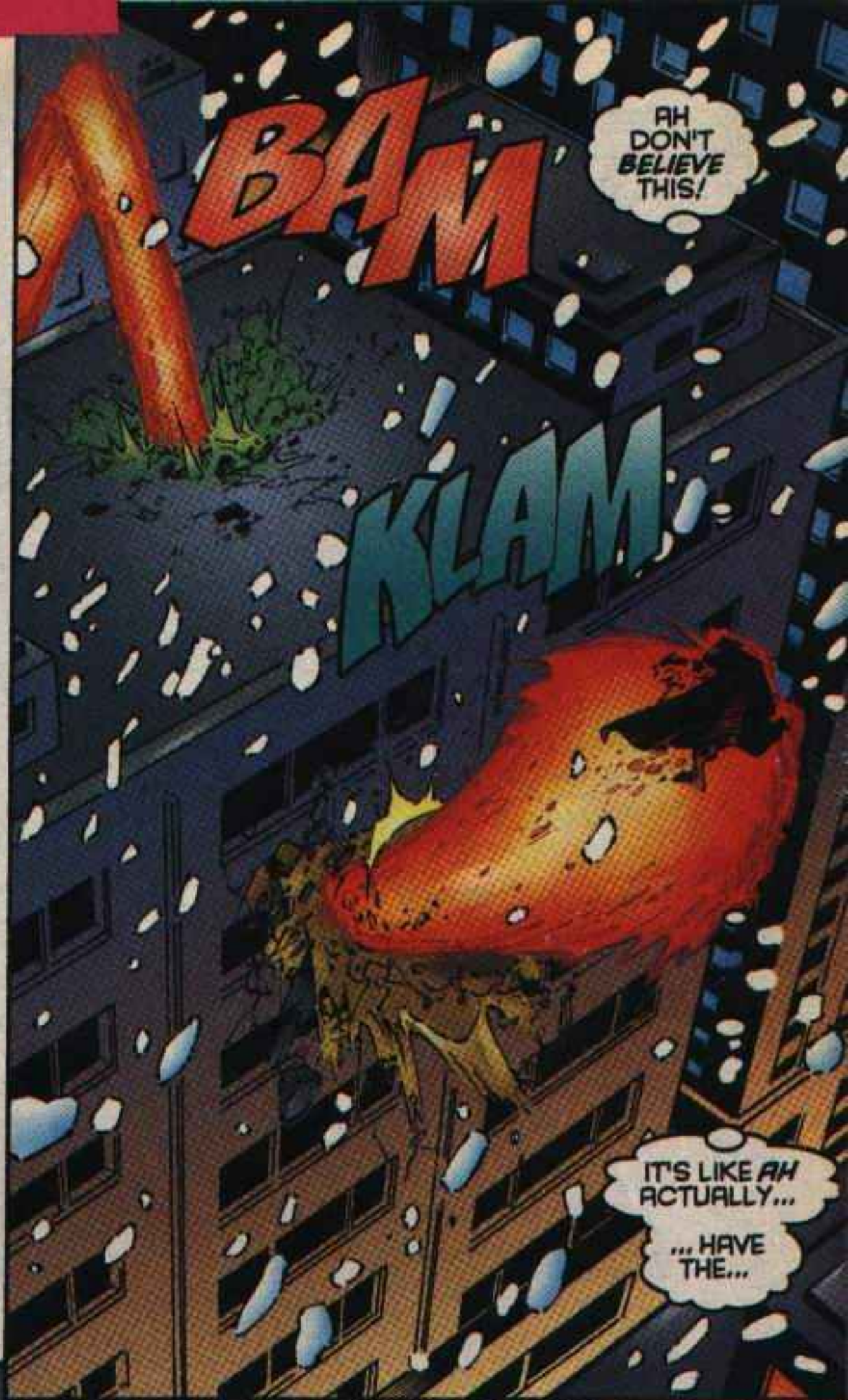
-- OUTSIDE!

# SLAMBO

AS IN,  
"AWAY FROM  
THE INNOCENT  
BYSTANDERS!"

THE FIRST  
LESSON  
PROFESSOR X  
EVER TAUGHT  
US --

-- THE  
VERY FIRST  
DAY O'  
SCHOOL.



AH  
DON'T  
BELIEVE  
THIS!

# BAM

# KLAM

IT'S LIKE AH  
ACTUALLY...

... HAVE  
THE...



... UPPER  
HAND?!

# BOP

DID WE  
JUST...

... STOPP  
IN MID-  
BLASTP

YES.

BUT --  
THAT AIN'T  
POSSIBLE!



"IMPOSSIBLE", TERRAN,  
IS A MATTER OF  
PERSPECTIVE.

... THE HARDER...

->LUMPH<-

... AH PUSH...

->URN<-

... AGAINST YOU...

->MMP<-

... THE HARDER...

->RNMP<-

... YOU PUSH?

PRECISELY.

SURRENDER NOW BEFORE YOU HURT YOURSELF.

NOPE.

GRAB

BY...

IT'S CALLED "PRAYING".

KABOOOM

ALL AH DONE WAS T'USE YOUR OWN MOMENTUM AGAINST YA BY CHANGING DIRECTIONS.

IT'S SOMETHIN' WE EARTHLINGS CALL "PHYSICS".

WHAT AH'M DOIN' NOW -- AS WE HEAD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SIGHT BELOW..?

THE TWIN TOWERS.

AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN GET TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD IN NEW YORK CITY.

NOW THAT WE'RE ALONE...

... I HAVE A CONFESSION TO MAKE, ROGUE.

Oh?

I'M... GLAD GAMBIT DECIDED NOT TO JOIN US EARLIER.

I HAVE BEEN PLANNING THIS SURPRISE FOR YOU FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW.

"SURPRISE", LIKE A CHRISTMAS PRESENT?

NO.

A "SURPRISE" AS IN A GIFT TO THE WOMAN WHO HAS SHOWN ME SO MUCH KINDNESS FOR...

... WELL, FOR ALMOST AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.

BEHOLD!  
YOU ARE LOOKING AT THE INTERIOR WEBBING OF THE SO-CALLED Z'NOXX CHAMBER.

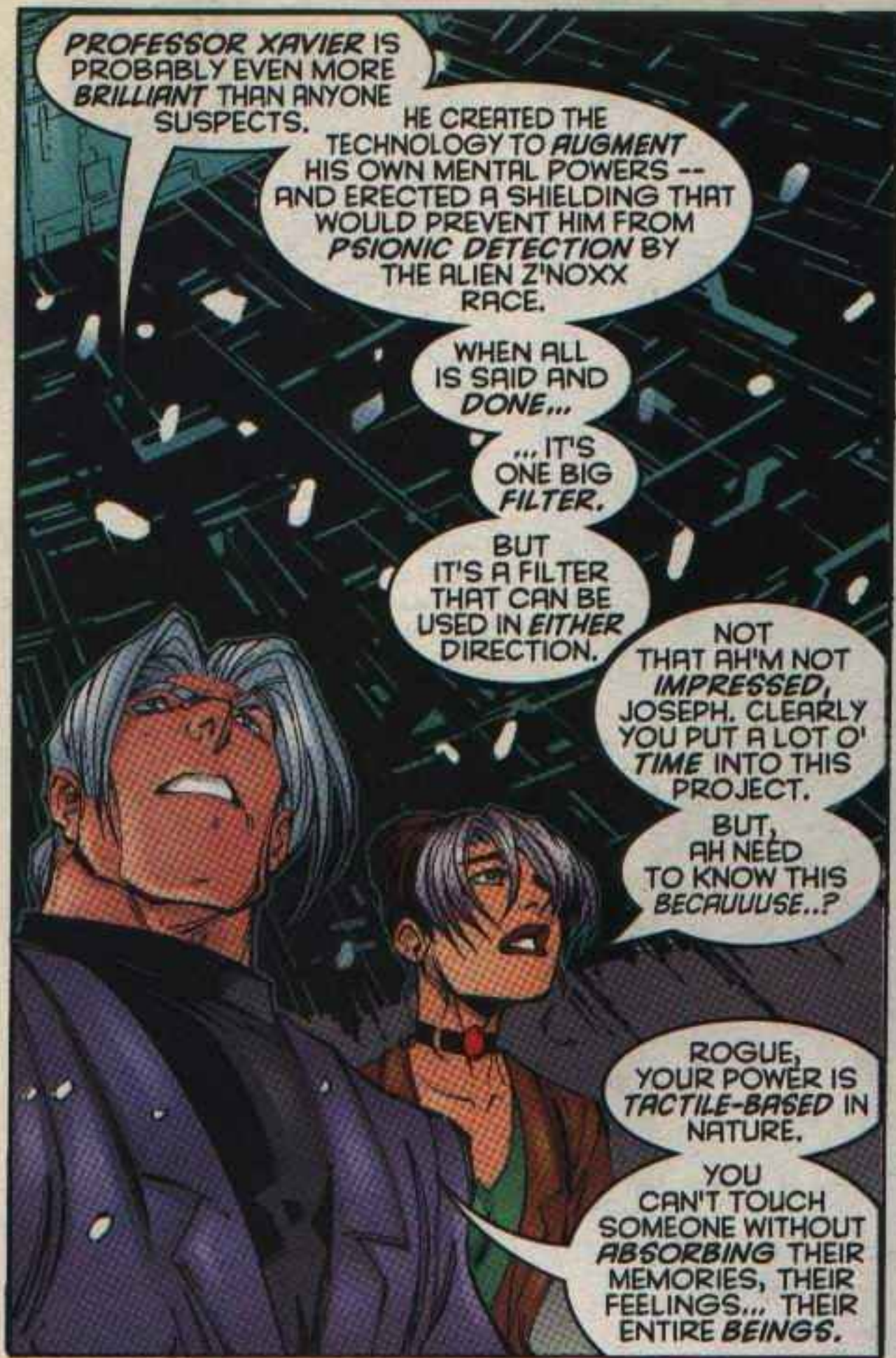
OVER THE LAST FEW NIGHTS, I HAVE BEEN DECONSTRUCTING IT --

-- TRANSPORTING IT FROM THE ROOM BENEATH THE X-MEN'S WESTCHESTER MANSION...

... AND RECALIBRATING ITS ESSENTIAL PSI-GRADIENT INFRASTRUCTURE TO COINCIDE IN AN OPEN AIR ENVIRONMENT.

THAT'S NICE, JOSEPH.

BUT... WHY?



PROFESSOR XAVIER IS PROBABLY EVEN MORE BRILLIANT THAN ANYONE SUSPECTS.

HE CREATED THE TECHNOLOGY TO AUGMENT HIS OWN MENTAL POWERS -- AND ERECTED A SHIELDING THAT WOULD PREVENT HIM FROM PSIONIC DETECTION BY THE ALIEN Z'NOXX RACE.

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE...

... IT'S ONE BIG FILTER.

BUT IT'S A FILTER THAT CAN BE USED IN EITHER DIRECTION.

NOT THAT AH'M NOT IMPRESSED, JOSEPH. CLEARLY YOU PUT A LOT O' TIME INTO THIS PROJECT.

BUT, AH NEED TO KNOW THIS BECAUUUSE..?

ROGUE, YOUR POWER IS TACTILE-BASED IN NATURE.

YOU CAN'T TOUCH SOMEONE WITHOUT ABSORBING THEIR MEMORIES, THEIR FEELINGS... THEIR ENTIRE BEINGS.



BUT WHAT IF THE MIND THAT CONTAINED THOSE THINGS WAS UNREACHABLE?

WHAT IF THAT MIND REMAINED "CLOTHED" --

-- IN THE SAME WAY YOU WEAR GLOVES TO PREVENT YOUR SKIN FROM CONTACTING WITH ANOTHER HUMAN?

Y-YOU'RE SAYIN'..?



I'M SAYING TO CLOSE YOUR EYES, ROGUE.



JOSEPH... PLEASE. AH'VE BEEN DOWN THIS ROAD BEFORE...

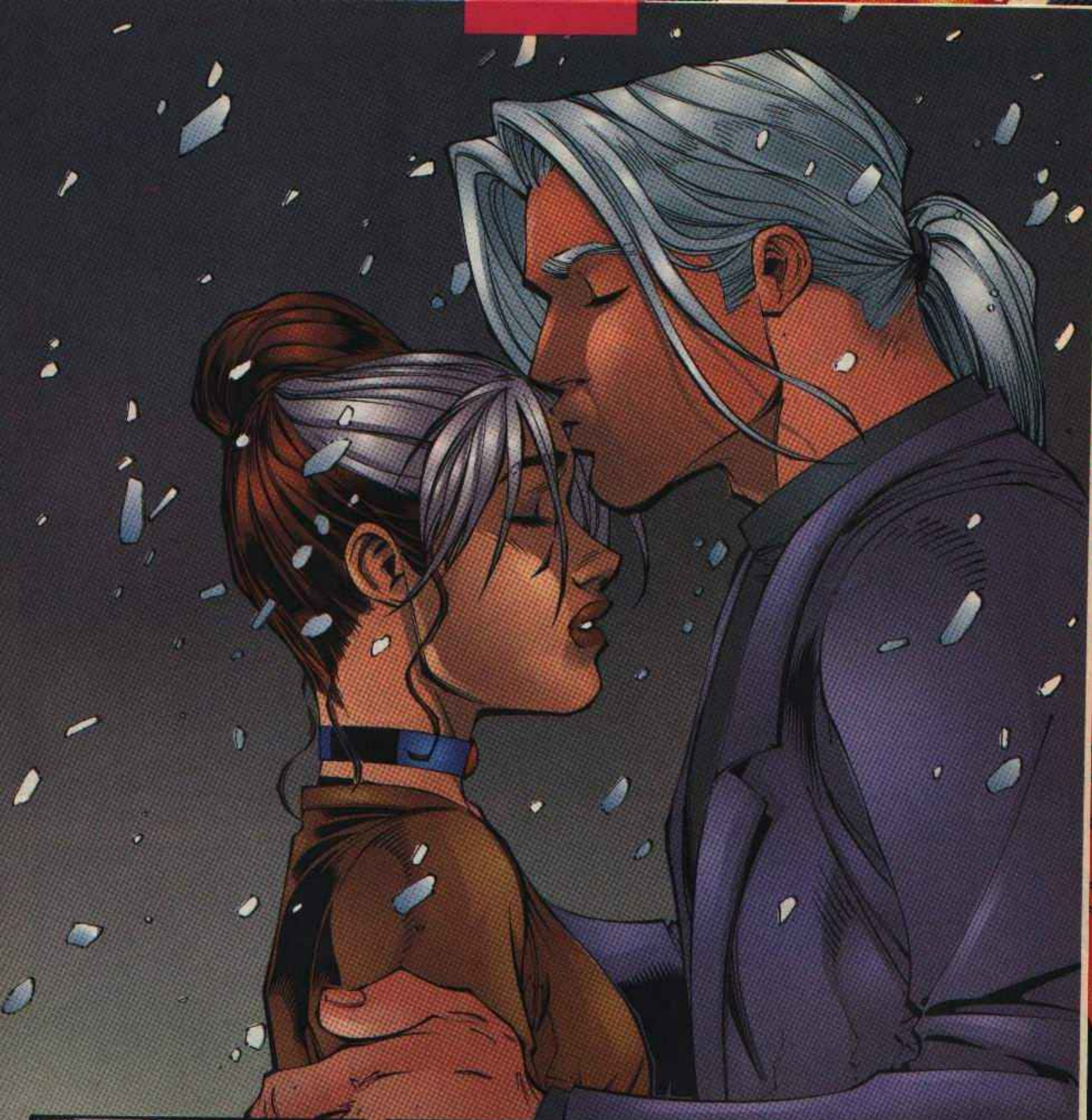
... AND IT ONLY LEADS TO DISAPPOINTMENT.



DO YOU TRUST ME?



... YES.



AH...  
... AH  
DON'T KNOW  
WHAT I'  
SAY.



MERRY  
CHRISTMAS,  
ROGUE.



MEANWHILE...



**PING**

I SOUGHT YOU AND YOUR MONGREL BRETHREN OUT FOR A PARTICULAR REASON, MUTANT!  
AND THAT REASON DID NOT INCLUDE SUFFERING AFFRONTS TO MY PERSONAGE BY YOU!

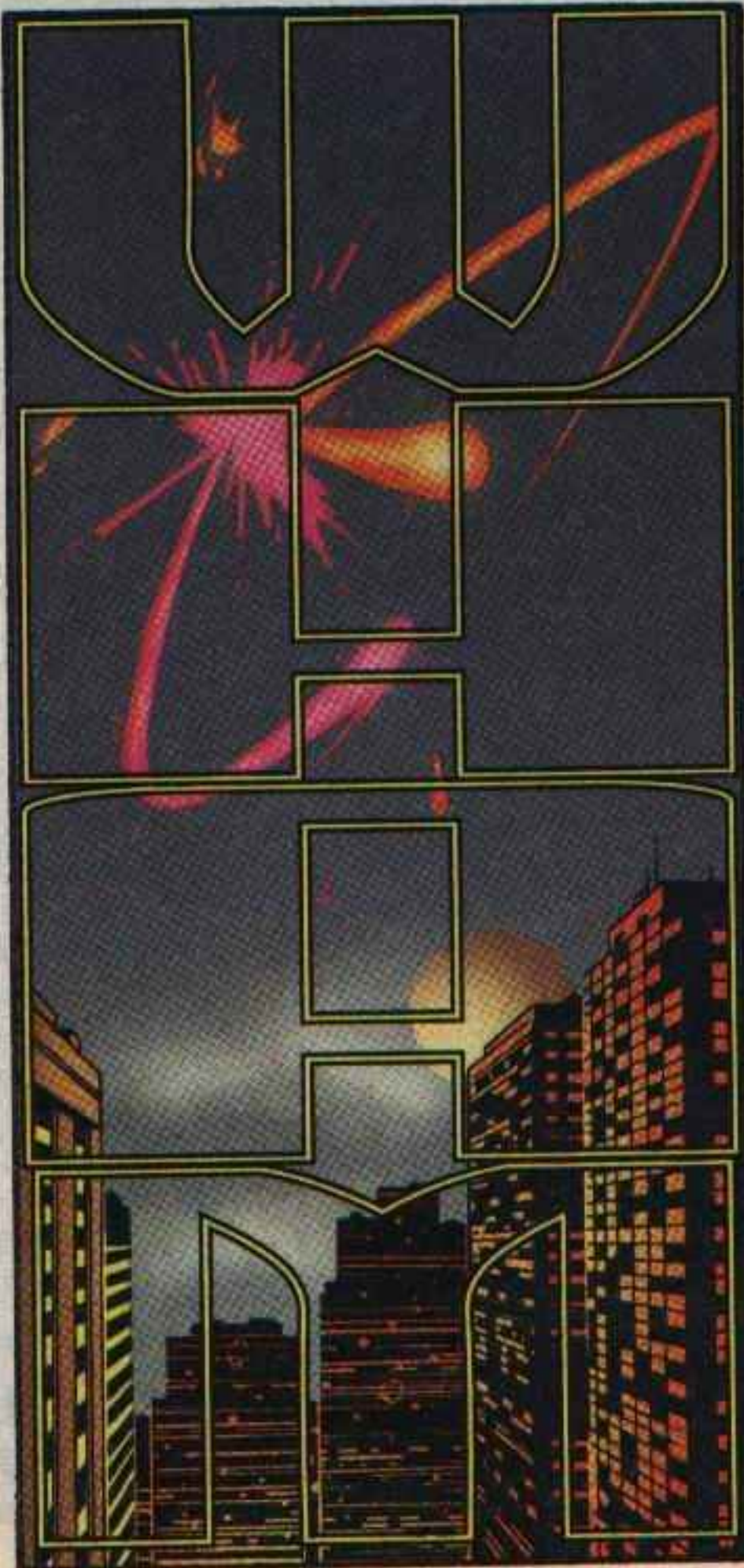
AH WAS THERE, SIR --  
-- YOU WERE THE ONE THAT STARTED THIS!

URNGH!  
AH ACTUALLY FELT THAT ONE IN MY TEETH!



EXCUSE ME, SIR.  
MA'AM.  
AH'M A MIGHT WINDED BY THAT LAST BLOW...  
... BUT IF'N AH CAN TURN AND COME UP BEHIND HI--

**SKRATCH**



**CRASH**



WHU--?!  
JUST HOW FAST ARE YOU?

FASTER THAN YOU, YOUNGLING.

YEAH, WELL...  
... YA MIGHT...  
... WANNA...  
... STAND BACK.

# SHREAAAD

WHAT DO YA KNOW...?

IT WORKED!

ALL AH DID WAS EXPAND MY KINETIC FIELD, SIR.

YA MIGHT WANNA CRY "UNCLE" BEFORE AH TURN MY POWER ON YOU!

I'LL TAKE THAT UNDER ADVISEMENT.

AND YOU, TERRAN, MIGHT WANT TO LOSE THE JACKET.

PARDON?

BECAUSE ITS A LOT HOTTER WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

WHICH IS THE CENTER OF THE SUN!

YOU'RE JOSHIN', RIGHT?

"JOSHIN'?"

HE'S NOT -- HE CAN DO IT, TOO!

FROM WHAT AH REMEMBER, GLADIATOR CAN DO ANYTHIN' HE SETS HIS MIND TO!

OUCH. THIS IS GONNA HURT.

UNLESSS...

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT IN THE INSTANT BEFORE DEATH, YOUR LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES.

THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENS TO SAM GUTHRIE.

INSTEAD, HE RECALLS EVERYTHING HE KNOWS ABOUT GLADIATOR, AND HOW THE IMPERIAL GUARDSMAN'S POWER WORKS.

IT HAS BEEN THEORIZED THAT GLADIATOR IS ESSENTIALLY FUELED BY CONFIDENCE...

... THAT HIS SUPER-HUMAN INVULNERABILITY IS IN PART PSIONICALLY REINFORCED.

DISPATCHING ONE LONE X-MAN...

... CANNONBALL, NO LESS...

... SHOULD BE AS SIMPLE AS DROPPING OUT OF ORBIT.



?!

SO TELL ME, PARDNER...



WAS THAT YOUR BEST SHOT?



BUT...  
... BUT THAT WAS MY MOST POWERFUL BLOW!

AND... YOU LIVE?

THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE...!

WE GOT A  
SAYIN' AROUND  
THESE PARTS,  
SIR!

"IMPOSSIBLE  
IS A MATTER OF  
PERSPECTIVE!"

**BWOONGGG**

BRavo!

?!



YOU CHANNLED ALL THE KINETIC ENERGY FROM HIS KILLER BLOW--

-- AND DIRECTED IT TO YOUR FORCE FIELD.

HOW LONG HAS THAT PARTICULAR TRICK BEEN IN YOUR REPERTOIRE, Mr. G?

ABOUT SIX SECONDS NOW, Dr. McCoy.

WERE Y'ALL JUST WATCHIN'?

WE'VE ACTUALLY ALL ARRIVED ONLY THIS MOMENT.



MY FAV'RITE PART WAS WHEN Y'WAITED FOR DE EXACT INSTANT HE DOUBTED ... BEFORE HE DOUBTED HIMSELF... Y'GAVE HIM DE COUPE DE GRACE.

THANKS, SIR.

CALL ME REMY, SAM.

OR JOSEPH AT THE VERY LEAST.



SAM, ANY IDEA WHAT THIS WAS ALL ABOUT?

THE X-MEN HAVE BATTLED GLADIATOR AND HIS COMPANIONS IN THE PAST...

... BUT IT SEEMS OUT OF CHARACTER FOR HIM TO ATTACK WITHOUT PROVOCATION.

NOT A CLUE, BUT--

--AH RECKON YA' CAN ASK HIM YOURSELF!



TRISH, GET BEHIND ME!

I SHOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE DEBRIS...

... UNLESS...

... UNLESS IT JUST HOVERS IN MID-AIR?

YOU'RE GOOD.



THAT WOULD BE ME, Ms. TILBY.

WE COULD HEAR THIS FIGHT ALL THE WAY DOWNTOWN, SAM...

... WE GOT HERE AS QUICK AS WE COULD!



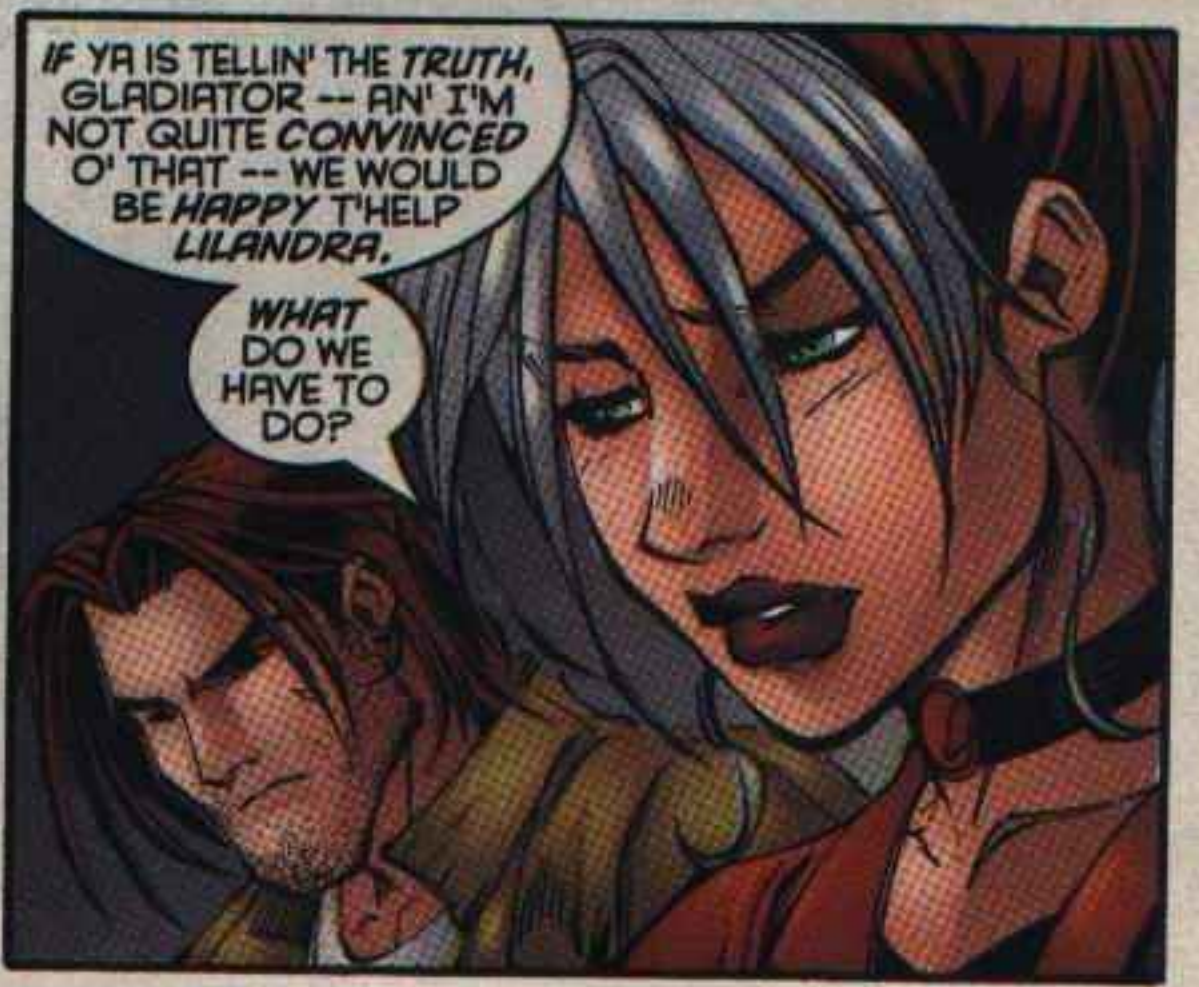
WHAT STARTED THIS?!

I HUMBLY CONFESS I WAS FULLY RESPONSIBLE.

I NEEDED TO CONTACT YOU BECAUSE, AS A PREATOR OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD, I REQUEST A BOON.

THIS ENTIRE CONFRONTATION -- WAS MERELY TO GET OUR ATTENTION?

THE SHI'AR EMPIRE IS IN THE GRAVE DANGER, AND YET I HAVE BEEN FORBIDDEN BY THE MAJESTRIX TO INTERFERE.



IF YA IS TELLIN' THE TRUTH, GLADIATOR -- AN' I'M NOT QUITE CONVINCED O' THAT -- WE WOULD BE HAPPY T'HELP LILANDRA.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO?



AS MUCH AS IT SHAMES ME TO SAY THIS...

... YOU HAVE TO GO IN MY STEAD.

● BECAUSE THEY HAVE THEIR OWN MISSION TO ACCOMPLISH! SEE THE IMPERIAL GUARD 1 FOR DETAILS. BOBBY



AH RECKON WE COULD DO THAT. WE'LL NEED TO CONTACT THE OTHERS AND--

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.



WHAT ARE THESE THINGS... PROBES?

NO... THEY ARE TRANSIT SPHERES.

"TRANSIT SPHERES"? AS IN SOME SORT OF TELEPORTA--



WHAT THE HECK DID YOU DO TO THEM, GLADIATOR?!

IF 'N YA' HURT 'EM, SO HELP ME AH'LL--

STAND BACK, CHILD.

THEY HAVE BEEN TELEPORTED TO THE ROYAL CRUISER OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD.

AT THIS MOMENT, YOUR FRIENDS ARE EN ROUTE TO THE HEART OF THE MOST DIRE CONFLICT THE SHI'AR HAVE EVER FACED.

BUT... WHAT ABOUT ME?

TO SEND A YOUTH INTO SUCH DANGER WOULD LACK HONOR

FOR IF YOUR SIX COMRADES ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL...

... THE SHI'AR EMPIRE WILL FALL...

... AND THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE WILL FOLLOW.

**NEXT SIX AGAINST THE GALAXY!**