

MARVEL
PG 424

AUSTEN
GARNEY
MORALES

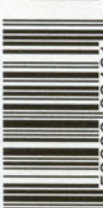
UNCANNY

X-MEN[®]



DIRECT EDITION

42411



7 59606-02461-2

\$2.25 US \$3.75 CAN

HOLY WAR
2 OF 2

PT!03
B.



Change is coming. A new breed of man has emerged. They are the Children of the Atom, Homo Superior, individuals gifted with strange and fantastic abilities simply by virtue of their genetic makeup.

Stan Lee presents...

UNCANNY X-MEN

HOLY WAR Part 2 of 2

Writer
Chuck Austen
Penciler
Ron Garney
Inkers
Morales, Nelson,
and Green
Colorist
JD Smith
Letterer
Chris Eliopoulos
Cover
Philip Tan
Associate Editor
Mike Raicht
Editor
Mike Marts
Editor in Chief
Joe Quesada
President
Bill Jemas

PREVIOUSLY



ARCHANGEL
Warren Worthington III
Wings, Flight



NIGHTCRAWLER
Kurt Wagner
Teleportation



ICEMAN
Bobby Drake
Sub-Thermal Control



HAVOK
Alex Summers
Solar-Generated Plasma Blasts



CYCLOPS
Scott Summers
Optic Blasts, X-Men Leader



JEAN GREY
Telepath, Telekinetic



WOLVERINE
Logan
Healing, Adamantium Claws



POLARIS
Lorna Dane
Magnetic Control

At the Xavier Institute for Higher Learning, the last few weeks have been anything but normal for several of the X-Men...

Alex Summers, the longtime X-Man known as Havok, has finally emerged from his coma and rejoins the X-Men alongside Lorna Dane, his fiancé. Lorna, better known by her X-Men code-name of Polaris, has undergone an extreme shift in attitude and demeanor of late, after witnessing the deaths of sixteen million mutants on the island nation of Genosha several months ago. Add to that the fact that Alex has fallen in love with Annie, the young nurse who aided him out of his coma, and it is easy to see why Alex and Lorna's relationship is anything but smooth these days... even despite Lorna's recent proposal of marriage to Alex and their upcoming wedding.

Meanwhile, Kurt Wagner, the X-Man known as Nightcrawler, surprises the team with a shock announcement. He has decided to step down as leader of the X-Men, and quickly leaves the school to accompany Alex and Lorna on a quick archeological expedition to the Bermuda Triangle — a trip which results in a chance encounter with the mysterious Church of Humanity organization, and ends in the death of Alex's old college professor.

But these trying times at the Xavier mansion are only a small hint of the horrors to come... the X-Men awake one morning to find several young mutants nailed to crosses on their front lawn. Among the victims are several young mutants previously associated with the X-Men, including Magma, Jubilee, Skin and Jesse Bedlam. Jubilee fortunately survives the massacre, but the others don't fare as well.

Now, with the deaths of young mutants to avenge, the X-Men seek out the organization that they feel is responsible — The Church of Humanity. An organization, it seems, which has strange ties to the X-Men's very own Nightcrawler...

ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH,
BROOKLYN

My name is Kurt Wagner.
I'm *Nightcrawler*, the dark
blue demony looking fellow
hanging upside down here.

I was studying to be a priest--
as ridiculous as that sounds--
so I know *a lot* of scripture.

In Genesis 28 through
30, "The Word of God"
gives mankind the right
of dominion over *all*
beasts of the earth.

Looking at *me*,
would you consider
me more "person"
or "beast"?

Once a people is
"demonized" --

--equated with
something less than,
or not *even* human--

-- then by the Word
of God, mankind has
dominion over them.

I know what you're
thinking, Kurt, and this
has *nothing* to do
with you.

Oh
really,
Alex?

Control.

Governance.

The power of
life and death.

Kurt?

Authority.

Those same people believe you may not abort an unborn fetus.

That you are murdering a human life.

That human life is *sacred*.

Kuurr-rt.

It's Father Whitney!
He's *alive!*

Get down there.

At least until it's born, and old enough to become a *soldier* for another country--

--evil--

BAMF

Jean, is there anyone else *alive* down there?

A few...

...but not for long, Scott.

BAMF

Father Whitney?

Kurt.

I am *so* sorry, Kurt.

--or "collateral damage."

Can you telekinetically remove the ones who are?

Of course.

Make some *room* everyone, please...



...I don't want to catch anyone on the jagged floor.



You were right to *question*, Kurt...

...you were right to realize that wearing a *collar* and living in a *church*...

...*doesn't* make you closer to God.



They were so *angry* when I failed to keep you in the priesthood...

...when I failed to curb your *lustful desires*.

I had spent so much time convincing them that *you* would be our *greatest* achievement...

...our *key* to the world...

...once you became...

...*Pope*.

Who, Father? What are you talking about?



I tried to find... another...

...we gathered so *many*... you can see how many in the church here...

...but *you* were... were...

...they're in *Montana*, Kurt.

They never left.

I am so *sorry*, Kurt. I was just doing what they told me.

I never expected...

...to *like* you.



Who's in Montana, Father? The Church of Humanity?

What do you mean, "they never left"?

I never expected to...

...to grow fond of a...

...a mutie...
☹



Scott, get in touch with the Xavier Institute and the local hospital.

Get our healers, Warren and Xorn, here *now*... and when everything is in more capable hands than ours--





-- we're going to Montana.

⊗ LATER...



A few months back, we tracked the Church of Humanity to their home base in a compound a hundred miles outside of Butte, Jean...

...we arrived, knocked them around a bit, and came away with nothing.

Then they all "teleported" out of the compound when things got hairy, right?

But based on what Father Whitney said, and the mind-tampering you've obviously been through, Kurt--

--I'm thinking they never left Montana. You were just made to believe they did.

A mutant-hating, gun-wielding, mind-controlling religious sect in the middle of Montana turned you into a priest.

Sounds reasonable.



But then, I hang around with people who read minds, have claws, teleport, control magnetic fields and shoot power beams out of their eyes... so I'm hardly grounded, now am I?

Are you saying there's something unusual about us X-Men, Summers?



I'll scan ahead to see if I can pick up a psychic signature strong enough to mind-control on the level we're presuming...

I have no doubt you'll find one, Jean.

But I should *warn* everyone...

...if there is, they might feel me searching, and become *alerted* to our presence.



Good.

⊗ THE CATHEDRAL, MONTANA...

They're coming...



It's so *odd*, Your Holiness...

...I can actually *see* them projected into my mind by *Mutant 143* there.

He must have been *exceedingly* effective at convincing the Wagner mutant into believing he was a *priest*.

Is the *demon* with them?



It is, yes.

It seems to be *leading* the others.



Good. It's a *terrible* leader, which is ultimately why it was *wrong* for our plans.

Unfortunately, we were blinded by its *love* of God...

...and the ability to hide its true *Satanic* appearance under a false, "*human*" face with Xavier's image-inducer.



How perfect it would have been to place our demon-faced mutant as the successor to the current Pope--

--allow Wagner to "take his seat in the temple of God," as it says in Thessalonians--

--only to be revealed by an aptly timed failure of his image-inducer as "Satan"--

--who uses all power-- and every kind of wicked deception," leaving the Church forever destroyed.

Mutantkind would have been hunted down as the deliverers of the Antichrist, and the western world would have been lost --

-- with only us to turn to for spiritual solace.

A complex, but potentially powerful plan, all ruined because young Kurt Wagner, like all men --

-- could not keep control of his sexual urges and remain our priest.

It was your mission to end Father Whitney's failed experiment, my soldiers --

-- to quietly destroy his hidden cache of potential mutant replacements for the Wagner demon.

Not to leave calling cards on the front lawn of Xavier's mansion in fits of religious zeal... is that not correct?

It is, Your Eminence.

But with all the mutants he had rounded up, and the plan compromised--

-- we thought it was a perfect opportunity to send a message.



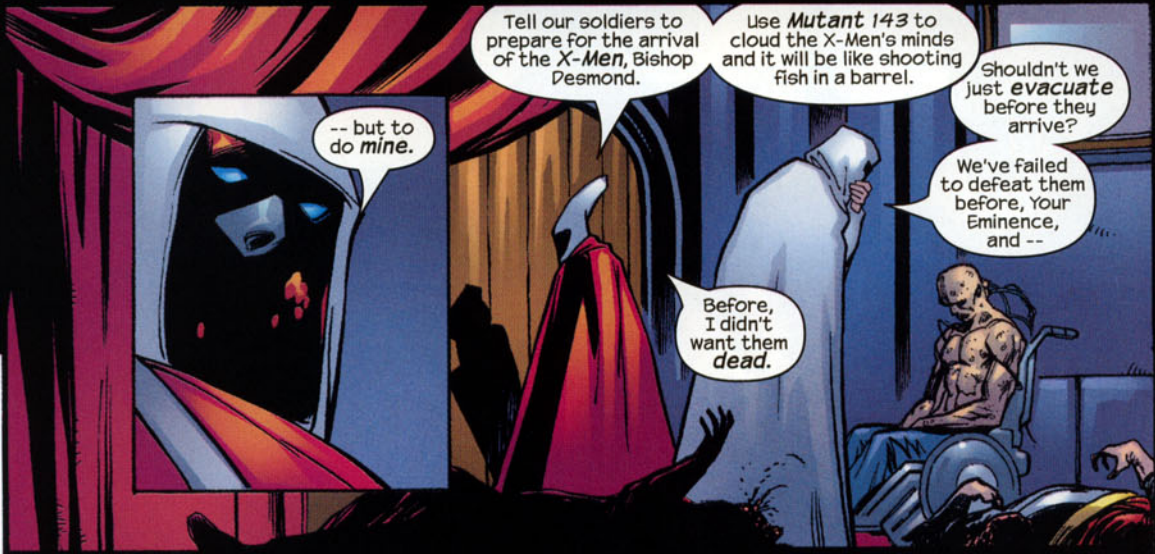
You thought it was a perfect opportunity?

You thought?



God gave you brains, not to do your bidding, my soldiers --





Tell our soldiers to prepare for the arrival of the *X-Men*, Bishop Desmond.

Use *Mutant 143* to cloud the X-Men's minds and it will be like shooting fish in a barrel.

Shouldn't we just *evacuate* before they arrive?

We've failed to defeat them before, Your Eminence, and --



-- but to do mine.

Before, I didn't want them *dead*.



This time I do.



Kurt, Jean and the others are all *inside*, Summers.

Let's do our part, Lorna.

Look at them all, Logan...



...don't they all look like *ants* from up here?





THAT'S
FOR KILLING
SKIN!



It really
would be best
if you all just laid
down your--



-- weapons?

SPLAK!



I have
complete
magnetic
control.

How did
these--

-- get
by me?



LORNA!
SUMMERS!

IT'S AN
ILLUSION!

WE AIN'T
FIGHTIN'
ANYBODY!



WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
LO--



AAAAHHH!

This is *too* easy. They think they're actually fighting something and we just keep filling them with holes!



Mutant 143?

Can you add *olfactory* sensations to the illusion, or is it too late now?

DAMMIT! Logan, you've got to get us OUT of here!



I DON'T--

-- NOW I'M SMELLIN' STUFF, TOO!

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN--

I've thrown a magnetic shield around you, Scott.



YEEEAHHH!

LOGAN!

⊗INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL...



The others are being **slaughtered!** The X-Plane is destroyed, and --
-- oh, God, Scott is down and he's been **shot!**

BAMF

What happened?



A psychic mutant is filling their minds with **illusions**, and--

-- Logan's **burning**, and Lorna's been shot, too!

Dammit, Kurt, I **never** should have let you talk me into splitting up the team.

Lorna?



This is **why** we had to split up the team, Alex! So **they** could cover **us** while we snuck in.

Do what you can to support them, Jean. You've covered our entrance.

Right. I'm going after the **psychic mutant**.



Fine. The rest of us will get to the Pope and **end** this lunacy!

X-Men?

Are you the X-Men?



Who are you?

I'm a Priest... a human, but I'm on **your side**.

They've been **experimenting** on me and I want a chance to help stop them.

Help **you** stop them.

ELSEWHERE...

I know what their plan is.

I can see 'em now!

THEY'RE UP ON THE WALLS!

LOGAN, GET DOWN!

DROP AND ROLL!

NOT UNTIL I CAN TAKE SOME OF THEM WITH ME!

IDIOT! I'm holding all these bullets here for a REASON--



-- AND YOU'RE IN THE WAY!



Gotcha.



Lorna, you can't just...
...you'll kill them...



SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK SPAK





Yeah.
I would expect so.



So what's your point?



Begin casting an illusion, Mutant 143...

...something that will give us time to retrieve His Eminence and escape.

Nnnnhhh...



What is it?

WHAT'S WRONG?

He tried to kill my husband--



-- and I take that personally.



Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...

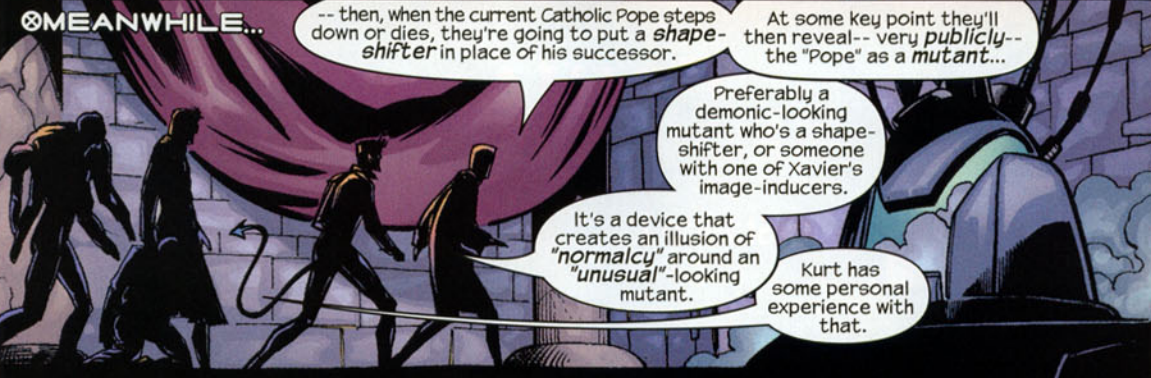
...protect your follower, my Lord, Jesus Christ...



God has heard your prayer, my sad little man--



-- AND HAS SENT THIS IN REPLY!



MEANWHILE...

-- then, when the current Catholic Pope steps down or dies, they're going to put a *shape-shifter* in place of his successor.

At some key point they'll then reveal-- very *publicly*-- the "Pope" as a *mutant*...

Preferably a demonic-looking mutant who's a *shape-shifter*, or someone with one of Xavier's *image-inducers*.

It's a device that creates an illusion of *"normalcy"* around an *"unusual"*-looking mutant.

Kurt has some personal experience with that.

Wait--
you're
Kurt?
Kurt
Wagner?

You're the
one they were
training to
ascend to the
Papacy!

Yeah, I
figured as
much.

And once they had
me in place, they would
initiate a *false Rapture*,
wouldn't they?

Direct ascension
of the "true Christians"
straight to heaven to
signify the "End of
Days"?

So then,
when this
mutant
Pope--

-- me--

-- is
"revealed"
by a failure
in the image-
inducer --

The Church is revealed
to be headed by the
"Antichrist" and it would
destroy the Church,
completely.

How would
they initiate
this false
Rapture?

They've been feeding
me a diet of holy
wafers--

-- the bread
disks that represent
the body of Christ in
communion ritual--

-- and...
they just
don't taste
right.

Uh... can you
explain all this
to the *non-*
Catholic boy in
the back?

The Rapture is the moment when God
determines the world will *end*, and all
true Christians are taken directly
to heaven.

They vanish
right out of their
clothes, their jewelry,
their fillings --

-- wherever
they are, whatever
they're doing.

You're
kidding.

So what
happens to
the rest of
us?

Years of damnation,
torture and hell at
the hands of the
Antichrist --

You mean
Kurt.

Not
funny.

Once the Antichrist
is revealed, and the
true savior
arises --

-- and I'm
assuming a
front-runner will
be this Church's
Pope --

-- the key is
beginning things
with the Rapture,
and if holy wafers
were *tampered*
with --



-- filled with something that could make Catholics the world over--

-- "vanish in the twinkling of an eye."

AAARRGGGHH!



FXZZT



Listen, and I will tell you a *mystery!*



We will not all die, but we will be **CHANGED**, in a moment--

-- in the twinkling of an eye--



They **disintegrated** him!

Jeez, not *these* fools again.

They activated the *wafers* he had eaten.

I've had enough of this.



AT THE LAST TRUMPET!



Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, HYPOCRITES!

For you cross the sea to make a single convert--



-- and you make the NEW convert TWICE as much as a child of hell yourselves!

You DARE use the language of GOD against ME?!

You may as soon spit in the EYE of my Lord, you spawn of Satan and worshipper of godless science!



The BEAST was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words!



You talking to me or him?



You're no beast to me, cutie.



You shall not bow down to false idols or worship them-- for I the Lord your God am a jealous God --

They worshipped--

-- the dragon--



AAAAHHH!

-- for he had given--

--NNGGH--

-- his authority to the beast!



Back off, junior!

Can't you see I'm busy?

Punishing children for the iniquity of parents--



-- to the third and fourth generation of those who REJECT me.

You shall not take vengeance--

--AAHHH--

-- or bear grudge against any of your people--

--AAAANNGG--



-- but you shall LOVE your neighbor as YOURSELF!

You shall not let your animals BREED with a different KIND!



AAAAAAHHH!

LOVE-- YOUR-- ENEMIES--



-- AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU --



BAMF



BAMF

AAAH!



FSHOOM

THE LORD--

--THE LORD SETS THE PRISONERS FREE--



--THE LORD OPENS THE EYES OF THE BLIND!



The... the Pope's a woman.

Yeah, and she's kind of cute.

That chamber's arcing like mad...

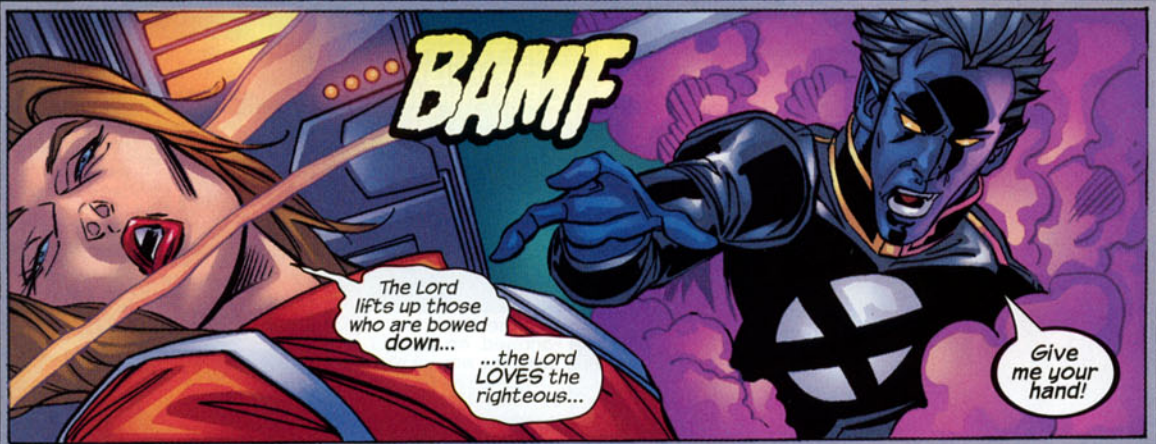


...someone should try to save her!

CRACK

FZAKKK

POP



BAMF

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down...

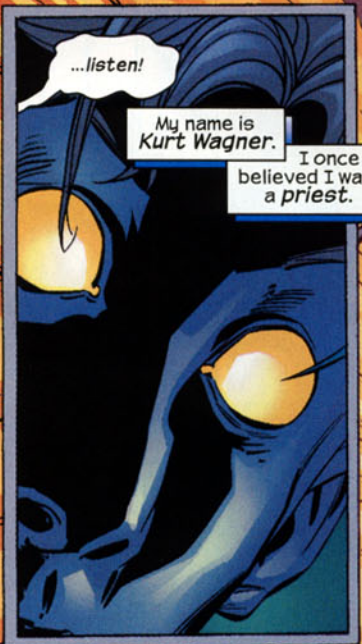
...the Lord LOVES the righteous...

Give me your hand!



...then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

Let anyone with ears...



...listen!

My name is Kurt Wagner.

I once believed I was a priest.

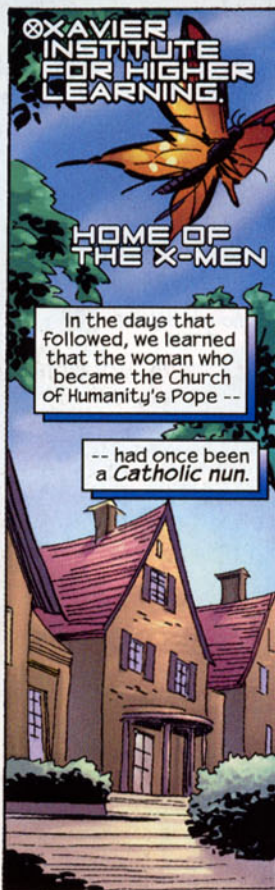
SH BOOOON



I had a crisis of faith --



-- and ruined someone's hidden plan for world domination.



XAVIER INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER LEARNING.

HOME OF THE X-MEN

In the days that followed, we learned that the woman who became the Church of Humanity's Pope --

-- had once been a Catholic nun.

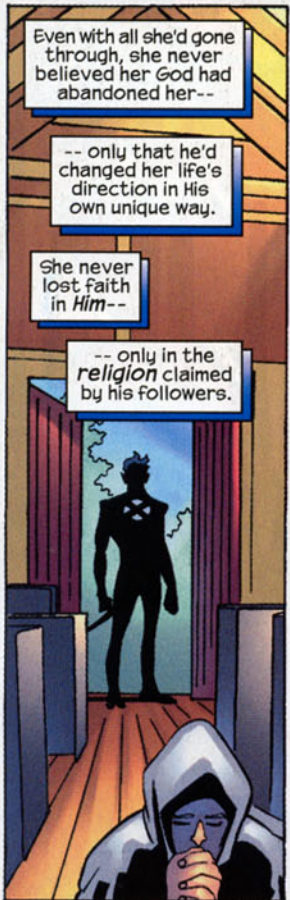


She had been raped by a priest--

-- accused of infidelity by that priest--

-- and forcibly removed from her life's chosen work by church officials --

-- a work she loved and did not want to leave.



Even with all she'd gone through, she never believed her God had abandoned her--

-- only that he'd changed her life's direction in His own unique way.

She never lost faith in Him--

-- only in the religion claimed by his followers.



A religion she felt compelled to destroy--

-- with the help of a hated mutant.

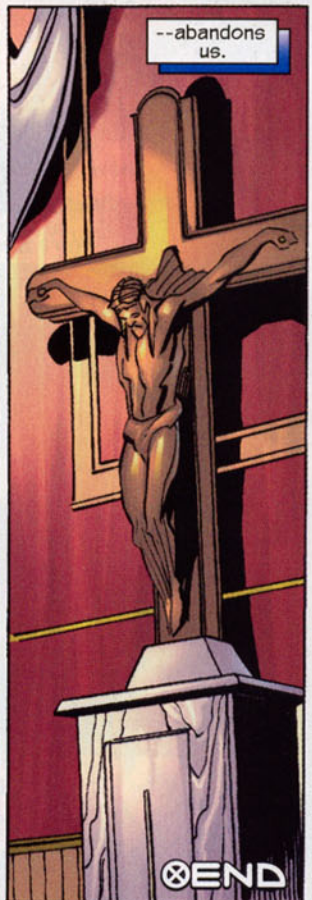
I understand her perspective, even if I disagree with her goals.

We might have cause to fear religion, at times.



But I can never make myself believe that God ever--

-- TRULY--



--abandons us.

⊗END