

X-MEN

MARVEL



Comic
Hook



GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

CLAREMONT • ANDERSON

X-MEN



GOD LOVES,
MAN KILLS

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Pop quiz: What's the question most commonly asked of writers?

Answer: Where do you get your ideas?

From here, the colloquy can turn profound, sublime or (very often) just plain silly, as betokened by the standard writer's response, "the Idea Bank in Poughkeepsie." You'd be amazed how many folks would subsequently call 4-1-1 and try to get the number ("Is that a 'savings bank' or a 'national bank'?") See? Silly. I told you. All of this is to disguise the fundamental reality of our craft, which is that we all start with ourselves, and a blank sheet of paper (or a blank display screen). Our task is to fill that page with words, ideas, a story. The tools we employ to that end are our imagination and our craft. But it starts with that empty page. What gets you going? There's no set answer. Sometimes it can be a primal visual image, or a notion prompted by a conversation, the news, the soup you had for lunch; anything and everything can provide inspiration. (That also includes the need to pay the mortgage, or the reality—in comics, anyway—that a penciler is dependent on your productivity to pay his bills.) Sadly, many of those seeds fall on fallow ground, or they sprout ideas that start out promisingly but wither and fade. The idea itself is the ten-percent inspiration; the hammering it into a viable, successful, memorable story is the ninety-percent perspiration that follows.

So—where did this story, this particular graphic novel, come from?

Marvel, and the comics industry itself, was a very different place almost two decades ago.

The industry, which had been in what we all thought was a terminal decline only a few years previously, was exploding both commercially and creatively. Everywhere you turned, there were new talents, new formats, new concepts. It felt like a revolution, both in terms of the stories being told and the means we had to tell them. There was no need to restrict ourselves to the classic paradigm of costumed super heroes, portrayed in monthly 22-page serial increments. We could tell stories in a longer form; we could pitch concepts that were "outside the box," including those that were creator-owned as opposed to the more traditional work-for-hire. For the first time, there was a growing sense that comics, like mainstream publishing, could be approached as a partnership between creators and publishers, with both sides equitably sharing the risks of publishing and the potential rewards. One of the engines driving that change, certainly at Marvel, was the *X-Men*. I mean, who'd'a thought—that this title, resurrected as a mid-list bimonthly only a few years before, would quickly become the commercial benchmark by which the field would be measured? Somehow, this was the right title, at the right time, for the right audience. But that's shoptalk. What about the world in which we lived, the background against which these stories

appeared? I came into comics at the tail end of the '60s, gleefully embracing the fast-paced, irreverent, hyper-emotional story model that had been established by Stan Lee and continued (so ably in terms of the *X-Men*) by Roy Thomas. In those days, since all of us figured the business didn't have long to last, there was a very strong sense that "anything goes." We didn't have to worry about "established continuity"; the Marvel Universe we were playing in was so young that we were creating most of that continuity.

So here we are in the early 1980s. Ronald Reagan is president and a wave of creative conservatism is sweeping the nation, pitched as a backlash from the heartland to the unpatriotic and hedonistic attitudes and mores of the '60s and '70s. According to them, the country was returning to bedrock, traditional values and beliefs, both political and moral. Leading that charge—and by extension, the avalanche of criticism of the prevalent "lefty" "New York/LA" lifestyles—were a coterie of TV evangelists, trumpeting their born-again, fundamentalist vision of the Bible across the national airwaves. There were the long-established ministries of Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and Robert Shuler (sic), plus their newer counterparts such as Pat Robertson (the 700 Club), Jerry Falwell (the Moral Majority), Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker (the PTL Club), among many others.

The vision that many of these ministries espoused was pure and focused. The Bible was the font of wisdom, it was the path to salvation, not only for the souls of the individual parishioners, but through those individuals for the nation itself. Theirs was a creed that offered what was presented as a more vital and viable and relevant alternative to the traditional denominations. Regrettably to me (and here, I'm afraid, this piece becomes somewhat personal), it also seemed from an outsider's perspective to be increasingly exclusionary. Other faiths, other branches of the same faith, sounded as if they were being dismissed, which carried disturbing echoes of the growing fundamentalist movement that was sweeping the Islamic world. Despite acknowledgments from the ministries in various public forums of the need for tolerance, and the recognition that America is a pluralistic society, there remained—to my ears, at least—an underlying sense of "my way, or the highway." You either accepted the Word of God wholly and unreservedly, or you didn't, and if you didn't, you were damned. At the same time, these ministries were beginning to advance a broad-based social and political agenda, hoping to reshape the national landscape in terms of their faith. Now, we're talking primal structures here. We're talking about faith, not only in a supreme deity but also, by extension, in the ministers who present those beliefs to their congregations. Here we have ministers asking—some might say, requiring—absolute trust from their congregations, absolute belief that what is

being asked of them is true, that the cause they are being asked to follow is just and righteous. This is a weapon of extraordinary power, as was demonstrated not only by the actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but most absolutely by the actions of Christ himself. And yet, these ministers are only human, and to be human is to be fallible. In every war that's ever been fought, ministers on both sides have called for victory in the name of God, have stated that God is on their side. But if both sides believe in the same God, which one is correct?

Mutants in the Marvel Universe have always stood as a metaphor for the underclass, the outsiders; they represent the ultimate minority. Suppose, I began to wonder, a man of faith—for what he considered the most righteous of reasons and in perfect consistency with his Manichaeian perception of the world—put forward the proposition that mutants are creatures of the Devil. There is good and there is evil, and mutants by the very fact of their existence fall into the latter category. That they are not human, that they are a threat to the hegemony of God's Chosen (i.e., what we now call baseline humanity), that their very existence is an affront to God's plan for the world. Suppose he chose to act on those beliefs? Ours is celebrated as a secular society. We are a nation "under God," but the definition of what "God" represents is left open. It is, I have always believed, meant to embrace a broad spectrum of faiths, whether held by a single individual or by tens of millions. How then do we reconcile the beliefs of one group of citizens with those of another? How do we subordinate—or can we, or should we—the commitments required by those faiths to the necessities of living in a pluralistic hegemony?

For me, this story grew out of a time where voices of casual intolerance were very much abroad in the land, where espousing views that stood apart from what was considered the "mainstream" could have serious and lasting consequences. In William Stryker, I wanted to create a man of faith whose sincerity could not be questioned. He is true in his beliefs, but those beliefs have led him down a path that could have terrible and lasting repercussions for a significant segment of the populace. In the X-Men are people of many cultures and different faiths—Nightcrawler is a staunch Catholic, Kitty Pryde, a Jew—yet that aspect of their lives is completely overshadowed by what is for Stryker the seminal reality of their existence: They are mutants. Nothing else is of consequence.

When I wrote the story, I read my Bible cover to cover, more than once—which I hadn't done since college—and I still have the dog-eared and heavily annotated copy on my bookshelf. In traveling the country, I spend Sunday after Sunday listening to media ministers both local and national. The graphic novel as it evolved grew into a plea that, no matter what the

dictates of faith, we must all be bound by our conscience as individuals. That to me is the nature of free will. We come to a point of choice, both in terms of our faith as moral beings and our lives as good citizens. For some, actions in a civil arena grow from their faith, like a tree from a sapling; for others, the reverse—their actions in a societal sense must stand in opposition to tenets of their faith.

William Stryker acted from his own perception of his faith. Yet at the same time, the people he was acting against were also—and remain—people of faith themselves. Is Nightcrawler's faith in the divine any less valid because Stryker believes him a creature of the Devil? And if Nightcrawler's faith is valid and true, what then of Stryker's condemnation?

Are we all, in some manner or shape or form, children of God? Or are some of us perhaps more beloved than others? Therein, for me, lay the crux of the conflict in the graphic novel, one that lasts to this day. Faith lies at the most fundamental core of our being as sentient creatures, this need to believe in something greater than ourselves, this almost inherent acknowledgment of the miracle of creation. But as faith is personal and unique to us as individuals, so then must also be our acceptance of responsibility for those actions that derive from it. Because in the end, while we remain individuals, we reside in a community. For the community to thrive, we need to find ways to get along, to play nice with one another. We need to cherish that which binds us, and accept with a measure of tolerance some of the things that make us different.

Why was this story written? What makes it special? Ultimately, I think, it grew out of two quotes that pretty much defined my own adolescence. One was from Martin Luther King, one of his most celebrated lines, which I've used myself in describing my approach to the X-Men: "I dream of a world where my children and their grandchildren will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." The other, from Ted Kennedy, eulogizing his murdered brother, Robert: "Some dream of things that never were and say, why? I dream of things that are yet to be and say, why not?"

The irony of *God Loves* is that it was very much of its time and place, and yet, almost twenty years later, the sentiments—and the inspirations that brought it into being—retain their relevance. People are still judged more by the color of their skin, and the nation of their origin, and the faith they espouse, than their character. And I still find myself dreaming of a time when all of that is behind us and saying, why not?

Chris Claremont
Brooklyn, New York
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X-MEN[®]



ANDERSON '82

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

by CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT and BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

**STAN LEE PRESENTS
A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL**



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by CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT and BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

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—Chris Claremont

WESTPORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL --
WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT...

THEY RUN, WITHOUT KNOWING WHY, SAVE
THAT THEY ARE IN PERIL OF THEIR LIVES.

THEIR NAMES ARE MARK AND JILL.

HE IS ELEVEN.
SHE JUST TURNED
NINE LAST WEEK.

I'M TIRED.
CAN'T WE
STOP
'N' REST?
PLEASE?!

WE CAN'T,
JILL. THEY'RE
RIGHT
BEHIND US!

THROUGH THE PLAYGROUND,
SIS -- FAST AS YOU CAN!

WHERE ARE MOM 'N' DAD?
WHAT HAPPENED TO
THEM?!

DON'T THINK
ABOUT THEM,
THEY CAN'T
HELP US
ANYMORE.





BOOM!



BOOM!



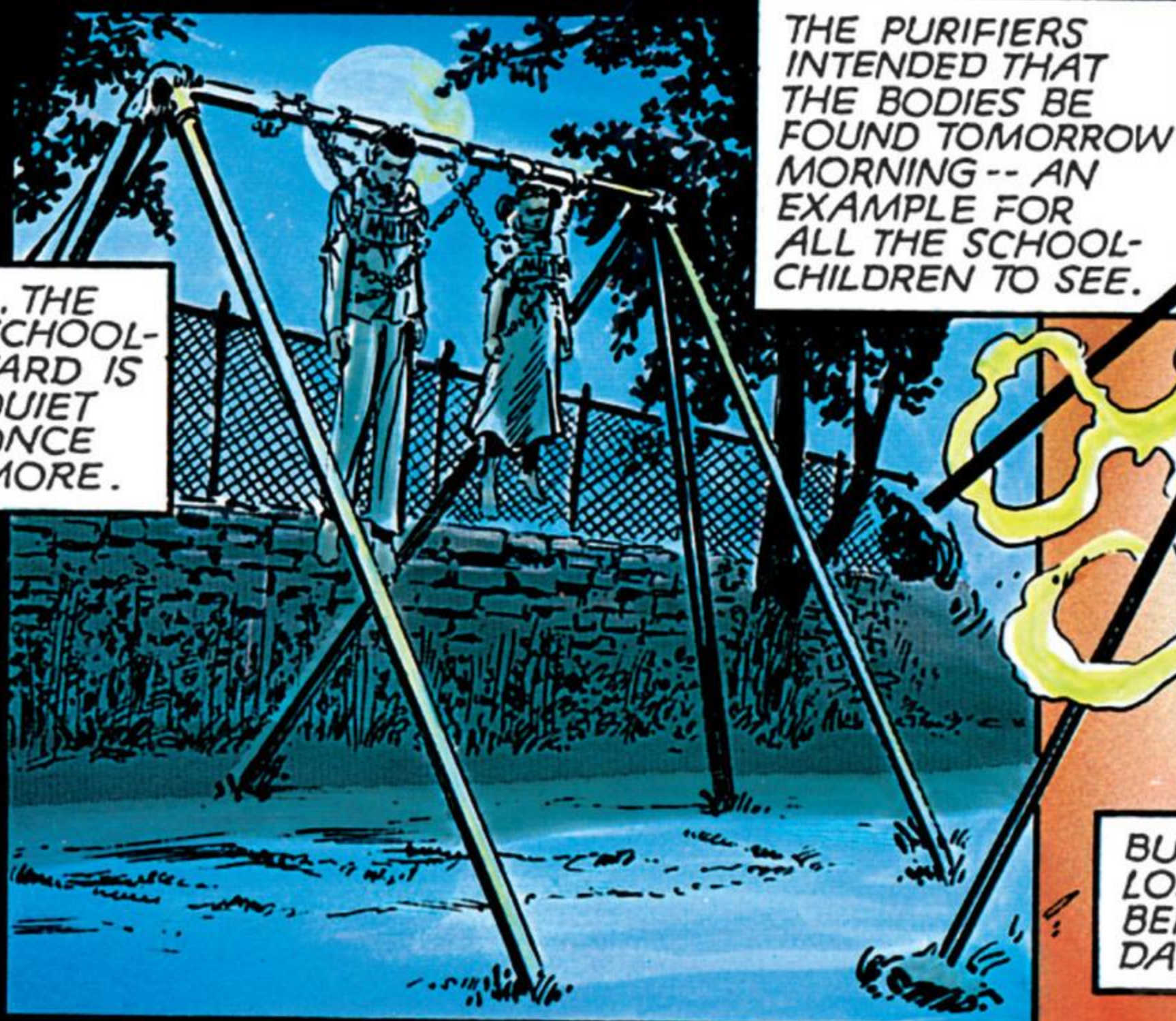
HOIST THEIR BODIES UP ON THAT SWING-- AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT.
THIS MISSION'S TAKEN TOO LONG AS IT IS.



AND FOR A TIME...

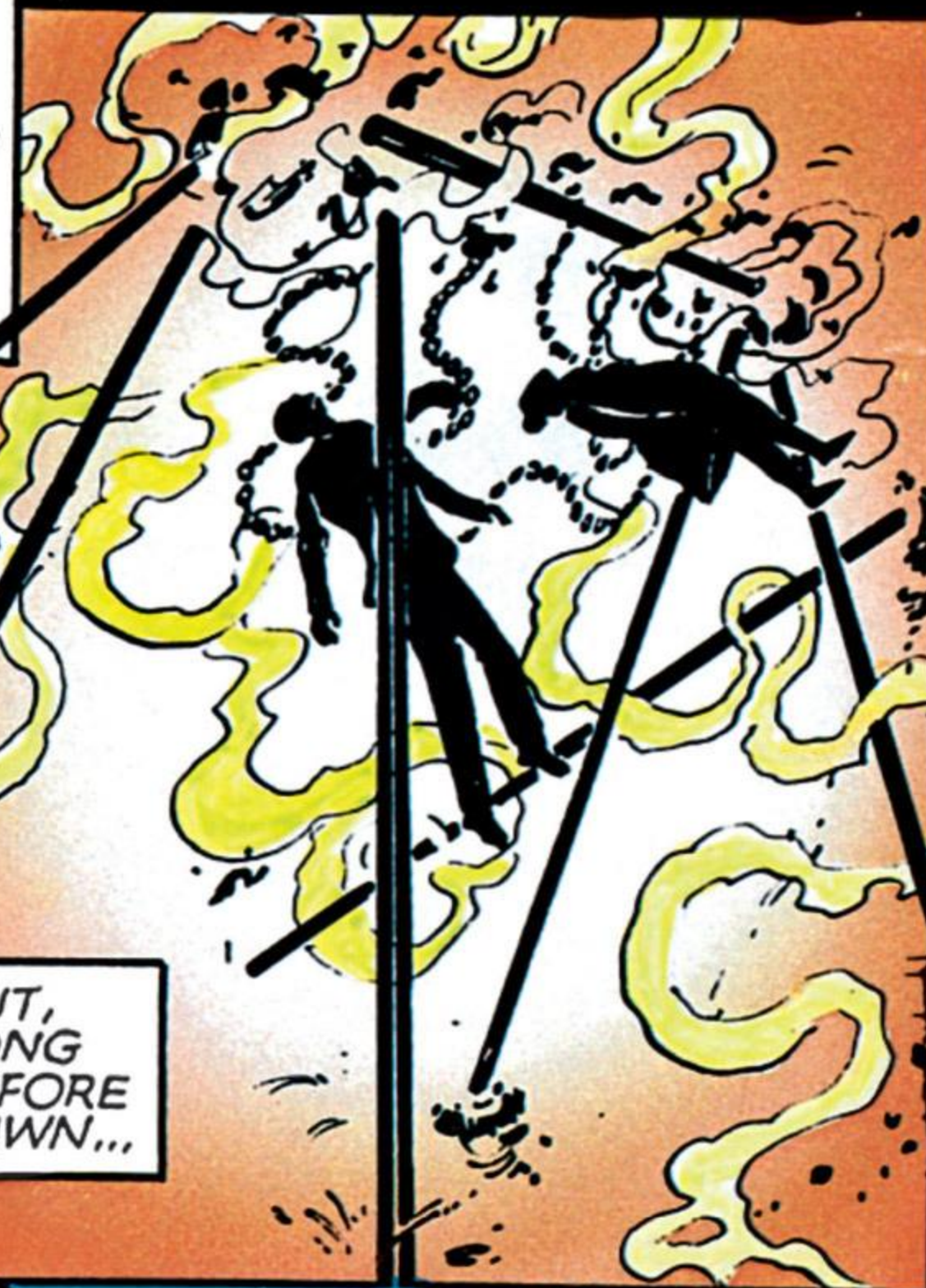


... THE SCHOOL-YARD IS QUIET ONCE MORE.



THE PURIFIERS INTENDED THAT THE BODIES BE FOUND TOMORROW MORNING-- AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL THE SCHOOL-CHILDREN TO SEE.

BUT, LONG BEFORE DAWN...



AN EXECUTION.

NOT THE FIRST, FAR FROM THE LAST-- ONLY THIS TIME, THE VICTIMS ARE CHILDREN.



SO YOUNG...

...SO INNOCENT...

... TO KNOW SUCH TERROR AND PAIN.

THEIR ONLY CRIME-- THAT THEY HAD BEEN BORN.

AND FOR ALL MY VAUNTED POWER, I WAS UNABLE TO SAVE THEM.

NO MORE SHALL DIE-- BUT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ATROCITY! WHATEVER THE COST, HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES, I WILL HUNT THEM DOWN--

-- AND MAKE THEM PAY!!



NEW
YORK
CITY...

... THE
STRYKER
BUILDING,
HEAD-
QUARTERS
OF THE
WORLDWIDE
EVANGELICAL
STRYKER
CRUSADE.

"IF THERE BE FOUND AMONG YOU... MAN OR WOMAN, THAT HATH WROUGHT WICKEDNESS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD THY GOD, IN TRANSGRESSING HIS COVENANT, AND HATH GONE AND SERVED OTHER GODS, AND WORSHIPPED THEM, EITHER THE SUN OR MOON, OR ANY OF THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN, WHICH I HAVE NOT COMMANDED...

"...AND IT BE TOLD THEE, AND THOU... BEHOLD IT TO BE TRUE... THEN SHALT THOU BRING FORTH THAT MAN AND THAT WOMAN, WHICH HAVE COMMITTED THAT WICKED THING...

"... AND SHALT STONE THEM WITH STONES...

"...TILL THEY DIE."

THY KINGDOM COME, LORD,
THY WILL BE DONE.

ON EARTH,
AS IT IS IN
HEAVEN.

BZZZZT!

THE BRIEFING
TAPES ARE
READY,
REVEREND.

THEN RUN THEM,
BESS. AND WOULD
YOU HAVE SOME
SANDWICHES AND
FRESH COFFEE SENT
UP, PLEASE?

I GOT SO
INVOLVED IN
WRITING SUNDAY'S
SERMON, I
FORGOT TO BREAK
FOR DINNER.

YES?

"SUBJECTS: THE UNCANNY **X-MEN**, A TEAM OF SO-CALLED SUPERHEROES, WHOSE MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF **MUTANTS**, PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE SIX.

"**CYCLOPS**-- CAPABLE OF PROJECTING FORCE BEAMS FROM HIS EYES.

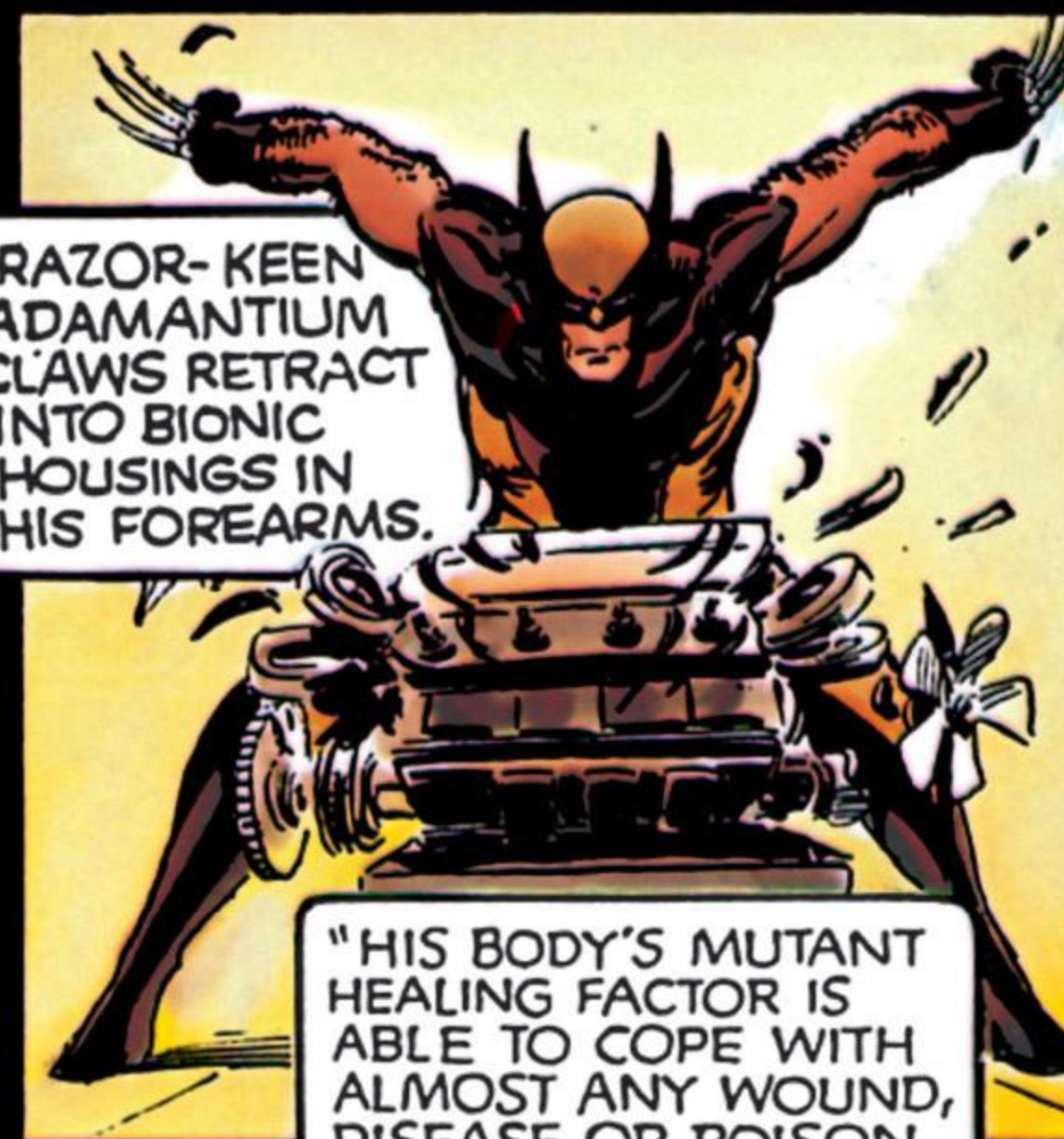


"THESE 'OPTIC BLASTS' CAN ONLY BE RESTRAINED AND CONTROLLED BY GLASSES OF RUBY QUARTZ.

"**STORM**-- A SELF-STYLED PAGAN GODDESS, POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE WEATHER.



"**WOLVERINE**-- FORMER CANADIAN SECRET AGENT, HIS SKELETON IS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.



"RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS RETRACT INTO BIONIC HOUSINGS IN HIS FOREARMS.

"HIS BODY'S MUTANT HEALING FACTOR IS ABLE TO COPE WITH ALMOST ANY WOUND, DISEASE OR POISON.

"**COLOSSUS**-- WHO CAN TRANSFORM HIS BODY FROM FLESH AND BLOOD--



"--INTO SUPER-STRONG, NIGH-INVULNERABLE ORGANIC STEEL.

"**ARIEL** -- ABLE TO PHASE HER BODY THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS.

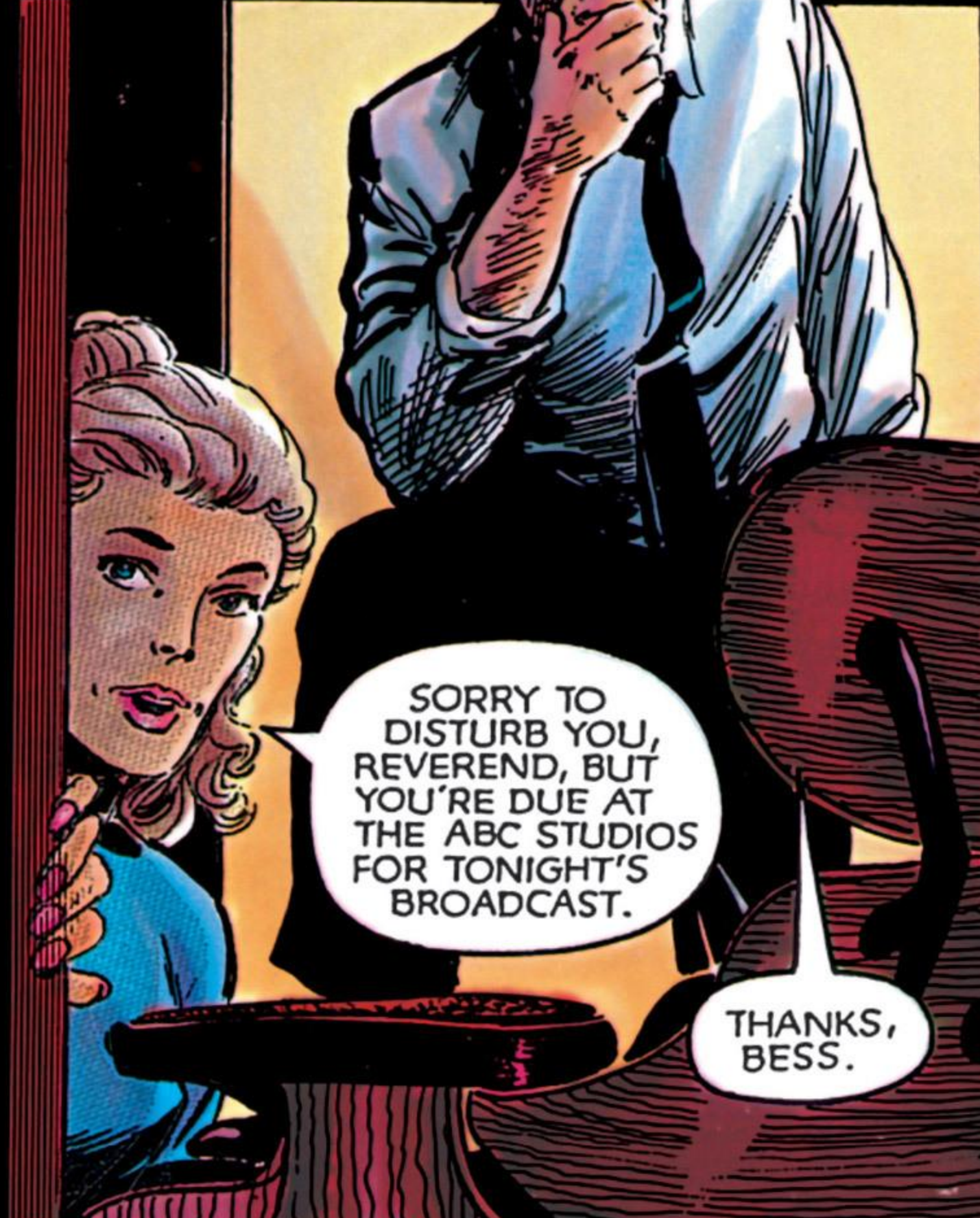


"**NIGHTCRAWLER**-- IN ADDITION TO EXCEPTIONAL ACROBATIC SKILLS AND THE ABILITY TO CLING TO WALLS AND CEILINGS...



"... HE IS A TELEPORTER.

"THE TEAM'S FOUNDER AND MENTOR, **PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER**, IS A TELEPATH. THE X-MEN ARE BASED AT HIS SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK, WHERE THEY--AND OTHER MUTANTS-- COMPRISE THE STUDENT BODY."



SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, REVEREND, BUT YOU'RE DUE AT THE ABC STUDIOS FOR TONIGHT'S BROADCAST.

THANKS, BESS.

ARE THOSE THE X-MEN?

THEY CERTAINLY ARE. BUT, GOD WILLING, IF ALL GOES WELL ...



...NOT FOR VERY MUCH LONGER.



CHAPTER 1



73 WILLINGTON ROAD, IN THE SUBURBAN TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, WHERE FORMER PRIMA BALLERINA STEVIE HUNTER MAINTAINS BOTH HOME AND DANCE STUDIO.



TAKE IT BACK!

TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID, DANNY, OR SO HELP ME --

-- I'LL REARRANGE YOUR FACE!



KITTY, STOP THIS! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!

LEMME ALONE, ILLYANA! THIS CREEP'S BEEN ON MY CASE ALL WEEK! I'VE HAD IT WITH HIM!

C'MON, DANNY, LET'S HEAR YOUR APOLOGY-- WHILE YOU CAN STILL TALK!

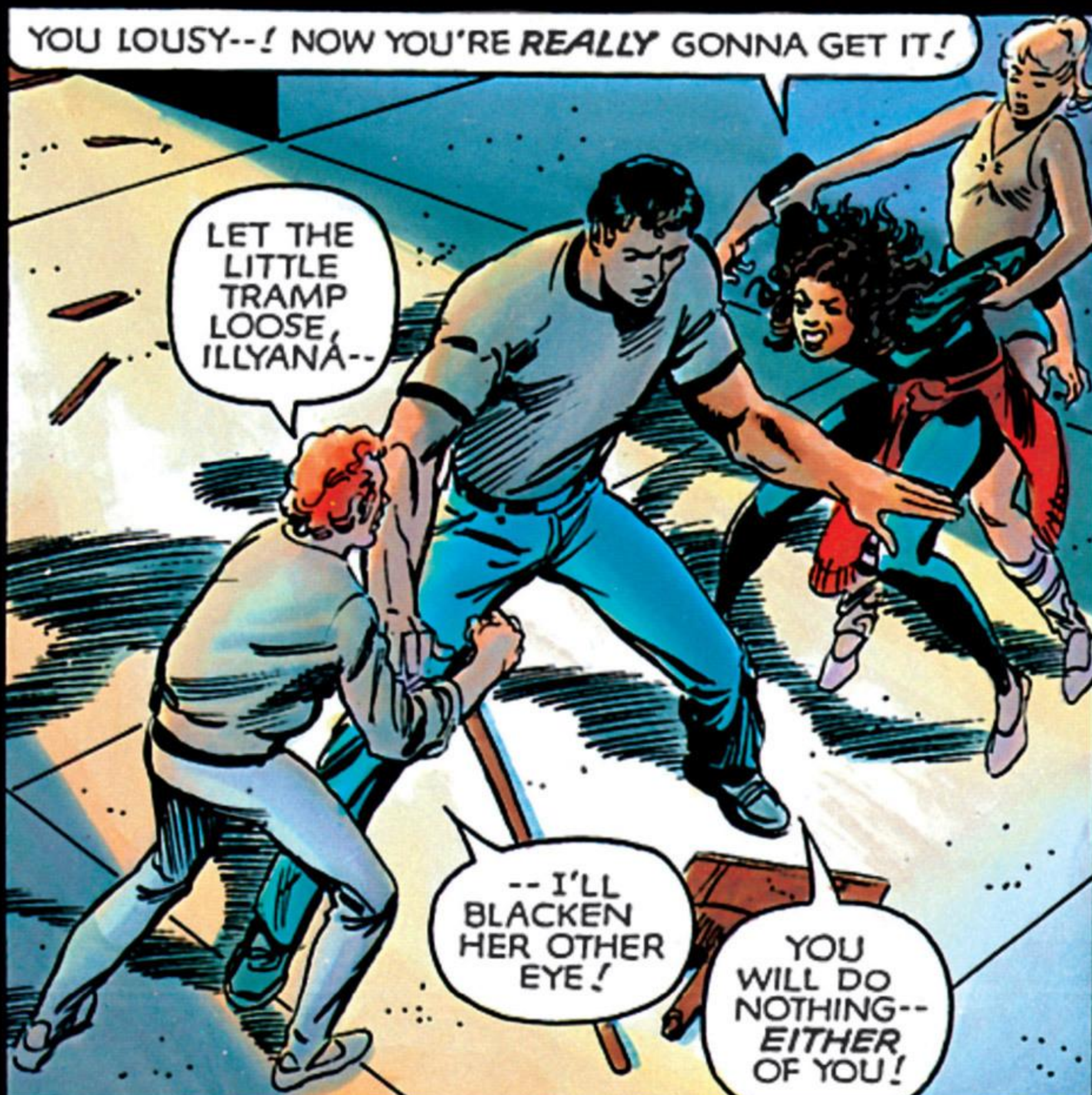
KATYA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!



HUH?!?
PETER--!



OWW!



YOU LOUSY--! NOW YOU'RE REALLY GONNA GET IT!

LET THE LITTLE TRAMP LOOSE, ILLYANA--

-- I'LL BLACKEN HER OTHER EYE!

YOU WILL DO NOTHING-- EITHER OF YOU!



STAY OUT OF THIS, PETER. IT ISN'T YOUR FIGHT, YOU DIDN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAID!



SETTLE DOWN, KITTY!

GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!

YOU'RE PHASING!

WHAT THE **HELL** IS GOING ON OUT HERE!?!
IT'S KITTY'S FAULT, Ms. HUNTER! SHE STARTED IT!



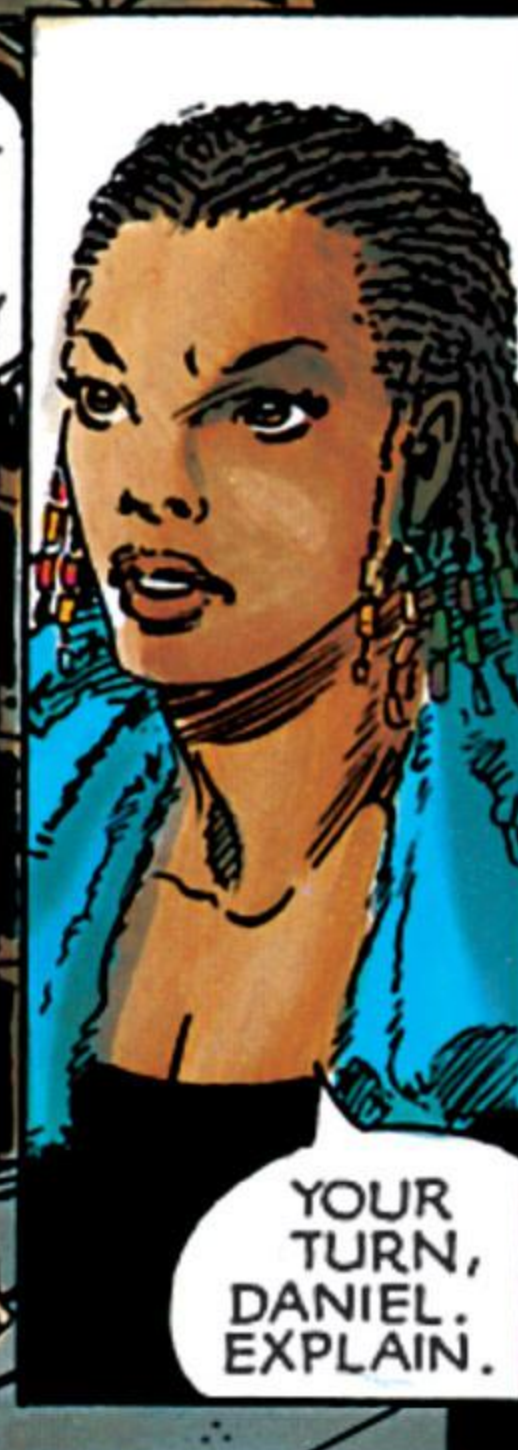
IS THIS TRUE?



I SWUNG FIRST--



--BECAUSE DANNY SHOT HIS MOUTH OFF ONCE TOO OFTEN!



YOUR TURN, DANIEL. EXPLAIN.

I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT THE STRYKER CRUSADE, AN' ALL THE GOOD IT DOES.



MY FOLKS AN' I ARE MEMBERS, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

TELL HER THE REST, CREEP-- ABOUT HOW REVEREND STRYKER'S GONNA SAVE HUMANITY...



...FROM THE GODLESS HORDES OF **MUTANTKIND!**

WELL, HE IS! MUTIES ARE EVIL! THEY DESERVE WHATEVER THEY GET!



YOU WANNA MAKE SOME-THIN' OF IT, MUTIE-LOVER?!



YOU HAVE BOTH MADE YOUR POINTS, YOUNG MAN. I SUGGEST YOU LET MATTERS END THERE.

RIGHT. HEY, ANYTHING YOU SAY, MR. RASPUTIN. NO PROBLEM.



NEXT TIME, PRYDE--WHEN "KING KONG" HERE ISN'T AROUND TO PROTECT YOU--IT'LL BE MY TURN.



THANKS A LOT, PETER.

FORGIVE ME, KATYA. I SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE BOY HURT.



WITH YOUR TRAINING, YOU COULD'VE CRIPPLED DANNY--OR WORSE.

HE'D'VE DONE THE SAME TO ME, I BET.

C'MON, LET'S GET YOU INSIDE AND CLEANED UP.



HOW CAN YOU ALL BE SO **CALM**?! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!



THEY'RE ONLY WORDS, CHILD.



SUPPOSE HE'D CALLED ME A **NIGGER-LOVER**, STEVIE?!

WOULD YOU BE SO DAMN' TOLERANT THEN?!!



YOU AND YOUR SISTER HAD BETTER GO AFTER HER, PETER-- SEE SHE GETS HOME SAFE.

I'LL SPEAK TO DANNY, AND MAKE CERTAIN THIS SORT OF THING *NEVER* HAPPENS AGAIN.

KITTY IS UPSET, STEVIE. SHE DID NOT THINK ABOUT WHAT SHE WAS SAYING.

SHE ... DID NOT MEAN...

OF COURSE SHE DID, MY FRIEND. SHE MEANT EVERY WORD.

AND SHE WAS RIGHT.



THE HUNTER WOMAN IS GOING BACK INSIDE.

ONE SHOT WOULD DO THE TRICK. SHE'D NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT HER, AND WITH A SILENCER, NO ONE WOULD HEAR A THING.

SHE ISN'T A MUTANT, PARTNER. LEAVE HER BE.

SHE'S WORSE-- SHE TREATS THOSE MUTIE SCUM LIKE REAL HUMAN BEINGS.

OUR MISSION'S SURVEILLANCE, NOT ASSASSINATION. BE PATIENT, GEORGE--ONCE WE'VE DEALT WITH THE MUTIES, THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR TRAITORS LIKE HER.



MISSION CENTRAL, THIS IS ROVER TEAM THREE. COLOSSUS, HIS SISTER ILLYANA, AND ARIEL ARE RETURNING TO THE SCHOOL. SITUATION NORMAL.

OPERATION HEADHUNTER CAN PROCEED AS SCHEDULED.

A FEW MILES OUTSIDE TOWN, PETER RASPUTIN TURNS OFF GRAYMALKIN LANE AND UP THE SCHOOL'S DRIVE. THE ESTATE-- SPRAWLED ALONG THREE MILES OF LAKEFRONT-- HAS BEEN IN XAVIER'S FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS AND HAS BECOME A MUCH-BELOVED HOME TO THE X-MEN, AS WELL.



WHAT KEPT YOU, PETER?

WE WERE WORRIED YOU'D MISS HERR PROFESSOR'S APPEARANCE ON TELEVISION. HURRY INSIDE -- THE SHOW'S ABOUT TO START!



THAT'S SOME SHINER YOU'RE SPORTIN', PUN'KIN-- SCRAP OR ACCIDENT?

SCRAP.

FAIR FIGHT?

I GUESS SO.

YOU WIN?

NOPE.

HOW COME?

I GUESS I DON'T HAVE YOUR KILLER INSTINCTS, WOLVERINE.

THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT?



I WASN'T FIGHTING AN EVIL MUTANT, OR SUPER-VILLAIN, OR MURDER MACHINE, LOGAN-- JUST A KID WITH A BIG MOUTH. IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.

I'M GONNA WASH UP AN' CHANGE MY CLOTHES. I WON'T BE LONG.

WHILE KITTY'S GONE, ILLYANA EXPLAINS...

THERE IS NO ANSWER TO SUCH HATRED. IT EXISTS, AS WE DO.

BUT FOR SUCH A CONFLICT TO COME TO A HEAD TONIGHT, EVEN-- OR PERHAPS, ESPECIALLY-- IN SO SMALL AND ORDINARY A MANNER... IS THAT AN OMEN?

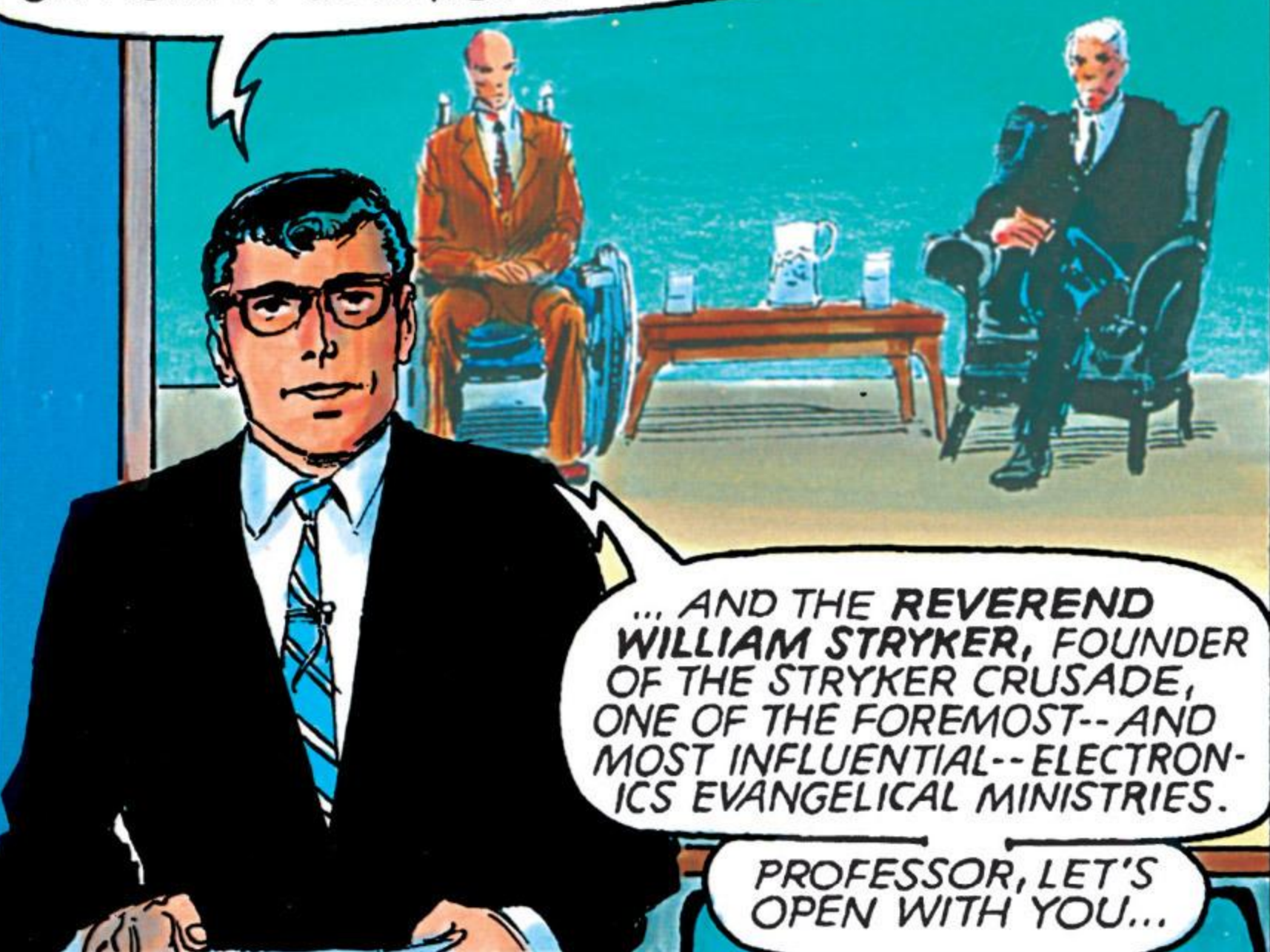
POPCORN, ANYONE? KITTY?

NO THANKS, ILLYANA.



SHUSH, YOU TWO-- THE PROGRAM IS BEGINNING.

GOOD EVENING. I'M JOHN CHEEVER. OUR TOPIC TONIGHT: **MUTANTS**. AND HERE WITH ME TO DISCUSS IT: **PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER**, RENOWNED AUTHORITY ON HUMAN GENETICS...



... AND THE **REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER**, FOUNDER OF THE STRYKER CRUSADE, ONE OF THE FOREMOST-- AND MOST INFLUENTIAL-- ELECTRONICS EVANGELICAL MINISTRIES.

PROFESSOR, LET'S OPEN WITH YOU...



FIRSTLY, Mr. CHEEVER, MUTANTS PER SE ARE NOT A MONOLITHIC GROUP, POSSESSING ONE SET OF ATTITUDES OR GOALS. THEY ARE INDIVIDUALS-- AS ARE WE ALL-- AND SHOULD BE JUDGED AS SUCH.

NOW THERE YOU GO, CHARLES.

THESE "INDIVIDUALS" OF YOURS POSSESS SOME PRETTY TERRIFYING POWERS. HOW ARE WE COMMON FOLK TO DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST THEM?

IF I MAY QUOTE FROM THE REPORT OF SENATOR ROBERT KELLY'S AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MUTANT ACTIVITIES:



"...THE EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS OF MUTANTS POSES A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER, BOTH TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ORDER OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT."



RIIIGHT.



GOSH, KITTY, YOU DON'T LOOK DANGEROUS.



THIS AIN'T A JOKE, ILLYANA. THE SUCKER MEANS BUSINESS.



QUIET! I DON'T WANT TO MISS ANYTHING.



THEY HAVE SWITCHED TO A COMMERCIAL! THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THE PROFESSOR A CHANCE TO RESPOND.

OVER THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM, THE HEATED DEBATE CONTINUES.

AFTER ALL, CHARLES, IS IT FAIR TO EVEN CALL MUTANTS "HUMAN?" THE GENERIC TERM FOR THEM IS, I BELIEVE, **HOMO SUPERIOR**-- WHICH RELATES TO A DIFFERENT SPECIES ALTOGETHER.

CUE CAMERA ONE-- YOU THINK XAVIER'S MAKING A CONVINCING CASE?

YEAH, BUT WHO'S LISTENING? STRYKER KNOWS TELEVISION-- AND HE'S PLAYING TO THE AUDIENCE. HE COMES ACROSS AS SUCH A NICE, PERSONABLE GUY...



TOO BAD-- 'CAUSE THE MAN'S MESSAGE IS PRETTY DAMN SCARY.



FINALLY...

THAT'S ALL FOR US-- THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.

GOOD RIDDANCE. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU...



BUT I'M SUDDENLY IN A MOOD TO BREAK SOMETHING.

ANYONE WANT TO JOIN ME IN THE *DANGER ROOM*?

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

ILLYANA, WOULD YOU SET UP A TRAINING SEQUENCE WHILE WE CHANGE INTO COSTUME?

TAKE STRYKER'S REMARK ABOUT MUTANTS NOT BEIN' HUMAN TO ITS ULTIMATE AN' WE'VE NO RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW.

WE COULD BE EXTERMINATED, LIKE RATS. LEGALLY MURDERED.

NO RIGHT TO HAVE ANY RIGHTS. OR PROTECTION.

IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT STRYKER'S SO POPULAR.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE BELIEVE HIS EVERY WORD.

TO THINK US EVIL, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE EXIST? IT IS MADNESS.

I HAVE KNOWN SUCH FEAR AND HATRED FROM BIRTH...

... BUT TIME DOES NOT MAKE IT ANY EASIER TO TAKE.

THE OTHERS ARE SPOOKED-- WITH GOOD REASON.

I WISH THE PROFESSOR AND SCOTT AND ORORO WERE HERE.

MEANWHILE, ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...

A FASCINATING DISCUSSION, PROFESSOR. I'M SORRY WE HAD TO CUT IT SHORT.

I, TOO, MR. CHEEVER. I FEAR REVEREND STRYKER MADE BY FAR THE BETTER PRESENTATION.

THIS DID NOT GO WELL, DID IT, SCOTT?

WE WERE SLAUGHTERED, ORORO. CHARLES WAS SPEAKING TO PEOPLE'S IDEALS, STRYKER TO THEIR FEARS. BUT, ON CAMERA, CHARLES LOOKS SO GRIM AND FORBODING-- ALMOST SCARY-- THAT HE ENDED UP MAKING STRYKER'S CASE FOR HIM.

LET'S HOPE THE DAMAGE ISN'T IRREPARABLE.

MY FAULT, MR. SUMMERS. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WATCHING WHERE I WAS GOING.

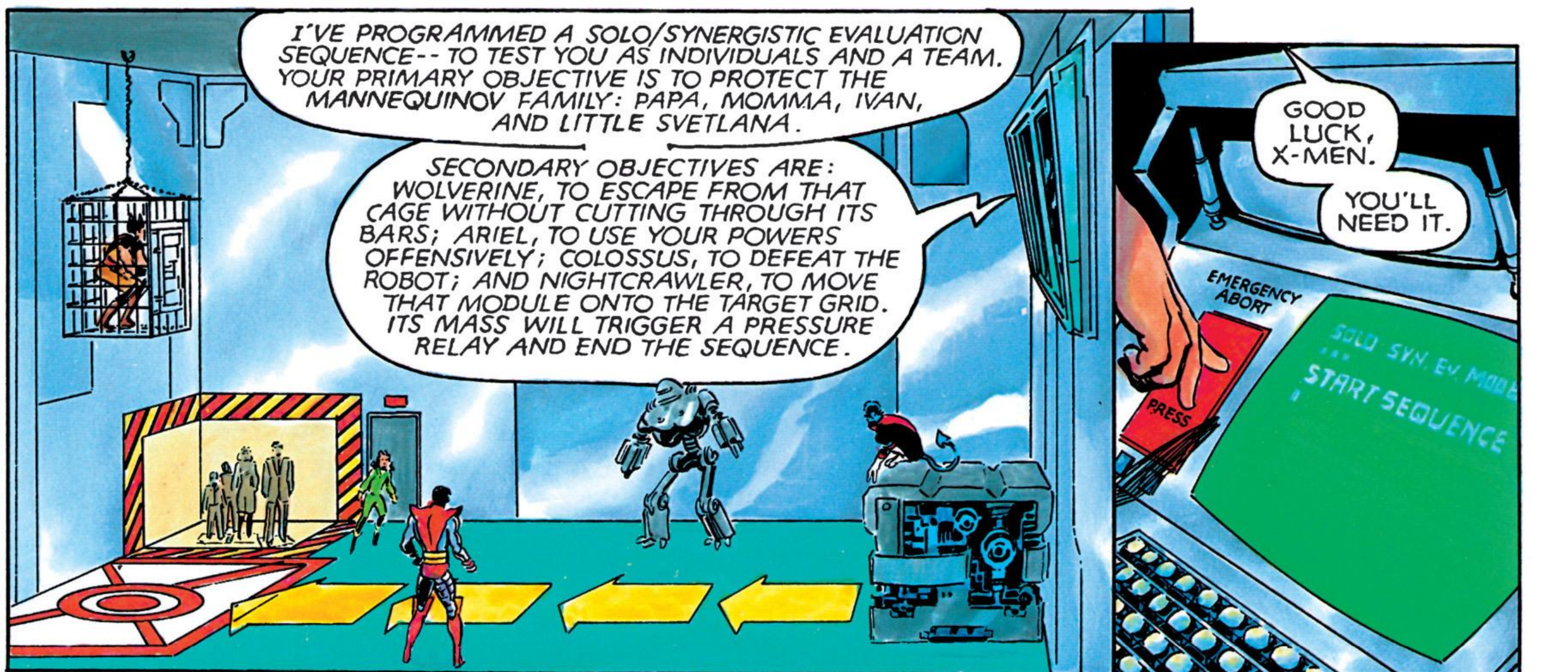
OH!

NO HARM DONE.

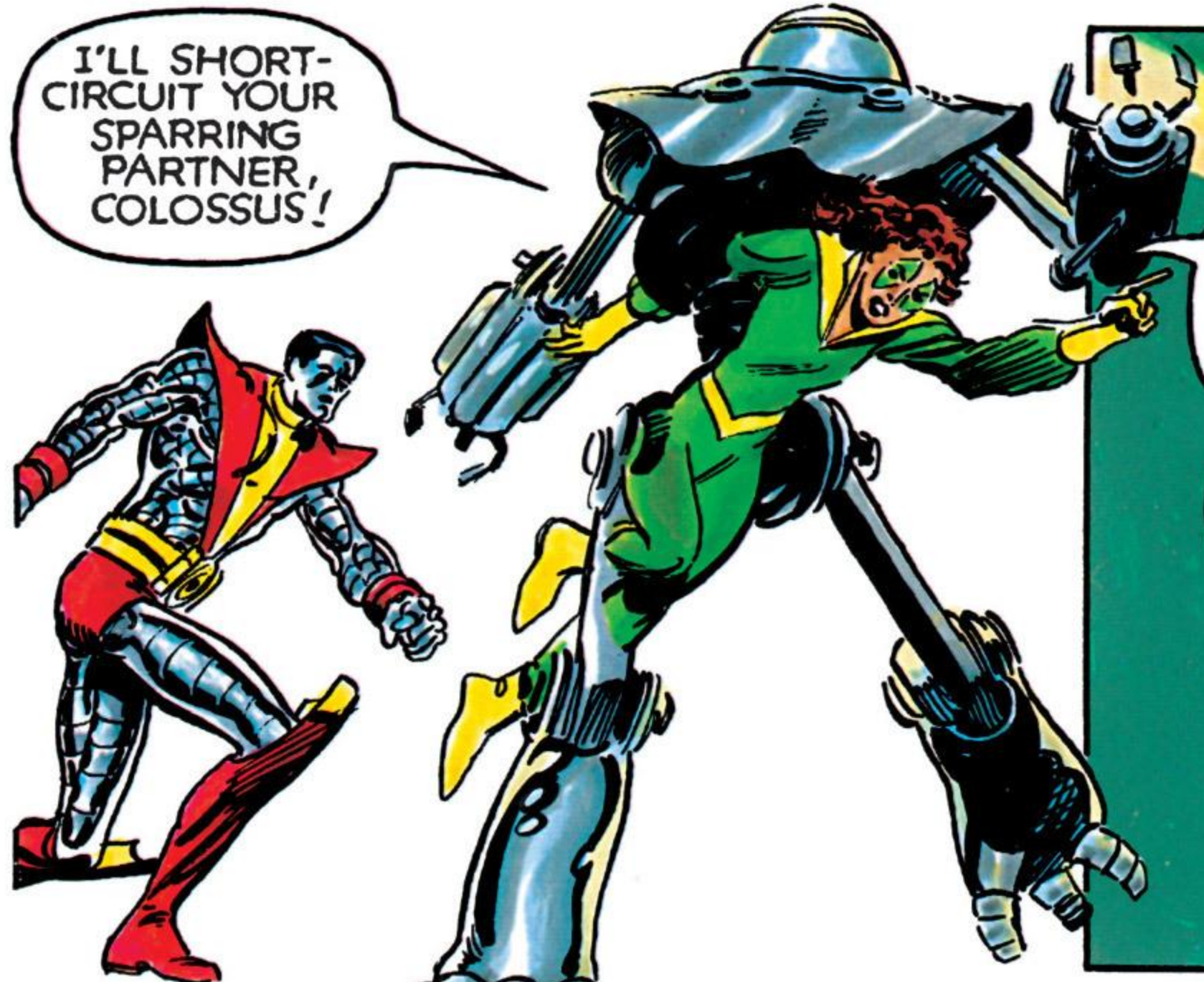
IS EVERYTHING READY, ANNE?

WE'LL TAKE THEM IN CENTRAL PARK, SIR.

SPLENDID. OUR PSI- SCREENS PREVENTED XAVIER FROM SCANNING OUR THOUGHTS, SO THE SURPRISE SHOULD BE TOTAL.



I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT YOUR SPARRING PARTNER, COLOSSUS!



YOU BLOCK THE MISSILES!

NIGHTCRAWLER, HELP WOLVERINE!



I MUST BE GETTIN' OLD-- SHOULD'A THOUGHT O' THIS MYSELF.

MAYBE I CAN'T CUT THE CAGE.



BUT NOTHIN'S TA STOP ME MAKIN' A MESS O' THE CHAIN THAT HOLDS IT UP.

HANG ON, ELF-- HERE WE GO!



NO GOOD, WOLVERINE. THE CAGE'S MASS IS INSUFFICIENT--

...TO TERMINATE THE SEQUENCE.

CLANG!

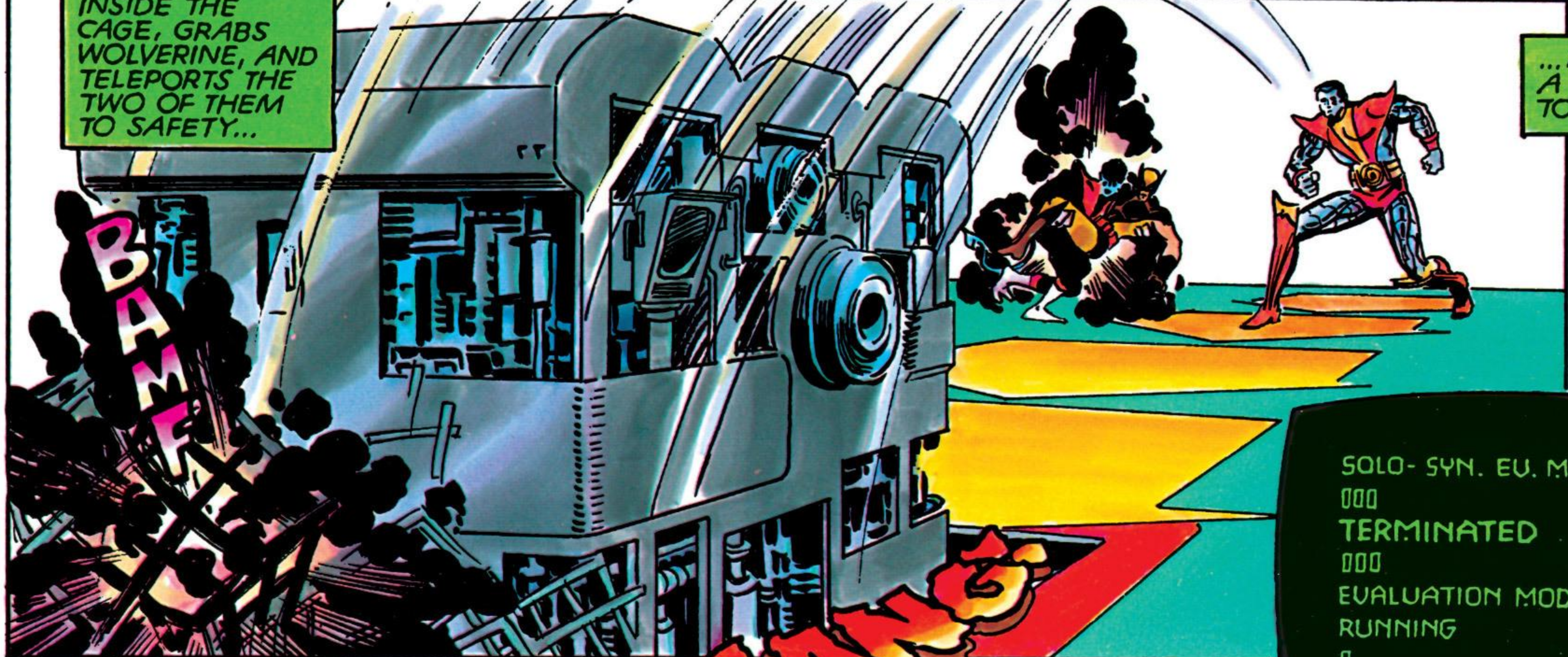


CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED.

'PORT ME OUTTA HERE -- WE'LL LET PETEY DO THE REST.



WITH A DOUBLE BURST OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, NIGHTCRAWLER SHIFTS HIMSELF INSIDE THE CAGE, GRABS WOLVERINE, AND TELEPORTS THE TWO OF THEM TO SAFETY...



...NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.

SOLO- SYN. EU. MODE
000
TERMINATED
000
EVALUATION MODE
RUNNING
0

WEST 67th STREET,
JUST OFF
COLUMBUS AVENUE...

HOW SERIOUS IS
THE STRYKER
SITUATION,
PROFESSOR?

POTENTIALLY QUITE GRAVE,
SCOTT. IN THE STUDIO, I SENSED
A SOPHISTICATED PSI-SCREEN
SHIELDING HIS THOUGHTS. A
GENERAL PRECAUTION? OR IS
HE AWARE OF MY ABILITIES?

AND IF SO, HOW DID
HE LEARN, AND WHAT
ELSE-- ABOUT ME
AND THE X-MEN--
DOES HE KNOW?

STAY ON
THEIR TAIL,
ROCCO, BUT
NOT TOO
CLOSE.

WE DON'T
WANT TO
GIVE OUR
"FRIENDS"
THE SLIGHTEST
CAUSE FOR
ALARM.

AT 72nd
STREET, THE
ROLLS TURNS
ONTO CENTRAL
PARK DRIVE...

AN EVIL MUTANT--
SUCH AS OUR ARCH-
FOE, **MAGNETO**--
CAN BE CONFRONTED
PHYSICALLY.

WE HAVE NO
SUCH OPTION
WITH STRYKER,
WHOSE STOCKS-
IN-TRADE ARE
WORDS AND
IDEAS.

WE CAN ONLY
COUNTER THEM WITH
SANE, GENTLER
WORDS OF OUR
OWN...

... AND HOPE FOR THE BEST--EH?!?

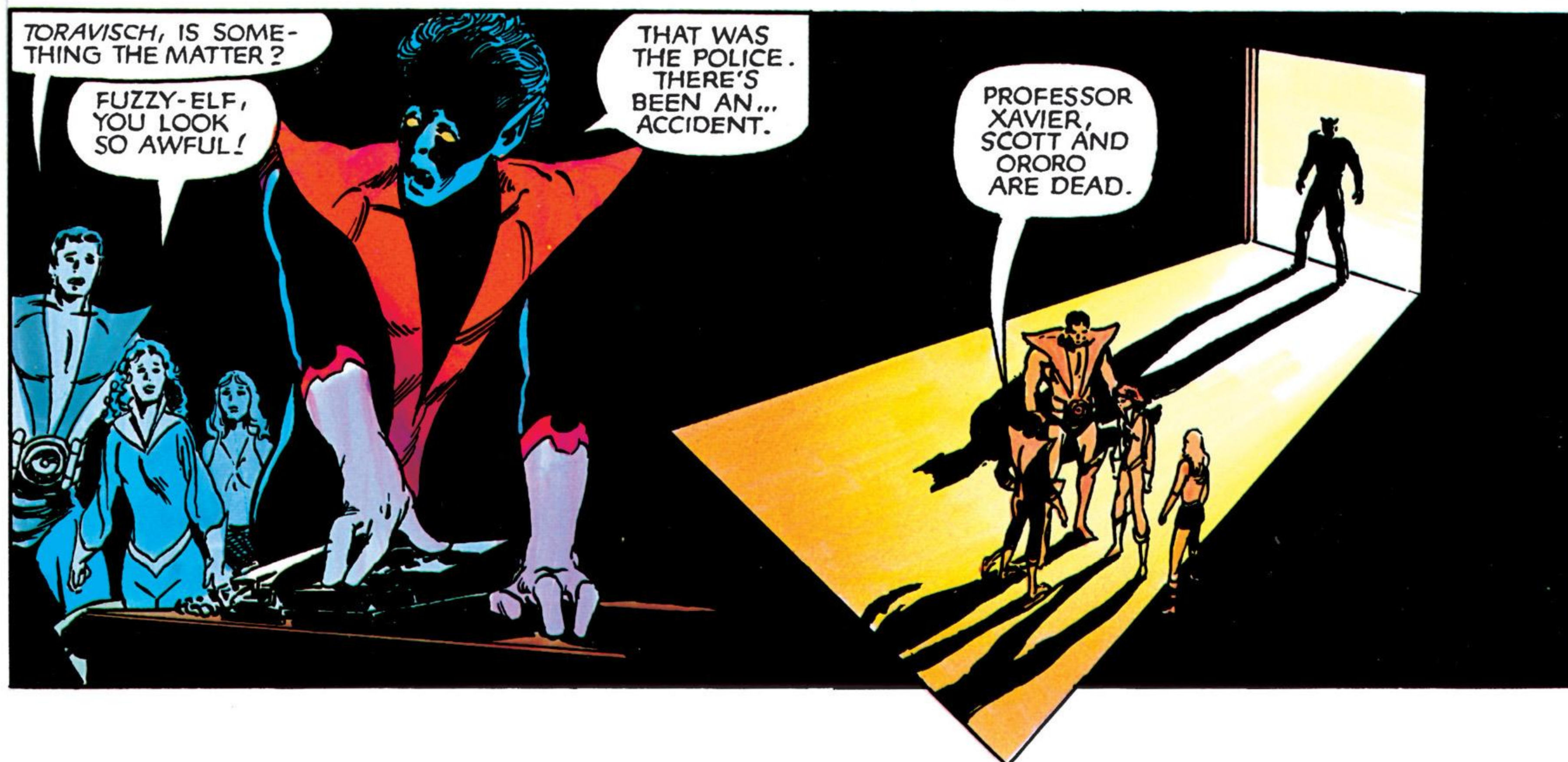
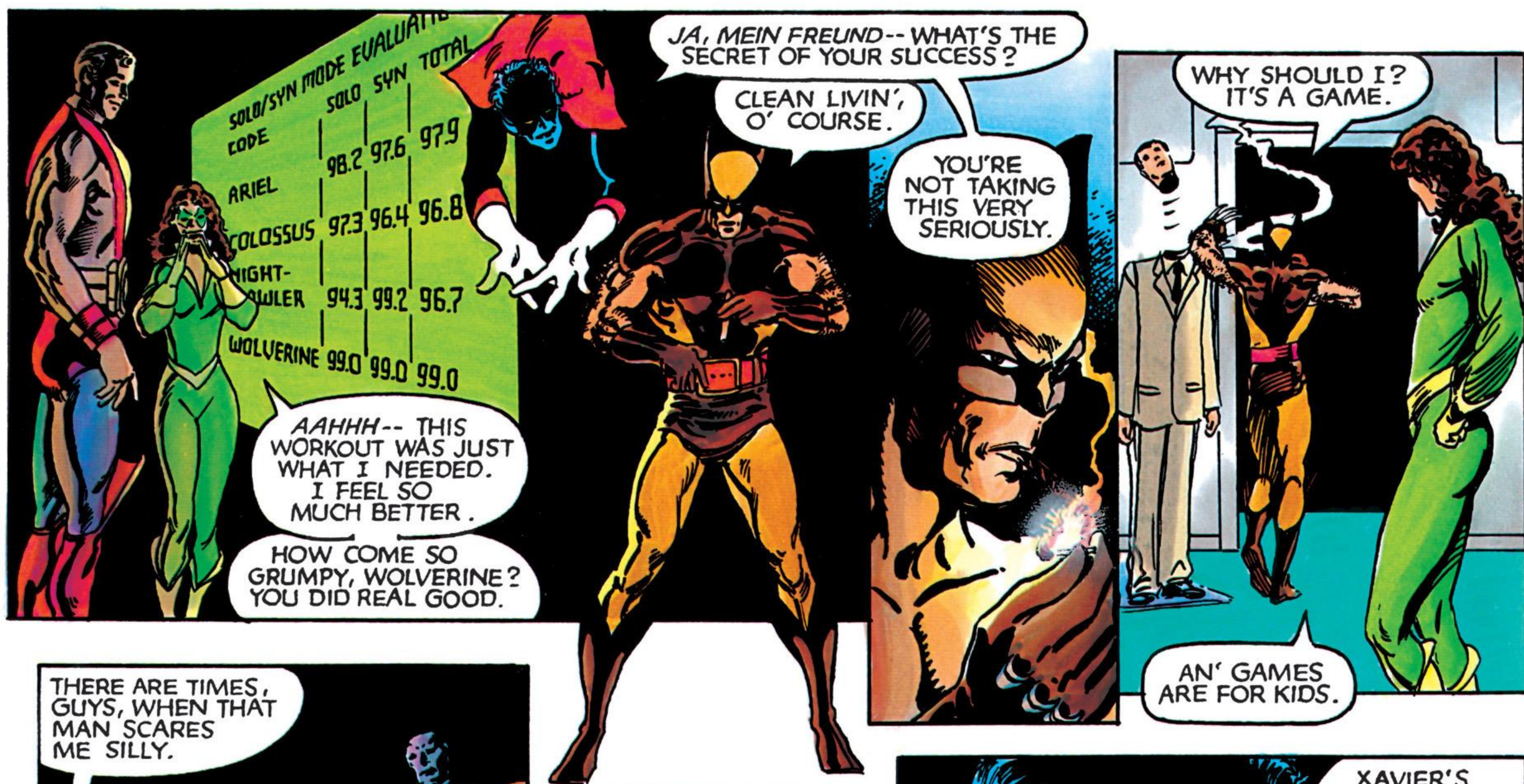
SCOTT, I SENSE
HOSTILE THOUGHT
PATTERNS AHEAD
OF US-- IT'S AN
AMBUSH!

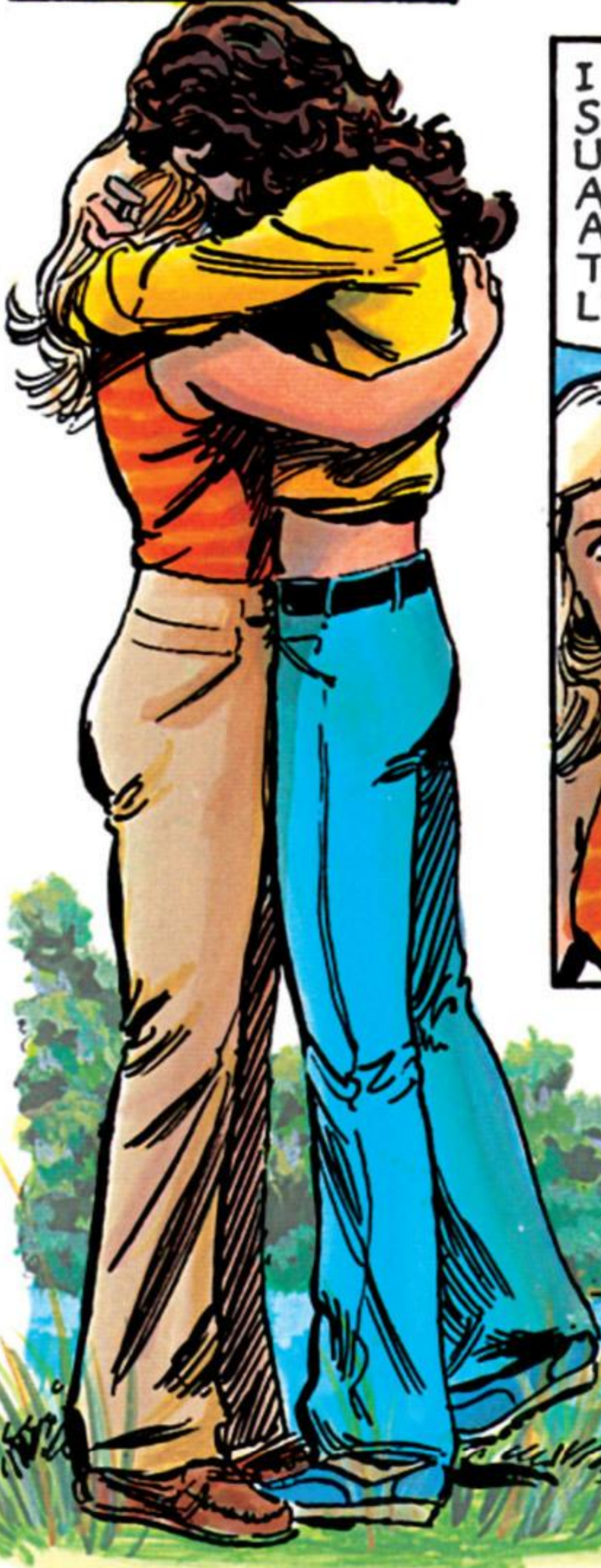
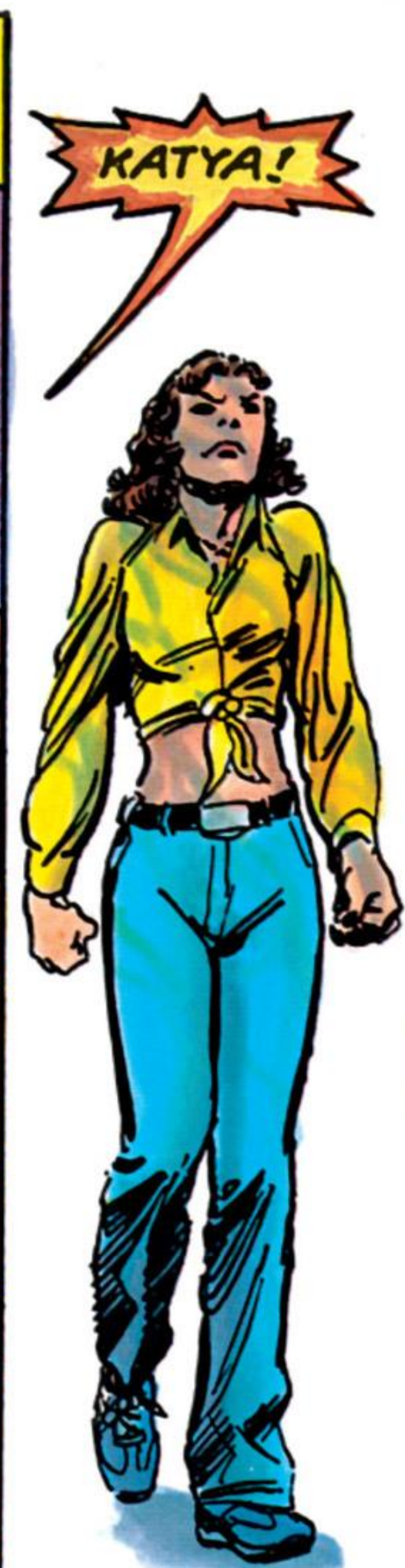
EXPLOSION STUNNED THE
PROFESSOR-- HE CAN'T
MINDCALL THE OTHERS
UPSTATE. AND THE RADIO'S
SMASHED AS WELL.

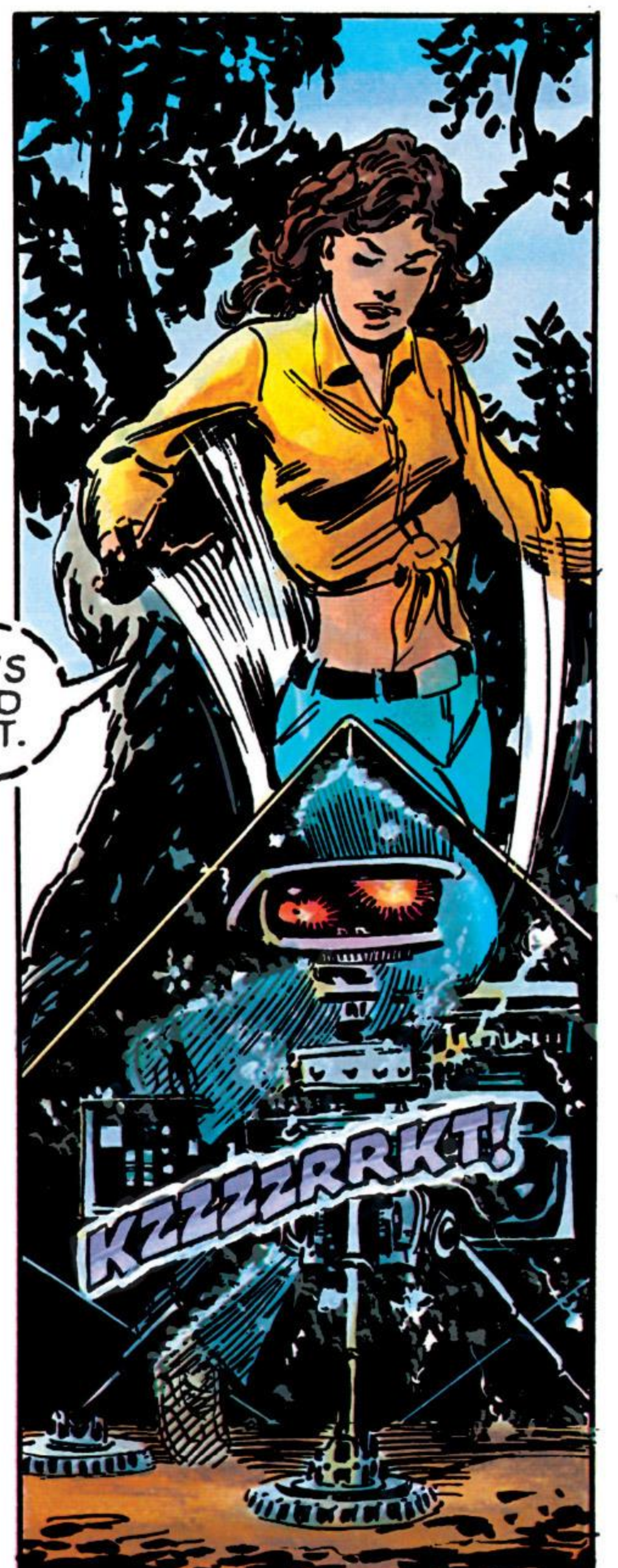
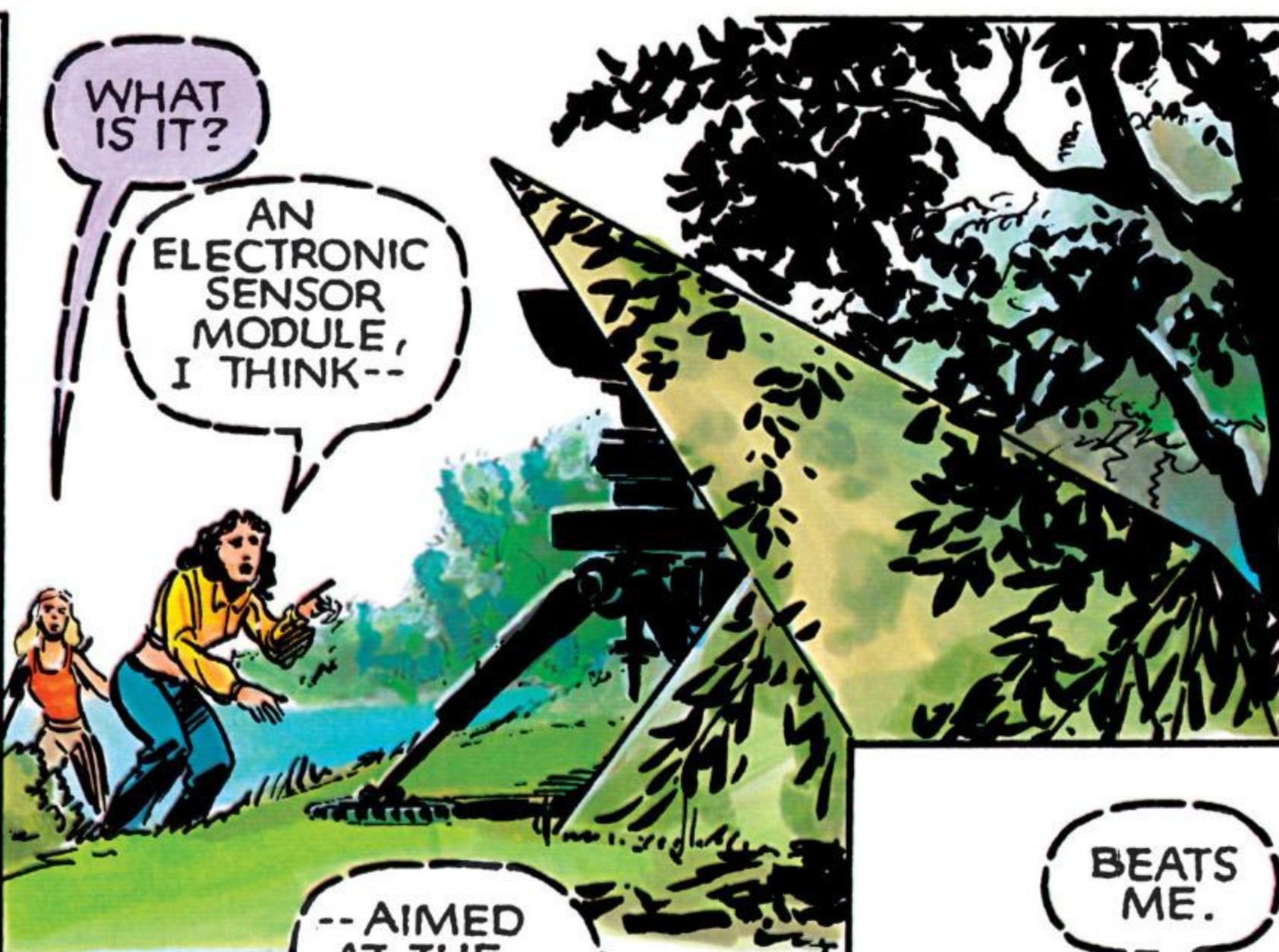
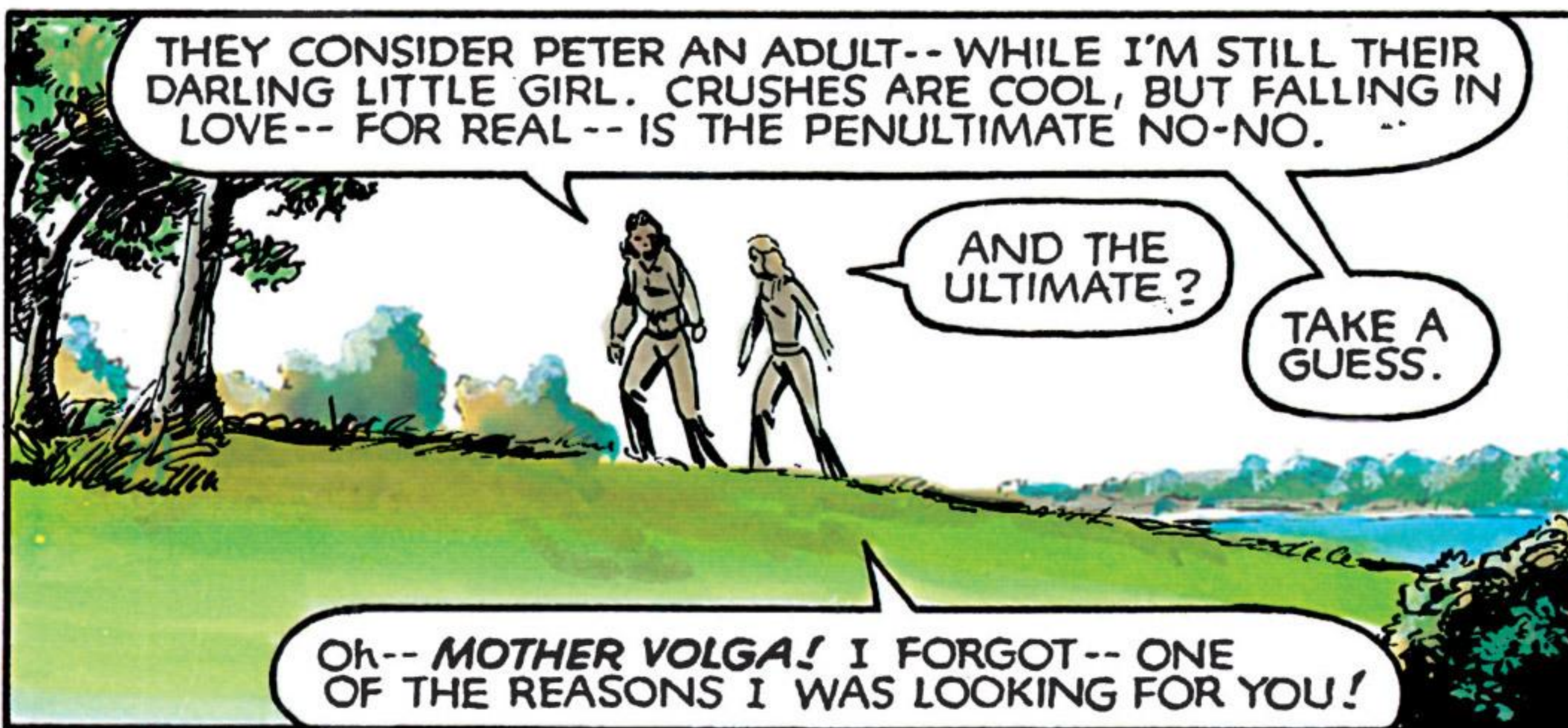
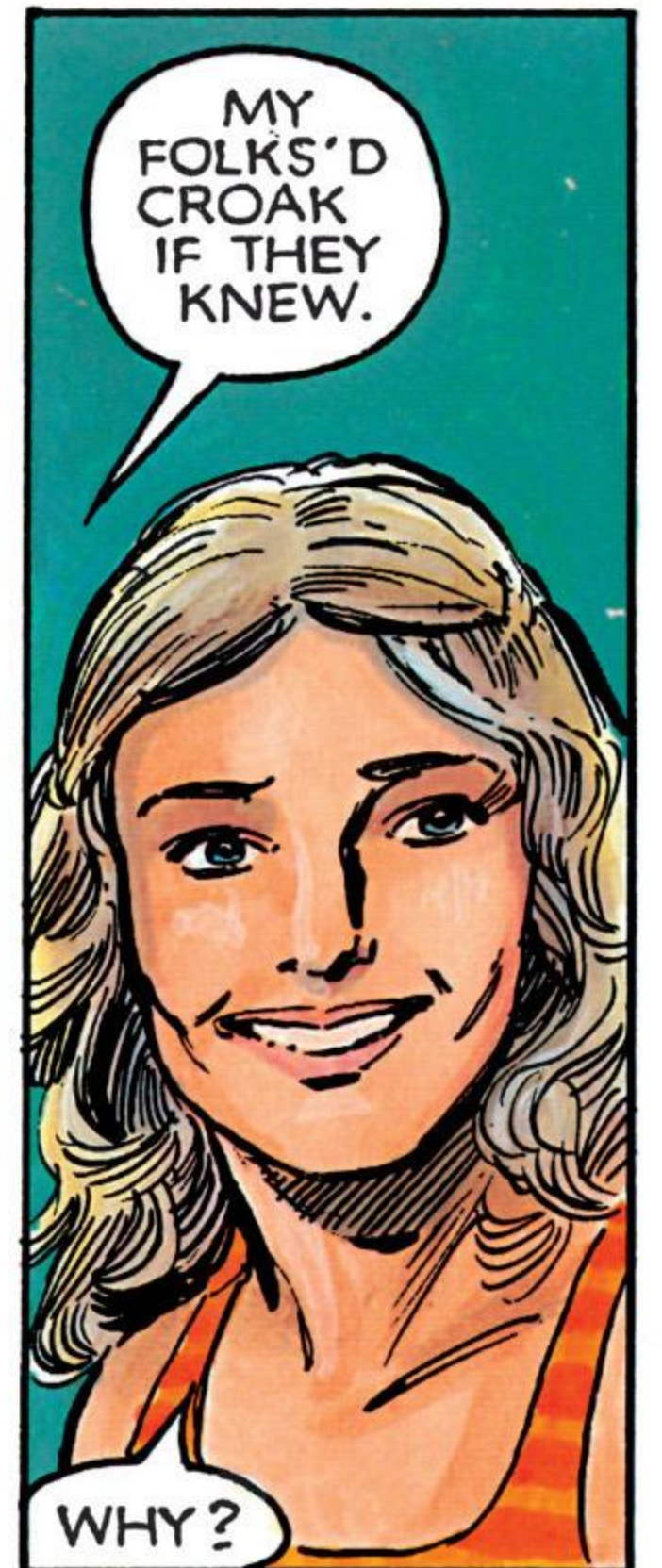
DOOR'S JAMMED--
I'LL HAVE TO USE MY
OPTIC BLASTS TO
PUNCH A WAY OUT.

ORORO, YOU TAKE
CARE OF THE PROFESSOR!
I'LL HANDLE THE
OPPOSITION! AS SOON
AS YOU'RE AIRBORNE,
SUMMON A FOG TO
COVER OUR ESCAPE!











THAT WAS IMPRESSIVE. NOW WHAT?

WE WAIT TILL SOMEBODY COMES TO FIX THE THING.

AND WE'LL BE HERE TO GREET THEM?

DON'T WORRY, ILLYANA. I'LL PROTECT YOU.

WONDERFUL.



CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN...

I DON'T CARE WHAT THE FLAMIN' COPS SAY, PETEY. THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT.



DOES IT MATTER, TOVARISCH? OUR FRIENDS ARE JUST AS DEAD.

THREE CORPSES WERE FOUND IN THE WRECK, PAL...

...BUT THEY WEREN'T OUR FRIENDS.



CAR TOTALLY CONSUMED BY FIRE. BODIES BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION. VERY NICE. VERY NEAT.

TROUBLE IS, THE SCENTS ARE WRONG.



I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.



IT'S A CON. SOMEONE WENT TO A HELLUVA LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONVINCE THE LAW-- AND US-- THAT CHARLEY, SCOTT AN' 'RORO WERE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.



HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN?

I'VE STAGED MORE'N A FEW SUCH "ACCIDENTS" IN MY DAY, BOY-- THIS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS.

SHOULD WE NOT TELL THE POLICE?

NOPE.



KURT, WHAT'CHA GOT?



YOUR HUNCH PAID OFF, MEIN FREUND. A CAR PARKED ACROSS FROM OUR ROLLS, JUST AFTER WE ARRIVED. TWO PEOPLE CHECKED OUT THE ROLLS. NOW THEY'RE WATCHING AND WAITING.



WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

LET'S NAIL THE BASTARDS.



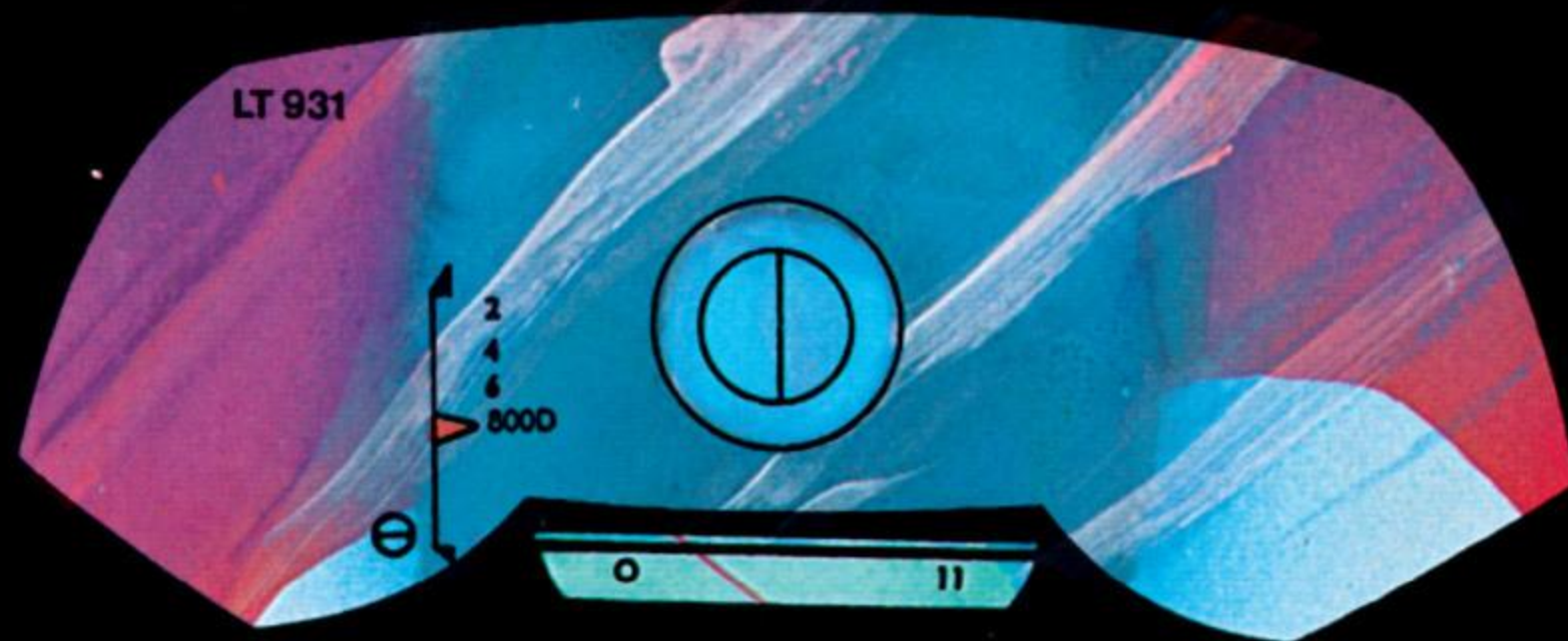
NO SIGN OF THE MUTIES.

RELAX. THERE ARE PURIFIERS COVERING EVERY EXIT FROM THE PARK-- PLUS OUR MEMBERS AMONG THE POLICE UNITS INSIDE. WHICHEVER WAY THE X-MEN TRY TO LEAVE, WE'LL SPOT 'EM.

I WISH SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN.



YOU GOT IT! THERE'S THE BIG ONE-- COLOSSUS-- BUT HE'S IN COSTUME!



WHAT THE HELL--?!?



BOOM!

NIGHTCRAWLER!



HIT THE BRICKS, BUB.

Yyiji--!

YOU, YER LADY FRIEND AN' ME'RE GONNA HAVE WORDS.

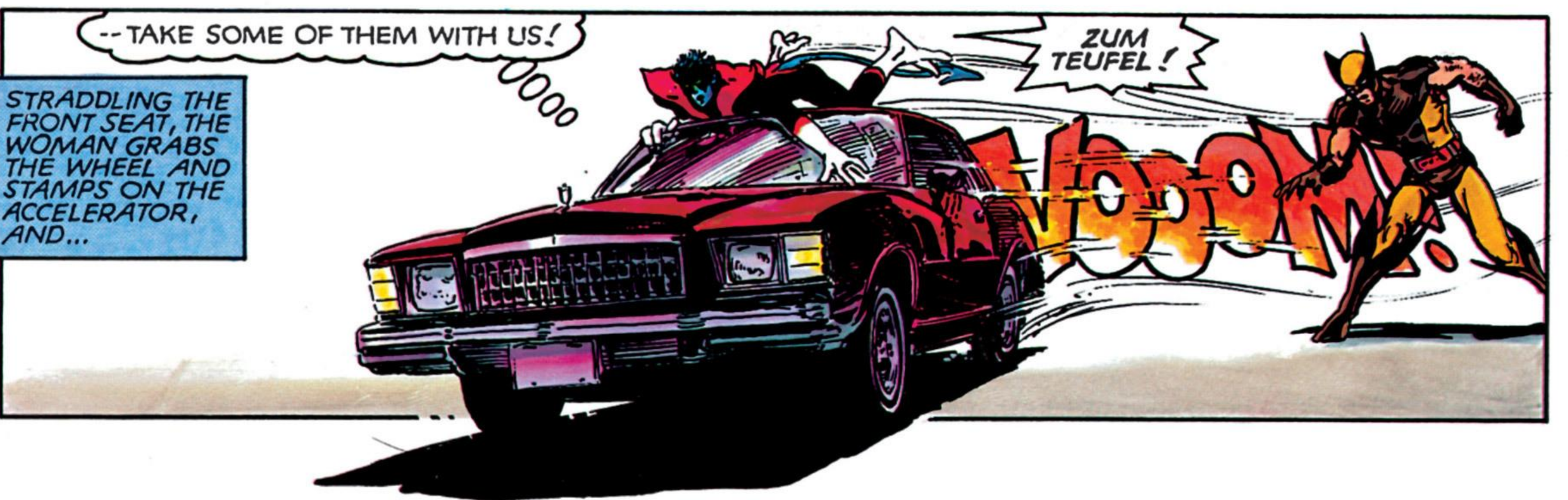


WHUNFF!E



WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CAPTURED.

BETTER TO DIE INSTEAD, AND IN THE PROCESS--



-- TAKE SOME OF THEM WITH US!

STRADDLING THE FRONT SEAT, THE WOMAN GRABS THE WHEEL AND STAMPS ON THE ACCELERATOR, AND...

ZUM TEUFEL!

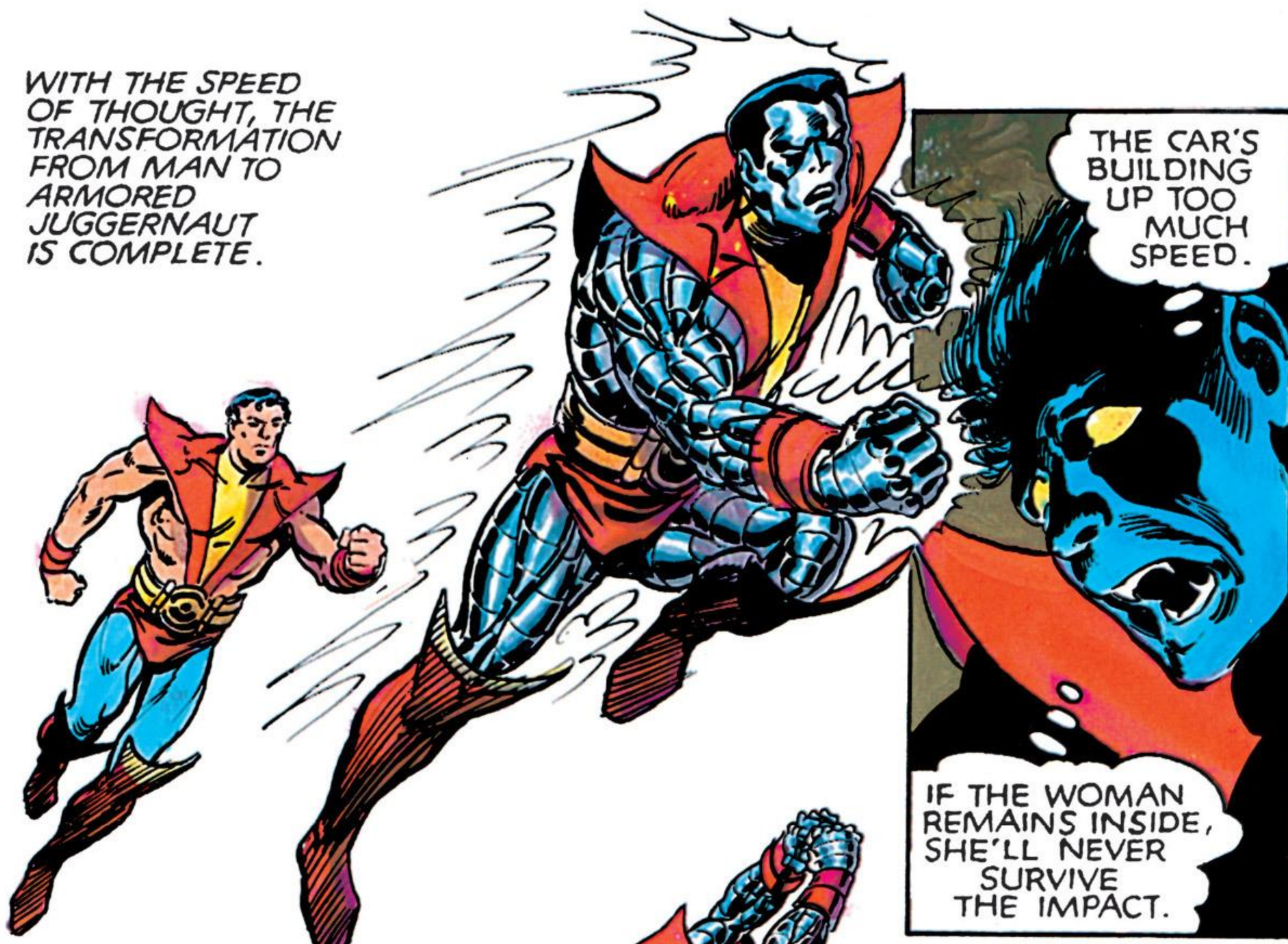
BOOM!



IF I TRY TO EVADE THEM, THEY WILL FOLLOW. ON THIS BUSY STREET, INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE SURE TO BE HARMED.

THAT, I CANNOT ALLOW.

WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT, THE TRANSFORMATION FROM MAN TO ARMORED JUGGERNAUT IS COMPLETE.



THE CAR'S BUILDING UP TOO MUCH SPEED.

IF THE WOMAN REMAINS INSIDE, SHE'LL NEVER SURVIVE THE IMPACT.



MY APOLOGIES FOR RUINING YOUR IMMINENT MARTYRDOM, FRAULEIN...



... BUT YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.

THIS INTERSECTION IS MOMENTARILY FREE OF TRAFFIC.

I MUST STOP THE CAR HERE.

AND... I SHALL!!



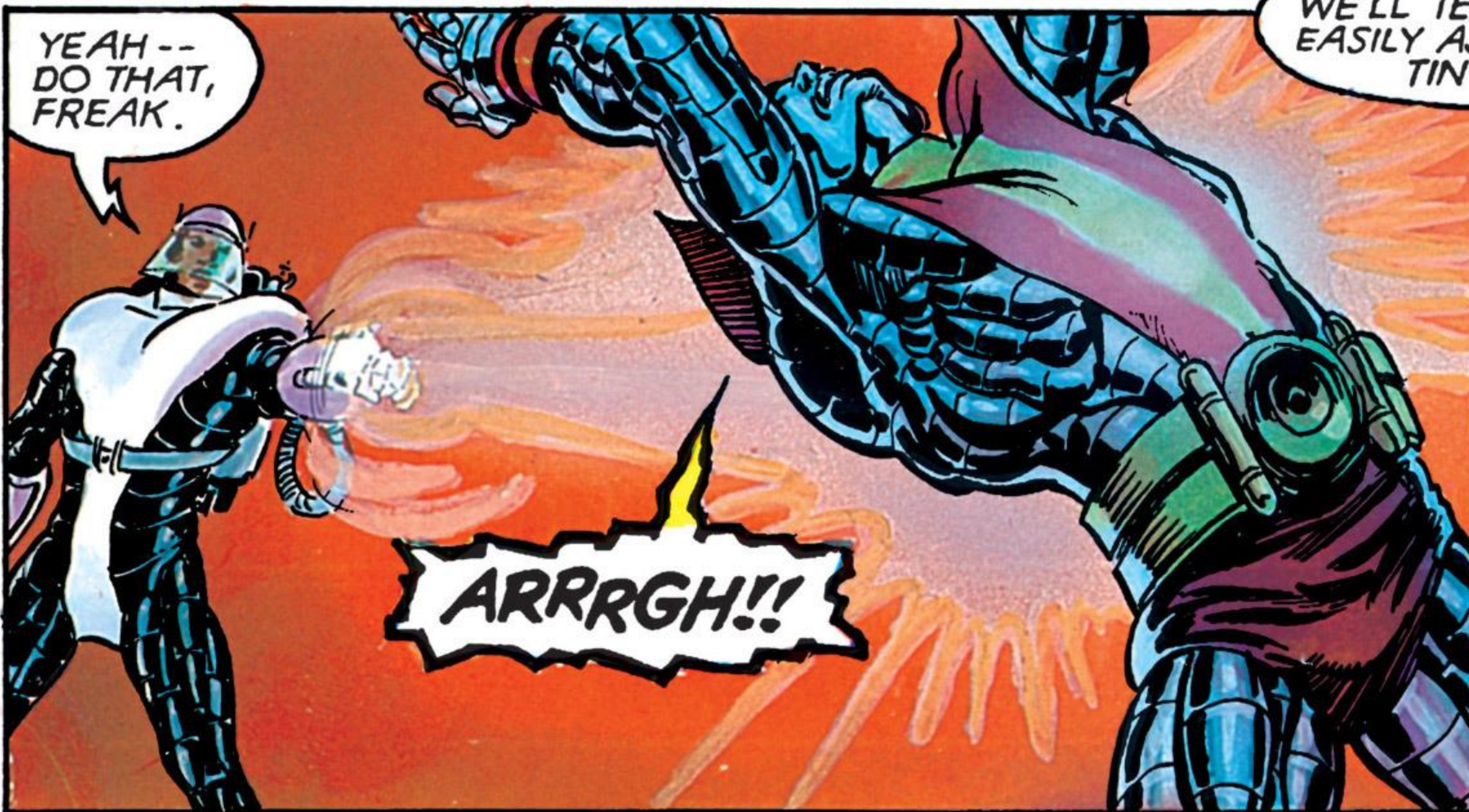


EITHER I AM GETTING STRONGER, COMRADES, OR AUTOMOBILES ARE NOT SO STURDY OR POWERFUL AS THEY USED TO BE.

MEIN GOTT! THERE WERE OTHERS IN THE CAR! WE DIDN'T SEE THEM!

'PORT OVER THERE, ELF! TACKLE 'EM!

COLOSSUS-- LOOK OUT-- BEHIND YOU!



YEAH-- DO THAT, FREAK.

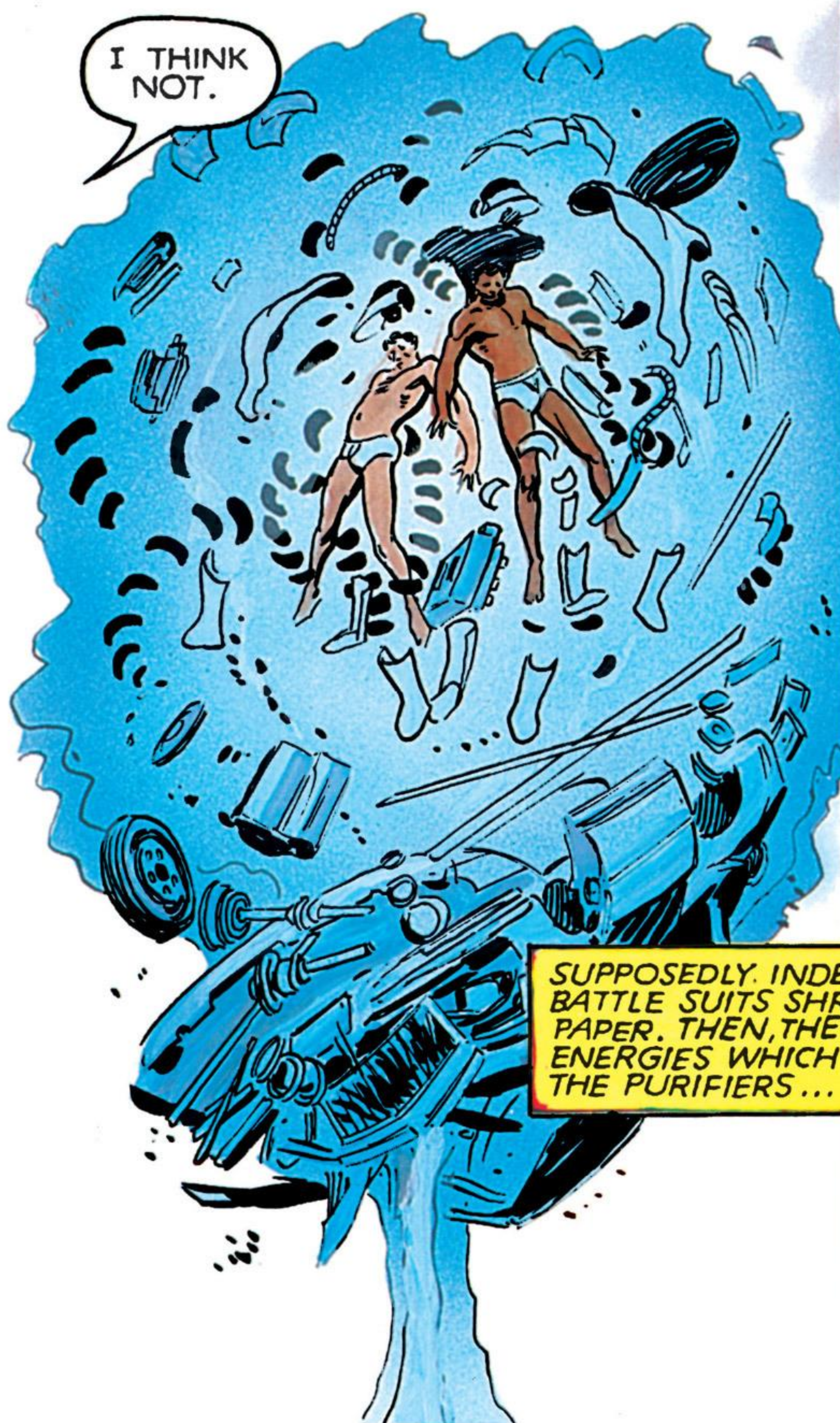
ARRRGH!!

WE'LL TEAR YOU APART, AS EASILY AS WE DROPPED YOUR TIN-PLATED PAL.

HOW 'BOUT THAT-- HE'S STILL TWITCHIN'. ONE MORE SHOT OUGHTA PUT HIM OUTTA HIS MIS'RY. THEN, IT'LL BE YOUR TURN--



HEY!!



I THINK NOT.

SUPPOSEDLY, INDESTRUCTIBLE BATTLE SUITS SHRED LIKE PAPER. THEN, THE SAME ENERGIES WHICH STRIPPED THE PURIFIERS...

... NOW IMPRISON THEM.



SHOULD WE BE GRATEFUL, WOLVERINE-- OR RUN FOR OUR LIVES?

YOU!

SHEATHE YOUR CLAWS, WOLVERINE.



MAGNETO IS
HERE AS A
FRIEND...

... AND,
IF
YOU'LL
HAVE
ME, AN
ALLY.



UPSTATE...

I'M
BORED.

ME, TOO. WE'VE WAITED
LONG ENOUGH. WE
MIGHT AS WELL HEAD
FOR THE MANSION AND
PHONE THE GUYS...

HOLD
IT!

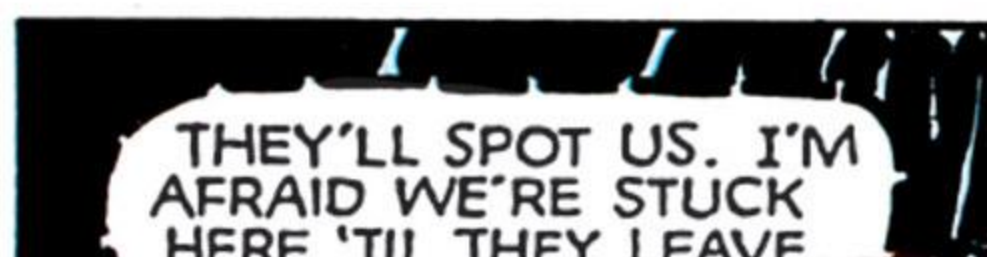
SOMEONE'S
COMING!



THEY LOOK
LIKE THEY MEAN
BUSINESS. DO
YOU RECOGNIZE
THEM, KITTY?

NOPE.

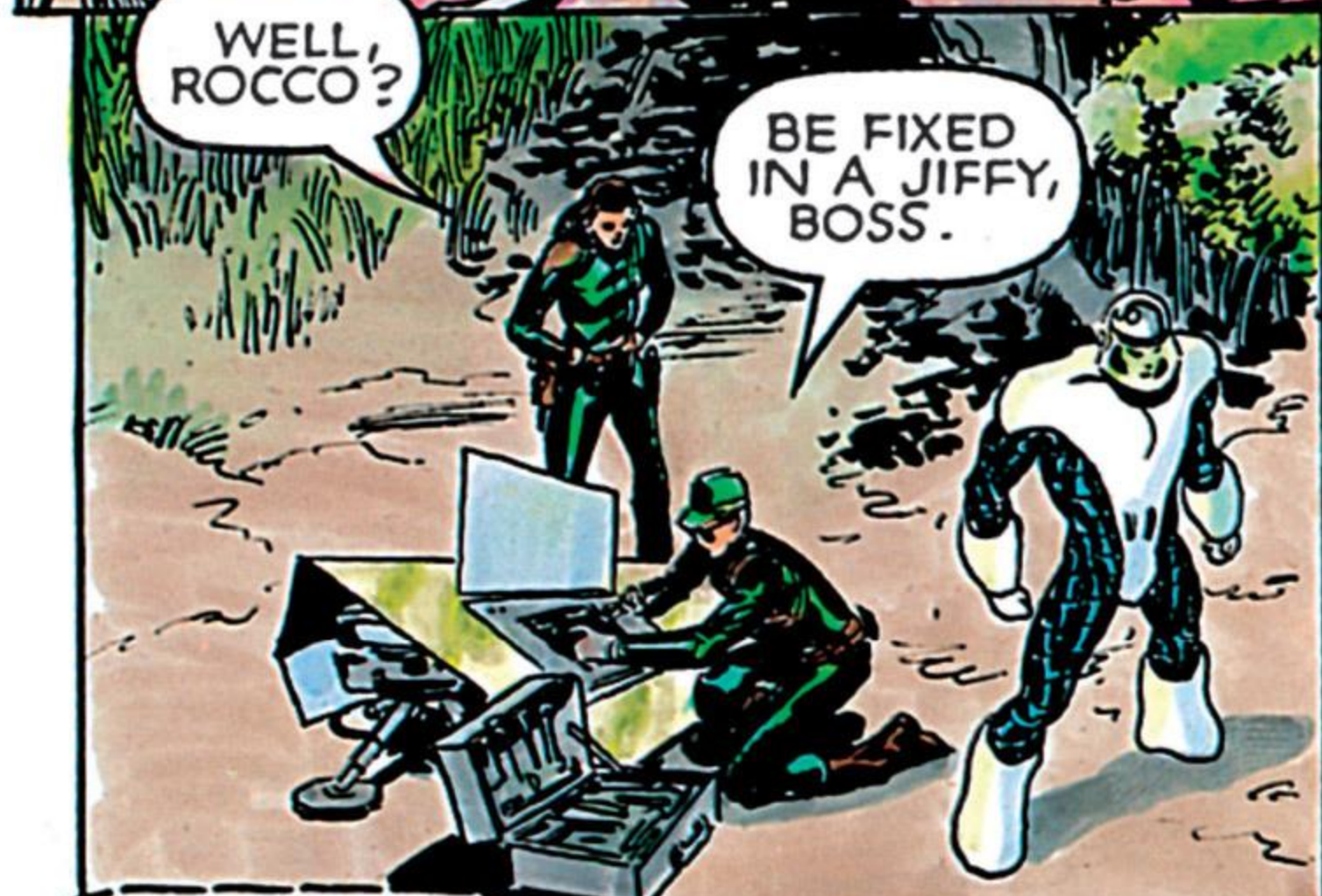
CAN WE
GO NOW?



THEY'LL SPOT US. I'M
AFRAID WE'RE STUCK
HERE 'TIL THEY LEAVE.



I'M AFRAID,
PERIOD.



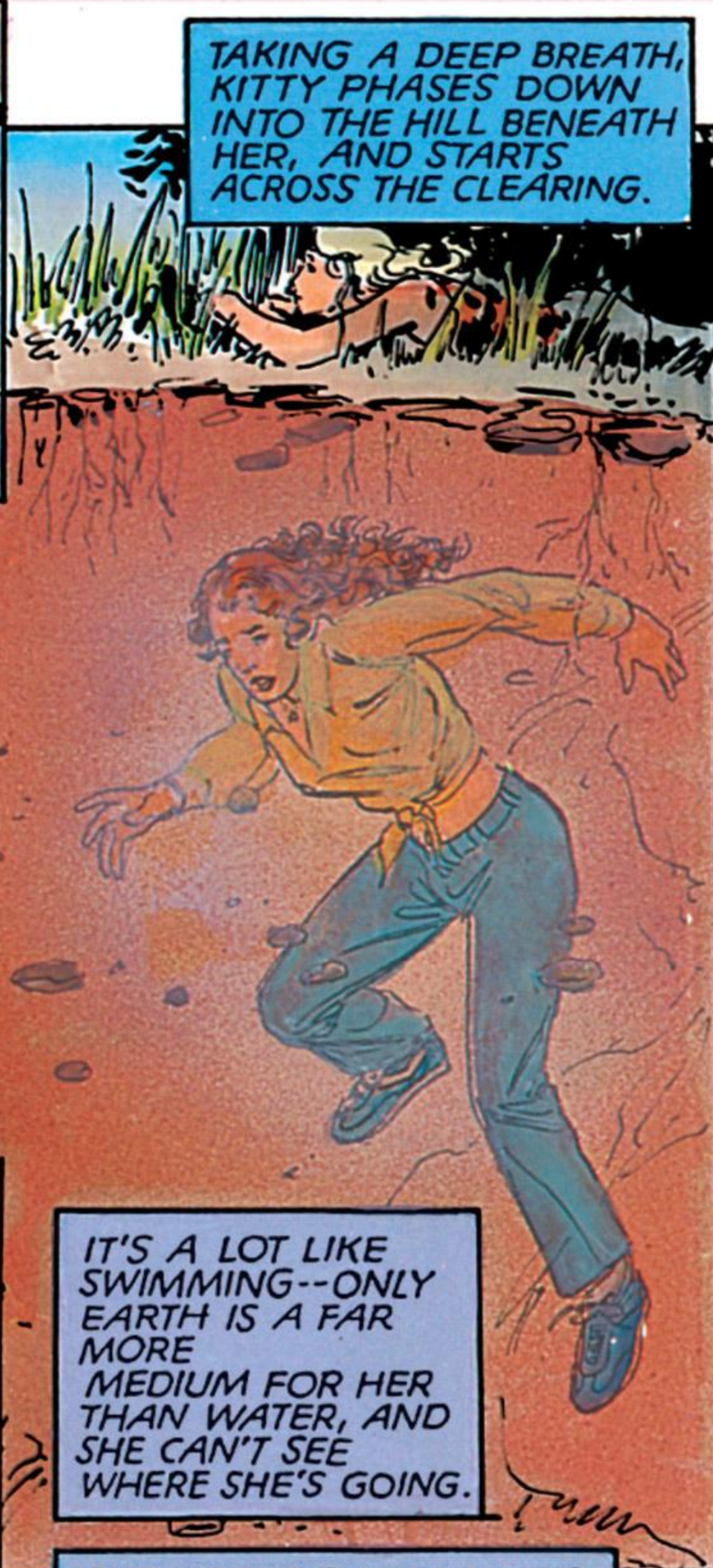
WELL,
ROCCO?

BE FIXED
IN A JIFFY,
BOSS.



I'M GONNA DO
SOME SCOUTING.

BE
CAREFUL.



TAKING A DEEP BREATH,
KITTY PHASES DOWN
INTO THE HILL BENEATH
HER, AND STARTS
ACROSS THE CLEARING.

IT'S A LOT LIKE
SWIMMING--ONLY
EARTH IS A FAR
MORE
MEDIUM FOR HER
THAN WATER, AND
SHE CAN'T SEE
WHERE SHE'S GOING.

SHE HOPES SHE REACHES
COVER BEFORE SHE RUNS
OUT OF AIR.



ALL SET,
ANNE.

I'LL RUN A 360°
SECURITY SWEEP
BEFORE WE GO--



--A CONTACT!

YIKES!

THERE!



GET HER!

KITTY--
HELP!



OH!



END OF
THE LINE,
MY DEAR.



BAM



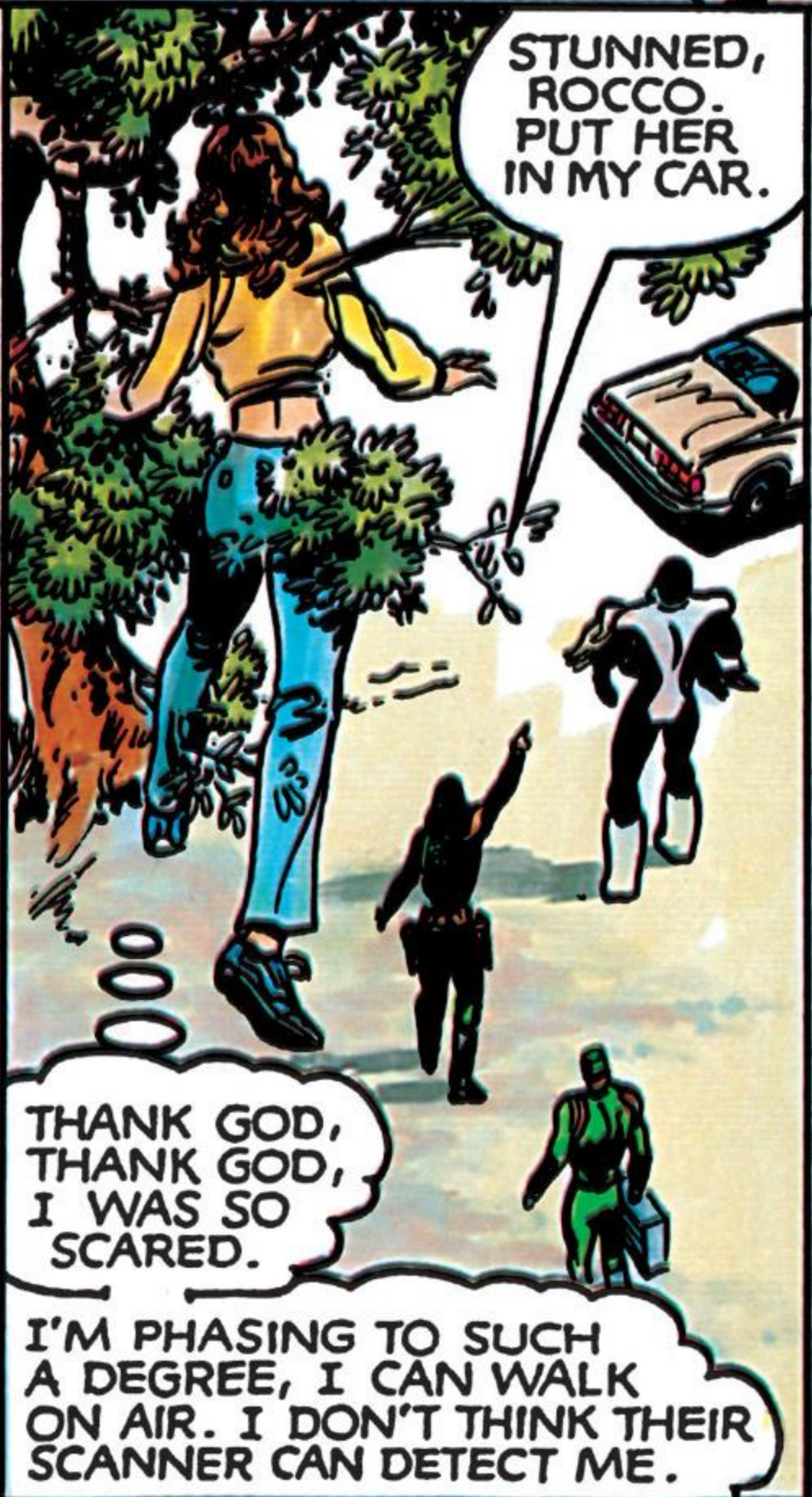
THAT WAS A
GUNSHOT!

ALL THE
COMMOTION--
ILLYANA!!



NO!!

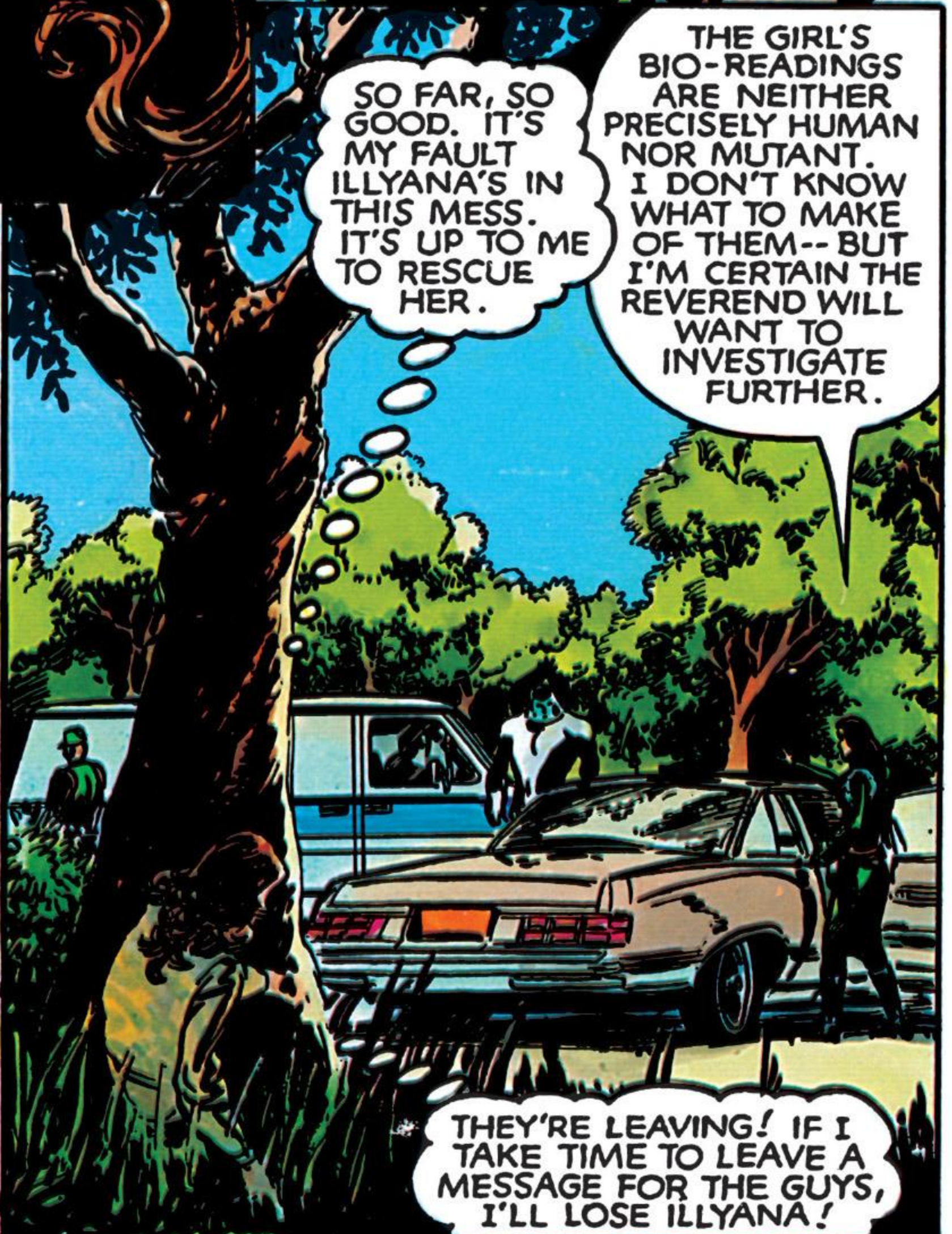
A MUTIE,
ANNE?
IS SHE
DEAD?



STUNNED,
ROCCO.
PUT HER
IN MY CAR.

THANK GOD,
THANK GOD,
I WAS SO
SCARED.

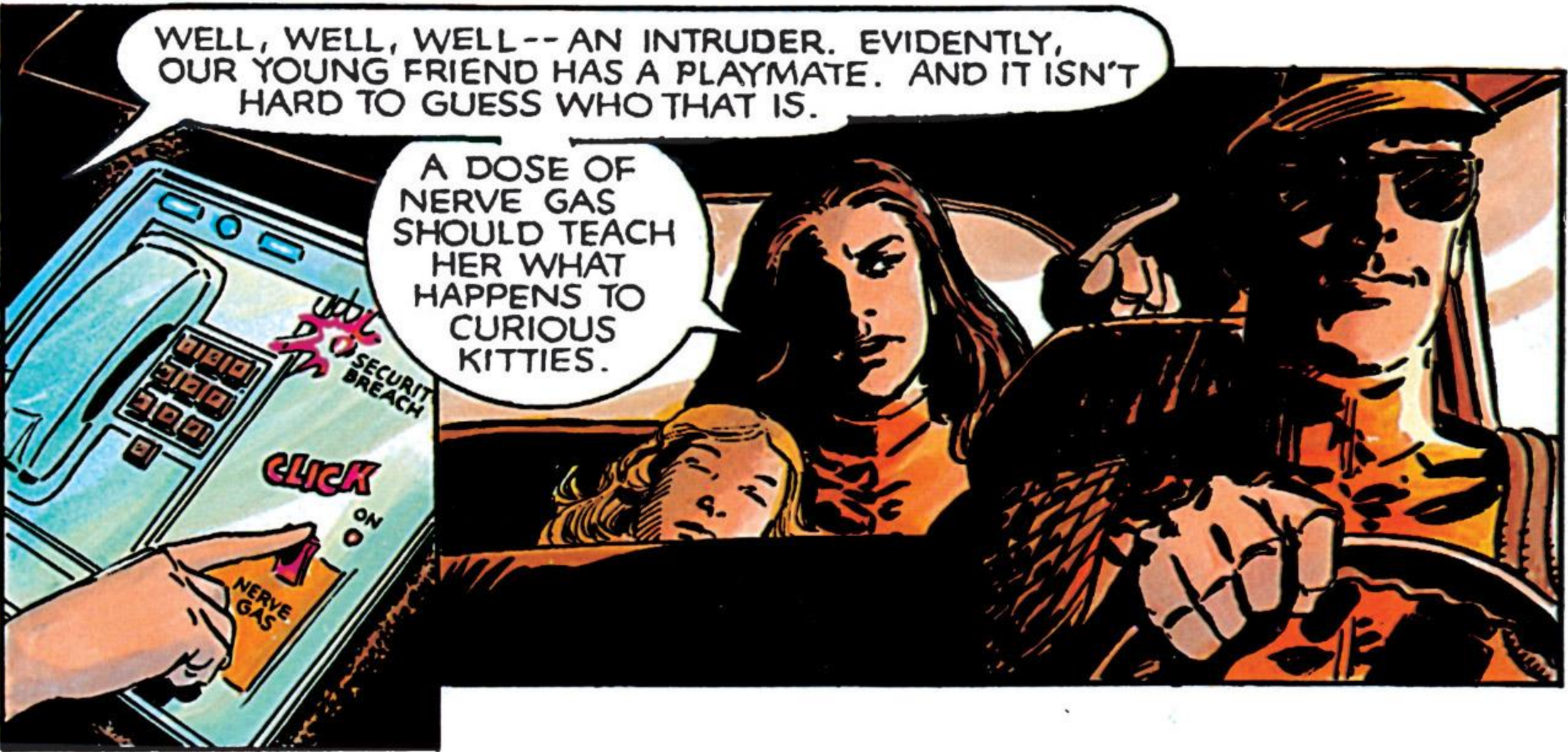
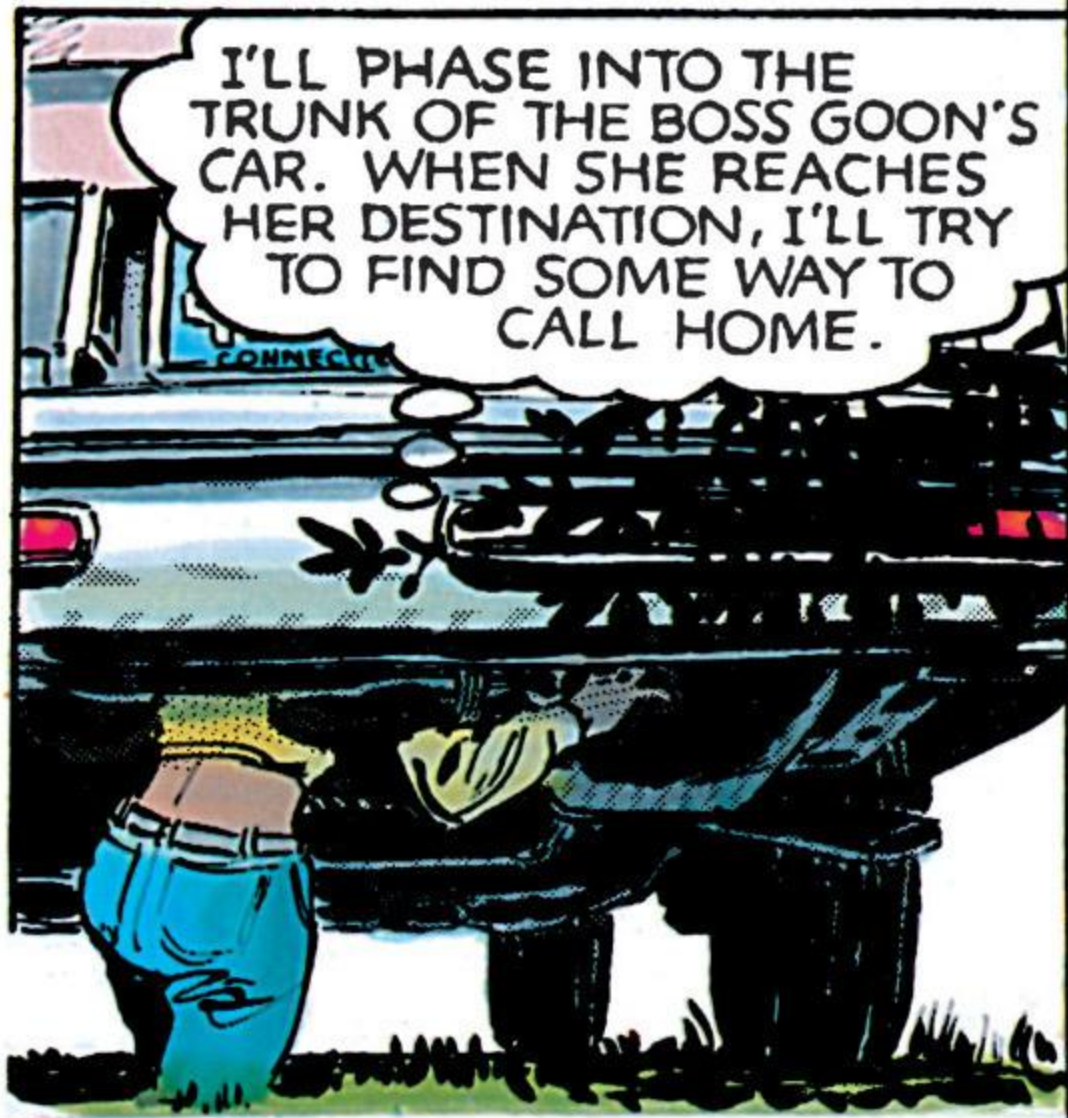
I'M PHASING TO SUCH
A DEGREE, I CAN WALK
ON AIR. I DON'T THINK THEIR
SCANNER CAN DETECT ME.



SO FAR, SO
GOOD. IT'S
MY FAULT
ILLYANA'S IN
THIS MESS.
IT'S UP TO ME
TO RESCUE
HER.

THE GIRL'S
BIO-READINGS
ARE NEITHER
PRECISELY HUMAN
NOR MUTANT.
I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO MAKE
OF THEM-- BUT
I'M CERTAIN THE
REVEREND WILL
WANT TO
INVESTIGATE
FURTHER.

THEY'RE LEAVING! IF I
TAKE TIME TO LEAVE A
MESSAGE FOR THE GUYS,
I'LL LOSE ILLYANA!





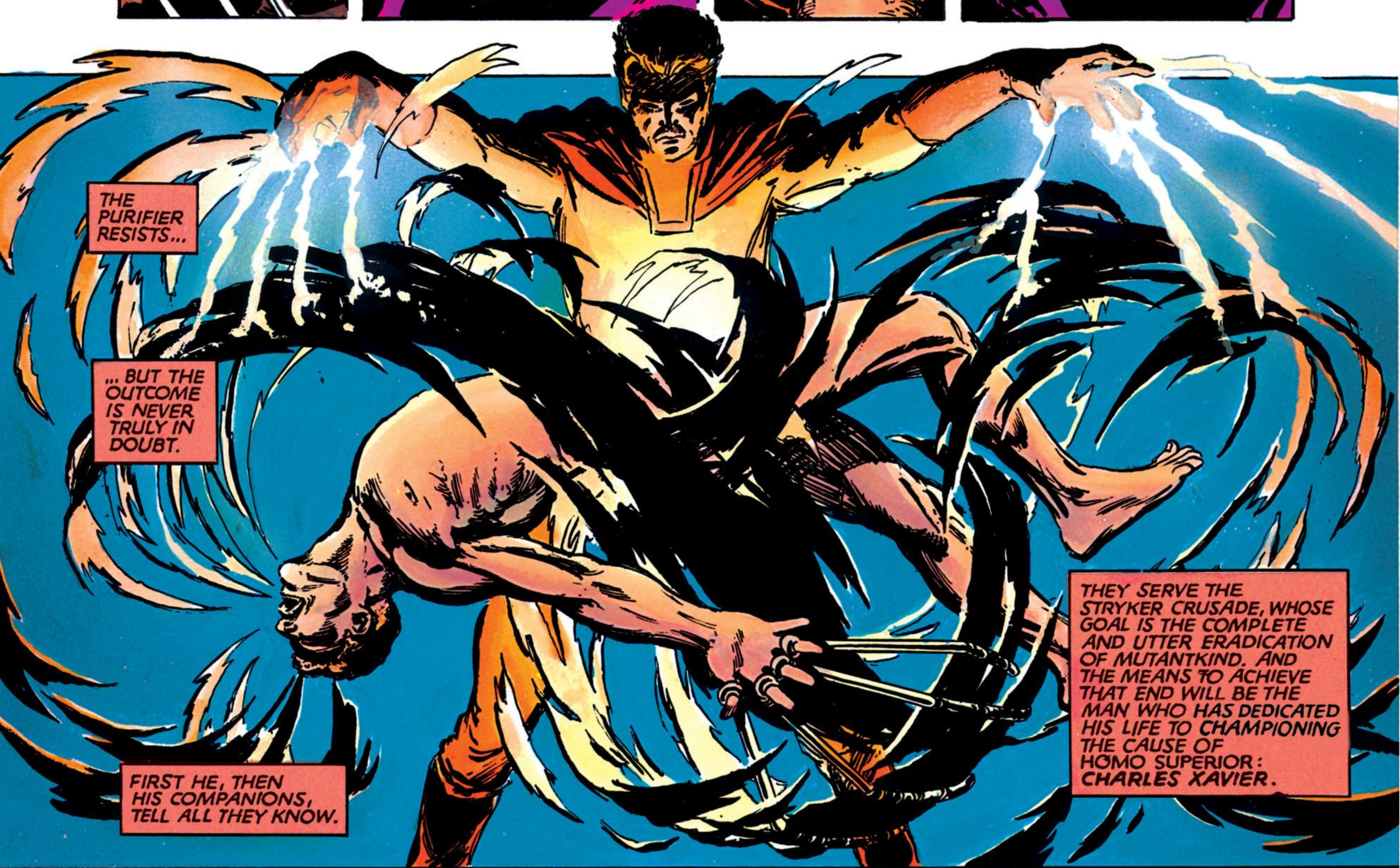
YOUR LUCKY DAY, PAL.



I DOUBT THAT.



I... I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, MUTIE!



THE PURIFIER RESISTS...

... BUT THE OUTCOME IS NEVER TRULY IN DOUBT.

FIRST HE, THEN HIS COMPANIONS, TELL ALL THEY KNOW.

THEY SERVE THE STRYKER CRUSADE, WHOSE GOAL IS THE COMPLETE AND UTTER ERADICATION OF MUTANTKIND. AND THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THAT END WILL BE THE MAN WHO HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE OF HOMO SUPERIOR: CHARLES XAVIER.



ONCE MORE, GENOCIDE IN THE NAME OF GOD.

A STORY AS OLD AS THE RACE.

WAS THIS... NECESSARY?



YUP.

BUT IF WE USE OUR FOES' METHODS, MY FRIEND...

... HOW THEN ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY?

Chapter 3 :

... THE WORLD
TRADE CENTER,
MANHATTAN.

"And they
bring him
unto the
place
Golgotha..."



"...and they
crucify him."

CHARLES
XAVIER DOES
NOT BELIEVE
THIS TO BE
REAL.

THAT DOES NOT
SAVE HIM.



IN
TURN...



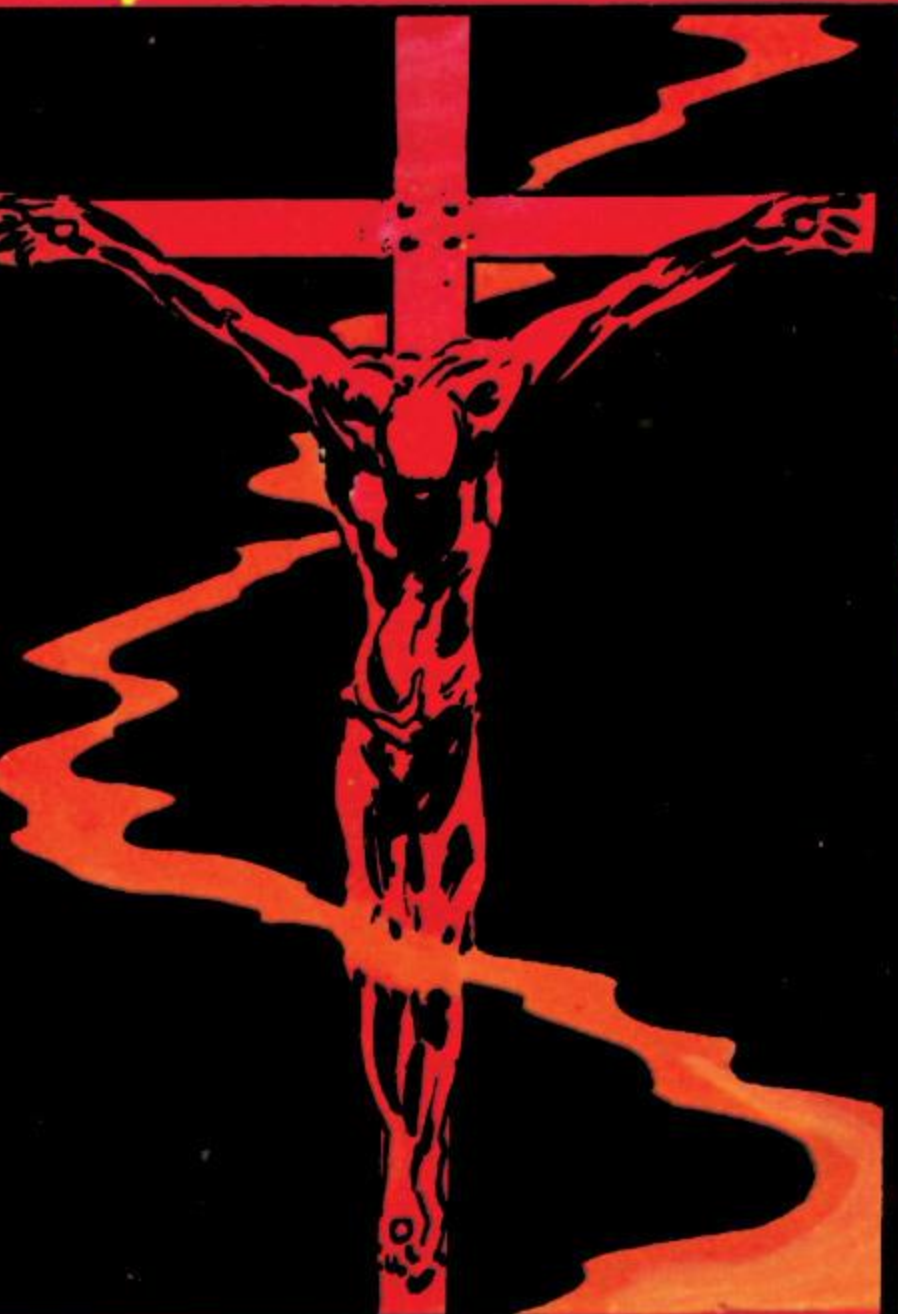
...EACH
X-MAN
COMES...



...TO PAY
HIS
RESPECTS...



...AND BID
HIM FOND
FAREWELL.





ENJOYING THIS, OLD MAN? YOU SHOULD BE, CONSIDERING YOU SHAPED US IN YOUR IMAGE.

WE LIVED AND FOUGHT FOR YOU, XAVIER-- AND YOU GAVE US NOTHING BUT DEATH AND DISHONOR!



THE DEBT'S LONG OVERDUE!



INSTEAD OF OPTIC BLASTS, A MIASMIC FOG ERUPTS FROM CYCLOPS' EYES...

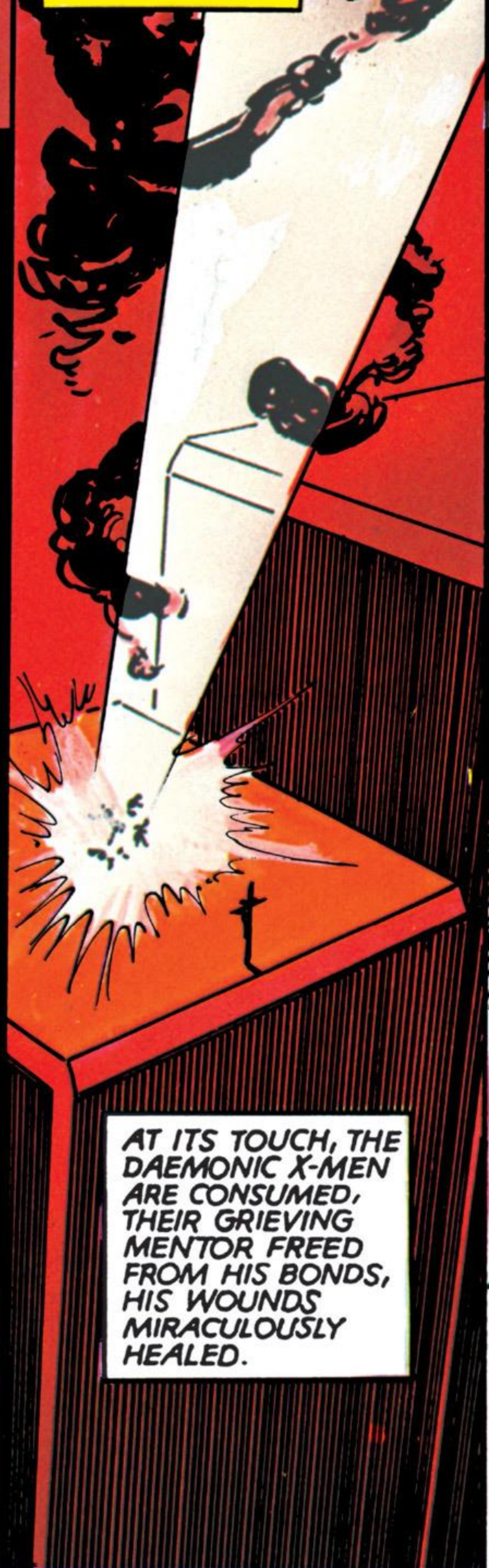
... TO ENSHROUD XAVIER LIKE A LOVER...

... AS HIS BELOVED STUDENTS DO UNTO HIM AS THEY BELIEVE HE DID TO THEM.

THEY HAVE BECOME CREATURES OF ULTIMATE EVIL. THEY SEEK TO MAKE HIM SO. HE NO LONGER RESISTS.

FOR IF THEY ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE, IS HE HIMSELF NOT EVIL INCARNATE?

THEN, WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST, A LIGHT OF PUREST SILVER PIERCES THE HEAVENS.



AT ITS TOUCH, THE DAEMONIC X-MEN ARE CONSUMED, THEIR GRIEVING MENTOR FREED FROM HIS BONDS, HIS WOUNDS MIRACULOUSLY HEALED.



IN AWE AND WONDER, HE LOOKS UP...

... TO BEHOLD A MAN...



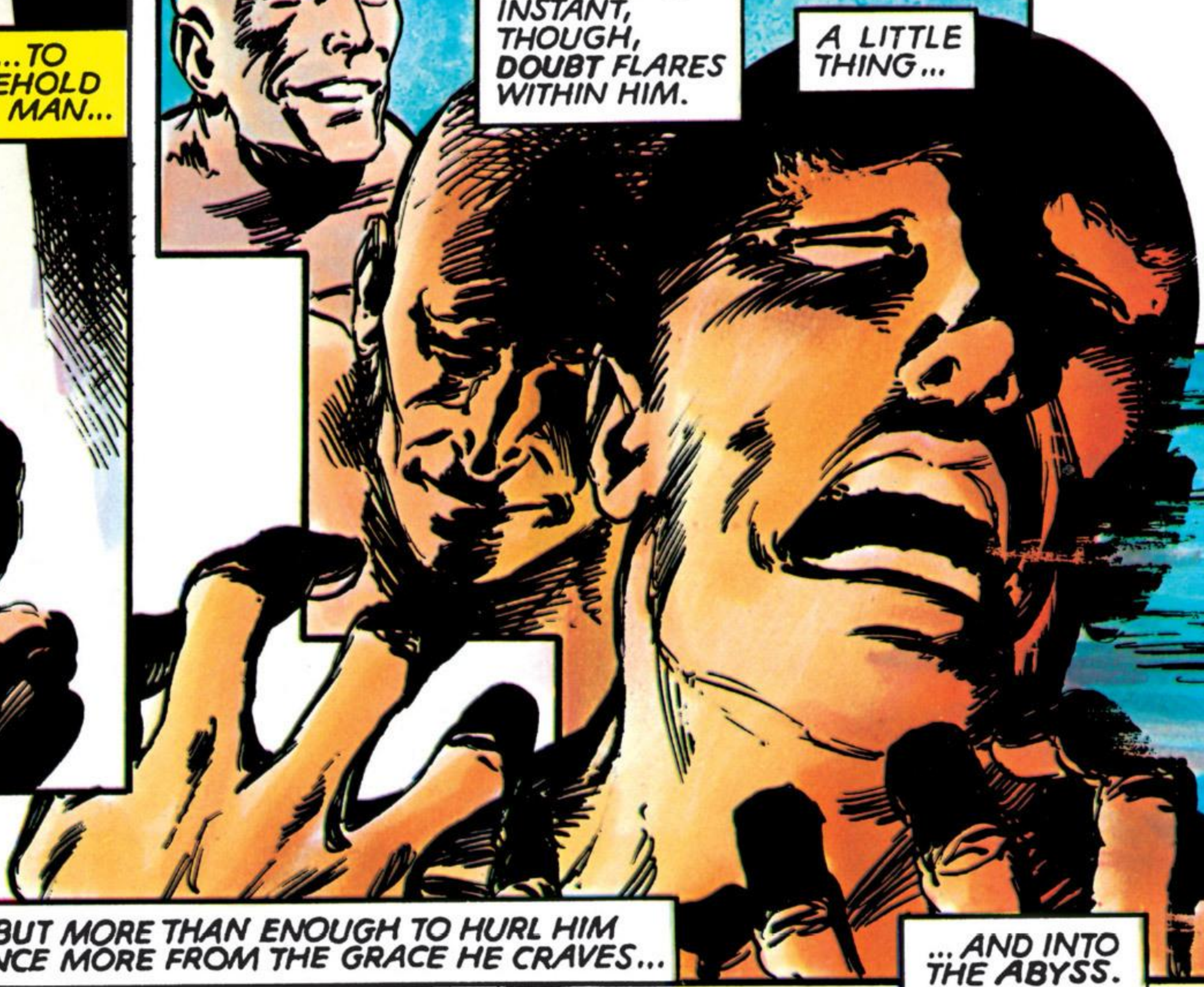
... A HAND HELD OUT IN FRIENDSHIP.



STILL IGNORANT OF HOW OR WHY THIS HAS COME TO PASS-- ONLY NOW NO LONGER CARING-- XAVIER REACHES OUT TO THE STRANGER.

AT THE LAST INSTANT, THOUGH, DOUBT FLARES WITHIN HIM.

A LITTLE THING...



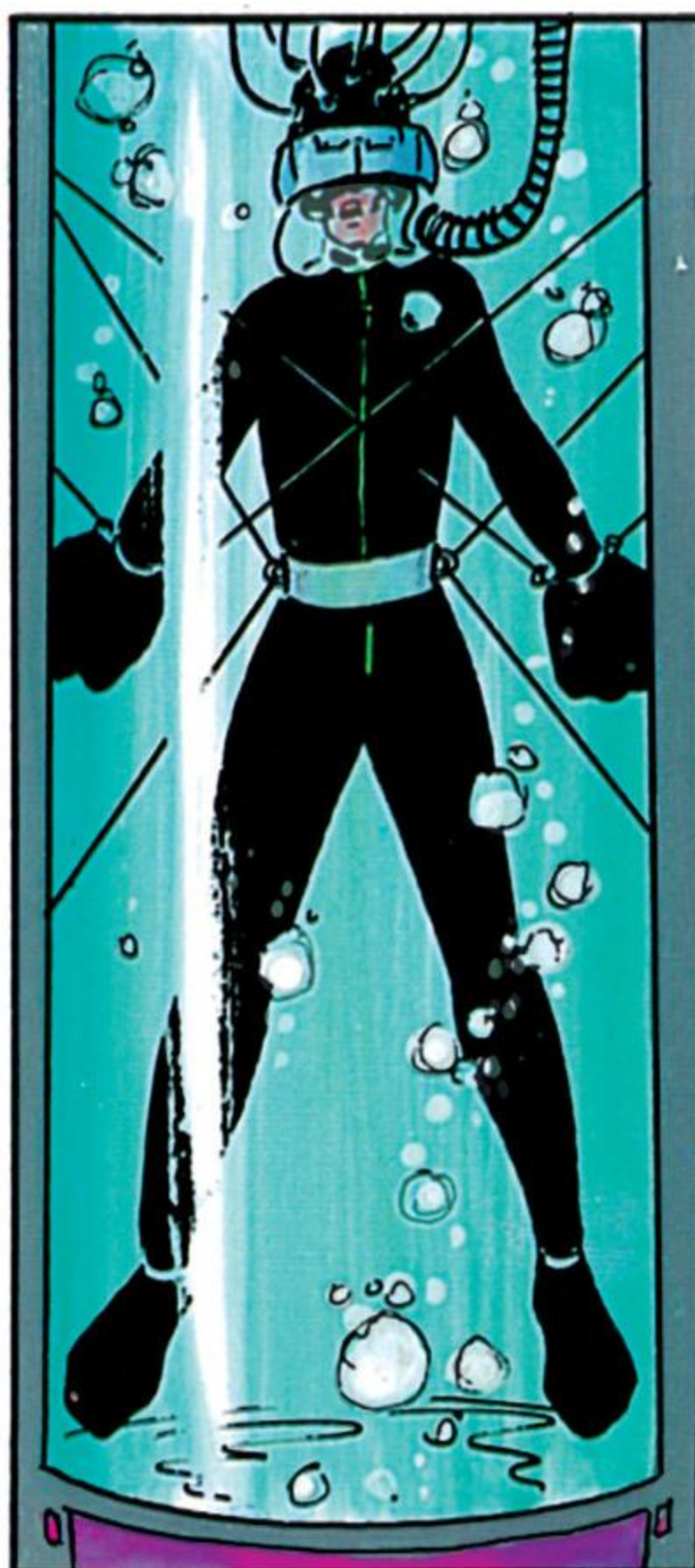
... BUT MORE THAN ENOUGH TO HURL HIM ONCE MORE FROM THE GRACE HE CRAVES...

... AND INTO THE ABYSS.

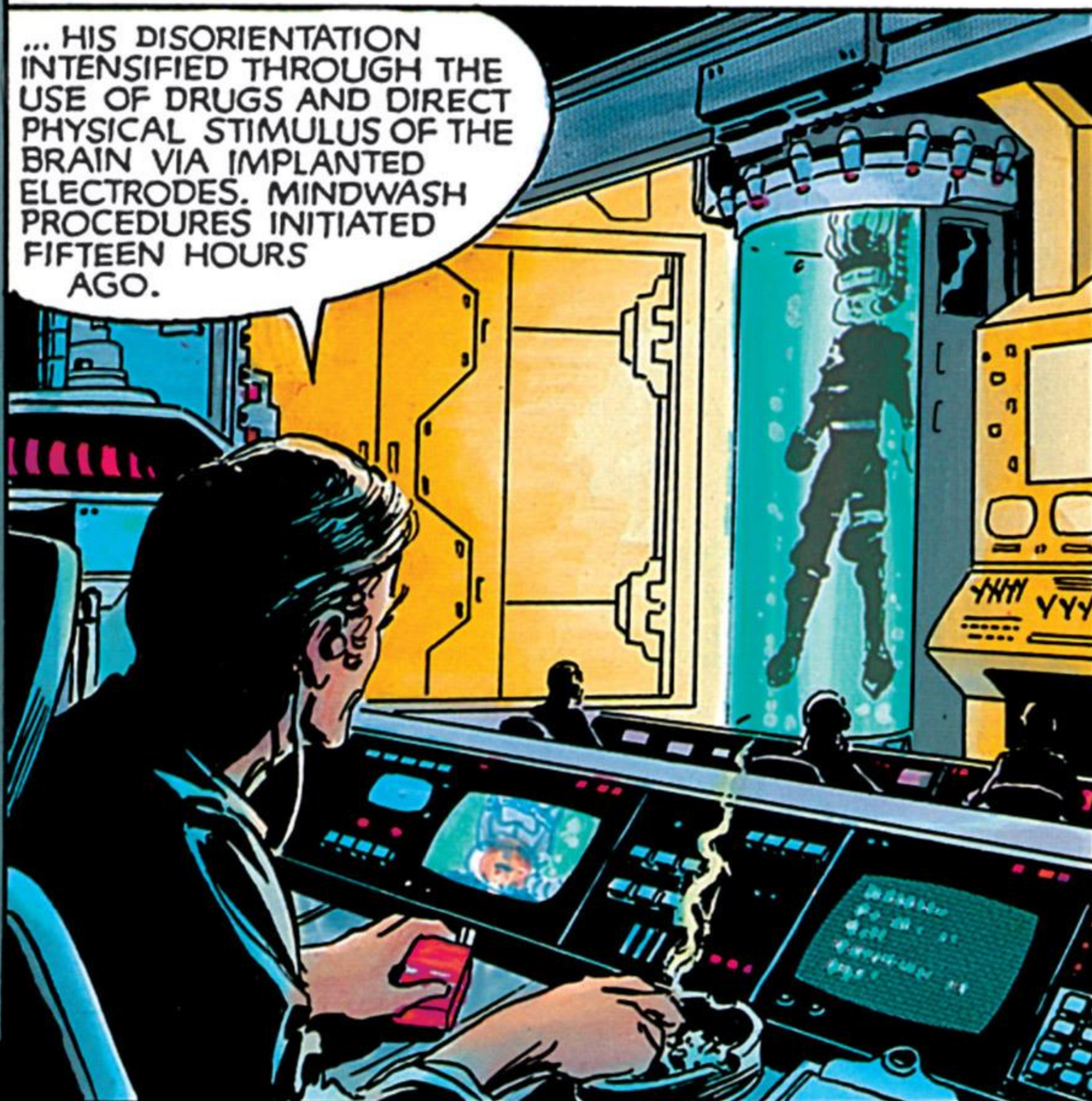


DAMN! WE
NEARLY HAD HIM
THAT TIME.

STATUS REPORT
UPDATE: SUBJECT
SUSPENDED IN
ISOLATION TANK,
UNDER TOTAL SENSORY
DEPRIVATION...



... HIS DISORIENTATION
INTENSIFIED THROUGH THE
USE OF DRUGS AND DIRECT
PHYSICAL STIMULUS OF THE
BRAIN VIA IMPLANTED
ELECTRODES. MINDWASH
PROCEDURES INITIATED
FIFTEEN HOURS
AGO.



RESULTS...

...ENCOURAGING.



HOWEVER, HIS
RESISTANCE
IS FAR MORE
DETERMINED
THAN I
EXPECTED.



A LIGHT,
PHILLIP?

THANK YOU,
REVEREND.

DON'T
DESPAIR,
MY
FRIEND.



WE KNEW
FROM THE
START THIS
WOULDN'T
BE EASY.

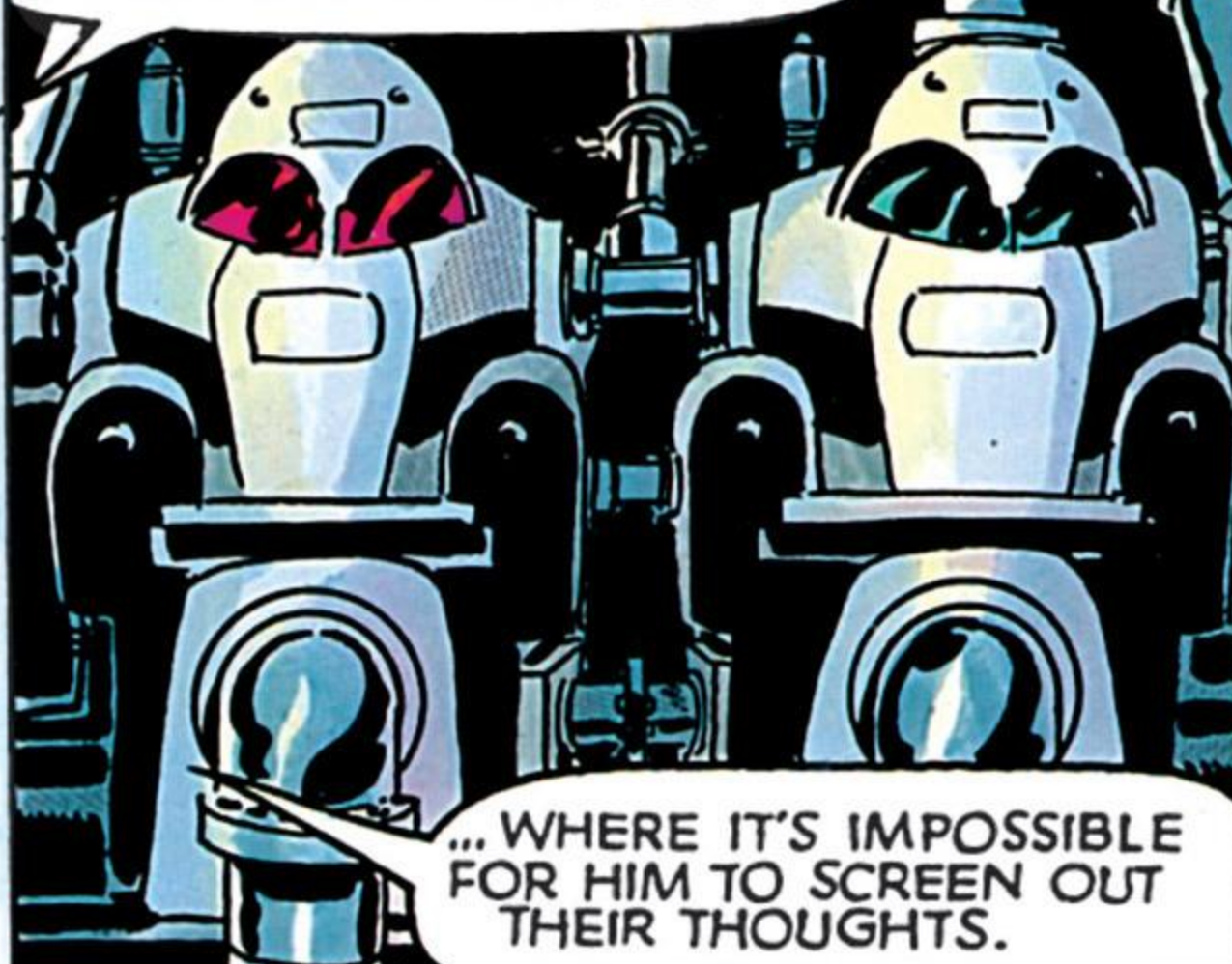
I'M NOT
WORRIED
ABOUT
BREAKING
HIM.

IT'S DOING
THE JOB
PROPERLY
-- WITHIN
YOUR TIME
LIMIT.



CARE TO
SEE OUR
OTHER
"GUESTS?"

THOSE CHAIRS NOT ONLY NEUTRALIZE
THE MUTANTS' ABILITIES, THEY PSIONICALLY
LINK THEM WITH XAVIER. THE DRUGS WE
ADMINISTERED HEIGHTEN HIS PSYCHIC
SENSITIVITY TO THE POINT...



... WHERE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
FOR HIM TO SCREEN OUT
THEIR THOUGHTS.



WE
TORTURE
THEM...

... AND
XAVIER
SUFFERS.

HE'S AWARE THAT THE PAIN COMES
FROM THEM AND IN HIS CONFUSED
STATE, BELIEVES THEY'RE DOING IT
DELIBERATELY. HIS OWN SUBCONSCIOUS
FEARS AND GUILTS
PROVIDE THE
RATIONALE FOR
THEIR BETRAYAL.



STRYKER!

WE HAVE DONE
YOU NO HARM--
WHY ARE YOU
DOING THIS ?!

BECAUSE
YOU EXIST.



AND THAT EXISTENCE
IS AN AFFRONT
TO THE LORD.



HE LOOKS AT THE TWO X-
MEN AND TIME AND MEMORY
SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY,
TURN BACK UPON THEMSELVES,
TO A SIMPLER DAY, THIRTY
YEARS GONE.

"THERE WAS NO CRUSADE,
THEN," HE REMEMBERS, "I
WASN'T EVEN A MINISTER.
QUITE THE OPPOSITE. MASTER-
SERGEANT WILLIAM STRYKER,
U.S. ARMY RANGERS-- A
TOUGH-AS-NAILS, HELL-RAISING
PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, ON
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT TO THE
MILITARY NUCLEAR TEST
PROGRAM. THE BRASS TOLD
US THE DANGER WAS MINIMAL.
WE BELIEVED THEM.

"WHEN MY TOUR WAS
OVER, MY WIFE
MARCY AND I
HEADED SOUTH-- TO
VISIT MY FAMILY
IN PHOENIX.



"WE NEVER
MADE IT.

"ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NEVADA
DESERT, I DELIVERED MY SON.

"HE-- IT-- WAS
A MONSTER!



"FACED
WITH THAT
ABOMINATION,
I DID WHAT
HAD TO BE
DONE.

"AND WHEN
MARCY, HALF-
UNCONSCIOUS,
ASKED FOR
HER BABY...



"... I TOOK HER IN MY
ARMS, HELD HER CLOSE...



"... AND BROKE
HER NECK.

"THE CAR HAD BEEN LEAKING GAS
SINCE THE CRASH-- IT WAS A
MIRACLE THERE'D BEEN NO EXPLO-
SION. I PLANNED TO CHANGE THAT.
I PLACED MARCY INSIDE THE WRECK,
HER... BABY IN HER ARMS. I
CLIMBED IN BESIDE HER...



"... AND LIT
A MATCH.

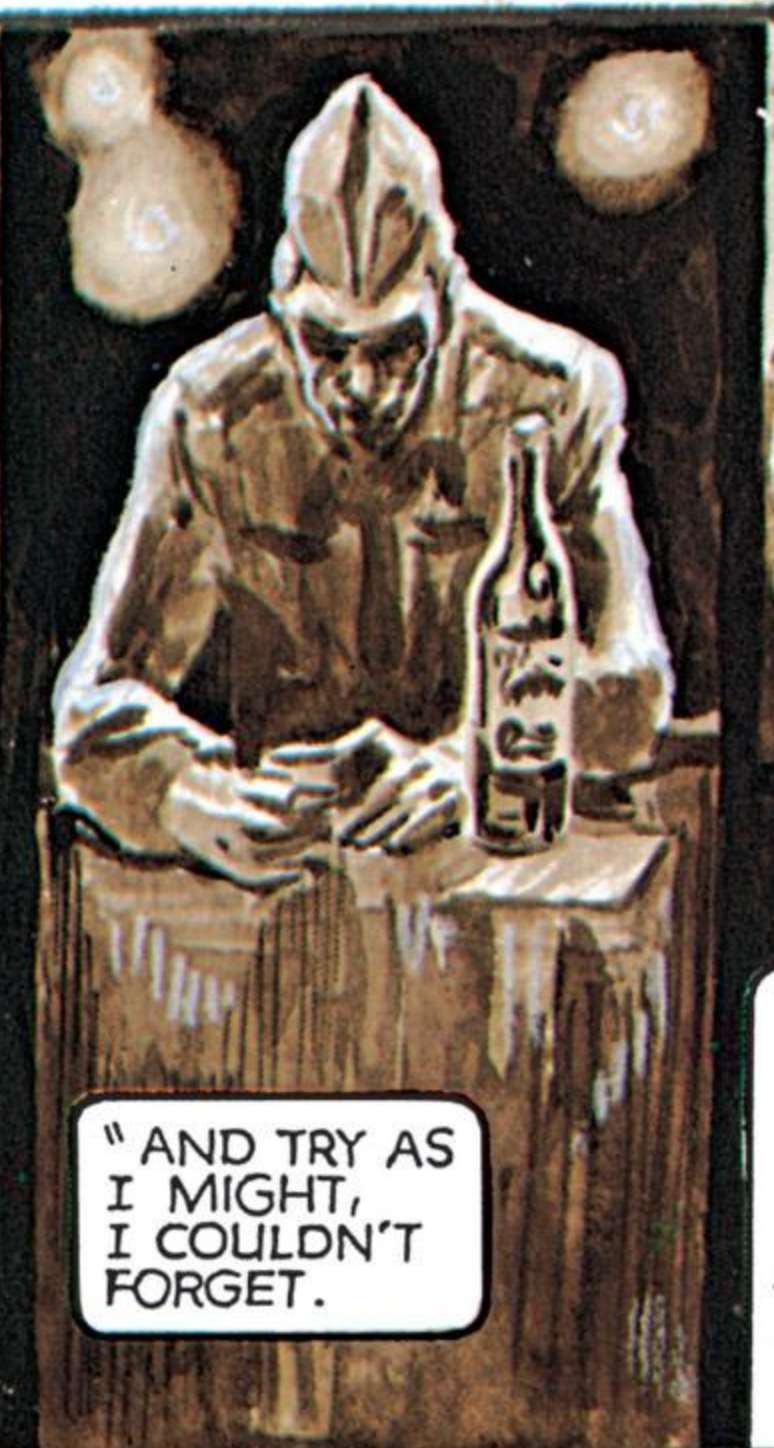


EASY, FELLA. DON'T TRY TO MOVE. THE AMBULANCE IS ON ITS WAY.

YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN. THAT EXPLOSION MUST'VE BLOWN YOU CLEAR. YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.



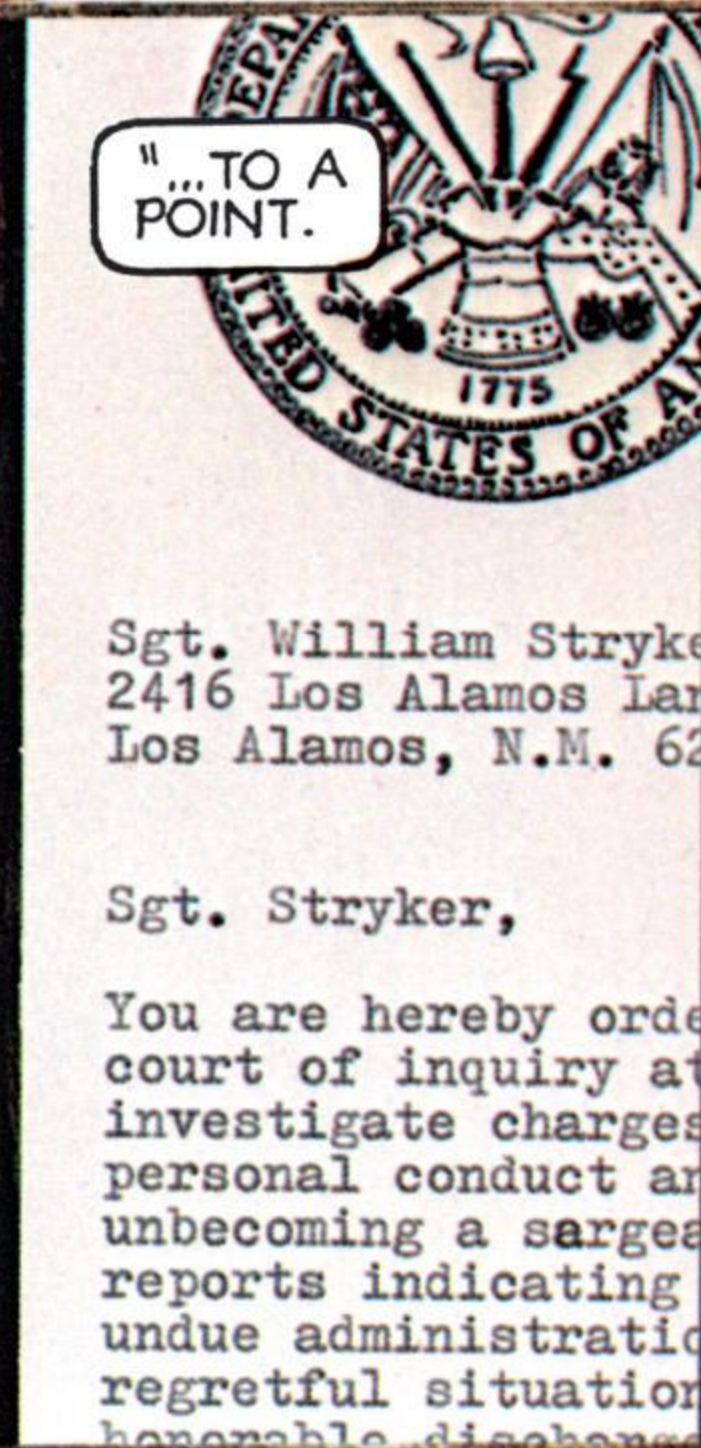
"MARCY AND THE MONSTER WERE BURNED BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION. NONE KNEW MY SHAME BUT I.



"AND TRY AS I MIGHT, I COULDN'T FORGET.



"I WAS A WAR HERO WITH A CLASS-A RECORD, SO THE ARMY TURNED A BLIND EYE TO MY DRINKING AND FIGHTING. I'D SUFFERED A TERRIBLE LOSS. THEY WERE PREPARED TO BE PATIENT...



"...TO A POINT.

Sgt. William Stryker
2416 Los Alamos Lane
Los Alamos, N.M. 62

Sgt. Stryker,

You are hereby ordered to court of inquiry at investigate charges personal conduct and unbecoming a sergeant reports indicating undue administrative regretful situation honorable discharge



"I TOUCHED BOTTOM WITHOUT EVEN THE GUTS TO KILL MYSELF.

"THEN I SAW A MAGAZINE ARTICLE BY CHARLES XAVIER. ABOUT MUTANTS.

"AFTER MONTHS OF TORMENT, I KNEW WHAT THE MONSTER WAS.



"A **MUTANT.**

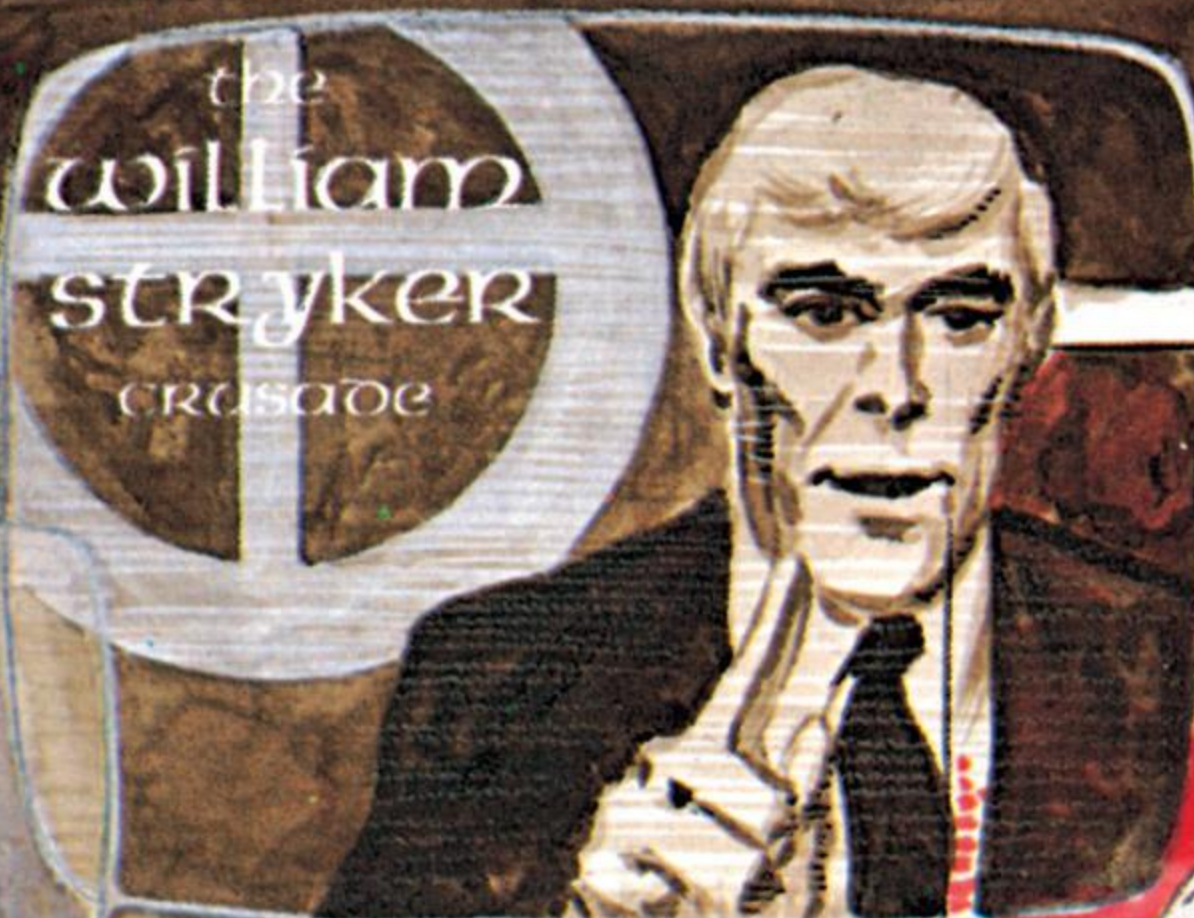
"BUT-- COULD I HAVE FATHERED SUCH A CREATURE? WAS MY LIFE SO WICKED THAT THE LORD SOUGHT TO PUNISH ME THROUGH MY SON? AND IF SO, WHY THEN LET ME LIVE? IF I WAS EVIL, SHOULDN'T I HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO ETERNAL **DAMNATION?**

"I PRAYED FOR GUIDANCE.

"IT WAS GIVEN ME.



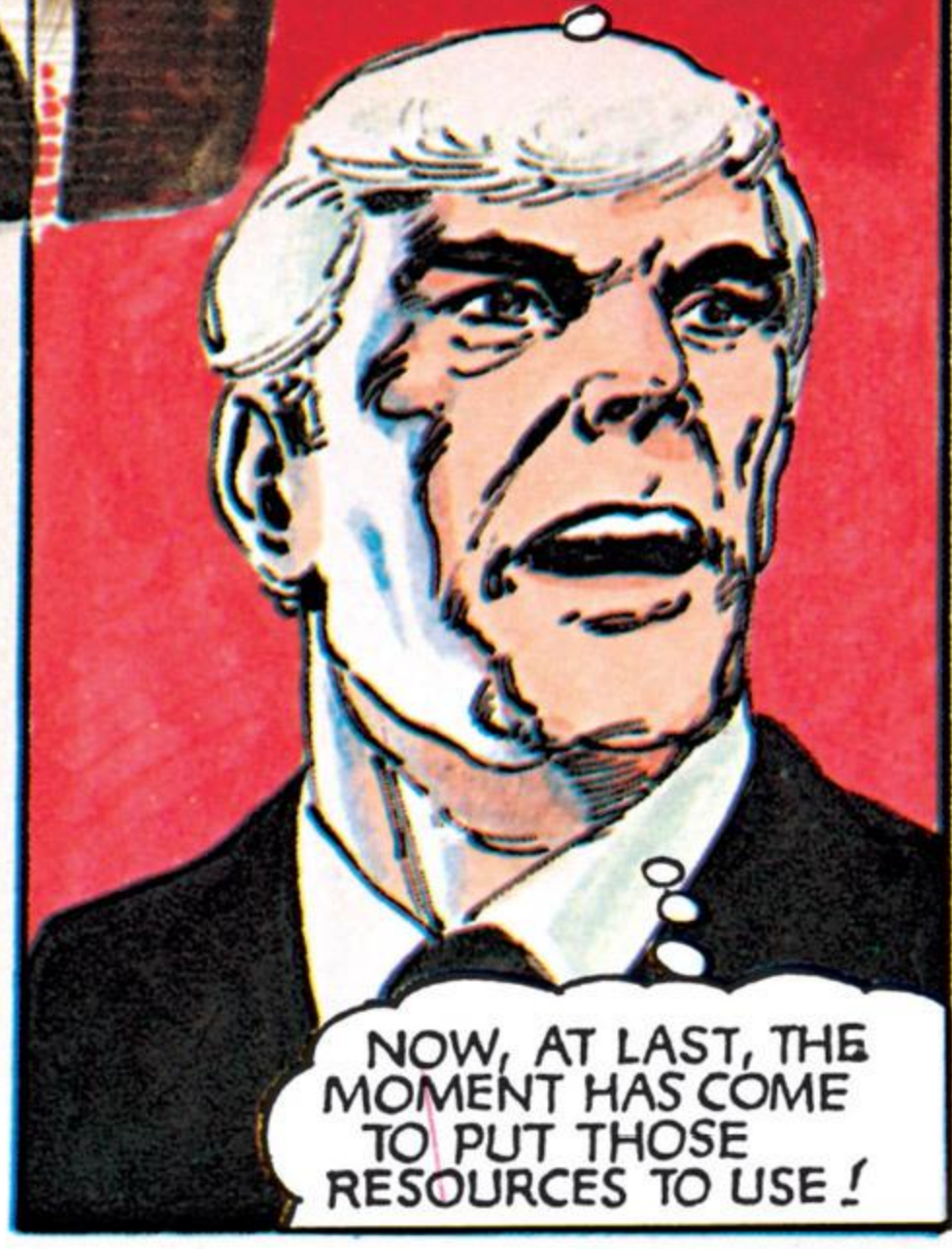
"THE EVIL-- THE SIN-- WAS **MARCY'S**, NOT MINE.



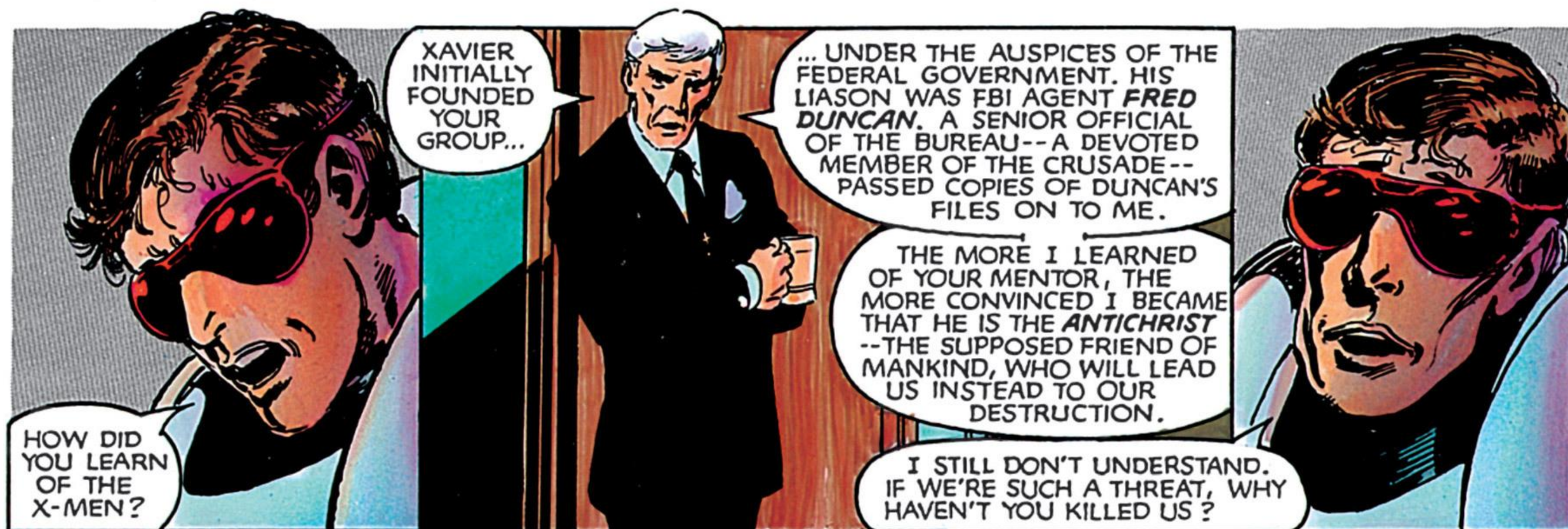
"SHE WAS THE VESSEL USED BY GOD TO REVEAL UNTO ME SATAN'S MOST INSIDIOUS PLOT AGAINST HUMANITY-- TO CORRUPT US THROUGH OUR CHILDREN, WHILE THEY WERE STILL IN THE WOMB. THE LORD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN **HIS** IMAGE, BLESSED WITH HIS GRACE. MUTANTS BROKE THAT SACRED MOLD. THEY WERE CREATIONS, NOT OF GOD, BUT OF THE **DEVIL.**

"AND I HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST THEM.

FROM THAT LOWLY BEGINNING CAME MY MINISTRY. FOR A QUARTER-CENTURY, I LABORED IN THE WILDERNESS-- AMASSING PHENOMENAL TEMPORAL POWER.



NOW, AT LAST, THE MOMENT HAS COME TO PUT THOSE RESOURCES TO USE!



HOW DID YOU LEARN OF THE X-MEN?

XAVIER INITIALLY FOUNDED YOUR GROUP...

... UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HIS LIASON WAS FBI AGENT **FRED DUNCAN**. A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE BUREAU--A DEVOTED MEMBER OF THE CRUSADE-- PASSED COPIES OF DUNCAN'S FILES ON TO ME.

THE MORE I LEARNED OF YOUR MENTOR, THE MORE CONVINCED I BECAME THAT HE IS THE **ANTICHRIST**--THE SUPPOSED FRIEND OF MANKIND, WHO WILL LEAD US INSTEAD TO OUR DESTRUCTION.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF WE'RE SUCH A THREAT, WHY HAVEN'T YOU KILLED US?



I HAVE MY REASONS, YOUNG MAN.

WHICH YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH. TO YOUR REGRET.

YES?

ANNE HERE, REVEREND, EN ROUTE FROM XAVIER'S SCHOOL, REQUESTING INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MY PRISONERS.

I TRUST YOUR JUDGEMENT ABOUT COLOSSUS' SISTER.

AND THE PRYDE GIRL?

KILL HER.

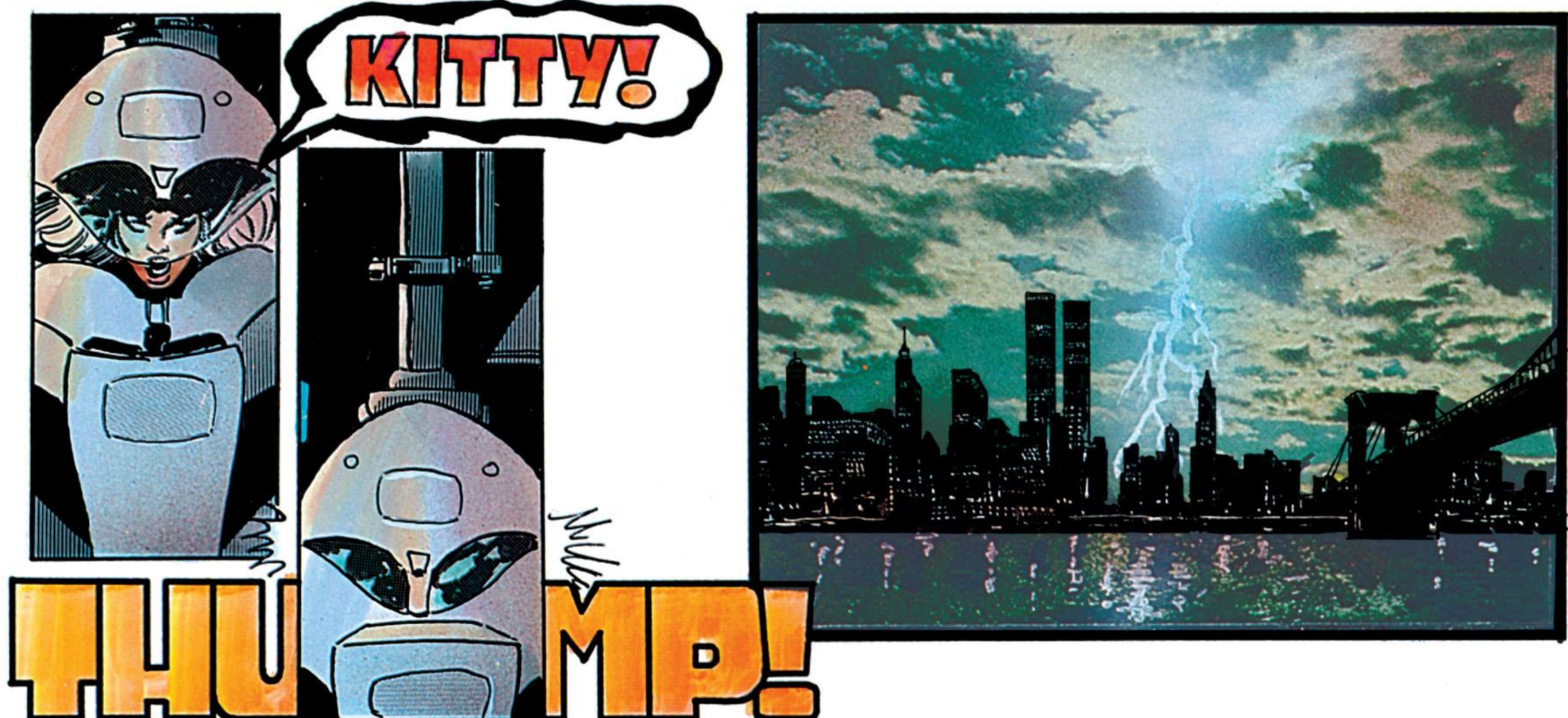


NO! SHE'S ONLY A CHILD!

"WHEN THE LORD THY GOD SHALL DELIVER THEM BEFORE THEE, THOU SHALT SMITE THEM..."

"... AND UTTERLY DESTROY THEM; THOU SHALL MAKE NO COVENANT WITH THEM, NOR SHOW MERCY UNTO THEM."

CONTINUE, PHILLIP. IT'S GETTING LATE.



KITTY!

THUMP!

COLSON STREET,
THE SOUTH BRONX...

SCREWY
WEATHER. THE
FORECAST WAS
FOR CLEAR
SKIES. INSTEAD,
OUTTA
NOWHERE...

...IT LOOKS LIKE A
HELLUVA STORM
BREWIN' OVER
MANHATTAN.

THAT'S NO
CONCERN
OF OURS,
ROCCO.

SENSORS INDICATE THAT PRYDE'S
STILL IN THE TRUNK. THE NERVE
GAS SHOULD HAVE RENDERED
HER UNCONSCIOUS LONG AGO.
PITY.

SHE
SHOULD BE
CONSCIOUS
FOR THIS.

"PURIFIERS..."

"... DO YOUR DUTY."

MUTIE

MUTIE

MUTIE

ANNE -- THE
CAR'S EMPTY!

THE BRAT'S
SMARTER-- AND
LUCKIER-- THAN I
GAVE HER CREDIT
FOR. STILL, SHE
CAN'T HAVE
GONE FAR.

AHA! A SIGNAL--
BEARING TWO-ZERO-
FIVE, AT A HUNDRED-
PLUS METERS.
THAT'S HER.

FAN OUT.
CUT OFF
HER ESCAPE
ROUTES.

SHOOT HER
ON SIGHT.



IT'S SO DARK! EVEN WITH A FULL MOON, I CAN HARDLY SEE WHERE I'M GOING.

OUCH!

I PHASED THE INSTANT I HEARD THE GAS JETS, BUT I THINK SOME OF IT GOT ME. I FEEL AWFUL.

I CAN HARDLY CONCENTRATE ENOUGH TO WALK, MUCH LESS PHASE. AND FOR ALL THE HELP I'M LIKELY TO FIND IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, I MIGHT AS WELL BE ON THE MOON.

SOME GREAT RESCUE THIS IS TURNING OUT TO BE-- I HOPE ILLYANA'S OKAY.



WHAT'S THAT-- ?!



OBOY! A FIRE! PEOPLE!

HELP ME, PLEASE! THEY'RE AFTER ME!

HELP!

HEY, BRO'-- COMP'NY.



YOU WAN' HELP, CHICA, WE BE GLAD TO 'BLIGE.

HEY, uh, MY MISTAKE. SORRY, FELLAS.

I'LL JUST BE ON MY WAY.



LEGGO!

I CAN'T PHASE! HE GOT ME!

LEAVIN', LI'L ONE?



YOU WAN' PROTECTION, IT'S YOURS. WE DO THIS FOR YOU, YOU DO SOMETHIN' NICE FOR US, RIGHT?

WRONG.



SHE'S MINE.



BACK OFF, NICE'N' SLOW. ANYONE STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY SOMETHING WON'T LIVE TO REGRET IT.

THIS OUR TURF, WOMAN. YOU DON' GIVE NO ORDERS HERE.



THIS GUN SAYS DIFFERENT.

MOVE AWAY FROM THE GIRL.

WE SIX TO YOUR ONE, BITCH.

IF I HAVE TO. AND UNLESS YOU PUT THAT HAND WHERE I CAN SEE IT...

I MANAGED TO CATCH MY BREATH. I'M IN AS GOOD A CONDITION AS I'M GONNA GET. WHILE THE GANG'S DISTRACTING THE PURIFIER...

DAMN!



YOU WERE WATCHIN' JULIO' AN' LA CHICA, BITCH.



YOU GONNA SMOKE US ALL?



...I'LL START WITH YOU.



I HAVE A CHANCE TO RUN!



YOU SHOULD'A KEPT YOUR EYE ON ME.



AAHHH!

BLAM!



MARTIN!!

HE'S DEAD, BRO! SHE ICED OUR JEFÉ!



AN' WE'LL PAY HER IN KIND, MI HERMANOS-- BLOOD FOR BLOOD!

TAKE HER!!



ANNE! WE HEARD GUNFIRE!

BUT I GUESS YOU DIDN'T NEED OUR HELP.

I HAD PRYDE, BUT THESE PUNKS MADE ME LOSE HER. THAT'S A MISTAKE THEY'LL NEVER MAKE AGAIN. KEEP AFTER HER, ROCCO; SHE HAS TO BE CLOSE BY. I'LL HEAD BACK TO THE CAR.

HOWEVER, WHILE THE SKIRMISH RAGED...

RATS!!



AN ALLEY!
THANK
GOODNESS--
AND THE
COAST IS
CLEAR.



RUSHER STREET. THAT
TELLS ME WHERE I AM,
FOR ALL THE GOOD THAT
DOES. I WISH I
HAD A MAP.

A STORE--A
BODEGA, A SPANISH
DELICATESSEN! MY
LUCK'S IMPROVING!

CAREFUL.
WOLVERINE
SAYS THERE'S
NO SUCH
ANIMAL.



POOP ON YOU, LOGAN--
LUCK EXISTS! AND IT'S
FINALLY BREAKING
MY WAY!



A
PHONE!

SORRY ABOUT THIS, MA BELL-- I
WOULDN'T DO THIS IF IT WEREN'T
AN EMERGENCY. I'LL PAY YOU
BACK, TOO, HONEST!



C'MON,
ANSWER!



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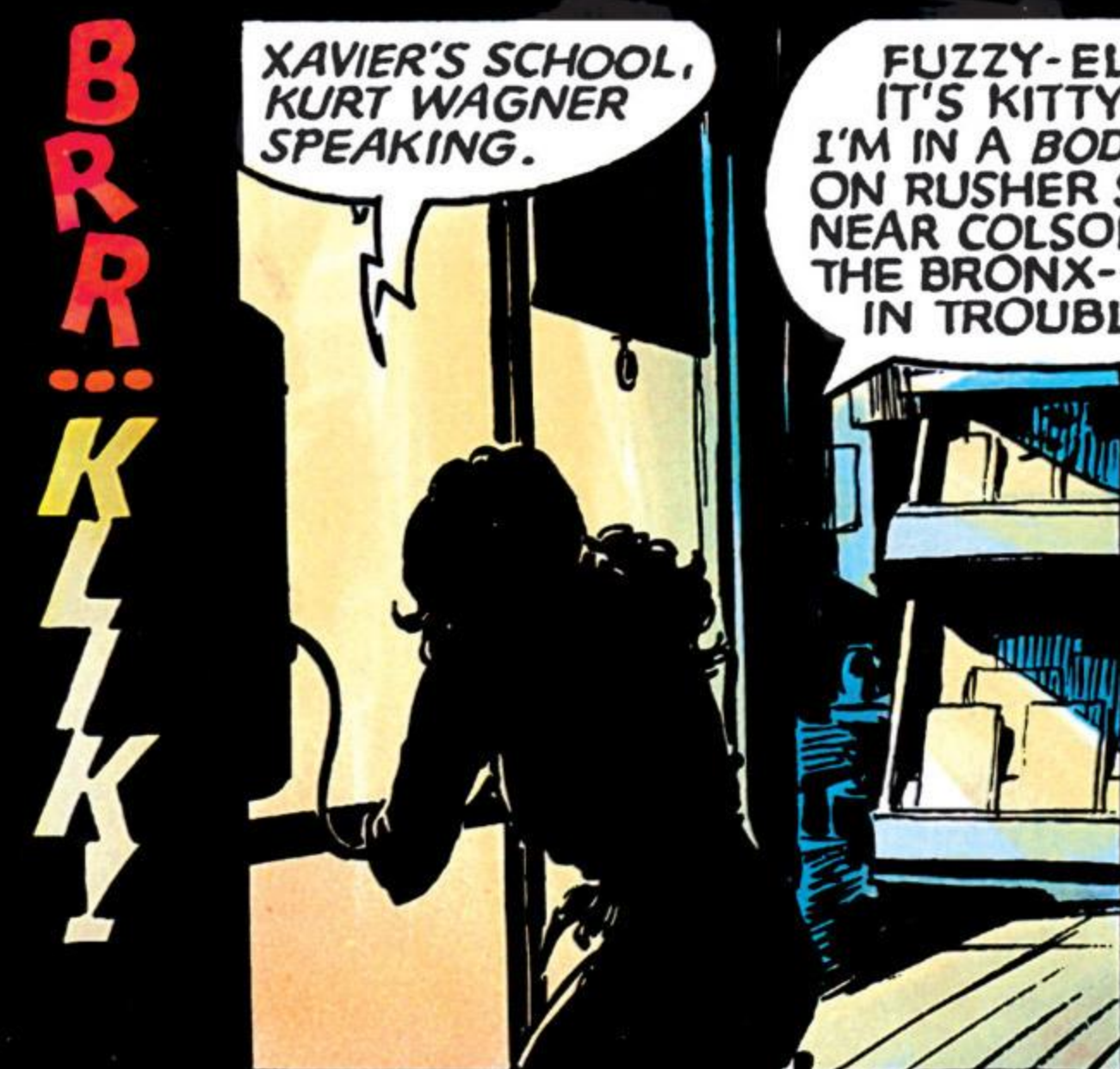
BE HOME,
SOMEONE,
ANYONE!

DON'T DO
THIS TO ME!

ANSWER
THE DAMN'
PHONE!

XAVIER'S SCHOOL,
KURT WAGNER
SPEAKING.

FUZZY-ELF,
IT'S KITTY!
I'M IN A BODEGA,
ON RUSHER STREET
NEAR COLSON, IN
THE BRONX-- I'M
IN TROUBLE!





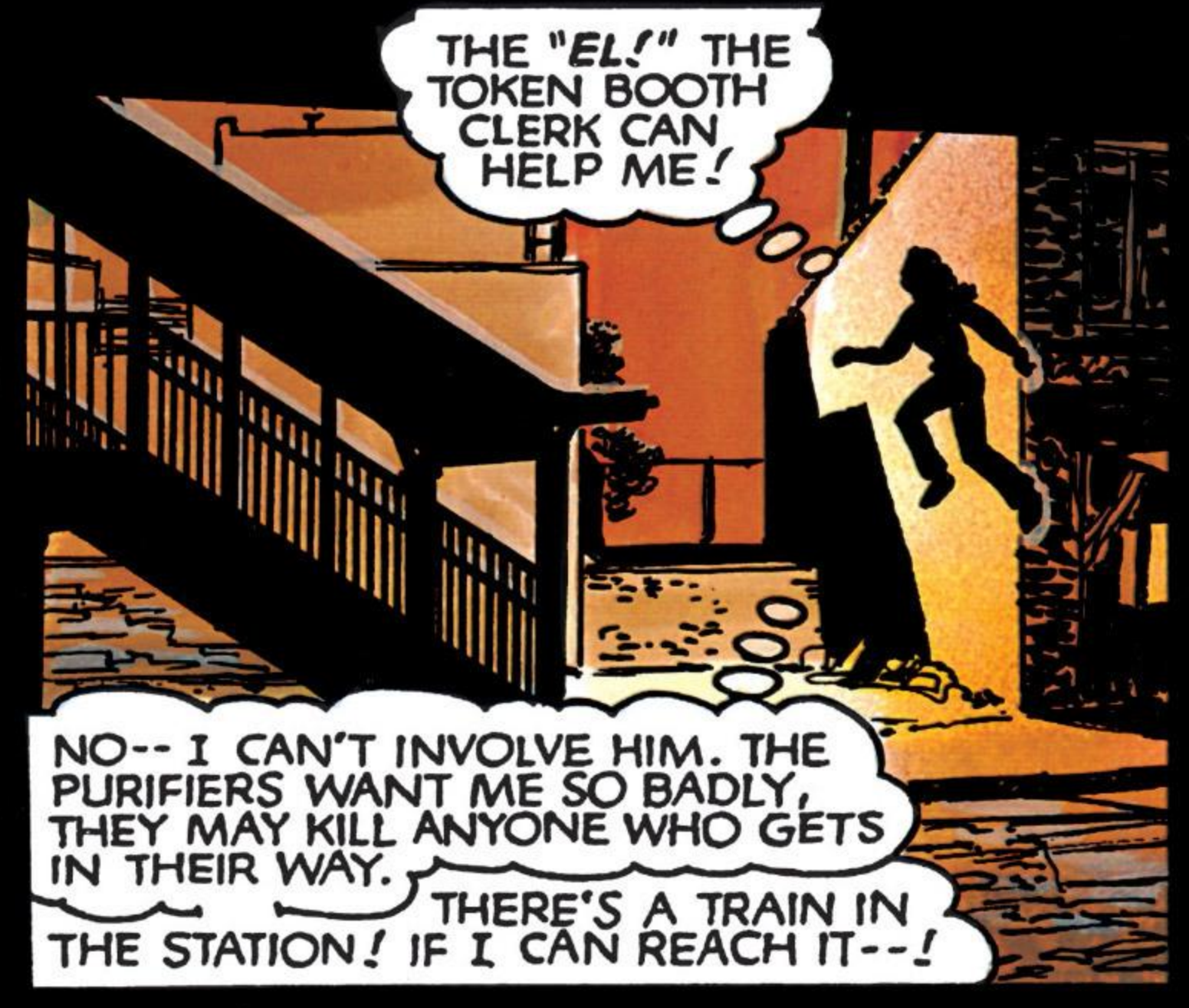
I PHASED--

--JUST IN TIME!



≡ KOFF! KOFF! KOFF! ≡
SMOKE IN MY LUNGS--IT HURTS TO BREATHE--OK, CRIPES, THEY'VE SPOTTED ME!

ROCCO, OUR BULLETS'RE PASSIN' RIGHT THROUGH HER! WHAT'LL WE DO?!



THE "EL!" THE TOKEN BOOTH CLERK CAN HELP ME!

NO-- I CAN'T INVOLVE HIM. THE PURIFIERS WANT ME SO BADLY, THEY MAY KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN THEIR WAY. THERE'S A TRAIN IN THE STATION! IF I CAN REACH IT--!



IT'S ROLLING-- I'VE GOT TO RUN!

USING MY PHASING POWER TO "WALK" ON AIR ISN'T EASY AT THE BEST OF TIMES. THE SLIGHTEST LAPSE IN CONCENTRATION, AN' I'LL BE SPLAT ALL OVER THE SIDEWALK. BUT I CAN'T MAINTAIN THIS PACE MUCH LONGER!



MADE IT!

HOLY--!

SAINTS PRESERVE US!



WHO YELLED?

SHE CAME THROUGH THE WALL LIKE A GHOST!

GIMME A BREAK.

YOU OKAY, HONEY?



LEMME... CATCH... MY BREATH...

MEN... CHASING ME... TRYING TO KILL ME...



DON'T BE SCARED. YOU'RE SAFE HERE-- HEY!

IT'S THEM!



CRASH!

BEHIND ME, KID! I'LL PROTECT YOU!



STAND ASIDE, PEOPLE, YOU WON'T GET HURT.

IT'S THE BRAT WE WANT.

I'M TOO TIRED TO PHASE, AND THAT PURIFIER KNOWS IT. BESIDES, I CAN'T-- I WON'T-- LEAVE THE POLICEMAN.



DO WHAT YOU WANT TO ME, BUT, PLEASE, HELP THE OFFICER! HE ISN'T A MUTANT-- HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY-- HE'S DYING!

AND HIS DEATH, MUTIE-- AT WHAT'LL APPEAR TO BE YOUR HAND-- WILL SERVE OUR CAUSE AS EFFECTIVELY AS YOUR DEATH.

LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS, PURIFIERS, AND SURRENDER--

--OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.

LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW!



WE'RE FLYING!

IT'S ANOTHER MUTIE! WASTE HIM!



FOOLS, YOU CAN NO MORE HARM THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM THAN YOU-- OR YOUR LEADER-- CAN ESCAPE HIS WRATH!



USING HIS POWERS...

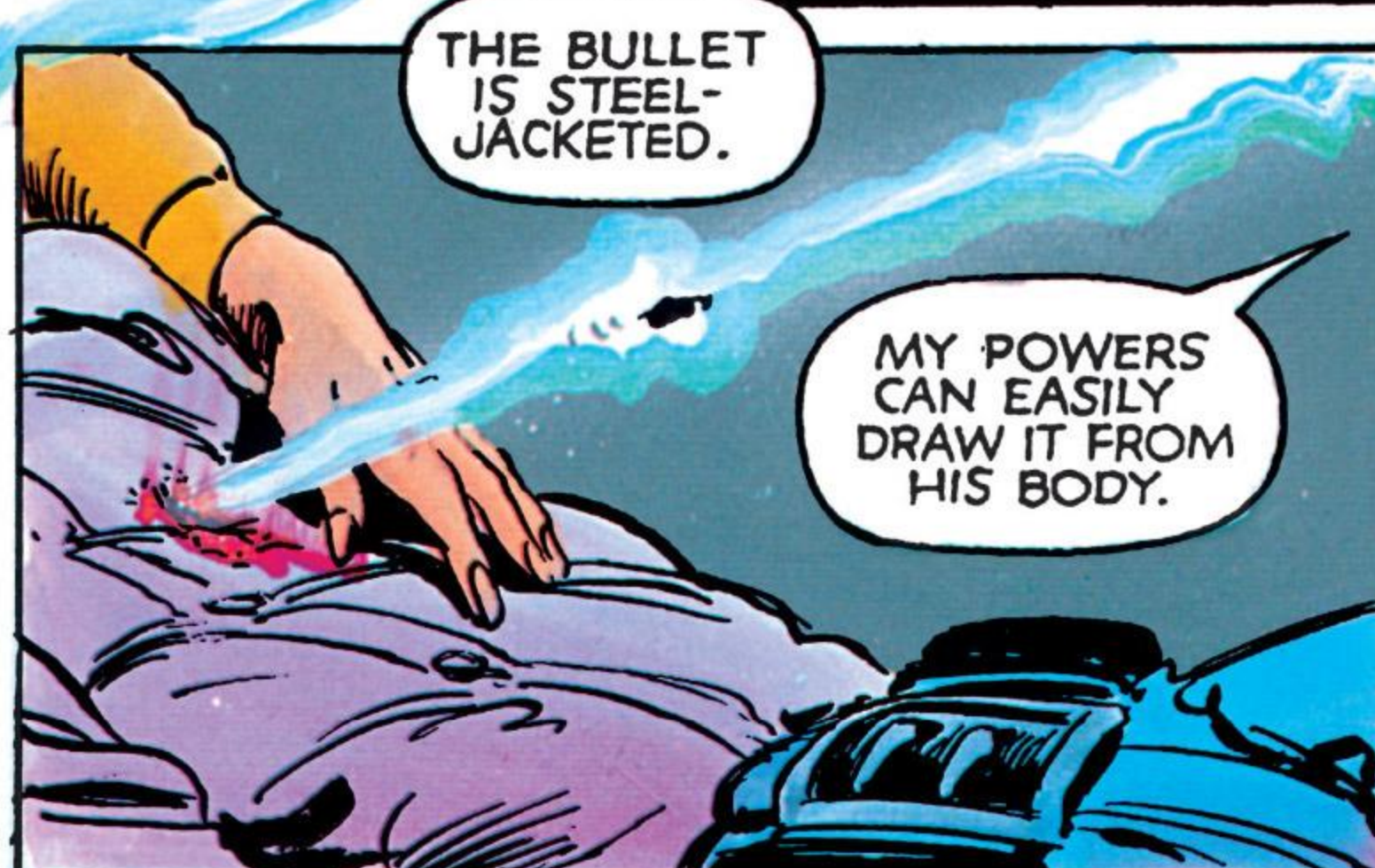
...MAGNETO EASILY DEFLECTS BOTH BULLETS AND ENERGY BOLTS.

THE PURIFIERS, UNDAUNTED, KEEP FIRING...



...FOR AS LONG AS THEY HAVE WEAPONS LEFT TO FIRE.







LEAVING THE REMAINING PURIFIERS FOR THE POLICE...

... AND SOARS DOWNTOWN ACROSS THE CITY.



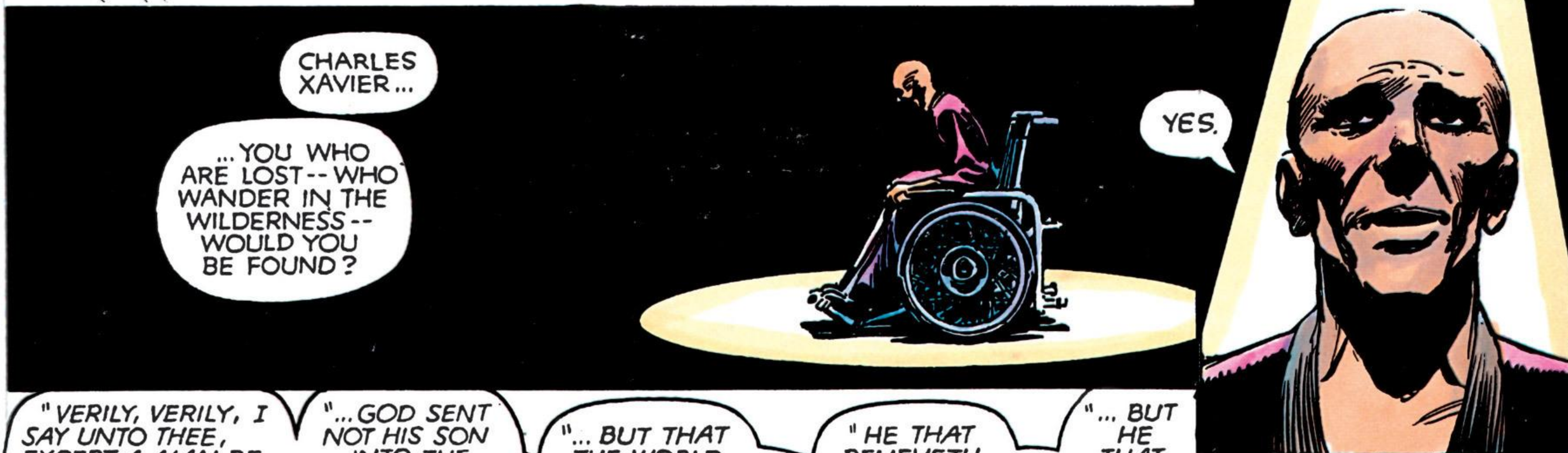
WHO... WERE THOSE GUYS? HELL, WHO ARE YOU?!

WHY WERE THEY AFTER THE KID?

I AM MAGNETO. MY COMPANIONS, X-MEN. WE ARE MUTANTS. AS FOR REASONS, YOU'D BEST ASK THE MAN THOSE ASSASSINS ARE SWORN TO SERVE...

... REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER.

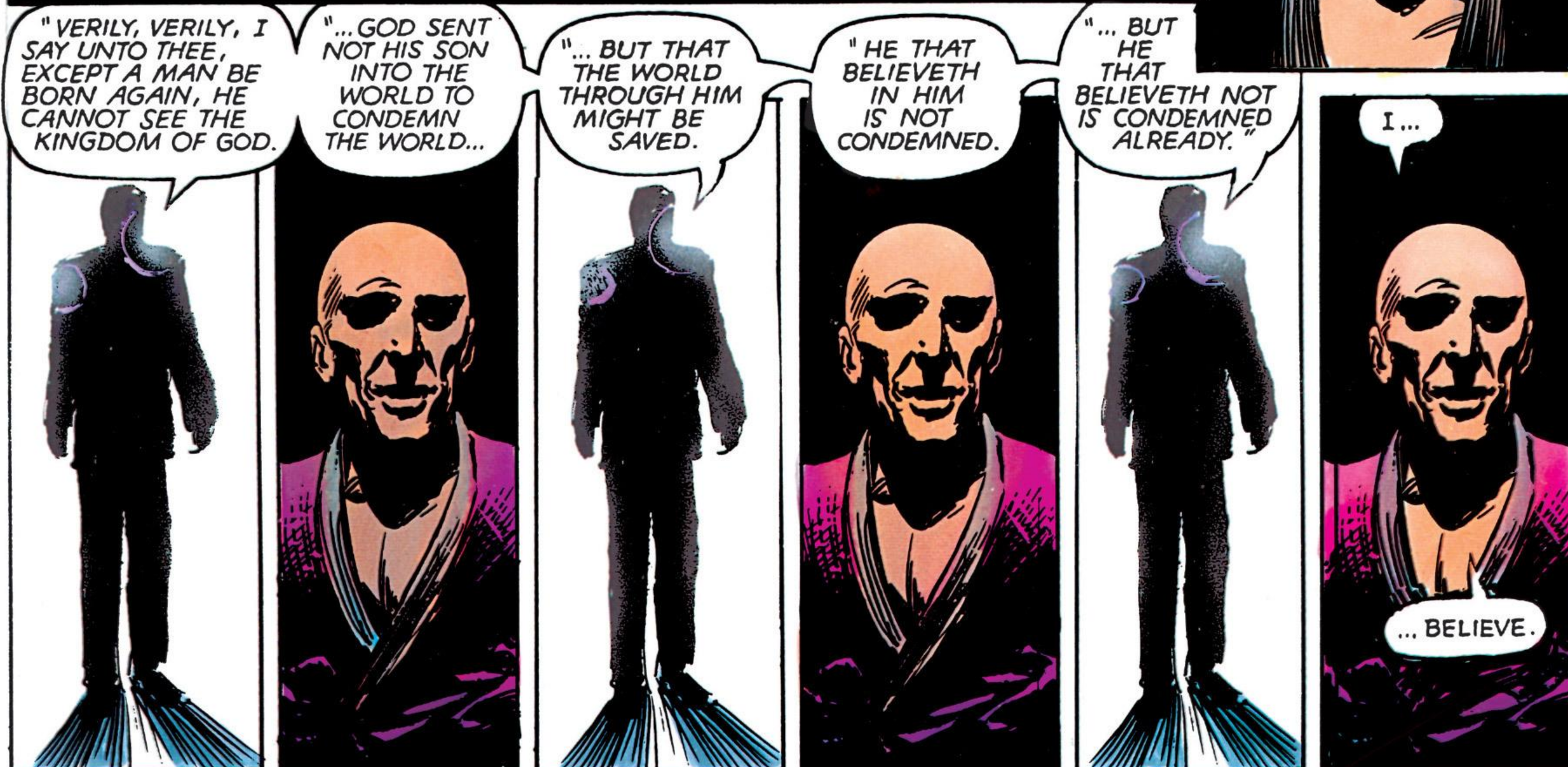
MEANWHILE ...



CHARLES XAVIER ...

... YOU WHO ARE LOST-- WHO WANDER IN THE WILDERNESS-- WOULD YOU BE FOUND?

YES.



"VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

"... GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD..."

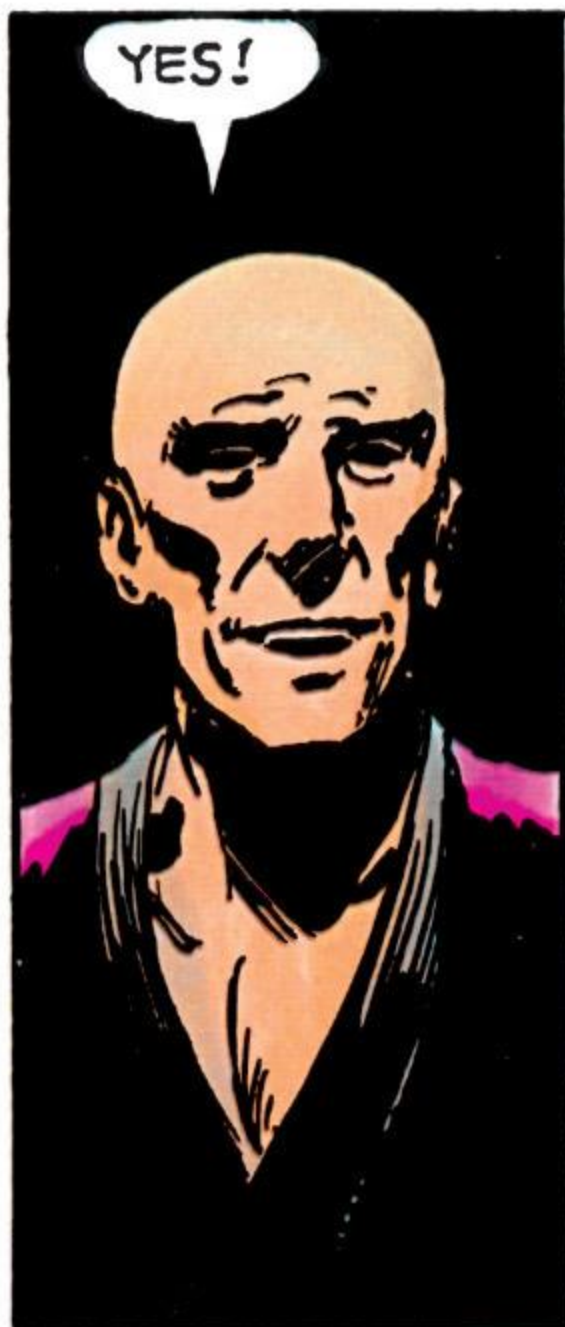
"... BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED."

"HE THAT BELIEVETH IN HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED."

"... BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY."

I ...

... BELIEVE.



WHERE TO, DR. RAMSEY?

HOME, GEORGE, FOR A SHOWER, SHAVE, CHANGE OF CLOTHES, AND A DECENT MEAL.

AN HOUR SHOULD DO THE TRICK. THEN, I'LL NEED YOU TO DRIVE ME TO THE GARDEN FOR TONIGHT'S RALLY.

NO PROBLEM. IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY BIG SHINDIG-- IS IT TRUE THE PRESIDENT'S GOING TO BE THERE?

WOULD YOU LIKE HIS AUTOGRAPH?

THAT'D BE GREAT, DOC. THANKS.

BUT, AS THE LIMOUSINE ACCELERATES DOWN THE STREET...

SURPRISE, SUCKER!

Uh-UH, HEAD-SHRINKER. NOT A PEEP.

WE'RE LEAVING AS SILENTLY AS WE ARRIVED.

I'M DOING IT!

BY MAINTAINING PHYSICAL CONTACT...

... I ACTUALLY PHASED ANOTHER BODY WITH ME!

I'VE PRACTICED PHASING LARGISH MASSES IN THE DANGER ROOM, BUT I NEVER PHASED A PERSON BEFORE, I NEVER HAD TO...

MMMPHGH!

!?!

... AND I'VE NEVER FELT SO BEAT--

--HEY!

GET AWAY FROM ME!

WAIT -- YOU'RE THE PRYDE GIRL. BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD--

URRRGH!

IF KITTY'S CONCENTRATION HAD SLIPPED EVEN A LITTLE, SHE WOULD HAVE SUFFERED A HORRIBLE DEATH -- ACH! THE CHILD IS BRAVE.

SHE HAS NINE LIVES, HERR DOKTOR, DIDN'T YOU KNOW?



PUT ME DOWN!
YOU'RE--
CHOKING ME!



SUFFOCATION IS THE LEAST OF YOUR PROBLEMS.

WE REQUIRE INFORMATION.

NEVER!



I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT.



WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK.



BUT MANY MORE OF MAKING YOU DIE.

THIS IS A MOMENT I'VE LONG LOOKED FORWARD TO.

NO--PLEASE!



YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT.

MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN.



THE STRYKER BUILDING...

...SOMETIME LATER...



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA.

ORDERS. THE REVEREND'S GOT NO MORE USE FOR THESE MUTIES. WE'RE TO DISPOSE OF THE BODIES.

HOW?

BASEMENT INCINERATOR.

I'LL TAG ALONG.

THERE'S NO NEED, ANNE. I DOUBT THEY'LL GIVE US ANY TROUBLE.

'SIDES, SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT THE GARDEN WITH REVEREND STRYKER?

33

IT'S EARLY. I'VE PLENTY OF TIME.

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

ORDERS. KID'S WANTED FOR EXAMINATION.

BUSY NIGHT.

ILLYANA GOES TO THIRTY. WE DROP ALL THE WAY.

BUT...

35

34

33

WE'RE GOING UP!

WHAT'LL WE DO, ANNE?

MY GUN--!

THE WALLS-- MAGNETIZED! AND THE ELEVATOR PANEL WON'T WORK. WE'RE CLIMBING FASTER BY THE SECOND AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN STOP US!





ALONE AND UNARMED, I'M NO MATCH FOR THE X-MEN. I HAVE TO FIND A WAY OUT, TO WARN THE REVEREND!

IF ONLY I CAN LEVER THESE BLASTED DOORS--



--OPEN!

WITHOUT HESITATION, ANNE LEAPS FOR THE ROOFTOP...



... TRYING NOT TO THINK OF THE SIX HUNDRED FOOT SHEER DROP AWAITING HER SHOULD SHE MISS.



THEY'RE LEAVING. THEY GOT WHAT THEY CAME FOR.



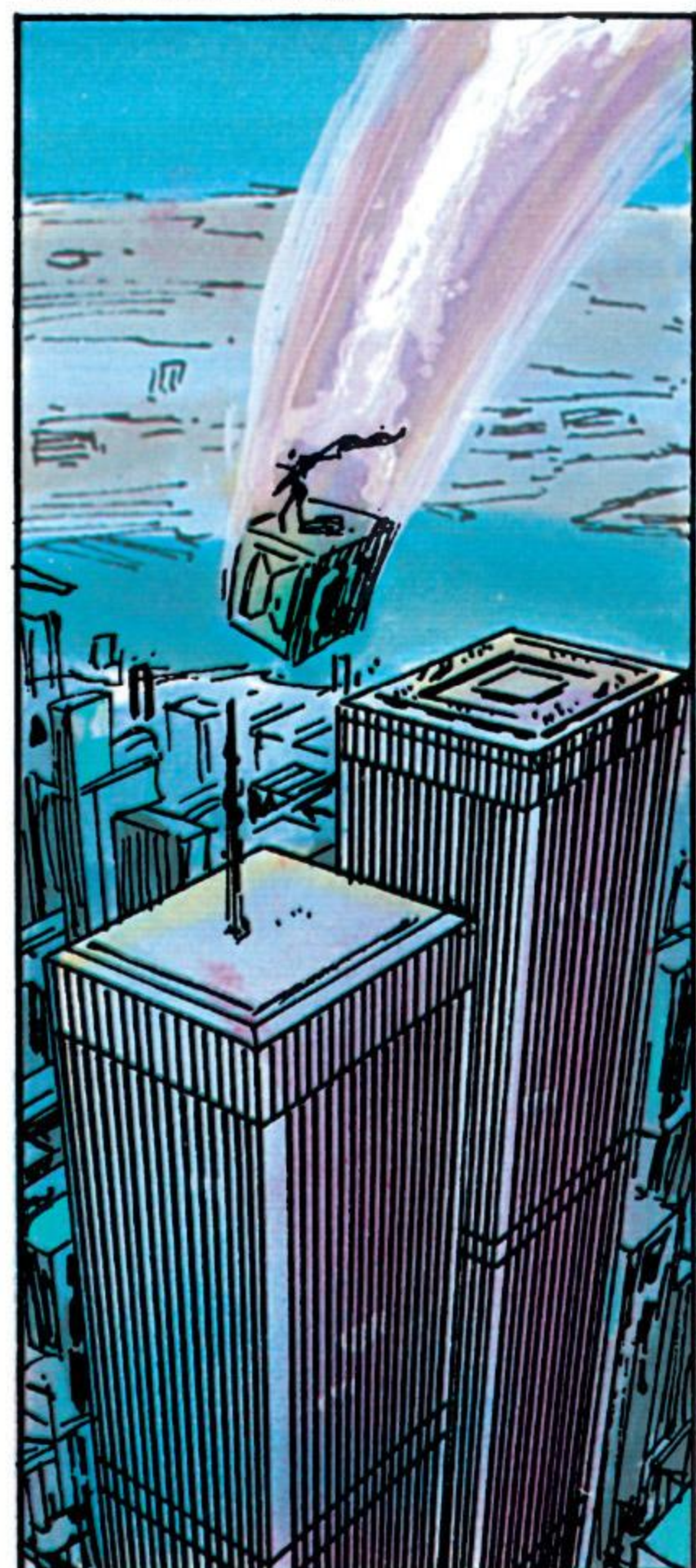
THEY MUST NOT CONSIDER ME...



... WORTH BOTHERING ABOUT.

THAT MISTAKE'LL COST THEM DEARLY.

ELSEWHERE...



AS I FEARED...

... WE ARE TOO LATE.

< PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH! >*

< I KNEW YOU'D COME! >

THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE! THEY CAN'T BE DEAD!

*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN-- L.



RELAX, PUN'KIN. THEY AREN'T.

WOLVERINE, THE DOCTOR...

... IS AN IDIOT! HE BELIEVES HIS FLAMIN' MACHINES. I SAY THEY'RE WRONG. MY SENSES TELL ME SCOTT-'N'-RORO ARE ALIVE ...

... IN SOME KIND'A STASIS. A HEFTY JOLT OF ELECTRICITY MIGHT REVIVE 'EM.



IT'S WORTH A TRY.

WE CERTAINLY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.



UHHNN...

FASCINATING. CHARLES MUST HAVE BEEN RESISTING STRYKER'S PROGRAMMING ON SOME DEEP SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL. HE COULD NOT KILL THESE TWO-- NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE BELIEVED HE SHOULD.

INSTEAD, HE REDUCED THEIR METABOLIC LEVELS TO THE BAREST MINIMUM, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF DEATH.



MAGNETO--?!?

HE SAVED YOUR LIVES, SCOTT

WHAT?! WHY?!!

CONSIDERING OUR PAST ASSOCIATION, YOUR REACTION IS UNDERSTANDABLE.

I AM NOT YOUR ENEMY, X-MEN, NOR DO I CONSIDER YOU MINE. TRUE, MY GOAL HAS EVER BEEN THE CONQUEST OF EARTH-- BUT SOLELY TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE OUR RACE, HOMO SUPERIOR, CAN LIVE IN PEACE.



LOOK AT YOURSELVES, RISKING YOUR LIVES FOR A HUMANITY THAT WOULD RATHER SEE YOU BEHIND BARS, OR DEAD. WHY DO YOU PERSIST?

IS YOUR WAY ANY BETTER? A MUTANT DICTATORSHIP?

DO NOT TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, BOY. I HAVE LIVED UNDER A DICTATORSHIP...



...AND SEEN MY FAMILY BUTCHERED BY ITS SERVANTS. WHEN I RULE, IT WILL BE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ALL.



CONTENTMENT BREEDS TRANQUILITY-- DISCONTENT, REBELLION. THEREFORE, I SHALL ENSURE THE ONE BY ELIMINATING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE OTHER: HUNGER, POVERTY, DISEASE, WAR.



THE FREEDOMS LOST WILL NOT BE NOTICED, EVEN IN THE MOST LIBERTARIAN OF STATES. AND THE MATERIAL BENEFITS SHOULD MORE THAN BALANCE THE SCALES.

ANYONE CAN CREATE AN UTOPIA FOR A SINGLE GENERATION, MAGNETO; THE TRICK IS MAKING IT LAST. WHO PRESERVES YOUR DREAM AFTER YOU'RE GONE?



YOU, OF COURSE, CYCLOPS. AND THE X-MEN. WHY DO YOU THINK I WANT YOU BY MY SIDE?

BUT ALL THIS MAY WELL BE RENDERED ACADEMIC IF REVEREND STRYKER'S PLANS ARE LEFT UNCHECKED. CONSIDER MY OFFER, X-MEN. SHOULD THE FATES BE KIND, WE SHALL SPEAK OF IT AGAIN.

Chapter 4

THIS IS JOHN CHEEVER, ABC NEWS, REPORTING FROM NEW YORK'S FAMED MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-- WHERE WITHIN THE HOUR REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER WILL GIVE WHAT IS BEING HERALDED AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SERMON OF HIS MINISTRY.

INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO EVERY MAJOR NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE-- OF BOTH PARTIES-- AND THE FEW REFUSALS ARE ELOQUENT TESTAMENT TO THE CRUSADE'S CLOUT.

HOWEVER, A GROWING NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS-- INCLUDING FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELICAL MINISTERS WHO ONLY A SHORT WHILE AGO WERE STRYKER'S FRIENDS AND ALLIES-- HAVE BEGUN TO QUESTION THE DIRECTION OF HIS CRUSADE.



REVEREND STRYKER HAS SAID THAT TONIGHT'S SERMON WILL LAY ALL SUCH DOUBTS TO REST.

IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS WILL BE THE CASE.

BACKSTAGE...

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS APPARATUS, CHARLES? IT'S PATTERNED AFTER YOUR OWN CEREBRO COMPUTER SYSTEM. LIKE CEREBRO, IT AMPLIFIES YOUR PSIONIC SENSITIVITY, ENABLING YOU TO DETECT THE UNIQUE BRAINWAVE PATTERNS OF BOTH ACTIVE AND LATENT MUTANTS.



"AND HE CAUSETH ALL, BOTH SMALL AND GREAT, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND BOND, TO RECEIVE A MARK... THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST."



AND WHEN YOU MAKE CONTACT WITH THOSE MINDS, YOU WILL DESTROY THEM.



REVEREND!

ANNE, YOU LOOK DREADFUL! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

X-MEN-- THEY STOLE CYCLOPS' AND STORM'S BODIES, AND COLOSSUS' SISTER! DR. RAMSEY'S DISAPPEARED AS WELL. I THINK THEY KIDNAPPED HIM!

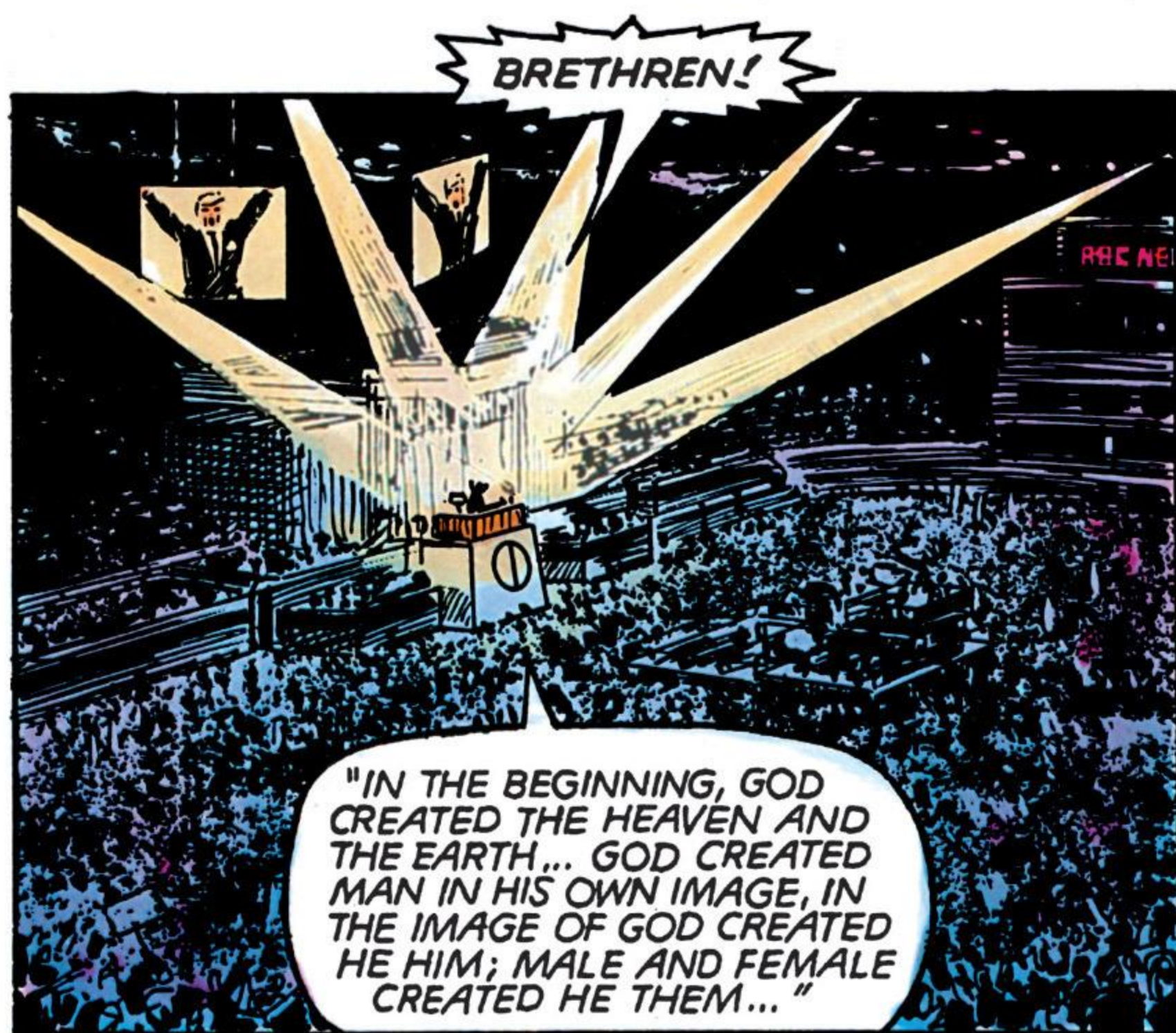
IF HE TALKS, IF THEY LEARN WHAT'S PLANNED FOR THIS SERMON--!

THEY'RE A HANDFUL OF CHILDREN, ANNE--



-- AND I AM A SERVANT OF THE LORD. WHAT CAN THEY DO TO STOP ME?

IT IS ONE THING, THEY NOTE, TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE MORAL STATE OF THE NATION, QUITE ANOTHER TO SINGLE OUT A SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE AND BRAND THEM AS LITERALLY LESS THAN HUMAN. TO MANY, IT BETOKENS AN ATTITUDE UNCOMFORTABLY REMINISCENT OF THAT HELD IN NAZI GERMANY AGAINST THE JEWS.



"IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH... GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM; MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM..."



"AND THE LORD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL!"



THUS, WAS OUR RACE BORN. THUS, IT HAS REMAINED FOR LO THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

UNTIL TODAY.



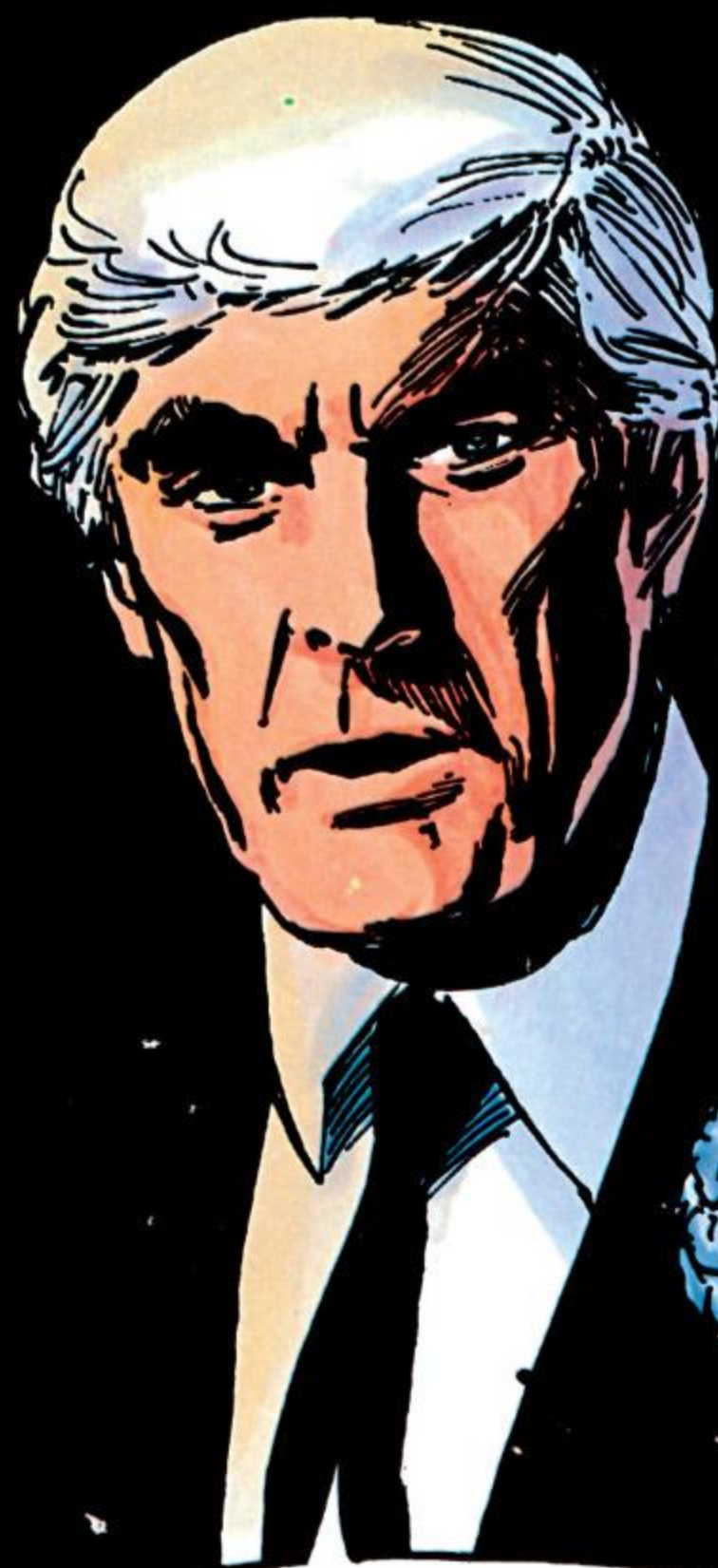
MERCE!

YES, SENATOR?

DOES THE PRESIDENT HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING?! DOES HE SUPPORT IT?!

THE PRESIDENT IS A FAIR-MINDED MAN. HE BELIEVES THE REVEREND'S VIEWS DESERVE A HEARING.

WE ARE BEINGS OF DIVINE CREATION, YET THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHOSE EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THAT DIVINITY.



GOD CREATED MAN-- THE **HUMAN RACE!** THE BIBLE MAKES NO MENTION OF MUTANTS. SO WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? SOME-- SO-CALLED SCIENTISTS, HUMANISTS-- SAY THEY ARE PART OF THE NATURAL PROCESS OF EVOLUTION.

WHADDYA THINK, JEFF?

THE RANGERS'RE PLAYIN' THE ISLANDERS OVER IN GARDEN CITY. I WISH I WAS THERE.



CROWD'S EATIN' IT UP. I DUNNO, PARTNER, THAT PREACHER SCARES ME.



ARE WE NOW TO LET THOSE WHO PUT FORWARD THE PROPOSITION THAT WE ARE DESCENDED FROM APES TELL US THAT OUR DESCENDENTS-- OUR **CHILDREN**-- WILL BE BORN **MONSTERS**?! AND THAT THIS IS **NATURAL** ???

I SAY, NO!
I SAY, **NEVER!**

WE ARE AS GOD MADE US! ANY DEVIATION FROM THAT SACRED TEMPLATE-- ANY **MUTATION**-- COMES NOT FROM HEAVEN, BUT **HELL!**

BEHIND THE PODIUM, A SWITCH IS THROWN, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE ACTIVATED.



RESULTS AREN'T LONG IN COMING...

... AS, ON THE ROOF OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, ACROSS 8th AVENUE...



MY HEAD--!
YOU FEEL IT, TOO, 'RORO?

THIS IS... WHAT SCOTT AND I EXPERIENCED... WHEN THE PROFESSOR MINDBLASTED US!



LOOK! DOWN ON THE STREET!

YAARRRGH!

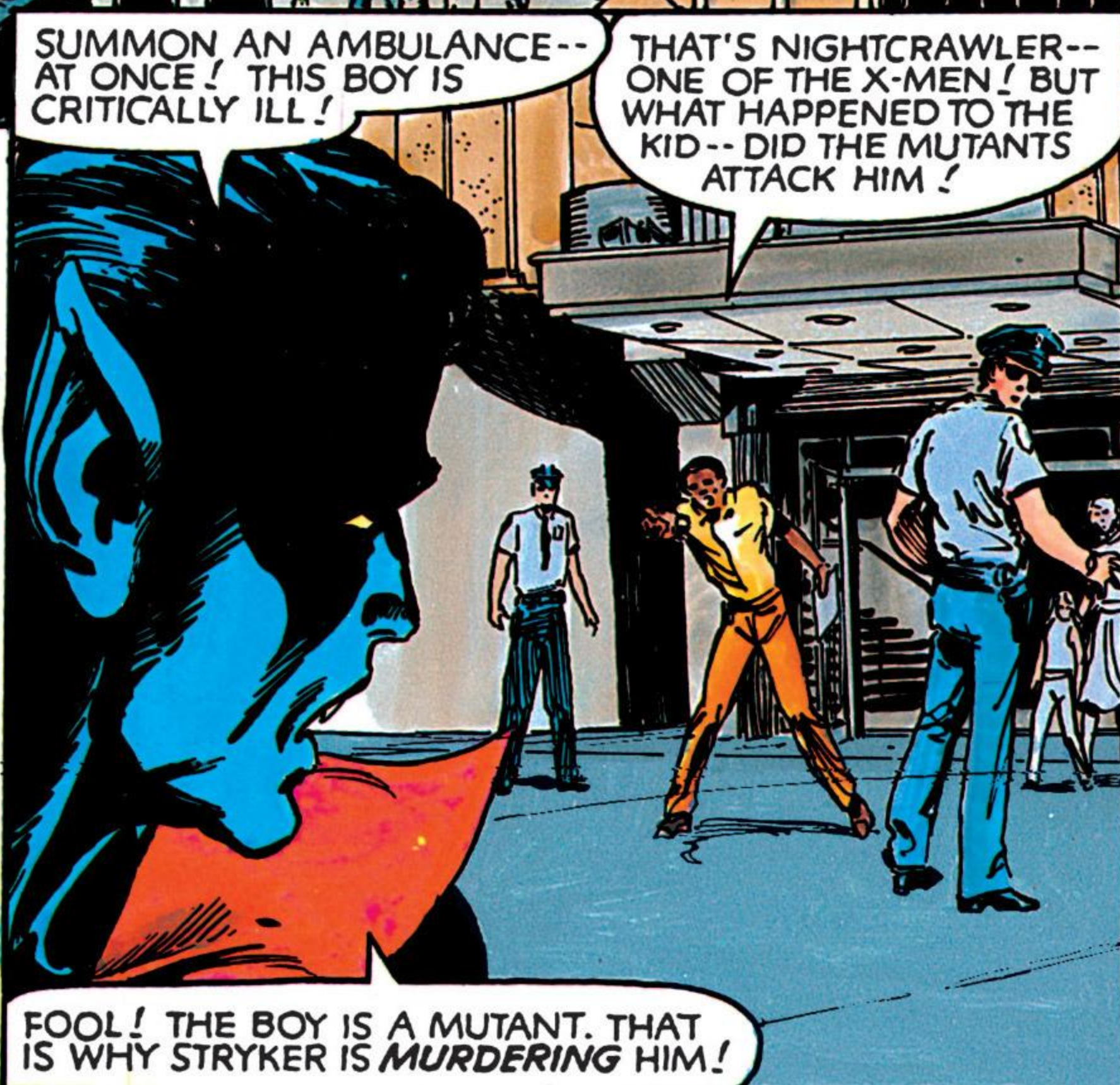


THE BOY'S IN AGONY!
THE BLEEDING FROM HIS EARS AND NOSE IS EVIDENCE OF A MASSIVE INTERNAL HEMMORAGE!



SUMMON AN AMBULANCE-- AT ONCE! THIS BOY IS CRITICALLY ILL!

THAT'S NIGHTCRAWLER-- ONE OF THE X-MEN! BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KID-- DID THE MUTANTS ATTACK HIM!



FOOL! THE BOY IS A MUTANT. THAT IS WHY STRYKER IS MURDERING HIM!

HOW IS HE?

SEHR SECHLECHT-- VERY BAD-- BUT MOSTLY, I THINK, DUE TO HIS CLOSE PROXIMITY TO PROFESSOR XAVIER. ONCE HE'S MOVED AWAY FROM HERE, HE SHOULD IMPROVE.



NIGHTCRAWLER-- KURT! YOUR EARS-- YOU'RE BLEEDING!

JUST LIKE THE BOY. AND WE WILL ALL END UP LIKE HIM IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE.



BUT WHAT?! STRYKER'S COUNTIN' ON AN ATTACK-- WE'LL BE PROVIN' ON NATION-WIDE TV THAT WE'RE THE MENACE HE'S BEEN PREACHIN' WE ARE.



HOWEVER, AS THE X-MEN ARE GRIPPED BY A MOMENT OF FATAL INDECISION, MAGNETO TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.

STRYKER!

SINCE YOU HAVE PROCLAIMED ARMAGEDDON FOR HOMO SAPIENS AND HOMO SUPERIOR, IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT YOU MEET YOUR CHIEF ADVERSARY FACE TO FACE.

"AND I BEHELD ANOTHER BEAST... AND HE HAD TWO HORNS LIKE A GOAT, AND HE SPOKE AS A DRAGON. AND HE HAD POWER TO... CAUSE THAT AS MANY AS WOULD NOT WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SHOULD BE KILLED."

BEHOLD-- MAGNETO! MOST FEARED OF A FEARSOME RACE, SELF-STYLED OVERLORD OF EARTH, ENSLAVEN OF ITS PEOPLE!

SENATOR, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

ON CUE, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE IS REPROGRAMMED, REFOCUSED, EVERY IOTA OF XAVIER'S POWER CONCENTRATED INTO AN AWESOME BEAM OF ENERGY...

... DIRECTED AT MAGNETO.

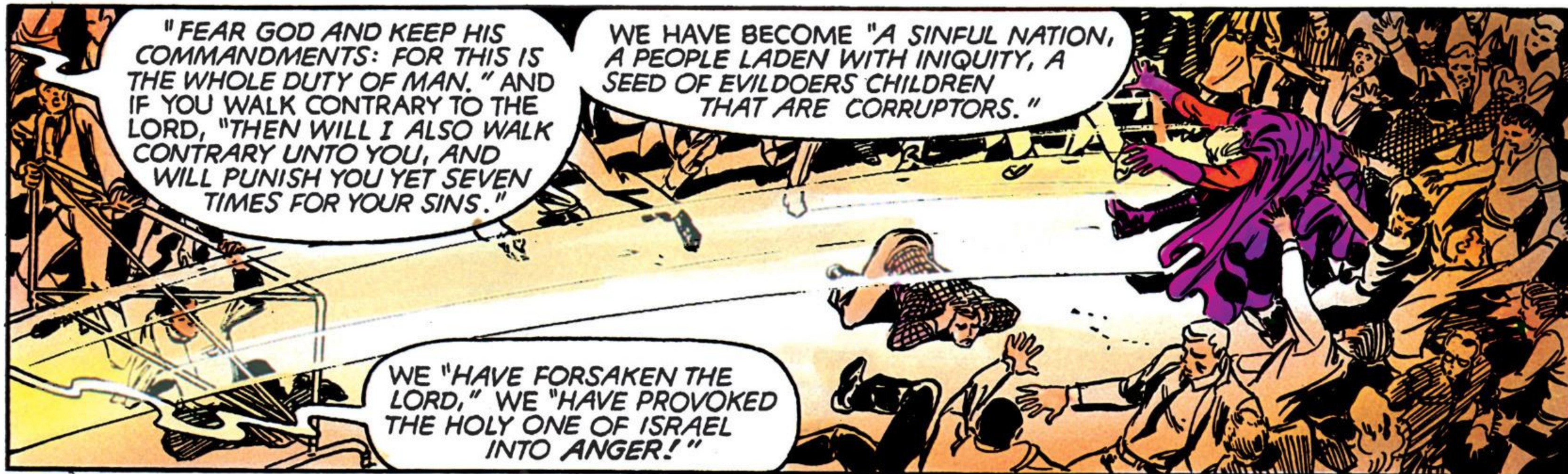
HIS SHIELDS-- HIS NATURAL PSYCHIC DEFENSES-- HOLD. BARELY.

NO, DAMMIT! SEE-- MAGNETO'S REPLACED THE ROOF, GOOD AS NEW! HE'S MADE AN ENTRANCE, NOT AN ATTACK!

BUT LISTEN, MERCE-- TO WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING! THAT'S THE REAL DANGER!

BUT FIRE SHALL COME FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN TO DEVOUR HIM. THE DEVIL SHALL BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, TO BE "TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT, FOR EVER AND EVER!"





"FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN." AND IF YOU WALK CONTRARY TO THE LORD, "THEN WILL I ALSO WALK CONTRARY UNTO YOU, AND WILL PUNISH YOU YET SEVEN TIMES FOR YOUR SINS."

WE HAVE BECOME "A SINFUL NATION, A PEOPLE LADEN WITH INIQUITY, A SEED OF EVILDOERS CHILDREN THAT ARE CORRUPTORS."

WE "HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD," WE "HAVE PROVOKED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL INTO ANGER!"



WE HAVE SINNED. AND MUST ATONE FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS...

...WITH BLOOD!

I UNDERESTIMATED CHARLES. IN THE PAST, HE ALWAYS HELD BACK-- FOR FEAR HE MIGHT HARM HIS FOE. NOT SO, TONIGHT. I CANNOT SURVIVE ANOTHER SUCH PSIBOLT.

I HAVE NEVER FELT SO DRAINED OF STRENGTH. I FEAR I AM TOO WEAK TO EVEN STAND.



BUT ENOUGH OF MY POWER REMAINS TO FORCE THIS RABBLE BACK. A LAST, DEFIANT GESTURE-- FOR THAT IS ALL IT IS--

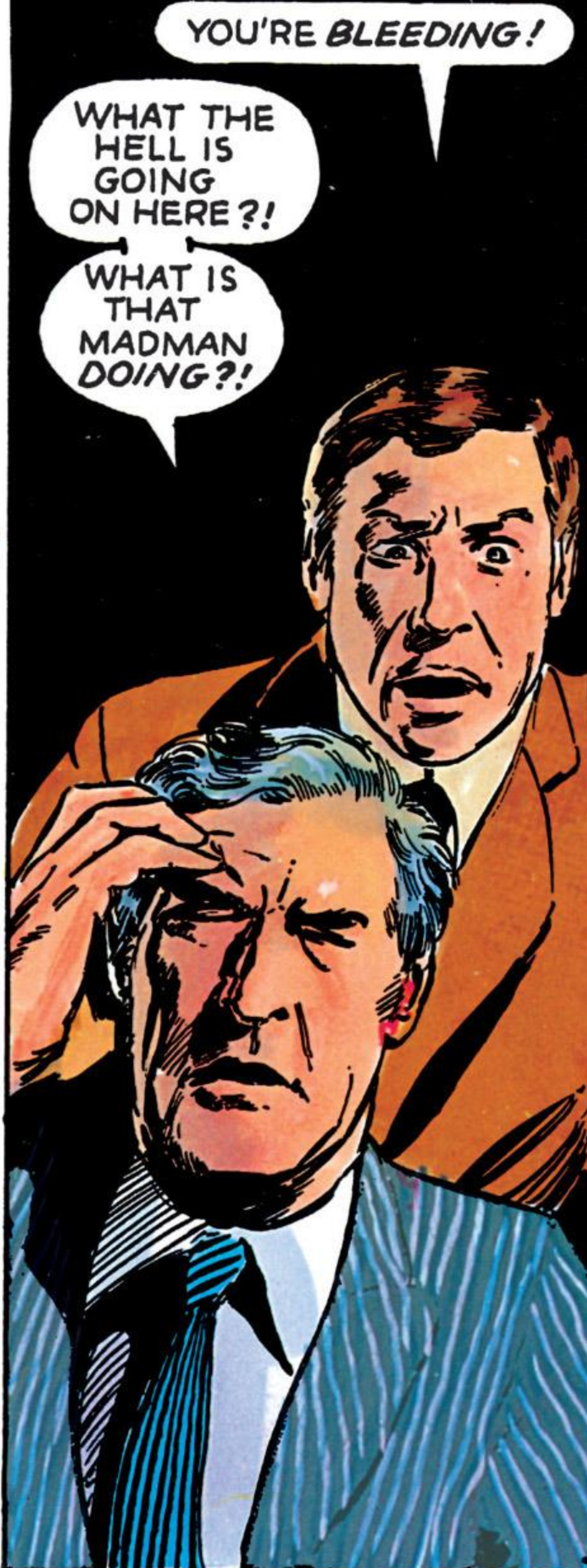
-- I CANNOT HOLD THEM LONG.



THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HIM-- THIS IS INSANE!

STRYKER'S GONE TOO FAR! BAD ENOUGH HE CLAIMS MUTANTS -- AS A RACE -- ARE EVIL, BUT TO CALL FOR THEIR SUMMARY EXECUTION ?!

SENATOR--



YOU'RE BLEEDING!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE ?!

WHAT IS THAT MADMAN DOING ?!



"THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE."



NOT IF I CAN HELP IT, BUSTER!

BACK OFF YOU PEOPLE!

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A CHURCH SERVICE, NOT A DAMN CIRCUS! LEAVE THE MAN BE!

MEANWHILE, OUT OF SIGHT OF THE CROWD...

MUTIES!

H-HEY--!?!?

WHILE MAGNETO HOLDS EVERYONE'S ATTENTION ON-STAGE, SCOTT FIGURES WE CAN SLIP IN, GRAB THE PROFESSOR AND GET AWAY-- HOPEFULLY BEFORE TOO MUCH HARM IS DONE.

WHUNFF!

THAT CREEPY DOC SAID SOME KIND OF DEVICE IS HYPING THE PROFESSOR'S POWERS. IF I CAN PHASE THROUGH IT, I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT IT'S SYSTEMS...

SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA-- THE PROFESSOR SENSED ME COMING, BLOCKED ME WITH A MINDBLAST!

THE BATTLE IS QUICKLY JOINED IN EARNEST. ORDINARILY, THE PURIFIERS WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE...

...BUT THIS NEAR ITS SOURCE, XAVIER'S MURDEROUS PSI-BEAM TAKES A TERRIBLE TOLL. THE X-MEN ARE LITERALLY DYING ON THEIR FEET.

THEY HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO STOP THEIR MENTOR.

FOR SOME, THOUGH, IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE.

REVEREND!

THE X-MEN ARE HERE-- TRYING TO FREE XAVIER!

AHHRRR!

ANNE -- WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?!

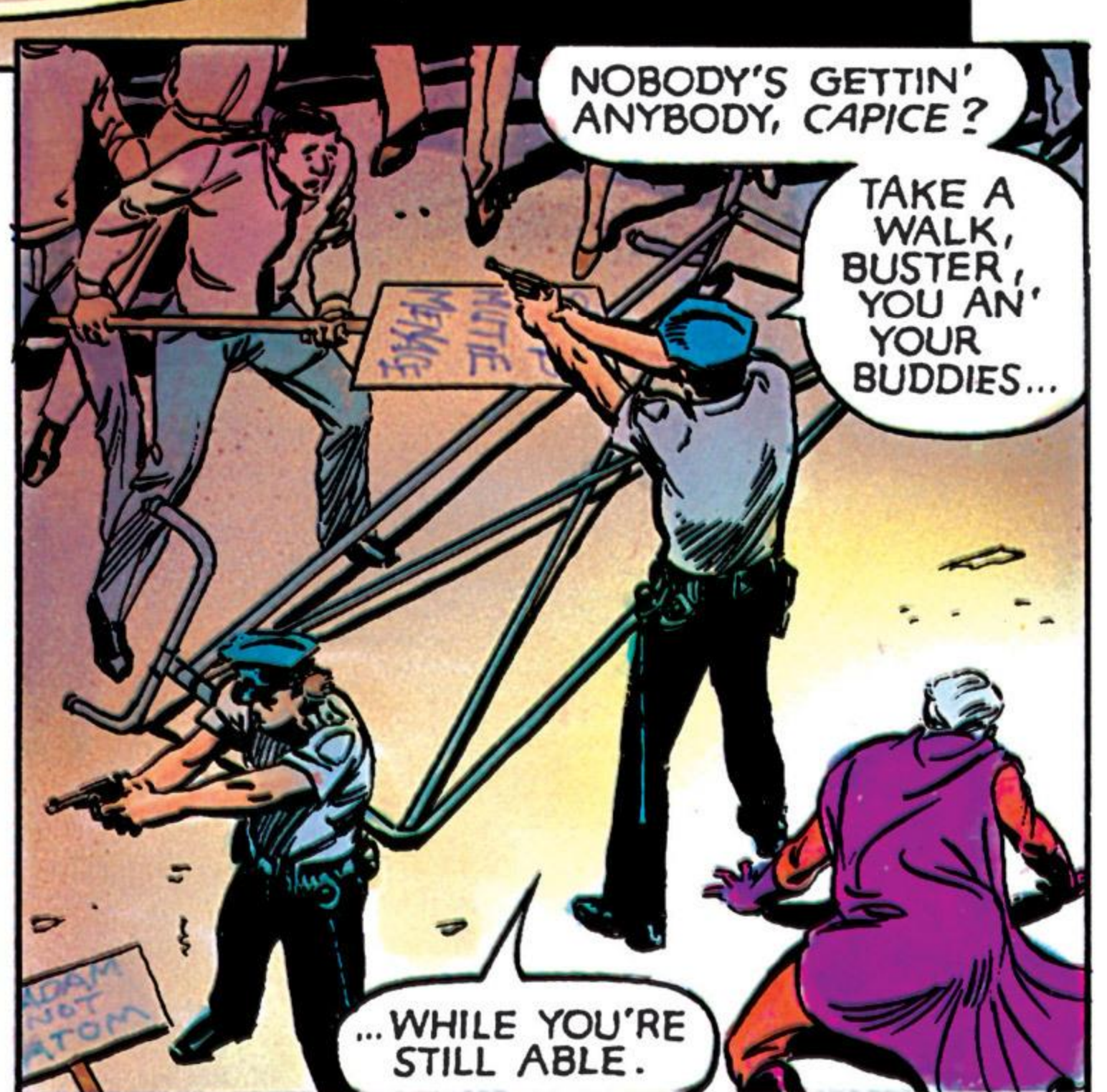
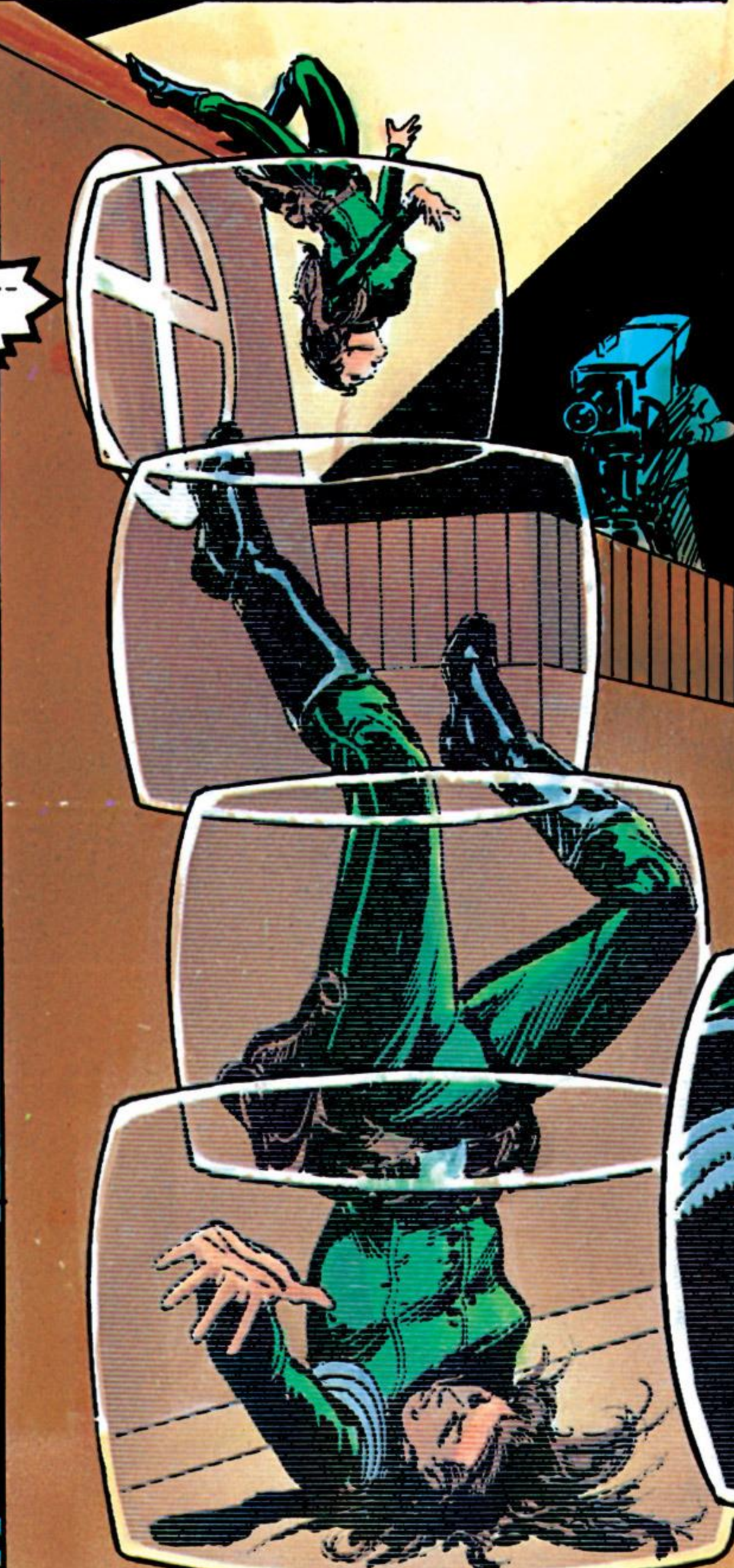
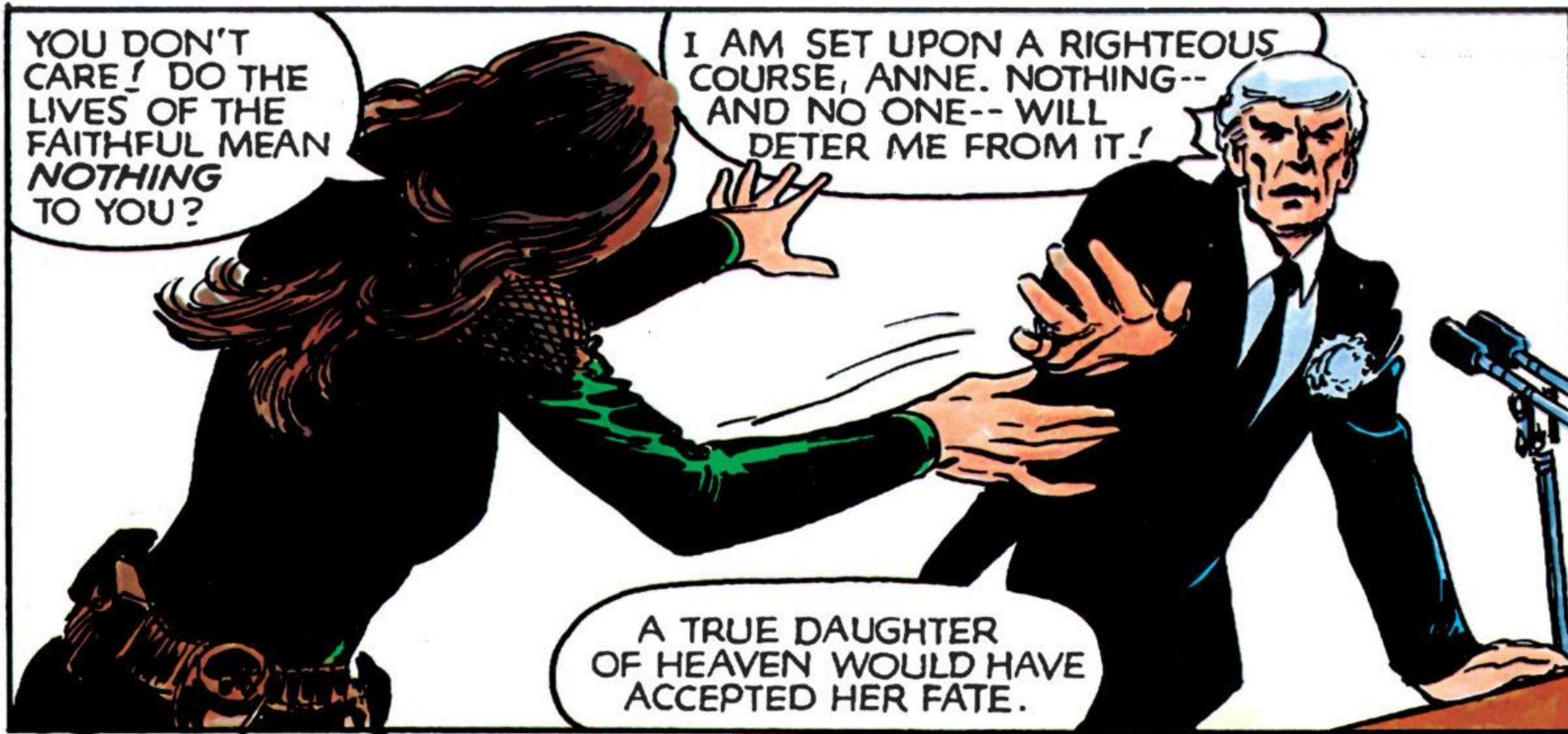
B-BLOOD???

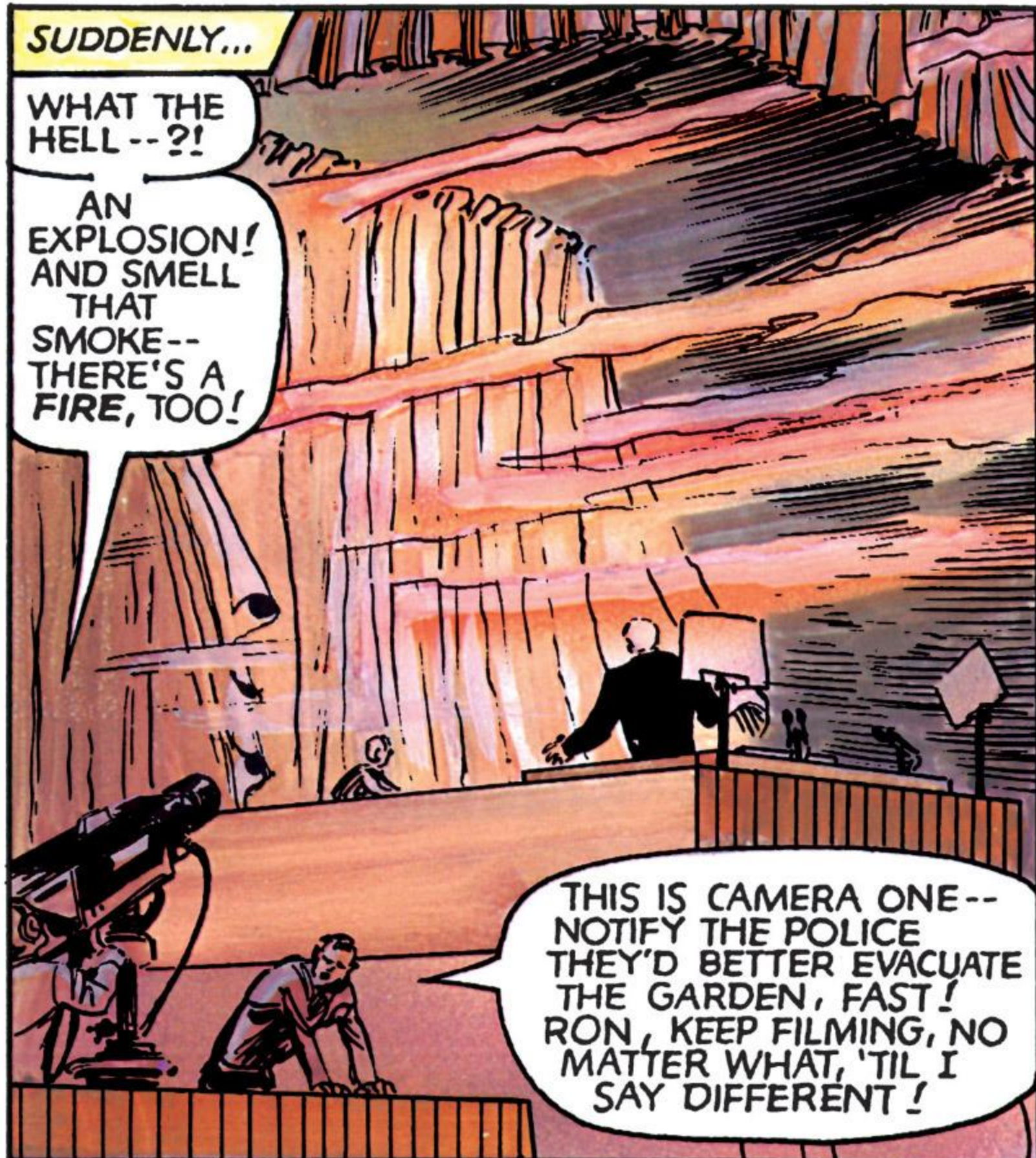
THE BEAM'S AFFECTING ME! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE-- THAT WOULD MEAN I'M A...

MUTANT.

REVEREND-- DEAR GOD! I'VE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!

IT IS GOD'S WILL, CHILD, NOT MY OWN. I AM TRULY SORRY.





SUDDENLY...
WHAT THE HELL -- ?!
AN EXPLOSION!
AND SMELL THAT SMOKE--
THERE'S A FIRE, TOO!

THIS IS CAMERA ONE--
NOTIFY THE POLICE
THEY'D BETTER EVACUATE
THE GARDEN, FAST!
RON, KEEP FILMING, NO
MATTER WHAT, 'TIL I
SAY DIFFERENT!



SCOTTY, WE GOT NO
CHOICE. WE HAVETA
PLAY IT MY WAY!

DO IT. AND
GOOD LUCK.



I'M AFRAID
A DOUBLE
'PORT WON'T BE
PLEASANT.

I'VE RIDDEN
THIS RIDE
BEFORE,
REMEMBER?

READY
WHEN
YOU ARE,
ELF.



NIGHTCRAWLER AND
WOLVERINE DISAPPEAR...

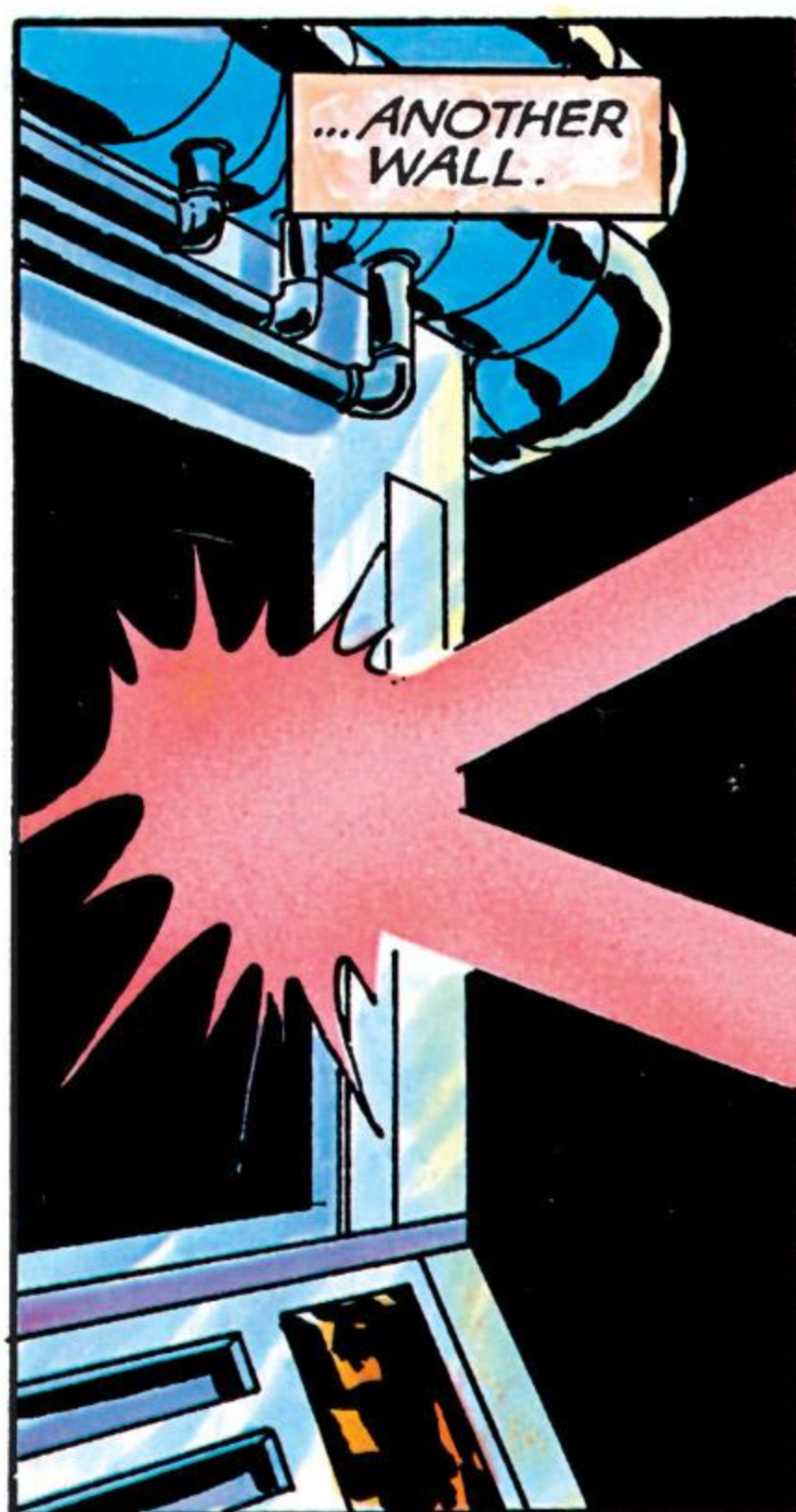


... AND CYCLOPS FIRES HIS OPTIC
BLASTS, SEEMINGLY AT NOTHING.

THE TWO MEN
ARRIVE AT THEIR
DESTINATION.



CYCLOPS' SHOT
REBOUNDS
OFF A WALL ...



... ANOTHER
WALL.



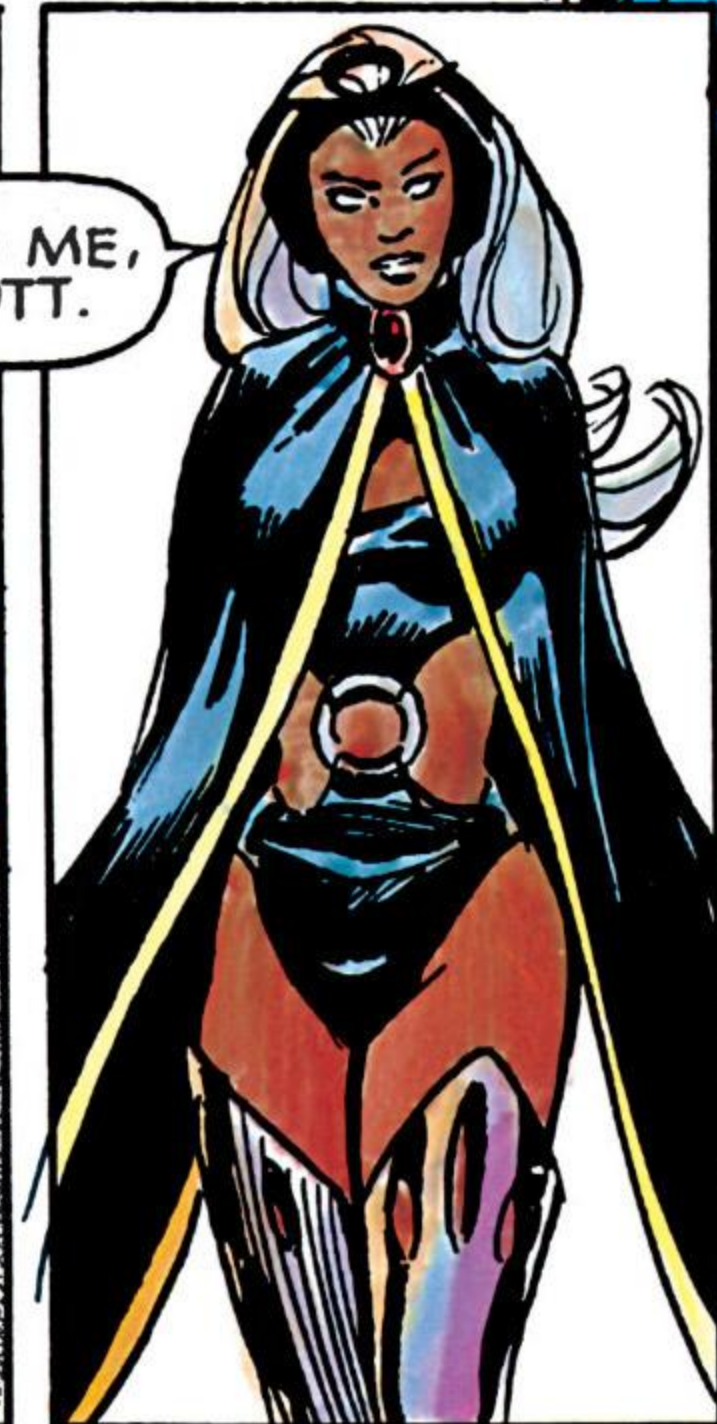
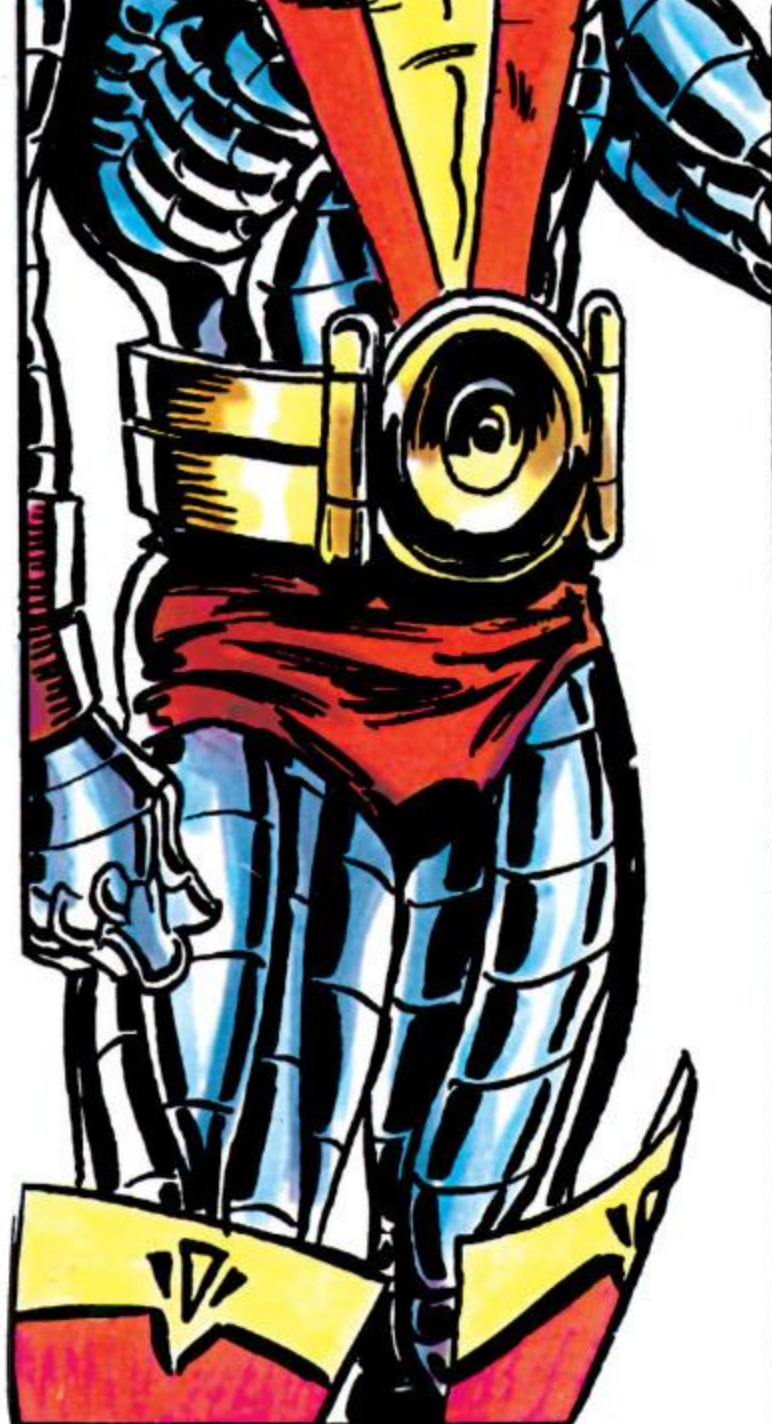
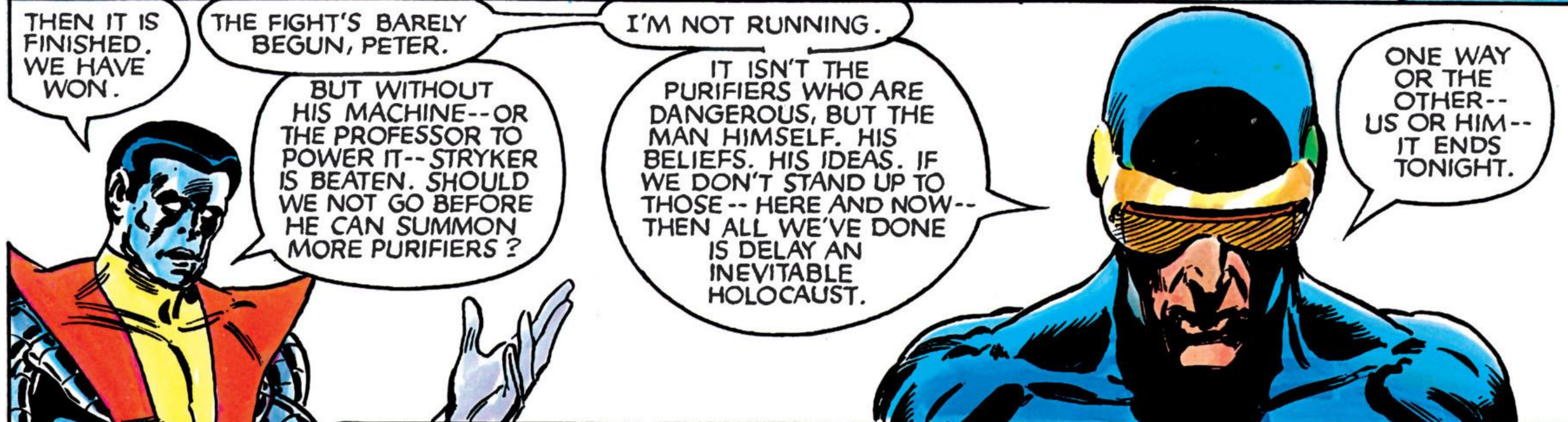
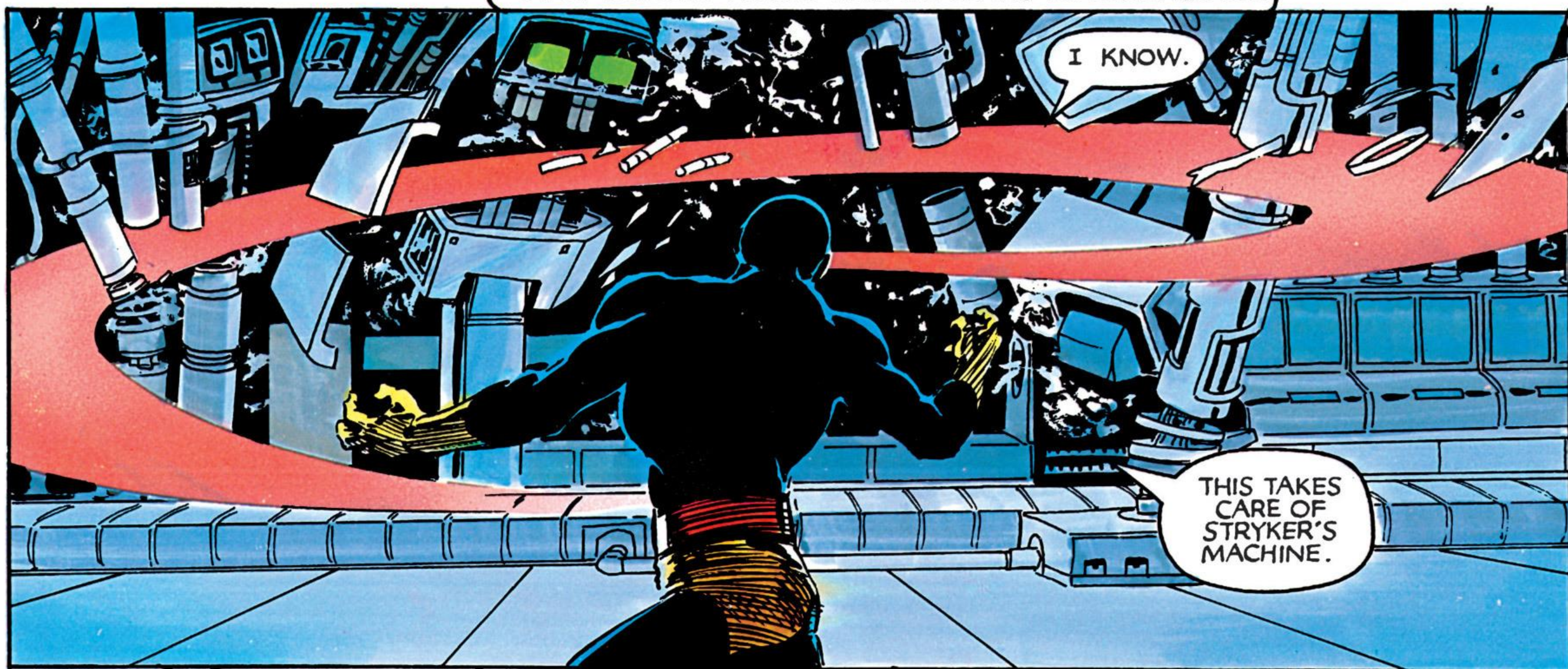
XAVIER DEALS WITH THE OBVIOUS THREAT...



... UNAWARE 'TIL
IT'S TOO LATE...



... THAT IT WAS MERELY
A DIVERSION.



AND SO, AFTER REMOVING PROFESSOR XAVIER TO SAFETY...

LOOK!

THEY'RE CRAZY!

MAYBE, BUT THEY GOT GUTS.

GOOD EVENING, REVEREND.

X-MEN--STORM AND CYCLOPS!

BUT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE...

DEAD? WE'RE FULL OF SURPRISES, STRYKER, AS YOU'LL SOON SEE.

YOU'VE BEEN MAKING SOME PRETTY EXTREME CHARGES AGAINST US. WE FIGURE WE'D CLAIM EQUAL TIME TO ANSWER THEM. YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?

YOUR TOYS ARE BROKEN, REVEREND, YOUR GOONS ARE BEATEN-- IT'S JUST YOUR WORD AGAINST OURS.

THEN I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.

YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN. THANKS TO YOU-- AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU-- MUTANTS LIVE IN FEAR EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. AND SOMETIMES, THOSE LIVES ARE VERY SHORT. LESS THAN A WEEK AGO, TWO CHILDREN IN CONNECTICUT WERE MURDERED, STRYKER-- CONDEMNED SOLELY FOR AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH.

WOULD YOU DO THAT TO SOMEONE BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN, OR THEIR BELIEFS?

I DO NOTHING, CYCLOPS. I AM AN INSTRUMENT OF THE LORD.

SAYS WHO? YOU? WHAT MAKES YOUR LINK WITH HEAVEN ANY STRONGER THAN MINE?

WE HAVE UNIQUE GIFTS-- BUT NO MORE SO, AND NO MORE SPECIAL, THAN THOSE GRANTED A PHYSICIAN OR PHYSICIST, OR PHILOSOPHER OR ATHLETE. IT COULD BE DUE TO AN ACCIDENT OF NATURE OR DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WHO'S TO SAY?

AND WHATEVER A MAN'S COLOR OR BELIEFS, HE IS STILL HUMAN. THOSE CHILDREN-- AND YOU X-MEN-- ARE NOT!

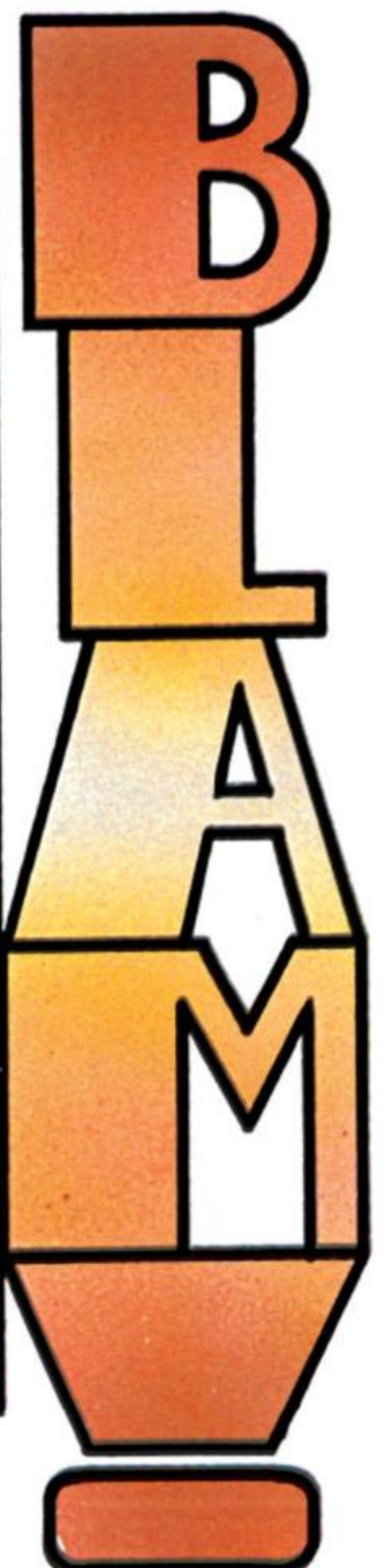
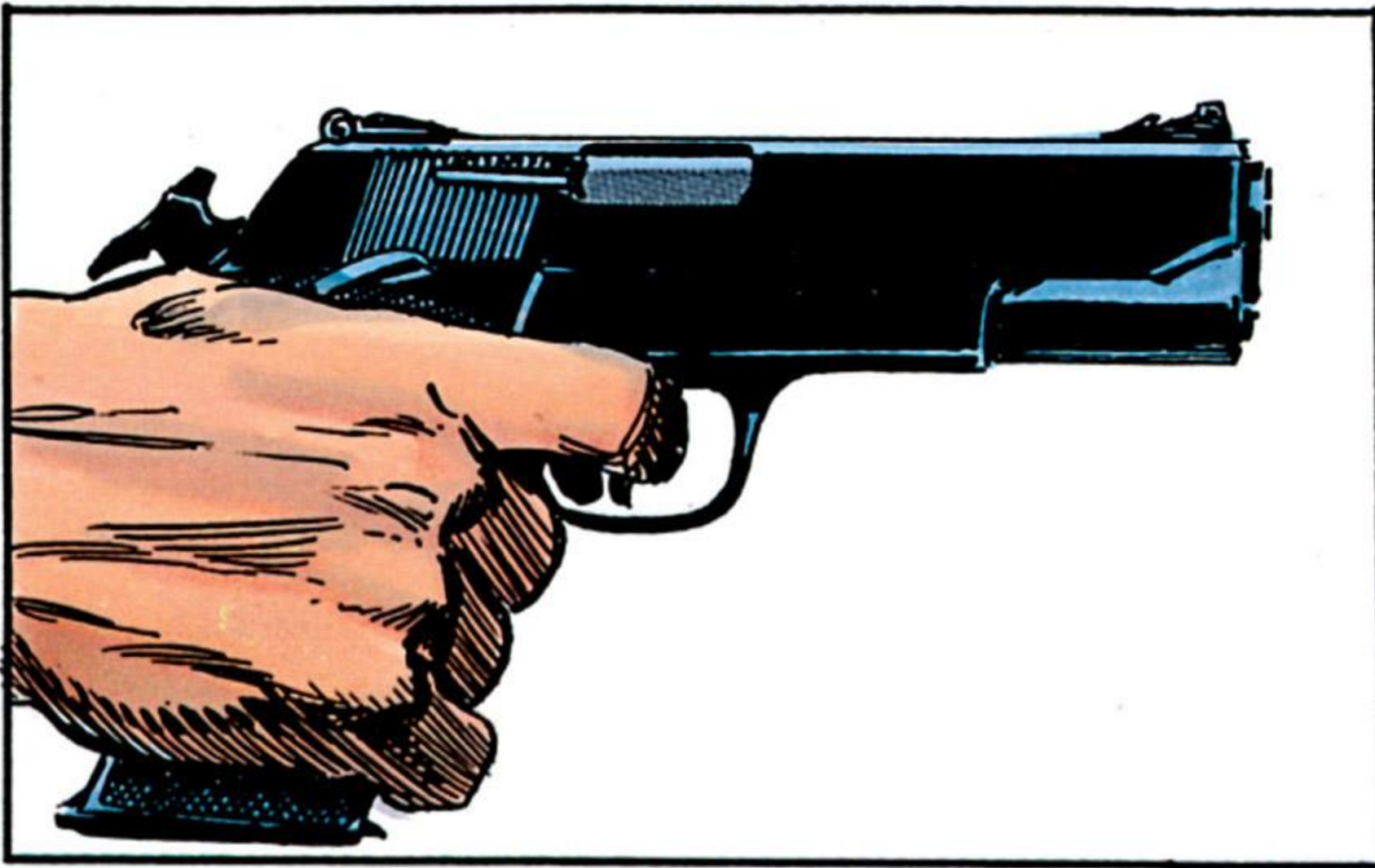
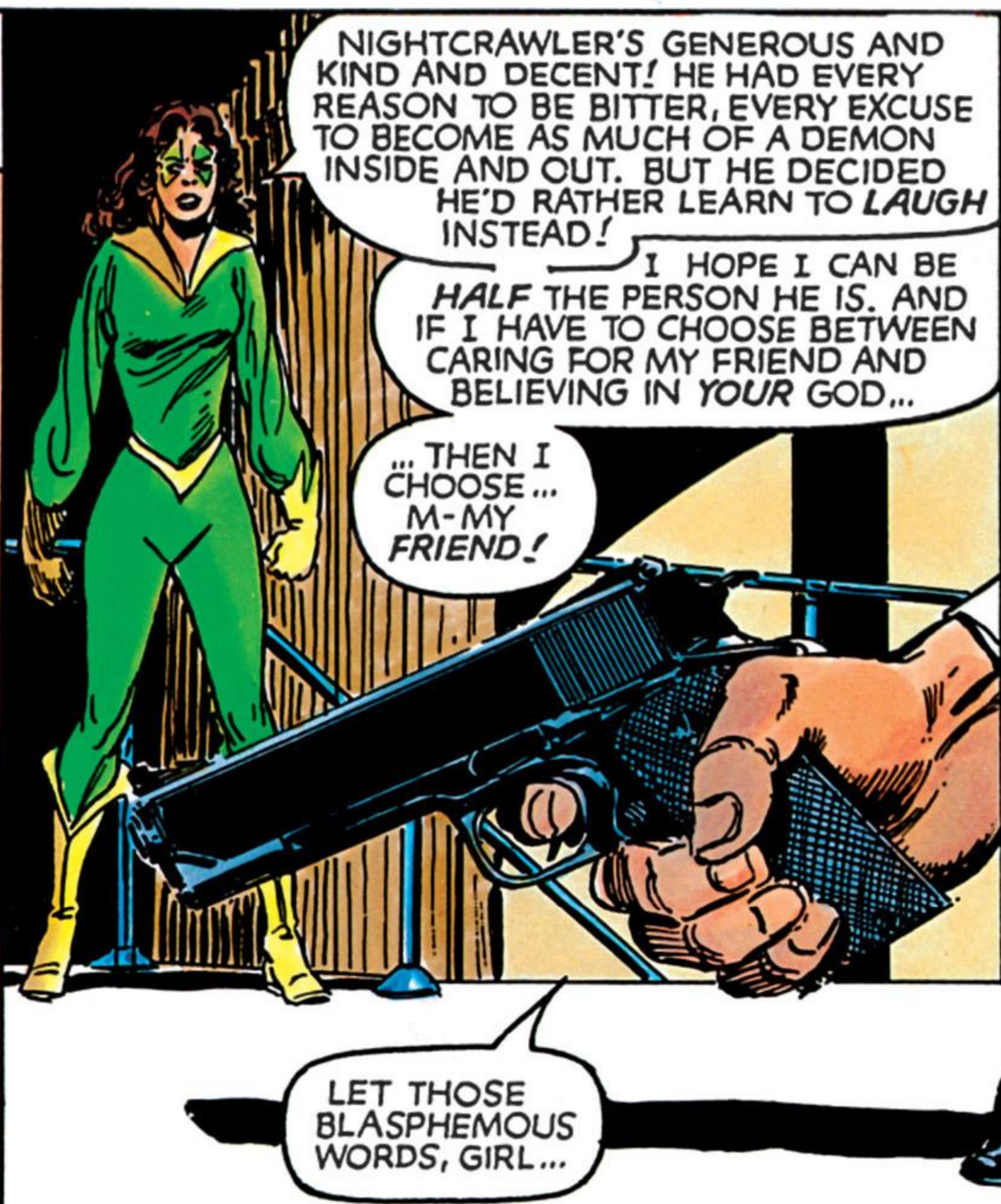
ARE ARBITRARY LABELS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE ACTUALLY ARE?!

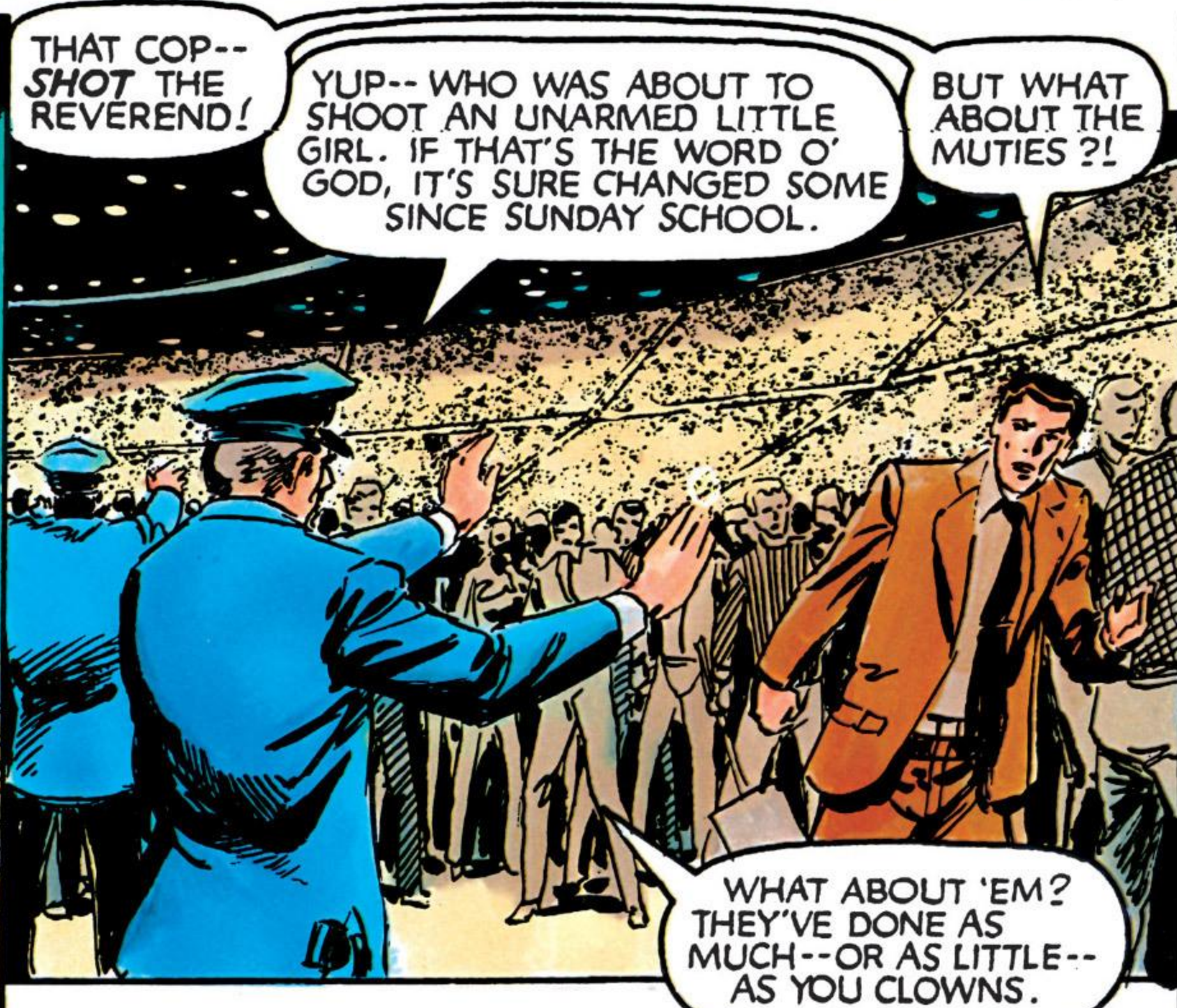
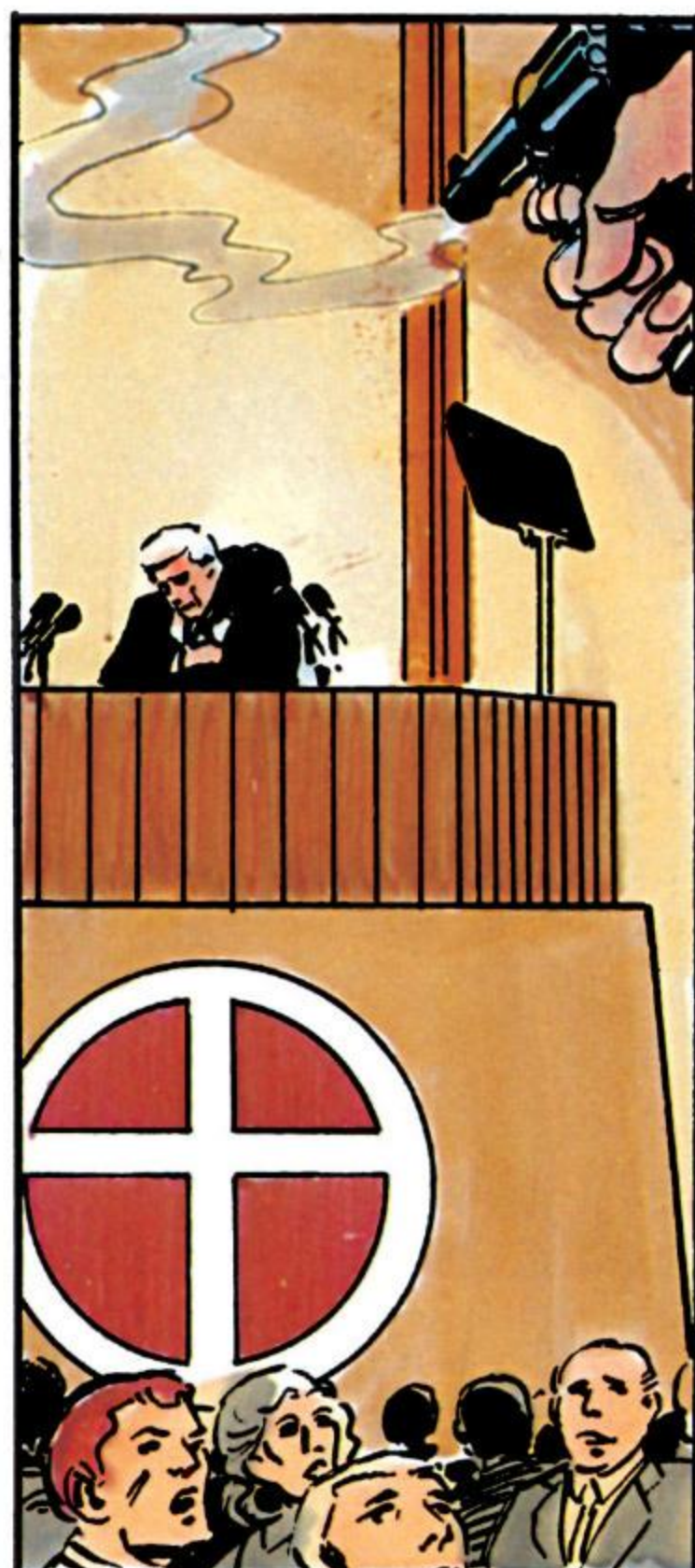
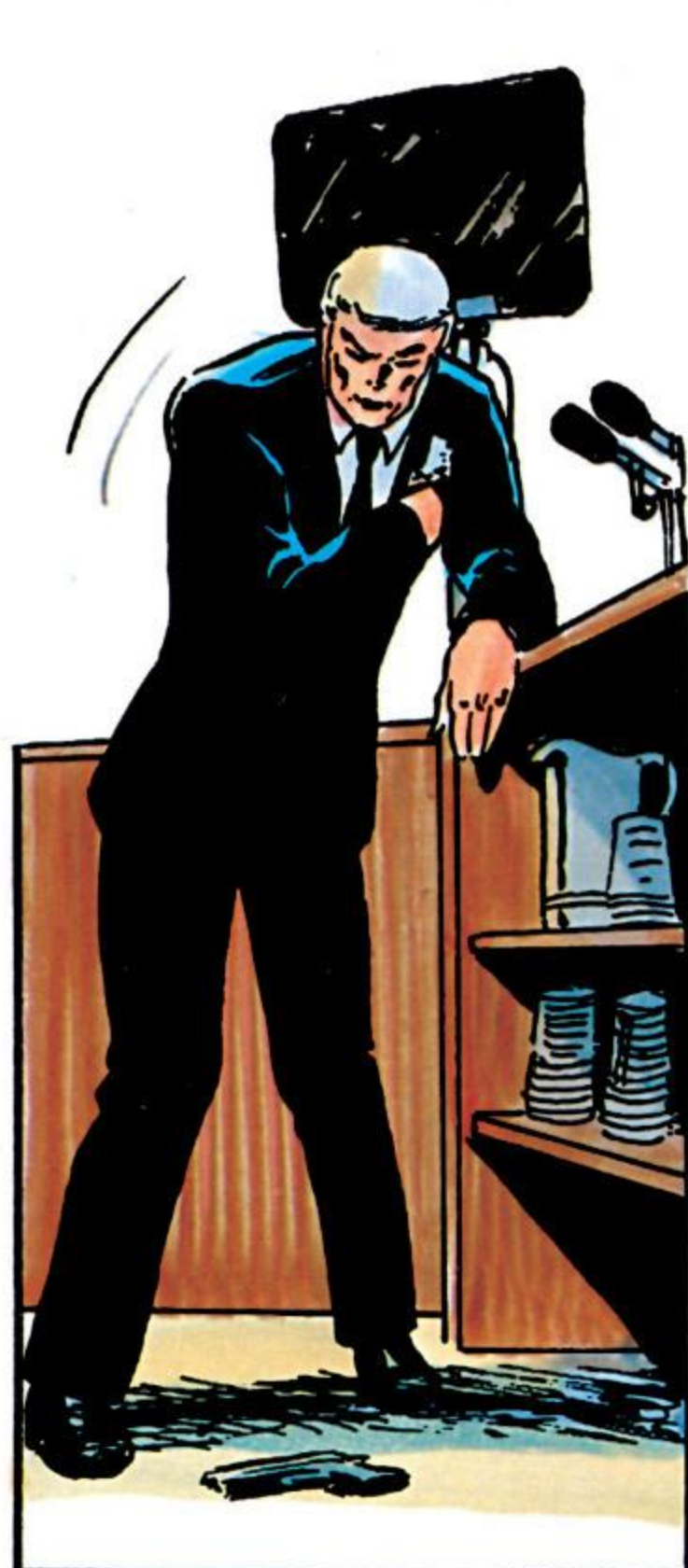
FOR ALL YOU KNOW, WE COULD BE THE REAL HUMAN RACE...

...AND THE REST OF YOU, THE MUTANTS.

HUMAN?!

YOU DARE CALL THAT... THING-- HUMAN?!!





THAT COP--
SHOT THE
REVEREND!

YUP-- WHO WAS ABOUT TO
SHOOT AN UNARMED LITTLE
GIRL. IF THAT'S THE WORD O'
GOD, IT'S SURE CHANGED SOME
SINCE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BUT WHAT
ABOUT THE
MUTIES ?!

AS FAR AS I'M
CONCERNED, THEY'RE
FREE TO GO.

WHAT ABOUT 'EM?
THEY'VE DONE AS
MUCH--OR AS LITTLE--
AS YOU CLOWNS.

AN'
GOOD
LUCK
TO 'EM.
THEY'LL NEED IT.

Epilogue:

A FEW DAYS LATER, AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL...

... WILLIAM STRYKER WAS ARRAIGNED TODAY ON CHARGES ARISING OUT OF THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF A GROUP OF HIS SUPPORTERS WHO CALL THEMSELVES **PURIFIERS**. HE DENOUNCED THE INDICTMENT AS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND PREDICTED THE EVENTUAL VINDICATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS CRUSADE.

A PHYRRIC VICTORY, X-MEN, WHOSE HOLLOWNESS...

...IS EVEN NOW BECOMING APPARENT.

THE **MAN** WAS BEATEN. HIS CAUSE LIVES ON. ALREADY, IT'S BEING SAID THAT STRYKER'S GOAL WAS RIGHT, ONLY HIS METHODS FLAWED. NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU CANNOT TRULY WIN.

I FEAR, OLD FRIEND...

...YOU ARE CORRECT.

I HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT TONE OF VOICE FROM YOU BEFORE, PROFESSOR.

ARE YOU TELLING US...

...WE SHOULD JOIN MAGNETO?

WHY NOT? I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE SMASHING MY HEAD AGAINST A WALL THAT REFUSES TO BE BROKEN. PERHAPS IT'S TIME I--WE-- FOUND A BETTER WAY.

STRYKER MADE ME A KILLER. EVEN THOUGH NO ONE ACTUALLY DIED, THE INTENT WAS THERE!

I SWORE LONG AGO THAT I WOULD SEE NO MORE X-MEN DIE. IF MAGNETO'S IS THE ONLY MEANS TO THAT END...

...THEN SO BE IT.

I WON'T ACCEPT THAT, CHARLES.

GRANTED, TIMES ARE TOUGH FOR US AND THEY'LL PROBABLY GET A LOT WORSE. GRANTED, WE PROBABLY COULD CONQUER THE WORLD--THOUGH THE COST IN BLOOD WOULD BE STAGGERING.

BUT DON'T YOU SEE--EITHER OF YOU-- **WE'RE HUMAN, TOO!** A DIFFERENT BRANCH, PERHAPS, BUT THE SAME BASIC TREE! SUCH A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN ATTITUDE CAN'T BE IMPOSED--TO HAVE ANY MEANING, IT MUST GROW FROM WITHIN.

YOU BROUGHT US TOGETHER TO FULFILL A DREAM, CHARLES-- ONE BORN OUT OF HOPE AND THE NOBLEST OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS--AND WE'VE SWEATED AND BLED, AND SOME OF US HAVE DIED, TO MAKE IT A REALITY. I'M NOT PREPARED TO GIVE UP.

THE MEANS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE END-- WE HAVE TO DO THIS RIGHT OR NOT AT ALL. ANYTHING LESS NEGATES EVERY BELIEF WE'VE EVER HAD, EVERY SACRIFICE WE'VE EVER MADE.



I FEEL SO...
ASHAMED.

TO BE PROVEN ONLY HUMAN, AS FLAWED
AND VULNERABLE AS THE REST OF US?

WHERE'S
THE SHAME
IN THAT?



WHERE
INDEED?

I OWE
YOU MORE
THAN I
CAN EVER
REPAY.



IF EVER THERE
WAS A MOMENT
WHICH JUSTIFIED
MY CREATION OF
THE X-MEN,
THIS IS IT.

OH--
THANK YOU,
KURT.

PRECISELY
WHAT I NEED.

WOULD YOU MIND SOME COMPANY, SCOTT?

NEVER SAY NO TO A
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN,
ESPECIALLY WHEN
SHE'S A FRIEND.

I HAVE NEVER
BEEN MORE
PROUD OF YOU.
YOU SAID WHAT
WAS IN OUR HEARTS,
BOTH HERE AND AT
THE GARDEN.

I THINK FOR
A MOMENT YOU
UNNERVED THE
PROFESSOR--
YOU BECAME
THE TEACHER
AND HE, THE
PUPIL.



THAT'S WHAT IT'S
ALL ABOUT, REALLY.

NEEDING AND
HELPING. CARING
FOR ONE
ANOTHER.

AND FROM
THAT CARING
COMES LOVE.



LABELS
AGAIN.
THE HELL
WITH 'EM.

HE WAS IN NEED.
I HELPED HIM. AS
HE WOULD ME.

WHICH
MAKES
THE
WORLD
GO
'ROUND.



IF ONLY
THAT
WERE SO.



FIN

Mutants—ordinary people, gifted with a unique X-factor in their genetic make-up giving them extraordinary abilities—are all around us. While some use these powers for unspeakable evil, others like the mutant outlaws known as *the Uncanny X-Men* have honed their awesome abilities and pledged them in the service of mankind!



But when the very people they have sworn to protect turn against them, the X-Men must bond together against their greatest threat; the battle against the fear and hatred of the anti-mutant movement. It is a fight that will cost them dearly, and one they may not win.

ISBN: 0-939766-22-1

MARVEL
COMICS

X-MEN

GOD LOVES

MAN KILLS

CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT ■ BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

X-MEN[®]

GOD LOVES



MAN KILLS

X-MEN: GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS (1994 REPRINT) COVER
BY BILL SIENKIEWICZ

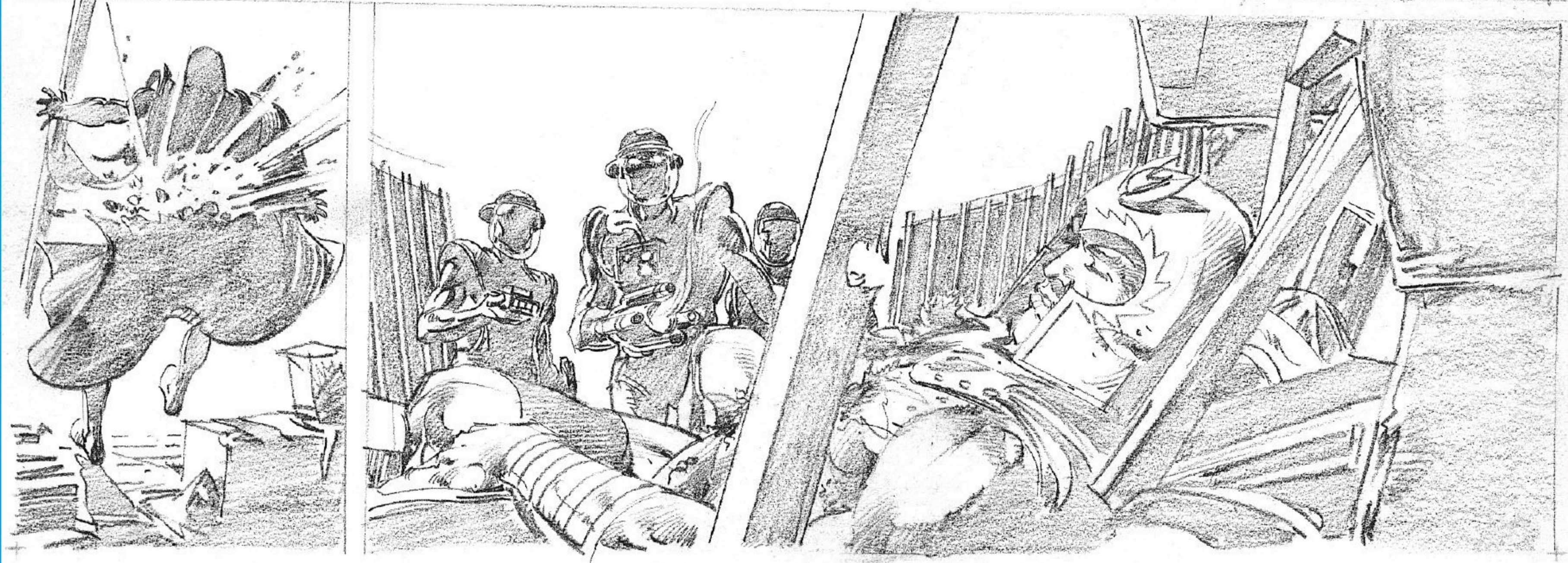
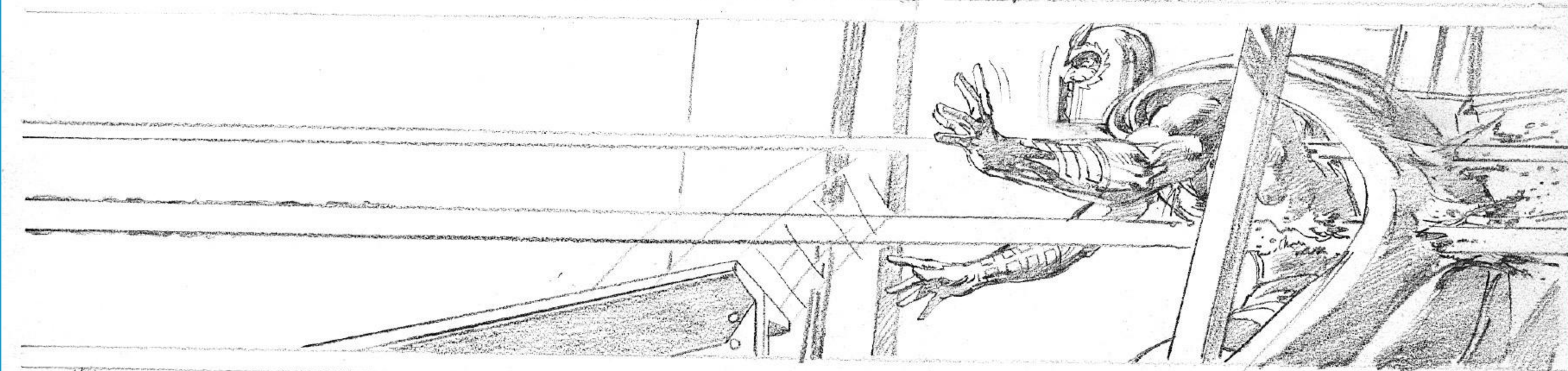
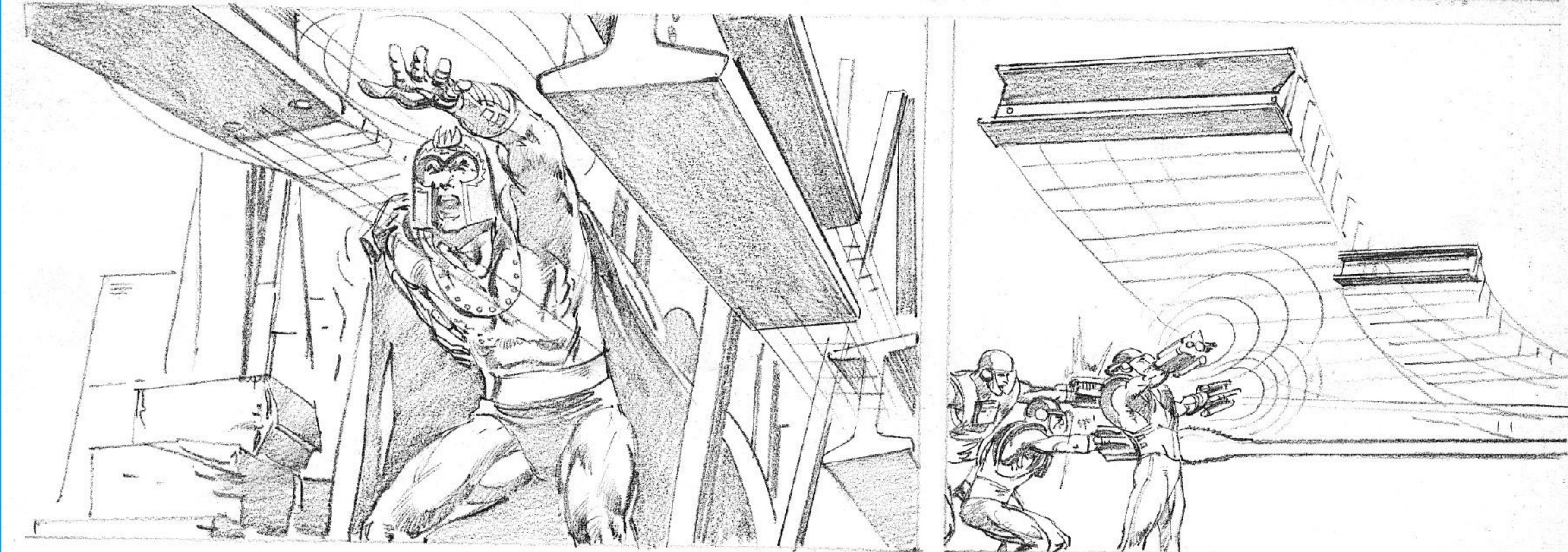
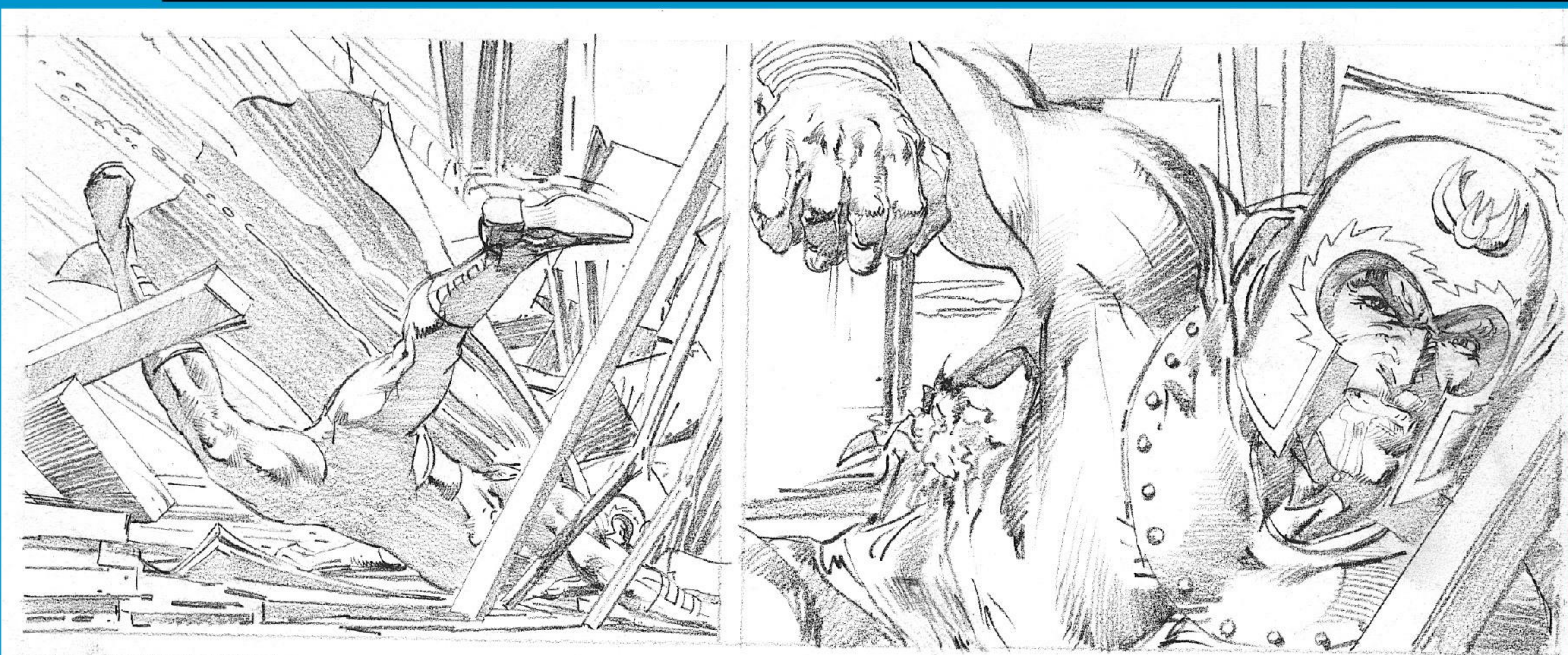
X-MEN: GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS (2003 REPRINT) COVER
BY ADAM HUGHES



NEAL ADAMS WAS THE ORIGINAL ARTIST ASSIGNED TO X-MEN: GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS AND DREW SIX PAGES BEFORE LEAVING THE PROJECT.



PRESENTED HERE ARE PENCILS OF THOSE PAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



NO LIFE SIEWS
THE MUTANTS
DEAD

1 3
HE HAD
COURAGE YES HE WAS





INK FACE REGULAR AND
WE'LL DROP IT OUT OF THE BLACK
PLATE

PLAYING TO WIN

INSIDE CHRIS CLAREMONT'S VISION OF THE **ULTIMATE X-MEN STORY**

The legendary *X-Men* writer discusses the influential, evergreen story of *God Loves, Man Kills*

By John Rhett Thomas

Ever since the "All-New, All-Different" X-Men broke in 1975, it has earned a diverse group of fans, many of which have remained intensely loyal through the years. And for each one of these fans, there is that one, special story that stands out above the others, the one that means more to them than any other. For some it may be the "Dark Phoenix Saga," one of the acknowledged classics of all comic history, for others it might be "Days of Future Past," the dystopian nightmare that found the X-Men's future haunted by the menace of the Sentinels. For this writer, it's the "Brood Saga," that cosmic opera that saw the X-Men head into outer space and face an insidious foe that put their very souls under siege. But really, the list goes on and on, as do the many fine artists who put pencil to paper and brought visual life to these tales.

Of course, at the root of all these great stories is the writer Chris Claremont, the patron saint of X-Fandom. We have no way of looking back on history with any sort of accuracy, but it seems safe to suggest that without Claremont, there is no catalyst for what would become a comics phenomenon like no other. It could be said that Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko built Marvel with the Silver Age of Comics, but the rise of the Mutant Universe, with Claremont the prime mover behind it all, was the thing that cemented Marvel Comics in prominence for keeps.



WHEN THE QUESTION OF “FAVORITE X-MEN STORY?” IS TURNED TOWARDS THE MASTER planner of said Mutant Universe, by all indicators it would be this one you hold in your hands, *God Loves, Man Kills*. As revealed by Claremont in the following interview, this story was as high-concept as they come, purposely designed to be unbound by rules and also to make a statement. It was, as he says, their attempt at a big, blockbuster X-Men story to stand above all that had come before and influence all that would come after. That it also wound up to be a sizable portion of his fan base’s favorite X-Men story of all time – including a certain X-Men film director – should go without saying, for by now you know that *God Loves, Man Kills* has entered the lexicon as just what its creator planned – a classic story, by a classic writer.

JOHN: Was the genesis of this story something you wanted to do in the regular *X-Men* series but maybe realized it didn’t work there and decided to do it as a graphic novel, or was the story developed with the intent of being used in the graphic novel format?

CHRIS: Marvel had just started to embark on the graphic novel program. The graphic novel division was sort of split between original creator-owned material and Marvel-owned material. They wanted to go with big guns up front. We were on the list. What happened was that a couple of books ahead of us didn’t get produced as rapidly or as effectively as had been anticipated (which is also how the New Mutants got in there unexpectedly.) We were actually approached and asked, as I recall, if we could move *God Loves, Man Kills* up in the schedule and Weezie [editor Louise Simonson] and I both felt that this was a story that shouldn’t be slap dashed. We wanted to make sure it was the best possible story, art and production that we could come up with because we felt that it was a significant thing. This story was what we felt we were not able to do within the regular run of the book, which was if you only had *one* opportunity to tell a story about the X-Men that would encapsulate the concept, the morals, the struggle, the emotional and physical realities of the book, what would it be?

JOHN: And so the graphic novel format was really a very attractive vehicle to do that one, definitive X-Men story in a big way.

CHRIS: We felt it was at that time, yeah. I mean, we were making it up as we went along. One thing that we felt was we wanted it to stand alongside the European and Japanese versions of graphic productions. You know, this is our shot at the big time. And we wanted something that would be special. A story that we could tell in this format, in this venue, that we couldn’t do in a regular comic, that we did not feel was right in the regular run of the book. In those

days, this was our \$5-million dollar movie. Now it would be \$105 million!

JOHN: Right! (*Laughter.*)

CHRIS: We wanted something that would read as good, we hoped, in 5 years if not 20, as it did in that day. And goodness knows, we seemed to have pulled it off.

JOHN: You had intended to create an evergreen story with this book that would act as an anchor for all the stories that came before and afterwards, and this is obviously what has happened. But I’m curious if there was any nervousness at the time about taking a very popular franchise that was getting even more popular, and making some courageous choices involving intense dialogue and graphic and violent imagery that was maybe pushing the envelope. Was there a little nervousness about doing that with these particular characters at this particular time?

CHRIS: Not really. We were just telling a good story. Our confidence was that if we had a good story the characters would take care of themselves. We wanted to make our point — our emotional points, our moral points; in an ideal sense we wanted to have a sense of completion and yet also leave the reader going, “Oh God! What the hell’s happened? What next? Where do they go from here?” We wanted them desperate to come back for more.

JOHN: One thing that I wanted to clear up—and this is a question from when I was a twelve-year-old kid reading this for the first time—since this graphic novel wasn’t the regular *X-Men* comic, was this story taking place in the regular X-Men continuity?

CHRIS: No. In terms of continuity we used the X-Men who were existing at that time and in the appearance they had at that point. Therefore Kitty’s part of the team, Illyana’s there, Salem

Center’s there, Stevie Hunter’s there. That said, there was no attempt to integrate it into the ongoing action continuity of the monthly series. Again, the guiding concept of *God Loves, Man Kills* was, it is a portrait of a specific era, i.e., 1982, but the things we were doing with Magneto, with Xavier, with the team, were solo unto itself. Stryker was never supposed to be utilized again. He was unique unto the graphic novel. He had a beginning, he had a middle, he had an end. Period. It was supposed to be a stand-alone. It was never supposed to be absorbed into and subsumed by the monthly cavalcade that came before and has come afterwards because it was always meant to be a unique and special thing. This was in our mind, Weezie’s and mine—and I hope Brent’s—a relatively unique event and a special event and any attempt to spin off from there would have just diminished it.

JOHN: One of the main features of the book was Stryker. He was the “immoral” core of the book, let’s say.

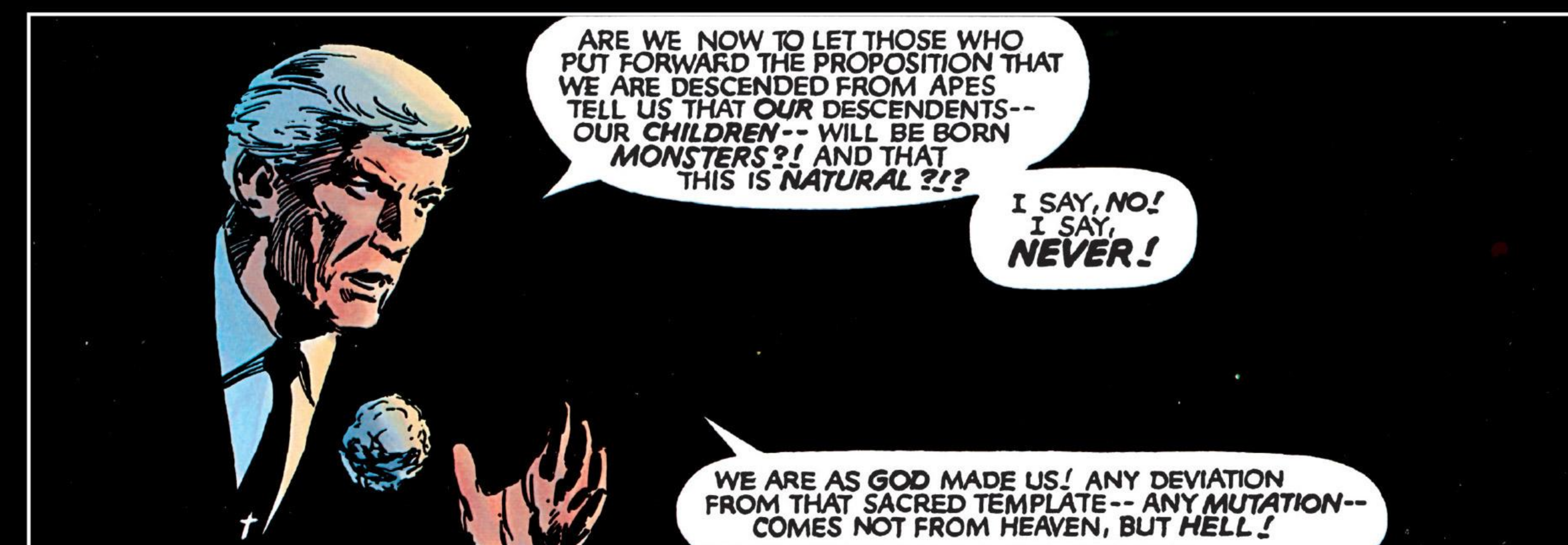
CHRIS: I wouldn’t say immoral at all. From Stryker’s perspective he was an *immensely* moral and even to some measure conflicted character. That was, I think, part of what made the story powerful: none of the characters fall into, I hope, a clichéd model. There was a path Stryker took to the man he is and the actions he committed—as there was for the X-Men. And they all had to try and find a way to deal with it.

And again, the final moral conflict is between this man of God and this child, Kitty, and Scott

is the one who basically has the impassioned confrontation. And the paradox is that Xavier is the one who is committing the horrible acts, as he did in *X-Men 2* and Magneto is the one who’s trying to save him. We were trying to burst all the bubbles and present everyone in a textural light that provided the reader with a measure of insight into them. The goal was that there would be no stock characters. There would be no stock heroes. No stock villains. That a reader could find a way to emphasize with Stryker on some level as they could with Charlie and Magneto on some level, to understand why they came to this point in their lives and why they’re doing what they’re doing. And hopefully learn something from it.

“WE WANTED SOMETHING THAT WOULD READ AS GOOD, WE HOPED, IN 5 YEARS IF NOT 20, AS IT DID IN THAT DAY.”

JOHN: Many of your characters are very sympathetic role models as people of faith, you know Nightcrawler, Kitty Pryde, Rahne Sinclair. It’s not something one sees too often anymore, especially with newer characters. So you created these role models that lived their lives of faith out in the open and were positive and at the same time, you could be pretty tough on organized religion through characters like Stryker, showing the sort of stridency and danger that can come from fundamentalism. What went into those kinds of characterizations for you as a writer?



CHRIS: Well, in terms of Stryker, it was basically me spending six months traveling through the United States, going to conventions and what have you, and taking the time to watch Sunday religious programming. There was a considerable difference between the faith and the presentation of the faith, and what the Bible actually says versus an interpretation that's put on it by certain people: these might be two different things. And that the stridency and the passion and, to a certain extent, the rage that some of these gentlemen of faith felt towards those who were not of their various persuasion - and this applies whether you're talking Protestant or Catholic or Judaism or Islam or whatever.

I wanted to show that just because Nightcrawler is strange-looking, that doesn't mean that the faith he feels is any less true or any less impassioned than what Stryker feels—and in Kitty's case, I wanted to show the primal example of "the child shall lead them." And then again you have someone like Colossus and Illyana who have, from that perspective, no faith at all. They are from an atheistic society, the former Soviet Union.

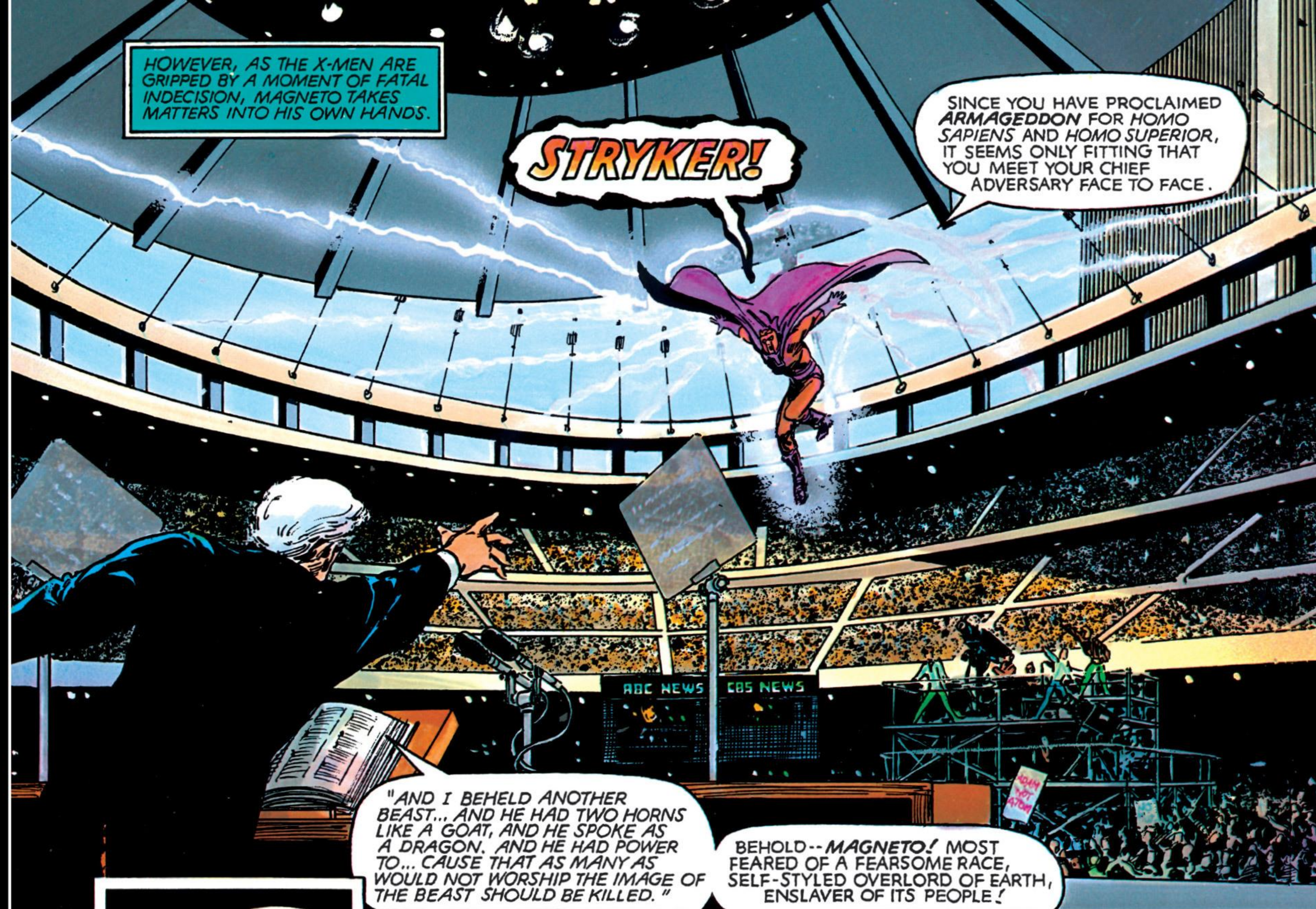
The nice thing about the X-Men is that they cover a vast number of bases — at least they did in those days. And this is, like it or not, supposed to be a pluralistic society where we are mature enough to share the space, the political, the social space with a number of different and perhaps even contradictory beliefs and views. And the hope was that we would tell a story that wouldn't need to be told 20 years later or be looked upon as an anachronism, and unfortunately it's become more relevant than ever.

JOHN: One of the things I wanted to mention that made me sit up in my chair when reading the graphic novel was the frank use of the racial epithet "nigger" when Kitty was having her showdown with Stevie Hunter. At the time, obviously, that was a bold word choice. Do you think if you had to do *God Loves, Man Kills* today that you could make the same bold choice?

CHRIS: I could make it, but whether it could be published as is, I don't know.

JOHN: Right.

CHRIS: The point is, language has power. Use of language is an expression of power. Rap music



had not taken off to the passionate extent it has over the subsequent ten or fifteen years. The airwaves were not as, for lack of a better word, corrupted by language as they have become over the last fifteen years. You turn on a series on FX now and poor old George Carlin's seven deadly words are part of the average stock in trade. So I guess things change. But the idea was at that time, as a writer and an editor and a publisher at that place speaking to our audience—which I have to say, we suspected was predominantly white—we wanted to make a point. And we wanted to make a point about words and about pain. Hurting people. And it isn't a matter of punching someone in the nose. "How would you feel if he said this, Stevie, would you have been so tolerant then?" And that's a student talking to the teacher. That's a young, white Jewish kid talking to her black role model. And there's no answer to it, because from my experience and my youth, my reality, that was an insult, an obscenity. It was the kind of word that started fights. It wasn't the subject of rap music.

We were trying to deal with primal stuff in a primal way and God was on one side and the language was on the other. And we wanted to bring it home in terms that our audience would understand on a visceral level, and Jim Shooter, to his credit, let us do it. We wanted

“THE X-MEN, IN EFFECT, WERE LIVING, WALKING, TALKING NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HOW DO YOU COME TO TERMS WITH THEM?”

to tell a story in a way that could not be done in the regular book. There's a reason why *God Loves* was done as a graphic novel without the code seal. But unlike what generally seems to happen when creators are given new freedom to do stuff, we did not want to restrict ourselves to "Hey! We can do grown-up stuff here! *Let's see some T&A!!!*" Our feeling was, if you're going to do an adult story, it isn't a matter of nudity and cursing, it is a matter of concepts. It is matter of dealing with visions of people and of social realities that might be considered inappropriate in a standard comic book simply because the kids who read it might be too young and might draw the wrong impression from the story. They wouldn't get it. But at the same time, we also wanted to demonstrate how powerfully graphic storytelling could be used to convey concepts and stories in a way that people to a wide extent could understand and derive pleasure and learning from it.

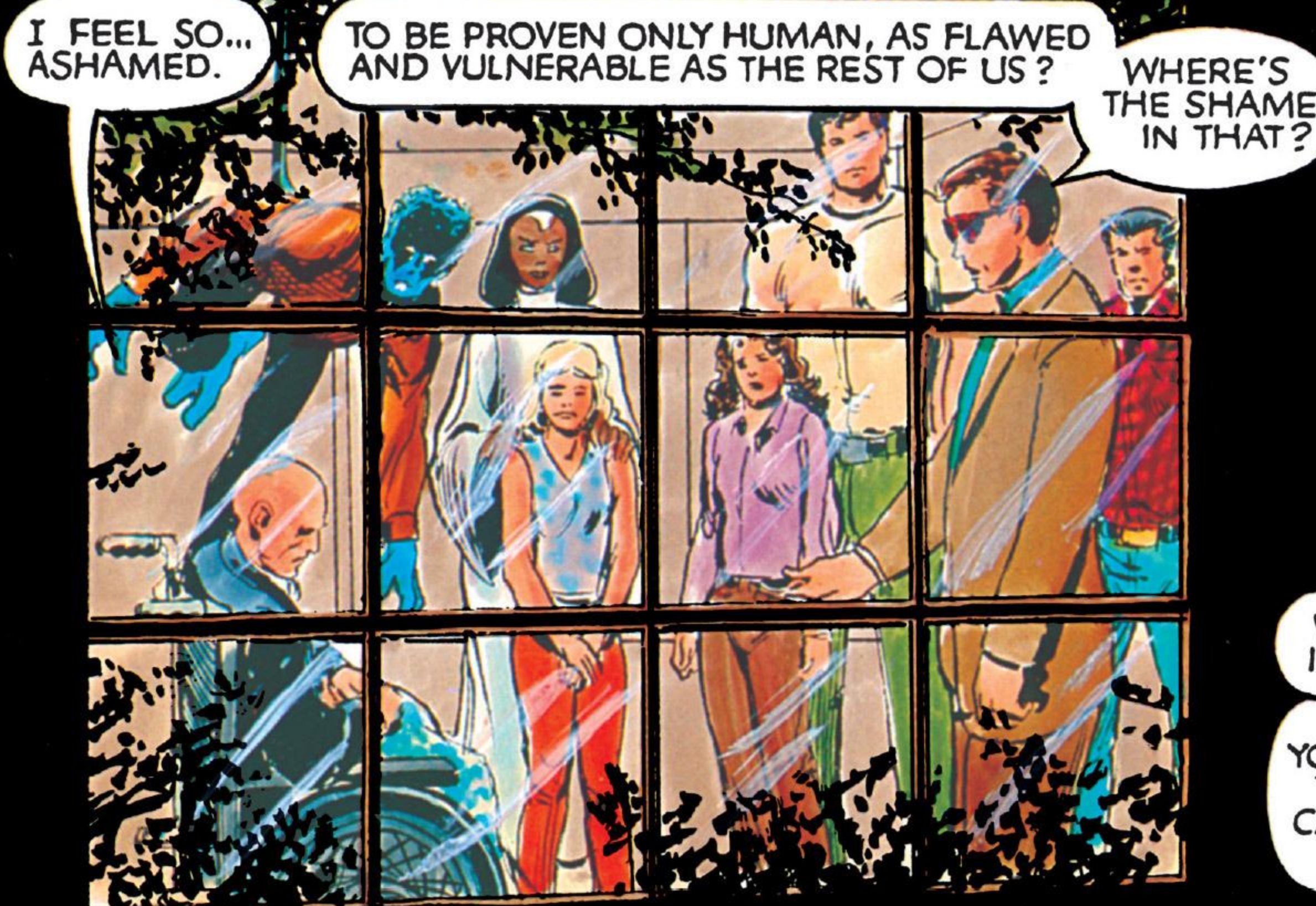
JOHN: One of the other interesting things I noted was in the initial debate between Charles and Stryker, where Stryker asks the question of Xavier, "These individuals of yours possess some pretty terrifying powers. How are we common folk to defend ourselves against them?" And this is a question that was echoed in the movie X2. And it's a good question. How do you as Chris Claremont, a normal, human guy, grapple with that question?

CHRIS: The hope I would have is that as we are all human, as we all live on this one world, as we all are mortal, you hope that there is a level on which we can live together. Being neighbors as friends is better than being neighbors as enemies.

You have to understand within the context that (at that time) we were barely a decade out of Vietnam. We were still in the middle of the nuclear age. You had to have lived through the Cuban missile crisis. There is something about sitting in class and suddenly hearing an air raid siren go off, and the teacher saying, "This is a

drill. Everyone get under their desks." I didn't. I sat there. And the teacher came over and said, "Why aren't you under your desk?" And I said, "Why?" And she said, "This is an air raid drill." And me being a smart-assed hyper-educated twerp, I'm sitting there saying, "If the Russians dump a twenty-megaton thermonuclear device on the Empire State Building, the area of absolute destruction is a radius of twenty-five miles. We are thirty-one miles from the Empire State Building. We will be turned to ash. And if they miss and it lands in Queens, we're vaporized. So what's the point?" She was a good teacher, and she looked at me and said, "Yeah, and if it lands in New Jersey, what are you gonna do then?" So I ducked.

The flip side of it was that there was a Bowmark launch site two miles from where I went to school. There were five major airports near me, there was Grumman, there was McDonnell



“YOU PLAY THE HAND YOU’RE DEALT. AND IN OUR CASE WE WERE DEALT A DAMN FINE HAND, AND WE PLAYED TO WIN.”

Douglas. There were the submarine pens up in New London. If the %\$*@ hit the fan, it wouldn’t have been pretty. I lived under the nuclear umbrella and I read way too much. I knew what could happen and basically I was transferring all of that anxiety, hope, and realization into the comic. The X-Men, in effect, were living, walking, talking nuclear weapons. How do you come to terms with them?

The key in those instances is to remember you were talking from a global standpoint of maybe thirty or forty mutants, good and bad, out of a world population of three or four billion. You’re not talking about the mutant environment that exists today where it seems like it’s every other

kid down the street. Now, the cliché is that they’re no more fearsome as a concept than traffic on a freeway. You’re used to it because there are so many of them. The conceptual idea in those days was that you’ve got this couple dozen characters who could destroy the world, and you don’t know who they are. That’s scary, that’s special.

So, again, to state that just because they’re strange, that doesn’t make them any less human; in some ways it might make them more human — Nightcrawler being the most extreme example. The most outrageous-looking of the cast, he is the most traditional and human in his beliefs, in his character. He is the one who is *most* like us, except that he isn’t. And you build up from there.

JOHN: The other point that was made in his little speech, and this made me chuckle, was when he said, “Ever-increasing numbers of mutants pose a clear and present danger both to the United States and to the socio-political order of the world as we know it.” Which is entirely the basis of the last several years of *X-Men* stories.

CHRIS: Well, you could claim that was the foundation of Grant’s vision of the X-Men when he did his run. Of course. You know, but one of the virtues of being the first is that no one’s done it before. I was building the tropes as I went along, you know? But that is the essence of it: they are a clear and present danger. And if they are a clear and present danger when there’s only ten of them, what do you do when it’s ten thousand, what do you do when it’s a hundred thousand? What do you do if you

suddenly wake up and Russia has three million, China has three million and we don’t? You know, how do you deal with it? How do you make friends? Do you go gently into that good night, or what?

JOHN: Those kinds of themes inevitably add a very human, relatable element to understanding the existential crisis between mutants and humans.

CHRIS: The other point behind the conceptual approach to *God Loves* as opposed to the *X-Men* series was that it wasn’t meant to be about characters in skin types. It wasn’t meant to be about SUPER HERO VERSUS SUPER-VILLAIN! That’s why the final dramatic action of the book is a human police officer pulling his trigger.

JOHN: That’s right. Magneto’s rescue in the end was by one of New York’s finest. As the climax of the book picks up steam, you see these average cops grow slowly from your basic bystanders into the pivotal roles that decisively end the story.

CHRIS: Right. And what it’s saying is that we are all part of the global community. We are all part of this society. We all have a stake in making things work. The X-Men have a role. Magneto, if he chooses to, has a positive role. The police officer has a role. We can all accomplish a positive result if we cast aside our prejudice and work together. That there is good and there is evil and Stryker, for all of his stated belief in good, turns against his strongest acolyte upon the discovery that she is a mutant and doesn’t care that he may kill innocent people, that he may kill millions. It is for him a necessary price to pay to bring about the proper end, the right and final solution. And that a human, a non-powered character sworn to uphold the law (and the most primal part of that law being “Thou shalt not kill”), is the one to stop him. And he doesn’t stop him by killing him. He stops him by shooting him, yes, but not by killing him.

JOHN: I have a question about the Stryker characterization, about how he murdered his wife, murdered the child.

CHRIS: He doesn’t see it that way. He’s a combat veteran. He’s a master sergeant or a sergeant major. His wife gives birth to a mutant and it evidently was not a pretty mutant. And there was no support group. You’re in the

middle of the southwest and suddenly you find yourself cast into this nightmarish situation, and his response was a soldier’s response. Not the right one, and certainly not one that you would want a soldier to do. But he responded primally.

JOHN: That interlude seemed to have an Old Testament, Biblical texture to it. Was that something you were inspired by?

CHRIS: It was in there by accident. We wanted to make our points on very primal, very serious levels, and that’s the foundation of the entire situation. There’s a fundamental reason why the whole Stryker situation became the foundation of the X2 film, and why that one of the three films is the most powerful and most memorable, because it’s dealing with primal conflicts on a primal level. It’s a shame that Bryan went on to do *Superman* and didn’t do X3 because that would have been fascinating to see where he would have evolved and taken the trilogy. And it would’ve been a lot nicer to end the *X-Men* trilogy with the same sort of panache and power and passion with which, say, the Bourne trilogy ended. Not to say that X3 was bad, but it would’ve been nice to see what Bryan was gonna do next?

JOHN: What are your impressions of the movie overall?

CHRIS: Oh, it was brilliant.

JOHN: Did you talk with Bryan at all about the movie at any time?

CHRIS: We talked, but it was his creative vision. I wrote the novelization for the film, so there was certainly a measure of interaction. But this was his expression of his vision. It’s apples and oranges, I’m afraid.

JOHN: Right, but as far as movie adaptations go, you were very proud to see that translation.

CHRIS: Oh yeah. It is a very good movie, on a whole lot of levels, I think.

JOHN: What was the working relationship like with your editor, Louise Simonson?

CHRIS: She did what every writer wants from an editor, which is to help the writer focus in on the essential story that the writer is trying to tell and pare it down to its essence. So there

is very little dross. Yes, we could have done this for another hundred pages. I could have thrown in everything including the kitchen sink, but the key is to focus it down to the essential story and then tell that story as clearly and eloquently as it is possible to do. And you know, you could not ask for more and you could not have found a better editor or collaborator.

JOHN: I'd like to get your comments on the art of Brent Anderson in regard to this graphic novel, but also, he worked with you on three issues of *Uncanny X-Men*. What did you think of him as a collaborator on the X-Men?

CHRIS: I think the art speaks for itself both in terms of quality and eloquence. It tells the story with passion and clarity. You know, it looks frightening - like the real world. It has visual humor, it has visual excitement. As with every X-Men story, the scary thing was how do you get all these bloody characters into the panel simultaneously? Unlike today, where essentially a lot of group books turn into a succession of single character panels, he was using all of the actors in the frame. It was a joy. We were bouncing from past to present, from reality to fantasy, from Salem Center to New York City.

JOHN: He struck me as someone who could have really been a good artist on a more consistent basis for the X-Men.

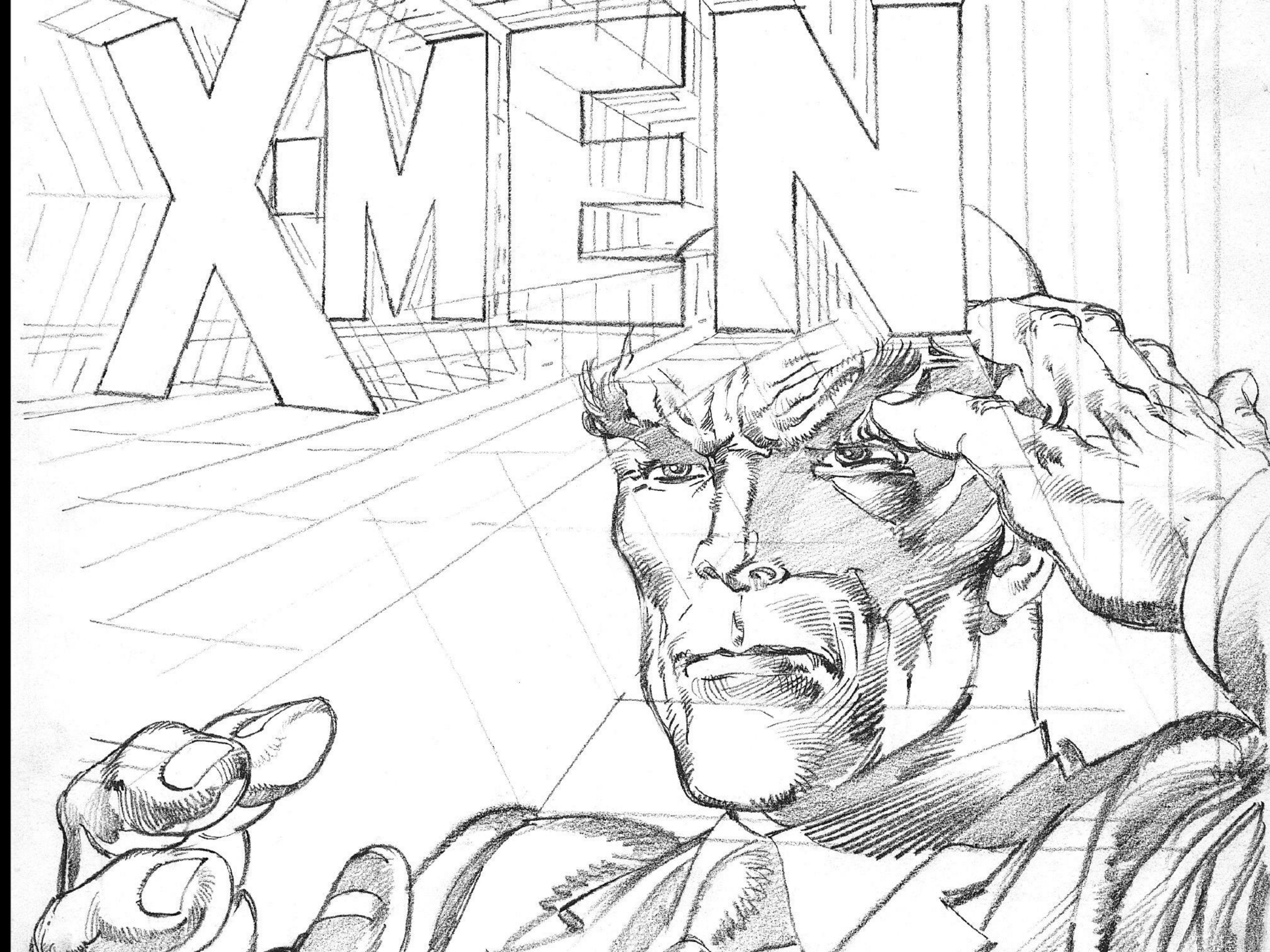
CHRIS: Yes, but instead he went off and created his own series and did it quite well. The X-Men is a very hard nut to crack, and always has been. At least, I should say, in my experience with it. You're not just dealing with a group, you're dealing with a group of heroes and a group of villains and a context and a city and God knows what else and there's more stuff going on than you know what to do with and how the hell are you gonna fit everybody in a panel and "I'm not George Perez, how do I do this?!?" (Laughter.) You know, the challenge with the X-Men has always been that they are a group, they are a family, they are a



multitude of people interacting. Not from one panel to the next, but within a panel. You've got to be able to draw more than one person, and more importantly, because of the density of the stories, inevitably you're dealing with multiple characters in God help us, five, six, seven panel pages. Try it sometimes, it's fun. (Laughter.)

And when you're dealing with characters as physically disparate as Colossus and Nightcrawler....Oy! You know, not to mention Storm, because you need to give her a sense of flight, of space. And not to mention that in terms of the X-Men you're dealing with, at least in those days, you were dealing with a multitude of ethnic characters, so you had to be able to draw a variety of people. And in *God Loves*, more than most, you did not have the luxury of being able to invent a fictitious reality. This story is set in the real world. You've got the school, okay that you can fake; Salem Center, a little harder; oh, and *New York!* We're not going to the Shi'Ar system. We're not going to the Savage Land. We're not going to Ouwagodugu or whatever; it is Manhattan. It is Manhattan in 1982 and it's gotta look like it. They're not driving a super-jet, they're driving a Rolls Royce. These are real people. Kitty is running for her life through the South Bronx and its gotta look the South Bronx. It's reality, what a concept.

Neal Adams did this wonderful six-page sequence of Magneto running through a construction site, throwing giant cranes and earthmovers at those who are chasing after him and it was wonderful and then he got into some sort of dispute with Marvel and that was that. (But) that's the way of things. The way I find myself thinking about it is, Brent isn't Neal....so what? The book that Brent produced was every bit as eloquent and true to the concept and the idea and the story as I'm sure we would have gotten out of Neal and it doesn't really matter in the end. The story stands on its own. And that's part of life. You play the hand you're dealt. And in our case we were dealt a damn fine hand, and we played to win.



YOU HAVE TO MAKE YOUR STAND

NEAL ADAMS AND **GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS**

X-Men Visionary Neal Adams Explains Why He Walked Away From The Biggest X-Men Story Ever Told
BY JOHN RHETT THOMAS

IT'S 1982 AND YOU ARE LIKE virtually every other comic fan of the time. You're a fan of the X-Men, the group of Marvel mutants that have evolved rapidly from a nondescript relaunch, to a cult item beloved by discriminating fans, to surging popularity across all of fandom, to status as the most popular comic title of the day. And now, the newest format in comics, the Marvel Graphic Novel, has hit stands, promising to tell the biggest, best X-Men story that has ever been told. You head down to your local comic shop, plunk down your \$5.95, and then head quickly home, ready to settle in for some good reading...

Magneto, once the hunter, is now the hunted. He races through a warehouse, looking for anything he can use to defend himself, to stay alive. But his pursuers are relentless. They seem to have armaments of their own that not only equal their quarry's awesome magnetic powers, but one-up them with their brutal lethality. The shots are fired, and Magneto is felled...possibly for good. A psychic alarm barges its way into the brain of Charles Xavier, the harrowing, uncertain fate of his longtime friend/foe causing a flash of momentarily intense pain. The response comes instantly, perhaps by reflex: "X-Men! To me, my X-Men!" The call goes out to his brash cadre of students, and a story is born...

Except...this is a story that never happened. This exciting action scene, spelled out by the six pages drawn by legendary X-Men artist Neal Adams, would have to stand as his sole testament to the story that would later become *God Loves, Man Kills*. When the idea was put forth to tell the biggest X-Men tale to ever be told, a planned evergreen story that would draw on 20 years worth of the X-Men legacy and define it for the future, it seemed there was only one artist that could merit billing in the credits of such a book, but it was an artist who hadn't worked for Marvel for over a decade.

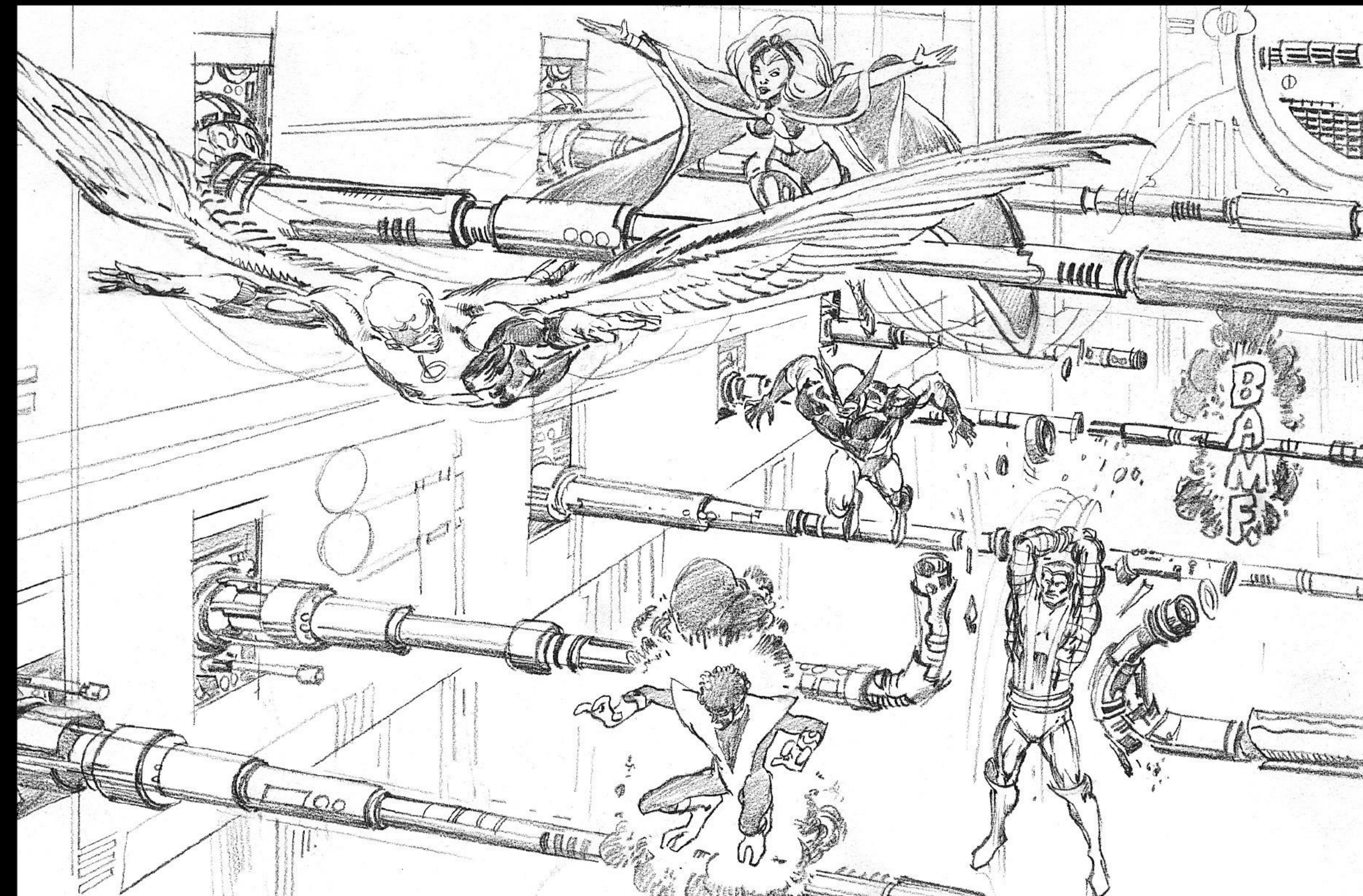
After teasing Marvel Comics fans in the late '60s with his groundbreaking talents in a small handful of books (*X-Men*, *Avengers*), he disembarked for DC Comics to make his biggest statements in the pages of *Deadman*, *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, and perhaps most importantly, *Batman*. He would later leave DC Comics and not return for a particular reason that would have a bearing on his invitation to return to Marvel to draw *God Loves, Man Kills*. "Jim Shooter asked me if I would do a special project," says Adams. "I told him that I wasn't doing anything for DC Comics because I was sort of 'on strike' against the work made for hire provision of the law. I said I could do something for Marvel if it wasn't work 'made for hire.' Jim said he didn't think that would be a problem, he was sure he could get it taken care of. I said, 'If you can do that, I'll be glad to do it. If you can give me reassurance that's the case.'" On top of this reassurance, Adams was given an outline of the story. While toiling away on some preliminary pages based on the outline, Adams considered the matter of work for hire status on its way to being taken care of according to his conditions.

But what is it about work for hire that unnerved the artist? "If you sign a work made for hire contract, you're signing a contract that says you're essentially a temporary employee, which is really *not* what you are," says Adams. Citing several examples of what he considers to be important distinctions between what a temporary employee is and a freelance employee is, Adams feels strongly that the work for hire contract system puts comic creators at a disadvantage to their employers. "Essentially (as a comic creator), you're a freelance contractor, and that's what this business should be about."

His good feelings about continuing the job were challenged when, despite the initial reassurances, he was delivered a contractual agreement that said "Work Made For Hire." This rankled Adams and caused him to consider both the ethics of his situation and the ramifications of his decision to either quit or continue. Reflecting on this situation, Neal says, "I'm sure that when the promise was made, it was a hopeful promise, one of those promises that turn out to be 'I'm sure I can take care of it, but guess what! Those legal eagles got involved and said we can't do that because it'll set a dangerous legal precedent if we grant some freedom and equality to a freelancer. It'll spread like an infection and we don't want that to happen!'" With the only thing left to do being the signing of the contract, Neal framed his options thusly. "Would I take the bit between my teeth and say, 'No, I'm not going to do this?' Or would I say, 'It really doesn't matter to me. I know I have to be a realist under certain circumstances, and after all I've already started to do the story?'"

In the end, and in the face of building excitement over a fun, new project, Adams took the bit between the teeth and made the hard call. "I said to myself, 'Mmmmm...no, Neal. The fact that you've already started to do the story should be the last reason why you should continue. What you're doing is giving yourself an excuse.' Although I've signed work made for hire agreements afterwards, since I *only* agreed to do this under the basis that it would *not* be such an agreement, I could not continue."

For Adams, this was a simple matter of ethics. Ascribing no nefarious intent to the one who made the promise, the matter still resolved itself based on what his sense of right and wrong told him. "It's not that you have to be



such a jerk about all these things that people pretend to believe in, but there's a certain point where somebody says something and it doesn't turn out that way, and you have to decide what you're going to do. So I had to decide, well, here's the sacrifice I have to make." Not wanting to regret putting his feelings about work made for hire in the backseat and what it would mean to him and his fellow freelancers, he shut down his contribution to the project.

But not without some personal disappointment. As the pages he did manage to complete show, Adams was producing some art that was startlingly fresh — despite not having drawn the X-Men in years and also having to contend with many new characters. "If you look at the pages, I was clearly having a good time. I think it would have been a good project, and I think I would have done it justice." In fact, part of his enthusiasm for doing the project was the lure of drawing the new characters, particularly the stocky, smallish Canadian dynamo currently emerging as one of Marvel's most popular characters. "I really wanted to do Wolverine. You can tell by the drawings I did that, yeah, that would have been fun for me," says Adams, with a wistful air to his voice. "But...there you go. I got to give the X-Men a pretty good kick-start back when I was doing it."

Summing up his feelings about this singular moment in his long contribution to comic art, Neal chuckles, "It's just too bad when things like that happen. But you have to make your stand. A man has to know his limitations, what things he will do and won't do. And that pushed me just a little bit too far. Not a good thing to do to Neal!"

Despite the rancor that may have existed then, it didn't rub off on his appreciation for the graphic novel that eventually came of the project he walked away from. Asked about his regard for the work of Brent Anderson in *God Loves, Man Kills*, Adams gives a very positive response, despite acknowledging that his work would have been quite different. "It seems like such a different thing. It's interesting how different an approach one artist would take from another. I didn't see it in any way like Brent saw it. I was very pleased to see what he did, it just didn't resemble what I would have done. I don't say that in a negative way — I think he did a terrific job. I think it's a great example of what happens when one artist does a job and another artist does a job, and sometimes they're not even recognizable from one another. It's interesting, isn't it?"



AN INTERVIEW WITH
BRENT ANDERSON

THE ART OF GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

A NEW ARTIST PINCH-HITS FOR A LEGEND AND TURNS IN THE ART OF A LIFETIME

BY JOHN RHETT THOMAS

After Neal Adams left the X-Men graphic novel project in its earliest stages, Chris Claremont turned to a young artist named Brent Anderson to follow through with the visual side of his blockbuster story. At the time, Anderson wasn't the first name that rolled off the tongue when the roll call of X-Men artists was announced: those names would have appropriately been either Dave Cockrum or John Byrne, the current masters of mutant delineations, or the aforementioned Neal Adams, whose epic vision of the group from the late '60s still had a solid hold on the wistful imaginations of X-Men fans.

But Anderson wasn't exactly a stranger to the X-Men, either. He had joined the X-Men artist fraternity in the early '80s with a trio of sterling stories. The first, *Uncanny X-Men* #144, was a Cyclops solo story meant to bridge the gap between the conclusion of Byrne's popular run and the return to the book of original "All-New, All-Different" X-Men stylist Cockrum. If the green artist felt any trepidation when putting his art out there between issues of acknowledged X-Men greats, it didn't show in his work. Cyclops' brutal battle with the fear-mongering D'Spayre, all while the macabre Man-Thing shambled in the background, was as visually arresting as any other X-Men art of the time. As well, the murky landscapes of the Everglades swamps and the villainous D'Spayre's hideous visions were gorgeously rendered by Anderson's evocative pencils.

His next issue was the double-sized *X-Men Annual* #5, featuring Xavier's mutants in a team-up with the artist's favorite characters of all time, the Fantastic Four. Anderson was able to showcase his flair for high adventure delivered Marvel style, as the X-Men and Sue Storm barnstormed through Arkon's kingdom to free the imprisoned FF from the clutches of the evil Badoon. His final dance with the X-Men occurred in the classic *Uncanny X-Men* #160, in which Belasco, a demonic character he co-created with writer Bruce Jones in the pages of *Ka-Zar*, showed up to menace the X-Men by kidnapping Colossus' young sister, Illyana Rasputin, setting the stage for her emergence as the fan-favorite character Magik.

As Anderson reveals in this interview about his time drawing the *God Loves, Man Kills* graphic novel, this period was a time of artistic searching for him: looking for a style, an artistic vision to call his own after years of learning from — and styling himself after — masters of the medium like Neal Adams and John Buscema. But having the right influences is half the battle won for a comic artist just starting to learn his craft; he also had the confidence of his peers after proving himself on *X-Men* with that small handful of issues. This, combined with his eagerness to explore the possibilities of the new graphic novel format, made him the perfect replacement for Adams.

JOHN: Neal Adams was the original scheduled artist for the graphic novel, but things didn't quite work out with him continuing on with the book. When did you find out that you were going to be the guy to draw *God Loves, Man Kills*?

BRENT: Chris came to me when I was finishing up my run on *Ka-Zar*. I was frustrated that I was unable to hit the deadlines for that book, doing the kind of work I like to do — the better-drawn work, in my opinion — and that was almost exactly the same time Dave Cockrum had put in his notice on the *X-Men*. So I went into Weezie's office (Editor Louise Simonson) and I was complaining, "Oh, God I can't do good enough work!" and stuff like that. I told her that I had to leave *Ka-Zar* and start doing some one-shots or something. And then she said, "Oh, that's too bad because Dave Cockrum just left *X-Men* and Chris and I wanted to know if you wanted to pick it up!" And I said, "What?! I came in here to quit *Ka-Zar* because I didn't think I could draw the main characters well enough and now you're telling me you want me to draw the *X-Men*?!?! They have seven main characters, I just can't do that amount of work." And she said, "Well I think your quality is fine and you're doing a great job but it's up to you."

So then Chris came in the office and he said, "I heard you turned down my *X-Men* book." He said he had a graphic novel he was supposed to do and Neal Adams couldn't do it for whatever reasons and he asked if I wanted to do it and I said, "Perfect!" It's the *X-Men*, it's a one-shot, I get to take my time on it, it would be part of their graphic novel group, which would have that nice paper with that Marvel color that Steve Oliff had developed, that gray line Marvel color. And I thought, man this great. I get to pencil, ink *and* color it — or supervise the color by hiring whomever I wanted to color it, and I got Steve Oliff. So it was a dream project.

JOHN: Obviously with such a new and innovative format, the art techniques were going to require some new innovations as well. Can you take us inside the technical aspects of what Steve Oliff brought to the coloring and what you were able to do with that?

BRENT: It was definitely more painterly. Over the gray-line stats that Steve was coloring on, you could do the coloring as a surprint and then print the black plate over the top of it, and by taking out elements in the black plate

which were printed on the gray-line underneath and covered over with color, you could get a painted quality over and above the ink work. So we experimented with some scratch-through, scratching through an area to make the black-line fade out so you could see the color of it underneath. There were all kinds of interesting things that Steve did with that, and he was using animator's cell paint. The cell paint would resist itself with different colors.

There was one panel where Storm is conjuring up clouds for a storm effect and Steve just literally took the colors blue, white and a little gray and sort of squeezed them on to the thing and moved them around so they swirled and looked like cloud formations or something. Really, really nice effects! So there were some nice opportunities to really pull out all the stops and see how well I could draw this thing.

And since I was penciling and inking it, I did the first three-page sample twice-up, meaning it was at 200%. At the time they were trying to wean people off that method because they couldn't gang up the original art on the camera board they shoot the film on and it would wind up costing more money because they couldn't shoot as many pages. So Jim Shooter convinced me to go down to one and a half, and since you can still get the detail you want to get in there, I said okay. I'm kind of glad I did because the detailed pages, the sequences that were twice-up like the gang scene, I just loved drawing them but when they got reduced down they got a little muddy. Steve held them together with the color, but I was glad to go to one and a half.

JOHN: So when you came on to draw this, how long of a lead time did you have?

BRENT: At that time I had never done anything as elaborate. I had never penciled and inked my own work. It was long, something like 63 pages of art, and three of those pages were painted (I did monochrome painting on the sequence with the flashbacks featuring Stryker in the army). I actually got to paint three of the pages, penciling and inking the pages and supervising the color and all that. I didn't know how long it would take but I remember at the time [Editor-In-Chief Jim] Shooter had instigated a bonus for work that came in on time or ahead of time. If it came in ahead of time, I think you got something like \$1,000. If it came on your deadline, you got a \$500 bonus. I was

shooting for the \$1,000. I don't think I ever got it! (*Laughter.*) I remember I made the deadline, but at one point towards the end of the book, I was thinking the book really should have been about 90 pages, not 63, just for the pacing, because there were so many panels.

Chris tends to write heavy, but he's good at it. I used to give him a hard time about crowding up my drawing with stupid words! (*Laughter.*) But he agreed too, it should have been 90 pages, but Marvel wasn't going to pay for 90 pages of content before the book came out. I think I had three-and-a-half months to produce the black and white art, and then Steve was brought in to color it, so I think the overall project was about five months long.

JOHN: *God Loves, Man Kills* was not going to be just any *X-Men* story. It was meant to be a big deal, the most defining, high-concept *X-Men* story that could be told. Did you get that sense as well, that there was a lot riding on getting this right?

BRENT: Yeah, Chris sort of emphasized that

“CHRIS CAME IN THE OFFICE AND HE SAID, ‘I HEARD YOU TURNED DOWN MY X-MEN BOOK.’”

from the beginning and as we got into it he said he was glad that I was doing it, because if Neal had done it, it would be a far different book. He was going to play to what were Neal's strengths, and what he was doing with me was playing to what he felt were my strengths. He kept emphasizing that he thought this was a big thing. I was still callow and I was just trying to comprehend what Chris was talking about; all I ever want to do is enhance the creator's vision when I'm working or collaborating with a writer. I want to do whatever I can to illustrate the content and the meaning, and as the pages would get done he would call me up and say, "I just saw the new pages and they're great!" He was thrilled the whole way.

JOHN: So he was happy and you were happy as it went along, but when the graphic novel came

together, do you think Marvel felt like this was a good *X-Men* story to put out in the graphic novel format?

BRENT: Yep, everyone was pretty happy with it. In fact, one of the guys in the intern department saw the first pages with the gang [*pages 37-38*] and he said, "Man these pages are great! I grew up with these guys, man. I *know* these guys, and you got 'em!" I don't think he really meant he knew the guys specifically, but he said he grew up with guys like that and I managed to capture them.

JOHN: Are there any sequences in the book that really stand out to you as ones that you feel really represent the book at its best?

BRENT: There were actually two scenes, one where Nightcrawler bamfs into the back of Stryker's limousine, then bamfs him out by the neck and he's choking him with his tail. He brings him up to his fanged face and he's trying to scare him, he's trying to scare the #&*@ out of him, and in that scene I really tried to emphasize the horrifying nature of what's

going on: here is this good-hearted character with demonic features who is using his features to try to intimidate the evil guy. It's just a horrific moment. And I

got flashes of that in the *X-Men* movie, when Nightcrawler bamfs into the White House and is attacking the president. I think (*X2* director) Brian Singer liked that scene too.

And then the other scene was kind of a goof-up that I made. It was at the end of the story, in the scene at Madison Square Garden where the





X-Men come out onstage to denounce Stryker, and Stryker is trying to keep his audience in his thrall, and he says, "These are not human!" Then he points to Nightcrawler and he says, "Is that human?" And Nightcrawler doesn't have a tail! The tail that almost choked the life out of the guy is not there and no one noticed for a long, long time! And then when I noticed it, I said, "Oh my God." And people hadn't told me for years.

JOHN: If they don't know it, they're going to know it now! (*Laughter.*)

BRENT: That was the other scene that was a favorite.

JOHN: I guess we can assume there is eligibility for a No-Prize on this one. What we ought to do, 25 years later in this deluxe, hardcover edition, is solicit No-Prize entries. I'm going to say Nightcrawler teleported his tail away for just a second. (*Laughter.*) That's my guess.

BRENT: If you look at it, his tail could be hanging down behind him. But what's the point of hiding it at that moment? (*Laughter.*) But the thing is, maybe that worked to its advantage, because unconsciously, people said, "Yeah, he's human! He's Nightcrawler! Don't be distracted by his forked tail. We know who the fuzzy elf is and you have no right to point at him and accuse him of not being human!" (*Laughter.*)

JOHN: You mentioned the *X2* movie, and *God Loves, Man Kills* was a big influence on Singer's approach to the second film. How do you feel about that and how do you feel about the movie and how it used some of the storytelling elements of this graphic novel?

BRENT: Actually, with the fact that a good part of the movie *Independence Day* was inspired by *Strikeforce: Morituri* [Brent's cult classic series from the late '80s], and *X2* was inspired by the graphic novel I had done, and I had wanted for years to make movies, I kind of feel that today I'm at least making the storyboards for movies, or the templates for movies! (*Laughter.*) It's quite gratifying. I actually bought a copy of the *X-Men* movie and watched it, and I saw inspiration from the graphic novel, but there were no literal lifts. I wouldn't expect that, anyway. Brian Singer is not me or Chris; he is going to carry some of the themes from the comics that impressed him, but he's going to do it in a movie way. I actually like all the *X-Men* movies so far.

JOHN: 25 years later, do you think this is a high watermark for you in your career? Do you think you could have done a better job or are you content with the finished product of *God Loves, Man Kills*?

BRENT: I think it was my first real successful experiment in comic storytelling, where I sort of worked to come up with my own style. Prior to the graphic novel, I didn't feel like I had my own artistic style. I was an amalgam of John Buscema and Jack Kirby, Alex Raymond, and Hal Foster, all these influences I had that meant I really didn't have a style of my own. I think after *God Loves, Man Kills*, I found my look, my style.

From there I went on to *Somerset Holmes*, where basically I applied that to doing a Hitchcock film in comics form, and then to *Strikeforce: Morituri* where we did a whole different riff on super heroes. But I would say, yes, the *X-Men* graphic novel is a high watermark. And the fact that it has stayed in print virtually all these years and I kept getting royalty checks on the reprinting of the graphic novel — every year, every quarter, which meant they were constantly reprinting the graphic novel because it was in constant demand. Every three-and-a-half years they would reprint that sucker and sell another 10,000- 12,000 copies because they were selling it to a whole new generation of *X-Men* fans who just had to have the graphic novel in their collection. I'm sure glad for that!

“IF A MAN BELIEVETH NOT, HE IS CONDEMNED ALREADY...”

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