

MARVEL COMICS
MAR • 1
X-MEN
• DELUXE •

THE ASTONISHING

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

X-MEN



*Madureira
Fawcett*

DIRECT EDITION
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ENTER NOW...
THE AGE OF APOCALYPSE

It begins with the breaking of a man's heart...

ERIK LEHNSHERR-- known throughout the world as MAGNETO, founder of the ASTONISHING X-MEN--

...and a searing of his soul.

--the last bastion of hope in a world split asunder by the ravages of a eugenics war between humans and mutants--

-- knows exactly what it is he's asking of his homo superior comrades this day.

He's asking them to die.

I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO TRY TO SUGARCOAT THIS, MY FRIENDS.

ANYONE WILLING TO TAKE PART IN THIS RAID, ISN'T LIKELY TO MAKE IT BACK ALIVE.

JA, SO?



I THINK WHAT KURT IS TRYING TO SAY, FATHER--

--IS "HOW IS THIS MISSION ANY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER?"

SOMETHIN'S GOT YER SPANDEX RIDIN' UP YOUR BACKSIDE, MAGNETO--

YEAH... SNOT SNOT... GRRR.

MORPH, PLEASE. NO ONE'S AMUSED.

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE WOOL GATHERING, LADS?

ICEMAN

AS IF LIVING IS ANY GREAT SHAKES?

QUICKSILVER

-- AN' WE'VE ALL BEEN TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW IT HAS TO DO WITH MORE THAN YER MASSIVE SENTINEL EVAC OFF THE COAST OF MAINE.

SABRETOOTH

MORPH

STORM

BANSHEE

YE SHOULD ALL ACCEPT BY NOW THAT ERIK WON'T BE SPILLING A SINGLE BEAN 'TIL HE'S READY.

IF WE CAN'T TRUST OUR FEARLESS FOUNDER AND FEARLESS LEADER, MEIN FREUNDS...

NICHT WAHR? WHO CAN WE TRUST?

NIGHTCRAWLER

Yesterday...

Today...

Tomorrow...

...they are the ASTONISHING X-MEN!

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS X-MEN STORY EVER.

ONCE MORE, *with Feeling*

SCOTT LOBDELL WRITER
JOE MADUREIRA PENCILER

DAN GREEN AND TIM TOWNSEND INKERS
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERS
STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORS
BOB HARRAS HOT SEAT
SEPARATIONS: DIGITAL CHAMELEON



"TRUST", KURT?

THAT IS EXACTLY WHY I AM SO... CONCERNED.

I HAVE RECENTLY COME ACROSS INFORMATION...*

... THAT I BELIEVE IS... IRREFUTABLE...

... THAT HAS PROMPTED ME TO QUESTION NOT ONLY EVERYTHING WE STAND FOR, MY X-MEN--

-- BUT OUR VERY EXISTENCE AS INDIVIDUALS.

*SEE X-MEN ALPHA.

NOT JUST OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD--

-- BUT RATHER IF THIS WORLD SHOULD EXIST AT ALL.

YEAH, FSST! FSST!

SABRETOOTH IS RIGHT, MAGNETO.



YER KIDDIN', 'RIK? YOU GOIN' METAPHYSICAL ON US?



YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY BE THIS UPSET OVER THE RAMBLINGS OF THE STRANGLER, BISHOP-- ONE LONE MADMAN?



GRRR
BAMHAM!

KNOCK IT OFF, MORPH!

SIR, WE'VE ALL GROWN WEARY OF THIS NEVER-ENDING WAR AGAINST APOCALYPSE AND HIS FORCES--

-- BUT TO ADD CREDENCE TO BISHOP'S CLAIM THIS IS ALL SOME SORT OF COSMIC... ACCIDENT?

TO ENTERTAIN SUCH THOUGHTS IS...

IS WHAT, PIETRO?

MADNESS?



AND IS IT ANY LESS MAD TO BELIEVE A HANDFUL OF MUTANTS MIGHT SAVE AN ENTIRE WORLD?



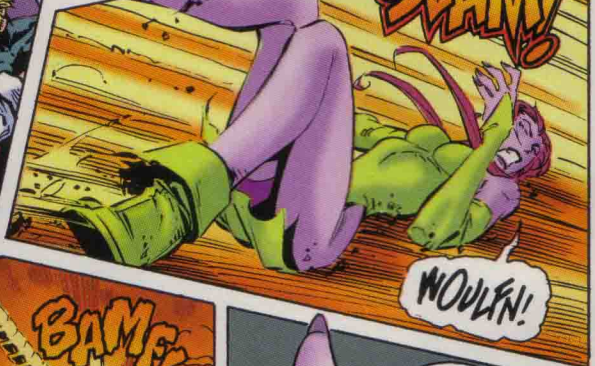
VAS-- A TRANSPORTAL ?!

THIS DON'T LOOK GOOD, GANG. BUT WHO WOULD--



--BLINK?!
GANGWAY, PEOPLE!

CRITICALLY WOUNDED MUTANT CHEESECAKE, EN ROUTE!



SLAM!

WOULFN!

WOMAN, ARE YOU--

--INSANE?! BY TELEPORTING DIRECTLY INTO THE MANSION, YOU COULD LEAD APOCALYPSES FORCES DIRECTLY TO US!

YEAH, WELL-- ME AND SUNFIRE KIND OF HAD OTHER PRIORITIES AT THE MOMENT I DECIDED TO VAMOOSE, KURT!

BAMF!

BAMF!



SHIRO?! WHAT HAPPENED TO SUNFIRE ?



RELAX, BLUE.

HE SHOULD BE ALONG ANY MINUTE.

AS IN "INCOMING!"

CHILD, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT--?!

MEIN GOTT--SUNFIRE?!

BOOOOOW!

I'M SAYING, SIR, WE WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT WITH AN INFINITE.

WE WEREN'T WINNING.



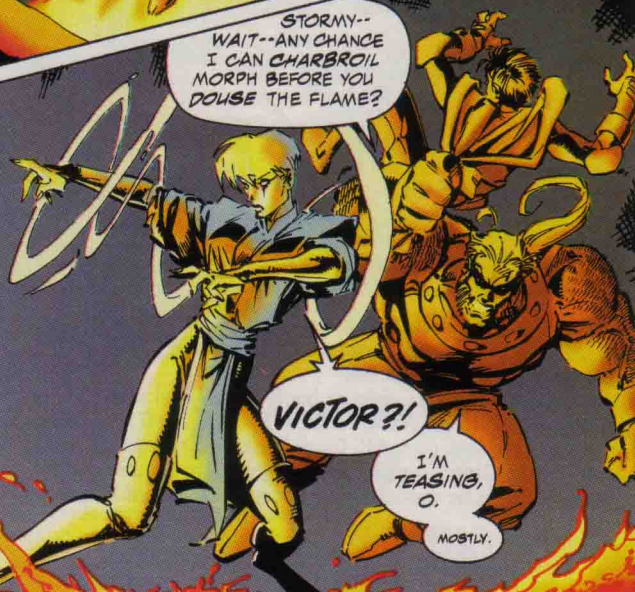
BAMF!

SO YOU CAME HERE, CLARICE?

YOU MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.

ALTHOUGH YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO ENJOY IT, IF MY WEATHER POWER DOES NOT DISPERSE SHIRO'S AFTERBLAST!

STORMY-- WAIT--ANY CHANCE I CAN CHARBROIL MORPH BEFORE YOU DOUSE THE FLAME?



VICTOR?!

I'M TEASING, O. MOSTLY.



BACK, EVERYONE--
--HIS POWER IS OUT OF CONTROL!

RRREENNT

FORTUNATELY MY MASTERY OF MAGNETISM IS NOT!

SHIRO, LISTEN TO ME!

YOU MUST CALM YOURSELF-- YOU MUST REASSERT CONTROL OVER YOUR POWER.



LOOK! HIS FLAME... DAMPENING?

SOMEHOW HE'S POWERING DOWN!

LOOK AGAIN, KURT. IF OUR BREATH IS ANY INDICATION --

--IT IS THE AIR AROUND HIM THAT IS CHANGING.

DON'T BOTHER THANKING ME, PEOPLES...

...YOU'RE WELCOME.



BUT SOMEONE REALLY OUGHTTA TURN AROUND AN' TAKE A LOOK AT THE PORTAL!





BLINK--
YOUR EYE
GLOWING!?
NO--!!

-- YOU'RE
CLOSING THE
PORTAL?!



BUT WHAT
HAPPENS
TO--?!

THAT
WAS THE
"SEE YA"
PART.



I UNDERSTAND
THE GIRL'S
BEHAVIOR, SHIRO,
BUT WHAT COULD
POSSESS YOU TO
RISK EXPOSING
OUR--



PIETRO,
PLEASE ALLOW
HIM TO CATCH
HIS BREATH.

SUNFIRE IS
NO COWARD.
IF HE CAME
HERE, IT WAS
FOR A REASON.

A DARKER
REASON THAN
YOU COULD
IMAGINE, SIR.

THE LATEST
REPORTED CULLING--
THE ONE IN SEATTLE *
APOCALYPSE CLAIMED
IGNORANCE IN LIGHT
OF THE KELLY PACT.
DID HE NOT?

HE
PROMISED TO PUNISH
ALL THOSE
INVOLVED.



BLINK
AND I JUST
DISCOVERED
HE WAS
LYING.

THE CULLINGS
HAVE BEGUN
AGAIN. IN
EARNEST.

THEY'RE BEING
CARRIED OUT,
PERSONALLY,
BY APOCALYPSE'S
SON...

... HOLOCAUST.

* X-MEN
ALPHA
--BOB

MANHATTAN.

More accurately,
what is left of
MANHATTAN--

-- the first
AMERICAN city
to fall beneath
the boot heel
of the "man"
some call
APOCALYPSE...

... he who is also
EN SABAH NUR-- the
genetic overlord
dedicated to seeing
mutantkind achieve
its destiny...

... even if it means
building that destiny
upon a mountain
of humanity's
dead.

Inside...

SKRUNCH
SKRUNCH
SKRUNCH
SKRUNCH

M'LORD?

COME,
REX.

SKRUNCH
SKRUNCH
SKRUNCH





I FIND THE AROMA...

...SOOTHING.

THEY WERE THE WEAK... AND SUCH IS THEIR FATE.

MY LORD... THESE SKULLS?!

H-HUMANS?

OF COURSE.

THERE M-MUST BE HUNDREDS?!

DID YOU PIN-POINT THEIR LOCATION?

THOUSANDS, REX.

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, ACTUALLY.

BUT SPEAK, MUTANT--YOU ARE NOT HERE TO DISCUSS MY... AFFECTIONS, ARE YOU?

NO, M'LORD.

I WANTED YOU TO BE AWARE... NOT THAT YOU AREN'T AWARE OF EVERYTHING ANYWAY... BUT I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW, I MEAN, FOR SURE, THAT--

NOT YET, SIR...

M'LORD... YOUR FACE?!

WHAT'S WRONG?

...BUT IT'S CERTAIN ONLY TO BE A MATTER OF TIME.

REX...

... DELGADO MADE IT THROUGH THE GIRL'S PORTAL, AS YOU ASSUMED HE WOULD...

... AND JUST AS YOU, IN YOUR BRILLIANCE, PREDICTED, THEY SEALED IT ON THE POOR WEAK FOOL AS WELL.

NOTHING, REX.

IT'S A SMILE.

IT'S A SMILE.

IT'S A SMILE.

At that moment...

... somewhere in the DEAD ZONE, formerly WEST-CHESTER COUNTY--

-- sits a collection of decaying buildings that once comprised a home.

A mansion.

The estate of the long dead CHARLES XAVIER.

Currently, the headquarters of the wandering nomads called the X-MEN.

CHICAGO?

BUT THAT CITY WAS CONDEMNED YEARS AGO-- EVEN BY HUMAN STANDARDS.

WE KNOW WHAT WE SAW, ROGUE.

ENOUGH COUGH IF YOU...

Y'ALL DO NO SUCH THING--YA CAIN'T BARELY STAND, SHIRO!

ROGUE -- I LOST MY ENTIRE COUNTRY TO HOLOCAUST ...

... EVERYONE WHO EVER DEPENDED ON ME.

I WILL DIE BEFORE I SEE HIM VISIT ANOTHER SUCH HORROR UPON THIS WORLD.

... WON'T RETURN WITH US...

... WE'LL GO COUGH ALONE.

... EVERYONE I EVER LOVED...

DAT'S WHAT I LIKE T'HEAR, MON AMI.

NOTHING LIKE A GOOD SUICIDE MISSION TO START THE DAY OFF RIGHT.

MAYBE, AFTER WE STOP DE CULLINGS, WE CAN LIBERATE DE PITS AND OVERTHROW THE BIG 'A' ALTOGETHER?

'COURSE, DAT DON'T LEAVE MUCH FOR DE AFTERNOON, BUT...





REMY!
Y--YOU'RE
STILL
HERE?

YEAH, I THOUGHT THE
MAGSTER SENT YOU AND
YOUR LITTLE GROUP O'
X-TERNALS ON SOME
SECRET MISSION?

DAT
HE DID,
LADIES.

BUT IT'D
BE THE HEIGHT
OF RUDENESS
TO LEAVE--

-- WITHOUT
BIDDING A
PROPER
ADIEU.

SINCE
WHEN DO
YOU CARE
ABOUT BEING
RU--

BLINK,
PLEASE.



SCUSE US
A MOMENT.

I THOUGHT
SHE WAS
OVER THAT
CAJUN
JERK.

SHE
IS.

AS MUCH
AS ONE CAN
BE.



AH... PROBABLY
WON'T BE HERE
WHEN YA' GET
BACK.

YOU'RE
GOIN' WIT'
DEM-- T STOP
DE UNSTOP-
PABLE?

OR DIE
TRYING,
SUGAH.

NO BIG
T'ING,
CHERE.

DON'T KNOW
HOW WE'RE EVEN
SUPPOSED TO GET
TO THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE UNIVERSE
FOR THIS 'M'KRANN
CRYSTAL" T'ING DAT
BISHOP FELLA KEEPS
BABBLIN' 'BOUT --

--LET ALONE GETTIN' BACK.



SO.

SO.

I GUESS
SO.

AH
GUESS THIS
IS IT.



SEEING AS WE
WON'T BE SEEING
EACH OTHER AGAIN,
I DON'T S'PROSE
YOU'D CONSENT TO
A KISS GOOD-BYE?

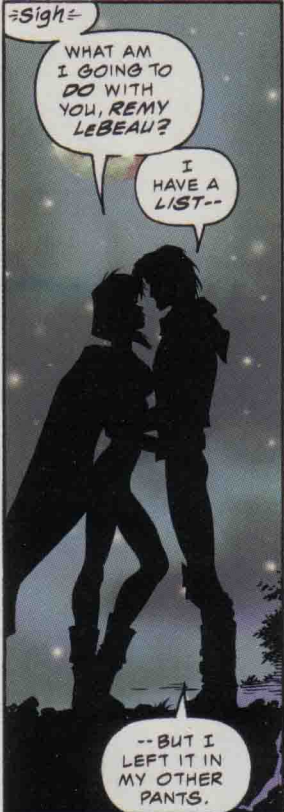
ONE
FOR DE
ROAD?

REMY,
PLEASE.

I'M
MARRIED
TO YOUR
BEST FRIEND.

HE WAS
MY BEST
FRIEND,
CHERE.

BUT DAT
ALL CHANGED
A LONG, LONG
TIME AGO.



=Sigh=

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU, REMY LEBEAU?

I HAVE A LIST--

-- BUT I LEFT IT IN MY OTHER PANTS.



MOMMA?!



CHARLES?!

BLINK, WHAT--?!

NANNY'S BEING UP-GRADED--IN PREPARATION FOR THE SENTINEL-EVAC.

THOUGHT, AS HIS MOTHER YOU'D WANT TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR SON--

-- SINCE HIS FATHER, YOUR HUSBAND, IS BUSY PREPPING THE OTHERS.



UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO--

NO. THANK YOU, CLARICE.

REMY, GOOD LUCK.

ALWAYS, THERE.

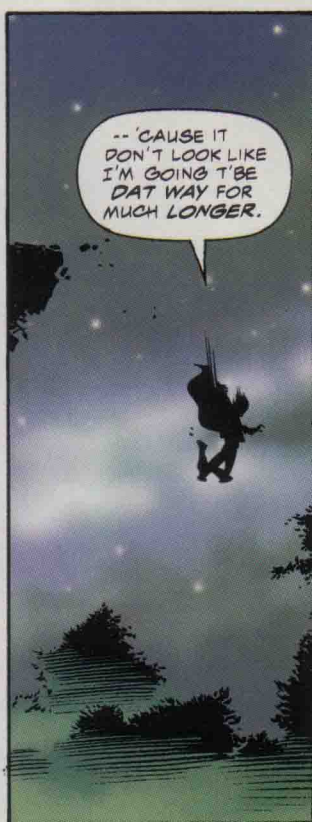
ALWAYS.



FEEL BETTER, P'TITE?

NOT WHILE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.

GOOD NEWS, DEN--



-- 'CAUSE IT DON'T LOOK LIKE I'M GOING T'BE DAT WAY FOR MUCH LONGER.

Several floors
above...

IS THIS
WHERE IT
BEGAN FOR
YOU, OLD
FRIEND?

IS THIS
WHERE YOU CAME,
AS A CHILD, TO
DREAM YOUR DREAMS
SO LONG AGO,
CHARLES XAVIER?

YOU'D LOOK
UP AT THE STARS...
CONVINCED YOU
COULD CHANGE
THE ENTIRE
WORLD.

IN ISRAEL,
IN OUR YOUTH, I
ONCE QUESTIONED
JUST HOW MUCH
ONE MAN WAS
CAPABLE OF
ACCOMPLISHING.

BY YOUR
ABSENCE, YOU'VE
ANSWERED THAT
QUESTION.

YOU
REALIZE
WHAT IT IS
THEY'RE TRYING
TO DO?

KURT?

HE AND HIS SON, HOLOCAUST, ARE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO DIVIDE OUR FORCES...

... ON THIS, THE EVE OF OUR MOST AMBITIOUS EFFORT EVER.

A QUESTION, OLD FRIEND.

NOTHING WILL STOP US FROM WORKING WITH THE EURASIAN HIGH COUNSEL TO LIBERATE THE HUMAN POPULACE ALONG THE NORTH EASTERN COAST. *

REST ASSURED, WE WILL--

IT IS MORE THAN THAT, ERIK. IT IS THIS "BISHOP" FELLOW THEY HAVE PLANTED, IN ORDER TO PROMPT YOU TO DOUBT--

--YOU WHO NEVER DOUBTED ALL THESE YEARS.

THIS IS WHY YOU'VE ASKED ME AND MY MOTHER TO TRACK DOWN A WOMAN NAMED DESTINY IN A PLACE THAT MAY OR MAY NOT EXIST. **

FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, PETER AND KATYA HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED *** TO SEATTLE TO--

A AMAZING X-MEN #1
** X-CALIBRE #1
*** GENERATION NEXT #1 --
BOB



JA.



DO YOU TRUST ME, KURT?



MORE THAN I TRUST THE SUN TO RISE IN THE MORROW.

THEN TRUST ME WHEN I SAY--

-- THAT I AM LESS AFRAID OF BISHOP BEING A HOAX --

-- THAN I AM THAT HE REPRESENTS THE TRUTH.

" AT THE MOMENT
CHARLES XAVIER
DIED SAVING ME--



"-- KILLED BY
A LUNATIC
CALLING HIMSELF
LEGION --

" -- I WAS
DEALING WITH
MY OWN
INJURIES.

"AS SUCH, I
HAVE ONLY THE
VAGUEST
RECOLLECTION:



"A BLACK
MAN ON THE
PERIPHERY--

"-- WHO MUST
HAVE WANDERED
AWAY IN THE
AFTERMATH.

"MY ONLY
CONCERN
WAS FOR MY
FRIEND.



"CRADLING HIS
LIFELESS BODY IN
MY ARMS, I MADE
A PROMISE TO
THE MAN--

"-- A PROMISE, I
DON'T DOUBT, WHICH
CHANGED THE
DIRECTION OF MY
ENTIRE LIFE."

A PROMISE
TO MAKE THE
WORLD A BETTER
PLACE.



A PROMISE
I WILL SEE KEPT...
ESPECIALLY NOW,
WHEN IT SEEMS THERE
WAS ANOTHER WAY...
THAT XAVIER WAS
NEVER MEANT TO
DIE AND ALL THIS...
NIGHTMARE... CAN
BE UNDONE.

AND YOU
WOULD SACRIFICE
THIS WORLD
COMPLETELY?

EVEN IF IT
MEANS GIVING
UP OUR LIVES
AND THAT OF
THOSE WE
LOVE?



YES, KURT...
EVEN IF.

GOD
HELP US
ALL... EVEN
IF.





In the hangar bay...

I DON'T GET IT. IF WE'RE GOING TO GO ANY- WHY... WHY DON'T I JUST BLINK US THERE?!

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HOLOCAUST WILL NO DOUBT BE EXPECTING, DARLIN'...

AN' BECAUSE SUNFIRE WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO SURVIVE THE PROCESS. WE'LL BE BETTER OFF IF AH USE MY MAGNETIC POWERS TO FERRY THE SHUTTLE THERE.

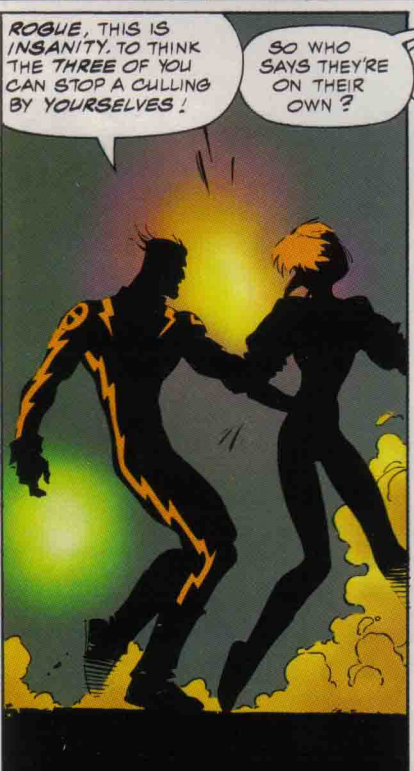
I KNOW YOU HATE HEARING THIS, BUT YOU'RE NOT NEARLY AS TALENTED AS YOU LIKE TO THINK YOU ARE.



THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR YOU, "MOTHER".

OR DID YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE YOU COULD LEAVE WITHOUT ANYONE KNOWING?

QUICKSILVER, AH LEFT WORD WITH--



ROGUE, THIS IS INSANITY. TO THINK THE THREE OF YOU CAN STOP A CULLING BY YOURSELVES!

SO WHO SAYS THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN?

VICTOR?! YOU--?!

-- HAVE GOT A LOT TO ATONE FOR, PETE... OR DID YOU FORGET ME AND THE KID HERE USED TO RUN WITH HOLOCAUST?

'SIDES NOBODY LIVES FOREVER.

THANK YOU, CREED.

I AIN'T DOIN' IT FOR YOU, GIRLIE.

BUT WHAT THEY HEY-- YER WELCOME ANY WAY.

IT SHOULD BE CLEAR, MY SON... IT ISN'T POSSIBLE TO DECIDE WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT--

--THE EVACUATION OR THE CULLING.

WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF A HUNDRED THOUSAND HUMANS MAKE IT ACROSS THE SEA TO EURASIA...

...IF AN EQUAL AMOUNT ARE FELLED BY HOLOCAUST AND HIS HOMICIDAL HORDES?

I CAN... WALK...
...ON MY... OWN.

OF COURSE YOU CAN, SHIRO.

...IF I AM... GOING TO DIE... THIS DAY...

...I'LL DO IT STANDING UP.

I'M LEAVING THE REST OF THE X-MEN IN YOUR CARE, PIETRO.

YOU...?

BUT FATHER YOUR PLACE IS--

--HERE, YES.

ANY OTHER DAY OF THE YEAR.

BUT THESE ARE DIRE TIMES. IF WE DON'T MAKE IT BACK--

-- I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO REMIND THE OTHERS ABOUT OUR GOALS.

TO REMIND THEM... NO SACRIFICE IS TOO GREAT.

BUT MOST OF ALL--
-- REMIND THEM TO FLOSS.

OF COURSE... SIR.

!?!

DID YOU SAY... "FLOSS"?

YOU KNOW, PETEY, FOR THE FASTEST MUTANT IN THE WORLD--

-- YOU CAN BE PRETTY SLOW ON THE UPTAKE! I THOUGHT FOR SURE THAT "HOMICIDAL HORDES" WAS A DEAD GIVEAWAY!

MORPH!?

SMACKEROONIE!

HOW CAN YOU NOT LOVE A GUY LIKE THIS?!

SO HELP ME, YOU HAD BETTER HOPE YOU DON'T COME BACK!

AWWW, YOU DON'T MEAN THAT!

WHO ELSE WOULD SERVE YOU BREAKFAST IN BED EVERY MORNING?

WASN'T IT JUST YESTERDAY--

-- HE WAS THAT MOROSE LIL' CHANGELING?

IT WAS PRETTY HIDEOUS.

YES.

POSSESSED OF THE UGLIEST PURPLE HEAD-PIECED COSTUME EVER.

WHAT DID FATHER USED TO SAY?

"ANY SHAPE IMAGINABLE AND YOU CHOSE THAT?!"

YOU HAVE NEVER SERVED ME BREAKFAST IN BED!

NOT FOR LACK OF TRYING, Q.

HA HA HA
HA HA
HA...





DID YOU SAY GOOD-BYE TO MY FATHER ?

NO.



I'LL NEVER SAY "GOOD-BYE" --

-- BECAUSE THAT WOULD IMPLY WE'D NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.



AND THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

GODSPEED, ROGUE.

THANK YOU, PIETRO.



WE'LL BE BACK.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND..

...WHY ARE THEY...
THROWING THEIR
LIVES AWAY? WHAT
THEY PROPOSE TO
DO... WOULD SEEM
IMPOSSIBLE.

YOU NEED
TO ASK,
BISHOP?

YOU WHO CLAIM
TO COME FROM A
PLACE WHERE
THE SACRED
XAVIER AND HIS
X-MEN HAVE ACTUALLY
MADE A
DIFFERENCE?

IS THIS
THEN, THE
REALITY YOU'RE
ASKING US TO
RECREATE--A
WORLD POPU-
LATED BY
COWARDS?

THERE
IS MUCH
I CAN'T...
CLEARLY
RECALL.

JUST THAT
THIS PLACE IS...
WRONG.

SO YOU'VE SAID, BUT WHY
DO YOU KNOW THESE THINGS?
WHY OF EVERYONE ON THIS
MISBEGOTTEN PLANET DO
YOU HAVE VISIONS OF THIS
DIFFERENT WAY?

THIS MAY
NOT BE MUCH
OF A WORLD--

--MAY NOT
EVEN BE THE
WORLD IT IS
SUPPOSED
TO BE--

--BUT IT
IS OUR WORLD
NONETHELESS.

AND WE
WILL FIGHT
FOR IT.

INDEED,
AND I'M
CERTAIN THE
PROFESSOR
WOULDN'T
HAVE IT ANY
OTHER
WAY.

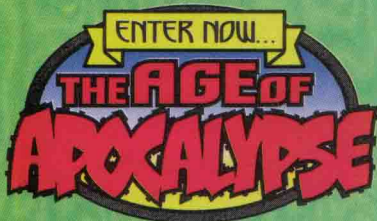
TO BE
CONTINUED:
THE CULLING

X-FACTS

January 1995

THE DREAM IS OVER...

A man who should never have died is now gone. His passing marks the loss of a world full of promise, a world of hope unfettered, and heralds the coming of a reality rife with the ravages of chaos and confusion, an age of madness and destruction.



...LET THE NIGHTMARE BEGIN!

It all began with a business trip. X-MEN Editor-In-Chief Bob Harras was over on the other side of the coun-

try, in the middle of a rather important meeting with the producers of FOX's hit Saturday morning X-MEN cartoon, when suddenly, he was visited by a miraculous polemic.

"What would the world be like without Professor X?"

Mulling the idea over and over, Bob finally realized what this ambitious thought meant. It meant that this was a story idea which could potentially have lasting repercussions on the X-Verse like none other. Upon his return to New York, Bob set the wheels

which would become the AGE OF APOCALYPSE a'turning.

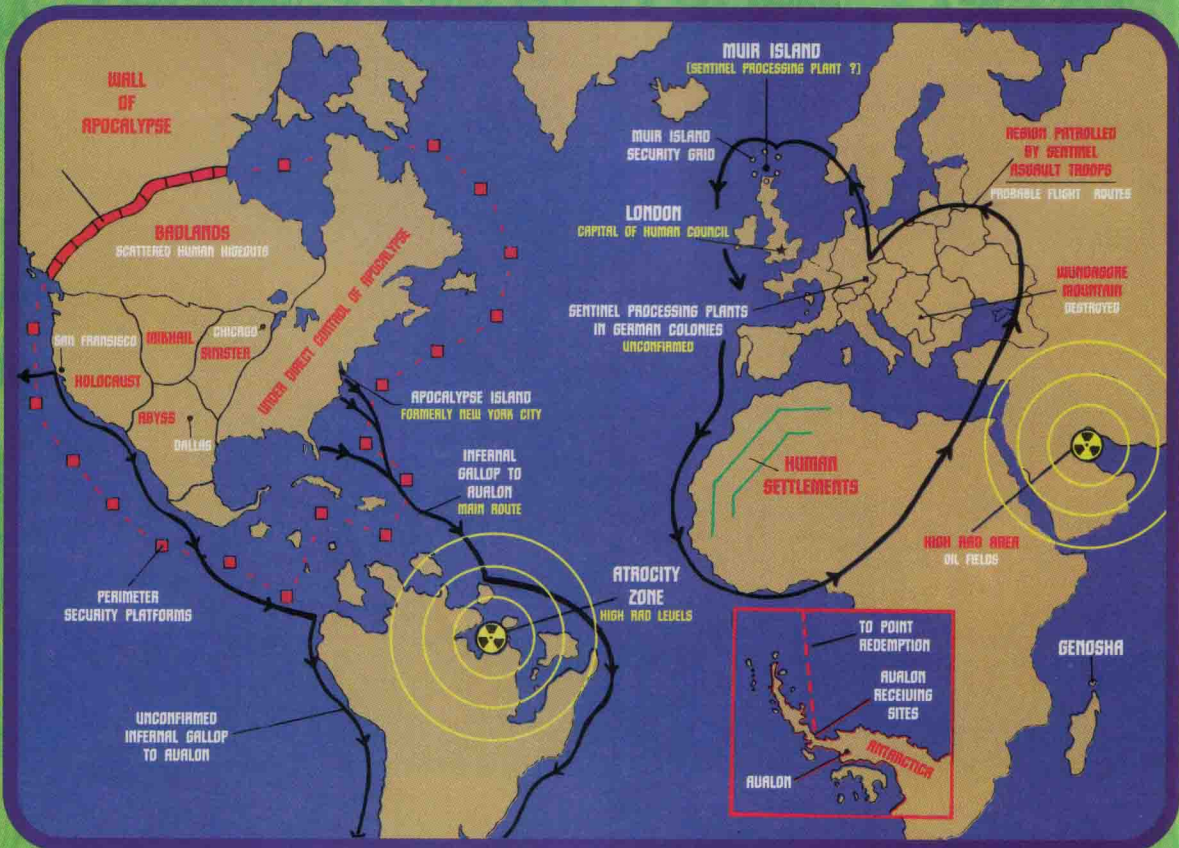
First order of business to be addressed was... 'How to do the deed?' Of all the methods suggested, the one possessed of the greatest sense of urgency involved someone traveling back in time to a crucial moment in X-history that would shake the mutant universe to its very foundations had it never occurred. Thus, a time period was determined. The tragedy would occur during Xavier's days in Israel -- the time just before he set out to found the first School For Gifted Youngsters. After all, if he had never achieved that goal, then there would never have been any X-Men.

Or would there?

Determined to find out, we began our search for the next piece of the puzzle -- *the murderer*.

Which agent of evil would perpetrate this most heinous crime? Villains' names were batted around, but none had the right motivation or capacity to 'pull the trigger' that would assassinate Xavier. Sure, the potential candidates all had their own unique flair for the dramatic, but not a single member of the X-Men's rogue's gallery fit the bill.

Having arrived at an impasse, a new take on the murder was suggested. Why even go after Xavier in the first place? Perhaps it wasn't Charles who had prevented the assassin from achieving his own selfish ends at all, but rather *another* figure whose very



existence irrevocably shaped this frustrated character's life?

Like *Magneto*...

Hmm. That presented an interesting twist. There seemed to be a logic to it, but who would have felt that way, and why? One very unique name was suggested, and it was at that very moment that the clock began ticking out the final days of the X-Men.

And that name was...*Legion*.

Being the son of Professor X, Legion was one of the many people whose life's course was determined by forces beyond his control, specifically the ongoing conflict between Xavier and his arch nemesis, Magneto. Had Magneto never gotten in Xavier's way, then perhaps Xavier's dream of a world where humans and mutants co-exist in peace might have come true. Instead, the two men, once the closest of friends, became the most bitter of rivals. Ultimately, neither one's vision was ever fully realized thanks to the other's incessant interference.

Finally realizing the importance of Xavier's goals, and blaming Magneto for the fact that he never got the chance to know his father, Legion would have to figure out a way to get Xavier's attention which had been distracted by his quest for a better world for so long.

And with his delusional mind lucid for the first time in his life, latent aspects of Legion's already formidable mutant powers had reached their full potential. So now he had both the method and the motivation to make thought deed and set things 'right'.

If only he hadn't killed the wrong man...

THE PLOT THICKENS

This past summer, as the technorganic terror of the PHALANX COVENANT kept the X-teams busy saving the universe, the X-MEN editorial staff conspired to undo all the work our exhausted mutants had accomplished.

Together with writers *Scott Lobdell*, *Fabian Nicieza*, *Larry Hama*, *John Francis Moore*, *Jeph Loeb*, *Howard Mackie* and *Mark Waid*, and pencilers *Andy and Adam Kubert* and *Joe Madureira*, we stole away from the hustle and bustle of the Big Apple for the serenity of the country. For two steamy, summer days, we bounced around, threw out, accepted and rejected -- and ultimately *accepted again* -- thoughts, suggestions, feelings, questions, comments, frustrations, agreements and dissensions.

Meanwhile, fellow creators *Chris Bachalo*, *Tony Daniel*, *Steve Epting*, *Warren Ellis*, *Ken Lashley* and *Steve Skroce* -- who couldn't

physically be with us at the conference (y'all were there in spirit, guys) -- were all hard at work in their respective studios, their brains ablaze with activity.

Our collective goal...create a world gone mad, a reality so insane that the unthinkable would become so painfully real that you'd believe that you were in the middle of a Kafka-esque nightmare from which you could never wake up.

But why on earth would such a horrific reality ever exist?

Simple. Because Charles Xavier *never* founded the X-Men. And without his influence to guide the growing mutant community, and no force of good to stem the tide of evil, the time would be ripe for some of the would-be world-beaters to make their move and establish their dominion over the earth.

And that's exactly the kind of situation that *Apocalypse* used to his best advantage. Seeing no opposition to his Darwinist schemes, he tested the mettle of both human and mutant alike. The end result, a world trapped beneath his boot's crushing heel.

Having come to a conclusion as to who would play the role of the heavy in this grim, new world of ours, we needed a group of heroes who would rise to challenge him.

Enter...*this reality's X-Men!*

Of all the people who would have carried the torch of peaceful coexistence between Homo Sapiens and Homo Superior, it seemed the most logical that Magneto would take up the mantle that Xavier was so tragically denied. After all, he bore witness to Xavier's murder at a time before the two men ever became adversaries, and since he himself was Legion's *intended* target, it was the last, best way for him to honor their friendship and his late friend's memory.

RADICAL REFLECTIONS

Of course, the next step was figuring out who would go where...and why...and what for! If reality were turned on its ear, would heroes *still* be heroes? Heck, we're not dealing with a carbon-copy dimension here, so it's very possible that even the most upstanding of champions in our reality would be a base villain in this new one. Lovers in our world might be mortal enemies here. Characters who have lost their lives may be alive and well...

The list of similarities and differences goes on and on, but no matter what the world may become, there will always be a band of heroes willing to fight for the dream of peaceful coexistence between humans and mutants.

For in every reality, there remains one constant...*and that's the X-Men.*

The Wish List

ASTONISHING X-MEN #1: The mysterious Bishop raises questions about this world's existence! Rogue's affections are tasted when her old flame, Gambit comes calling! In the middle of it all, the X-Men prepare for the biggest genetic culling yet! By *Scott Lobdell* and *Joe Madureira!*

X-MAN #1: Finally free of Sinister's gene banks and seeking the elusive truth behind his origins, the young X-Man fights to prevent Apocalypse's infinite soldiers from culling both humans and mutants alike! By *Jeph Loeb* and *Steve Skroce!*

GENERATION NEXT #1: Hoping to recruit the next generation of mutants for the crusade against Apocalypse, Magneto reveals the long-hidden truth about Colossus's lost sister, Ilyana! By *Scott Lobdell* and *Chris Bachalo!*

WEAPON X #1: Working as underground agents on the side of peace between humans and mutants, Logan and Jean Grey procure valuable information from the duplicitous Sinister only to discover the shocking secret behind the Human High Council's plans! By *Larry Hama* and *Adam Kubert!*

X-CALIBRE #1: Sent on a crucial mission by Magneto, Nightcrawler must find his mother, the shape-changing Mystique, and make his way to the fabled land of Avalon to enlist the aid of the mutant precog known as Destiny! Plus, the menace of Damask and the Pale Riders! Guest-starring the Angels! By *Warren Ellis* and *Ken Lashley!*

AMAZING X-MEN #1: While genetic collings ravage North America's remaining human population, the X-Men struggle to ensure that the Sentinel evacuation is a success as they take their never-ending fight to Apocalypse! By *Fabian Nicieza* and *Andy Kubert!*

FACTOR X #1: Sinister has left control of the breeding pens in the hands of the Summers brothers, but will their sibling rivalry tear down all of their surrogate father's work? Plus, a look at the Beast's ghoulish genetic experiments! By *John Francis Moore* and *Steve Epting!*

GAMBIT & THE X-TERNALS #1: Putting aside their differences, Magneto recruits Gambit's ragtag band of thieves for the biggest jewel heist ever -- the cosmic reality nexus known as the M'Kraan Crystal! By *Fabian Nicieza* and *Tony Daniell!*

X-MEN CHRONICLES #1: A tale of the original X-Men and their first encounter with the evil of Apocalypse! The introduction of Rogue! The tragic death of an X-Man! A 64-page story of triumph and tragedy by *Howard Mackie* and *Terry Dodson!*