

MARVEL
COMICS

MAY • 3

X-MEN
DELUXE

THE ASTONISHING

X-MEN

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



CHAPTER
THREE

AFTER XAVIER:
THE AGE OF
APOCALYPSE

WOLFGANG
TJUNG
MAY 2004

STAN LEE PRESENTS: AN ADVENTURE OF **THE ASTONISHING X-MEN**

There was
a time —

— before the X-MEN,
before he was named
WILD CHILD —

— when his only concern —
his only joy — was finding
a warm patch of grass
upon a CANADIAN
prairie.

Things have
changed.

IN EXCESS

SCOTT LOBDELL

PLOT

JOE MADUREIRA TOWNSEND/MILGROM

PENCILS

JEPH LOEB

IALOGUE

INKS

STEVE
BUCELLATO
COLORS

RICHARD STARKINGS
AND COMICKRAFT
LETTERS

BOB
HARRAS
EDITOR

DIGITAL CHAMELEON SEPARATIONS

ZAAKKT

Another inch and a half, and the blast would have severed his spinal column.

As it is —

— he can feel the heat cauterize the hole burned through his right lung.

CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE PRELATE HOLOCAUST WANTS YOU ALIVE, X-MAN...

... OR THIS CHASE WOULD HAVE ENDED WITH YOUR DEATH.

EVER THE DEFIANT UPSTART — oh, WILD CHILD!

WMP

HRMMP?

GRRRR



DON'T BOTHER GETTING UP.

YOU AND THE REST OF THE GENETIC TURNCOATS WHO HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM THE EMBRACE OF HIS HIGH LORD APOCALYPSE...

— HAVE EARNED A FINAL RESPITE FROM THIS STRUGGLE YOU CANNOT HOPE TO SURVIVE.

YOU ARE NOW BIDDEN TO DIE AT THE FEET OF HOLOCAUST!

P-
PRELATE...P

SIR? YOU DISPATCHED US FROM INDIANAPOLIS...!

HOW DID YOU BEAT US HERE TO CHICAGO?

DON'T DARE QUESTION ME, YOU SOULLESS GENETIC CONSTRUCT!

I FIND IT IRRITATING.



HMMMM.

NOW, WHAT TO DO... WHAT TO DO... P

I SUPPOSE I COULD KILL HIM... SLOWLY.

OR MAKE A GIFT OF HIM TO APOCALYPSE.

VERY GOOD IDEAS -

Sshhh!

I'M THINKING.



PAP

WAIT A MINUTE - I'VE GOT IT!
WE CAN PUT ON A SHOW!

SNAP

A "SHOW"?!



SURE, A SHOW!

IT'LL BE LOADS O' FUN!



UNCLE JOE HAS SOME COSTUMES - AND WE CAN USE THE OLD BARN FOR A STAGE!

OF COURSE, I'LL STAR... but that goes without saying!

?!

Before they can react, the Infinites feel the heat of a raging sun behind them -



— and they turn to see that a bad situation has just gotten worse.

SURRENDER, NOW, UNCONDITIONALLY.

OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.

ANOTHER X-MAN — SUNFIRE!

WE'VE BEEN SET UP!

BLAST THE TRAITOR OUT OF THE SKY!

THANK YOU.

As his atomic flame reduces them to cinders —

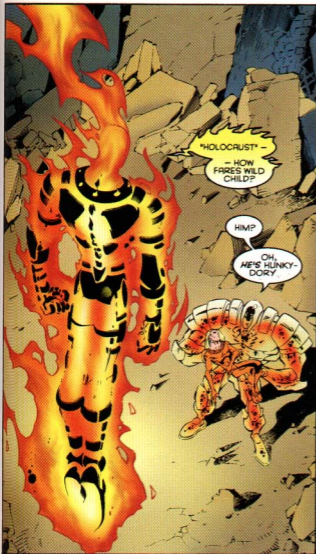
POW!

— he finds he feels nothing for them.

For *ANY* compassion Sunfire once had *DIED* long ago —

POW!

... at the hands of the madman Apocalypse.





WILD CHILD?!
BUT IF YOU'RE HERE -
- WHERE'S SABRETOOTH?

At the mere mention of his master's name, Wild Child grows agitated - ignoring the severity of his wounds.

GRR RRRR
GRRR



AH... THINK HE'S TRYIN' TO TELL US SOMETHIN' -

MMPH H

RRRR



IS IT ABOUT MISTER CREEP?

YIP!

ROGUE, WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO? MISTER CREEP MIGHT BE IN DANGER!



AH... DON'T KNOW -

VICTOR IS THE ONLY ONE WHO HE BARELY COMMUNICATES WITH -



SLURRP

WILD CHILD - DON'T - NO!

Since she was a child, Rogue has been both blessed and cursed with a mutant power -

- the slightest physical contact with another -

— floods her mind with not only their memories —

HOLOCAUST!



IPE!

GRR OFF!



— but sometimes a piece of them as well.

RRRR
AH KNOW...



GRRR
... AH...
... KNOW
WHERE VICTOR
IS...

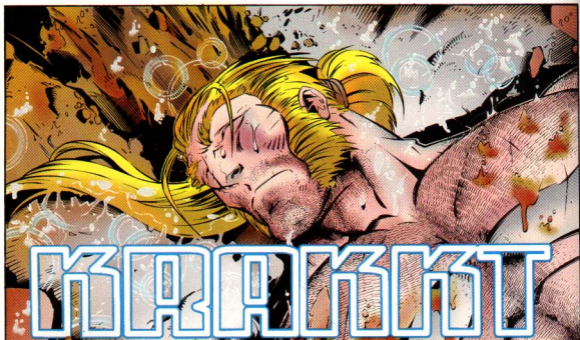
ROGUE..?

AH'M...
ALL...
RIGHT...

... IT
WAS WORTH
IT...
... 'CAUSE
THE FIVE OF US
ARE NOW GOING
TO SHUT DOWN
HOLOCAUST...
... ONCE
AND FOR
ALL!

AND
AFTER THAT
WE'RE GONNA GET
YOU A YUMMY
TREAT!





KARAKOT

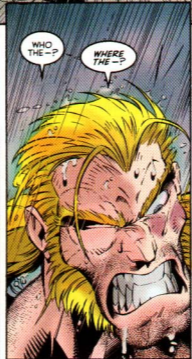
SKRUNCH

SPUNK

SLOSH



BLOK



WHO THE-?

WHERE THE-?



YOU STILL LIVE.

GOOD. I'LL LOVE THE SUPREME PLEASURE OF KILLING YOU, AGAIN.

GO TO HADES!



I THINK NOT.

YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND MIGHT CONSIDER YOURSELF **ALREADY** THERE.

WELCOME TO MY LITTLE CORNER OF THE WORLD, GREED...

...WELCOME TO THE HEART OF **APOCALYPSE'S EMPIRE!**

THE HUMANS ONCE BELIEVED THAT ONLY THEIR... GOD COULD MAKE A ROSE...

MY LORD, ON THE OTHER HAND — CAN IMPROVE ON IT.

YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE FUTURE, X-MAN.

FROM THIS PROCESSING PLANT, WE WILL MAKE ARMIES OF A MILLION INFINITES —

— THAT WILL TRAMPLE THE WORLD!



ALWAYS...
-ACKKK-
KNEW YOU
WERE A
LOSER.



EVEN
BACK...
-WING-
WHEN
YOU WAS
NEMESIS...
... JOCKEYIN'
FOR POSITION
AS -COFF- A
HORSEMAN...



LOSER?
I
THINK THE
BEATING THAT
I GAVE YOU SO
ADDLED YOUR
BRAIN -
-THAT
YOU HAVE US
CONFUSED.



THE
GENETIC
WAR IS ABOUT
TO BE TORN
ASUNDER -
- AND
APOCALYPSE
WILL REIGN
SUPREME!

OH,
REALLY.

... WAY
I SEE IT...
-COFF- YOU
JUST SHOT
TO SPIT...
-HAKK-
... YOUR
LITTLE "GENETIC
SUPERIORITY"
GAME.



SINCE
THE ONLY
WAY YOUR
SIDE CAN
WIN...
... IS BY
STACKIN'
THE DECK
WITH A LOT OF
HOMEMADE
SOLDIERS.



...
PERHAPS,
SOME OF US
HAVE GREATER
AMBITIONS
BEYOND...
... "THE
SURVIVAL OF THE
FITTEST" ...



PITY.

YOU
WON'T BE
ALIVE TO SEE
HOW IT ALL
TURNS
OUT.

THRASH

SPLAT



VIC?

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?



LET GO O' ME.

THIS WHOLE FLIPPIN' BASE IS GONNA BURN—

—WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN—

—NOW, LET'S BOOK!



I TOLD YA, LOGAN.

I'M PICKING UP A SCENT.

AND I AIN'T LEAVIN' SOMEBODY HERE TO DIE—

—IF I GOT ANYTHING TO SAY 'BOUT IT!



THEN, GET OUTTA THE WAY—

—OR WE'LL BE HERE ALL NIGHT!

SNIKT

KCHANG



I'LL BE DIPPED—

KRRRIPPP

RRROF



—THERE WAS SOMEBODY IN THERE!



A KID, LOGAN...

...SOMEBODY'S KID...



... THAT WAS THE FIRST MEMORY I HAVE OF MR. CREED.



WE ALL KNOW HOW IMPORTANT VICTOR IS TO YOU, BLINK--

--HOW IMPORTANT HE IS TO ALL OF US.

AH PROMISE YA, WE WILL FIND HIM.



PSST... HEY, SHIRO? YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHERE WE'RE HEADED?



IN THE DISTANCE... MUCH FURTHER THAN YOU OR THE OTHERS COULD SEE...

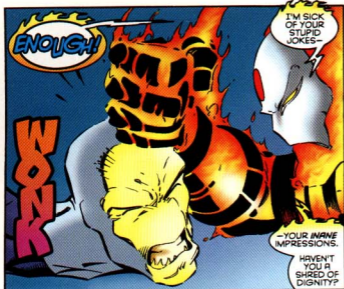


THERE IS THE STRUCTURE WE SEEK.



ARE YE SURE, LADDIE BUCK--

--I CANNAE SEE A THING!



ENOUGH!

WONK

I'M SICK OF YOUR STUPID JOKES--

--YOUR INANE IMPRESSIONS. HAVEN'T YOU A SHRED OF DIGNITY?



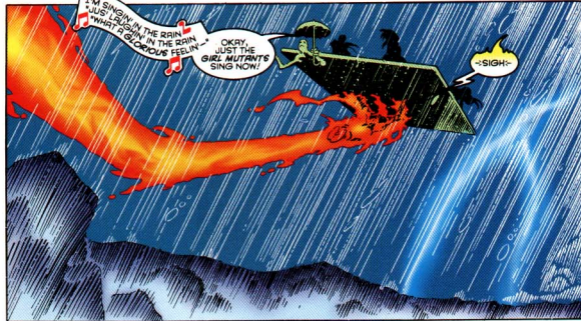
GEE...WHIFF... GUESS YOU REALLY TOLD ME...



BUT, I'M ALL BETTER NOW.



LOOK, SUNNY BOY, IF I'M GONNA DIE, I WANT TO DO IT WITH A SMILE ON MY FACE...
... IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT?



"I'M SINGIN' IN THE RAIN"
"JUS' LAUGHIN' IN THE RAIN"
"WHAT A GLORIOUS FEELIN'"

OKAY, JUST THE GIRL MUTANTS SING NOW!

--SIGH--



Formerly the XAVIER ESTATE.

Currently, the vessel of an impossible dream...



CAN YOU DO IT, BISHOPP?

CAN YOU LOOK ME IN THE EYE AND PULL THE TRIGGER?

WHEN THE TIME COMES, WILL YOU BE ABLE TO TAKE ONE HUMAN LIFE?



Y-YES... YES, IF IT MEANS...

... GOING BACK IN TIME... INSURING THAT ANOTHER THAT CHARLES XAVIER - LIVES...

... IF IT MEANS CORRECTING THIS DARK... WORLD WHICH NEVER SHOULD HAVE... HAPPENED.



BUT IT HAS HAPPENED!

THE YOUNG MAN I KNEW AS LEGION - THE SON YOU CLAIM XAVIER SURED IN THE FUTURE -

- KILLED CHARLES, WHO WAS TRYING TO SAVE MY LIFE!

IF IT IS EVEN POSSIBLE TO SEND YOU INTO THE PAST...

... IT IS LIKELY YOU WILL HAVE TO KILL LEGION.



AGAIN... CAN YOU DO IT?

Y-YES...

... NO...

KILLING GOES AGAINST SO MUCH OF... WHAT... WE'RE FIGHTING FOR...



IN YOUR REALITY, YOU MAY HAVE AFFORDED YOURSELVES THAT LUXURY!

THIS REALITY IS IN THE DEATH THROES OF A GENETIC WAR! A WAR WHICH NO ONE CAN WIN!



AND TO THE VICTOR... WHAT, ERIC?



A WORLD WHERE EVEN THE GOOD... AND INNOCENT...

MAY BE FORFEIT?



LONG BEFORE XAVIER DIED
— BEFORE THIS POINT OF
DIVERGENCE —

... I STOOD
BY HELPLESSLY AS
MILLIONS OF MY
PEOPLE WERE LEAD TO
SLAUGHTER IN THE
NAME OF "GENETIC
PURITY."

I AM
NOT A FOOL,
BISHOP.

IN
ANY WORLD
THERE WILL BE
PAIN AND
SUFFERING.

YOUR
WORLD
OFFERS MY SON
THE POSSIBILITY OF
ONE THING MY
WORLD CANNOT.

A
FUTURE.

WONT! WONT!
WONT! SECURITY
PARAMETER
BREACH!

SECURITY
PARAMETER
BREACH!

INITIATING
DEFCON
ARMAGEDDON

DADDY..?

Omnium coils
constrict —



ERIK?!

NANNY IS
FOLLOWING
ITS PRIME
DIRECTIVE —
— TO
PROTECT MY
SON FROM ANY
EXTERNAL
THREATS.

— constructing
an impenetrable
cocoon —



DEFCON:
ARMAGEDDON
CAN ONLY MEAN
ONE THING.
APOCALYPSE
IS COMING.



Somewhere
inside the
INFINITE
Processing
Plant...

...A commander
surveys his
troops.

As far as the
eye can see,
unfolding numbers
of INFINITE
CLONES perform
a precision
Death March.

PERFECT.
IF YOU WANT
SOMETHING DONE
CORRECTLY...

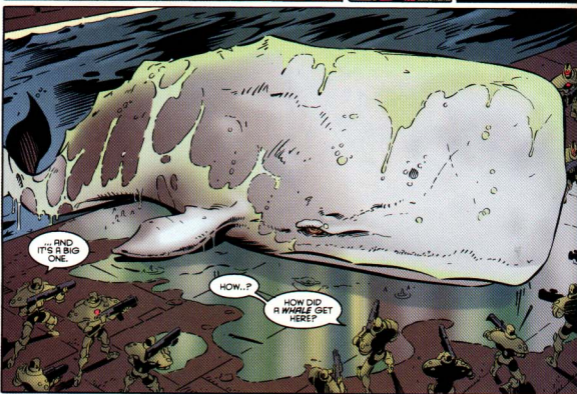
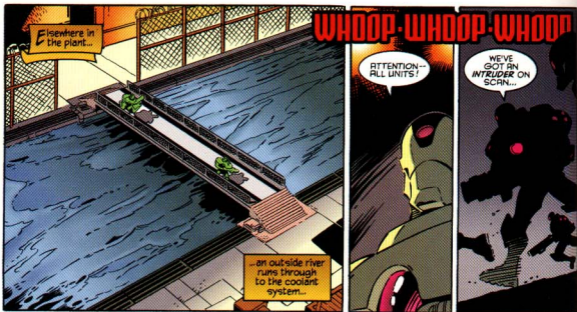
... YOU
HAVE TO DO IT
YOURSELF.

WITH
THIS INFINITE
ARMY AT MY DISPOSAL,
I CAN CUT A SWATH OF
DEATH AND DESTRUCTION
ACROSS THE GLOBE—

—THE
LIKES OF WHICH
APOCALYPSE HAS
NEVER DREAMED!

"THE
SURVIVAL
OF THE
FITTEST",
INDEED...

THERE
ARE NONE
WHO ARE FIT
TO SURVIVE IN THE
LANDSCAPE
I WILL
CREATE!





SURPRISE!

SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T FLOSS!

HIT 'EM HARD X-MEN!

AH WANT Y'ALL TO DO AS MUCH DAMAGE AS YA CAN!



GOTTA SEAL OFF THIS AREA BEFORE -

GRRRRRRRRR



ALL UNITS/ ALL UNITS/ WE NEED -



HELLO!

I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU - CUTIE PIE!



NOT BAD, PEOPLE...

... BEEN HERE ALMOST THREE MINUTES AND WE'RE STILL ALIVE.

NOW ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FIGURE OUT HOW TO TAKE THIS PLACE APART, BRICK BY BRICK.

HEY! I RESEMBLE THAT REMARK!



VICTOR!



BLINK!

HRRRT

BLINK! WHERE THE DEVIL HAS THAT CHIL' RUN OFF TO?



JUST A GUESS - BUT SHE WENT THAT-AWAY!



... MISTER
CREED ...

- to be
concluded ...