

# ULTIMATE IRON MAN

ISSUE

# 2

MARVEL  
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DIRECT EDITION

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ORSON SCOTT CARD

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# PREVIOUSLY IN ULTIMATE IRON MAN:

Howard Stark had a problem. His company, Stark Defense Corp., developed a revolutionary nano-technology armor that feeds on metal and prevents injury with amazing shock absorption. The nano-armor is spread on the skin and can be washed off with soap and water. There's one problem—the armor starts to eat away at the skin of the person using it. That is where Maria Cerrera came in.

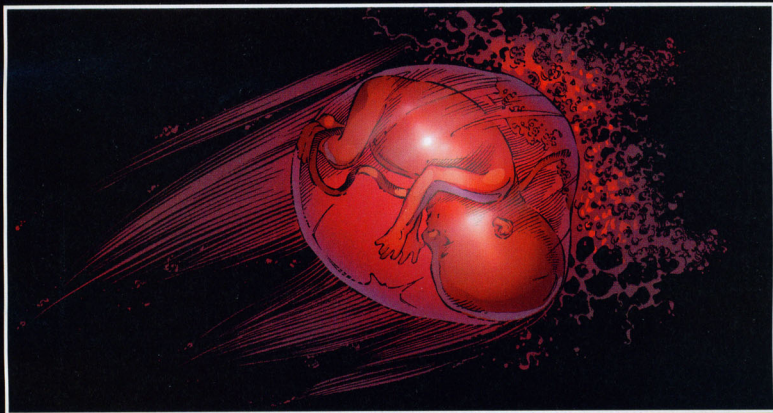
Maria Cerrera is a geneticist working on a project to regenerate body parts through the use of a virus. With the virus, each body cell becomes a neural cell and is capable of new growth, like an embryonic cell. Maria's problem is that if every cell is a neural cell, then it is hyper-sensitive as well, causing the person to experience terrible pain.

The two discovered that their processes could work together, the regenerating cells feeding the armor and the armor protecting the regenerating cells. They also fell in love.

They weren't the only two people getting together—Howard's ex-wife Loni and Howard's biggest defense rival, Zebediah Stane, decided to increase their wealth by stealing Stark Defense Corp. right under Howard's nose.

Meanwhile, tragedy struck when Maria was infected with the very virus she was developing. The virus, not intended for a fully grown subject, is killing her. Also infected is the unborn baby Maria didn't know she had. The baby's body, still in the early stages of growth, is adapting to the virus in the intended way.

Today, Zebediah and Loni have finally succeeded and have taken over Stark Defense. And as if things couldn't get worse, a call has just come in from the hospital...



S T A N L E E P R E S E N T S :

# ULTIMATE IRON MAN

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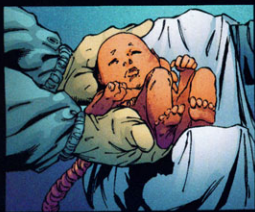
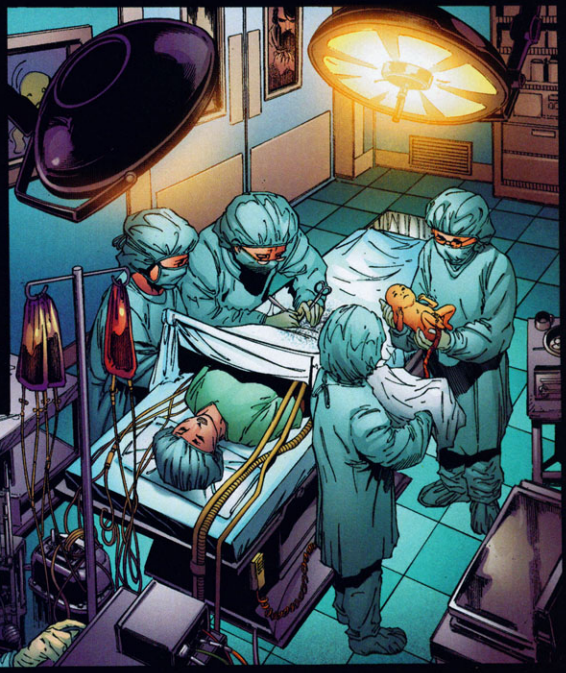
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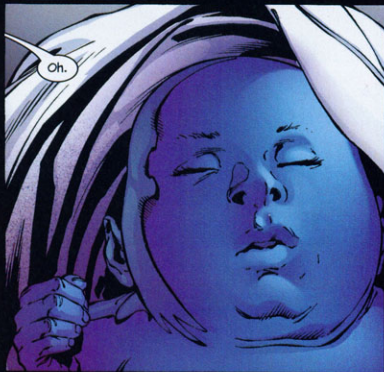
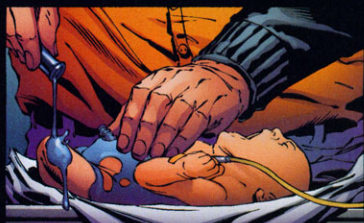
















When you grow up and ask me, Kid, I'll tell you: You saw your mother ...



...and she held you.



He's perfect, Maria. You did good.



I'm naming him Antonio.

After your little brother who never got a chance to grow up.









You're a biologist. You know a woman has needs.



Who... what are you...

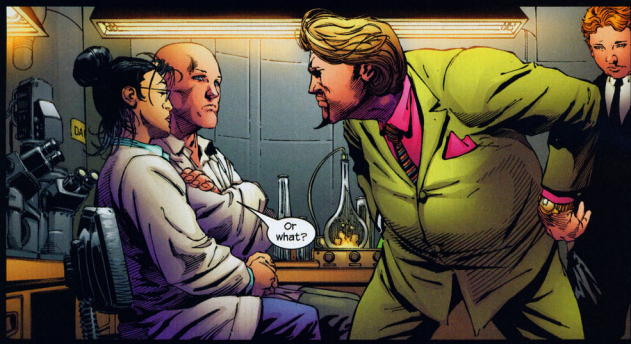


Mr. Stane wishes to see you, Mrs. Stane.

We were just... researching...



You are going to write down every part of the formula that you know!



Or what?



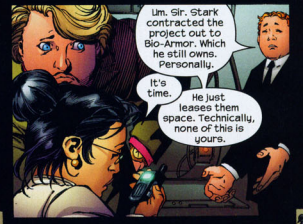
Or you'll never work as a scientist again.

Can't fire someone who doesn't work for you.





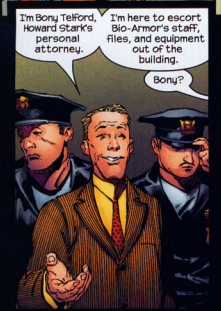
When I bought Stark Defense Corporation, I bought your contract.



Um, Sir, Stark contracted the project out to Bio-Armor. Which he still owns. Personally.

It's time.

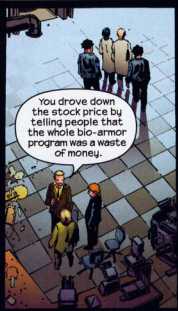
He just leases them space. Technically, none of this is yours.



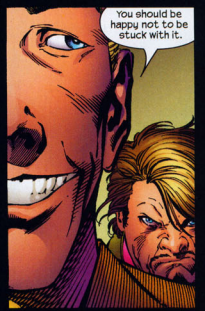
I'm Bony Telford, Howard Stark's personal attorney.

I'm here to escort Bio-Armor's staff, files, and equipment out of the building.

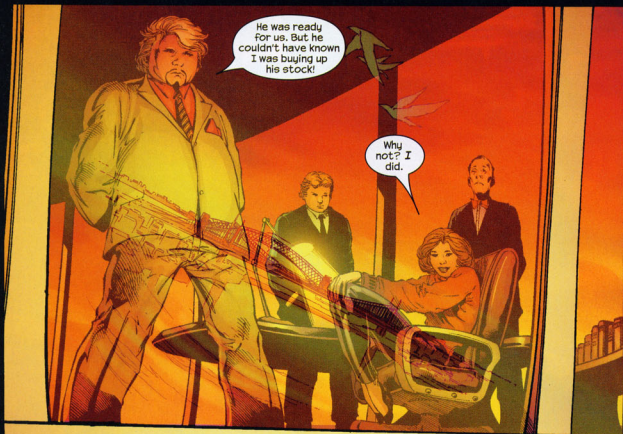
Bony?



You drove down the stock price by telling people that the whole bio-armor program was a waste of money.



You should be happy not to be stuck with it.



He was ready for us. But he couldn't have known I was buying up his stock!

Why not? I did.

Bio-Armor is required to provide Stark Corporation with samples.



We can have our own scientists analyze them and figure out how to make more.



You really don't know anything about science, do you, darling?



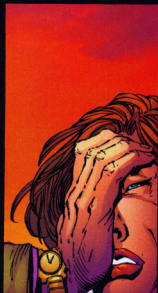
The samples won't tell you the process they used to create them.

That's why Howard never patents anything. You have to reveal the process.




You played me. You said we'd *get* his patents.












"Zebediah Stane won't give up. Anybody who works with me will be in danger."



"Anybody who *ever* worked with you, sir. You have to let us stay with you."




"You won't be any safer with me."

"Bio-armor is my life's work, sir. You didn't let Stane take it away from *you*. Why are you taking it away from *me*?"

"You'll only have to train somebody else to help you."



"Obviously I never trained you to do what I say."



"First thing, you'll want to get rid of that blue color. People will notice that."



"His name is Antonio Stark."

"But you can call him Tony."

"Hello, Tony."

As I told you, I want you to write down everything you know about bio-armor.

It doesn't work.



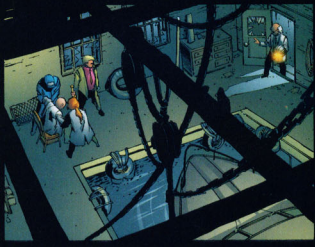
I hear Stark used to do that to you a lot. To amuse visitors.

I think my ribs are broken.



You're just going to kill me, whether I tell you or not.

I'm upper management. I don't kill people.



Here's the Lid, Mr. Stane.

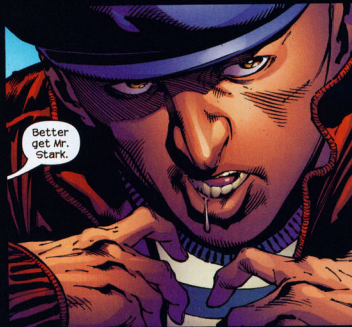


You'll talk so much, we won't be able to shut you up.





GENOA, ITALY





Stane sent him here as a message. Whatever Nero knew, now Stane knows it.

And he knows where we are.

Maybe Stane did this to him because he wouldn't talk.

Everybody talks when Stane puts his Lid on them.



The military canceled Zebediah's contract because of it.

The Lid doesn't work?

It works. Put it on, it sucks out everything you know.

It doesn't leave much behind.



Using it on a prisoner would be considered a war crime.

Is this a war?

Now it is.



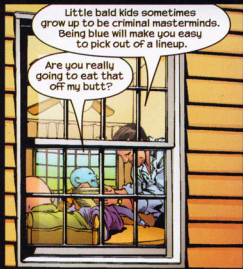
Zebediah tracked this boat. That means he's got access to U.S. Defense Department spy satellites.



By the time the sun comes up again, we won't be on this barge.

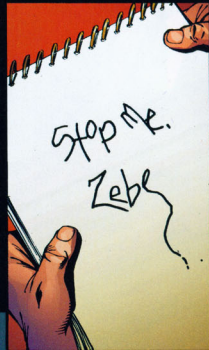


FOUR YEARS LATER...















What are you doing, you lackwit?

How did... what...?

The bio-armor. Anything that's pushed into it gets eaten away by the bacteria.



But if the pushing comes from the boy, it doesn't do a thing. That's why he can wear shoes and pick things up.

Your breath smells.

Get the Lid.



The bio-armor will eat away all the needles inside the Lid.

Get me some soap and water. Antibacterial soap.



You're not supposed to wash me.

The sedative was supposed to protect him from the pain of washing away the bio-armor.

But...oh well.



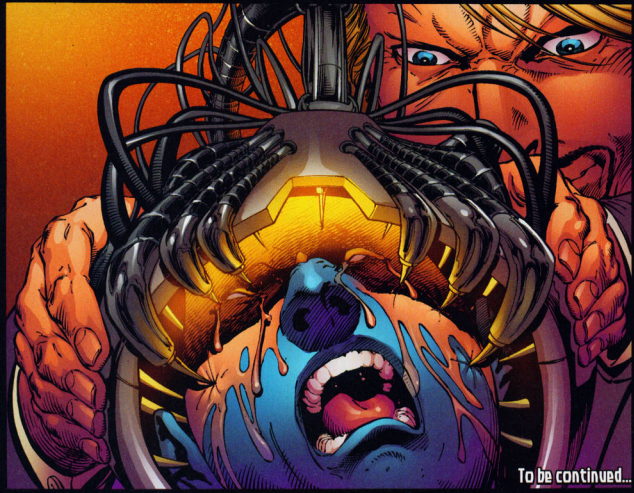
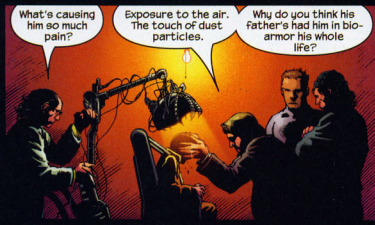
What's causing him so much pain?

Exposure to the air. The touch of dust particles.

Why do you think his father's had him in bio-armor his whole life?

What are all the needles in the Lid going to do to him, then?

They'll make him want to keep me happy.



To be continued...