

ULTIMATE

IRON MAN



MARVEL

Andy Kubert
154A40VE

DIRECT EDITION

PARENTAL ADVISORY



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ORSON SCOTT CARD
ANDY KUBERT

ISSUE

4

PREVIOUSLY IN ULTIMATE IRON MAN:

Tony Stark isn't a normal boy. His mother, Maria, was a geneticist working on a regeneration process where a virus turns every body cell into a neural cell, capable of new growth (like an embryonic cell). The problem with the process is that each cell is therefore hyper-sensitive, causing the infected person great pain. She accidentally infected herself and Tony (who was in her womb at the time) with the virus. The pain caused Maria's death during Tony's birth. Tony was saved from this pain by a revolutionary nanotech armor that his father, Howard, developed. The armor is a thin layer on the wearer's skin that absorbs shock and eats any metal that comes into contact with it.

Zabediah Stone, Howard Stark's main competitor in the world of Defense Technology, stole Howard's company and first wife, Loni, but couldn't get what he wanted most—the nanotech armor technology. So he started playing dirty. He kidnapped Tony and tortured him to get information on the armor. He was caught, sent to prison and his company went to Loni and the son she and Stone had together—Obadiah.

Right now, Zabediah isn't Tony's problem. Two minutes ago, Tony and his friend James "Rhoddy" Rhodes went down to their school's boiler room to try out a new, more elaborate armor Tony designed. When the armor is activated by Tony's remote control it sends thousands of volts into whoever touches it. The suit works, all right, but it just fried three bullies that have it in for Rhodes and Tony. Now, the bullies are back up and are ready to kick the living crap out of Rhodes and Tony ...



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Leave him alone!



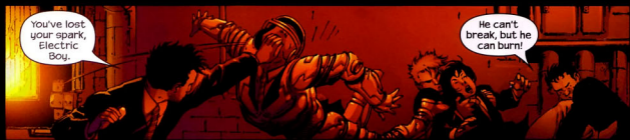
He looks like firewood to me.

How appropriate. The other one looks like coal.

Get the controls away from him.

Rhodey, put on the helmet first!







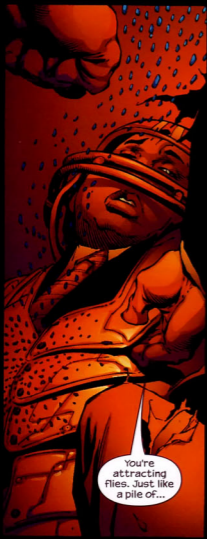
Activate!

Hey, this is hot!

What are you supposed to be, the Terminator?

It's not the heat, it's the proximity.

Shut up and shove him in!

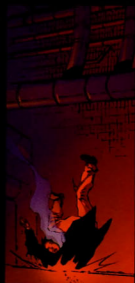


You're attracting flies. Just like a pile of...



He's not cooperating.

Hold his legs together!







This is all just a misunderstanding.

Of course.

These things happen.



What have you done, you monster!



Help! A monster is killing boys in the furnace room!



I won't let you burn them!



Deactivate.



Dammit, Nifara, it's me, James!



Call 9-1-1!

Tony! I swear I didn't think you could burn!

Don't...call... doctor...



Of course we're calling a doctor.

Call...
Pat.



In the furnace room of the gym. It's pretty bad.

Feed him.
And give him water to drink.

We didn't think it would hurt him.



You don't want his father to have you killed? Get food. **NOW.**



He's dying, and you're sending out for lunch?

He needs protein!

You want to help? Get him water.

Bottle...
in suit...
spray...



Food. Mass quantities. And *maybe* you can stay out of jail.

I hope Evian is okay.



I can't get this off!

Why are you wearing that stupid getup in the first place? They'll never let you play football dressed like that.

Think it's Halloween?



Disassemble suit.



I got the bottle.

Spray me.



Now get the suit on me.



These are all the sandwiches out of the machines.

They've all got meat.

Or cheese.

I swear it, the guy told us the kid couldn't burn.



Shut up and leave the food.

What guy?



Guy told us if we wanted to teach you a lesson--

Fire would hurt you, but you wouldn't burn--

Said he worked for your father.

He said it would be like a joke.

Your father was sick of you showing off.

Just a guy in a suit.

Teach you a lesson.

Gave us a hundred bucks.

Each.



It was supposed to be murder, you cretins. He hired you as hit men.

Stupid, incompetent hit men.

Get out of here. And don't talk about this to anybody. Ever.



You should both go outside now. Keep people from coming in till my dad gets here.

I can't believe you're eating at a time like this.

I can't believe you're not conscious.
Doesn't it hurt?



It hurts all the time.
This is worse, but ...
I tune it out.

If you mean it hurts to wear that suit-amen, brother. Don't you have *any* padding in there?



This thing gave me bruises every time I moved my arm.

Poor baby. Do you think we care about your bruises?

Are you two really going to discuss how to make that suit more *comfortable*?

I've got a lot of time invested in that suit. It doesn't work if it hurts to wear it.

Didn't it hurt you when you tried it on?

Like I said, it hurts all the time.

You mean... even when you're *not* wearing the suit?

I didn't think of padding. Show me the pressure points.

Poor baby genius.



Thanks for calling me instead of 9-1-1.

Tony told us to.

He was conscious?

Through everything.



Good job, Tony.



New skin over everything. Already.

If the muscles weren't so atrophied, you'd never know there'd been an injury.



No gurney.

I'm walking out of here.

You can't.

I can in the suit.



What do you think you're doing?

Is that one of our football players?

Those aren't even our team colors, bonehead.



All visitors are supposed to check in through the front desk.

My son was assaulted in the furnace room. By four of your students.

I've heard nothing about this!

Exactly. Which is why my son will not be coming back to this school.



You aren't going to talk to the media about this, are you?



Nor am I going to bring charges against the boys who did it.



I'm sure they're not really bad.

Just cowards. Bullies. Killers.

The proud men you trained them to be.



I can't believe your father isn't going to press charges.

They should go to jail!

How do we explain why I don't have a mark on me?

They'll claim it never happened.



Our word against theirs.

That never works out so well for us black folks.

Don't start getting all tribal on me.

You don't know what it's like, you've never been black.

I know what it's like to wear a goofy-looking suit.



And you've never been blue.



They said some guy paid them to do it. He said Tony couldn't be killed.

Well, he can.

My point is, it was a hit. Like the Mafia.

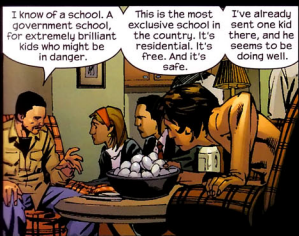
Yes, I got that.



James, Nifara, you're in danger.

Why?

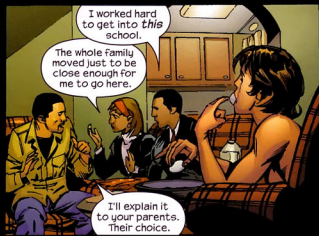
We're witnesses.



I know of a school. A government school, for extremely brilliant kids who might be in danger.

This is the most exclusive school in the country. It's residential. It's free. And it's safe.

I've already sent one kid there, and he seems to be doing well.



I worked hard to get into *this* school.

The whole family moved just to be close enough for me to go here.

I'll explain it to your parents. Their choice.



So I guess this turned out to be a failure.

Are you kidding? Without that suit, no way I could have stopped them in time.



In *time*? If he wasn't...the way he is...

Weird. He'd be dead.



If he wasn't how he is, then nobody'd be trying to kill him.



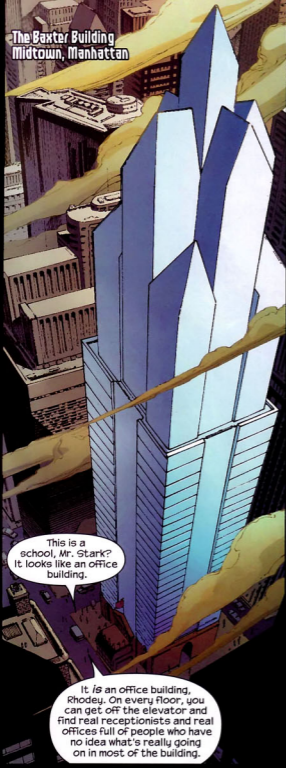
What did we *learn* from this?

Pick safer friends.

Stay out of the furnace room.

I need a better suit.

The Baxter Building
Midtown, Manhattan



This is a school, Mr. Stark? It looks like an office building.

It *is* an office building, Rhodey. On every floor, you can get off the elevator and find real receptionists and real offices full of people who have no idea what's really going on in most of the building.



So if we decide not to go to school here, you have to kill us?

Please tell me I was joking.



Howard Stark. I have an appointment.

God bless you, sir!

Open for Stark party of four.



Why did I know they wouldn't let us come in the front door?

This *is* the front door.



You all here?

Four of four.



Okay, now it looks like a high school.

Does the cafeteria food suck?



It has all the features of a first-rate high school except one.

No football team.

But they still have cheerleaders, right?



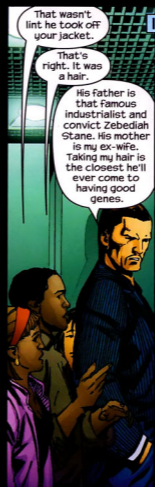
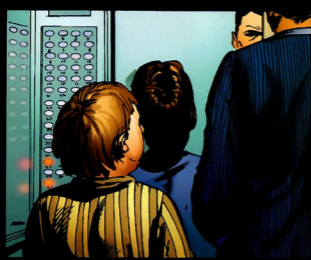
Gosh, I am *so* excited to meet you. Are you going to be a new schoolmate of mine?

Are you a genius like so many of us? Or is your dad super rich and really well connected in Washington, so he could *buy* your way in?

I bought *your* way in, Obadiah.

You changed my life, sir, you really did. Without your intervention I would have had to make it on my brains alone. Instead, I am getting the finest education the government has to offer to its pet guinea pigs.

I hope I become an international spy. When I assassinate people, I'll dedicate all the corpses to you, sir!



Keep your hands off my father.

I only touched his five-thousand-dollar bespoke suit from Saville Row.

It had lint.

Hong Kong. Under a thousand.

The four thousand I saved paid your tuition, Obadiah.

For a month.

DING

Excuse me, o kind benefactor.

So what's this experiment you wanted to show us?

You said something about anti-grav?

It's probably something Mr. Stark's company is already mass-marketing in Asia. But here in the Baxter Building, it's so secret the faculty don't even know about it.

That wasn't lint he took off your jacket.

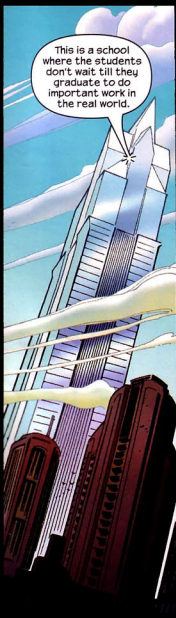
That's right. It was a hair.

His father is that famous industrialist and convict Zebediah Stane. His mother is my ex-wife. Taking my hair is the closest he'll ever come to having good genes.

So why are you paying for him to go to school here?

To keep the rest of the world safe from him.

DING



This is a school where the students don't wait till they graduate to do important work in the real world.



Does this thing fly?

Fast and deadly.

And a student made it?

A student I already have under contract. The moment she graduates...



No one would do an experiment out here. What is this about, Obi-Wanda?

Do you really think they'd leave it out for anyone to see?

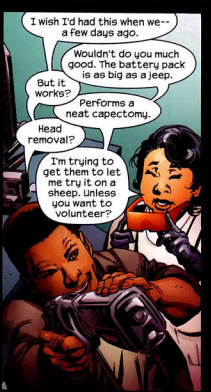
Who's to see it? Nobody comes out here.



This takes real sensitivity.

I can't believe you're not crushing everything.

You're not bad at this.



I wish I'd had this when we-- a few days ago.

Wouldn't do you much good. The battery pack is as big as a jeep.

But it works?

Performs a neat capectomy.

Head removal?

I'm trying to get them to let me try it on a sheep. Unless you want to volunteer?



It's the best-equipped lab in the world for students working at the highest level.

It's a prison, Dad.

I don't think I want to go to school.

High school is all about keeping kids off the street till they're civilized.

What is he doing down there?



That doesn't look safe.



Security, we've got a kid in danger at the southeast corner of the 30th floor. Outside. On the edge.



I just want to see you fly, Link. I think you can do it. I think that's the reason you're here at this school.

You'll bring her back up? She'll be safe?

Run for help, Link!

Word of honor. Link the Flying Boy.



Come back! Get away from the edge!



There are witnesses up there! You won't get away with this!

Of course there are witnesses! This is science!



I'm losing her, Link!

AAAAAAH!



Don't you get it, Link? I'm insane! If you don't fly, I will drop her!



That's right! Spread your wings! You can do it! Fly!

No, Link!





Link!

Oh, well. He gave it a good try.



The trouble is, Dodge, I'm really not very strong.

You murderer!

You've been a doll, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go.



If only I could have been in two places at once. I had to miss the best part.

The landing.



It was a suicide pact.

I held on to her as long as I could. Why didn't you get here sooner?



Her shoe came off.



What have I done, sending him here?

The Stark House



You couldn't have saved them, not even with a flying suit.

You had unbreakable glass between them and you.



My suit could have broken it.

What, you think you should have been wearing it under your clothes?



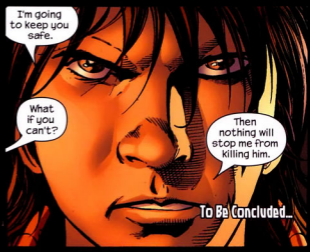
I know it's too late to save them.



Obadiah Stane took that hair from your jacket for a reason.

Either he plans to clone me, or plant the hair in order to implicate me in a crime.

He plans to destroy you. The way he murdered those kids-- without anybody being able to blame him.



I'm going to keep you safe.

What if you can't?

Then nothing will stop me from killing him.

To Be Concluded...

TAKE A BITE OUT OF
NICK FURY'S

HOWLING COMMANDOS

FIRST ISSUE!

WATCH
FOR PRESSURE
PLATES.

PRESSURE
PLATES?
MIGHT I REMIND
YOU THAT THIS IS
AFGHANISTAN?

NOT IN
THAT TONE'A
VOICE.

HE'S GOT A
POINT. PRESSURE
PLATE SECURITY? THAT'S
A BIT SOPHISTICATED
FOR A COUNTRY WHOSE
NATIONAL FLOWER'S
A ROCK.

AND ANOTHER
ONE HEARD FROM. DID
ANYONE READ THE
MISSION BRIEF?

I TRIED.

GOOD
FOR YOU.

THESE CLOWNS
BEEN BUYING UP TECH
FROM WHOEVER'S SELLIN'.
MOSTLY FROM THOSE
TRIPLE L MANIACS.

TRIPLE L?

HELLO?
LORDS OF THE LIVING
LIGHTNING?

I THOUGHT
YOU SAID SHE WAS
NICER WHEN SHE
VAMPS OUT?

SHE'S
NICER
TO ME.

MOTION
DETECTORS DEAD
AHEAD. NINA?

ON IT.

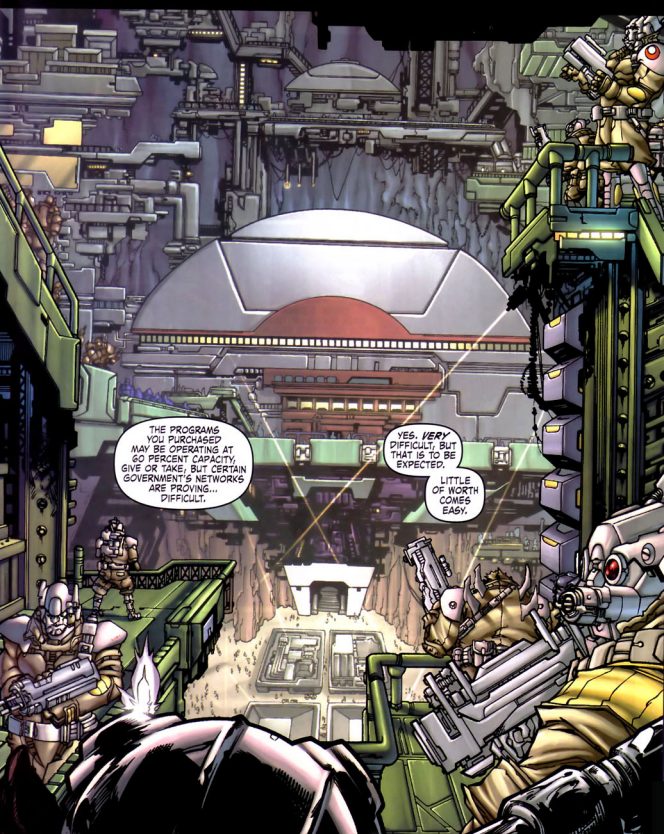
YO, MONKEY BOY?
YOU'RE AWFUL QUIET
BACK THERE.

YOU TRY BREATHING
DOWNWIND OF THE THREE
OF THEM. DEAD, DEADER AND
DEADEST. MAKES L.A. SMELL
LIKE A FLOWER SHOW.

THIS FROM A POOP
FLINGER.

DID ANYONE
STOP TO CONSIDER
THEY MIGHT HAVE A
SOUND-SENSITIVE
ALARM SYSTEM?

SHUT.
UP.
YOU.



THE PROGRAMS YOU PURCHASED MAY BE OPERATING AT 60 PERCENT CAPACITY, GIVE OR TAKE, BUT CERTAIN GOVERNMENT'S NETWORKS ARE PROVING... DIFFICULT.

YES, *VERY* DIFFICULT, BUT THAT IS TO BE EXPECTED.

LITTLE OF WORTH COMES EASY.

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CREATURES ON THE LOOSE!

STILL AND ALL, AN AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING. A CENTRALIZED INTELLIGENCE BROKERAGE...*VERY* AMBITIOUS.

QUITE SO. QUITE SO.

WE NEED BETTER THAN YOU'VE BEEN PROVIDING. IT'S TIME TO START TAKING US SERIOUSLY.

WE *DO* TAKE YOU *QUITE* SERIOUSLY.

THE LORDS OF THE LIVING LIGHTNING DO *NOT* ENGAGE IN FRIVOLOUS PURSUITS.

THAT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

PERHAPS AN ACHILLES WORM WITH MITOTICALLY PARALLEL INTRUSION ROUTINES. SNIFFS AND INJECTS ON KERNEL LEVEL.

PROACTIVE SWEEP DETECTION AND POLYMORPHIC SPOOF RESPONSE INCLUSIVE.

IN WORDS I CAN UNDERSTAND?

IT'S UNDETECTABLE BY MOST SECURITY SOFTWARE. IF COMPROMISED, LOGIC BOMBS OR CYANIDE PILLS. YOUR CHOICE.

OR NOT.

WHAT'S IT GOING TO COST?

UNLIMITED, UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO THE DATA BASE.

HAVE YOU COMPROMISED S.H.I.E.L.D. YET?

WE WOULDN'T BE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION IF...

THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.

I QUITE AGREE.



STATUS!

COMPROMISED.
PRIMARY POWERS DOWN
ACROSS THE GRID.

IMPOSSIBLE!

APPARENTLY
NOT.



TROUBLE IN
PARADISE?

MOST DISTRESSING.
WE'VE SOFTWARE TO
PREVENT SUCH
AS THIS.

I KNOW!
WE OWN IT!



GRRRRRRR



A WOLF,
NO?

A WOLF.
YES. NOT INDIGENOUS
TO AFGHANISTAN?

MOST DECIDEDLY
NOT. THIS DOES NOT
BODE WELL.



OH...
MY...
GOD...

NO... NO
NO NO NO...
GOD IN HEAVEN,
NO...



BRATATATATATATATA
CH-KOOM!

NICE
LIGHTING CHOICE.
BLOOD RED. YOU
SHOULDN'T
HAVE.



PARTY'S
STARTED, GENTLEMEN.
LET THE REVELS
BEGIN.

CHAK! CHAKKACHAK!

WHOOM!
AAAACHUK!

CONTINUED IN
NICK FURY'S
HOWLING
COMMANDOS
#1 - ON SALE
IN OCTOBER!