

MARVEL



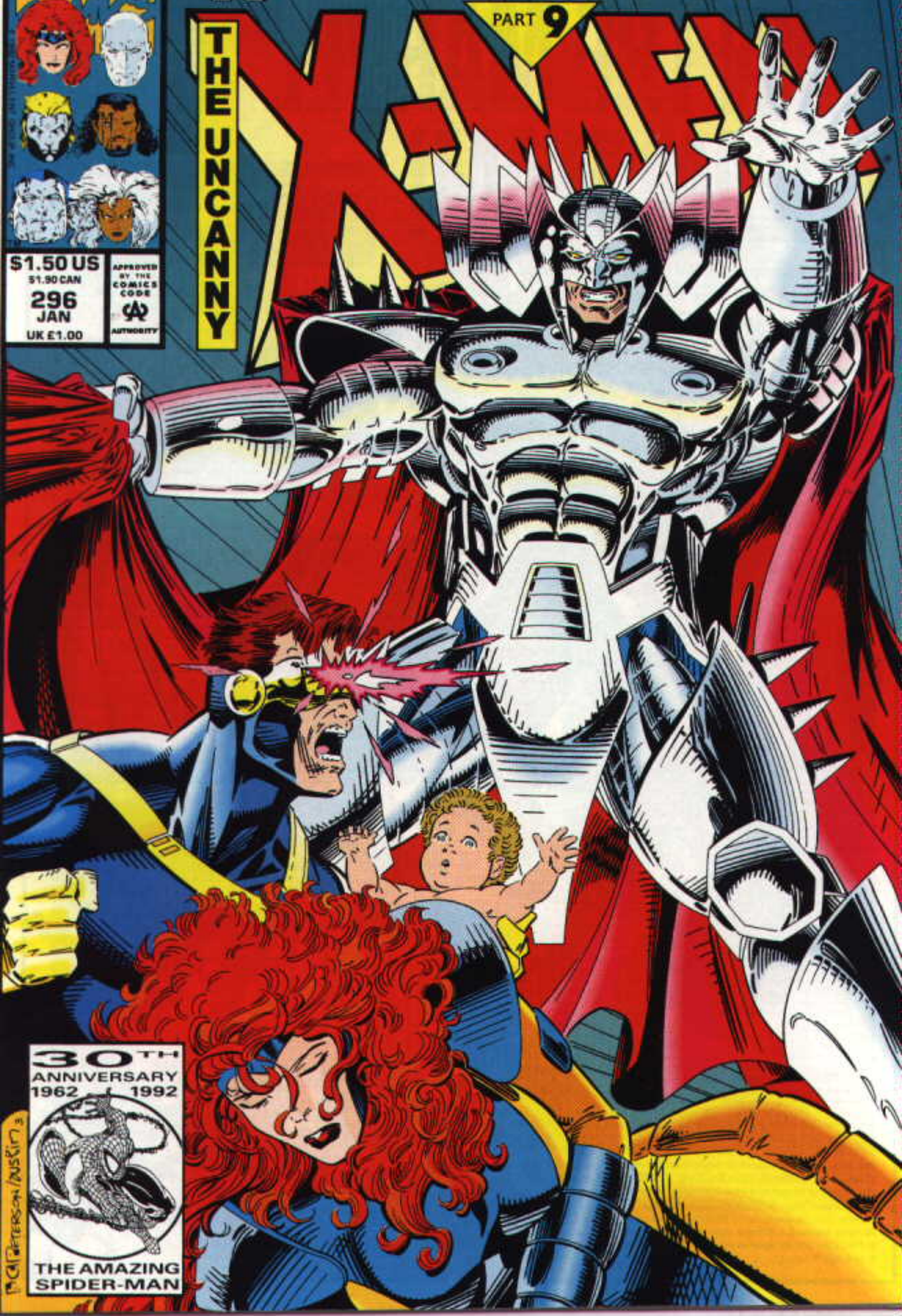
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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

X-CUTIONER'S SONG

PART 9

THE UNCANNY



30TH
ANNIVERSARY
1962 - 1992



THE AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN

McPHERSON/DUSKIN

JEAN!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

IT WAS YOUR IDEA TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE, CYCLOPS. *

WE'RE ONLY HERE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR CELL--

--AND JEAN GREY, IT WOULD SEEM, DOWN TO THE MORGUE!

IF IT IS TRUE THAT A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS...

...THEN THIS IS A PORTRAIT OF EXHAUSTION--

--HOPELESSNESS--

--AND FINALLY, DESPAIR.

STAN LEE PRESENTS
THE UNCANNY X-MEN
IN

PRESCENDO

THE CHILDREN OF THE ATOM KNOW STRYFE IS BEHIND THE SHOOTING OF PROFESSOR X, THE FRAMING OF CABLE, THE DEFEAT OF APOCALYPSE, THE CAPTURE OF X-FORCE AND THE DISMANTLING OF THE M.I.R.!

LOBDELL / PETERSON / AUSTIN
ELIOPOULOS / ROSAS / JAVINS
HARRAS / DEFALCO

NOW THEY MUST FIND A WAY TO STOP HIM / CHAPTER OF THE X-CUTIONER'S SONG. **9**

SORRY, TUSK, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU OR YOUR "EXTENSIONS."

JEAN AND I HAVE OTHER PLANS!

AS A TEENAGER, SCOTT SUMMERS LIVED IN MORTAL FEAR OF HIS MUTANT POWER.

CURSED WITH UNCONTROLLABLE OPTIC BLASTS CAPABLE OF PULVERIZING ADAMANTUM--

--HE VOWED NEVER TO USE THEM AGAINST ANOTHER LIVING BEING.

THAT WAS BEFORE THE X-MEN.

BEFORE HE BECAME THE LEADER OF A TEAM OF MUTANTS SWORN TO DEFEND A WORLD THAT FEARS AND HATES THEM.

BEFORE HE DISCOVERED JEAN GREY-- AND LEARNED THERE IS VERY LITTLE A MAN WON'T DO.

ZAT

TO PROTECT THE WOMAN HE LOVES.

NOT THE BRIGHTEST DARK RIDER, WAS HE?

DON'T JUDGE HIM TOO HARSHLY, JEAN--

--HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN OUR PSYCHIC LINK ALLOWED YOU TO TELEKINETICALLY RESTRAIN MY OPTIC BLASTS.

JUST AS WELL, OR WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SET HIM UP LIKE THAT.

THEN AGAIN, SCOTT...

MAYBE WE'RE THE ONES WHO'VE BEEN SET UP?!

THIS COMPLEX GOES ON FOR MILES--

--ALL OF IT LOOKING WASILY FAMILIAR!

COULD BE BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!

MAINPANE!

ANOTHER OF APOCALYPSE'S HENCHMEN-- BUT WHY ARE THEY SERVING STRYFE?

OUR LOYALTIES
HAVE ALWAYS
BEEN TO THE
FIRST AMONG
MUTANTS!

A MANTLE
STRYFE RECENTLY
WRESTED FROM
OUR FORMER
MASTER! *

SCOTT MUST BE
MORE NERVOUS
THAN I THOUGHT.

WITH ALL
THIS IN-
FIGHTING--

THAT **ALMOST**
SOUNDED LIKE HIS
VERSION OF A
JOKE.

--WHERE DO YOU
PEOPLE SQUEEZE-
IN YOUR **SIDS**
FOR WORLD
DOMINATION?

THE T.K. LINE IS IN
PLACE. READY TO
COMPLETE OUR
GREAT ESCAPE?

NO...

NOW! I'M
READY!

AS OPPOSED TO CYCLOPS,
JEAN GREY HAS ALWAYS
EMBRACED HER MUTANT
ABILITIES.

BLESSED WITH THE
NATURAL TALENTS OF
TELEPATHY AND
TELEKINETICS--

--SHE FELT SHE
COULDN'T BE ANY
HAPPIER WITH
HER GENETIC
"GIFTS."

THAT WAS
BEFORE SCOTT
SUMMERS

BEFORE SHE'D
SACRIFICED HER
LIFE ON HIS
BEHALF--

--ONLY TO LEARN THERE
ARE GREATER POWERS
THAN DEATH IN THE
UNIVERSE--

--AND THE
GREATEST
OF THESE
IS LOVE.

SURPRISED,
ZERO?

YOU
SHOULDN'T
BE.

DID YOU
BELIEVE
THEY WOULD
HAVE
ESCAPED--
IF I HAD NOT
ALLOWED?

BUT STRYFE
RECEIVES NO
ANSWER FROM
HIS SILENT
SOLDIER--

-- THE ONLY MEMBER
OF THE MUTANT
LIBERATION FRONT
TO ESCAPE JUSTICE
AT THE HANDS OF
XAVIER'S STUDENTS.*

SUMMERS AND
GREY ARE NOTHING
IF NOT PREDICTABLE.

AND IN
THE END--

-- THAT
PREDICTABILITY
WILL DESTROY
THEM.

AS
SURELY..

AS IT
DESTROYED
ME.



SALEM
CENTER.

PROFESSOR XAVIER'S
SCHOOL FOR GIFTED
YOUNGSTERS.

HOME OF
THE X-MEN.

THIS ONE IS DR.
HENRY MCCOY,
KNOWN--

--BOTH AFFECTIONATELY
AND FUNCTIONALLY--

-- AS THE
BEAST.





"THE THREE OF THEM
HAVE PROBABLY KILLED
EACH OTHER BY NOW."

ANYONE FOR
A CUP OF
COFFEE,
WOLVERINE?

BISHOP?

ANYONE?

I have no need of liquid
refreshments, Nathan.

Thank you, anyway.

I WAS
SPEAKING
TO OUR GUESTS,
PROFESSOR.

They do not seem eager to
engage in conversation.

Perhaps they are uncomfortable
aboard Graymalkin?

Space travel — even our tight
orbit around the Earth — is an
acquired taste.

OR MAYBE THEY'RE
JUST CONCENTRATING
ON THE TASK AT HAND—
LOCATING STRYFE?

GENTLEMEN, I
APPRECIATE THE
IMPORTANCE OF A
STRATEGY SESSION
AS MUCH AS THE
NEXT SEASONED
WARMORSE...

BUT RUNNING
THROUGH THIS
SCENARIO AD
INFINITUM IS
GETTING US
NOWHERE.

YOU'VE SEEN
AT THAT FOR
HOURS, SON.

WHY DON'T
YOU TAKE A
BREAK?



COMPUTER?

RUN
HOLO-
PROGRAM.
AGAIN.

Proceeding.





AS NEAR
AS WE
KNOW...

... THIS BEGAN WITH
AN ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPT ON PROFES-
SOR XAVIER BY...

-- ALL
APPEARANCES
TO THE
CONTRARY--

-- SOMEONE
OTHER THAN
CABLE.

It has been established
Stryfe, sans his helmet, is
an exact replica of Cable.



OR THE
OTHER WAY
AROUND

MEANWHILE--
SUMMERS AND GREY
WERE BEING
KIDNAPPED BY
APOCALYPSE'S
HORSEMEN...

... AS THE PROFESSOR,
DESPITE THE MANSION'S
SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY,
LAY DYING--



-- ONE CELL
AT A TIME.

At that time, there was little
evidence to connect the
tragedies.



UNTIL MR.
SINISTER.

FOR
WHATEVER HIS
REASONS--

-- HE INTIMATED
STRYFE WAS BEHIND
THIS WELL-
ORCHESTRATED
ASSAULT.



NOT THAT THE... KIDS...
IN X-FORCE COULD
CORROBORATE MY
INNOCENCE UPON
THEIR CAPTURE--

-- SINCE
"PRIVATE
MATTERS"
HAD FORCED
ME UNDER-
GROUND FOR
A WHILE.

It's not the first time Stryfe
set-up your people in order
to get at you, Nathan.

APOCALYPSE IS APPARENTLY ALSO A TARGET FOR STRYFE'S REVENGE.

ACCORDING TO GOLD TEAM, HE HAD NOT AUTHORIZED HIS HORSE-MEN TO ATTACK...

...ANY MORE THAN YOU HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE ASSAULT UPON THE PROFESSOR--

--AS YOU MANAGED TO EXPLAIN TO OUR SATISFACTION.

FOR THE MOMENT.

STRYFE IS OUT FOR VENGEANCE-- BUT WHY?

AGAINST WHOM?

FOR WHAT?

PERHAPS.

Perhaps a display of the key elements to date?

BUT YOU'RE MISSING ONE.

THERE YOU GO.

CABLE-- A GENERAL WITHOUT HIS TROOPS.

STRYFE-- A MAN FROM THE FUTURE OBSESSED WITH THE PAST.

APOCALYPSE STRIPPED OF HIS HONOR GUARD...

...AS THE PROFESSOR IS NEARLY STRIPPED OF HIS LIFE.

FIND OUT WHAT THESE DISPARATE PLAYERS HAVE IN COMMON--

FINALLY, SCOTT AND JEAN-- THE HEART AND SOUL TORN FROM THE BODY THAT IS THE X-MEN.

-- AND WE'VE FOUND THE KEY TO DEFEATING STRYFE!



SCOTT, MAYBE NOW
ISN'T THE TIME TO
QUESTION THE MOTIVES
OF OUR CAPTOR--

-- BUT I
CAN'T HELP
WONDERING--

WHY
US?

NEAR AS
I CAN TELL--

-- THIS "STRYFE"
BLAMES YOU AND
ME..

FOR SOME-
THING THAT
HAPPENED IN
HIS PAST.

A SINGLE
EVENT WHICH
CHANGED HIS
LIFE.



BUT HOW IS THAT
POSSIBLE? HE'S
GOT TO BE TWENTY
YEARS OLDER THAN
US.

WE'LL PONDER
THE SPECIFICS
LATER--

--AFTER WE'VE
ESCAPED AND ALERTED
THE REST OF THE
X-MEN TO...



TO
THE..

TO
THE
BABY?



IT WAS NEVER HIS INTENT
TO ACTUALLY RULE THE
WORLD.

INSTEAD, APOCALYPSE WAS
CONTENT--DETERMINED--TO
ASSUME THE ROLE OF "CARE-
TAKER" TO HIS FELLOW
MUTANTS.

HE HAS SPENT THE PAST
SEVERAL CENTURIES OF
HIS LIFE PRUNING AND
CUTTING--

--WHEN NECESSARY,
HACKING AND
SLASHING--

-- AT THE GENETIC
WEEDS WHICH THREATEN
TO STRANGLE THE EVER
GROWING BRANCH OF
HUMANITY KNOWN AS
HOMO-SUPERIOR.

OVER THE YEARS,
HE HAS MADE
MANY ENEMIES--

... AND PRECIOUS
FEW ALLIES.

SUFFICIENTLY
RECOVERED FROM
MY... CONCENTRATION...
WITH STREYF--

EXTENDING

-- WE CAN NOW
RESUME OUR
NEGOTIATIONS.

ON? WERE WE IN THE
MIDDLE OF A DEAL
WHEN YOU PASSED OUT
ON THE FRONT STOOP?

MORE TO THE POINT--

-- WHY DO YOU
BELIEVE YOU ARE OF
ANY USE TO US?

... I CAN DO
WHAT YOU CAN
NOT.



BECAUSE,
STORM--
HAVOK--

I CAN SAVE
YOUR SACRED
XAVIER.

YOUR SERVICES
IN EXCHANGE FOR
OURS, AS YOU
HAVE SAID.

BUT, IN THE
GODDESS'
NAME--

-- WHY SHOULD
WE TRUST YOU?

HALF YOUR
NUMBER ARE
IMPRISONED--

-- OR HAVE
FALLEN IN
BATTLE.



FRANKLY, CHILD--
YOU HAVE NO
CHOICE.

WHO'S TO SAY
YUH CAN EVEN
SAVE THE
PROFESSOR?

I
DO.

APOCALYPSE
IS A MASTER OF
MUTAGENETICS.

HE ONCE INFECTED
SCOTT'S SON--NATHAN
CHRISTOPHER-- WITH
A VIRUS WHICH
RESEMBLES THE ONE
THREATENING
CHARLES. X

MY WINGS-- "GIFTS"
FROM THIS MADMAN--
ARE TECHNO-ORGANICALLY
DERIVED FROM HIS OWN
SHAPE-SHIFTING CELLS

FOR BETTER
OR WORSE--

--THOUGH I
LOATHE TO
ADMIT IT--

--I AM LIVING
TESTIMONY TO
HIS GENIUS, TWISTED
OR OTHERWISE.

HE MAY BE
CHARLES' ONLY
HOPE.

© X-FACTOR #68 -- TECHNO-259



IF WARREN BELIEVES HIM--

-- THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO DISCUSS.

BRING HIM.

I AM CURIOUS.

YOU HAVE NEVER MADE A SECRET OF YOUR HATRED FOR ME.

GIVEN THIS OPPORTUNITY-- WHY DON'T YOU ACQUIESCE TO YOUR HEART'S DESIRE?

WHY NOT SLAY ME, SON?



I AM NO MORE YOUR "SON" THAN I AM THE "ANGEL OF DEATH" YOU SOUGHT TO TURN ME INTO.

WHEN I **DO** KILL YOU--

--AND REST ASSURED I WILL--

--IT WILL ONLY BE AFTER YOU'VE SUFFERED THE WAY I'VE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF YOU.

IT WILL BE AT A TIME AND PLACE OF MY CHOOSING--

-- NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THE SITUATION HAS PRESENTED ITSELF.





OH, LORD... THAT CHILD--LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE--LIKE...

...NATHAN?

BUT WHEN ASHLEY TOOK MY SON TO THE FUTURE TO SAVE HIS LIFE--

--SHE SAID IT WAS FOREVER. SHE SAID I'D NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN.

SCOTT, I'M SORRY... I DON'T NEED MY PSYCHIC POWERS TO KNOW HOW DIFFICULT THIS IS FOR YOU. IT'S HARD FOR ME, TOO.

IT'S AS IF STRYFE KNEW WE PLAYED OUT A SIMILAR SCENARIO NOT THAT LONG AGO.

BUT, AGAIN...



...HOW COULD HE KNOW?

YES HOW WOULD HE UNLESS--

...HE WAS THERE?



DON'T GET CARELESS, JEAN. HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S NOT AN AUTOMATON-- A TRAP? STRYFE DOESN'T SEEM ABOVE THAT.

I CAN SENSE A THOUGHT PATTERN, SCOTT.

HE'S ALIVE.

ALAS, A STATE OF
BEING HE WILL NOT
ENJOY FOR MUCH
LONGER!

THIS CHILD'S
MIND HAS BEEN
GENETICALLY
LINKED WITH
MY OWN CON-
SCIOUSNESS--

--SIMILARLY, HIS
BODY IS INTERWOVEN
WITH THE LIFE SUPPORT
SYSTEM OF THIS ENTIRE
COMPLEX!

YOU'RE SAYING
WE'RE POWERLESS
TO STOP YOU WITH-
OUT HURTING THE
BOY? YOU SON
OF--

HOW COULD YOU?
HIDING BEHIND
THE LIFE OF AN
INFANT, STRYFE?

YOU'RE
INSANE!

DO YOU HONESTLY
BELIEVE WE VALUE
OUR OWN LIVES--

--OVER THAT
OF AN INNOCENT
CHILD?

NO NEED
TO MAKE A
DECISION
RIGHT AWAY.

YOU HAVE
THIRTY
SECONDS.

YOU MIS-
UNDERSTAND.
I HIDE BEHIND
NOTHING. RATHER
I INVITE.

YOU HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY
TO RIDE THE
WORLD OF THE
DARK RIDERS.

THIS APOCALYPTIC
TOMB OF PAIN
AND MISERY...

...AND
ME--

--SIMPLY BY
DESTROYING
THE CHILD.

YOU'RE BEGINNING TO ANNOY ME WITH YOUR QUESTIONING EXPRESSIONS, ZERO.

THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THEY WOULD SACRIFICE THE LIFE OF THE CHILD--



--SIMPLY TO SAVE THEMSELVES... MY DEATH AN ADDED INCENTIVE.

I CAN GUARANTEE THEY WOULD DO THIS AND MORE.



YOU SEE, IT HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE.



ANYTHING?

IF I WAS HANK OR FORGE--

--I'D FIND A WAY TO FREE THE BABY FROM THIS CIRCUITRY WITHOUT HURTING HIM.

--OR HAD A MONTH TO FIGURE THIS OUT--

I'M AFRAID IF WE ATTEMPT TO REMOVE HIM NOW--



--HE'LL DIE.

THEN THERE'S NO CHOICE, IS THERE, SCOTT? NONE AT ALL.

WE HAVE TO GIVE OURSELVES UP IN ORDER TO SAVE THE BABY.





--THEY'RE
FIGHTING
BACK?



LONG BEFORE THEY'D
EVER MET...

--STRYFE BELIEVED HE KNEW ALL
HE NEEDED TO ABOUT SCOTT
SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY.



HE WAS
WRONG.



IT IS NOT A REALIZATION
WHICH COMES EASY TO
THIS MAN...

--OR, MORE
IMPORTANTLY,
TO THE CHILD
WITHIN HIM.

HE HAS SPENT A LIFE-
TIME HATING THEM FOR
A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

SINCE HE CAN NO
LONGER BE SURE
THEY COMMITTED.

THEIR ACTIONS THIS
DAY HAVE PUT A LIE
TO HIS MEMORIES.

HIS RESOLVE
HAS BEEN
REPLACED BY
DOUBT.

WHILE HIS
HATRED--

--IS ALL THAT HE
HAS LEFT TO CALL
HIS OWN.

WITHOUT SO MUCH AS
A THOUGHT BETWEEN
THEM--

--THEY KNOW WHAT
THEY HAVE TO DO.

WIN OR LOSE,
TO STAY WOULD
ENDANGER
THE LIFE OF AN
INNOCENT.

RATHER,
THEN...

THE
ABYSS.

FOR THE "LIFE" JEAN SENSED
WAS BUT A FRACTION OF THE
VILLAIN'S OWN PSYCHE--

--REPOSITED IN THE TECHNO-
ORGANIC CONSTRUCT THAT
WAS THE "CHILD."

THE NEED FOR
POSTENSE FAST...

...THE VESSEL REVERTS
TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM.





Gene-scan negative.

A global search might be—

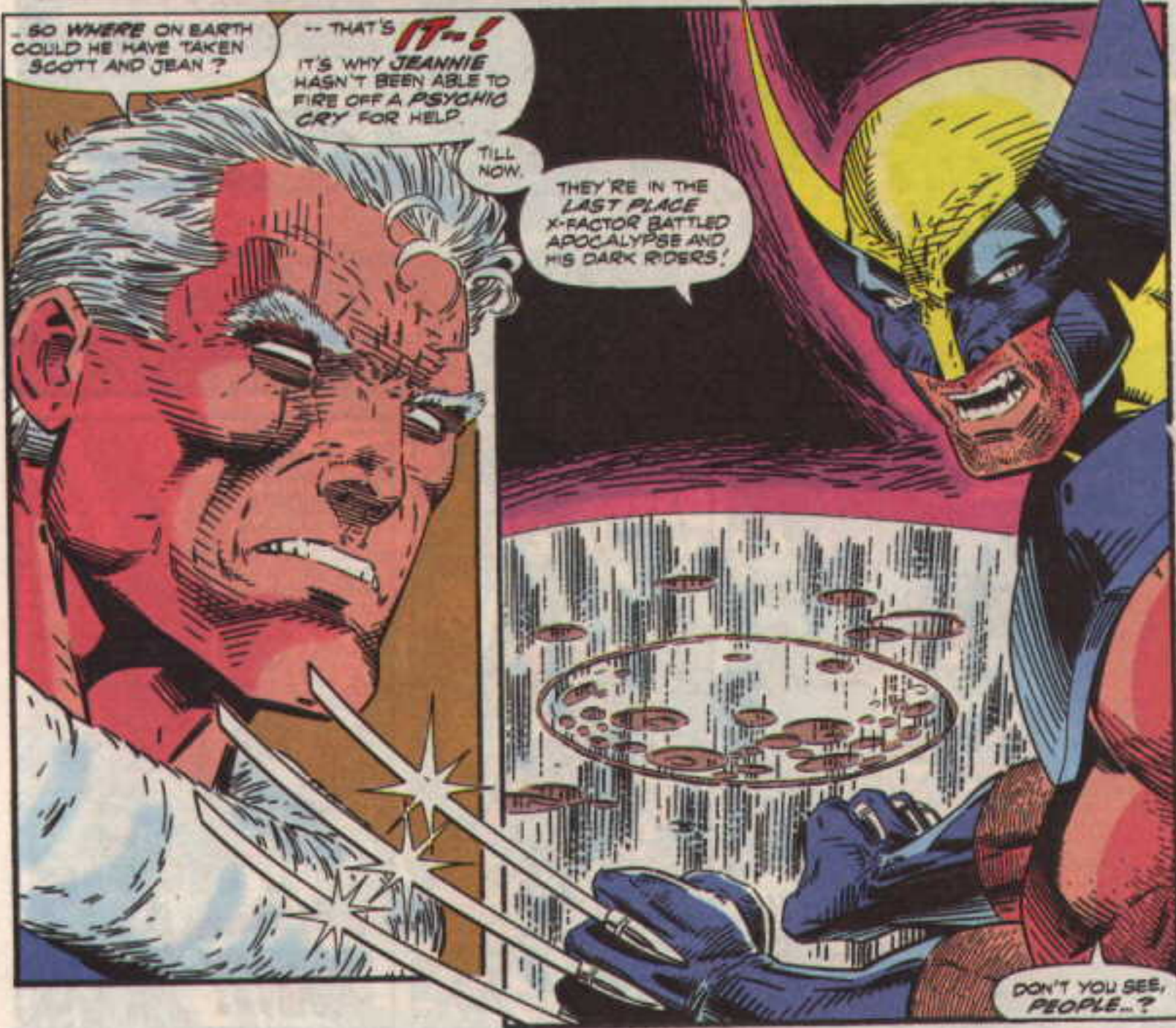
--A WASTE
OF TIME AND
RESOURCES.

WHEREVER HE IS,
STRYFE FEELS SAFE--

--OUT OF
OUR REACH--

...CONFIDENT.

IF HE IS AMONG
HIS ENEMIES, WE'VE
RULED OUT THE
PROFESSOR, MYSELF
AND APOCALYPSE...



...SO WHERE ON EARTH
COULD HE HAVE TAKEN
SCOTT AND JEAN?

-- THAT'S **IT--!**
IT'S WHY JEANNIE
HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO
FIRE OFF A PSYCHIC
CRY FOR HELP.

TILL
NOW.

THEY'RE IN THE
LAST PLACE
X-FACTOR BATTLED
APOCALYPSE AND
HIS DARK RIDERS!

DON'T YOU SEE,
PEOPLE...?



"THEY'RE NOT ON
THE BARTH AT ALL!"

— TO BE CONTINUED
IN X-FACTOR #50!