

MARVEL
COMICS

JUN '04



X-MEN
DELUXE

THE ASTONISHING

APPROVED BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

X-MEN

TM



MODERNA
FERRER
BALLE

CHAPTER
FOUR

AFTER XAVIER:
THE AGE OF
APOCALYPSE

As a child, CLARICE FERGUSON was considered almost pathologically shy.

HOLOCAUST!

Clearly, that is no longer the case.

SCOTT
LOBDELL
PLOT/DIALOGUE

JOE
MADUREIRA
PENCILS

TOWNSEND/
MILGROM
INKS

STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORS
DIGITAL CHAMELEON SEPARATIONS
STARBUCKS/COMICRAFT LETTERS

BOB
HARRAS
EDITOR



I'M SORRY, CHILD, I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE MET.

THE NAME IS BLINK.

AND I'M NOT A CHILD.

I'M THE X-MAN THAT IS GOING TO STOP YOU AND YOUR GENETIC CULLINGS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

YOU MIS-UNDERSTOOD ME... BLINK.

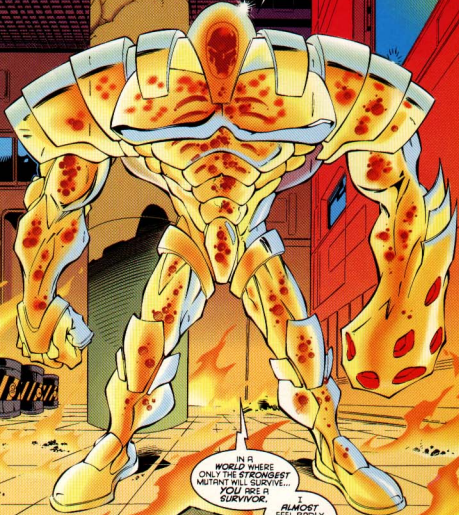
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE — INDEED, I RECOGNIZE ALL THE GENETIC TURNCOATS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO DEFEY THE WILL OF THE HIGH LORD APOCALYPSE.

I MEANT I AM GENUINELY SORRY WE HAVE NOT MET BEFORE NOW.

ASSESSING THE DAMAGE YOU'VE SINGLE-HANDEDLY WROUGHT UPON MY INFINITE PROCESSING PLANT —

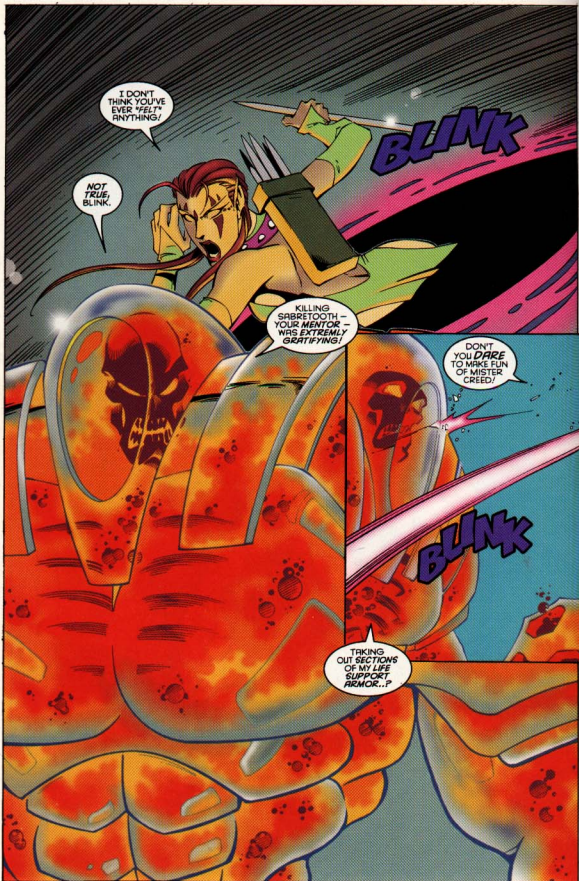
— CREATIVELY USING YOUR NATURAL SPATIAL DISPLACEMENT POWER —

— IT'S CLEAR YOU'RE A MUTANT OF UNTAPPED POTENTIAL.



IN A WORLD WHERE ONLY THE STRONGEST MUTANT WILL SURVIVE... YOU ARE A SURVIVOR.

I ALMOST FEEL BADLY ABOUT HAVING TO KILL YOU.



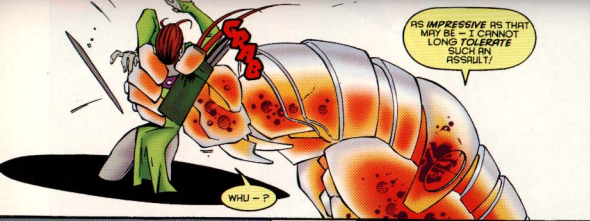
I DON'T
THINK YOU'VE
EVER "FELT"
ANYTHING!

NOT
TRUE,
BLINK.

KILLING
SABRETOOTH -
YOUR MENTOR -
WAS EXTREMELY
GRATIFYING!

DON'T
YOU DARE
TO MAKE FUN
OF MISTER
CREED!

TAKING
OUT SECTIONS
OF MY LIFE
SUPPORT
ARMOR...P



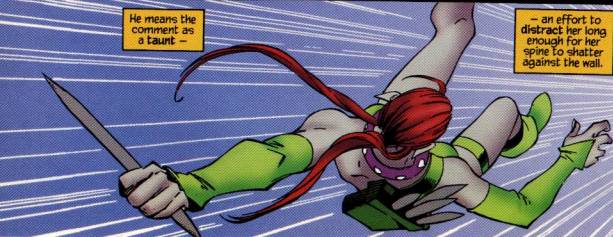
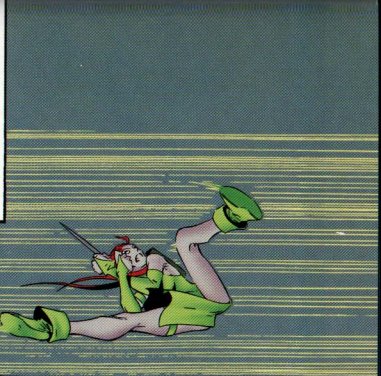
AS IMPRESSIVE AS THAT
MAY BE - I CANNOT
LONG TOLERATE
SUCH AN
ASSAULT!

WHU - P



BE GRATEFUL I'M
ALLOWING YOU
TO DIE
QUICKLY.

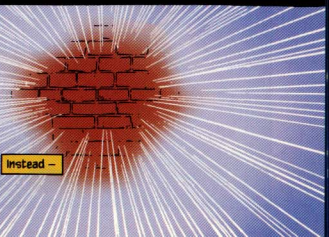
IT'S
AN HONOR I
DIDN'T AFFORD
THE MONGREL
CREED!



He means the
comment as
a taunt -

- an effort to
distract her long
enough for her
spine to shatter
against the wall.

Instead -



— it allows her to focus her rage.

BUNK

Using momentum to her advantage —

— she teleports behind Apocalypse's deadliest Horseman!

BUNK

CRACK

YOU'VE TORTURED AND KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE OVER THE YEARS.

INNOCENT HUMANS, MUTANTS YOU DEEMED "USELESS" ANYONE WHO OPPOSED YOU AND YOUR LORD'S SURVIVALIST RACIST DOGMA.

SO TELL ME... HOW'S IT FEEL KNOWING YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE?



MISTER CREED WAS A DECENT MAN WHO DIED FIGHTING A HOMICIDAL MANIAC.



YOU, HOLOCAUST..?



... YOU DON'T EVEN DESERVE TO LICK HIS BOOTS!



YOU MUST BE JOKING, GIRL.

IT APPEARS YOU AND I HAVE COME TO SOMETHING OF A STAND-OFF, NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.

TELL ME, CLARICE...

DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE FASTER THAN I AM?



MY NAME IS "BLINK".

WHO DO YOU THINK IS FASTER...



...HALFSRIN?

Not Far away...

DID I MENTION WE ARE DOOMED??

NOT IN THE LAST FIVE MINUTES, NO.

SUNFIRE

ACTUALLY, ASIDE FROM BEING OUTNUMBERED A GAZILLION-TO-ONE -

- I THINK ALL THINGS CONSIDERED -

- WE X-MEN ARE DOING PRETTY GOOD!

ROGUE

SPONK

MORPH

MORPH...? UNTIL THIS IS OVER AND WE'VE CLOSED DOWN THIS PLANT FOR GOOD, AND CONSIDER IT A PERSONAL FAVOR IF YA WOULD KINDLY -

FIGHT UP!

GRRRRR

WILD CHILD





SHIRO - BLINK HAS CLEARLY DONE HER PART BY TRASHIN' THIS PLACE...

... AH NEED YA TA FREE THE SURVIVORS OF THE CULLINGS -

- BEFORE THEY'RE TURNED INTO FODDER FOR THE INFINITESP

DONE!



AND TAKE WILD CHILD WITH YA!

FAST!
FAST!
FAST!



KYLE, NO ONE APPRECIATES YOUR DESIRE TO EXACT REVENGE ON HOLOCAUST MORE THAN I

- BUT OUR RESPONSIBILITY, FOR THE MOMENT, IS TO THE LIVING.

POOSH

YANK



HEY, LEADER LADY... IT JUST OCCURRED TO ME...

UNLESS YA CAN BE SERIOUS FOR FIVE SECONDS, SYDNEY, AH DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!

MAYBE WE CAN ASK THEM TO SURRENDER?

REAL POLITE LIKE?

MORPH - FOR THE LAST TIME... ZIP IT!



HIMMPP? NOT EVEN A SMILE...P

SYD - I THINK IT'S TIME YOU ACCEPTED THE FACT...

IFM ITWILL MAKEM YOUHAPPYMY!

THIS COULD BE 'IT.'

Half a continent from Holocaust's mid-western base, the stronghold of EN SABAH NUR — he who is called Apocalypse — towers high above the once proud NEW YORK skyline.



In a city whose people have forgotten how to dream...



NOW
T' FIND BLINK
BEFORE —

...something akin to hope still flourishes in the most unlikely of places.

In the heart and soul of one man...

ROGUE,
MY LOVE —



— MY
LIFE.

...ERIK MAGNUS
LEHNSHERR.



ENOUGH!

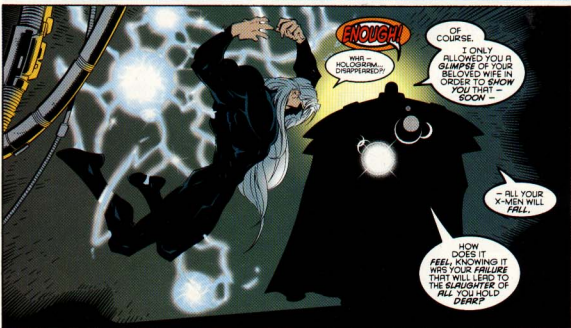
WHY —
HOLOGRAM, DRAPPED?

OF
COURSE.

I ONLY
ALLOWED YOU A
GLIMPSE OF YOUR
BELOVED WIFE IN
ORDER TO SHOW
YOU THAT —
SOON —

— ALL YOUR
X-MEN WILL
FALL.

HOW
DOES IT
FEEL, KNOWING IT
WAS YOUR FAILURE
THAT WILL LEAD TO
THE SLAUGHTER OF
ALL YOU HOLD
DEAR?







...a brilliant light flashes
down from on high!

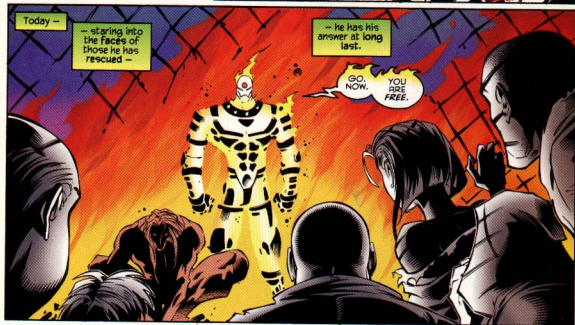
An atomic angel
in search of
vengeance.

Three years before
this moment, **SHIRO
YOSHIDA** bore witness
to the genocide of
his native **JAPAN**.

For years, he heard
their screams pounding
in his head — waking him
each night.

And he wondered
why was he the
only one spared?

Why must he
carry on without
respite?



Today —

— staring into
the faces of
those he has
rescued —

— he has his
answer at long
last.

GO
NOW. YOU
ARE
FREE.

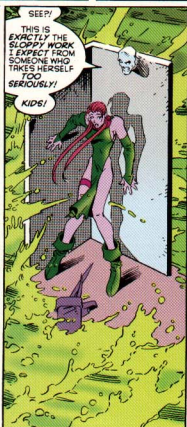
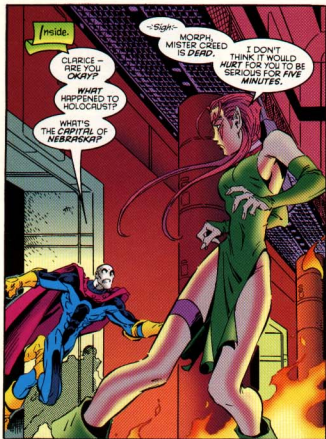


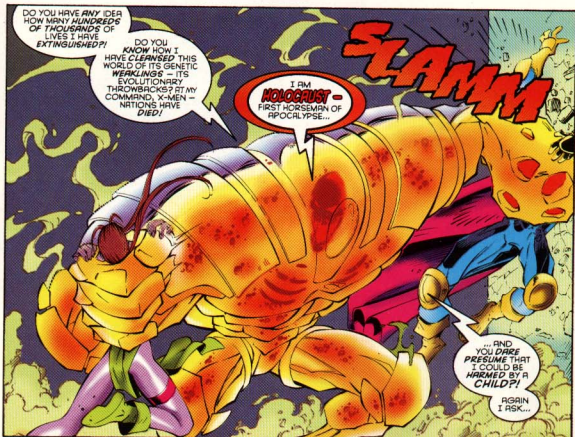
FREE, MUTANT?
WHAT ABOUT...
WHAT ABOUT
HOLOCAUST?

SO LONG
AS HE LIVES,
NONE OF US
ARE TRULY
FREE!

TRUST
ME,
MADAM.

THAT
VERY SITUATION
IS BEING RESOLVED,
EVEN AS I SPEAK.





DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF LIVES I HAVE EXTINGUISHED?!

DO YOU KNOW HOW I HAVE CLEANSED THIS WORLD OF ITS GENETIC WEAKINGS - ITS EVOLUTIONARY THROWBACKS? AT MY COMMAND, X-MEN - NATIONS HAVE DIED!

I AM HOLOGRUST - FIRST HORSEMAN OF APOCALYPSE...

SLAMM

... AND YOU DARE PRESUME THAT I COULD BE HARMED BY A CHILD?!

AGAIN I ASK...



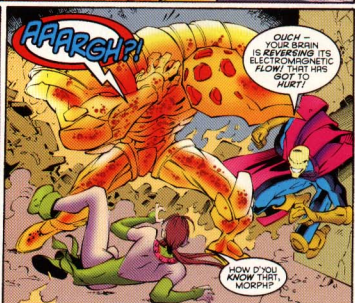
... HOW DARE YOU?!

MORPH?!



SURE, A MINUTE AGO I WAS CLASS CLOWN...

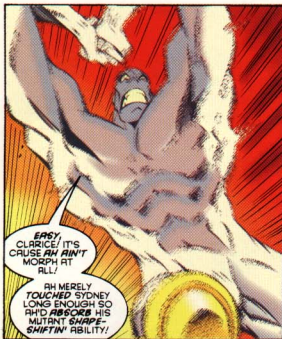
... NOW YOU NEED ME ALL OF A SUDDEN?



AAARGH?!

OUCH - YOUR BRAIN IS REVERSING ITS ELECTROMAGNETIC FLOW! THAT HAS GOT TO HURT!

HOW D'YOU KNOW THAT, MORPH?



EASY, CLARICE! IT'S CAUSE AH AIN'T MORPH AT ALL!

AH MERELY TOUCHED SYDNEY LONG ENOUGH SO AH'D ABSORB HIS MUTANT SHAPE-SHIFTIN' ABILITY!

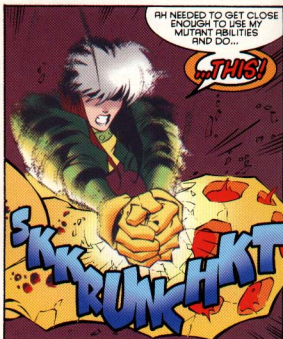


SURE, SHE COULD LOOK LIKE ME -

- BUT WHO COULD POSSIBLY HOPE TO MATCH MY MASTERY OF OSNOXIOUS-NESS?!

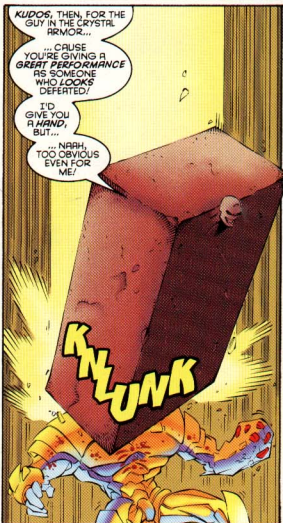
YOU FOOLS ARE... WASTING... YOUR TIME! AND THAT PRECIOUS COMMODITY IS SOMETHING YOU SHOULD NOT WASTE!

I WILL... NOT BE... DEFEATED!



AH NEEDED TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO USE MY MUTANT ABILITIES AND DO...

...THIS!



KUDOS, THEN, FOR THE GUY IN THE CRYSTAL ARMOR...

... CAUSE YOU'RE GIVING A GREAT PERFORMANCE AS SOMEONE WHO LOOKS DEFEATED!

I'D GIVE YOU A HAND, BUT...

... NAH, TOO OBVIOUS EVEN FOR ME!

KLNUNK



FILTHY...
MUMF...
LOVING... GENE
TRASH!

Y'KNOW,
IT'S LIKE I
ALWAYS SAID: "NO
MATTER HOW
STRONG..."



"... NO
MATTER HOW
POWERFUL..."

"... IT
ALWAYS
COMES DOWN
TO NAME
CALLING."

YOUR
COMPLEX IS
DESTROYED,
HOLOCAUST.

WE'VE
FREED THE
PRISONERS -

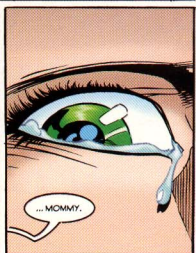
- AN'
SHUT OFF THE
ENDLESS SUPPLY
O' INFINITES TO
APOCALYPSE.

WHERE
AM'M STANDIN',
IT LOOKS LIKE
YA'RE
FINISHED.



WHAM

THEN
STAND OVER
THERE.

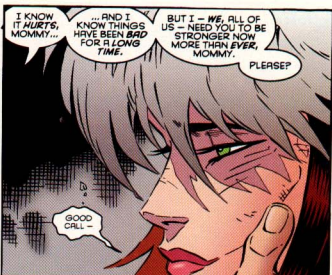




MOMMY, PLEASE GET UP.

PLEASE...
... WE NEED YOU.

CHARLES...P



I KNOW IT HURTS, MOMMY...

... AND I KNOW THINGS HAVE BEEN BAD FOR A LONG TIME.

BUT I - WE, ALL OF US - NEED YOU TO BE STRONGER NOW, MORE THAN EVER, MOMMY.

PLEASE?

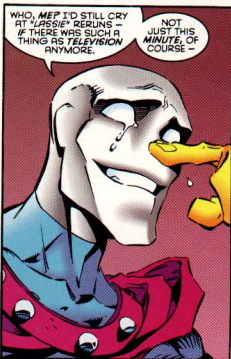
GOOD CALL -



- MORPH, YA FIGURED MORPHIN' INTO MY SON WAS THE... ONLY THING'D GET MY ATTENTION.

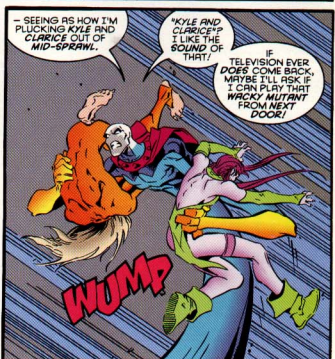
YOU WERE RIGHT.

JUS' NEVER REALIZED YA HAD SUCH A... SENTIMENTAL SIDE TO YOU, SYDNEY.



WHO, MEP I'D STILL CRY AT "LASSIE" RERUNS - IF THERE WAS SUCH A THING AS TELEVISION ANYMORE.

NOT JUST THIS MINUTE, OF COURSE -



- SEEING AS HOW I'M PLUCKING KYLE AND CLARICE OUT OF MID-SPRAWL.

"KYLE AND CLARICE"? I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT!

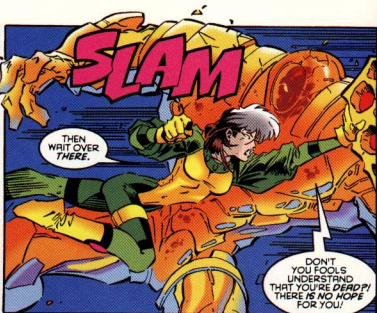
IF TELEVISION EVER DOES COME BACK, MAYBE I'LL ASK IF I CAN PLAY THAT WACKY MUTANT FROM NEXT DOOR!

WUMP



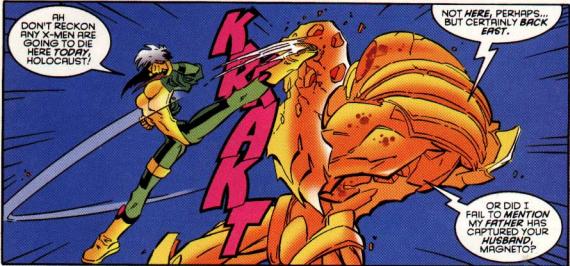
I'VE WAITED SO LONG
TO BE RID OF YOU,
SHIRO...

WOMK



THEN
WAIT OVER
THERE.

DON'T
YOU FOOLS
UNDERSTAND
THAT YOU'RE DEAD?!
THERE IS NO HOPE
FOR YOU!



AH
DON'T RECKON
ANY X-MEN ARE
GOING TO DIE
HERE TODAY,
HOLOCAUST!

**K
R
A
T**

NOT HERE, PERHAPS...
BUT CERTAINLY BACK
EAST.

OR DID I
FAIL TO MENTION
MY FATHER HAS
CAPTURED YOUR
HUSBAND,
MAGNETOP?



Oh, and **BISHOP**. OF COURSE, IN
ORDER TO DO THAT, HE HAD TO
DESTROY THE REMAINS OF THAT
"MANSION" IN WHICH YOU
WERE ALL HIDING. ♪

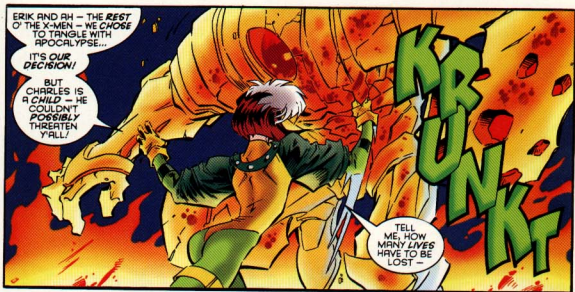


APOCALYPSE
EVEN PROMISED
ME I'D BE ALLOWED
TO KEEP AN EYE ON
YOUR SON,
CH-

WHAM

THAT WAS **ABSOLUTLEY**
THE **LAST PLACE** YOU
WANTED TO GO,
HOLOCAUST!





ERIK AND AH — THE REST
O' THE X-MEN — WE CHOSE
TO TANGLE WITH
APOCALYPSE...

IT'S OUR
DECISION!

BUT CHARLES IS
A CHILD — HE
COULDN'T
POSSIBLY
THREATEN
Y'ALL!

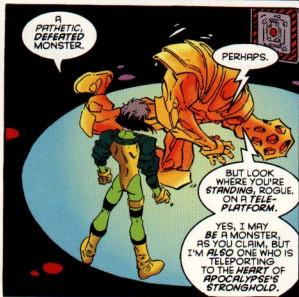
TELL
ME, HOW
MANY LIVES
HAVE TO BE
LOST —



— HOW MUCH BLOOD
HAS TO FLOW,
UNTIL Y'ALL ARE
SATISFIED?!

YA
CLAIM T'BE
A MUTANT —
T'BE PROUD
OF IT.

BUT
THE TRUTH
IS... YA ARE
A MONSTER.



A
PATHETIC,
DEFEATED
MONSTER.

PERHAPS.

BUT LOOK
WHERE YOU'RE
STANDING, ROGUE.
ON A TELE-
PLATFORM.

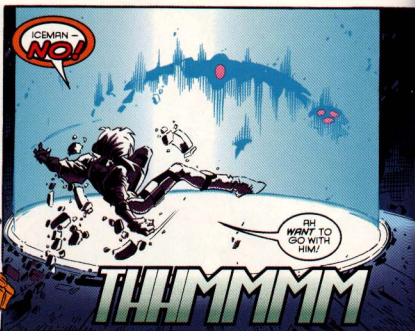
YES, I MAY
BE A MONSTER,
AS YOU CLAIM, BUT
I'M ALSO ONE WHO IS
TELEPORTING
TO THE HEART OF
APOCALYPSE'S
STRONGHOLD.



AND
YOU'RE
COMING
WITH ME!



WHA - AN ICE LASSOP



ICEMAN - NO!

AH WANT TO GO WITH HIM!

THMMMMM



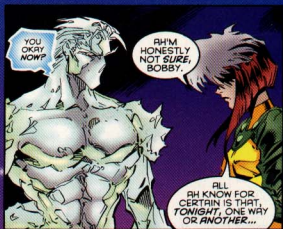
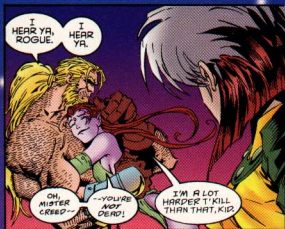
NOT A BRIGHT MOVE, GAL.

CREED IS RIGHT... YOU WANT TO SQUARE OFF AGAINST APOCALYPSE, GET YOUR HUSBAND BACK, FREE YOUR KID IF HE'S THERE...

... FINE.

BUT I DIDN'T TRAVEL CLEAR ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON PIETRO'S SAY-SO TO WATCH YOU SACRIFICE YOURSELF!

AH'D WALK INTO HELL IF IT MEANT SAVIN' MY CHILD, BOBBY.



NEXT

READ AMAZING X-MEN #4 -- AND THEN GET READY FOR
X-MEN OMEGA! IT'S ALL GOING TO END WITH A BANG!