

MARVEL

AGENT X

UDON

LEE

MARVEL PG



AGENT X



DIRECT EDITION



00211

7 59606 05367 4

\$2.25 US \$3.75 CAN

Previously in:

AGENT X



Agent X



Sandi



Taskmaster



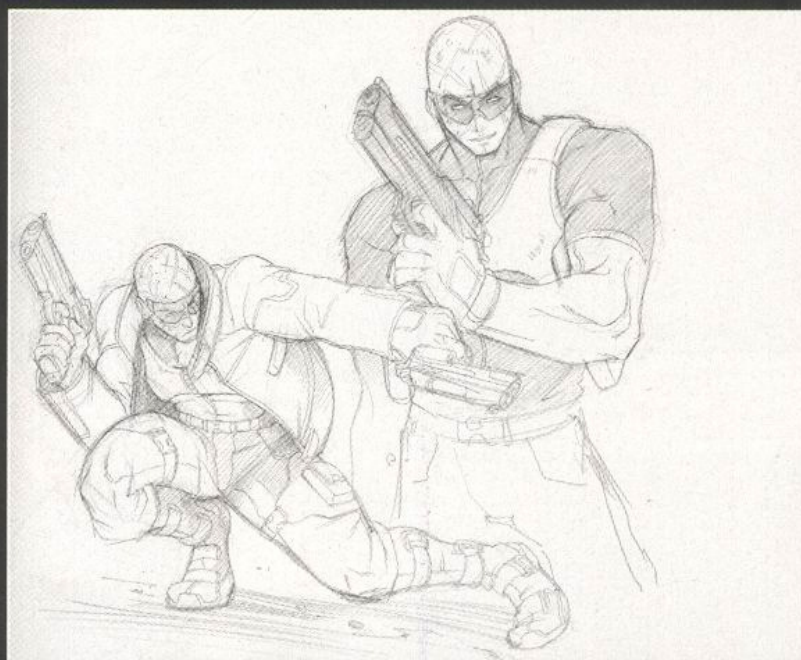
Outlaw

The man now known as Agent X arrived hungry, helpless and drooling at former secretary Sandi Brandenburg's doorstep, begging for her help. Sandi, with a penchant for taking in mangy strays and seeing a resemblance to an old friend in the strange man, agreed to help him start a new life and career. Together they founded the mercenary agency: Agency X.

Choosing the name Alex Hayden, our hero began training immediately. Sandi enlisted the help of fellow mercenaries Taskmaster and Outlaw to train Hayden. Taskmaster took an immediate dislike to Hayden after seeing the same resemblance to Sandi's old friend, whom he also despised and considered a rival. After several bloody training sessions, which included multiple stabbings courtesy of the Taskmaster, Hayden finished his training and accepted his first mission: Gathering rogue carnival animals.

The animals were released to threaten and intimidate the carnival owner, who refused to sell his property to a mysterious Japanese criminal organization known as the Four Winds. Hayden successfully gathered the animals and, to send an intimidating message of his own, crashed an elephant into the lobby of the building where the head of the Four Winds, Higashi, resided.

Having successfully completed his first job, Hayden is thrilled to find his payment is the deed to his client's abandoned carnival. If only everyone else was as thrilled...





Well...
...it's
nasty.

This is the guy teaching
me how to bleed profusely
from multiple wounds.



You should
feel right at
home here.

He likes to be called the Taskmaster, which,
you gotta figure, means something dirty,
which makes him a big skull-faced *pervo*.
I've been discreet enough not to mention
that, however.

DEAD MAN'S SWITCH PART 2

Story by
Gail Simone

Art by UDON with Alvin Lee, Eric Vedder, Rob Ross,
Calvin Lo, Arnold Tsang, Andrew Hou, TheRealTI & Omar Dogan

UDON Chief
Erik Ko

Letters by
Dave Sharpe

Assisted by
Lynne Yoshii

Edited by
Andrew Lis

Chief
Joe Quesada

President
Bill Jemas



This whole
area used to be
really pretty. We'd
take the train out
here when I was
little.

Now it
looks like a
poverty bomb
exploded.

This is my new
business partner,
Sandi Brandenburg.
She believes in me,
but don't judge
her by that.

And my name is Alex Hayden.
I keep thinking, if I repeat that
enough times, I'll start to know
why I picked it.

You guys
aren't seeing
this right.

I mean,
I'm looking right
at it...



ALPINE PARK

...And it's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

I'm the only guy I know whose autobiography is three sentences long:

I showed up on Sandi's doorstep.

I don't know who I am or how I got there.

And I don't care.

But this...this feels like something. Something great.



Our first job, Sandi, and we get *this* as payment.

Just look at it! Wonder if he left the animals?

I feel like a kid in a candy store that has nudie magazines and illegal fireworks... or, you know, skip the candy store part, really.



I don't know, Alex. The whole place looks pretty run-down and...uh...incredibly, unbelievably dangerous.

What are you talking about? Come on, let's open it up and ride the coaster! Let's deep-fry us up some corn dogs-- We can all get tattoos and hoot at underage girls!

I swear, some people got no vision.



Kenichi Building

"Repeat your last statement to me, Wei-san."



It was ...er...it was an insane man riding an elephant, Higashi-sama.

...

I can't imagine it should be very difficult to narrow down the list of suspects in this particular case, Wei.



...No, sir. No. The elephant belongs to a Mr. Paul Steinen, the man who owned the amusement park that we...

That we've been trying to purchase. Understood.

But...but Mr. Steinen has left town, sir.



Then I believe the new owner of that property has made his unwillingness to sell very clear, wouldn't you say?

"Wei-san, please work up a cost analysis for having the park's new owner killed, versus upping our cash offer for the property by 5%. Immediately, please."



Hey, 'Hayden.' You don't have time for this. I got you a gig.

What? Really?

What kind of gig, Tony?

Strictly a no-monkey gig-- low risk, high pay. I'd go myself, but tonight's Iron Chef.

I wrote down the directions. You can take my wheels, no sweat.



Huh. Maybe he's not such a jerk, after all. *Damn*, this is a sweet ride.

Your car? Really? What?

Hey, quit acting so shocked! I want you to succeed-- that's why I'm so hard on you. It's like tough love.



God, he's got *all* the Spice Girls CDs, even the *SOLO* stuff!

Those are private!

Alex...you be careful.

If something doesn't feel right, you leave.

Yeah, yeah, don't worry, Gramma. Geez, is there no classical?!



I don't like this--I don't think he's ready.

Fish gotta fly, bird gotta swim.

Big bad merc gotta listen to Spice Girls.

Hey!



Half an hour later, I'm at my first job that doesn't include monkey wrestling. *Hopefully.*

"...appreciate the five of you coming in like this. We're interested in offering you a sporting proposition...sort of a scavenger hunt for hired guns."

**CULVER SPORT
AND GUN CLUB**
est. 1887.
Members Only

Each of *us* has hired each of *you* to obtain a pair of...*unique* items. We've each contributed \$50,000 as a completion bonus for the merc who returns with the items within 48 hours. With me so far?

\$250,000?
Roger that.

Met most of these zambonis in the waiting room--hardcore guys, all...

B-1.

B-1, giving a "thumbs up" sign.

The Scalpel.

...just a simple procedure for a reasonable fee...

Bloc.

~mmfda~

And my sometime-pistol-trainer, *Outlaw.*

Shouldn't we find out what the job *is* first?



You guys are destroying my vision of a cashless society!



I mean... uh... I'm in. I'm in.

I'm a merc ahead of my time.



The sponsor of the victorious operative will *keep* the items for his collection. That's the real prize.

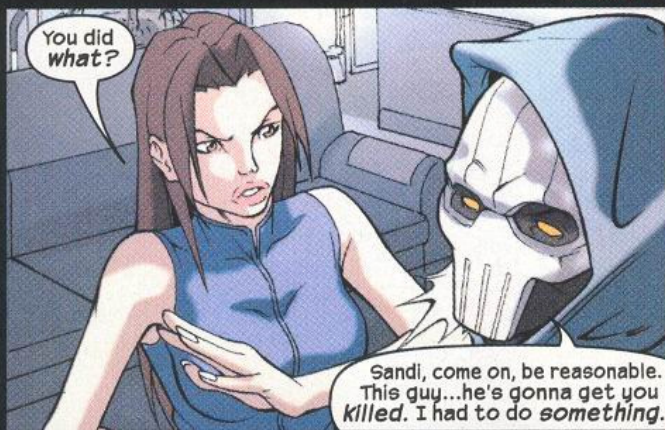
And for added amusement, the winning sponsor *also* takes possession of the other sponsors' *mistresses*.



Look. We. Don't. Care.

What is it you want us to get?

If I wanted useless chat, I'd get AOL.



You did what?

Sandi, come on, be reasonable. This guy...he's gonna get you killed. I had to do something.

"You sent Alex-- untrained, inexperienced Alex--to go get..."

...The Punisher's guns.

Outlaw shoots me a look...is it protective? A warning? A threat? Never saw her spooked before.

This Punisher guy must be rough company.

One of you will return with the Punisher's custom .45s and collect the bounty. We have arranged for his current prey to be at the location we have provided you.

We of course expect a rousing competition from all of you.

Pity the poor dope they use as bait.

Meet the objective, nullify the target, return within 48 hours. That's affirmative.

...a routine extraction, and I shall claim the exorbitant fee... heh heh...

Uh...excuse me, when does the competition start?

Well... it begins now, of course. The five of you will ...

Pandy.

...eh...?

KLK

FWWWWWH

....owwww! Compound fracture of the femur... extensive orthopedic reconstruction recommended!

...seek second opinion, best to err on side of caution!

...vision impaired...!

Hey! What are you doing, Mister?

KRACK!





Not fair!
They didn't
even make
it out of the
building!

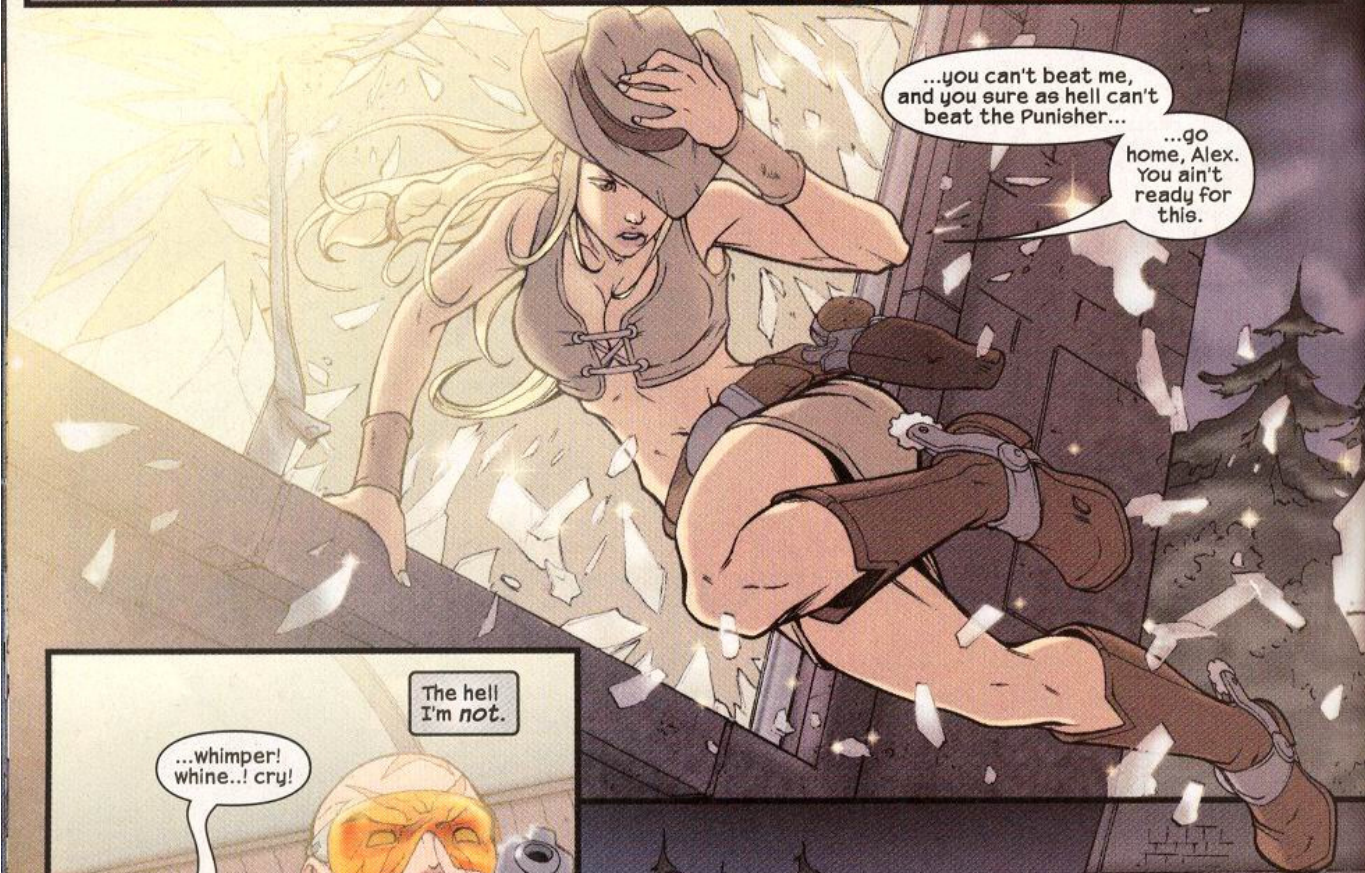
Completely
unreporting!

So, what
do we do
now?

Now? Now
we play for real. But
if you want some real
good advice...

Should be
disqualified...

Sorry, but
you three are
out. Pay your
share and leave
your mistresses
in the main hall,
please..



...you can't beat me,
and you sure as hell can't
beat the Punisher...

...go
home, Alex.
You ain't
ready for
this.



The hell
I'm *not*.

...whimper!
whine...! cry!

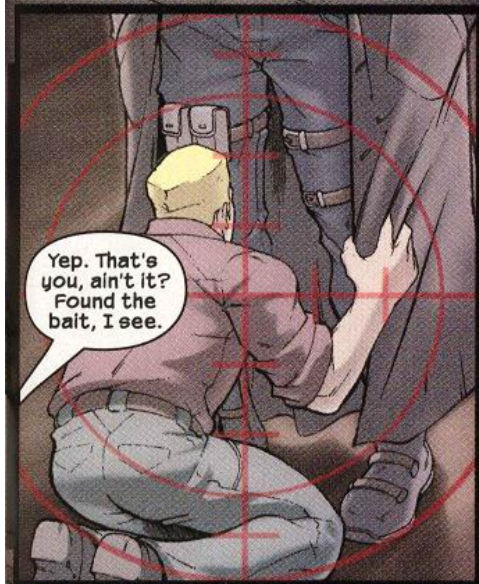
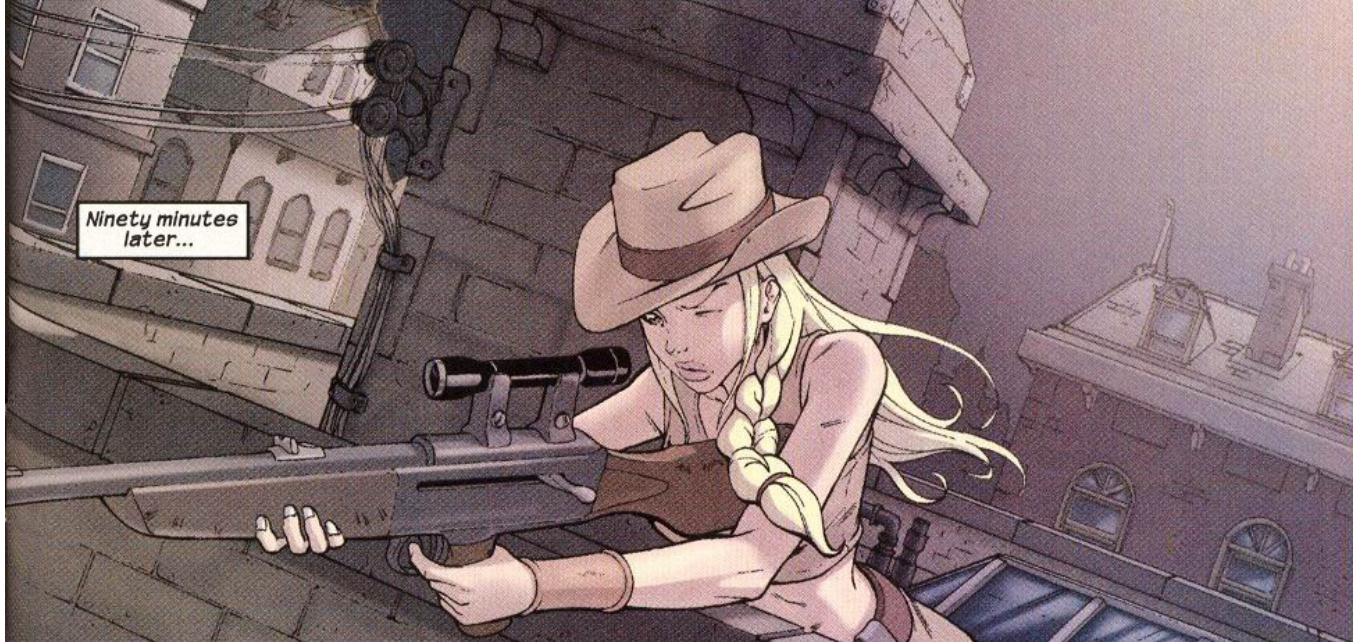
Oh,
shut
up.



Thanks a
dumpload,
Outlaw.

Tasky's not gonna be
too happy about *this*.

Ninety minutes later...



Yep. That's you, ain't it? Found the bait, I see.



Adios, big scary Punisher man.



WHOOOOOA!

Hey! Miss me?



You owe me cab fare, Outlaw.

Nice gun. Bet the cacti around your place are terrified.

Alex, one thing you'd best learn, pronto...



Don't *never* touch a Texas girl's gun.

Criminy! I didn't know she could do that. I woulda been sarcastic from a distance!



She's strong.
Much stronger
than me. Tough,
too --

Excuse me.
Pardon me.
Excuse me.

Ooof...!



--but not
completely
bullet-
proof, looks
like.

Aaaak.



Urrk...
now I...
...know why
they...
...call you...
Crazy
Inez.

I told
you, Alex--



awkk...
kkaa

Don't
CALL me
that.

This
bounty's *mine*,
greenhorn.



...kaff...there
will be a...brief
intermission...
while I...

...grow a new
larynx. ?kaff
kaff!?



Shhhh! I'm gonna tell you a
secret. This is something the
Avengers won't tell you.

You know *why* it is that when two
super-powered individuals meet,
they *invariably* wind up fighting?

You realize...all this ruckus prollly spooked our target...?

Can I...unhhh... take that as a surrender?

We do it because...

Over the side?

You know it.

did we lose him?

I'm okay. this swarm of rats broke my fall...

SQUEAK! SQUEAK!

...it's fun.

UNNNHH!

and if you had this kind of power, you would, too.



Looks like he did his business and skedaddled. Our 'sponsors' sent this guy here to get killed.

You were great, tell ya in passing. Nice moves.

You're just saying that.

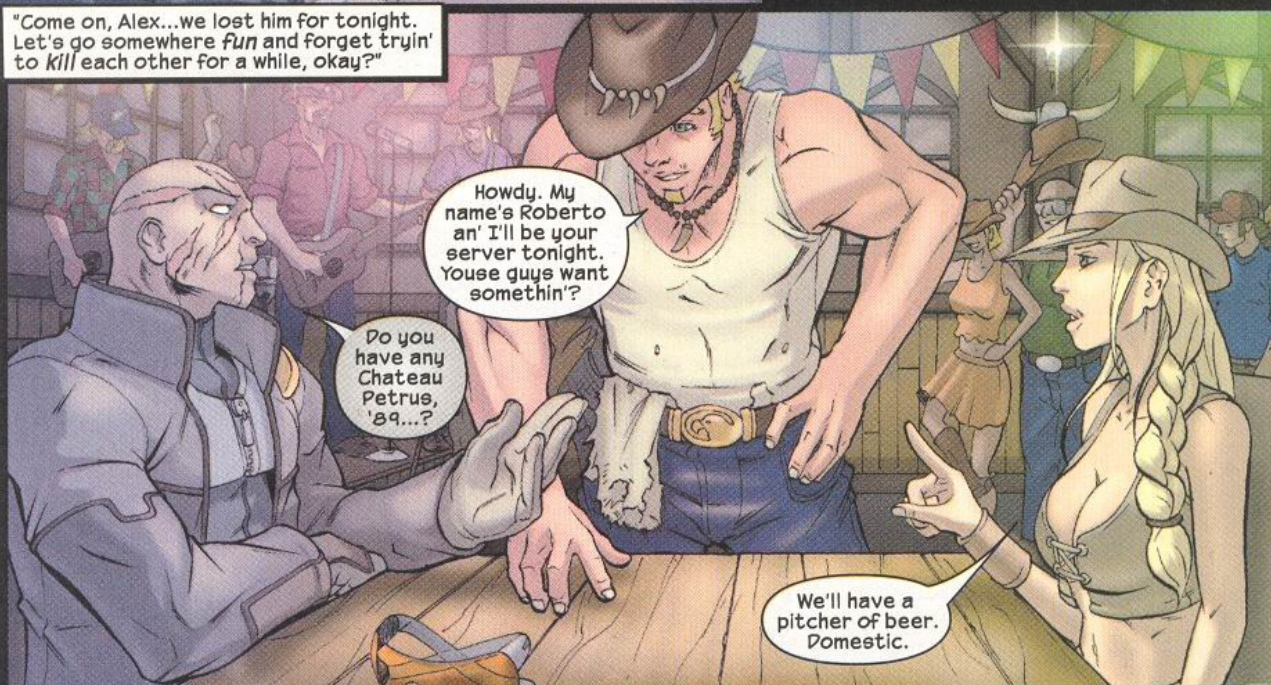
No, I really felt it.



You didn't have your guns, and you knew I was stronger. You coulda quit.

So, I'm kinda proud right now, fact is.

"Come on, Alex...we lost him for tonight. Let's go somewhere *fun* and forget tryin' to *kill* each other for a while, okay?"



Howdy. My name's Roberto an' I'll be your server tonight. Youse guys want somethin'?

Do you have any Chateau Petrus, '89...?

We'll have a pitcher of beer. Domestic.



Your eyes are bleedin' again.

With this music, I'm surprised my ears aren't bleeding.

I don't get why the guy singing has to keep telling me about his damn truck.



Isn't all this a little desperate, Outlaw? I mean, it's all fairy tale stuff anyway, isn't it?

Not where I come from, it's not.

I know this seems silly. Most of these boys ain't never been out of the city, let alone been in the saddle.

But comin' here makes me a little less lonesome for home.

Well then, ma'am... I believe it's my sworn duty as a genuine pretend-for-one-night cowboy to show you a good time, Texas-style.





That was...
real nice. Best
time I've had since
moving here, in
fact. Thanks.

OWWW!
My pelvis!
OWWW!

Sorry.

WOOMP



I... should
really call Sandi,
let her know
where I am...

She can't
help you right
now, Alex.

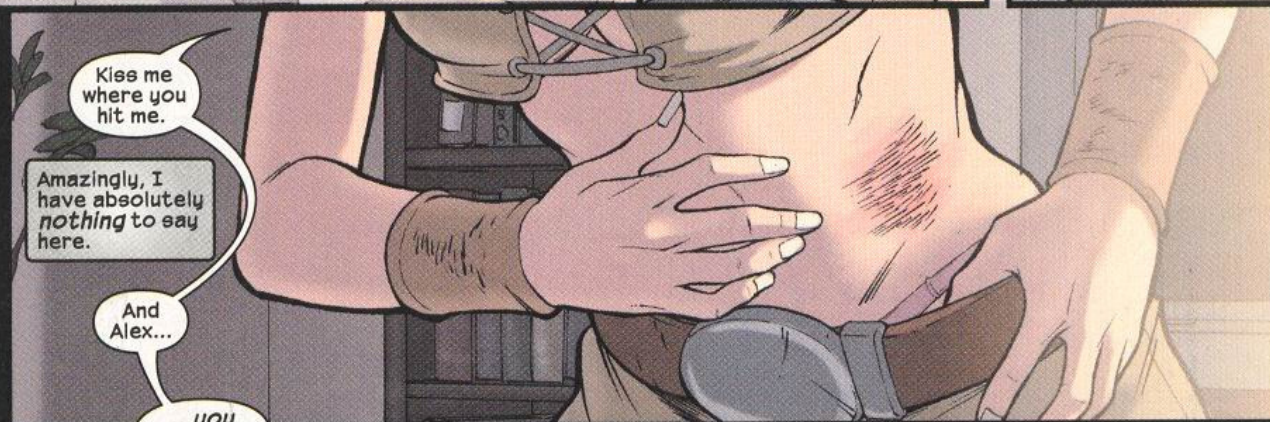


You wanna
kiss me?



Not
there...
not just
yet.

I haven't been around that
long, but I'm pretty sure
that's one of the dumbest
questions I'll be asked in my
lifetime.



Kiss me
where you
hit me.

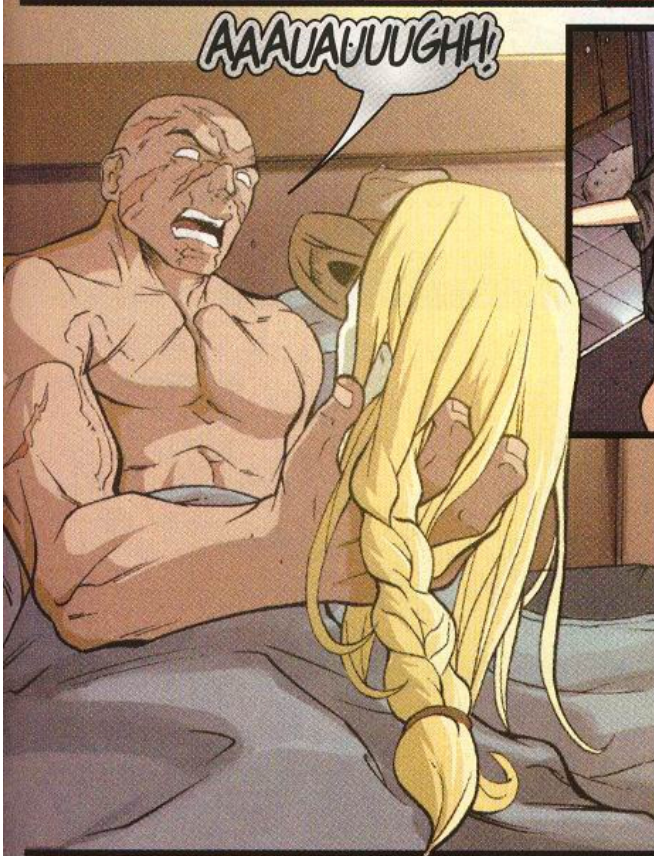
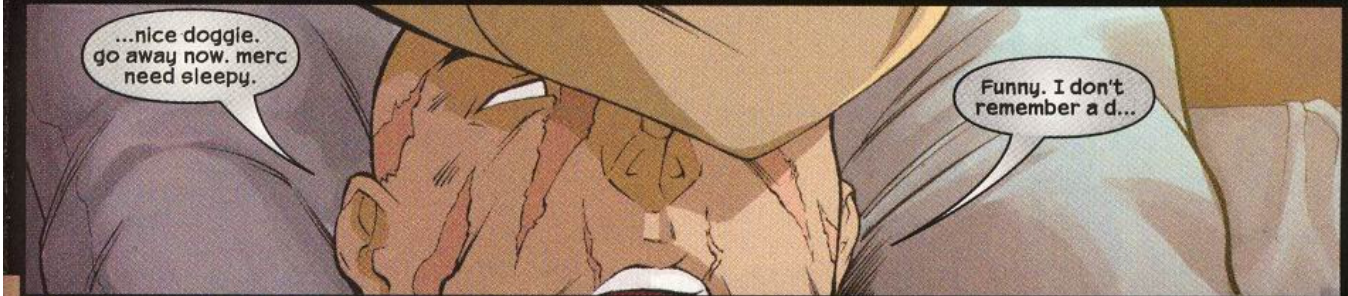
Amazingly, I
have absolutely
nothing to say
here.

And
Alex...

...you
can call me
Inez.



OWWW!





What, did you just reckon they grew all of us out on a perfect body farm somewhere?

Well, I just naturally assumed...

Let me guess, you never been drunk before, right?



Now that there's a Texas breakfast. Made the salsa myself.

Never been drunk before. I've never done anything before.

Yeah, I about figured that out last night.

What?

Nothing!



Oh, MAN, this is good. >snarf chomp smack<

That's what I like. A man who eats like a pig and sleeps like a horse.

Ready to go claim them guns, barnyard boy?



What? But...how?

I called around. I got a lead on where the big man's hidin'. Apt to be a good bit dangerous.

We're going. You gonna wear that big she-toupee?



Like *you* should talk. You look like you got run over by a waffle iron. But I'm startin' to take a shine to you, anyways.

Well, then let's go get those pistols and be the most dangerous freaks at the ball, what do you say?



That's it... he's leaving his apartment.

Simple smash and grab, and get out before the big bad Punisher even knows we're *there*. I don't know why we didn't think of this before.



Careful, Alex-- that there door's more'n likely...



...booby-trapped.

Several deadly booby traps later...

Well, dang. He's got every kinda weapon in here short of a set of Ginsu knives--

--But no .45s.



Hey, there's a loose board in here...

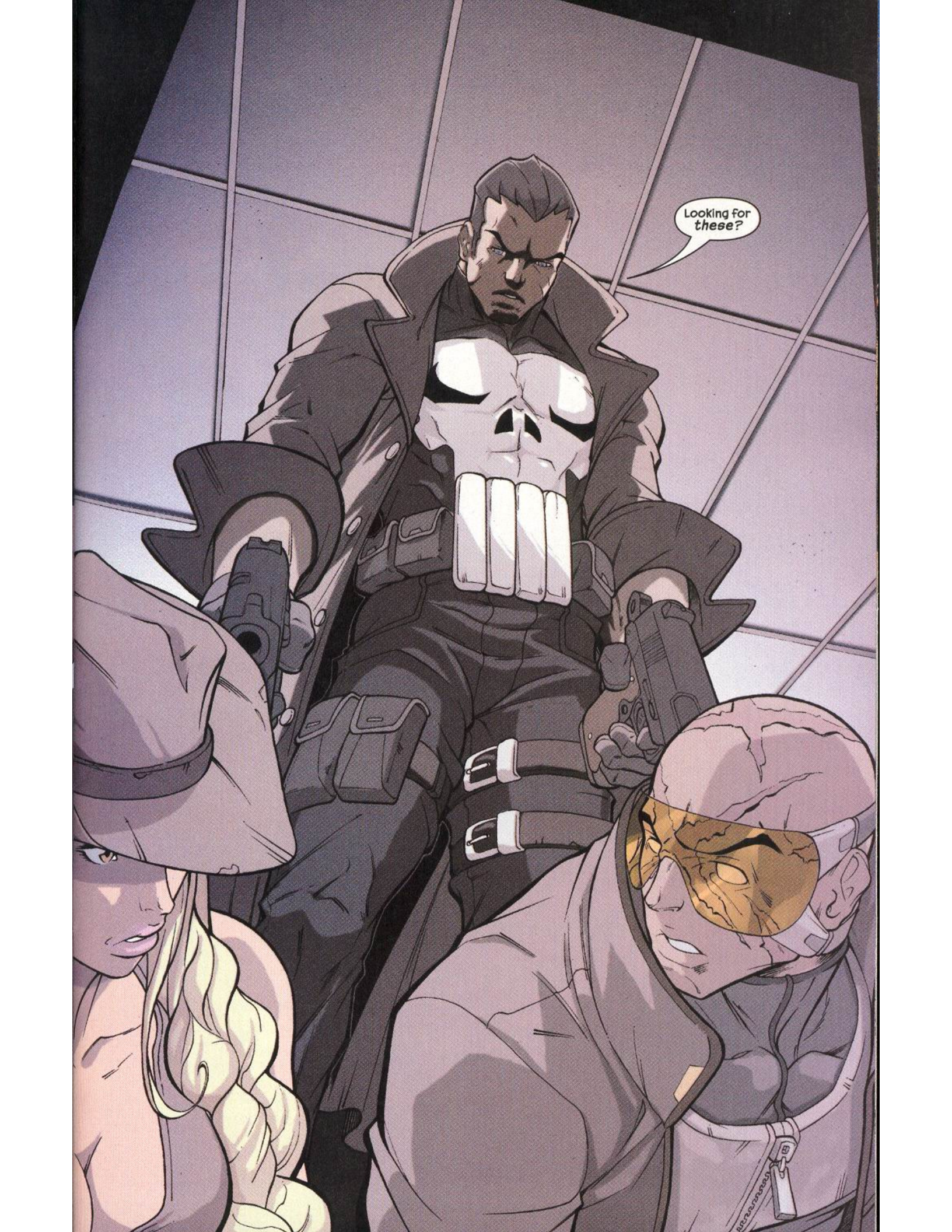
Come on, come on...daddy needs a place to keep his elephant.

Any automatics at all?

Found the ammo-- semijacketed high velocity-- most destructive load a .45'll take.

No .45s, though.





Looking for
these?

