

# THE ULTIMATES™ 2

ISSUE

# 2

DEAD MAN WALKING

MARVEL  
PSR<sup>+</sup>

MILLAR  
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When faced with Nazi Germany's military advances, the U.S. government decided that the best weapon against them was a person, not a bomb. With this in mind, Steve Rogers volunteered for a covert military experiment that turned him into Captain America. After a few years of exemplary service, Captain America fell in battle-- his body wasn't recovered.

Years passed and Captain America was found frozen in suspended animation. When he awoke, he was convinced to join Iron Man, The Wasp, Giant Man, Black Widow, Hawkeye, and Thor in forming the superhuman defense initiative run by Nick Fury, called The Ultimates.

## PREVIOUSLY IN THE ULTIMATES:

The Ultimates have had two decisive battles since Nick Fury brought them together. The first was when they saved New York City from the rampaging monster known as The Hulk. What the world at large doesn't know is that The Hulk is really Bruce Banner, a scientist who was working on the superhuman defense initiative.

The second battle The Ultimates won was against an army of shape-shifting aliens bent on destroying the world and killing all humankind. These two victories made The Ultimates the biggest celebrities the world has ever known.

It has just been leaked that Bruce Banner is the Hulk.

# DEAD MAN WALKING



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

# THE ULTIMATES

MARK MILLAR BRYAN HITCH PAUL NEARY

STORY

PERCIS

INKS

LAURA MARTIN CHRIS ELIOPOULOS NICK LOWE RALPH MACCHIO JOE QUESADA DAN BUCKLEY  
COLORS LETTERS ASSISTANT EDITOR EDITOR EDITOR IN CHIEF PUBLISHER

CAPTAIN AMERICA CREATED BY JOE SIMON AND JACK KIRBY

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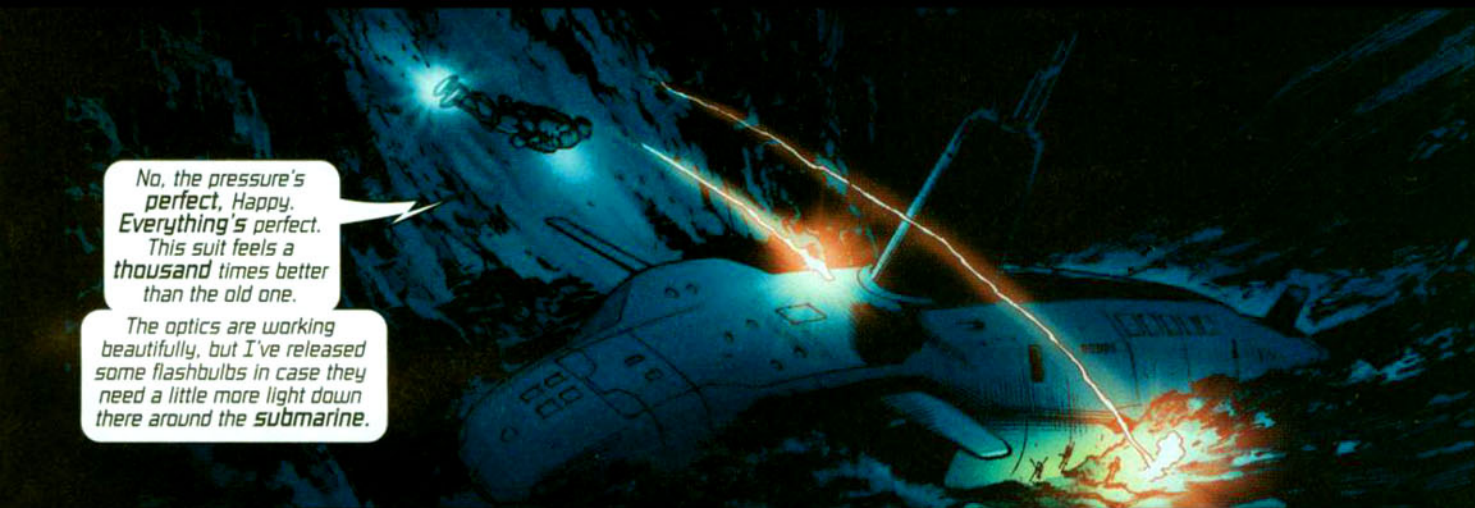
God. You get some  
ugly fish, don't you?  
There's one over  
here looks exactly like  
Ernest Borgnine.



Tony, would you please stop talking about Ernest Borgnine and just hurry the hell up? We're supposed to be going to Donatella's after-show party in half an hour.

I'm sorry, Miss Romanov, but I'm afraid you're either gonna have to call up and *cancel* or go to this thing by *yourself*.

Tony, how's the new *suit* holding up? Body temp and air supply are looking good. The *pressure* giving you any grief down there?




No, the pressure's perfect, Happy. Everything's perfect. This suit feels a thousand times better than the old one.

The optics are working beautifully, but I've released some flashbulbs in case they need a little more light down there around the submarine.



Dad, it's Brian.


I think Iron Man just showed up.



Mister Stark? This is Professor James Braddock from the European Super-Soldier Initiative. On behalf of my colleagues and I, I'd just like to thank you for helping out on such short notice.


I'm only sorry I can't introduce you to these **soldiers** we've been enhancing, but until you sign the appropriate **non-disclosure forms...**

Take it easy, Professor. I've got twenty-three offices in the European Union, so the concept of red tape isn't exactly alien to me.



Guys, I'm going to try moving this thing backwards off the racks if you can get under there and support me. Happy, I need five times more power if you can set up a two-minute download.

Satellite primed, Tony. Power boost should be hitting your battery in T-minus fifteen...



Hold on, boys. Grab hold of something steady.



My God--

Would you look at that?



What did we create here, Tony?

A ten-billion-dollar means of rendering my weekends *miserable*, Mister Hogan. Now could somebody in this dump please fetch me a *drink*? Jarvis, what the hell are we *paying* you for?

Because I've still got the *negatives*, Miss Romanov. And you can fetch your *OWN* bloody drink. I've got my *hands* full at the moment playing *strip-monopoly*.

Besides, you're supposed to be some kind of *super hero*. Shouldn't you be *helping* him or something?

I'm a former Soviet *super-spy*, idiot. What am I going to do with a *stricken submarine*? Take *pictures*?

What Master Tony sees in you I'll *never* know, you slutty minx.

Well, I'm afraid you'll just have to get used to me, old man, because I'm not going *anywhere* as long as I'm giving him that one thing that even *you* can't deliver.

What's *that*, darling? Hungarian goulash?

Oh, hell.

What's wrong?

Just got a message from General Fury.

This is really *bad*.



She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.



Thus mellow'd to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.  
One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impair'd the nameless grace  
Which--

--damn.



What's wrong,  
Pietro?

Another message from  
one of the *primates*,  
darling. What's the  
matter with these  
Americans? Don't they  
even appreciate the  
*concept* of  
downtime?



*Quicksilver* speaking and  
this had *better* be important.  
This call has already shattered  
the most perfect moment my  
sister and I have enjoyed in  
quite some time.

Phoning in the middle of lunch? What kind of people are we associating with these days?



Mm-hm.

Mm-hm.

Mm-hm.

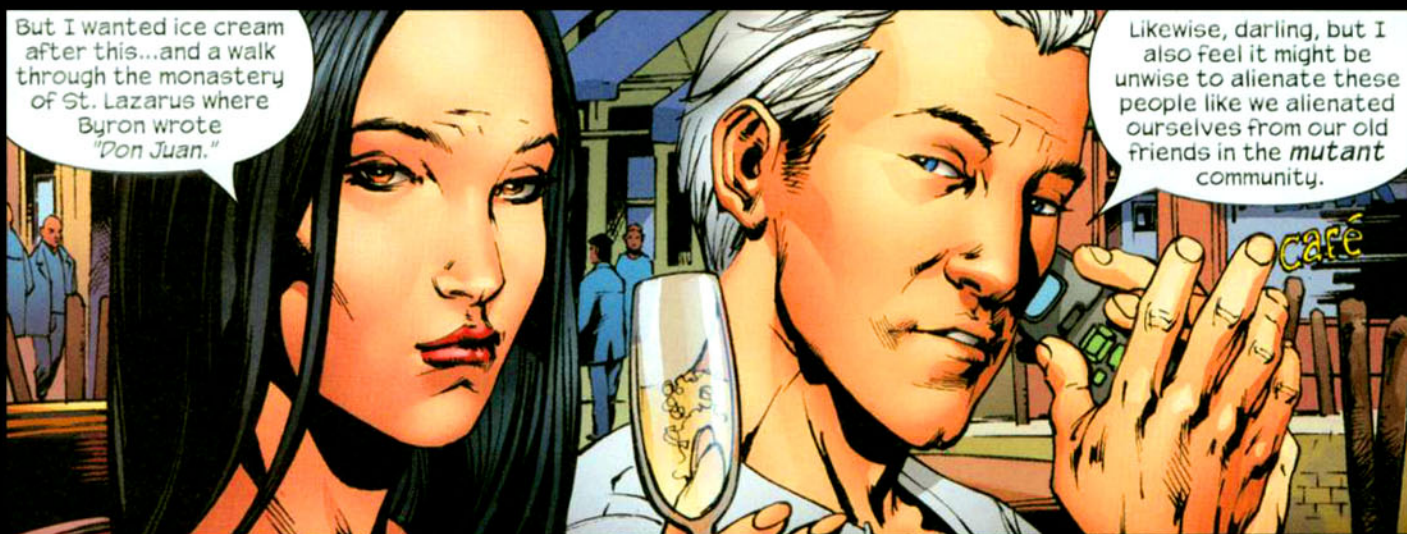
Mm-hm.

What is it *this* time? Another alien invasion?



No, they said this Bruce Banner character's just been outed as The Hulk. Apparently, there's some kind of crisis meeting at the Triskelion and they want to know if we can *join* them.

But I wanted ice cream after this...and a walk through the monastery of St. Lazarus where Byron wrote "Don Juan."



Likewise, darling, but I also feel it might be unwise to alienate these people like we alienated ourselves from our old friends in the *mutant* community.

café



Don't you think we should maybe suffer their tedium just this once and explore Venice together at some *later date*? It looks like it was going to rain here, anyway.



Oh, all right, Pietro.

But just for you.



Dr Robert  
Bruce Banner--

--previous  
history of mental  
illness--

--nothing short  
of a cover-up of epic  
proportions, Dan.



Going live  
now to our--

General Nick  
Fury refused  
to answer--

--of course  
Thor was  
behind this.

--trying to destroy  
the team before the  
President sends The  
Ultimates to support  
our boys.

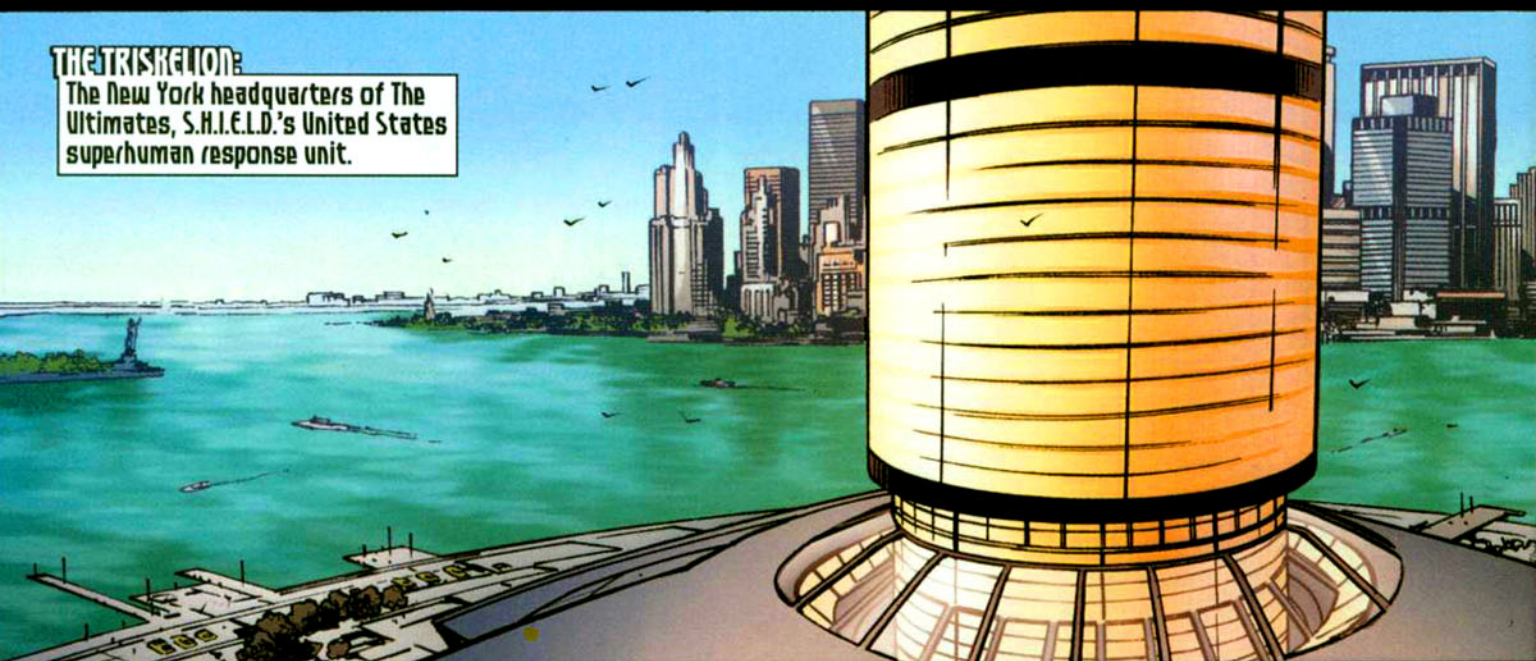


Damn right  
this wasn't an  
accident...



# THE TRISKENION

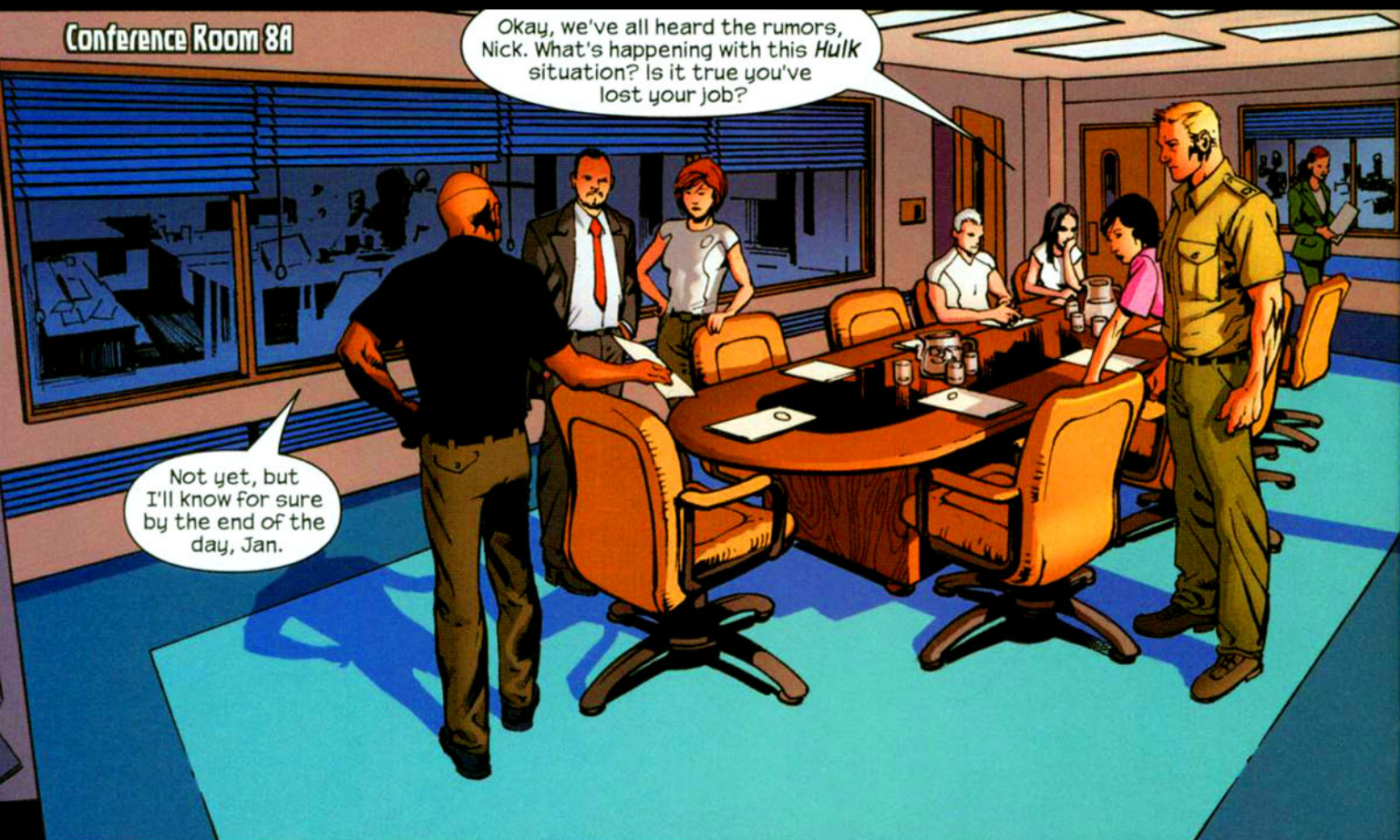
The New York headquarters of The Ultimates, S.H.I.E.L.D.'s United States superhuman response unit.



## Conference Room 8A

Okay, we've all heard the rumors, Nick. What's happening with this *Hulk* situation? Is it true you've lost your job?

Not yet, but I'll know for sure by the end of the day, Jan.

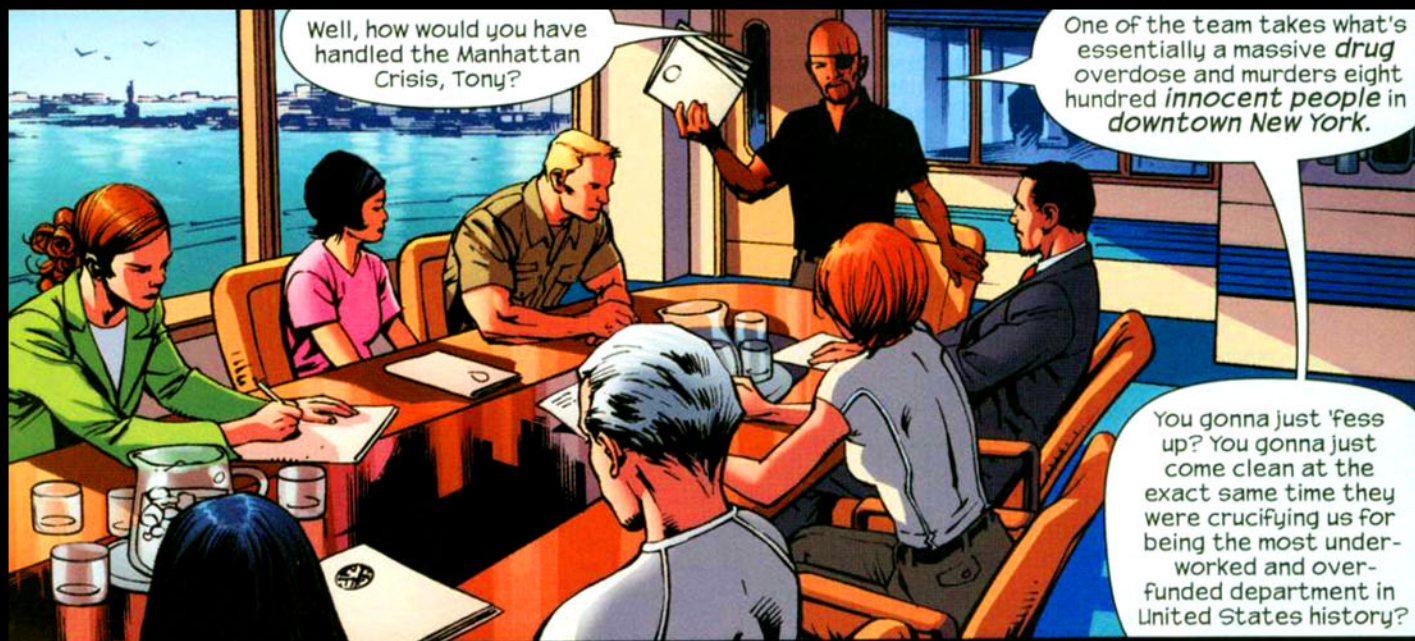


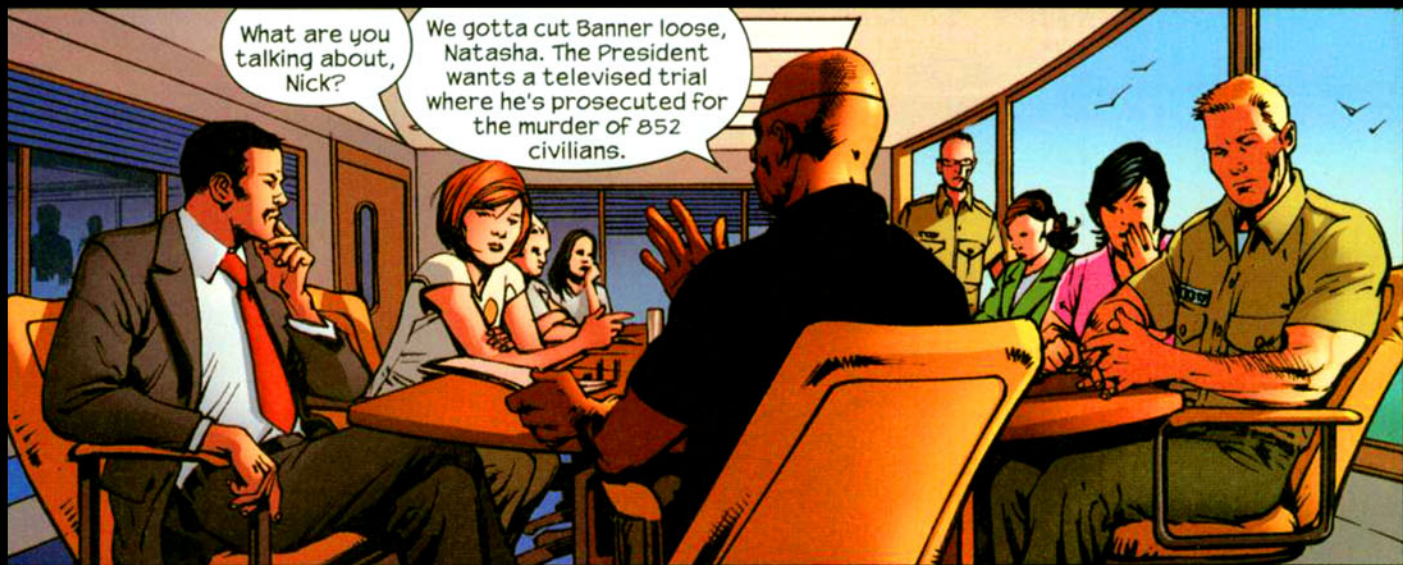
It's one thing lying to the American public, but the President don't take it too well when all the files we were hiding from the Oval Office get broadcast on every major television network.



I can't believe S.H.I.E.L.D. made such a hash of this. I thought national security was your particular field of interest.







What are you talking about, Nick?

We gotta cut Banner loose, Natasha. The President wants a televised trial where he's prosecuted for the murder of 852 civilians.



But that's an automatic death sentence.



Almost certainly, but that's what the public wants, Tony.



Betty, for God's sake, this is Bruce we're talking about.



And you think I'm *unaware* of that? You think this isn't hitting me harder than anyone else in this room?

Bruce and I have been on and off for the last five years, but my first duty is to my job and the security of this country, Jan.



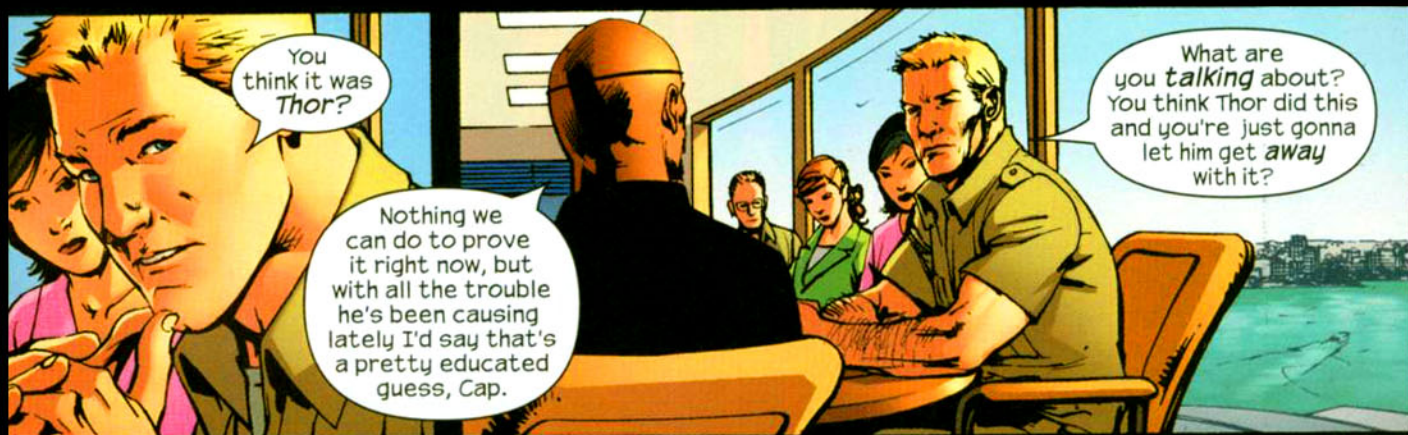
I'm feeling this more than *anyone*, but if I can be *professional* and get behind this P.R. job, the rest of you can do it *too*.

Sorry. You're absolutely right. I'm sorry.



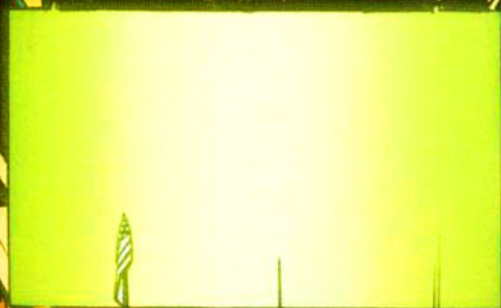
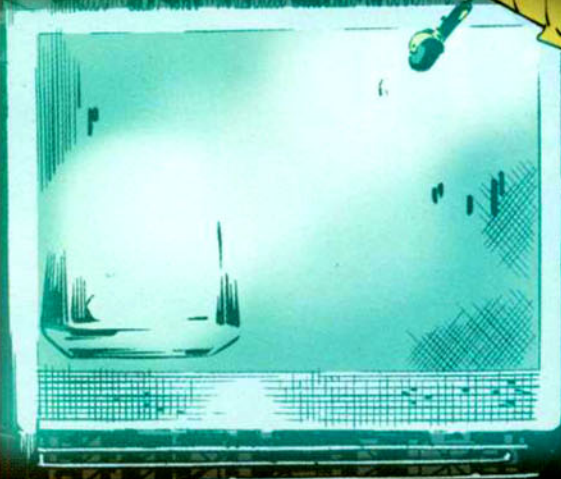
Where is Banner anyway? Does he even know this is happening?

He knows what he saw on TV and he's downstairs crying in his cell. We got him doped up to the eyeballs for his own protection, but the irony is he hasn't turned into the Hulk in *weeks*.



TIMES SQUARE

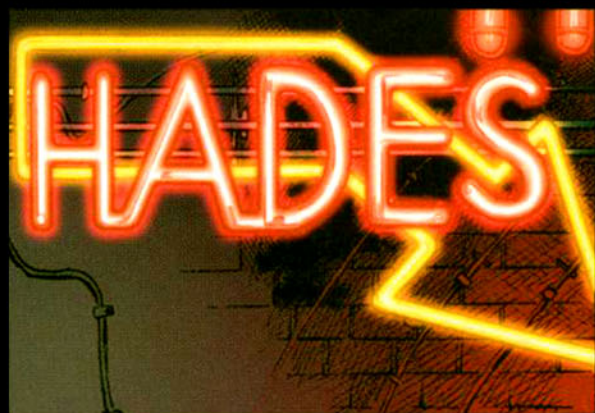
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NEW YORK  
HOTEL

LAN



Hey, where d'you think you're going, man? Full house!



--I said I love that piece in your book about America thinking it's the new Roman Empire, but why have you stopped mentioning the President by name, Thor? Why don't you personalize it anymore?

Because blaming him for what they're doing is like blaming Ronald McDonald for the hamburgers. He's just their *frontman*. I doubt they even let him into the *meetings*.



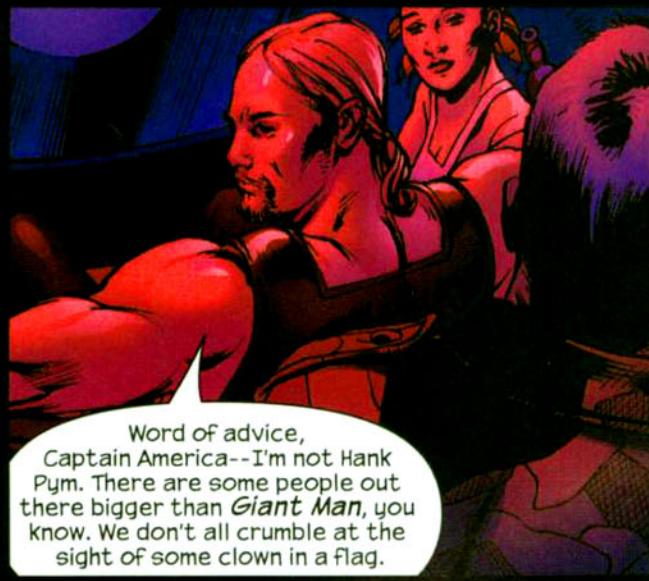
Listen, are you that nurse from San Francisco? The one that gave up her job when she saw us on TV...?

You!





This supposed to be *intimidating*, jackass? Two hundred fellas with long hair that haven't seen a bath in months?



Word of advice, Captain America--I'm not Hank Pym. There are some people out there bigger than *Giant Man*, you know. We don't all crumble at the sight of some clown in a flag.



And as far as your accusations go, I've been in the Triskelion three times in my life: Once to see *Fury*, once to have breakfast with *Tony* and once for that *charity thing* we did last Christmas.

I can barely do my *e-mail*, never mind hack into classified S.H.I.E.L.D. files...



Besides, I'm the most vocal opponent of the death penalty in this country. Do you really think I'd just hand over Banner to your cowboy president for a public lynching?

Just watch your step, *Goldilocks*. You've had access to a lot of privileged information these last eighteen months and if you do anything to compromise this country's *security*...



Hey, soldier?  
Hm?

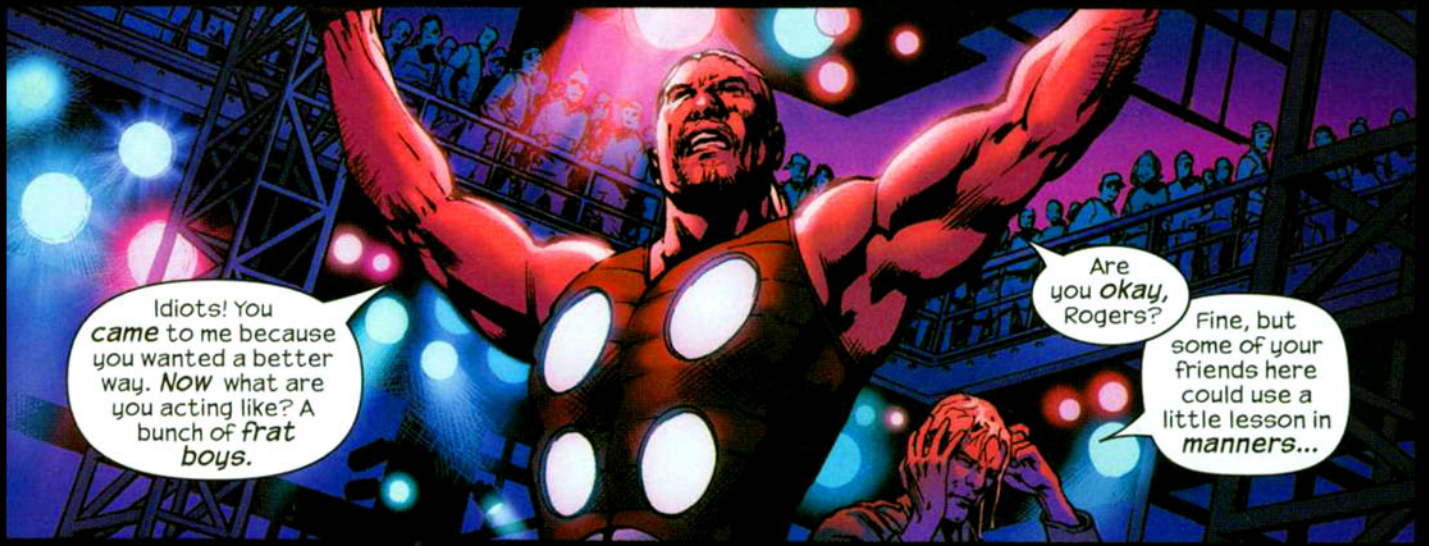


*PTUI!*



**BEER  
BAAAAATH!!!**





Idiots! You *came* to me because you wanted a better way. *NOW* what are you acting like? A bunch of *frat boys*.

Are you *okay*, Rogers?

Fine, but some of your friends here could use a little lesson in *manners...*



Listen, I'm sorry about this. I really didn't want that to happen and I'm serious when I said I'd nothing to do with outing Banner.

That said, I think I know who *might* have released those files.

Who?



My evil half-brother, *Loki*. A messenger from Asgard came to warn me that he *escaped* from his bonds again and journeyed to Midgard to do everything he could to--

Thor, please.

What?

Just shut up.



You go to *church* every Sunday, Captain.

What I've got to say's no stranger than *that*.



How are you feeling, Bruce?



Kind of relieved, to be honest.

I've been living in *limbo* for the last eighteen months, Professor Xavier. Locked up like a rat in a cage, no contact with the outside world. Did you hear I'm not even allowed to watch TV anymore?

And why's that?



In case I catch something on the news that upsets my *adrenal system* and triggers off another *Hulk* episode. It's ridiculous. I haven't turned into the Hulk in *months*.

Well, you're not missing much: afternoon talk shows and late-night political slots where people debate the merits of killing you by *electric chair* and killing you by *lethal injection*.

You do realize you're going to be *executed* for this, don't you? Politically, there's really no alternative when the fatalities are in triple-figures like this.



I've known since the minute they locked me up, Professor. It was always pretty *obvious* I wasn't getting out of there alive...

...but, like I said, there's something kinda *liberating* about not being in that *no-man's-land* anymore.

Where *is* this place? Where *are* we? I can taste salt water on the air, but there's also the smell of someone barbecuing steaks on a charcoal grill. Are we standing in a *confused* memory here?

Yeah, it seems to be a kinda cross between the time my mom and dad took me up to Kennebunkport and the time I spent the summer at my cousin's place down in Runnemede, New Jersey.

I used to love going down there and staying with Jenny. The fact she was five years *younger* than me meant she didn't realize what an *idiot* I was yet.

I've just been told our time is up, Bruce. Do you want to stay here until I come back tomorrow? *General Fury* doesn't seem to have any objections.


Nah, as nice as it is in my pre-frontal gyrus I guess I should get out there and face the music, huh? Hank Pym's supposed to be dropping by to see me at 4:00 anyway.

Whatever makes this easier, young man. I'll be back tomorrow, of course. Same time, same place. You know my psychic distress code if that monster gives you any trouble in the meantime.

Absolutely, Professor Xavier.

"Absolutely."






So how *was* he?

Surprisingly relaxed. He's a very clever man who's spent a lot of time in there with little else to *do* besides contemplate his fate.

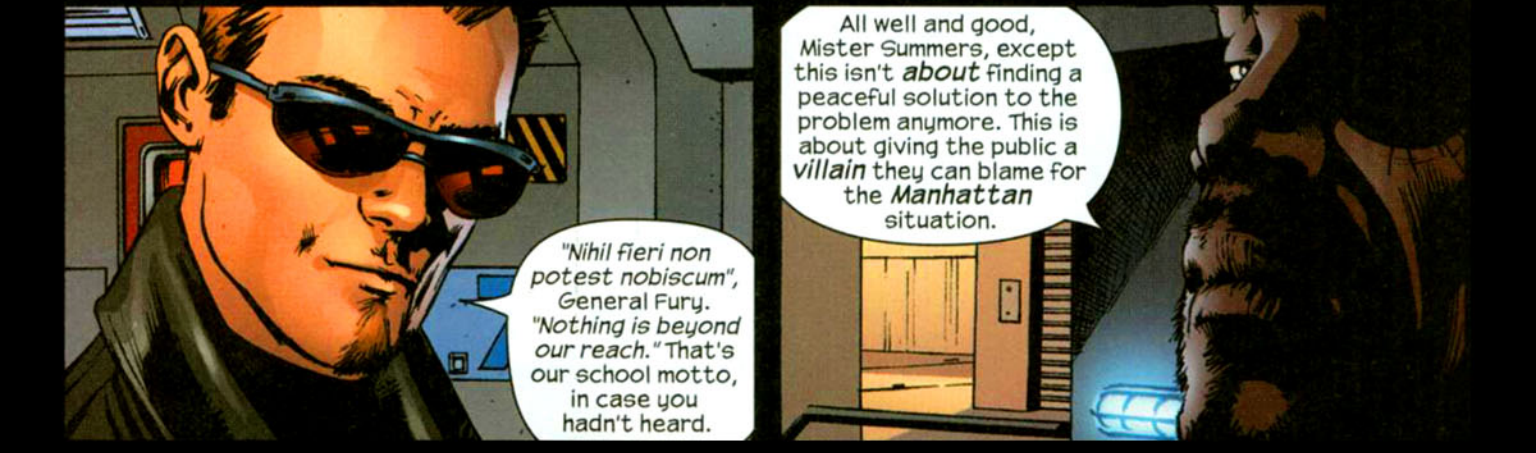
He knows full well how this is all going to end and seems to be taking it all rather better than expected.



It just hasn't sunk in yet. Wait'll the trial starts. *Then* we'll see how well he's taking it, poor little guy.

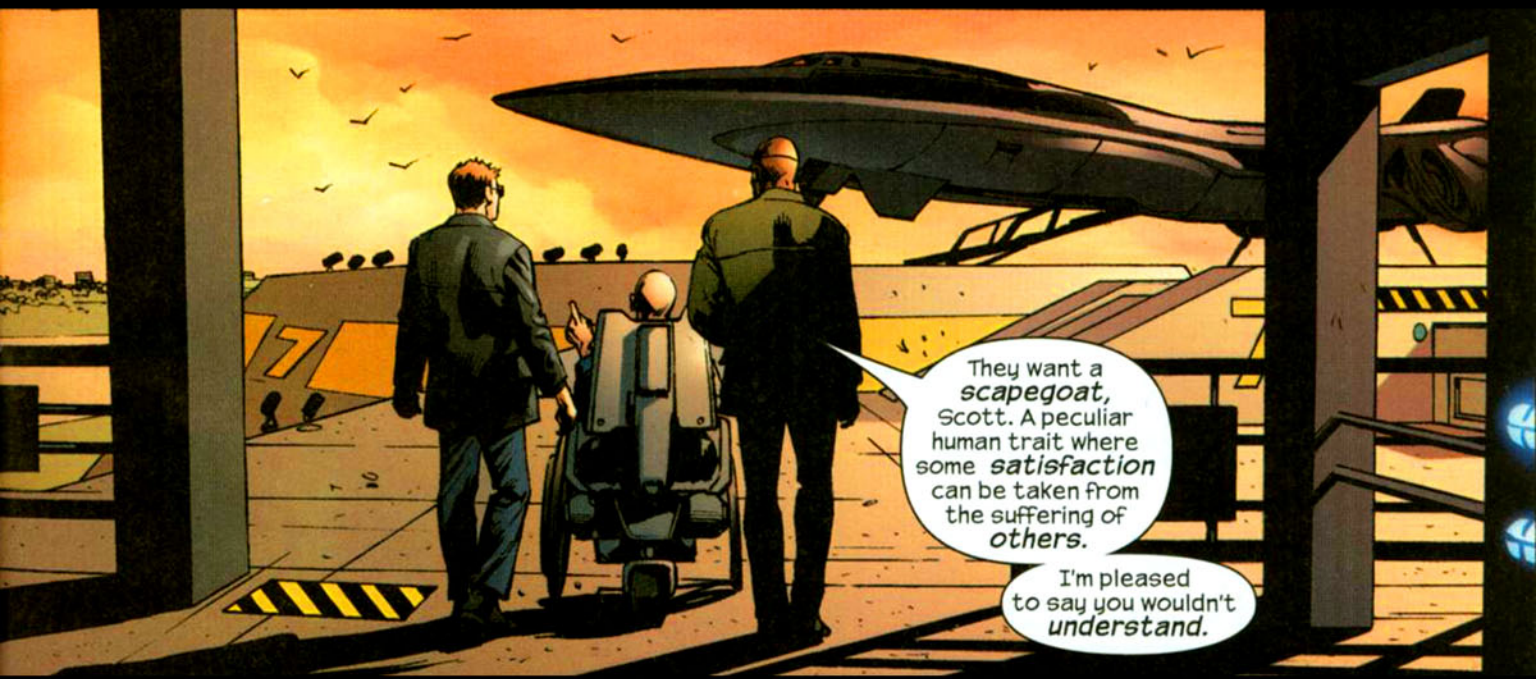
Have you given any more thought to this idea that I might enlist him in my school? I've become something of a *past master* when it comes to helping people with dangerous powers.

Scott here couldn't open his eyes without killing anyone in his line of vision when we first met. Isn't that right, Scott? And we fixed him up soon enough.



All well and good, Mister Summers, except this isn't *about* finding a peaceful solution to the problem anymore. This is about giving the public a *villain* they can blame for the *Manhattan* situation.

"*Nihil fieri non potest nobiscum*", General Fury. "Nothing is beyond our reach." That's our school motto, in case you hadn't heard.



They want a *scapegoat*, Scott. A peculiar human trait where some *satisfaction* can be taken from the suffering of *others*.

I'm pleased to say you wouldn't *understand*.



So how does it feel knowing you're going to be a big TV star?

What?



This trial's being broadcast in ninety countries and a hundred and fifty languages, Bruce. *TV Guide* says you'll be bigger than *Oprah*.

Only difference is she doesn't get executed at the end of the season.



More's the pity. Are these the cameras they've installed for the courtroom appearances? Wow, it's weird seeing this stuff in real life.

That D.A. they've got's really *something*, man. You know he refuses to answer questions about *The Hulk* to anyone? He just keeps saying "Doctor Banner" over and over again.



He's just hammering home the connection in people's minds. Just doing his job, Hank. Can't blame a guy for that.



Very philosophical, Grasshopper.

No, just realistic. I killed hundreds of people out there and there's a million eyewitnesses. I know I'm going to die at the end of all this. All I want to do now is tie up the loose ends before I go.

Which reminds me, I told Fury I really wanted you to get all these new *super-soldier* designs I'd been putting together.

Don't worry about giving me a credit or anything when they publish the papers. No use to me where *I'm* going, right?

Don't talk like that. You don't know for sure how this is all going to pan out and, besides, didn't you hear? I'm gone at the end of the month anyway.

Why? I thought you *loved* this place.

I do, but they don't exactly love me back. They're saying it's because they can't risk any more unstable personalities, but there's definitely *something else* going on here.

What do you mean?

I think we all got used to making this terrifying *military force* they put together seem *nice and friendly* for a while.

Y'know, playboy billionaires and eccentric geniuses to pave the way for all the big, crazy *soldiers* they're going to have in these costumes by the end of the year?

No way. They wouldn't be building everybody up like this if they were just going to replace them with regular Army *grunts*...

Look who they're *bringing in*, man; Hawkeye, Widow, all those weirdos and psychopaths from the Black Ops units like *Scarlet Witch* and *Quicksilver*.

Look who they're *phasing out*.

Look who they're *phasing out*.



**TO BE CONTINUED...**