

MARVEL

PG 421

AUSTEN

GARNEY

MORALES

UNCANNY X-WOMEN

**RULES OF
ENGAGEMENT**
1 of 2

DIRECT EDITION



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Change is coming. A new breed of man has emerged. They are the Children of the Atom, Homo Superior, individuals gifted with strange and fantastic abilities simply by virtue of their genetic makeup.

Stan Lee presents...



UNCANNY X-MEN

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT Part 1 of 2

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PREVIOUSLY



Things have slowed down considerably in the aftermath of the X-Men's battle with the Dominant Species. But along with downtime comes the opportunity to question the events of the past few weeks.

Rarchangel must deal with his newly developed secondary mutation—his blood apparently has the ability to heal. Not only did he rescue Husk from two near-death experiences in their battle with the werewolves, but he also saved Juggernaut from serious injuries as well!

Juggernaut finds himself in the strange position of not only being a hero for the first time, but of also being accepted and even looked up to by some of the school's children, including Carter and Sammy.

Alex Summers—a.k.a. Havok—has emerged from his coma with the help of Professor Xavier and Carter, the young mutant son of Annie, the school's new nurse. Annie developed a crush on Alex while he was in a coma, but it looks as though her infatuation may be put on hold now that Alex's old girlfriend Lorna Dane—a.k.a. Polaris—has returned to the mansion. Lorna's demeanor has changed in the months since Alex has been gone—being witness to the deaths of nearly 16 million mutants on Genosha has taken a serious toll on her—but it appears as though she still has feelings for him.

And on top of all this, Nightcrawler has removed himself from the position of priest within the Catholic church, while Husk has fallen for her knight in shining armor, Rarchangel.

With the team in emotional disarray, it looks as though Professor Xavier will have his hands full today.



RARCHANGEL
Warren Worthington III
Flight



HUSK
Paige Guthrie
Skin Manipulation



HAVOK
Alex Summers
Solar-Generated Plasma Blasts



ANNIE GHAZIKHANIEN
School Nurse



CARTER GHAZIKHANIEN
Annie's son
Untapped Mental Ability



POLARIS
Lorna Dane
Magnetic Control



JUGGERNAUT
Cain Marko
Super-strength, Invulnerability



NIGHTCRAWLER
Kurt Wagner
Teleportation



SQUIDBOY
Samuel Pile
Underwater Breathing



ICEMAN
Bobby Drake
Sub-Thermal Control




A lot has happened in the time you've been gone, Alex --



-- a relatively new phenomenon called *secondary mutation* which has affected --

-- among others --


-- Hank and Emma Frost -- who's living here at the mansion now, by the way --



-- and then the *second tower* fell, killing a few thousand, most of them rescue workers --




-- *Peter* sacrificed his life so that every mutant might live --



-- called itself *Cassandra Nova*, who was responsible for the near destruction of the Shi'Ar empire --

-- and very nearly *all of us* --



-- *Genosha* was completely destroyed by Sentinels, sixteen million mutants dying within minutes --

-- including *Magneto*.





Oh, and don't be surprised to see *Juggernaut* wandering the halls.



If you want, Annie, you can go in to see Professor X ahead of me.

I'm in no rush.

Thanks, Kurt.

He wants to talk about Carter ... but I should really tell him what happened between *Lorna* and me in the infirmary before all the *rumors* start.

How ya gonna beat me if ya can't even *reach* my thumb, Carter?

I can do it, Cain!



We're all looking forward to having you two back home at the school again, Lorna.

Alex has a scar, but otherwise he's as good as new.



I'm sorry, people.

There's kind of a line, here, waiting to see Professor Xavier.



The line doesn't apply to us, Florence Nightingale.

It's all right, Annie.

Xavier summoned us --
-- mentally --

-- to come in first and welcome Alex home.



Your job is finished now, Annie.



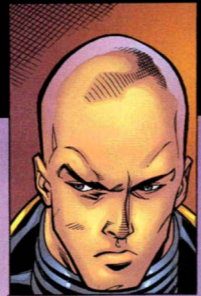
Alex doesn't need you to look after him anymore.













Lorna, I--

CONGRATULATIONS!



Lord knows we've all been wondering when you two would finally tie the knot!

Hank, I--



Come on, Carter.

We'll see the Professor another time.

Kurt, would you mind telling the Professor I had to leave?



⊗ LATER...

Bobby, are you all right? I know you and Lorna were an item once --



I'm fine, Warren, just fine.

Stop asking me already.



Whattya say we grab some lunch?

It's a **babe-fest** down at The Robin this time of day.

Well ... thanks, Bobby, but I'm having lunch with Paige, and we --

Paige?!

Please tell me you're not dating that twelve-year-old, Warren!

She's older than twelve, Bobby.

And no, we're not dating ...

We just have a lot in common, and we --

-- you know --

Hey, don't get me **wrong**, bud. I think you've been out of the saddle **too long** as it is --

-- and if you've got a taste for **cheerleaders...** well, that's okay by me.

But be home by **ten**, young man, and remember --

-- "Sixteen'll get you twenty."

Cha-Ching!



⊗MEANWHILE...

Cain, Kurt --
I'm sorry to
keep you both
waiting.

As you can
imagine, it's
been a little
hectic around
here today.

I get
that.

No worries,
Professor.



Is it possible
I could talk to
you both at
the same
time?



Uh, well, I think
I need some
privacy for what
I need to talk to
you about.

But I only
need a few
minutes.

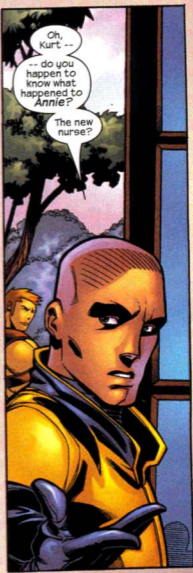


I can wait
outside ...

Nah, nah, you stay,
'Crawler.

I need to
get out of
this office,
anyway.

I'm feelin' kinda
claustrophobic.



⊗ THE INFIRMARY



... and Warren and I just talked for like --

-- I don't know, *four hours* or something.

And he's so *funny*, Annie.

But not in like a *Kurt* or *Bobby* kind of way ... more dry and gentle.

And he has such a kind soul. It, like, lights up an *entire room*.

Like an *Angel*,... which is what he is, I guess.

Mm hmm.

And he's been through *so much*, you know?

Apocalypse, losing his wings, losing his girlfriend Betsy ...

... but he's still so *positive* ... about life ... about people ...

Did he *walk on water* for you, Paige?

No. He never even tried to *kiss* me. But I wanted him to.

Have you ever looked into his *eyes*, Annie?

They're this powder blue... like the *sky* on the best day of your life.

Can he feed the hungry?
House the homeless?
Cure crippled children?





I don't know.
Probably.



Oh my God!
Did I tell you? I didn't tell you!
He healed me!



He what?



His blood. It healed me when I was dying.
Dead, actually... I think.

Anyway, his blood mixed with mine and he healed me.

Paige, you're kidding.

He do do that?
Is he sexually active?



Oh, don't be like that. It was romantic.
Mutants can't get AIDS, anyway.



They can't? Why not?



It's because of the X-Genes.

I just made that bed, you know.



I know. Don't be such a wet blanket.

I'm in heaven with my Angel, so please don't ruin it.



Or isn't Alex supposed to know?



I mean, I'd be excited for you if we were talking like this about Alex.



Talking like what about Alex?

⊗ OUTSIDE



If this is too difficult to talk about, Cain, I could just read your thoughts.

Stay outta my head, Charlie.

No offense.



"No offense?"

That's something I never thought I'd hear you say to anyone ...

... let alone me.

Yeah, well ...



You know, fighting those Wolves with Logan and Warren and the others ...

... it was kinda Fun.



"Fun"?

Hey, don't psychoanalyze me or nuthin', all right?

I'm just tryin' ta be honest here.





And maybe I could *join up* with the X-Men, too, you know.

Be the *muscle*.

If it's not like a "*mutant-only*" thing, or somethin'.

It's not actually a *rule* or anything, no.



You'll have to talk with the *team leaders* about joining, though. I leave those decisions to them.

But I *approve*, absolutely.

You're always welcome in my home.



Great.

That's great. Thanks.

So, who do I talk to, then? About the X-Men thing.



Well, *Scott* leads one unit ...

... and *Kurt* is technically the leader of the second, but he seems to prefer sharing the role with Warren. Talk to Kurt.

Great.

This is really great.

Thanks.

My pleasure, Cain ...

... believe me ...

... it's my pleasure.



THE INFIRMARY



So my brother tells me I have you to thank for keeping me clean and odor-free while I was a vegetable, Annie.

Well ...
... it was my job.



It's still pretty special to me.

if a little awkward, given what you probably had to do.

It was my pleasure.

Really.

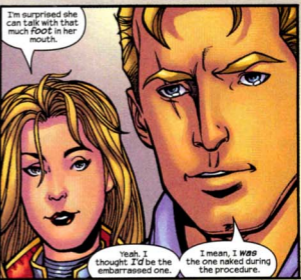


I mean --
-- not like I get pleasure out of --

-- I mean --

-- I had to keep you clean --

-- it's just part of the, the, the --



I'm surprised she can talk with that much foot in her mouth.

Yeah. I thought I'd be the embarrassed one.

I mean, I was the one naked during the procedure.



Well, yeah, but if I could have been the naked one, I would've been --

-- I mean, not the naked one, that's not what I meant, I meant the one without clothes on --



-- and you'd be naked --

-- I mean the one with clothes on and you'd be rubbing me naked --

-- cleaning, not rubbing, cleaning, you know, sponging, in a medical way --

I think she's going to explode.



⊗MEANWHILE...





...and stepping down as leader of the X-Men.

☉ LATER ...



I understand that you need to reacclimate, Alex, but you just got back.

Yeah, I know, Scottie ... but it's only for a little while.

We'll be back soon. I promise.

We'll have the wedding here, if that's all right with you, Professor.

Of course, Lorna.

I'd be hurt if you had it anywhere else.



Believe me, Scott... it's not that I want to leave you guys.

It's just that you *snore* so damn loud, and --

Get in that cab before I boot your sorry butt all the way to Bermuda.

It's going to be so beautiful, Alex. I'm so excited!



It should be you going to Bermuda with him, Annie, not that psycho.

Oh, Paige. They've been together for years.

I'm just a lonely mother who developed a crush on a comatose patient.

Who's the real psycho here?



Well. I guess this is it.





ALEX!

The plane isn't going to wait for us!

And Kurt's already at the airport!

Coming, dear.

I'll be --
-- right there.



I--



So, Lorna. What should we read on the way to the airport?

I got tragedy-- I got smut.

I even found something with a *monkey-boy* on the cover!

A monkey-boy?

Please, spare me.



All right, fine. Boring old news it is.



2 NIGHTS LATER...

It's just that I used to say those *exact* words when I brought magazines to read to him.

"Tragedy or smut."

And on top of that, he knew my name.

As soon as he came out of the coma, he started saying 'Annie this' and 'Annie that' ...

How did he know my name?

Maybe he heard you, somehow, when he was in the coma.

God, I hope not. I told him some embarrassing stuff.

BAM

By the order of the Prime Minister of Canada and the Governor and Attorney General of the State of New York --

-- you are hereby ordered to relinquish custody of all the children in your care to **ALPHA FLIGHT** --

-- or have them removed by force!



⊗ TO BE CONTINUED! ⊗