



YEARS BEFORE A WARY WORLD CAME TO KNOW THE X-MEN AS AN INTERNATIONAL BAND OF EXOTIC ADVENTURERS, THERE WERE A HANDFUL OF TROUBLED TEENAGERS, AND ONE MAN WITH A DREAM... STAN LEE PRESENTS:

**X-MEN**  
THE HIDDEN YEARS

# HUNTER and HUNTED

HE'S NEARBY. I CAN ALMOST FEEL HIS EYES ON ME.

WATCHING, WAITING, BIDDING HIS TIME, LIKE THE HUNTER HE IS.

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WAITING FOR ME TO SHOW ONE FATAL WEAKNESS.

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A WEAKNESS I WILL NOT SHOW!

I HAVE MADE TOO MANY MISTAKES ALREADY TODAY.

...BUT THE FACT THAT THE X-MEN HAVE BEEN KEPT BUSY WITHOUT RESPITE FOR MORE THAN A WEEK...

...FOR EVERY MOMENT OF THE TIME SINCE PROFESSOR X RETURNED TO US, IN FACT...

...WOULD NOT SERVE ME WELL AS AN EPITAPH!

\*MOST RECENTLY RECOUNTED IN OUR FIRST ISSUE - J

I COULD BLAME FATIGUE, BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL...

BUT RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT, KRAVEN HAS US OVER A BARREL!

JEAN-- WHAT'S AVIA'S STATUS?

HANK IS OUT THERE ALONE! WITH KRAVEN THE HUNTER DOING ALL HE CAN TO KILL HIM!

WE CAN'T JUST LET THAT HAPPEN!

AND WE WON'T, BOBBY.

KRAVEN WANTS THE MOST DANGEROUS HUNT OF HIS CAREER, HE SAYS!

THEN IT BEHOOVES THE BRUTAL BEAST TO GIVE IT TO HIM!

"WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!"

NO CHANGE, SCOTT.

I WISH I KNEW IF THAT WAS GOOD OR BAD!



THE AUTO-DOC'S SCANNERS DON'T REVEAL TOO MUCH OF ANYTHING, I'M AFRAID.

THEY SHOW ALL OF AVIA'S LIFE FUNCTIONS AT A LOW, LOW EBB...

BUT SHE'S SO--ALIEN, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT WOULD BE NORMAL FOR HER!

KRAVEN SAID HE GAVE HER SOME KIND OF SLOW POISON...

...AND I SHALL PROVIDE YOU WITH THE ANTIDOTE...

...ONCE YOU HAVE PROVIDED ME WITH WHAT I SEEK HERE!

AND THAT MIGHT BE..?



YOURSELF AS THE CENTERPIECE OF MY GREATEST HUNT, BEAST.

I HAVE WASTED TOO MUCH TIME AND EFFORT ON FRUITLESS PURSUITS OF SPIDER-MAN.

I HAVE LET MY SKILLS GROW DULL. YOU SHALL BE THE STONE ON WHICH I SHARPEN THEM!



AND SUPPOSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY YOUR LITTLE GAME, KRAVEN?



THAT OPTION HAS BEEN EXPROPRIATED, LITTLE PARTNER.

IF I REFUSE, AVIA DIES.

BUT I HAVE HEARD, KRAVEN, THAT IN YOUR OWN SICK WAY, YOU ARE A MAN OF HONOR.

DO I HAVE YOUR WORD..?

THAT THE ANTIDOTE SHALL BE HERS NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME?

"OF COURSE."

AND WHAT CHOICE DID WE HAVE BUT TO BELIEVE HIM?

THOUGH I MUST CONFESS, IF ONLY TO MYSELF, A CERTAIN NAGGING DOUBT THAT KRAVEN IS QUITE THE NOBLE HUNTER HE WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE.

"HE NEGLECTED TO MENTION, FOR INSTANCE..."

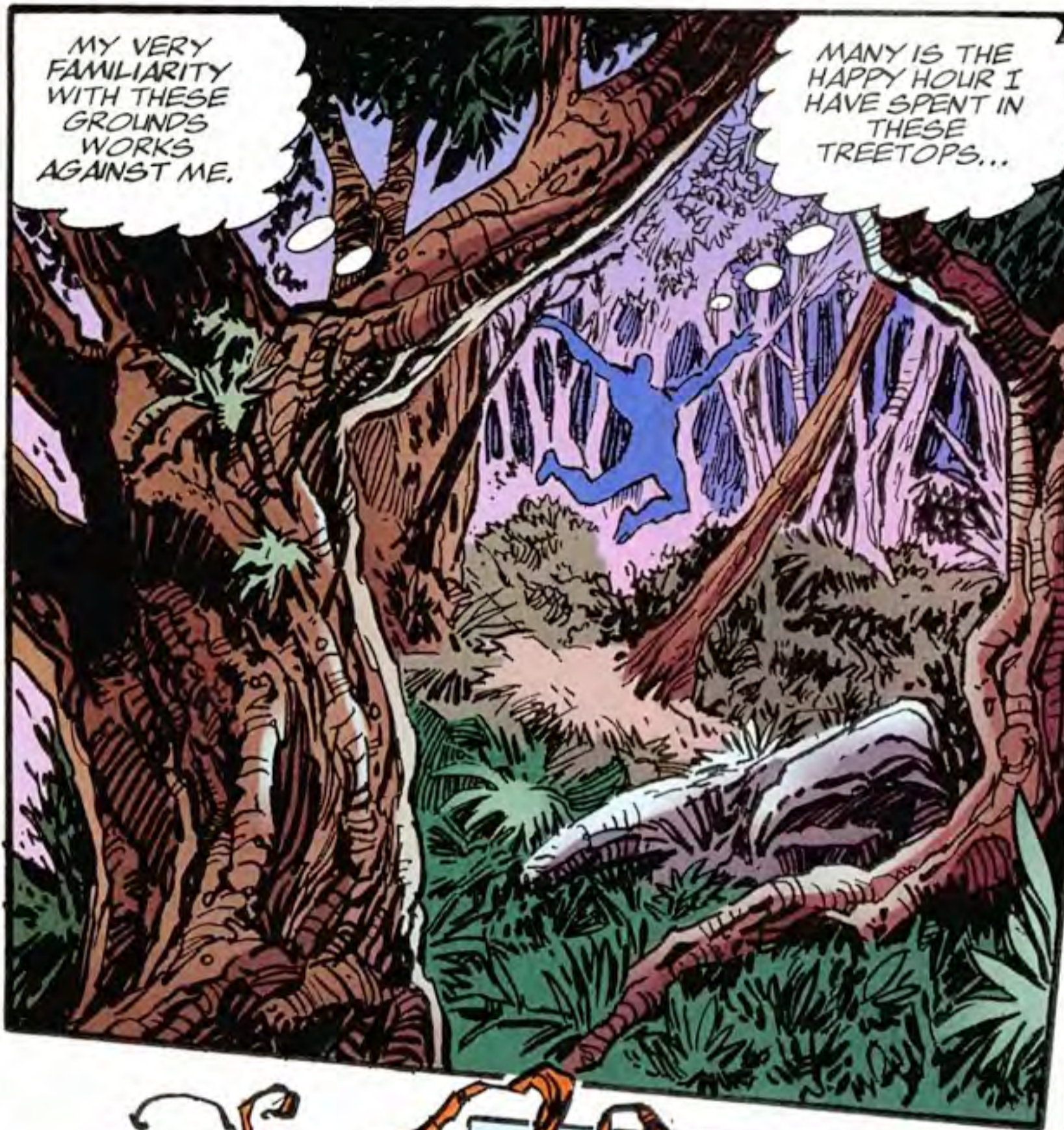
"... THAT HE MUST HAVE SPENT SOME CONSIDERABLE TIME BEFORE OUR RETURN TO THE MANSION..."

"... RIGGING TRAPS AND SNARES ALL OVER THE ESTATE."

"THREE OF WHICH I HAVE BUT NARROWLY ESCAPED THIS FAR."

**KRAVEN**





MY VERY FAMILIARITY WITH THESE GROUNDS WORKS AGAINST ME.

MANY IS THE HAPPY HOUR I HAVE SPENT IN THESE TREETOPS...



...UNLEASHING THROUGH STRENUOUS ACTIVITY THE TENSIONS ENGENDERED BY LIFE AS THE SENIOR X-MAN.

IT IS DIFFICULT EVEN NOW FOR ME TO CONVINCE MYSELF ANY PART OF THESE ONCE SHELTERING GROVES...



...MIGHT HARBOR A SUDDEN TERMINATION FOR MOTHER MCCOY'S ONLY...

NO!!

A SPRING-LOADED NET!

IT'S HURLING ME RIGHT AT THAT MASSIVE--

LINGH!!

"IS IT TIME?"

IT'S MORE THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS SINCE I MADE FIRST CONTACT.

**KRN!**



SHOULDN'T WE HAVE MADE OUR NEXT MOVE BY NOW?

PATIENCE, MR. CARTER. PATIENCE.

YOU HAVE BEEN WITH US FOR WHAT IS, FOR YOU, ONLY A SHORT TIME.

YOU MUST LEARN THAT WE MOVE SLOWLY UNTIL THE MOMENT IS EXACT.

AS WE DID WITH YOU, TAD.

YOU'RE NOT FALLING FOR HER, ARE YOU?

YOU DID SPEND LONGER WITH LORNA DANE THAN THE PLAN ALLOTTED, TAD.

THAT QUESTION IS A LITTLE OUT OF YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE, ISN'T IT, SIMON?

I KNOW YOU WERE BORN IN 1945, BUT...

STILL--WHAT-EVER FEELINGS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE YOU HAVE FOR HER...

IS IT ALL THE X-MEN YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT, CARTER?

OR ONE X-MAN--MAKE THAT X-WOMAN IN PARTICULAR?

I KNOW. FORGIVE MY IMPATIENCE, MR. MESSENGER.

BUT... IF THESE X-MEN ARE ALL THEY SEEM TO BE...

...BUT, LIKE ALL OF US, HE HAS AGED ONLY ONE WEEK FOR EACH DECADE SINCE HE JOINED OUR GROUP.



"...THEY MUST AFFECT IN NO WAY OUR PLANS FOR MISS LORNA DANE..."

THIS IS SO BAD! I KNOW HANK IS REAL GOOD AT WHAT HE DOES...

...BUT THIS KRAVEN CREEP HAS COME CLOSE TO KILLING SPIDER-MAN MORE THAN ONCE.

OH, SORRY... I WAS DISTRACTED.

ER... WHICH ONE OF YOU JUST SPOKE TO ME..?

NONE OF US, LORNA. WE'RE ALL TOO BUSY TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO HELP HANK!

I... I'M NOT SURE.

I WAS CERTAIN I HEARD SOMEONE SAY MY NAME...

LORNA

YOU OKAY, BABE?

...BUT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THE VOICE WAS...

WAS...

WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER. JEAN... DO YOU STILL HAVE A FIX ON HANK?

YES, SCOTT.

ALL RIGHT THEN...

WE'VE PLAYED THIS LITTLE GAME BY KRAVEN'S RULES LONG ENOUGH.

WE MAY HAVE GIVEN OUR WORDS THAT WE WOULD NOT HELP HANK DIRECTLY...



"...BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN'T MAKE SURE KRAVEN KEEPS HIS WORD!!"

THAT... WAS MOST UNPLEASANT.

NOT TO MENTION STUPID.

THE BEAST'S PULSE RATE IS ALTERED... ERRATIC.

THE STEADY FLOW OF BLOOD TO HIS BRAIN IS DISRUPTED.

BUT THEN, IT SEEMS AS IF MY THINKING IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE BEFUDDLED AS THIS HUNT PROGRESSES!

THE VARIOUS VENOMS WITH WHICH I CHARGED EACH OF THE TRAPS HE BELIEVES HIMSELF TO HAVE SO EASILY ELUDED...

NOW LET KRAVEN HUNT!!

MOST DISTURBING, IF KRAVEN CAN SO EASILY FRAZZLE ONE WHO PRIDES HIMSELF ON MAINTAINING HIS INTELLECTUAL FOCUS.

"IT IS WORKING!"

...ARE BEGINNING TO HAVE THE DESIRED CUMULATIVE EFFECT.

"YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS, CHARLES?!"



DUNFEE, ILLINOIS.

YOU KNOW THE FBI REALLY SHOULD SEAL THIS PLACE TIGHT AS A DRUM

NOT QUITE MEANWHILE...

WHICH WOULD ULTIMATELY ACCOMPLISH NOTHING, FRED.

THE REMAINS OF THE SENTINEL HAVE BEEN DULY REMOVED AND IMPOUNDED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES...\*

...AND YOU WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE TO STUDY THIS YOUNG MUTANT YOU FOUND HERE.

I KNOW, CHARLES. I KNOW.

BUT YOU KNOW ANY SENTINEL ACTIVITY FALLS UNDER THE MANDATE OF MY DEPARTMENT...

SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, AGENT DUNCAN...



SO I'LL YIELD TO YOU ON THIS ONE...EVEN THOUGH I'M STILL HAVING TROUBLE DEALING WITH YOUR RETURN FROM THE DEAD!

\*A MUTANT HUNTING SENTINEL ROBOT ATTACKED THIS HOUSE AND ITS OCCUPANTS IN XHY II - J

...BUT YOUR MEN ARE HAVING COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS IN THE KITCHEN.

WOULD YOU GENTLEMEN CARE FOR SOMETHING?

NO, THANK YOU, MRS. MARTIN. I'M JUST ABOUT DONE HERE, I THINK.

AND I'M FINE, TOO, THANK YOU, MRS. MARTIN.

TERI.

YES... TERI, THANK YOU. WE SHALL BE OUT DIRECTLY.

OKAY... SEE YOU SOON, THEN.

WELL, CHARLES, YOU OLD DEVIL!

I KEEP ASKING YOU TO CALL ME TERI... CHARLES.





"I NEVER KNEW YOU HAD IT IN YOU!!!"

JEAN, CAN YOU "HEAR" US?

RIGHT WITH YOU, SCOTT.

NEVER GONNA GET USED TO "HEARING" JEAN'S VOICE IN MY HEAD LIKE THAT!

REASON NUMBER ONE YOU'LL NEVER BE A REAL X-MAN, SUMMERS.



OH, AND LIKE YOU'D KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT, HUH, DRAKE?

MR. I-QUIT-BUT-NOW-I'M-BACK?

I'M ONLY BACK FOR AS LONG AS MY FRIEND NEEDS MY HELP, JERK.

WHY WAIT, FROSTY?

I CAN SPARE THE THIRTY SECONDS IT WILL TAKE TO STICK A CARROT UP YOUR NOSE...!

ALEX! BOBBY! CUT IT OUT!

KEEP OUT OF THIS, CYKE. THE MAN IN BLACK HERE MAY BE YOUR BABY BROTHER...

BUT BEFORE I GO, MAYBE I CAN FIND TWO MINUTES TO PUSH THAT FANCY HEADDRESS OF YOURS DOWN 'ROUND YOUR ANKLES!

...BUT THIS IS STRICTLY BETWEEN HIM AND...

OW!!

MY HEAD !!



THAT PSI-BLAST FROM JEAN WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG, UNLESS YOU CLOWNS QUIT THIS NONSENSE.

ALEX--YOU HAVEN'T BEEN WITH THE X-MEN LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE LEARNED DISCIPLINE...

I CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR SIB LATER.

JEAN! TELL ME WHERE HANK IS NOW.

...BUT, BOBBY, I'M ASHAMED OF YOU! IS THIS ALL YOU'VE LEARNED IN ALMOST THREE YEARS?

OKAY, OKAY, SPARE ME THE STERN TONES, SCOTT.

LORNA..?

OH... SORRY, WHAT..? I WAS... I WAS...

YOU WERE DISTRACTED. SOMETHING YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO BE.

LOOK, LORNA, IF YOU DON'T FEEL UP TO THIS, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO THE HOUSE AND...

LORNA'S HANDLED HERSELF JUST FINE SINCE SHE JOINED.

OKAY, OKAY--TAKE IT DOWN A NOTCH, ALEX.

BUT STAY ALERT, LORNA.

HEY, BACK OFF, SCOTTIE!

SHE DOESN'T NEED YOU PLAYING LITTLE TIN GOD WITH HER!



"THE LAST THING HANK NEEDS TODAY IS ANOTHER LIABILITY!"

HE MOVES WITH ASTONISHING GRACE FOR A CREATURE OF HIS BULK.

BUT I SEE CLEAR SIGNS OF UNCERTAINTY NOT VISIBLE IN ANY OF THE VIDEOTAPES I STUDIED.

SO LET US BRING HOME THIS HUNT!

YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH OF MANY MEN, I AM TOLD, BEAST.


BUT KRAVEN'S IS THE STRENGTH OF THE TRUE RULERS OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM.

KRAVEN!


AND THAT IS ONLY ONE OF MY SKILLS!

INDEED!






THEN PERHAPS WE ARE CLOSELY MATCHED, HUNTER...




AND I DARE SAY SPIDER-MAN NEVER BATTERED YOU WITH PODES OF SUCH PROFOUND PROPORTION!



YOU SPEAK OF BEING CAPABLE OF MORE THAN BRUTE FORCE, BEAST...

...YET YOUR FIRST ASSAULT IS BASED ON LITTLE MORE!


...SINCE I HAVE MORE THAN STRENGTH AT MY COMMAND!




WHAT DID HE DO TO ME?

SOME KIND OF... NERVE PINCH.

UNGH!!



MY WHOLE ARM HAS GONE NUMB!



MUSTN'T  
LET HIM THINK  
I AM IN ANY WAY  
INCOMMODATED!

IF I AM TO  
CONSUMMATE  
THIS ENCOUNTER  
TO MY OWN  
ADVANTAGE, I  
DARE NOT SHOW  
A SIGN OF  
WEAKNESS.

A  
CERTIFIABLY  
SPOCK-LIKE  
MANEUVER,  
KRAVEN.

MISTER,  
NOT  
DOCTOR!

BUT IT WILL  
TAKE MORE THAN  
A TRANSITORY  
TORPOR OF A  
SINGLE  
EXTREMITY...

...TO ABRIDGE  
THE  
BELLICOSITY OF  
THE MOST  
EXUBERANT OF  
THE X-MEN!

I'M SURE I  
CAN DEPEND ON  
YOU FOR AN  
AFFIRMATION OF  
MY  
ALLEGATION?

YOU CHATTER  
LIKE A TREE FULL  
OF BABOONS,  
BEAST.

IS IT YOUR  
GREATEST GIFT  
TO BORE YOUR  
ENEMIES TO  
DEATH?



YOU WILL FIND SUCH PETTY DISTRACTIONS HAVE NO EFFECT ON KRAVEN!!

"LORNA..?"



WHERE THE HECK IS SHE?

SHE WAS RIGHT IN MY LINE OF SIGHT NOT TEN SECONDS AGO.



LORNA!  
BABE... ARE YOU OKAY?

I DIDN'T HEAR ANY SOUND OF A SCUFFLE...



...BUT IF KRAVEN JUMPED HER IN THE COUPLE OF SECONDS SHE WAS OUT OF MY...  
LORNA..?



LORNA!!  
"SCOTT! BOBBY! BEAR LEFT!"



HANK IS AT TEN O'CLOCK... FIVE HUNDRED YARDS!

GOOD WORK, JEANIE! KEEP GUIDING US!

IS HE OKAY, JEAN?



I'M... NOT SURE, BOBBY.

HANK'S THOUGHT PATTERNS ARE USUALLY SHARP AS CUT GLASS...



"...BUT RIGHT NOW HE SEEMS ALMOST OUT OF FOCUS...!!"

I WAS WISE TO SELECT YOU AS THE QUARRY FOR MY HUNT!

YOU WERE RIGHT, BEAST! WE ARE WELL MATCHED!

BUT THERE IS ONE AREA IN WHICH KRAVEN WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR BETTER!

WOULD THAT BE YOUR PERSISTENT PROPENSITY FOR REFERRING TO YOURSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON, KRAVEN?



I CONFESS  
A PERIODIC  
PREOCCUPATION  
IN THAT AREA  
MYSELF...

...BUT YOU  
DISPENSE  
PRONOUNS  
THE WAY  
CONGRESS  
HANDS OUT  
TAX CUTS!

AHGH!!

ENOUGH  
OF THIS!

MY  
ADVANTAGE IS  
THAT I WILL  
HESITATE AT  
NOTHING TO GAIN  
MY ENDS!

YOUR  
RESISTANCE  
TO MY VENOMS  
IS GREATER  
THAN I  
ANTICIPATED.

THE TIME  
FOR SUBTLETY  
IS THEREFORE  
PASSED!

VENOM!

THEN THIS  
MOUNTING  
MIASMA  
SURROUNDING  
MY BRAIN...

...IS SOME-  
THING YOU  
HAVE  
INDUCED!

...SO YOUR  
PROMISE THAT  
AVIA WILL BE  
SPARED NO  
MATTER WHAT  
THE OUTCOME...

...IS NO  
LONGER ENOUGH  
TO MAKE ME  
HOLD BACK FOR  
FEAR OF  
HARMING EVEN  
ONE SUCH AS  
YOU!

AN ADMISSION  
OF SUCH WAS A  
GRIEVOUS  
ERROR ON YOUR  
PART, KRAVEN!

I WOULD BE  
MOST UNWISE  
TO ASSUME THE  
TOXINS WITH  
WHICH YOU HAVE  
AFFLICTED ME  
ARE NON-  
LETHAL...



"LET THE CONSEQUENCES BE ON YOUR OWN HEAD!!!"

SCOTT!

JEAN! WHY AREN'T YOU USING YOUR TELEPATHY?

IF KRAVEN IS NEAR ENOUGH TO HEAR...

NO TIME FOR SUBTLETY NOW, SCOTT!

KRAVEN HAS DONE SOMETHING TO HANK! IF WE DON'T BUST UP THAT FIGHT IMMEDIATELY...

"...I'M AFRAID ONE OF HANK'S GREATEST FEARS MAY BE REALIZED!!!"

HE IS TRULY OUT OF CONTROL!

I DID NOT ANTICIPATE THIS RESPONSE TO THE VENOMS.

I MUST ESCAPE THIS PLACE...

...BEFORE HIS FURY OVERWHELMS ME!





NOT SO...  
FAST...  
KRAVEN.



WE  
HAVE...

A  
DEAL...



AND THAT  
DEAL...  
REQUIRES YOU...  
TO STICK  
AROUND!

SO YOU  
WILL STICK  
AROUND.



EVEN IF  
IT'S  
IN PIECES!!

HANK!!



KEEP HIM AWAY FROM ME!

HANK! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

STOP FIGHTING AGAINST MY BEAM!!

HE'S MAD! INSANE!!



NO! LET ME GO, SCOTT!!

GOT TO STOP KRAVEN! GOT TO GET ANTIDOTE FOR AVIA!

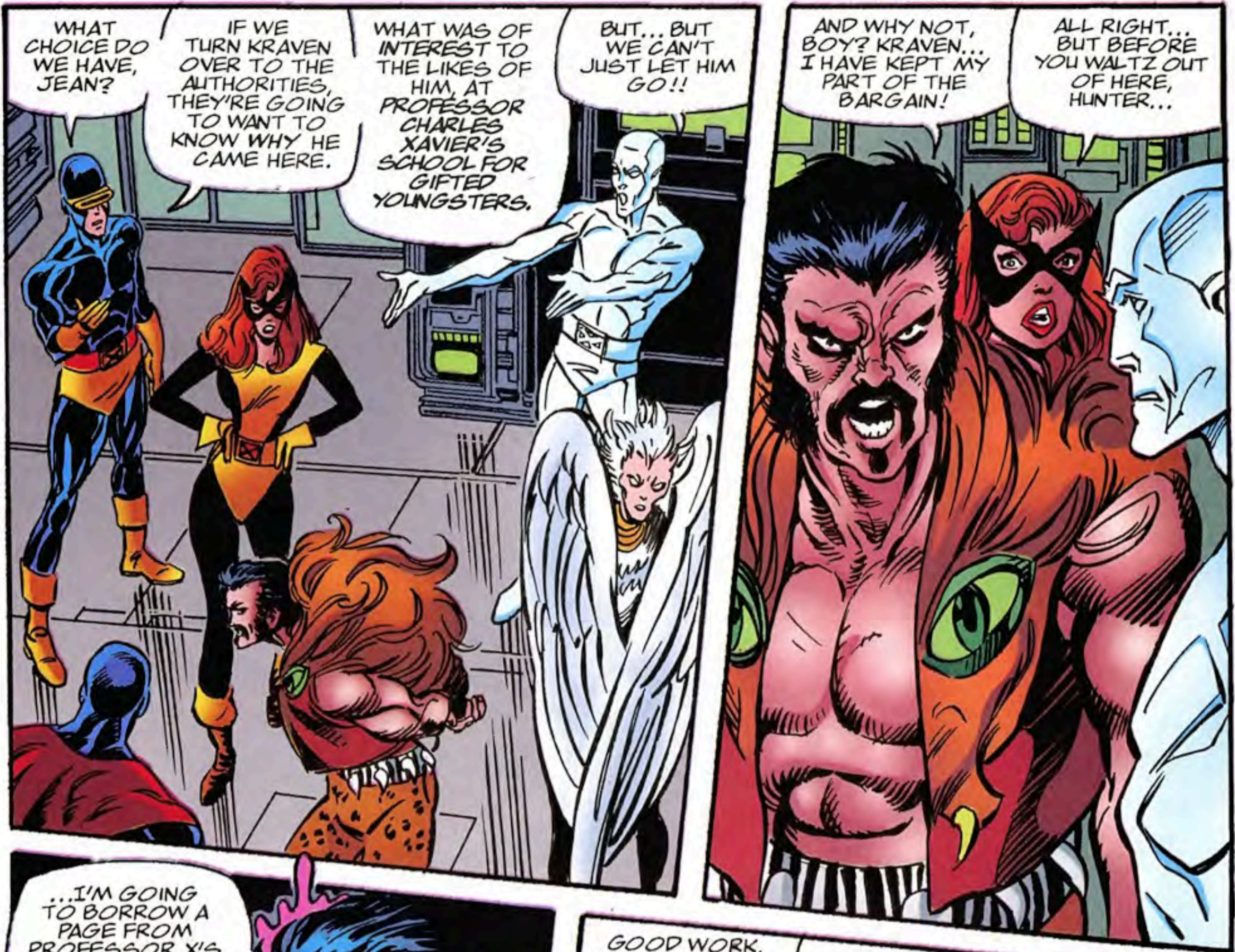


GOT TO SAVE AVIA.

SAVE...

MYSELF...

"YOU CAN'T MEAN IT, SCOTT!!"



WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE, JEAN?

IF WE TURN KRAVEN OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES, THEY'RE GOING TO WANT TO KNOW WHY HE CAME HERE.

WHAT WAS OF INTEREST TO THE LIKES OF HIM, AT PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.

BUT... BUT WE CAN'T JUST LET HIM GO!!

AND WHY NOT, BOY? KRAVEN... I HAVE KEPT MY PART OF THE BARGAIN!

ALL RIGHT... BUT BEFORE YOU WALTZ OUT OF HERE, HUNTER...



...I'M GOING TO BORROW A PAGE FROM PROFESSOR X'S BOOK AND WIPE ANY MEMORY OF US OUT OF YOUR MIND!

GOOD WORK, JEAN, WE CAN JUST DUMP HIM ON THE HIGHWAY, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SALEM CENTER.

IF THE POLICE FIND HIM THERE, THAT WILL BE HIS TOUGH LUCK!

CAN YOU... DO THE SAME FOR ME, JEAN?



HANK?

KRAVEN KEPT HIS WORD, PROVIDED THE ANTITOXINS FOR AVIA AND MYSELF...

...BUT THERE IS NO ANTIDOTE FOR THE MEMORIES THIS ENCOUNTER HAS PLACED IN MY CEREBRUM.

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN AFRAID OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

I HAVE KNOWN INTELLECTUALLY THAT I WAS NOT THE BRUTE WHO LOOKED BACK AT ME FROM EVERY MIRROR...

IF IT WAS SO EASY FOR KRAVEN TO UNLEASH THE BEAST...

LET IT GO, HANK. NONE OF THIS WAS YOUR FAULT.

SCOTT'S RIGHT, HANK. YOU WERE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE YOURSELF TO SAVE AVIA.

THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO REMEMBER.



...BUT ALWAYS IT SEEMED AS IF A DARKER NATURE MIGHT LIE BUT A HAIR'S BREADTH BELOW MY CAREFUL VENEER OF GENTILITY.

SURE! DON'T BEAT UP ON YOURSELF, BUDDY!

SCOTT!!

SHE FLOATED UP AND JUST... DRIFTED AWAY!!

SHE... SHE FLOATED UP INTO THE AIR!

GONE..? WHADAYA MEAN, GONE??

IT'S LORNA! SHE... SHE'S GONE!

ALEX?? WHAT THE DEVIL!



**NEXT**  
**What is... THE PROMISE?**