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The SIRE

DOLCE
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"Off To a Great Start!"
- Greg Land

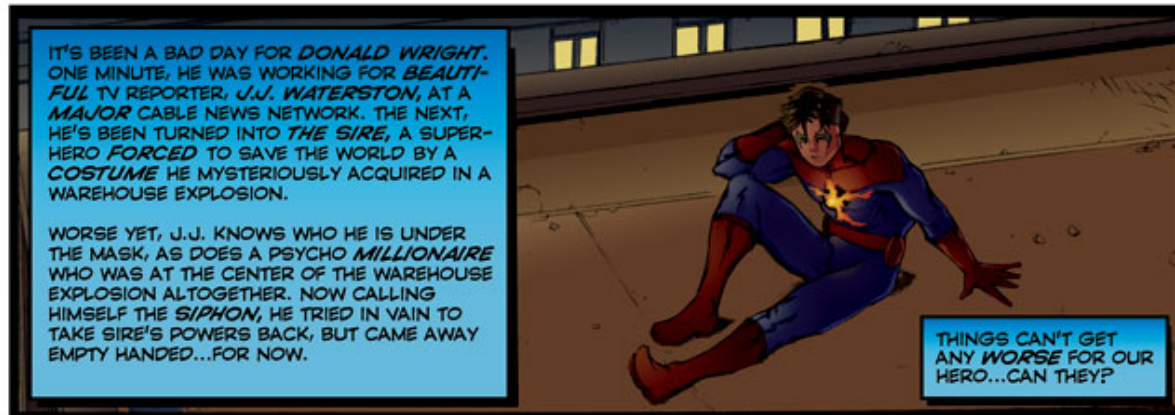




The SIRE



LAST ISSUE:



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POWER. WHO HAS IT? WHO WANTS IT?

DON!

TAKE ME FOR EXAMPLE...

DON OPEN UP! IT'S ME, J.J.!

...IN THE SPAN OF A WEEK, I'VE GONE FROM SECRETARY FOR CABLE NEWS HOTTIE J.J. WATERSTON...

THEY SAY POWER EQUALS CONTROL. THE ABILITY TO DO WHAT YOU WANT, WHEN YOU WANT.

...YOUR BOSS.

...TO TRADING HAYMAKERS WITH SUPER-POWERED CROOKS AND DEFORMED MILLIONAIRE MOGULS!

...AND SHE'S GONE ABSOLUTELY INSANE!

AND YET, WHAT TERRIFIES ME EVEN MORE THAN THAT...

YOUR INSTINCTS ARE PROVING AS ACCURATE AS I'VE BEEN TOLD.

AND GIVEN THE SITUATION, CAN ANYONE BLAME YOU FOR YOUR REACTION?

YOU HAVE LESS THAN TWO SECONDS TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF!

OH, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT!

WHOP?

...IS THE THOUGHT OF ACTUALLY HAVING TO TELL HER ANY OF THIS!



MY NAME IS PROFESSOR ZEUS WYNDELL.

MY CURRENT EMPLOYER GOES BY THE NAME SAMUEL ANTONETTI. A NAME I BELIEVE YOU KNOW ALL TOO WELL.

IN A *BOTCHED* ATTEMPT TO HARNESS AN *ALIEN* ENERGY SOURCE DEEP WITHIN SPACE, WE INADVERTENTLY UNLEASHED A GREAT AND POWERFUL *BURDEN* UPON THIS PLANET.

BURDEN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

EVOLUTION, MS. WATERSTON...

...EVOLUTION!



SHE STOPPED *KNOCKING*. NOW'S MY CHANCE!



YOU CAN MAKE IT, YOU CAN MAKE IT, YOU CAN MAKE IT, YOU CAN MAKE IT...





CRAP! WASN'T THINKING! WASN'T WATCHING!

I HATE YOU SO BAD!

THIS IS GOING TO HURT!



ARGH!

CRASH!



BRILLIANT... JUST, BRILLIANT.



AT LEAST I WASN'T KILLED.

OF COURSE, NEITHER WAS THE SUIT.



SIGH... PLAN B ANYONE?

WHY DO YOU FIGHT IT?



WHO'S THERE?!



OH...IT'S YOU.

YOU TREAT YOUR NEW LIFE AS IF IT IS A BURDEN.

FAR EASIER JUST TO EMBRACE IT, NO?



EMBRACE WHAT? A SUIT THAT MAKES ME ITS SLAVE?

A BUNCH OF PSYCHOS OUT TO BURY ME?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I'D SAY BURDEN DOESN'T COME CLOSE TO DESCRIBING WHAT'S HAPPENED!

IF YOU ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO PLAY THE ROLE OF INNOCENT BYSTANDER THEN YOUR MISSION HAS FAILED BEFORE IT'S EVER TRULY BEGUN!



MISSION? WHAT MISSION? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THIS ISN'T MY FAULT!



THEN IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO REMEMBER...



WHAT?! WHERE AM I?

REMEMBER...



WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?!

...REMEMBER WHAT BROUGHT YOU...



HEEEEEELP!

...REMEMBER WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO ME!

MEANWHILE...

THE DIARY OF
ISSAC BANKS.

AFTER FLEEING LOCAL
AUTHORITIES FOLLOWING
YESTERDAY'S ESCAPE,
FIREHEART AND I HAVE
HOLED OURSELVES UP
FOR THE TIME BEING.

CONSIDERING THE EXTRAORDINARY
NATURE OF OUR ESCAPE, I FEEL
COMPELLED TO KEEP A LOG OF
EVERYTHING THAT TRANSPIRED.

THIS NOTEBOOK I FOUND
SHOULD SUFFICE.

THOUGH MAKING SENSE OF WHAT
ACTUALLY HAPPENED IS FAR
MORE DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND.

THE PHYSICAL NATURE OF
OUR TRANSFORMATIONS
AND THE SEEMINGLY
RANDOM SELECTION OF IT
ALL IS UNSETTLING.

BUT THE MENTAL
CHANGE UNDERGONE
BY OUR FORMER
CELLMATE SOREN IS
OUTRIGHT SCARY.

HIS NEWFOUND MENTAL STATE
MADE HIM A LIABILITY. THE
DECISION TO LEAVE HIM BEHIND
WAS EFFORTLESS.

BESIDES, IN OUR LINE OF WORK...

WHAT DO YOU
THINK OF
PARALYS?

...THERE'S NO SUCH
THING AS LOYALTY.

WHAT?

MY CODENAME!
PARALYS! THE
PARALYZER! WHAT
DO YOU THINK?

I'M NOT
SURE I
FOLLOW.

COME ON BARD,
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO
BE THE SMART ONE.
YOU REALIZE WHAT
WE ARE?

WE'RE SUPER-
VILLAINS! LIKE IN
THE BLOODY
COMICS!

ON THE RUN,
BACKS AGAINST
THE WALL, READY
FOR ACTION SUPER-
VILLAINS!



WE'LL CALL YOU SMASHER, OR BRUISER OR SOMETHING CLEVER LIKE THAT.

AH, YOU'RE NO FUN AT ALL!

NO...WE WILL NOT!

IT WAS BAD ENOUGH I HAD TO PUT UP WITH THAT RIDICULOUS NICKNAME THEY GAVE ME IN PRISON.
BARD, THE STORYTELLER. THE LEARNED MAN.

A POSSIBILITY ONCE, BUT TO THEM JUST A JOKE.

IT'S SAD, REALLY. I'VE STRIVED FOR SO LONG TO AVOID PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS OF ME. A LIFE OF CRIME, OF VIOLENCE...



...AND I'VE FAILED IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY! AND NOW, AFTER USING MY LATEST PRISON SENTENCE TO STUDY AND BECOME SMARTER...

...TO FINALLY CAST ASIDE WHAT PEOPLE HAVE COME TO EXPECT FROM ME...

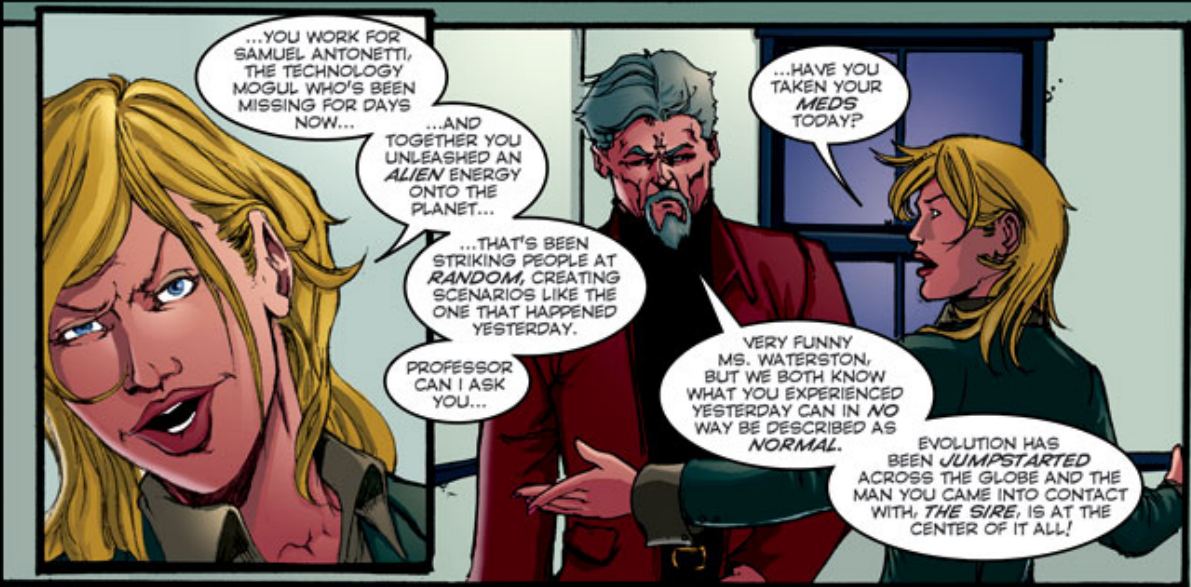
...I'M TRANSFORMED INTO THIS...THIS MECHANISM OF VIOLENCE! THIS OGRE!



IT SEEMS FATE FINDS ME LAUGHABLE ONCE AGAIN...

THEY'RE HERE!





...YOU WORK FOR SAMUEL ANTONETTI, THE TECHNOLOGY MOGUL WHO'S BEEN MISSING FOR DAYS NOW...

...AND TOGETHER YOU UNLEASHED AN ALIEN ENERGY ONTO THE PLANET...

...THAT'S BEEN STRIKING PEOPLE AT RANDOM, CREATING SCENARIOS LIKE THE ONE THAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

PROFESSOR CAN I ASK YOU...

...HAVE YOU TAKEN YOUR MEDS TODAY?

VERY FUNNY MS. WATERSTON, BUT WE BOTH KNOW WHAT YOU EXPERIENCED YESTERDAY CAN IN NO WAY BE DESCRIBED AS NORMAL.

EVOLUTION HAS BEEN JUMPSTARTED ACROSS THE GLOBE AND THE MAN YOU CAME INTO CONTACT WITH; *THE SIRE*, IS AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL!



THE CENTER OF WHAT? I STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, LET ALONE A CLUE AS TO WHY YOU'RE TELLING ME ALL THIS!

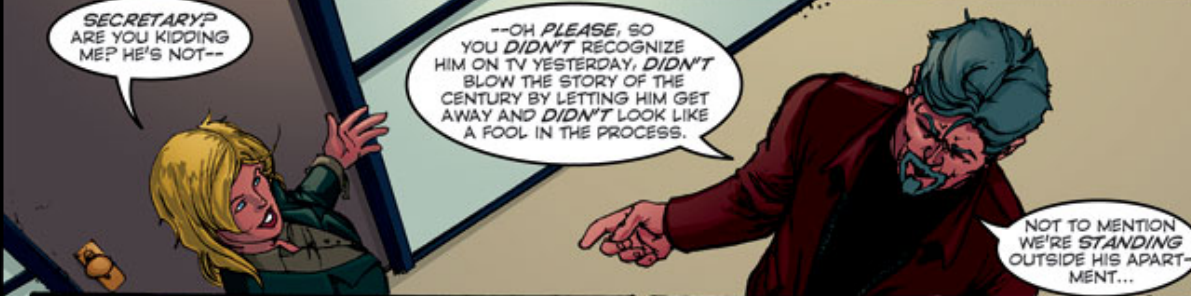
THEN I'LL MAKE THIS SIMPLE.

YOU'VE BEEN TRYING FOR MONTHS TO BRING MY EMPLOYER DOWN, TO CONNECT HIS TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES WITH THAT OF ORGANIZED CRIME...

...BUT IN THE END YOU'VE ALWAYS COME UP SHORT.

WELL, NOW YOU HAVE SOMETHING BETTER, YOU HAVE ME

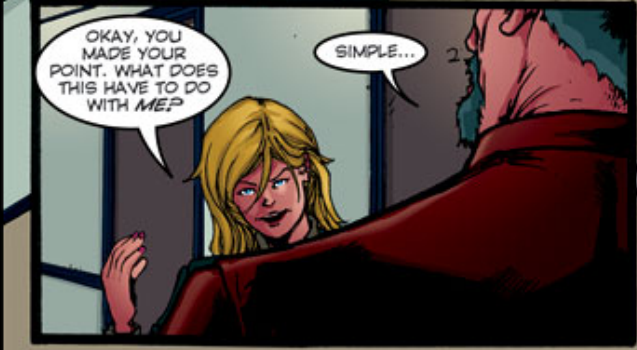
AND ALL I ASK IN RETURN IS THE *SIRE*...YOUR SECRETARY.



SECRETARY? ARE YOU KIDDING ME? HE'S NOT--

--OH PLEASE, SO YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM ON TV YESTERDAY, DIDN'T BLOW THE STORY OF THE CENTURY BY LETTING HIM GET AWAY AND DIDN'T LOOK LIKE A FOOL IN THE PROCESS.

NOT TO MENTION WE'RE STANDING OUTSIDE HIS APARTMENT...



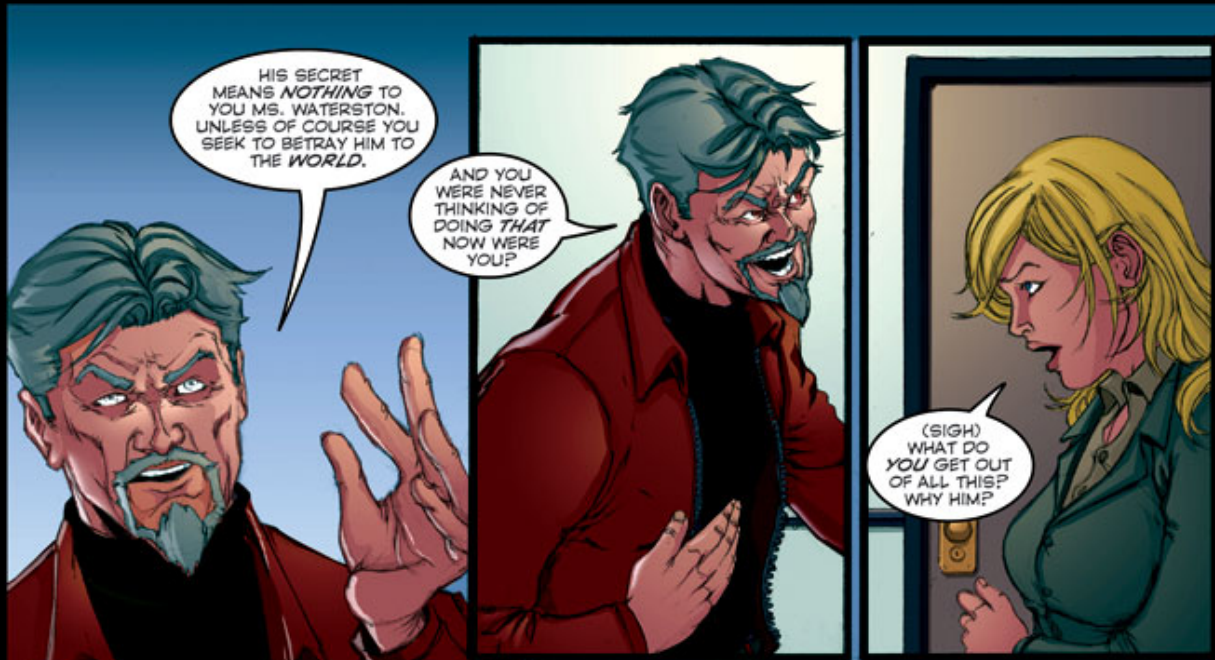
OKAY, YOU MADE YOUR POINT. WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH *MEP*?

SIMPLE...



...YOU CAN GET CLOSE TO HIM. AND WHEN THE TIME COMES...

...YOU CAN BRING HIM TO ME!



HIS SECRET MEANS *NOTHING* TO YOU MS. WATERSTON. UNLESS OF COURSE YOU SEEK TO BETRAY HIM TO THE *WORLD*.

AND YOU WERE NEVER THINKING OF DOING *THAT* NOW WERE YOU?

(SIGH) WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF ALL THIS? WHY HIM?

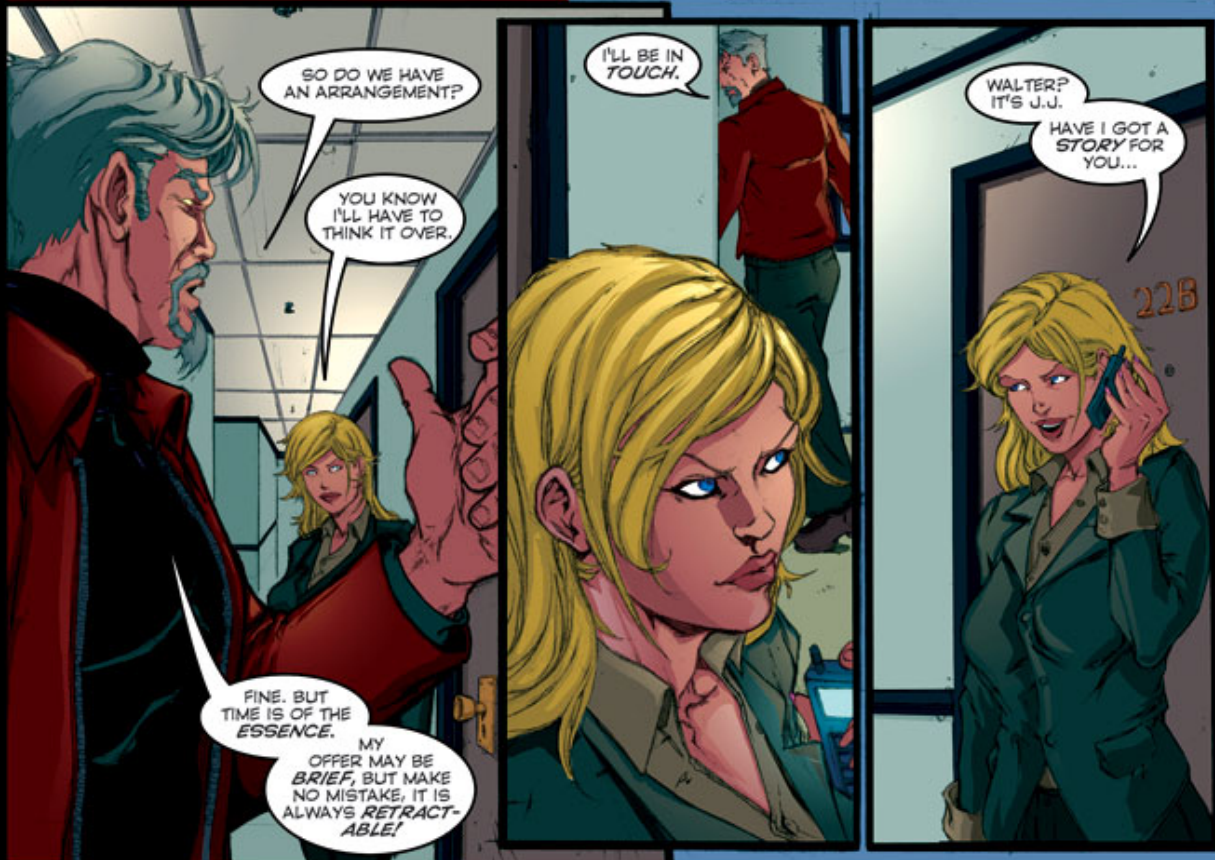


BECAUSE HE DOESN'T *COMPREHEND* WHAT HE IS YET. AND WHAT HE MEANS TO *HUMANKIND* IS SOMETHING ONLY I CAN SHOW HIM!

I COME TO YOU BECAUSE I NEED THIS TO BE HANDLED *QUIETLY*.

MY EMPLOYER IS A *DANGEROUS* MAN MS. WATERSTON...

...YOU MAY THINK YOU HAVE YOUR EYE ON HIM BUT BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY HE'S ALWAYS KEEPING A CLOSER EYE ON *YOU!*



SO DO WE HAVE AN ARRANGEMENT?

YOU KNOW I'LL HAVE TO THINK IT OVER.

FINE. BUT TIME IS OF THE *ESSENCE*.

MY OFFER MAY BE *BRIEF*, BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT IS ALWAYS *RETRACT-ABLE!*

I'LL BE IN *TOUCH*.

WALTER? IT'S J.J.

HAVE I GOT A *STORY* FOR YOU...

MEANWHILE...



WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?!

ONE MINUTE I'M IN DREAM-LAND...

...THE NEXT I'M BACK AT WORK?!

WRIGHT!

WHA?

I NEED THESE NOTES TYPED, STAPLED, AND COLLATED!

AND I NEEDED THOSE TRANSCRIPTS ON MY DESK YESTERDAY!

AND GET A HAIRCUT FOR GODSSAKE, YOU LOOK RIDICULOUS!



YES, J.J.!

I DON'T CARE WHO PULLED STRINGS TO GET YOU THIS JOB...

...YOU'D BETTER COME READY TO WORK!

BECAUSE THE ONE THING I CAN'T STAND IS LAZINESS!

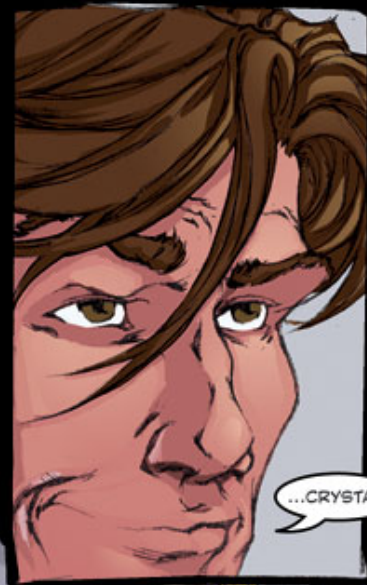
IF YOU'RE NOT WORKING TO MAKE ME OR THIS STATION BETTER, THEN YOU'RE WASTING EVERYONE'S TIME!





ARE WE CLEAR?

CRYSTAL, J.J....



...CRYSTAL

SHE WAS AMAZING. UNLIKE ANY WOMAN I'D EVER MET, LET ALONE WORKED FOR.

SO I SPENT THE BETTER PART OF THE NIGHT TRYING TO GET THOSE FILES READY FOR HER...



BRING!

...JUST TO SHOW HER I COULD.



WHEN I GOT THIS PHONECALL...

WNBW, DON WRIGHT SPEAKING...

...NO, I'M SORRY SHE'S NOT IN RIGHT NOW, CAN I TAKE A--

--WHOA, HANG ON SLOW DOWN...



...ANTONETTI, WHOP

SIR, YOU'RE GOING A MILE A MINUTE HERE...



YES, I'M AWARE OF HIS SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY. THE EXCELSIOR HANDHELD, RIGHT? WAIT, WHAT?

WAREHOUSE...?



THIS MAN...



MEANWHILE...



--AND THEN HE JUST OFFERED HIM UP!

JUST LIKE THAT.

JUST LIKE THAT?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, HE MUST'VE WANTED SOMETHING IN RETURN!

WALTER WHAT'S GOING ON?

YOU LET ME HANDLE THAT!

I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT!

TAXI!!

WALTER, YOU WORRY, TOO MUCH. IT'S NOT GOOD FOR YOU.

IN THE MEANTIME, I NEED TO KNOW WHAT I'M GETTING MYSELF INTO.

THIS ZEUS GUY...



UNDERSTOOD. I'LL GET JIM ON IT IMMEDIATELY!

I NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM. WHO IS HE? WHERE'D HE COME FROM?

GET ME ON *WHAT* IMMEDIATELY?



WHO KNOWS WALTER...WE MAY JUST PULL OURSELVES OUT OF THE FIRE YET!

WHERE TO...?

THE WAREHOUSE...









CAN YOU GIVE US A MINUTE?

BARD, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

LIEUTENANT...

LEAVING.

I KNOW, SIR

WHAT? WHY?



BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM I DO NOT TRUST.

AND IT IS PAST TIME I FOLLOW MY INSTINCTS RATHER THAN MEN LIKE YOU OR HIM.

I DO NOT EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND.

GOODBYE.



WAIT, BARD! IS IT BECAUSE OF HIS FACE?

I'M SURE IT'LL GROW BACK!



UM, YEAH. SO...?



LIEUTENANT...

I'M ON IT.



THIS ISN'T A PACKAGE DEAL IS IT? BECAUSE YOU KNOW, I HARDLY KNEW THE GUY! CELLMATES ONCE, REALLY. THAT'S ALL! WHATTYA SAY?



HOW CAN THOMAS FIREHEART BE OF SERVICE?



WHO A...



YEAH, HE'S GONE. MY MEN...



WHO IS...

WHAT IS...

...DID YOU SEE...

...HE JUST...



...THEY TRIED.



I SEE. IT APPEARS YOUR FRIEND WILL HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH AT ANOTHER TIME.

LIKE I SAID, I BARELY KNEW HIM!



YES, OF COURSE...



...ON TO THE MATTER AT HAND...

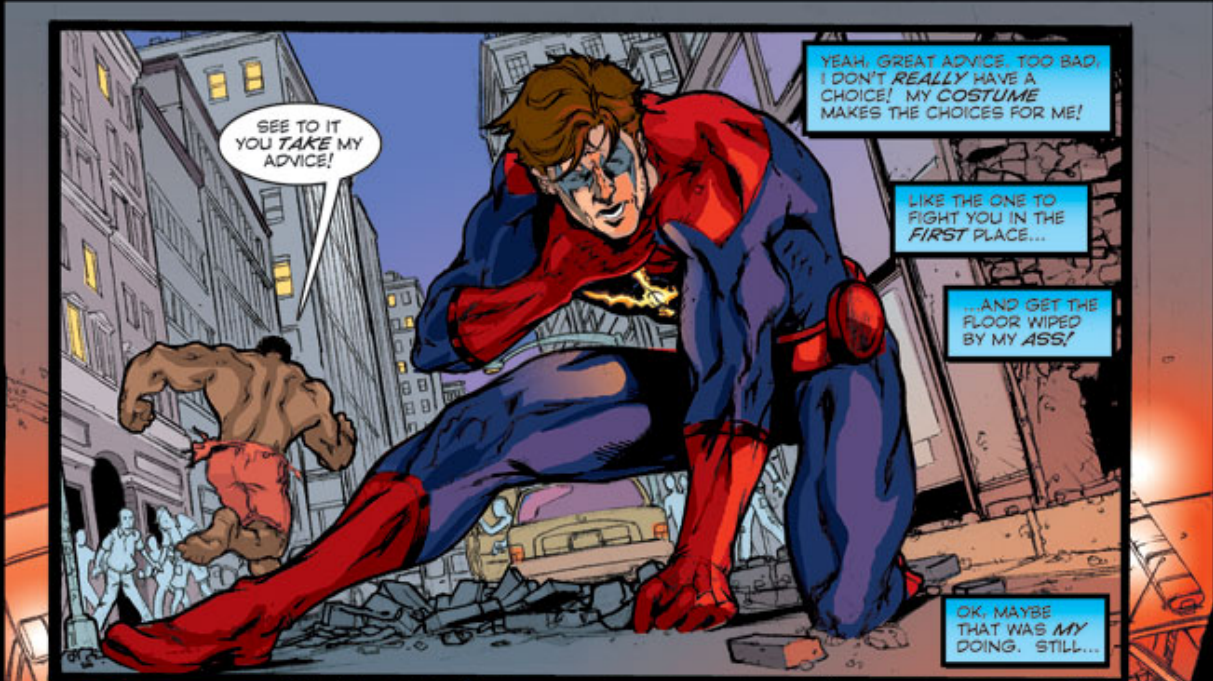
...WHICH, IRONICALLY ENOUGH, INVOLVES ANOTHER OF YOUR SO-CALLED FRIENDS, SOREN CLAUS.



AS I UNDERSTAND IT, HE WAS RECENTLY TAKEN INTO CUSTODY. AS IT TURNS OUT...







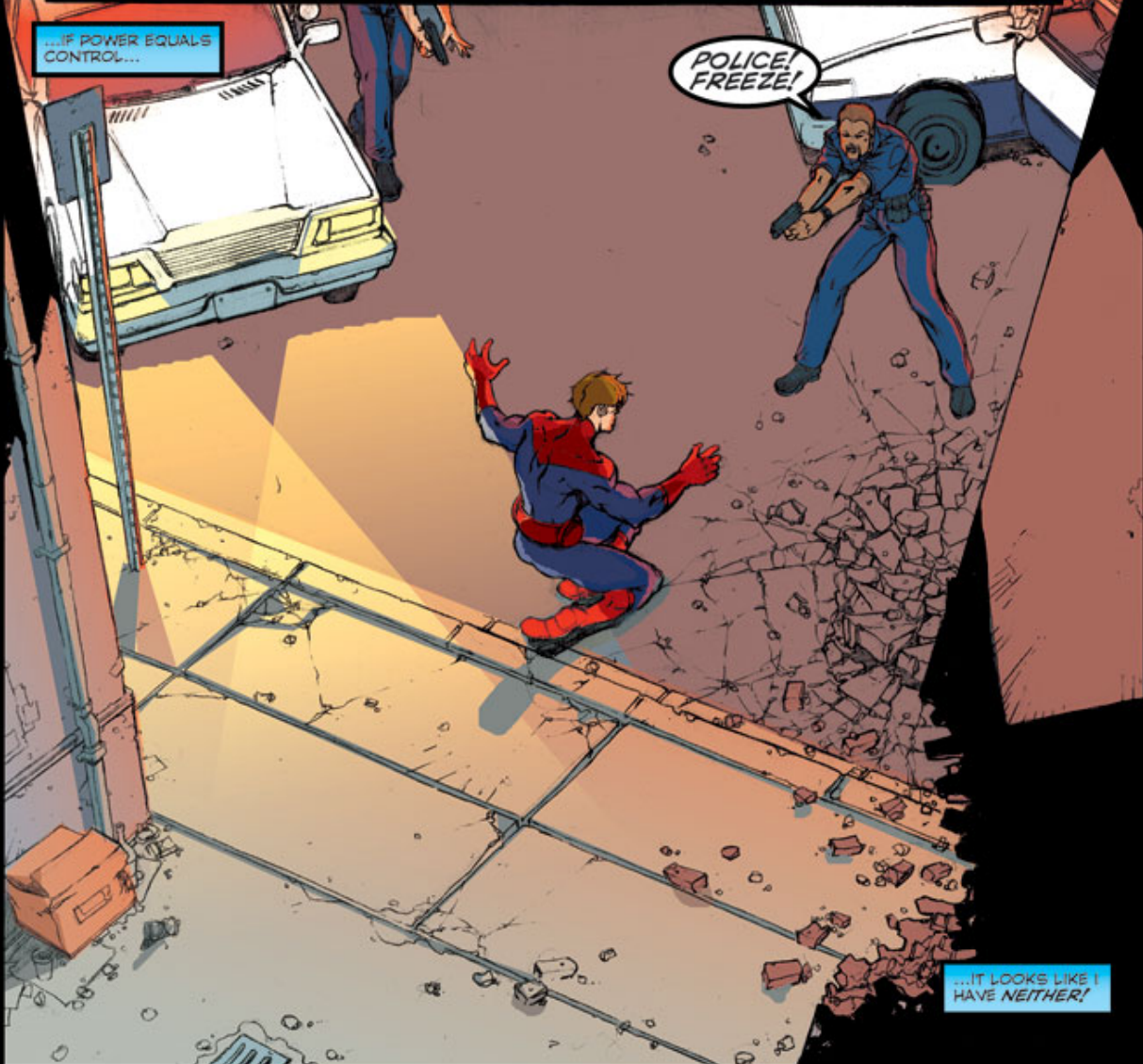
SEE TO IT YOU TAKE MY ADVICE!

YEAH, GREAT ADVICE, TOO BAD, I DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE! MY COSTUME MAKES THE CHOICES FOR ME!

LIKE THE ONE TO FIGHT YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE...

...AND GET THE FLOOR WIPED BY MY ASS!

OK, MAYBE THAT WAS MY DOING. STILL...



...IF POWER EQUALS CONTROL...

POLICE! FREEZE!

...IT LOOKS LIKE I HAVE NEITHER!

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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– Michael Dolce (creator: **The Sire**, **Mainstream**, **Descendant**)

