

TM

**MARVEL**  
PG 1

# Mystique

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**THE KREMLIN**  
**MOSCOW**  
**5:24 AM (MSK)**

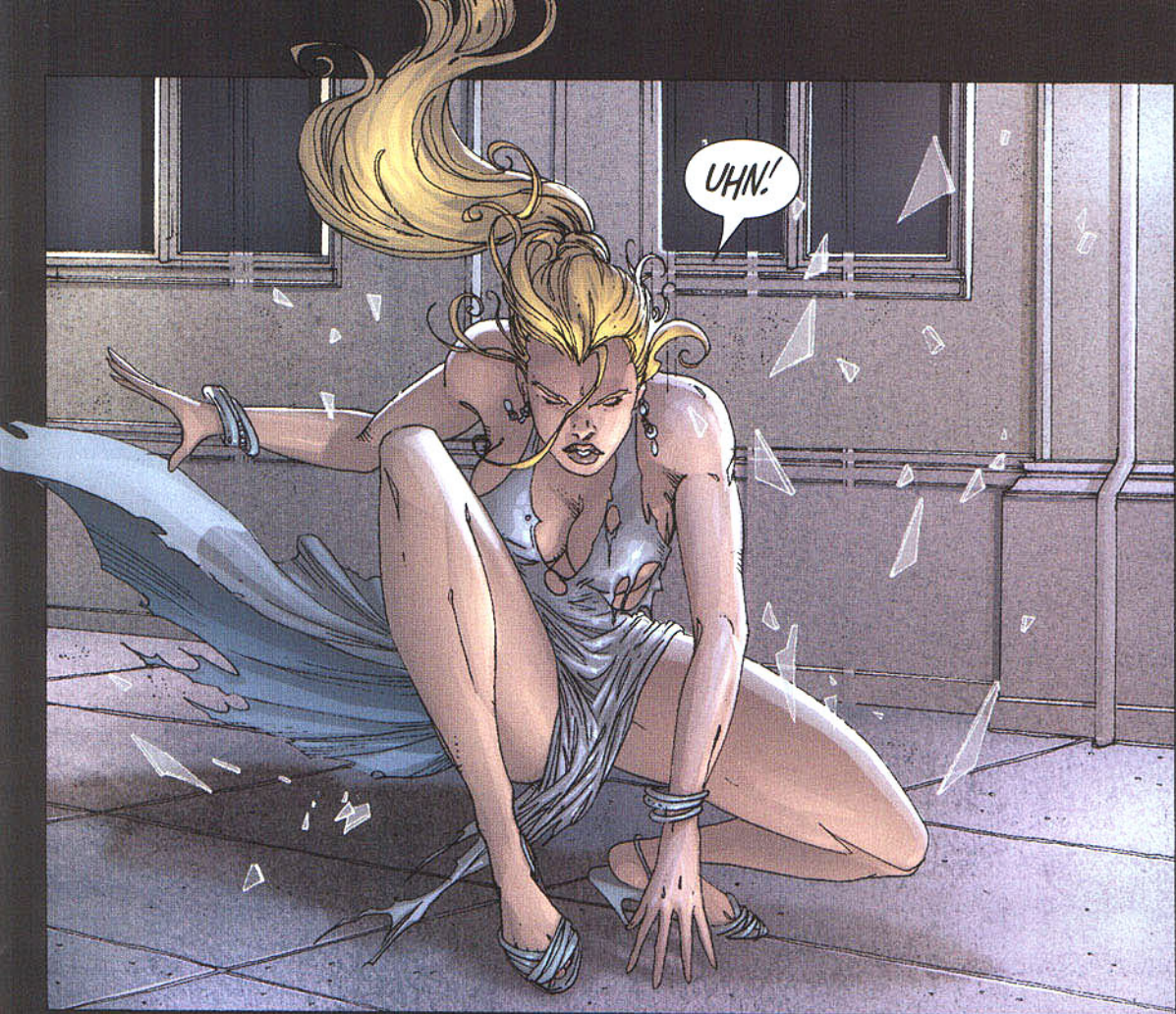




# DEAD DROP GORGEOUS

CHAPTER 1 of 6

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UHN!



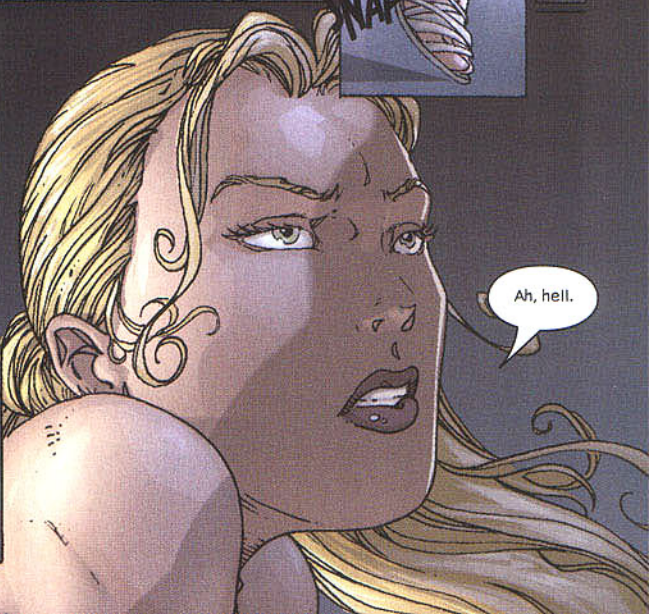
CLOP CLOP CLOP CLOP CLOP



SNAP!



Dammit!  
Stupid high-heeled pieces of--



Ah, hell.





I never really liked the Stones... more of a Beatles gal myself.



And you know what the Beatles say about happiness.



You don't have the guts, girlie.

Burn in hell, Steinbeck.

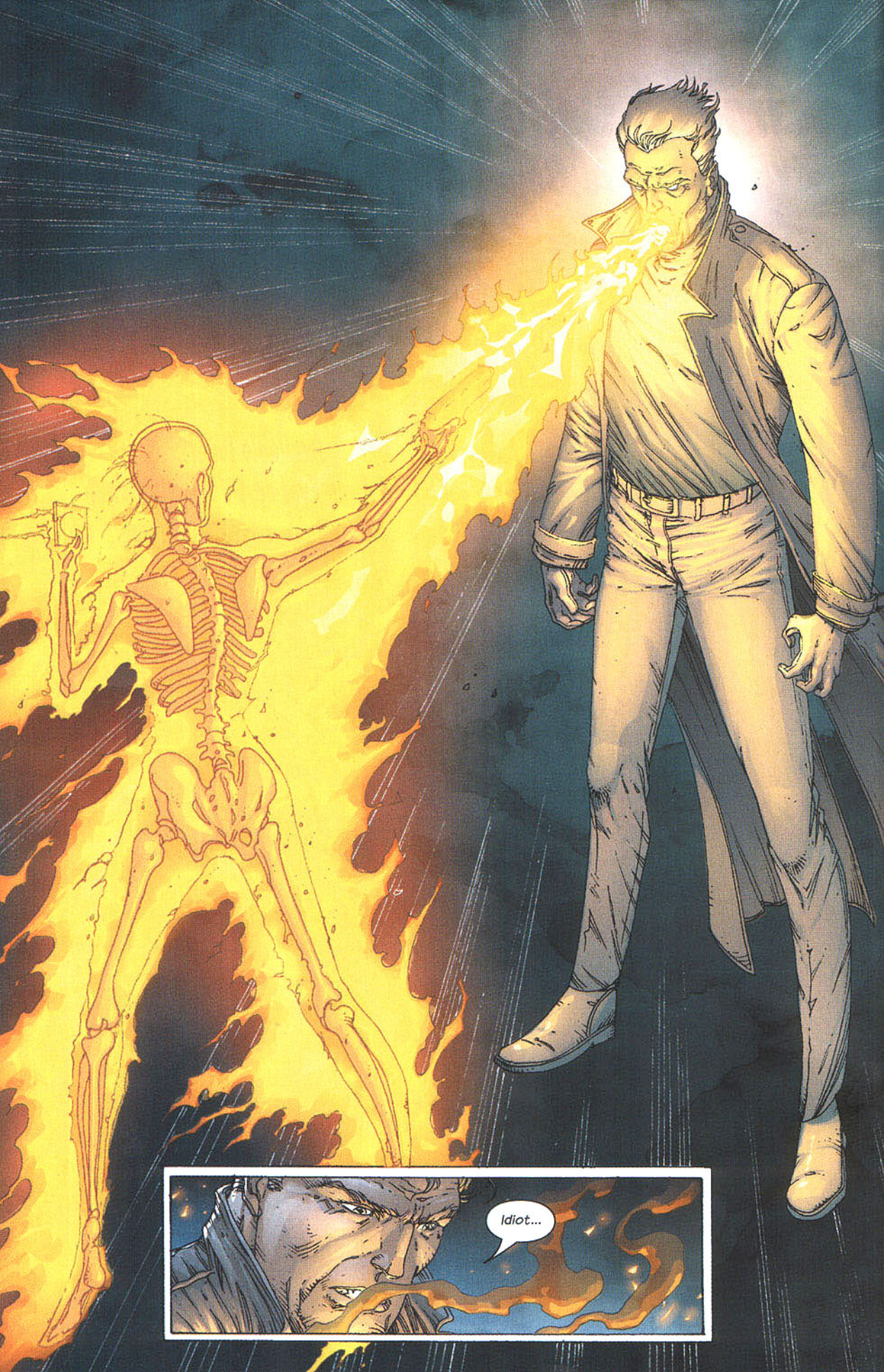


Why go there... when we can all burn here?



**NO!**

I've got the only disk! You can't--



Idiot...

XAVIER  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
HIGHER LEARNING

WESTCHESTER,  
NEW YORK  
11:39 PM (EST)

--ning us live via satellite is Charles Xavier, founder of the X-Men and CEO of the global X-Corporation.

The leader of the "peaceful" mutant rights movement, Professor Xavier recently revealed to the world that he too is Homo superior, a telepath of the highest order. Professor, welcome to Nightline.

Thank you for having me, Ted.

Are things better for mutants today than they were a year ago?

For some, but many people throughout the world remain oppressed simply because of the unique genetic make-up with which they were born.

As a volunteer rescue force, the X-Men hope to help offset these conditions by responding to--

Professor X, this is Field Handler Shortpack! I... I don't know if this telepathic channel is secure, but we have a situation in Moscow.

Forgive me, Ted. I'm going to have to cut our discussion short. My apologies to your viewers.



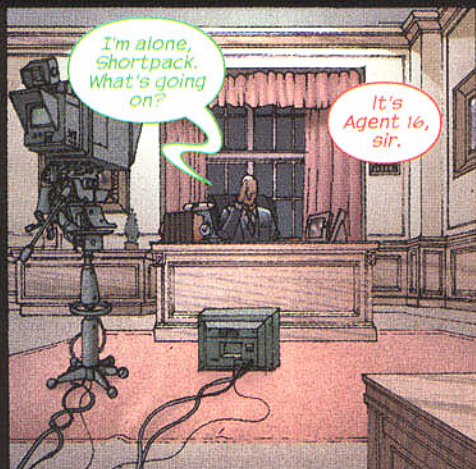


I killed the feed, Professor. Are you all right?

I'm fine, Jean. I just need a moment to myself, please.



Of... of course. I'll be outside if you need me.



I'm alone, Shortpack. What's going on?

It's Agent 16, sir.



She's dead.

No.



What have I done...?

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND  
2:54 AM (EST)

KNOCK  
KNOCK

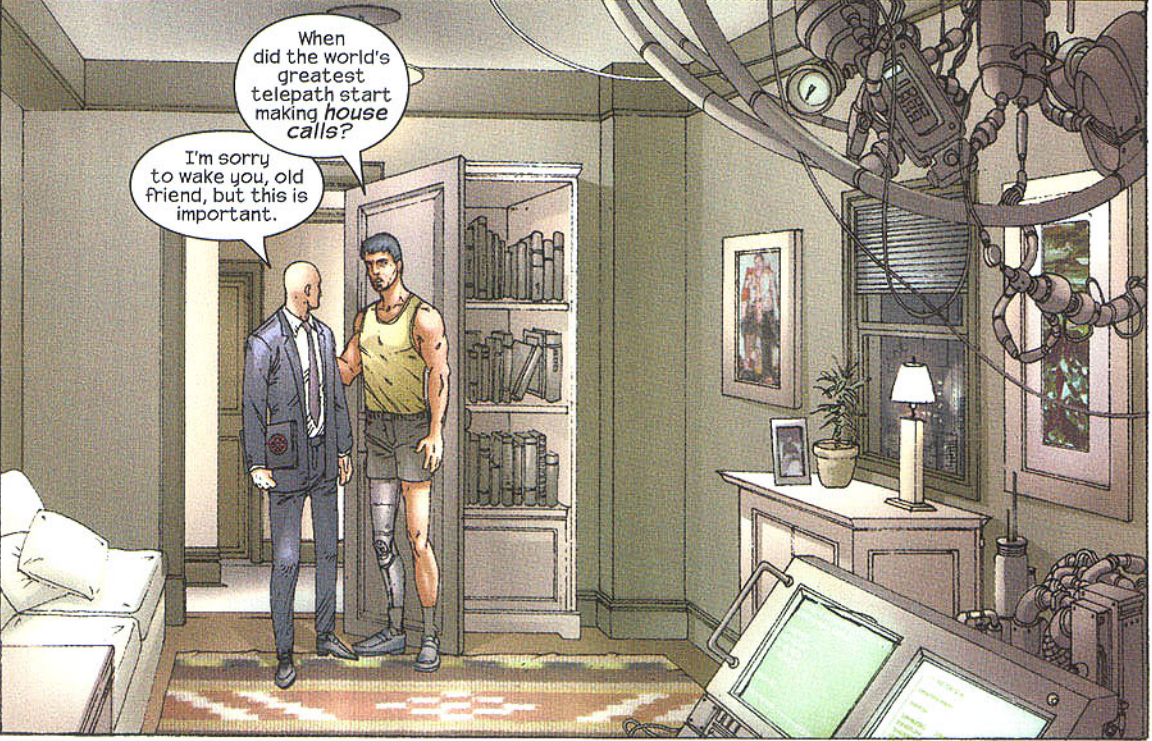


If you expect me to buy a copy of *Watchtower* at this hour, you're out of your--



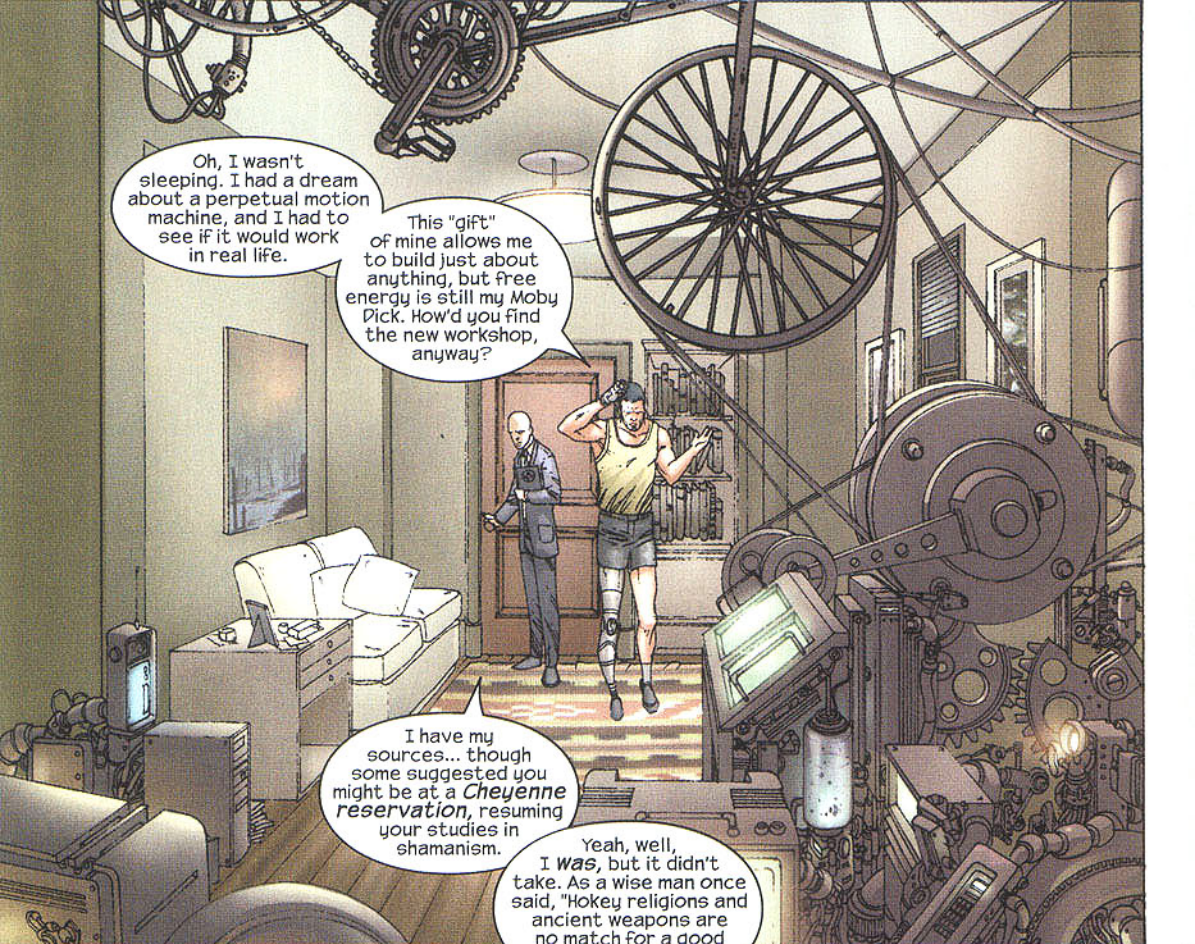
Hello, Forge.

Charles...?



When did the world's greatest telepath start making house calls?

I'm sorry to wake you, old friend, but this is important.



Oh, I wasn't sleeping. I had a dream about a perpetual motion machine, and I had to see if it would work in real life.

This "gift" of mine allows me to build just about anything, but free energy is still my Moby Dick. How'd you find the new workshop, anyway?

I have my sources... though some suggested you might be at a *Cheyenne reservation*, resuming your studies in shamanism.

Yeah, well, I was, but it didn't take. As a wise man once said, "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good *blaster* at your side."

But I doubt you gassed up the personal jet to talk *theology* with me.

I'm afraid not. As you know, my students and I were recently "outed" as mutants to the world.

And while this development has been largely positive, it has also *complicated* our ongoing battle to promote unity between mutants and humankind.

Occasionally, politically sensitive missions will require a certain degree of... *deniability*.

And it's tough to deny a fighter plane filled with public figures wearing big letter X's on their jackets, huh?

Precisely. Which is why I've started utilizing clandestine operatives who can't be traced back to me in the event of their capture or death.

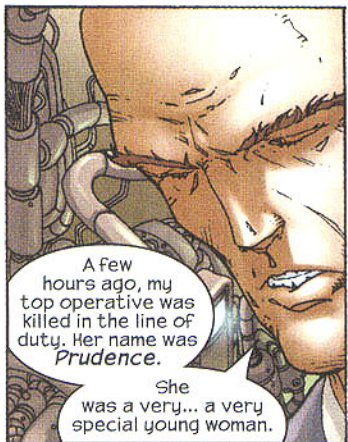
You mean... *spies*?



This requires your utmost discretion, Forge.

To prevent igniting any international incidents, these agents remain so secret, even my X-Men are unaware of their existence.

I don't understand. If you haven't told your students, why are you telling me? I've always supported your cause, but--



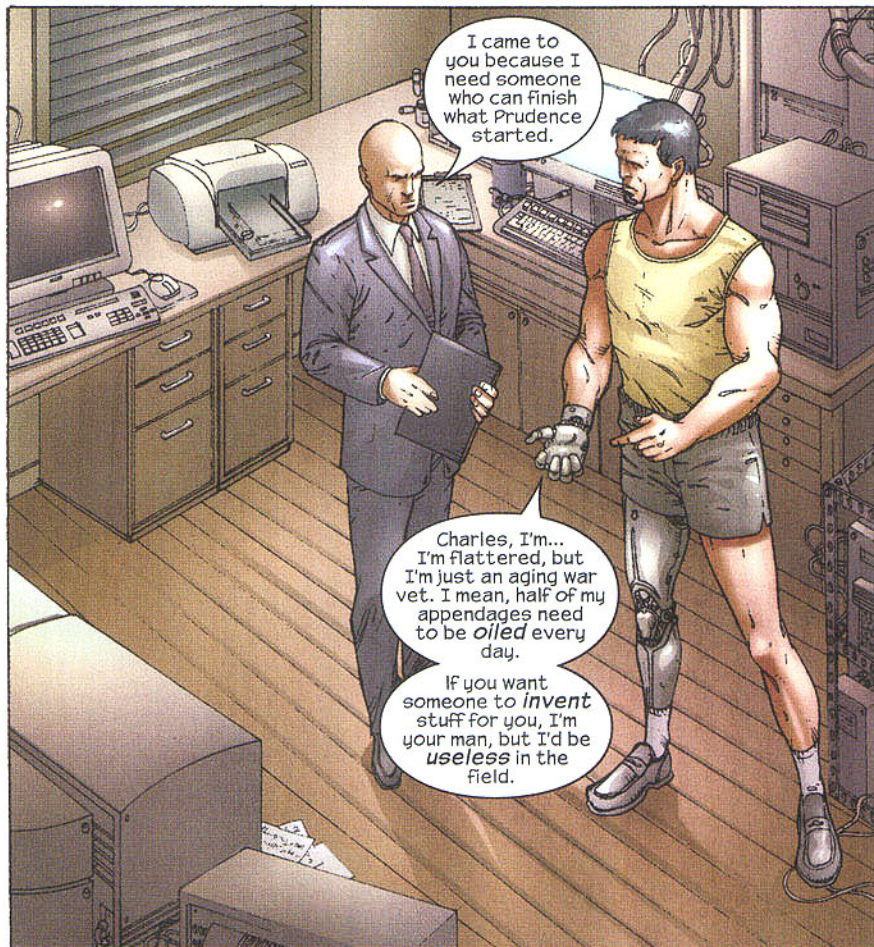
A few hours ago, my top operative was killed in the line of duty. Her name was Prudence.

She was a very... a very special young woman.



I'm sorry.

A pyrokinetic, arms-dealing mutant named Steinbeck murdered Prudence before she had a chance to complete her assignment... a diplomatically thorny mission that could save countless lives.



I came to you because I need someone who can finish what Prudence started.

Charles, I'm... I'm flattered, but I'm just an aging war vet. I mean, half of my appendages need to be oiled every day.

If you want someone to *invent* stuff for you, I'm your man, but I'd be *useless* in the field.



Actually, I wasn't talking about you, Forge...

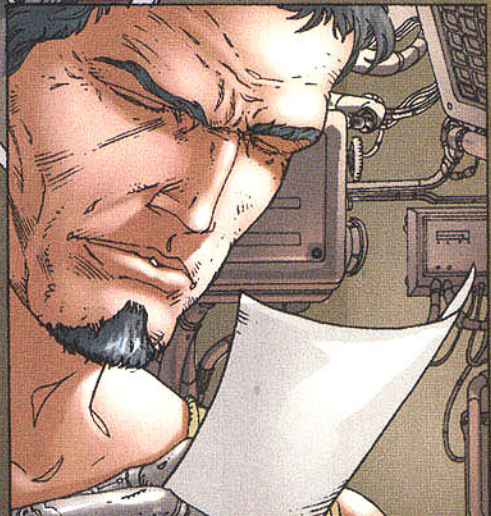
...I was talking about her.



*Mystique?!*

Are you *insane*? She's a *terrorist*, a... a *heartless mercenary* who only cares about her--

You loved her once, didn't you?



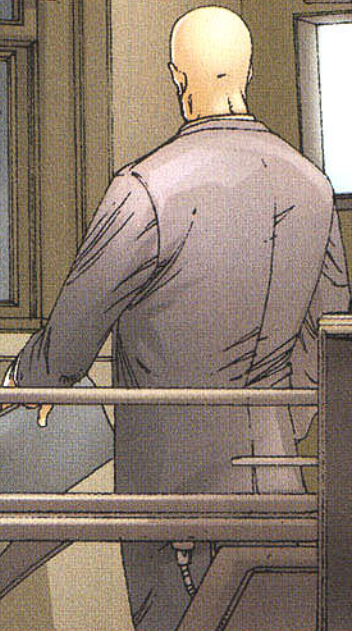


I have the power to fix anything... but I couldn't fix her.

And neither can you, Charles. No one can. Mystique's a *shapeshifter*. There's a reason my people call her kind *tricksters*.

Raven Darkholme may be able to alter her *appearance* a million times a day... but she never really changes.

I have no illusions about the chances of reforming her, Forge. Mystique is a vicious woman who's hurt people I love.



Unfortunately, because of her expertise in espionage, she is also the only mutant with the skills and abilities to successfully complete Prudence's mission.

In the process, perhaps she might unwittingly repay society for some of her past crimes.

She'll never agree to help you.

I believe I can make her the proverbial "offer she can't refuse"... but first, I have to *find* her.

Mystique eludes most conventional forms of detection, and I'm unable to get a telepathic lock on her ever-shifting gray matter.



As the person who knows her better than anyone, I was hoping *you* might help me locate her.

I don't know what to tell you, Charles. I suppose I'll do what I can, but I haven't heard from Mystique in ages.

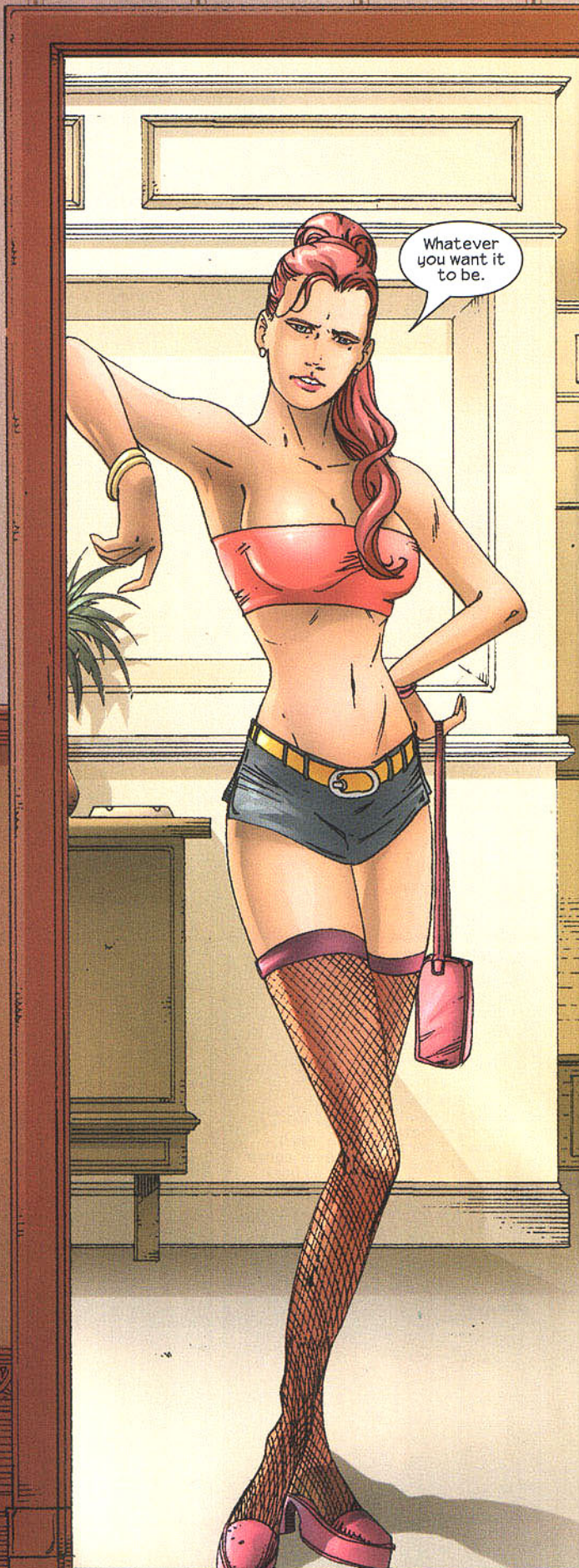
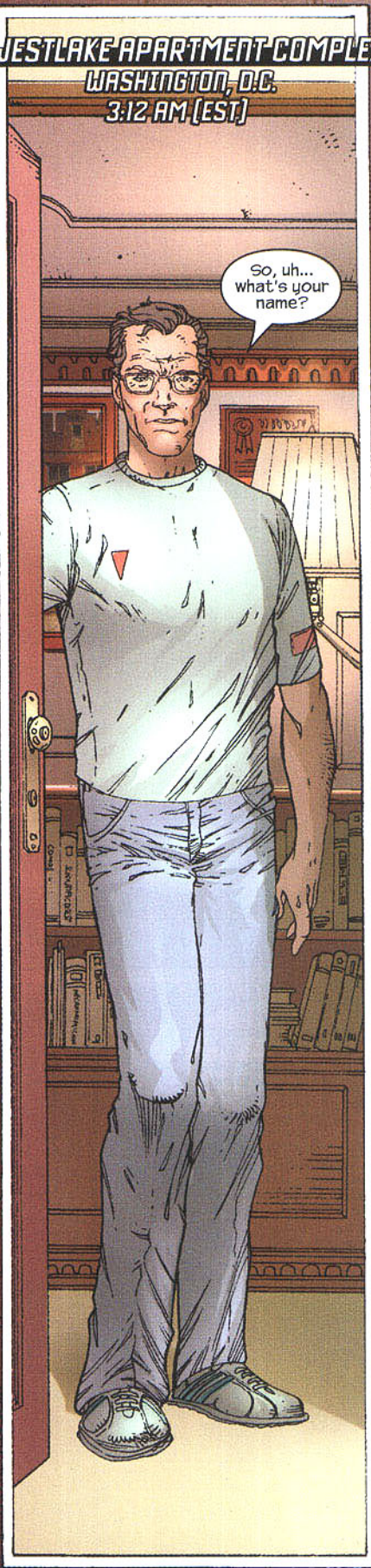
She could be *anywhere*...



**WESTLAKE APARTMENT COMPLEX**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**3:12 AM (EST)**

So, uh...  
what's your  
name?

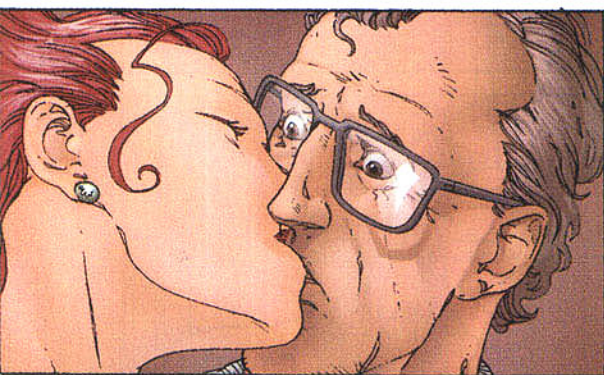
Whatever  
you want it  
to be.





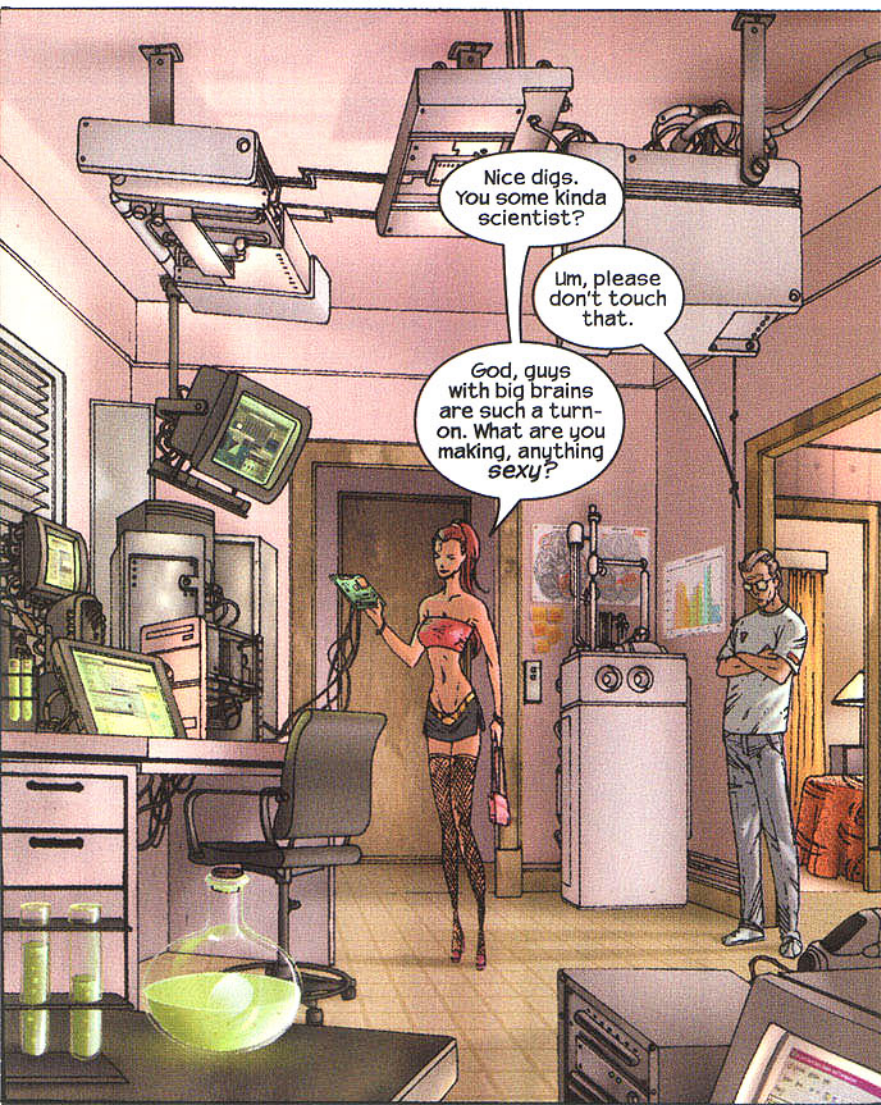
I told the agency I wanted a *brunette* tonight.

Relax, handsome...



...hair's gonna be the *last* thing on your mind once we get started.

Actually, you... you should be *fine*.



Nice digs. You some kinda scientist?

Um, please don't touch that.

God, guys with big brains are such a turn-on. What are you making, anything *sexy*?



All of my projects are *highly classified*, okay?

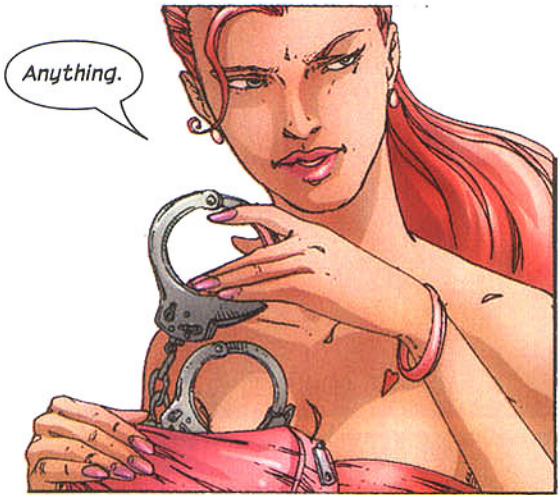
Can we just get started? This is an expensive hour.



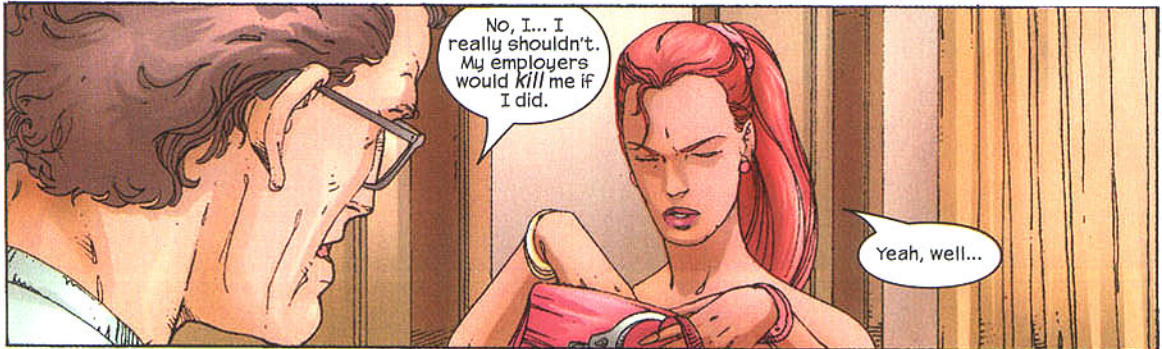


Oh, but I *love* secrets. Come on, show me something cool, and I'll let you do anything you want with me.

Anything...?



Anything.

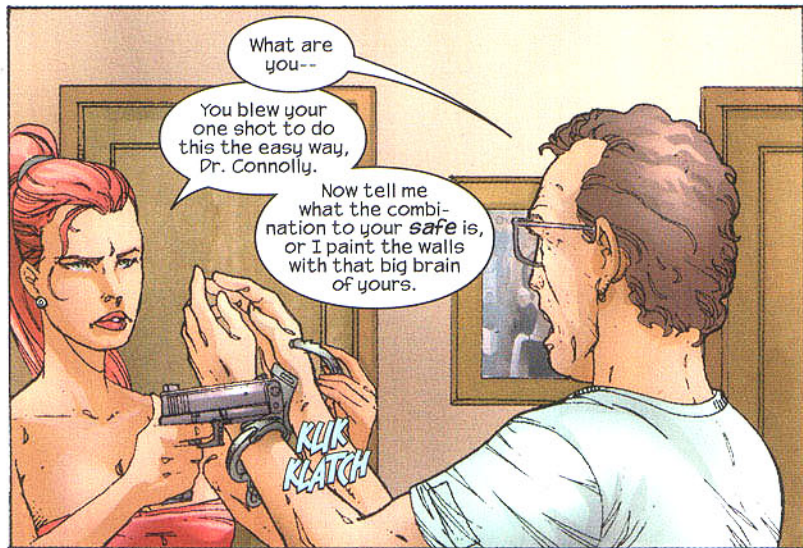


No, I... I really shouldn't. My employers would *kill* me if I did.

Yeah, well...

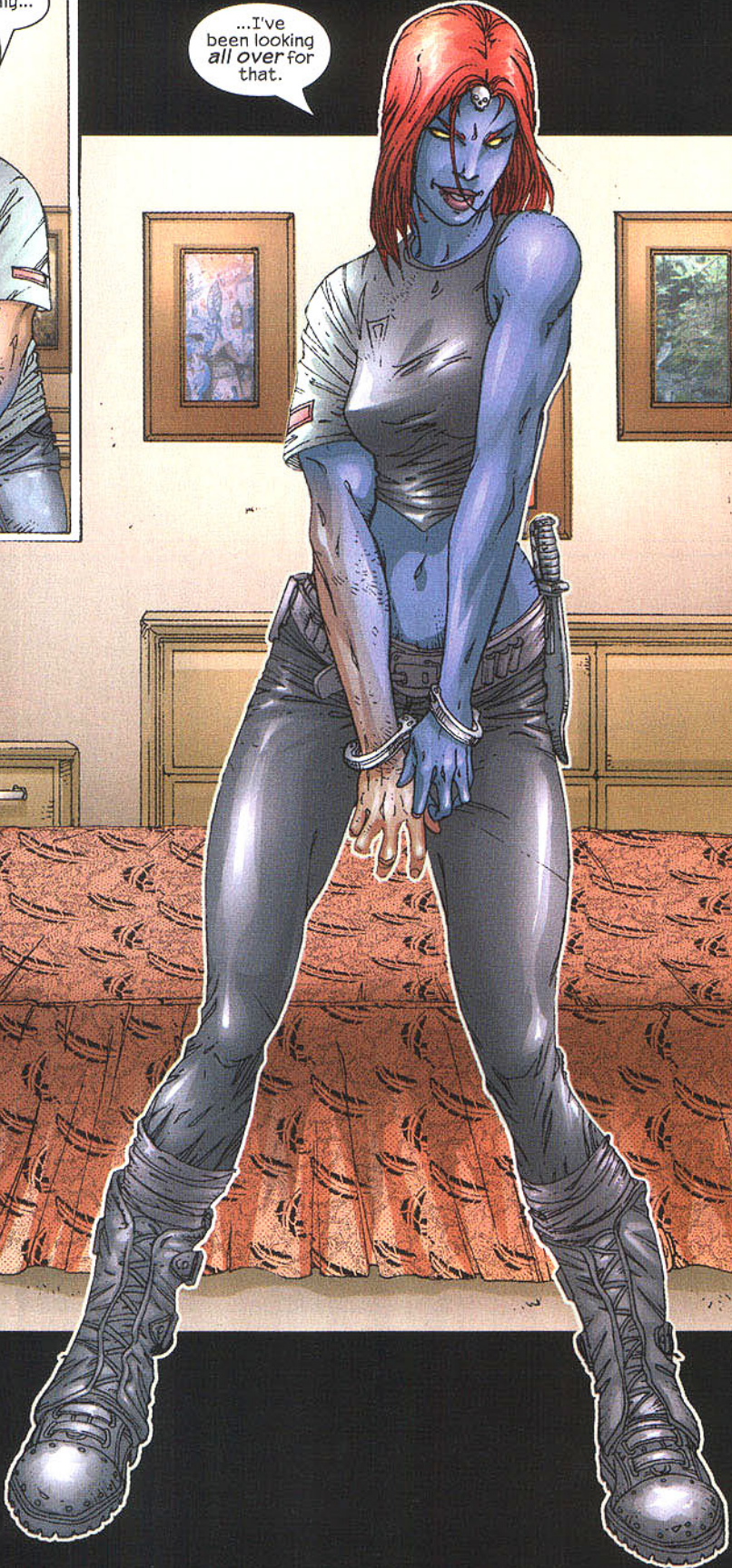


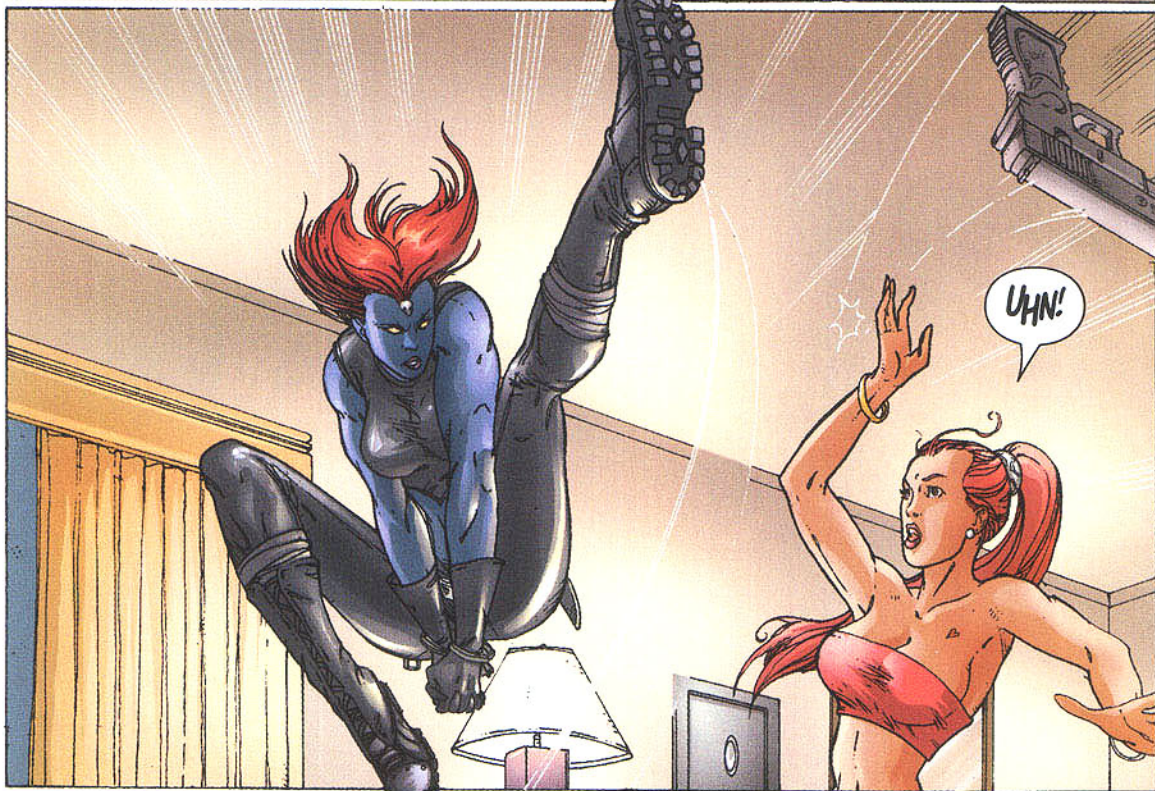
...I'll kill you if you *don't*.





...I've been looking all over for that.







But you didn't mind kissing a woman, huh?

God, I just love open-minded girls.



Then the real Dr. Connolly...?

...is unconscious in the closet. I showed up a few minutes before you did. Pegged you for a spook the second I heard that fake American accent.



Look at you, with your bad wig and slutty get-up. What's your waistline, a fraction?

I know every chick who watches an episode of *Alias* thinks she can be a secret agent now, but what kind of third-rate outfit would hire you?

I'm not telling you anything.



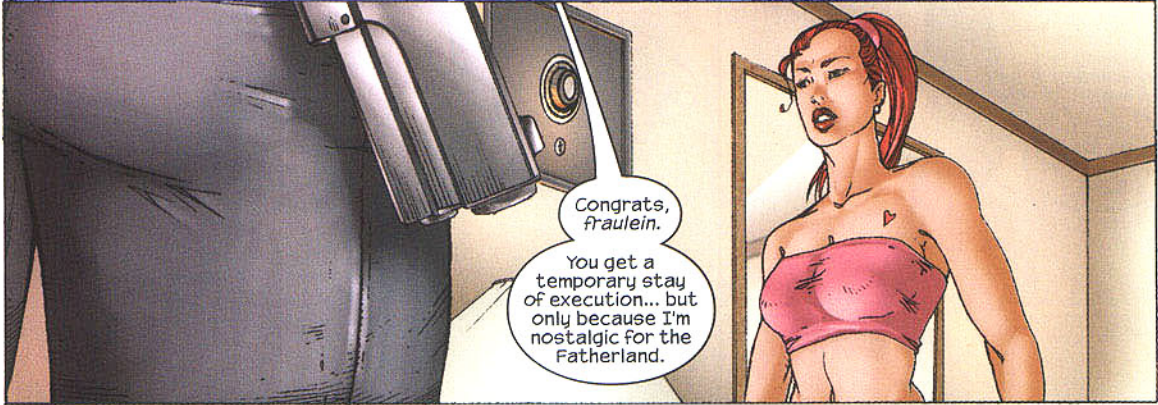
Whatever, I'm gonna kill you either way.

Wait!

I... I work for the A.I.D.

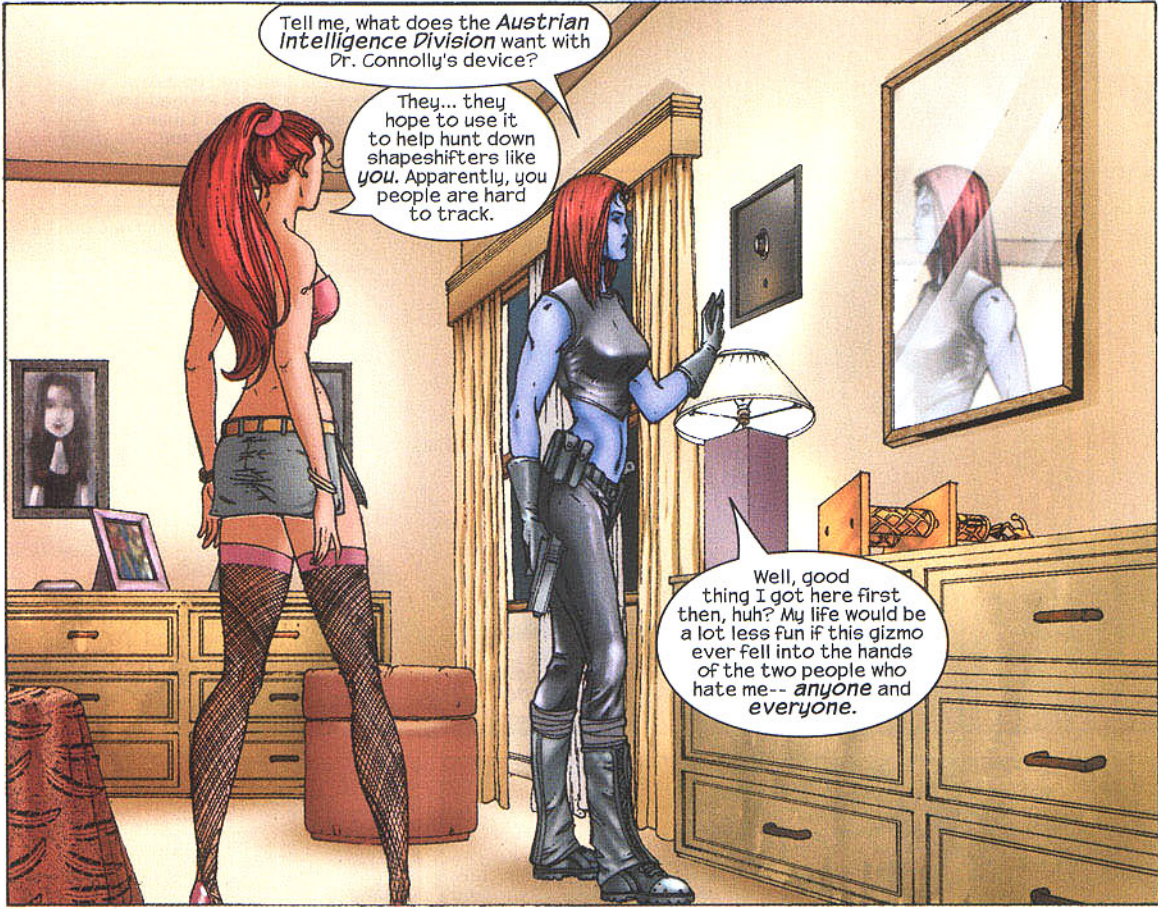


Austria?



Congrats, fraulein.

You get a temporary stay of execution... but only because I'm nostalgic for the Fatherland.



Tell me, what does the *Austrian Intelligence Division* want with Dr. Connolly's device?

They... they hope to use it to help hunt down shapeshifters like *you*. Apparently, you people are hard to track.

Well, good thing I got here first then, huh? My life would be a lot less fun if this gizmo ever fell into the hands of the two people who hate me-- *anyone* and *everyone*.

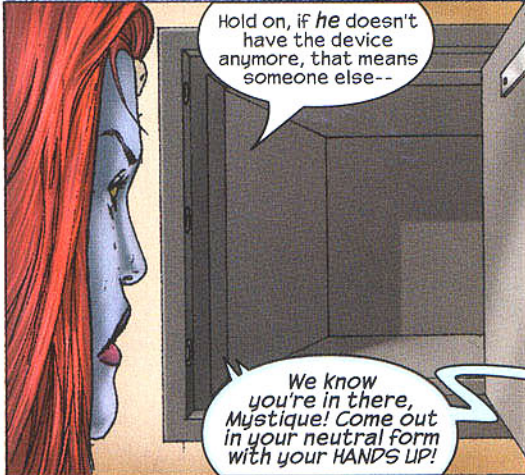


Now shut up for a second. If I enlarge my tympanic membrane, I should be able to hear the tumblers fall into place.

Annnnd...



...voila?



Hold on, if *he* doesn't have the device anymore, that means someone else--

We know you're in there, *Mystique*! Come out in your neutral form with your **HANDS UP!**



Friends of yours, you little rat?

No!

I am alone in this country, I... I swear!



Then beat it. I'll try to buy you some time.



Why are you--

But if I ever see you again, I'll put a bullet between your pretty little eyes. You're not cut out for this game, girl. Get out before somebody takes you out.

Danke. I... I don't know how to--



Just go!



Whoever these boys are, I'm sure I can handle them on my--

# KERRASH



Enemy combatant Mystique, the President of the United States has provided us with written legal authority to execute you where you stand!



Ah, hell.



**TO BE CONTINUED...**