
**The World.
Then.**

"What's the matter, Diana?" Dr. Janis Suriyama, Japan's leading expert in quantum physics, inquired as she sat in front of a large computer console. Before both women was a large computer screen, depicting a futuristic world, ravaged by war. Flashes of hyper-focused lasers fired out of gun barrels. Explosions of every color littered the orange clouded sky like a warped fireworks display. Cyborgs, androids, mutants, humans, Atlanteans, and even some extraterrestrials were on the battlefield...killing each other. It was a blood bath like something out of a James Cameron film. It was like nothing people of the 20th Century had ever seen. "Are you getting jitters on your first day on the job?"

Dr. Diana Russell, mutant telepath and telekinetic—as well as renowned expert in psychology and parapsychology, among other things, rubbed her eyes, "Did those soldiers really have to drug me and knock me unconscious to hide where this secret base is?"

Dr. Suriyama arched an eyebrow, "Was there any other way? Project Askani must operate in secret. No one may know. Not even our benefactors at Weapon X."

Diana shook her head, "Nevermind. Is there anything besides decaf in the lounge?"

"Not that I know of," Janis said briefly as she turned back to the console. Various other unnamed scientists worked on their individual stations, monitoring different regions of the futuristic landscape and its people and cultures. She smiled to herself, "It's amazing, isn't it?"

"What is?" Diana asked.

"My theories," Janis said. "Time and space are related. If one can generate matter and manipulate physics as all the superhumans can, then there had to be a technological solution to the matter as well. We've created our own localized portion of time and space—a sort of pocket universe—based on our own past and present, just hyper accelerated two millennia in the future."

"Explain to me how this whole thing works again," Diana wondered as she looked at the computer screen, perplexed. "It doesn't seem possible to fit an entire universe in just a large dome base over the Arctic."

Dr. Suriyama appeared annoyed, "Don't read my mind, Diana. You wouldn't like it. Those are military secrets in there." She removed her glasses, "And besides, the entire universe started out smaller than an atom. This isn't really that much of a stretch."

"Sorry," Diana said, "I'm just...as amazed as you are. All this super-science stuff is just beyond me. How is the Trask girl?"

"She seems to be doing quite well, adapting to the Askani philosophy that you invented," Dr. Suriyama said. "As well as essentially keeping this artificial timeline as seamless as possible. She's a very powerful girl. Hard to think her father created the Sentinels to hunt and kill her kind."

"You make it sound like I created a religion or something," Diana scoffed, annoyed. "Nothing more than mixing in Xavier's mind techniques, Buddhism, my own experiences with psychology, and Rachel Summers's own improvisation. She's the Mother Askani, not me."

"Nevertheless, it's working. The adult Nathan Summers currently in our era remains unchanged,

confirming my hypothesis," Janis stated. "Whatever we do, happens...for a reason."

"You make it seem like we can do whatever we want and not screw this whole thing up," Diana said.

"It's different," Dr. Suriyama said. "This was all Dr. Windsor's plan—his idea. Originally, anyway."

"...what?!" Diana wondered aloud. "What the FUCK kind of project is this?! Why did I even agree to this?! I'm sick of being yanked around!"

"Calm yourself, girl," a stern voice demanded.

A small, yellowish-tan deformed gnomish creature dressed in tattered robes and decorated with various organic-looking technologies simply glared at the young woman, "My name is Blaquesmith. I am a native of your artificial timeline. My natural mutant abilities made me aware of the truth. This...Dr. Windsor is nothing more than a deranged geneticist with a vendetta against his master—a powerful mutant named Apocalypse. He plans to turn the infant Nathan Summers into nothing more than a disposable weapon."

"I thought we were just...making really high-tech weapons and discovering battle techniques with this candidate?" Diana wondered.

"That's was just the tagline we pitched to Weapon X to get their financial support," Dr. Suriyama said.

Blaquesmith continued, "It is my belief that Nathan may be of more use to the world than just a weapon. With your help...we'll turn him into a savior..."



#4 (February 2008)

KIDS WITH GUNS

Part IV: "The Gospel According to Essex"

Written by [Brad Horton](#)

"Fire and brimstone coming down from the skies. Rivers and seas boiling."
"Forty years of darkness. Earthquakes, volcanoes..."
"The dead rising from the grave."
"Human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together - mass hysteria!"

Ghostbusters (1984) – regarding the Apocalypse

**Classified Military Compound.
Baghdad, Iraq.
Now.**

"...I'm sick of these flashbacks," Deadpool muttered to himself as he took a chug of ice cold Miller High Life. "Looks like Iraq isn't as alcohol free as I thought."

"One of the generals always had some stashed," the silver-haired Cable (and with new nifty scraggly beard to match) said as he took a swig of his own liquid yeasty goodness. He smacked his lips together and grinned a little, "Didn't think I'd miss one of these that much. Charles Xavier, the king of never losing his cool, gave me my first beer. I was in my thirties then."

Deadpool watched over Cable's shoulder as he typed commands into a computer console located within the American army base, what was left of it, "What are we doing, exactly?"

Cable's left eye briefly sparked with energy, "Finding the mutant nullifier. From what I can gather, you can't even get these on the black market. This is the only one."

"Then it's the only way to stop Apocalypse," Deadpool said. "I mean...since you don't have your powers anymore."

"...true," Cable said with a hint of frustration and personal annoyance. "But there's something...I can talk to and manipulate machines and electronics in the same way my telepathy and telekinesis worked. I just can't use those abilities the way I'd like. It's hard...it's like I have to learn everything backwards. My techno-organic infection seems to have found a harmony with my immune system to the point where I can control it at will."

"So, I guess it's true, then...," Deadpool said with a smirk as he chugged the rest of his beer in one gulp, tossing the bottle nonchalantly behind him.

Cable stopped typing and turned around, his brow seemingly pressed into a permanent crease on his face, "What?"

"You really turned into a giant pussy over the years...," Deadpool snickered. "I mean, here you are—big muscular guy from the future, carrying guns way to big for one man to carry, then you start hanging around squeaky-clean teenagers, turning them into a laughable band of douchebag mutant soldier wannabes. Then came your, uh...toothpick-wielding years...you killed Apocalypse by not even really beating him, just holding out long enough for his heart to give out. I mean," Deadpool paused to chuckle, "Seriously."

Deadpool screamed like a Muppet as he was suddenly and violently gripped around his throat by 20 tons of pressure around his throat via a techno-organic hand. Cable growled, "First of all, I endured a YEAR of being tortured by my own country—even after I was an official CIA correspondent and interim agent! I traversed universes to get back here and ended up right where I left off only to be locked

up!”

“...guh...okay,” Deadpool agreed as his windpipe was cut off. “Ten-four...?”

“Second,” Cable growled while simultaneously applying more pressure to Deadpool’s throat, “how did you know about my battle with Apocalypse in the Fifth Dimension? Not many know about that...and I know you’re too stupid to find the intel on that kind of scale.”

“Um...lucky guess...?” Deadpool wondered aloud, his voice gravelly and high-pitched from lack of a proper airway. “Man...this is twice I’ve been strangled out of sheer annoyance this week...Don’t you want like...torture some information out of me or something...?”

Cable finally released his hold on Deadpool, allowing him to drop to the floor. Wade pulled off his mask, revealing his scarred and porous visage, wiping some spittle away from his mouth. “No wonder half your kids wound up with Magneto...*kaff*...”

Cable grabbed a hold of his own face in sheer rage, trying to maintain his composure. It always pained him that his former students went over to Magneto’s side after Xavier’s death. He always thought his influence would put them beyond what the X-Men or Brotherhood were always tangled up in. They both fought for the future—but by comparison, it was a narrow world view.

At least Sam went in the right direction.

“You gonna cry, soldier...?” Deadpool coughed. “It’s an ugly world out there. Just ask Diana Russell.”

Cable’s eyes darted for Deadpool’s crouched form as he kicked him in the jaw, nearly taking his head off. “Where do you know that name?!”

“Who gives a shit?!“ Deadpool exclaimed as he leapt up and delivered a jab to the chest, followed by a heel scraped against Cable’s chin, sending him backpedaling several feet.

Deadpool smiled as blood oozed out of his split bottom lip and nose, “...I thought you said something along the lines of ‘you and I aren’t that much different’ blah blah blah, look at my retarded attempt at a beard?” Wade sighed as he got up. His wounds had already healed after a brief sting of pain.

“She helped me, alright? Set some things straight for me up here,” Deadpool continued as he pointed to his cranium. “I’ve always been able to like...sense things on a higher level than most. My brain’s in a constant state of flux with my regeneration thing going on...that’s how I knew about you and Big Ol’ Tacolips. I just kind of...know certain things.”

“A weak form of cosmic awareness perhaps,” Cable deduced.

“I like to think of it as breaking the fourth wall, but...whatever,” Deadpool shrugged. “But in all seriousness...I’m beginning to remember things from my past. Diana holds the key. She taught me how to...access the inner me with these meditation sessions...focusing in and out on this bright light, like flexing a muscle in my mind or something...”

“Those were Askani techniques,” Cable said sternly, with a sense of possessiveness. He was named the Askani’Son after all. “I think she holds the key to both of our pasts, Wade...”

“Cool,” Deadpool said bluntly. “Are we done beating each other up?”

“For now,” Cable deadpanned. He walked over to the computer and sat down with a sigh, “Allying

myself with an annoying killing machine with a healing factor. I am my father's son after all."

"Maybe you'll start having a hard on for redhead telepaths," Deadpool snickered as he pulled his mask back on, followed by a quick extended index finger and thumb gesture. "Burn!"

Shaking the lingering parts of Nate Grey's psyche from the back of his subconscious, Cable continued his manual search of the mutant nullifier. He eventually pounded his fists through the keyboard, moaning in frustration. "This is taking forever!"

"Talk to it," Deadpool suggested. "You know...read its mind or whatever."

Cable shot him a glance that suggested he was still one-hundred percent insane, however, eventually he realized Deadpool was right. He had to man up—quit complaining about his lack of mutant powers and use everything at his disposal. First rule of the Askani is to always be prepared. Second is adapt or die.

Nate closed his eyes and concentrated, listening for the invisible and untraceable "language" of computers and electronics. When he found it, he sent out a counter-signal with his mind—adjusted to manipulate it as he was a higher form of technology. When he opened his eyes, his left eye's glow changed from a fiery yellow to an eerie, yet calming blue.

The computer screen eventually overrode the encoding and encryption programs as various maps and military documents flashed rapidly on the screen, one image going to the next barely seconds apart. The image "slideshow" soon stopped and Cable's eyes widened. A grin traveled across his face.

Deadpool peered over Cable's shoulder and smiled, "Jackpot."

**Xavier Institute for Higher Learning.
Salem Center, New York.
Now.**

"What the hell happened?!" the man known as Logan (or Wolverine to his keen mutant friends) yelled as he rushed into the medical lab housed several stories below ground. He heard the physical and mental cries of one Rachel Summers—who was in a coma for the better part of a year.

At least, until recently.

Logan stroked his stubbled chin amongst his trademarked mutton chops as all he could see was the backs of his teammates, Cyclops, Phoenix, and Beast of the X-Men huddled around an unseen figure. A quick whiff of the air caused him to arch an eyebrow, "Okay, I'm interested."

Cyclops turned as he heard Wolverine's voice, "Hey...someone wants to say hello."

Rachel Summers, almost a spitting image of her mother, Jean Grey-Summers, smiled weakly in response to seeing her former teammate. Although they have come to blows in the past, she regarded Logan highly for his sense of honor.

Logan smiled, "Well, well. Look who finally decided to join the party. How you feelin'?"

"Disoriented, but otherwise okay...my muscles are atrophied. Jean's telekinetically stimulating my

nerves...," Rachel said. She looked over to the far end of the med lab.

Logan followed her eyes and saw that one of the beds was occupied. He sniffed the air and found his claws unconsciously slice out of his forearms, "What the hell is Sinister doing here? And why are we keeping him alive?!"

"Calm down," Phoenix reassured. "He came here, wounded by Apocalypse—who's apparently alive and well...and more powerful than ever. Cerebro never recorded such a spike in power before."

"Sinister apparently used his mental powers to free Rachel of her comatose state, however he subsequently went into a coma himself..." Beast explained. "And as far as I know, his powers seem to be weakening. His encounter with Apocalypse could be to blame, considering he gave Sinister his powers to begin with."

Wolverine raised his right fist, with his claws still extended, "Then let's finish it...once and for all!"

"He helped us—as much as I hate to say it—we owe him for that," Cyclops said with disappointment. Nothing would please him more to rid the world of Nathaniel Essex, but he had to disagree with Wolverine on this one.

"Besides," Jean said as she looked over at Sinister's visage—which had begun to turn to a sickly shade of gray, "I can probe his mind. Discover any secrets he might have that are useful to us. I can get Rogue to help, or Rachel...if she's up for it." Jean gave her alternate-reality daughter an inquisitive glance.

Rachel returned the look with a worried shrug, "I'd like to know what's going on first. What has Sinister done this time?"

"What hasn't he done?" Wolverine growled. "Made Senator Kelly the President of the United States by allying himself with the Byron Agency—bunch of corporations all over the world that like to do a bunch of the scary militaristic secretive stuff. Had a bunch of us kidnapped, too. Basically handed us over to them. All so he could get his hands on some engineered soldiers based on the St. Croix sisters."

"Sounds like it's been a hectic year," Rachel half-joked. "Why the sudden change of heart in waking me up?"

Cyclops crossed his arms, "Not sure. Apocalypse, I'm guessing. The thorn in everyone's side." The sound of that name sent rage-filled blood through his veins. After impregnating his wife against her will—he took comfort in knowing he was dead and suffered until his last breath. That scion then impersonated Cyclops for quite some time as well. It wasn't a happy situation, to be sure.

"Are you going to hold a team briefing, fearless?" Beast asked.

Cyclops nodded, "I just need some time to think, first..."

Before he walked out of the med lab to go into the war room, Jean lightly grabbed her husband's arm and asked, half-whispering, "Do you want to talk?"

"No thanks," Scott said gruffly before walking away, leaving Jean hurt inside. She knew he was stressed. This could be the breaking point for him—for her, as well. With her recent power fluctuations, she wasn't sure what to do anymore.

"You think Apocalypse is going to take over the world again?" Deadpool asked as he and Cable rode a secret elevator down to the base's lower levels—where the mutant nullifier was hidden.

"Actually," Cable said as he crossed his arms, "I don't think so. Whatever happened, he's been given a new lease on life...he's thinking realistically. From what you described how he was brought back—who even knows if he'll live long anyway?"

Deadpool peered at his one-time enemy, "What the hell are you talking about? Why are you still in Jesus mode? He's gonna kill people again. We can't simply turn the other butt cheek again with this guy. He's gotta pay for his crimes!"

"Like YOU kill people for money?" Cable retorted. "This isn't as simple as you think, Wade."

"I didn't warp reality into a big friggin' Egyptian Mortal Kombat realm, okay?" Deadpool defended. "Just because I'm a merc doesn't mean I'm gonna kill—depends on what the job is. I mean, somehow...I prostituted myself for one job. You never know how things end up!"

"Exactly," Cable said. "Which is why we aren't going to kill Apocalypse."

"Sphincter says what?!" Deadpool exclaimed as the elevator reached the ground floor. The doors slid open. Down a long corridor was the metallic weapon they were looking for, fashioned into a large gun. Deadpool chuckled, "I like how they just have it in a force field with spotlights shining on it."

"Yeah, whatever. Can I borrow this?" Cable asked as he pulled an uzi out from Deadpool's holster, deactivating the safety. Five robotic creatures soon slid out of compartments hidden in the walls around the cylindrical blue force field.

"Fuck...thought this would be easy," Deadpool groaned.

"Tell me about it!" Cable shouted as he opened fire, bullets spraying into the mutant nullifier's robotic templars. "But fuck if it isn't fun!"

Deadpool smiled as he unsheathed his katanas, "I'll give you that one, Summers."

"I'll draw their fire!" Cable shouted as he rolled around the inside of the elevator to avoid the robots' return fire. "Get the nullifier!"

"You're not in charge! I'll draw their fire!" Deadpool shouted. "Bullets can't kill me, remember?!"

BLAM

"...ow...," Deadpool muttered before falling limp due to a gunshot to the head, his katanas clanging against the floor as he dropped them. He rolled over as his wounds healed, "...okay, you draw their fire..."

"Glad we have an understanding," Cable said as he spun and rolled into the fray of battle.

**Department X Facility.
Now.**

"Malcolm," Diana said as she sat down in the dimly lit office. "Thanks for seeing me..."

"My pleasure," Dr. Malcolm Colcord said with his hands folded, sitting in front of his face. "Have you seen the surveillance photos? The live SHIELD feeds?"

Diana Russell nodded, "Yes..."

Malcolm leaned back in his chair, "My God...what have I done? I thought we had the resources to figure something like this out. Cable has been here this whole time?! And we released a powerful crazed mutant onto the world populace?!"

"Murphy's Law—anything that can go wrong, will go wrong at the most inopportune moment," Diana stated with a shrug. "Maybe humankind wasn't meant to wield such forces, tamper with such things."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Malcolm growled. "Only mutants and low grade psionics like yourself?"

"No one on Earth should," Diana reiterated more sternly.

Malcolm sighed, "Why was I assigned to this burden...? Why did he choose me? Of all people? It seems like everything I'm doing is making this prophecy come to pass..."

"I wouldn't call it a prophecy," Diana said ominously. "I'd call it more of a warning..."

[[==WARNING==system failure...]] the cobalt-covered robot sputtered as Cable carelessly tossed its head behind his shoulder, falling on the debris from its comrades.

"Why didn't you use your new powers on these things?" Deadpool wondered as he kicked pieces of scrap metal and wiring away from his walking path. "This would have been way easier..."

Cable smirked, "Maybe I wanted to do things the old fashioned way. Besides, I mastered almost every weapon known to man and some unknown. I haven't mastered my technopath powers yet."

"Any idea on how to shut down this force field, then?" Deadpool wondered as he approached the humming blue glow that surrounded their prize.

Cable rubbed his chin as he visually scanned the tech which generated the force field beam, "Hmm. This stuff is pretty ahead of its time. I'm kind of impressed." He closed his eyes and concentrated, "It's constantly producing a main alpha frequency followed by a different counterwave every five seconds. It's almost impossible to penetrate. Interesting..."

"...can you turn it off?" Deadpool asked.

Cable's eyes opened with a blue glow simultaneously as the force field faded away, "Yeah..."

"What the hell were you doing?" Deadpool wondered.

"I was copying its code into my techno-organic mainframe. Maybe I could use that force field for something," Cable explained.

"Gross," Deadpool muttered. He grabbed the metallic weapon and strapped it to his back. "Alright."

What now? Hop on a plane back to the States? Find the X-Men, use their mutant tracker and boom...use this sucker on Apocalypse?"

"Not yet," Cable said. "We need some answers first. I'd like to meet this Malcolm Colcord face-to-face. I'd like to speak with Diana as well."

"...yeah," Deadpool said. "That's why we gotta get stateside."

"I know," Cable said as he looked at the ceiling. But really, he was looking upward. "I just hope its still up there, at least in standby mode..."

"Huh? You're talking all kinds of funky—starting to sound like me, but in a sad, scary kind of crazy," Deadpool rambled.

"Bodyslide by two," Cable commanded.

"Ah, fuck—" Deadpool muttered. "I don't have barf bags!"

The air crackled with blue ionized air, smelling like burnt baby oil. The light got brighter as it encircled the two soldiers. A tickle formed in Deadpool's chest, causing him to wince, "My molecules, dude...where are we going exactly?"

"We're off to see the wizard..." Cable said with a smirk.

In a blink, Cable's teleportation matrix aboard the dormant (but active) orbiting space station known as Greymalkin II executed its main function—namely, to teleport Cable and any reasonable number of passengers to anywhere on the planet.

As the dust settled and the lights dimmed, a shadow emerged. Apocalypse, his long black hair draped over his muscular form, observed the technological carnage that laid before him. He smiled, "So it begins, my adversary...adversaries..."

"...wizard? Who?" Deadpool wondered as he opened each eye, one at a time. To his surprise, he was once again in Weasel's lair.

"Jesus Christ!" Weasel screamed as he shakily brandished a 9 millimeter handgun, poised to shoot and possibly kill his intruders. If anything, he would do anything to protect his black market network.

"Not quite," Cable mused as he had appeared instantaneously from Baghdad with his arms crossed. Deadpool was still uncharacteristically crouched into the fetal position. "Hello, Weasel."

"...Cable," Weasel breathed with a sense of relief and slight agitation. "Glad to see you, but what did I say about teleporting here?"

"We don't have time for this," Cable explained. "We need weapons and we need them now. I've been gone for a year...my safehouses have either went into mandatory lock down or self-destructed. I've got nothing."

Deadpool arched an eyebrow, and found himself screaming, "You two fuck nuts KNOW EACH OTHER?!?!" He panted, "For how long?!"

Cable shrugged, "Awhile."

Weasel nodded and mumbled incoherently, "...couple years, yeah."

"Okay...", Deadpool paused as his hands flung into the air and flexed his fingers, "that's sneaky."

"I've helped Weasel out from time to time, providing him with some future tech while he provided me with information and weapons," Cable explained.

Weasel grinned as he snapped his fingers, "Yeah! That's where I got your teleportation device, Wade."

Deadpool crossed his arms as he gave Cable a sinister glare, "...the one that never worked correctly?"

Cable simply smirked and pretended to look away.

Deadpool scowled under his mask, "You are SO immature! You...poop...poop-eater!"

Cable glared back at Deadpool, "It was the only way to keep you a couple steps out of the game after what you and your shape-shifting girlfriend did to Domino."

Deadpool's eyes widened, "Oh, so it's my fault Vanessa impersonated your girlfriend?"

"You were working for Tyler, my brainwashed son!" Cable growled. "You weren't exactly helping his situation by encouraging bad behavior..."

Deadpool mock strangled Cable by placing his crooked fingers only inches from his throat and shouted, "He paid me in AD-VANCE! Tax-free! Sue me!"

"I've got a degree from Harvard Law, maybe I will," Cable boasted.

"That's...", Deadpool paused. His shoulders suddenly slumped as he looked to the side. "Uh...okay, I guess that's pretty impressive for a brutish asshole like yourself. This actually adds to my 'you're-a-pussy' theory."

"...what?" Cable asked defensively. "How does that even make sense? Lawyers are pussies?"

"Well, yeah...", Deadpool stated. "Not exactly fond of them after my whole Landau, Luckman, and Lake ordeal."

Weasel, sensing the agitation, perked up with the question, "Hey, is that what I think it is?"

Deadpool, almost immediately snapped out of his foul mood and unstrapped the metallic weapon which hung over his back, "Yep! The one and only mutant nullifier, just like you said. But Askani'Douche over there doesn't want to use it against Apocalypse."

"Oh," Weasel interjected, a little stunned. He scratched the back of his head, "Pray tell why?"

"There are other ways to defeating Apocalypse," Cable said. "I've killed him a couple times in my lifetime. Point is, he always comes back. Maybe we shouldn't waste our energy on him."

"You just want him around because he gave you your new techopath powers," Deadpool scoffed.

"No...", Cable said as he scratched his beard. "It was more than that. He rescued me..."

Deadpool crossed his arms, "I was about to rescue you, too...by proxy. After I got the nullifier."

"...I can't keep this up any longer," came a feminine voice from the back end of the lair. Diana Russell dropped her psychic shielding and stepped out of the shadows, with Malcolm Colcord in tow.

"Damn it...", Weasel swore as he leaned back in his chair, frustrated. "I need a new address. Or better security."

"Hello, Cable," Dr. Colcord said. "Pardon my reluctance to step into the light. The injuries to my face have been considerable, even with several surgeries. I am Dr. Malcolm Colcord—you already know Dr. Russell. We traced your signature and had one of our teleporters bring us here."

Cable clenched his fists, "Why did you bring Apocalypse back—? Even if it was accidental, why play with forces you have no knowledge of?"

"Because, Deadpool told me to," Malcolm said.

Deadpool, unapologetic, growled as he lunged for Colcord with a katana, "You've fucked with me for the last time!"

"Wade, don't," Diana said sternly as she telekinetically pushed Deadpool back.

"Mr. Hammer," Malcolm said as he held out a small portable flash drive, calling Weasel by his true surname. "Would you be so kind as to play this movie for us? You may scan it for viruses if you wish, but I assure you we're not here to start a fight." Weasel, curious, grabbed the drive and plugged it into a random port.

"You're from Weapon X?" Cable deduced. He glanced over at Diana, "And you, as well?"

Diana felt a rush of guilt as she turned her head away. Malcolm spoke up, "We were formerly associated, just as Wade was. I belong to a new faction known as Department X. Diana is merely a correspondent and advisor."

"Okay, the movie's ready...only a couple seconds, but this thing is a seriously huge file," Weasel commented. He clicked on the play button and a large screen lowered itself from the ceiling.

"This recording was remotely streamed directly to me six months ago," Malcolm said before the screen fizzled into focus.

{{"Hello?"}} a scratchy voice yelled. A close-up of a solitary brown-eyed, bald figure appeared on-screen. He frequently darted from side to side, looking for something. {{"This is General Wade Wilson...the year is 2018...we've come under attack. All the superhumans are gone. X-Men, Avengers, Force Works, Fantastic Four, Inhumans...the Eternals even came to our aid, but were slaughtered. Uatu the Watcher even broke his solemn promise and tried to defend us, but he was blinded and...We traced the threat to about ten years prior. Thor and Hercules retreated to their godly realms, simply because there was nothing else to fight for with no man, woman, or child left alive...they're all gone...I'm all that's left."}}

"What the fuck?" Deadpool muttered. "My face is...normal?"

{{"We found a machine to send a transmission through time,"}} General Wilson explained,{{"...not even sure if this is going to work. Rachel Summers and Bishop, two time-traveling mutants said they

had no knowledge of this happening. Which means ////////// must have changed the past. Cable has been missing for about ten years...if we had him, we could have stopped this...WE could have stopped this...he and I...//////////...he and I are the keys to the future of everything we hold dear...I need you, Malcolm, to do whatever you can to find Cable in your time...bring him back so that we can stop ////////// before it—"} }

The video fizzled out, leaving the group silently in awe.

"So...I guess we have our work cut out for us," Deadpool lamented. "Wonder what brings about the—"

"Apocalypse?!?!?" Robert Drake, also known as Iceman, shouted as he ice-slid his way through the halls of the Xavier Mansion. He arched an organic ice eyebrow towards his female teammate, flying beside him with a determined look on her face. Ororo Munroe's platinum hair blew behind her with a calm, but steadfast wind. She was the X-Men's co-leader, Storm.

"He's on the front lawn," she said, perhaps to shock herself into believing it was actually true. "The reservists are on their way and the strike team is right behind us."

"What about the mansion security?" Iceman inquired as he forced his ice slide to break open the front doors off their hinges, only to find Apocalypse standing motionless, with several pieces of smoldering debris left by robots and damaged repulse weapons scattered around him.

Storm touched down and immediately fogged the area around the mansion grounds, making sure to keep enough moisture in the air for Iceman to utilize.

"What are you doing here, Apocalypse?" Storm yelled as she stared unflinchingly at the man once considered to be a death god to many ancient cultures. She herself was revered as a goddess for her mastery of the Earth's weather.

"And what's with the King Tut outfit?" Iceman berated with an equal, if not humorous, serious tone.

Apocalypse smiled at Drake's wit, "The omega mutants trying to mask their fear with their words instead of their might...pathetic."

"What's pathetic is that you can never man up and die like a good old stooge!" Iceman growled as his body seemed to grow more muscular and spiky. Steam blew from his mouth like a furnace. He threw his arms forward and sent a torrent of pure ice towards the ageless mutant. Apocalypse winced for a moment, but let the cold overcome him.

"Keep on him!" Cyclops, who had just arrived on the scene with other X-Men in tow, commanded.

Storm nodded as her eyes became white and the skies became darkened with blizzard-like conditions. Snow flew at Apocalypse as if it were fired out of a bazooka, further freezing him in place. His eyes suddenly glowed with an ever-intensifying red. In an instant, the ice melted and evaporated. The snow did not even form from the skies.

"Yes, keep on me," Apocalypse mused as he fired a blast of energy from his palms, striking Iceman through the chest and Storm in the thigh. The skies settled and the fogs lifted. Iceman groaned as he shifted back into human form.

More X-Men came onto the scene until almost the entire front of the mansion was lined up with Xavier's soldiers. Some flew, others ran, and others still were teleported via borrowed abilities.

Cyclops stood at the head of the battlefield, as he always did.

"We've done this dance before," Cyclops warned as his visor flashed red. "Get off my property!"

"Or what?" Apocalypse asked with a grin. "You'll fight me to the brink and then keep me alive with feeding tubes?"

"Gotta point," Wolverine mustered to deadpan with his razor sharp adamantium claws unsheathed.

"Shut up," Cyclops responded out of the side of his mouth.

"X-Men, you have been proven strong time and time again," Apocalypse boasted as he waved his hands in the air with a grand gesture, "but I implore you to stand down. It's Essex I want. The snake in the grass I gave life to has no place in our world...the world of the strong."

"How can we trust you?" Phoenix asked as she stood in a defensive fighting stance. "You, of all people!"

Apocalypse smiled to himself, "Our genes were quite the match, yes? It's a shame our son had to grow up in such harsh conditions. The harshest of circumstances. I only regret not having done the deed myself...such a young body, soft to the touch..."

Cyclops, angered by the mere thought of Apollyon—the bastardized son Apocalypse impregnated Phoenix with—prepared to open his visor, but stopped the outright attack as it would be easily anticipated.

In any event, Domino, with her twin pistols drawn, flinched—and for a probability-altering mutant to flinch—it meant your luck was about to run out.

THOOM

A crackle of lightning from residuals of Storm's weather manipulation and Apocalypse found himself on the ground. He attempted to get up, but geothermal blasts from the ground itself, courtesy of Magma, knocked him back. Wolverine leapt outwards, propelled by Colossus's fastball special as he drove his claws deep into the chest of Apocalypse.

With his lungs filling with blood, Apocalypse howled in retaliation—but not pain. The sonic wave produced a horrifying shockwave, breaking every window in the mansion. Cyclops's visor was cracked and it broke apart, sending optic blasts in multiple directions, downing his teammates Beast and Domino. Apocalypse telekinetically flung some lava which had boiled up to the surface at the remaining X-Men, causing them to scatter.

He picked up Wolverine by the back of the neck, who was still reeling from the sonic wave due to his enhanced senses, and flung him towards his teammates, knocking the blinded Cyclops down.

Colossus grunted as he drove his fist into Apocalypse's solar plexus, but to ill effect. The ageless mutant simply smiled and "shoved" Rasputin out of the way—sending him plummeting to the bottom of a lake two miles away.

An elfin mutant with a forked tail and indigo fur attempted to latch onto him and perform a multi-teleportation romp, only Apocalypse forcibly closed the dimensional barrier—causing Nightcrawler to topple over from a loud pop in his sinuses.

Apocalypse continued his approach towards the mansion, outstretching his arm to massive sizes and

pinning Magma to the ground, suffocating her. Rogue flung into the fray and before attempting to atomize him with Blink's powers, took off her gloves and latched onto Apocalypse's face.

A crackle of electricity and Rogue took several steps backwards, falling over, unconscious. No one being could process the five-thousand years worth of memories, not to mention Apocalypse's immense power.

"Just you and me, Mrs. Summers," Apocalypse mused with a hint of 21st century diction.

"NO!" came a shout from above as Cannonball attempted to dive bomb on Apocalypse, only to have his forearm snatched and promptly broken. As Sam reeled in pain, he doubled over from the shock and ferocity of his injury—not to mention he should have been invulnerable while his bio-kinetic field was in play.

"I was wondering when the External would show up," Apocalypse chuckled.

Then again, Apocalypse had been breaking a lot of rules lately.

Jean's hair seemed to billow with a hint of yellow telekinetic energy as she forced a telekinetic blast upon Apocalypse, causing him to slide back a few feet.

Stunned, Apocalypse regained his footing and continued his forward march. Phoenix screamed as she exerted the full extent of her telekinetic fury, but soon her waning powers finally caught up with her as the shockwave pushed her back onto her rear. Apocalypse approached Jean and stood before her, rubbing his chin.

"Disappointing," Apocalypse said. "I wasn't even graced with a phoenix manifestation...I feel almost insulted..." He backhanded Jean, leaving the last X-Man to stand in his way face down in the mud.

BOOM

A force from inside the mansion prevented Apocalypse from entering—in fact, he was pushed back into the water fountain which decorated the landscape of the Xavier Institute. Taken aback, Apocalypse coughed up blood as he observed the smoldering wound in the middle of his chest. He looked up and saw a young woman with piercing glowing eyes.

Rachel's eyes narrowed as she appeared to be on fire, which took on the shape of a large firebird, **"IS THIS ENOUGH TO GRACE YOU?"**

NEXT ISSUE: *Cable and Deadpool are united, but will they stick together to fix this unnamed apocalyptic threat? And watch as Rachel goes toe to toe with Apocalypse! Plus: more on the true origins of the Askani! I couldn't possibly describe anything else without an exclamation point!!!!!!!!!!!!*

CABLE / DEADPOOL BIBLIO/GRAPHY

- Apocalypse once harnessed the M'Kraan Crystal, the Nexus of Realities, to reshape the world in his image (into an Egyptian Mortal Kombat Realm, as Deadpool put it). When the mythic "Twelve" were gathered, they hyper-accelerated Cable and Apocalypse to the Fifth Dimension, where they battled

