
Then.

"You are on the path, but your mind sways...", a heavy, Japanese-accented voice called out. "What makes you think you have what it takes? An American, of all people?"

Young Wade Wilson knelt before the martial arts master in front of him in the candle-lit dojo. Tears welled up in his eyes as he stated matter-of-factly, "I have nothing else to live for. They kicked me out of the military. I'm a failure..."

The Japanese man, cloaked in a black samurai tunic, shook his head, "Your mind has unused potential, this is true. Why do you want this? Because of your parents? Your mother, who died of some form of cancer before you were old enough to fully grieve? Or the abusive father—who buried himself in his military career—and took out his frustrations on his unruly and rebellious son?"

Wade sniffled, "I got him killed."

The master arched an eyebrow, "Really? How did that happen? You seem to have blocked that memory from your subconscious..."

"It was a misunderstanding...", Wade said simply. "All my fault."

"There we go, I can see it now...You didn't pull the trigger, your drunken friend did...after your father dishonored you by slapping you," said the master.

"I enlisted to somehow...honor his memory. And to ask for forgiveness, but they discharged me. Dishonorably," Wade explained.

"You are looking to find honor again?" the master wondered.

Wade nodded as he clenched his fists, "I heard samurai have a strict code...of honor. But I don't want that. I want to find the sons of bitches that killed my wife! The military didn't exactly like me going around and beating people up for information—trying to tackle the investigation myself. I wanted to find them..."

"So you came to me...", the master said.

Wade bowed his head, "I want the best training possible. I want to know how to kill people."

"And I can give you that," the master said, "but I ask only one thing in return."

Wade shook his head, "I'll pay you whatever, can we just get on with it?!"

"I do not have any concern for money, not from you, my son," the master uttered. "I've peered into your soul and the blackness peered back at me. If I do this for you, you must promise to release me once this is done..."

Wade growled as he lowered his voice, "Fine. How much knowledge will I retain?"

"Enough martial arts, espionage, ninja, firearm, and swordplay experience to build a very successful career..."

Wade felt a cold-blooded smile creep up across his lips, "Good."

"This could be a little jarring," Ogun said as his eyes lit up and transferred his mind into that of Wade's. Within his new temporary host body, Ogun spoke with Wade's voice, "I hope your mind survives the process, young one..."



#5 (June 2008)

KIDS WITH GUNS

Part V: "Jumper"

Written by [Brad Horton](#)

fever dream. (noun).

very unpleasant dream (nightmare) occurring during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep relating to FFCD (first fear cycle of development) that can be remembered upon awakening.

So anyway, I suppose it's been awhile since the last issue and you need to be caught up on what's been happening. Oh, um...Deadpool here. That's right, the infamous Merc-With-A-Mouth. See, ever since appearing in this title, there's been some...interesting things happening in terms of character development. Some might consider them uncharacteristic or that Horton guy has finally lost his gourd—others might welcome the change. Me? As long as I can keep my fantasies of Bea Arthur and the Olson Twins mud-wrestling intact—I could really care less.

It all began about a year ago. Cable, powerless after a deadly battle with the Shadow King, merged with Nate Grey (or "X-Man" as pop-culture nerd/buffs would call him) and ascended into a higher plane of existence. Seemingly hunky-dory, only he wasn't so happy. He was essentially a prisoner—only being able to look in on our reality and not interfere. Eventually, he made a deal with Death herself to return to mortal life—only he wound up in the same place he left—in a US military base in Iraq, where he'd secretly be tortured and imprisoned for over a year. AND he was still powerless. Lame, huh?

Cut to me, in prison for participating with the Byron Agency in trying to assassinate the X-Men. Diana Russell, a mutant uber-psychiatrist, did some tests with me and eventually got my insanity (a little) under control. Cue Malcolm Colcord, some dude who was severely wounded by Wolverine years ago. This mysterious doctor guy tells me he wants to recruit me for "Department X" to apprehend T-Ray, my long-hated zombie/mystical douche bag nemesis—which I did. Apparently, Diana and Malcolm were Weapon X buddies at one point—and one or the other wanted to bring Cable back (which was moot, because he was already back, technically).

So, they hook T-Ray (yeah, totally kicked his ass) up to this conduit machine and open a portal or some such into the "Fifth Dimension" to funnel Cable's essence back to our plane of existence, only...they get Apocalypse instead! D'oh!

After a brief "Mummy Returns" tussle with Tacolips, I visited my old pal, Weasel, to get some intel on the situation to try to take that crusty, surprisingly spry Apoc guy down—since it was kinda my fault. Of course, this is where I find out Cable is indeed alive and well in the same military installation that had the mutant nullifier—which I was going to use on Apocalypse.

Only, once I get there, the military base is already under attack by AIM (who got tipped off by Apocalypse) while Apoc taunts the captive Cable, reawakening the techno-organic virus within him that strangely, doesn't eat him alive—but gives him some sort of technopath abilities (that's the ability to communicate and manipulate machines for the lay person). So, we team up and get the nullifier together and bodyslide back to Weasel's joint, only to discover Drs. Colcord and Russell are there—who reveal to us that Cable and I are the future's only hope for survival.

Oh, snap!

Meanwhile, Mr. Sinister, having betrayed Apocalypse years ago, gets attacked by his former master, and limps to the X-Men for help—awakening Rachel Summers from a coma (also a slight result from Shadow King—what a prick) just in time for Apocalypse to kick the X-Men's collective asses and Rachel to go all Phoenix on him in retaliation all dramatic-like...or something.

That should be it. Go re-read the previous issues if you don't believe me, boners!

Department X Headquarters.

Now.

"I don't like this...I mean, how many months has it been since the last issue? That recap took a lot out of me," Deadpool muttered aloud to himself as he paced back and forth within a debriefing room. Suddenly, the door opened, and Cable stepped in, wearing a variation of his combat fatigues—blue with white trim with his arms exposed and various pouches strapped to his belt.

"You shaved," Deadpool said, with a sense of relief.

"Uh, yeah..." Cable confirmed nonchalantly as he shut the door behind him. "Facial hair makes me look about forty years older than I actually am, especially when I went prematurely gray at age twenty."

"Hunh. No shoulder pads?" Deadpool asked with an arched eyebrow underneath his trademark red mask with two large egg-shaped black dots over the eyes.

Cable shrugged as he sat down in one of the two chairs in front of a large desk, "Guess they didn't have them in my size."

Deadpool rubbed his chin as he nodded, "Clever...y'know, I'm supposed to be the one making jokes around here."

"Right, because the drama of the story requires me to be the straight and narrow militaristic type and you the care free trigger-happy clown..." Cable mumbled.

Deadpool raised a finger and found he was unable to speak for a few moments. After the aforementioned moments, he said, "Breaking the fourth wall is a no-no for you, too!"

"I used to be a god, Wade," Cable explained. "Can't get any more omniscient than that."

Deadpool smacked himself in the face, "Fine, whatever..."

Malcolm finally walked in the door and sat at the large desk facing Cable and Deadpool, sitting down with his arms folded, "Hello, gentlemen. I suppose we should get started on the specifics."

"Yeah, I'd say so, too," Cable said as he tried to ignore Malcolm's unsightly face. Scars and botched plastic surgery attempts left him with a sort of unfinished Frankenstein monster syndrome. "Like how we're supposed to trust an offshoot of Weapon X?"

Malcolm scoffed at the thought, "Weapon X was just the sliver of water trickling down from the big pool. We are what's left of Landau, Luckman, and Lake."

Cable rubbed his chin in thought, "I thought...Diana...worked for Weapon X? I don't...get it."

"She did," Malcolm confirmed. "As did I."

"Ah, fuck..." Deadpool sighed. "Those fuckers again? Like we really need THOSE lawyer guys messing up my life again...fuckin' Christ!" He burst out of his chair, which flung itself against the wall, "I am not

one to have my chains yanked again!"

Malcolm held out his hands, "Ms. Culloden is no longer here, Wade. No Mithras slaying. It's me. I am your friend, even if you don't remember."

"Wolverine," Cable concluded with a smirk. He pointed to Malcolm, "The same guy you mutilated your face? And LL&L has had business with Logan in the past...which is why you can't swear bloody vengeance upon him."

Malcolm attempted a smile—or at least, what his facial muscles could allow, "Yes. Coincidentally, I was there that faithful night Wolverine broke free. Also, coincidentally, I had a good surgeon save my life..." Malcolm turned to Wade and chuckled.

"I saved your life...?" Deadpool wondered. "I was a surgeon? I thought I was a freelance merc already before Department K tried to cure me of my cancer...?"

"You were," Malcolm said. "But as you know, the procedure muddled with your memories a little. Your sessions with Diana were an attempt to restore your capacity for long term memory."

"This is fine and dandy for a walk down memory lane," Cable began with a growl and a hint of a curled upper lip, as he was also unsure if his memories were correct, "but how about where are we, exactly? Landau, Luckman, and Lake is an inter-dimensional law firm. Are we still on Earth, at least?"

"In part," Malcolm explained, "Department X is just a name, not to be confused as a direct Weapon X offshoot. It is located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Or 'Site X' as it was during Project Manhattan. Our facility is a second out of phase with the rest of reality. As of right now, no one outside this building even knows it exists or where to find it."

"We are into preventing the end of the world. For instance, starting with Deadpool's transmission from the future, we have mobilized several missions in an attempt to change the future, but we found our efforts would have been fruitless without Cable."

"Why me? Why not get into contact with Bishop?" Cable wondered. "He would have cooperated, I'm sure."

"We needed you," Malcolm said. "You were specifically trained to enact change, whereas someone like Bishop and even your sister were merely stranded here. You WANTED to come here."

"I am not working for you," Cable said gruffly.

"Finally, something we agree on!" Deadpool groaned.

"I never said either of you were employed by us, however our resources are open for use if you choose to," Malcolm explained.

"Where's Diana?" Cable implored. "What's her connection with the Askani?"

"I have no idea what you are talking about," Malcolm said enigmatically. "The Askani were from the future, started by your sister, as I understand."

"BULLSHIT!" Cable exploded, his left eye beaming with energy, despite his apparent lack of any powers.

Malcolm remained steadfast, "Right then, perhaps we should direct your attention to Apocalypse. He's been cutting a path through everything ever since we accidentally resurrected him. We've been tracking him...and he seems to have stopped just north of New York City."

"He's after the X-Men...," Cable deduced as he calmed down. His anticipation heightened as he found a newfound sense of guilt of potentially damaging his extended family. "I bet you're heartbroken Logan got his ass kicked..."

"It should also be noted that the Phoenix has engaged him," Malcolm said with a slight smile. "There's little else we can do at the moment."

"Jean?" Cable wondered. He nodded with a sense of pride, "Course it would be her to the end."

"Actually, it's Rachel," Malcolm said. "Sinister awakened her from her coma, only to fall ill seconds later. Appears that Apocalypse is mighty peeved and wants Sinister for himself. The X-Men fought valiantly..."

Cable growled as he grabbed an automatic weapon from his holster and pointed it at Malcolm, "Don't finish that sentence."

Deadpool unsheathed his katana and swung it, stopping just inches from Cable's jugular, "Can I say something?"

Cable, unflinching with his gun quietly poised at Malcolm's forehead, muttered, "Sure."

"Let's just finish this," Deadpool said calmly. "Let's take Apocalypse down so we can fulfill your destiny and then we can concentrate on your...other destiny. Ours. Saving the world or some such from a threat eight years from now..."

After a lengthy pause, Cable withdrew his gun, "Alright." He nodded and breathed calmly, "Alright, Wilson. You and me. We see this thing through to the end." He turned to Dr. Colcord, "I am not signing my life away to Landau, Luckman, and Lake, you're still the same. I don't need my telepathy to see that."

"Wait," Diana said as she strode into the room. She handed Cable a folded piece of paper. He gave her an intense glare as he unfolded it and read what was inscribed, "What is this, Latin?"

"It's a spell our mystics whipped up," Diana explained. "In case the nullifier has no affect on Apocalypse."

"Magic?" Cable wondered. "I'm not big on the mystical...stuff."

"Just think of it as another weapon in your arsenal," Diana said. "Apocalypse was brought back by a hybrid of science and magic. If the science part doesn't stop him, then you might need the magic to fight fire with fire."

Cable read the spell once more, "Part of it's blank in-between."

"For the spell to work, you need to say Apocalypse's true name, whatever it is...," Diana revealed with a slight feeling of embarrassment.

"En Sabah Nur," Cable shrugged. "Your intel department needs an upgrade."

"You need his original, ancient Egyptian birth name. En Sabah Nur is Arabic and not even the correct translation," Diana elucidated.

Cable rolled his eyes and folded the piece of paper, placing it in his front pocket pouch, lightly patting it, "Like I said, I'll stick to my guns on this one. Literally. Magic, no magic, I still get the job done."

"Well, whatever happens, I'd like to schedule an appointment when you get back," Diana said. "I'm sensing you need issues cleared up."

Cable nodded in reference to the strange flashbacks he experienced on a higher plane of existence, "Will do. Hope you like having the patient ask the psychiatrist the questions."

Diana smiled as she crossed her arms, "It's fun to switch gears sometimes."

"So, are we ready?" Deadpool asked. He grabbed the mutant nullifier, which he still had strapped to his back. "Hope the X-Men don't have any hard feelings that one time I tried to kill them...sorta. And those other times. And...X-Force, the Avengers..."

Cable rolled his eyes, "Bodyslide by two."

And with a crackle of blue light and the smell of laser, the two men were gone in a blink.

Malcolm stood up and winced as he gripped his chest, spreading his own blood over his hands as his wounds opened up again. He leaned with his head lowered to the desk, panting, concentrating...

"Malcolm?" Diana asked as she walked into the briefing room.

"It's okay," Malcolm said wearily, "just need to...sit down." He sat down as he implied and gripped his chest.

"Do you need a tourniquet?" Diana asked as she rushed to Malcolm's side. "What the hell happened?"

"N-nothing...," Malcolm said quickly. "They don't know the price I paid...ever since I took over this place, my wounds started to...bleed..."

"What?" Diana wondered aloud.

"Don't try to probe my mind about what happened...," Malcolm warned hesitantly. "Although I appreciate you trying to help...Ever since I received those messages, I've been...pre-occupied..."

"There was more than one message?" Diana exclaimed.

Malcolm nodded, "Each one was different, but there was a similar outcome..." He cleared his throat, "And why does Cable think you have a connection to the Askani?"

Diana held her chest to calm her agitated heartbeat, "I honestly have no idea...and I'm scared to think what he'll do when I don't have the answers he's looking for."

Xavier's.

Blue light materialized into Cable and Deadpool, each armed to the tee with various firearms—in

particular, the mutant nullifier. Invented by Forge, it is the only known device to permanently strip a mutant of their powers. It is not known if it would work on a mutant who apparently transcends all normal physics as Apocalypse has been doing.

Cable peered off into the distance, closing his left eye and allowing his techno-organic eye to see into the infrared—also employing a telescopic option. He sighed as echoes of explosions and shockwaves of energy thundered in the air, "They're fighting. He's fighting my sister out there..."

"And...?" Deadpool wondered, who had already had a pair of binoculars held up to his face. "What about the X-Men?"

Cable remained silent, "We'll find out, won't we?"

"I wasn't sayin'...", Deadpool paused. He chuckled as he put his binoculars back into its pouch on his belt, "I mean, they're okay, I'm sure."

Cable wiped sweat from his forehead, "This place is hot with psionic energy. I'm almost glad I don't have telepathy anymore." He began running towards the mansion, "Let's go!"

Deadpool brandished the nullifier and followed suit, "Any kind of plan in mind?"

Cable smirked, "Kind of hoping we wait until Apocalypse is drained from the fight with the Phoenix then wham him with the nullifier!"

"Then what?" Deadpool wondered aloud with an inner giggle.

"I don't know...want to take on Dr. Doom?" Cable joked.

"Dude," Deadpool panted, "don't give me a boner!"

Suddenly, a telekinetic pulse sent the two men hurtling backwards. Cable landed hard on his side, rolling into a bush while Deadpool was sent spine-first head on into a tree trunk. Wade then landed with a loud crack on his side.

"Uh...", Wade muttered. He shakily rolled over, "Ah...ah shit."

Cable groaned as he got up, dirt and mud smeared over his face, "What?"

"Broken...!" Deadpool growled as he backed away from the damaged weapon in shock.

Cable's eyes went wide in shock as well as he felt his heart sink, "What...?"

"Did you take Building Energy Stripping Guns 101?" Deadpool wondered.

Cable closed his eyes as a blue ionic field appeared around his body, "No, but I've been trained all my life to kill this guy—no matter how powerful he is."

"You gonna bodyslide?" Deadpool wondered as he loaded his M4 Carbine variant assault rifle.

"No," Cable said with strain in his voice. His left arm seemed to warp and formed into an arm-mounted cannon of sorts. "When I touched the nullifier, I read its schematics...my techno-organics can replicate it."

Deadpool rolled his eyes, "You couldn't have done that first? I just about started!"

"WE CAN DO THIS DANCE ALL DAY, APOCALYPSE," Rachel said as she emotionlessly hovered in midair amidst a firebird of psionic flame. Her skin had become almost a blackened onyx in appearance, with tiny cracks of magma in her. The surrounding and once lush landscape of the Xavier Mansion had been burnt away.

Apocalypse wiped his lip of blood as his body healed its other wounds. He smiled, "Ah, the prodigal Summers daughter...swooping in at the exact right time to save her mythical X-Men from certain doom. One would think she'd stop Robert Kelly from becoming President of the United States instead to prevent her timeline from coming to pass...but who is paying attention, anyway?"

Rachel's brow creased, **"YOU DARE TO..."**

Apocalypse laughed, "The Phoenix Force is tricky. Embrace it too much and you become it. I am just trying to see if you're still in there beneath all that fire and brimstone, my dear girl. Stand down. We don't have to destroy this tiny town with collateral damage. All I want is Essex to pay for his crimes. All that pain he put your father through...regardless of the timeline."

Rachel inquired, **"WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO—?"**

Apocalypse smiled, "I did not come here to kill the X-Men, just Sinister. It baffles me to think that Xavier's soldiers believe all beings, no matter how despicable, deserve a second chance. So...do I? Do I have your forgiveness, Rachel? You can read my mind if you wish...I assure you I am a changed man."

"WHAT WILL STOP YOU FROM DOING WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO?" Rachel wondered as she peered into the sordid mind of Apocalypse. Suddenly, a warm feeling crept up her spine as she felt herself unable to let go of his mind. **"WHAT ARE YOU—?"**

Apocalypse smirked once more, "Sorry for this, my dear girl. I anticipated all of this. You were the only living being in this dimension left to defeat me. Essex would have no choice but to resuscitate you...and you would no doubt call upon the Phoenix Force for me to grab and harness."

The unconscious and incapacitated X-Men were hastily and involuntarily picked up by an unseen force, held in midair as Apocalypse began to feed off of the psionic energy in the air.

"NO!" Rachel cried as her psionic flames died down. She grit her teeth and struggled to the point of tears. **"I'll kill you!!!"**

Apocalypse's eyes glowed with pure white light as he continued to draw upon the Phoenix, "I wish I knew about this energy source when I was younger. I might have been able to...use it..."

THOOM THOOM THOOM

Three beams of blue light flew through the air and struck the immortal mutant in the chest,

temporarily forcing him to stop his psionic feast.

Apocalypse fell backwards and gripped his chest, shakily witnessing his skin turning from gray to a soft brown, "What...? You...?"

Cable and Deadpool stood over him with their respective weapons drawn. Cable's left arm in particular, was still molded after the mutant nullifier.

"That calmed you down some," Deadpool observed. "Just be glad we didn't chop your balls off, Sparky!"

Apocalypse growled as he lunged for the two men, performing a kick to Cable's solar plexus while simultaneously violently choke-slammng Deadpool, "I have more than enough power for that puny toy to deplete me!"

Cable groaned as he gasped for air. He concentrated, looking for the correct access point as sweat beaded off of his forehead. "Keep him busy...Wade...," he muttered.

[[Cerebro Remote Interface Online...]]

"...this should be fun."

"I will vaporize you both!" Apocalypse shouted. He panted as he soon realized the telekinetic hold over the unconscious and wounded X-Men had fallen. Deadpool forcibly removed his crushed skull from the dirt and fell over in the process.

Apocalypse shook uncontrollably as his body temperature dropped. He looked at his hands – he had shifted into a skin tone that would have resembled one of an Ancient Egyptian. Even his misshapen scowl had reverted into that of a normal human's.

Deadpool got to his feet and unsheathed his katana, pointing the edge of the blade at his opponent, "Are you ready to die for real this time? You're worse than that M2K fanfic site..."

[[Mutant designate: Apocalypse. Not found on mutant brain wave frequency.]]

"Wait," Cable said as he held up his hand. "He's not going to be harming anyone else. He's human. It worked."

"No...no powers...at all?" Apocalypse wondered aloud to himself as he dropped to his knees. He raised his head and smiled, "It will take more than that to defeat me, Nathan. Perhaps I am more dangerous than ever."

"You're human," Cable said. "Permanently. I altered some of the mutant nullifier's capabilities. I'm not sure even if Forge used the 'antidote' weapon he created would counter the effects."

"Human I may be, but I'll be alive...forever," Apocalypse grinned. "I touched the Fifth Dimension. I am beyond Death. She won't even touch me!"

"She better not!" Deadpool shouted. "That's my Kool-Aid, bitch!"

"You're saying you're virtually immortal?" Cable wondered.

"Not just immortal," Apocalypse explained. "Nothing will kill—"

SHLUK

Deadpool growled as he held his katana deep in Apocalypse's chest, much to Cable's shock, "For all we know, this jackass could have been the one to destroy the world...I'm not gonna let that happen."

Blood began to fill Apocalypse's lungs as he forcibly removed himself from Deadpool's sword. He coughed and staggered backwards, gripping his chest where the katana had pierced him. Apocalypse smiled to himself with the realization that his wound had already begun to heal, "I do not want to see the world die anymore than you do, Wilson. We three will see it through until the end..."

Cable walked up behind Deadpool and whispered under his breath into his one-time enemy's ear, "Keep an eye on him..." The Askani'Son then ran past the two men and immediately came to the aid of his alternate-reality sister.

Rachel looked up with swollen eyelids and smiled. Blood trickled out of the corners of her mouth. She tried to speak, but only a long wheeze escaped her lips. Cable kneeled down next to the Mother Askani, "Rachel?"

Time had stopped, their surroundings replaced by white light.

"This is my stop, little brother," Rachel said with a hint of reluctance. She was now an ethereal orange beauty. Like Persephone returning from the underworld to usher in a new spring. "My body gave out the minute Sinister awakened me. The Phoenix was the only thing keeping my heart pumping..."

"What?" Cable wondered. "No...no, this was my fight!" He looked around in all directions, calling out to an unseen manipulator of fate. "It was my burden, not hers!"

WE WARNED YOU THERE WOULD BE A PRICE/////YOUR ENERGIES MUST BE OCCUPIED FOR THE UNIVERSE TO FIND BALANCE/////WE HAVE CHOSEN THE CHILD OF THE PHOENIX HERSELF AS YOUR REPLACEMENT/////

"You realize none of this would have happened if you didn't come back?" Rachel asked as a skintight costume formed around her body – a white version of the Phoenix uniform – awarded to only the most worthy. "Apocalypse knew it. I felt what he knows. And something is coming that none of the heroes can stop..."

Cable shook his head in disbelief, "No...I sensed something was wrong. I had to come back. My timeline was a fake...the Askani were a fake! It was all some kind of advanced Weapon X training facility!"

Rachel lowered her eyes and felt a tugging feeling on her heart, "You were having the equivalent of a nightmare, Nathan...for all your omniscience...you probably couldn't tell if you were experiencing another timeline...or somehow your memories got mixed in with Nate Grey's to the point where you literally lost your grip..."

Tears welled up in Nathan's eyes as his breathing became labored, "Oath...I never...oh God..." He tried to walk up to his sister, but was stopped by cosmic forces he couldn't possibly resist.

"You made a deal with Death, Nathan...what did you expect would happen?" Rachel wondered as

hundreds more lifeforms with their own versions of the Phoenix uniform appeared around her. They were the sum total of the Phoenix's might – which all life that is and ever will be draws from.

"I was trained to be a soldier since birth like some kind of messiah...but no one ever trained me for what was beyond that...you can't give a man or mutant godhood and expect everything to be alright!" Cable yelled with outrage.

AND SO YOU CHOOSE TO FIGHT///TO CREATE THE PERFECT COUNTERBALANCE TO BLISS///

"My father was Scott Summers, not the Almighty...I wasn't immaculately conceived...Sinister worked the pedigree charts until I was at the end of the equation! I see that now...maybe you're right," Cable pledged, "maybe young Nate's memories mixed with my own and altered my perception of reality."

///YOUR OBSERVATION IS DULY NOTE—

"I'M NOT FINISHED!!!" Cable shouted. "I've realized something...I am a walking bomb...nothing more. In this reality and the next...that's all Nathan Summers ever is. And now...I'm just what's left over. I'm not meant to be some god to hold dominion over other gods! And Rachel is definitely not supposed to be a god!"

Rachel and the other members of the Phoenix Corps faded into the nothingness, leaving the white light environment empty and barren.

PERHAPS YOUR EMOTIONS ARE YOUR SAVING GRACE///YOU BROUGHT DISORDER TO THE UNIVERSE///HOWEVER YOU INTEND TO FIGHT IT///EVEN THOUGH IT WILL MOST LIKELY END IN YOUR/////DEATH/////

Cable solemnly nodded, and spat venomously, "Probably..."

THE PHOENIX BURNS AWAY WHAT DOES NOT WORK///BUT IT HAS COME TO OUR ATTENTION THAT THE UNIVERSE BALANCES ITSELF OUT///OUR EFFORTS SHOULD BE MORE FOCUSED ON THE LIFE THAT IS///RATHER THAN WHAT WILL BE

Cable shook his head, "Didn't you do that already anyway?"

WE WILL LEAVE THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE AND RETURN TO THE STATE OF///UNKNOWINGNESS///NO ONE SHALL EVER BEAR WITNESS TO THE FURY OF THE PHOENIX FORCE AGAIN///ONLY IN THE HEARTS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SENTIENT BEINGS WILL WE REST

Nate...???

"Nate?" Deadpool asked as he waved his hand in front of Cable's face. "You're starting to scare me. And I'm crazy! What happened to Jean Junior? Er...Phoenix the Second? Wait, I got it...Phoenix Phase Two! Um...help me out here!" Deadpool gripped his chin, "I know she shares a name with one of the characters on Friends...Chandler? No..."

"Rachel?" Cable wondered as he adjusted to the natural flow of time, making him slightly queasy. He looked from side to side. The remote Cerebro interface did not detect her, either. "Where's Apocalypse?"

"Not sure," Deadpool said somberly. "He kind of...disappeared."

"What?!" Cable shouted before falling victim to an unsettling bout of nausea. He fell to his knees and vomited over the charred landscape. After breathing heavily, a beam of red energy struck Deadpool from behind, causing the wind to expel from his lungs.

"Guh!" Deadpool grunted as an invisible telekinetic force held him in midair. "Um...X-Men are back."

Nate looked up to see Cyclops, donning a pair of his ruby quartz sunglasses—as his visor had been shattered by a sonic pulse caused by Apocalypse—his wife, Jean, was beside him.

"Cable...What happened to Rachel?" Cyclops asked. "And...why are you...here?" He shot an angry glance at the man clad in red and black held up by his wife's telekinesis, "With him?"

"I have a name!" Deadpool bellowed.

The battle-hardened warrior from the future grunted as he got to his feet, towering a good six inches above his father, "Well, to answer your question, apparently Rachel merged with the Phoenix Force...she's gone."

Cable suddenly felt a shaky hand shove the barrel of a gun to his temple. Domino, tears welling up in her eyes, pulled the safety on her weapon, "So help me, if this is Stryfe or some clone, I will pull the trigger..."

"Dom...it's me," Cable said as he held up his hands. Many more of the wounded and broken X-Men began to approach the scene that had transpired. Many of them muttered to each other in shock. Cannonball, holding his broken arm, almost fell over at the sight of his former mentor.

"Both of these clowns got a familiar stink on them," Wolverine muttered. "Smells and awful lot like Landau, Luckman, and Lake..."

Jean nodded, "I probed Nathan's mind...what's going on? Why are you working with Deadpool?"

"It's more of a planned marriage," Deadpool mused. "Neither of us wanted it, really..."

Cable sighed as Domino withdrew her weapon, "It's complicated."

"He was hired to kill us at one point!" Cyclops shouted.

"He's on the path to redemption, believe it or not," Cable muttered. "His mind was broken, fragmented, but he's been getting some really good help...someone who helped me deal with some

post-traumatic stress.”

“Don’t be an idiot,” Domino said. “Wilson will turn on you any chance he gets!”

“Nate,” Sam Guthrie said as he shook his head, “you can’t trust this guy...listen to Dom and I. We’ve dealt with him more than anyone else here...”

Cable glanced at a certain Southern Belle, “As I understand, you have a way with holding your arms open for anyone looking for a second chance, right Marie?”

Rogue shifted her weight nervously.

Cable grit his teeth, “So what? With Xavier gone, you just ignore everything he’s taught you?! If it wasn’t for Deadpool, I wouldn’t have been able to depower Apocalypse and save your collective asses—AND the world!” He turned around, “In my experience—in my lifelong war...if you fight by my side and get the job done, regardless what your past was, you’re alright in my book...”

Cyclops growled as his sunglasses began to light up, “I don’t think I like your tone! We lost Rachel—your sister!”

“She was forcibly awakened from a coma, Scott,” Cable muttered. “Even with the Phoenix empowering her, it wouldn’t have lasted...ask Beast—I’m sure his medical knowledge would counteract your fucking stubbornness!” He held out his techno-organic arm and formed his hand into the mutant nullifier—similar to the palm-based repulsors on Iron Man’s armor. He pointed his arm at his surrogate mother, “Let him go, Jean. When we bodyslide out of here, it could cause a negative telekinetic pulse...I don’t want to have to strip your powers, too.”

“Don’t talk to her like that, damn it!” Cyclops shouted.

“Scott,” Jean sighed as she let Deadpool down. “It’s fine...he’s on a path we can’t follow.”

Deadpool furrowed his brow at the X-Men as he pompously brushed his costume off of dust, “Long time, no see. How’s it goin’? When’s the X-Team picnic?”

“Wade...,” Cable said sternly.

“You say my name like you’re trying to get a dog to come,” Deadpool stated. “Like, I mean...walk over by you.”

Cable rolled his eyes, “Bodyslide by two.”

A flash of light, and the two were gone.

“Uh, guys...,” Robert Drake, Iceman, said as he slid in on an ice slide. “I just checked the med lab. Where’s Sinister? And what the hell did I miss out here?”

Apocalypse opened his brown eyes to see the full moon, bathed in the blanket of a lunar eclipse. He was somewhere in the mountainous region of Afghanistan. He looked up to see a cloaked figure with a red tint to his eyes.

"...Essex," Apocalypse stated.

Sinister stood with his arms folded, "Oh, how the mighty have fallen..."

"I am more powerful than ever," Apocalypse boasted. "But my eyes have been opened. Perhaps my vengeance was misguided. You are one of the strong, Essex."

Sinister scoffed, "You don't have to butter me up. I think we should put this...rivalry behind us. Something is coming. I've felt it. This is something no mutant or metahuman would even hope to defeat..."

En Sabah Nur...or Phineasokpara—as he was called at birth—smiled, "It's the apocalypse. The word has been my obsession since I heard it in Greek thousands of years ago. I thought I would prevent it by causing something more terrible...but the Celestials will still come to this world and crush it. I've delayed it long enough...they are coming. I suspect they will send one of their emissaries within the next decade."

Sinister looked off into the distance, "What shall we do?"

Apocalypse closed his eyes and began to meditate, "We wait."

War Room.

Xavier Institute.

Cyclops stared at a large screen with a cold cup of coffee. A strange blinking device was securely fixed to his left ear. He gulped down the last of the bitter water and pondered strategy once more.

The screen read **XAVIER PROTOCOLS: CODE 1-3-9: CABLE.**

[[**"Cable is a powerful telepath and telekinetic. But a large part of his telekinetic ability is, at any given time, tied up in controlling his techno-organic disease. Attacks on Cable should make full use of this weakness, with the preferred result of the disease devouring his brain and major internal organs."**]]

Cyclops typed in a few commands and waited as the computer idled.

[[**Previous entry deleted. Uploading new entry.**]]

"Scott?" Jean called out with her telepathy. **"Where are you? You weren't in bed."**

Scott closed his eyes tightly and rubbed the corners of his eyes with his index finger and thumb before replacing his ruby quartz lenses, "Sorry...couldn't sleep. I'll be up in a minute."

"Your thoughts are barely making it out. Are you blocking me?" Jean wondered, thinking possibly he took Rachel's "death" harder than expected. For her, it was difficult to think of going to the White Hot Room as death—in fact, the opposite.

Cyclops reached for his earpiece to make sure it hadn't shorted out, "No...I'm just overtired. Get some rest, sweetheart."

[[**"Cable has no known mutant abilities, although is infected with a techno-organic disease which has**

given him technopath abilities, including but not limited to, communicating with technology and replicating complex machinery—such as Forge’s mutant nullifier—by simple touch. Currently, there is not enough sufficient data for an efficient attack method as the scope of these new abilities has not been measured.”]]

“Get some rest...”

“You’re up late,” came a familiar voice.

Scott sighed through his nose, “You were supposed to be here twenty minutes ago.”

Bishop. Mutant, cop, detective, warrior, X-Man—whatever you wanted to call him, he was a man of many trades. The tall man of dark complexion nodded, “Ironic that I’m not on time. Always just a hair off. How was that whole Apocalypse battle?”

“We managed,” Cyclops said gruffly. “But that’s not what I called to debrief you about.” His voice was weary and tired, “My son, Cable, is back. And he’s hanging around Deadpool. I need something done about it.”

Bishop crossed his arms, “I’m not your nanny, Summers.”

“Cable has duplicated the mutant nullifier—and I’m not sure what he’ll do next. He was tortured in some military compound...supposedly after being ascended to a higher plane of existence. His mind is broken. I saw the video feed of the battle when he and Deadpool took on Apocalypse. He’s...wild. Untamed. With Rachel gone, there’s no one else with the experience necessary to think like him.”

Bishop sighed, “I’m not sure what I can do.”

“The Danger Room is open to you if you want to run a couple of scenarios,” Cyclops offered.

Bishop rolled his eyes, “He’s your son.”

“He was ready to use that damn weapon on Jean—the closest thing he has to a mother,” Cyclops growled as his lenses lit up. “I’m out of options.”

Bishop nodded as he put his hands on his hips, “In my future, there was no record of Nathan Summers. Never even knew about him.”

“I taught him everything he knows—but with his Askani training and fighting a war 2000 years in the future gives him an impossible edge I can’t even attempt,” Cyclops explained. “I’m not forcing you to do this...but I don’t know who else to turn to. Then there’s Deadpool...”

“I’m not worried about him,” Bishop said.

“He’s resourceful, moreso than anyone thinks,” Cyclops warned.

Bishop shook his head, “I’m not worried, because I’ve killed him before. Years from now.”

Cyclops’s eyebrows rose, “Can you do it again?”

Bishop remained stoic, “If I have to. I’ll worry about that when the time comes. I guess the question is...do you want Cable dead or alive?”

Department X Facility.

Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

0.05 Seconds out of Phase.

"You look like you were just hit by a truck," Malcolm said as Cable and Deadpool approached. "Congratulations on defeating Apocalypse."

"Still alive," Cable said with a sense of defeat.

Deadpool shrugged, "We knocked some spark out of him. Who cares if he's human, but still virtually immortal?"

Malcolm held out his grasp with the intention of a handshake, "A congratulations is still in order. This is a victory."

Cable denied the gesture and replied coldly, "What's our next target?"

Malcolm looked at him with an inquisitive stare, "I'm not sure what you mean."

"We talked it over," Deadpool explained as he crossed his arms, "And we want the entire intel Landau, Luckman, and Lake has on the end of the world—and how to stop it."

Malcolm smacked his lips together and nodded, "I see. Well...the only thing we have been following for some time is an underground lab that has been conducting some dangerous experiments with exotic energies."

"Where is it?" Cable wondered. "We can bodyslide there and blow it up by morning."

"Not that simple," Malcolm said with a frown. "The facility is on an island nation with a very advanced security system—not to mention a population of some very powerful mutants who will no doubt think you are infiltrating their home with malignant intent and try to kill you."

Deadpool jumped up and down whilst clapping his hands, "Weeee!!"

Cable shook his head and sighed, "Of course." He glanced towards Deadpool, "Looks like we're headed for Genosha..."

Deadpool stopped in mid-celebration and gawked at his partner, "I thought he was talking about Iceland...wanted to try out those hot spring bath thingies. Damn."

NEXT ISSUE: TO BE CONTINUED... UNLESS THIS IS THE END OF THIS ARC... SOME FUNKY CHEESEHEAD DIDN'T SPECIFY... TRY BACK LATER...

CABLE / DEADPOOL

