

CAPTAIN AMERICA HQ. HARLEM.

THEY'RE CALLING THEMSELVES **SERPENT SOLUTIONS**, BUT YOU PROBABLY PROBABLY RECOGNIZE THEM--

--IT'S THE **SERPENT SOCIETY** WITH A FRESH COAT OF PAINT AND ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION. REALLY **BORING** ONES, EVEN.

I'M **MORE** THAN FAMILIAR WITH THEM, WHISPERER. BUT DOESN'T THIS SEEM A LITTLE... **AMBITIOUS** FOR THESE JOKERS?

YEAH, I GUESS THEY'VE GRADUATED FROM BEING THOSE GLUYS YOU BEAT UP WHILE YOU'RE DOING AN INNER MONOLOGUE AT THE BEGINNING OF A **BIGGER** ADVENTURE, YOU KNOW? 'CAUSE THIS IS A DEFINITELY A MAJOR EXPANSION--

--MALLIS' **BIO-ENGINEERING LAB** WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG.

THEY'VE BANKROLLED FACILITIES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY IN A BUNCH OF FIELDS-- BRINGING IN A LOT OF OLD HYDRA AND A.I.M. SCIENTISTS WHO ARE FINDING THEMSELVES DESPERATE FOR WORK THESE DAYS.

HOW ARE THEY **PAYING** FOR THAT?

THIS IS THE **GOOD** PART. THEY'RE BASICALLY TAKING A PAGE OUT OF **FOXCOMM'S** PLAYBOOK--GET HIRED BY A BIG COMPANY, DO THEIR DIRTY WORK--

--THEN SELL THAT WORK BACK TO THE CORPORATION AT A **HUGE PROFIT**--

--ALL THE WHILE GIVING THEIR EXECs **PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY** ON HOW THE SAUSAGE GOT MADE. SO FAR, IT'S BEEN SURPRISINGLY EFFECTIVE.

AND THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO **WARN** YOU ABOUT, SAM--I'D BE CAREFUL.

YOU'RE WARNING ME TO BE CAREFUL?

I'M JUST SAYING--THE SNAKE DUDES HAVE BEEN MAKING A LOT OF FRIENDS IN **HIGH PLACES**. IT'S ONE THING TO GET S.H.I.E.L.D. AND THE GOVERNMENT MAD AT YOU, BUT **WALL STREET**-- WELL, COME ON--

--WE ALL KNOW WHO **REALLY** RUNS THINGS, RIGHT?

NOW YOU'RE JUST BEING **PARANOID**, WHISPERER. BESIDES, THESE DAYS--

--MY **BARK** IS WORSE THAN MY BITE.

SO YEAH--

--DEALING WITH SOME SERIOUS LIFE CHANGES AROUND HERE.

GLY BY THE NAME OF KARL MALLUS WAS DOING HUMAN-ANIMAL HYBRID EXPERIMENTS ON ABDUCTED BORDER CROSSERS. HE GOT THE DROP ON ME, AND MADE ME ONE OF HIS TEST SUBJECTS, TOO.



HENCE THE NEW LOOK, AND A WHOLE NEW SET OF PROBLEMS--

--FOR STARTERS, THERE'S THE SMELLS.

SNIEE
SNIEE

I'LL GO SHOWER.



EVERYTHING-- AND I DO MEAN EVERYTHING-- SETS ME OFF--

WOOF! WOOF!
WOOF! WOOF!
WOOF! WOOF!

I'M JUST HERE TO READ THE METER!



--JUST FEELING VERY TERRITORIAL THESE DAYS, I GUESS.

AND I'M ASHAMED TO SAY MY CULINARY PALATE JUST ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.

NEWS SAID HE WAS BROKE-- NO IDEA IT WAS THIS BAD, THOUGH.



THE WHOLE THING HAS BEEN SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL, AND THEN IT FINALLY HIT A BREAKING POINT--

--LET'S JUST SAY MY FIRST FULL MOON DID NOT GO WELL.

NOW, GETTING PAST THIS HAS BECOME A TOP PRIORITY--

Wooooo

--OVER-AGGRESSION, SENSORY OVERLOAD, UNPREDICTABLE BEHAVIOR--THESE ARE NOT GOOD LOOKS FOR A CAPTAIN AMERICA--



--SO I CALLED IN DOCTOR CLAIRE TEMPLE.

A FRIEND OF MISTY KNIGHT'S, AND A DOCTOR WHO SPECIALIZES IN TREATING, LET'S SAY, "UNUSUAL" CONDITIONS. IF ANYONE CAN HANDLE THIS, IT'S HER.

I CAN'T HANDLE THIS, SAM.





THAT BAD, DOC?

NOT FOR YOU. YOUR CONDITION-- WHILE A MAJOR INCONVENIENCE, I'M SURE--IS TEMPORARY. THANK GOD YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY NOTICED SOME SIGNS OF REGRESSION.

WELL--



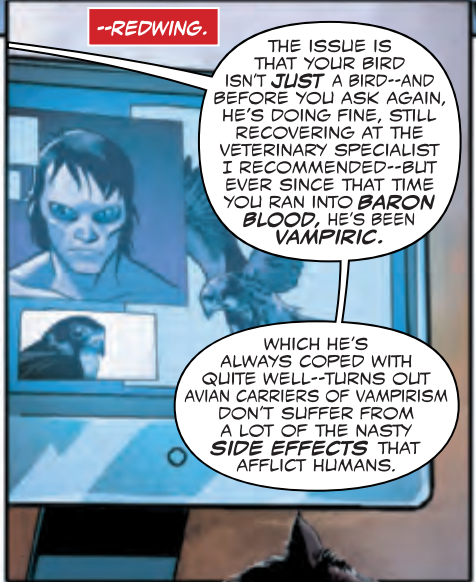
--THERE HAS BEEN SOME SHEDDING."



IT'S A START. BOTTOM LINE, I EXPECT YOU TO BE OUT OF THE WOODS IN DAYS OR WEEKS. NO, MY CONCERN--

--IS HIM.

JOAQUIN TORRES.
ANOTHER ONE OF MALLUS' TEST SUBJECTS. LOOKING FOR HIM IS HOW I STUMBLED INTO THIS WHOLE MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND HE WAS BONDED TO AN ANIMAL I HAVE SOME CONNECTION TO MYSELF--



--REDWING.

THE ISSUE IS THAT YOUR BIRD ISN'T JUST A BIRD--AND BEFORE YOU ASK AGAIN, HE'S DOING FINE, STILL RECOVERING AT THE VETERINARY SPECIALIST I RECOMMENDED--BUT EVER SINCE THAT TIME YOU RAN INTO **BARON BLOOD**, HE'S BEEN **VAMPIRIC.**

WHICH HE'S ALWAYS COPED WITH QUITE WELL--TURNS OUT AVIAN CARRIERS OF VAMPIRISM DON'T SUFFER FROM A LOT OF THE NASTY **SIDE EFFECTS** THAT AFFLICT HUMANS.



BUT **SOME** ASPECTS OF THAT CONDITION HAVE NOW BEEN TRANSFERRED OVER INTO TORRES AS WELL. MOST NOTABLY, **REGENERATION--** WHICH MEANS NO REGRESSION OF HIS CONDITION.

IN FACT, I DON'T THINK EVEN **SURGERY** WOULD WORK-- ANYTHING WE REMOVE, WOULD LIKELY JUST COME BACK. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT **PERMANENT PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES** HERE--

AND THAT'S NOT EVEN GETTING INTO HIS **MENTAL STATE.**



HE OKAY? I KNOW THE KID WAS PRETTY **SHAKEN** WHEN WE PICKED HIM UP.

HH. WELL, THAT WAS **BEFORE.**

BEFORE WHAT?