


SECRET EMPIRE

STEVE ROGERS, A.K.A. CAPTAIN AMERICA, HAS CLAIMED THE UNITED STATES FOR HYDRA. WITH MOST OF EARTH'S HEROES TRAPPED IN THE DARKFORCE BUBBLE SURROUNDING MANHATTAN OR STRANDED BEHIND THE PLANETARY DEFENSE SHIELD, HIS POWER SEEMS ABSOLUTE.




BLACK WIDOW BELIEVES THAT THE ONLY WAY TO STOP CAPTAIN AMERICA IS TO KILL HIM, BUT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE UNDERGROUND BELIEVE THAT THE SHATTERED COSMIC CUBE HOLDS THE KEY TO ROGERS' SUDDEN TRANSFORMATION, AND IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM, IF THEY CAN PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER. STEVE IS AFTER THE CUBE AS WELL, HOPING TO USE IT TO REWRITE THE WORLD IN HYDRA'S IMAGE.

TONY STARK'S TEAM WAS ABLE TO GATHER TWO SHARDS AND BRING THEM BACK TO THE MOUNT, BUT SOMEONE IN THE UNDERGROUND WAS WAITING TO TIP STEVE OFF TO THEIR RETURN. NOW, THE HYDRA SUPREME HAS COME TO COLLECT WHAT'S HIS, AND HE'S GOT A TRUMP CARD UP HIS SLEEVE: BRUCE BANNER, TEMPORARILY RESURRECTED AFTER BEING KILLED BY HAWKEYE DURING THE SECOND SUPER HERO CIVIL WAR.

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HYDRA

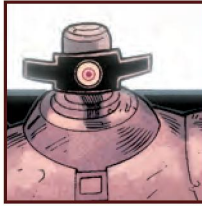
HYDRA COMMAND



CAPTAIN AMERICA



MADAME HYDRA



ARNIM ZOLA

AVENGERS



SCARLET WITCH



ODINSON



VISION

THE UNDERGROUND



TONY STARK (A.I.)



ANT-MAN



HERCULES



SAM WILSON



RAYSHAUN LUCAS



GIANT-MAN



QUICKSILVER



MOCKINGBIRD



HAWKEYE



THE THING

DARKFORCE NEW YORK



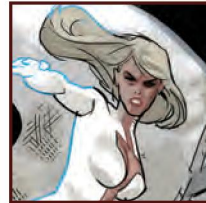
CLAIRE TEMPLE



DOCTOR STRANGE



CLOAK



DAGGER



DAREDEVIL



KINGPIN

THE RED ROOM



BLACK WIDOW



WASP



SPIDER-MAN



VIV VISION



IRONHEART



FALCON



MARYLAND.



INSTEAD, WE ARE THE ONES BENDING TO HER WILL. LOOK AT WHAT SHE IS MAKING US BE A PART OF!

ASSASSINATION. TORTURE. AND NOW--WE ALLY OURSELVES WITH VIPER? SHE'S THE WORST! I THOUGHT THE POINT WAS DEFEATING HYDRA--



--NOT MAKING THEM OUR NEW BEST FRIENDS.

I HEAR YOU, NAD, BUT IT AIN'T THAT SIMPLE--

JOAQUIN IS RIGHT. THE SITUATION IS QUITE COMPLEX--

NO, IT ISN'T!



LISTEN TO ME-- ALL OF YOU. I HAVE LIVED THROUGH WHAT THE RED ROOM DOES TO YOU. WHAT IT MAKES YOU. WHAT IT DESTROYS INSIDE YOU.

I ESCAPED IT ONCE. I WILL NOT BE MADE A KILLER AGAIN--



--AND I WILL NOT LET IT HAPPEN TO MY FRIENDS.

OKAY, N--WE GET IT, ALL RIGHT? THINGS ARE STARTING TO GET A LITTLE OUTTA HAND. I DIDN'T MEAN TO DRAG YOU ALL INTO THIS.

JUST--GIVE IT ONE MORE NIGHT. LET ME TALK TO HER...



"...SHE LISTENS TO ME."

GO AWAY, SPIDER-MAN.



HOW DO YOU KEEP--OKAY, WELL, LOOK, YOU SHOULD KNOW, THERE'S SOME DISSENSION IN THE RANKS BACK IN THE HOUSE--

NADIA.



SHE'S ABOUT FIVE MINUTES FROM CALLING AN UBER. S'FUNNY, I KINDA THOUGHT YOU TWO WOULD HIT IT OFF, GIVEN ALL YOU GOT IN COMMON, BUT--

--WELL, I THINK THAT WHOLE RED ROOM THING IS REALLY RUBBING HER THE WRONG WAY. WHICH IS NOT SURPRISING, I GUESS...

NO, IT IS NOT--



--BUT IT IS NECESSARY.

IS IT? I MEAN, WE SHOWED UP AT YOUR DOOR, REMEMBER? VOLUNTEER MISSION. YOU DIDN'T EVEN WANT US.

EVER WONDER IF THE "WELCOME TO HELL" PART WAS JUST OVERKILL?

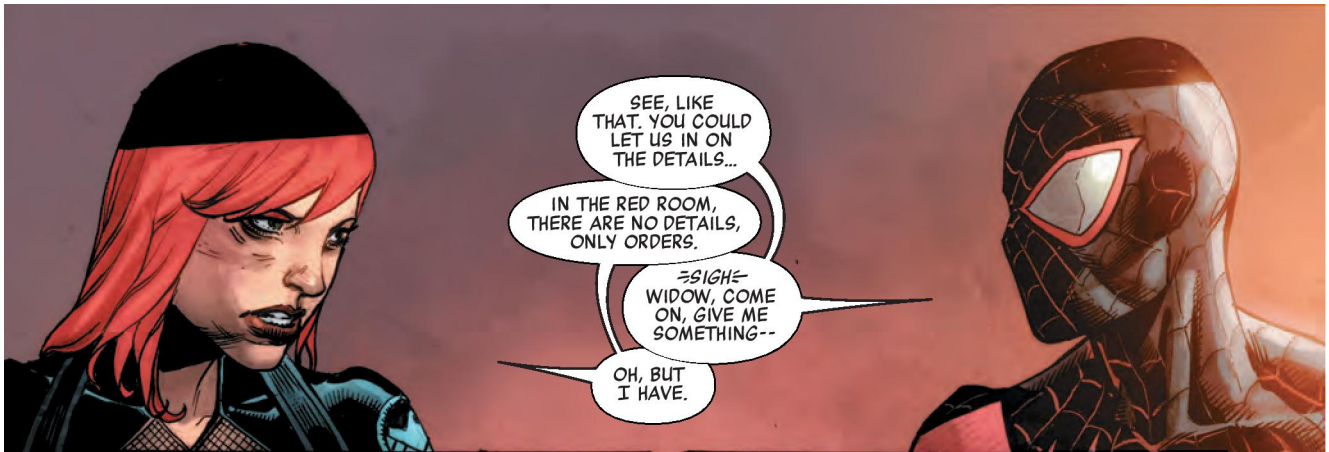


IT'S WORKING, ISN'T IT? THE LAST MISSION WENT VERY SMOOTHLY. NO TEENAGE SUPER HERO HIJINX.

YOU MEAN BUSTING THAT OLD SICK GUY OUT OF HYDRA JAIL? YEAH, WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT? AND WHO IS HE?



"HE IS NOT YOUR CONCERN."



SEE, LIKE THAT, YOU COULD LET US IN ON THE DETAILS...

IN THE RED ROOM, THERE ARE NO DETAILS, ONLY ORDERS.

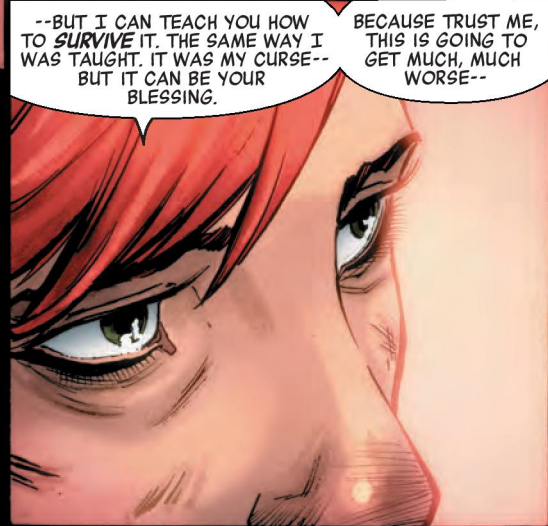
SIGH WIDOW, COME ON, GIVE ME SOMETHING--

OH, BUT I HAVE.



THIS IS MY GIFT TO YOU. ALL OF YOU.

THIS WORLD IS THE WAY IT IS BECAUSE OF US. BECAUSE OF MY GENERATION. WE WERE TOO WEAK, TOO PETTY, TOO SELFISH--AND NOW WE'VE LEFT YOU WITH THIS...MESS. I CAN'T FIX THAT--



--BUT I CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO SURVIVE IT. THE SAME WAY I WAS TAUGHT. IT WAS MY CURSE-- BUT IT CAN BE YOUR BLESSING.

BECAUSE TRUST ME, THIS IS GOING TO GET MUCH, MUCH WORSE--



OR YOU COULD BE WRONG.

SORRY?



WE'D LOOK PRETTY STUPID THEN, RIGHT? ME, THE KID WHO THINKS HE'S GONNA KILL CAP, AND YOU, THE LADY WHO JUST REALLY WANTS TO.

JUST SAYING, IT MIGHT NOT HURT TO HOLD OUT A LITTLE HOPE, EVEN IF WE DON'T TELL ANYBODY. COME ON--

MAYBE NONE OF THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. MAYBE IRON MAN AND HAWKEYE WERE RIGHT. MAYBE THEY'RE OUT THERE FINDING THOSE COSMIC CUBE FRAGMENTS, AND THEY'RE GONNA FIX CAPTAIN AMERICA ANY DAY NOW.



--SOME PART OF YOU MUST BE PULLING FOR THEM, RIGHT?