

MC 075: Holding Actions!

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G.I. JOE #75

Holding Actions!

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Script: Larry Hama

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Inks: Fred Fredericks

Colors: Neil Yomtov

Lettering: Rick Parker

Editor: Bob Harras

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Summary: The Joes have arrived on Cobra Island in the midst of the Cobra civil war, sent to assist Serpentor's fight against Cobra Commander's forces. Destro's forces have arrived as well to complicate matters. After the Dreadnoks have captured Hawk right off of the battlefield, Thrasher has managed to crash his Thunder Machine into Destro's command tank. While Cobra Commander (Fred VII) yells at him, Thrasher tries desperately to detach the two vehicles. Hawk continues to fight the other Dreadnoks. Destro and the Sergeant Major flee the DEMON tank while his driver blasts the Thunder Machine off his vehicle.

Meanwhile, the Joes are caught between Destro's troops and the rest of Fred's troops. Finally, Serpentor's column of HISS tanks arrive. In the confusion, the Joes manage to rescue Hawk and bring him back to the Joes' position. "Great! Now he can get overrun with the rest of us!" Thrasher gets the Thunder Machine moving again, and they head off to meet up with Zartan's armored column. The opposing forces open fire on each other as the Joes and their vehicles -- stuck in the middle -- make a run for it to meet up with Serpentor. Cutter lodges a complaint with Serpentor about his treatment of prisoners, particularly the fact that Serpentor has the Baroness strapped to the front of his HISS tank. Serpentor ignores him.

On the beach, not far from the battle, Destro puts out a beach chair and umbrella. He and his troops sit down to have tea while viewing the battle. "Have the junior officers take notes. Rather informative, actually."

When the Joes meet up with Serpentor, Hawk and the Cobra emperor argue about who's in command, while Dr. Mindbender plays referee. Serpentor wants the Joes to follow his orders, but Hawk refuses to have his team commanded by anyone but himself. During the argument, Serpentor's reserve force of BATs arrives and is promptly blown up by enemy fire, throwing machinery into the air. "Better make up your mind, Serpentor," Hawk says. "It's raining BAT parts." Serpentor agrees with Hawk and calls in some air cover.

Fred's Mambas arrive and attack Wild Bill's Tomahawk and Maverick's Vector jet. In the airfield's flight control tower, Falcon and his Joe recon team watch the battle, hoping to stay unnoticed, though Gung-Ho wishes they could join the fight.

Serpentor's air support -- Rattlers and FANGs -- arrive and even up the odds in the air. Taking advantage of the air attack, the Joes and Serpentor mount an assault and charge Fred's forces. The Joes and Vipers start fighting at close range until Destro's aircraft finally attack, having waited for Fred and Serpentor's air cover to destroy each other. Hawk and Serpentor order their troops' retreat, as does Fred. As they fall back to opposite ends of the island, Destro's Iron Grenadiers take over the airfield. As Destro takes over the control tower, Falcon and his team escape into the drainage tunnels below. Falcon listens to Destro's conversation just above and learns Destro's sending troops into the drainage system. Sneak Peek points out that it's starting to rain and the tunnels are going to fill up with water. "We're trapped," Gung-Ho says, "unless Captain Minh knows another way out of here." The old fishing boat captain -- once left for dead by Fred -- answers him: "I know a way out... but you're not going to like it!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Review: Though this is the second issue of the Cobra civil war storyline, the war seems to still just be starting. The story opens not more than minutes from the last issue's ending. The plot is more or less the details of each side taking up their positions and more specifically shows the Joes and Serpentor's forces meeting up. A big part of the story is just the interactions of the characters. Larry Hama manages to briefly focus on a big cast of characters, even if he gives many of them just one line. And most of the time, the few lines fit the characters who say them. Leatherneck complains about the battle, wishing the people who planned it were there to see it. Gung-Ho hates the fact that he has to just watch the fight

and not get involved. At one point, while Doc and Lifeline help Wild Bill out of his crashed 'copter, Doc says Wild Bill's had a lot of practice crashing and burning. "Yeah," Wild Bill responds. "I'm a regular expert."

Mainly, the dialogue mixes tactical comments -- helping to lend a bit of realism to the fighting -- and battlefield quips. Serpentor again proves to be a better character than you may expect, his sarcastic conversations with Hawk subtly showing how superior he feels over anyone else. When Cutter lodges a complaint about his treatment of prisoners, Serpentor just answers, "Spare me," and ignores him. The panels where Hawk wins an argument as BAT parts rain down on the scene finds a clever use for the disposable soldiers, and is also absurdly funny. The Baroness strapped to the front of a tank like some trophy is probably a very sexist concept, it fits Serpentor's background and seems like something an ancient military leader may have done. It's played mostly for humor, when both Zartan and Fred himself wonder if Serpentor actually believes that will keep them from firing on him. Making even stranger is the fact that Baroness doesn't have one line in this issue, even though she's obviously conscious in a few panels.

The action in the story is constant, with nearly every panel including an exploding shell or a flying missile in the background. It helps make the Joes' retreat to Serpentor's lines seem urgent and dangerous.

With such a fast-paced story, there's little negative to focus on, the comic itself suffers from a number of poor coloring decisions and just plain coloring errors. The color artist is not the usual man for the job, and as a result, there are a number of mis-colored characters and vehicles, including a troop of Vipers colored like they're part of the Crimson Guard, and Destro's DEMON tanks painted in Army green, instead of the correct black, red and gold. There's also one word balloon error when insets of pilots swap the balloons showing Maverick and a Gyro-Viper's lines.

In short, this is a fast-paced issue, filled with action and humor, as well as showing us a battle of great scale. It helps the Cobra civil war storyline one of the most popular of the series.

First Appearances:

- Cobra vehicles: IMP missile launcher tank

Reprinted in:

- G.I. Joe: The Action Force Holiday Special 1991 (May, 1991). This continues the Cobra civil war storyline after the previous issue was reprinted in the last Transformers UK issue to include 'Action Force' stories. The last issue of the story was never published in the UK.
- A version of the issue was released by Hasbro in 2005, packaged with action figures of Buzzer, Ripper, and Thrasher, as seen in this issue. All references to Marvel Comics were removed.
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 8 (May 2010). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #71-80.