

DDP 05: Out for Bludd!

Friday, 28 May 2010

G.I. JOE v2 #5
Out for Bludd
Cover Date: April, 2002

Writer: Josh Blaylock
Pencils: Eric Wolfe Hanson
Inks: John Larter, Barbara Schulz

Colors: Hi-Fi Colour Designs
Letters: Dreamer Designs

Editor: Scott Wherle

Summary: (Shortly before issue #1...) In a transport plane high over the former Soviet Union, Agent Hauser (aka Duke) reviews the intelligence files on Major Sebastian Bludd. His assignment is to track down Bludd who is suspected of being involved with Colonel Nakita -- a former KGB agent -- and is also wanted for the death of General Flagg back in 1983. Duke says that out of all the Cobras he encountered, he really couldn't stand Bludd. Duke parachutes out of the plane and later makes his way to a catered affair, politely speaking Russian to his host, Colonel Nikita (who refers to him as "comrade Smith from the Americas"). Excusing himself to the restrooms upstairs, he runs into a guard who refuses to let him pass. Using a hidden taser, Duke knocks out the guard and picks a lock to get into Nikita's office. He searches a desktop computer for information on Major Bludd, but as he downloads the information to his wrist comlink, he's interrupted by two more unarmed guards. He thinks about bluffing them, but decides "I don't have time for this," and reveals his black military jumpsuit underneath his tux. He pulls two pistols on the men and is about to escape when armed guards enter the room. Duke dives behind the desk to avoid their fire, just barely stopping the computer connection from coming loose. When more show up he dives out the nearest window, grabbing onto a tree outside. The Russians fire on him, but a helicopter shows up to rescue him. The gunner inside tells Duke they'll analyze his data and find Bludd by morning.

As the sun rises in Italy, Major Bludd and two guards meet a group of men in a warehouse, delivering a crate full of missiles. After he's given a briefcase full of money, Bludd hits a button on a small device, setting off an explosion that knocks out the lights in the room. When the others light a match to see, Bludd is gone and a timer atop the crate is ticking off the seconds. As the warehouse explodes, Bludd heads for a nearby dock and hops into a speedboat. He then sends a transmission, saying that his finished his obligations and will meet "the commander" in Rome. Two men dressed in black driving jetskis pursue. One of the men tell Bludd he's under arrest for "conspiring with terrorist factions against the United States government, for inciting prison riots at Ft. Leavenworth, for the death of General Lawrence J. Flagg and for more things than we can count". Bludd fires on them with two hidden pistols, but a third jetski is coming straight for him. It's Duke, who jumps into the boat and punches Bludd. They exchange a few words and Bludd recognizes Duke. He knocks Duke out of the boat just as it runs aground on a beach. Bludd steals a car to run for it and Duke takes a nearby motorcycle. With the help of a GPS system and his central base, he catches up with the Major on a winding mountain road -- a cliff overlooking the water. Duke slaps a magnetic charge onto the car, forcing Bludd to bail out, sending his car off of the cliff to explode in midair. Backup from Duke's agency arrives. Duke says Bludd has no choice but to surrender. The mercenary thinks for a moment, then dives off the cliff into the water below. Duke assumes Bludd couldn't survive the drop as the local police arrive. Duke tells them the name of his cover agency, and they let him and the others go.

Later that evening, Duke and other agents search through the small house Bludd had lived in for two months. As Duke is informed via cell phone that Bludd's body wasn't recovered, another agent finds an interesting document. Duke reads it... "Dear Lord. This... this is not good." He then places an encrypted call to General Clayton Abernathy at the Pentagon. The document is labelled "Cobra Commander - United States arrival." END

Review: "Out for Bludd" is a generic spy story dressed up as a G.I. Joe story. There's certainly nothing wrong a James Bond-esque comic, but there's nothing particularly new here. The highlight of the issue is the artwork (pencils) of Eric Wolfe Hanson. His portrayal of Duke is very much patterned after the Sunbow cartoon's version of the character. He's very easily recognizable, even without his familiar outfit. The story does get extra points for having Bludd be wanted for the murder of General Flagg. Hanson's version of Bludd is an update of his original uniform, and looks just right.

The plotline is fairly straight-forward, and is -- again -- a variation on the Bond theme. Duke travels across Europe, speaks Russian and chases Bludd on land, sea and air. And while the story isn't particularly bad, it kind of falls flat. In the first issue of this new series, Duke is treated as a darker, meaner character. Shipwreck mentions that fact to the other Joes. But here, no more than a few months before "Reinstated", Duke doesn't seem very different from his lighter cartoon portrayal, Making smart remarks while happily chasing after Bludd. It seems like a missed opportunity. It would've have been nice to follow through and show him to be a changed man. His "black ops" past just doesn't seem very... well... "black". Whether or not you like issue #5 depends on how seriously or lightly you want to take the comic

book. If you're hoping for more than a light action story, look elsewhere.

Reprinted in:

- G.I. JOE: Disavowed, Volume 1 (June 2010). A trade paperback from IDW Publishing collecting issues #1-5. The title "Disavowed" refers to the fact that IDW has started a series that follows Marvel's G.I. Joe #155, and ignores the Devil's Due continuity.