

DDP 06: Reckonings Pt. 1

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G.I. JOE v2 #6
Reckonings, Part 1
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Summary: We begin looking through the eyes of someone being treated by doctors. He slowly wakes up and then follows Crimson Guardsmen and Tomax and Xamot, who escort him into a nearby SUV. The twins explain that all is ready and that the genetic experiments were kept from Destro. The new prototypes are waiting. They tell him they hope he'll be pleased. We finally see the man; it's Cobra Commander. "For your sake, I hope so."

At the residential family housing section of Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Gung-Ho and Shipwreck help Stalker and his family move into their new home. Shipwreck is playing with the two kids, carrying Jamal on his shoulders. Stalker's wife, Lydia comes in while Gung-Ho and Shipwreck joke about her wearing the pants in the family. They all compliment the house and comment on how well the Joes are being treated this time around. They share a drink, prompting Gung-Ho to wonder if they'll bring back Yo-Jo Cola. Not far away, in Flint's office, Billy (William) asks Flint if he can be a part of the team, officially or otherwise. He wants his father, Cobra Commander, out of commission. Flint admits it's unorthodox, but agrees to let Billy join them.

In Destro's castle in Trans-Carpathia, Alexander kneels before his father in shackles. He's angry about all the strife he's brought upon the family. "And you dare say you 'did it all for me?'" Alexander explains that he wanted to do what his father never could -- take the reigns of power from Cobra Commander. He angrily points out that Alexander brought him back into association with people he wanted nothing more to do with. "You cast me back into a life I worked years to escape! How is that supposed to help me," he shouts as he punches Alexander. We learn that Alexander infected Destro when he was starting to recover from his illness. He wanted to keep him on his "deathbed" so he could prove himself. "I needed the chance to prove myself, and I almost gave you the world." Destro says Alexander is mad and that he could never respect someone as "sick and foolish as you". Alexander tells his father that he did everything that he never could. Destro's guards take Alexander away. Destro tells the Baroness that Alexander is a disgrace to his family name, but he's not sure what to do with him. "He may be needed to clear my name... to salvage any honor we have left."

At Wright Patterson, Roadblock "spots" Hawk while he lifts weights and is impressed with the General's workout. A young officer storms in to tell them the gym is reserved for someone else, but is embarrassed to see who he's yelled at. Roadblock says that they have to stop sharing the base with non-Joes. Hawk thinks they'll be out soon since Uncle Sam owes them. We cut to a meeting between Hawk and a government official, who informs him that they're cutting the budget, believing Cobra's threat to have lessened after the nano-mite affair.

In an old Arbco warehouse, Cobra Commander and the twins watch from a hidden room as Zartan, Zanya, Major Bludd, Dr. Mindbender and a number of Cobra officers arrive, all surprised to see each other. They've been tricked into coming here, not knowing they were summoned by the Commander. Smoke begins pouring out vents in the floor, making it hard to see and breathe. Zartan tries to get Zanya out, but is hit in the face by someone. The figure easily knocks them all down with kicks and punches. The smoke begins to clear and reveals Storm Shadow. The Commander steps into the room, where Storm Shadow tells him they are ready for him now. The Commander tells them all to consider themselves lucky "because I have spared your pathetic, miserable lives," and assures them that though their lives were at stake due to Destro's nano-mites, they are still in danger and will continue to serve Cobra, implying that Storm Shadow will insure their loyalty. He then introduces them to his army of Neo-Vipers -- genetically enhanced soldiers with twice the strength, endurance and dexterity of a normal man.

Later that night in a darkened waterfront dock, the Dreadnoks deliver payment to a group of Russians for a "nuclear suitcase bomb". Buzzer reminds the Russian that they're not just dealing with the Dreadnoks. Their client is a "big fish." When he's asked for more info, Buzzer just says that the shipment better be on time, because Road Pig (hulking nearby) gets angry if they disappoint a customer. As they all disperse, we see Jinx has been watching from a rooftop and recorded the meeting. After she transmits her data and leaves, the Russians get a call from a Tele-Viper. They tell him things are going according to plan.

Somewhere in Georgia, Scarlett and Snake-Eyes arrive at Scarlett's home, where her brother Hank greets her, but is not very happy to see Snake-Eyes. Scarlett's brothers weren't fond of Snake-Eyes after their break-up. They didn't expect Snake-Eyes to be with her.

Meanwhile, the Commander tells the assembled Cobras that he intends to deal with Destro by paying him a visit at his castle, along with a squad of Neo-Vipers. He wants Zartan to come since he knows the castle's layout. "But leave the brat at home." Zartan asks to be excused, but one glare from Storm Shadow makes him reconsider. The Commander then hands Storm Shadow a folder, telling him he has his orders and he is to strike when the Dreadnoks make their move. "Understood, Commander." He pulls a photo from the folder and throws it in the air. "In a few days..." he says, flinging a knife at the photo of Hawk and pinning it to the wall, "General Hawk will die." TO BE CONTINUED

Review: Like the first issue of the series, issue #6 is a starting point, since it's part one of another four-part story arc. There are signs of interesting plotlines to come, but there are also signs that we have too much going on, which could again lead to a cramped four issues. An open-ended series that goes from issue to issue may serve the series better, or would at least be closer to the old series. But, this series doesn't necessarily need to recreate Larry Hama's comic book, after all.

As the cover indicates, Storm Shadow returns. We still know nothing about what Stormy's been up to since the old series, but seeing that he's back with Cobra and seems loyal to the Commander, it appears the effects of his brainwashing may be intact. Why he's still under the Commander's influence and Destro, the Baroness, Zartan and Billy are not will hopefully be revealed later. Stormy's easy beating of the assembled villains is a very dramatic way of having him return, though it sometimes seems like an excuse just to make him seem "cool". Supposedly, Storm Shadow is the Commander's way of keeping everyone in line, as if just his presence will frighten them into obedience. This doesn't really fit with what we know of these characters. In fact, Cobra's in-fighting in the old series was as fierce as ever when the Commander's ninja bodyguard first appeared. I'd think Mindbender may be kept in check by him, but Major Bludd doesn't seem the type to put up with being treated that way, and Zartan never seemed to be afraid of anything. We can explain away some of that, considering that Zartan isn't as healthy as he used to be and has his daughter's safety to worry about. Even the very fact that Storm Shadow is back with the Commander could mean that he's even deadlier with his conscience brainwashed out of him. The nuclear suitcase story, while probably an overused idea, looks like it could lead to an interesting story, but it may just be a decoy, since we see Cobra willingly allowing the Joes to know of the suitcase's purchase. The Dreadnoks' involvement shows them as more than comic relief, and Blaylock usually has a better handle on how to use them than other characters. They may be easy to laugh at, but they're still a dangerous threat. It's also nice to see Buzzer acting like he's in charge. He always acted as the Dreadnoks' unofficial leader, at least until Zarana showed up. The appearance of the Neo-Vipers doesn't feel exactly right. Making Cobra's troops super-human may make them a greater threat, but their sheer outnumbering of the Joes over the years were a big enough threat. Their introduction seems to be the first obvious connection between the comic book and the new line of toys. I had hoped there would be less of a comic book / Hasbro connection, but it looks like that may not happen. The worst part about this is that the regular Vipers' uniforms look better than these new outfits.

Destro's dealing with Alexander follows Destro's character fairly well. His tirade about working to not be involved in Cobra fits well with the old series, during which he's constantly pulled between involving himself with Cobra and trying to get out. This again is part of Blaylock's attempt to come up with a reasonable way to honor the old storyline and still have the classic villains working for Cobra. For casual fans, this may be necessary to keep the nostalgia for Joe going. By the end of the old series, just about every single member of Cobra's "high command" had turned their back on the Commander and could have been considered "good guys". But even Larry Hama struggled with that dilemma, which led to all that brainwashing at the series' end. The only slip-up is Destro's punching his son a couple of times while Alexander is shackled and unable to defend himself. Maybe that can be chalked up to Destro being extremely upset. It seems unlike Destro's honorable nature, but it's not as if he was viciously beating on him.

It's tough to analyze the Scarlett / Snake-Eyes story, since we don't see much of it. Scarlett's family doesn't seem to fit with the old comic book continuity. In the later years of the Marvel series, we met Scarlett's sister, Siobahn, who tried to take the family's land from her. This made it seem like she had no other family besides her sister and that Scarlett had the right to the family's estate. Here, we see three brothers, and hear about their mother. There's also not much of an estate. But, Siobahn's story doesn't really seem to fit with Scarlett's filecard, as written by Larry Hama. Strangely, the cartoon ended up being closer to the filecard text. This story could fit with the cartoon and filecard, but it ignores the "rewritten history" in the comic. Like issue #1, this issue has the potential to lead to a good story, but could also lead to a bad one. We'll just have to wait and see. Hopefully, this isn't something we'll have to do every fourth issue!

First appearances:

- Cobra: Neo-Vipers
- Recurring characters: Cartwright (government official); Hank O'Hara (and two unnamed O'Haras)

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