SHOWDOWN -- IN THE SHADOW OF THE WHITE HOUSE!

STAR-SPANGLED DOG! YOU'VE SMASHED THE SECRET EMPIRE -- PULVERIZED MOONSTONE --

BUT NOW YOU FACE THE DEADLIEST MAN-MENACE OF ALL!!
...BEFORE THE DAWN!

SO--CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE FALCON JOINED FORCES WITH THE MUTANT X-MEN TO DESTROY THE SECRET EMPIRE, EH?

BUT WHEN THEY ATTACKED US, THEY COULDN'T KNOW OF THE POWER AT OUR DISPOSAL--

THE POWER OF THE ATOMIC ANNihilator--

--THE POWER THAT HAS SLAUGHTERED THEM ALL!
AMERICA! TWO CENTURIES REMOVED FROM THE GOLDEN LAND THE BOUNTING FATHERS ENVS-AGED--NO LONGER YOUNG OR INNOCENT--

THOUGH THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE THAT CHANGED.

YOUR POSITION AS PUBLIC HERO #1 IS SECURE, THANKS TO MY GENIUS AT MANIPULATING THE TRUTH--

--AND THANKS TO CAPTAIN AMERICA'S BLUNDERING DEFENSE OF HIS NAME!

LIES ARE NEAT, TRUTH IS MESSY! ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU ALWAYS SAY?

HE NEVER HAD A CHANGE!

--YET STILL A PLACE WHERE FREEDOM IS NOT JUST ANOTHER WORD.

YES, IT WENT SMOOTHLY, MOONSTONE.

MAYBE THE TRUTH GOT OUT ON WATERGATE, BUT THAT'S THE EXCEP--

VROOM!

HUh?

THEY'RE HERE!

LOOK, MOONSTONE! LOOK AND YOU SHALL SEE HISTORY IN THE MAKING!

EVERY CAREFULLY-CHOREOGRAPHED APPEARANCE YOU'VE MADE UNTIL NOW IS FINALLY ABOUT TO PAY OFF!

ACROSS THE STREET--

ON THE WHITE HOUSE LAWN--

OUR ALLIES HAVE ARRIVED!

VOOM!
In seconds, the Secret Empire's Saucer comes to rest. Its sullen bulk resembling nothing so much as a monstrous mushroom defiling the bright green grass.

Many ships, any of them more conventional, could have brought these invaders here... but could anything else have the sickening impact of a true 'flying saucer'?

No, the fear of flying saucers runs deep in mankind.

And fear is the name of this game!

From all sides, mankind warily converges—first in the form of White House press crews, whose cameras devour the sight—

—And then the Army rolls up, pistols and cannons at the fore!

And when mankind is gathered and ready—when mankind has all of its attention riveted on the ship—

—the Secret Empire begins the show!

America, I am number one! I demand immediate and unconditional surrender!

The Army gives him its expected answer! Wump! Zrap!
Outside, the lust for domination has left number one. For it is a lust he is satisfying.

Now he fires the warming tide of triumph!

MARK THIS DAY, AMERICA! TODAY THE SECRET EMPIRE -- THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT TURNS VISIBLA!

Suddenly Captain America's frustrations - his hate - yes, and even his hurt - desert him! Suddenly - at last - he knows peace.

We got the bomb sites, partner! We'll get the word to shield!

The sound of chin meeting dirt is a sound so sweet as to defy description!

He is where he should be -- doing what he should be doing!

Captain America is fulfilling his heritage!

So - the renegade vigilante shows up to join his secret empire friends!

Mister... that's the last lie you're ever going to tell about me!
CRUMP!

THE LAST LIE!!
Have you ever stopped to think what makes a fighter?

--Extraordinary powers, from the body, the mind, or a weapon, help, too--and a record of previous victories over your opponent are a boon! A person with any of these might well consider himself someone to be reckoned with!

--Muscles, of course, play a part--

The man called Moonstone certainly owns all these advantages of statistics--

--But Captain America has spirit!

Captain America has a fighting heart--and a fierce pride in the land he's named for--and a cold determination that now, before the television-fed eyes of every American, will vindicate all that he is--
**AND THAT IS WHAT MAKES A FIGHTER!**

**SLAM!**

**BAM!**

**KA-DAK!**

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HERE IS NO DOUBT, IN THIS GLADIATORIAL SCENE, WHO THE MASTER IS!

**WHO THE HERO IS!**

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YOU SLUMY CREEP! I'M NOT TAKIN' THE RAF FOR THIS!

YOU AND YOUR COMMITTEE WERE NEVER ANYTHING BUT A FRONT FOR THE EMPIRE!

YOU TOOK YOUR IDEA OF RUINING CAP AND SOLD BOTH ME AND THEM ON IT!

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JUST LIKE THAT--

**IT'S OVER!**

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GOD BLESS YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA! I'VE JUST LEARNED THAT MY COMMITTEE WAS DUPED BY THAT MAN, AND I--

NOW TALK-- WITHOUT THE LIES!
WELL, YOU COULDN'T ASK FOR A NEATER WRAP-UP! COAST-TO-COAST, LIKE AND IN COLOR, MOONSTONE TELLS AMERICA EVERYTHING WE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT CORRUPTION.*  

**BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK.**

HE TALKS AND TALKS AND TALKS, TAKING EVERYONE INVOLVED DOWN WITH HIM—

**EVEN A TOTALLY OUTRAGED VIPER, WHOSE HATRED FOR CAPTAIN AMERICA INDIRECTLY BEGAN IT ALL.***

*IN CA & F #63, R.T.


KNOWING THAT—KNOWING HE HAS ONCE MORE DONE THE JOB HE CHOSE SO MANY YEARS AGO TO DO—CAPTAIN AMERICA LETS HIS FIRST SMILE IN DAYS Fill HIS FACE.

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?  

THE GUYS! THEY'VE RELAXED THEIR GUARD TOO SOON, ASSUMING I'M STILL UNCONSCIOUS!  

THIS IS MY CHANCE!

LOOK! NUMBER ONE—MAKING A BREAK FOR IT!  

THESE GUYS DON'T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT!

I KNOW, WORM—BUT IT'S NOT WHILE I HAVE HOPE OF ESCAPE!

HE'S HEADING INTO THE WHITE HOUSE!
THE RACE DOWN SHADOWED CORRIDORS IS SWIFT AND SHORT!

UNH-HH!

ALL RIGHT, MISTER: END OF THE LINE!

NOW LET'S JUST HAVE A LOOK UNDERNEATH YOUR COWL BEFORE--

GOOD LORD, YOU!!

BUT YOU-- YOU'RE--

EXACTLY! BUT HIGH POLITICAL OFFICE DIDN'T SATISFY ME! MY POWER WAS STILL TOO CONSTRAINED BY LEGALITIES!

I GAMBALED ON A COUP TO GAIN ME THE POWER I CRAVED-- AND IT APPEARS THAT MY GAMBLE HAS FINALLY FAILED!

I'LL CASH MY CHIPS, THEN!

NO, WAIT--

KRAK!

DON'T...

A MAN CAN CHANGE IN A FLICKER OF TIME.

THIS MAN TRUSTED THE COUNTRY OF HIS BIRTH... HE SAW ITS FLAWS...

BUT TRUSTED IN ITS BASIC FRAMEWORK... ITS STATED GOALS... ITS LONG-TERM VIRTUE.

THIS MAN NOW IS CRUSHED INSIDE, LIKE MILLIONS OF OTHER AMERICANS, EACH IN HIS OWN WAY, HE HAS SEEN HIS TRUST MOCKED!

BEGINNING: THE MOST AMAZING STORY YOU'LL READ ALL YEAR!

CAPTAIN AMERICA NO MORE??
HOLD STEVE ROGERS! THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT THOU DOST!

WRONG, THUNDER GOD! I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M DOING! I'M RENOUNCING MY CAPTAIN AMERICA IDENTITY-- FOREVER!
CAPTAIN AMERICA MUST DIE...

SO MANY HAVE TRIED TO BRING IT ABOUT...

BUT ONLY I CAN DO IT.

OR CAN I?

HAVE I THE GUTS--OR EVEN THE RIGHT--
TO DESTROY A SYMBOL OF THIRTY-THREE
YEARS' STANDING? A LIVING LEGEND?

BLAST IT! I'M NO LEGEND!

I'M A MAN!!

"AT LEAST--ONCE I WAS A BOY, A SKINNY,
GAWKY KID, JUST OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL--
BORN AND RAISED IN MANHATTAN, SO I
KNEW ALL ABOUT THE WORLD."

"I KNEW THE NAZIS WERE BORN, FROM
THE MINUTE I SAW EYES ON THEM."

"THEY WERE SUPPRESSING--THEN MURDERING
--THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE, WEREN'T THEY? THEY
HAD SPIES HERE, DIDN'T THEY?"

"I KNEW WHERE MY DUTY LAY! STEVE ROGERS,
ALL OF 18, HAD TO BECOME A SOLDIER!"

"I HAD WHITEHALL STREET THE NEXT MORNING, BUT--"

"WENT TO THE MOVIES A LOT, AND NEVER MISSED THE NEWSREEL."
BEHOLD! THE FIRST OF
THE SUPER-AGENTS, WHOSE
MENTAL AND PHYSICAL
ABILITY WILL MAKE THEM
A TERROR TO SPIES AND
SABOTEURS!

WE SHALL CALL YOU
CAPTAIN AMERICA,
SON! BECAUSE, LIKE
YOU, AMERICA SHALL
GAIN THE STRENGTH
AND THE WILL TO
SAFEGUARD OUR
SHORES!

DEATH TO THE DOGS
OF DEMOCRACY!

UGH!

PROFESSOR
REINSTEIN! WHAT--?

YOU! YOU KILLED
HIM, YOU SKUNK!

"I DIDN'T MEAN
TO HIT HIM SO
HARD--"

--BUT I--

DIDN'T KNOW
MY OWN
STRENGTH!

"AND I WASN'T SORRY!

NOTHING LEFT OF HIM
BUT CHARRED ASHES...
A FATE HE WELL
DESERVED!

YOU'RE THE ONLY
ONE NOW, ROGERS--
THE ONLY SUPER-
SOLDIER THERE
WILL EVER BE!

"NOTHING ELSE IN MY LIFE, BEFORE OR SINCE, HAS
EVER EVEN COME CLOSE TO THAT MOMENT!

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, I FULLY REALIZED WHAT
HAD BEEN DONE FOR ME!

"FIGHT FOR AMERICA?
MAN, I WAS
CAPTAIN
AMERICA!
“BUT SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN!”
LOTS OF PEOPLE FIGHT CRIME, OR PROVIDE INSPIRATION—but only you do it for the United States of America!

THERE'S JUST ONE PROBLEM WITH THAT ARGUMENT, PEGGY...

AMERICA IS NOT THE SINGLE ENTITY YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. IT'S CHANGED SINCE I TOOK MY NAME.

"THERE WAS A TIME, YES, WHEN THE COUNTRY FACED A CLEARLY HIDEOUS AGGRESSOR, AND HER PEOPLE STOOD UNITED AGAINST IT!"

BUT NOW, NOTHING'S THAT SIMPLE. AMERICANS HAVE MANY GOALS—SOME OF THEM QUITE CONTRARY TO OTHERS!

IN THE LAND OF THE FREE, EACH OF US IS ABLE TO DO WHAT HE WANTS TO DO—THINK WHAT HE WANTS TO THINK.

THAT'S AS IT SHOULD BE—

"BUT IT MAKES FOR A GREAT MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF WHAT AMERICA IS."

"SO WHEN PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER LOOK AT ME--"

--WHICH AMERICA AM I SUPPOSED TO SYMBOLIZE?"