

SECRET INVASION

Another behind-the-scenes memo today concerning last year's SECRET INVASION crossover. This was the planning document that was shared with other editorial offices and writers once we began to figure out what specific tie-in issues we'd be doing. The date on this is 10/24/07.

— Tom Brevoort.

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Planning Sheet

WHAT IT IS:

SECRET INVASION is Marvel's major crossover event for 2008. The build-up has been going on in the background of the assorted AVENGERS titles for some time, really kicking off in NEW AVENGERS #31. The actual series begins in April, and runs for eight issues, ending in November

THE PREMISE:

Since the destruction of their homeworld, and now with the decimation of their population in ANNIHILATION, the Skrulls are in desperate need of a new plane to call their own. Among a certain religious sect within the Skrull culture, there are prophecies that indicate that Earth is that predestined planet. So for several months/years, this sect of Skrulls has been executing a secret invasion of the world, replacing people in key positions within the infrastructure of planetary defense so as to be able to sow discord from within, and be in a position to undermine and destroy any attempt to prevent them from taking the planet when the foredestined time comes. And that time is now.

HOW YOUR TIE-IN WORKS:

Because there are three main AVENGERS titles that will be tying directly into the events of SECRET INVASION almost throughout the entirety of the event, there are probably going to be fewer windows in which other tie-ins can comfortably fit than normal—especially for the characters that are directly involved in the main book.

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Also, like WORLD WAR HULK, the events of SECRET INVASION take place over at most a couple of days' time, so that will also limit the types of tie-in stories we can do.

We're planning for there to be three kinds of tie-ins to SECRET INVASION at the moment. They are:

- 1) **INDIVIDUAL ISSUES OF MONTHLY BOOKS:** These will be the most prevalent of the crossovers, and will be the toughest to coordinate. Because the events of SECRET INVASION are so sweeping, they're going to impact on most every monthly title we publish at some point. However, we want to be careful not to have so many crossovers and tie-ins that it becomes ridiculous. As Bendis pointed out for HOUSE OF M, we're only as strong as our weakest link. Therefore, we want to encourage people to find places for their monthly titles to tie in, but only where there's some meaty component of the story to tell. We'd rather have two really strong SECRET INVASION issues of, say, IRON MAN than five tie-in issues that aren't what they should be—the short-term gain will look attractive, but we've got to keep the quality high and the continuity strong. We'd like to build a checklist over the next week or two of which issues of which monthly titles will be direct SECRET INVASION tie-ins.
- 2) **SELF-CONTAINED TIE-IN BOOKS:** Because there are certain monthly titles that cannot directly tie into SECRET INVASION because of the publishing strategies associated with them—the Millar & Hitch FANTASTIC FOUR, for example, or the thrice-monthly AMAZING SPIDER-MAN—we're planning in these cases, when there's a viable tie-in story to be told, to produce dedicated limited series, similar to what we did during HOUSE OF M.
- 3) **NEW UPCOMING IDEAS OR CHARACTERS THAT CAN DEBUT IN SECRET INVASION ITSELF:** We want to debut as much new stuff in SECRET INVASION as we can, to leverage the strength of promotion towards their spin-outs or launches. So if you have any titles in the planning stages that you think would be helped by including in SECRET INVASION, we want to know about that as well. We're going to be at least somewhat limited by the amount of material that Brian already has to cover in the series, but we should explore these possibilities on a case-by-case basis.

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THE GUIDELINES:

The potential exists for SECRET INVASION to do wholesale and lasting damage to the Marvel Universe and the publishing line going forward if we are not extremely careful in how we handle the issue of revealing established characters to be Skrulls. As a result, I am going to be a pit-bull when it comes to allowing such revelations to take place outside of the main title. It is absolutely imperative that when SECRET INVASION is finished, the reader feels satisfied that all of the Skrull agents have been ferreted out, and that no more remain in place. Otherwise, we're going to be at a point where the reader can't trust what he's reading in the stories to be true. So everybody needs to be aware of this concern, and operating with one eye towards maintaining the sanctity of the bedrock of our fictional universe at all times. So if you want to reveal that some long-standing character in your series has been a Skrull for a long period of time, you'd best be prepared to show how this works and prove that this isn't going to cause more and greater problems long-term. We need to keep the Pandora's Box closed.

Another thing to keep in mind is that, among our sect of "true believer" Skrulls, there are less than a hundred in total. These Skrulls are as-yet undetectable by any means yet used. They baffle Wolverine's senses, and defy Doctor Strange's abilities.

When the actual attack goes off the Skrulls field a wide assortment of new Super-Skrulls, whose abilities individually are a random mix-and-match of the powers of the various superhumans of Earth. Where the classic Super-Skrull had all the powers of the Fantastic Four, these guys will individually have the powers of any super-team you may choose to name. These guys are the footsoldiers and the shock troops of the invasion, so they can be used fairly prevalently throughout the event as the need arises.

Another general note: especially over the last decade or so, the Skrulls have really lost their menace, being depicted as another dopey alien race. That cannot be the case here. Our Skrulls have to come across always as formidable and dedicated and competent. From their point of view, this is a war for the survival of their species, and on some level a religious jihad. These guys aren't stupid or goofy, and never should be depicted as such.

This event will only be as strong as its weakest component, so we'll be making every effort to make sure that any tie-ins are necessary and important, and contribute meaningfully in some way, either to the main event or to the contributing title.

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THE MONTHLY BEATS AS WE KNOW THEM NOW:

So that you and your creators can plan, here is a brief outline of the basic beats of SECRET INVASION as they now stand. Much of this stuff is subject to change as we develop better ideas, but this will at least give you a general road map towards planning. The later we get into this outline, the looser and more fluid things become.

PRE-APRIL

NEW AVENGERS—Battling the Hand in Japan, the New Avengers learn that Elektra, the Hand leader, is a Skrull. This revelation fractures the trust of the team. Spider-Woman escapes with the body of the dead Skrull Elektra intending to take it to Tony Stark. In the aftermath of an attack by the Hood's underworld, Jessica Jones takes her baby and leaves Luke Cage, turning to the Mighty Avengers for sanctuary. An attempt to replace Echo with a Skrull infiltrator is foiled.

MIGHTY AVENGERS—Spider-Woman brings the Skrull Elektra body to Tony Stark, alerting him to the potential conspiracy. This begins to get the wheels turning in his head, and casts suspicion on any number of events over the course of the last year, going back to the formation of the New Avengers.

NEW AVENGERS: ILLUMINATI—Iron Man takes the Skrull Elektra body to the Illuminati, to inform them about the conspiracy. During the meeting, the Black Bolt in attendance reveals himself to be a Skrull infiltrator, and along with two other Super-Skrulls almost succeeds in wiping out the Illuminati. The Illuminati part ways, knowing they cannot trust one another.

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE—We reveal that a high-ranking member of the Initiative's administration is a Skrull, and that he's been manipulating the system to place a Skrull infiltrator onto each of the established Fifty State initiative super-teams that have been set up.

CAPTAIN MARVEL—In the course of this limited series, we discover that the Captain Marvel who appeared during CIVIL WAR is actually a Skrull infiltrator—but he refuses to believe it or accept it, having embraced the role of Mar-Vell so thoroughly.

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MS. MARVEL—Evidence points to Ms. Marvel being a Skrull infiltrator, and Tony Stark orders SHIELD to take her down and bring her in. This is eventually proven to be a false trail.

APRIL

SECRET INVASION #1

--A Skrull ship crash lands in the Savage Land, setting off a race to get to the ship between the New Avengers and the Mighty Avengers.

--Tony Stark leaves Reed Richards and Hank Pym in the midst of an autopsy on the Elektra Skrull to join the pursuit. Reed and Hank continue with the autopsy, trying to devise a way to detect the Skrull infiltrators.

--Spider-Woman notifies Luke Cage and the New Avengers of the Skrull ship, getting them to join in the pursuit.

--As the two teams face off in the Savage Land, and the Skrull pod is opened, a trigger signal is sent out to the Skrull infiltrators around the world.

--A Dum Dum Dugan Skrull destroys the S.W.O.R.D. space station.

--A Jarvis Skrull unleashes a virus into S.H.I.E.L.D.'s systems and throughout Stark technology, paralyzing and destroying them. Tony Stark is struck down as though ill as a result of this.

--The SHIELD Helicarrier crashes down into the sea.

--The security systems on the Raft and the Cube prisons stop functioning, letting the inmates out into the world. Among those released is Marvel Boy.

--Captain Marvel attacks Thunderbolts Mountain.

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--A Skrull works his way into the Baxter Building and throws open the negative Zone gateway, beginning to draw the building and the team into the Negative Zone.

--In the Savage Land, the pod opens—and earlier, classic versions of a dozen Marvel heroes emerge, claiming to have just escaped from the Skrulls. They face off against the assembled heroes, nobody quite knowing who is real and who is not.

--In the autopsy room, Hank Pym reveals himself as a Skrull infiltrator, and shoots Reed Richards.

--And high above, beyond Earth orbit, the Skrull space fleet has arrived.

NEW AVENGERS #40

MIGHTY AVENGERS #12

MAY

SECRET INVASION #2

--The classic heroes from the pod and the modern Avengers engage in a wild melee, which is only broken up by stampeding dinosaurs.

--Tony dispatches Ms. Marvel to leave the battle site and return to Manhattan to see what is going on elsewhere in the world while the Avengers are all tied up in the Savage Land.

--Paranoia among the Avengers in the Savage Land is at an all-time high, as each hero literally cannot trust anybody, so scattered and chaotic has the battle become.

--Ronin (Clint Barton) is reunited with his long-dead wife Mockingbird, who emerged from the pod. Or is she a Skrull? Or is he?

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--In Manhattan, the Young Avengers witness the Baxter Building being sucked into the Negative Zone, and are on hand as Super-Skrull troops begin emerging from their ships in force.

NEW AVENGERS #41

MIGHTY AVENGERS #13

JUNE

SECRET INVASION #3

--On the downed SHIELD Helicarrier in the ocean, the Skrull Jarvis confronts Maria Hill, asking for humanity's surrender.

--In Thunderbolts Mountain, Norman Osborn gets under the Skrull Captain Marvel's skin, halting his attack.

--At Camp Hammond, Hank Pym mobilizes the Initiative recruits and teams into action against the invading Super-Skrulls.

--In Manhattan, the Young Avengers battle Super-Skrulls, eventually aided by the Initiative kids. But they're all overwhelmed and defeated.

--In the Savage Land, Spider-Woman confronts Tony Stark, revealing that she is a Skrull infiltrator, and that he is too. Tony isn't sure what to believe.

--Back in Manhattan, the Skrulls begin executing the fallen heroes, but are halted by the arrival of Nick Fury and his all-new team of super-powered Howling Commandos.

NEW AVENGERS #42

MIGHTY AVENGERS #14

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #14

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JULY

SECRET INVASION #4

--Aboard the Skrull flagship, we learn that Reed isn't dead, but he is being tortured by the Skrulls. We learn of the origins of this attack, dating back to the first ILLUMINATI issue, set during the Kree/Skrull War.

--Fury's team rescues the fallen heroes in New York, and he begins to set up a counter-offensive.

--During the chaos, the Hood and his super-villain underworld join the fray.

NEW AVENGERS #43

MIGHTY AVENGERS #15

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #15

AUGUST

SECRET INVASION #5

--The Skrulls consolidate their hold on the world.

--More evidence that Tony is a Skrull. Spider-Woman throws Tony to the wolves, outing him as a Skrull to the assembled heroes in the Savage Land.

--Reed escapes from captivity aboard the Skrull ship.

--Fury's crew is divided from within and broken apart by Skrull infiltrators.

NEW AVENGERS #44

MIGHTY AVENGERS #16

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #16

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SEPTEMBER

SECRET INVASION #6

--The Thunderbolts fight back on the steps of Washington DC. Heroic images of these once-villains taking it to the enemy.

--Besieged on all sides, Tony receives information from Reed aboard the Skrull ship that allows him to neutralize and unmask the Skrull infiltrators. Now proper battle lines can be drawn.

--Regrouped Avengers race to Manhattan to take the fight back to the invaders.

--Downtrodden resistance heroes in New York are rallied by the appearance of the new Captain America.

--Thor appears to bail the heroes out and turn the tide.

NEW AVENGERS #45

MIGHTY AVENGERS #17

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #17

OCTOBER

SECRET INVASION #7

--Heroes battle back the Skrulls.

--Classic Avengers triumvirate is united for the first time in years: Thor, Captain America and Iron Man.

--Skrull Captain Marvel sacrifices himself to destroy the Super-Skrull army.

--Iron Man assembles a strike force to journey into Skrull territory and end the fight once and for all.

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NEW AVENGERS #46

MIGHTY AVENGERS #18

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #18

NOVEMBER

SECRET INVASION #8

--Pods are found among the Skrulls with the missing people/heroes in them. Now we have a clear list of who was replaced and for how long.

--Spider-Woman/Skrull Queen makes her final stand with doomsday weapon. Sentry defeats it at the cost of much of his power.

--Skrull Jarvis has disappeared into the world with the Cage baby which had been left in his care.

--Tony is devastated as Thor tells him he only fought beside him because of necessity, and they will never be friends again. The Avengers reunion falls apart, and Tony is left alone, the victory a hollow one.

--Norman Osborn holds the first meeting of the Villain Illuminati

NEW AVENGERS #47

MIGHTY AVENGERS #19

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE #19