

THE OZARK MOUNTAINS.

The Hot Zone.

OTHERS
PRAY FOR
ANYTHING...

THE
READINGS--

FORGET
CONTAINMENT.

FORGET
PREVENTION.

WE DON'T
KNOW **WHAT** WE'LL
FIND OUT HERE.

SOME OF US HOPE
WE'LL FIND **NOTHING**,
THAT THIS HAS ALL
BEEN SOME SORT
OF **MISTAKE**.

WE'RE
COMING
UP WITH A
**GOOSE
EGG**,
BRYCE.

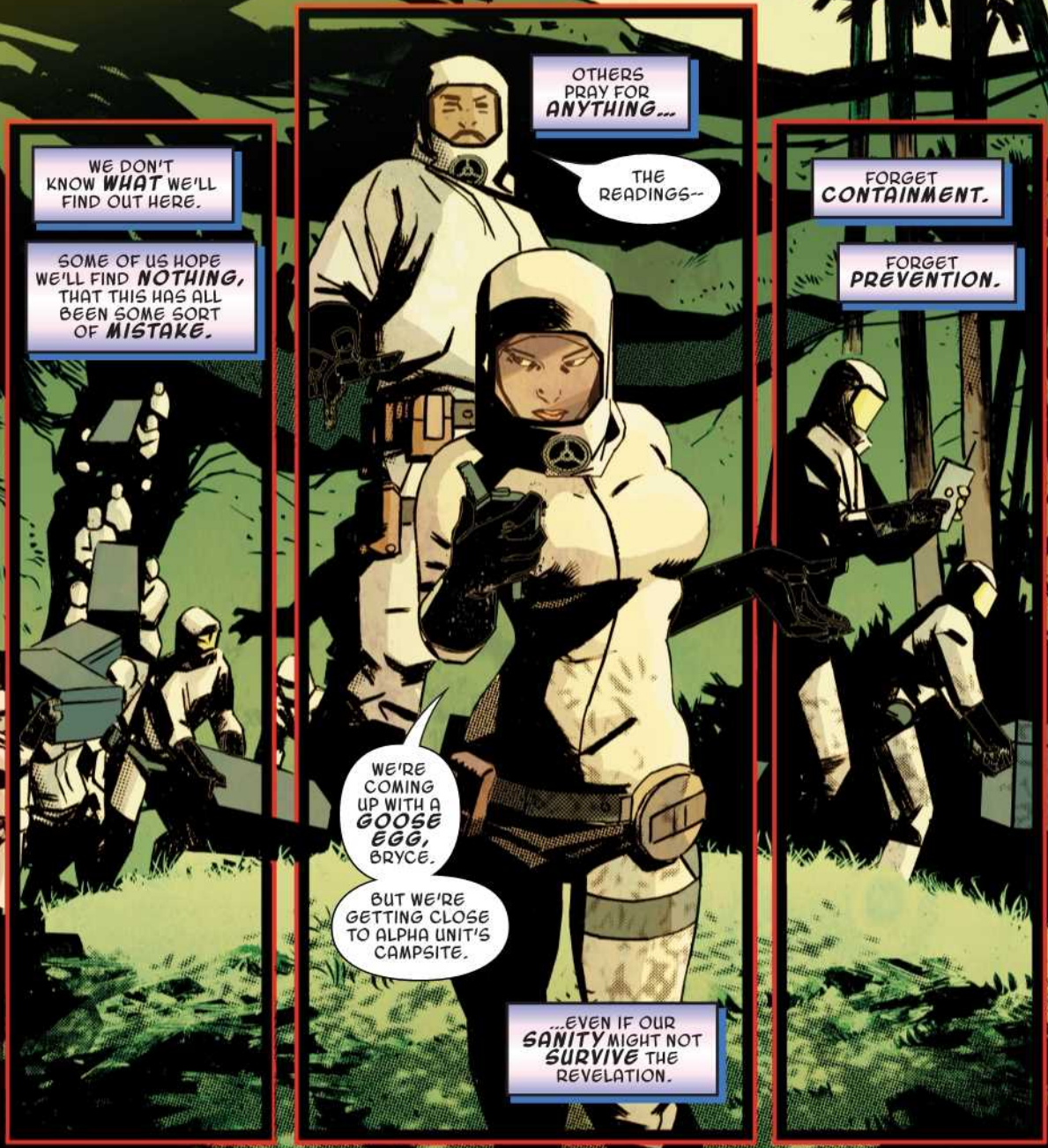
BUT WE'RE
GETTING CLOSE
TO ALPHA UNIT'S
CAMPSITE.

...EVEN IF OUR
SANITY MIGHT NOT
SURVIVE THE
REVELATION.

FOR SOME
OF US...

MY
GOD!

...**VALIDATION** IS
THE ONLY THING WE
CAN HOPE FOR.



Fifty-two hours since initial infection.





LOOK AT THE *SIZE* OF IT!

IT LOOKS HUMAN, BUT--

--IT CAN'T BE.

I'M NOT DETECTING ANY RADIOACTIVE ANOMALIES.



NO TOXINS.

NO DISCERNIBLE AIRBORNE PATHOGENS.

THE AIR IS READING *CLEAN*.



I DON'T CARE *WHAT* THE METERS SAY.

WE MAINTAIN *HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT* PROTOCOLS.

AT LEAST UNTIL WE HAVE A BETTER SENSE OF--



--WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

THERE'S... *BLOOD* ON THE BANKS.



I WANT TO ESTABLISH A PERIMETER.

WORK WITH PARTNERS.

WE'LL SET UP A CAMP HERE.

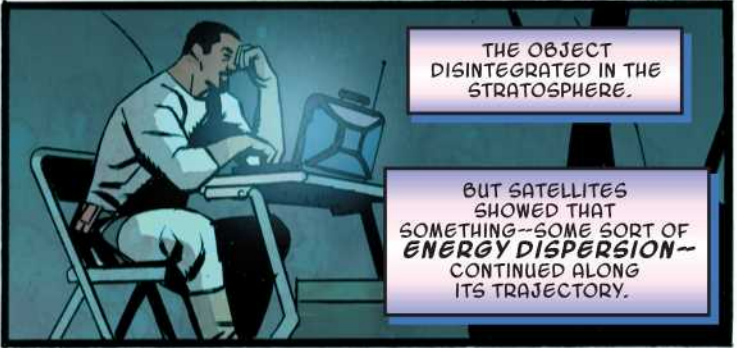


"AND TRY TO ESTABLISH COMMUNICATIONS WITH ALPHA UNIT."

ALPHA UNIT WAS DISPATCHED TO INVESTIGATE A **FOREIGN OBJECT** THAT ENTERED OUR ATMOSPHERE JUST OVER TWO DAYS AGO.



THE OBJECT DISINTEGRATED IN THE STRATOSPHERE.



BUT SATELLITES SHOWED THAT SOMETHING--SOME SORT OF **ENERGY DISPERSION**--CONTINUED ALONG ITS TRAJECTORY.

ALPHA UNIT **VANISHED** NOT LONG AFTER ENTERING THE MOUNTAINS.



OUR JOB, THOUGH, IS NOT TO FIND THEM.

SOME OF US BELIEVE WE'RE ABOUT TO MAKE **FIRST CONTACT**, AND THAT THIS IS A MISSION OF--



VALIDATION.

ZZZIP

SONJA?



BRYCE-- YOU NEED TO SEE THIS.





I THINK THE CONTAMINANTS ARE INTELLIGENT.



SONJA!

=CHOKE!=-

DEAR LORD!



IT'S NOT RIGHT.

THIS ISN'T THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE.

IT'S NOT SUPPOSED--

--TO BE SO PAINFUL.



YOU MUST UNDERSTAND.

WE HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO BE--