

MC 077: Aftershocks

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G.I. JOE #77

Aftershocks

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Script: Larry Hama

Pencils: Marshall Rogers

Inks: Randy Emberlin

Colors: Bob Sharen

Lettering: Rick Parker

Editor: Bobbie Chase

Editor-in-chief: Tom DeFalco

Summary: "On Cobra Island, the battle is over, Serpenter is dead and Cobra Commander is victorious..." On the beach, the Joes are withdrawing all their vehicles and personnel from the island. Hawk tells Cobra Commander that he would never personally agree to this withdrawal, but the Commander (Fred VII, in disguise) says that's what the Joes get for being on the wrong side. A Tomahawk copter lands carrying Lady Jaye and Flint to start moving the injured Joes. The Commander mentions Destro taking the Baroness and Zarana says she doesn't know what Destro sees in that "worthless trash." Lady Jaye appears prompting Zarana to say, "speaking of worthless trash, take a look at what the Joes flew in to haul away their wounded." Lady Jaye turns and "accidentally" hits Zarana in the face with the stretcher she's carrying. They start to fight, and instead of breaking it up, the Joes gather around to watch (especially since Lady Jaye's winning). Eventually, they stop fighting and are dragged away by their respective teammates. Falcon arrives and starts to tell Hawk that they need to take Captain Minh back to the mainland, but when he turns back, the fishing boat captain is gone. Hawk gets on the third Tomahawk with Roadblock, mentioning that he's on his way to the Pentagon. "Gonna raise a fuss, Hawk?" one of the Joes says. "You bet!" Hawk answers.

Not far off the coast on Destro's troop-carrying cruise ship, he and the Baroness lounge in the sun like they're on vacation. The Baroness tells him how utterly romantic it is that he invaded the island and withdrew all to get her back. Destro says that was his goal, but adds, "Well, I did want to test out my new troops and machines as well as run an on-the-spot recon of Cobra Island." Baroness says that that was only secondary. "I was the main reason?" Destro replies, "Oh, absolutely!" Once the ship is just beyond the range of the island's radar, Destro decides to drop anchor and see what happens. "Well, if that's the case," Baroness says, "There's something you really ought to know about the man in the Cobra Commander suit!"

Back at the island's land-locked freighter, Dr. Mindbender is having Serpenter's body packed in ice for safe keeping. He leaves the body to speak with Fred, who wants to know what's been done with Serpenter's body. Mindbender nervously says that the late Cobra Emperor was an organ donor and his body parts are probably in differing medical facilities on the island. As Mindbender makes excuses, Captain Minh leaps down from the rafters and lands on top of Fred. He starts pulling off his helmet, causing the other Cobras to run, knowing that the helmet has an anti-tamper device full of explosives. Minh tells Fred that they had a deal, and he owes him a new fishing boat. When he threatens to reveal Fred's identity, the fake Commander asks, "How big a boat do you want?"

Back in America, Hawk and General Hollingsworth arrive with Roadblock in tow and head for the secret committee of generals who are still pulling strings, even though Hollingsworth was supposedly given full command of the team. The "Jugglers" are not happy to see them. Hawk and Hollingsworth want to know why they "were sold down the river on this Cobra Island affair." The committee's chairman, General Malthus tells them that certain influential and powerful people could be severely hurt if they took responsibility for being on the losing side of the Cobra civil war. Hawk and Hollingsworth will take full blame because it is in the best interests of the country. When Hawk reacts angrily, Malthus says that he is acting unreasonably and calls the MPs. "You are to be remanded to a psychiatric unit for testing and evaluation of your competency to stand trial." Hawk, Hollingsworth and Roadblock are taken away in handcuffs, right past a sea of reporters in front of the Pentagon. As they're put into back of a car, Malthus issues a statement to the press that certain people have overstepped their authority and will be punished, if they are found competent to stand trial.

In the back of the car, the two Generals discuss what to do. If they are locked away in a hospital run illegally by a federal investigative agency, they could easily have a convenient "accident". They need someone on the outside who knows exactly what went on and can coordinate a rescue if needed. Roadblock gets the hint and asks for Hawk's word that he'll make things right once it's all over. Once he gets it, he breaks open his handcuffs and leaps out of the car, tearing the door off its hinges. He steals an escorting MP's motorcycle and escapes into the traffic of downtown Washington, barely escaping the MPs.

Back on Cobra Island, Captain Minh heads for the open sea in his new Cobra Hydrofoil as Fred and Mindbender look on.

Mindbender wonders aloud what Minh had to hold over the Commander's head. Fred feigns ignorance until Mindbender tells him that's he known Fred's true identity for some time. He's willing to keep Fred's secret if he enters into an alliance with him. They shake on it, and Fred says that they "have a fine basis for an alliance... as long as we can keep Zartan in check!"

Somewhere in the Caribbean, Destro and the Baroness watch the evening news from Destro's cruise ship, hearing about Malthus' accusations. "I am appalled by the lack of honor in the higher echelons..." It is also reported that all the members of the G.I. Joe team on the U.S.S. Flagg were arrested as soon as they returned to port. Destro marvels over the fact that the Joes have been effectively deactivated, Serpentor is dead and Cobra is being commanded by a man "more accustomed to giving lube jobs than orders!" The Baroness says that the only forces not in flux are Destro's legions, and this is his chance. "A chance, yes... but for what?"

In the Georgetown section of Washington, someone else is watching the news -- Dr. Burkhart, the woman rescued twice by the Joes over the years. She wonders what will happen to Hawk and the Joes, and if there's any way she can help. She then answers her doorbell and finds Roadblock, asking for an awfully big favor. Burkhart answers, "I think you had better step inside first, before the feds surround the joint!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Review: This issue at first seems to be wrapping up the Cobra civil war storyline, but unexpectedly, the story did not end at the conclusion of the last issue. Much of the story is just characters talking, and there's little action, but it's a surprise to see the new enemy become the Joes' own superiors. While the Jugglers appeared briefly once before, this is their first prominent role they are given. They appear a couple of times later in the series, and even have a role in the new Devil's Due comic. They bring the series back to the old theme of rank and file soldiers vs. the establishment, but it's never been so blatant. Here, we see military leaders who have become more interested in politics than protecting the country. While some readers would prefer to see the Joes fighting Cobra, the story is still an interesting one, especially when it comes so unexpectedly.

The Jugglers appeared once before, when Hawk appeared before them shortly after Hawk's promotion to General. They told him Cobra Island was off-limits due to its sovereign status. They weren't heard from again until this issue. Back then, Hawk thought they were called Jugglers because they rearranged and balanced certain situations and take the blame to protect others. Here, he admits he was wrong, and that they really got that name by juggling things around to let the blame fall on anyone but themselves. Hawk is disgusted by this, of course, and won't stand for it. It's a surprising turn of events when the story arrests Hawk, Hollingsworth and most of the Joes. Maybe even more surprising is the sudden return of Dr. Burkhart. It makes perfect sense to go to her for help, since she has a history of activism against the government. She immediately becomes more likeable than she's been in the past when she tells Roadblock to get inside "before the feds surround the joint." There's also a nice bit of continuity when Hawk mentions Scarlett and Snake-Eyes are in the Himalayas, referring to issues #14 and 15 of Special Missions, proving that the two series aren't necessarily unconnected.

The strangest scene is the fight between Lady Jaye and Zarana. As the two women fight, all the men gather around to watch without intervening. Sure, it's probably the most sexist scene in the series, but it's played as a joke, making fun of just how blatant the whole thing is. Zarana's insults about Lady Jaye are odd, since the two characters have no history between them. Still, it's the only "catfight" in a series that treats its women characters with more respect than most other comics.

The scenes with the enemy are short, but significant. Mindbender finally reveals that he knows Fred's identity. Of course, he uses it to his own advantage, hoping to remain in the good graces of Cobra's leader, no matter who he is. His worrying about Zartan will lead to more a few issues down the road. This once again brings up the question of why Mindbender or Serpentor never revealed that Fred was an imposter. It could have prevented the whole power struggle and civil war from happening.

The scenes with Destro and the Baroness end up being very funny, if just for the fact that Destro is wearing a bathing suit and still wearing his steel mask. There's also some subtle humor hinting that Destro's motive for invading the island was not really just to get back the Baroness. It's also in keeping with his character that he's disgusted by General Malthus' lack of integrity. The Baroness shows that even though she found Destro's actions in the last issue "romantic", she wastes no time in suggesting he can make a grab for power with the Joes and Cobra in disarray.

"Aftershocks" is a compelling, smart story, and is another example of why the series is remembered as much more than a "toy comic". Even with the catfight...

First Appearances:

- Recurring characters: General Malthus

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