

CAPTAIN AMERICA: HAIL HYDRA #3 BEAT SHEET

Pages 1-3: We open in China (209 BC) XÚ FÚ, court sorcerer of the Qin Dynasty, stands at the foot of Penglai Mountain, in the presence of the immortal ANQI SHENG. (This is Xú Fú's second mission to see this immortal, hoping to obtain the Elixir of Life. He returned from his first mission, claiming that he could not find the immortal; but told the emperor that he learned from a vision that if he brought with him six thousand virgin boys and girls that their 'purity' would part the veils of shadow that hide the sacred mountain. The emperor agreed, and Xú Fú then set out.) We learn this backstory in dialogue and discover that this is really part of devil's deal Xú Fú made with the immortal—who is a very corrupt being—and that the children are sacrifices for the immortal's monster god. In return he is given a tiny crystal vial. It is not, after all, the Elixir of Life, but an essential component that can be found nowhere else. Xú Fú never returns to the emperor. As the god devours the children, the sorcerer and his armed guards (who wear Chinese versions of the Hydra symbol), head down the mountain to the ships waiting for them.

Page 4-5: CUT TO Wakanda. Captain America and the Falcon have gone to visit T'Challa to get an upgrade on Falcon's costume (this is when the Falcon first got to fly). The Falcon soars with great joy—although erratically. T'Challa suddenly receives a call to investigate an attack on a village by *zombies*. (Not the Marvel Zombies variety, of course.) These zombies are straight-killers—mindless and frightening.

Page 6-7: CUT TO FLORIDA, 1521 AD – A team of explorers led by COUNT DUENDE (a Hydra alchemist) are cutting through the forest. They reach a grove by a fountain where Ponce de Leon and his men are enjoying themselves, having found what they believe is the Fountain of Youth. Count Duende tests the formula—and determines that, while not the fountain of youth, it is nevertheless another key component of the Elixir of Life. He orders his men to sack the settlement and make it look like an attack by indigenous peoples. "Blame it on the natives," he says.

Page 8-11: Cap, Falcon and T'Challa arrive at the village and find it under siege from several reanimated corpses. T'Challa does not believe that this is a 'zombie' attack because contrary to popular belief zombies did not originate in West Africa (they were created as part of Haitian Vodou). During the fight it becomes clear that the 'zombies' (they aren't flesh-eaters) are attempting to loot an ancient grotto believed to be a storehouse of secrets from the days of King Solomon. As the zombies are defeated they crumble into dust, but they leave behind a single clue: a hydra (the polyp <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hydra001.jpg>) in a crystal disk. Each of the monsters had one embedded in their chest. Cap realizes that he is seeing an old enemy rise again.

Page 12-13: CUT TO SECRET HYDRA LAB/Modern Day: Dr. Geist peers into a fishtank filled with hydra (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hydra001.jpg>). He is training new Hydra scientists and explains to them that the organization did not take its name from the mythological creature, but from these tiny, freshwater polyps. Unlike

most creatures on earth, the hydra regenerate and do not seem subject to *senescence* (biological aging). **NOTE: This is the bit of true science that inspired this storyline.** Geist says Hydra's holy search has been for the key to bestow similar immortality on humans. We pull back to see all sorts of failed experiments (horrible monsters in tanks and cages) and new things growing on slabs.

Page 14-15: Since returning from Wakanda, Cap has been using all of his contacts in Avengers, SHIELD, etc. to look for 'zombie attacks'. Reports of such attacks send them to Haiti. There they meet biologist (Dr. Lewis) who explains that he's been working on the link between zombie mysticism and science. (We borrow from the true story of ethnobotanist Dr. Wade Davis.) Lewis has collected all of the different variations of *coupe poudre* (zombie powder) and is running a crude computer model to synthesize a perfect formula that draws on the best qualities of each. There has been a rise in zombie reports and purported attacks. Falcon holds up one of the small crystal disks with a hydra inside and asks if Lewis has seen one. Before he can answer, the lab is attacked by zombies.

Page 17: CUT TO SPAIN/THE INQUISITION. Count Duende –now FATHER DUENDE-- is overseeing an interrogation of a suspected alchemist. Under torture the man admits that he has been courting dark powers in order to discover the secret of immortality. The man begs forgiveness from the Church and prays for a quick execution; however Torquemada pulls back his hood to reveal that he, like so many others throughout history, is an ancestor of Dr. Geist. Instead of condemning the alchemist, he offers him a job with the Order of the Hydra.

Page 18-21: Big fight as Cap and Falcon duke it out with the living dead. Some of the zoms are like the ones in Africa: they really are animated corpses and when they're defeated they crumble to dust. But seeded among these zoms are ALPS –Erlking and the others. Cap isn't surprised by this –he's been expecting it since finding the Hydra disk.

The Alps have come to take Dr. Lewis' research –specifically the perfected *coupe poudre*. Cap goes toe-to-toe with Erlking, who has become more powerful. Their battle sends them crashing down a hill, apart from the main fight.

As they battle, Erlking taunts Cap with hints about the quest for immortality and the rise of a new order of mankind—not super soldiers but a true race of new gods. He begs Cap to join him, calling him brother and saying that he is already one of the new immortals. When Cap refutes this, saying that his longevity was the product of the Super Soldier formula and stasis in ice for decades. Erlking counters with: “We have studied the surviving notes of the Super Soldier program. Longevity was never part of that formula. And, my brother, ask yourself...why have you not aged a day since the Avengers pulled you out of the water?” This stuns Cap, and in that moment Erlking dives from a cliff into the ocean. Falcon tries to catch him but isn't yet skilled enough with his flying abilities.

Page 22: The battle is over, with the zombies totally destroyed, and Dr. Lewis' records are saved. Falcon tells Cap that they've finally gotten a handle on the secret Hydra cabal, but Cap doesn't seem to be paying attention. Erlking's words have hit Cap hard, filling

him with doubt. He stands looking out to sea, and the clouds in the sky appear to form the symbol of the Hydra. Is Cap a monster?