

Wizard: Is this a stand-alone issue or part of a larger arc?

Quinn Johnson: This is a stand-alone issue, though it concludes a storyline that began back in the early '90s during the "City at War" story arc and Mirage's Volume 2 of the Turtles series.

W: What makes Casey a great character to write and focus on?

QJ: Casey Jones has always been one of my very favorite Turtles characters for a number of reasons. For one thing, with his hockey mask he just looks totally awesome...which he really is. After all, the first time they met he kicked the crap out of Raphael. He's sort of an "Everyman" superhero, someone who doesn't possess superhuman abilities but just sees the wrongs in the world and uses what resources he has to right them. How many other superheroes fight crime with bats and hockey sticks, and drive around in an old beat up truck or '57 Chevy Bel Aire? As a character, Casey is also really interesting because of how he has grown and evolved over the life of the Turtles comic book series. When it began he was pretty much a total psycho who would beat a purse snatcher to death, but after hanging around with the Turtles he really came to mature, to develop a quiet but strong sense of honor; he came to value life more. He could still bust heads, but was more disciplined in his approach--he was more of a true warrior. By the end of the original series (Volumes 1 & 2) he had been through a lot of major life changes (including getting married, losing his new wife in childbirth, then raising that child (Shadow) and starting a relationship with April O'Neil) that showed he had definitely grown, including having the qualities of a good father and husband...though he still remains rough around the edges.

W: What is the premise of this issue?

QJ: In the earlier volumes of the series there were a couple nightmare sequences where Casey was attacked by a monstrous, evil version of himself; not only did this "Dark Casey" threaten him, but also his family members. Now, years later, this "Dark Casey" again invades Casey's dreams, and through a series of strange events (involving a menta-wave helmet and a shape-shifting alien) enters the real world, setting the stage for a deadly battle with both physical and symbolic ramifications.

W: What is kind of person is Casey afraid of becoming?

QJ: I think Casey is afraid of becoming the very thing he's battled his whole life-- a violent, remorseless killer. Considering that he started out as pretty much that, but has now taken on the life of a loving husband and father, he is afraid that he's living a lie-- and that he might someday revert back to someone who is a threat to all those he loves.

W: Can you describe his Casey's alter-ego? What kind of qualities does he have?

QJ: Dark Casey is basically the remorseless psycho that Casey could have become had he not been tempered by the Turtles and his family, only on steroids. Dark Casey is massive, very strong and powerful, with all of Casey's skills and memories. The major difference between them is that Dark Casey is not driven by justice. He is driven by violence, a bloodlust that is an end unto itself. He sees the honor and love that have changed Casey as weaknesses that he intends to destroy. The good that had always been with Casey and had to grow over time is completely non-existent in Dark Casey-- he is evil through and through.

W: In what way have those past nightmares molded Casey into the person he is today?

QJ: Casey is determined to not become what he sees in his nightmares. He wants to be the best person he can be--which is not readily perceived because of his rough, wise-guy exterior.

W: How does his relationship with April stand currently? How does she help Casey with his problems?

QJ: Casey and April have been married for some time now, and love each other dearly. Her more thoughtful, refined nature and patience is a good balance for his brash, strongheaded approach to life. He would do anything for her. She is a constant reminder to him of the good man he is. She brings out the best in him.

W: Where does his relationship stand with Shadow currently?

QJ: Casey and Shadow have a very close relationship. Even though he is not her biological father, Shadow sees him as her true father. They are totally devoted to each other...which is why he'll stop at nothing to protect her.

W: What's next for Casey after this story?

QJ: Hard to say...since this is the only issue I've written thus far, and Peter Laird is in charge of the ongoing events in Casey's life. If I get more opportunities to write about Casey, though, I have some ideas of his ongoing discoveries of the symbolism of his mask, and what that says about himself.

W: What is the overall theme of this issue?

QJ: That it is possible to face the demons and fears of your past, especially with the help of your loved ones. We all have the capacity to rise above the darker side of our natures.