Once upon a time, Jessica Jones was a costumed super-hero, just not a very good one. Her powers were unremarkable compared to the amazing abilities of the costumed icons that populate the Marvel Universe. In a city of Marvels, Jessica Jones never found her niche. Now a chain-smoking, self-destructive alcoholic with a mean inferiority complex, Jones is the owner and sole employee of Alias Investigations - a small, private-investigative firm specializing in super-human cases. In her inaugural arc, Jessicas life immediately becomes expendable when she uncovers the potentially explosive secret of one heroes true identity. But her wit, charm and intelligence just may help her survive through another day. Thrust into the midst of a conspiracy that reaches the highest levels, has Jessica burned too many bridges to turn to old friends for help? Plus: Jessica travels to upstate New York to investigate the disappearance of a teenage girl rumored to be a mutant in a prejudiced small town, goes on a date with the Astonishing Ant-Man, teams up with Jessica Drew, the original Spider-Woman; and confronts the demons of her past! Collects Alias 1-28, What If? Jessica Jones had Joined the Avengers.

My Personal Review:
Its strange how such an important comic can be so relatively obscure. This is the book responsible for launching Marvels MAX imprint, which is pretty much their answer to DCs wonderful Vertigo line. Not only is Alias responsible for MAX, but it introduces us to Jessica Jones and is a very intriguing read as well.

Written by Brian Michael Bendis, the 28 issues of Alias tell the story of Jessica Jones, a former superhero who hung up her cape after deciding that she didnt have what it takes to be a hero. Her powers, which include superstrength and flight, are good, but nothing special. Furthermore, she is too self-destructive; she doesnt believe in herself and she has tons of personal issues, going all the way back to her high school days. Even her origin story gives her reason to doubt herself. Now she runs Alias Investigations, a private detective agency. Her cases take her to the
darker side of the Marvel universe that don't usually get shown in the mainstream books like The Avengers or The Fantastic Four. The first case we see her on shows her finding a missing woman... who just so happens to be sleeping with none other than Captain America! Another case has her tracking down a missing girl who is rumored to be a mutant. However, she learns that there may be more to the story when she discovers that the town the girl went missing in is full of racists who hate everyone from Jews to mutants.

Along the way, we are given hints of Jessica's past. Her relationship with best friend Carol Danvers (whose aliases include Ms. Marvel) is dysfunctional at best, she has angry sex with Luke Cage, and begins dating Scott Lang/Ant-Man, another hero with a questionable past, and the relationship is a rollercoaster for both. Occasionally, she acts as bodyguard for Matt Murdock, who had just been outed in the press as Daredevil.

Eventually, Jessica confesses the story of her origin to Cage, and the tale of how she got her powers is heartbreaking. Furthermore, she describes her early adventures as the superhero Jewel, and how an encounter with the mind-controlling Purple Man had lasting consequences on her mental state and which nearly led to a crisis with the Avengers.

Bendis stories are very well-written and engaging. Jessicas cases are interesting, but its her personality that is truly captivating. She smokes and drinks heavily for someone who once made it her job to protect people, and her relationships with others are very unhealthy. The fact that the book is published under the R-rated MAX imprint allows people to fully express their feelings through the ability to use hard-core swearing (and Bendis doesn't hold back on the cussing). It turns out that the superheroes of the Marvel universe can have some pretty dirty mouths. As for the art, it takes some getting used to. I admit that it fits the dark and gritty tone of the story, but there were times when I wasn't sure what was going on.

This HUGE omnibus collects all 28 issues of the series in addition to the What If...? issue detailing what would have happened if Jones had joined the Avengers. While I really enjoyed the 28 issues of Alias, the What If...? issue was only OK, and (SPOILER!!) I find it very hard to believe that Jessica could have single-handedly prevented the events of Avengers: Disassembled. Still, it's enjoyable enough to see Jessica happy in a completely different environment.

This book is expensive, but its pretty worth it. In addition to 29 issues presented in oversized format, we are treated to sketches, an interview with Bendis, Bendis pitch for the series, and an introduction from Allen Heinberg, writer for The OC and creator/writer of Young Avengers.

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