

Kitty Pryde and the Heroine's Journey

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In many interviews, Whedon cites Kitty Pryde as an early inspiration for Buffy. In 2004, Whedon found his chance to explore her innermost psyche when he wrote *Astonishing X-Men*. Kitty as the central heroine is pitted against challenges that test her powers to their limits and proclaim her the savior of the X-Men as well as savior of earth. She returns to the school, this time as X-Man and teacher rather than student. Following the classic arc, she struggles to protect the innocents in her charge even as she falls once more for Colossus, the shapechanger-as-boyfriend.

Her shadow is sexy, aggressive femme fatale Emma Frost, the embodiment of evil to Kitty. Emma in turn requested Kitty to keep watch on her and be her conscience even as she struggles with her own inner darkness. Other enemy shadows include the Danger Room itself as destroyer and evil matriarch Cassandra Nova. Kitty confronts all these as they bring her worst fears to life—making her turn insubstantial as she falls forever through the earth and harming the children in her charge, including, finally, her own.

She faces each fear and conquers it through her personal strength, until she grows tough enough to save her team on an alien planet across the galaxy. By the time Kitty faces the final challenge, one Spiderman, the Fantastic Four, and other heroes cannot defeat, she proves that her subtle, defensive power makes her the strongest X-Man of all.