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DETAILS INSIDE



1981 MARVEL
COMICS GROUP TM

GUEST-
STARRING
THE
UNCANNY
X-MEN

WHAT IF
WOLVERINE
HAD KILLED THE **HULK?**



BUDIANSKY
WYCK...



PLUS!
Fantastic Four
WHAT IF THE
HAD NEVER BEEN?

STAN LEE PRESENTS: A STUNNING SAGA OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY!

I AM THE WATCHER/
FOR UNITS OF MILLIONNA
IT HAS BEEN MY TASK
TO OBSERVE THE PIVOTAL
EVENTS WHICH HELP TO
SHAPE THE REALITY
OF YOUR WORLD!

WITNESS IF YOU WILL, ONE
SUCH MOMENT: IT BEGAN WHEN
THE MAN-MONSTER CALLED THE
WOLF WANDERED INTO CANADA
--AND BATTLED THE ACCURSED
CANNIBAL-CREATURE OF THE
NORTH WOODS-- THE
WENDIGO!

FEARFUL OF THE RAMPAGING
CREATURES, THE CANADIAN
AUTHORITIES DISPATCHED A
SPECIAL AGENT--A MUTANT
POSSESSING AMAZING ABILITY
AND AN INDESTRUCTIBLE
ADAMANTUM STEEL SKELETON
--TO CAPTURE THEM!

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BUT WHAT IF SOMETHING HAD
GONE WRONG?
**WHAT IF WOLVERINE
HAD KILLED THE
HULK?**

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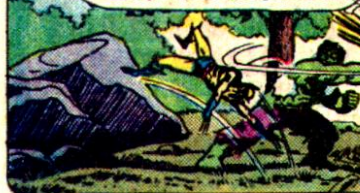
IN YOUR REALITY, WOLVERINE FIRST ATTACKED THE WENDIGO! AS THE MAN-EATING CREATURE FELL, THE DANGER-CLAWED MUTANT THEN TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE EMERALD BEHEMOTH.



STAY STILL, LITTLE MAN... SO HULK CAN SMASH!

CRIPES! COLLARIN' THE HULK'S GONNA BE HARDER 'N I THOUGHT! MY RETRACTABLE CLAWS AIN'T DOIN' BEANS AGAINST HIS THICK GREEN HIDE!

THE FOREST ROCKED WITH THE RUMBLE OF BATTLE AS BOTH COMBATANTS FOUGHT TO A VIRTUAL STAND-OFF... WOLVERINE'S SPEED COUNTERING THE HULK'S INCREDIBLE STRENGTH!



BUT IN THE HEAT OF COMBAT, A MULTITUDE OF EMOTIONS AND IMPULSES FLARE UP INSIDE THE DIMINUTIVE MUTANT'S BRAIN. AND, IN ONE CRUCIAL INSTANT, WOLVERINE REFUSES TO ACCEPT A DRAW, EQUATING IT WITH DEFEAT.

AND SO, THE MOMENT WOLVERINE DECIDES TO DELIBERATELY DISOBEY HIS ORDERS -- TO KILL THE HULK, NOT CAPTURE HIM -- A NEW REALITY DIVERGES INTO BEING!



ALRIGHT, HULK... YA PUNCHED ME TA THE FLAMIN' LIMIT! NOW WE PLAY BY NEW RULES!



THAT HURT, HUH? I FIGURED YER NECK'S YER WEAK LINK... AN I WAS RIGHT!



GOTTA KEEP HAMMERIN' AWAY--

--RIPPIN' INTO YER THROAT!



EITHER YOU FALL OR I DO!
MY MONEY'S ON YOU!

*TEETH CLENCHED IN RAGING FURY, WOLVERINE FLAILS AT THE HULK WITHOUT MERCY! THE JADE GIANT STAGGERS, CLUTCHING FUTILELY AT HIS BLEEDING NECK...



*...THEN TOPPLES BACKWARDS, CRASHING WITH A FORCE THAT JARS THE EARTH!



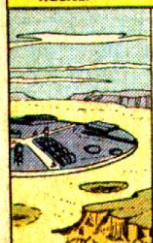
H-HE'S DEAD! I DID IT!

I BEAT THE HULK!

"LATER, THE AUTHORITIES WOULD ARRIVE TO DISPOSE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS WENDIGO, AND THE EMERALD CORPSE..."



"WHILE, AT THE **HULK MONSTER BASE**, A SPRAWLING NEW MEXICAN FORTRESS DESIGNED TO CAPTURE AND CONTAIN THE HULK..."



"GENERAL THADDEUS 'THUNDERBOLT' ROSS, REACTS TO THE NEWS OF HIS GREATEST ENEMY'S DEMISE--"



"--WITH A MIXTURE OF RELIEF AND REGRET..."

-- I KNOW THERE'S NOTHING I CAN SAY TO CHANGE WHAT HAS HAPPENED BUT...



WHAT COULD EVER EASE THE PAIN IN MY HEART? I KNOW THE HULK WAS DANGEROUS--

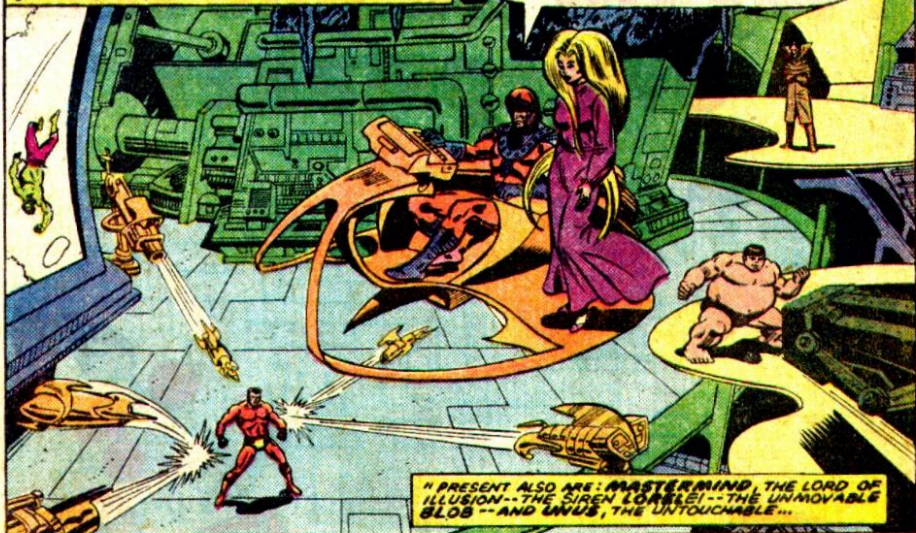


WHEN I THINK THAT I MIGHT HAVE CAUSED MY DARLING DAUGHTER THIS GORROW, I SHUDDER.



"MEANWHILE, MANY HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY, IN THE SECRET LAIR OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS -- MAGNETO, THE UNDISPUTED MASTER OF MAGNETISM, PONDERES THE LATEST NEWS..."

"THIS CAN ONLY BE THE HANDIWORK OF MOMO SUPERIOR! ONLY A MUTANT MUCH LIKE OURSELVES COULD HAVE DESTROYED THE MULK!"



"PRESENT ALSO ARE: MASTERMIND, THE LORD OF ILLUSION--THE SIREN LORELEI!--THE UNMOVABLE GLOB--AND UGGA, THE UNTOUCHABLE..."

TOO BAD OLD JADE JAWS BOUGHT THE FARM / I WAS HOPING TO GO THE DISTANCE WITH HIM SOMEDAY!



TURN, MY OVERWEIGHT COMPATRIOT! AND YOU'LL GET YOUR WISH!

TH--THE MULK! CHARGIN' RIGHT AT ME! BUT HOW--?



WAIT! HIS ARM! GOIN' RIGHT THROUGH ME!

MASTERMIND! YOU TRICKED ME! THIS IS ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR ILLUSIONS!



VERY OBSERVANT, YOU OBESE CLOD!

ENOUGH! I CANNOT ABIDE WITH SUCH DISTRACTIONS!

SILENCE THEM, LORELEI!



"THE LIPS OF THE BEAUTIFUL MUTANT PART... AND A SOUL-NUMBING SONG ISSUES FORTH... A SONG THAT FREEZES BOTH MEN IN THEIR TRACKS!"

WE CANNOT MOVE!

LORELEI'S VOICE CAN PARALYZE MEN!



LISTEN TO ME, MY BROTHERHOOD... FOR MAGNETO HAS A PLAN!



"JUST THEN, SITUATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF QUEBEC IS THE MILITARY COMPLEX THAT SERVES AS WOLVERINE'S HOME BASE..."

"... HE IS PRESENTLY A.W.O.L. AT A LOCAL TAVERN ACROSS FROM THE SPRAWLING HEADQUARTERS... CELEBRATING HIS NEWLY-WON VICTORY!"



"ANOTHER ROUND 'O DRAWS FER MEIN MY LADY-FRIENDS!"

"GOSH, LOGAN! WE HAVEN'T HAD THIS MUCH FUN IN AGES!"

"TELL US AGAIN HOW STRONG YOU ARE!"



"LISTEN, BUNT... I'VE HAD MY FILL 'A YOU AND YER LOUD-MOULDED BRAGGIN'!"



"H-NUNT!"

"YOU AIN'T SHUT YOUR YAP SINCE YOU GOT HERE!"



"SO I'LL SHUT IT FOR YOU!"



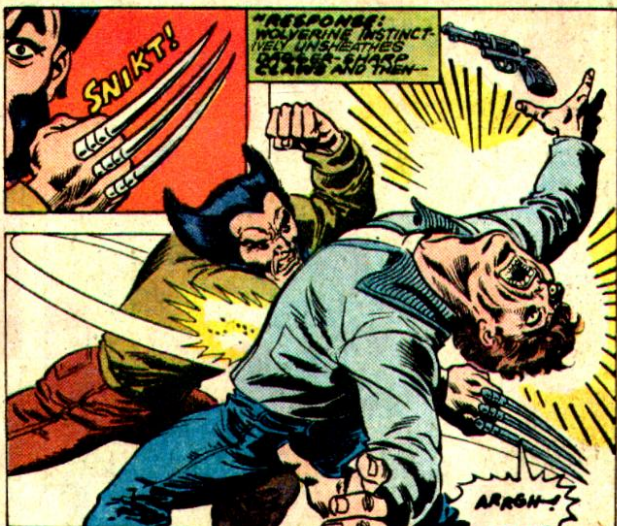
"THAT WAS A MISTAKE, BUB. A BIG ONE!"

"I HOPE YER MEDICAL INSURANCE IS PAID IN FULL... CAUSE YER GONNA NEED IT!"

"HEY! HE SUCKER PUNCHED JEAN-PAUL!"



"LET'S GET THAT SAWED-OFF MALE-PIST! WE'LL TEACH HIM NOT TO STEAL OUR GIRLS!"



"WOLVERINE, A SOLITARY MAN, CONSIDERS FEW PEOPLE HIS FRIENDS!"

"JAMES MACDONALD HUDSON, HIS IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR, IS NUMBERED AMONG THOSE FEW!"

WOLVERINE SMASHED THROUGH THAT METAL DOOR LIKE IT WAS TISSUE PAPER!

MAC! YOU'VE GOT TA HELP ME ...PROTECT ME!

WHAT IS IT, LOGAN? WHAT'S WRONG?

"QUICKLY, WOLVERINE EXPLAINS THE SITUATION, THEN..."

YOU'VE KILLED BEFORE—BUT ONLY ON GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED MISSIONS. THIS IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY!

WHAT'RE YA SAYING?

WE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS THROUGH THE CIVILIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM... THE COURTS! BUT WE'LL SPARE NO EXPENSE IN YOUR DEFENSE! UNDERSTAND?

I UNDERSTAND, ALL RIGHT!

I SWEAT BLOOD FER THE MILITARY... DOIN' THEIR DIRTY JOBS...

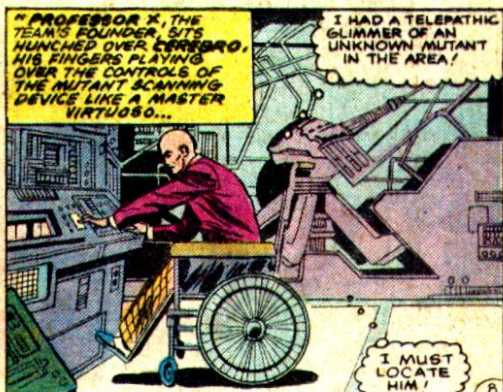
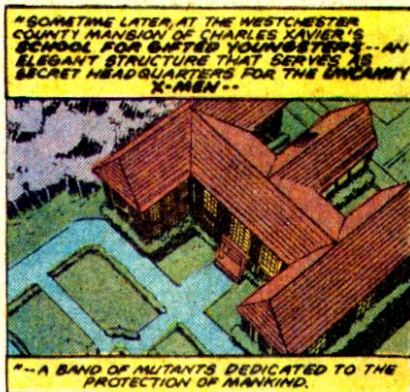
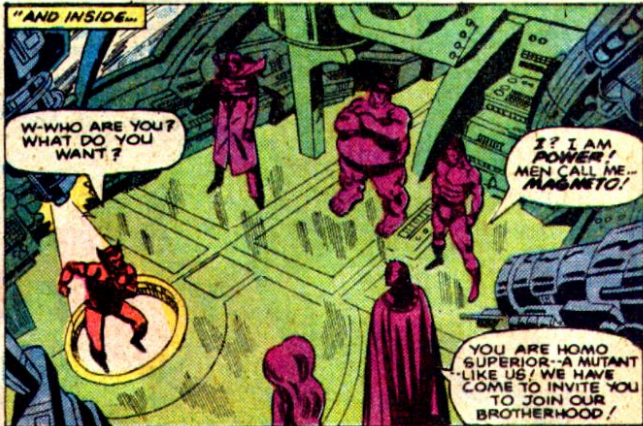
--AN WHEN I COME BEGGIN FER HELP, YA THROW ME TA THE WOLVES!

NO WAY, HUDSON! HEAR ME! NO WAY!

BLAST! YEARS O' PSYCHO-TRAININ' IN! DRUG THERAPY... FER WHAT?

I'M STILL A KILLER AT HEART! ALWAYS WAS! ALWAYS WILL BE!

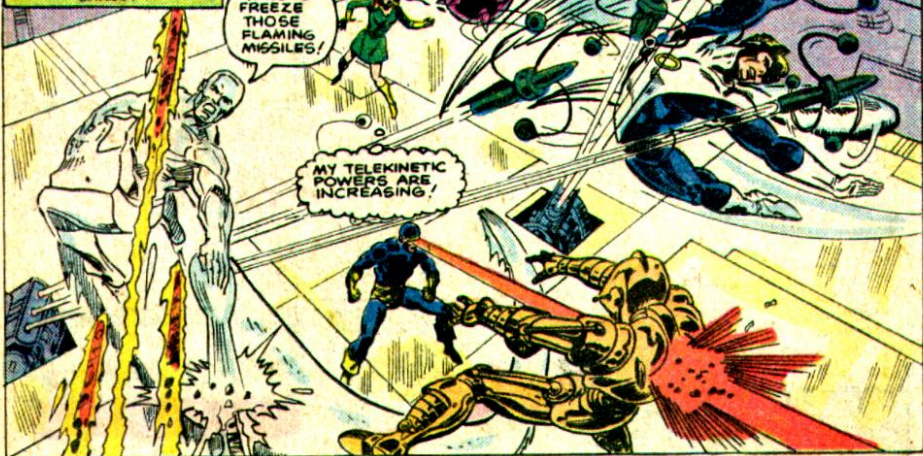
I'M A MARRIED MAN NOW! WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHERE CAN I--



"JUST THEN, IN THEIR PERILOUS PRIMER ROOM, THE THEN-CURRENT X-MEN -- ICE-MAN, MARVEL GIRL, ANGEL, AND CYCLOPS -- PRACTICE EXHAUSTIVE MANEUVERS TO SHARPEN THEIR FIGHTING SKILLS!"

HAVE TO FREEZE THOSE FLAMING MISSILES!

MY TELEKINETIC POWERS ARE INCREASING!



"SUDDENLY..."

CEREBRO'S LOCKED ON TO THE MUTANT! HE'S APPROACHING THE MANSION!

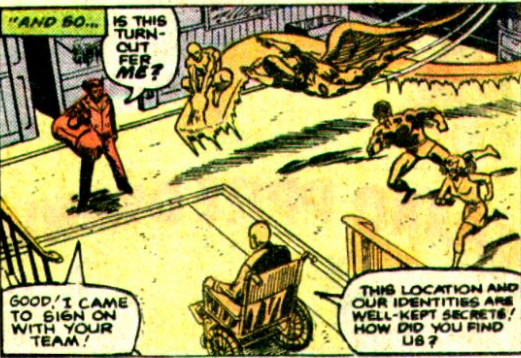
I'D BEST ALERT MY STUDENTS!



"AND SO..."

IS THIS TURN-OUT FOR ME?

GOOD! I CAME TO SIGN ON WITH YOUR TEAM!



THIS LOCATION AND OUR IDENTITIES ARE WELL-KEPT SECRETS! HOW DID YOU FIND US?

MUTANTS HAVE A DISTINCTIVE SCENT! IT WAS A PIECE O' CAKE TO TRACK YA DOWN!

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CLAMPED A SECURITY LID ON MY TUGGLE WITH THE LAW! AND BALDY CAN'T READ MY MIND THANKS TO A TELEPATHIC SCRAMBLER MAGNETO GAVE ME!

I AM CONVINCED YOU ARE A TRUE MUTANT! AND, THUS, I MUST--



--WELCOME YOU TO THE X-MEN!

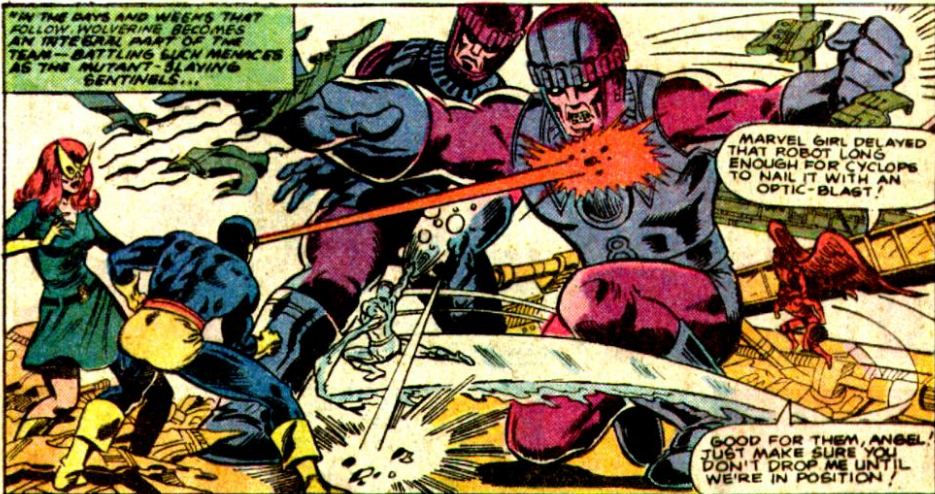


PROFESSOR X HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO HELPING AND TRAINING MUTANTS! HE COULDN'T TURN WOLVERINE AWAY!

BUT I DON'T TRUST OUR NEWEST MEMBER!

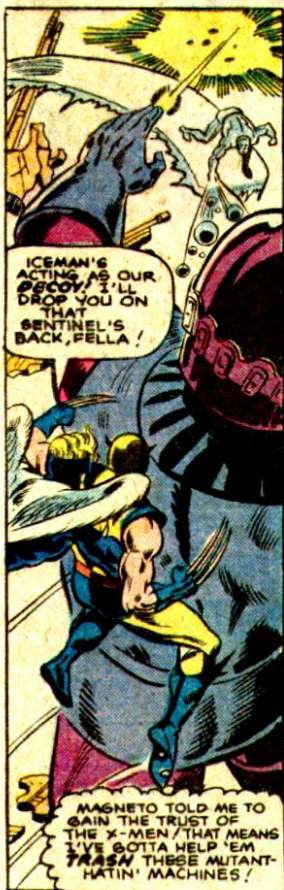


IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOW, WOLVERINE BECOMES AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEAM—BATTLING SUCH MENACES AS THE MUTANT-SLAYING SENTINELS...



MARVEL GIRL DELAYED THAT ROBOT LONG ENOUGH FOR CYCLOPS TO NAIL IT WITH AN OPTIC-BLAST!

GOOD FOR THEM, ANGEL! JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T DROP ME UNTIL WE'RE IN POSITION!



ICEMAN'S ACTING AS OUR BACKUP! I'D DROP YOU ON THAT SENTINEL'S BACK, FELLA!

MAGNETO TOLD ME TO GAIN THE TRUST OF THE X-MEN! THAT MEANS I'VE GOTTA HELP 'EM TRASH THESE MUTANT-HATIN' MACHINES!



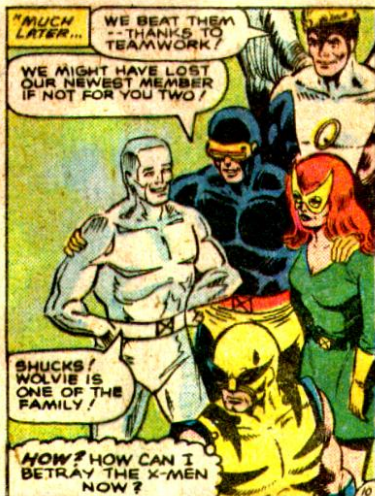
YAAHHH!

I KNEW THIS TIN-PLATED BOZO COULDN'T STAND UP TO MY UNBREAKABLE ADAMANTIUM CLAWS!

UH-OH! ONE'S COMING UP BEHIND ME!



DON'T WORRY, WOLVERINE! ICEMAN AND I CAN PLUG ITS FINGER CANNONS!



"MUCH LATER..."

WE BEAT THEM -- THANKS TO TEAMWORK!

WE MIGHT HAVE LOST OUR NEWEST MEMBER IF NOT FOR YOU TWO!

SHUCKS! WOLVIE IS ONE OF THE FAMILY!

NOW? HOW CAN I BETRAY THE X-MEN NOW?

"BUT, THAT NIGHT..."



THIS IS THE ROOM
WHICH HOUSES
CEREBRO!

"MOVING SWIFTLY AND SILENTLY,
A SHADOW STEALS INTO THE
DARKENED ROOM! AND THEN..."



SNIKT

XAVIER HAD CEREBRO RIGGED WITH A
PROXIMITY FUSE SET TO HOWL IF MAGNETO
AND HIS BUNCH EVER CAME WITHIN RANGE!
BUT MY ADAMANTIUM CLAWS PUT AN END
TO THAT!



THE X-MEN
SAVED MY SKIN
TODAY! I DON'T
LIKE THE IDEA
OF BETRAYING
THEM-- BUT I'M
ALREADY
COMMITTED!

"MOMENTS
LATER..."

GOTTA SNEAK
BACK TO MY
ROOM! UH-OH!
SOMEONE'S COMING!
THAT SCENT --

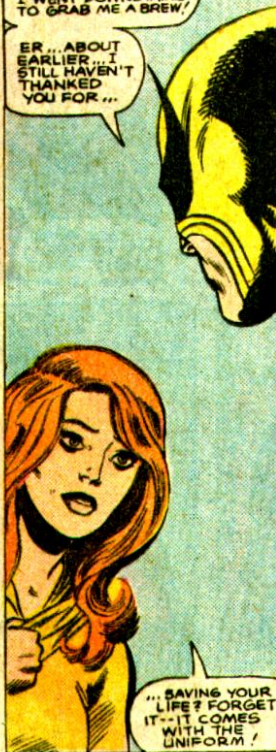


"IT'S
JEAN
GREY,
MARVEL
GIRL!"

OH, YOU
STARTLED ME!

SORRY, JEANNIE! I
COULDN'T SLEEP... SO
I WENT DOWNSTAIRS
TO GRAB ME A BREW!

ER... ABOUT
EARLIER... I
STILL HAVEN'T
THANKED
YOU FOR...



"...SAVING YOUR
LIFE? FORGET
IT-- IT COMES
WITH THE
UNIFORM!"

BY THE WAY, I WISH YOU'D DO SOMETHING
ABOUT THAT MASK OF YOURS!



WELL...
GOODNIGHT!

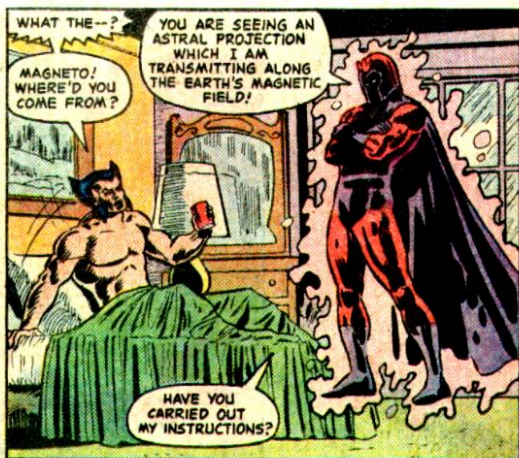
IT MAKES
YOU LOOK SO
FIERCE, SO
BRUTAL...
AND YOU'RE
AMONG
FRIENDS
HERE!

G'NIGHT!

YEAH, I'M WITH
FRIENDS, ALL RIGHT...



"AN' THAT'S
JUST THE
TROUBLE!"



EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, THE X-MEN ASSEMBLE IN THE DANGER ROOM UNDER THE EVER-WATCHFUL EYES OF PROFESSOR XAVIER...

THESE DAILY WORKOUTS ARE A FLAMIN' WASTE OF TIME!

JEANNIE'S HANGING AROUND CYCLOPS AGAIN! WHAT DOES SHE SEE IN HIM?

THIS EXERCISE WILL HELP ME TO ACHIEVE GREATER CONTROL OVER MY OPTIC POWERS!

THERE! I'VE NARROWED THE FOCUS OF MY BEAM! NOW WATCH...

OH, SCOTT! YOU CARVED MY NAME IN THAT BLOCK OF REINFORCED STEEL!

ER... I WAS HOPING YOU'D BE PLEASED!

"AT THAT MOMENT..."

WHAT THE--?

HI, TROOPS! HOPE I'M NOT INTRUDIN'!

WOLVERINE, THAT WAS RUDE!

SCOTT AND I WERE TALKING.

I JUST WANTED TO SHOW YOU THAT I TOOK YOUR ADVICE... AND REDESIGNED MY MASK! MAYBE LATER WE COULD... EH?

WHAT? SOMETHING'S WRONG!

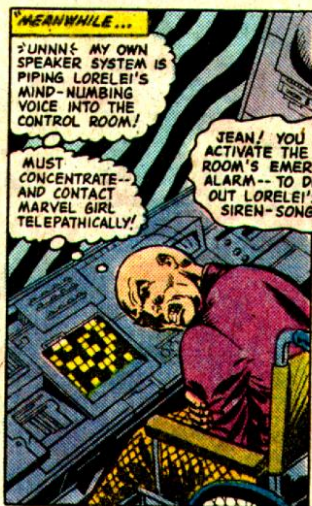
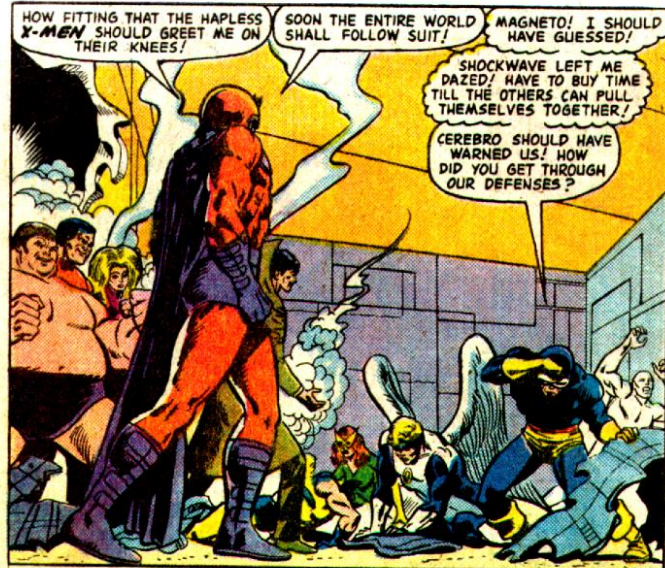
THEN, EVEN BEFORE ANOTHER WORD CAN BE SPOKEN, OR A MOVE CAN BE MADE...

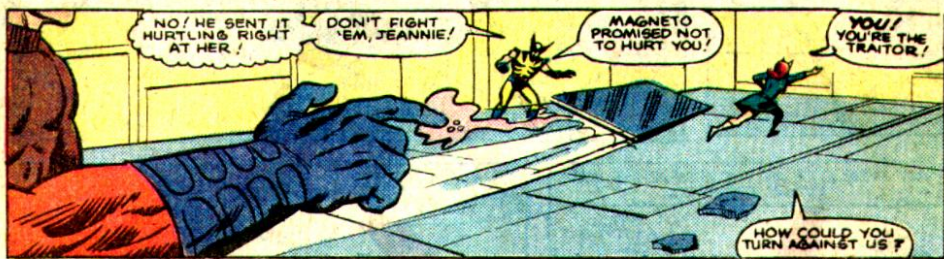
KA-BLOOM

WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!

WHO WOULD DARE--?

A RUMBLING SOUND IS COMING FROM BEHIND THAT WALL!





"TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WOLVERINE'S SUDDEN INTERVENTION, MARVEL GIRL REACHES THE PROFESSOR'S ALARM SYSTEM..."

MUST TRIGGER IT MANUALLY! THE PROFESSOR BUILT A FAIL-SAFE INTO IT-- SO THAT I WOULDN'T ACCIDENTALLY SET IT OFF WHILE PRACTICING MY TELEKINETIC POWERS!



"INSTANTLY, A SHRILL BLARE THUNDERS FORTH--"

"--SHATTERING LORELEI'S SONIC HOLD OVER THE X-MEN!"



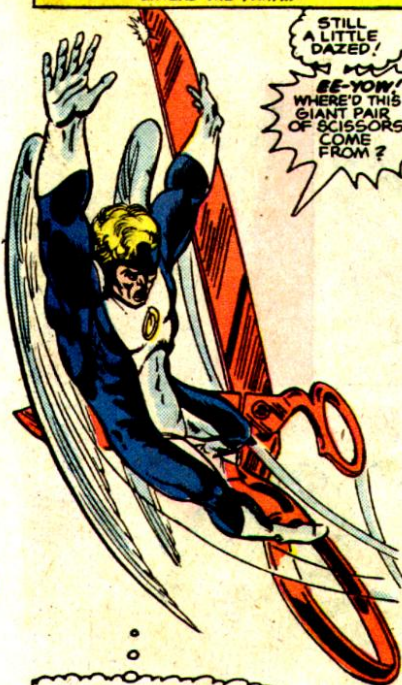
CURSE THE LUCK! IF NOT FOR WOLVERINE'S INTERFERENCE--THE X-MEN WOULD HAVE BEEN OURS!

SPARE ME YOUR WHIMPERINGS, MASTERMIND! I POSSESS SUFFICIENT POWER TO HUMBLE THEM!

BATTLE FORMATION, TROOPS!

ANGEL! ICEMAN! HIT THEIR FLANKS!

"BUT THEN, EVEN AS THE HIGH-FLYING ANGEL ENTERS THE FRAY..."



STILL A LITTLE DAZED!

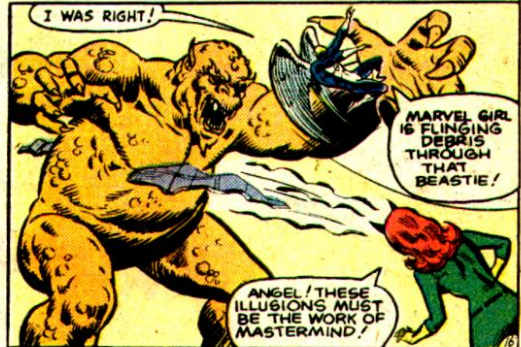
EE-YOW! WHERE'D THIS GIANT PAIR OF SCISSORS COME FROM?

OH, NO! A MONSTER IS SUDDENLY MATERIALIZING BEFORE ME!



HEY! THE DANGER ROOM ISN'T EQUIPPED FOR EFFECTS LIKE THESE! THEY CAN'T BE REAL!

I WAS RIGHT!



MARVEL GIRL IS FLINGING DEBRIS THROUGH THAT BEASTIE!

ANGEL! THESE ILLUSIONS MUST BE THE WORK OF MASTERMIND!

HAVE TO AVOID THEIR RAZOR-SHARP BLADES OR THEY'LL CLIP MY WINGS!

"THE EAGLE-EYED ANGEL QUICKLY SPOTS THE LORD OF LEGERDEMAIN, AND THEN--"

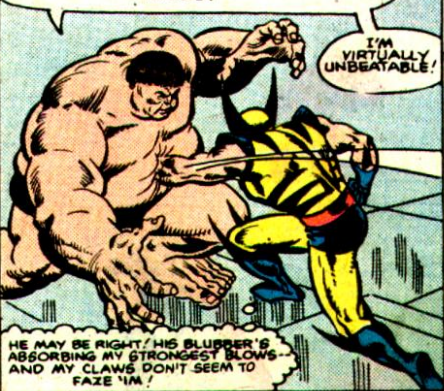
TAKE TEN MASTERMIND!



NO! YOU SHOULD BE COVERING IN ABJECT TERROR!

I WONDER HOW THE OTHERS ARE DOING?

HA! THE VERY MOLECULES OF MY FLESH OBEY MY EVERY MENTAL COMMAND! I CAN INCREASE MY MASS UNTIL NO FORCE ON EARTH CAN MOVE ME!



I'M VIRTUALLY UNBEATABLE!

HE MAY BE RIGHT; HIS BLUBBER'S ABSORBING MY STRONGEST BLOWS AND MY CLAWS DON'T SEEM TO FAZE HIM!

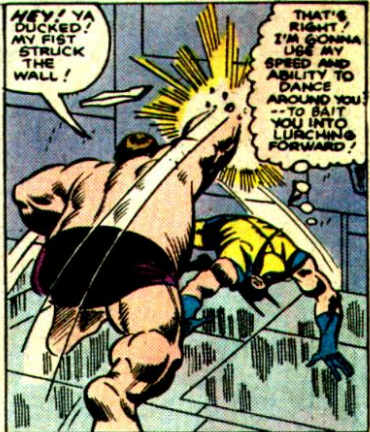
NO ONE CAN DEFEAT THE BLOB!

UNNN--! HAVEN'T BEEN SLOGGED THAT HARD SINCE I FOUGHT THE HULK!



BUT I'M BETTING JELLY-BELLY CAN'T DO HIS DENSITY BIT WHEN HE AIN'T ROOTED DOWN TO THE FLOOR!

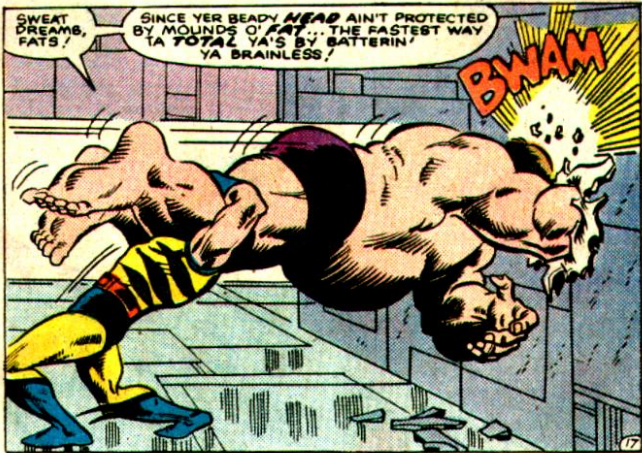
HEY! YA DUCKY! MY FIST STRUCK THE WALL!



THAT'S RIGHT! I'M GONNA USE MY SPEED AND ABILITY TO DANCE AROUND YOU -- TO BAIT YOU INTO LURCHING FORWARD!



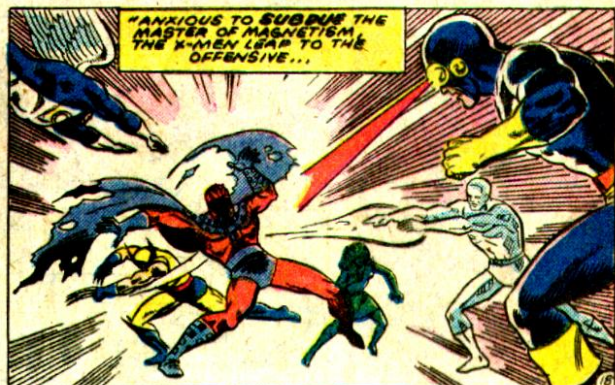
THERE! I CAN USE LEVERAGE AGAINST YA-- NOW THAT YER OFF-BALANCE-- AND AIN'T ANCHORED DOWN...



SWEAT DREAMS, FATS!

SINCE YER BEADY HEAD AIN'T PROTECTED BY MOUNDS O' FAT-- THE EASIEST WAY 'A TOTAL YA'S BY BATTERIN' YA BRAINLESS!

BWAM



WO! THE X-MEN ARE PLAYING RIGHT INTO MAGNETO'S HANDS!

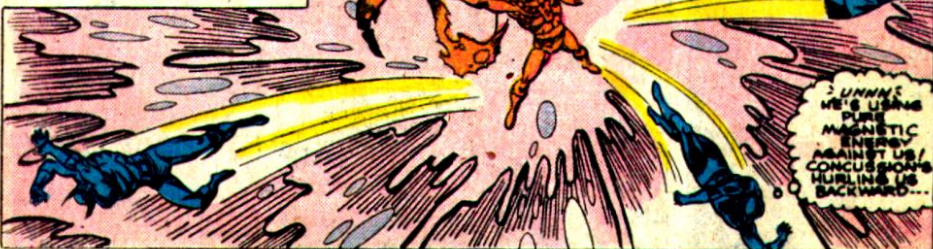


"INDEED..."

BAH! I HAD HOPED TO BASK IN MY TRIUMPH RATHER THAN SULLY MY HANDS IN COMBAT!

BUT SINCE YOU DARE PROVOKE ME--LET ME REMIND YOU OF HOW POWERFUL I TRULY AM!

I WINNIE! HE'S USING PURE MAGNETIC ENERGY AGAINST US! COME! EASY! HURLING US BACKWARD...



THEY HAVE BEEN RENDERED UNSENSITIVE, BUT THE AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE OF ENERGY HAS LEFT ME MOMENTARILY WEAKENED...

STILL I HAVE TIME ENOUGH TO FINISH THEM BEFORE THEY CAN AWAKEN!



DON'T BELIEVE IT, MAGG!

WOLVERINE? IMPOSSIBLE!

I REMEMBER THE HULK REMEMBER? I'M A WHOLE LOT TOUGHER THAN YOU FIGURED!



HERE'S WHERE I PAY YOU BACK FOR TRYIN' TA HURT JEANNIE!



GAAA!

"BUT THEN..."

STOP IT, WOLVERINE! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!

SO WHAT? HE TRIED TO SKRAG US!

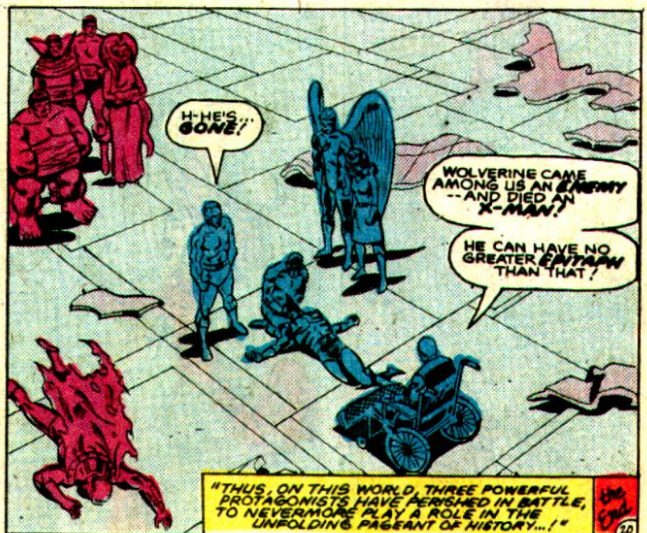
THAT'S NOT THE POINT!



YOU'RE AN X-MAN--NOT A MURDERER!

THE FOOLS THINK ME HELPLESS...





BENOLD THE FANTASTIC FOUR! FOUR INHABITANTS OF THE PLANET EARTH WHO WERE TRANSFORMED INTO BEINGS OF INCREDIBLE POWER!

SINCE THAT FATEFUL DAY WHEN THEY GAINED THEIR POWERS, THEY HAVE BEEN A MIGHTY FORCE FOR GOOD, AND THROUGH THEIR HEROIC DEEDS THEY HAVE BECOME LEGENDS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT!

BUT WHAT IF THINGS HAD TURNED OUT DIFFERENTLY? WHAT IF THESE FOUR BOLD HEROES HAD NOT BANNED TOGETHER? WHAT EFFECT WOULD THAT HAVE HAD ON YOUR WORLD?

ONLY I KNOW... FOR I AM THE WATCHER, AND MINE IS THE POWER TO SEE WHAT WAS... AND WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN! ONLY I CAN ANSWER THE QUESTION...

...WHAT IF™

THERE WAS NO

Fantastic Four?



STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY...
ROGER STERN ALAN KUPPERBERG FRANK GIACCIA
SCRIPTER PENCILER INKER

BASED ON A PLOT BY BILL MANTLO

JIM SHOOTER
CHIEF

R. FARNER, letters
B. SHAREN, colors

TOM DeFALCO
EDITOR



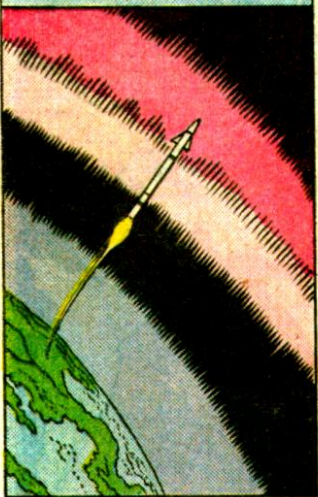
OBSERVE...
THIS WAS YOUR
WORLD, JUST A
FEW SHORT
YEARS AGO!



"IT WAS JUST BEFORE DAWN WHEN
THE FOUR CLIMBED ABOARD AN EX-
PERIMENTAL ROCKET WHICH THEY
HOPED WOULD ENABLE THEM TO
REACH THE STARS!"

OUTST
SPACE
PL

"BUT THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF THE
PROTOTYPE STAR-DRIVE WERE FORGOTTEN...
WHEN THEIR ROCKET WAS ENGULFED IN A
STORM OF MYSTERIOUS COSMIC RAYS!"



"THE RADIATION PENETRATED THE TINY
CRAFT AS EASILY AS LIGHT PASSES
THROUGH A WINDOW!"



MY HEAD!!
IT--IT'S
POUNDING
AS THOUGH
IT'S ABOUT
TO BURST!

WE SHOULD
HAVE WAITED--
SHOULD HAVE
GOTTEN HEAVIER
SHIELDING!

"OVERCOME BY THE PERIE RAYS, THE
FOUR FRIENDS JUST BARELY MAN-
AGED TO RETURN TO EARTH."



"BUT AS THEY CRAWLED FROM THE
WRECKAGE OF THEIR SHIP, THEY
FOUND THAT THEY HAD BEEN CHANGED
BY THE RADIATION!"

"DR. REED RICHARDS' BODY HAD GAINED
ASTOUNDING ELASTIC PROPERTIES. HIS FI-
ANCEE, SUSAN STORM, BECAME INVISIBLE!
HER BROTHER, JOHNNY, WAS A LIVING
HUMAN TORCH! AND AS FOR THEIR PILOT,
BEN GRIMM..."



HE'S TURNED
INTO SOME
SORT OF...
THING!

LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU! THAT
MEANS **YOU** TOO, BEN! TOGETHER,
WE HAVE MORE POWER THAN ANY
HUMANS HAVE EVER POSSESSED!



YOU DON'T HAVE TO
MAKE A SPEECH, BIG
SHOT! WE UNDERSTAND!
WE'VE GOTTA **USE**
THAT POWER TO HELP
MANKIND, RIGHT?



AND SO WAS BORN...
**THE FANTASTIC
FOUR**...

"...AT LEAST, IN **YOUR** REALITY!"

BUT THERE EXIST OTHER
WORLDS... OTHER REALITIES
WHERE HISTORY DIVERGES
AT CERTAIN CRITICAL POINTS...
WHERE A MOMENT'S INDECISION
YIELDS VERY
DIFFERENT RESULTS!

HERE IS ONE SUCH
WORLD.

THERE'S ONLY ONE
HAND STILL MISSING...
BEN!

I AIN'T BEN
ANMORE--I'M
WHAT SUSAN
CALLED ME--
THE THING!!

AND JUST BECAUSE I
UNDERSTAND YOU, DOESN'T
MEAN THAT I GO ALONG
WITH YOUR FOOL IDEAS!
LOOK AT US! WE'RE
FREAKS... ALL OF US!
THERE'S NO PLACE FOR US
ANYWHERE!

BEN, THAT'S
NOT TRUE! I UNDERSTAND
HOW YOU FEEL, BUT--!

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL, RICHARDS!
NOBODY CAN! OPEN YOUR EYES...
I'M A MONSTER!
A MONSTER!
AND IT'S ALL
YOUR FAULT!

HE'S GOING MAD! SUE,
TRY TO TURN INVISIBLE
AGAIN-- HURRY!

NO! I WON'T HIDE... NOT
WHILE YOU'RE IN DANGER!

BEN,
PLEASE!
WE'RE
YOUR
FRIENDS!

HE'S
NOT LISTENING,
GIS! GET BACK!

IF YOU THINK I'M GONNA LET YOU HURT
MY SISTER, THING, THINK AGAIN... IF
YOU STILL CAN!

YOU
BLASTED HUMAN
SONFIRE! GO
AHEAD-- HIDE
BEHIND YOUR
FLAMING
BARRICADE.

... SEE IF I CARE! I DON'T NEED YOU! I
DON'T NEED ANYONE! I'M THE THING, AND
THERE'S NO ONE ON EARTH LIKE ME...

... NO ONE.

"AND SO, IN THIS
ALTERNATE REALITY,
BENJAMIN J. GRIMM
STALKS OFF INTO
THE WILDERNESS...
ALONE!"

IMPOSSIBLE, YOU SAY? THE THING WOULD NEVER ABANDON HIS PARTNERS? PERHAPS NOT THE THING WITH WHOM YOU ARE FAMILIAR!

AH, BUT THIS IS THE BEN GRIMM OF AN EARLIER TIME... A MAN DRIVEN TO THE BRINK OF MADNESS BY HIS TRANSFORMATION.



THIS THING HAS NOT HAD THE TIME TO COME TO GRIPS WITH HIS NEW FORM. HE HAS NOT YET LEARNED TO HIDE HIS BITTERNESS BEHIND A MASK OF HUMOR.



AND SO, HE TURNS AWAY FROM THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE BECOME A SECOND FAMILY TO HIM!

ALAS, OUR STORY DOES NOT END HERE. FOR THE EFFECTS OF SO DRAMATIC A CHANGE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MAN ARE INDEED FAR-REACHING!

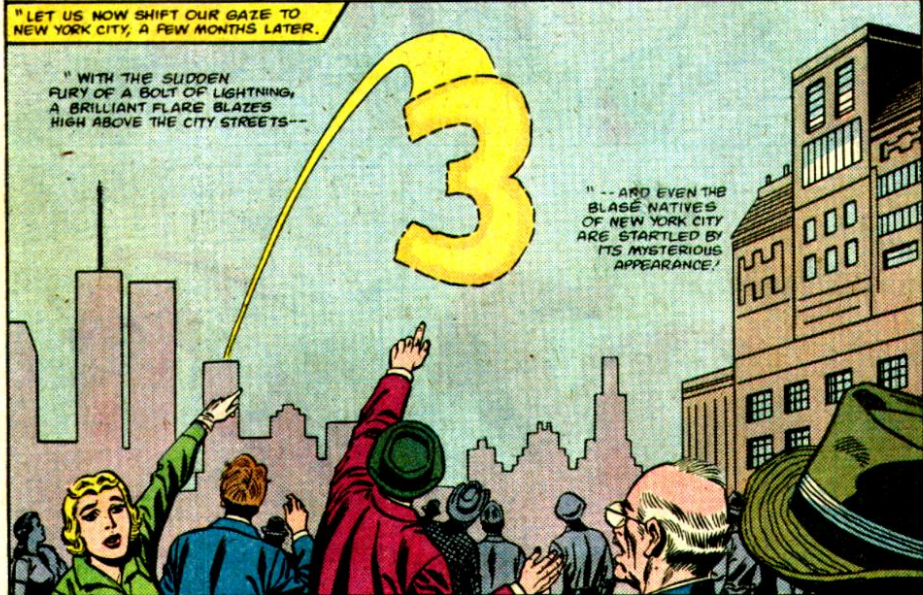


"LET US NOW SHIFT OUR GAZE TO NEW YORK CITY, A FEW MONTHS LATER."

"WITH THE SUDDEN FURY OF A BOLT OF LIGHTNING, A BRILLIANT FLARE BLAZES HIGH ABOVE THE CITY STREETS--"

3

"--AND EVEN THE BLASE NATIVES OF NEW YORK CITY ARE STARTLED BY ITS MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCE!"



"THE AUTHORITIES ARE NOT ANY LESS SURPRISED!"

LOOK! IN THE SKY-- WHAT IN BLAZES DOES IT MEAN?

I DUNNO, BUT THE CROWDS ARE GETTIN' PANICKY!

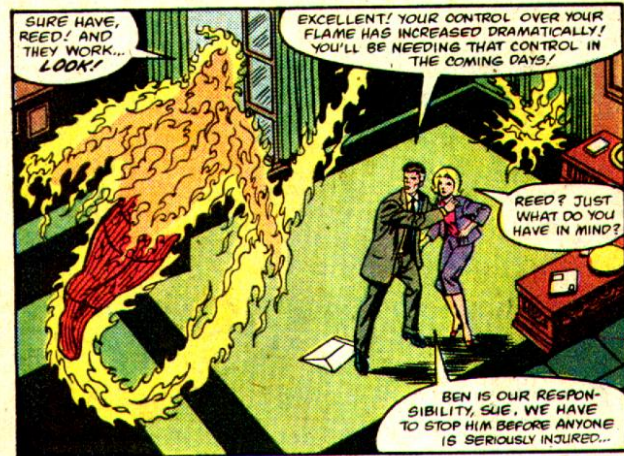
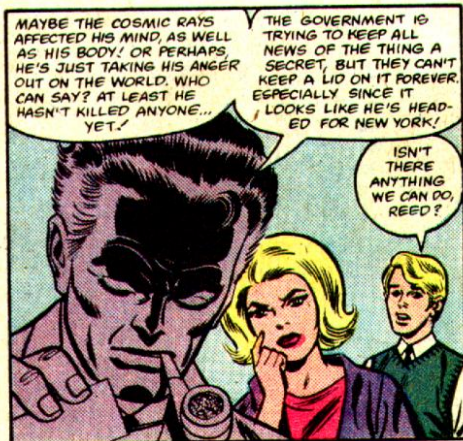
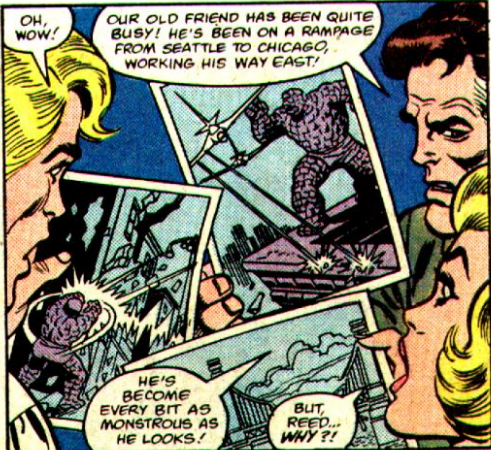
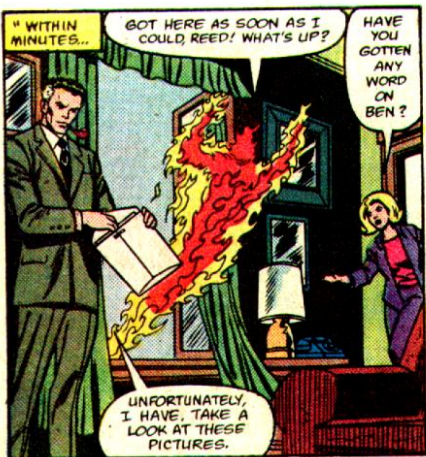
RUMORS ARE FLYIN' ABOUT AN ALIEN INVASION



"ABOVE ALL THE EXCITEMENT, REED RICHARDS STANDS, HOLDING A STILL-SMOKING FLARE GUN."

I'D HOPED THAT I WOULD NEVER HAVE TO USE THIS SIGNAL. BUT NOW... I HAVE NO CHOICE.





"AT THAT MOMENT, ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY..."

I MUST FIND SOME WAY TO CONTROL THESE OUTBURSTS OF TEMPER BEFORE I LOSE ALL CONTROL OF MYSELF!

LIKE IT OR NOT I HAVE TO FIND RICHARDS. HE'S PROBABLY THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP ME!

TURNING THE BROODING THING LUMBERS AWAY FROM THE ALLEY. BUT, THEN...

HEY, WHY DON'T YOU LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING? CAN'T YOU SEE?

OH! N-NO, I-I CAN'T!

YOU'RE BLIND? I'M SORRY... I DIDN'T KNOW.

THAT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT. I... YOUR HAND! IT FEELS LIKE SOME SORT OF HIDE!

ALICIA, WHO IS THAT STRANGER?

ALICIA!

HEY, DADDY, WHAT'S GOIN' ON? IS THAT BIG GUY HURTIN' THAT LADY?

NO! NO, I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE! YOU MUST BELIEVE ME!

GOOD HEAVENS, LOOK HOW BIG HE IS! AND HIS HANDS... I-LOOK AT HIS HANDS!

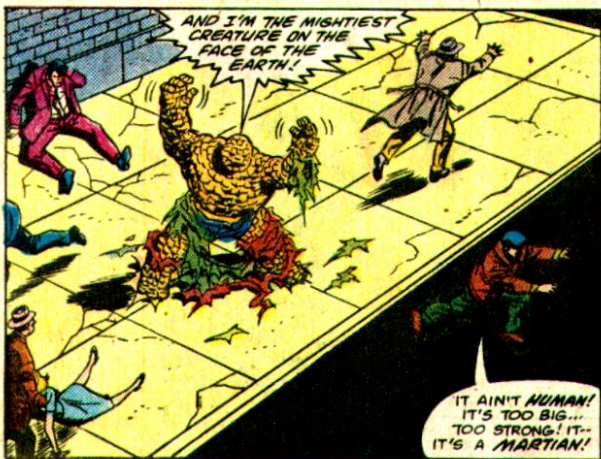
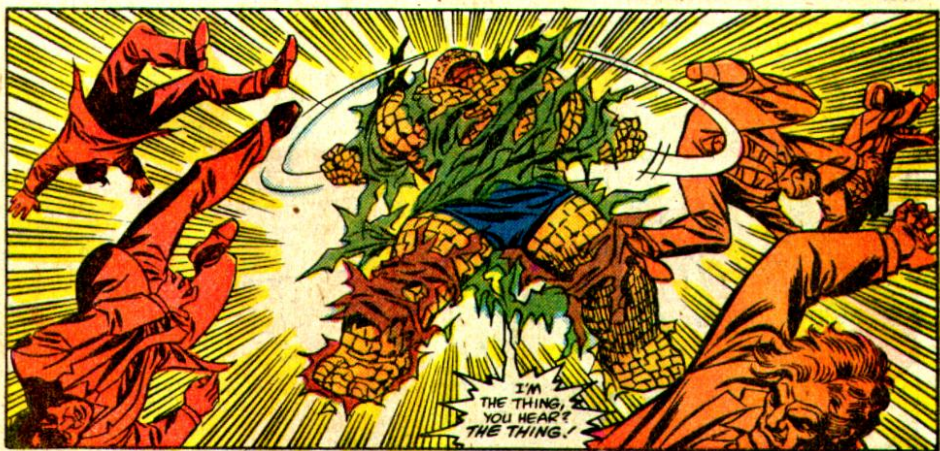
DID HE HARM YOU, CHILD?

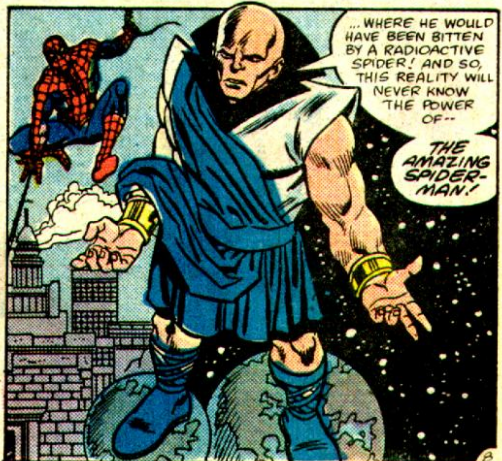
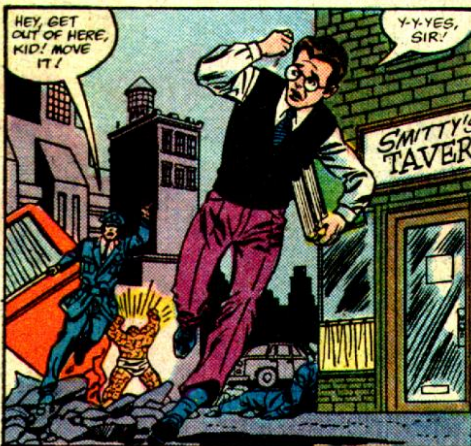
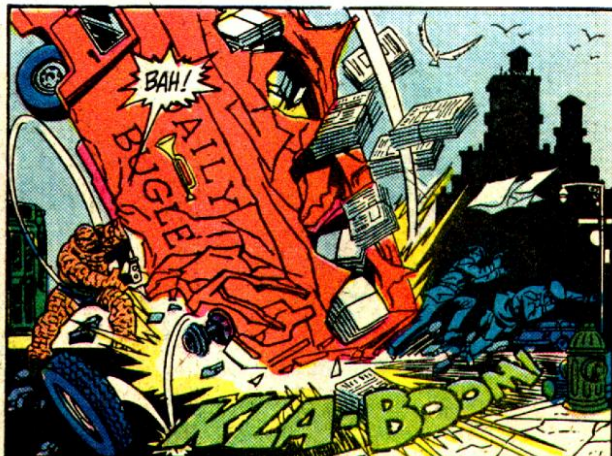
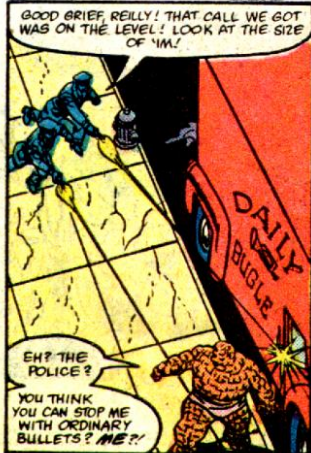
NO, FATHER. IF ANYTHING, HE SEEMED TO BE THE ONE WHO WAS HURT!

STRANGE! HIS HANDS FELT SO STRONG, SO POWERFUL... BUT THERE WAS STILL SOMETHING GENTLE ABOUT HIM. SOMETHING TRAGIC!

"AND SO, IN THIS ALTERNATE WORLD, THE THING HAS BUT A BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH THE LOVELY ALICIA MASTERS."

"THE WOMAN WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BECOME HIS LOVE!"





"MEANWHILE, A CONTINGENT OF NEW YORK'S FINEST BEGINS TO CORDON OFF THE AREA AROUND THE ENRAGED BEHEMOTH..."

KEEP AWAY FROM ME, Y'HEAR? I HATE PEOPLE POKING AT ME!



DRIVER, WHAT'S THE MATTER?

BEATS ME, DOC--



-- BUT WHATEVER IT IS, IT HAS TRAFFIC IN A REAL MESS!

CAN'T YOU TRY SOME OTHER ROUTE? MY PLANE LEAVES IN LESS THAN AN HOUR!



I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO, DOC... BUT I DON'T THINK WE'LL MAKE IT!

INDEED, THE DR. DONALD BLAKE OF THIS WORLD WILL MISS HIS PLANE, CAUSING HIM TO DELAY HIS LONG-PLANNED TRIP TO NORWAY!



WE WILL NOT BE IN THOSE REMOTE SCANDINAVIAN MOUNTAINS TO FIND AN ENCHANTED WALKING STICK, AS HE DID ON YOUR WORLD!



THUS, THIS DONALD BLAKE SHALL NOT DISCOVER HIS TRUE IMMORTAL HERITAGE... AND **THOR**, SON OF ODIN, SHALL NEVER GRACE THE SKIES OF THIS ALTERNATE REALITY!

COULD ONE SMALL DIVERGENCE SO CHANGE A WORLD? AYE, IT COULD... IT **HAS!** AND YET THERE ARE STILL **MORE** CHANGES IN THE WIND! OBSERVE.



I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM ME!

THOOM!



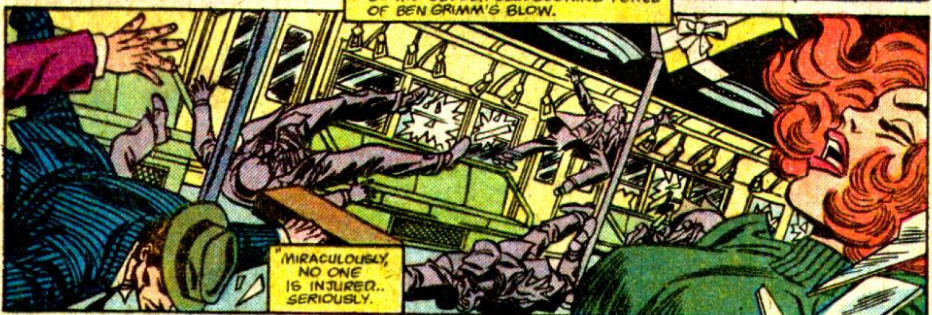
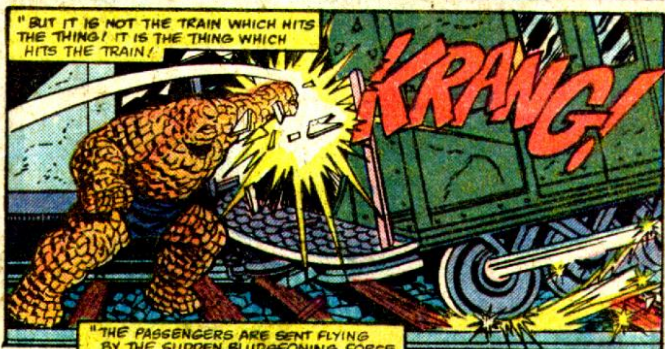
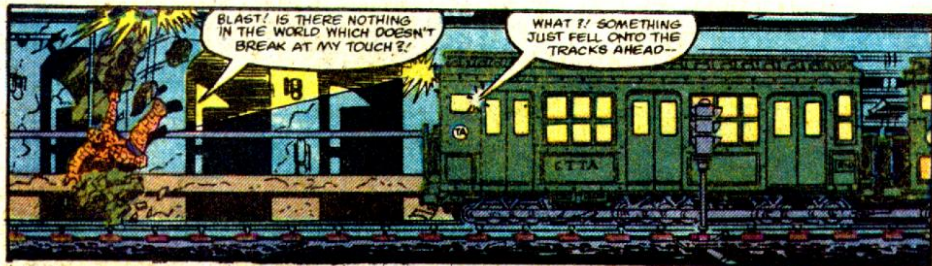
I'M NOT SOME Sideshow EXHIBIT FOR YOU TO GAWK AT! STAY AWAY, OR I SWEAR!

FRANK!



EH?

CRIMENY! HE HIT THE STREET SO HARD, IT'S GIVIN' WAY!



"BUT IT IS NOT THE NATIONAL GUARD WHICH RESPONDS TO THE CALL FOR HELP INSTEAD, A SPECIALLY-ASSEMBLED CREW OF MILITARY AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS CONVERGE ON MANHATTAN.

"THEIR MISSION:
STOP THE THING.

CONFOUND IT, STARK, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? WE HAVE THE CREATURE CORNERED ON TOP OF THAT BUILDING! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO USE THAT POP-GUN OF YOURS?

GIVE US A CHANCE, GENERAL ROSS! IT'S A MIRACLE THAT DR. BANNER AND I WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE OUR COSMIC RAY CANNON AT ALL IN THE TIME YOU GAVE US!

A LITTLE CIVILITY WOULDN'T HURT, YOU KNOW! I CANCELLED AN IMPORTANT TRIP TO THE ORIENT TO ASSIST YOUR "THING ASSAULT FORCE."

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, TONY! I LEFT BEHIND AN IMPORTANT NEW SOLAR PROJECT TO HANDLE THIS.

BAH! YOU CIVILIANS ARE ALWAYS BELLY-ACHING! YOU ACT LIKE A LITTLE INTERRUPTION OF YOUR ROUTINES WILL CHANGE YOUR LIVES FOREVER!

"AND THOUGH GENERAL 'THUNDERBOLT' ROSS WOULD NEVER BELIEVE IT, THEIR LIVES HAVE BEEN IRREVOCABLY CHANGED.

FOR, BY BEING IN NEW YORK AT THIS POINT IN TIME, TECHNOCRAT ANTHONY STARK WILL AVOID THE MISHAP WHICH WOULD HAVE PUT HIM IN THE ARMOR OF IRON MAN!

"AND DR. ROBERT BRUCE BANNER WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE THE ACCIDENT WHICH WOULD HAVE TRANSFORMED HIM INTO THE INCREDIBLE HULK!"

"BUT THEN... TONY--DON'T ACTIVATE THAT CANNON! R-REED? WHAT ON EARTH?"

DR. BANNER, MAY I INTRODUCE DR. REED RICHARDS? RICHARDS IS A RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE EAST COAST SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY...

... BUT I NEVER KNEW HE WAS SO FLEXIBLE!

"AFTER A BRIEF EXPLANATION...

SO YOU SEE, GENERAL... I THINK WE HAVE A CHANCE OF CONVINING THE THING TO TURN HIMSELF IN!

PLEASE, SIR! YOU MUST LET US TRY! THERE'S A HUMAN BEING TRAPPED INSIDE THAT MONSTROUS FORM!

I WISH I COULD SAY YES, MISSIE! BUT I'VE BEEN GIVEN TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY ON THIS MISSION--

-- AND I CAN'T RISK THE LIVES OF UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL, NO MATTER WHAT STRANGE ABILITIES THEY MAY HAVE!



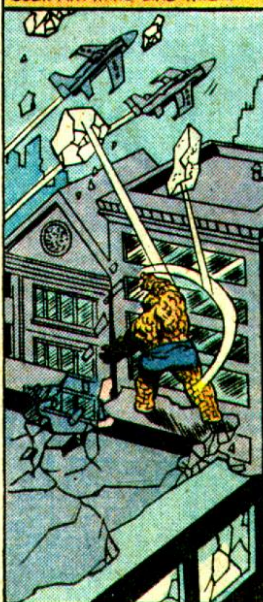
UH... GENERAL, SIR?

WHAT IS IT SON, I...

GAD-FRY!



"GENERAL ROSS IS A VETERAN OF COUNTLESS MILITARY CAMPAIGNS, BUT HE HAS NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS..."



THE TEST-PILOT IN ME HATED TO WRECK A COUPLE OF BEAUTIFUL BIRDS LIKE THOSE, BUT THEY WERE LONG-RANGE SURVEILLANCE JETS... AND I'M TIRED OF PEOPLE STARIN' AT ME. SPYIN' ON ME!

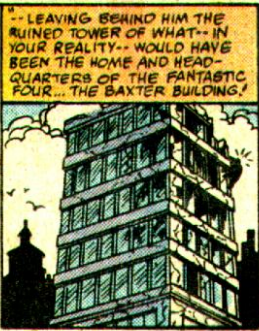
I SPOTTED SOME BIG BRASS DOWN IN THE STREETS. I'LL BET THAT THEY'RE THE ONES RUNNIN' THIS SHOW!

I THINK I'LL JUST GIVE THEM A PIECE OF MY MIND-THING-STYLE!

WAIT A MINUTE! THAT TALL DRINK A WATER IN THE BLUE JUMP-SUIT... TALKIN' TO THAT THREE-STAR... THAT'S REED!



"AND SO THE THING VACATES HIS HIGH VANTAGE POINT--"



-- LEAVING BEHIND HIM THE RUINED TOWER OF WHAT-- IN YOUR REALITY-- WOULD HAVE BEEN THE HOME AND HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR... THE BAXTER BUILDING!

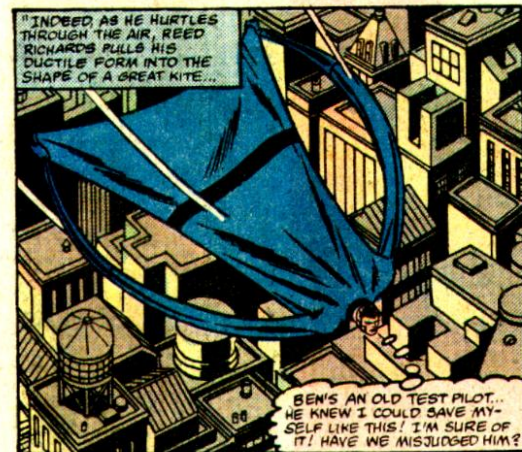
THAT DOES IT! THAT CREATURE IS THE GREATEST DOMESTIC MENACE THIS NATION HAS FACED SINCE THE CIVIL WAR! HE HAS TO BE STOPPED... AND NOW!

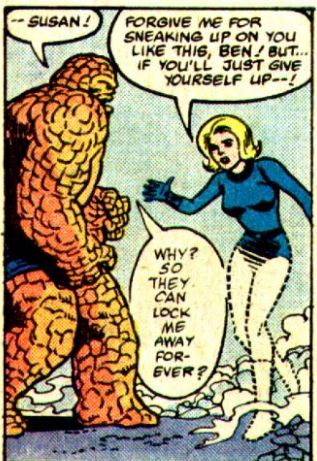
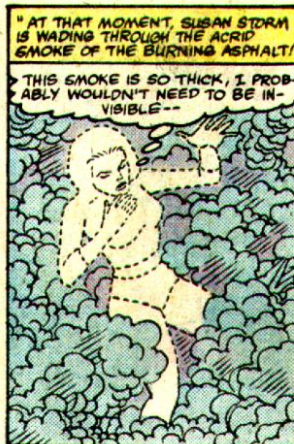
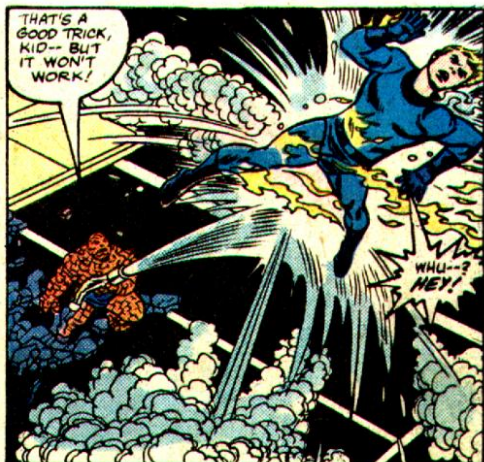
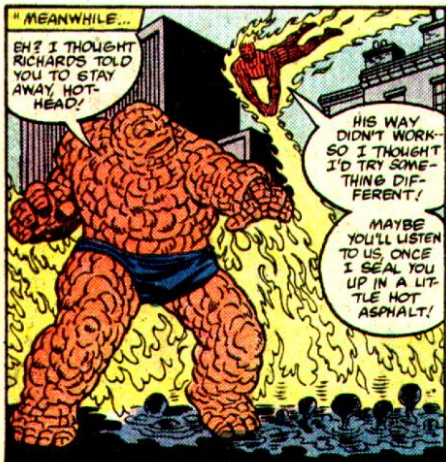


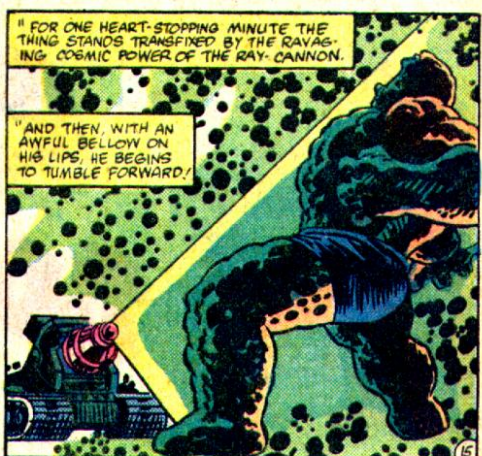
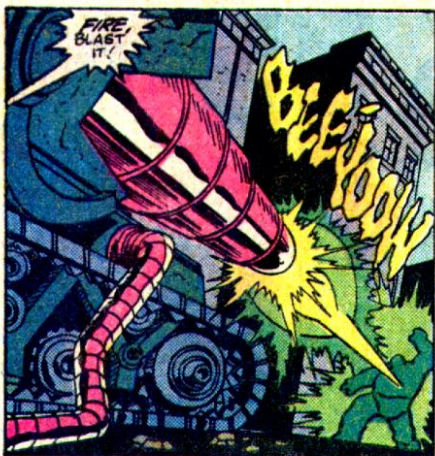
BUT, GENERAL--!

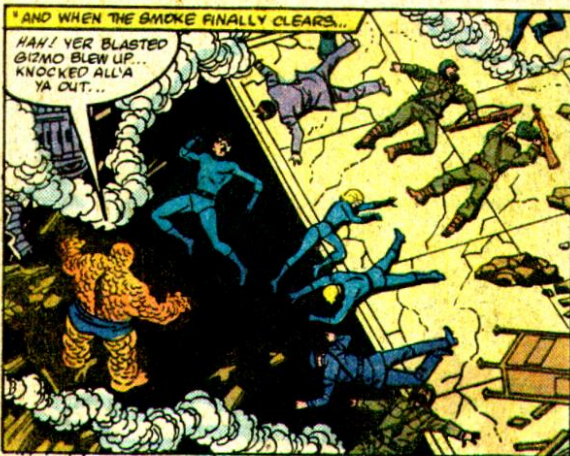
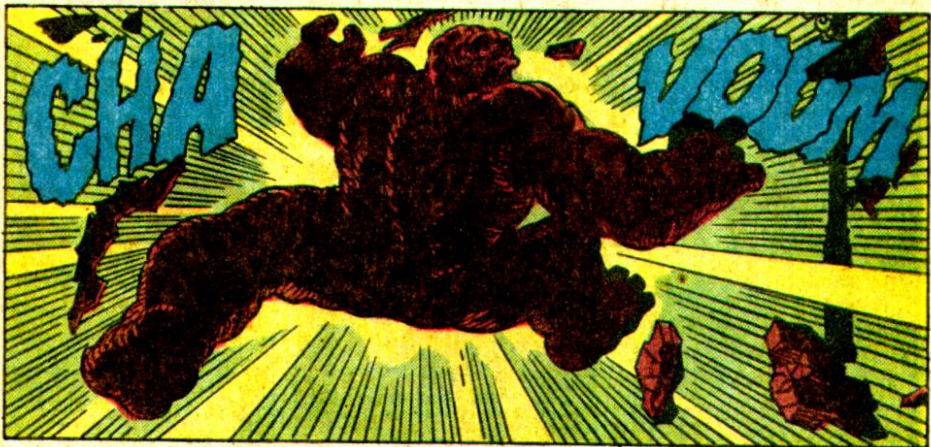
GENERAL, I HAVE A SUGGESTION.

THE COSMIC RAY CANNON REQUIRES SEVERAL MINUTES TO BUILD TO FULL POWER. GIVE RICHARDS AND HIS TEAM A CHANCE TO REASON WITH THE THING.











IN FACT,
I'M STRONG
ENOUGH TO
KILL YOU ALL
WITH ONE
BLOW!!



BUT... IF I DO
THAT... I REALLY
WOULD BE A
MONSTER,
WOULDN'T I?

AND I'M NOT. WHATEVER I
MIGHT LOOK LIKE... OR FEEL
LIKE... I AIN'T REALLY NO
MONSTER!

I WAS RIGHT ABOUT ONE
THING, THOUGH... NOBODY
CAN KNOW THE WAY I
FEEL. IF FOLKS HAD ONLY
GIVEN ME A CHANCE, I
MIGHT'A LEARNED TO
LIVE WITH THIS UGLY
HIDE...



... BUT THAT WUZ TOO MUCH TO
HOPE FOR! EVERYWHERE I WENT,
I SCARED ANYONE WHO CAUGHT
SIGHT'A ME! LITTLE KIDS
SCREAMED... GROWN MEN FAINTED!
AN' THEN THE ARMY STEPPED IN!

I ALWAYS
HAD ME A
TEMPER,
RICHARDS...
YOU KNEW
THAT!



BUT DO YA KNOW WHAT
IT'S LIKE TO LOSE YER TEMPER,
AN' THEN DISCOVER THAT YER
AS STRONG AS A HUNDRED
MEN ???

EVERYTHING
BREAKS WHEN YA TOUCH
IT... LIKE THE WHOLE
WORLD WUZ MADE
OF CARDBOARD!



AW, WHY AM
I WASTING
MY BREATH?
YOU CAN'T
HEAR ME...

... AN' YA SURE
CAN'T HELP ME!
I'LL NEVER BE
HUMAN AGAIN!
I'LL LIVE--AND
DIE-- JUST THE
WAY I AM!



THE WHOLE
WORLD'LL BE
A LOT BETTER
OFF IF I DIG
MYSELF A
BIG HOLE, AN'
PULL IT IN
AFTER ME!

"WITHIN SECONDS, BEN GRIMM
IS GONE... ONCE AGAIN, HIDDEN
FROM THE SIGHT OF MAN,
MINUTES
REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS..."



THE THING IS GONE!
THERE'S... THERE'S
NO TRACE OF HIM!

WHAT?! YOU
MEAN HE WAS COM-
PLETELY BLOWN TO
ATOMS?!

THAT WASN'T OUR INTENT, GENERAL,
BUT THE EVIDENCE SEEMS IRREFUTABLE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE ANYTHING WAS STRONG
ENOUGH TO BE UNAFFECTED BY THAT
EXPLOSION!

REED,
I... I CAN'T
FLAME ON!

I KNOW, JOHNNY. THE COSMIC-RAY
FEEDBACK FROM THE EXPLODING
CANNON ERASED THE EFFECTS OF
OUR ORIGINAL EXPOSURE. IF ONLY
IT HAD DONE THE SAME FOR
POOR BEN!

OH,
REED!

THIS SHOULDN'T
HAVE HAPPENED!
FROM THE RADIATION
READINGS WE TOOK
AT THE SITES OF
THE THING'S PREVIOUS
RAMPAGES, I
WAS CERTAIN THAT
THE COSMIC CAN-
NON WOULD
CURE HIM!

I'M AS
MYSTIFIED
AS YOU, TONY!
EVEN IF WE
COULDN'T
CURE HIM,
THE EXPLO-
SION SHOUL-
DN'T HAVE TO-
TALLY DISINTE-
GRATED HIM!

WHAT?!

DO YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT WE
PROVIDED YOU TWO EGGS
WITH THE MONEY AND MANPOWER
TO BUILD A WEAPON, AND YOU
TRIED TO CURE THAT MONSTER,
INSTEAD?!

@@#! I SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN BETTER THAN TO TRUST
A COUPLE OF BLEEDING-HEART
MILKSOP SCIENTISTS! THE
NATION'S JUST BLAMED LUCKY
THAT THE CREATURE WAS
DESTROYED!

...NO THANKS
TO YOU! I SWEAR
I'LL SEE TO IT THAT
NONE OF YOU EVER WORK FOR
THE GOVERNMENT AGAIN!

I JUST
CAN'T
BELIEVE
THAT
BEN IS
GONE!

ME NEITHER,
SIS! REED
ISN'T THERE
A CHANCE
THAT HE
GOT AWAY?

A SLIM ONE, JOHNNY.
BUT, IF HE DID, PERHAPS
IT WOULD BE BETTER
THAT WE NEVER FOUND
OUT!

I KNOW THAT IF HE EVER SHOWS HIS
FACE AGAIN, THAT GENERAL WILL BE ON
HIS TAIL...PROBABLY WITH A NUCLEAR ARSENAL!

"AND SO THEY GO THEIR OWN WAYS,
THESE FIVE BOLD BEINGS...

IN A WORLD, NOW VERY DIFFERENT
FROM YOURS: IT IS A WORLD
WITHOUT A FANTASTIC FOUR, AN
IRON MAN, A SPIDER-MAN, A
HULK, OR A THOR.

IT IS A WORLD WHERE ONE BENJAMIN J.
GRIMM SKULKS THROUGH NEW YORK'S
ALLEYWAYS, AVOIDING THE EYES OF MAN--

--LEAVING BEHIND HIM A LAND NEARLY
DEVOID OF THAT SPECIAL BREED WHICH
SOME CALL **SUPER HEROES**! IN THE
DAYS AHEAD, THIS REALITY SHALL
SOLEMNLY NEED THOSE HEROES...

...TO COMBAT THE
MIGHT OF ALIEN
INVADERS AND
SUCH MALEVOLENT
MENACES AS
EARTH'S DR. DOOM!
WILL THIS EARTH
SURVIVE? WILL
OTHER HEROES
ARISE?

ONLY I
KNOW...FOR
I AM...
THE
WATCHER!

END