

MARVEL®

A SCOTT ADAMS/MARVEL COMICS LIMITED SERIES

QUEST PROBE

FEATURING

THE
**HUMAN
TORCH**

AND
THE

THING

by SCOTT ADAMS
with art by
RON WILSON AND
JOE SINNOTT

75¢

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NOV



TERROR ON TWO WORLDS!



JOHN SINNOTT • NOSTRUM

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

QUESTPROBE!

Original concept by SCOTT ADAMS & JOHN BYRNE

FEATURING:
THE HUMAN TORCH AND THE THING!

SOME SAY THAT ONE'S HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS. IF SUCH IS THE CASE, THEN JOHNNY STORM'S HOME IS WHEREVER ALICIA MASTERS WALKS-- FOR THAT SIGHTLESS SCULPTRESS HAS RECENTLY WON THE YOUNG HERO'S HEART.

BUT HERE IN THE BAXTER BUILDING, LONG-TIME RESIDENCE OF THE FABLED FANTASTIC FOUR, JOHNNY FINDS THE WARMTH DRAWN FROM HIS LOVELY COMPANION QUICKLY FADING, AS IF LEECHED BY THE VERY DWELLING THAT HE ONCE CALLED... "HOME."

YOU KNOW, ALICIA, I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH THIS PLACE CAN FEEL LIKE... WELL... A TOMB.

*THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE THE BAXTER BUILDING'S DESTRUCTION IN FANTASTIC FOUR # 279 -- BOB.

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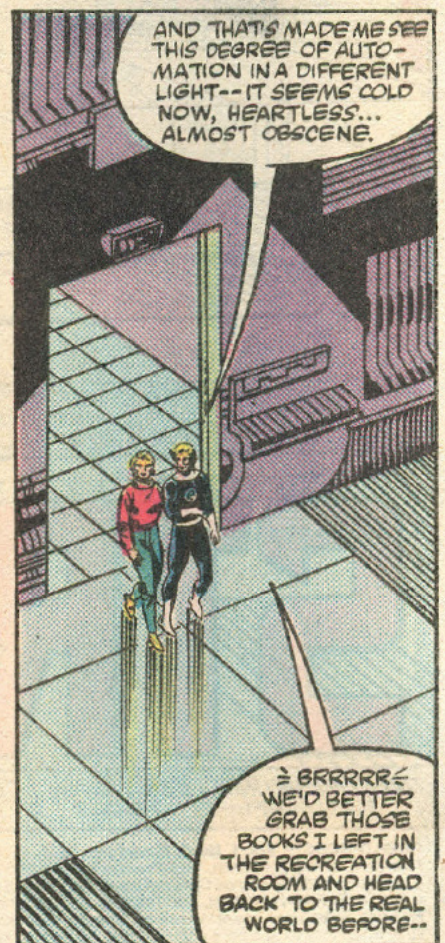
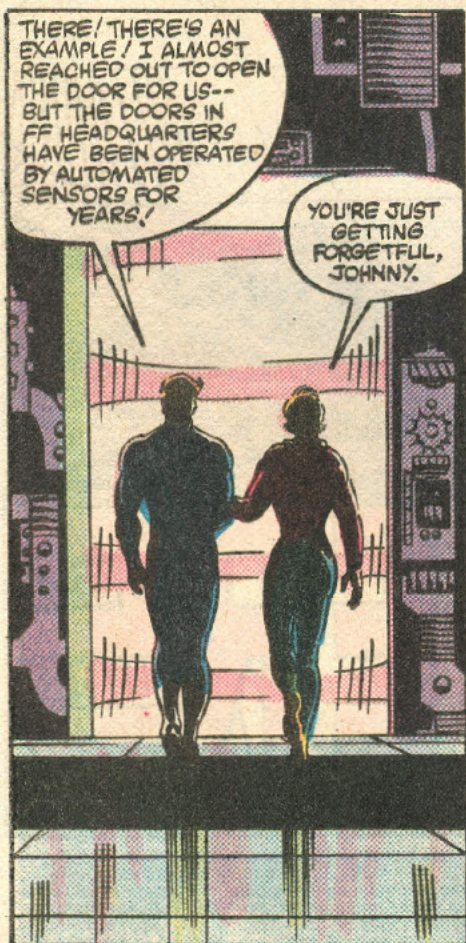
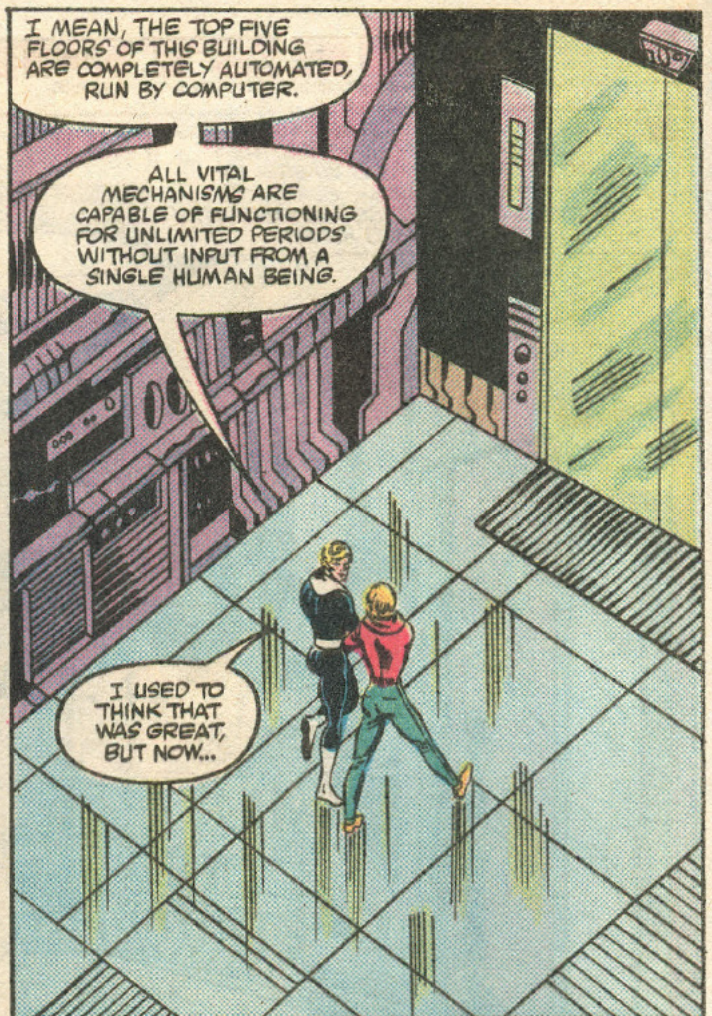
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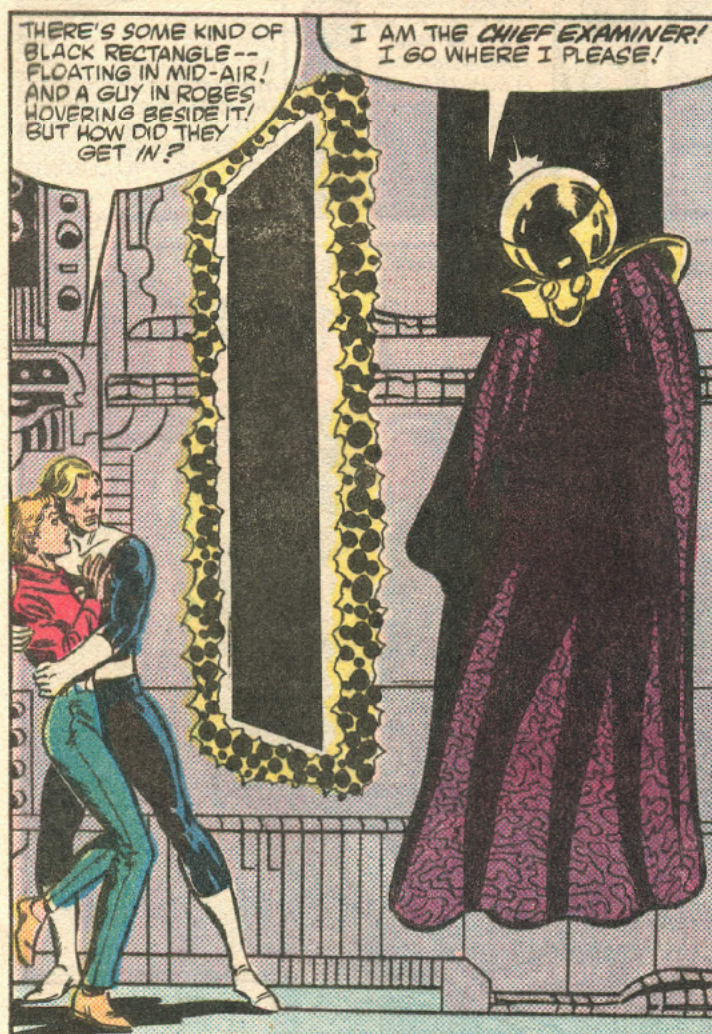
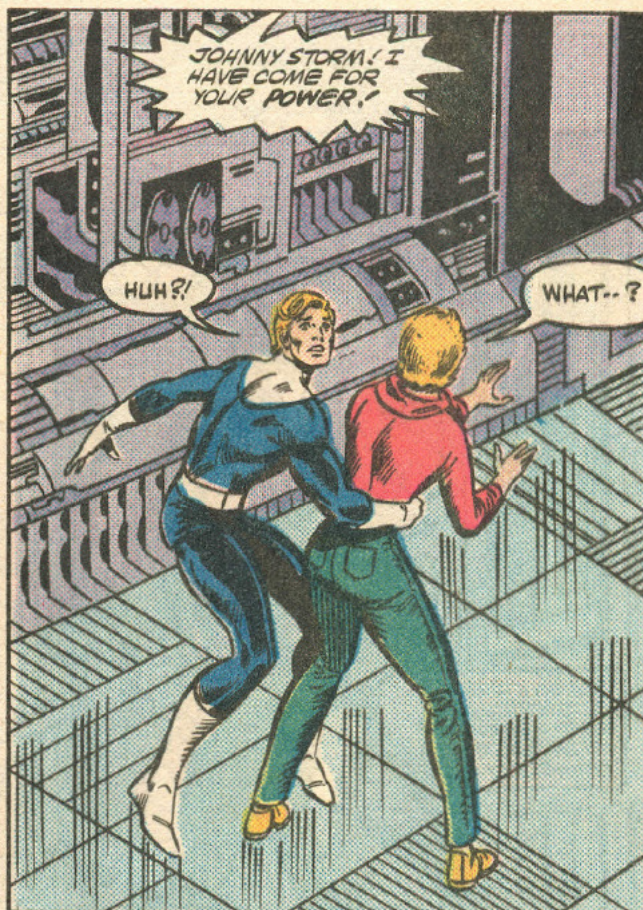
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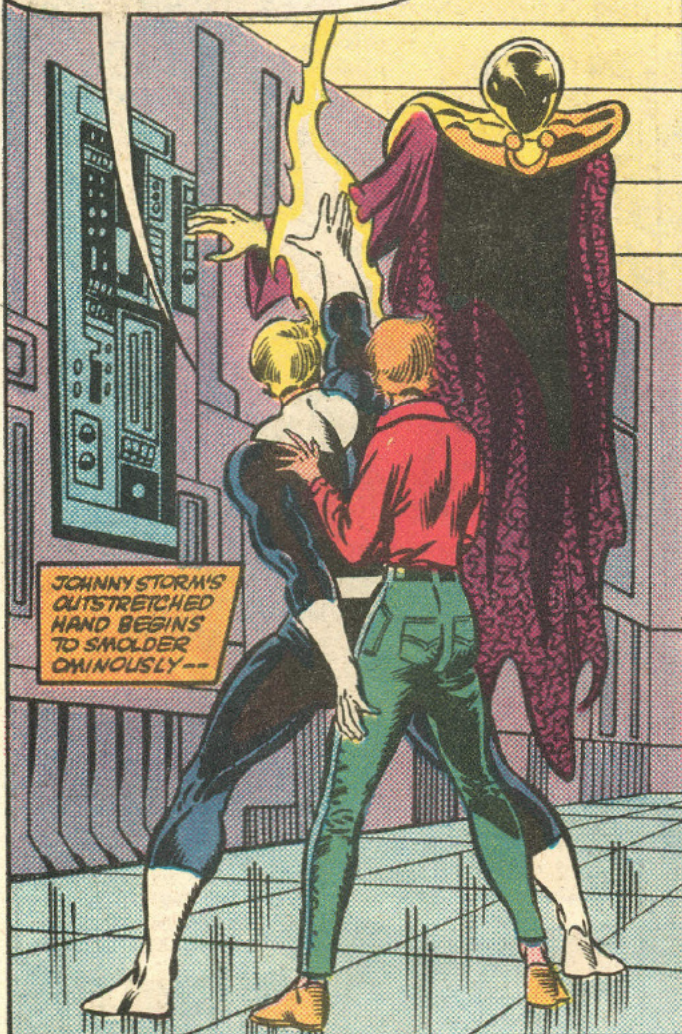
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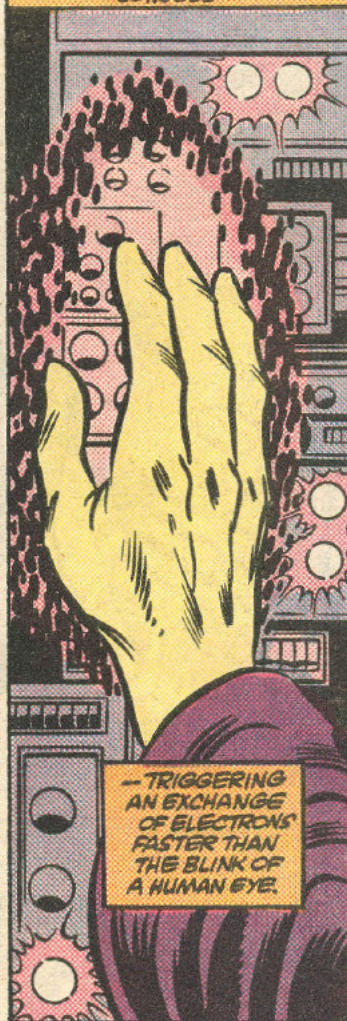


THIS GUY SOUNDS LIKE A LUNATIC, BUT IF HE'S SMART ENOUGH TO GET INTO FANTASTIC FOUR HQ, WE'D BETTER NOT TAKE ANY CHANCES!



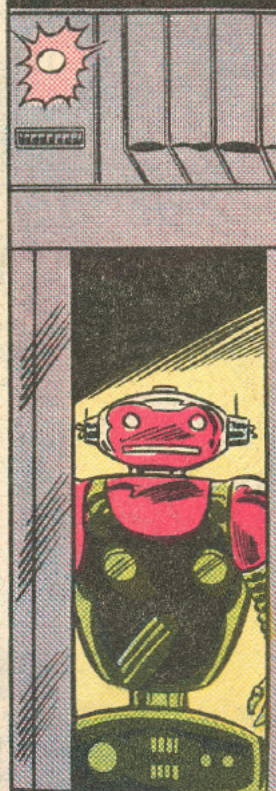
JOHNNY STORM'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND BEGINS TO SMOLDER OMINOUSLY--

--WHILE THE CHIEF EXAMINER'S HAND, DELICATE AND ETHEREAL, WAFTS OUT TO TOUCH A NEARBY COMPUTERIZED CONTROL CONSOLE--



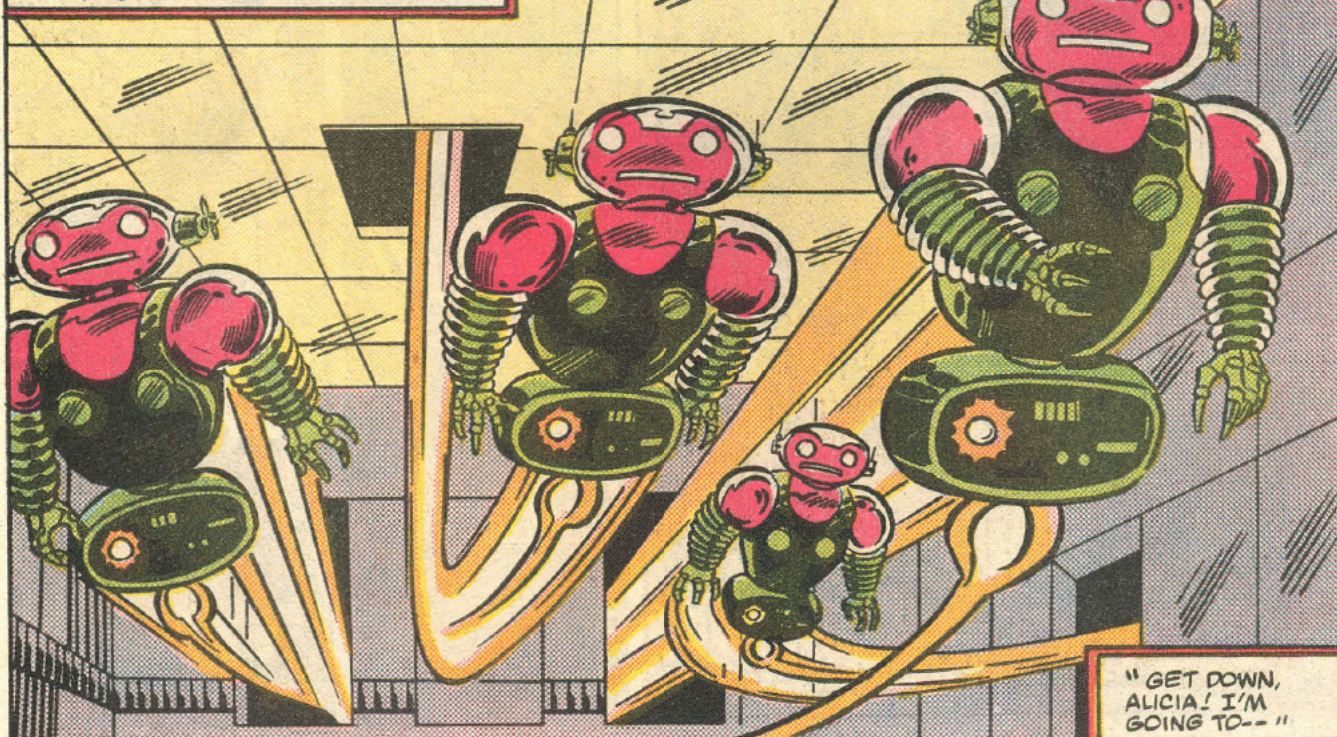
--TRIGGERING AN EXCHANGE OF ELECTRONS FASTER THAN THE BLINK OF A HUMAN EYE.

AS A RESULT OF WHICH...

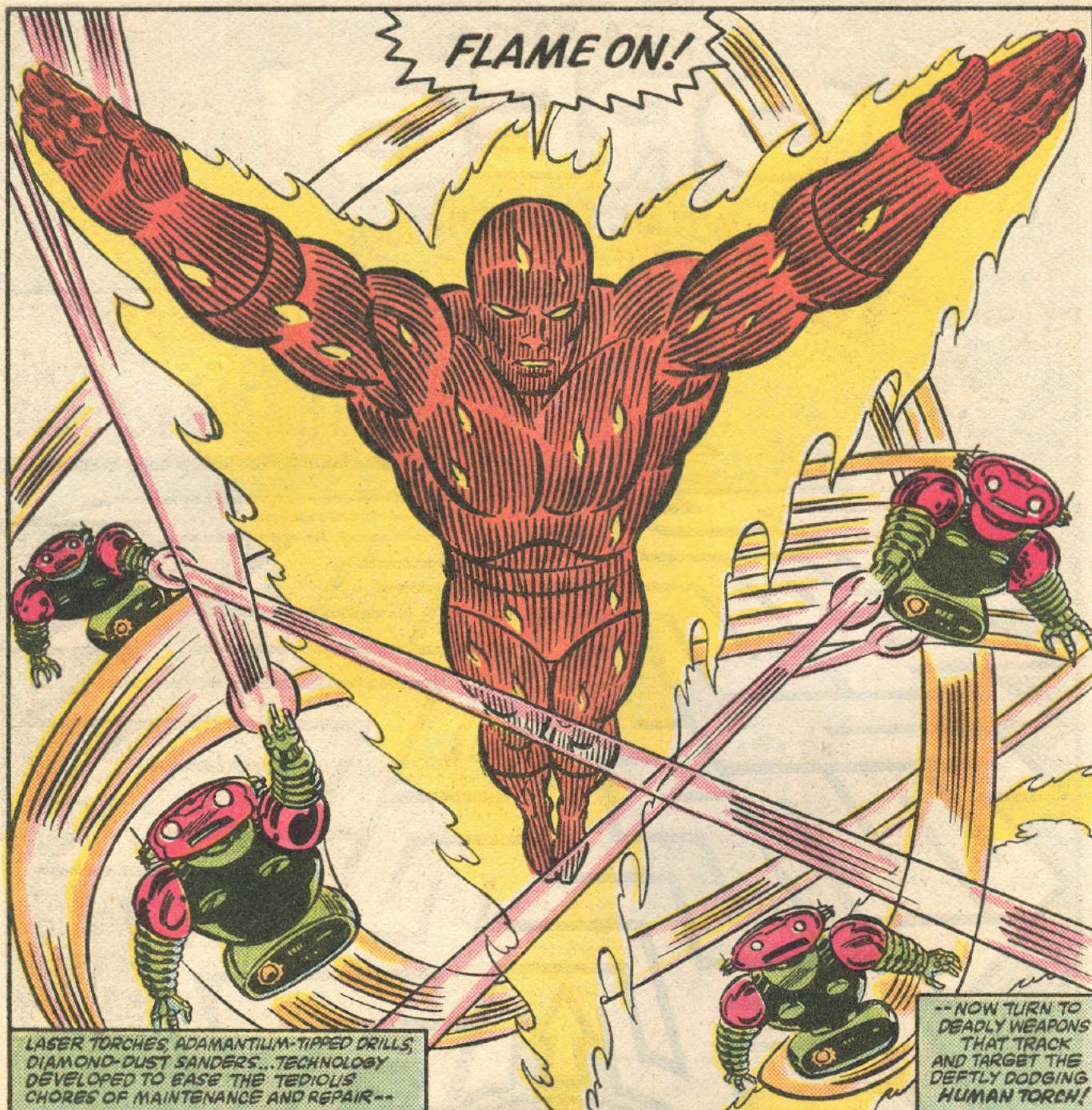


SERVICE ALCOVES OPENING! I DON'T GET IT! THOSE MAINTENANCE DRONES AREN'T SUPPOSED TO ACTIVATE UNLESS THERE'S SOMETHING TO CLEAN UP OR REPAIR!

"AND NOW THEY'RE GROUPING TOGETHER, HEADING STRAIGHT AT US LIKE THEY'RE GOING TO ATTACK! IT'S ALMOST LIKE THEY'VE BEEN REPROGRAMMED!"



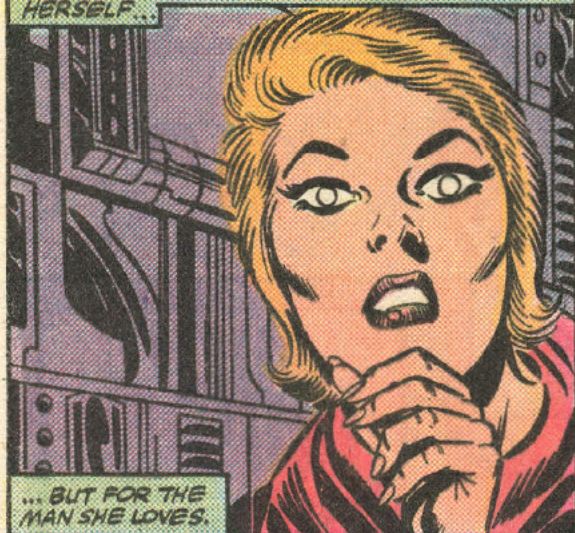
"GET DOWN, ALICIA! I'M GOING TO--"



LASER TORCHES, ADAMANTILUM-TIPPED DRILLS, DIAMOND-DUST SANDERS...TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED TO EASE THE TEDIIOUS CHORES OF MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR--

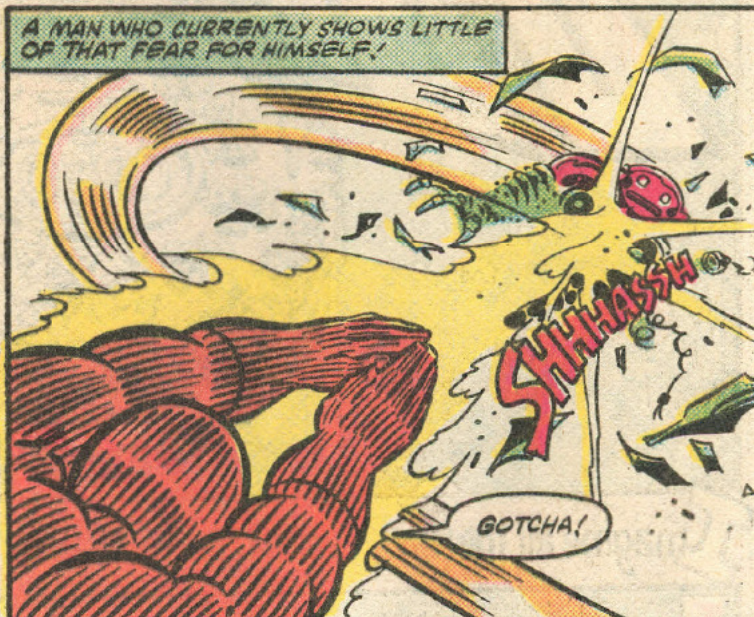
-- NOW TURN TO DEADLY WEAPONS THAT TRACK AND TARGET THE DEFTLY DODGING HUMAN TORCH!

WHILE NEARBY, ALICIA MASTERS COCKS HER HEAD THIS WAY, THEN THAT, FOLLOWING THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE, HER FACE A MASK OF FEAR, NOT FOR HERSELF...



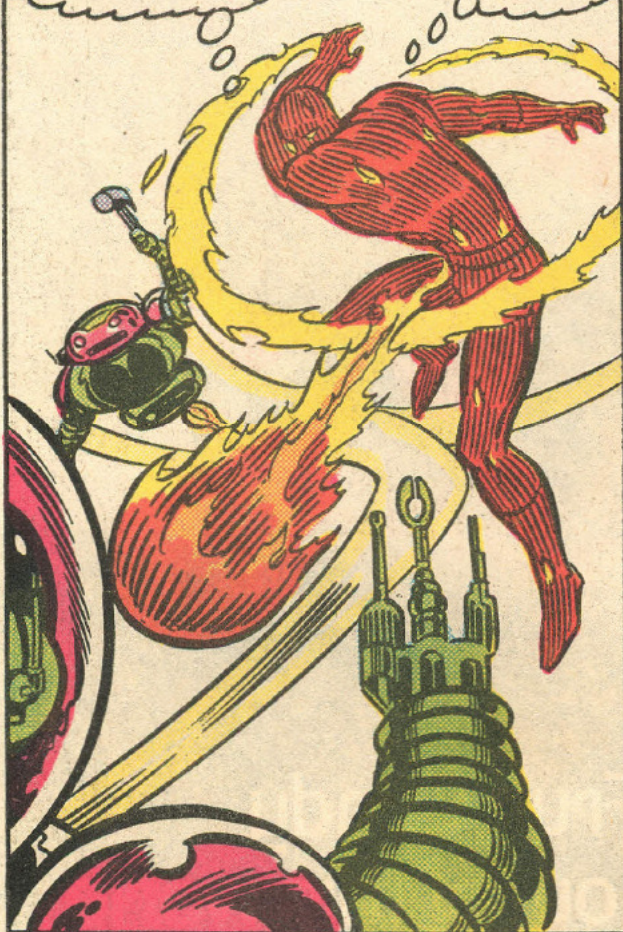
... BUT FOR THE MAN SHE LOVES.

A MAN WHO CURRENTLY SHOWS LITTLE OF THAT FEAR FOR HIMSELF!

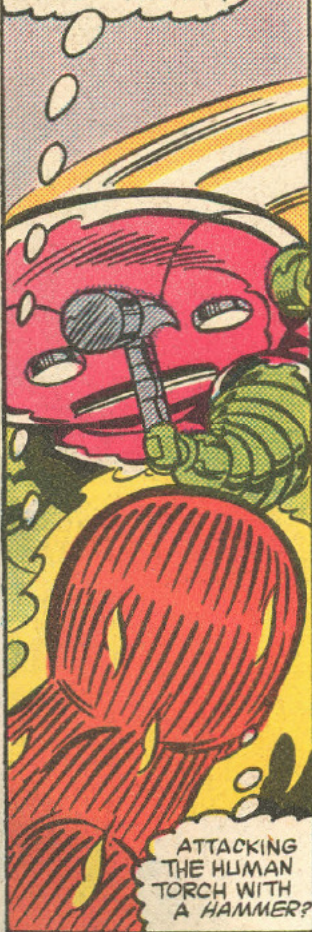


THESE DRONES ARE FAST, BUT REED DESIGNED THEM FOR SERVICE, NOT COMBAT!

A FEW FIREBALLS HERE AND THERE--



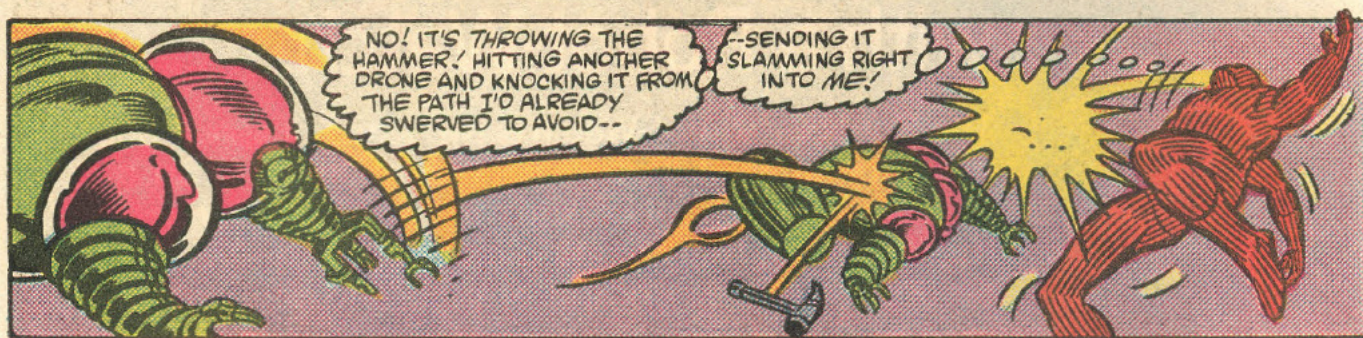
--AND THEY'LL BE NOTHING BUT PILES OF--AW, C'MON! WHO'S IT KIDDING?



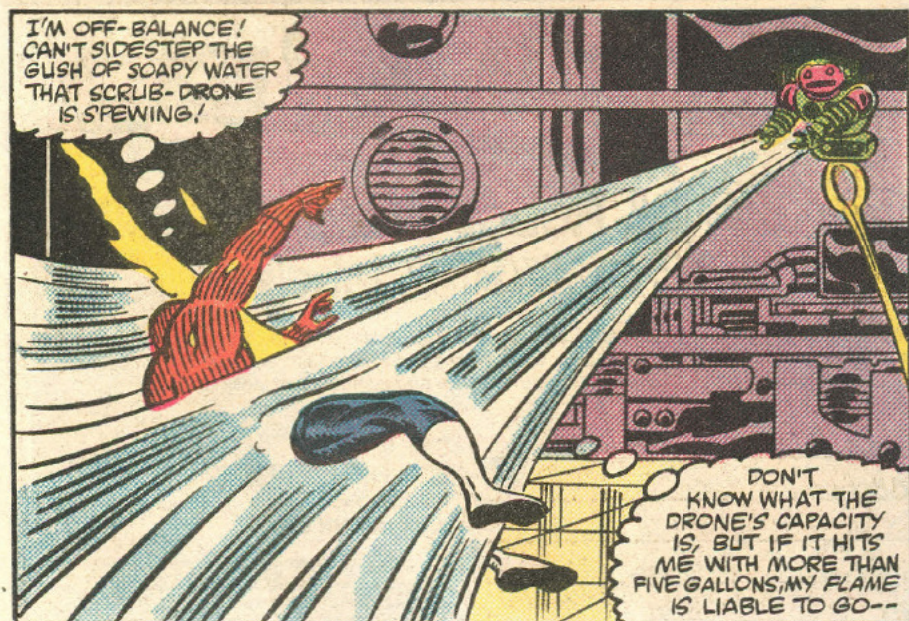
ATTACKING THE HUMAN TORCH WITH A HAMMER?

NO! IT'S THROWING THE HAMMER! HITTING ANOTHER DRONE AND KNOCKING IT FROM THE PATH I'D ALREADY SWERVED TO AVOID--

--SENDING IT SLAMMING RIGHT INTO ME!

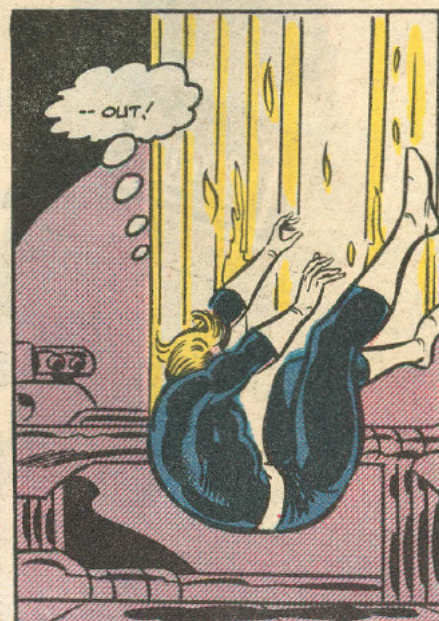


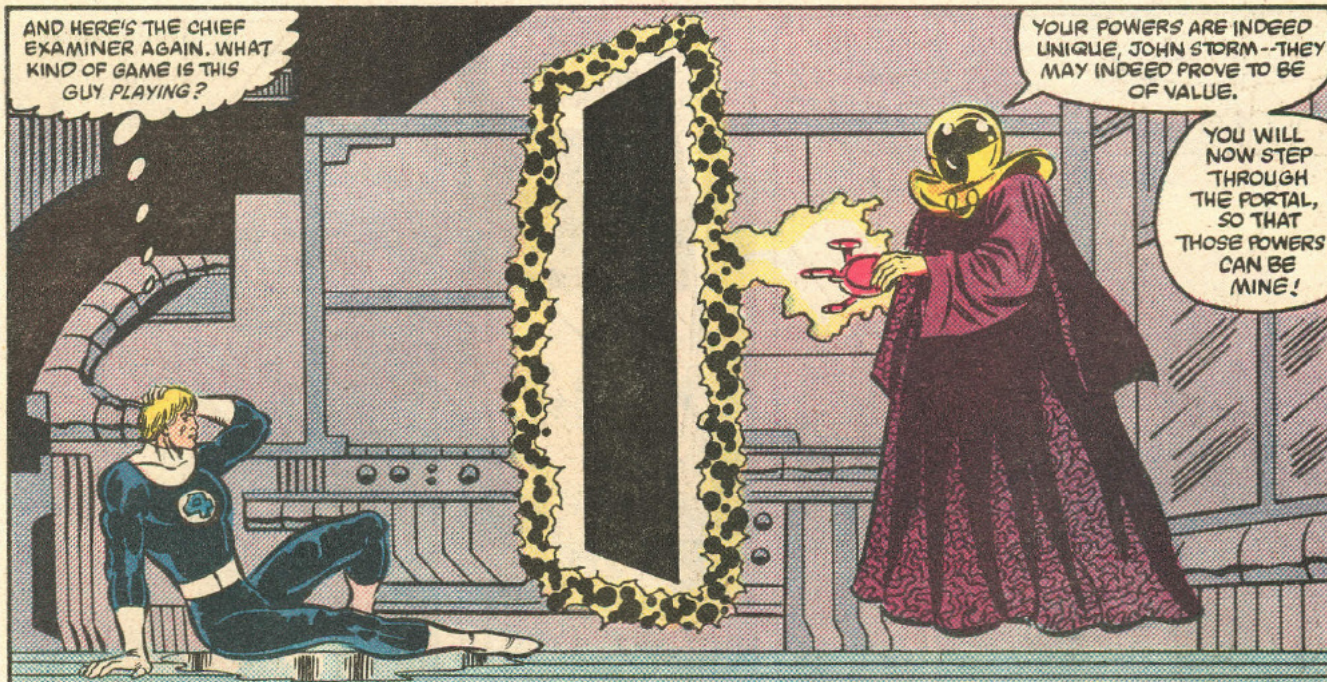
I'M OFF-BALANCE! CAN'T SIDESTEP THE GUSH OF SOAPY WATER THAT SCRUB-DRONE IS SPEWING!



DON'T KNOW WHAT THE DRONE'S CAPACITY IS, BUT IF IT HITS ME WITH MORE THAN FIVE GALLONS, MY FLAME IS LIABLE TO GO--

--OUT!

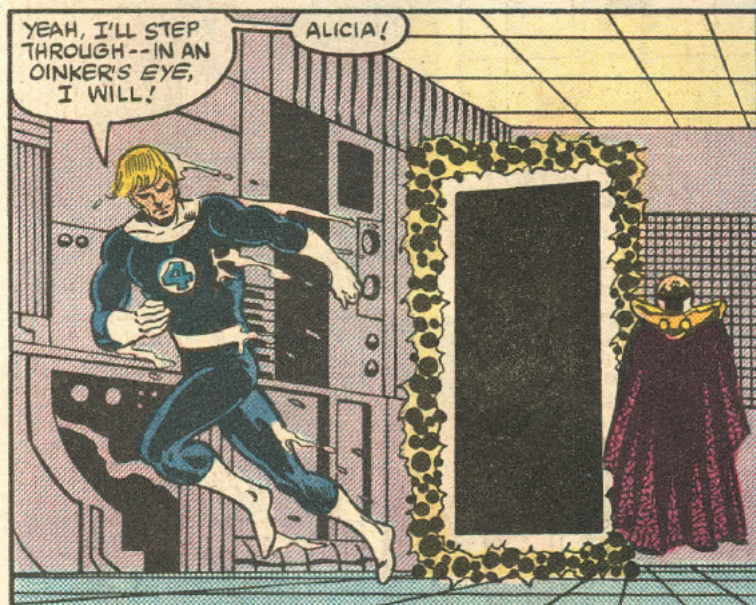




AND HERE'S THE CHIEF EXAMINER AGAIN. WHAT KIND OF GAME IS THIS GUY PLAYING?

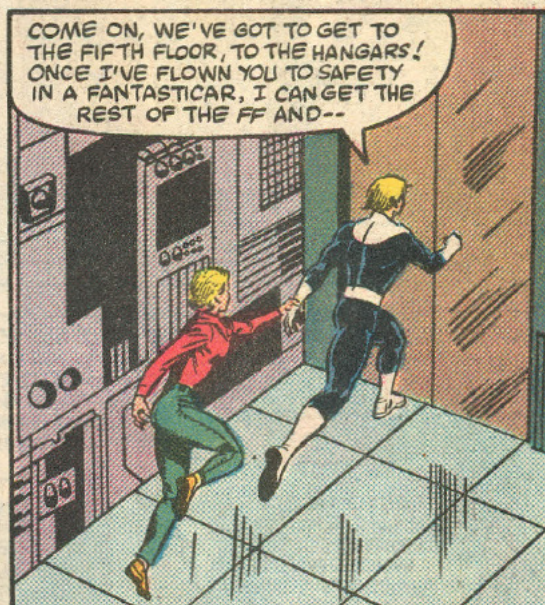
YOUR POWERS ARE INDEED UNIQUE, JOHN STORM--THEY MAY INDEED PROVE TO BE OF VALUE.

YOU WILL NOW STEP THROUGH THE PORTAL, SO THAT THOSE POWERS CAN BE MINE!

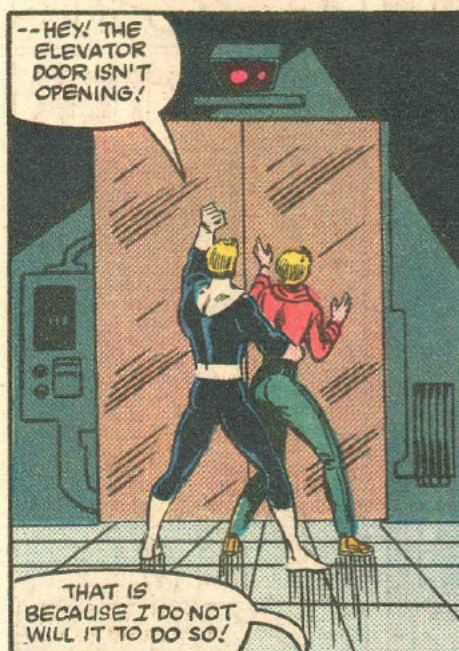


YEAH, I'LL STEP THROUGH--IN AN OINKER'S EYE, I WILL!

ALICIA!



COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE FIFTH FLOOR, TO THE HANGARS! ONCE I'VE FLOWN YOU TO SAFETY IN A FANTASTICAR, I CAN GET THE REST OF THE FF AND--



--HEY! THE ELEVATOR DOOR ISN'T OPENING!

THAT IS BECAUSE I DO NOT WILL IT TO DO SO!

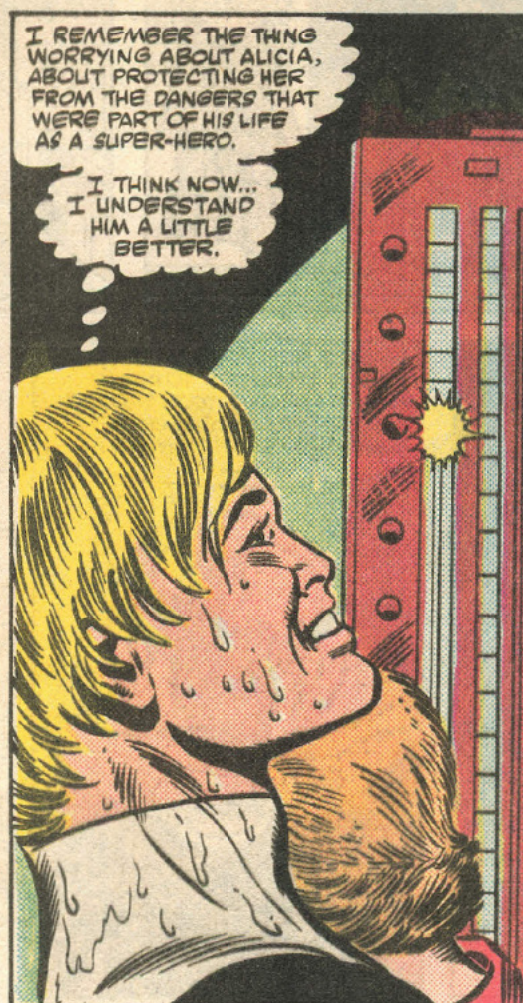
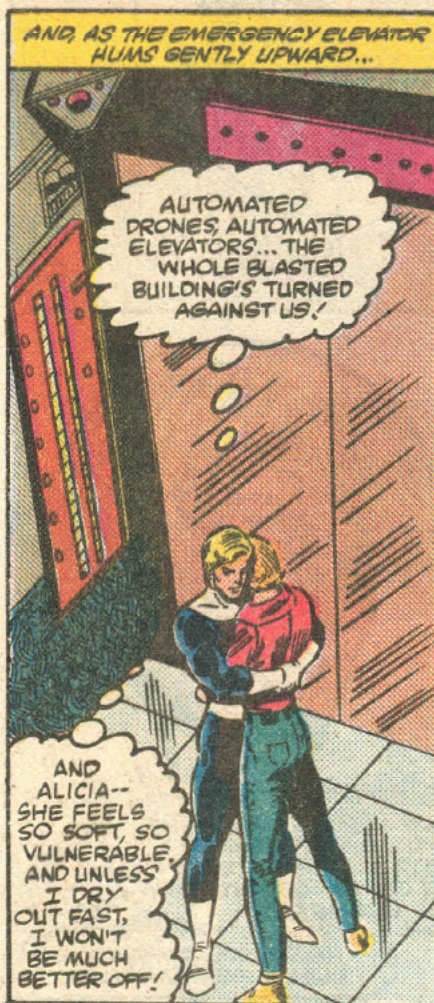
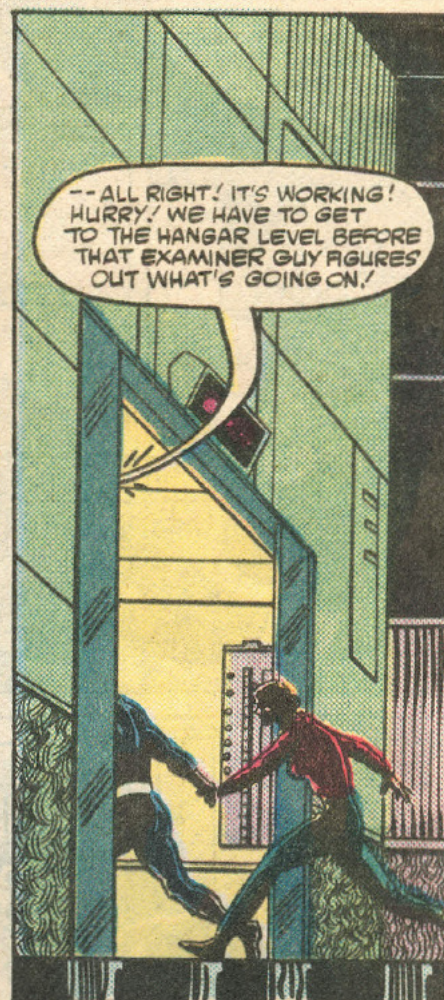
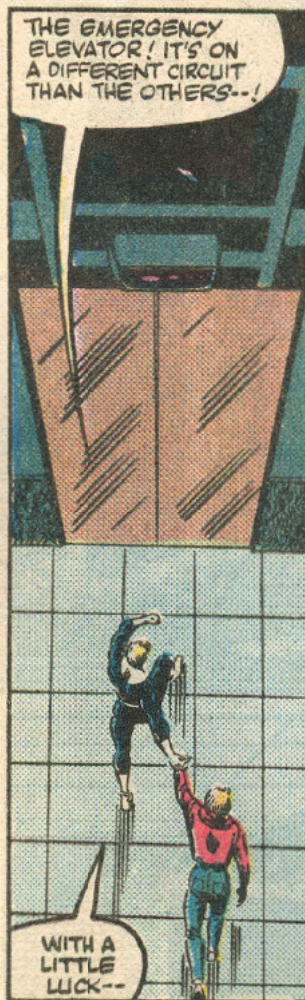
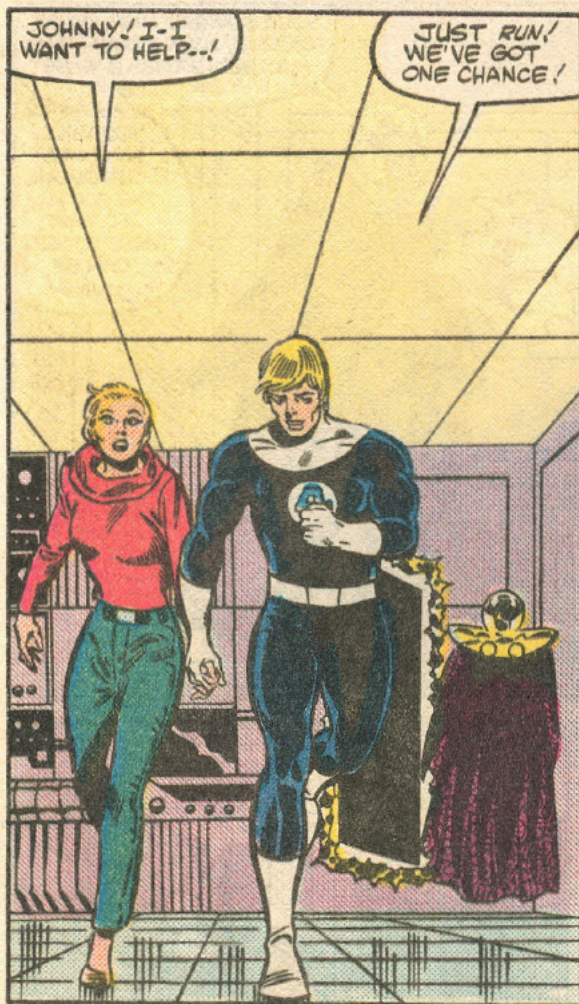


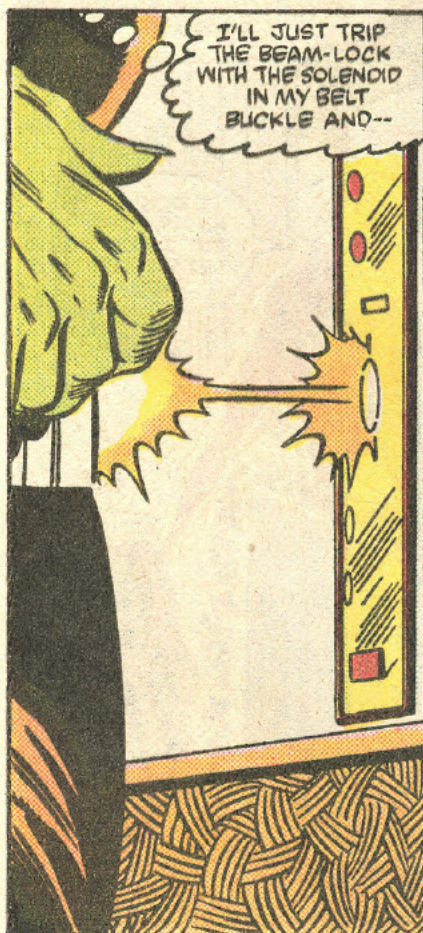
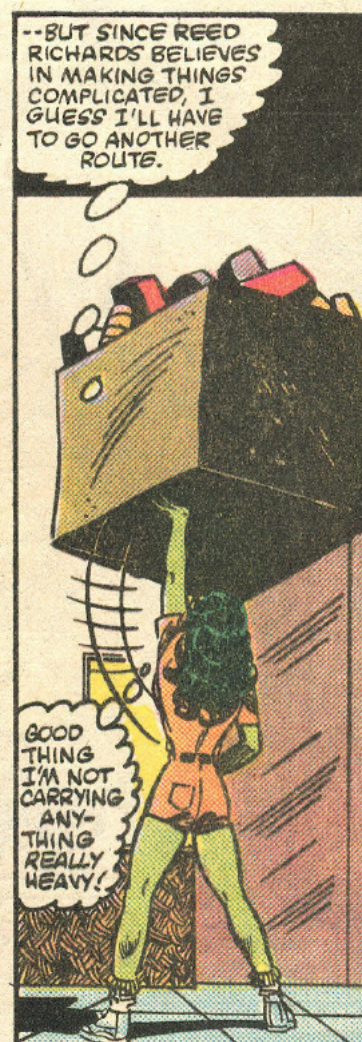
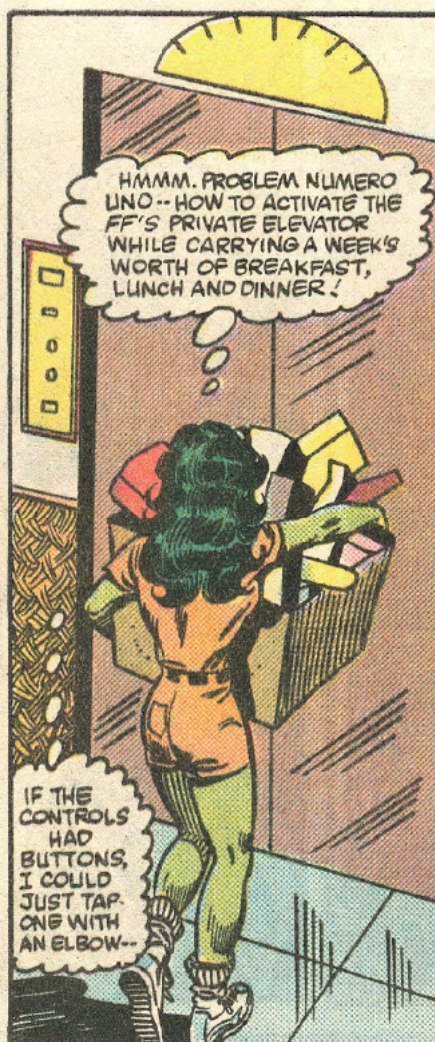
WHEN I REPROGRAMMED THE ALARM CIRCUITRY TO CEASE FUNCTIONING, I TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF CANCELING THE ELEVATOR PROGRAMMING AS WELL!

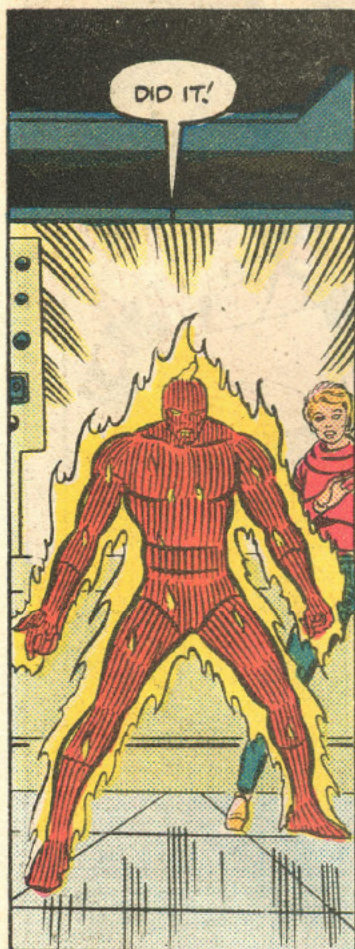
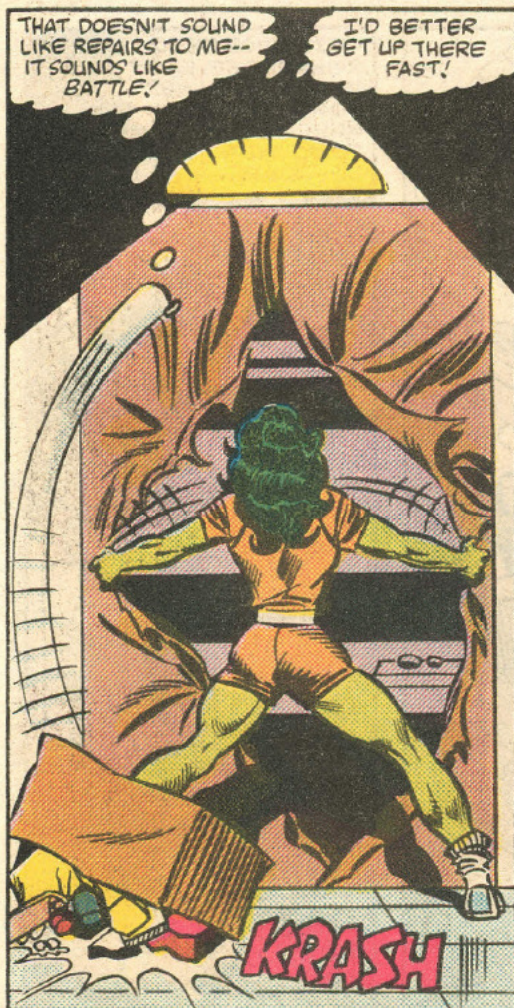


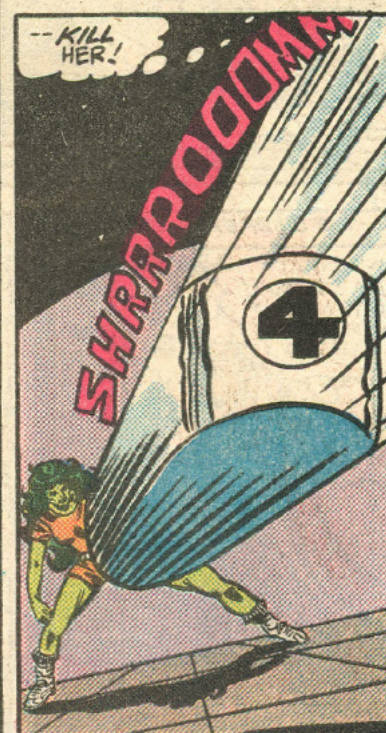
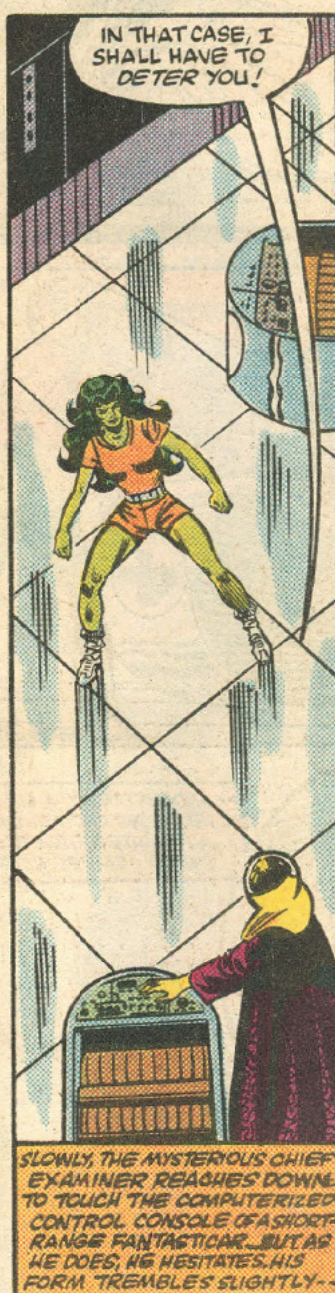
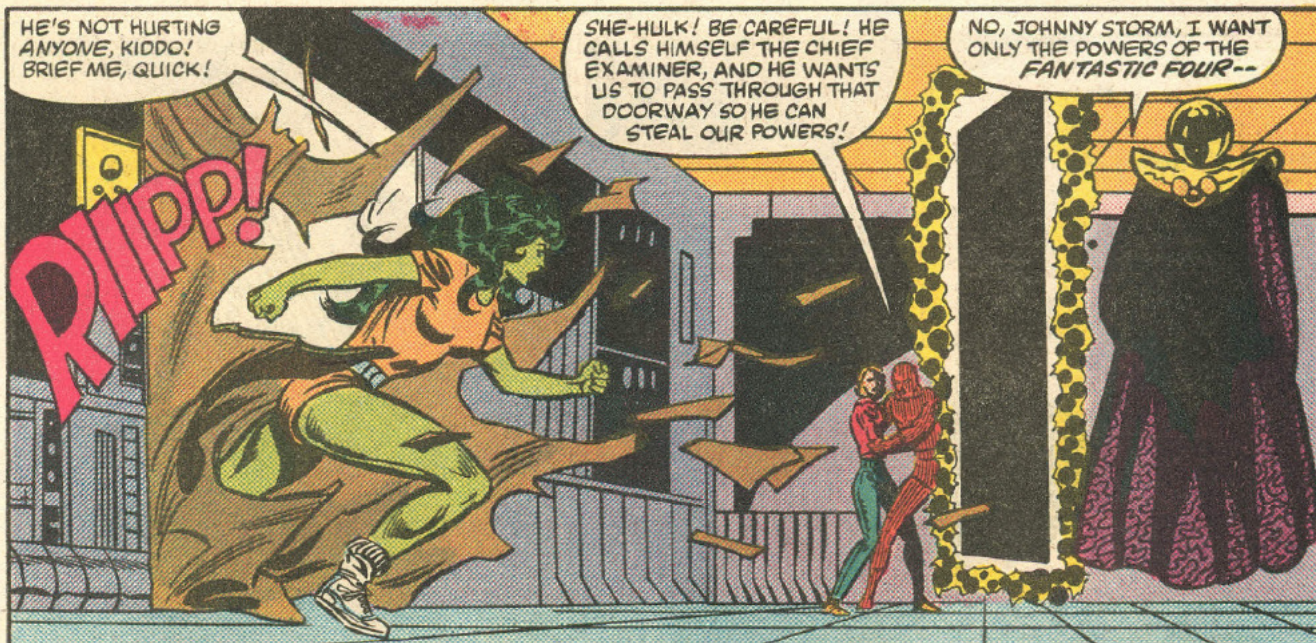
HOLY--! REED'S COMPUTERS ARE THE BEST-PROTECTED ELECTRONICS ON EARTH! IF THAT GUY CAN GET INTO THEM LIKE HE SAYS--

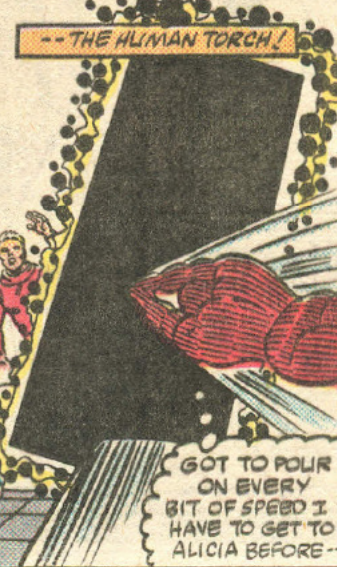
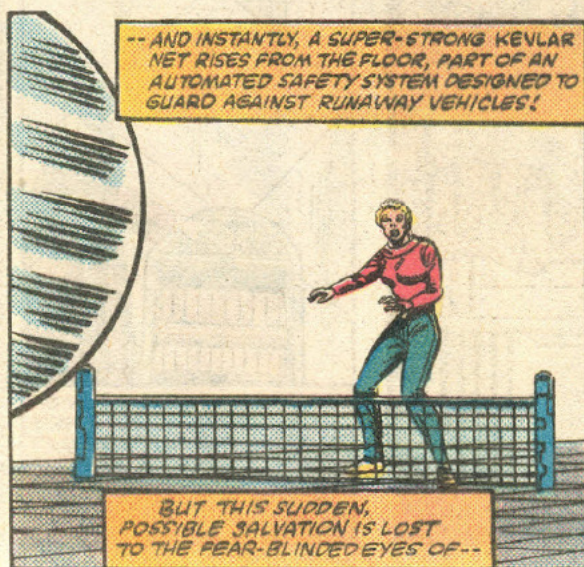
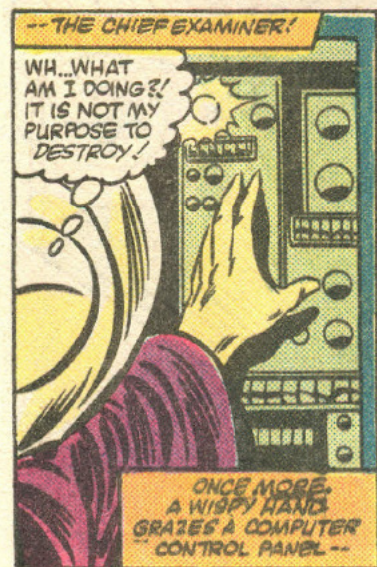
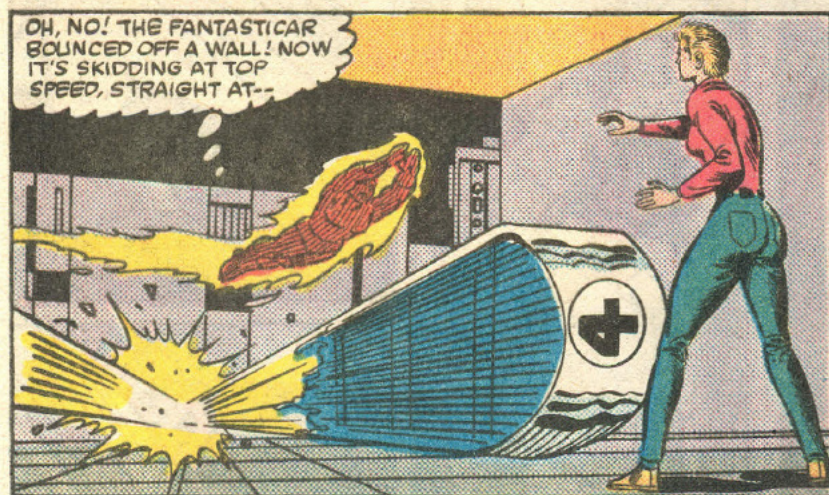
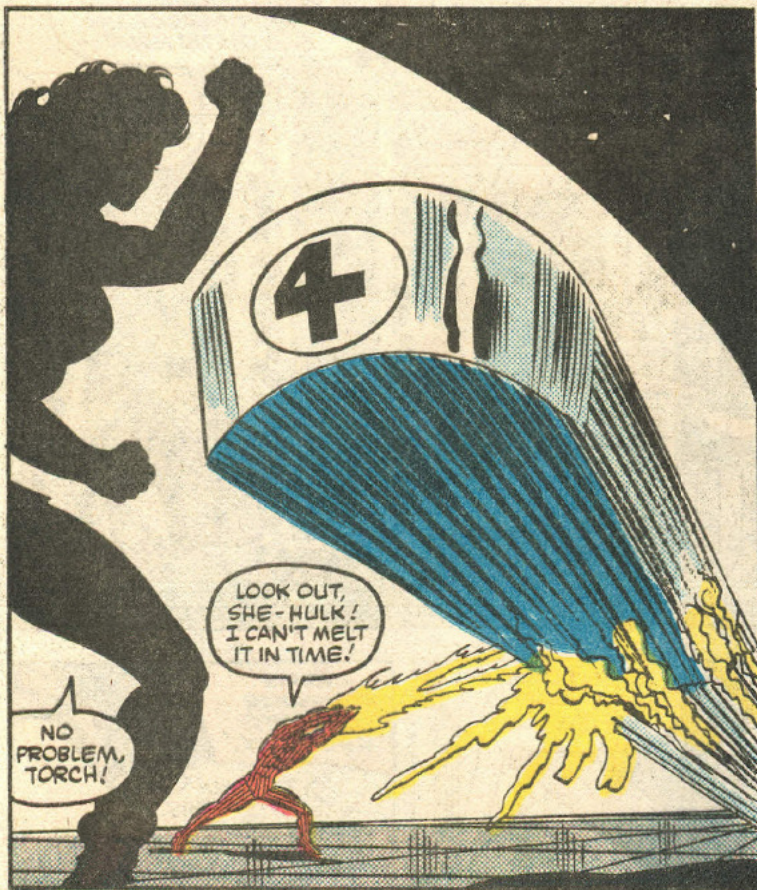
--HE'S MORE DANGEROUS THAN I EVER IMAGINED!

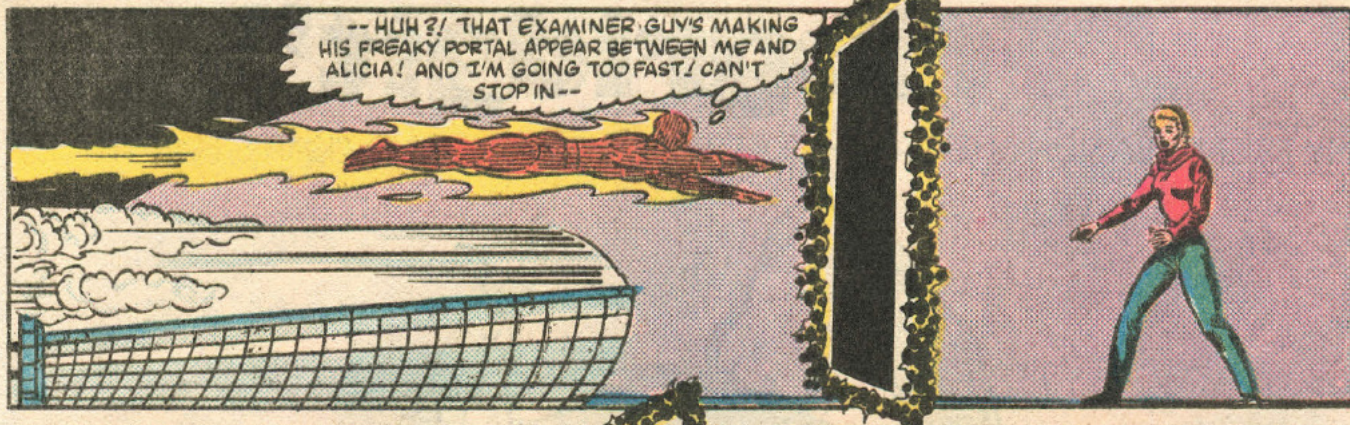




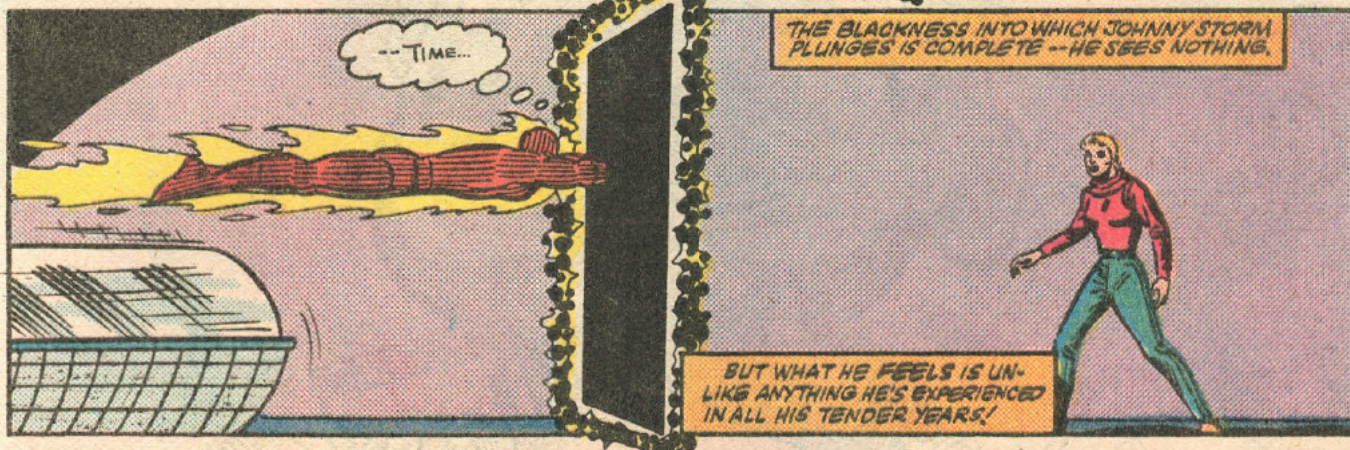








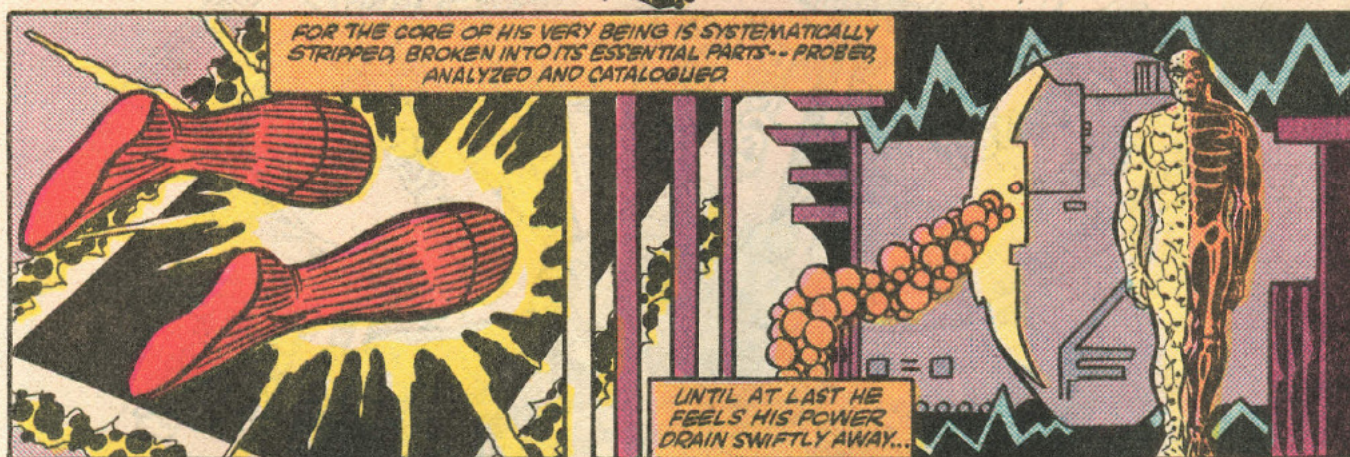
-- HUH?! THAT EXAMINER GUY'S MAKING HIS FREAKY PORTAL APPEAR BETWEEN ME AND ALICIA! AND I'M GOING TOO FAST! CAN'T STOP IN--



-- TIME--

THE BLACKNESS INTO WHICH JOHNNY STORM PLUNGES IS COMPLETE -- HE SEES NOTHING.

BUT WHAT HE FEELS IS UNLIKE ANYTHING HE'S EXPERIENCED IN ALL HIS TENDER YEARS!



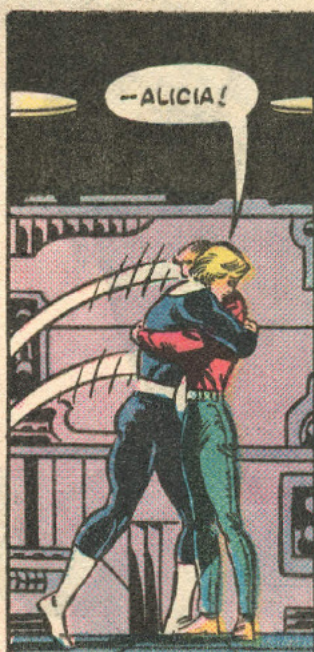
FOR THE CORE OF HIS VERY BEING IS SYSTEMATICALLY STRIPPED, BROKEN INTO ITS ESSENTIAL PARTS-- PROBED, ANALYZED AND CATALOGUED.

UNTIL AT LAST HE FEELS HIS POWER DRAIN SWIFTLY AWAY...



... AND HE TUMBLES WEAKENED, THOUGH APPARENTLY UNHARMED, FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE EBON GATEWAY!

STILL... IN ONE PIECE... AND I CAN FEEL MY POWER ALREADY RETURNING... BUT WHAT ABOUT--

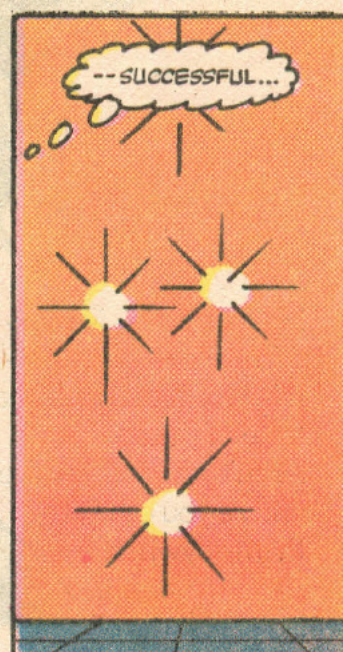


--ALICIA!

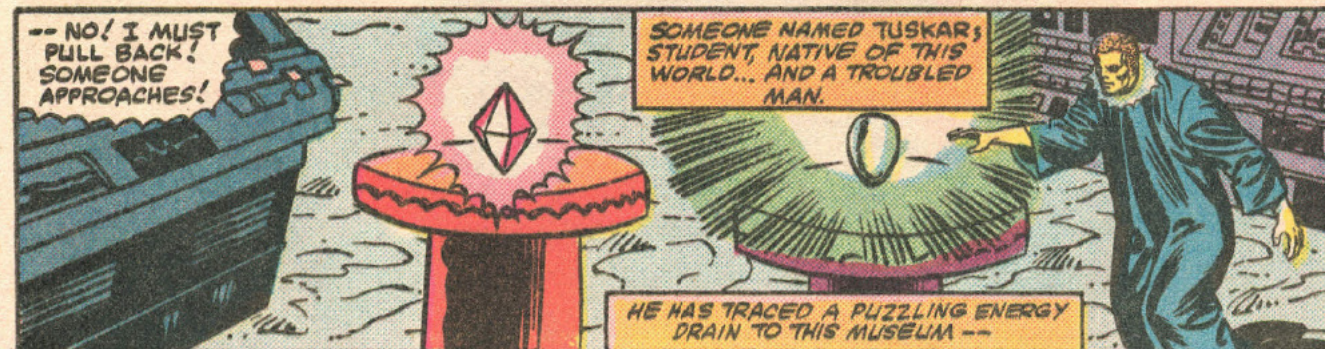
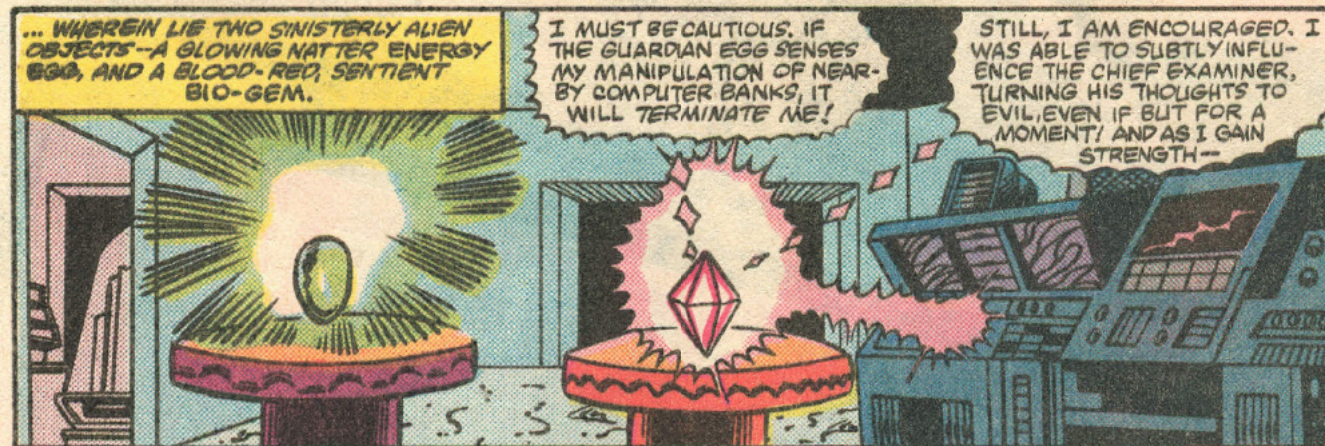
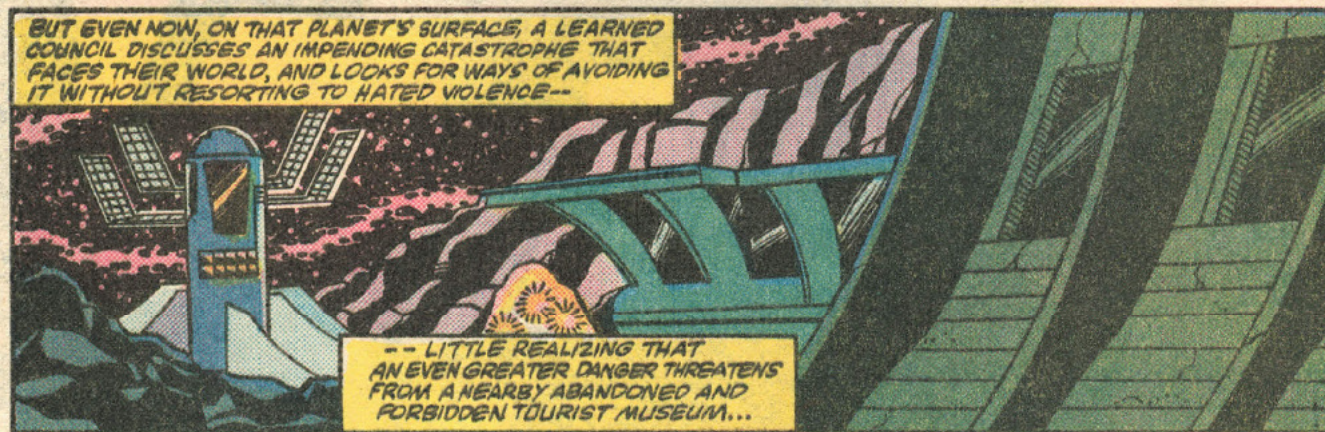
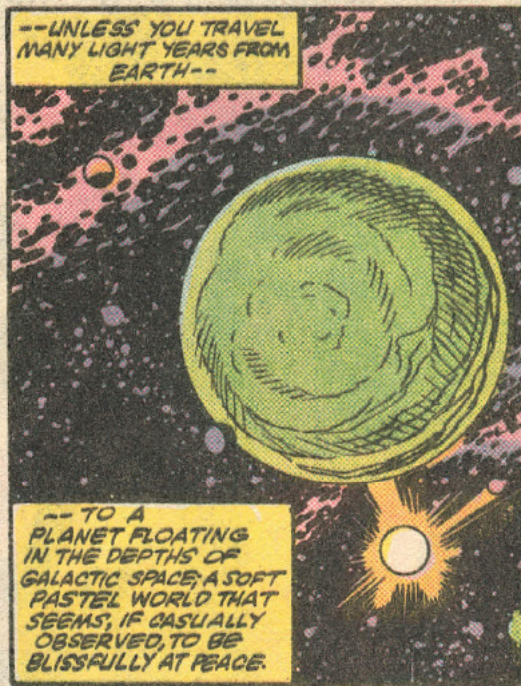


THE POWER OF THE HUMAN TORCH IS MINE, TO ADD TO THAT OF THE HULK AND SPIDER-MAN. * MY MISSION HAS BEEN --

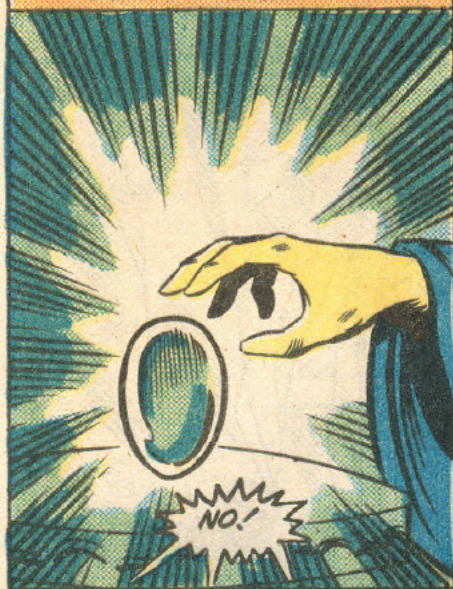
*IN QUESTPROBE #5142--Bob.



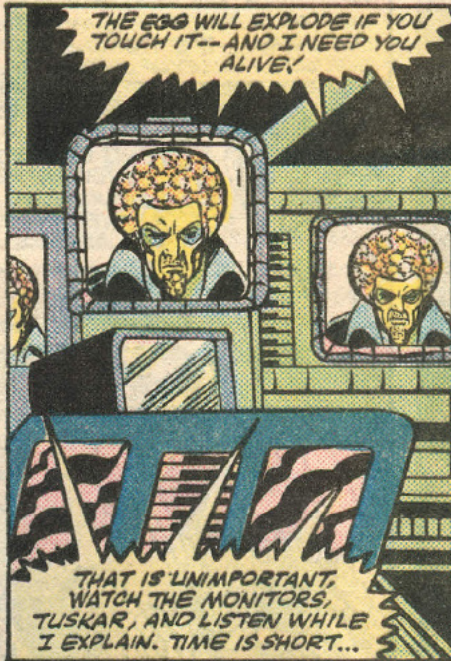
-- SUCCESSFUL --



-- AND NOW REACHES OUT TOWARDS THE NATTER EGG, CURIOSITY OPENING HIS HAND... UNTIL--



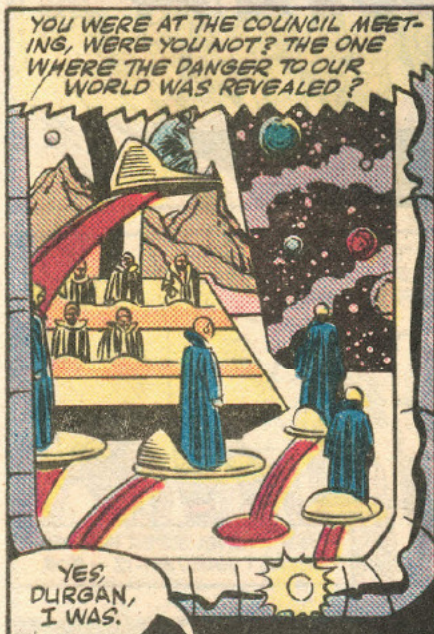
NO!



THE EGG WILL EXPLODE IF YOU TOUCH IT-- AND I NEED YOU ALIVE!

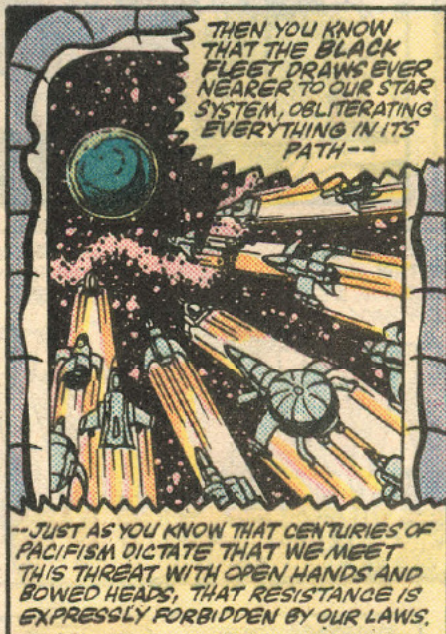
THAT IS UNIMPORTANT, WATCH THE MONITORS, TUSKAR, AND LISTEN WHILE I EXPLAIN. TIME IS SHORT...

WHA-- DURGAN THE PHILOSOPHER! M-MY OLD TEACHER! BUT HOW--



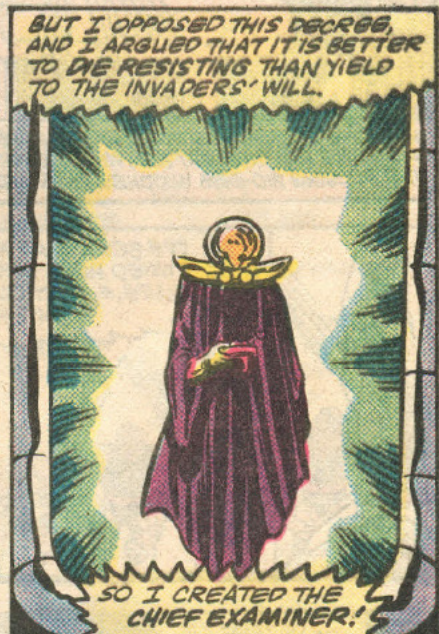
YOU WERE AT THE COUNCIL MEETING, WERE YOU NOT? THE ONE WHERE THE DANGER TO OUR WORLD WAS REVEALED?

YES, DURGAN, I WAS.



THEN YOU KNOW THAT THE BLACK FLEET DRAWS EVER NEARER TO OUR STAR SYSTEM, OBLITERATING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH--

--JUST AS YOU KNOW THAT CENTURIES OF PACIFISM DICTATE THAT WE MEET THIS THREAT WITH OPEN HANDS AND BOWED HEADS, THAT RESISTANCE IS EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN BY OUR LAWS.

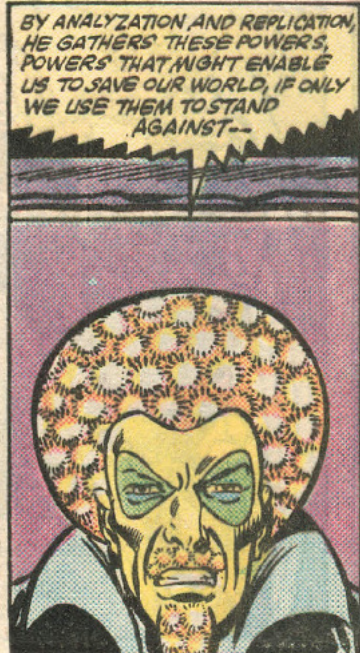


BUT I OPPOSED THIS DECREE, AND I ARGUED THAT IT IS BETTER TO DIE RESISTING THAN YIELD TO THE INVADERS' WILL.

SO I CREATED THE CHIEF EXAMINER!



EVEN AS WE SPEAK, HE IS THE AGENT THAT TRANSFORMS MY PHILOSOPHY INTO ACTION. HE ROAMS A DISTANT PLANET WHERE DWELL NUMEROUS HEROES WITH ASTONISHING POWERS!



BY ANALYZATION AND REPLICATION, HE GATHERS THESE POWERS, POWERS THAT MIGHT ENABLE US TO SAVE OUR WORLD, IF ONLY WE USE THEM TO STAND AGAINST--



NO! I-I'LL LISTEN NO LONGER! YOU SPEAK HERESY! I MUST INFORM THE COUNCIL--

YOU MUST NOT INFORM THE COUNCIL! YOU ARE A KINDRED SPIRIT, TUSKAR, ELSE YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE SET FOOT IN THIS FORBIDDEN PLACE! I NEED YOU, MY FRIEND...

... FOR IN MY PRESENT FORM, I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SAVE OUR PLANET ALONE. WILL YOU HELP ME, TUSKAR?

WILL YOU...?

THE YOUNG STUDENT HESITATES, FISTS CLINCHED, FIGHTING AN INNER BATTLE... WHILE NEARBY THE PULSING BID-GEM WATCHES, AND WAITS.

MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY ON A WORLD MADE FROM PIECES OF MANY WORLDS, BEN GRIMM--THE THING--WANDERS THROUGH A VALLEY OF MIRRORED GLASS...

IT KINDA FITS, SEEIN' MY FACE PLASTERED ALL OVER THE PLACE, AFTER ALL--

-- EVERYTHING ON THIS BLASTED PLANET COMES FROM MY MIND!

IT'S BEEN THAT WAY EVER SINCE I STAYED HERE AFTER THE SECRET WARS.* ONLY PROBLEM IS, I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE ANSWER IS SOMEHOW TIED TO THAT ROT-TOOTHED, GREEN-FACED--

*SEE MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS #s 1-12 -- BOB.

-- WIZARD?*

THERE HE IS! GOTTA GRAB 'IM BEFORE HE--

*THIS STORY TAKES PLACE AFTER THE THING # 17 -- BOB.

-- WHOOP! JOKER PULLED A QUICK FADE!

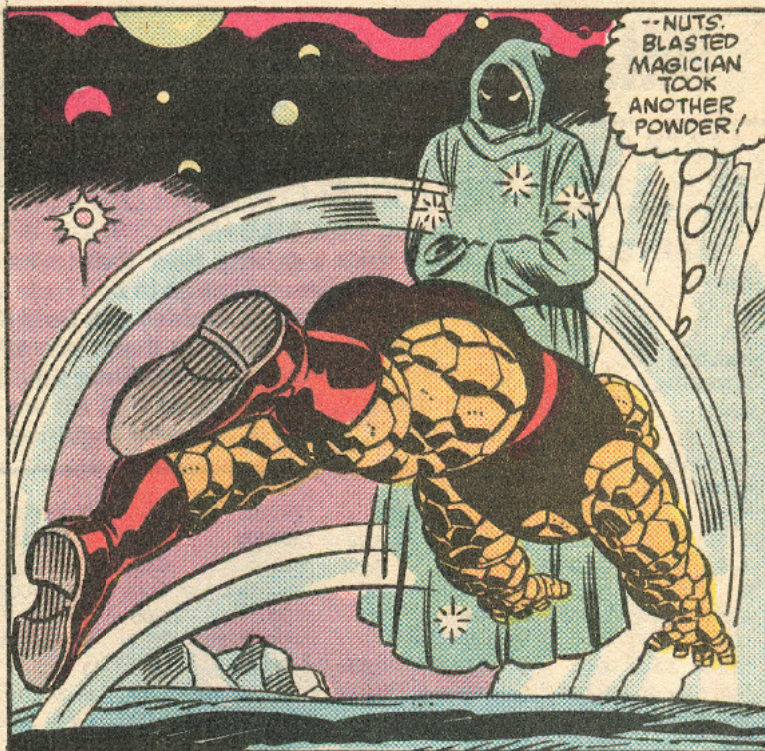
SORTA LIKE A POLITICIAN AFTER ELECTION DAY!

AN' NOW HE'S OVER THERE!

== SHEESH! == MAYBE IF I ASKED 'IM REAL NICE, HE'D CONJURE ME UP SOME ASPIRIN!



NAH, I GOT OTHER THINGS
TA ASK THAT JERK-- LIKE WHY
HE'S BEEN THROWIN' ROAD-
BLOCKS IN MY WAY FER THE
LAST FEW WEEKS, ALMOST
LIKE HE WAS TESTIN' ME
OR--



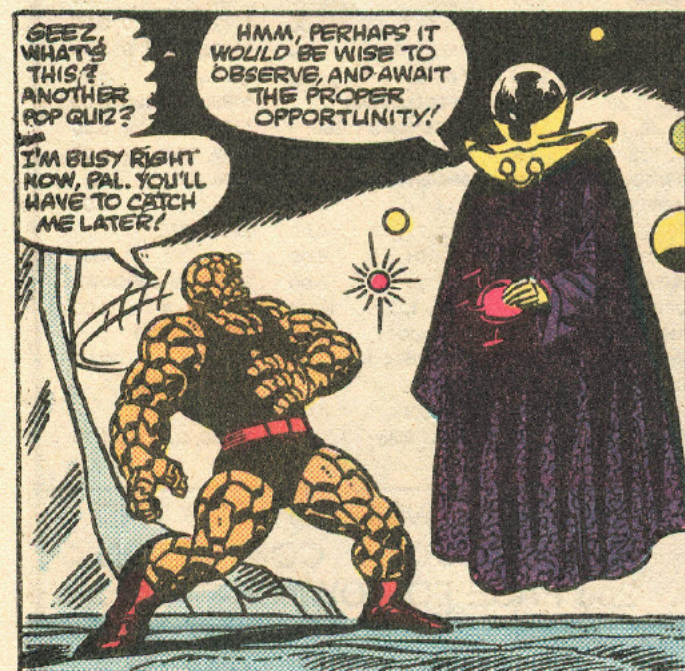
--NUTS.
BLASTED
MAGICIAN
TOOK
ANOTHER
POWDER!



AN' NOW HE'S GLARIN' AT ME
FROM WALLS THAT SHOULD SHOW
MY REFLECTION.

IF THERE'S ONE THING THIS
GUY AIN'T, IT'S PREDICTAB--

BENJAMIN
GRIMM!
I WANT YOUR
POWER!



GEEZ,
WHAT'S
THIS?
ANOTHER
POP QUIZ?

I'M BUSY RIGHT
NOW, PAL. YOU'LL
HAVE TO CATCH
ME LATER!

HMM, PERHAPS IT
WOULD BE WISE TO
OBSERVE, AND AWAIT
THE PROPER
OPPORTUNITY!



YEAH, YOU DO THAT.
ME, I GOT A WIZARD
TO FI--

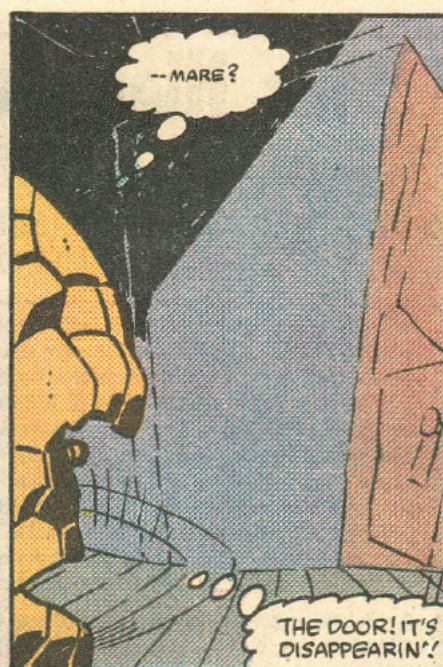
--AHA! HE'S TRYIN' TO HIDE
IN THAT FREAKY BUILDIN'!



DID I SAY
"FREAKY"?
THIS PLACE
LOOKS LIKE
SOMETHIN'
SALVADOR
DALI MIGHTA
DESIGNED
AFTER A
BAD DAY!



OR
BETTER YET,
A BAD NIGHT--



THE DOOR! IT'S
DISAPPEARIN'!



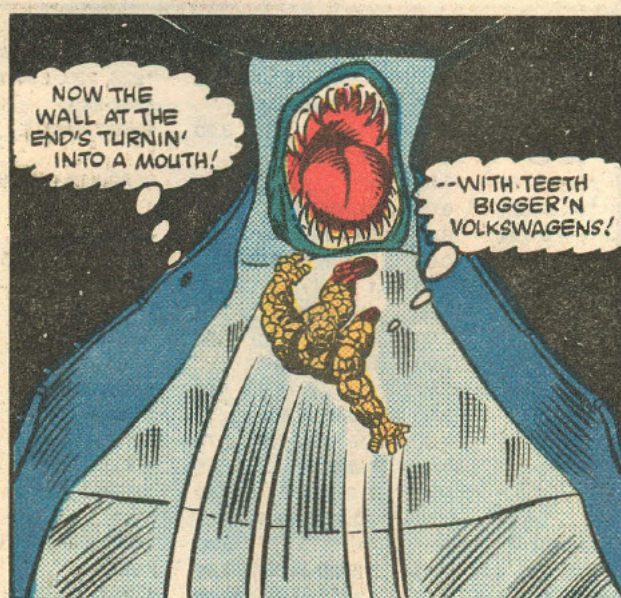
NO
MATTER.
I AIN'T
FINISHED
IN HERE,
ANYWAY.

STRANGE,
THOUGH.
THIS JOINT
ALMOST
SEEMS...
FAMILIAR
SOMEHOW.
LIKE I'VE
BEEN HERE
BEFO--



--WHOA!
STEPS
SUDDENLY
SNAPPED
FLUSH,
TURNIN'
THE
STAIRWAY
INTO A
SLIDE!

AN' I'M
STARTIN'
TO SLIDE
UP INSTEAD
O' DOWN!

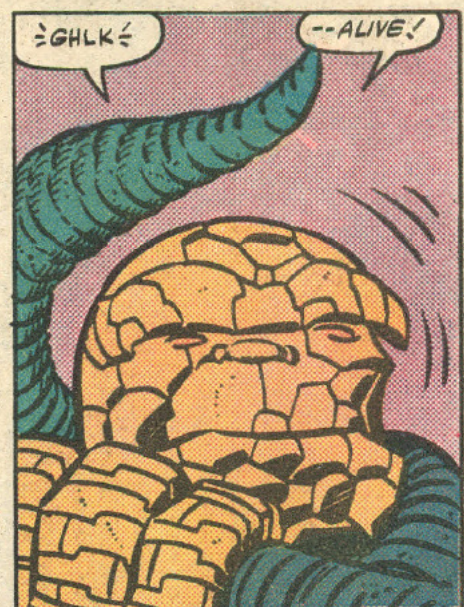
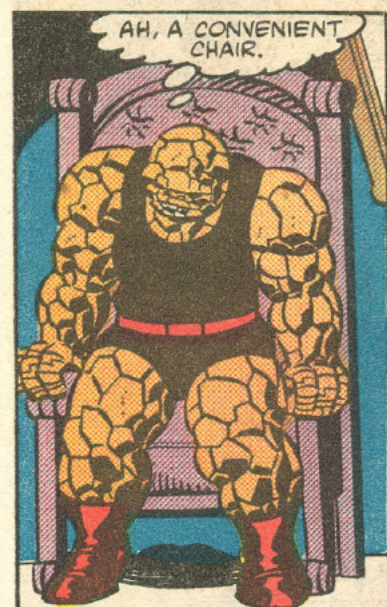
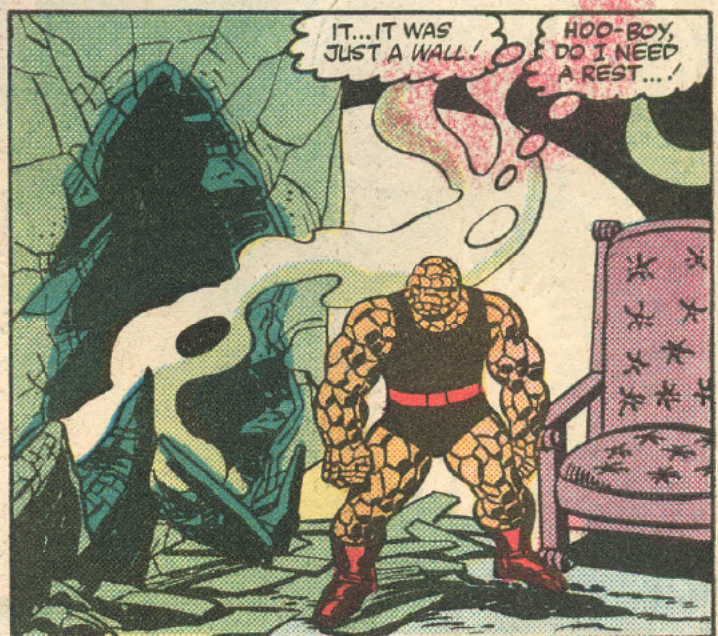
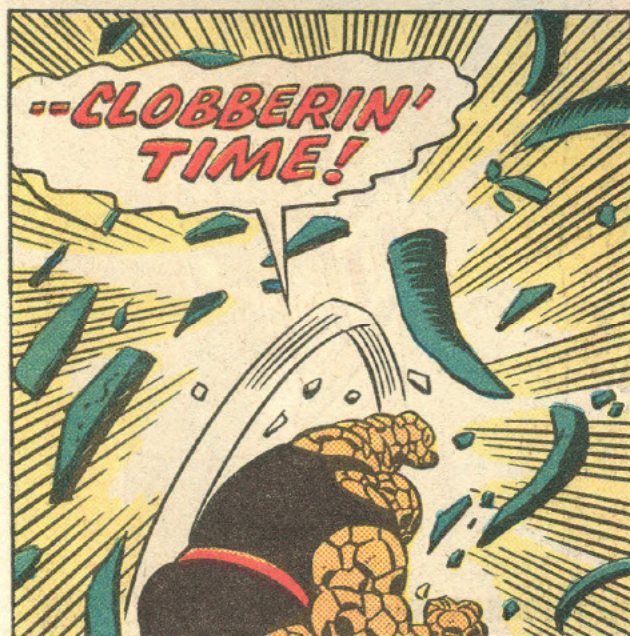
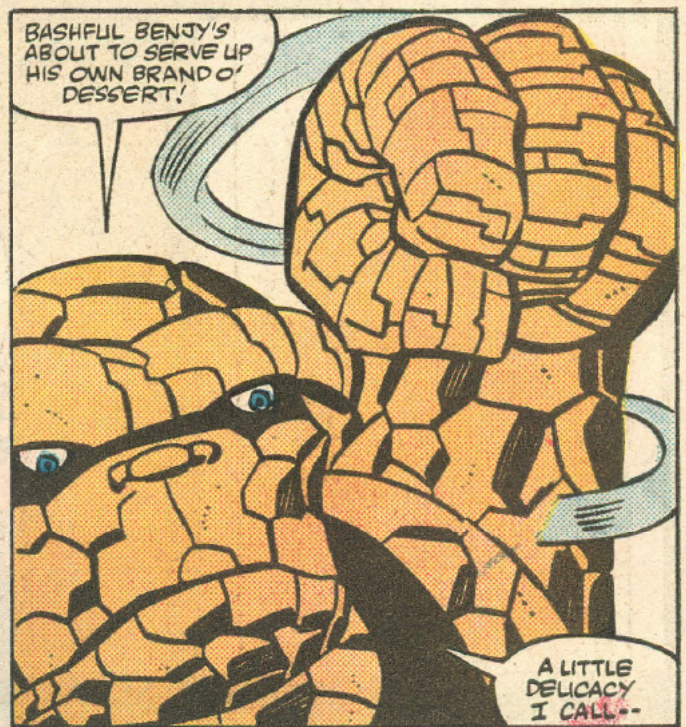
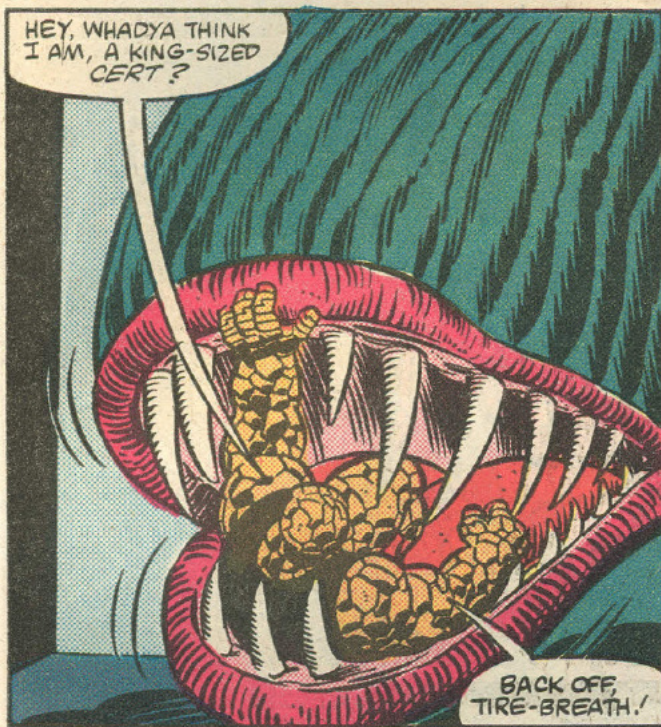


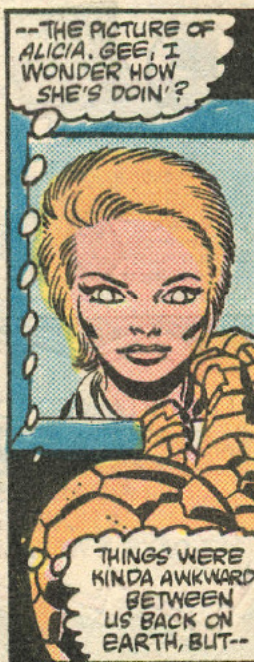
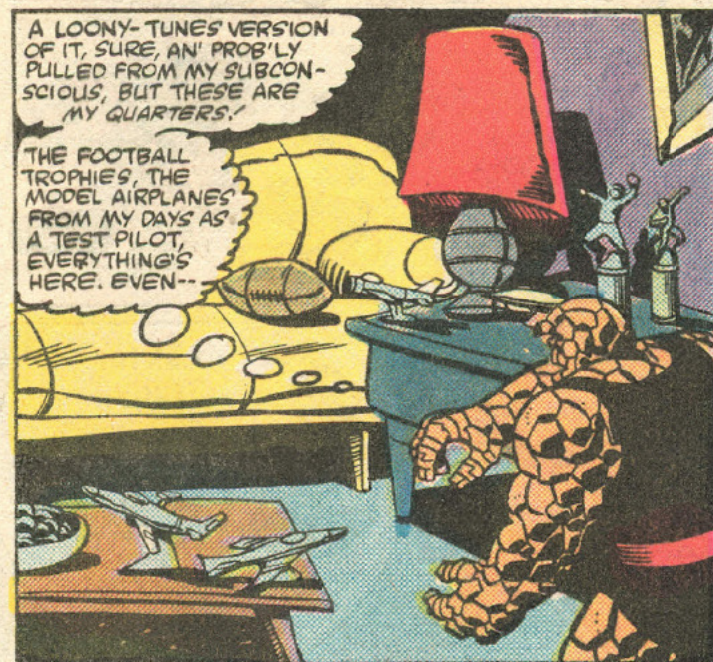
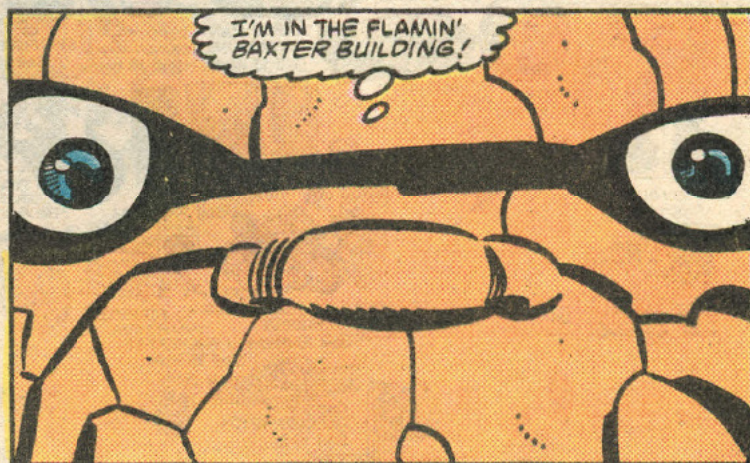
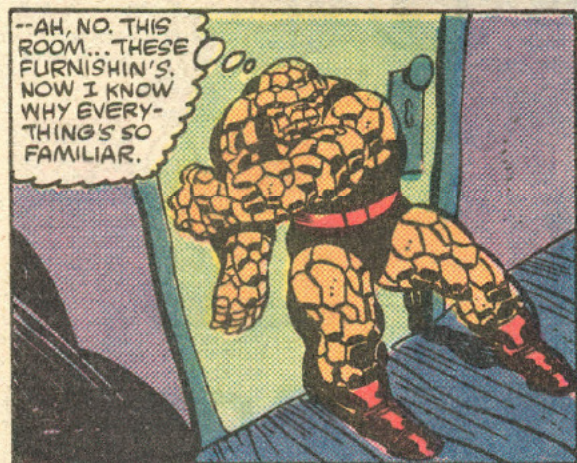
NOW THE
WALL AT THE
END'S TURNIN'
INTO A MOUTH!

--WITH TEETH
BIGGER'N
VOLKSWAGENS!



AN' GUESS
WHICH EVER-
LOVIN' BLUE-
EYED SUCKER'S
GONNA BE
BRUNCH!

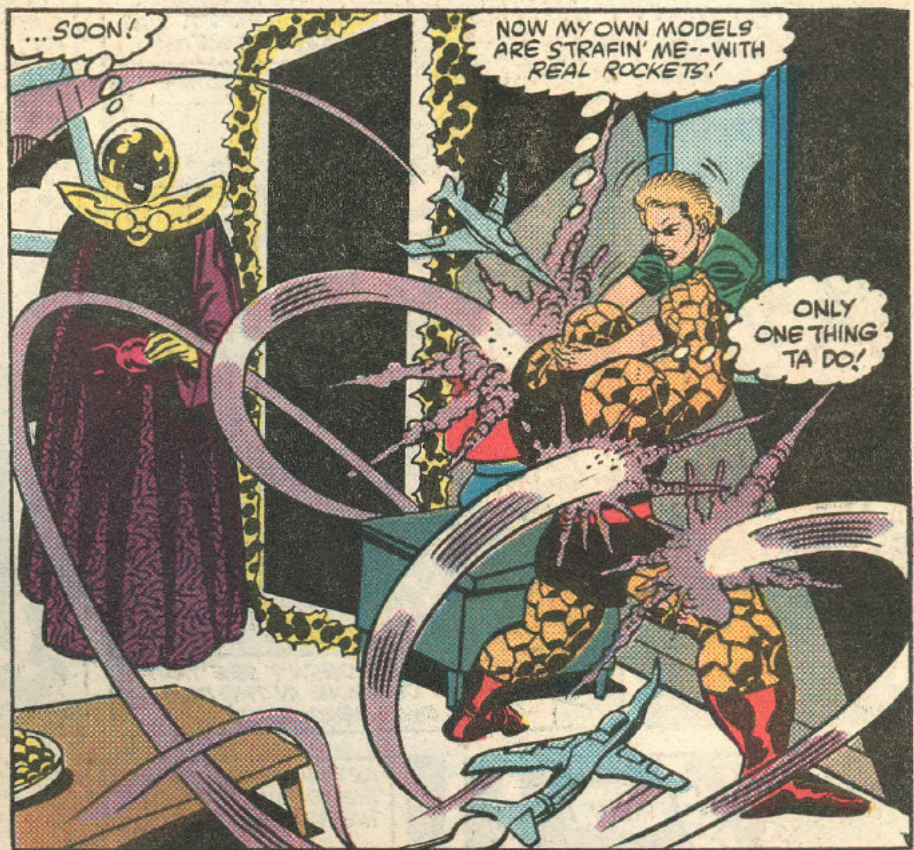






-- ATTACK!

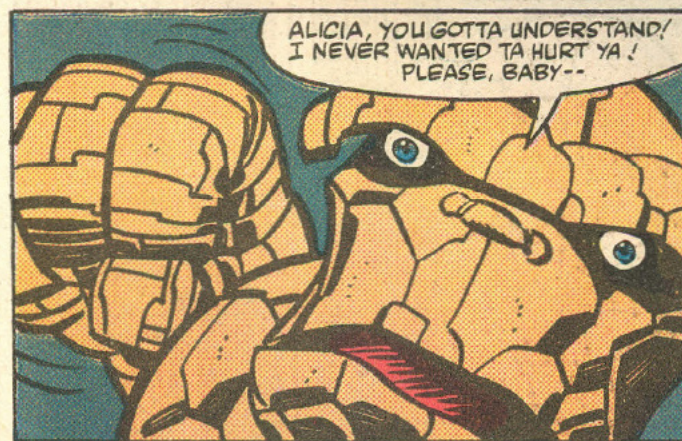
THE THING IS INDEED A WORTHY SUBJECT. I SHALL HAVE HIS POWER...



... SOON!

NOW MY OWN MODELS ARE STRAFIN' ME-- WITH REAL ROCKETS!

ONLY ONE THING TA DO!



ALICIA, YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND! I NEVER WANTED TA HURT YA! PLEASE, BABY--



-- FERGIVE ME!

KREEESH

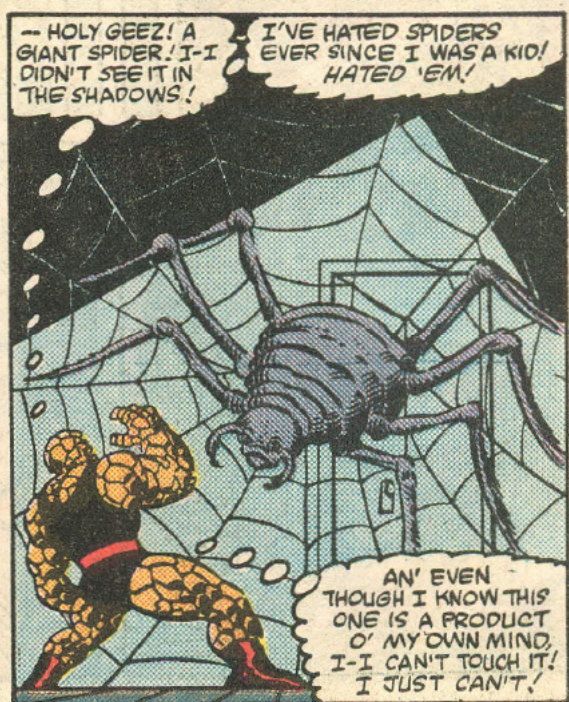


THIS PLACE IS NUTS! I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!



EVEN IF I HAFTA SMASH THROUGH EVERY WALL IN THE JOINT TO-- WAITA-MINIT! I SEE LIGHT!

IT'S A DOOR TO THE OUTSIDE! ALL I GOTTA DO IS--



-- HOLY GEEZ! A GIANT SPIDER! I-I DIDN'T SEE IT IN THE SHADOWS!

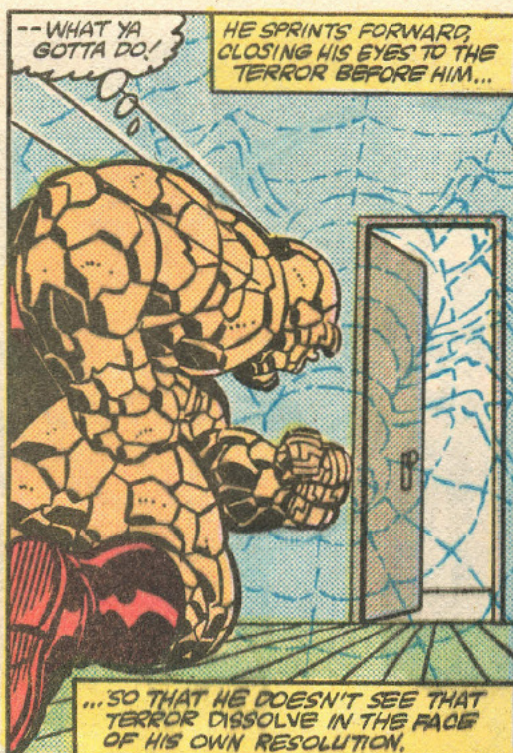
I'VE HATED SPIDERS EVER SINCE I WAS A KID! HATED 'EM!

AN' EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THIS ONE IS A PRODUCT O' MY OWN MIND, I-I CAN'T TOUCH IT! I JUST CAN'T!



BUT I HAVE TO. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY OUT, AN' IF I DON'T GO NOW, I COULD BE TRAPPED IN THE BAXTER BUILDING FOREVER!

BENJY, I GUESS YA JUST GOTTA DO--



-- WHAT YA GOTTA DO!

HE SPRINTS FORWARD, CLOSING HIS EYES TO THE TERROR BEFORE HIM...

...SO THAT HE DOESN'T SEE THAT TERROR DISSOLVE IN THE FACE OF HIS OWN RESOLUTION.

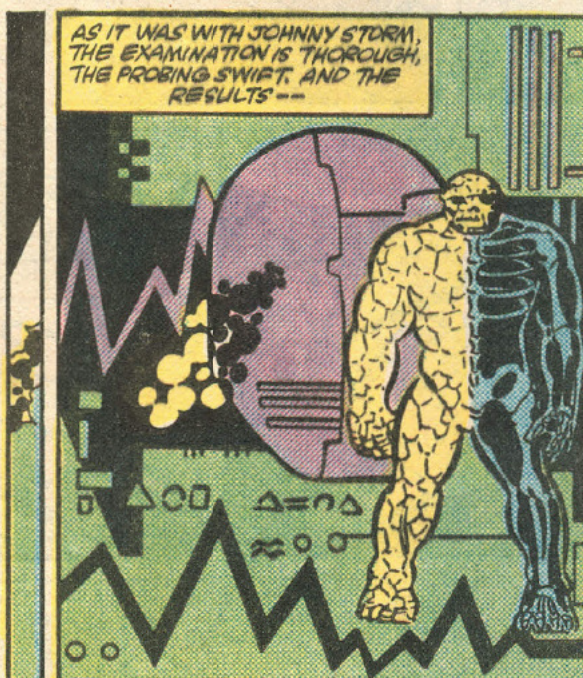


UNFORTUNATELY, HE ALSO DOESN'T SEE THE MIDNIGHT PORTAL THAT SUDDENLY APPEARS IN HIS PATH!



UNTIL...

HUH?



AS IT WAS WITH JOHNNY STORM, THE EXAMINATION IS THOROUGH, THE PROBING SWIFT, AND THE RESULTS--



-- DRAINING!

UUUHH... F-FEEL WEAK... AS A KITTEN!



BUT THE SPIDER'S GONE-- AN' SO'S THE WACKO BAXTER BUILDIN'!

THE ONLY ONE LEFT IS THAT GUY WITH THE FISHBOWL ON HIS HEAD!



AN' NOW EVEN HE'S TAKIN' IT ON THE LAM! SHEESH!



MAYBE SOME DAY THIS'LL ALL MAKE SENSE TA ME-- BUT RIGHT NOW, I GOT ME A WIZARD TA CATCH!

LET SOMEONE ELSE WORRY ABOUT OL' GLOBE-DOME AN' HIS PET RECTANGLE!

NEXT ISSUE: COULD IT BE? THE CHIEF EXAMINER -- A VILLAIN?