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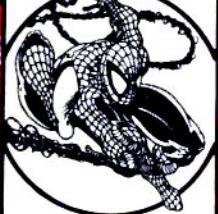
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# WHAT IF... THE WATCHER SAVED THE UNIVERSE?



**30TH**  
ANNIVERSARY  
1962 - 1992



**THE AMAZING  
SPIDER-MAN**

**TIMEQUAKE**  
PART FIVE OF FIVE



# WHAT IF THE WATCHER SAVED THE MULTIVERSE?

"TIMEQUAKE" BOOK 5 OF 5

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THE TIME VARIANT AUTHORITY IS A VAST BUREAUCRACY--

(BELIEVE ME, YOU DO NOT WANT TO KNOW HOW VAST!)

--DEDICATED TO THE THANKLESS TASK OF OVERSEEING, ADJUSTING, AND ULTIMATELY BALANCING THE MYRIAD TIMELINES OF AN INFINITELY VARIABLE MULTIVERSE.

THIS MOST DEFINITELY INCLUDES MONITORING OF ALL NEXT--THOSE BEINGS, ONE TO EACH REALITY, WHO ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THAT REALITY'S VERY EXISTENCE.

NATURALLY, ANY ORGANIZATION SO IMMENSE IN SCOPE MUST HAVE--

--A WAITING ROOM.

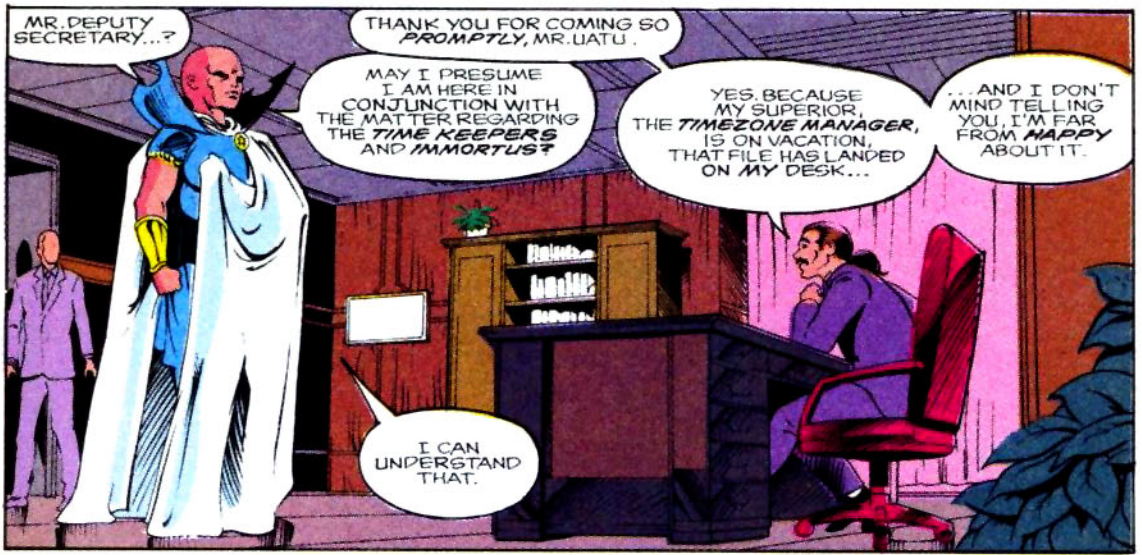
I KNOW, FOR I AM THE WATCHER.

IN THIS CASE, I SUPPOSE I AM ALSO-- THE WAITER.

...THE DEPUTY SECRETARY WILL SEE YOU NOW.

MR. LIATU...





MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY...?

THANK YOU FOR COMING SO PROMPTLY, MR. UATU.

MAY I PRESUME I AM HERE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MATTER REGARDING THE *TIME KEEPERS* AND *IMMORTUS*?

YES, BECAUSE MY SUPERIOR, THE *TIMEZONE MANAGER*, IS ON VACATION, THAT FILE HAS LANDED ON MY DESK...

...AND I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU, I'M FAR FROM *HAPPY* ABOUT IT.

I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.



STILL, YOU WILL ADMIT--

NOT MY IDEA, I ASSURE YOU.

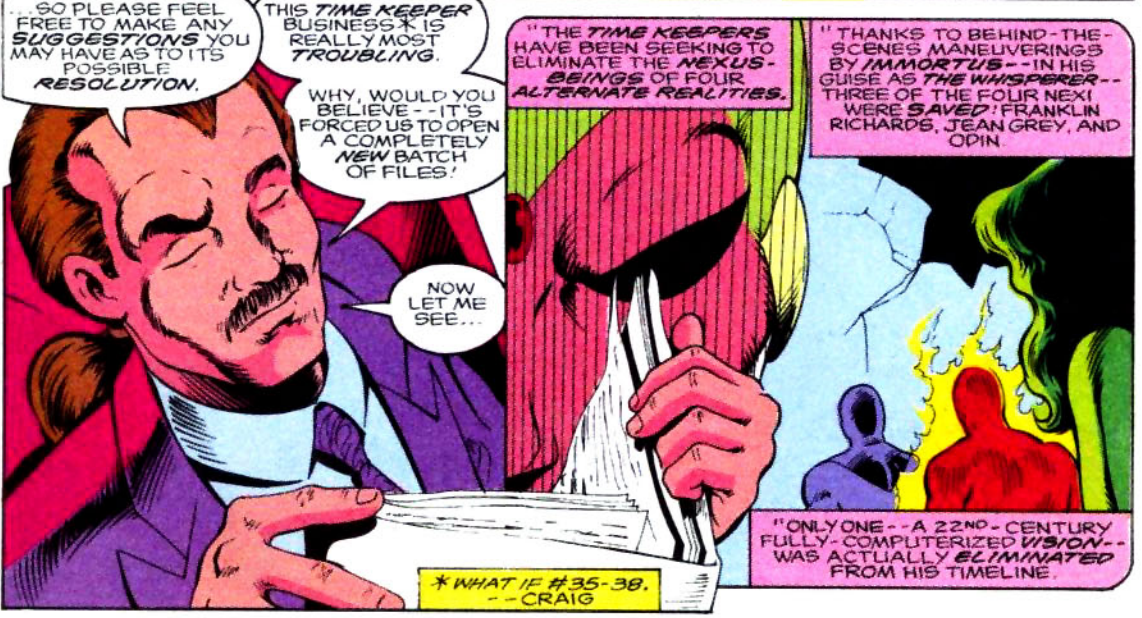
STILL, PERHAPS YOU'LL *LEARN* A THING OR TWO.

I'VE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ALLOW YOU TO OBSERVE OUR OPERATIONS IN THIS MATTER.

BY THE WAY, ALL COSMIC OATHS--INCLUDING YOURS NOT TO INTERFERE IN THE AFFAIRS OF ANY WORLD--HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED...

-- IT IS MOST UNUSUAL... FOR THE TVA TO INVITE A *WATCHER* ONTO ITS PREMISES.

...WHILE THIS PARTICULAR SECTION OF THE *CONTINUUM* IS BEING *REFITTED*...



...SO PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE ANY SUGGESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE AS TO ITS POSSIBLE RESOLUTION.

THIS *TIME KEEPER* BUSINESS IS REALLY MOST TROUBLING.

WHY, WOULD YOU BELIEVE -- IT'S FORCED US TO OPEN A COMPLETELY NEW BATCH OF FILES!

NOW LET ME SEE...

"THE *TIME KEEPERS* HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO ELIMINATE THE *NEXUS-BEINGS* OF FOUR ALTERNATE REALITIES.

" THANKS TO BEHIND-THE-SCENES MANUEVERINGS BY *IMMORTUS*-- IN HIS GUISE AS THE *WHISPERER*-- THREE OF THE FOUR NEXT WERE *SAVED*: FRANKLIN RICHARDS, JEAN GREY, AND OPIN.

" ONLY ONE -- A 22ND-CENTURY FULLY-COMPUTERIZED *VISION*-- WAS ACTUALLY ELIMINATED FROM HIS TIMELINE.

\* WHAT IF # 35-38. -- CRAIG



"IMMORTUS ACTED BY PLUCKING AN AGENT FROM EACH THREATENED REALITY:

"DR. DOOM... 22ND-CENTURY IRONDROID... A VAMPIRIC WOLVERINE... AND THOR."

"--AND IMMORTUS WAS FREED FROM THE LIMBO IN WHICH THE TIME KEEPERS HAD IMPRISONED HIM."

"WHEN, WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, THEY RESCUED THE ALTERNATIVE ODIN, ALL TIMELINES WERE THROWN 'OUT OF SYNC,' SO TO SPEAK--"

"MOREOVER, HE HAS SIPHONED OFF ENOUGH NEXUS POWER FROM THOSE FOUR TIMELINES TO MOVE TO ANOTHER PLANE OF EXISTENCE."

"THUS, HE IS NO LONGER A MAN."

"HE HAS BECOME A QUANTUM WAVE-- INFILTRATING ONE ALTERNATE REALITY AFTER ANOTHER."

"IF HE ISN'T STOPPED, HE WILL REORDER THE ENTIRE MULTIVERSE, TO MAKE HIMSELF MASTER OF ALL TIME!"

"WORSE, YET--"

-- THE TIME VARIANT AUTHORITY MAY VERY WELL BE DISSOLVED, AND WE'LL ALL BE OUT OF A JOB!"

NOW THAT WOULD BE A PITY."

"I'M GLAD YOU APPRECIATE THE EXTREME GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION"

SO I NOTICED, AT THEIR CITADEL AT THE END OF TIME."

I MUST ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT ALTHOUGH I KNOW IT WAS THE TIME KEEPERS WHO ORIGINALLY GAVE IMMORTUS MASTERY OVER A 7000-YEAR PERIOD--

-- I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNCERTAIN PRECISELY WHO GAVE TEMPORAL JURISDICTION TO THE TIME KEEPERS!"

THERE'S THIS OTHER TROUBLING DETAIL, AS WELL:

WHEN THE TIMELINES WERE THROWN OUT OF SYNC, THE THREE TIME KEEPERS, ONE BY ONE-- CEASED TO EXIST!"



I AM SURPRISED THE TIME KEEPERS WERE ALLOWED TO BECOME SO IMPORTANT.

IT HAS TO DO WITH--HE WHO REMAINS.

YES, I KNOW THAT GRAMMATICALLY IT SHOULD BE "HIM WHO REMAINS"--

--BUT EVEN BUREAUCRACIES MUST BE ALLOWED A BIT OF POETIC LICENSE NOW AND THEN.

HE IS, AS I SUSPECT YOU KNOW, THE VERY LAST DIRECTOR OF THE TIME VARIANT AUTHORITY.

"THEY TRAVELED BACK THROUGH TIME, DESTROYING EVERY ERA ON WHICH THEY HAPPENED, ON AN INSANE QUEST FOR TIME'S VERY BEGINNING.

"AT THE END OF TIME, JUST PRIOR TO THE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE, HE OVERSAW THE CREATION OF WHAT WERE INTENDED TO BE THE LAST LIVING BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE!

"THEY WERE TO BE OUR GIFT TO THE FUTURE, WHO WOULD TEACH THOSE OF THE NEXT UNIVERSAL CYCLE HOW TO AVOID THE ERRORS WE HAD MADE.

"ALAS, THE THREE ENTITIES WHO HATCHED FROM HIS NURTURE-PODS WERE IRREMIEDIABLY FLAWED--EVEN WARPED.

"FOR MORE REASONS THAN ONE, WE HAVE DESIGNATED THEM--THE TIME TWISTERS.



"IT TOOK ALL THE BEST EFFORTS OF THOR, THE EARTHLING JANE FOSTER, AND ZARRKO THE TOMORROWMAN--



\* THOR # 243-245 -- CRAIG

"-- TO CONVINCE HE WHO REMAINS THAT HIS FIRST EXPERIMENT HAD BEEN A DISMAL FAILURE.\*

"WITH A TEAR IN HIS EYE, HE RETROACTIVELY TERMINATED THE TIME TWISTERS BEFORE THEY WERE BORN--

THE KEEPERS MAY BE GONE, BUT THE TVA STILL EXISTS--AT LEAST UNTIL THE IMMORTUS WAVE ERASES US, AS WELL.

WE CANNOT ALLOW IT TO ERASE THE TIMELINES--EVERYTHING WE HAVE WORKED FOR AGES TO CREATE.

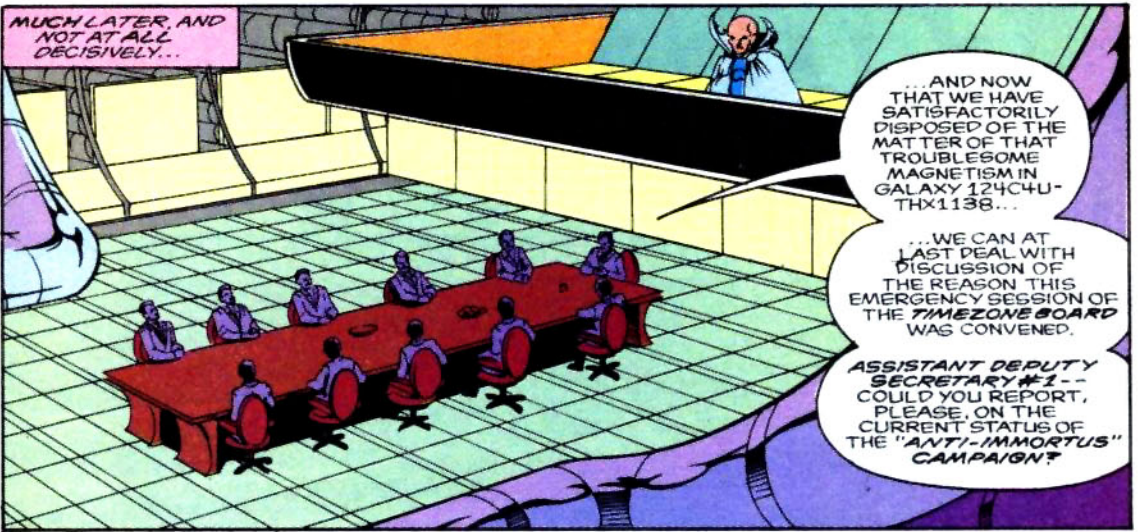


THUS, THE TVA WILL ACT-- --DECISIVELY-- --NOW!

"-- AND WENT ON TO CREATE THEIR REPLACEMENTS-- THE TIME KEEPERS."



MUCH LATER, AND NOT AT ALL DECISIVELY...



...AND NOW THAT WE HAVE SATISFACTORILY DISPOSED OF THE MATTER OF THAT TROUBLE-SOME MAGNETISM IN GALAXY 124C4U-THX1138...

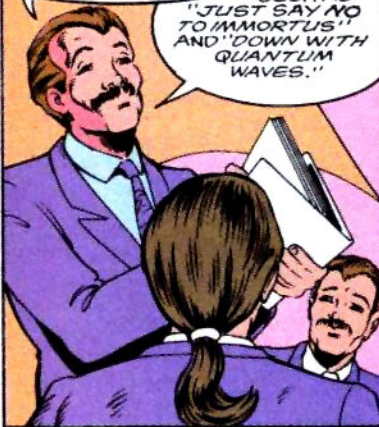
...WE CAN AT LAST DEAL WITH DISCUSSION OF THE REASON THIS EMERGENCY SESSION OF THE **TIMEZONE BOARD** WAS CONVENED.

**ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY #1** -- COULD YOU REPORT, PLEASE, ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE "**ANTI-IMMORTUS**" CAMPAIGN?

I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT IT IS PROCEEDING QUITE SATISFACTORILY, DEPUTY SECRETARY.

I HAVE LAUNCHED A BARRAGE OF POSTERS, LEAFLETS, AND T-SHIRTS THROUGHOUT THE TIME CONTINUUM...

... WITH SLOGANS SUCH AS "JUST SAY NO TO IMMORTUS" AND "DOWN WITH QUANTUM WAVES."



AN ADMIRABLE BEGINNING, A.D.S. #1, THOUGH THERE ARE SOME WHO MIGHT QUESTION SUCH A CAMPAIGN'S EFFICACY.



NOW, MAYBE WE CAN HEAR FROM ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY #2?

I BELIEVE, DEPUTY SECRETARY, THAT TO RESTORE THE TIME KEEPERS TO EXISTENCE--



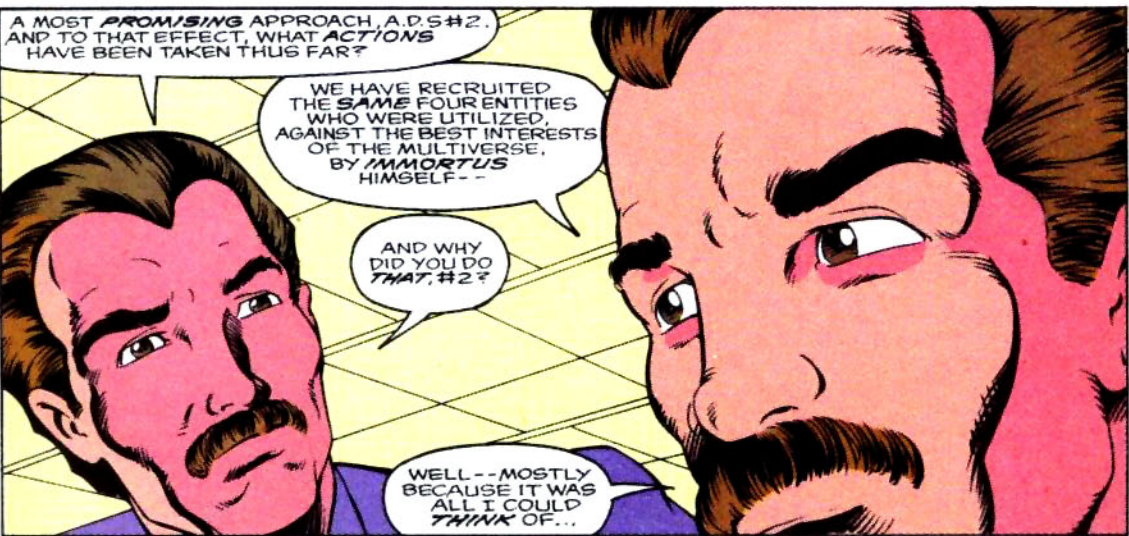
-- WE MUST ALTER THE VERY ORIGINS OF IMMORTUS, SO THAT HE BECOMES NO LONGER A THREAT TO THE TIMELINES.

A MOST PROMISING APPROACH, A.D.S. #2. AND TO THAT EFFECT, WHAT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN THUS FAR?

WE HAVE RECRUITED THE SAME FOUR ENTITIES WHO WERE UTILIZED, AGAINST THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE MULTIVERSE, BY IMMORTUS HIMSELF--

AND WHY DID YOU DO THAT, #2?

WELL-- MOSTLY BECAUSE IT WAS ALL I COULD THINK OF...





"I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO BEGIN WITH LIMBO, IMMORTUS'S FORMER DOMAIN.

"LIMBO IS GUARDED BY THE GIANT TEMPLUS-- BY A MULTITUDE OF ROBOTS OF THE PHARAOH RAMA-TUT-- AND BY THE SPACE PHANTOM'S WARLIKE RACE.

"AGAINST THEM I HAVE SENT OUR FOUR TIME-PLUCKED TITANS, IF I MAY COIN A PHRASE:

"THE THOR OF THE REALITY IN WHICH OPIN WAS SAVED FROM ANNIHILATION BY THIS VERY QUARTET--

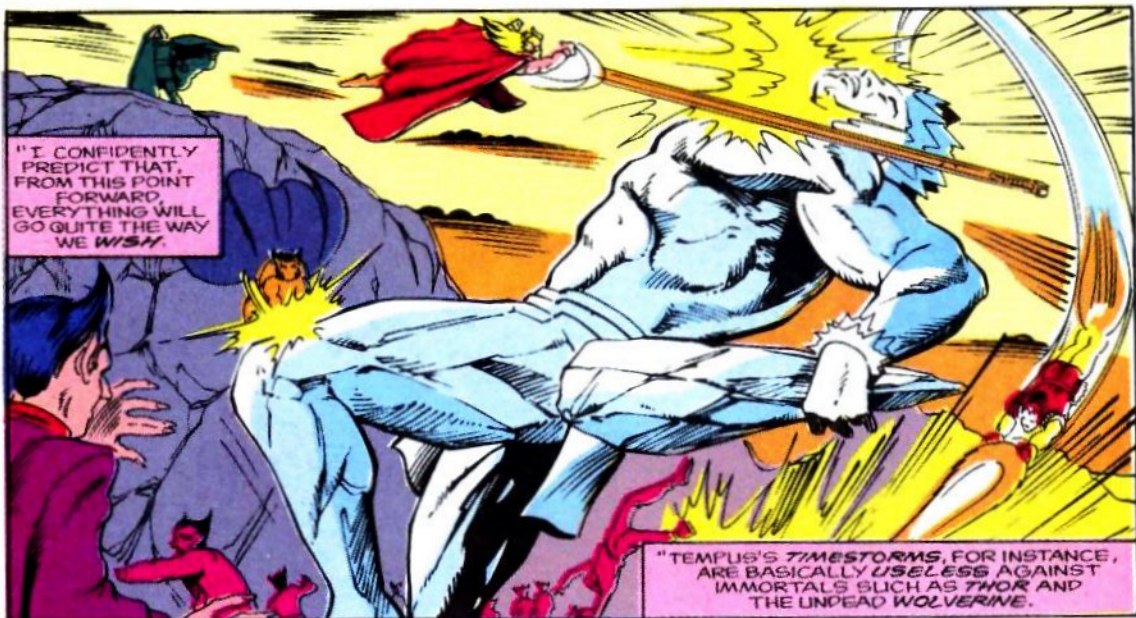
--THE IRONDROID OF THE 22ND-CENTURY WORLD IN WHICH THE ULTRA-VISION WAS WIPED OUT OF EXISTENCE--

--THE DR DOOM OF THE EARTH IN WHICH HE HELPED THE FANTASTIC FIVE SAVE THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN FRANKLIN RICHARDS--

"--AND THE WOLVERINE WHO HAS BECOME LORD OF A RACE OF MUTANT VAMPIRES.







"I CONFIDENTLY PREDICT THAT, FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, EVERYTHING WILL GO QUITE THE WAY WE WISH."

"TEMPUS'S TIMESTORMS, FOR INSTANCE, ARE BASICALLY USELESS AGAINST IMMORTALS SUCH AS T'POL AND THE UNDEAD WOLVERINE."



"WHILE SURELY, VICTOR VON DOOM, ON EVEN CURSORY EXAMINATION OF RAMA-TUT'S ROBOTS--"



"-- WILL NOTICE THAT THEY ARE SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO HIS OWN DESIGN--"



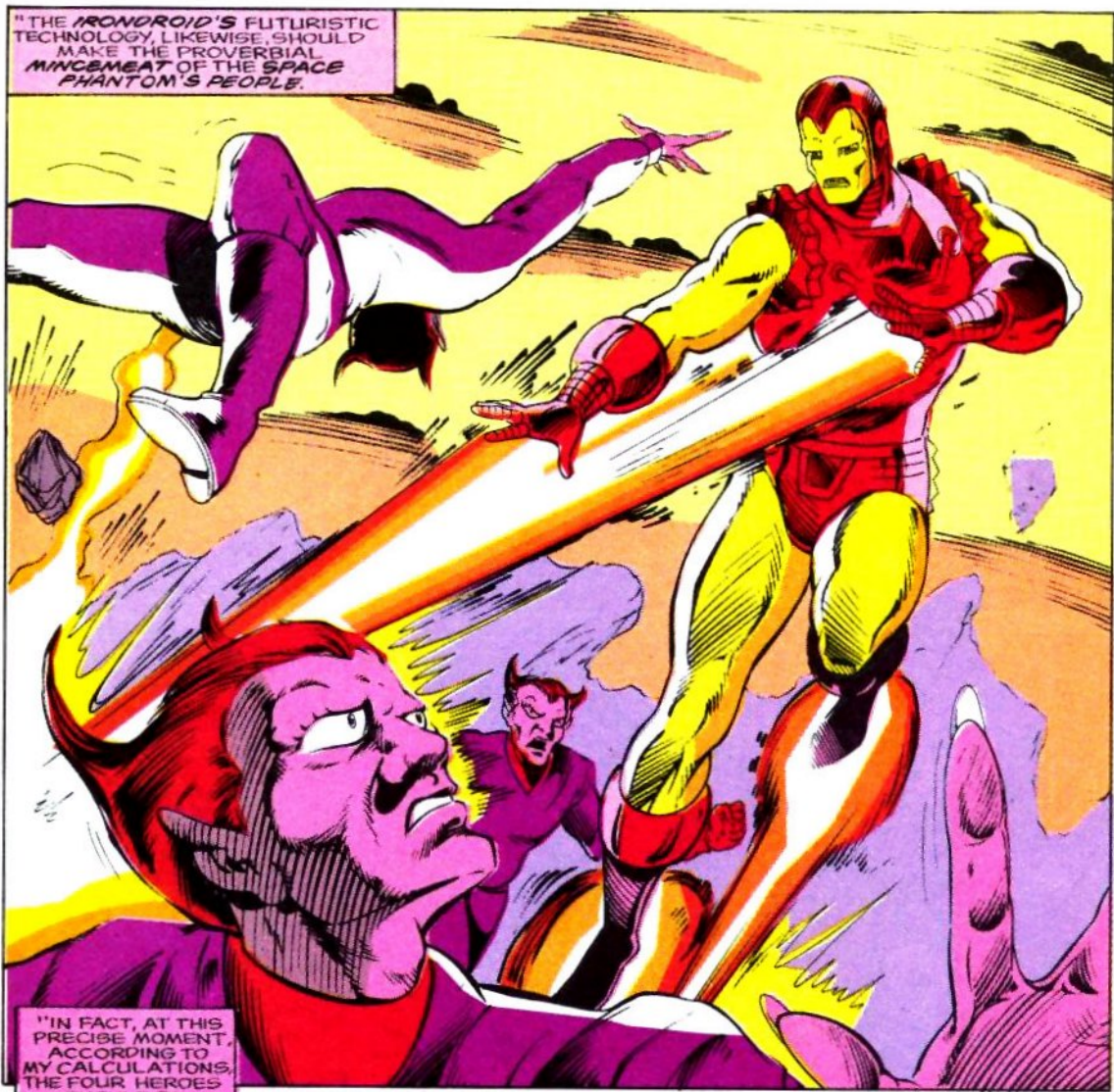
"-- FOR REASONS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH THE MAD PHARAOH'S OWN BEING--"



"-- AND IT SHOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY FOR HIM TO DISABLE THEM."



"THE *IRONROID'S* FUTURISTIC TECHNOLOGY, LIKEWISE, SHOULD MAKE THE PROVERBIAL *MINCMEAT* OF THE *SPACE PHANTOM'S* PEOPLE."



"IN FACT, AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT, ACCORDING TO MY CALCULATIONS, THE FOUR HEROES SHOULD BE CONGRATULATING THE AGENT FOR HAVING WON, SO WE CAN --"

"WH-- WHAT IS THIS?"

"THAT SUDDEN BLINDING LIGHT-- WASHING OVER EVERYTHING--"



"-- AND NOW THINGS ARE BACK TO THE VERY MOMENT OF OUR AGENT'S *ARRIVAL* IN LIMBO!"

"THE *IMMORTUS* WAVE HAS WARPED EVENTS BACK TO THE *STATUS QUO ANTE*."

"WHAT DO YOU *THINK* IS HAPPENING, ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY H2?"







IT IS UNFORTUNATELY CLEAR THAT HE -- /T-- HAS BECOME SO POWERFUL THAT IT ENABLES THE TIMELINES TO RESIST ANY FURTHER ADJUSTMENTS ON OUR PART.

IN SHORT, HZ, YOUR PLAN HAS FAILED. DOES ANYONE ELSE HAVE ONE TO SUBMIT?

IF NOT, I SUGGEST THAT WE BREAK FOR LUNCH, BUT WE SHALL RE-CONVENE PROMPTLY AT 1300 HOURS TO CONSIDER ADDITIONAL --

AHEM!



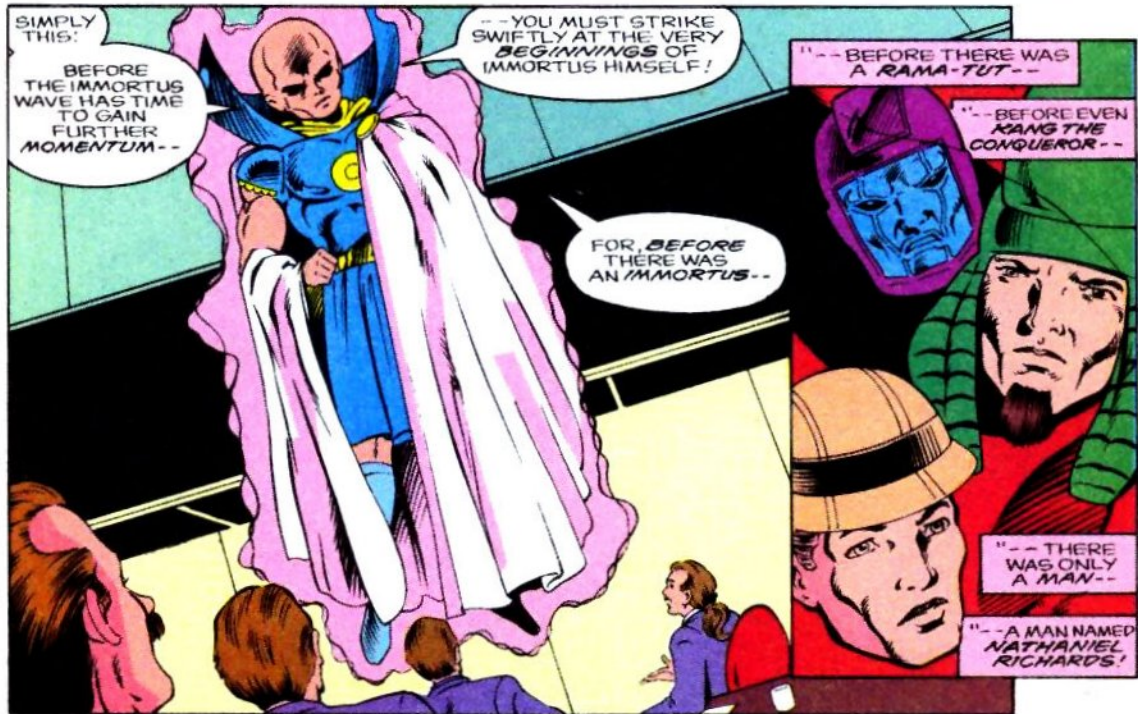
YOU COUGHED, MR. UATLIF?

I THINK I MAY KNOW THE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE IMMORTUS WAVE.

WELL, THAT IS GOOD NEWS! AS SOON AS WE RETURN FROM LUNCH, I'M SURE WE'LL ALL GIVE IT SERIOUS --

I TRULY BELIEVE YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME NOW, MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY --

OH, ALL RIGHT! WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?



SIMPLY THIS:

BEFORE THE IMMORTUS WAVE HAS TIME TO GAIN FURTHER MOMENTUM --

-- YOU MUST STRIKE SWIFTLY AT THE VERY BEGINNINGS OF IMMORTUS HIMSELF!

FOR, BEFORE THERE WAS AN IMMORTUS --

"-- BEFORE THERE WAS A RAMA-TUT --

"-- BEFORE EVEN RAAG THE CONQUEROR --

"-- THERE WAS ONLY A MAN --

"-- A MAN NAMED NATHANIEL RICHARDS!



"PLEASE REMEMBER, THAT UPON AT LEAST ONE ALTERNATE WORLD--LET US CALL IT 'WARLORD'S EARTH,' FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY--

"--THERE IS A GOLDEN AGE IN THE PERIOD CIRCA 3000 A.D.

"THERE DWELLS NATHANIEL RICHARDS--THE MAN WHO WILL ONE DAY BECOME KANG, RAMA-TUT AND IMMORTUS.\*

"THIS NATHANIEL RICHARDS IS ADDICTED TO WATCHING THE CANNED ENTERTAINMENT OF BYGONE DAYS ON THAT ERA'S VISI-SCREENS...

"...AND LONGS FOR THE EXCITEMENT OF CENTURIES PAST.

"ON A WHIM, HE DECIDES TO LEAVE THE COMFORT AND SAFETY OF A PEACEFUL BUT BORING METROPOLIS...

"...AND VISIT THE RUINS OF THE 'WARLORD'S FORT'--

"SAID ANCESTOR WAS THE FATHER OF REBO RICHARDS.

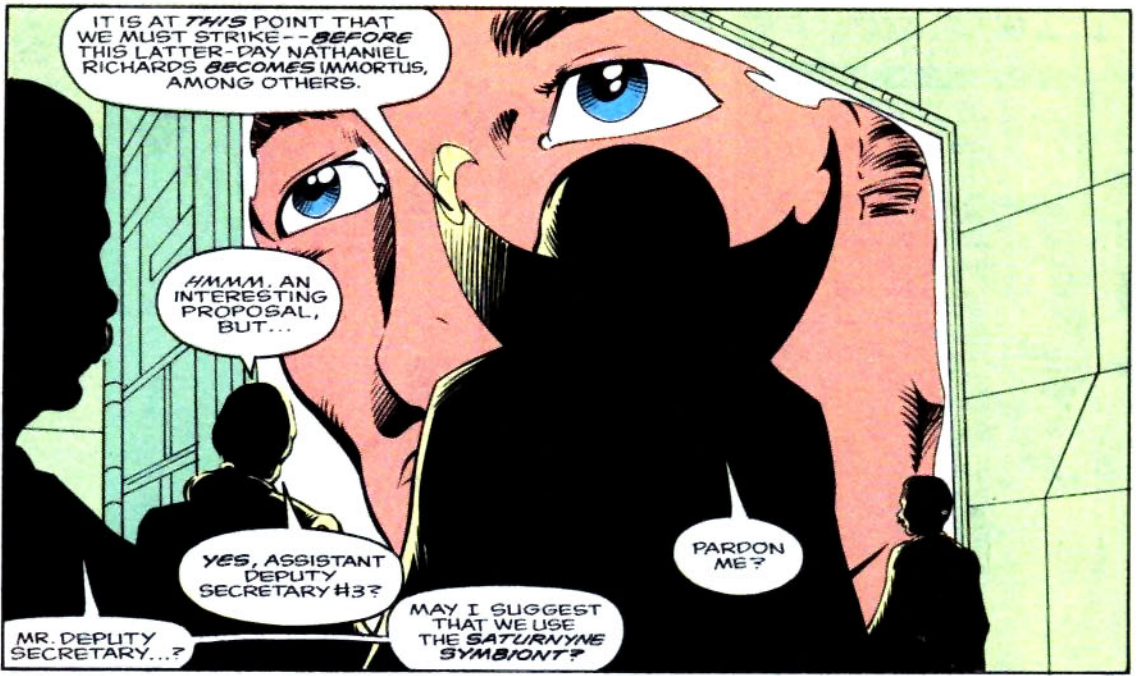
"--A CITADEL LEFT BY HIS ANCESTOR, ANOTHER NATHANIEL RICHARDS, 1800 YEARS BEFORE.

"HE HAD BUILT A TIME MACHINE AND TRAVELED TO WARLORD'S EARTH IN ITS YEAR 1127--

"--AND ELECTED TO STAY THERE, TO HELP REBUILD THE PLANET AFTER A CATASTROPHIC GLOBAL WAR."

\*SEE FANTASTIC FOUR #272-273, AS WELL AS THE CLASSIC F.F. #19.-- CRAIG





IT IS AT *THIS POINT* THAT WE MUST STRIKE -- *BEFORE* THIS LATTER-DAY NATHANIEL RICHARDS *BECOMES* IMMORTUS, AMONG OTHERS.

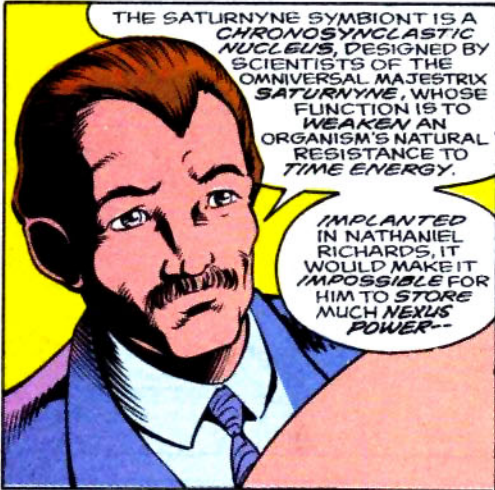
HMMM. AN INTERESTING PROPOSAL, BUT...

YES, ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY #3?

PARDON ME?

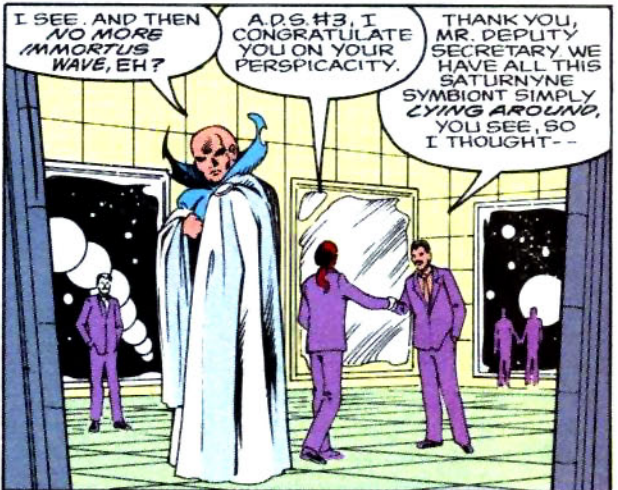
MAY I SUGGEST THAT WE USE THE SATURNINE SYMBIONT?

MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY...?



THE SATURNINE SYMBIONT IS A *CHRONOSYNCLASTIC NUCLEUS*, DESIGNED BY SCIENTISTS OF THE OMNIVERSAL MAJESTRIX SATURNINE, WHOSE FLUNCTION IS TO *WEAKEN* AN ORGANISM'S NATURAL RESISTANCE TO *TIME ENERGY*.

*IMPLANTED* IN NATHANIEL RICHARDS, IT WOULD MAKE IT *IMPOSSIBLE* FOR HIM TO STORE MUCH *NEXUS POWER*--



I SEE. AND THEN *NO MORE IMMORTUS WAVE*, EH?

A.P.S.#3, I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR PERSPICACITY.

THANK YOU, MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY. WE HAVE ALL THIS SATURNINE SYMBIONT SIMPLY *LYING AROUND*, YOU SEE, SO I THOUGHT--



THERE IS, OF COURSE, *ONE SMALL PROBLEM*.

PRECISELY *HOW* DO YOU PLAN TO GET THIS SUBSTANCE *INSIDE* IMMORTUS, IN ORDER FOR IT TO AFFECT HIM?

OH? ER-- WELL--

I'M CERTAIN WE CAN *COME UP* WITH A METHOD AFTER DUE DELIBERATIONS...

IF I MAY MAKE ONE *FURTHER* SUGGESTION?

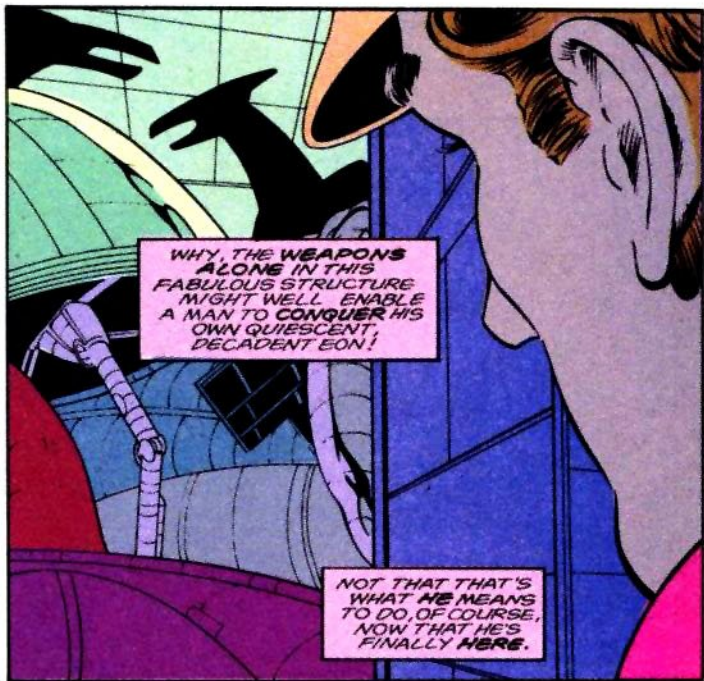
SOMEHOW, I *KNEW* YOU WERE GOING TO SAY THAT...



"NOW THIS IS MORE LIKE IT!"  
NATHANIEL RICHARDS MUST  
BE THINKING.

FOR YEARS, HE HAS  
DREAMED OF RELIVING  
THE EXCITEMENT OF  
BYGONE AGES,  
LONG BEFORE HIS OWN  
30TH CENTURY--

-- AND AT LAST, HE  
HAS FOUND IT-- IN  
THE "WARLORD'S  
FORT"!

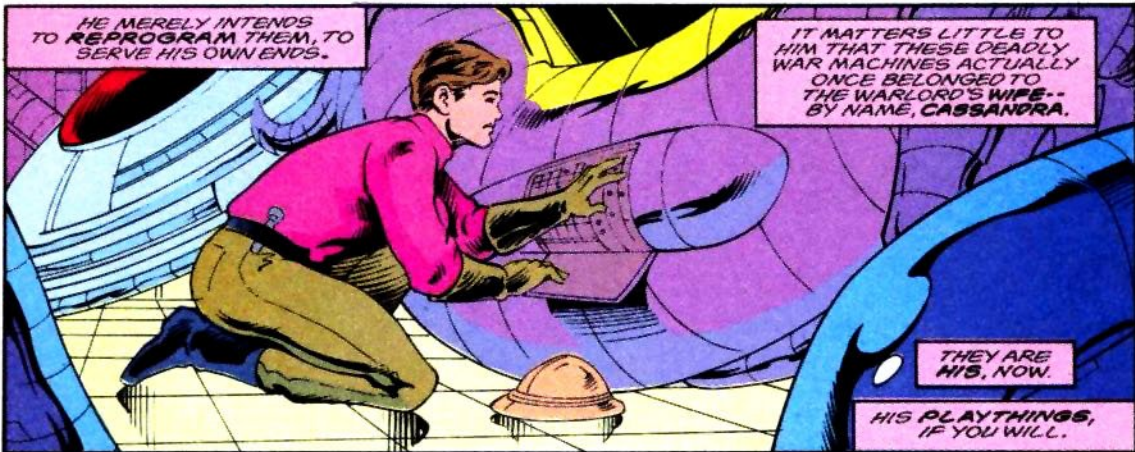


WHY, THE WEAPONS  
ALONE IN THIS  
FABULOUS STRUCTURE  
MIGHT WELL ENABLE  
A MAN TO CONQUER HIS  
OWN QUIESCENT,  
DECADENT EON!

NOT THAT THAT'S  
WHAT HE MEANS  
TO DO, OF COURSE,  
NOW THAT HE'S  
FINALLY HERE.

HE MERELY INTENDS  
TO REPROGRAM THEM, TO  
SERVE HIS OWN ENDS.

IT MATTERS LITTLE TO  
HIM THAT THESE DEADLY  
WAR MACHINES ACTUALLY  
ONCE BELONGED TO  
THE WARLORD'S WIFE--  
BY NAME, CASSANDRA.



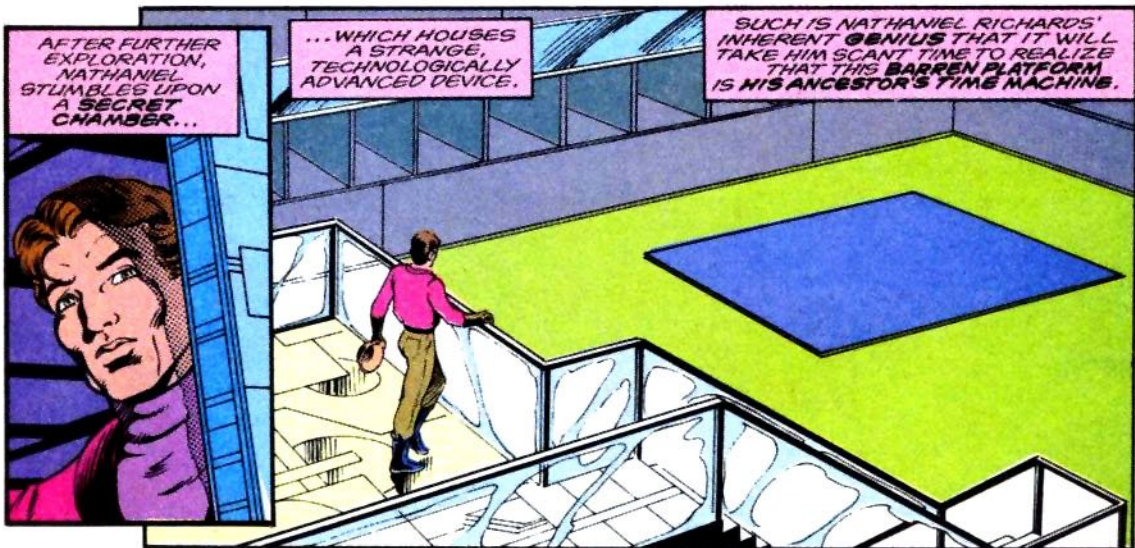
THEY ARE  
HIS, NOW.

HIS PLAYTHINGS,  
IF YOU WILL.

AFTER FURTHER  
EXPLORATION,  
NATHANIEL  
STUMBLES UPON  
A SECRET  
CHAMBER...

... WHICH HOUSES  
A STRANGE,  
TECHNOLOGICALLY  
ADVANCED DEVICE.

SUCH IS NATHANIEL RICHARDS'  
INHERENT GENIUS THAT IT WILL  
TAKE HIM SCANT TIME TO REALIZE  
THAT THIS BARREN PLATFORM  
IS HIS ANCESTOR'S TIME MACHINE.







HURRY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT #2!

IF WE MISS *THIS* OPPORTUNITY TO STOP RICHARDS, IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE WE WILL NOT HAVE THE *TIME* TO START OVER AND TRY AGAIN.

TRUE, MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY ORDINARILY, TIME-MANIPULATORS SUCH AS YOURSELVES WOULD HAVE AN *INFINITY* OF OPPORTUNITIES TO UNDO YOUR ERRORS --

-- BUT THAT WAS BEFORE *IMMORTUS* TURNED HIMSELF INTO A *TIME-MASTERING WAVE*!

THE *FVA* FINDS ITSELF ON THE SAME *CHRONOLOGICAL TREADMILL* AS MOST OF THE REST OF CREATION.

AH! I BELIEVE THE CONSOLE IS *SENDING*, AT LAST...



NEXT INSTANT, IN THE WARLORD'S FORT...

WH--? WHO IN BLAZES ARE YOU?

WE ARE THE **FANTASTIC FOUR**, NATHANIEL RICHARDS-- FROM ANOTHER WORLD, AN EARLIER ERA!

MY NAME IS REED RICHARDS, AND I'M AN ANCESTOR OF YOURS-- SORT OF.

YOU WANT TO DO THE HONORS, REED?



MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY -- THAT IS *NOT* THE ALTERNATE REALITY VERSION OF THAT TEAM WHICH I SUGGESTED WE EMULATE.

MAY I REMIND YOU, MR. LIATU, THAT PRECISELY WHICH FANTASTIC FOUR WE CHOSE WAS *MY* DECISION.

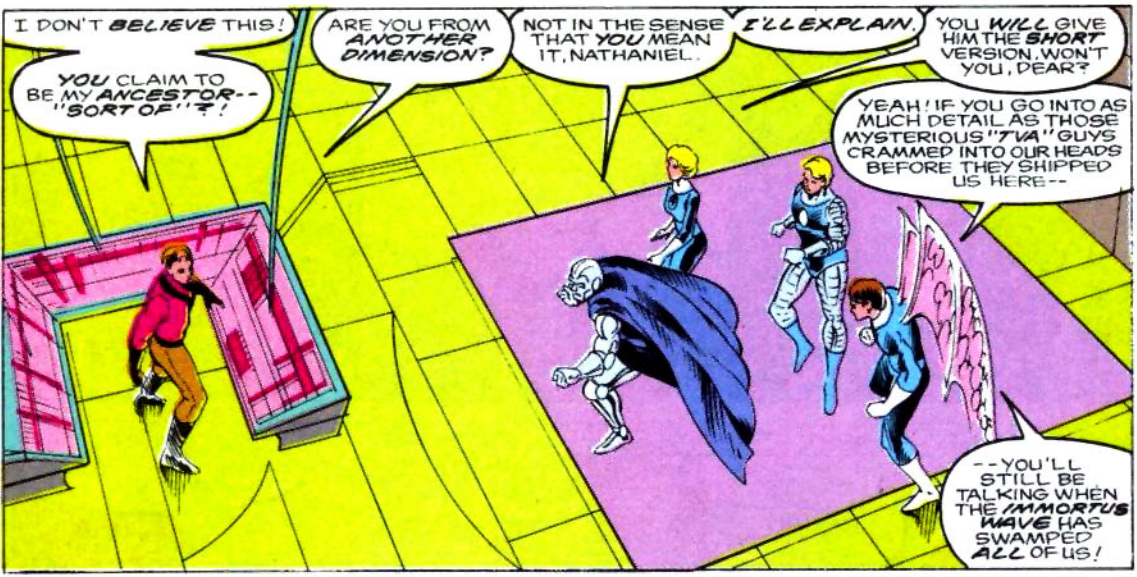
EVEN IN A *CRISIS*, THERE MUST BE A PROPER *CHAIN OF COMMAND*.

*THIS* GROUPING -- IN WHICH THE SAME FOUR HUMAN BEINGS BECAME *MANDROID*, *DRAGONFLY*, *ULTRA-WOMAN*, AND AN ARMORED "*BIG BRAIN*" -- WILL PROVE, IN MY OPINION, FAR MORE *POWERFUL* THAN THE STANDARD EDITION.

I DO *NOT* BELIEVE THIS IS GOING TO WORK.

SEE WHAT IF: FIRST SERIES #6 -- OL' CODGER CRAIG





I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!

ARE YOU FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION?

NOT IN THE SENSE THAT YOU MEAN IT, NATHANIEL.

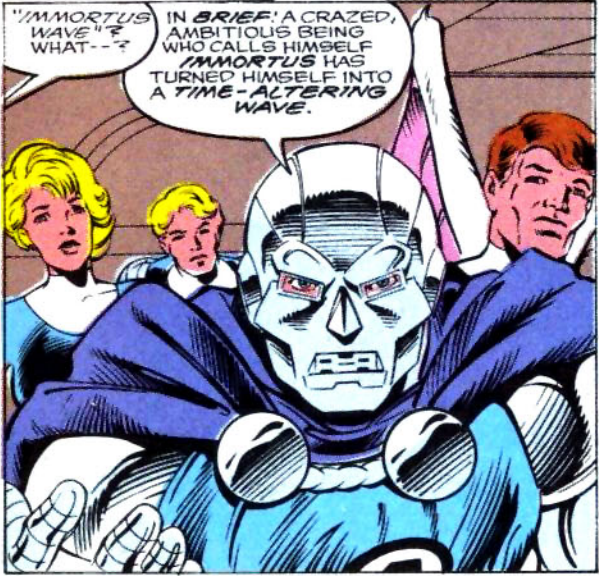
I'LL EXPLAIN.

YOU WILL GIVE HIM THE SHORT VERSION, WON'T YOU, DEAR?

YOU CLAIM TO BE MY ANCESTOR-- "SORT OF"?

YEAH! IF YOU GO INTO AS MUCH DETAIL AS THOSE MYSTERIOUS "7VA" GUYS CRAMMED INTO OUR HEADS BEFORE THEY SHIPPED US HERE--

-- YOU'LL STILL BE TALKING WHEN THE IMMORTUS WAVE HAS SWAMPED ALL OF US!



"IMMORTUS WAVE" ? WHAT--?

IN BRIEF, A CRAZED, AMBITIOUS BEING WHO CALLS HIMSELF IMMORTUS HAS TURNED HIMSELF INTO A TIME-ALTERING WAVE.

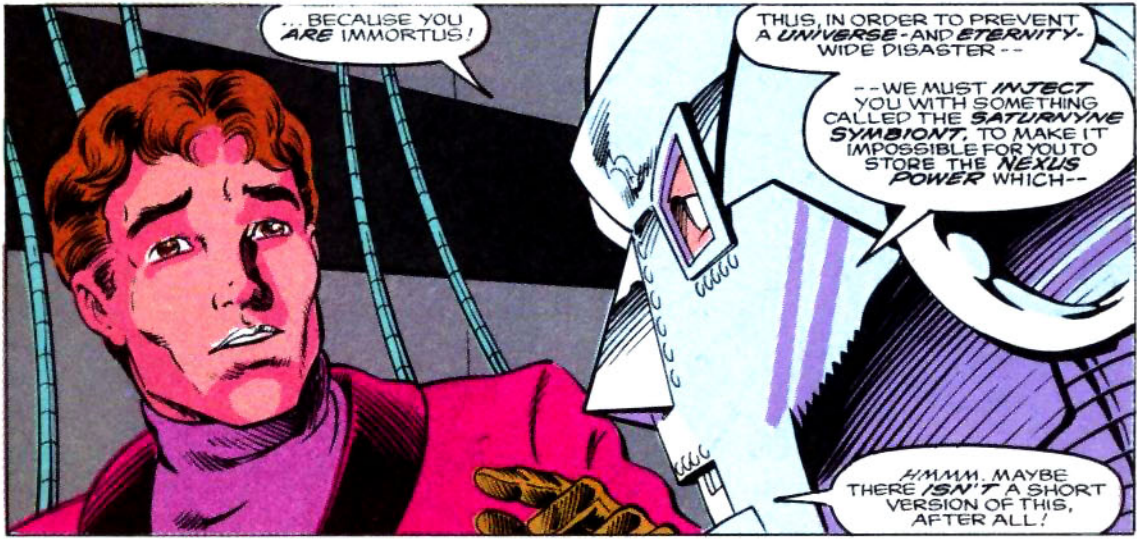


HIS PURPOSE IS TO MAKE HIMSELF MASTER OF TIME-- SO THAT REALITY WILL ONLY BE WHAT HE WANTS IT TO BE.

ONLY YOU CAN STOP HIM-- BY DESTROYING THAT TIME-TRAVELING PLATFORM YOU'VE DISCOVERED, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

BUT--WHAT HAVE I GOT TO DO WITH THIS "IMMORTUS" YOU MENTIONED?

EVERYTHING, NATHANIEL...



... BECAUSE YOU ARE IMMORTUS!

THUS, IN ORDER TO PREVENT A UNIVERSE-AND-ETERNITY-WIDE DISASTER--

-- WE MUST INJECT YOU WITH SOMETHING CALLED THE SATURNINE SYMBIOT, TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO STORE THE NEXUS POWER WHICH--

AMMM, MAYBE THERE ISN'T A SHORT VERSION OF THIS, AFTER ALL!





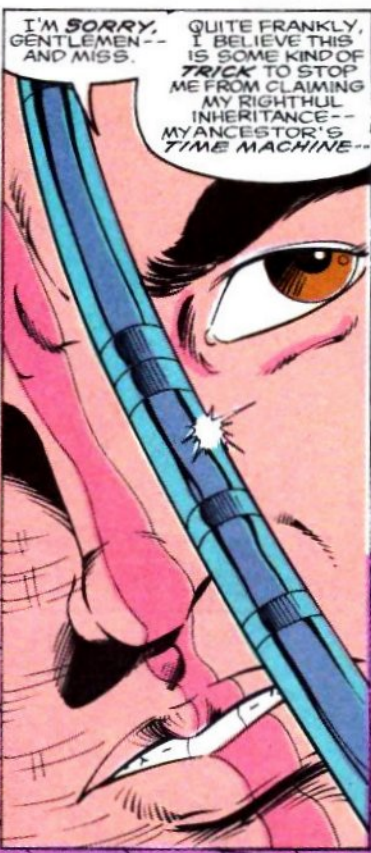
LET ME THINK ABOUT THIS A MOMENT...

...SEE IF I CAN COME TO TERMS WITH WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

REED-- HE'S NOT GONNA GO FOR IT, I TELL YOU!

LET ME EXPLAIN TO HIM ABOUT "CLOBBERING TIME"...

NOT YET, BEN. THE TVA MAN SAID THE SYMBIONT WOULD WORK BETTER IF HE TOOK IT WILLINGLY...



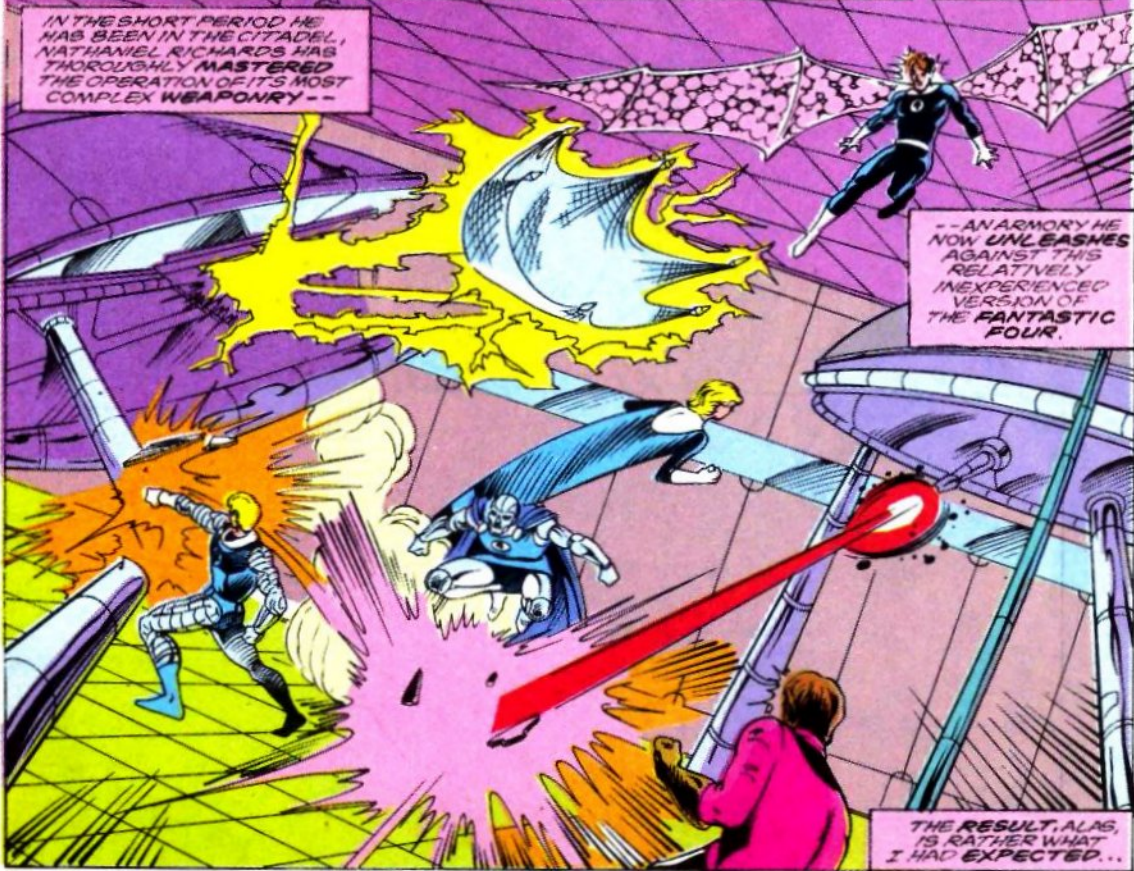
I'M SORRY, GENTLEMEN-- AND MISS.

QUITE FRANKLY, I BELIEVE THIS IS SOME KIND OF TRICK TO STOP ME FROM CLAIMING MY RIGHFUL INHERITANCE-- MY ANCESTOR'S TIME MACHINE--

--AND I WON'T HAVE IT!

**KLIK!**

IN THE SHORT PERIOD HE HAS BEEN IN THE CITADEL, NATHANIEL RICHARDS HAS THOROUGHLY MASTERED THE OPERATION OF ITS MOST COMPLEX WEAPONRY--



--AN ARMORY HE NOW UNLEASHES AGAINST THIS RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED VERSION OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

THE RESULT, ALAS, IS RATHER WHAT I HAD EXPECTED...



**ARRRRR**

**BEN (DRAGONFLY) GRIMM, WHO GAINED HIS PARTICULAR ABILITIES BECAUSE HE HAD ALWAYS LOVED TO FLY, NOW FINDS HIMSELF TRAPPED BY AN ELECTRIFIED METAL MESH--**

**ZZZZZZZZ**

**-- AND DIES.**

**JOHNNY (MANDROID) STORM, WHOSE FASCINATION WITH THINGS MECHANICAL HAD SOMEHOW CONVERTED HIM INTO A LIVING ROBOT, DESTROYS SEVERAL ATTACK-DROIDS--**

**-- ONLY TO BE, HIMSELF, FINALLY SLAIN.**

**AAAAA**

**SUE STORM, WHOSE PLIANT PERSONALITY HAS RESULTED IN HER BEING RENDERED A SUPER-MALLEABLE ULTRA-WOMAN BY THE COSMIC RAYS THAT BATHED THEM ALL, SURVIVES LONGER THAN BEN AND HER BROTHER.**





BUT IN SHORT ORDER, SHE TOO, SUCCEUMBS TO THE WAR WEAPONS...

... PERMANENTLY.

OHHHh...

HSSSSSS

REED RICHARDS IS, IN THIS REALITY, MERELY A BIG BRAIN -- REDUCED BY THE RADIATION TO PURE GRAY MATTER, NOW HOUSED IN A ROBOTIC BODY OF HIS OWN DEVSING.

INCREDIBLE -- THAT ONE WHO IS ALIEN TO THIS WORLD COULD BE SO FAMILIAR WITH ITS TECHNOLOGY --

NATHANIEL RICHARDS REMARKS GIVE PAUSE TO REED RICHARDS.

AN IDEA FLITS ACROSS HIS MIND. TACHYON-SWIFT...

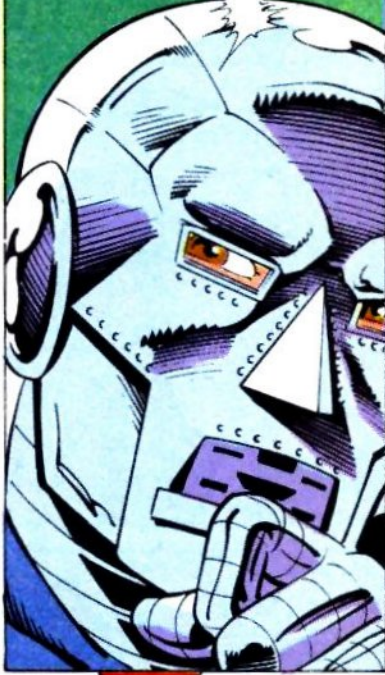


SHROOON

MAD WITH GRIEF FOR HIS FRIENDS, HE USES ITS TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED ARMOR TO DISABLE ONE WAR WEAPON AFTER ANOTHER



--ALMOST AS IF IT WERE YOU WHO HAD DESIGNED IT!



BUT EVEN THAT MOMENTARY PAUSE HAS BEEN --

-- A FATAL ONE.

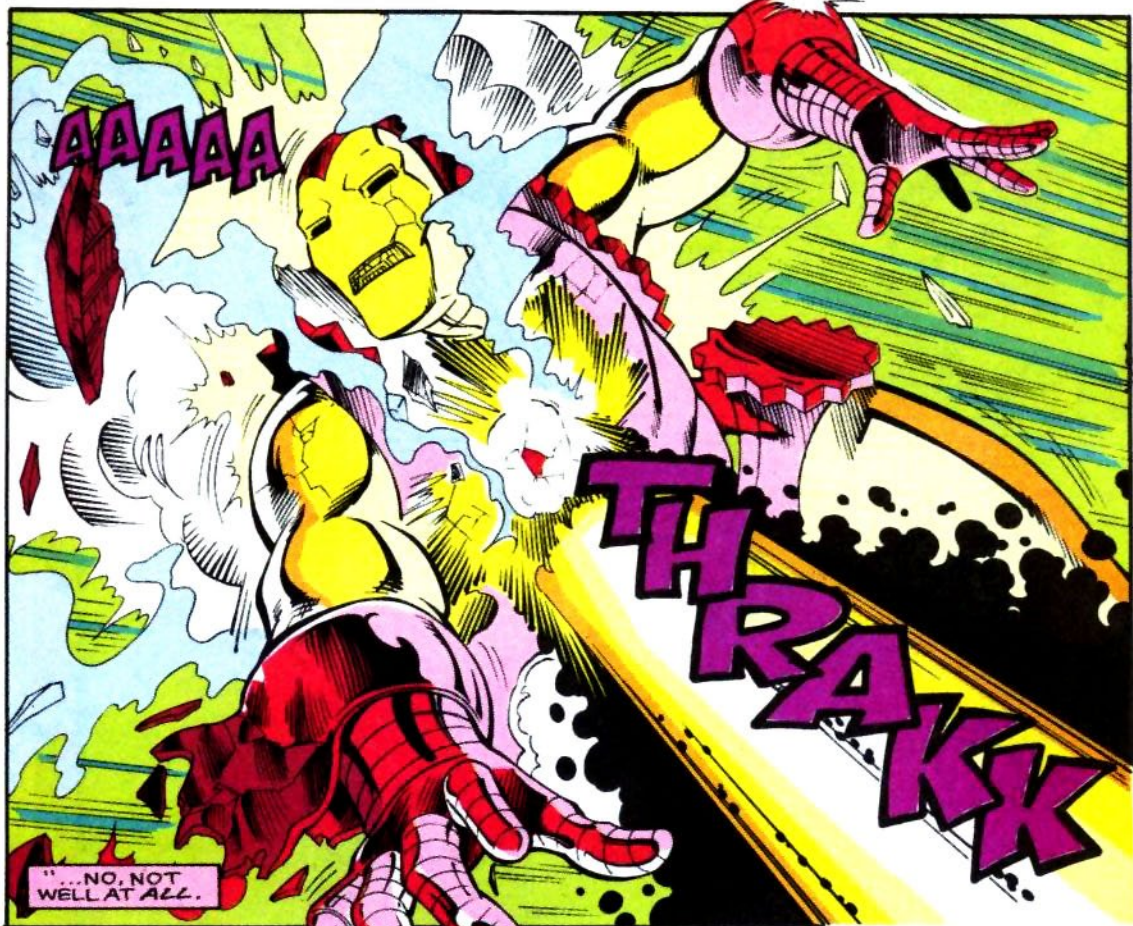
EROO

POMM









"...NO, NOT WELL AT ALL."



"PERHAPS THE DR. DOOM FROM THE WORLD OF THE FANTASTIC FIVE WILL FARE BETTER AGAINST THE DIRE WRAITHS..."



"... AND THEN AGAIN, PERHAPS NOT."

UNNNH--!

SLURRRP





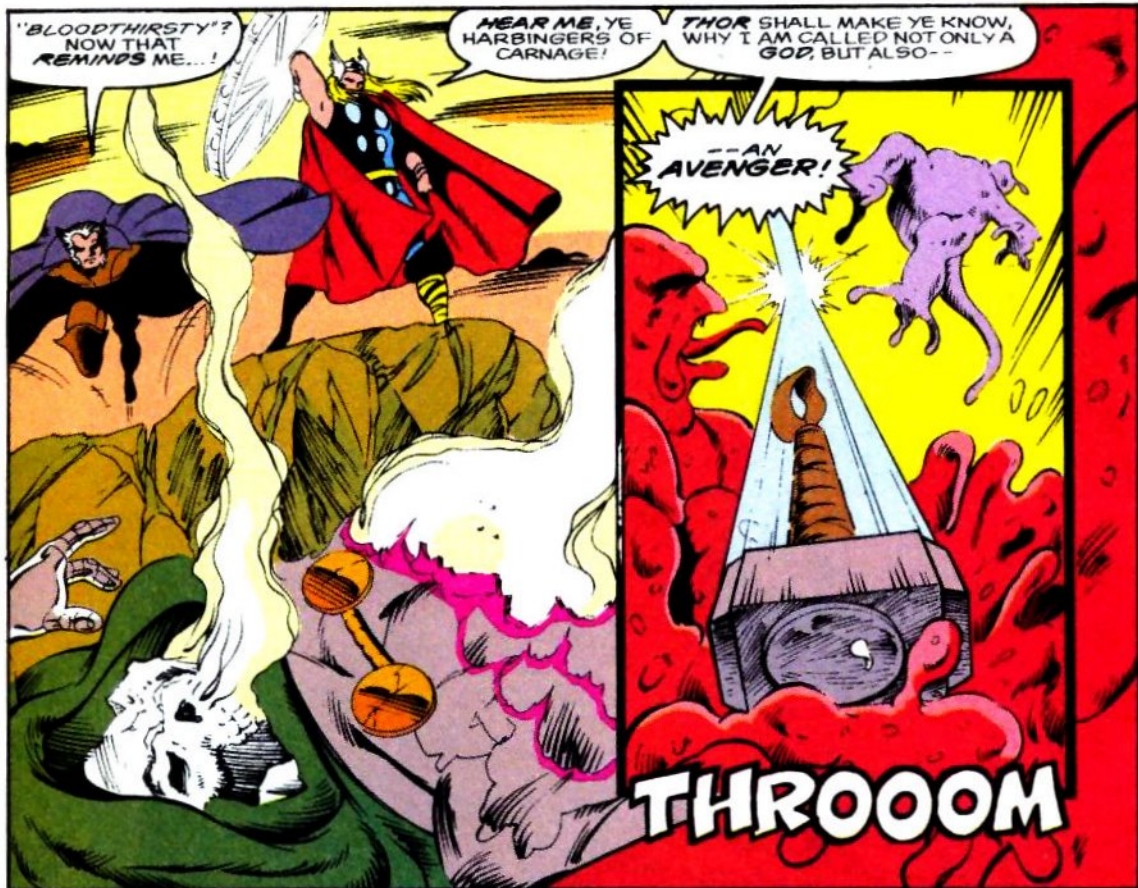
TRULY, A GREAT **REVULSION** FILLS MY SOUL!

YON MONSTER'S DART HAS GONE THROUGH THE LATVERIAN'S **EYE-SLIT**, AND HAS SUCKED OUT HIS **FLESH**--

-- LEAVING NAUGHT BUT **EMPTY ARMOR**!

YOU'RE KINDA **SQUEAMISH** FOR A **THUNDER GOD**, AINTCHA?

NAY, LOGAN. I AM BUT **REPULSED** BY SUCH **BLOODTHIRSTY VIOLENCE**.



"**BLOODTHIRSTY**?" NOW THAT **REMINDS ME...**!

**HEAR ME, YE HARBINGERS OF CARNAGE!**

**THOR** SHALL MAKE YE KNOW, WHY I AM CALLED NOT ONLY A **GOD**, BUT ALSO--

-- AN **AVENGER!**

**THROOOM**



JUST **SLAUGHTERING** THESE **WEIRDOS** IS A **WASTE**, **BLONDIE**--

-- WHEN THEY'RE SO **DOWNRIGHT TASTY!**

"**ACTUALLY** **THOR** AND THE **WOLVERINE**-- **VAMPIRE** ARE MAKING A FEW **INROADS...**



"... BUT IT ALL COMES TO NOTHING WHEN THE IMMORTUS WAVE STRIKES. A MOMENT LATER..."



... AND THINGS RETURN TO THE **BEGINNING**, EXCEPT THAT NOW THERE ARE ONLY **TWO** HEROES LEFT TO FACE THE INHABITANTS OF LIMBO

AT THE CURRENT RATE OF ATTRITION, AFTER THE **NEXT** WAVE, THERE WON'T BE **ANYONE** INTACT ON **OUR** SIDE.

QUITE FRANKLY, I'M AT A LOSS TO **UNDERSTAND** THEIR FAILURE.

COULD IT **PERHAPS** BE RELATED TO THE FACT THAT THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** YOU SENT WERE TOO **INEXPERIENCED** TO STOP NATHANIEL RICHARDS?

WELL, THEN, WE'LL SEND IN **ANOTHER** FOURSOME WHO **CAN**!

IN FACT, WHY STOP WITH **ONE** F.F. ? WE'LL **DELUGE** HIM WITH--

I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE A BETTER IDEA, UATU?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DO.

NO, NATHANIEL IS **SUSPICIOUS** NOW.

ANOTHER GROUPING OF SUPER-POWERED "**BREAKS**" WOULD ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE-- AND WE'VE NO **TIME** FOR YOU TO **EXPERIMENT** FURTHER.

ONLY **ONE** TEAM HAS A CHANCE TO CONVINCE NATHANIEL RICHARDS...



SOON AFTERWARD, IN THE WARLORD'S PORT, THE TIME MACHINE GLOWS ANEW.

ON WARLORD'S EARTH, IT IS AGAIN THE VERY MOMENT WHEN AN ALTERNATE FANTASTIC FOUR MATERIALIZED.

I SAY "SOON AFTERWARD, BUT OF COURSE THAT IS ON MY TIMELINE."

ONE DOES SO AGAIN--

--BUT THIS TIME--

WH--? WHO IN BLAZES ARE YOU?

REED RICHARDS-- AND THIS IS MY ROCKET GROUP.

I'M AN ANCESTOR OF YOURS-- SORT OF.



--OR I'LL ACTIVATE THE ROBOTS SURROUNDING YOU, AND THEY'LL TEAR YOU APART!

NOW--WHO ARE YOU?



JUST FOUR PEOPLE FROM THE 20TH CENTURY OF ANOTHER REALITY.

AND SO THEY ARE-- FOR, ON THAT EARTH, THIS FOURSOME NEVER GAINED SUPER-POWERS.\*

"SORT OF"? WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

AND WHILE YOU'RE TELLING ME, DON'T MOVE--



\*WHAT IF (1ST SERIES) #36, REPRINTED IN OUR RECENT TRADE PAPERBACK.-- CRAIG

AS SUCCINCTLY AS POSSIBLE, SCIENTIST/PHILANTHROPIST REED RICHARDS EXPLAINS WHAT HE CAN OF THE SITUATION.

...SO YOU MUST ALLOW US TO INJECT YOU WITH THE SATURNINE SYMBIONT, TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO STORE THE NEXUS POWER, WHICH--

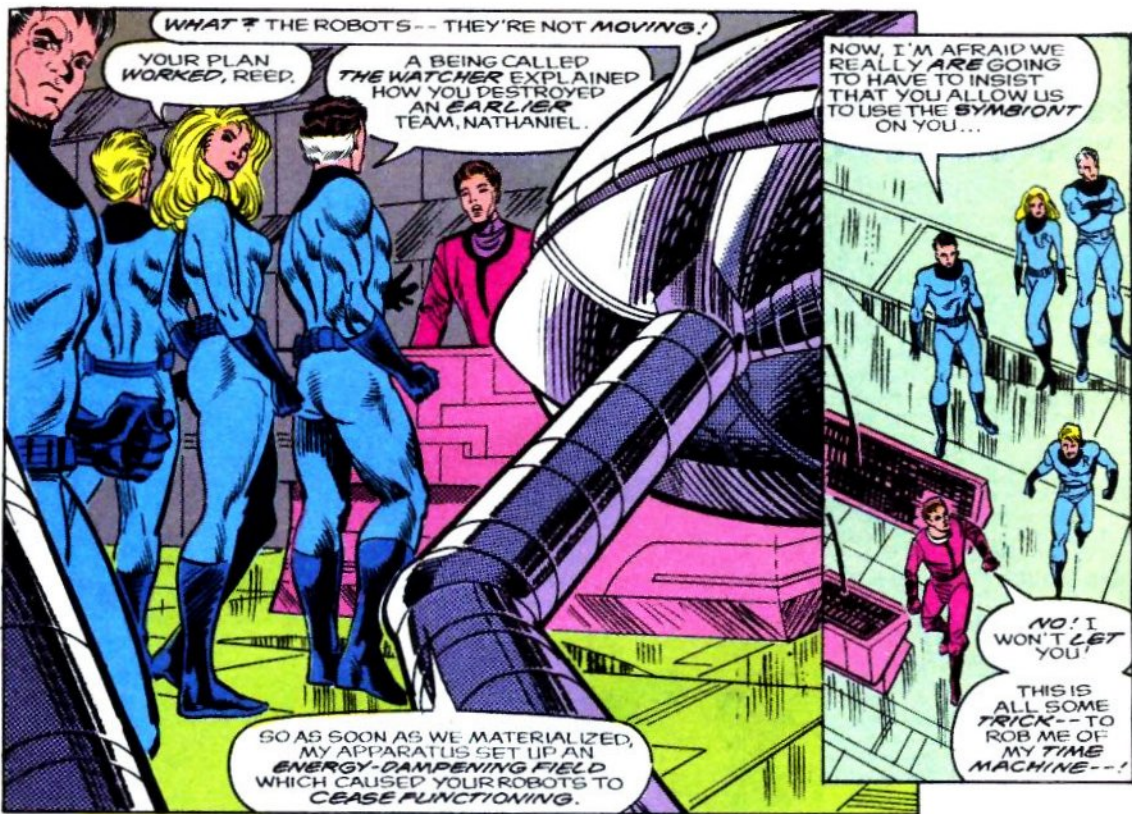


SORRY, BUT I'M NOT BUYING THIS WHOLE STORY ABOUT A SO-CALLED "IMMORTUS WAVE."

I'M ACTIVATING MY ROBOTS TO DETAIN YOU-- BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!

WELL, IT'S MOMENT OF TRUTH TIME, PEOPLE!





WHAT? THE ROBOTS-- THEY'RE NOT MOVING!  
YOUR PLAN WORKED, REED.

A BEING CALLED THE WATCHER EXPLAINED HOW YOU DESTROYED AN EARLIER TEAM, NATHANIEL.

NOW, I'M AFRAID WE REALLY ARE GOING TO HAVE TO INSIST THAT YOU ALLOW US TO USE THE SYMBIONT ON YOU...

SO AS SOON AS WE MATERIALIZED, MY APPARATUS SET UP AN ENERGY-DAMPENING FIELD WHICH CAUSED YOUR ROBOTS TO CEASE FUNCTIONING.

NO! I WON'T LET YOU!  
THIS IS ALL SOME TRICK-- TO ROB ME OF MY TIME MACHINE--!



I'VE GOT HIM, REED. THESE 30TH-CENTURY GUYS MUST'VE LOST THE KEYS TO THE LOCAL GYM.

LET ME GO! YOU'VE NO RIGHT!

ONLY THE RIGHT TO TRY TO SAVE THE MULTIVERSE!

I SURE HOPE YOUR HUBBY KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT, SUZIE, 'CAUSE I HAVEN'T GOT THE FOGGIEST NOTION!

LOOK, IF YOU WON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT THAT MY FATHER WAS YOUR ANCESTOR-- THE SO-CALLED WARLORD-- THEN WILL YOU BELIEVE DNA ANALYSIS?

ALL RIGHT-- GIVE IT TO ME!



WHAT...?

HERE, EXAMINE THIS DEVICE. IF IT'S WHAT I SAY IT IS-- THEN USE IT TO PERFORM DNA ANALYSIS ON US BOTH!

THAT SHOULD PROVE WHETHER I'M TELLING THE TRUTH OR NOT.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

THIS DEVICE IS *PRIMITIVE*, BEING A THOUSAND YEARS OLD-- BUT FOR THAT VERY REASON, IT'S CHILD'S PLAY FOR ME TO ASCERTAIN THAT IT HASN'T BEEN *TAMPERED* WITH.

AND IF WE'RE *RELATED*-- SINCE I HAVE *NO KNOWN* LIVING RELATIVES--

-- MAYBE I REALLY *WILL* BECOME THIS "*IMMORTUS*" YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT.

I'M GOING TO TAKE A CHANCE-- AND *TRUST* YOU.

THEN IF YOU'LL PULL UP YOUR SLEEVE, I'LL APPLY THE *SYMBIONT*.

... *THERE*! IT SHOULD TAKE EFFECT IN *SECONDS*.

BUT-- HOW WILL WE *KNOW* IF IT--

UHHHHH...

HE'S *UNDER*, REED.

THEN OUR WORK HERE IS *DONE*, AND WE CAN GO.

WHEN HE AWAKENS, HE'LL HAVE *FORGOTTEN* US, *IMMORTUS*-- THE WHOLE STORY.

BUT NATHANIEL RICHARDS WILL BUILD A SPHINX-SHAPED *TIME MACHINE*, WHICH WILL TAKE HIM ON THE *GREATEST JOURNEY* ANY MAN HAS EVER TAKEN.

EVEN AS REED AND HIS ROCKET GROUP *VANISH* WITHIN THE *TIME RECTANGLE*...

... THE "*WHISPERER'S*" FOUR HEROES, BOTH LIVING AND DEAD, *DISAPPEAR*, AS WELL...!



ONE WORLD'S DR DOOM FINDS HIMSELF ALIVE AND WELL IN HIS NATIVE LATVERIA, ON AN EARTH WHERE SUE RICHARDS OF THE FANTASTIC FIVE HAS JUST GIVEN BIRTH TO A SON...

IRONDROID IS AGAIN STARK INTERPLANETARY'S REPRESENTATIVE IN THE 22<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY'S COSMIC AVENGERS...

WOLVERINE, LORD OF VAMPIRES, SITS ON THE AZURE THRONE AS RULER OF THE DARK DIMENSION...

...AND A THUNDER GOD RETURNS TO HIS ALTERNATE ASGARD.

STILL IN LIMBO. IMMORTUS-- INSTEAD OF BEING FREED-- STRUGGLES DESPERATELY AS HE BECOMES IMBUED WITH MORE AND MORE NEXUS POWER--

--LIKE A CONTAINER NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE ALL THE FIERCE ENERGY POURED INSIDE HIM--

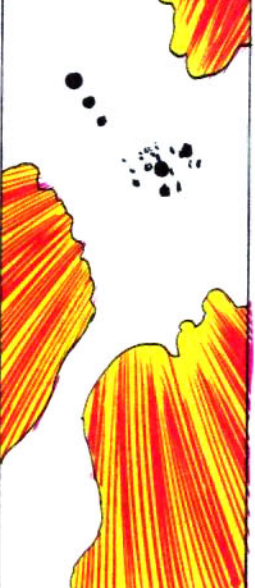
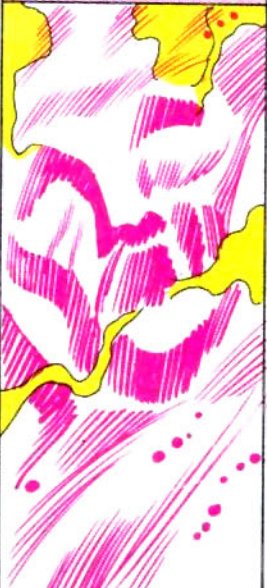
--UNTIL HE LITERALLY EXPLODES!

SIMULTANEOUSLY-- IF THAT WORD HAS ANY MEANING IN THE CITADEL AT THE END OF TIME--

-- ALL THREE TIME KEEPERS REAPPEAR.

FOR SOME REASON, THEY DO NOT SEEM HAPPY

AND I SUSPECT, I FINALLY KNOW THE REASON.







FOR, SUDDENLY, A SECOND TRIO OF IDENTICAL ENTITIES APPEARS BEFORE US ALL.

AND, EVEN AS THE FIRST GROUP REACTS IN SURPRISE--

-- THE FACES OF THE THREE WITH WHOM I HAVE BEEN DEALING MELT AWAY, AND THEY STAND REVEALED AS THE--



-- TIME TWISTERS!

WE-- HAVE BEEN EXPOSED, MY BROTHERS.

AYE, THANKS TO THE WATCHER!

AND JUST IN TIME, IF WE MAY USE THAT PHRASE, FOR THE SAKE OF THE MULTIVERSE!

THEY CONTINUE TO MELT LIKE WAX BENEATH A BLAZING SUN--



-- UNTIL THEY ARE LITTLE MORE THAN BLOSSOMS OF MATTER.

YES, UATU, FOR AS TIME ITSELF IS ABOUT TO END, IT SPROUTS ONE LAST ALTERNATE BRANCH.

THEN, I AM CORRECT IN MY SURMISE THAT THOSE "TIME KEEPERS" WERE ACTUALLY THE EARLIER TIME TWISTERS!

IN TRUTH, THE END OF TIME ACTUALLY COMPRISES TWO PARALLEL REALITIES..



...IN ONE, HE WHO REMAINS ABORTED THE APTLY-NAMED TWISTERS, AND CREATED US KEEPERS.

BEFORE THOR INTERVENED,\* THE TWISTERS' REALITY WAS DOMINANT-- AFTER IT, OURS WAS.

IN THE OTHER, HE DID NOT ABORT THEM-- AND WE NEVER EXISTED.

WE ARE GOOD-- THEY WERE EVIL-- BUT NEITHER OF US CAN TRULY ERASE THE OTHERS.

INDEED, THE VERY NATURE OF THE NEXT UNIVERSAL CYCLE DEPENDS UPON WHICH OF US PREDOMINATES WHEN TIME TRULY ENDS.

\*SEE PAGE 4, IF YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ALREADY-- CRAIG



USING OUR LIKENESS, THE TWISTERS TRICKED THAT FOOL IMMORTUS-- BECAUSE HE WAS ORIGINAL LY OUR PAWN-- INTO THAT BUSINESS WITH THE SCARLET WITCH.

THEY PLANNED TO ALTER THE TIMELINES SO THAT THEIR REALITY WAS DOMINANT, AND OURS WOULD FADE.

INSTEAD, THANKS TO YOUR INTERVENTION, THEY HAVE LOST-- AND OUR REALITY REMAINS THE PRE-EMINENT ONE.



AND NOW, IF YOU WILL EXCUSE US, UATU--

-- WE MUST RETURN TO WATCHING OVER THE TIMELINES--

-- AND OVER THESE PODS, AS WELL--



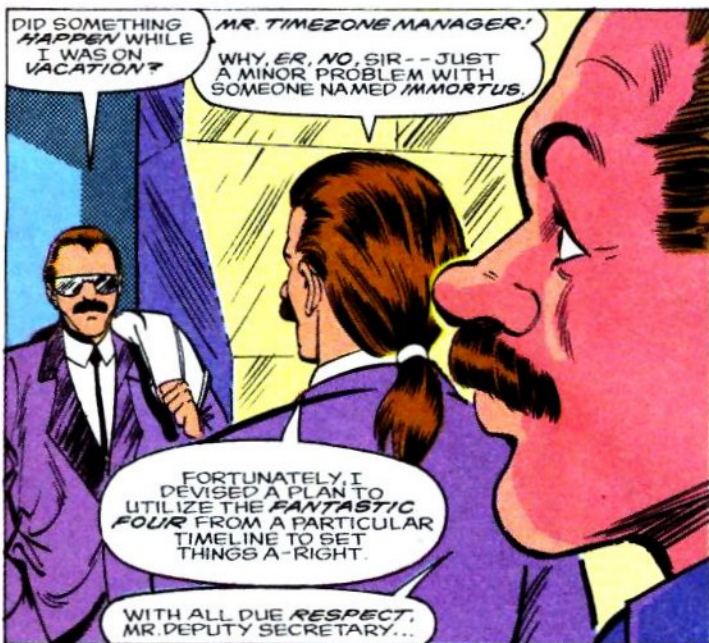


-- TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE TIME TWISTERS NEVER HATCH AGAIN!

YES!

WE HAVE WON.

WON WHAT, MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY...?



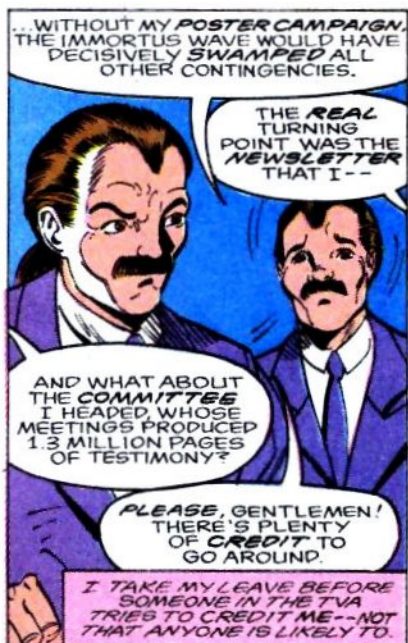
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN WHILE I WAS ON VACATION?

MR. TIMEZONE MANAGER!

WHY, ER, NO, SIR -- JUST A MINOR PROBLEM WITH SOMEONE NAMED IMMORTUS.

FORTUNATELY, I DEvised A PLAN TO UTILIZE THE FANTASTIC FOUR FROM A PARTICULAR TIMELINE TO SET THINGS A-RIGHT.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MR. DEPUTY SECRETARY...



...WITHOUT MY POSTER CAMPAIGN, THE IMMORTUS WAVE WOULD HAVE DECISIVELY SWAMPED ALL OTHER CONTINGENCIES.

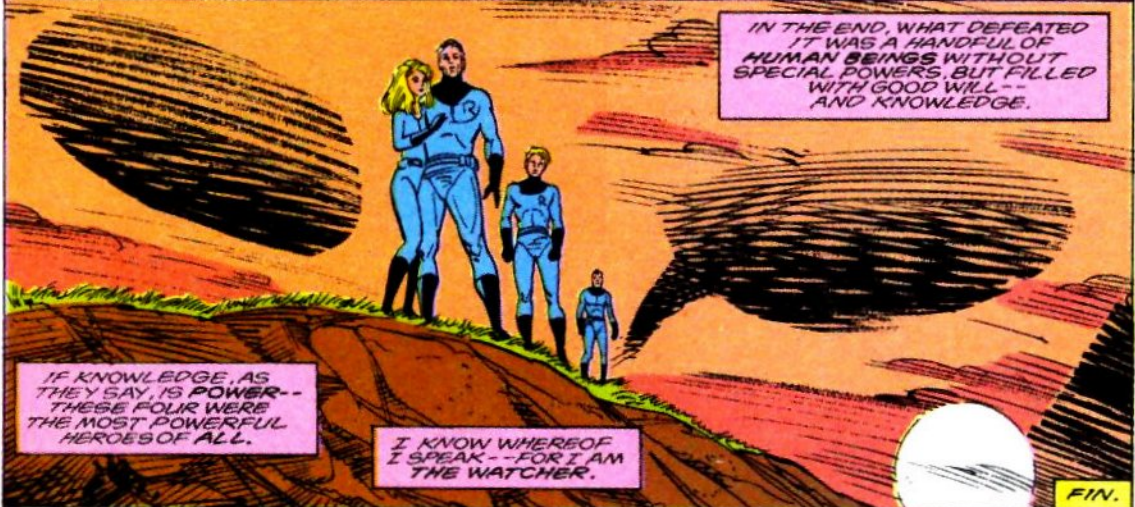
THE REAL TURNING POINT WAS THE NEWSLETTER THAT I --

AND WHAT ABOUT THE COMMITTEE I HEADED WHOSE MEETINGS PRODUCED 1.3 MILLION PAGES OF TESTIMONY?

PLEASE, GENTLEMEN! THERE'S PLENTY OF CREDIT TO GO AROUND.

I TAKE MY LEAVE BEFORE SOMEONE IN THE TVA TRIES TO CREDIT ME -- NOT THAT ANYONE IS LIKELY TO.

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT THE THREAT WHICH IMMORTUS AND THE TIME TWISTERS POSED TO THE MULTIVERSE IS FINALLY OVER.



IN THE END, WHAT DEFEATED IT WAS A HANDFUL OF HUMAN BEINGS WITHOUT SPECIAL POWERS, BUT FILLED WITH GOOD WILL -- AND KNOWLEDGE.

IF KNOWLEDGE, AS THEY SAY, IS POWER -- THESE FOUR WERE THE MOST POWERFUL HEROES OF ALL.

I KNOW WHEREOF I SPEAK -- FOR I AM THE WATCHER.

FIN.



FEARED AND HATED BY HOMO SAPIENS AND SHUNNED BY HIS OWN KIND, MAGNETO, THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM, HAS TRIUMPHED OVER AND FALLEN BEFORE A VERITABLE PLETHORA OF FEARSOME FOES IN HIS MANY YEARS OF TIRELESS COMBAT.

HE'S DONE BATTLE WITH THE AVENGERS...

THIS HELMET REALLY HURTS MY NOSE.

AND TO THINK WALT SIMONSON THOUGHT HE COULD CHANGE MY ARMOR!

...STOOD OFF AGAINST DOCTOR DOOM...

DO ANY OF YOU GUYS HAVE A CAN OPENER?

...AND FOUGHT WITH AND AGAINST THE UNCANNY X-MEN!

**BUT...**

**WHAT IF  
MAGNETO WAS  
STUCK IN AN  
ELEVATOR  
WITH  
COLOSSUS,  
IRON MAN  
AND  
DOCTOR  
DOOM?**

SIGH I SHOULD'VE JUST TAKEN THE STAIRS!