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WHAT IF...

THE
AVENGERS
HAD FOUGHT
GALACTUS



30TH
ANNIVERSARY
THE
AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
1962-1992

JIMMY SAM
AFTER JACK.

THE SCENE IS SOMEHOW FAMILIAR, YET ALL TOO DIFFERENT! FOR SHOULDN'T THAT BE THE FANTASTIC FOUR STANDING NEXT TO THE WATCHER? AND IF, INDEED, THAT IS THE AVENGERS, THEN WHERE IS CAPTAIN AMERICA?

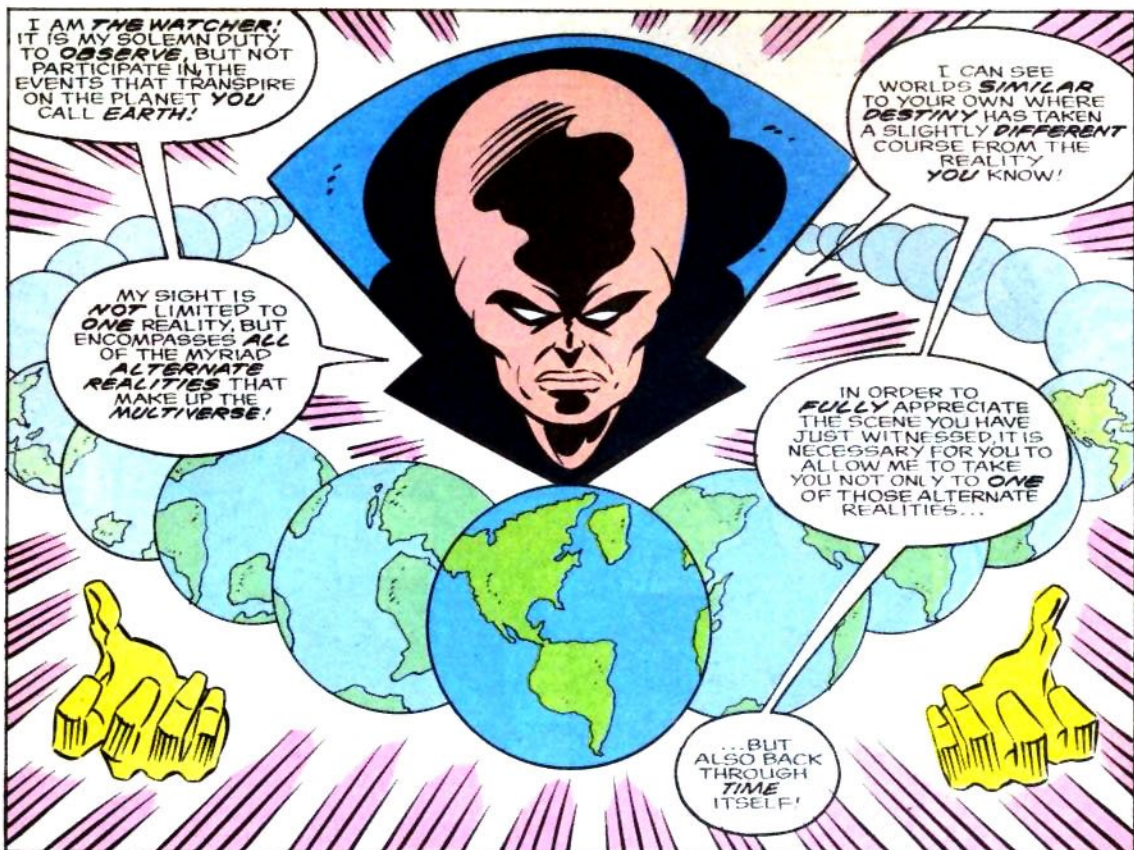
ALL WILL BE EXPLAINED, FAITHFUL ONE, IN THE STORY WE HAD TO CALL...

WHAT IF... THE AVENGERS HAD FOUGHT GALACTUS?



JIM (BLAST FROM THE PAST!) VALENTINO
STORY / LAYOUTS
SAM (WIRUSS SEVER!) DE LAROSA
FINISHED ART
JANICE (ARTIE'S/MEK IS MY IDOL!) CHIANG
LETTERS
TOM (A HUE FOREVERY OCCASION!) VINCENT
COLORS
CRAIG (I'M THE BOSS!) ANDERSON
EDITED BY
TOM (DON'T CALL ME CHIEF!) DE FALCO
EDITOR IN CHIEF
ADAPTED LIBERALLY FROM AND WITH GREAT
RESPECT TO THE MASTERS --
STAN (THE MAN!) LEE AND JACK (KING!) KIRBY

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I AM *THE WATCHER*! IT IS MY SOLEMN DUTY TO **OBSERVE**, BUT NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE ON THE PLANET YOU CALL *EARTH*!

I CAN SEE WORLDS *SIMILAR* TO YOUR OWN WHERE *DESTINY* HAS TAKEN A SLIGHTLY *DIFFERENT* COURSE FROM THE *REALITY* YOU KNOW!

MY SIGHT IS *NOT* LIMITED TO *ONE* REALITY, BUT ENCOMPASSES *ALL* OF THE MYRIAD *ALTERNATE* REALITIES THAT MAKE UP THE *MULTIVERSE*!

IN ORDER TO *FULLY* APPRECIATE THE SCENE YOU HAVE JUST WITNESSED, IT IS NECESSARY FOR YOU TO ALLOW ME TO TAKE YOU NOT ONLY TO *ONE* OF THOSE ALTERNATE REALITIES...

...BUT ALSO BACK THROUGH *TIME* ITSELF!

GAZE WITH ME NOW UPON THE CRASH SITE OF AN *EXPERIMENTAL ROCKET-SHIP*...

... WHERE FOUR INTREPID ADVENTURERS WOULD HAVE THEIR LIVES FOREVER ALTERED BY THEIR EXPOSURE TO *COSMIC RAYS*!



IN *YOUR* REALITY THEY WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AS...

Fantastic Four

*IN THE CLASSIC F.F. #1.--CRAIG

IT WAS *THEY* WHO WOULD, SOME YEARS LATER, FACE THE WORLD-DEVOURER, *GALACTUS*...

... AND, THROUGH MY OWN *INDIRECT INTERVENTION*, WARD HIM AWAY FROM YOUR PLANET! *



*IN THE IMMORTAL F.F. #48-50.--CRAIG



OR SO IT WAS ON YOUR WORLD.

BUT AS I HAVE OBSERVED, THERE ARE MANY REALITIES IN THE MULTIVERSE...

... INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE WHERE **RED RICHARDS**, **BEN GRIMM** AND **SUE** AND **JOHNNY STORM** WOULD DIE IN THAT SAME CRASH...

... AND THE **FANTASTIC FOUR** WOULD NEVER BE!



IN THIS REALITY, **VICTOR VON DOOM** WOULD NEVER COME TO AMERICA TO ENACT HIS VENGEANCE ON HIS OLD COLLEGE RIVAL **REED RICHARDS**...

... BUT WOULD, INSTEAD, PROTECT HIS SMALL **SAVARIAN KINGDOM** FROM THE ARMIES OF THE EAST, AND THUS BECOME A TRUSTY ALLY OF THE WEST!

* AS HE DID IN **F.F.#5**. -- C.A.



ALSO, WITHOUT **JOHNNY STORM** TO REVIVE HIM FROM HIS **AMNESIAC STATE**...

... A HOMELESS OUTCAST WOULD CONTINUE TO WANDER **THE BOWERY** AIMLESSLY...

... NEVER REALIZING HE IS **NAMOR**, THE ONE TRUE **SUB-MARINER**!

* **F.F.#4**. -- CRAIG



AND WITHOUT **NAMOR** TO FREE HIM*, THE LEGENDARY HERO OF WORLD WAR TWO, **CAPTAIN AMERICA**...

... WOULD REMAIN FOREVER FROZEN IN HIS ICY TOMB!

* **AVENGERS#4**. -- C.

YET, THERE ARE THOSE EVENTS WHICH WOULD REMAIN THE SAME IN BOTH REALITIES...



...SUCH AS THE FORMATION OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!*

*AVENGERS #1.-- CLASSIC CRAIG

AND, JUST AS IN THE REALITY YOU KNOW, THIS AUGUST BODY OF ADVENTURERS WOULD CHANGE THEIR MEMBERSHIP*...



*AVENGERS #16.-- GUESS WHO?

...ALBEIT, IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT CONFIGURATION THAN THE ONE YOUR WORLD KNEW!

AND, AS IN YOUR REALITY, THE MAN-GIANT CALLED GOLIATH, AND HIS PARTNER, THE WASP, WOULD RETURN TO THE FOLD*...



*AVENGERS #28.-- CRAIG-CAN-WE-STOP-WITH-THE-FOOTNOTES-NOW?-ANDERSON

...AND THIS IS WHERE OUR STORY TRULY BEGINS-- AS THE AVENGERS RETURN FROM THEIR FIRST CONFRONTATION WITH THE COLLECTOR*...

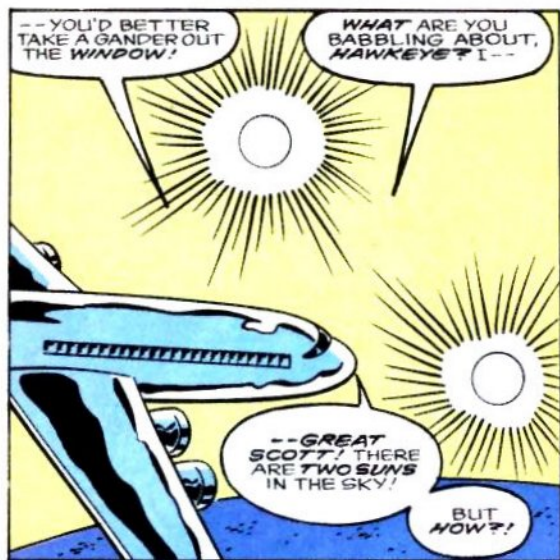


IRON MAN! GOLIATH TRIED TO CHANGE SIZE AND PASSED OUT!

LET ME SEE IF I CAN HELP WASP!

BETTER IKNAV ON THAT, SHELL-HEAD--

*AVENGERS #28-29.-- NOT-YET!-- JIM





BUT IRON MAN WOULD NOT EVEN CONSIDER LEAVING THE GROUP HE HELPED FOUND IF HE COULD BUT SEE INTO THE ENDLESS VOID OF SPACE...



... WHERE, EVEN NOW, RIDING THE WAVES OF SOLAR ENERGY ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH EARTH, COMES A STRANGE VISITOR FROM ANOTHER PLANET...



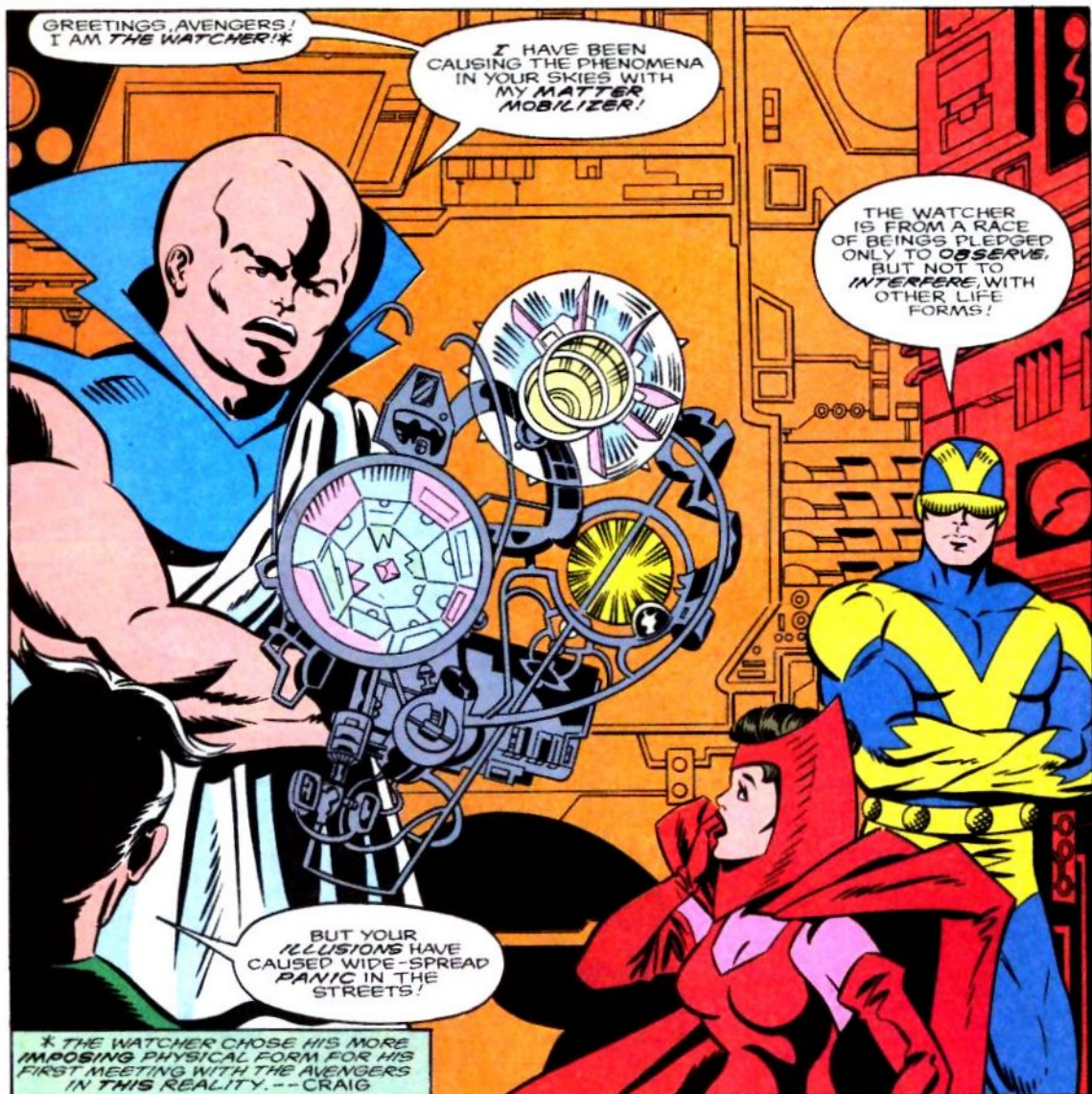
AND AS THE **SURFER**, THAT HARBINGER OF DESTRUCTION, WEAVES HIS WAY TO OUR FAIR GLOBE...

ODD PHENOMENA THAT DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED BY THE **SWIFTEST** AVENGER OF THEM ALL -- **QUICKSILVER!**

...STRANGE THINGS CONTINUE TO OCCUR OVER EARTH'S SKIES!

GOLIATH!
GOLIATH!





GREETINGS, AVENGERS!
I AM THE WATCHER!*
*

I HAVE BEEN
CAUSING THE PHENOMENA
IN YOUR SKIES WITH
MY MATTER
MOBILIZER!

THE WATCHER
IS FROM A RACE
OF BEINGS PLEDGED
ONLY TO OBSERVE,
BUT NOT TO
INTERFERE WITH
OTHER LIFE
FORMS!

BUT YOUR
ILLUSIONS HAVE
CAUSED WIDE-SPREAD
PANIC IN THE
STREETS!

* THE WATCHER CHOSE HIS MORE
IMPOSING PHYSICAL FORM FOR HIS
FIRST MEETING WITH THE AVENGERS
IN THIS REALITY. -- CRAIG

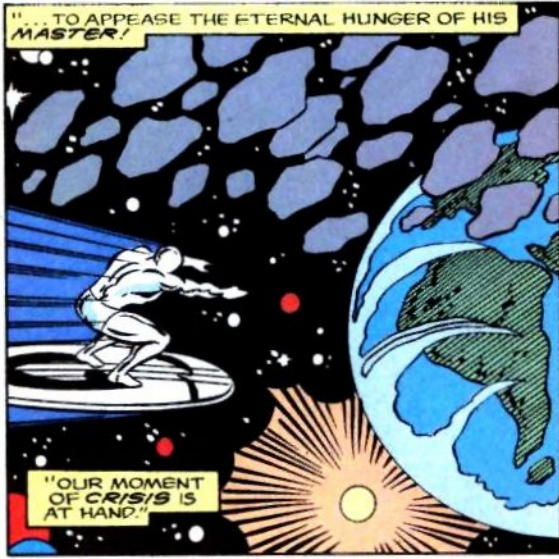


TRUE, BUT THE DANGER
EARTH FACES IS TOO
GREAT FOR ME TO
STAND IDLY BY.

I SOUGHT TO
SHIELD YOUR
WORLD FROM THE
SILVER SURFER.
HE WHO IS HERALD
TO THE WORLD
DESTROYER
GALACTUS!

BUT, ALAS,
I HAVE
FAILED!

EVEN NOW THE SURFER
ENTERS THIS SECTOR
OF SPACE -- HIS ONE
OBJECTIVE, A WORLD
THAT IS SUITABLE...



"... TO APPEASE THE ETERNAL HUNGER OF HIS
MASTER!

"OUR MOMENT
OF CRISIS IS
AT HAND."



THOSE ROCKS IN THE SKY POSED NO TRUE CHALLENGE FOR ONE USED TO NAVIGATING ASTEROID FIELDS!

AND, YET, IT APPEARS AS THOUGH SOME GREAT POWER ATTEMPTED TO SHIELD THIS PLANET FROM ME!

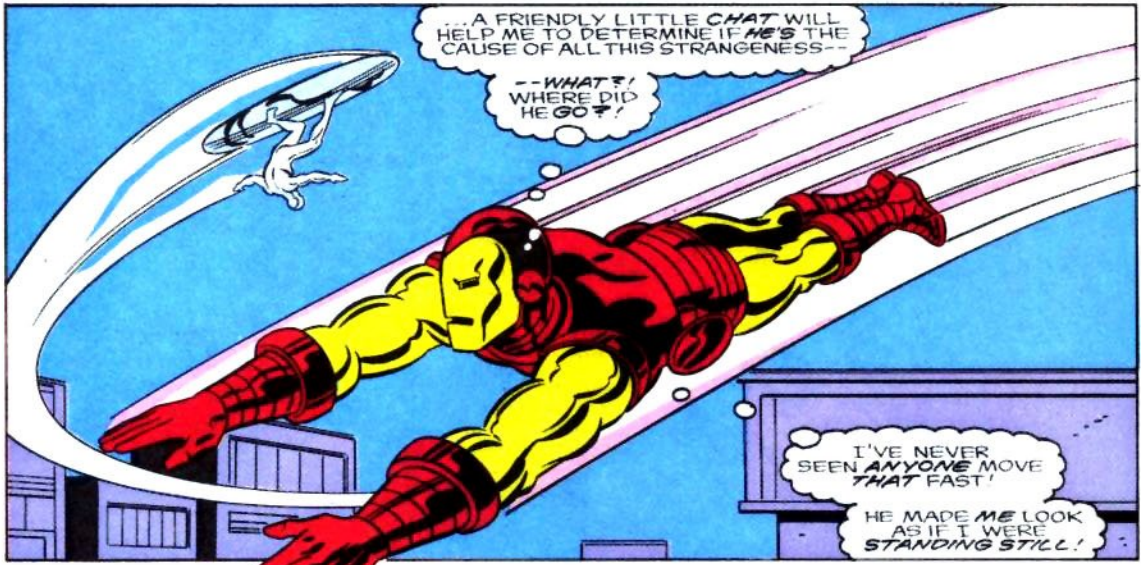
IT IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE. I AM HERE NOW AND ---



--HOLD! WHAT IS THIS? AN ARMORED BEING RISES UP TO CHALLENGE ME?!

BARELY HAD TIME TO RE-CHARGE MY ARMOR!

I DON'T KNOW WHO THIS GUY IS, BUT...

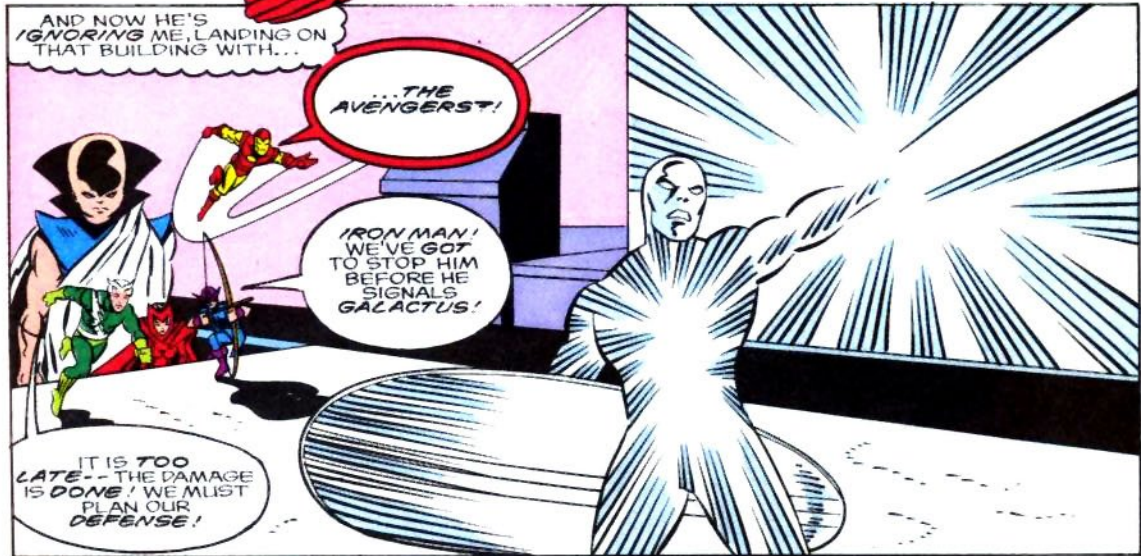


...A FRIENDLY LITTLE CHAT WILL HELP ME TO DETERMINE IF HE'S THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS STRANGENESS--

--WHAT? WHERE DID HE GO?!

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE MOVE THAT FAST!

HE MADE ME LOOK AS IF I WERE STANDING STILL!

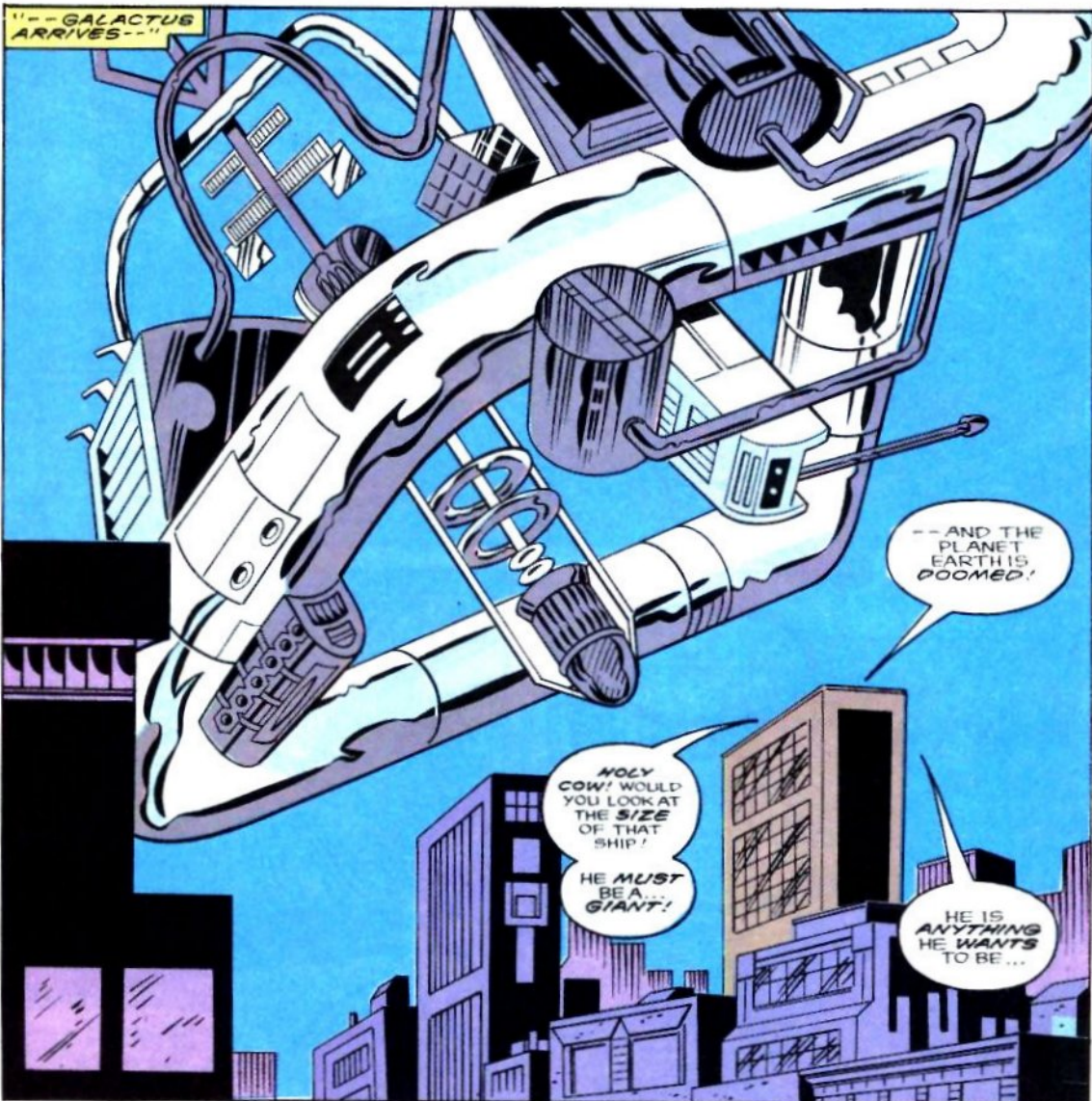


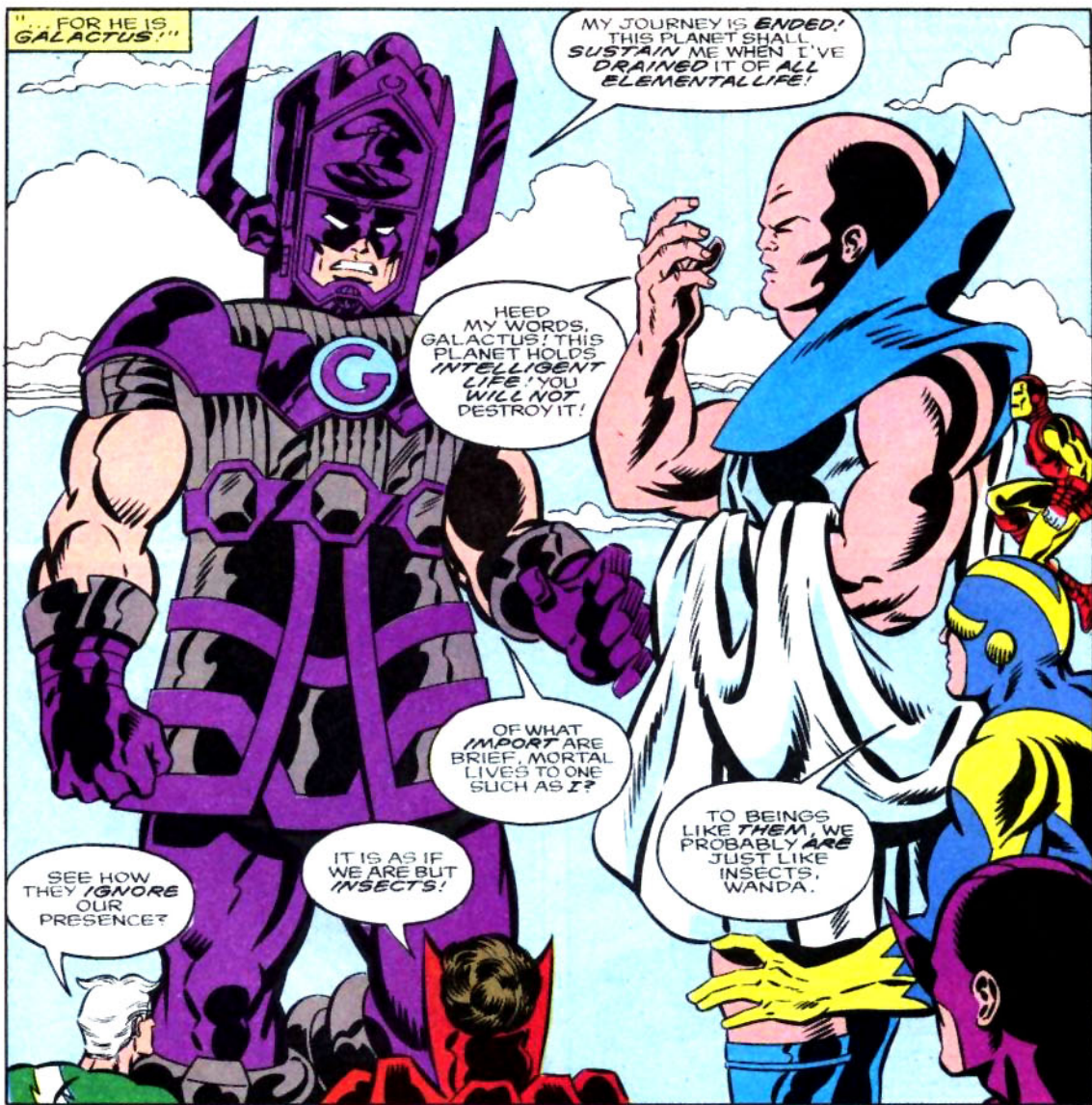
AND NOW HE'S IGNORING ME, LANDING ON THAT BUILDING WITH...

...THE AVENGERST!

IRON MAN! WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM BEFORE HE SIGNALS GALACTUS!

IT IS TOO LATE-- THE DAMAGE IS DONE! WE MUST PLAN OUR DEFENSE!





"... FOR HE IS GALACTUS!"

MY JOURNEY IS ENDED! THIS PLANET SHALL SUSTAIN ME WHEN I'VE DRAINED IT OF ALL ELEMENTAL LIFE!

HEED MY WORDS, GALACTUS! THIS PLANET HOLDS INTELLIGENT LIFE! YOU WILL NOT DESTROY IT!

OF WHAT IMPORT ARE BRIEF, MORTAL LIVES TO ONE SUCH AS I?

TO BEINGS LIKE THEM, WE PROBABLY ARE JUST LIKE INSECTS, WANDA.

SEE HOW THEY IGNORE OUR PRESENCE?

IT IS AS IF WE ARE BUT INSECTS!



YEAH? WELL, THIS LITTLE INSECT'S GONNA GIVE 'EM SOME NEWS!

SOME OF US KNOW HOW TO--

TWANG!



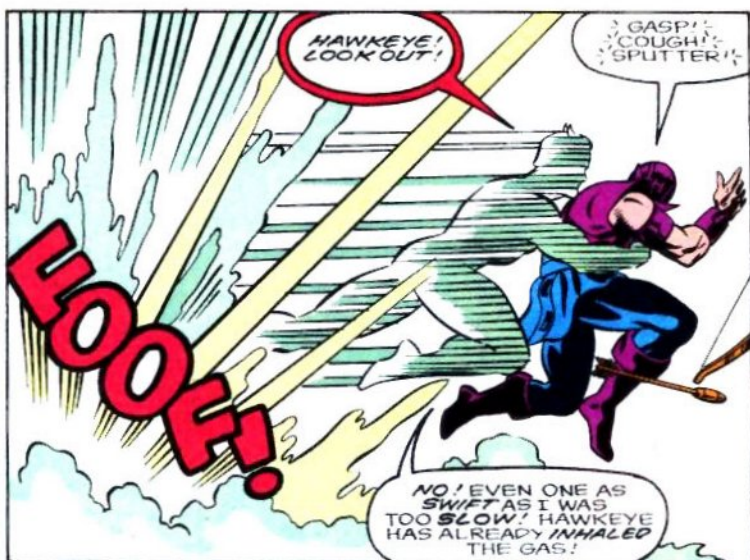
--STING?!

FOOM!

HUH?! THAT WAS ONE OF MY MOST POWERFUL CORUSION ARROWS! HE DIDN'T EVEN FEEL IT!



NOW WHAT? HE JUST LOBBED SOME KINDA CAPSULE AT ME!



HAWKEYE! LOOK OUT!

GASP! COUGH! SPLUTTER!

LOOF!

NO! EVEN ONE AS SWIFT AS I WAS TOO SLOW! HAWKEYE HAS ALREADY INHALED THE GAS!



HAWKEYE... ARE YOU--?

MY NOSE! MY EYES!

YARRGHH! MY WHOLE BRAIN IS ON FIRE! I-- I'M PASSING OUT--!



THAT TEARS IT, MISTER! YOU ATTACK ONE AVENGER-- YOU ATTACK US ALL!

I DON'T CARE NOW BIG YC! --LET'S SEE HOW YOU STAND UP TO A FULL BLAST OF REPULSOR RAYS!



HUH? HE'S JUST STANDING THERE! ABSORBING IT--

--GLOWING LIKE A NEWBORN SUN!



YOU GWATS ARE BUT A TRIVIAL ANNOYANCE!



NOW HE'S SHOOTING IT BACK AT ME--!

AAARRGHH!

COULDN'T... GET AWAY IN... TIME...



THAT'S IT, AVENGERS!
IRON MAN, OUR MOST
POWERFUL MEMBER, IS
DOWN FOR THE COUNT!



OH, HANK, YOU'RE OUR LEADER--
YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A PLAN!

THERE IS *NOTHING*
MORE YOU CAN DO
HERE, AVENGERS!



NO! I CAN'T ACCEPT
THAT, WATCHER! TWO
OF OUR MEMBERS ARE
DOWN ALREADY--

-- THERE *MUST*
BE *SOMETHING*
WE CAN DO!

I UNDERSTAND YOUR
ANGER AND YOUR
FRUSTRATION,
GOLIATH-- I HAVE
SEEN IT MANY
TIMES BEFORE...

... BUT THERE
ARE FORCES AT
WORK HERE BEYOND
YOUR *KEN*-- LET
ALONE YOUR
CONTROL!



"SEE HOW, EVEN NOW, THE *WORLD-EATER*
CALLS DOWN HIS MACHINES FROM HIS
ORBITING STARSHIP?"

"TAKE YOUR WOUNDED
AND TEND TO THEM! YOU
SHALL HEAR FROM ME
ANON!"

WHERE IS
MY HERALD?

WHERE IS
THE *SILVER*
SURFER?



AND PRESENTLY... THE SON OF ODIN HEEDS THY SUMMONS AND HATH BROUGHT A NEW ALLY-- HERCULES!*
 *THESE EVENTS TAKE PLACE SHORTLY AFTER THOR AND HERCULES' FIRST MEETING IN THOR # 126-129, BEFORE THE OLYMPIAN BECAME AN AVENGER.-- C.A.

THE HERCULES?! UH, GLAD TO HAVE YOU, FELLA!
 LET ME FILL YOU IN...

AND AFTER IRON MAN HAD BROUGHT THE IMMORTALS UP TO SPEED ON CURRENT EVENT'S...
 VERILY THY COURSE OF ACTION WAS A WISE ONE, MY FRIEND!
 AYE, HERCULES HUNGERS TO TEST THIS GALACTUS'S METTLE!
 THEN LET THE CRY RING FORTH --

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!!!

THE AVENGERS STAND TALL AND PROUD, READY TO LAY DOWN THEIR VERY LIVES FOR THE SAKE OF THE PLANET EACH CALLS HOME, WHEN SUDDENLY...

...THE VISAGE OF THE WATCHER APPEARS BEFORE THEM!
 WAIT, AVENGERS!
 YOUR STRENGTH IS NOT YET THE EQUAL OF YOUR COURAGE!
 YOU MUST RECONSIDER BEFORE YOU PRESS BLINDLY INTO BATTLE!



I SAY THEE *NAY*, GIANT! *MIDGARD* BE THREATENED AND IT FALLS 'PON US TO DEFEND IT!

STAND THEE TO ONE SIDE...

...OR BE COUNTED 'MONGST MY ENEMIES!



THERE IS *NO WISDOM* IN THIS! THEY ACT LIKE BRASH, OVERCONFIDENT CHILDREN...

... RUSHING HEAD LONG INTO THAT WHICH THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND!

WERE THERE ONLY SOME WAY I *COULD* HELP THEM --

-- BUT *NO*! I MUST NOT FORGET MY OATH AS A WATCHER!

I MUST *NOT* INTERFERE --

-- EVEN IF IT MEANS THEIR DEATHS!



AND, AS THE WATCHER PONDS THE *FOOLISHNESS* OF HUMANITY, SO, TOO, DOES THE *SILVER SURFER*! LOOK AT THEM! BARBARIC, PRIMITIVE...

... THEIR VERY *PRESENCE* DESTROYS THEIR WORLD -- FOULING ITS *LAND* AND ITS *AIR*.

THEY *COWER* IN ABJECT *FEAR* OF THAT WHICH THEY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND...



... AND YET, I SENSE SOMETHING *NOBLE* IN THEM!

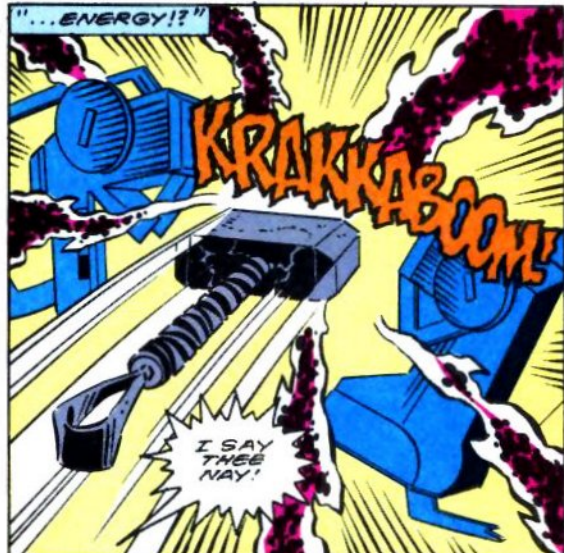
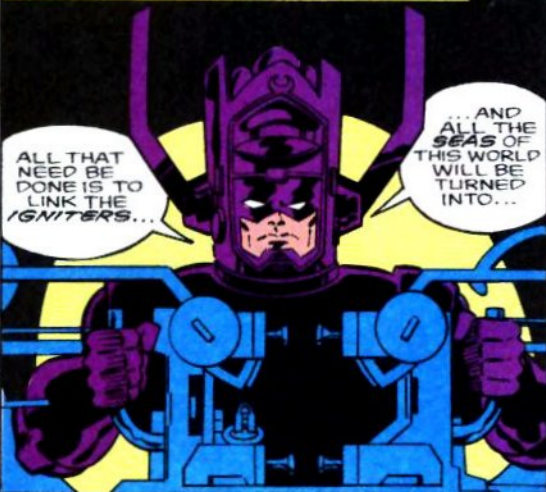
IN *SOME* WAYS THEY REMIND ME OF MY *OWN* RACE ON *ZENN-LA*...

... AS WE MUST HAVE BEEN AT THE *DAWNING* OF OUR CIVILIZATION!

SO MUCH *PROMISE* THAT WILL *NEVER* BE REALIZED --

-- SACRIFICED TO ASSUAGE GALACTUS'S HUNGER!

WHILE THE SILVER SURFER MUSES OVER THE FATE OF MANKIND, GALACTUS CALMLY ASSEMBLES HIS **ENERGY CONVERTER!**



SO SAY WE **ALL**, THUNDER GOD!



"...IT'S YOUR TURN!"

MY POWER MAY BE **UNPREDICTABLE...**



"--NO! HE MERELY **FLOATS** IN THE AIR-- **UNAFFECTED!**"





WE HAVE ONLY
BEGIN,
VILLAIN!

SKARRAK!

FOOLISH, GODLING!
I CAN CREATE
ANOTHER CONVERTER
WITHIN MERE
MINUTES!

KATHOOM!

AN' WE'LL JUST
TEAR *THAT*
ONE DOWN, TOO!

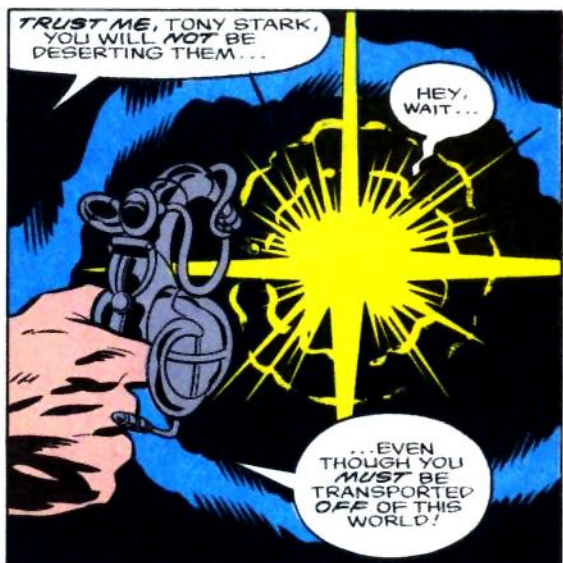


ELSEWHERE ...

IRON MAN, *WAIT!*
YOU CAN HELP YOUR
FRIENDS *BEST* IN
ANOTHER MANNER!

HOW,
WATCHER?

BY OBTAINING
THE *ONE* OBJECT WITH
WHICH YOU CAN
DEFEAT GALACTUS!



TRUST ME, TONY STARK,
YOU WILL *NOT* BE
DESERTING THEM ...

HEY,
WAIT ...

...EVEN
THOUGH YOU
MUST BE
TRANSPORTED
OFF OF THIS
WORLD!



THE *HUNGER* GNAWS
AT ME ... THREATENING
MY VERY *EXISTENCE!*

I CAN *TOLERATE*
THESE PETTY NUISANCES
NO LONGER!

THEREFORE I WILL
SUMMON ONE WHO WILL
KEEP THESE IRRITATING
MITES AT BAY WHILE
I COMPLETE THE
TASK AT HAND!



LET THE *PUNISHER**
COME FORTH!

*OBVIOUSLY *NOT*
FRANK CASTLE, BUT
AN ALIEN ROBOT
CONSTRUCT. --
OBSERVANT ANDERSON



AND, WHILE THE *HULK* AND *MERCULES* TURN THE *PUNISHER* INTO SO MUCH SCRAP METAL, *IRON MAN* WINGS HIS WAY TOWARD DESTINY...

GOOD LORD!
WE ASSUMED
THAT GALACTUS'S SHIP
WAS HOVERING OVER
THE ATMOSPHERE--
BUT IT'S NOT!

IT'S IN
ORBIT BEYOND
THE EARTH-MOON
SYSTEM-- BUT IT'S
SO HUGE THAT
IT LOOKED
CLOSER!

I'VE NEVER
IMAGINED ANYTHING
COULD BE THIS BIG! IT
DWARFS THE ENTIRE
PLANET!

I HOPE I'M
DOING THE RIGHT
THING. I DON'T LIKE
LEAVING MY FELLOW
AVENGERS
LIKE THIS!



I CAN "HEAR"
THE WATCHER INSIDE
MY HEAD!

THE DEVICE
I'M SEARCHING
FOR IS DOWN
THIS CORRIDOR.

THE ONLY PROBLEM
IS THAT THIS CORRIDOR
IS SEVERAL HUNDRED
MILES LONG!



BUT BEFORE THE
ARMORED AVENGER
CAN REACH HIS
DESTINATION...

ZERRAPP!

... HE IS ATTACKED
BY THE GIANT
SHIP'S DEFENSES...



... DEFENSES THAT,
IN YOUR REALITY, DID
NOT ACTIVATE AGAINST
THE HUMAN TORCH...

... BUT RESPOND
TO THE METAL ARMOR
THAT GIVES *IRON MAN*
HIS VERY POWER!



FIND EVEN AS IRON MAN FALLS UNCONSCIOUS...

THAT PIECE OF DEBRIS IS ABOUT TO CRUSH THOSE PEOPLE!

WHAT AM I DOING?! WHY SHOULD I CARE IF THEY ARE CRUSHED?

HAVE I NOT ALREADY SEALED THEIR FATE?

ZAP!

ARE THEY NOT ALL DOOMED REGARDLESS?



WHY DOES THIS THOUGHT GNAW AT ME SO?

I MUST NOT THINK ON IT! BETTER TO FIND THE SOURCE OF THE DEBRIS...

... FOR THERE I WILL SURELY FIND THE MASTER!



THRAK KAKOW!

WHAT EFFRONTERY IS THIS?!



THOUGH THE GREAT GALACTUS CAN IN NO WAY BE HARMED IN SUCH A DISPLAY...

... THESE CREATURES MUST BE TAUGHT THE PRICE OF THEIR ARROGANCE!

I MUST CAST ASIDE ANY DOUBTS I MAY HAVE HARBORED - MY DUTY IS CLEAR...

... I MUST END THEIR INFERNAL MEDDLING AND ALLOW MY MASTER TO FEED...

"...EVEN IF I MUST KILL THESE BEINGS WITH MY BARE HANDS!"

HERALD, YOU HAVE RETURNED! GOOD! DISPENSE WITH THESE... CREATURES!

SHAMBOOM!

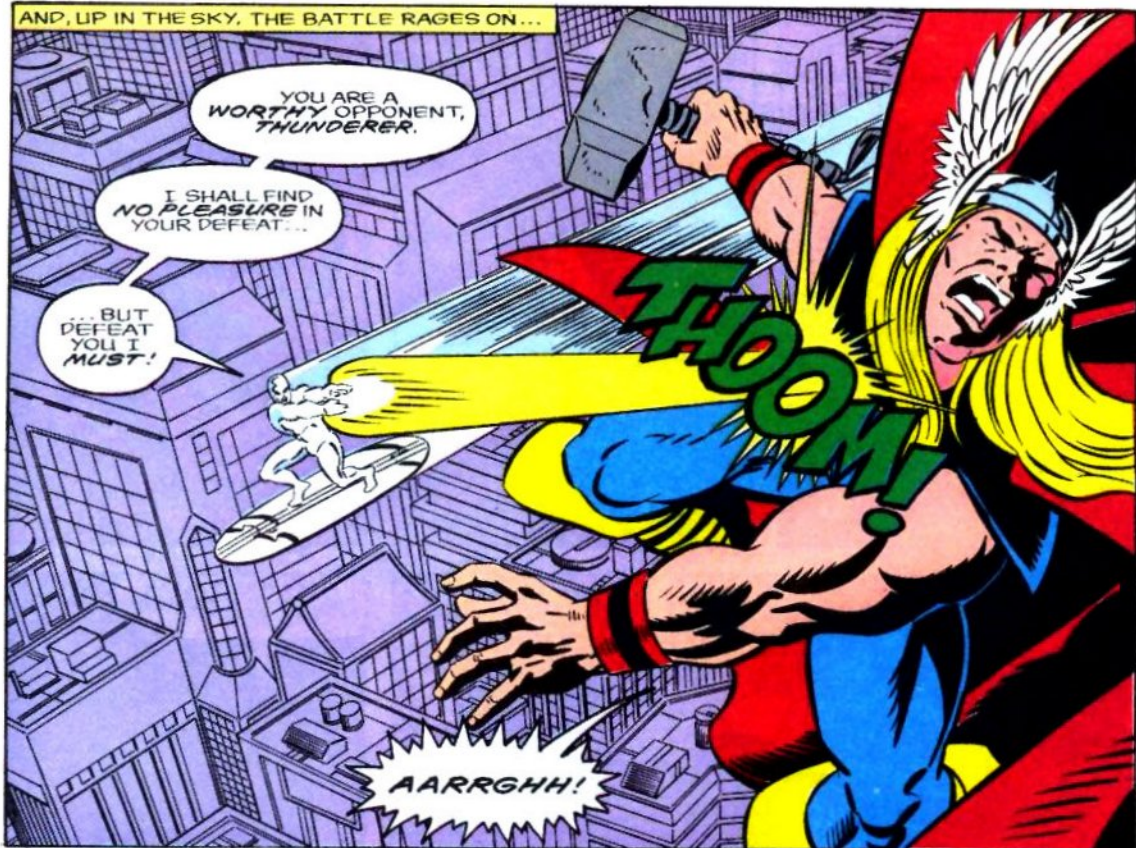
YOUR WILL IS MY WILL, GALACTUS--

-- I AM PLEDGED TO SERVE!





AND, UP IN THE SKY, THE BATTLE RAGES ON...



YOU ARE A WORTHY OPPONENT, THUNDERER.

I SHALL FIND NO PLEASURE IN YOUR DEFEAT...

... BUT DEFEAT YOU I MUST!

AARRGHH!

THOOM!



COME, WATCHER, TO MY SIDE! THE MORTALS HAVE FALLEN...

... THE NOBLE THUNDER GOD BE ON THE VERY BRINK OF CONSCIOUSNESS...

... JOIN THEE WITH THE PRINCE OF POWER AND LET THY LOYALTIES BE KNOWN!

OR BE THEE AFRAID TO TEST THINE METTLE?



YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND, YOUNG GODLING.

I HAVE SWORN AN OATH OF NON-INTERFERENCE...

... I CANNOT-- I MUST NOT-- BREAK THAT VOW--

--EVEN IF IT MEANS YOUR FRIENDS' LIVES!



*VERY BRIEFLY IN ISSUE #20 -- AVENGEROPHILE ANDERSON



AND ON *THAT* NOTE, LET US RETURN TO...

THOU AND THY MASTER BE COWARDS BOTH, SURFER!

LET THE MIGHT OF MY ENCHANTED HAMMER END THIS FRAY!

THE HAMMER! AT LAST HE HAS LET GO OF IT!

I AM CONVINCED IT IS THE CONDUIT OF HIS POWER...

... EVEN AS MY BOARD IS UNTO ME!

IF I USE THE POWER COSMIC TO HOLD IT IN PLACE AWAY FROM THE THUNDERER...

... WOULD THE MIGHTY THOR FALL AS WELL?

BUT THOUGH THE SURFER DOES NOT KNOW THAT WITHIN SIXTY SECONDS OF BEING SEPARATED FROM HIS HAMMER THE MIGHTY THOR WOULD REVERT BACK TO HIS MORTAL FORM OF DR. DONALD BLAKE, THE WATCHER KNOWS! THUS...

THE AVENGERS WERE EARTH'S BEST HOPE! BUT NOW THEY ARE ALL DOWN... SOON, EVEN THOR!

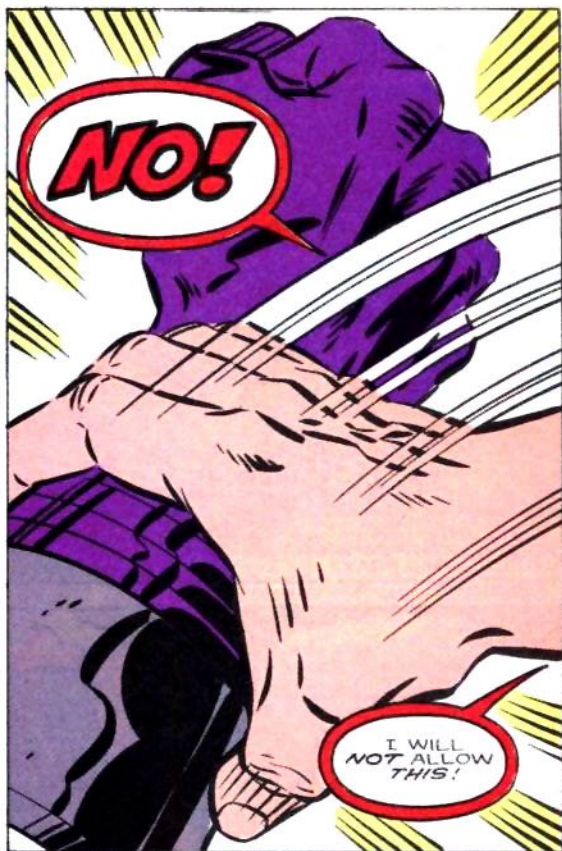
I HAD HOPED THAT THE SILVER SURFER WOULD SEE THE GOODNESS IN MAN...

EVEN IRON MAN HAS FAILED ME -- HE WILL NOT RETURN WITH THE ULTIMATE NULLIFIER!

THEN MY COURSE IS ALL TOO CLEAR! THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO AVOID EARTH'S TOTAL DESTRUCTION!

... BUT HE SEEMS MORE INTENT TO CARRY OUT HIS MASTER'S WILL THAN EVER!

I MUST DO WHAT NO WATCHER BEFORE ME HAS EVER DONE!



CONSIDER, FOR A MOMENT, THE TABLEAU BEFORE YOUR EYES. **TRUE BELIEVER!** A **WATCHER**, ONE OF A **RACE** OF ANCIENT BEINGS **PLEGDED** TO NON-INTERFERENCE, STANDS POISED, READY TO **STRIKE**...

... AGAINST THE **FORCE OF NATURE** THAT IS **GALACTUS!** A BEING OF SUCH **IMMENSE** POWER THAT HE **DEFIES** DESCRIPTION!

YOU CANNOT ALLOW IT?!

BE FOREWARNED THE **HUNGER** WITHIN ME REACHES **MADDENING** PROPORTIONS!

I **MUST** HAVE SUSTENANCE! **GALACTUS MUST** SURVIVE!!

NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF **THIS** WORLD!

YOU GO **TOO FAR**, WATCHER! I WILL **NOT** BE STOPPED BY **ANY** OTHER!!

AND **THIS**, THE **BATTLE** LINES ARE **DRAWN**...

... AND *THIS* REALITY IS WITNESS TO A SIGHT
NEVER SEEN BEFORE IN THE ENTIRETY OF
THE MULTIVERSE!



A WATCHER, PUSHED BEYOND
ALL POINTS OF ENDURANCE
BY HIS LOVE OF A SPECIAL
WORLD AND THE PEOPLES
THAT INHABIT IT, STRIKES THE
FIRST BLOW!

AND GALACTUS, AT THE VERY BRINK OF MADNESS FROM HIS ALL-CONSUMING HUNGER, RETALIATES...



... AND THE WHOLE OF EARTH -- NAY, THE VERY COSMOS ITSELF -- SAUNDERS WITH THE FURY OF THIS BATTLE JOINED!



YOUR *BLOWS* ARE POWERFUL, WATCHER...

...FOR ONE *UNACCUSTOMED* TO BATTLE!



BUT I AM GALACTUS!



YAARRGHH!

AND I AM POWER INCARNATE!



THOUGH GALACTUS IS ABOVE SUCH PETTY CONCEPTS AS *RIGHT* AND *WRONG*...

KNOW YOU THIS, WATCHER--I TRULY DO *REGRET* WHAT I NOW *MUST* DO!

AND WHILE THE WORLD-EATER PREPARES HIS PORTABLE ENERGY CONVERTER, DR. DONALD BLAKE MAKES A DESPERATE PLEA...

SURFER!
RETURN MY CANE
TO ME! *

PLEASE!
ALLOW ME
TO BECOME
THOR
AGAIN!



*THOR'S HAMMER TURNS INTO A CANE WHEN THOR BECOMES DR. DONALD BLAKE!--INFORMATIVE ANDERSON



CAN'T YOU SEE
WHAT'S GOING ON
HERE? DON'T YOU
KNOW WHAT HE'S
GOING TO DO?!

I BEG YOU--
IF THERE'S
EVEN A TRACE
OF HUMANITY
LEFT IN YOU!

"LOOK AT THOSE PEOPLE DOWN THERE, SURFER! THEY'RE HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF SUCH POWER!"



"PLEASE, LET ME
HELP THEM!"

"PLEASE, LET ME TRY TO SAVE
THEM--AND THE WATCHER!"



THE MORTAL'S WORDS STING ME--THEY
CUT ME TO THE BONE!

YET MY LOYALTIES LIE
WITH GALACTUS! HOW CAN
I BETRAY HIM WHO MADE
ME ALL I AM?

DO I HAVE THE
STRENGTH TO BREAK
MY SOLEMN VOW...

...EVEN
AS THIS
WATCHER
HAS
BROKEN
HIS?!

AND EVEN AS THE SILVER SURFER AGONIZES OVER WHAT TO DO...

FORGIVE ME.

... GALACTUS TURNS HIS ENERGY CONVERTER ON THE WATCHER!

NO! HE'S KILLING THE WATCHER!



WILL YOU HELP ME!!

I... I...

...YES.



THANK OPIN!

DR. DONALD BLAKE POUNDS HIS WALKING STICK UPON THE GROUND-- AND WITH A FLASH OF LIGHTNING-- AND A ROAR OF THUNDER...



... HE ONCE AGAIN RESUMES HIS TRUE FORM AS THE SON OF OPIN-- THE MIGHTY THOR!

ALBEIT, TOO LATE!

THE ENERGY!
IT INVIGORATES
ME!

GALACTUS
WILL
SURVIVE!

AND THE MIGHTY DEVOURER OF
PLANETS CONSUMES THE INCREDIBLE
LIVING ENERGY OF THE WATCHER!



MURDERER!!

HAVE AT THEE, VILLAIN!



BE AT PEACE, YOUNG GOPLING!

WITH A WAVE OF HIS GIGANTIC HAND...



... GALACTUS FREEZES THE SCION OF ASGARD-- HOLDING HIM IN PLACE!

I SHALL NOT BE DENIED MY VENGEANCE!

BUT YOU SHALL, CHILD.

THE DANGER TO YOUR WORLD, IS OVER.

THE HUNGER HAS ABATED...



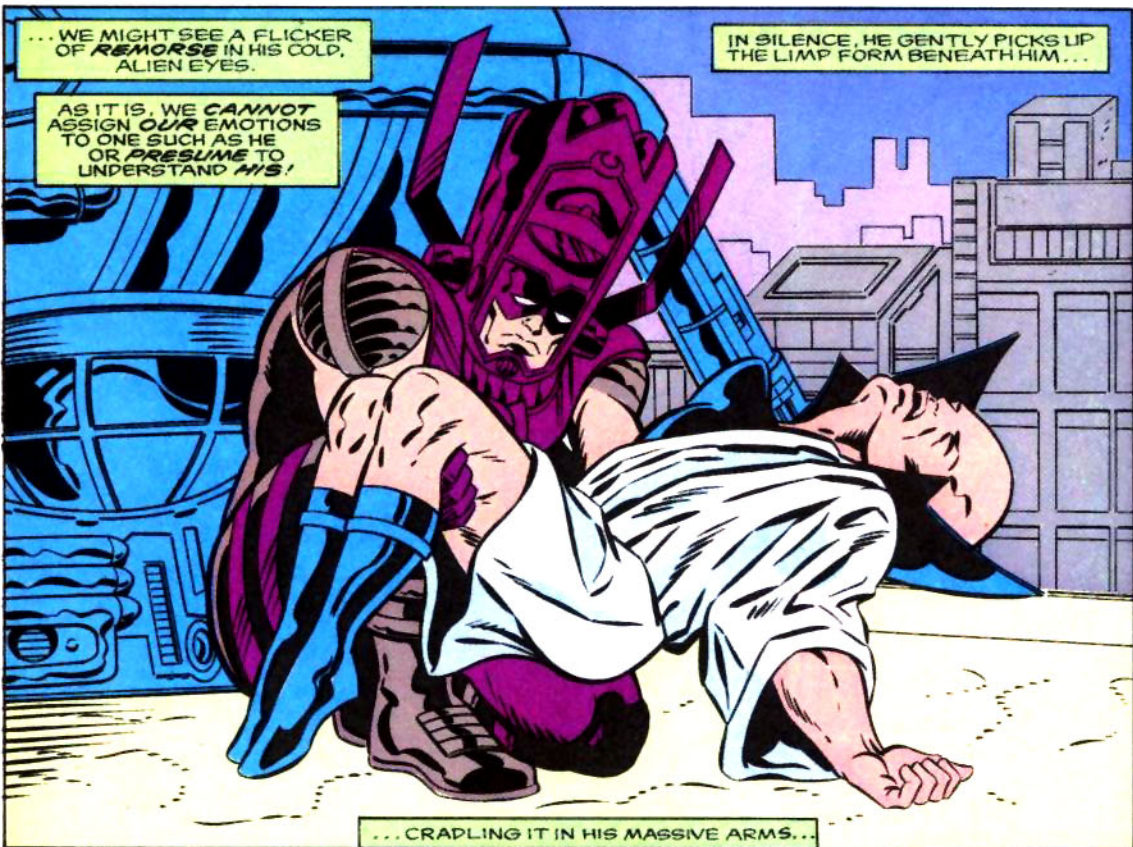
... BUT AT WHAT COST?

HE STANDS OVER THE EMACIATED FORM OF THE FALLEN WATCHER. AND IF GALACTUS HAS EMOTIONS AS WE KNOW THEM...

... WE MIGHT SEE A FLICKER OF REMORSE IN HIS COLD, ALIEN EYES.

AS IT IS, WE CANNOT ASSIGN OUR EMOTIONS TO ONE SUCH AS HE OR PRESUME TO UNDERSTAND HIS!

IN SILENCE, HE GENTLY PICKS UP THE LIMP FORM BENEATH HIM...



... CRADLING IT IN HIS MASSIVE ARMS...



... AND WHEN AT LAST HE SPEAKS, IT IS TO HIS HERALD.

COME, FAITHFUL ONE...

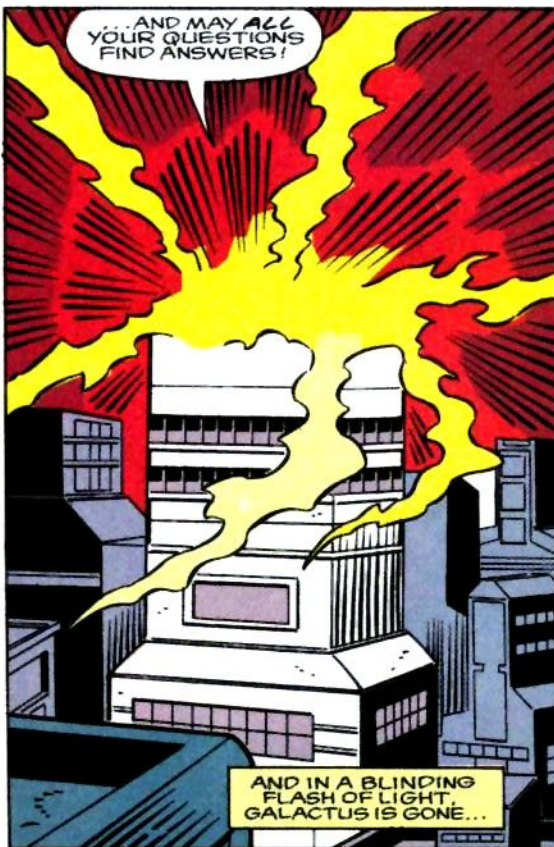
... I MUST RETURN THIS BODY... TO HIS HOME.

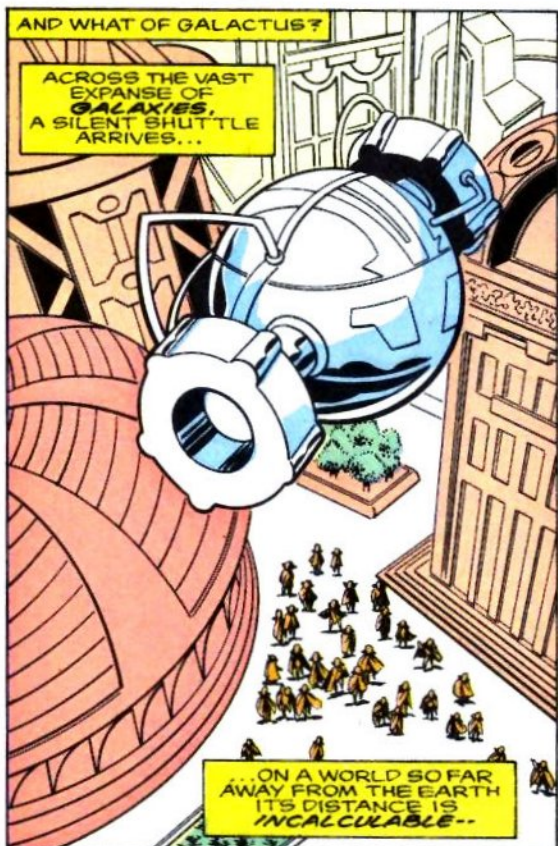


NO, MASTER.

I WILL NOT BE ACCOMPANYING YOU THIS TIME.

WHAT?! WHY NOT, HERALD??





BACK ON EARTH, **IRON MAN** RETURNS TO HIS COMRADES, AND THE **MIGHTY AVENGERS** PROFIT BY INDUCTING A POWERFUL **NEW MEMBER** INTO THEIR RANKS.

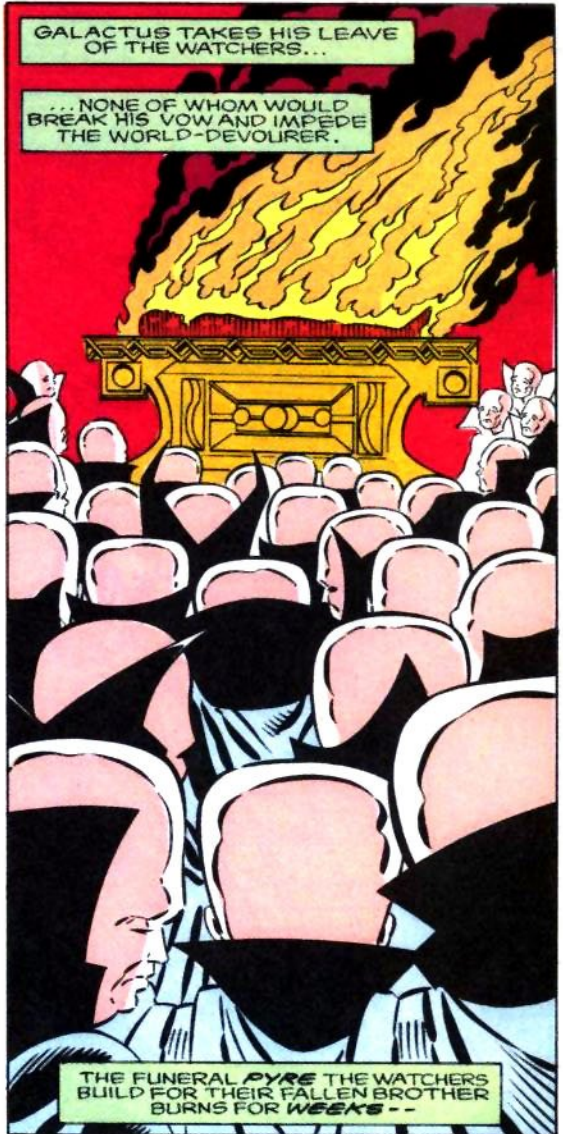


SO, TOO, DOES THE **SILVER SURFER** PROFIT...

... AS THE **AVENGERS** HELP HIM TO **REGAIN** HIS **LOST HUMANITY!**

GALACTUS TAKES HIS LEAVE OF THE **WATCHERS**...

... NONE OF WHOM WOULD **BREAK** HIS **VOW** AND **IMPEDE** THE **WORLD-DEVOURER**.



THE **FUNERAL PYRE** THE **WATCHERS** BUILD FOR THEIR **FALLEN BROTHER** BURNS FOR **WEEKS**--

-- THEIR **MOURNING** WOULD LAST FOR **MILLENNIA!**

MY **OTHER SELF** PAID THE **ULTIMATE PRICE** FOR HIS **INTERVENTION**--

-- A **PRICE** I MAY HAVE **EASILY PAID** FOR MY **OWN.**



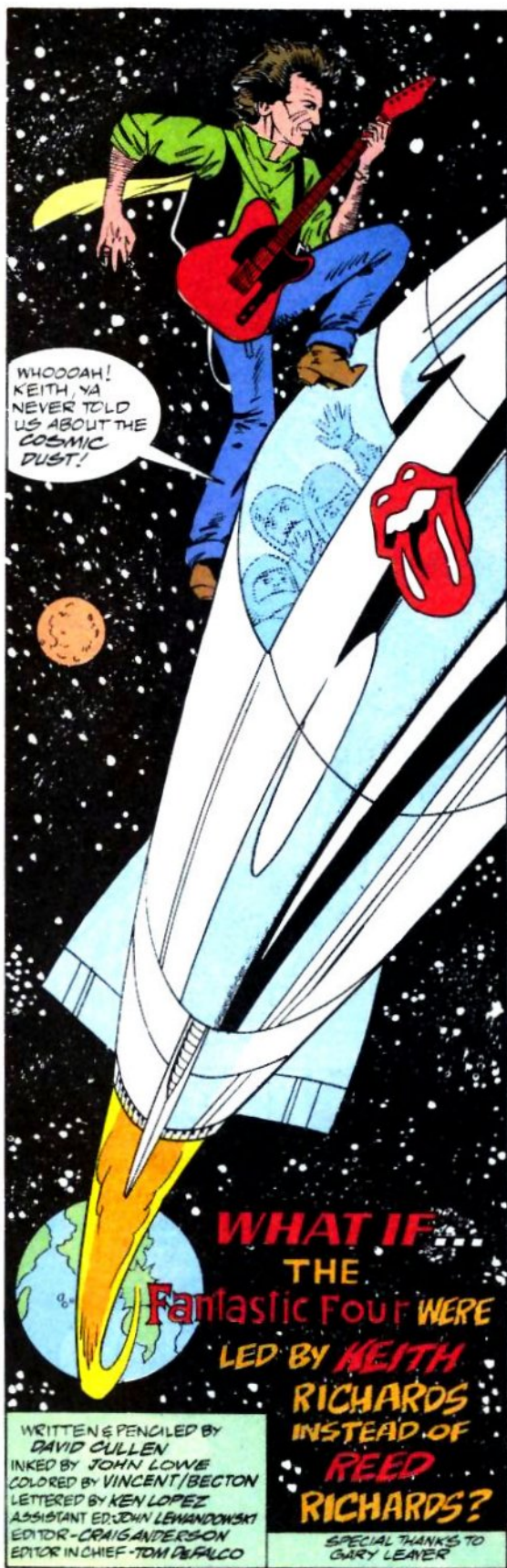
AND SO YOU SEE **WHY** I HAVE **WAITED** SO LONG TO **SHOW** YOU **THIS** **ALTERNATE REALITY**...

... AND **WHY** IT IS SO **DIFFICULT** FOR ME TO **OBSERVE**.

FOR IN **THIS** **REALITY**...

... I **DIED**.

THE END.

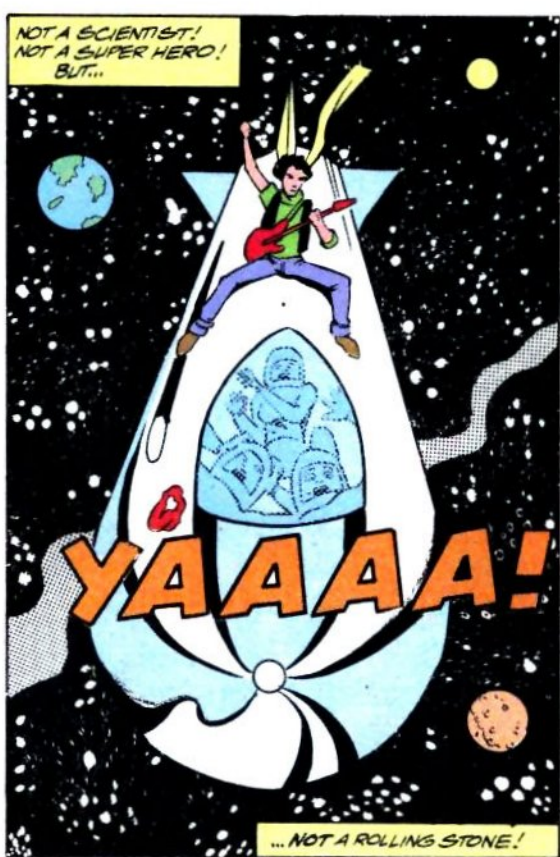


WHOOAH!
KEITH, YA
NEVER TOLD
US ABOUT THE
COSMIC
DUST!

**WHAT IF
THE
Fantastic Four WERE
LED BY KEITH
RICHARDS
INSTEAD OF
REED
RICHARDS?**

WRITTEN & PENCILED BY
DAVID CULLEN
INKED BY JOHN LOWE
COLORED BY VINCENT/BECTON
LETTERED BY KEN LOPEZ
ASSISTANT EDITOR: JOHN LEWANDOWSKI
EDITOR - CRAIG ANDERSON
EDITOR IN CHIEF - TOM DEFalco

SPECIAL THANKS TO
GARY LEAVER



NOT A SCIENTIST!
NOT A SUPER HERO!
BUT...

YAAAA!

...NOT A ROLLING STONE!



KEITH GUIDES THE COSMIC-RAY-BOMBARDED
ROCKET SHIP BACK TO EARTH, SAVING THE
LIVES OF BEN GRIMM, SUE STORM AND
HER YOUNGER BROTHER JOHNNY!

TRAPPED IN A WORLD
HE NEVER MADE,
HOW WILL KEITH
RICHARDS ALTER
BOTH THE WORLD
OF REALITY AND
THAT OF THE
MARVEL UNIVERSE
AS WE KNOW AND
LOVE THEM?

AND AS THE SPACE TRAVELERS' NEW EXTRAORDINARY POWERS REVEAL THEMSELVES, HOW WILL THE PRESENCE OF THIS CHAOTIC ANOMALY MANIFEST ITSELF IN WHAT IS DESTINED TO BECOME EARTH'S MOST FANTASTIC FOURSOME?



WE MUST USE OUR POWERS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF MANKIND!

HOW WILL ROLLING STONE, KEITH RICHARDS ALTER THE DESTINY OF THIS AMAZING QUARTET?



NAW, THERE'S NO SATISFACTION IN THAT! LET'S JES' ROCK!

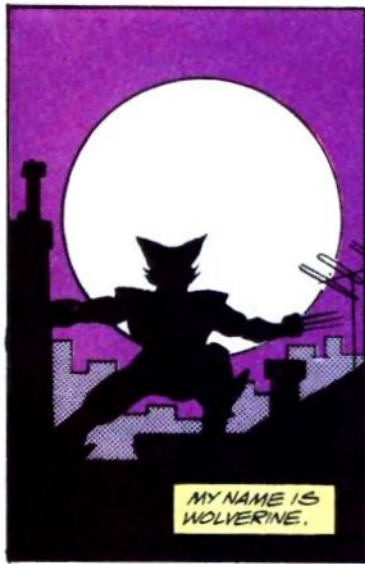
AND IF YOU THINK THAT'S NUTTY...



DO YOU REALIZE THAT A PROPORTIONATE INCREASE OF EACH SETTING ON THESE AMPLIFIERS WOULD ELIMINATE BLAH, BLAH, ETC., ETC...

COR! WHERE'D WE FIND THIS BLOKE?





MY NAME IS
WOLVERINE.



I POSSESS ANIMAL-KEEN,
RAZOR-SHARP SENSES...



...WHICH ARE ALMOST AS
SHARP AS MY ADAMANTIUM
CLAWS...



...AND IT'S A GOOD
THING I HAVE MY
MUTANT HEALING
FACTOR TO TOP
IT ALL OFF,
BECAUSE...

WHAT IF... WOLVERINE! WAS THE WORST THERE IS AT WHAT HE DOES?

DAVID CULLEN - WRITER/ARTIST
JOHN LOWE - INKS
KEN LOPEZ - LETTERS
TOM VINCENT - COLORS

...I'M STILL THE WORST
THERE IS AT WHAT I DO!



GO!

KER-ASH