

MARVEL

Special 25th Anniversary Issue

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Watch for the futuristic military adventures of Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future on TV this fall.



Stan Lee PROUDLY PRESENTS A COMIC BOOK MILESTONE: THE FABULOUS 300TH ISSUE OF...

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

VENOM

HER NAME IS MARY JANE WATSON-PARKER.

BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT.

AT THIS MOMENT, SHE KNOWS ALMOST NOTHING.

FOR HER MIND HAS BEEN HARSHLY NUMBED, ALL THOUGHT CRUELLY DROWNED IN AN ONRUSHING TIDE OF PRIMAL FEAR.

AN EMOTION THAT MAY NEVER FULLY FADE...

DON'T COME NEAR ME!
P-PLEASE! D-DON'T TOUCH ME!!

DAVID TODD RICK BOB JIM TOM
MICHELINIE McFARLANE PARKER SHAREN SALICRUP DE'ALCO

WRITER

ART

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ANSWER: THE KIND THAT CURRENTLY CRAWLS UP THE SHEER WALL OF A SOUTH BRONX TENEMENT. THE KIND THAT HAS JUST COME--

-- HOME.

YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW! THE WOMAN WASN'T OUR TARGET, BUT SHAKING HER UP COULD STILL WORK! I MEAN, IF WE DON'T FIND HIIM--

--HE MIGHT FIND US! EITHER WAY--

--IT'S JUST...

...A MATTER...

...OF TIME!

GUESS I'LL PUMP A LITTLE IRON. POP A SWEAT. YOU MAY NOT GET YOUR POWER FROM MUSCLE BUDDY, BUT I SURE DO!

AND I WANT TO MAKE CERTAIN I'M IN SHAPE, Y'KNOW?

FOR THE KILL!

WALL CRAWL DRUN
MILK S. TANK
FRIC AND
CRANT

DOOR MENACE?

THE ALL-NEW, ALL-DARING SPIDER MAN

SPIDER-MAN
CHILD FRAM

>HIH<
>HIH<

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MIDNIGHT:
THE LYDEN HOUSE
HOTEL IN MID-
MANHATTAN...

CAN'T SLEEP
TOO TENSE.
THINK I KNOW
WHO THAT
INTRUDER
COULD HAVE
BEEN.
TROUBLE
IS--



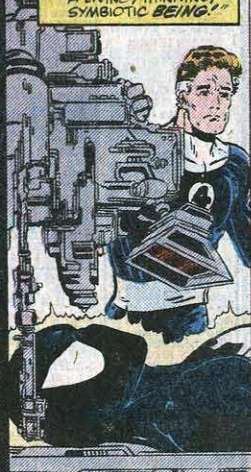
DON'T KNOW WHO THE MAN
WHO BROKE IN WAS, BUT FROM
MJ'S DESCRIPTION, THE INHUMAN
THING SHE SAW SOUNDS AN
AWFUL LOT LIKE --

--MY OLD
COSTUME!

"I FIRST GOT MY BLACK-AND-WHITE SUIT ON
ANOTHER PLANET, DURING THAT *BEYONDER* THING.*
I BROUGHT IT TO EARTH BECAUSE IT WAS GREAT
HAVING A COSTUME THAT COULD *MIMIC* MY
CIVILIAN CLOTHES, AND CHANGE FROM ONE
TO THE OTHER AT A MENTAL COMMAND!

"THE PROBLEMS STARTED
WHEN *MR. FANTASTIC*
DISCOVERED WHAT MY
COSTUME REALLY WAS:

"A LIVING, THINKING,
SYMBIOTIC BEING."



--THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE!

*FOR MORE INFO, SEE *SECRET WARS* #9. -- J.G.

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NOW!**

(EXTRA COUPON
FOR A FRIEND!)

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AN ALIEN WHO WANTED ME FOR ITS **HOST**, WHO EVEN TRIED TO **BOND** ITSELF TO MY BODY!

"IT FINALLY TOOK MR. FANTASTIC'S **SONIC BLASTER** TO CAPTURE THE CREATURE!"



"BUT IT ESCAPED, DETERMINED TO JOIN WITH ME **PERMANENTLY**. I GOT DESPERATE."



"SO DESPERATE THAT I LURED IT TO A CHURCH TOWER--"

"-- AND LET THE SHATTERING CLAMOR OF THE BELLS **KILL** THE MONSTER BEFORE IT COULD DESTROY ME!"*



*SEE WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #1-- J.S.

BUT FROM WHAT MARY JANE SAYS, THE REPORTS OF THAT DEATH MAY HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT... **PREMATURE.**

NUTS. I'M REALLY STRUNG TIGHT.



IN THE PAST, I'D LOOSEN UP WITH A LITTLE WEB-SWINGING, MAYBE TAKE SOME PHOTOS FOR THE **DAILY BUGLE**.



BUT I'M A MARRIED MAN NOW, AND I HAVE TO STAY WITH MARY JANE UNTIL--



...MAYBE... PETER?

COME TO BED.

I THINK I KNOW WHO TERRORIZED YOU, M.J. AND WHY THEY'RE AFTER SPIDER-MAN. I HOPED MY HAVING A **SECRET IDENTITY** WOULD SHIELD YOU, BUT--

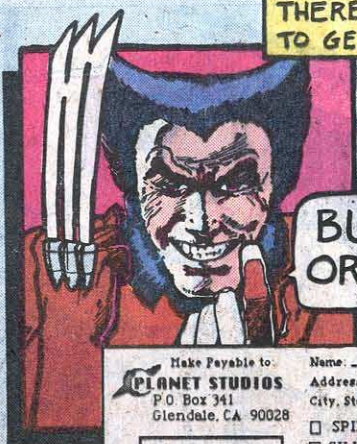


HUSH, TIGER. WHEN I SIGNED ON "FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE," I **MEANT** IT.

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GOOD MOVE!
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IF I HAD A NICKEL FOR EVERY TIME I'VE DROPPED THROUGH THIS SKYLIGHT--



--MAYBE I COULD AFFORD TO PAY FOR MY SHARE OF THAT CONDO!

SPEAKING OF WHICH--

-- I WONDER IF THERE'LL BE A PROBLEM GETTING IN AND OUT AS SPIDER-MAN?



GUESS I'LL SWING ACROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN I COME TO IT. NOW, I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.



AND TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST!

I BORROWED THIS SONIC BLASTER FROM THE FANTASTIC FOUR ON MY WAY OVER.



I JUST HOPE I DON'T HAVE TO USE--

--HNN? LIGHT BLINKING ON MARY JANE'S ANSWERING MACHINE. BETTER SEE WHAT IT IS.



HI, KIDS! THIS IS AUNT MAY. JUST CALLING TO REMIND YOU ABOUT DINNER TONIGHT, CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS AT SEVEN P.M. SHORT-- I-I MEAN SHARP! OH, PHOOEY, I HATE THESE CONTRACTIONS! :CLICK:



HEH! AUNT MAY WILL GET SUCH A KICK WHEN SHE HEARS ABOUT THE FANCY WEST-SIDE CONDO I'M MOVING INTO. QUITE A STEP UP FROM THIS PLACE!



'COURSE, WHEN YOU COME RIGHT DOWN TO IT, I'M GOING TO MISS LIVING HERE. SURE, IT'S A DUMP, BUT FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS--

--IT'S BEEN MY DUMP! OH, WELL...



SOON...

DON'T KNOW HOW MANY PICS M.J. WANTS. I'VE GOT 36 EXPOSURES OF ZOO DX IN MY CAMERA. I HOPE THAT'S--



--HUH, I COULDN'T BE IN ANY DANGER-- OR MY SPIDER-SENSE WOULD WARN ME. BUT SOMEHOW, I ALMOST--



---FEEL---



---LIKE---



---I'M---



---BEING---



---FOLLOWED!--





HE'S DUCKING
INTO AN ALLEY WAY!
MUST BE A SHORT-
CUT!

BLAST! NO
CROWD TO HIDE IN!
WE'D BETTER GIVE
HIM A FEW SECONDS
TO GET AHEAD,
THEN--



WHAT--?
HE'S GONE!



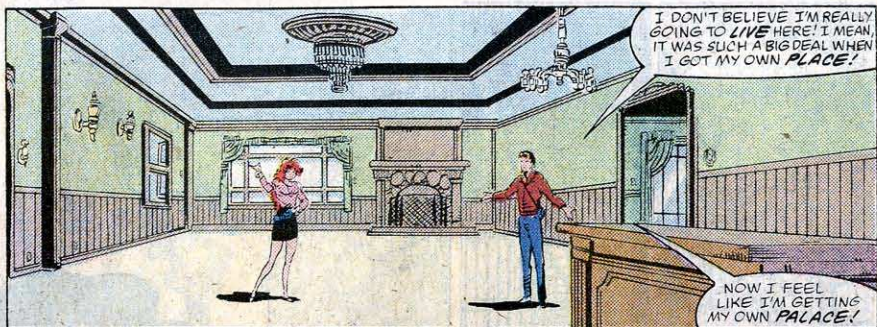
LIVING IN NEW YORK FOR
SO LONG MAY HAVE MADE ME
PARANOID, BUT I CAN'T
HELP BELIEVING THAT OLD
SAYING: "BETTER SAFE--

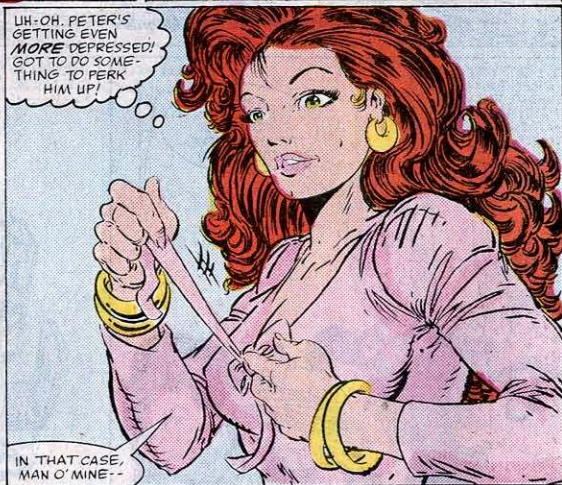
"--THAN
SPLATTERED!"

AND THUS, A SHORT WHILE LATER,
AT THE EXCLUSIVE BEDFORD
TOWERS CONDOMINIUM RESIDENCE...



WOW.





AND THAT EVENING, AT THE QUEEN'S
COUNTY BOARDING HOUSE OWNED AND
RUN BY MAY PARKER...

MY, YOU YOUNGSTERS
CERTAINLY LOOK HEALTHY!
MARRIAGE MUST AGREE
WITH YOU!

APPARENTLY
IT DOES, MAY.
THAT NEPHEW
OF YOURS HAS
BEEN IGNORING
YOU EVEN MORE
THAN BEFORE
HE GOT
HITCHED!

NOW YOU HUSH, NATHAN LUBENSKY! THE
CHILDREN HAVE LIVES OF THEIR OWN TO LEAD!

I HOPE YOU'LL
FORGIVE MY LITTLE
=AHEM= TIRADE.
I'D BETTER GO
PLIT THESE DISHES
IN TO SOAK.

OH, NO,
DEAR! YOU
STAY WITH
PETER, WHERE
YOU BELONG.

I'LL HELP

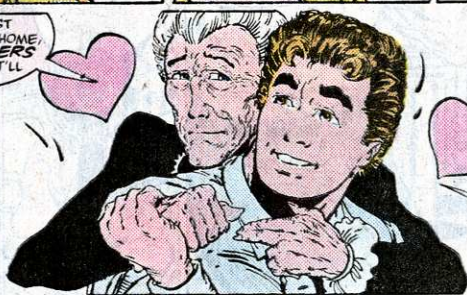
BACK IN A
SEC, HON.

UH-HUH.

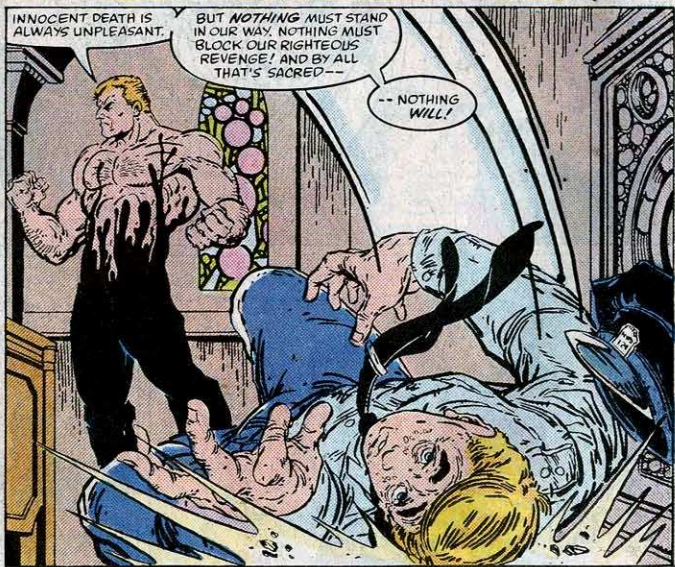
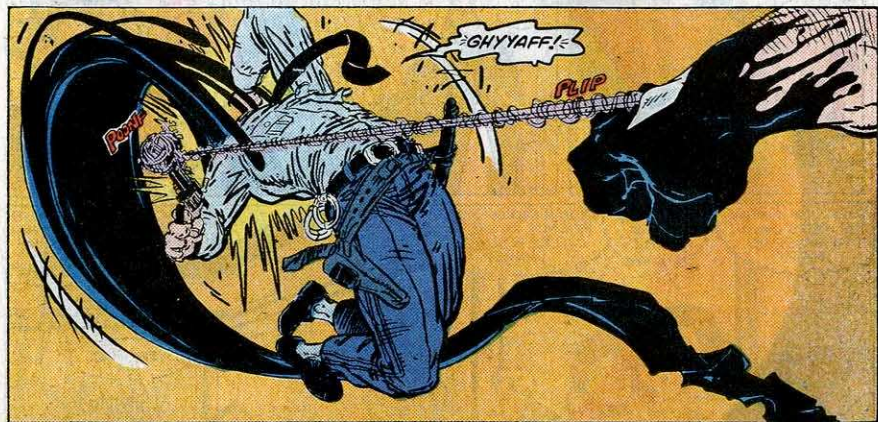
YEAH, THAT
WAS THE YEAR
LUCKY LINDY
HIMSELF CAME
INTO MY SHOP.
I REMEMBER--



... PETER, IF I'M NOT THE FIRST GUEST YOU ASK TO YOUR NEW HOME, I'LL HAVE THE GREY PANTHERS PICKET THE PLACE SO FAST IT'LL MAKE YOUR HEAD SPIN!







A DAY PASSES. THE YOUNG POLICE-
MAN'S BODY IS NOT FOUND.

AND AS EVENING SETTLES
ONCE MORE OVER THE IMPOSING
EDIFICE OF THE BEDFORD
TOWERS...

SORRY THIS MOVE IS SO LATE, FOLKS.
ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, I COULDN'T
GET A VAN ANY EARLIER.

NO PROBLEM,
M.J.

WHOA! THAT RED-
HEADED GUY'S
HAIRDO IS
RADICAL!

DARN! I'M MISSING
THE NETS GAME!
THAT MAKES ME
MAD!

WHO ARE
THESE
PEOPLE?

I RAN OUT OF YOUR
FRIENDS, PETER, SO I
CALLED IN SOME OF
MINE!

DO HURRY WITH THOSE
BOXES, JEEVES. WATCH-
ING YOU CARRY THEM
IS POSITIVELY
EXHAUSTING!

VERY GOOD,
SIR!

WOW! THERE'RE PETE'S
OLD NEIGHBORS--CANDI,
RANDI, AND BAMBI!

MAN, IF I HAD THEM LIVING
NEXT DOOR, I'D NEVER MOVE--

HEY!

WATCH IT!

EASY, BOYS. DON'T
HURT YOURSELVES.

THREE MINUTES LATER, OVER
THE SOUTH BRONX...

THAT CREEP MUST'VE
CHECKED CHELSEA STREET
AND FOUND I WASN'T
THERE ANYMORE! NOW
HE'S LOOKING FOR
ME!

AND I COULDN'T
TAKE A CHANCE ON HIM
FINDING ME WITH ALL
MY FRIENDS AROUND!

I JUST HOPE HE
HASN'T GOTTEN SO
FAR AHEAD THAT—

—BINGO! CRAWLING INTO
THAT ABANDONED BUILDING!

I'LL JUST FOLLOW,
SCOPE OUT THE SITUATION,
THEN TAKE HIM BY SURPRISE!
AFTER ALL—

—MY SPIDER-
SENSE WILL
WARN ME IF
THERE'S ANY
DANGER!

WON!



WELCOME
TO MY
NEIGHBORHOOD,
SPIDER-MAN!
WOULD YOU
BE MY...

...COULD
YOU BE MY...

...NEIGHBOR?

TH-THIS
GUY'S
NUTS!

BUT THAT
COSTUME--GIVING
ME THE SHIVERS!
GOT TO BE
THE ALIEN!

HAVE
TO STALL,
REACH THE
BLASTER!

YOU MAY CALL ME
VENOM--FOR
THAT'S WHAT I'M
PAID TO SPEW OUT
THESE DAYS! I'M
YOUR VICTIM,
SPIDER-MAN--
I'M THE INNOCENT
YOU RUINED!



WH-
WHO
ARE
YOU?



BUT I STILL
DON'T KNOW
WHO--



PERHAPS **THIS**
WILL HELP!

MASK FLOWING
FROM HIS FACE!
LOOKS FAMILIAR!
LIKE--GASP--

EDDIE
BROCK?!



AH, YOU'VE SEEN MY
PICTURE IN THE
DAILY GLOBE!

INDEED, I **USED**
TO BE EDDIE BROCK--
BEFORE YOU STOLE
MY CAREER! ERASED
MY **FUTURE**!

OBLITERATED
EVERYTHING I
LIVED FOR!

MY COLUMN IN
THE DAILY GLOBE
WAS READ BY
MILLIONS!

I WAS A SOLID
REPORTER, A
RESPECTED MEMBER
OF THE FOURTH
ESTATE!

"AT LEAST I WAS WHEN I
BEGAN WRITING A SERIES
OF ARTICLES ON THE 'SIN-
EATER' MURDERS A
FEW MONTHS BACK.

"IT WAS PARTLY BECAUSE
OF THOSE ARTICLES
THAT I WAS CONTACTED
BY A MR. EMIL GREGG,
A MAN WHO CONFESSED
TO BEING SIN-EATER!

"PROTECTING MR. GREGG'S
IDENTITY THROUGH MY
RIGHTS UNDER THE
FIRST AMENDMENT,
I TOLD HIS STORY...
INCISIVELY,
COMPASSIONATELY.

"THE GLOBE'S
CIRCULATION
SOARED.

"BUT **PRESSURE** ALSO MOUNTED. THE POLICE INSISTED
THAT I REVEAL MY SOURCE, SO THAT THEY COULD
STOP THE MURDER SPREE. UNDER ADVICE OF
COUNSEL, I FINALLY WROTE MY MASTERPIECE,
ANNOUNCING GREGG AS THE SIN-EATER."

FINAL THE DAILY GLOBE 30c
EXCLUSIVE: SIN-EATER REVEALED!
FINAL THE DAILY GLOBE 30c
EXCLUSIVE: SIN-EATER REVEALED!
"IT WAS A SENSATION--"

*THESE EVENTS OCCURRED BETWEEN THE LINES DURING
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN#107-110--J.S.

THAT'S IT--
KEEP
TALKING!

-- FOR ABOUT
AN HOUR-AND-
A-HALF!

THAT WAS HOW LONG
IT WAS BEFORE **YOU**
REVEALED WHO THE
REAL SIN-EATER
WAS!



"SOON, THE WHOLE CITY KNEW THAT SIN-EATER
WAS ACTUALLY POLICEMAN **STAN CARTER**--
AND THAT MY STORY WAS BASED ON THE LURID
RAMBLINGS OF A COMPULSIVE CONFESSOR!



"THE **GLOBE** WAS A LAUGHING STOCK. I WAS
FIRED. MY FEARS QUESTIONED MY ETHICS,
SHUNKED ME. I WAS FORCED TO WRITE
VENOMOUS CELEBRITY EXPOS AND
"I WAS KIDNAPED BY ALIENS" DRIVEL
FOR SCANDAL RAGS, JUST TO EKE
OUT A LIVING.



"IF YOU HADN'T BUTTED IN, NO ONE
WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT EMIL
GREGG **WASN'T** THE SIN-EATER

"PERHAPS CARTER WOULD
HAVE BEEN SMART AND
STOPPED HIS KILLINGS,
KNOWING HE COULD GET
OFF SCOT-FREE.



"PERHAPS--

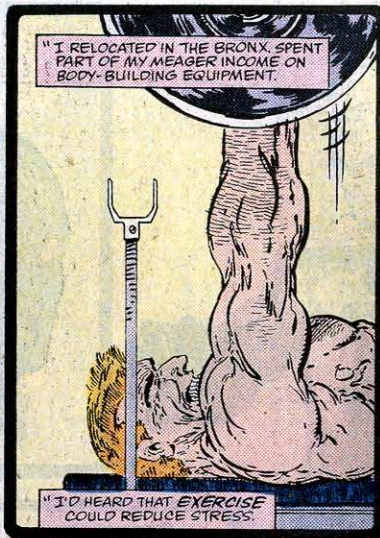
... JUST A LITTLE MORE...!





-- MY LIFE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SHATTERED! I MAY HAVE MADE AN ERROR IN JUDGMENT, BUT I WAS ALWAYS A GOOD JOURNALIST.

AND THE GARBAGE I WAS FORCED TO WRITE BEGAN TO ROT MY SOUL.



"I RELOCATED IN THE BRONX. SPENT PART OF MY MEAGER INCOME ON BODY-BUILDING EQUIPMENT.

"I'D HEARD THAT EXERCISE COULD REDUCE STRESS.



IT DIDN'T WORK.



"WHenever I LIFTED A BARBELL, IT WAS YOUR THROAT I WAS SQUEEZING.



EACH TIME I PUNCHED THE HEAVY BAG, I WAS PULPING YOUR FACE.




"I TAPED HEADLINES ABOUT YOU ON MY WALLS, FEEDING MY HATRED, KNOWING THAT I COULDN'T GET A STORY EVEN ON THE BACK PAGE OF ANY RESPECTABLE PAPER.

"UNTIL, FINALLY, THE PAIN BECAME UNBEARABLE--



OOO ALMOST THERE...!



"-- AND I DECIDED TO END IT. **ALL**. BUT I WAS RAISED CATHOLIC, AND SUICIDE IS A **MORTAL SIN**. SO I WANDERED FROM CHURCH TO SHADOWED CHURCH, PRAYING FOR FORGIVENESS. THEN, AT OUR LADY OF SAINTS, SOMETHING... **ODD** HAPPENED.


"A SHADOW MOVED. CARESSSED ME."

"I WAS JOINED."

BUT THIS WAS A SHADOW FILLED WITH **LIGHT**. IT CLARIFIED MY ANGUISH, FOCUSED MY PURPOSE. ITS **HATRED** FOR YOU MATCHED MY OWN.

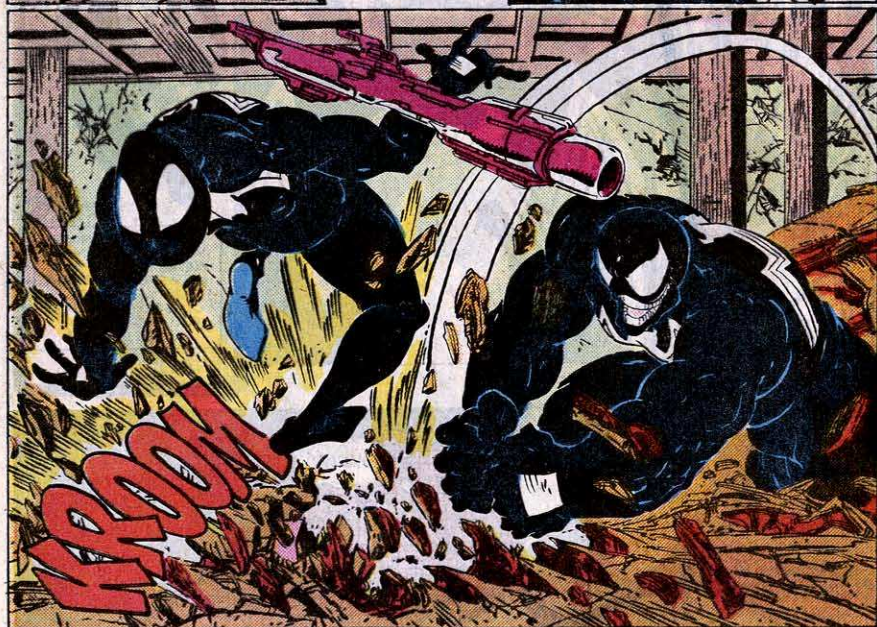
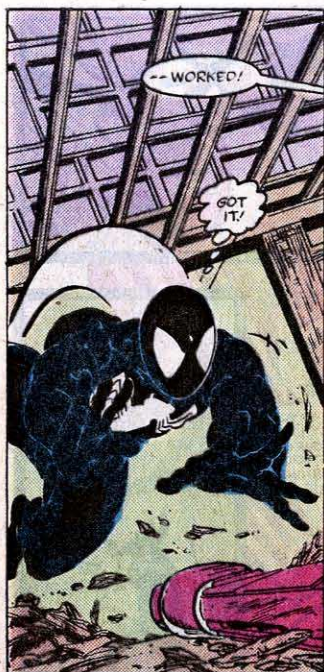
IT KNEW WHO YOU WERE, AND IT HAD POWER. OH, **SUCH** POWER!

WE FOUND THE WOMAN FIRST. LATER, WE FOUND YOUR EMPTY APARTMENT. YOU WERE RUNNING FROM US.

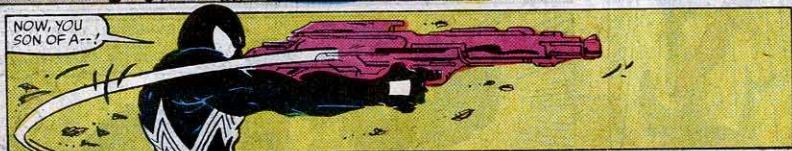
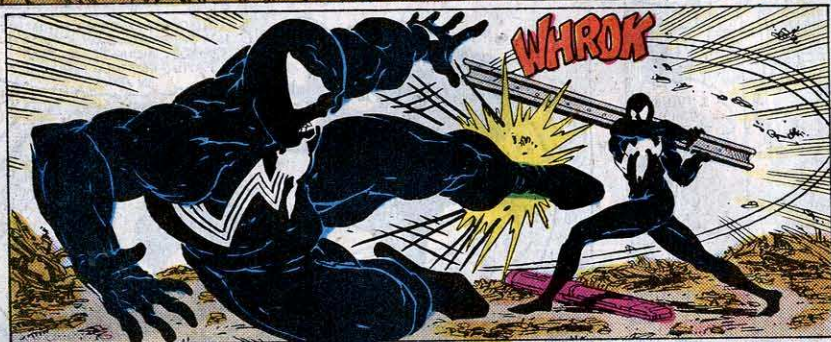
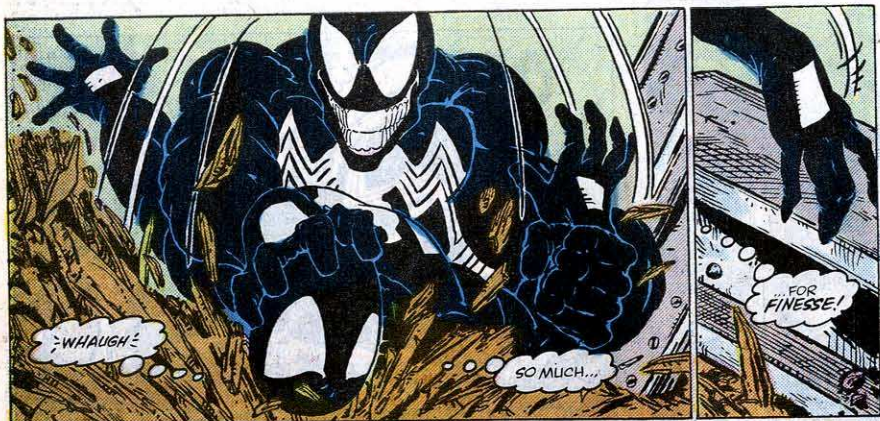


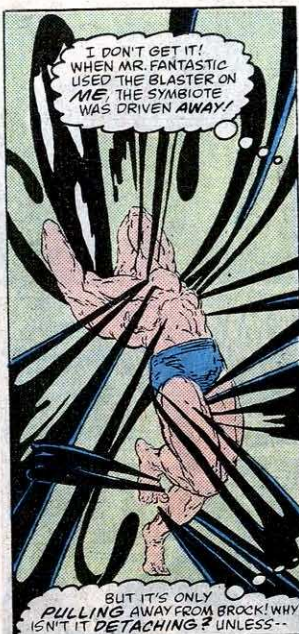
"BUT THE SHADOW KNEW YOU WELL, KNEW YOU'D HAVE TO LEARN WHO WE WERE. SO WE WENT 'TROLLING,' USING OURSELVES AS A LURE AND APPARENTLY, THE BAIT --"

NOW!







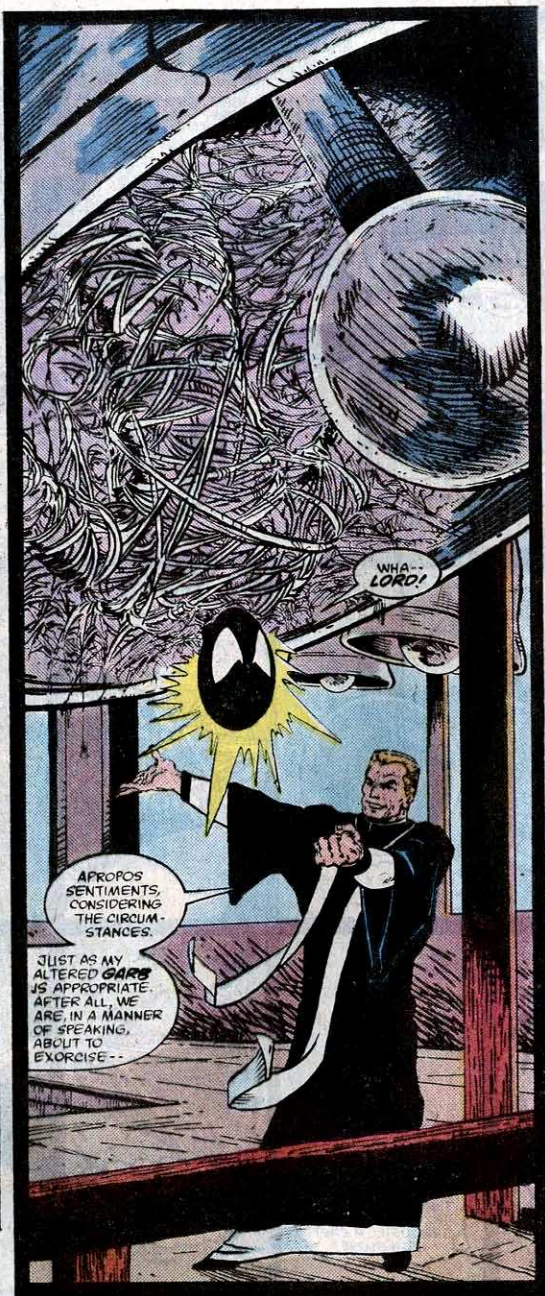


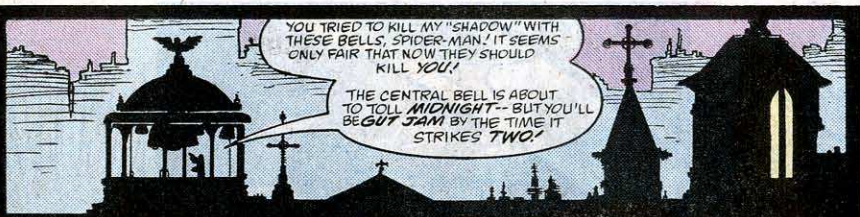


W
P
P



UNKNOWN
HOURS
PASS.





YOU TRIED TO KILL MY "SHADOW" WITH THESE BELLS. SPIDER-MAN! IT SEEMS ONLY FAIR THAT NOW THEY SHOULD KILL YOU!

THE CENTRAL BELL IS ABOUT TO TOLL MIDNIGHT-- BUT YOU'LL BE GUT JAM BY THE TIME IT STRIKES TWO!

WE MUST LEAVE.



WHEN THE CLAPPER SQUISHES THROUGH TO BARE METAL, THE NOISE COULD BE PAINFUL TO US. BUT I PROMISE--

--WE'LL RETURN TO VIEW THE REMAINS!



VENOM'S WEBBINGS AS STRONG AS MINE! MUST'VE USED GALLONS OF IT TO WEB ME TO THIS BELL!



CAN HARDLY MOVE! HAVE TO FIGURE SOME WAY TO--



--HUH? IN THE DISTANCE! OTHER BELLS STARTING TO TOLL! BUT THAT MEANS--



--AW, GEEZ! CLAPPER'S PULLING BACK!



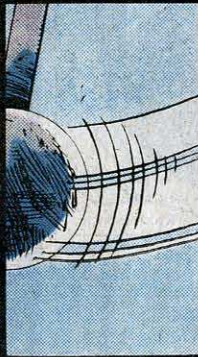
NO TIME TO BE FANCY! GOTTA USE BRUTE STRENGTH!



TRY TO SWING! PUSH ONE HAND THROUGH! L-LIKE TRYING... TO SCRATCH THROUGH... A CAST IRON GLOVE!



B-BUT... IT'S THE ONLY... CHANCE... I'VE--



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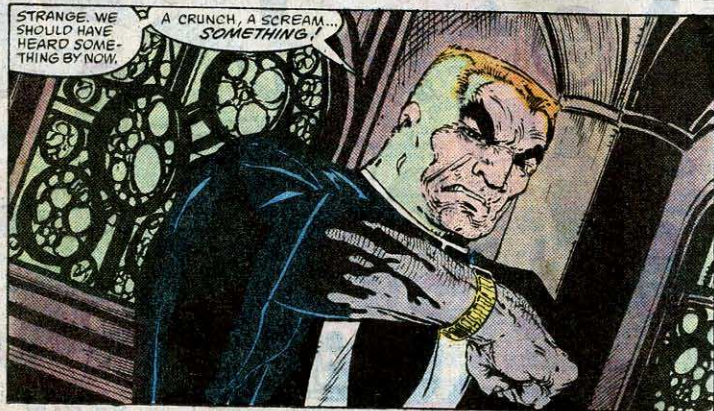
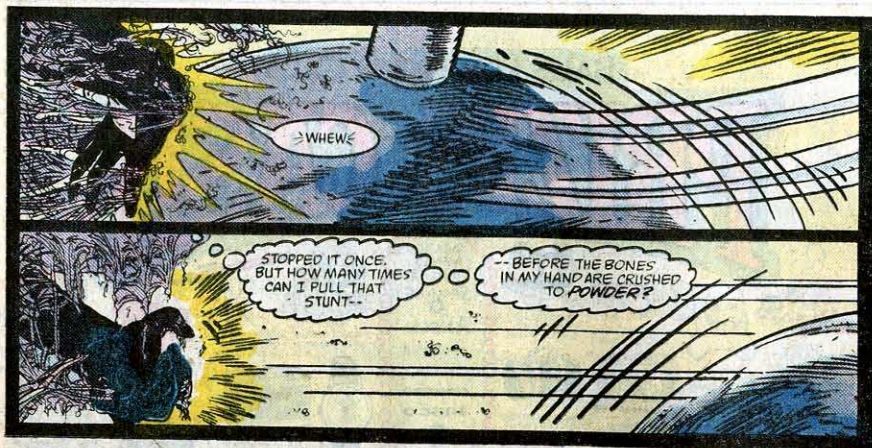
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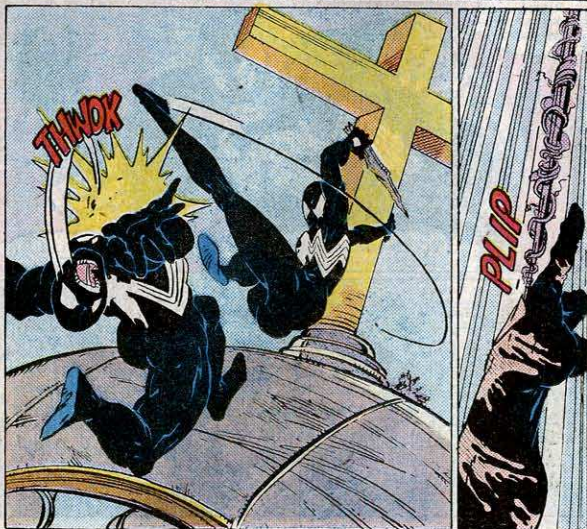
THINK, SPIDEY! HOW CAN YOU FIGHT THIS GUY? HE HAS THE SAME POWERS AS YOU, THE SAME WEBBING, THE SAME-- WAIT! HE *DOESN'T* HAVE THE SAME WEBBING!

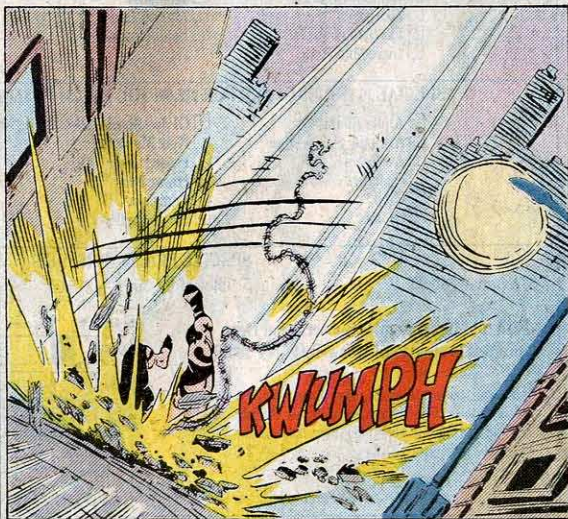
AND I REMEMBER PUMA SAYING THE WEBBING WAS ORGANIC! *

THAT COULD MEAN IT'S MADE OF THE ALIEN'S OWN *SUBSTANCE*, THAT HE REGENERATES IT OVER TIME! AND THAT COULD BE MY KEY--

* IN AMAZING SPIDER-MAN # 259--J.S.

WHEN I WORE THE ALIEN SUIT, I NEVER NEEDED WEBBING CARTRIDGES! NEVER EVEN KNEW WHERE THE WEBBING *CAME* FROM!





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BROCK'S ALIVE--AND SO'S THE ALIEN. THOUGH IT HASN'T REGENERATED ENOUGH OF ITS MASS TO BE A THREAT YET.

I'LL NEED TO CONTAIN THEM BOTH, BUT THAT'LL HAVE TO WAIT. NOW--

--IF ONLY I CAN REMEMBER MARY JANE'S CALLING CARD NUMBER!



SOON...

BEDFORD TOWERS? THIS IS MR. PARKER FROM B-C. WE JUST MOVED IN AND DON'T HAVE A PHONE YET. COULD YOU POSSIBLY PASS A MESSAGE ALONG TO MY WIFE?

BE MY PLEASURE, SIR. WHAT'S THE GLAD WORD?

JUST TELL HER I HAD TO PHOTOGRAPH A NEWS STORY. THAT I'LL BE HOME SOON, AND MOST OF ALL... TELL HER I'M OKAY.

AND SO, SOME TIME LATER AT FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA--

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I'VE BEEN ON THE HORN WITH MR. FANTASTIC, AN' HE SAYS THE SONICS BEIN' PIPED INTO THIS CYLINDER SHOULD KEEP 'EM NICE AN' DOCCILE. LEASTWAYS--

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24 MANHATTAN, N.Y. - Roosevelt Hotel, 46th St.
and Madison Ave.
31 WAYNE, N.J. - Totowa Holiday Inn, Rte. 46 West
just 1/4 mile from Exit 55A off Rte. 80, two miles
east of Willowbrook Mall.

FEBRUARY 1988

- 6 SPRINGFIELD, N.J. - Springfield Holiday Inn,
304 Route 22 West - four miles from G.S. Pkwy.
7 MT. LAUREL, N.J. - Budget Motor Lodge, Rt. 73
& Fellowship Rd., next to Exit 4 off N.J. Turnpike.
7 STAMFORD, CT. - Stamford Howard Johnson.
Exit 6 off I-95.
14 WAYNE, N.J. - Totowa Holiday Inn, Rte. 46 West
just 1/4 mile from Exit 55A off Rte. 80, two miles
east of Willowbrook Mall.
20 PLAINVIEW, N.Y. - Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel,
150 Sunnyside Blvd., Exit 46 off Long Is. Expwy.
21 MANHATTAN, N.Y. - Roosevelt Hotel, 46th St.
and Madison Ave.
PHILADELPHIA, PA. - City Line Holiday Inn.
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(Write or call for date of show.)
NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. - Hyatt Regency,
Two Albany St. (Write or call for date of show.)

MARCH 1988

- 5 SPRINGFIELD, N.J. - Springfield Holiday Inn,
304 Route 22 West - four miles from G.S. Pkwy.
6 MT. LAUREL, N.J. - Budget Motor Lodge, Rt. 73
& Fellowship Rd., next to Exit 4 off N.J. Turnpike.
12 NEW HAVEN, CT. - Park Plaza, 155 Temple St.,
Exit 47 off I-95.
13 WAYNE, N.J. - Totowa Holiday Inn, Rte. 46 West
just 1/4 mile from Exit 55A off Rte. 80, two miles
east of Willowbrook Mall.
19 PLAINVIEW, N.Y. - Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel,
150 Sunnyside Blvd., Exit 46 off Long Is. Expwy.
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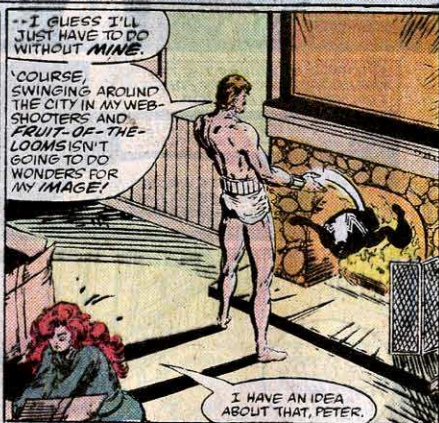


SPIDER-MAN MAKES THE TRIP TO THE BEDFORD TOWERS CAREFULLY, FAVORING HIS LEFT ARM.

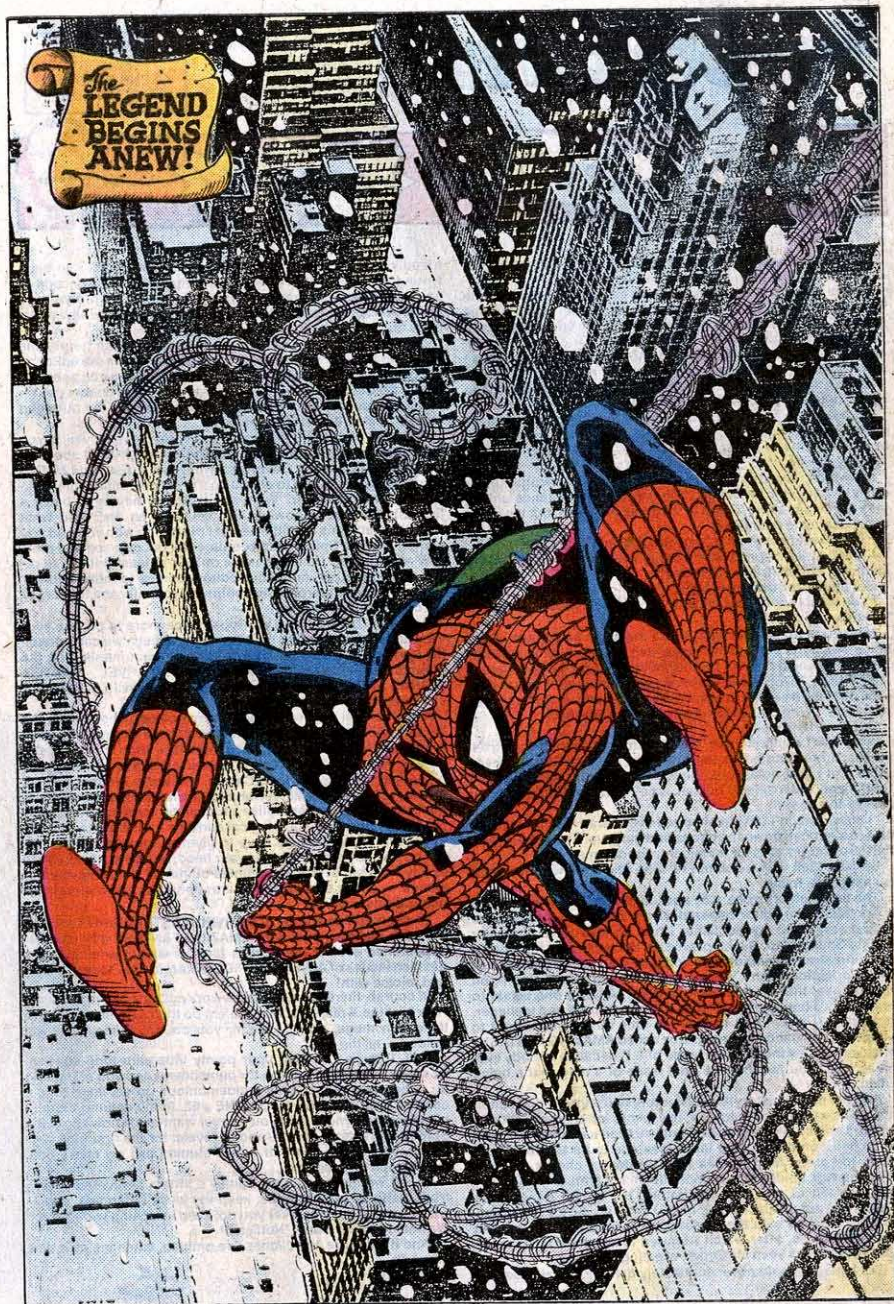
AND ONCE THERE, AFTER HIS TALE HAS BEEN TOLD...

WHAT'S WRONG, MJ?
YOU SEEM AWFULLY...
DISTANT.





* IN THE SPIDER-MAN VS WOLVERINE SPECIAL--3.9.



THE SPIDER'S WEB

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
GLENN HERDLING
ASSISTANT EDITOR

STAN'S

SOAPBOX

SPECIAL!



So there I was, sitting at my computer in the hallowed hills of Hollywood, when all of a sudden the phone rang.

Before picking it up, I immediately lapsed into my favorite fantasy. "It's probably my big chance! Some world-famous movie director heard that I'm here and wants me to play Rhett Butler in the sequel to *Gone With the Wind*!" Or, "Schwarzenegger isn't available right now and they're calling me because some macho muscleman is needed to take his place!"

Quickly I grabbed the receiver, telling myself not to sound too eager, determined to mellow it out, play it cool.

And then the bubble burst! It wasn't Spielberg, or Lucas, or even Irving Forbush! No, I realized my daydreams had been all in vain when I heard the dulcet tones of Slim-Jim Salicrup suavely saying, "Hey, Stan, hope I didn't wake ya up!"

Now then, knowing that editors are much too frugal (obviously a metaphor for "cheap") to phone long-distance unless they want something, I tried to disguise my voice, but it was no use. Salicrup is relentless!

"Stan, I want something," sayeth he. (Didn't I tell you?) I immediately replied in my usual gracious and captivating manner, "Forget it, man! I'm busy!"

But then he struck a low blow.

"You want I should cut off your comic book subscription?"

I knew I was beaten!

Never one to take advantage of a foe when he's down, Jim's voice was considerate and tinged with compassion as he murmured, "I need a column for the 300th Anniversary issue of the *AMAZING SPIDER-MAN*! A lot of guys can write it better than you, but they'd expect to be paid! You can afford. So I want you to write it!" Who could turn down a tribute like that?

But then, it hit me!

"Hey WAIT a minute! I don't believe this! You're not gonna tell me that three hundred issues have gone by since Studly Stevey Ditko and I first unleashed the wondrous wall-crawler upon a dazed and defenseless human race? I mean, you're talking twenty-five years!"

"I knew I wasn't talking chopped liver," was his clever retort as Jim slammed down the phone and hung up. Everyone knows he's too soft-hearted for sentimental goodbyes.

So here I am with a column to write and a million memories rushing back to me.

The first memory goes "way back to the early '60s when I was a humble writer/editor (instead of the humble huckster I am today) and I told my publisher I had an idea for a character named Spider-Man. Did he pat me on the back, leap into the air with unrestrained enthusiasm and give me a raise? Not exactly. He said "Spider-Man? What a bone-headed name! Don't you realize, Lee, that no one likes spiders? And no one wants to read about a teenage hero!" (Peter Parker started as a teenager, remember?) Well, I had to bide my time till we were about to suspend publication of a magazine called *AMAZING FANTASY*. I sneaked Spidey into the last issue of A.F. because nobody ever cares what you put into the final issue of a mag that's being killed.

And the rest is history! As the Library of Congress and scholars everywhere well know, a few years after Steve Ditko's artwork and co-plotting so brilliantly helped us launch the strip and contributed in such a large measure to its towering success, the great John Romita took up the art chores, thereby insuring that Spidey would continue on his path of glory. After that, the list of fabulous illustrators, led by Gil Kane, Ross Andru and John Buscema, is nearly endless. As for the script-writing, I stayed with the woebegone wall-crawler for the first ten years or so, after which I figured it was time to let some other scribes keep Mr. Parker wiggling his webs.

But I guess I could never completely divorce myself from our

friendly neighborhood web-slinger, which is why I've been writing the Spider-Man newspaper strip for the past decade or so — and now that our hero has gotten married, it'll probably go on forever as we get embroiled in all sorts of nutty new situations and cataclysmic complications!

Oh, by the way, if your local newspaper doesn't carry the daily and Sunday Spidey strip, don't be shy. Write the editor an indignant letter telling him he has no right to keep you and your fellow Spideophiles culturally deprived! You'll probably get results! I mean, what editor would dare mess with the outraged hordes of Marveldom Assembled?!!

But what about this historical anniversary issue, which you now hold in your tremblingly grateful fingers? What about all the trouble that writer David Michelinie and artist Todd McFarlane have gone to, just to dream up a great new villain for you to cherish and marvel at? What about Spidey having to battle a fiendish foe whose powers are the same as his? And what about the fact (this is a little secret I'm sharing with you and you alone!) that the Spider-Man costume will become red and blue, now and forever, from this issue on! (Or at least until of Slim-Jim or some other innovative editor decides to make another change, thereby mercilessly confusing you, me, and the rest of the comic book universe!)

And now, before I turn you loose once more to pursue your variegated activities and multifarious interests, we can't possibly end this scintillating little session without mentioning the magnificent, majestic, magniloquent *MARVEL MASTERWORKS SERIES*, ON SALE NOW (you lucky devil!) in beautiful, eye-popping hardcover editions!

Now look, I'll admit they don't come cheap! They're not the kind of books you can buy with some loose change you have laying around. Admittedly, they cost less than a Ferrari, but they're not what you'd call a casual purchase (unless your name happens to be Irving Casual, but that's another story!). However, no serious Marvel fanatic, no enterprising comic book collector, no truly perceptive student of contemporary illustrated literature and sociological currents can afford to be without them! True, you may have to give up a luxury or two, like eating and having a roof over your head, but what a small price to pay for a set of deluxe volumes of Marvel's earliest masterpieces — of the stories and illustrations that set the style for generations to come!

The Spider-Man edition of *MARVEL MASTERWORKS* actually includes the now-legendary *AMAZING FANTASY* #15, the first appearance ever of the world's favorite wall-crawler, plus the next ten issues of *AMAZING SPIDER-MAN* for you to read, relish and rejoice with!

Of course, there are also Masterwork editions of *The Fantastic Four* and the *X-Men*, but hey, let 'em do their own sales pitch in their own mags, right? I mean, you bought Spidey, you get Spidey — all the way!

Well, I figure I've bent your pointy little ears long enough. However, if you're a glutton for punishment and you're panting for even more of the same pandemonium prose, latch onto a copy of *MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE* #63. In my column there, I plan to tell you more than you've ever wanted to know about the Spidey newspaper strip — and to reveal, for the first time anywhere, why in the name of Aunt Petunia I call my merry little monograph a "soapbox"!

So, till we meet again on Spidey's fiftieth anniversary, face front, hang by your thumbs, keep thy webs untangled, and — wherever you go, whatever you do, keep marching with Marvel! We hate to travel alone! Nuff said!

(And if there are any clichés I've omitted, catch me next time around!)

Excelsior!

Stan



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