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SPIDER-MAN

#18

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THE SUNFLOWER DINER, IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN...

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...

...THINGS COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE THAN THEY ALREADY ARE!

I'VE GOT NO MONEY, NO APARTMENT, NO REAL JOB...

...THESE RUBBER GLOVES ARE LEAKING, I'M STARVING AND THE MANAGER WON'T EVEN FEED ME --



RAIL SAYS YOU CAN HAVE THE LEFTOVERS, PARKER.

THANKS... I'LL PASS.



VENOM IS OUT THERE TRYING TO KILL OFF ALL OF THE SINISTER SIX...

...AND THEY'VE SPLIT BUT ARE STILL CAUSING MISCHIEF...



...I FEEL LIKE I'VE GOT A COLD COMING ON...

...JONAH WON'T BUY ANY SPIDER-MAN PHOTOS FROM ME AND I'M PRETTY SURE IT'S BECAUSE HE PEEKED UNDER MY MASK A FEW WEEKS AGO WHEN I SAVED HIS LIFE FROM VENOM...

...AND NONE OF MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY WILL ACCEPT THAT MY WIFE, MARY JANE, IS STILL ALIVE -- NO MATTER WHAT THEY THINK!

EITHER SHE WASN'T ON THE PLANE WHEN IT EXPLODED OR IT WAS ALL SOME SORT OF ILLUSION CREATED BY MYSTERIO OR ONE OF MY OTHER COUNTLESS ENEMIES.



SO I KNOW THINGS HAVE GOT TO START TURNING AROUND FROM HERE.

THEY'VE GOT TO.



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AT A DEMONSTRATION ON RADIATION, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PETER PARKER WAS BITTEN BY AN IRRADIATED SPIDER FROM WHICH HE GAINED THE ARACHNID'S INCREDIBLE ABILITIES. WHEN A BURGLAR KILLED HIS BELOVED UNCLE BEN, A GRIEF-STRIKEN PETER VOWED TO USE HIS GREAT POWERS IN THE SERVICE OF HIS FELLOW MAN, BECAUSE HE LEARNED AN INVALUABLE LESSON: WITH GREAT POWER MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. S T A N L E E P R E S E N T S :

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!

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ROMITA SR.
guest inks

RS & COMICRAFT'S TROY PETERI
letters

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colors

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chief

YEAH...
...THINGS
WILL BE JUST
FINE AFTER
I GET MJ
BACK!



MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE
OSBORN INDUSTRIES...

...LIZ ALLAN-OSBORN, CURRENT
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF THE
MULTINATIONAL ORGANIZATION, HEADS
TOWARD HER WAITING LIMOUSINE...

...TO HER BODYGUARDS...

...TO WHAT PASSES
FOR HER LIFE.

AS SHE ENTERS
THE CAR THE
QUESTIONS BEGIN...

...HOW COULD SHE
HAVE WOUND UP IN
THIS LIFE?

A LIFE SHADOWED BY
THE OSBORN LEGACY.

A LEGACY PASSED
FROM NORMAN TO
HER LATE HUSBAND
HARRY, FROM FATHER
TO SON. SHE LIVES
IN CONSTANT FEAR
OF NORMAN'S RETURN.

RUNNING IS FUTILE. NORMAN WOULD ALWAYS
FIND HER AND HIS SOLE HEIR, HIS GRANDSON,
HER LITTLE NORMIE.

ONCE SHE WAS SO
IN LOVE WITH HARRY.
AND NOW...

SHE CURSES THE DAY
SHE MARRIED HIM AND
GAVE HIS FATHER
ANOTHER POTENTIAL
SOUL TO CORRUPT.

CURSES THE DAY THE
GREEN GOBLIN ENTERED
HER LIFE.

BUT LIZ KNOWS SHE CAN'T
ALLOW THESE THOUGHTS
TO STAY WITH HER FOR
TOO LONG.

SOON SHE'LL BE HOME.
NORMIE WILL JUMP INTO
HER ARMS...

...AND, AS SHE SMELLS
HIS HAIR AND HIS LITTLE
ARMS SQUEEZE HER SO
TIGHTLY...

...SHE'LL LOOK AROUND
AT THE LUXURIOUS
APARTMENT, SHE'LL
REMEMBER THE
COUNTRY HOMES, THE
LIFE OF PRIVILEGE.

AND DESPITE IT
ALL...DESPITE THE
HEARTACHE...

...SHE KNOWS
THAT THINGS
COULD ALWAYS
BE WORSE.

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WHAT --?
NO.



NOT
AGAIN.
NOT SO
SOON.



MAXWELL!
DRIVE! DRIVE
NOW!

"IT'S
STARTING
AGAIN!"



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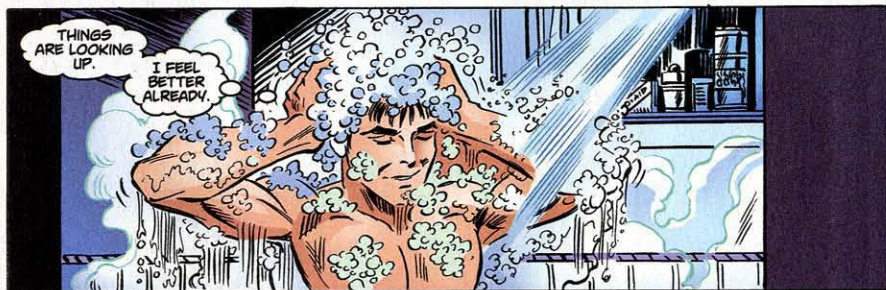
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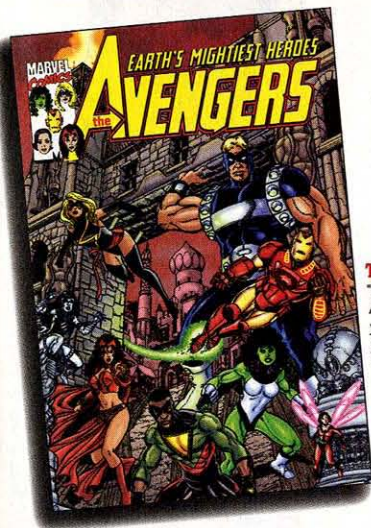
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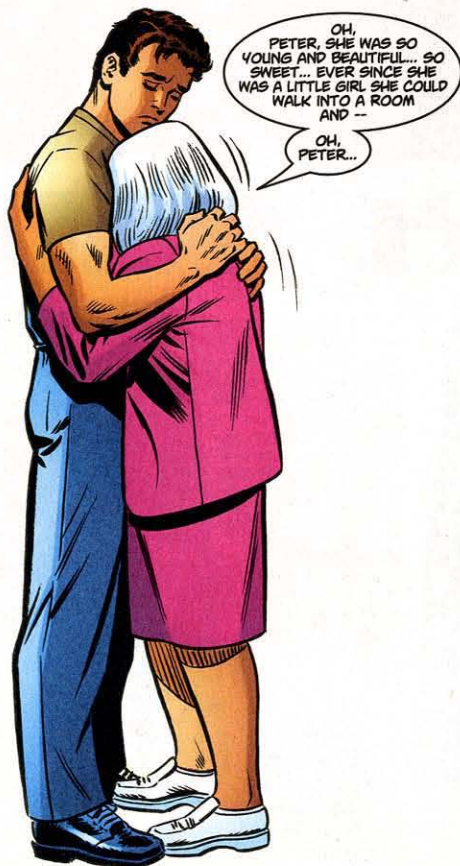
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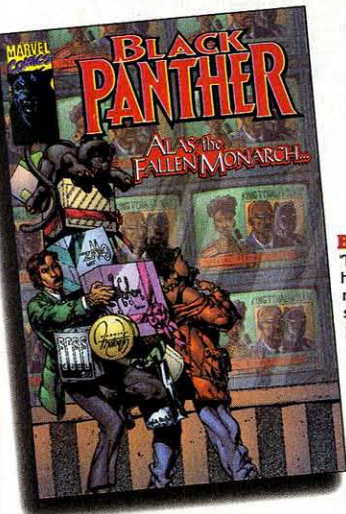


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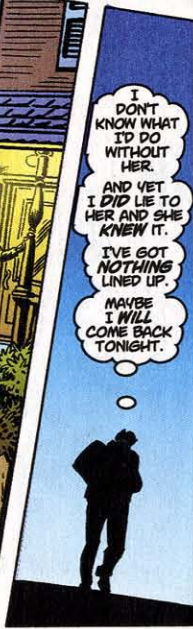
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THE F.D.R. DRIVE, ON
MANHATTAN'S UPPER
EAST SIDE...

OH, MS.
OSBORN...

...WE'VE
GOT TO
TALK!



NO.

GET
AWAY!
LEAVE ME
ALONE!

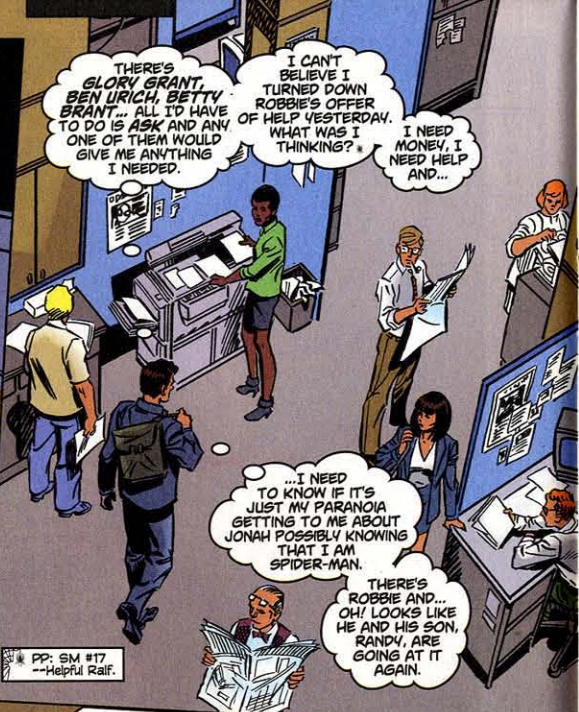
YOU'RE
NOT HIM!

WELL, AT
LEAST YOU
STOPPED
RUNNING.

IT'S REALLY
NOT AS EASY TO
STAY UP ON ONE OF
THESE GOBLIN GLIDERS
AS SOME HAVE MADE
IT LOOK.

SO... HOW
ABOUT WE JUST
TALK AND WE CAN
BOTH GET THE
ANSWERS WE
NEED?

I
KNOW YOU
AREN'T!
WHY ARE
YOU DOING
THIS?
WHO ARE
YOU?



I APPRECIATE THAT, ROBBIE, AND THE MONEY IS GOING TO HELP, BUT...

...IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN GET ME BACK TO WORK?

GEE, PETER... I'LL ASK AROUND, BUT RIGHT NOW... HERE... THE BUDGET... CIRCULATION IS DOWN --

YEAH! NICE TALKING TO YOU TOO, DAD! I JUST LOVE THESE FATHER AND SON CHATS WE HAVE.

I'M SORRY, ROBBIE. I SHOULDN'T HAVE JUST --

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. RANDY IS A GROWN-UP... OR HE SHOULD BE.

BUT ABOUT YOU... MAYBE IF YOU COULD TURN SOME FREELANCE ASSIGNMENTS IN THAT DIDN'T INVOLVE SPIDER-MAN...

I UNDERSTAND, ROBBIE. THANKS.

I THINK IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR YOU TO DIVERSIFY ANYWAY.

OTHER THAN THE MONEY... HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP? IF YOU EVER NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO ABOUT IT --

I'M OKAY, ROBBIE. REALLY. THINGS ARE TURNING AROUND.

WELL, GIVE ME A CALL SOMETIME. MARTHA AND I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU OVER FOR DINNER.

OH... DON'T FORGET THIS!

THANKS, ROBBIE. I REALLY APPRECIATE IT.

YOU COMING, PETER?

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I'VE GOT
TO SEE HIM!
I'VE GOT TO
KNOW!

A SHORT TIME LATER, IN
THE SHADOW OF THE
59TH STREET BRIDGE...

LIZ!

LIZ
OSBORN!

DO YOU SEE
WHAT YOU'RE CAUSING?
ALL THESE POLICE... ALL
THIS UNNECESSARY
DESTRUCTION!

DO YOU
REALLY WANT
AN INNOCENT
LIFE ON YOUR
HANDS?

I
KNOW I
DON'T!
STOP
RUNNING...
...AND
COME TO
ME!
IT WILL
BE QUICK AND
PAINLESS!



MAYBE THIS IS ALL CONNECTED SOMEHOW.

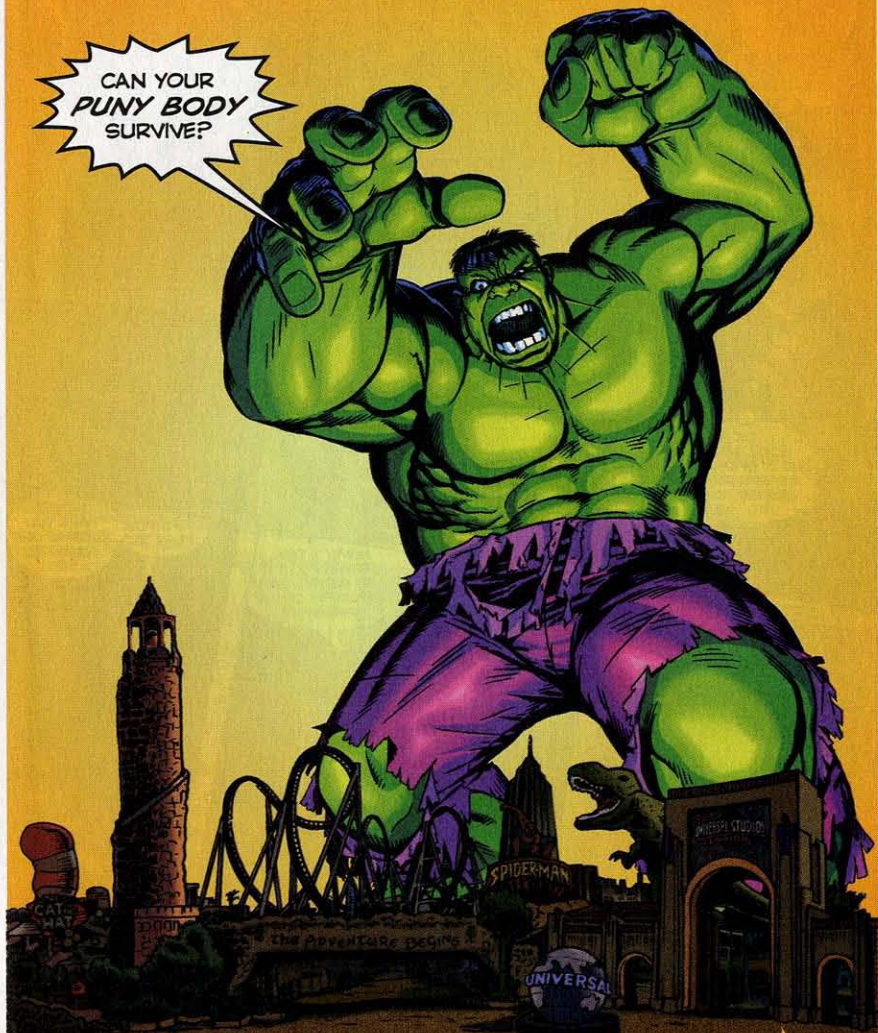
WHY IS IT THAT EVERY WOMAN WHO EVER CROSSES MY PATH SOMEHOW GETS SUCKED INTO THIS LIFE OF HEROES AND VILLAINS?



* See Amazing Spider-Man 2000
-- Spooky Ralf.

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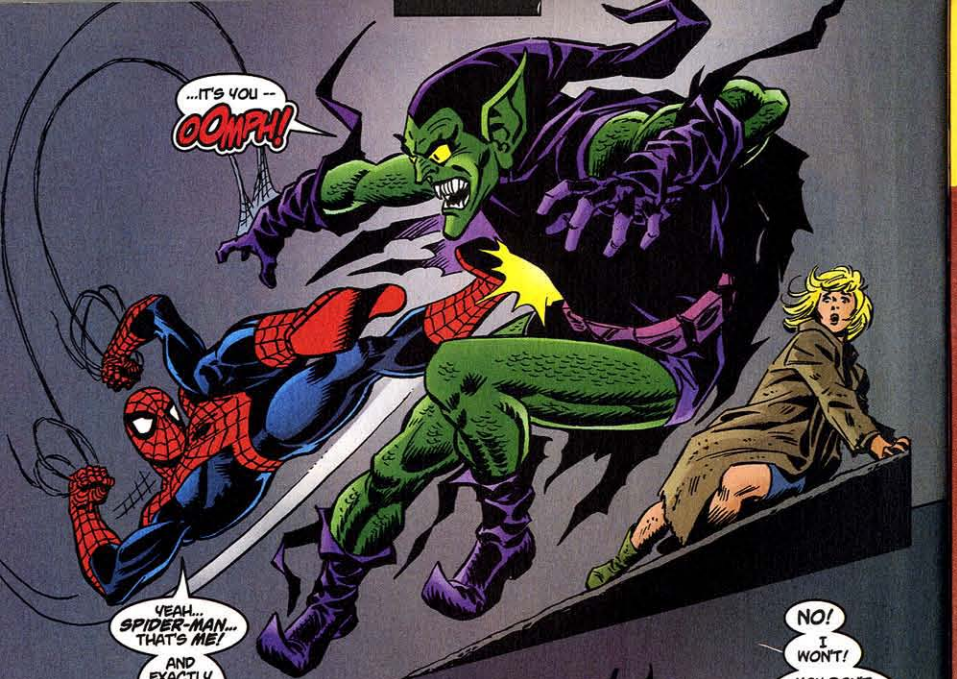
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...IT'S YOU --
OOOMPH!

YEAH...
SPIDER-MAN...
THAT'S ME!

AND
EXACTLY
WHO ARE
YOU?

NO!
I
WONT!
YOU DONT
SOUND LIKE THE
GOBLIN, DONT
FIGHT LIKE THE
GOBLIN...



AND THAT IS
THE QUESTION OF
THE DAY!

I GUESS
FOR NOW, YOU
CAN CALL ME THE
GREEN --



...AND I'VE
GOT TO TELL YOU,
SOME AMATEUR
WANNABE PUTTING ON
THE GREEN GOBLIN
COSTUME IS NOT
MAKING ME
HAPPY!

NOT TO
MENTION THAT
I JUST BLEW THE
CHANCE AT MAKING
ANY MONEY FROM
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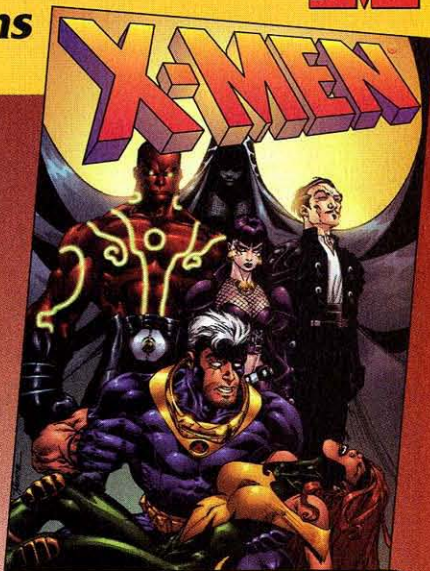
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OKAY...
FINE, MISTER
SPIDER-MAN, I
GIVE UP!

I REPENT.

DON'T KNOW
WHAT I WAS
THINKING!

I'LL JUST
LEAVE, GO ABOUT
MY BUSINESS AND
NEVER BOTHER
YOU AGAIN.

OH,
BY THE
WAY...



...INCOMING!



NOT
BAD FOR A
WANNABE,
IS IT?

I KNOW
I'M NOT THE
BEST AT THIS,
BUT...

...I CAN
GET BY WHEN
I WANT.

YEAH...
WELL, FROM THE
WAY YOU'RE FLYING
THIS THING... I THINK
WE'RE GOING TO BE
SWIMMING IN THE EAST
RIVER PRETTY
SOON!

YOU
WANT TO TRY
CONTROLLING
THIS THING?!

I DIDN'T
EXACTLY GET
AN INSTRUCTION
MANUAL WITH
IT!



YOU THINK
THIS IS MY
IDEA OF
FUN?

SURE, IT'S GOT
ITS MOMENTS,
BUT --

-- WHAT
AM I
DOING?

WHO
ARE
YOU?
WHY
ARE YOU
DOING
THIS --?

DON'T
START WITH
ME!

I'VE
BEEN
HAVING
A BAD
YEAR!

DO ALL
SUPER-HERO/
SUPER-VILLAIN
BATTLES END UP
IN POINTLESS
EXPOSITION?

WELL, I'VE
GOT MORE
IMPORTANT
THINGS TO
ATTEND
TO.

LET'S
SEE IF I CAN
REMEMBER
HOW THIS
GOES.

THUMB
GOES
HERE...

...POINTY END
TOWARD THE
TARGET...

...FLICK
THE WRIST
AND...

...RAZOR BAT
AWAY!



NO!
THE
TRAM THAT
GOES TO
ROOSEVELT
ISLAND!

AND
THAT WAS THE
POINT!

LOOK... I HAVE
NO DESIRE TO KILL INNOCENT
PEOPLE, BUT THAT'S WHY THIS
CITY IS CRAWLING WITH
HEROES, RIGHT?

AND I
WASN'T DOING
TOO WELL
AGAINST
YOU.

STAY
OUT OF MY WAY,
SPIDER-MAN.

I'LL GET MY
ANSWERS AND BE
GONE.

I PROMISE.

OH,
YEAH...AND
HOLD ON
TIGHT!



SOME TIME
LATER...

SORRY IF
I WOKE YOU UP,
AUNT MAY, BUT I
JUST WANTED TO
MAKE SURE
EVERYTHING
IS OKAY.

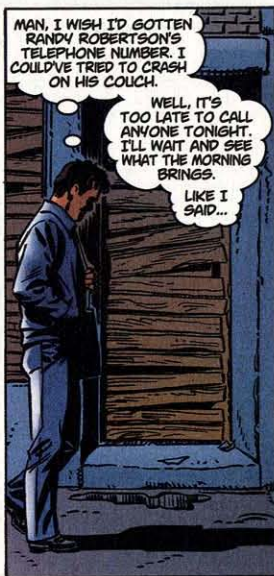
ME?
COULDN'T BE
BETTER.



GOT A
LINE ON A
JOB AND A GREAT
PLACE TO
STAY.

AS A
MATTER OF
FACT, I THINK
I'M GOING TO HIT
THE SACK IN A
FEW MINUTES. HAD
A EXHAUSTING
DAY.

LOVE YOU,
TOO.



Last month we ran comments that were representative of the more immediate reaction to Mary Jane Parker-Watson's apparent demise in **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #13**. This issue, we'll focus on some of the longer, more contemplative letters. Enjoy!

Dear Spider's Web,

What can I say aside from "Wow"? Talk about a payoff. Kudos to a story well told; you had me going from the start that this was all about an imminent breakup between Peter and MJ. Was I ever wrong! Look at it from a reader's standpoint rather than a creator's, and you'll understand the effect this issue had on most of us. We pretty much knew Peter would miss the plane (the irony being he was finally getting some positive recognition while running toward his greatest failing), no matter how quickly he raced the clock. Too little, too late. Sucks to be Peter Parker. Again. She's gone, baby, gone. And then our stomach gives a little hitch. The old man with the lollipop brings every reader's own personal spider-sense into high gear, though a small part of us does rejoice—it can't be over if MJ is still in danger!

Oh, how little we truly know. Seeing the plane go down in a ball of flames was like a punch in the gut. So much for rejoicing.

And that's part of the payoff. This isn't over. This climax was merely the beginning, and it sets up far too many possibilities to even begin speculation. Is she dead? If not, where is she? And who has her? If she is dead, who was ultimately responsible? The old coot with the all-day sucker? Probably not, and the answers will have us waiting on pins and needles.

This is vintage John Byrne. Howard Mackie has the scripting chore, and he's done an admirable job. But make no mistake about it, the pacing, the little reassurances given that the hero's plight may not be so hopeless (no, youngster, it's worse), this is all what Byrne does best. Leave the reader wondering—but wanting more.

I haven't been this shocked at a story's turn since Alpha Flight's Guardian was killed (Hmmm).

I know this story has its detractors (a certain comics magazine that shall remain nameless seems to have it in for the distinguished Mr. Byrne). But consider the pacing of many comics today. To ensure a return on their investment—a returning audience—they feel the need for a Wham-Bang-Payoff every issue. It's almost expected now, and very little time is spent developing stories, sub-plots, and most importantly, characters.

The "tragic" endings are stunted by a general apathy toward the characters. Where is the payoff in that? They could all take some lessons from John and Howard.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN is Marvel's flagship title. I'm glad to see it is again the most exciting comic on the shelf. Thank you for a gripping good time—and the promise of more to come!

Ken Cross

We're sorry, Ken, but it seems that you're having far too much of a good time with a storyline that's been critically drubbed ahead of time by 'a

certain comics magazine that shall remain nameless." We're afraid we're going to have to revoke your license to read comics in this oh-so-modern age of ours. Haven't you heard, fun and excitement aren't what funny books are about anymore!

Dear Spider's Web,

I don't think Mary Jane Parker is really dead, but I like the way that Howard Mackie and John Byrne wrote her out of the series. Just don't bring her back too soon. Mary Jane has been rather stale for years. She was one of the best supporting characters ever created, but she was so much more interesting when she was fun-loving, wild, and a free agent. If and when she is brought back, I think that the Parkers' marriage should be over.

Peter Parker was/is the quintessential hard-luck hero. The domestic life just doesn't fit his character. He is supposed to be a guy that deserves to have a wonderful marriage, a devoted wife, financial stability—but finds these things elusive. Peter Parker is most interesting when his personal life has been thrown into turmoil; perpetual heartache is part of the mythos. Now he is suddenly a widower. This is a great opportunity to deal with the grief and pain that drives him. But unlike the deaths of Gwen Stacy, Captain Stacy, or Uncle Ben, Peter cannot blame himself for Mary Jane's death...or can he?

Peter DePietro
Boston, MA

Thanks for writing, Peter. You hit on the central argument at the heart of recent speculation regarding the future of the Parkers' marriage. Namely, does Peter's having a happy hearth and home contradict his core appeal as a hero with feet of clay? On the other hand, numerous fans argue rightly that growth and change are the hallmarks of a successful character, and to keep too closely to these aspects lead to a clichéd character.

We've received many differing viewpoints on this topic. Any new interpretations out there?

Dear Websters,

I predict a flood of letters about the death of MJ. Like this one for instance. A lot of people will put her in the category of Reed Richards/Aunt May/Doctor Octopus, expecting it to be overturned at some point in the future, especially since the mystery of the Lollipop Man was not resolved, and he supposedly died in the crash as well (like he died in the car explosion).

I'm personally hoping for a long-term death (only in the comics biz could anyone even use that phrase). My reasons are clear, especially in light of the events of **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #14**, when Mattie Franklin aka Spider-Woman liplocks Peter. He's now a free agent, and that ups the zest of the book 100%. Although, having Mattie jump the gun so overwhelmingly was a bit disconcerting. Those bricks must've hit her harder than she knew for her to be so callous. Peter hasn't even begun to mourn.

Charlotte is very interesting—a villain created against her will, which makes her intriguingly complex. I'm curious to see if she can repeat her

absorbing powers with others.

Jonah's cavalier attitude at the beginning of the issue bothered me more than Mattie's did later. In **PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN #13**, he was one of the first people to come to comfort May and Peter, and he has frequently shown a gruff but fatherly affection for Peter, though never in Peter's presence (he secretly put up Peter's bail during the clone saga, he keeps multiple copies of Peter's book "Webs" in his office, etc.). Yet, at the beginning of **ASM #14**, he's practically yawning about MJ's death and tells Mattie he had his secretary send Peter and May a "basket of fruit or something." The inconsistency is frustrating. It will be interesting to see who lines up to comfort Peter and how fast they'll get there. Jill Stacy and Felicia Hardy should be right behind Mattie.

Sally Cuhler
Imlay City, MI

Leave it to you, Sally, to coin the phrase "long-term death." So the reason for Peter to eventually recover from his grief and hit the dating scene again, eh? You wouldn't be alone there, although as you say, it certainly would be premature at any point in the near future.

Regarding your comments about Mattie's perceived callousness, let's remember that she's a fifteen-year-old girl. The restraint many adults would have shown was absent—deliberately and realistically so. And concerning your statement about Jonah, we don't see the contradiction. In the scene you refer to in **PPSM #13**, Jonah was hardly tripping over himself with grief or sentiment. He showed up because it was the right thing to do. His comment to Mattie in **ASM** merely showed him in a distracted frame of mind. Sorry it appeared to be contradictory, Sally.

NEXT ISSUE:

WHEN SPIDEY MISPLACES HIS COSTUME, HE HAS TO DON A FAMILIAR BLACK-AND-WHITE ONE! NOT ONLY THAT, BUT HE FINDS HIMSELF FACING OFF AGAINST A VILLAIN WITH A DISTURBINGLY SIMILAR COLOR SCHEME! NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THIS ISSUE MARKS THE RETURN OF ERIK LARSEN TO THE SPIDER-MAN MYTHOS! NOT ONLY THAT, BUT IT'S WRITTEN BY HOWARD MACKIE AND GUEST-INKEED BY JOHN BEATTY! NOT ONLY THAT, BUT IT'S EDITED BY RALPH! WELL, NOT REALLY EDITED, MORE LIKE, "ALLOWED TO HAPPEN WITHOUT ANY INPUT OR INTERFERENCE."

MATT HICKS
ASSISTANT EDITOR

RALPH MACCHIO
EDITOR

BOB HARRAS
CHIEF



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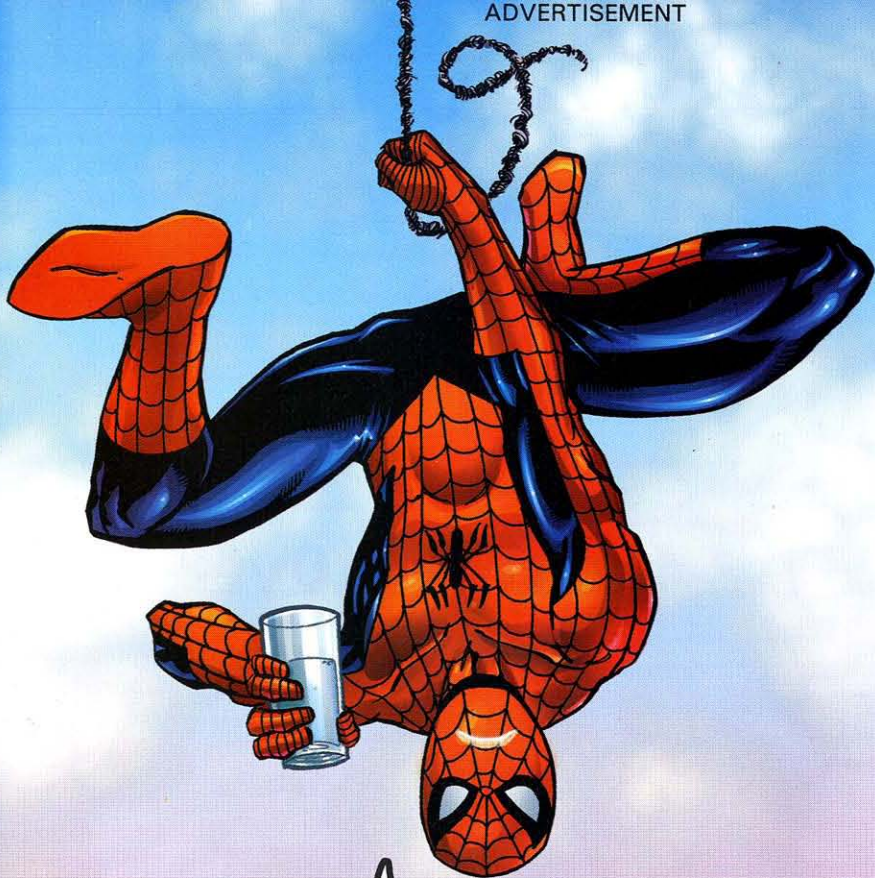
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Andy
Kosove

**SPIDER-SENSE
TINGLING!**

WHY? BECAUSE
NOT GETTING ENOUGH CALCIUM
CAN BE DANGEROUS! THAT'S WHY
I DRINK **THREE GLASSES** OF MILK A
DAY FOR STRONG BONES. HEY, WHEN
YOU'RE TRADING PUNCHES WITH
DOC OCK, CALCIUM IS YOUR
BEST FRIEND.

got milk?

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