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SUPER-SIZED

30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE



the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®



30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
1962 - 1992



THE AMAZING  
SPIDER-MAN

INSIDE: THE MOST SHOCKING EVENT OF SPIDER-MAN'S LIFE!

PLUS: GATEFOLD POSTER OF SPIDEY, VENOM AND CARNAGE!

PLUS: STAN LEE AND JOHN ROMITA SR.-- REUNITED!

PLUS: THE RETURN OF THE LIZARD!

PLUS: A FIVE-PAGE PREVIEW OF SPIDER-MAN 2099!



# 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

of the  
**AMAZING SPIDER-MAN**  
1962-1992

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assistant editor



DANNY FINGEROTH  
editor

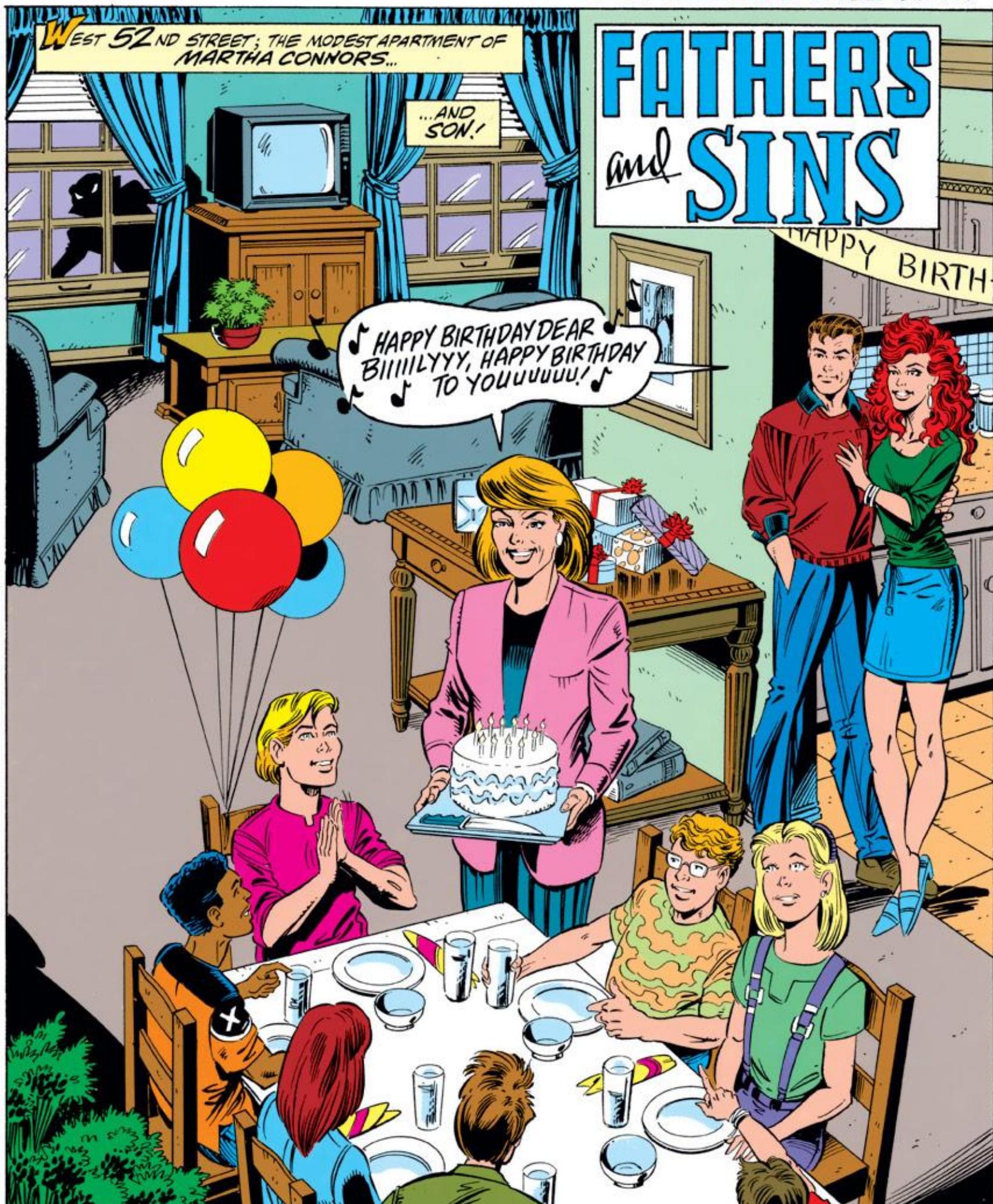


TOM DeFALCO  
editor in chief



BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, STUDENT PETER PARKER GAINED THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH AND AGILITY OF AN ARACHNID! ARMED WITH HIS WONDROUS WEB-SHOOTERS, THE RELUCTANT SUPER HERO STRUGGLES WITH SINISTER SUPER-VILLAINS, MAKING ENDS MEET, AND MAINTAINING SOME SEMBLANCE OF A NORMAL LIFE!

Stan Lee  
PRESENTS: **THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN**®



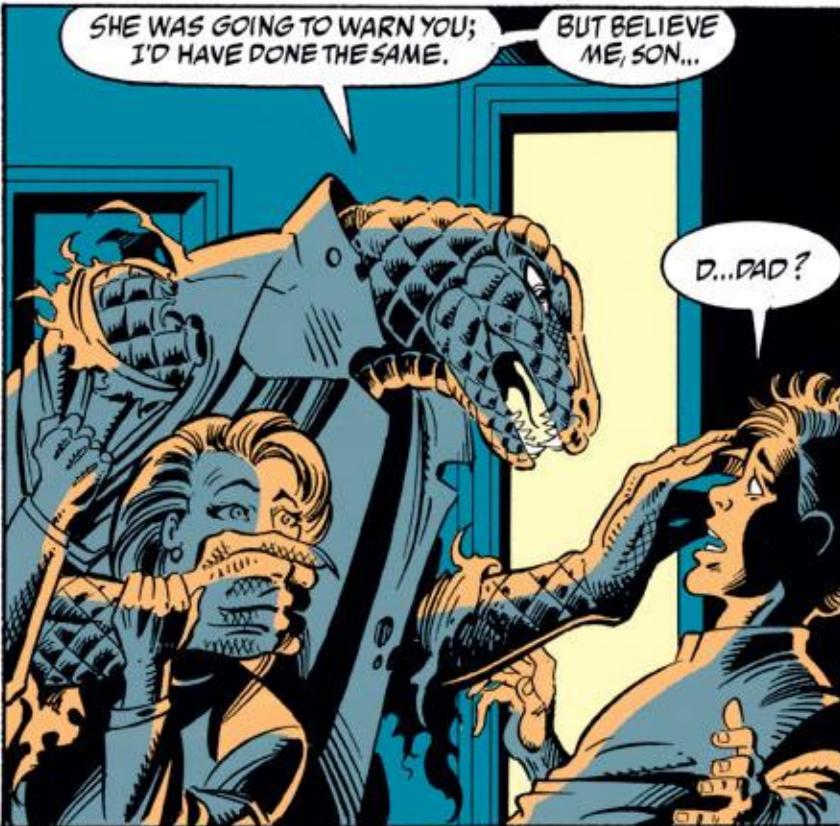
DAVID MICHELINE  
MARK BAGLEY  
RANDY EMBERLIN  
RICK PARKER  
BOB SHAREN  
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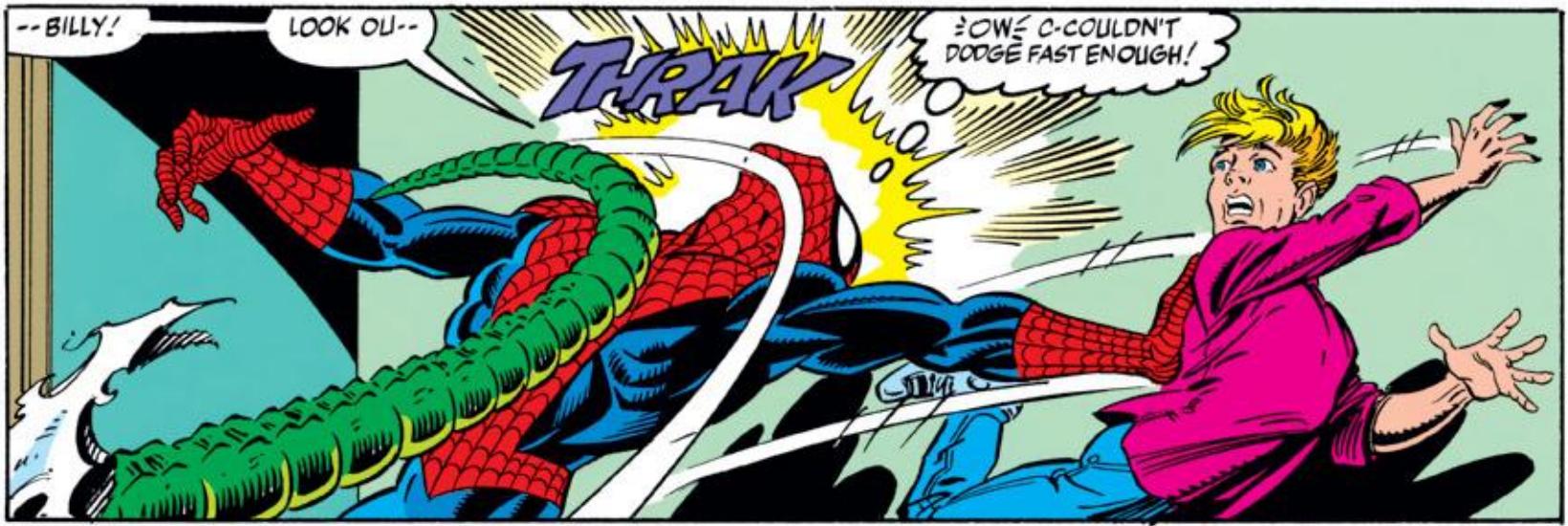
ARE PROUD TO PRESENT THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF SPIDER-MAN'S FIRST APPEARANCE  
IN AMAZING FANTASY #15, AUGUST 1962

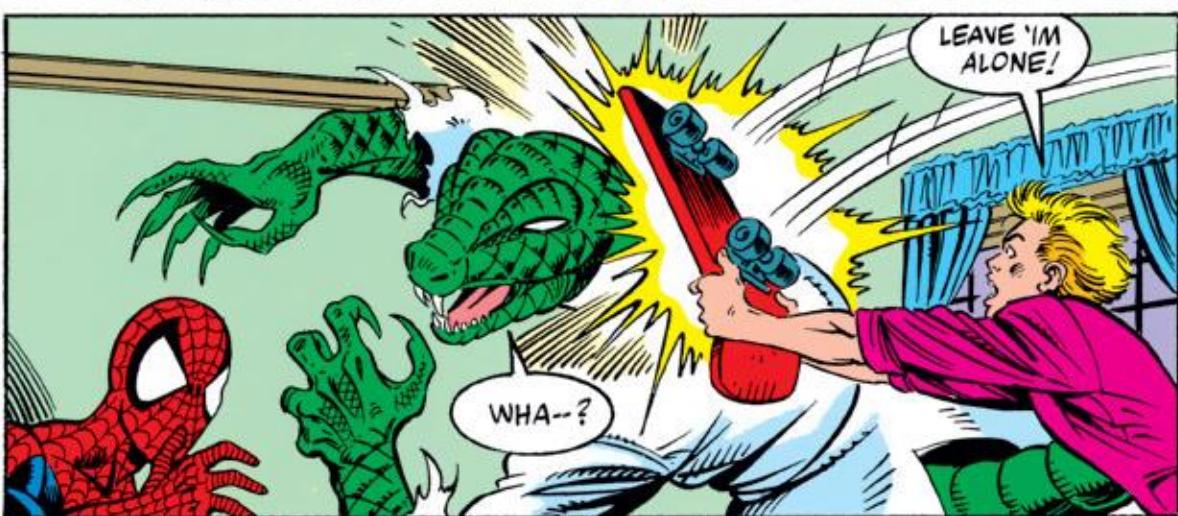
Stan Lee Steve Ditko John Romita, S.  
SOUL AND INSPIRATION

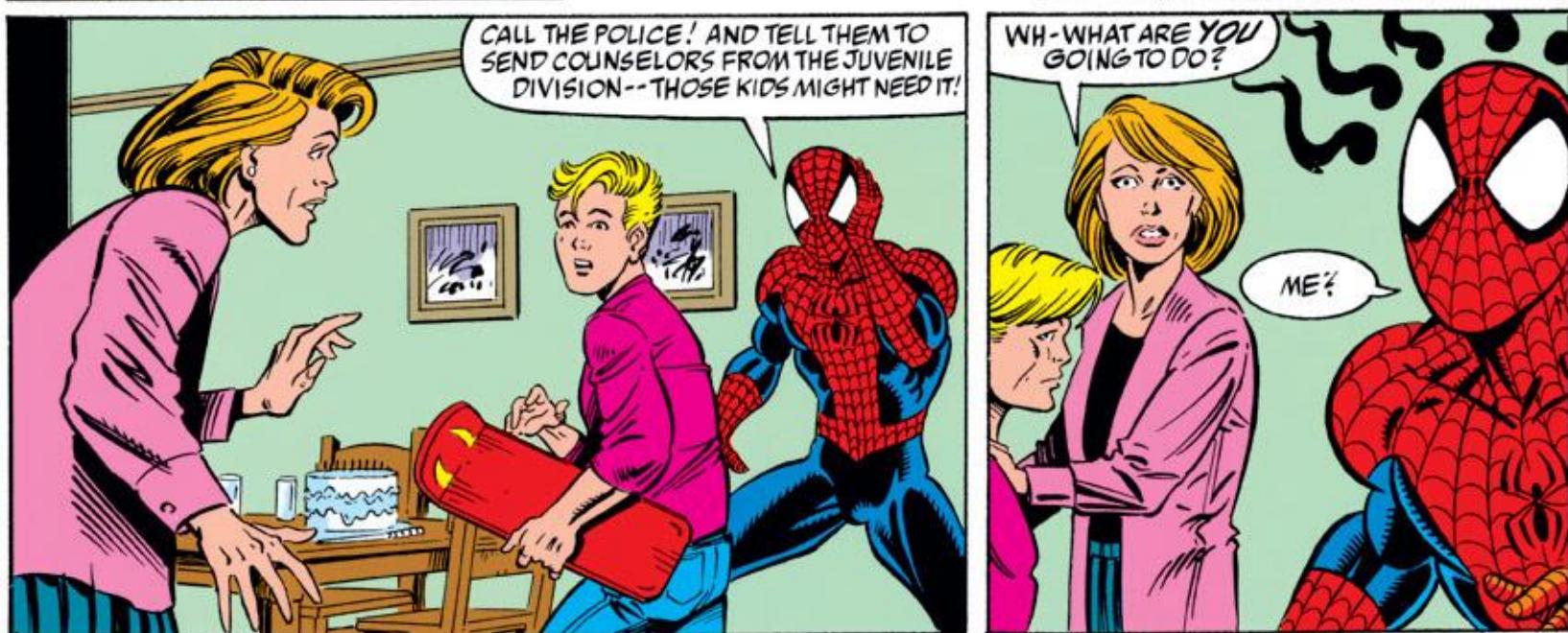
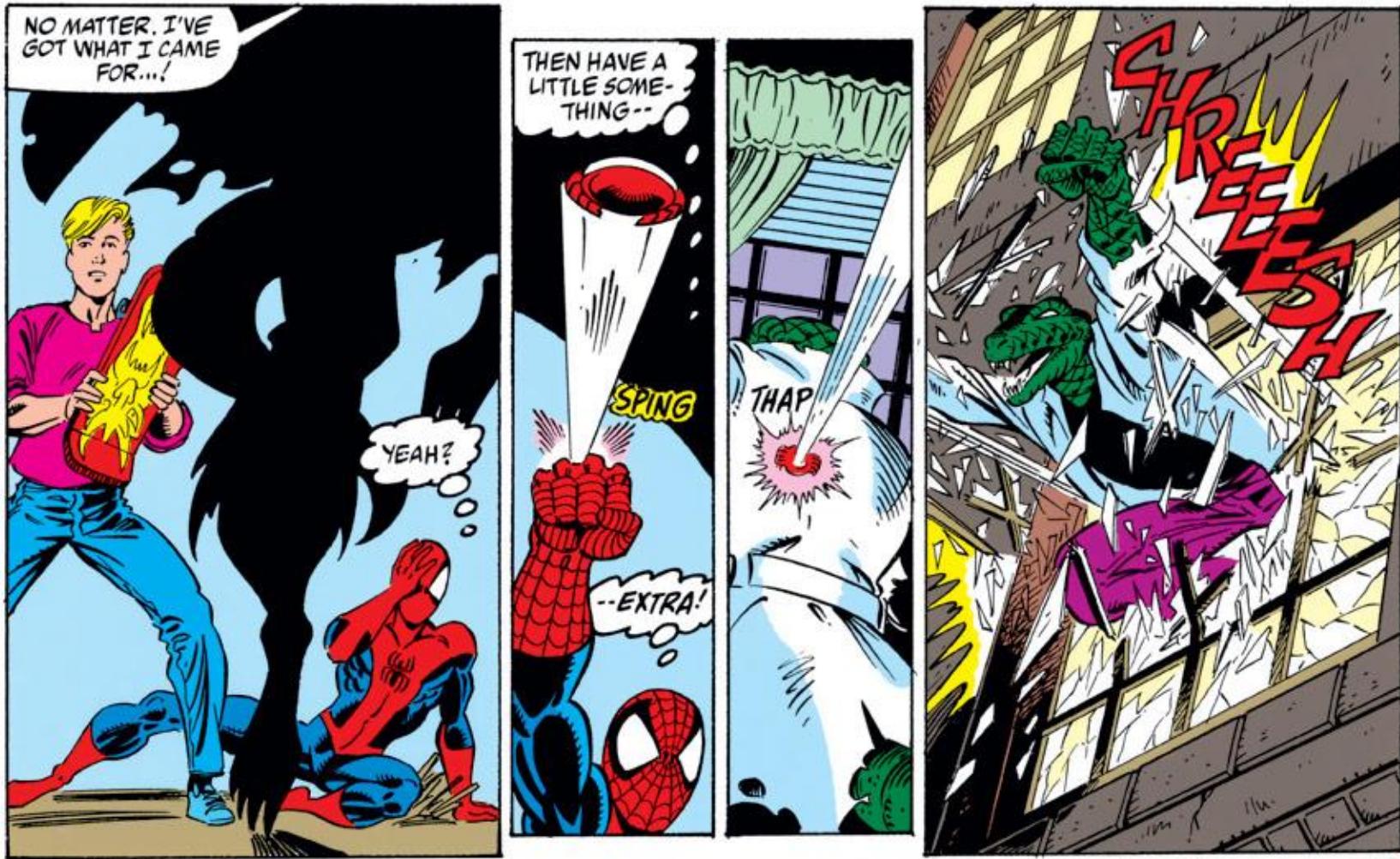


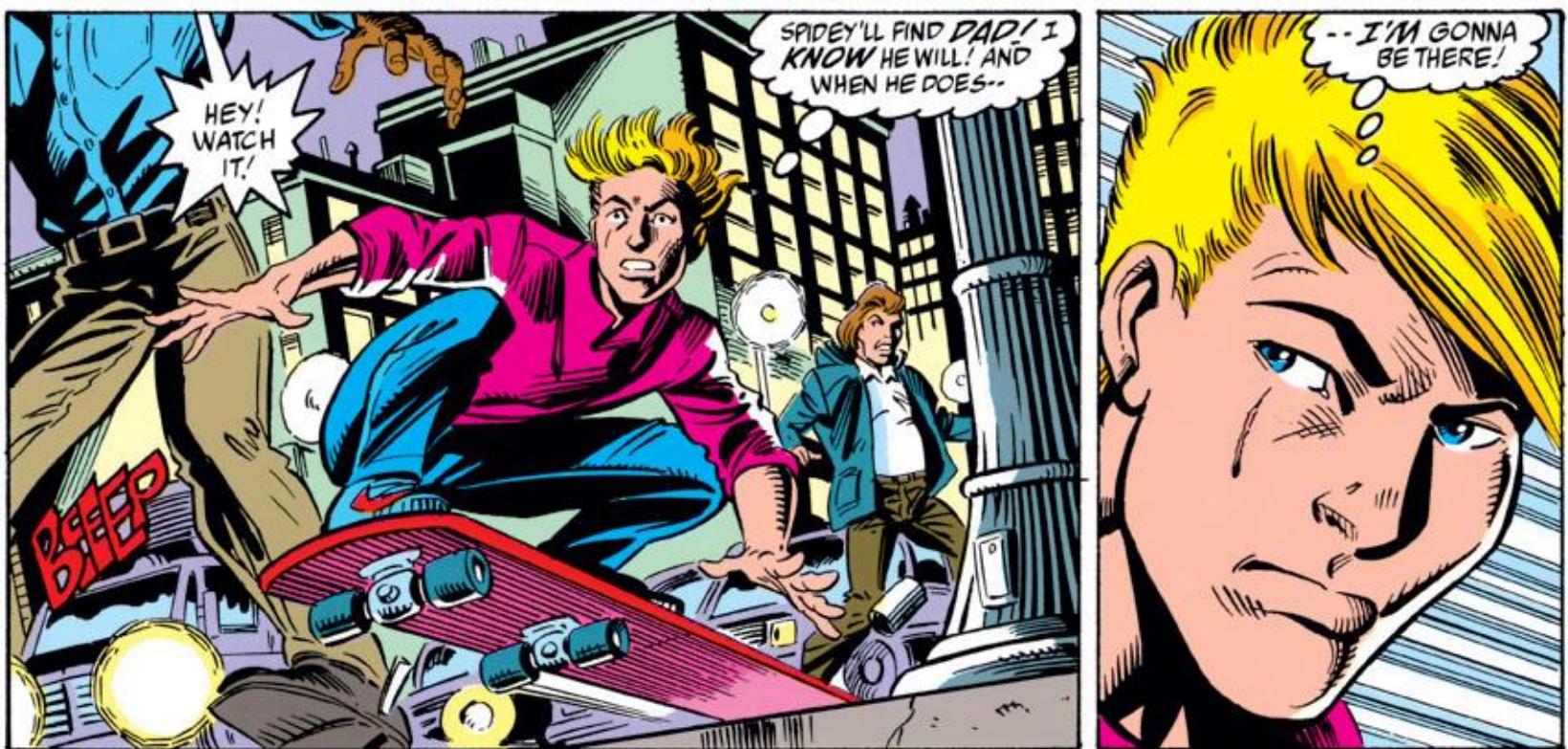














INTERLUDE: THE 59<sup>th</sup> STREET BRIDGE, NEAR QUEENS...



I DON'T KNOW IF WE'LL EVER BE READY. BUT IT HAS TO BE DONE. WHAT-EVER THE CONSEQUENCES...

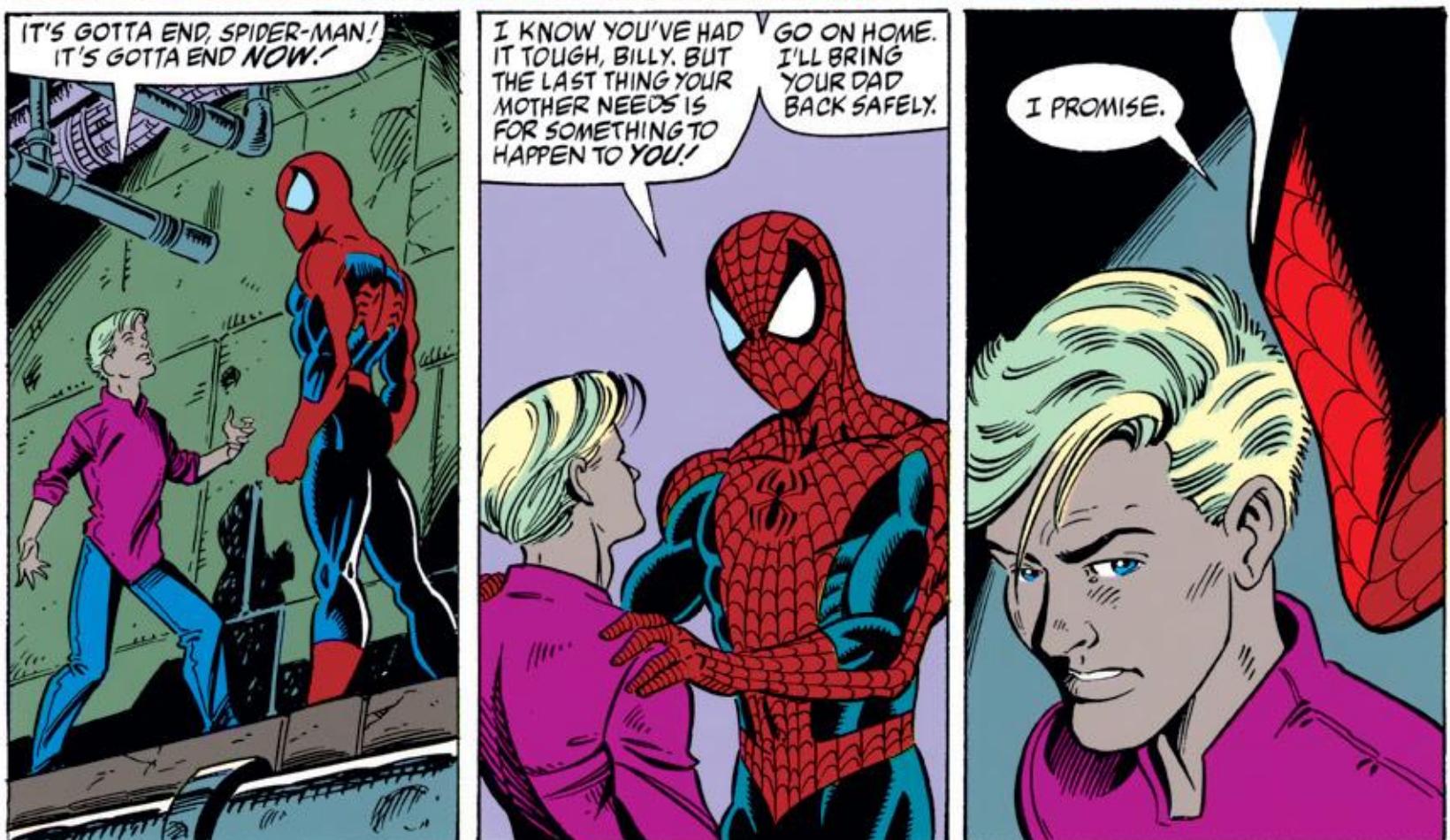
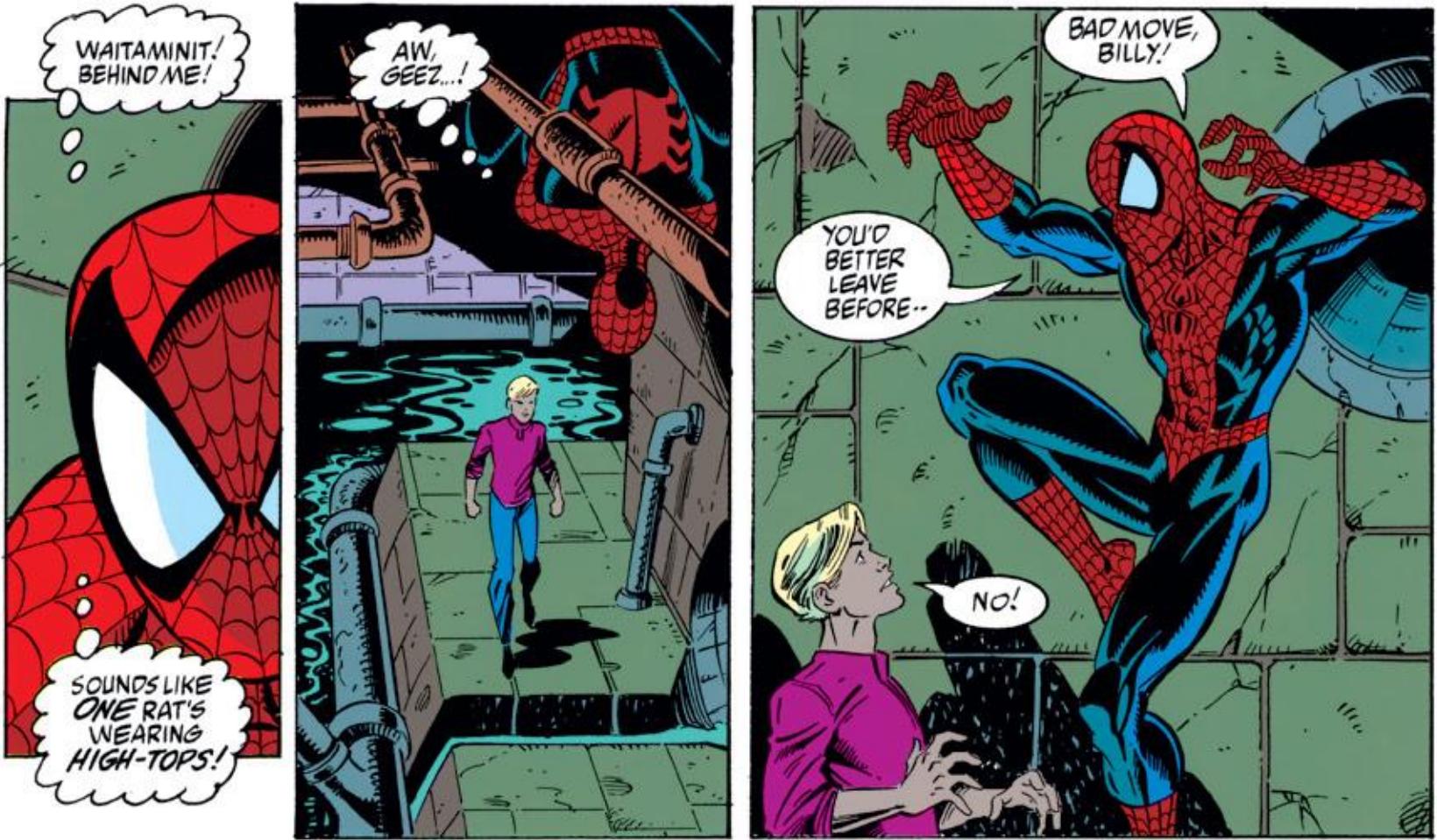
...MAY PARKER WILL HAVE TO FACE...  
...THE GREATEST SHOCK OF HER LIFE.

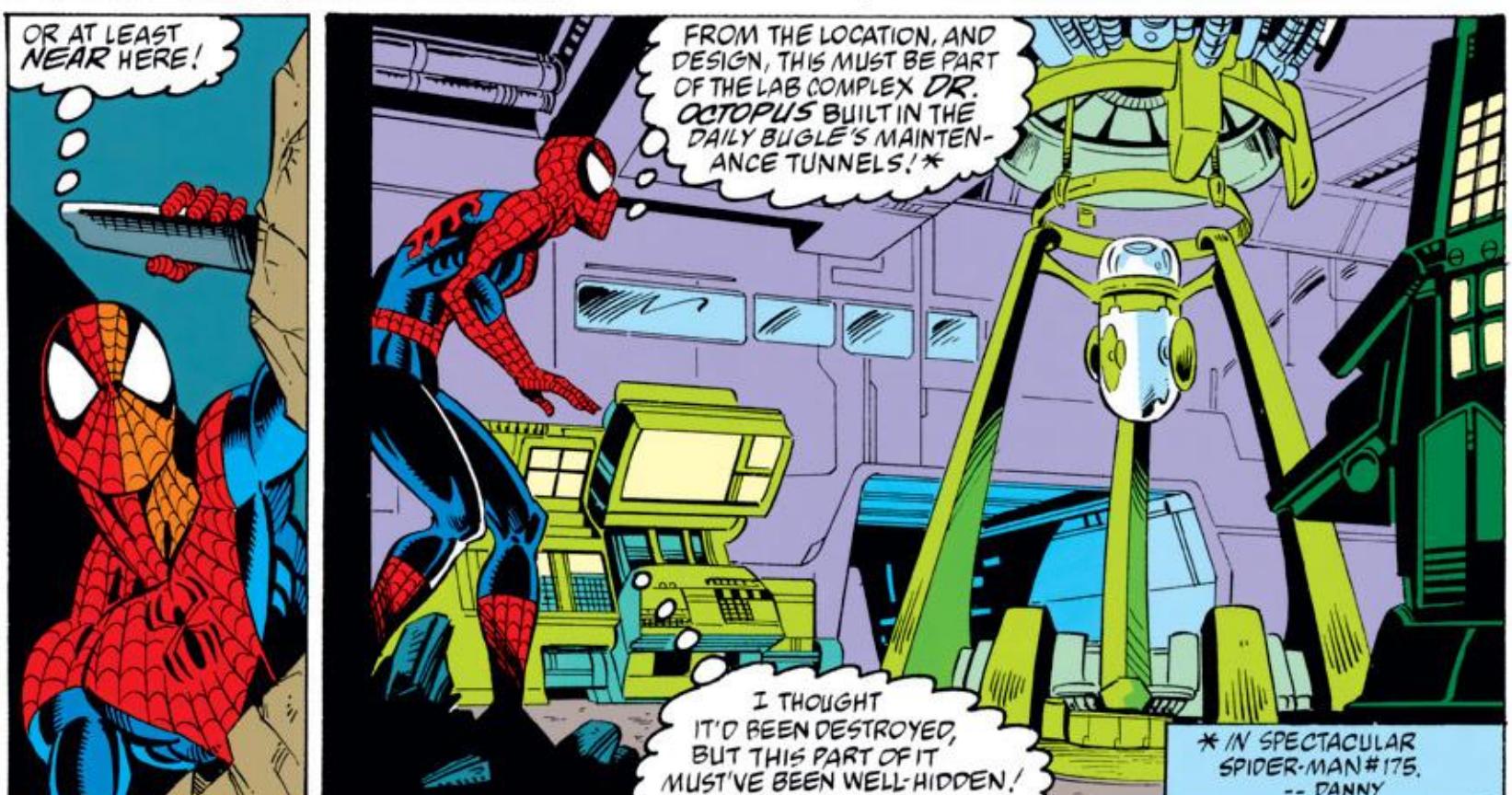


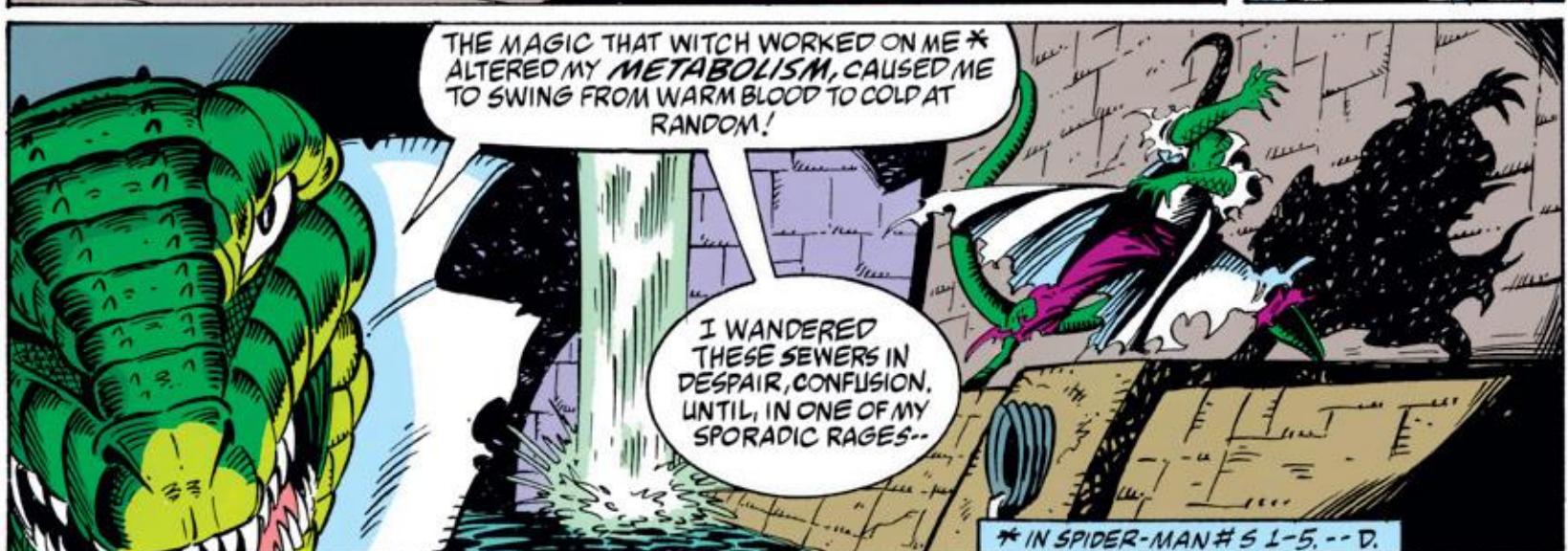
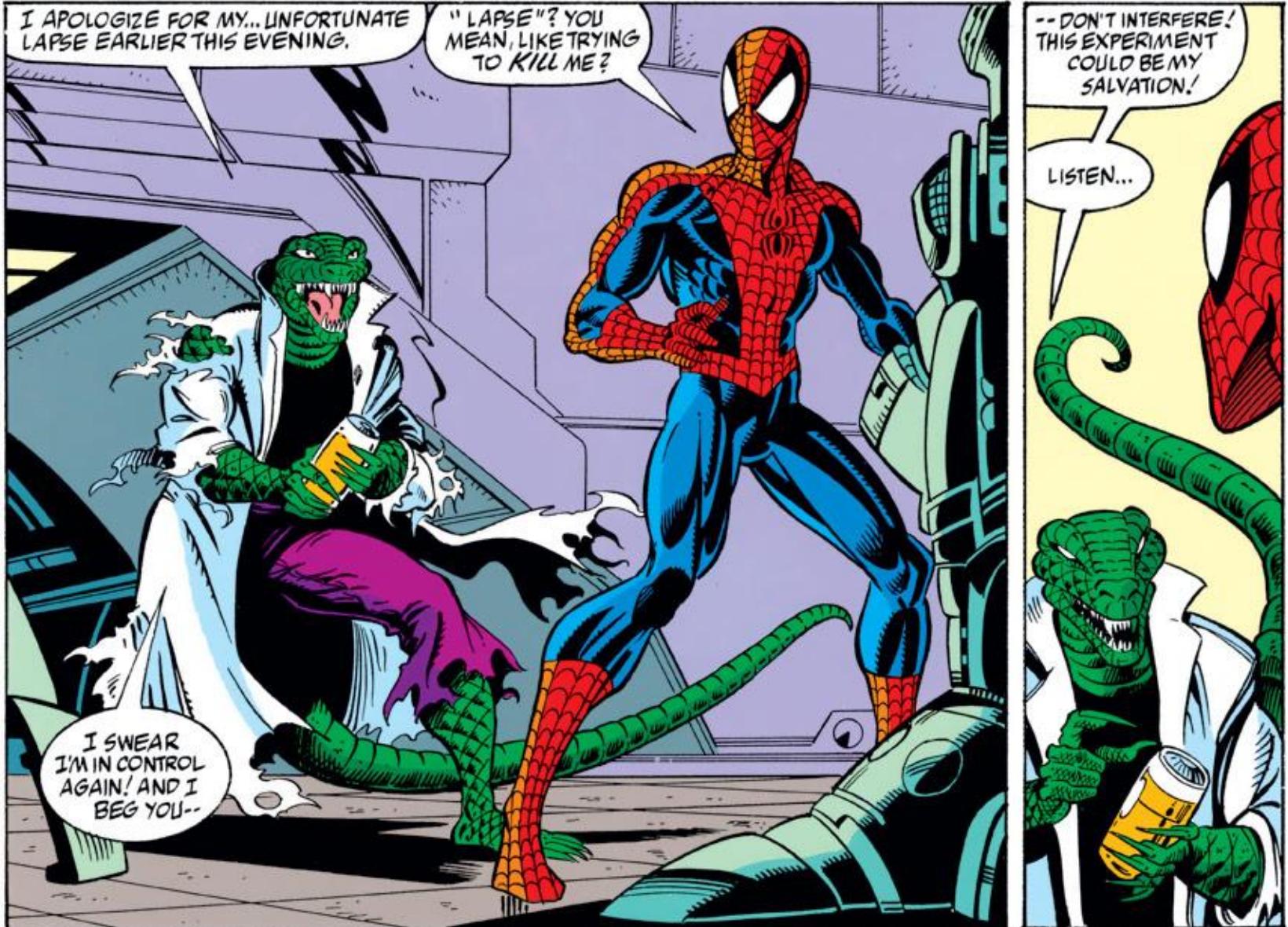
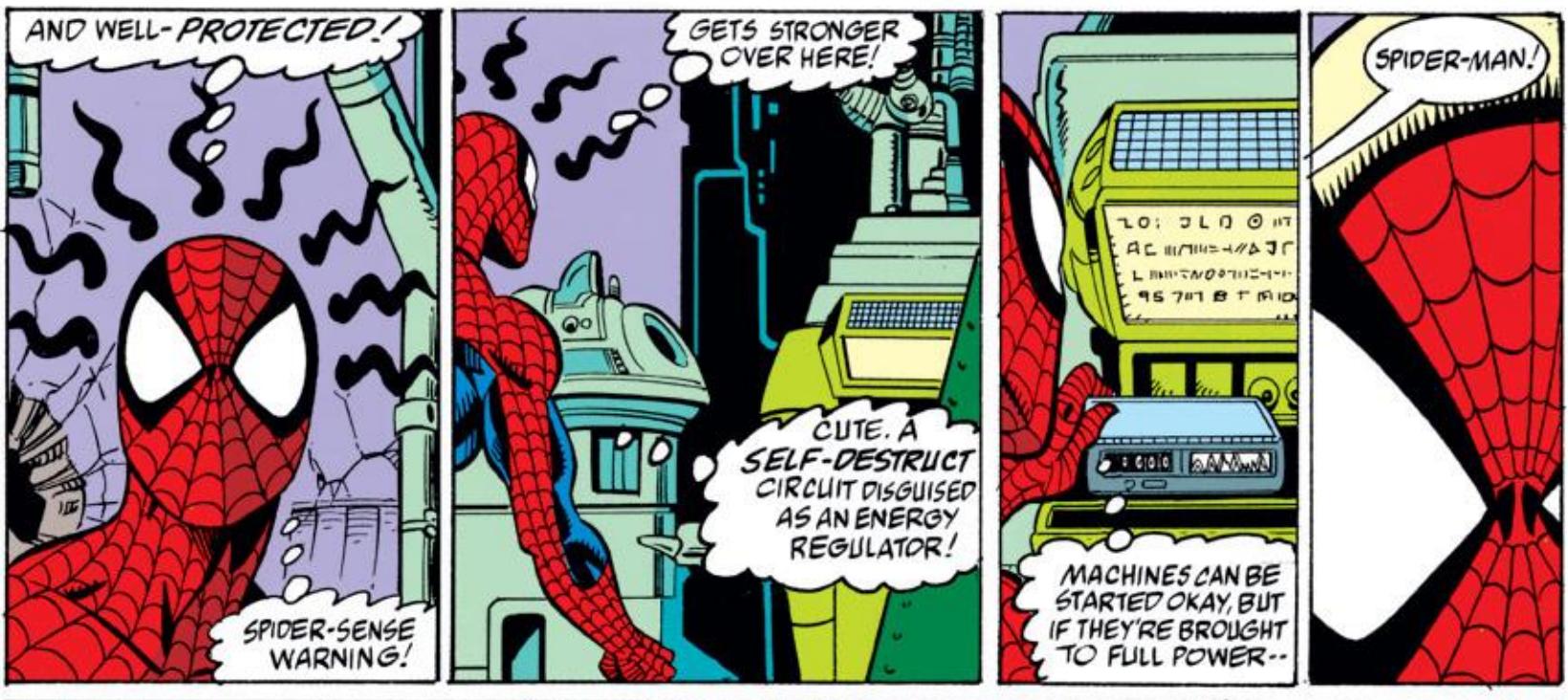
WHILE IN THE FOUL CAVERNS BELOW MANHATTAN, MRS. PARKER'S NEPHEW HAS PROBLEMS OF HIS OWN!

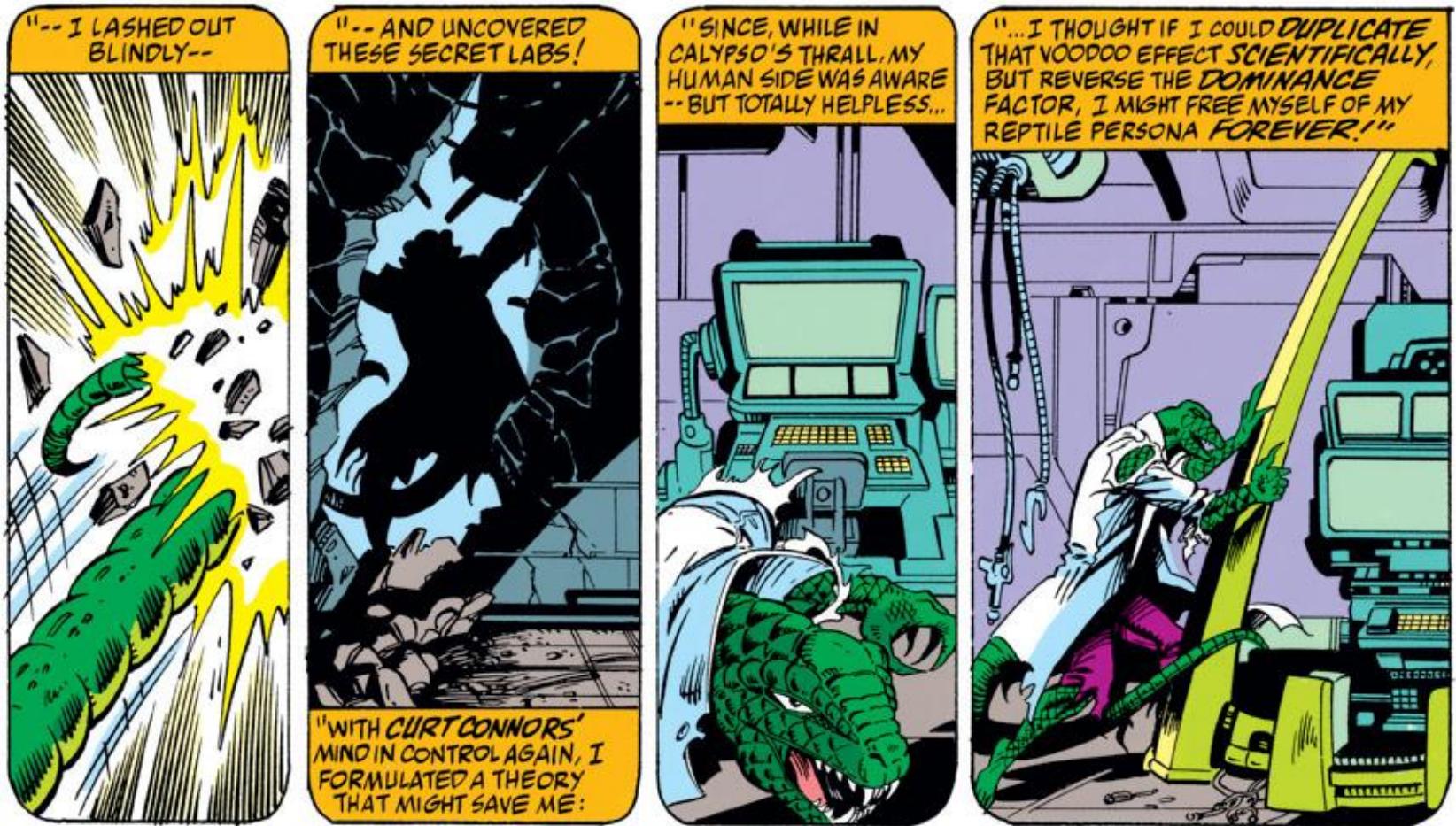
I GOTTA TAKE TIME TO BUILD NOSE PLUGS INTO THIS MASK!

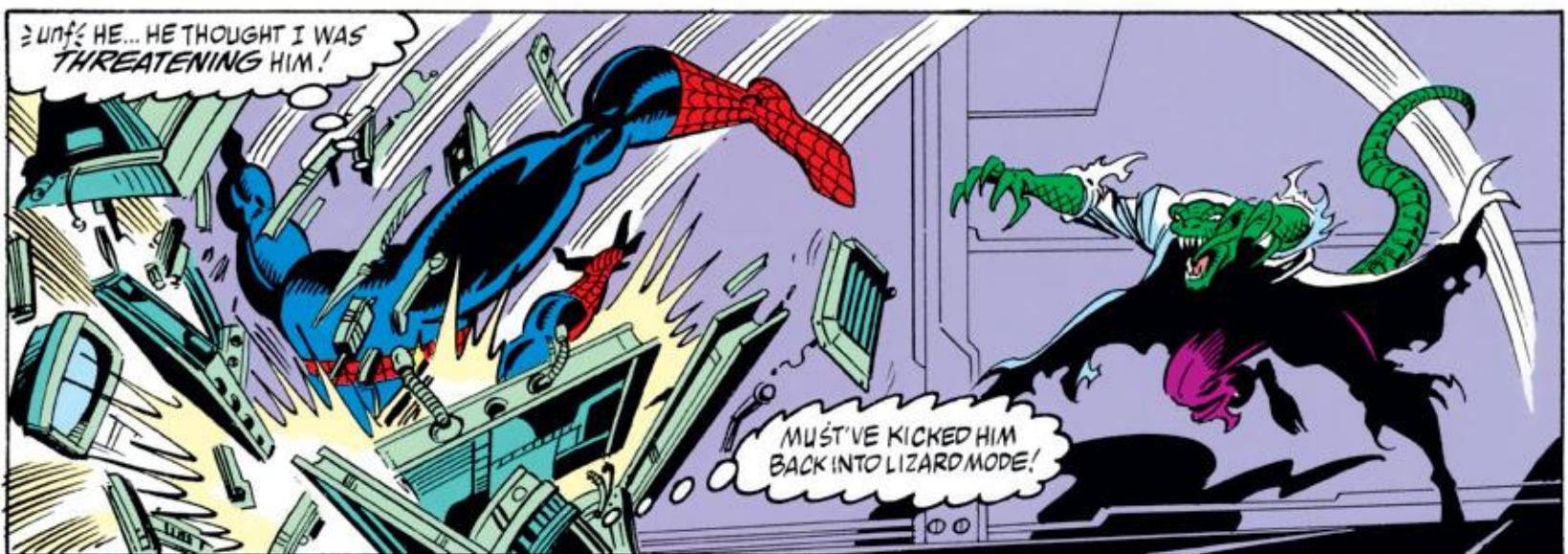


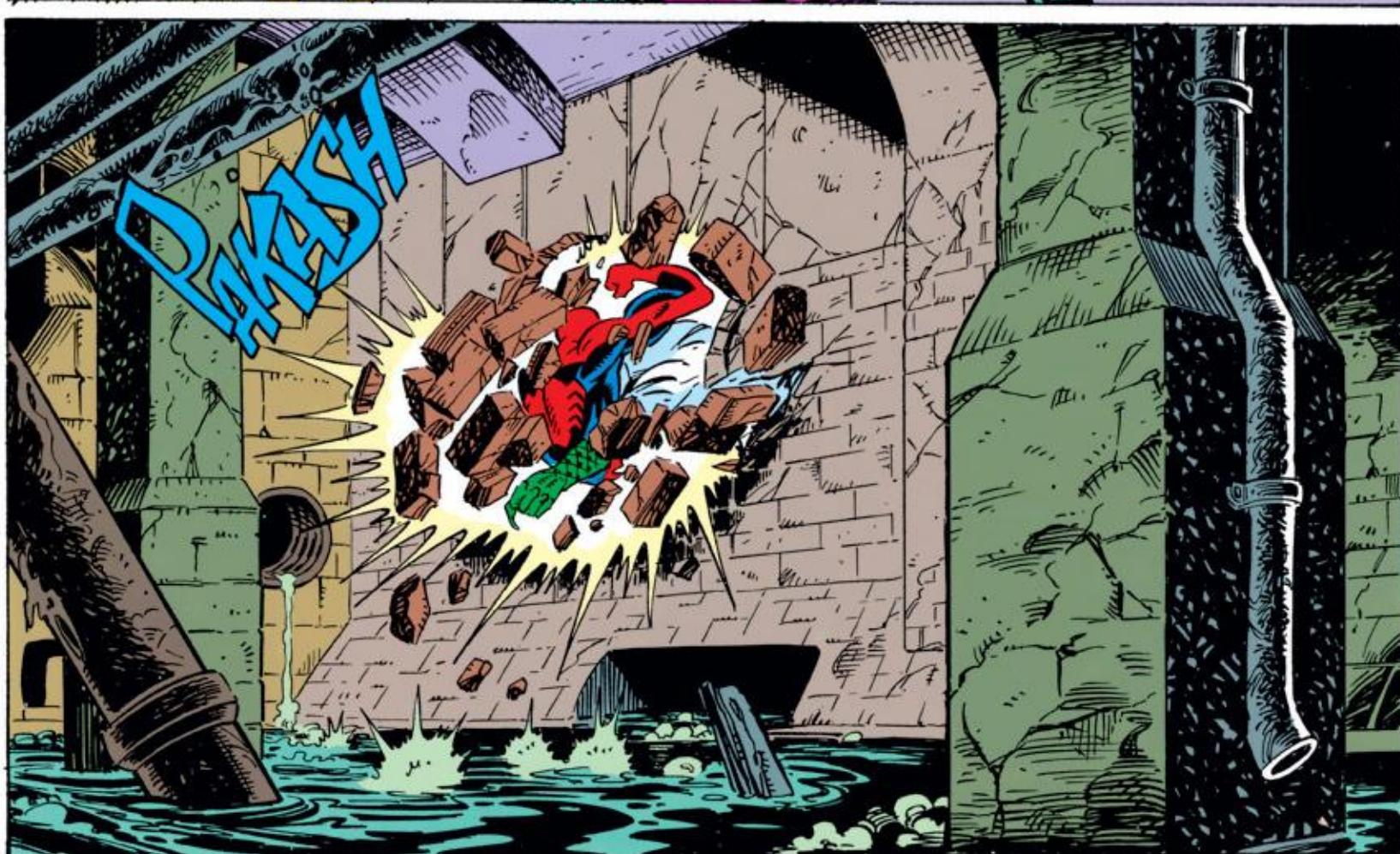


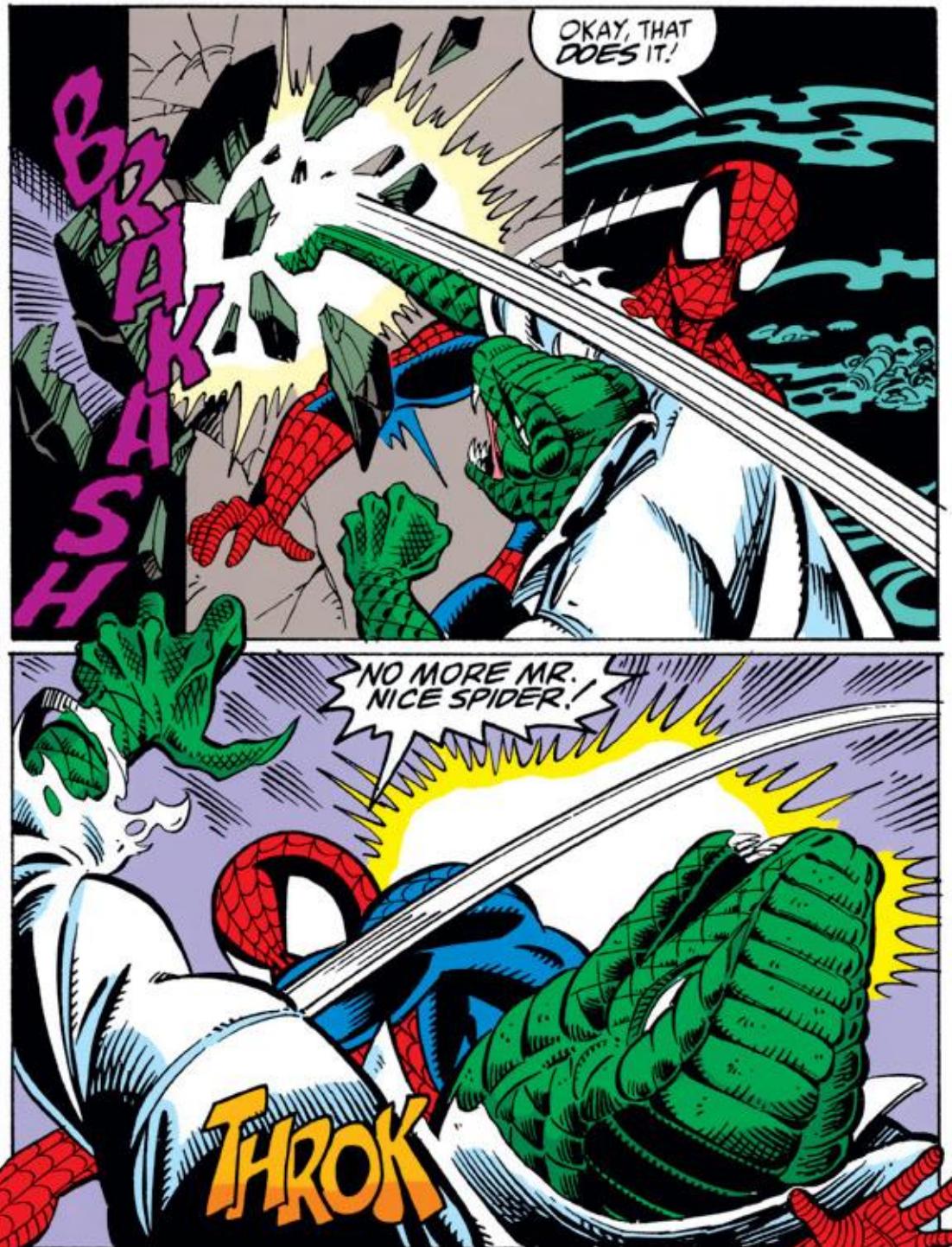


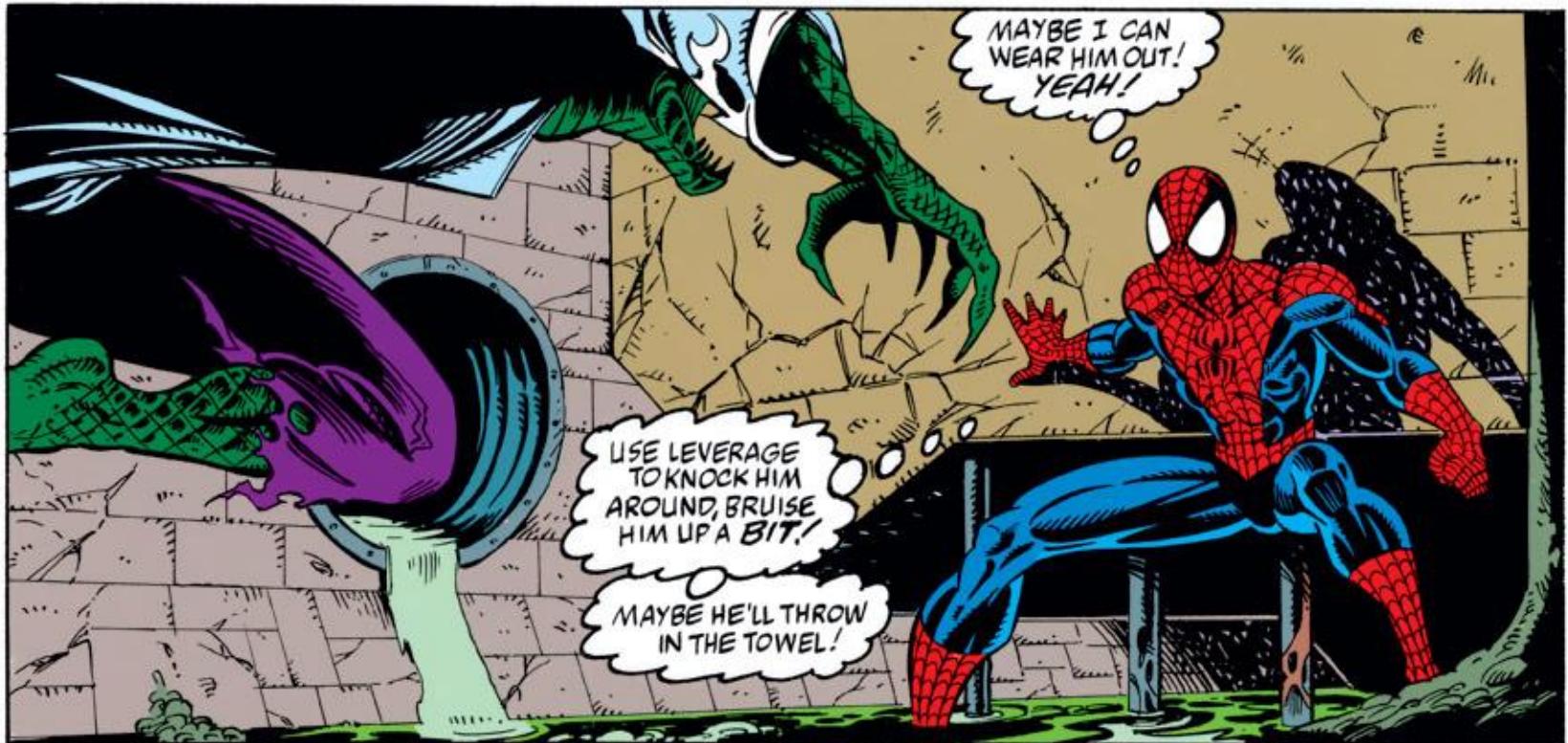




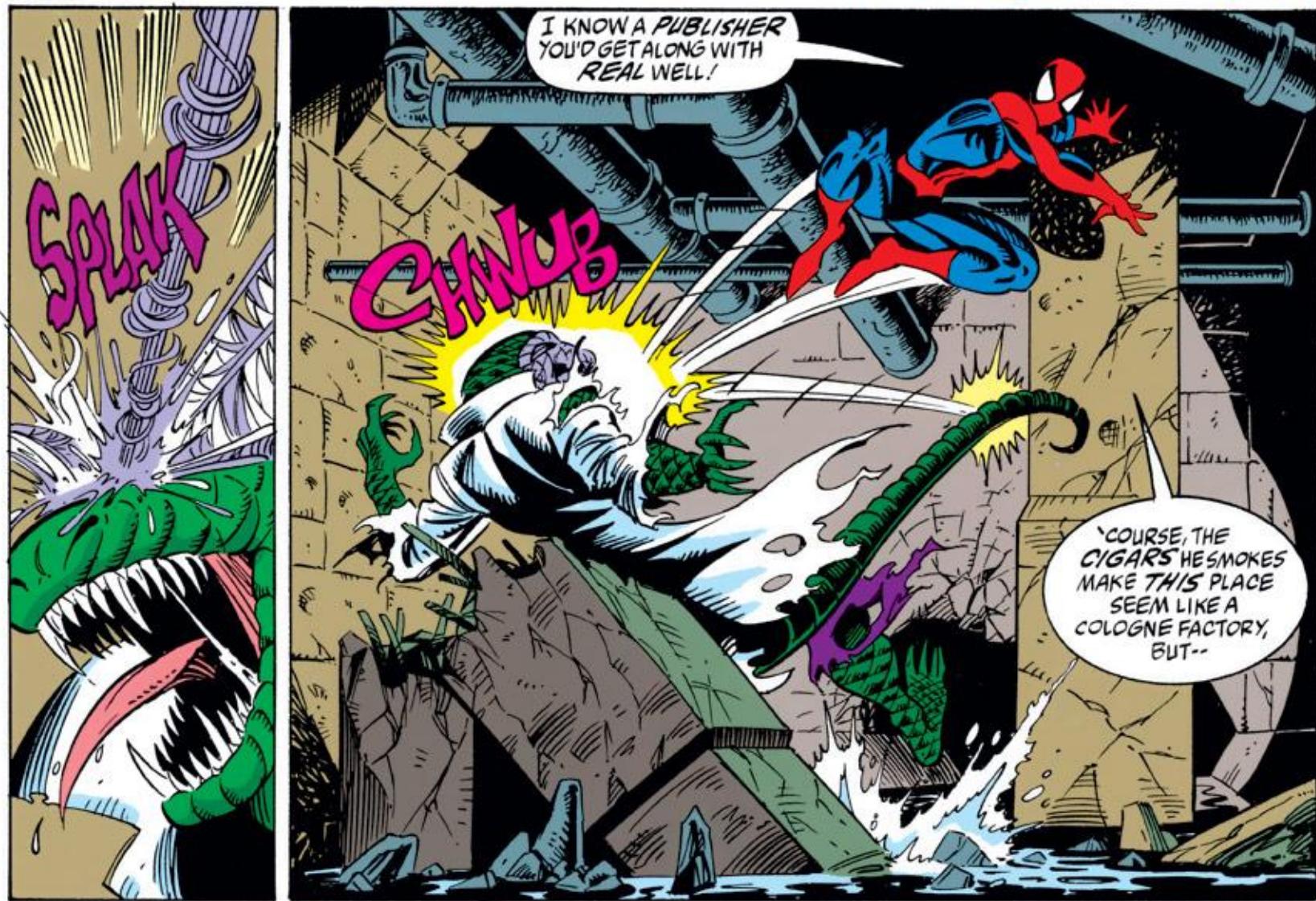


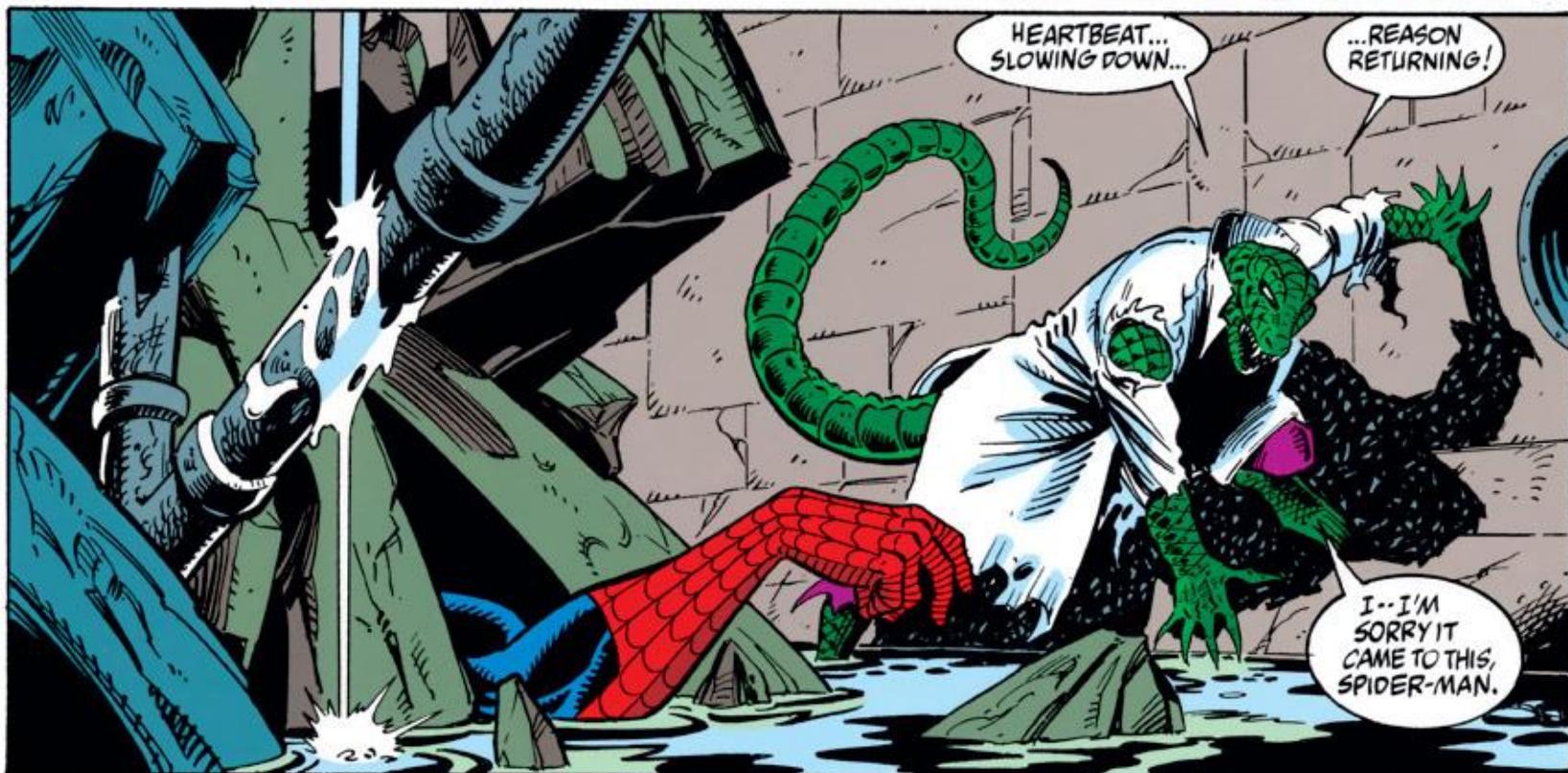


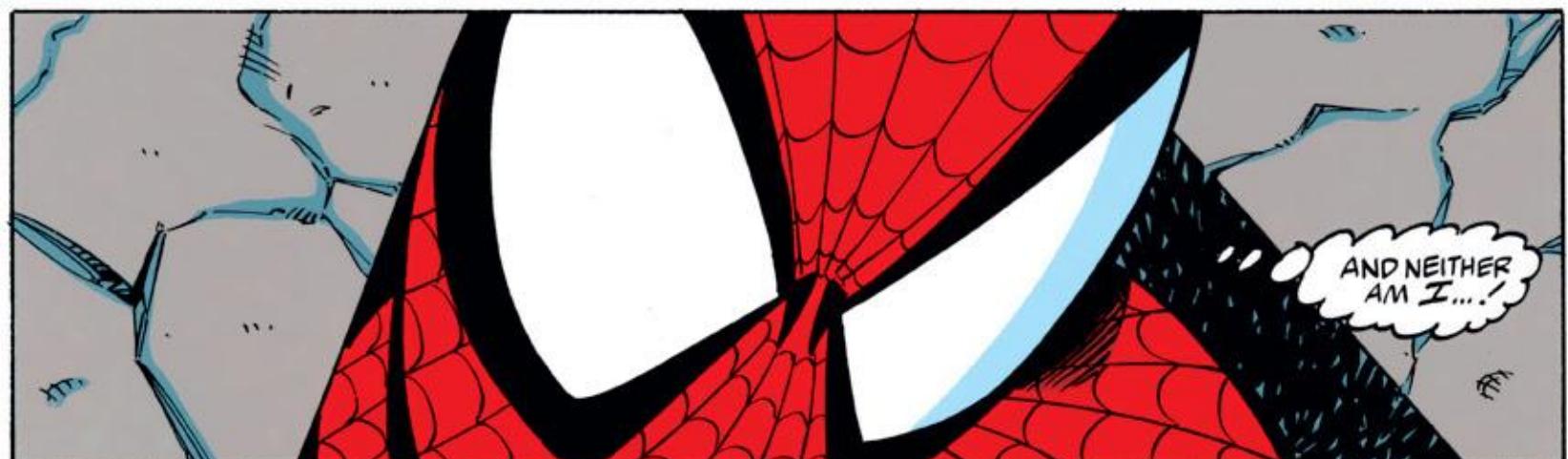


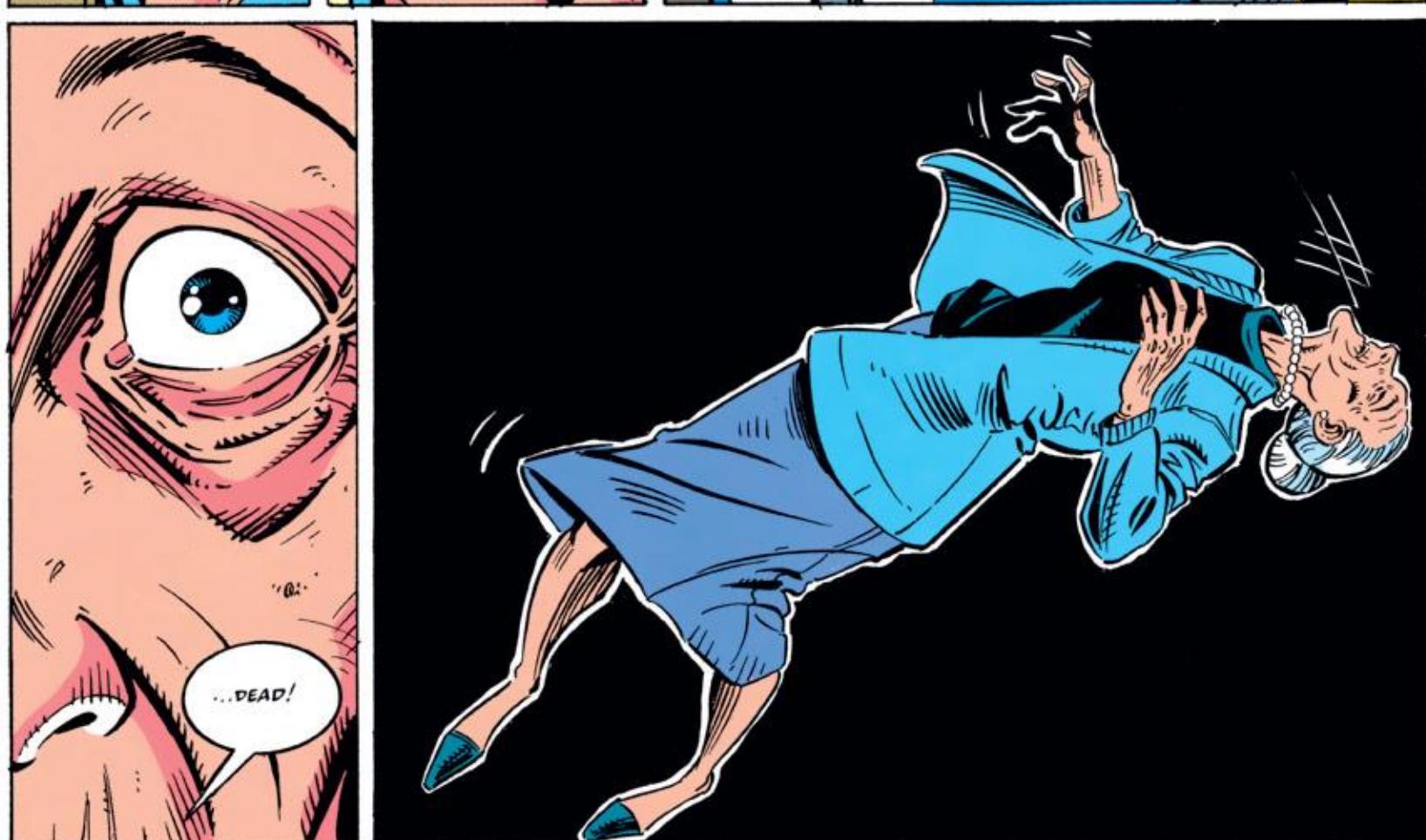
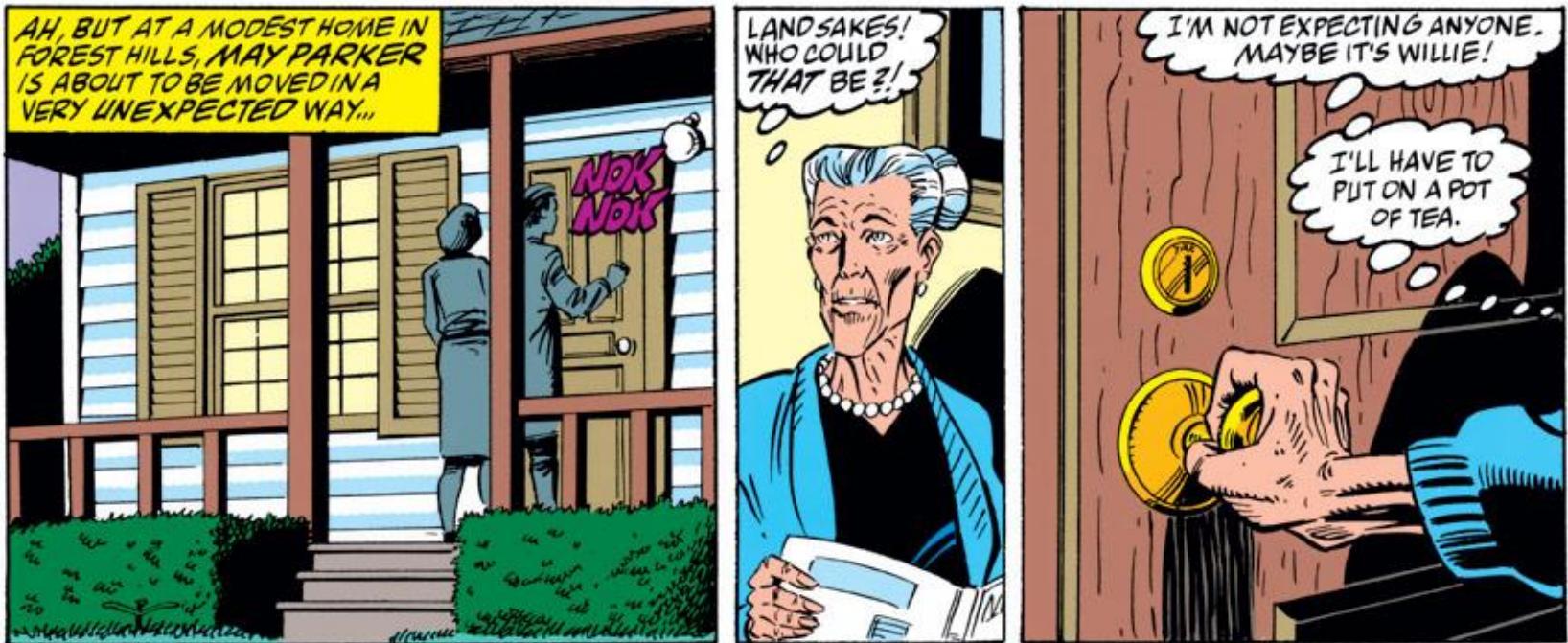


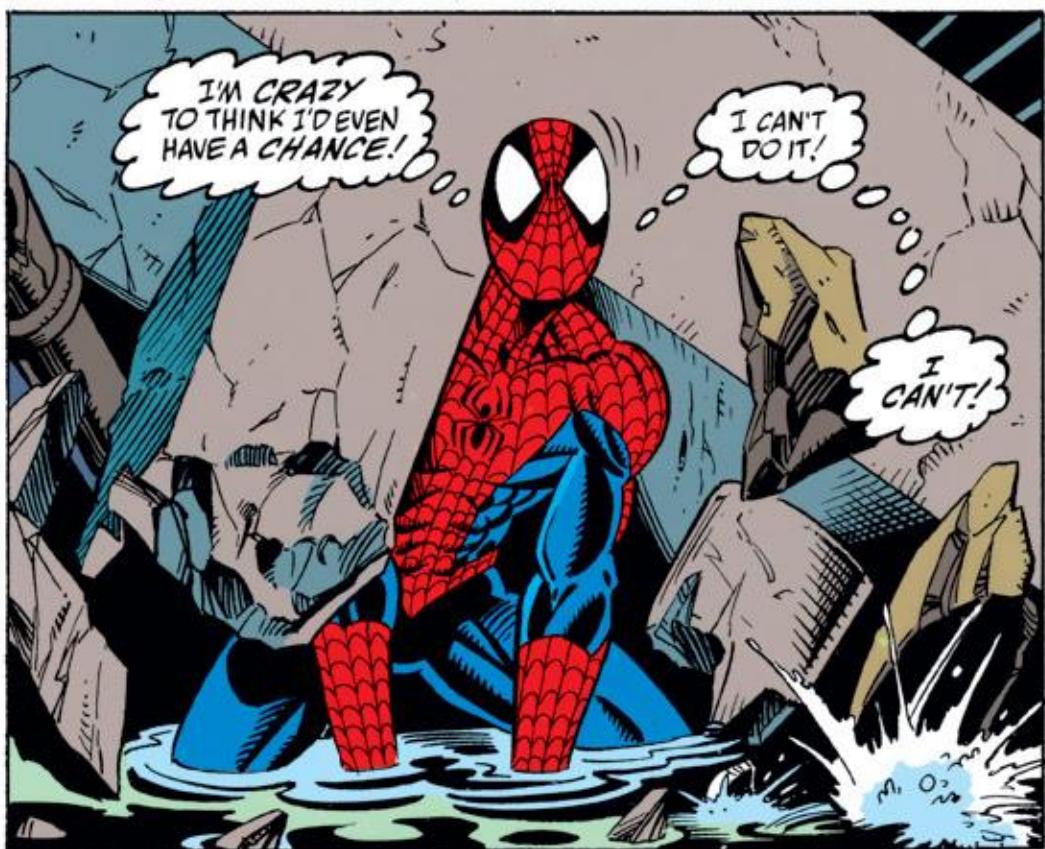
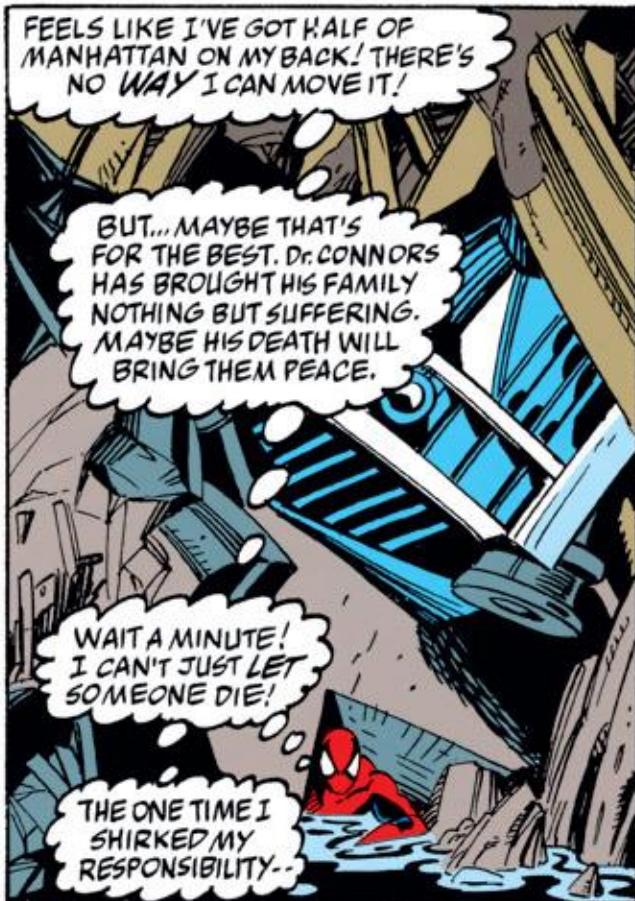


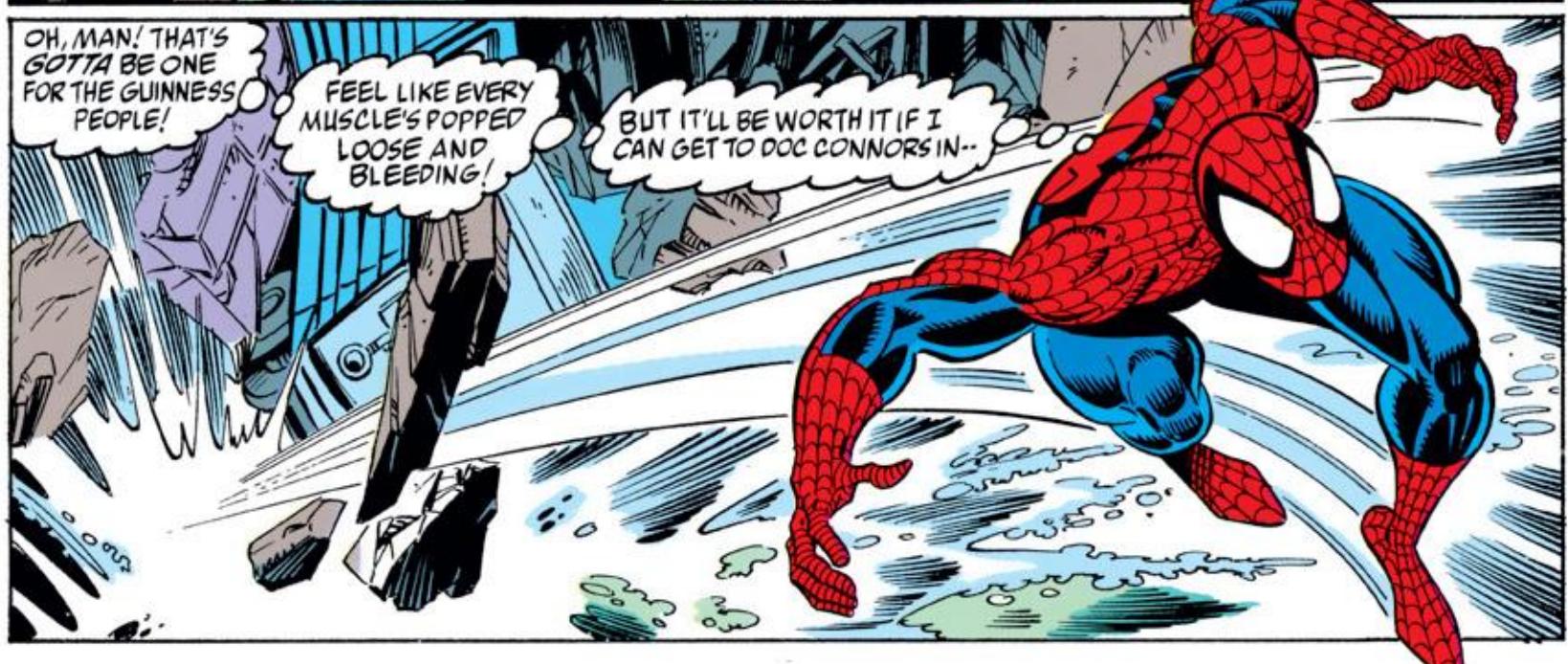












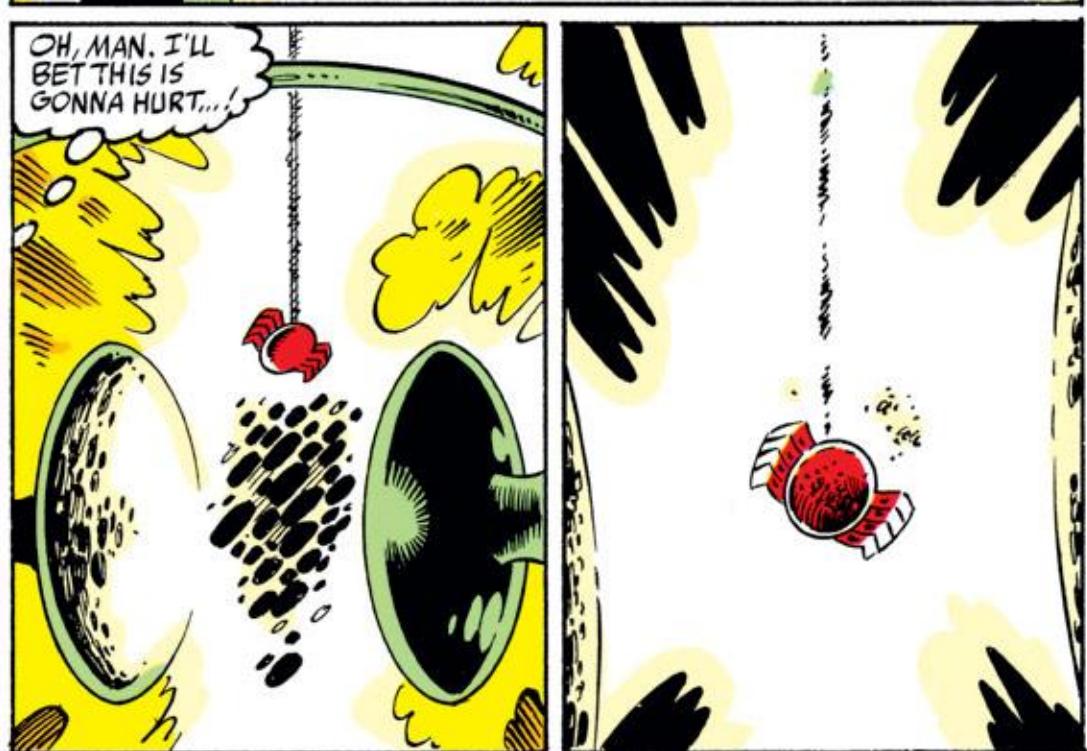
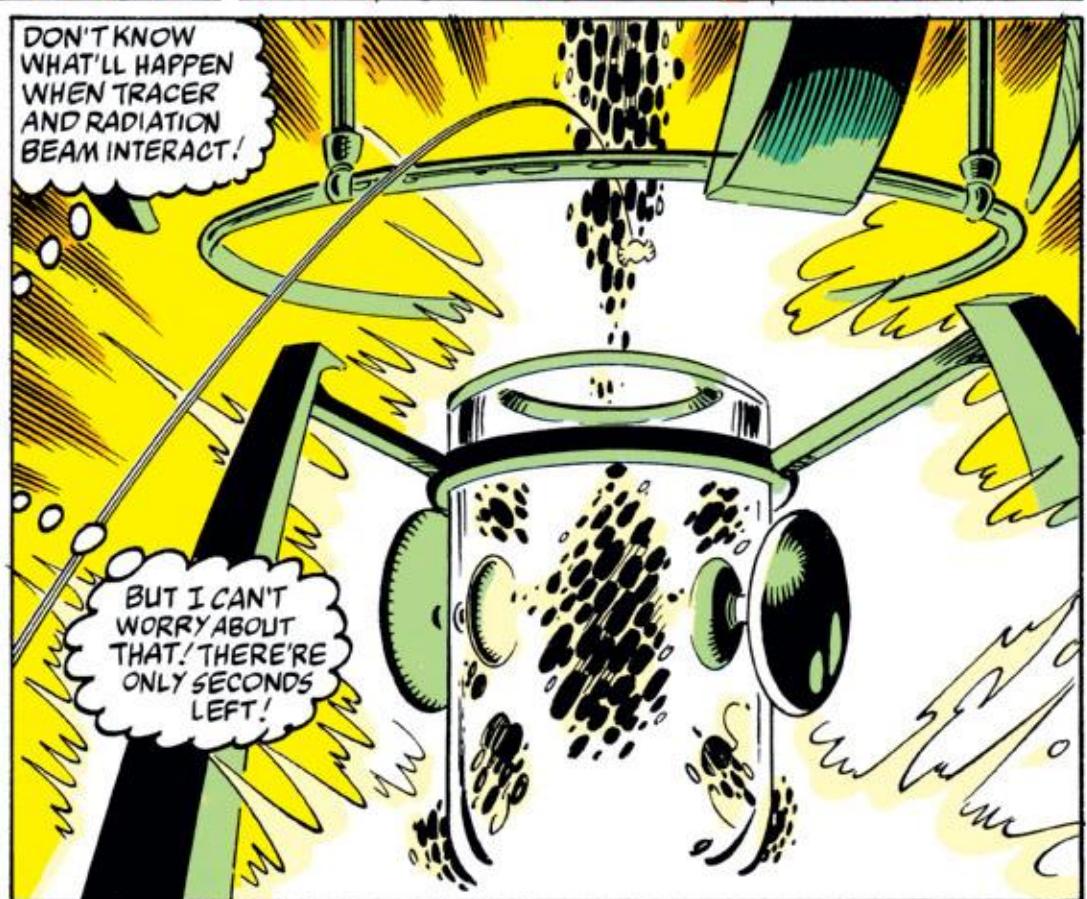
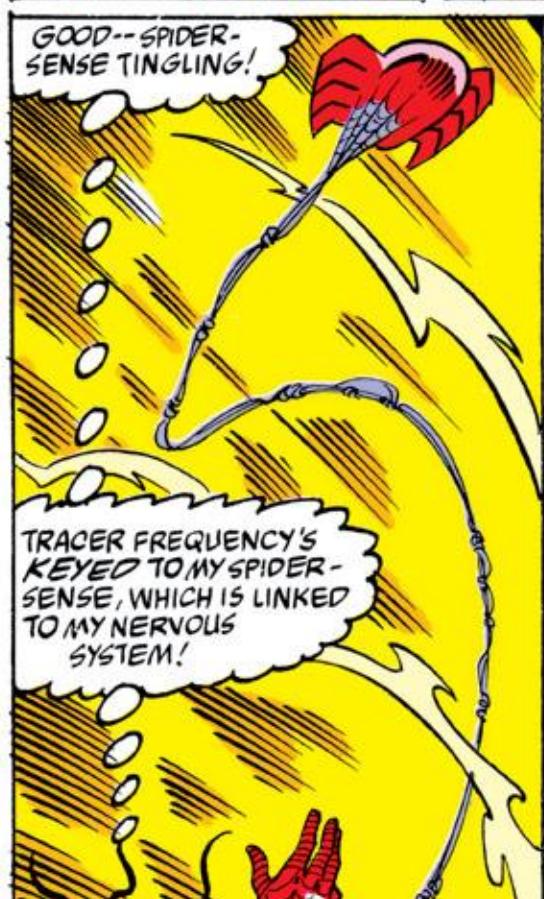
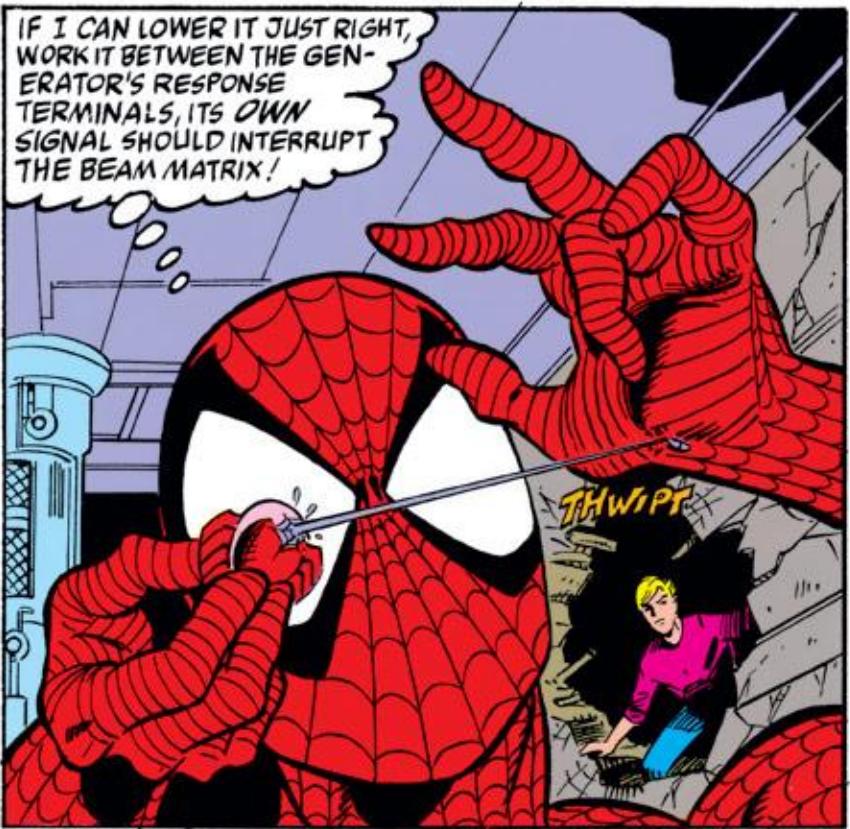


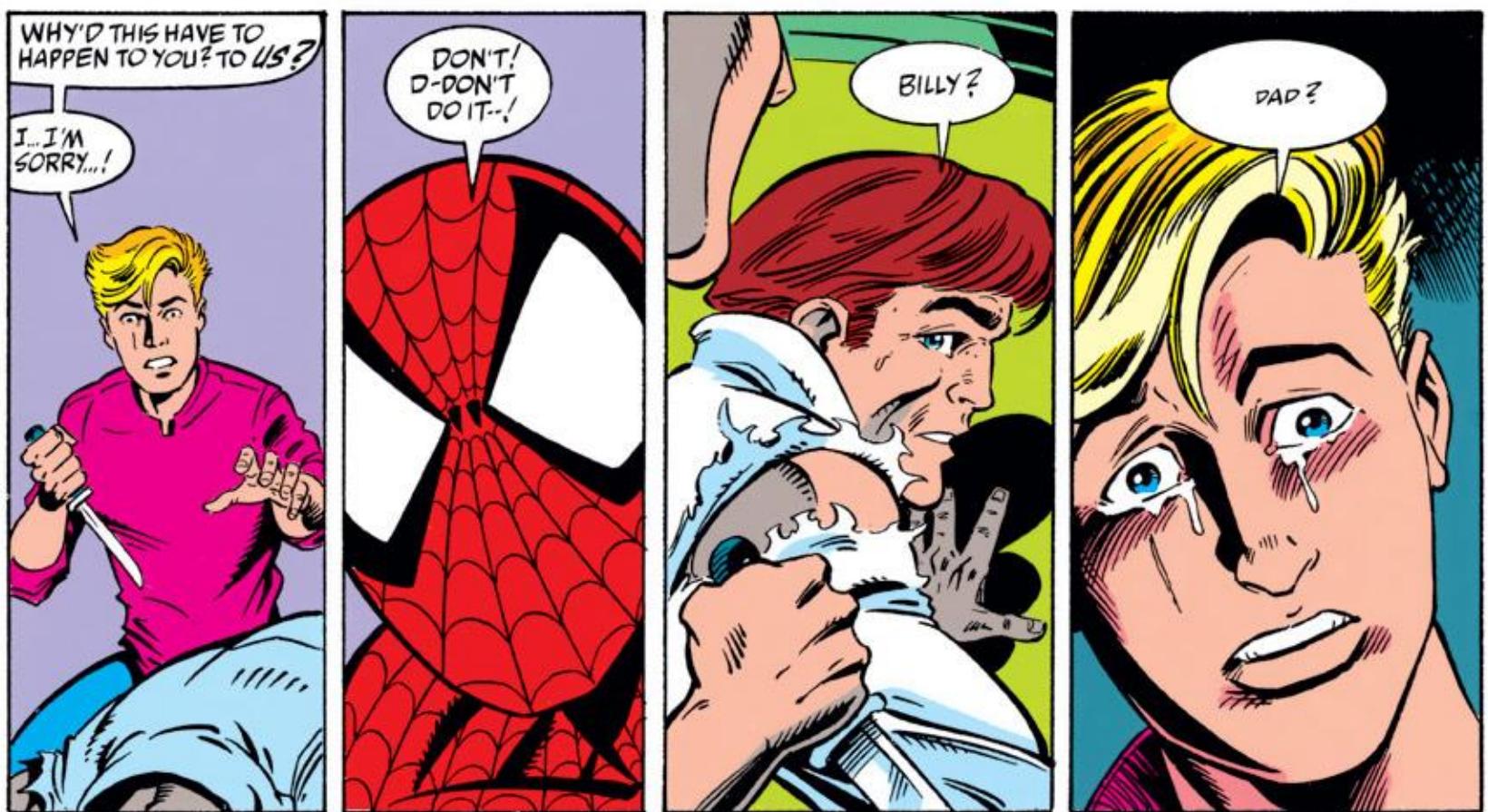
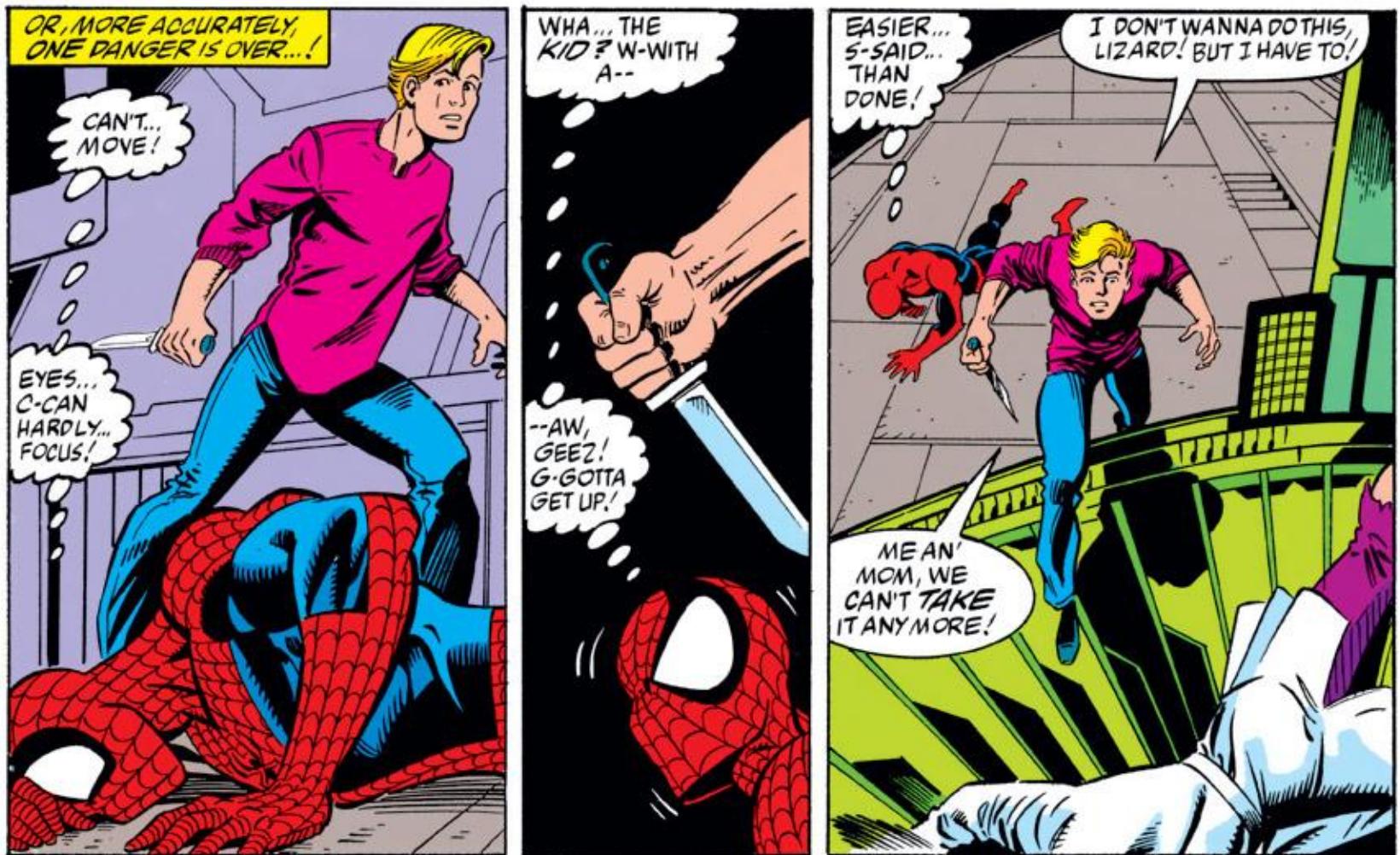
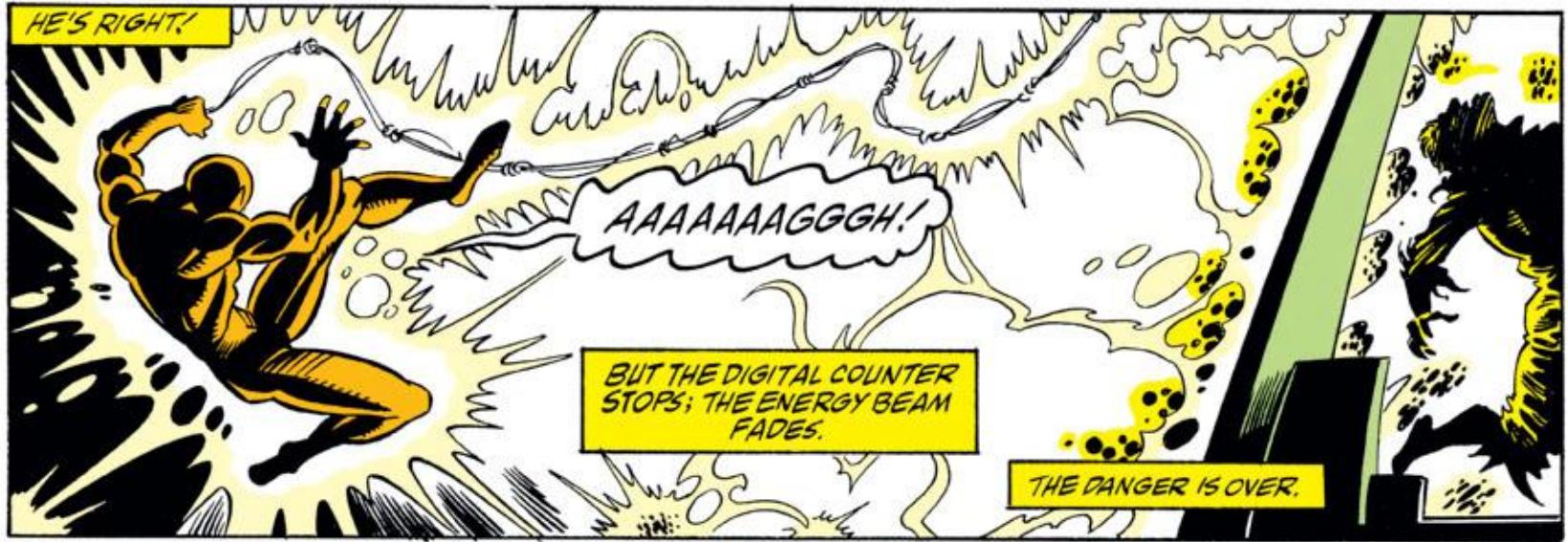
SELF-DESTRUCT COMMAND IS LOCKED IN! DIGITAL TIMER SHOW'S THE MACHINE'S SET TO BLOW IN LESS THAN A MINUTE!

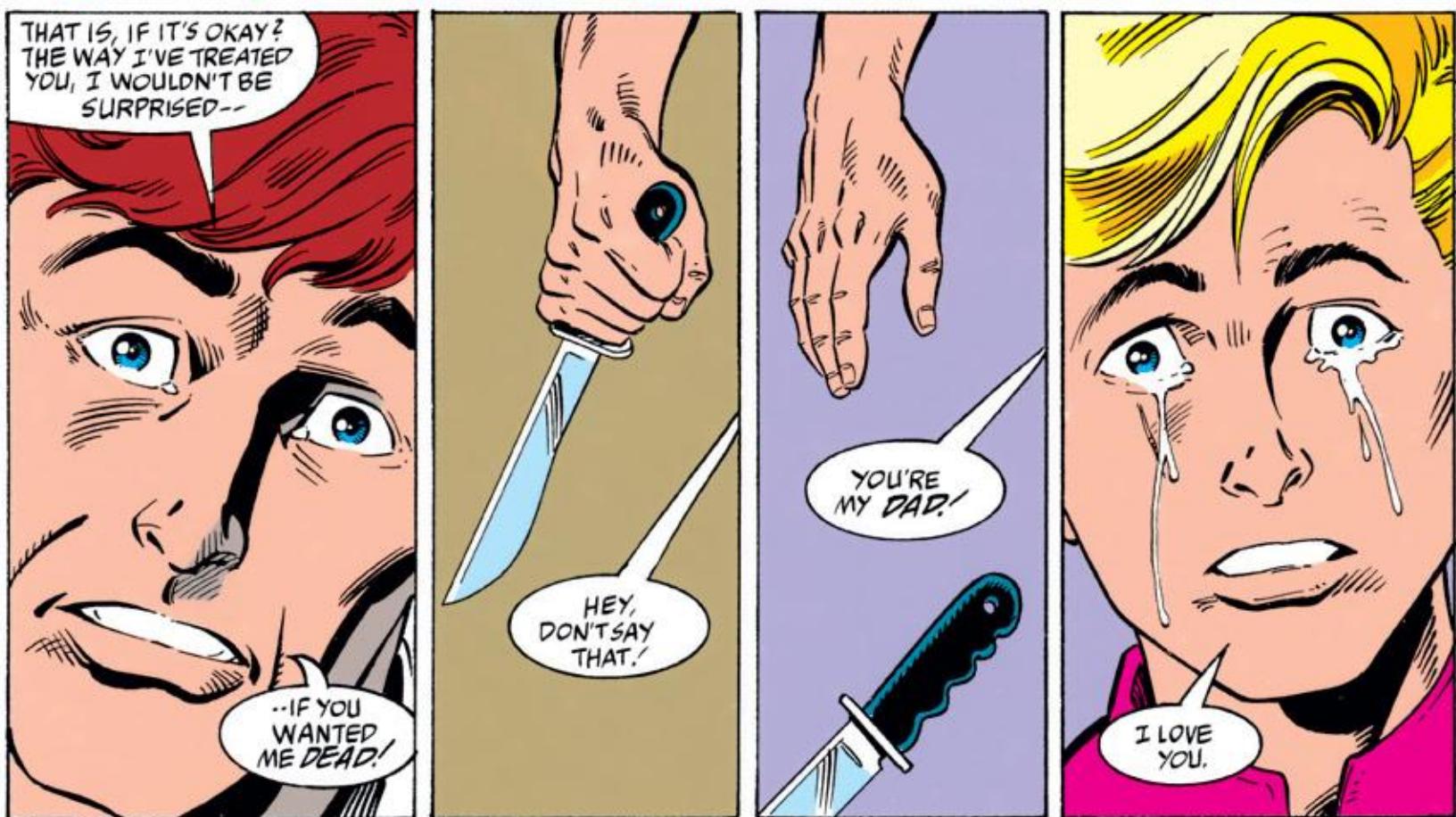
AND SMASHING THE EQUIPMENT MIGHT SET IT OFF EVEN SOONER!

THIS ISN'T FAIR!

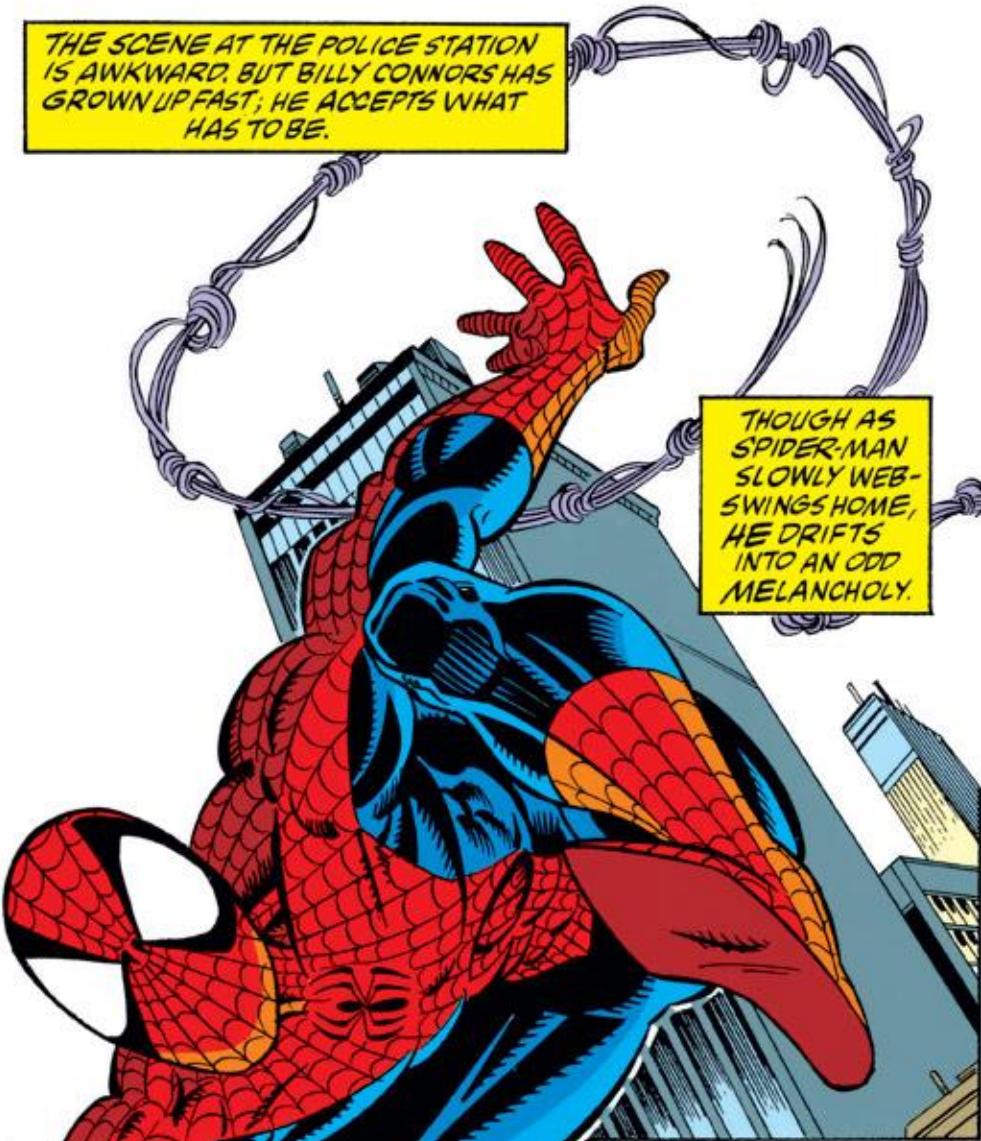


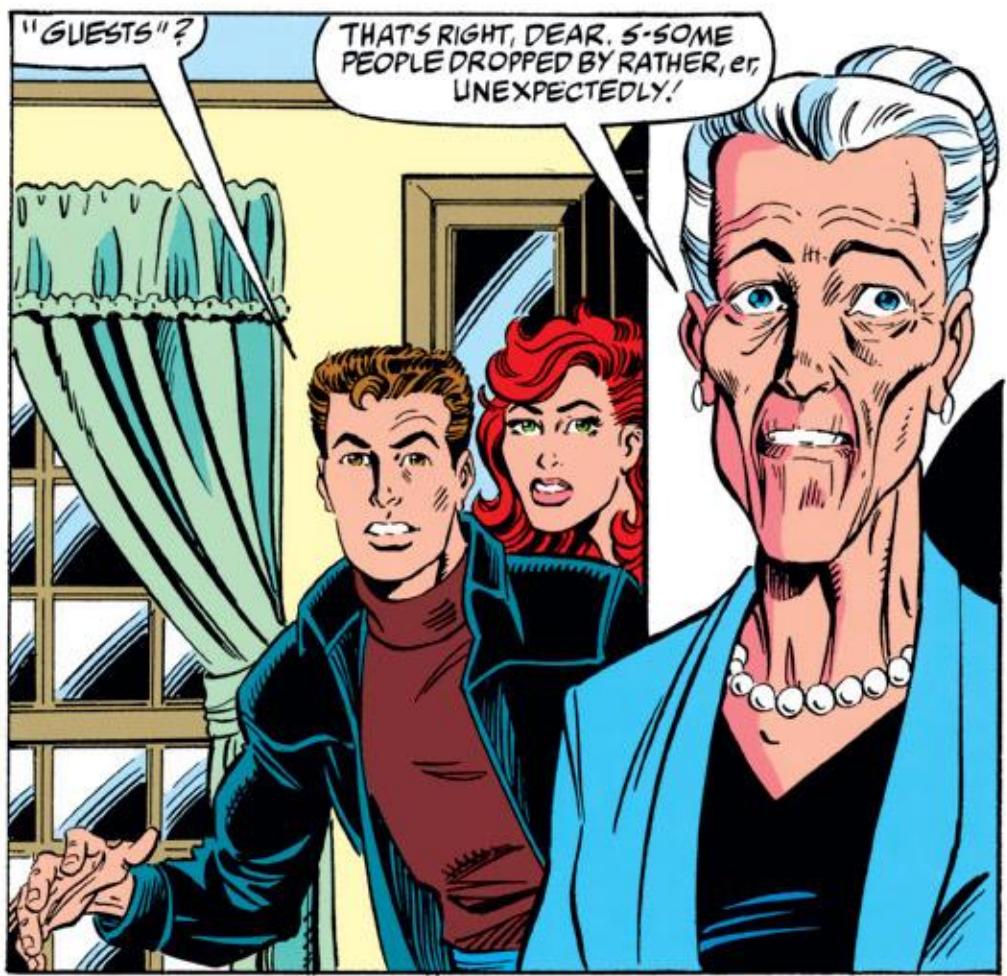






THE SCENE AT THE POLICE STATION IS AWKWARD. BUT BILLY CONNORS HAS GROWN UP FAST; HE ACCEPTS WHAT HAS TO BE.





NEXT ISSUE: THE QUEST FOR THE TRUTH BEGINS! ARE RICHARD AND MARY PARKER REALLY PETER'S LONG-DEAD PARENTS -- OR SOMETHING FAR MORE SINISTER? WHATEVER THE ANSWER, OUR WALL-CRAWLING WONDER WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!



PLUS, IN THE MONTHS TO COME: THE RED SKULL! THE RETURN OF THE BLACK CAT! TASKMASTER! AND, STARTING IN ISSUE # 368, THE ACTION DOUBLES WITH THIS YEAR'S SIZZLING BI-WEEKLY SAGA, "INVASION OF THE SPIDER-SLAYERS!" DON'T MISS A SINGLE STARTLING STORY IN MARVEL'S YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION OF A MILESTONE IN COMICS HISTORY: THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!



# THE SAGA OF SPIDEY'S PARENTS

## by Stan Lee



Hi, Heroes!

I can't believe it! When Daring Danny Fingeroth, our sagacious Spidey editor, asked me to pen this meritorious little monograph, he said it was in celebration of Spidey's thirtieth anniversary! Thirty years! It doth boggle the mind! It puts our web-swingin' super hero right up there with the biggest of them, because it was in 1962 that the first James Bond movie opened, it was the same year that the NY Mets were born and it was also Johnny Carson's first year on the Tonight Show! Although, in the hallowed history of comicdom, it will evermore be enshrined as the year that Sturdy Steve Ditko and yours truly, in a moment of dazzling derring-do, took pen and pencil in hand as we daringly intoned, "Let there be Spider-Man!"

Y'know, in the course of those thirty exciting years, countless articles have been written about Spidey and his capricious cast of characters, but there's one aspect of his life that has seldom, if ever, been covered. Let me tell you about it...

The year was 1968 and I was looking for a new theme for a Spider-Man King-Size Special, which is what we called our 64-page annuals in those prehistoric days. In fact, to enable you to fully appreciate how long ago it was, our King-Size Specials were probably the most expensive comic books you could buy, with a cover price of 25 cents! Remember, that was at a time when other comics were twelve cents!

Well, as you can imagine, we wanted to make sure we had a theme that would be truly special, a theme worthy of the 25-cent price. And that's when we got lucky!

Despite the fact that the Spider-Man series was then more than five years old, and despite the fact that we had done stories involving every possible aspect of Peter Parker's life, it occurred to us that we had never given our readers any clue as to how he became orphaned, or who his parents had been! The minute that thought hit us, we knew we had our theme!





However, a theme is one thing — but a story is something else. The problem now was how to come up with a story that would be surprising enough and unusual enough to justify the theme. The obvious thing would be to say Peter's parents had been an average couple who had suffered an unfortunate auto accident or some such, after which our teenage hero was brought up by his childless aunt and uncle. It could have made a nice enough story, but so what? Remember, we were looking for something different, something unexpected, something to justify that enormous 25-cent cover price!

Of course, to make it more exciting, we could have said that Peter's parents were killed by a criminal and it was an overpowering desire to avenge that deed that made their young son become a super hero. Not too original a premise, but it might have worked, except — every reader knew that Peter became a super hero quite by accident. He really never wanted to be a masked avenger. So, scratch that angle!

Besides, since our story was to be a movie-length 40-pager, it had to have a really big theme plus an exciting super-villain, some deadly baddie whose appearance would shock the readers because it would be totally unexpected in this particular tale!

It was then that I got together with my brother, *Larry Lieber*, who was scheduled to draw the story, and we decided that the last villain anyone would expect to see in a Spider-Man adventure would be the Red Skull! Naturally, that made him the perfect choice for us!

Okay. We had our villain and we had our theme. But how to weave them together and make an epic out of them? And how to tie Spidey into the story? Now the ideas started coming fast and furious. What if Peter somehow learns that his mom and dad had been traitors to the United States? Hey, we couldn't get anything much more startling than that! And what if our broken-hearted hero can't make himself believe such a thing about his own parents despite the evidence, so he decides to investigate the long-buried events himself to learn the truth? Now we had some real gritty drama to work with. Then, what if Peter learns that his mom and dad had actually been U.S. secret agents? But, after he and his wife were killed in an air accident, evidence was found that they had been double agents, traitors to their country! Now we were really rolling! And here was the





best of all — we'll let Spidey discover it was a bum rap, his parents had been framed! Which is where the Red Skull comes in! We'd have Peter find out that the Skull had been almost trapped by Peter's courageous dad, who was on his trail! But, in some diabolical way, the Skull managed to cause the death of agent Parker and his wife, while at the same time planting false evidence that it was they who had been enemies of America, rather than him!

Obviously, that didn't all come together for us quite so fast, but once we saw the first pieces of the jigsaw fall into place everything else began to fit in perfectly. The most exciting part of the process for us was figuring out how, when Spidey, many years later, returned to Algeria to learn the truth about his parents, we could find a way to have him battle hordes of killers

whose mission was to stop him. And then, best of all, we figured out a way for the web-swinging to not only clear his parents' names, but to defeat the Red Skull at the same time, after all those tragic years!

Yes, Larry and I were very proud of that tale which, for the first time, gave readers an insight into Peter Parker's roots and solved a mystery which had baffled comicdom for decades!

And hey, just think of the possibilities it opens for the future! Next time we're stuck for a plot we'll just dream up a yarn about Spidey's *grandparents*, and after that, there's always his great grandparents! In fact, who knows how far back the Parker family tree may go?

But, even though the past thirty years have provided a wonderful, fun-filled ride on the dizzy roller coaster of Spidey's life, we may have to wait another couple of decades before we go further back into Peter's ancestry. I mean, let's face it — we've gotta save something for the ol' web-swinging's *fiftieth* anniversary!

Excelsior!

- Stan Lee



DAILY BUGLE BUILDING,  
10:37 P.M.; THE OFFICE  
OF PUBLISHER,  
J. JONAH JAMESON.

NOTES FOR AUTO-  
BIOGRAPHY: "MEMOIRS  
OF A CRUSADER,"  
CHAPTER 7. AHEM!

IN THIS SECTION  
I'LL DEAL WITH  
ONE OF THE DARK-  
EST PERIODS OF  
MY OTHERWISE  
STERLING  
CAREER.

WITH GREAT  
HUMILITY I  
INTEND TO REVEAL,  
FOR THE FIRST TIME--

# HOW I CREATED SPIDER- MAN!

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

DAVID MICHELINE - WRITER  
AARON LOPRESTI - PENCILER  
& INKER  
DAVE SHARPE - LETTERER  
KEVIN TINSLEY - COLORIST  
DANNY FINGEROTH - EDITOR  
TOM DEFALCO - EDITOR IN CHIEF

BACKGROUND: EVEN NOW, LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE WEBSLINGER'S PRE-VIGILANTE DAYS.

BUT IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HE WAS QUITE YOUNG WHEN HE FIRST GAINED HIS POWERS. PERHAPS HE EVEN ATTENDED--

"ONE OF THE LOCAL SCHOOLS."

THERE'S PETER PARKER!

THAT BOOKWORM?

HE'S MIDTOWN HIGH'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL WALLFLOWER!

"JUDGING FROM HIS CURRENT ARROGANCE, HE MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE THE LADIES' MAN..."

PETER, FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME, YOU'RE JUST NOT MY TYPE!

"THE ENVY OF HIS PEERS!"

THERE'S THIS GREAT NEW EXHIBIT AT THE SCIENCE HALL--

YOU STICK TO SCIENCE, SON! WE'LL TAKE THE CHICKS!

"AS FOR HIS HOME LIFE, THE BOY WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A TROUBLEMAKER, A BURDEN TO HIS FAMILY!"

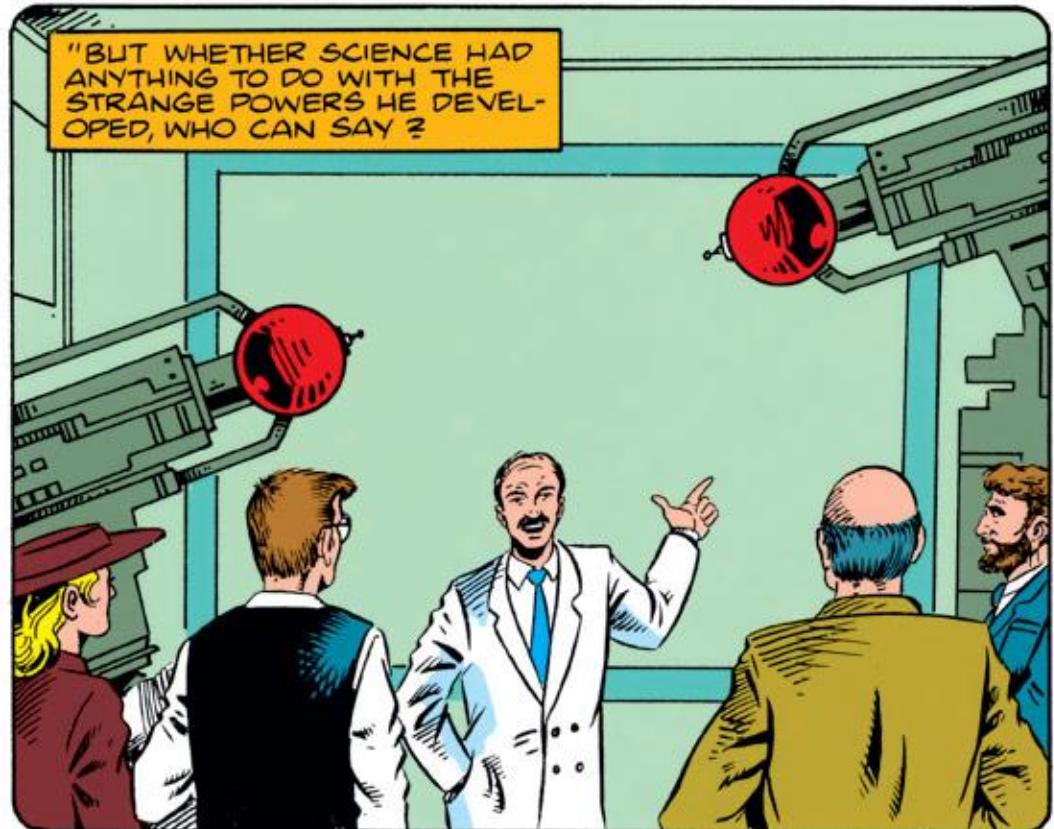
I COOKED YOUR FAVORITE BREAKFAST, PETEY!

EASY, DEAR, I CAN HARDLY OUT-WRESTLE HIM NOW!

BUT HE WAS AN INTELLIGENT LITTLE DELINQUENT, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT.

MUST'VE HAD AN UNCANNY GRASP OF PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY. PROBABLY WOULD'VE BECOME SOME KIND OF MAD SCIENTIST IF HE HADN'T FOUND SNUBBING HIS NOSE AT LAW AND ORDER MORE ATTRACTIVE!

"BUT WHETHER SCIENCE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE STRANGE POWERS HE DEVELOPED, WHO CAN SAY?



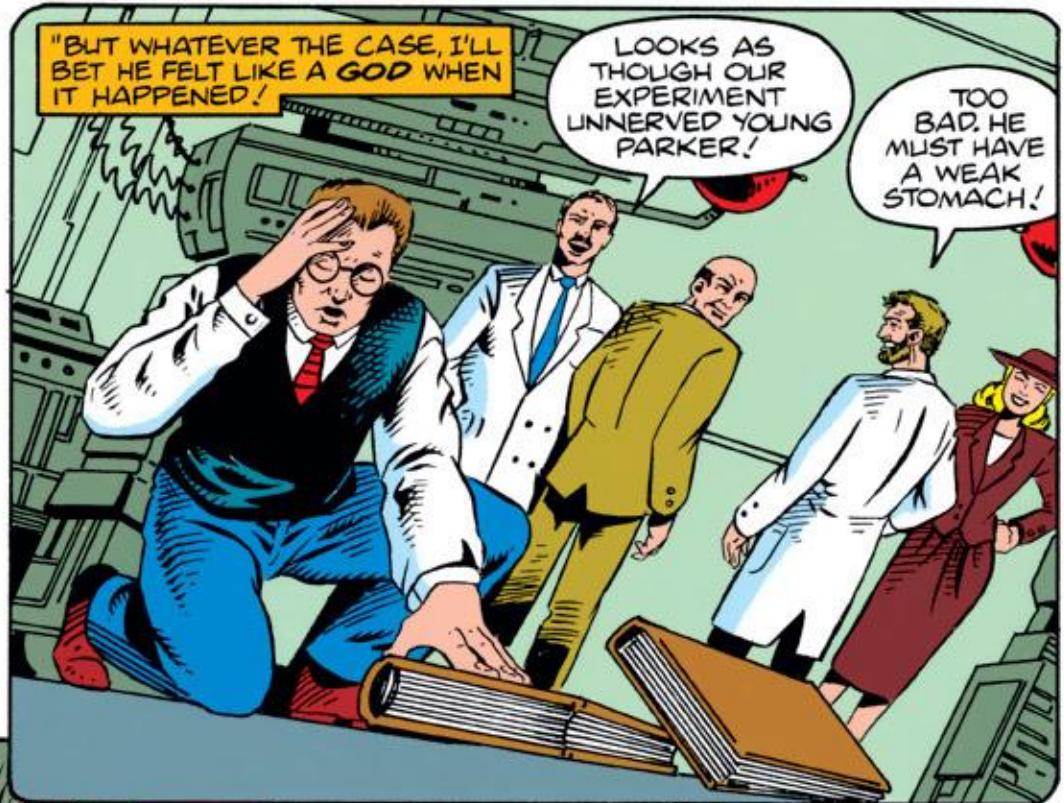
"IT COULD BE HE'S AN ALIEN..."

"OR ONE OF THOSE BLASTED MUTANTS!"

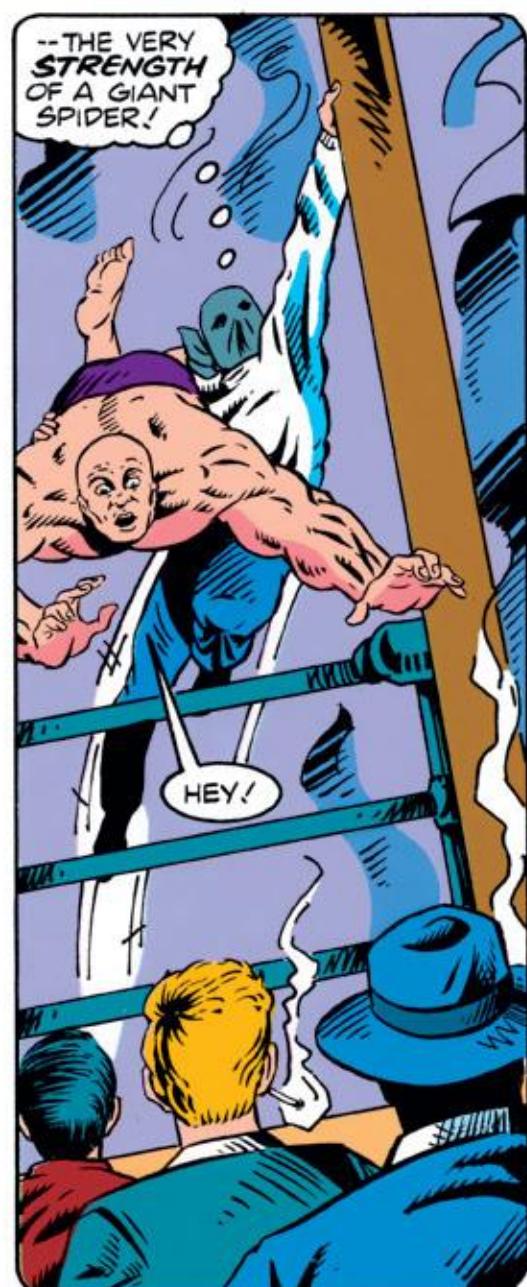


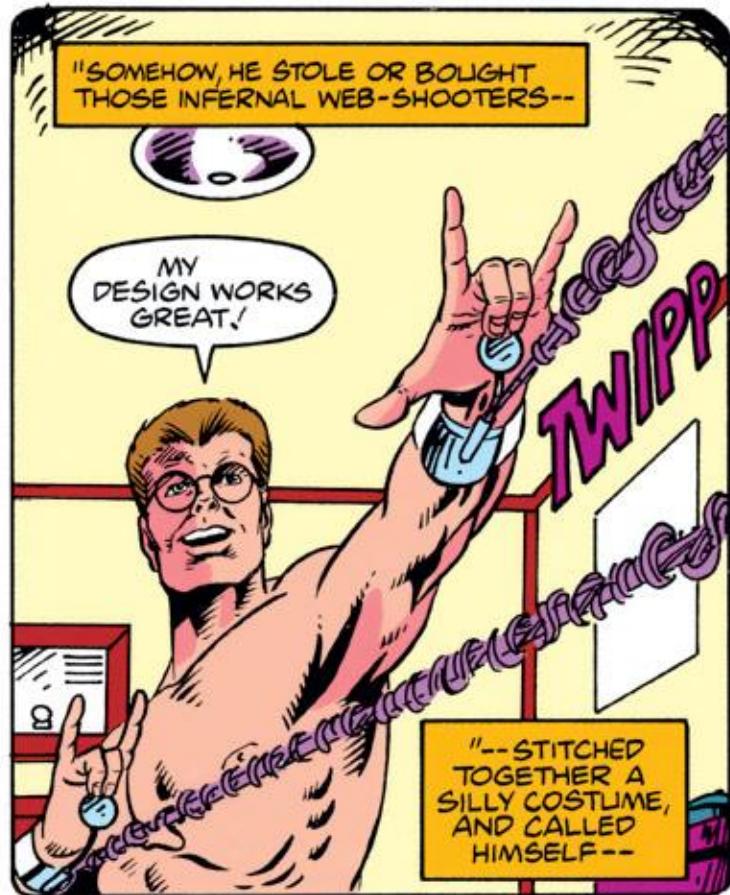
"OR FOR THAT MATTER--"

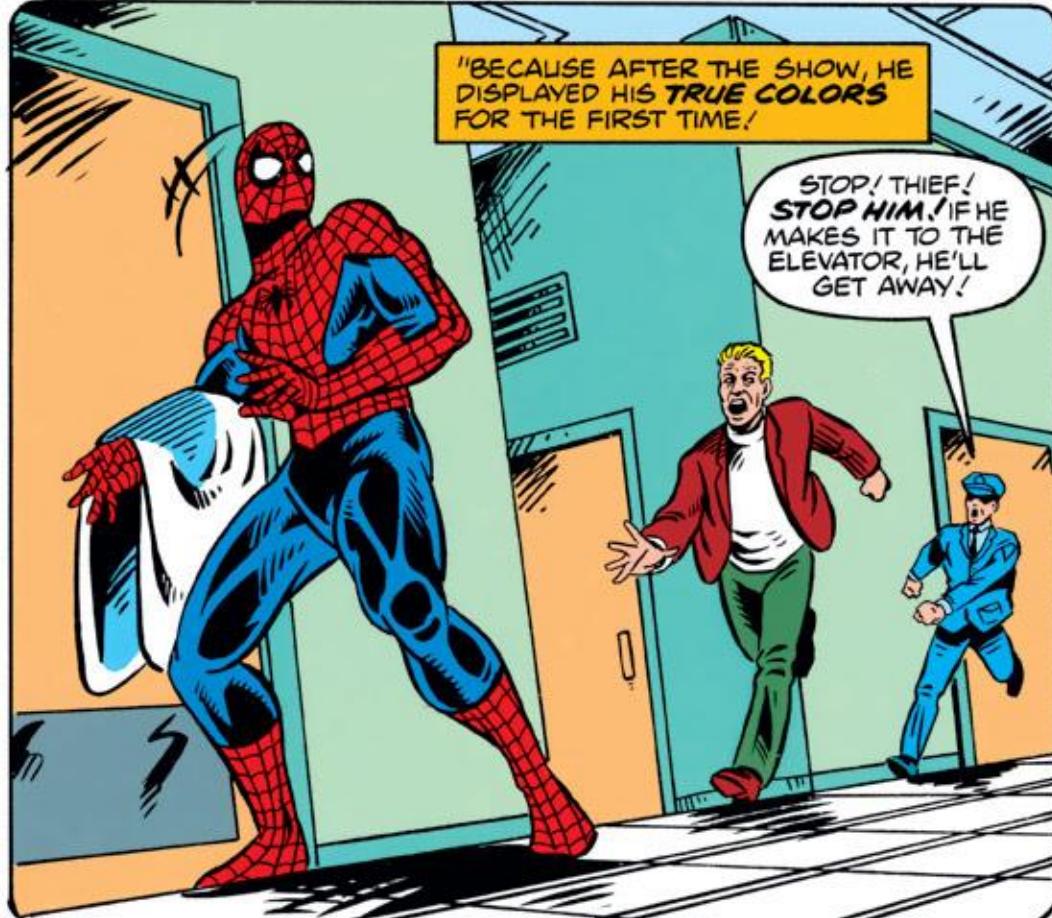








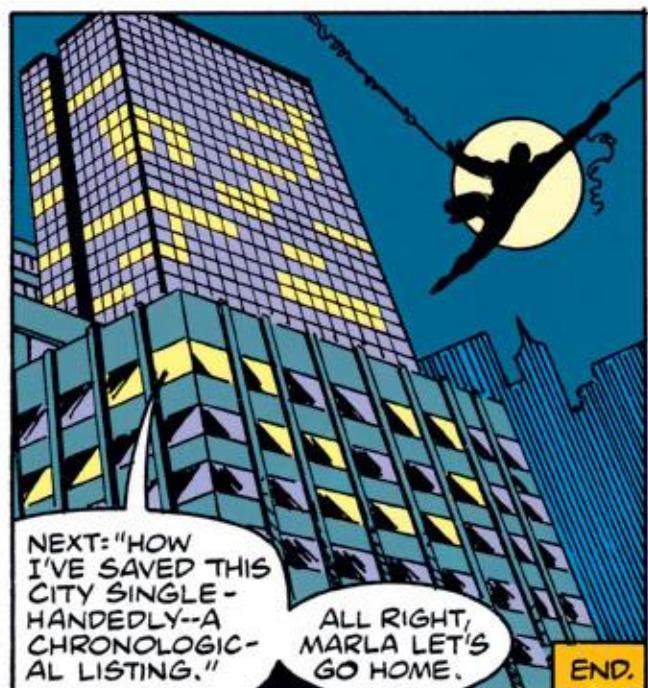
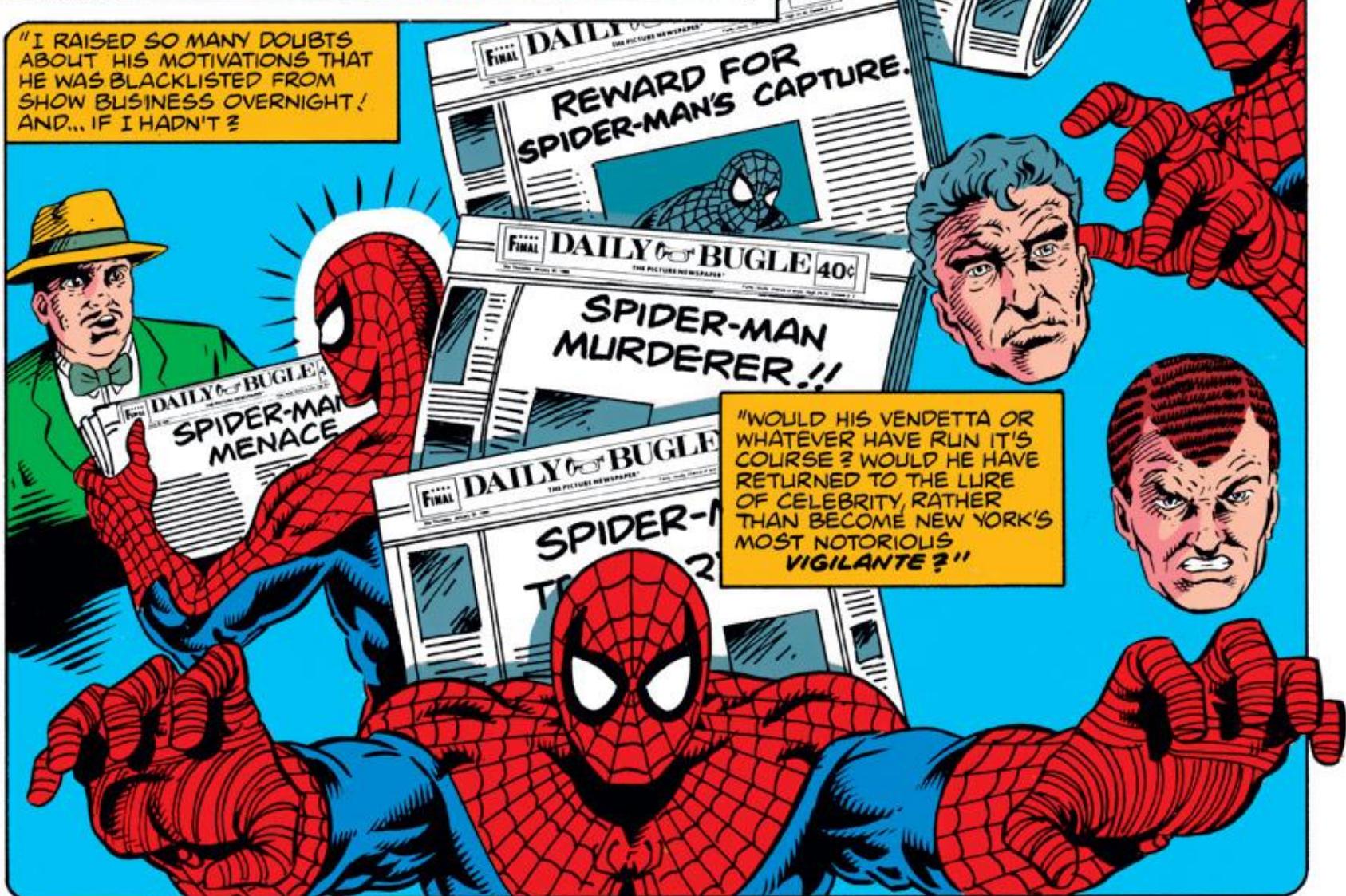








"I WAS ENRAGED THAT SOME COSTUMED PUNK HAD GONE TO DO A COP'S JOB WITH A MASK INSTEAD OF A BADGE! I USED THE BUGLE TO WAGE WAR ON HIM, PORTRAYING HIM AS A MENACE TO HONEST SOCIETY!"



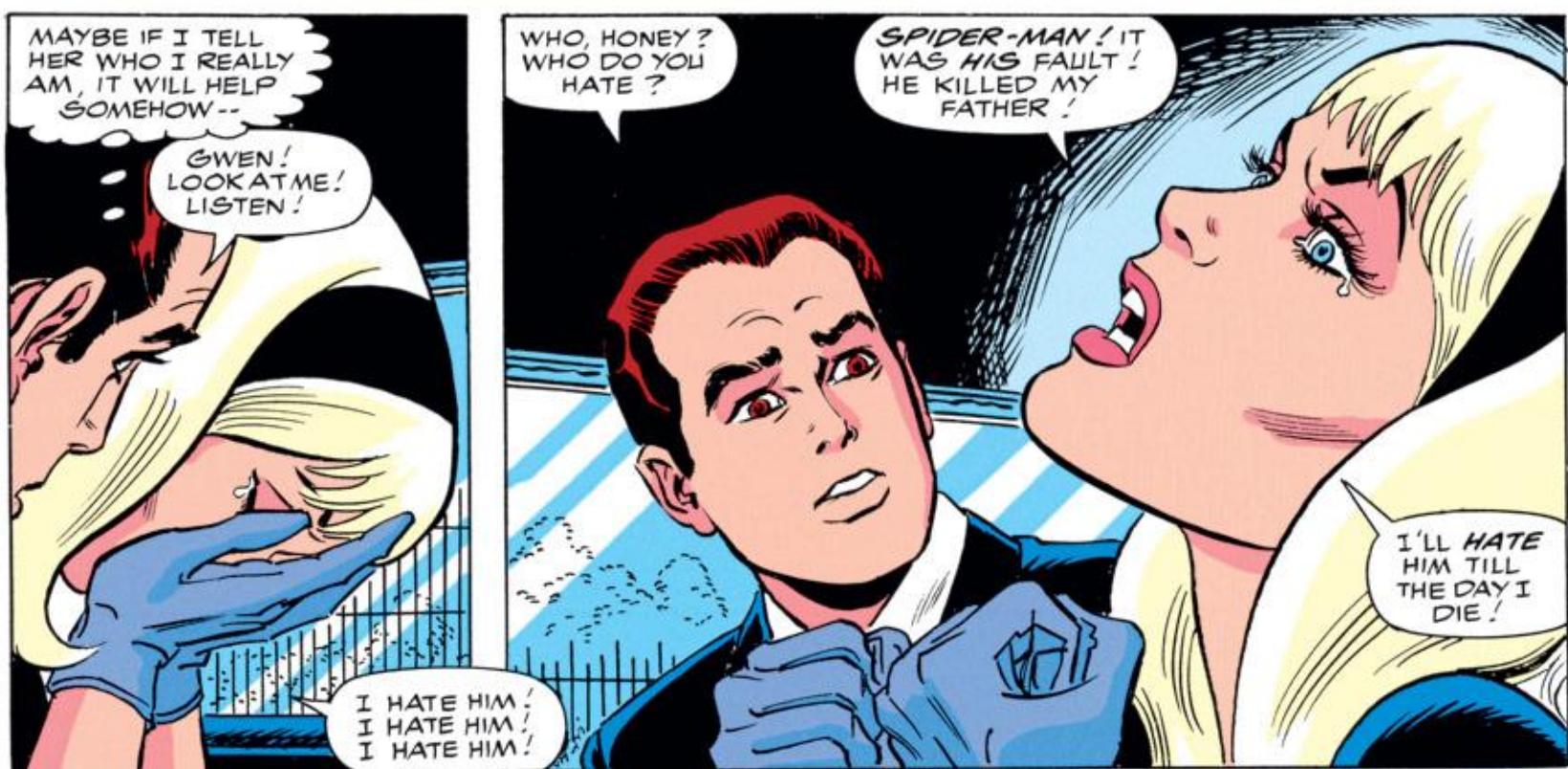
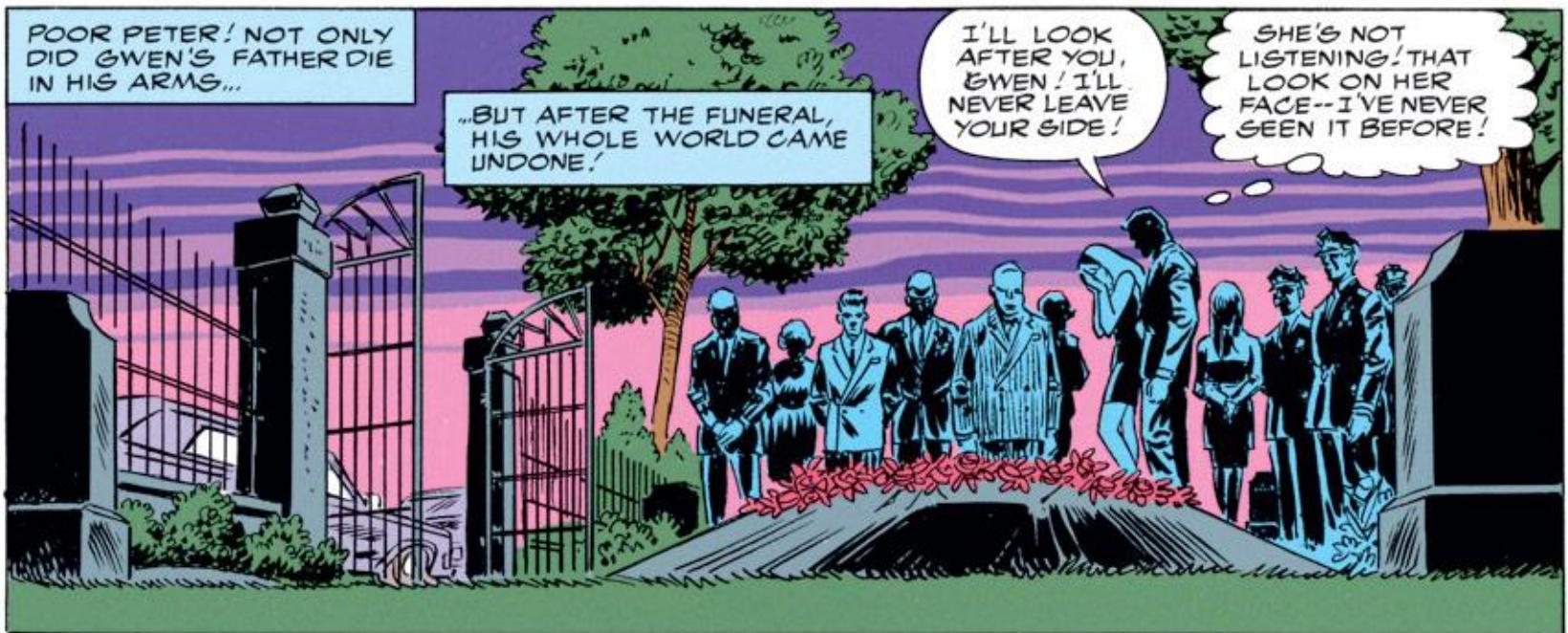
# "I REMEMBER GWEN"











WHEN I LEARNED THEIR ROMANCE HAD GONE  
PFFFFTT, I KNEW IT WAS MY BIG CHANCE...

I NEVER  
WANT TO  
SEE HIM  
AGAIN!

RIGHT ON,  
GWENDOLYN!  
LOTS OF OTHER  
FISH IN THE SEA!

LADIES

AND YOU'RE  
A GAL WHO'S  
GOT ALL THE  
RIGHT BAIT!



THIS IS GREAT!  
IT LEAVES THE  
FIELD CLEAR  
FOR LITTLE  
MARY JANE!

BUT THOSE  
TEARS ARE  
REAL! SHE'S  
HEART-  
BROKEN!

THAT WAS WHEN I DID THE  
LAST THING IN THE WORLD  
I EXPECTED TO DO!

THEN  
LISTEN TO  
YOUR TRUEST  
FRIEND,  
GWENDY!  
YOU'RE MIS-  
TAKEN ABOUT  
PETER!

THE GUY  
IS BONKERS  
FOR YOU!

HE ONLY SPOKE UP FOR  
SPIDER-MAN 'CAUSE HE  
DIDN'T WANT YOU TO SPEND  
THE REST OF YOUR LIFE  
BEING BITTER!

BECAUSE  
HE CARES  
FOR YOU!

THANKS, MJ.  
YOU'RE MY  
TRUEST FRIEND!

I -- NEVER  
THOUGHT OF  
IT THAT  
WAY!

MINUTES LATER, THEY WERE  
IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS!

I HAD PRACTICALLY HANDED PETER  
OVER TO HER ON A SILVER PLATTER!

MARY JANE  
WATSON, YOU'RE  
THE GREATEST!  
YOU REALLY  
OPENED MY  
EYES!

I KNEW IT WAS  
A FOOL THING  
TO DO!

SO WHY DID  
IT FEEL SO  
GOOD?

TO THIS DAY I'M HAPPY THAT I HELPED BRING THEM TOGETHER, EVEN FOR SUCH A LITTLE WHILE.

Gwen was so sweet, so unselfish, that she deserved all the happiness she could get --

BECAUSE IT WAS DESTINED TO END TOO SOON, TOO TRAGICALLY SOON!

EVEN NOW, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I CAN HARDLY BEAR TO THINK ABOUT IT!

DURING A BATTLE WITH THE GREEN GOBLIN, ONCE AGAIN SPIDER-MAN SUFFERED AN AGONIZING LOSS!

BUT THIS TIME I WAS THERE TO COMFORT HIM--AND LOVE HIM.





STAN LEE PRESENTS:

# THE PROWLER

IN

## A FRIEND IN NEED

TIME MOVES QUICKLY ON  
A CONSTRUCTION SITE!

KNOWING THAT THE  
JOBS--AND THE  
RESULTING FRIEND-  
SHIPS--ARE TEM-  
PORARY BY NATURE,  
THE WORKERS  
USUALLY MAKE  
THE MOST OF THEM!

YO, THORPE!  
HOW'S IT  
GOING, MAN?

HOWEVER, THERE  
ARE EXCEPTIONS--!

TOM DEFALCO: WRITER  
TOD SMITH: PENCILER  
ANDREW PEPPY: INKER  
JON BABCOCK: LETTERER  
KEVIN TINSLEY: COLORIST  
DANNY FINGEROTH: EDITOR





--AND HE COMPLETELY IGNORES THE CHEERFUL GREETING OF HOBIE BROWN!

WHAT'S WITH THAT GUY? HE SURE AIN'T NO MR. SOCIALE!

CUT HIM SOME SLACK, HOBIE! I HEAR THE MAN'S GOT MUCHO PROBLEMS!

A SICK WIFE, OR SOMETHING...

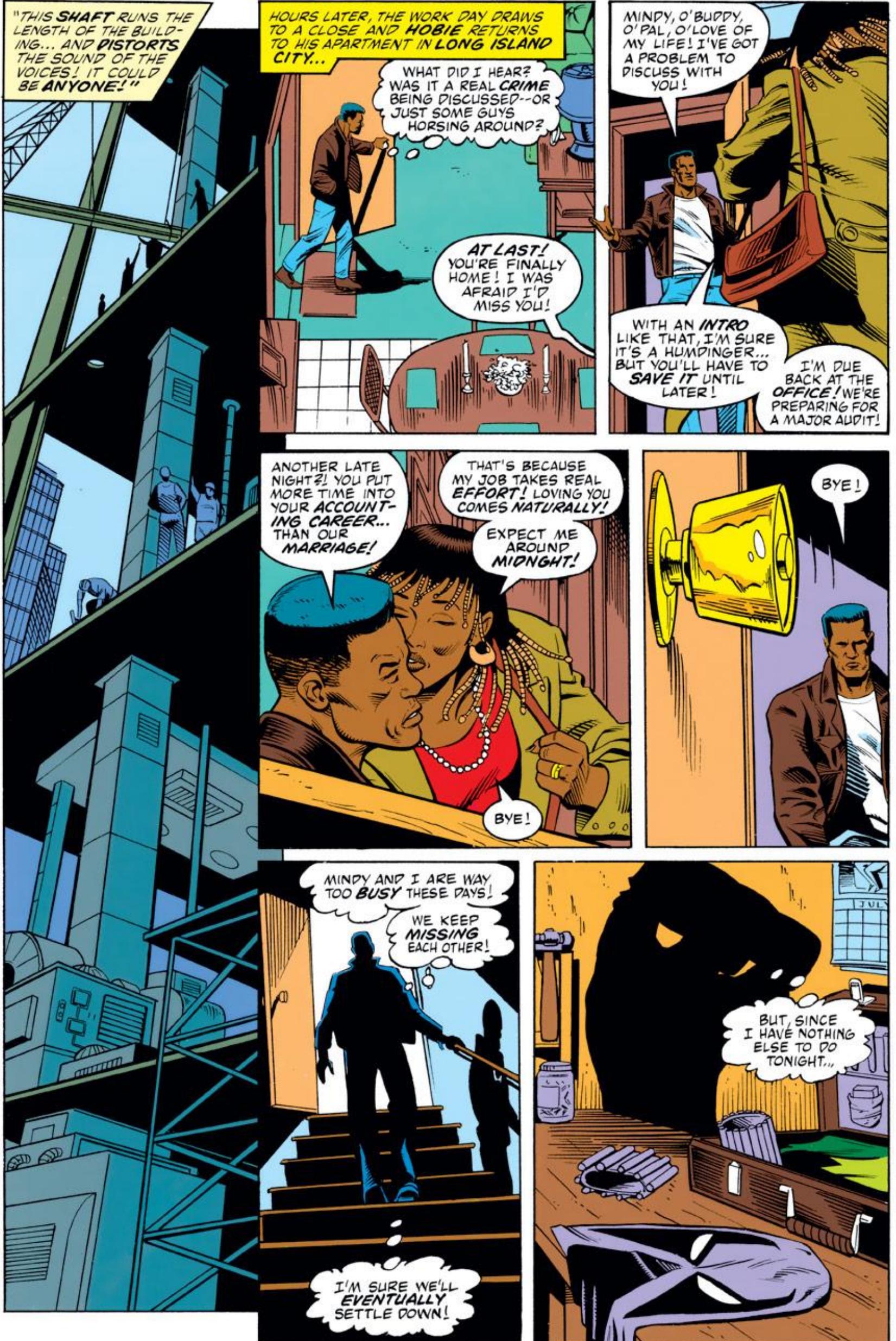
BUT HE'D GET MORE SYMPATHY--

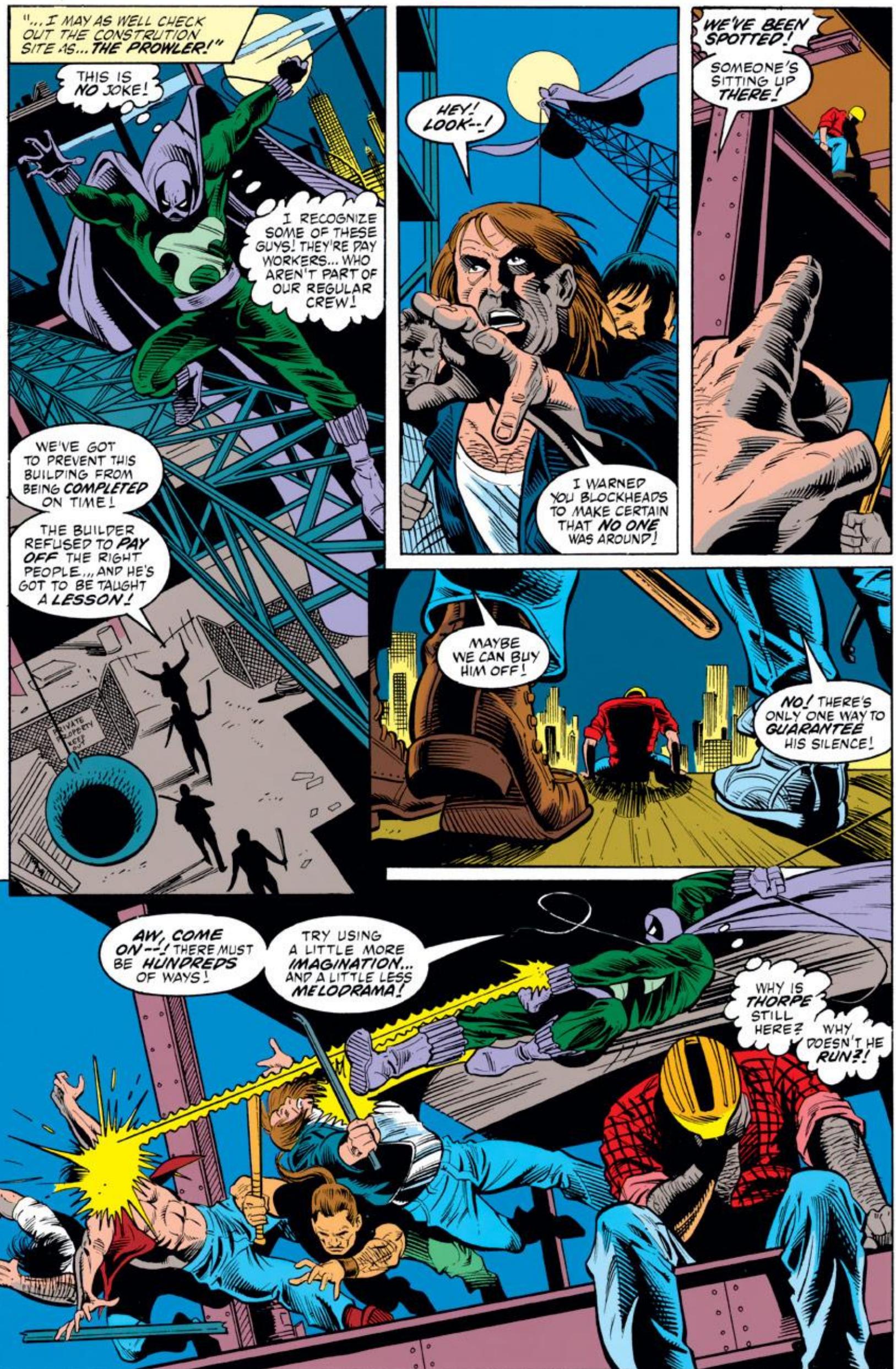
--IF HE LOST THE ATTITUDE!

LOOK AT HIM THERE... SITTING BY HIMSELF!

SORRY TO HEAR IT, NATIE...



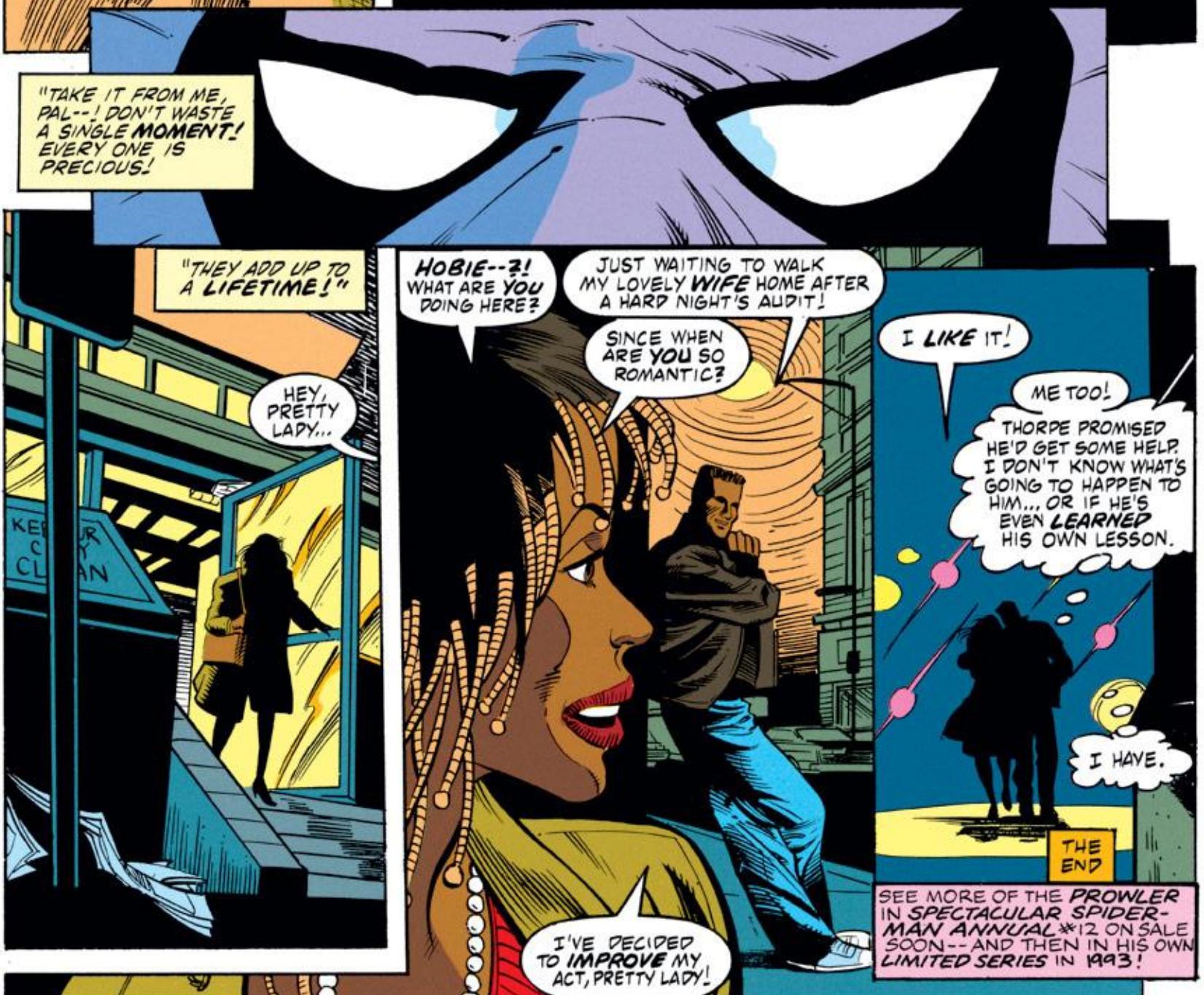












# SPIDER-MAN®

## THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS

by Peter Sanderson

**B**y 1962 Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had already redefined the world of super hero fantasy with their first major joint creations, THE FANTASTIC FOUR and THE INCREDIBLE HULK. Yet neither the Fantastic Four nor the Hulk were super heroes in the traditional sense. In the early 1940s the word "super hero" did not yet exist; instead these costumed adventurers were known as "mystery men." That concept of "mystery" seemed essential to most of the traditional super heroes up until very recent times. Most of them had secret identities; they were "ordinary" people who put on masks and costumes in order to display their extraordinary abilities in fighting menaces to society. After their first issue, there was nothing "mysterious" about the Fantastic Four. They wore no masks, their costumes were no more than practical jumpsuits, and everyone knew who they were. The Hulk originally had a secret identity, but he was as much a potential menace as he was a "super hero."

It was not until 1962 and AMAZING FANTASY #15 that "The Marvel Age of Comics" produced its first major masked crimefighter. But Stan Lee and Steve Ditko's creation, the amazing Spider-Man, was like no costumed crimefighter that had preceded him, and completed the revolution of the entire super hero adventure genre that the FANTASTIC FOUR had begun.

Consider first Spider-Man's name. Stan Lee has written in the past how he was discouraged from naming the character after a spider (or the Spider, a masked vigilante of 1930s pulp fiction), since everyone found spiders repulsive. (By the same logic, I suppose, a hero named after a bat could never be popular, either.) But in the early 1960s, super heroes over at the Distinguished Competition were clean-cut, cheerful individuals, motivated only by a sense of idealism, beloved by the public they served, operating in a brightly lit, squeaky clean world without any sense of danger apart from the occasional costumed crook robbing a bank.

The eeriness of a man with spider-like abilities provided a startling contrast to these characters. Spider-Man wore a mask that completely concealed any facial ex-



pression, and that, in fact, made him look inhuman. He scurried up walls with the strange, animal-like gait with which Steve Ditko endowed him. He often operated at night, frightening his criminal adversaries by catching them in the glare of the spotlight cast from his belt.

If Spider-Man was eerie, then his principal costumed opponents were downright grotesque. Lee and Ditko succeeded in fusing the costumed super-villain with the memorably repellent villains of the Dick Tracy mold. Some, like Spider-Man himself, blended the aspects of animals and human

beings: Doctor Octopus, the Vulture, the Lizard, the Scorpion, and the Chameleon. Others seemed to overturn the natural order of things by their very existence: the Sandman, who could turn his human form into a torrent of living sand; Mysterio, who used his knowledge of special effects to perform the seemingly impossible — even to appearing not to have a head! Perhaps most memorably, there was the Green Goblin, who looked like a medieval gargoyle come to life, a human in demonic form, possessed of the "black magic" of modern science.



Furthermore, Spider-Man did not live in some fictional metropolis, but in a city clearly identified as New York. And Steve Ditko's New York was not a fantasy world of gleaming, modern skyscrapers, but a city with dark alleys, water towers atop buildings that were clearly many decades old, dilapidated warehouses, dank sewers. It was also infested with thugs and gangsters, leading to the many tales of organized crime that have run through Spider-Man's entire history, ranging from early stories of the Big Man and Crime-Master through the many memorable sagas of Spider-Man's one-man wars against the Kingpin's criminal empire.

This was a dangerous world, and in part Spider-Man was the dark avenger who took it upon himself to hunt down its criminals. No scene shows this better than the climax of *AMAZING FANTASY* #15 itself, in which Spider-Man climbs down a wall in a darkened warehouse, terrifying the unnamed Burglar who killed his beloved uncle Ben. Perhaps it is the fact that there has always been this bleak, chilling aspect to Spider-Man's world that helps account for his remarkable popularity in this current age of "grim and gritty" vigilante heroes like the Punisher (many of whose early appearances were in *AMAZING SPIDER-MAN*) and Ghost Rider.

Up until 1962, most comic book super heroes had interchangeable personalities; what differentiated them from each other were their powers and gimmicks. If Spider-Man had been created in that mode, then there would be little more to him than his webbing, his strength, and a spooky demeanor. But, unlike his predecessors, the essence of Spider-Man lies not in his powers but in his unique personality.

Look at the other half of Spider-Man's name. One of the most revolutionary aspects of the character was that he was named Spider-Man, not Spider-Boy. Consider that in the early 1960s, virtually any costumed hero below the age of twenty-one was relegated to the role of "kid sidekick" to an adult hero. The younger heroes were saddled with names, and sometimes costumes, that underlined their juvenile rank (like a certain "boy wonder" in his short pants). And what was the point of "Kid sidekicks" anyway? What reader really wanted to

identify with the junior version of the adult hero instead of the star of the show? Why bother with Bucky when you could be Captain America?

In creating Spider-Man, Lee and Ditko not only made a teenager their central character, but they also demonstrated their refusal to condescend to him. He was not "Spider-Boy" or "Spider-Teen," as he inevitably would have been at the Other Company; he was "Spider-Man." (Similarly, in the following year Lee and Kirby would dub their team of teenage mutants "The X-Men.") They were making it clear that they intended to treat this character's desires and his sorrows, his triumphs and his failures, with the same respect with which they would treat those of an adult. And by extension, since virtually all of Spider-Man's audience in those early days were his age or younger, Lee and Ditko were stating that they were taking their readers seriously, as well.

The worst problem that your average kid faced in his private life was getting his homework done before going out on patrol. *SPIDER-MAN*, on the other hand, has from the beginning been a chronicle of a man's inner life. Lee and Ditko set the tone for the entire thirty-year run of the series in these early years through their highly perceptive and compassionate treatment of a male

adolescent's sense of alienation, his personal crises, his first experiences of love, and his maturation. Indeed, the very first *SPIDER-MAN* story works extremely well as a parable of how a young man discovers and comes to terms with his own potential to affect the world around him.

Clark Kent only pretended to be "mild-mannered," or, in today's terms, introverted, withdrawn, even nerdish. In fact, he was "really" an all-powerful super hero who, in the initial decades of his publishing career, anyway, was virtually free of inner turmoil. The early Peter Parker, on the other hand, was Clark Kent for real. Parker truly was a bookish introvert, isolated from his peers through their casual, unthinking cruelty. The story is told basically from Peter's own point of view. We see the desperate unhappiness in him that his classmates, and even his surrogate parents, Aunt May and Uncle Ben, do not. Still, despite Peter's dissatisfaction with the world of people his own age, May and Ben provide an idyllic world of love and security for him at home, one that he naively assumes is free from any danger.

In discovering his spider-powers, Peter likewise learns that he need not simply retreat from a world that belittles him, but can make his mark upon it. The powers can





be seen as symbolizing the strength of Peter's potential as a human being. The lonely introvert turns to the opposite extreme, becoming an arrogant egotist, using his new powers to win fame and fortune. So Spider-Man inaugurates his career as a television performer. For the SPIDER-MAN series, more than any other early Marvel strip, grounded its fantasy in a much more realistic world than super heroes had inhabited before. The Hulk was out in the desert, and the Fantastic Four spent much of their time on far away planets and in other exotic realms. But Spider-Man's adventures took place in modern day New York, and inevitably he became a public figure, subject to the eye of the mass media, which first exalted him, and then, through J. Jonah Jameson's *Daily Bugle*, became his tormentor.

But first the real world was to strike at him in a way that destroyed all his illusions about himself and his world. In other super hero series any dire fate that struck the supporting cast was usually reversed by the final page. Imagine how readers must have been surprised when Peter's Uncle Ben was murdered by an unnamed burglar, and shocked when they realized, as did Peter, that indirectly it had been Peter's own fault. He had let the burglar go free earlier, when he could easily have stopped him.

Thus he learned, that "with great power comes great responsibility," thereby taking the first step towards maturity. He could no longer trust in his surrogate parents to keep him safe; he could no longer simply exploit the world around him for fame and fortune. Instead, it was his moral duty to do whatever he could to keep the world's chaos from victimizing himself and others. His life since then has been not an unending campaign of vengeance against numberless enemies, nor a naive devotion to unrealistic ideals (like super heroes created in "simpler" times), but an ongoing effort to uphold his moral values as best he can, founded in a painful personal knowledge of the depths to which he is capable of sinking, and the pain that life can inflict.

Spider-Man thus had to learn to cope in a world that may have super-powered people in it, but otherwise was all too disturbingly like our own, one where even super heroes had to struggle to make a living, had romantic troubles, had to fight when they were ill, were held in suspicion by the police and the public, and ran the risk of falling prey to sociopaths. The Hulk and the Thing were separated from the rest of humanity because they looked like monsters. Spider-Man himself looked like a normal human being, yet he too felt divorced from the rest of humanity. Parker's fate as Spider-Man, gifted with super-human powers, was really the same as his life as the student gifted with scientific talent, but on a grander scale: he was still alone, troubled, and resented for the abilities that made him different from others.

Before this, super hero stories were usually purely escapist fantasy. The reader could briefly escape his own problems by vicariously participating in the triumphs of the super hero. But, inevitably, the reader finished the story and had to return to his everyday life and troubles. Thus it was startling when Lee and Ditko placed Spider-Man himself in the same position as the reader. Peter Parker could escape his personal agonies and humdum life by becoming the seemingly happy-go-lucky Spider-Man, swinging high above ordinary people and besting powerful foes. But being Spider-Man did not solve his problems in his personal life, and in fact it worsened them.

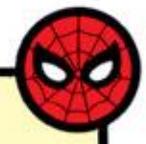
In establishing this dichotomy between the hero's triumphs and his personal miseries, SPIDER-MAN set the pattern for the many Marvel series that followed, and, indeed, for the entire super hero adventure genre as it evolved over the next thirty years.

But despite even the moments of deep tragedy in Spider-Man's life, the series has never been gloomy or depressing. From one point of view, Spider-Man's masked visage and animal-like crouching may make him look weirdly menacing, but they also make

him look appealingly, humorously "cartoony." A major part of Spider-Man's appeal has always been that he is the super hero as comedian. Super heroes before Spider-Man had engaged in light banter, usually not particularly funny, while battling their foes, but it was usually not particularly funny or memorable. Spider-Man, however, had his own unique style of humor that became his modus operandi. His adversaries were not only powerful but pompous, making long-winded speeches full of bluster about their own greatness. Spider-Man did not just win physical battles against them, but he also simultaneously cut their egos down to size with a constant barrage of wisecracks. They attempted to be grand figures of evil; he rendered them absurd. He is the traditional little guy of comedy who outmaneuvers his enemies by outsmarting them.

Spidey's humor is one of the ways in which he rises above the difficulties of his life, the very great dangers of his enemy-ridden, death-haunted world. Unlike previous wise-cracking super heroes, Spider-Man's humor embodied a consistent, ironic attitude towards life. Marvel would give us other jokester heroes over the years, such as the early Daredevil, but only in Spider-Man's case did the humor seem such an integral, essential part of the character's personality. Spider-Man lives in a "grim and gritty" world and his career was born from tragedy, but the principal impression that he gives is that of a spirit of good humor that rises above the morass of his crime-ridden world, and that triumphs over the world's worst excesses.

Throughout its history, the series has also celebrated those qualities that make the hardships of life easier to bear, notably love, friendship, and familial devotion. In no other Marvel series have there been so many important non-costumed supporting cast members — Aunt May, Betty Brant, Gwen Stacy, Flash Thompson, Harry and Liz Osborn, Joe Robertson, J. Jonah Jameson, Mary Jane Watson — who have played such important and memorable roles in the hero's life.



There are various cases of classic super heroes whose glory days lie in the past; succeeding writers and artists were never able to match or surpass the greatness of the original creators' stories. Brilliant as the Lee-Ditko run was, however, that has not proved true of SPIDER-MAN. There have been wonderful and important stories throughout the succeeding years, far too many to enumerate here. But surely among the high points are Stan Lee and John Romita Sr.'s two-parter revealing the true identity of the original Green Goblin, Gerry Conway and Gil Kane's chronicle of the death of Spider-Man's first true love, Gwen Stacy, and the ensuing demise of the Goblin, and, in more recent years, the manner in which Todd McFarlane succeeded in recapturing in a contemporary style the off-center quirkiness that Steve Ditko gave Spider-Man and his world. The series has given us major new characters over the course of its run, such as Cloak and Dagger, the Hobgoblin, and Silver Sable.

The continuing vitality of the series is demonstrated by the fact that it is still capable of producing a major villain to match the greatest of the past. Venom is very much a contemporary creation, yet he also fills a gap in the series we may not even have known was there. Each hero needs a nemesis who embodies his own dark potential. Venom is Spider-Man's nightmarish mirror image, reveling in savagery and bloodshed while protesting his obsession with avenging the innocent.

Spidey grows and matures, even though some of the major steps have seemed controversial at the time. But over the years he did evolve from the introverted bookworm into a late bloomer college student and



eventually into a married man (while his supporting cast — notably Mary Jane and Flash — matured considerably as well).

At the time it occurred, many thought that the marriage between Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson was a mistake. But it can also be seen as very much in keeping with the longstanding themes of the series.

If Peter Parker's life was meant to be static, he would never have entered college, never have changed from the unprepossessing wallflower drawn by Steve Ditko to the more

mature and confident man

John Romita Sr. drew

Thanks to writers Tom

DeFalco and Gerry

Conway (in the latter's

PARALLEL LIVES graphic

novel) Mary Jane became a

much more complex charac-

ter, a true counterpart to Spidey

in her efforts to trans-

cend her own unhappy

past through humor,

role-playing, and even

the world of show

business. In bonding

together, Peter and Mary Jane recognized and fulfilled their emotional needs rather than continuing their ultimately unsatisfactory attempts to escape from them. In a

sense the series came full circle, with Peter and Mary Jane establishing themselves as a new young married couple, a new center of moral and emotional stability in their unstable world, that took the place of the marriage of the elderly Ben and May that the world had destroyed in the very first Spider-Man story. Think how little role romance plays in many of today's most popular comics adventure series. Spidey's marriage provides a celebration of love in a super hero world that nowadays finds little room for it.

Thus Spider-Man the series and the character have changed over the years, always successfully adapting themselves to the tastes of new generations of readers. Yet throughout this evolution, Spider-Man has remained in essence the same as he was back in 1962. This is the true test of a classic character. And he is more popular now than ever.

In 1962 it probably would have seemed impossible that anyone could have created a new super hero who could rival the popularity and widespread recognition of Superman or Batman or Wonder Woman. But Spider-Man has done it. He may have been a little guy for whom nothing ever seemed to go right, but he kept on struggling till he won out. When you think about it, that's the essence of a classic American hero. And that's exactly what Spider-Man has become.



# THE SPIDER'S WEB

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP

387 Park Avenue South

New York, New York 10016

DANNY FINGEROTH  
EDITOR

ERIC FEIN  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Attention correspondents: All letters considered for publication must include your name and address, though we will withhold that information upon request.

Dear David and Danny,

Awesome! I just finished AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #359 and I was totally blown away. I have been buying Spidey's mags for ten years now. I think that he is the ultimate Marvel hero. I just have one question, though. How come on page eight, Mary Jane has brown hair instead of her normal red? Did she forget to dye it?

Can't say enough about Cardiac. Cool outfit, though it looks like he was electrocuted. I see him heading toward a Punisher-like future. It's great that there is a new black character on the block. Marvel should have more, or at least give one of the existing ones his own book. I hope that Spider-Man saves Cardiac instead of that dumb security guy. Spidey should understand that Cardiac's trying to make the world safer for the average Joe.

What's going on with that Kasady guy? Is he the one that is taking on the webster in that teaser cover? Can't wait to find out. Thanks again for another awesome comic.

Darnell Woods  
710 Noble Ave.  
Bronx, NY 10403

You guessed the identity of our "teaser" villain, Darnell. Hope you enjoyed our Carnage storyline as much as you enjoyed the Cardiac story. Not everyone agreed with your assessment of Cardiac, however...

Dear Spidey Writers,

I'm sick and tired of new villains. Spidey already has plenty to deal with anyway. For example, in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #359, you said, "The return of the villain you demanded — Cardiac!"

Who is this Cardiac anyway? I have over half the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN series, going as far back as #2, and I've never heard of this blue and white freak. There is one thing that won't change as far as my opinion goes. The oldies like Doc Octopus, the Lizard, Electro, the Chameleon, etc., are the best. The Chameleon and the Lizard have very sparse appearances. Please give them more.

I'm also tired of the mini-series within a series. Do you realize that with "Round Robin," "The Name of the Rose," and now "Funeral Arrangements," AMAZING, WEB, and SPECTACULAR have been caught up in "Part 1 of 6," "Part 2 of 6," etc. Let Spidey have one-comic adventures, will ya?

I would also like Spidey to remain solo. No more joining up with the Fantastic Four and X-Force. Appearing with large groups is not the wall-crawler's specialty. I would like to see a couple of fights with the Hulk, though. Hulk always has the most exciting battles with Spider-Man.

Okay, enough playing J. Jonah Jameson. I'll be writing in a couple of months with a copy of my article on the growth of comics this past year.

Sean Nye  
51 Martha Road  
Orinda, CA

We're looking forward to it, Sean! In the meantime, try to remember that we have four monthly Spidey titles. If we constantly

used the classic villains to plague our wondrous web-slinger, we'd get rather redundant in a very short time! And, hey, we think we've been using them quite a bit lately, anyway. (And, don't forget — today's new villain is tomorrow's golden oldie!)

Dear Spider-Man guys,

I have been reading AMAZING SPIDER-MAN for seven years now, and I consider him my favorite Marvel character. He always reacts in an original way to the problems that he faces. But a few things bothered me about issue #359:

1) I really didn't like the art. I know that Chris and Keith are good artists, but they didn't seem to be in sync this time out. Maybe next issue.

2) Is Cardiac a good guy or a bad guy? Sometimes it's tough to tell. He seems to take too much pleasure in beating up the villains. Don't make him into an Electro-Punisher — please!

3) How do you guys make the blue effect on Cardiac's shock stick? Is it a special effect? Why are there no black lines around the blue effect?

4) When will we see a John Romita or John Romita Jr. Spidey story? You have to get these guys again!

5) When are you going to bring back the Shocker, the Prowler, and the Lizard?

Well, even though I had some negative comments, I still consider AMAZING my favorite of all the Spider-Man comics. It's always given me the most enjoyment and I hope you all are very successful with it in the future.

Neal Mulligan  
Albuquerque, NM

1) Sorry you didn't like the art, Neal. Maybe you were just disappointed that Mark Bagley was taking a much-needed vacation after his incredible bi-weekly run.

2) Cardiac thinks he's a good guy. What Spidey believes, on the other hand, is a different story.

3) The blue effect on Cardiac's staff is called a color hold. It is composed on a separate sheet of paper from the art board, then printed in color rather than in black.

4) The Romitas are probably the busiest family in comics. John Sr. does many special in-house projects for Marvel while John Jr. is currently working his talents on PUNISHER: WAR ZONE and the upcoming CABLE limited series.

5) Last issue! This issue! This issue! Good enough for ya, Neal?

Dear Spider-People,

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #359 was great. The writing and the art were super as always. I loved the return of Cardiac and the new twist with Cletus Kasady. I can tell from the cover on the letters page that he's going to be trouble.

I just want to say congratulations on all those who work on AMAZING and wish Spider-Man a happy 30th Anniversary. Good luck in the next thirty years!

Dennis Russell  
4065 Debbidan Cv.  
Memphis, TN 38108

Many thanks, Dennis. Hope you're with us for the sixtieth!

Dear Spider's Web,

Lately, I've been reading SPIDER-MAN. No, not the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, but SPIDER-MAN. But, I found the artwork depressing and the stories even more depressing. So I took a trip to my local comic shop and bought THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #359. By the second page, my attitude went from depressed to "All right!" Finally a Spider-Man story that won't leave me feeling like ugh!

I have never seen Cardiac before, and when I saw the cover, I thought, "Oh no, I hope it's not some undead killer after Spider-Man for revenge." I'd had enough of those stories. After I read "Cardiac Attack!" I was relieved to finally find a classic-type Spider-Man story. The artwork was excellent! The story was superb (so far)! I'm anxiously awaiting issues #360 & #361.

Now that there are four Spider-Man titles, I'm a little confused. Is the web-spinner leading four different lives, or what? Please fill me in!

A.D. Bayless  
4060 Lillian Dr.  
Concord, CA 94521

We're keeping the continuity between AMAZING, SPECTACULAR, and WEB pretty tight, A.D., but it's a little looser in SPIDER-MAN. What do the rest of you folks think? Should our continuity be even tighter than it is now? Should SPIDER-MAN's continuity be more consistent with the other three Spidey titles? Let us know!

Dear Danny Fingerroth,

I just finished reading ASM #359. I think bringing Cardiac back was a great idea! I thought the suspense at the end of it was really cool. The action was great. I thought that after "Round Robin" you would wind down a little, but you didn't. I think a SANDMAN limited series would be pretty cool. Sandman is an interesting hero. So until the Punisher replaces his skull emblem with a happy face, Make Mine Marvel!

Tim Marzullo  
2610 Beaufort Ave.  
Toledo, OH 43613

Have you been reading WHAT THE—?!, Tim?

Re: AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #359,

Most triumphant issue! It was most stellar to see that bogus bad-guy Cardiac. Keep up the most excellent work! Party on, dudes!

Tim Hackman  
140 South Franklin Street  
Red Lion, PA 17356

Party on, Tim!

NEXT ISSUE: Guess what. Spidey's life gets real complicated. And the RED SKULL and TASKMASTER don't make things any easier. Be here as we begin our second thirty years. It just wouldn't be the same without you.