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THE GOTHAM INN, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN--ON A CHILLY APRIL NIGHT.

DETECTIVE RAVEN--

THE SCARLET SPIDER, I PRESUME?
FROM WHAT I'VE READ ABOUT YOU... BURGLARY ISN'T YOUR STYLE. SO I ASSUME YOU'RE HERE FOR SOME OTHER REASONS--?
YOU ASSUME CORRECTLY. I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT PETER PARKER, SIR.
YOU'VE ARRESTED THE WRONG MAN. THERE'S NO WAY THAT HE--

STOPS YOU COLD, DOESN'T IT? COLD AS THE GRAVE.
WHAT HAPPENED? THAT MARK ON YOUR FACE IS THE SAME AS--
THE SAME AS THE MARK FOUND ON THE BODIES OF DOCTOR OCTOPUS AND THE GRIM HUNTER.

THE SAME MARK A SALT LAKE DETECTIVE NAMED LOUISE KENNEDY HAD ON HER WHEN SHE WAS MURDERED TWO YEARS AGO.
THIS CASE HAS CONSUMED ME SINCE THAT NIGHT. MAYBE TOO MUCH. I KEEP DIGGING AND DIGGING... LOOKING FOR LOGIC AND CLEAR ANSWERS--
--BUT ALL I FIND ARE MORE MYSTERIES.
AND THE BIGGEST MYSTERY IS PARKER --OR SHOULD I CALL HIM BEN REILLY-- AND HIS CONNECTION TO A MAN NAMED KAINE.
BUT YOU HAVE MY WORD BEFORE GOD THAT, IF I HAVE ARRESTED THE WRONG MAN--
--I WON'T REST UNTIL I'VE MADE AMENDS. UNTIL THE TRUE MURDERER IS BROUGHT TO--
--JUSTICE.
I BELIEVE YOU, DETECTIVE ...AND I'M GRATEFUL--
--BUT I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND--
--IF I HELP SPEED THINGS ALONG.
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
CROSSFIRE
PART ONE
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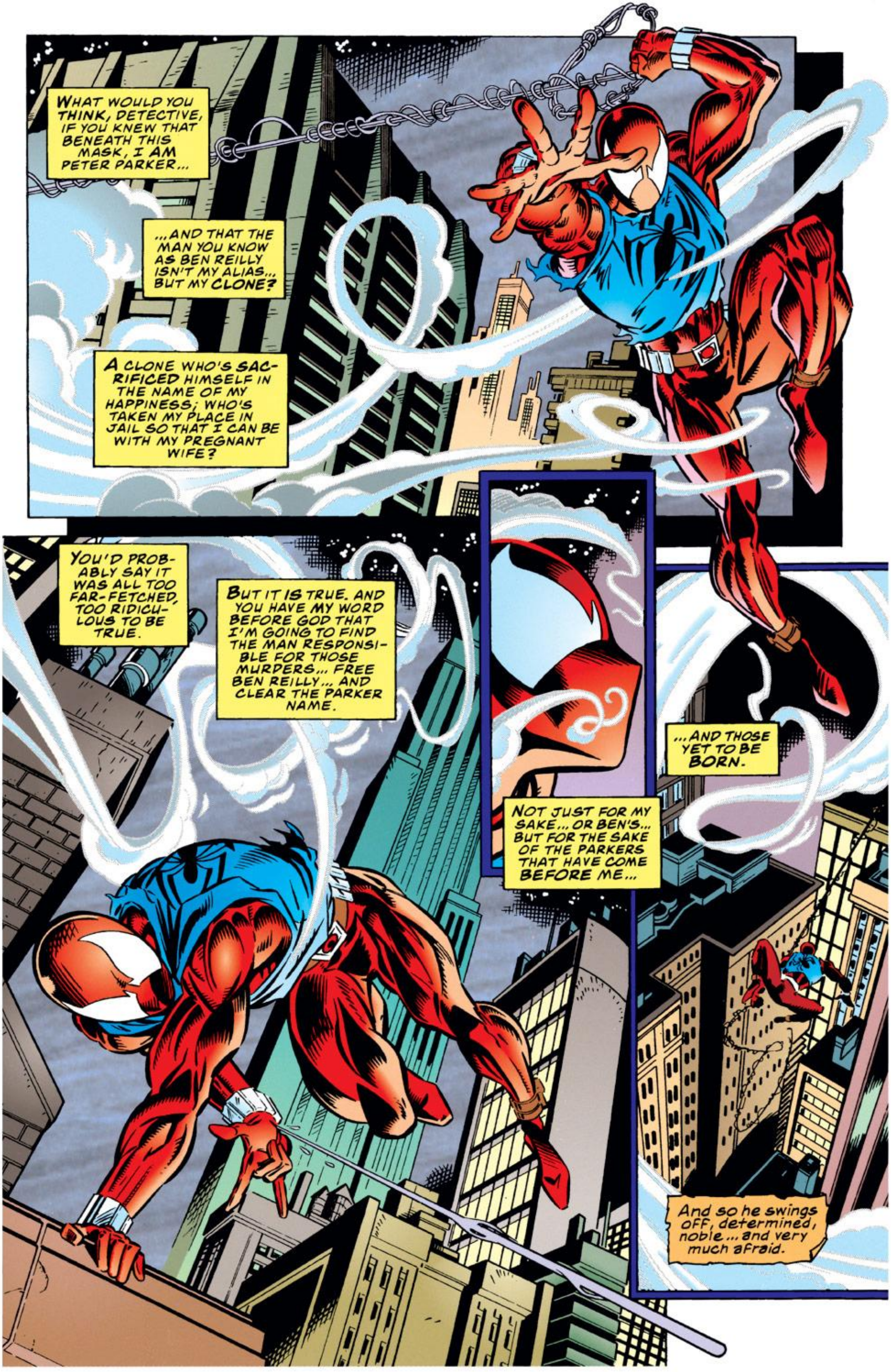
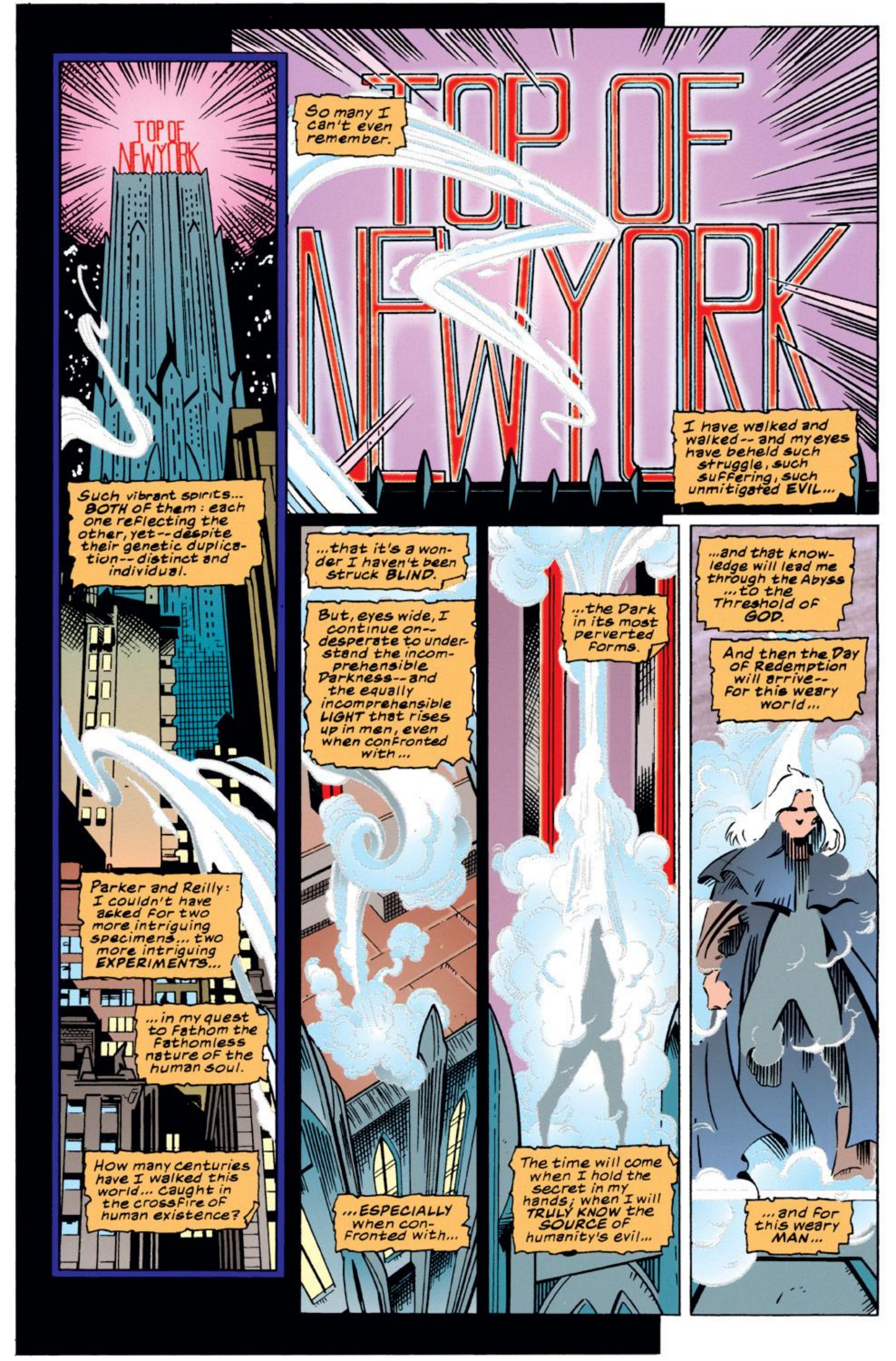
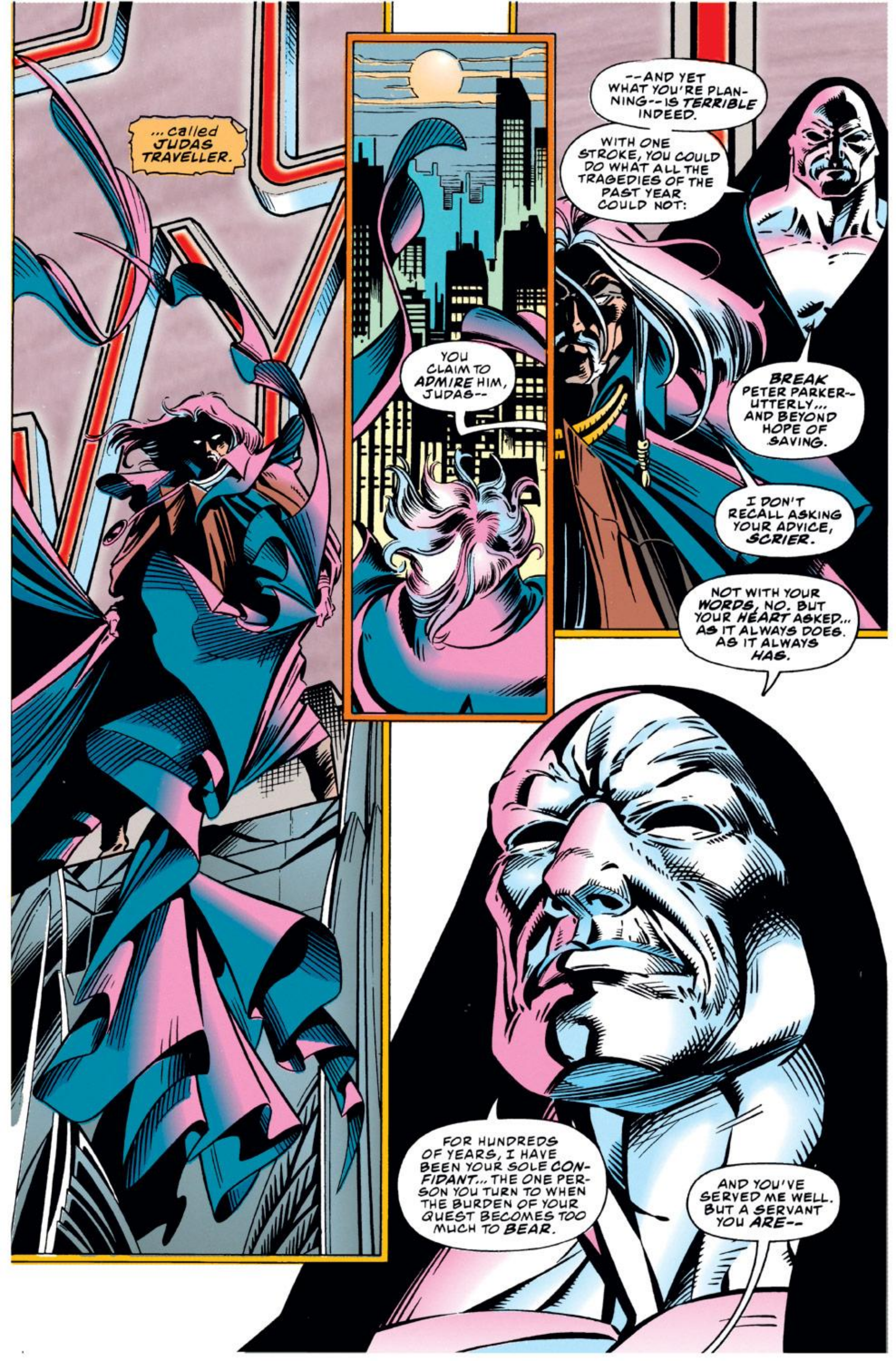
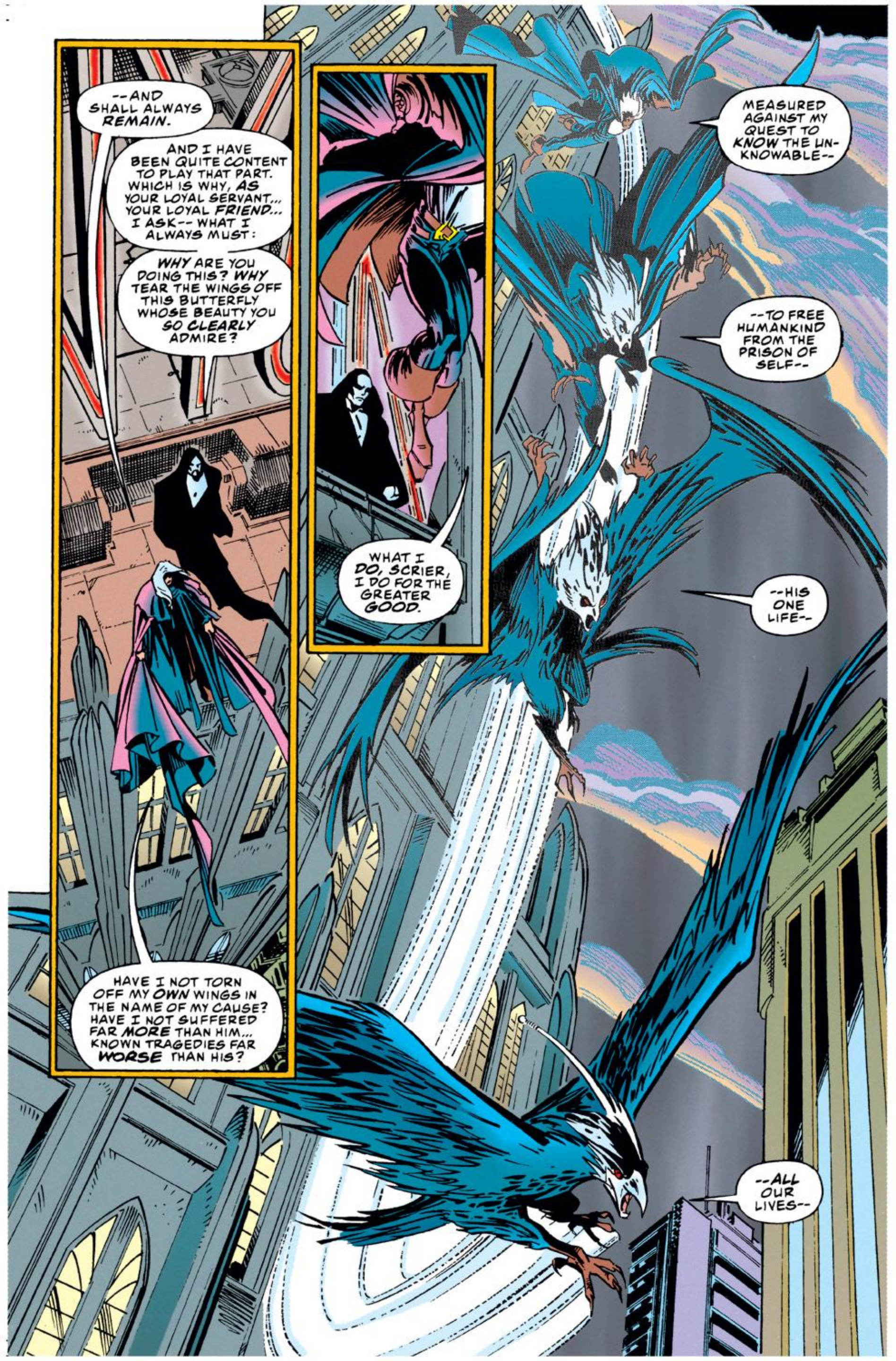
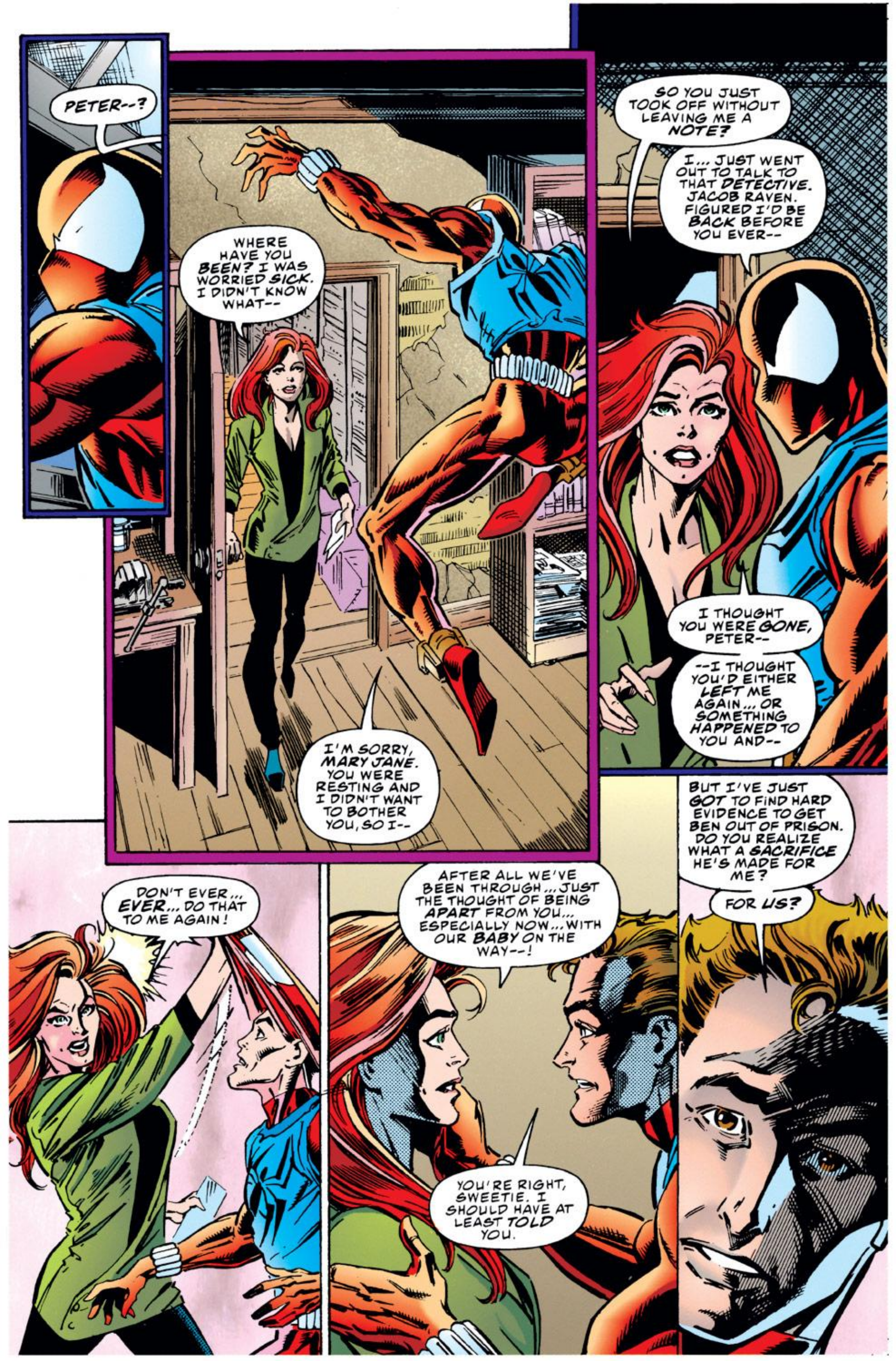

WHAT WOULD YOU THINK, DETECTIVE, IF YOU KNEW THAT BENEATH THIS MASK, I AM PETER PARKER...
...AND THAT THE MAN YOU KNOW AS BEN REILLY ISN'T MY ALIAS... BUT MY CLONE?
A CLONE WHO'S SACRIFICED HIMSELF IN THE NAME OF MY HAPPINESS; WHO'S TAKEN MY PLACE IN JAIL SO THAT I CAN BE WITH MY PREGNANT WIFE?
YOU'D PROBABLY SAY IT WAS ALL TOO FAR-FETCHED, TOO RIDICULOUS TO BE TRUE.
BUT IT IS TRUE. AND YOU HAVE MY WORD BEFORE GOD THAT I'M GOING TO FIND THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE MURDERS... FREE BEN REILLY... AND CLEAR THE PARKER NAME.
NOT JUST FOR MY SAKE... OR BEN'S... BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THE PARKERS THAT HAVE COME BEFORE ME...
...AND THOSE YET TO BE BORN.
And so he swings off, determined, noble... and very much afraid.


TOP OF NEW YORK
So many I can't even remember.
I have walked and walked-- and my eyes have beheld such struggle, such suffering, such unmitigated EVIL...
Such vibrant spirits... BOTH OF them: each one reflecting the other, yet--despite their genetic duplication--distinct and individual.
...that it's a wonder I haven't been struck BLIND.
But, eyes wide, I continue on--desperate to understand the incomprehensible Darkness--and the equally incomprehensible LIGHT that rises up in men, even when confronted with...
...the Dark in its most perverted forms.
...and that knowledge will lead me through the Abyss ...to the Threshold of GOD.
And then the Day of Redemption will arrive--For this weary world...
Parker and Reilly: I couldn't have asked for two more intriguing specimens... two more intriguing EXPERIMENTS...
...in my quest to fathom the fathomless nature of the human soul.
How many centuries have I walked this world... caught in the crossfire of human existence?
...ESPECIALLY when confronted with...
The time will come when I hold the secret in my hands; when I will TRULY KNOW the SOURCE of humanity's evil...
...and for this weary MAN...


...called JUDAS TRAVELLER.
YOU CLAIM TO ADMIRE HIM, JUDAS--
--AND YET WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING--IS TERRIBLE INDEED.
WITH ONE STROKE, YOU COULD DO WHAT ALL THE TRAGEDIES OF THE PAST YEAR COULD NOT:
BREAK PETER PARKER--UTTERLY... AND BEYOND HOPE OF SAVING.
I DON'T RECALL ASKING YOUR ADVICE, SCRIER.
NOT WITH YOUR WORDS, NO. BUT YOUR HEART ASKED... AS IT ALWAYS DOES. AS IT ALWAYS HAS.
FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, I HAVE BEEN YOUR SOLE CONFIDANT... THE ONE PERSON YOU TURN TO WHEN THE BURDEN OF YOUR QUEST BECOMES TOO MUCH TO BEAR.
AND YOU'VE SERVED ME WELL. BUT A SERVANT YOU ARE--


--AND SHALL ALWAYS REMAIN.
AND I HAVE BEEN QUITE CONTENT TO PLAY THAT PART. WHICH IS WHY, AS YOUR LOYAL SERVANT... YOUR LOYAL FRIEND... I ASK-- WHAT I ALWAYS MUST:
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? WHY TEAR THE WINGS OFF THIS BUTTERFLY WHOSE BEAUTY YOU SO CLEARLY ADMIRE?
HAVE I NOT TORN OFF MY OWN WINGS IN THE NAME OF MY CAUSE? HAVE I NOT SUFFERED FAR MORE THAN HIM... KNOWN TRAGEDIES FAR WORSE THAN HIS?
WHAT I DO, SCRIER, I DO FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
MEASURED AGAINST MY QUEST TO KNOW THE UN-KNOWABLE--
--TO FREE HUMANKIND FROM THE PRISON OF SELF--
--HIS ONE LIFE--
--ALL OUR LIVES--

TOP OF NEW YORK
...ARE MEANINGLESS.


PETER--?
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I WAS WORRIED SICK. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT--
I'M SORRY, MARY JANE. YOU WERE RESTING AND I DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER YOU, SO I--
SO YOU JUST TOOK OFF WITHOUT LEAVING ME A NOTE?
I... JUST WENT OUT TO TALK TO THAT DETECTIVE. JACOB RAVEN. FIGURED I'D BE BACK BEFORE YOU EVER--
I THOUGHT YOU WERE GONE, PETER--
--I THOUGHT YOU'D EITHER LEFT ME AGAIN... OR SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU AND--
DON'T EVER... EVER... DO THAT TO ME AGAIN!
AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH... JUST THE THOUGHT OF BEING APART FROM YOU... ESPECIALLY NOW... WITH OUR BABY ON THE WAY--!
YOU'RE RIGHT, SWEETIE. I SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TOLD YOU.
BUT I'VE JUST GOT TO FIND HARD EVIDENCE TO GET BEN OUT OF PRISON. DO YOU REALIZE WHAT A SACRIFICE HE'S MADE FOR ME?
FOR US?

OF COURSE I DO. BUT DO YOU REALIZE THE SACRIFICES I'VE HAD TO MAKE ALL THESE MONTHS?

HOW MUCH I STRUGGLED TO KEEP OUR HOME... OUR FAMILY... TOGETHER--WHILE YOU HID BEHIND THAT MASK? HID BEHIND SPIDER-MAN?*

I WAS... CONFUSED THEN, MJ. I WAS HURTING.

I'D NEVER PUT YOU THROUGH THAT AGAIN.

*DURING OUR "BACK FROM THE EDGE" STORYLINE.--Danny.

AND... WHEN YOU CAME BACK TO ME... I STOOD BESIDE YOU, DIDN'T I? THROUGH MAY'S DEATH... THROUGH THESE INSANE MURDER CHARGES?

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY, PETER. DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT IT'S BEEN EASY.

I'VE LOOKED INTO THE EYES OF A MAN CLONED FROM YOUR DNA. I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY THAT LUNATIC KAINE. FACED THAT MONSTER WHO CLAIMED TO BE YOU.

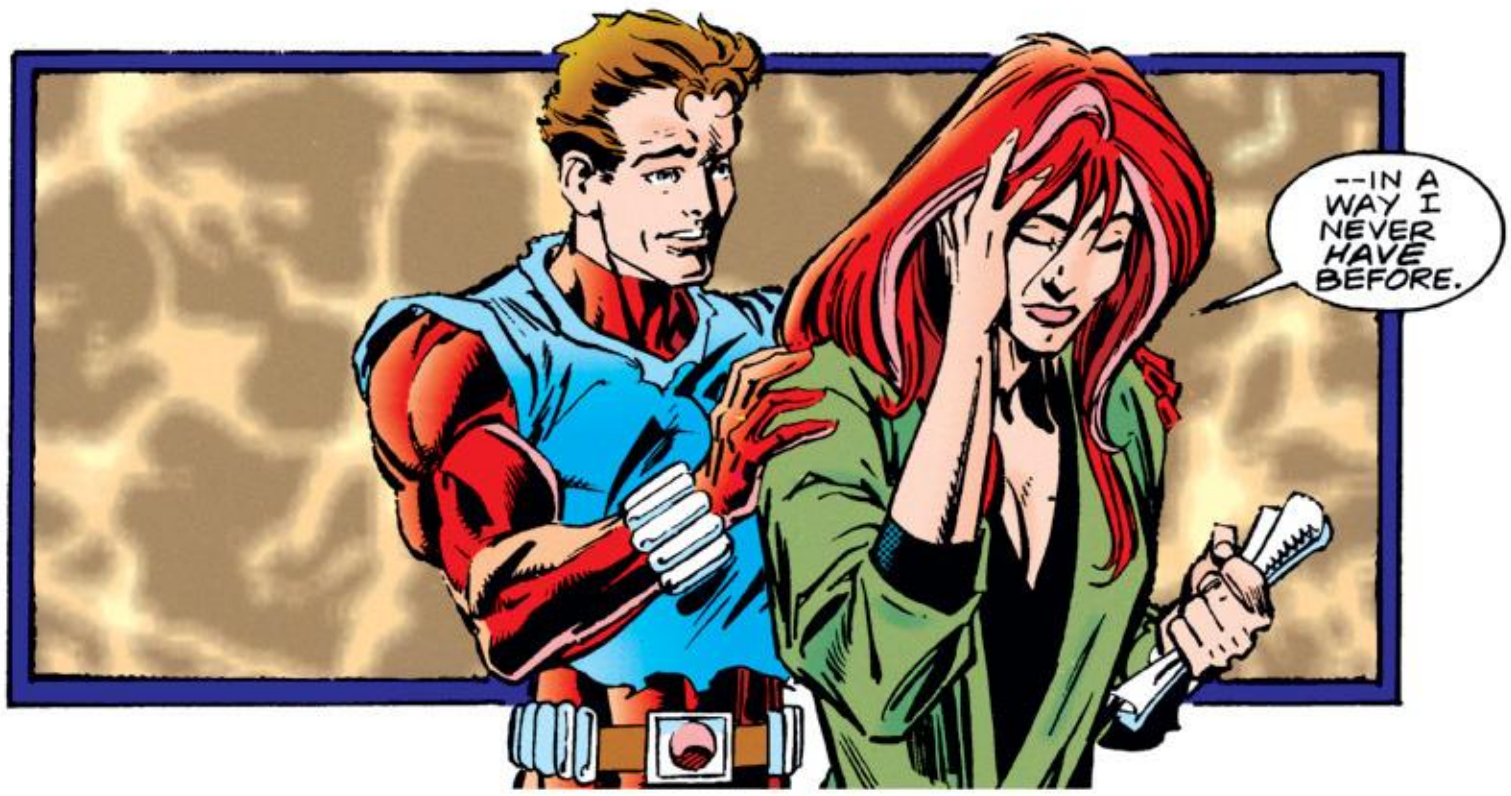
I'VE ENDURED THINGS THAT WOULD HAVE BROKEN MOST PEOPLE!

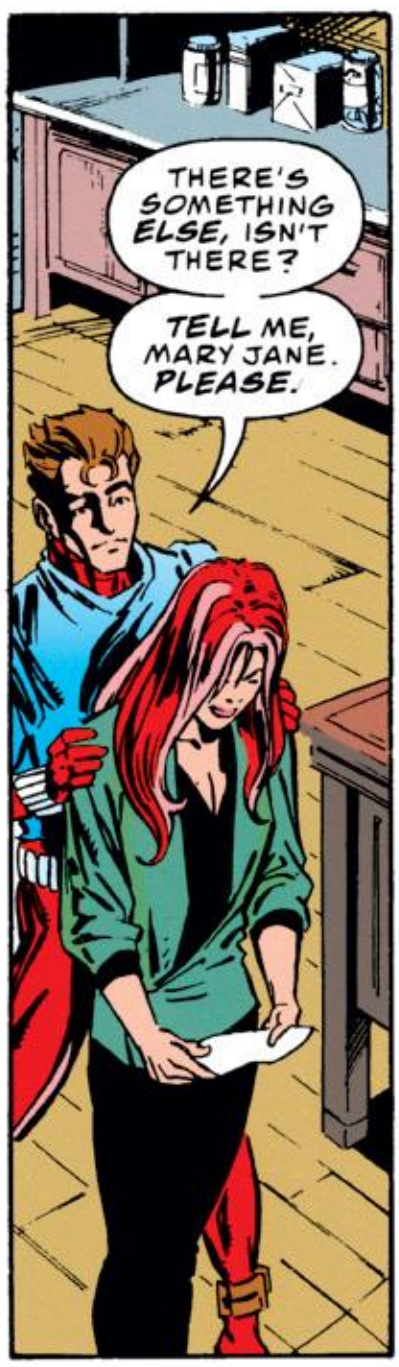
BUT I HAVEN'T BROKEN! I'VE BEEN STRONG! AND I'VE BEEN THERE FOR YOU--AS LOYAL, AS SUPPORTIVE, A WIFE AS ANY MAN HAS EVER HAD!

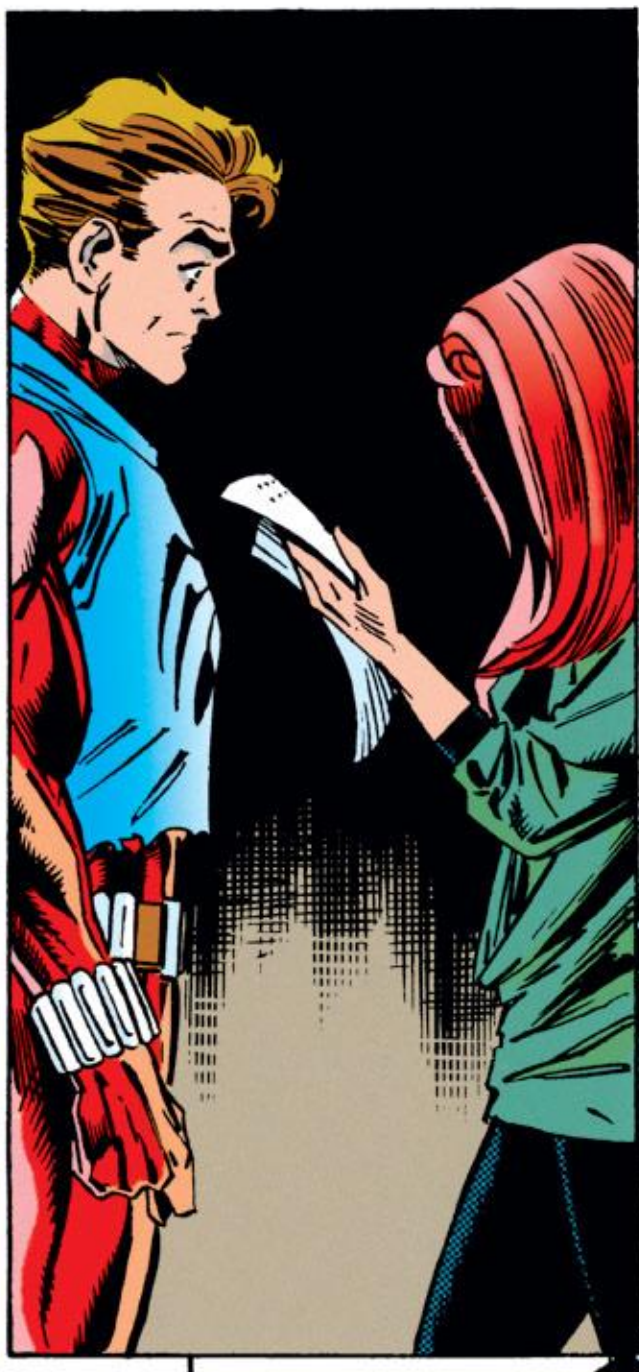
I... I DON'T MEAN TO YELL. I DON'T EVEN MEAN TO COMPLAIN. I WAS GLAD TO DO IT. BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, PETER.

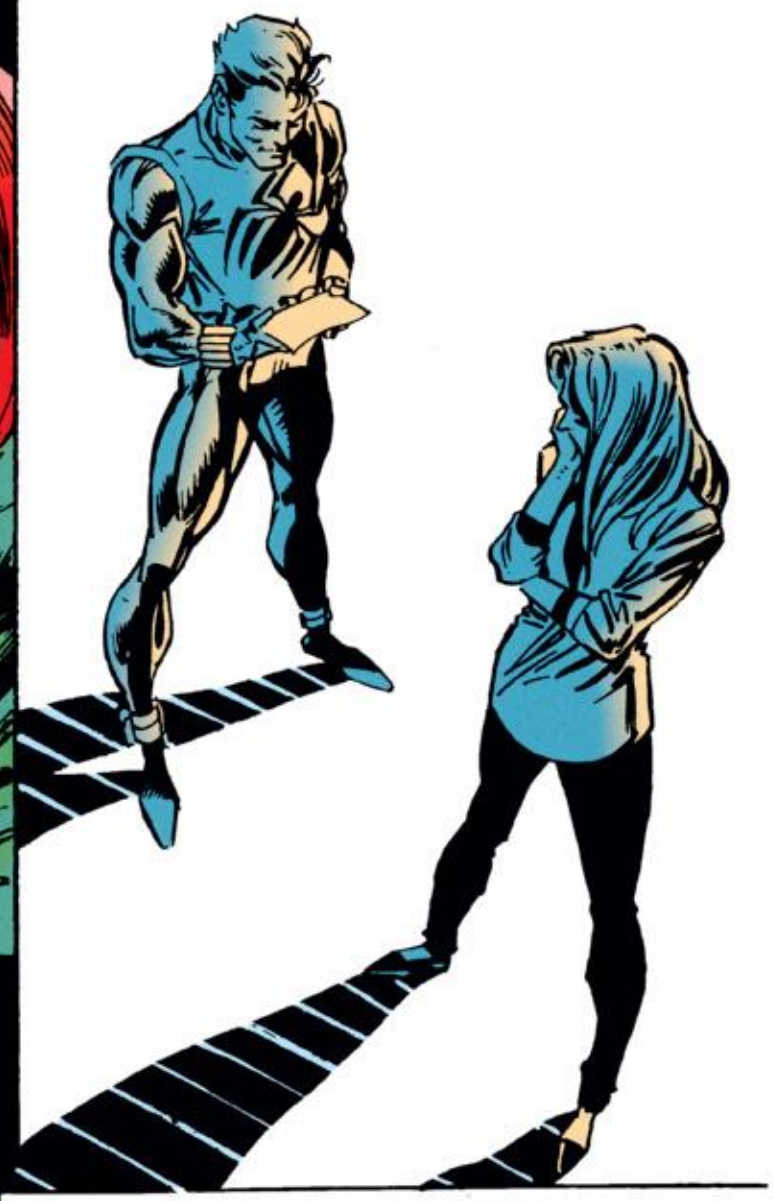
WHEN IT WAS JUST THE TWO OF US, THERE WAS NO LIMIT TO WHAT I'D DO FOR YOU--

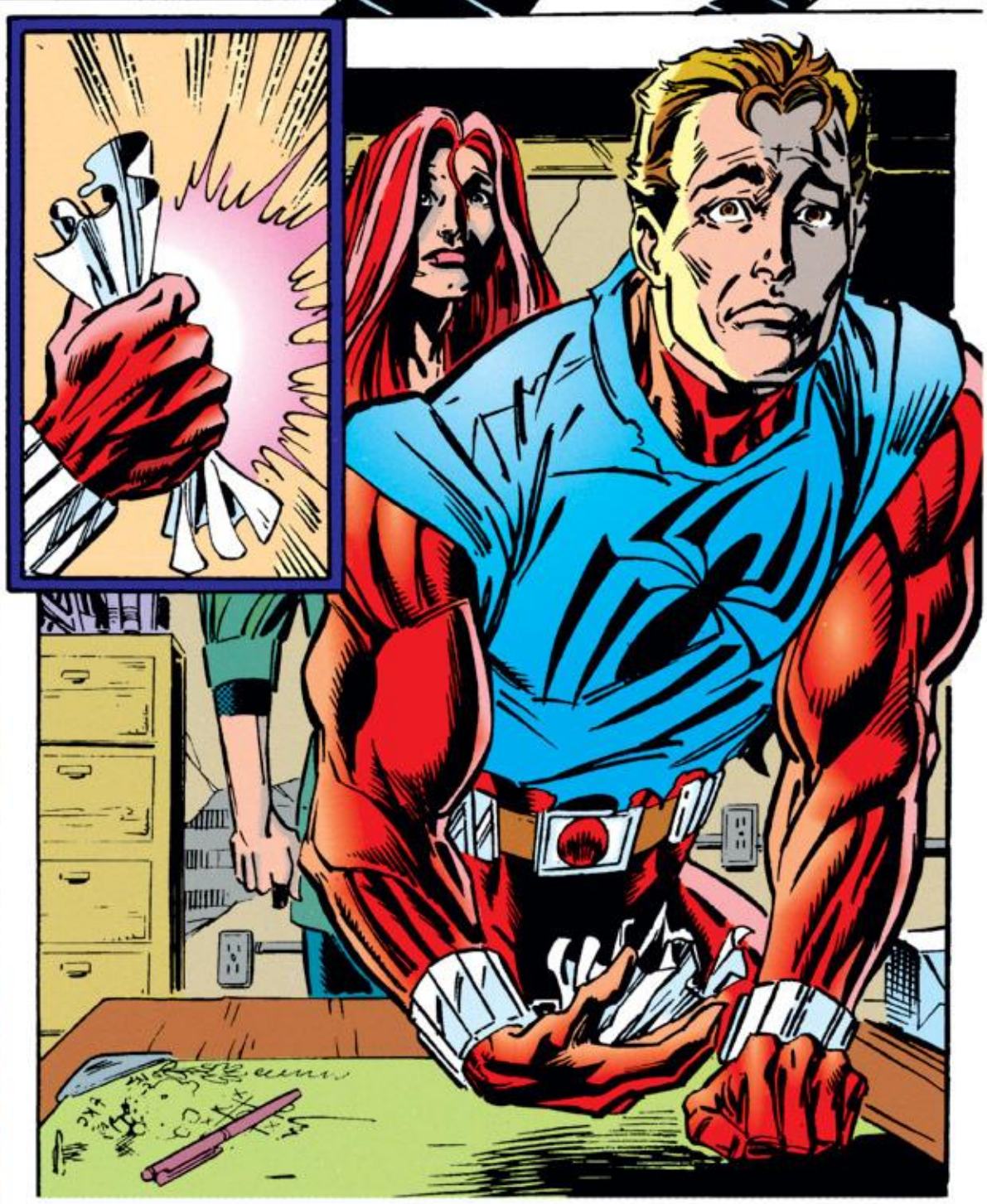
BUT THERE ARE LIMITS NOW. WE'VE GOT A CHILD ON THE WAY... AND I NEED YOU--

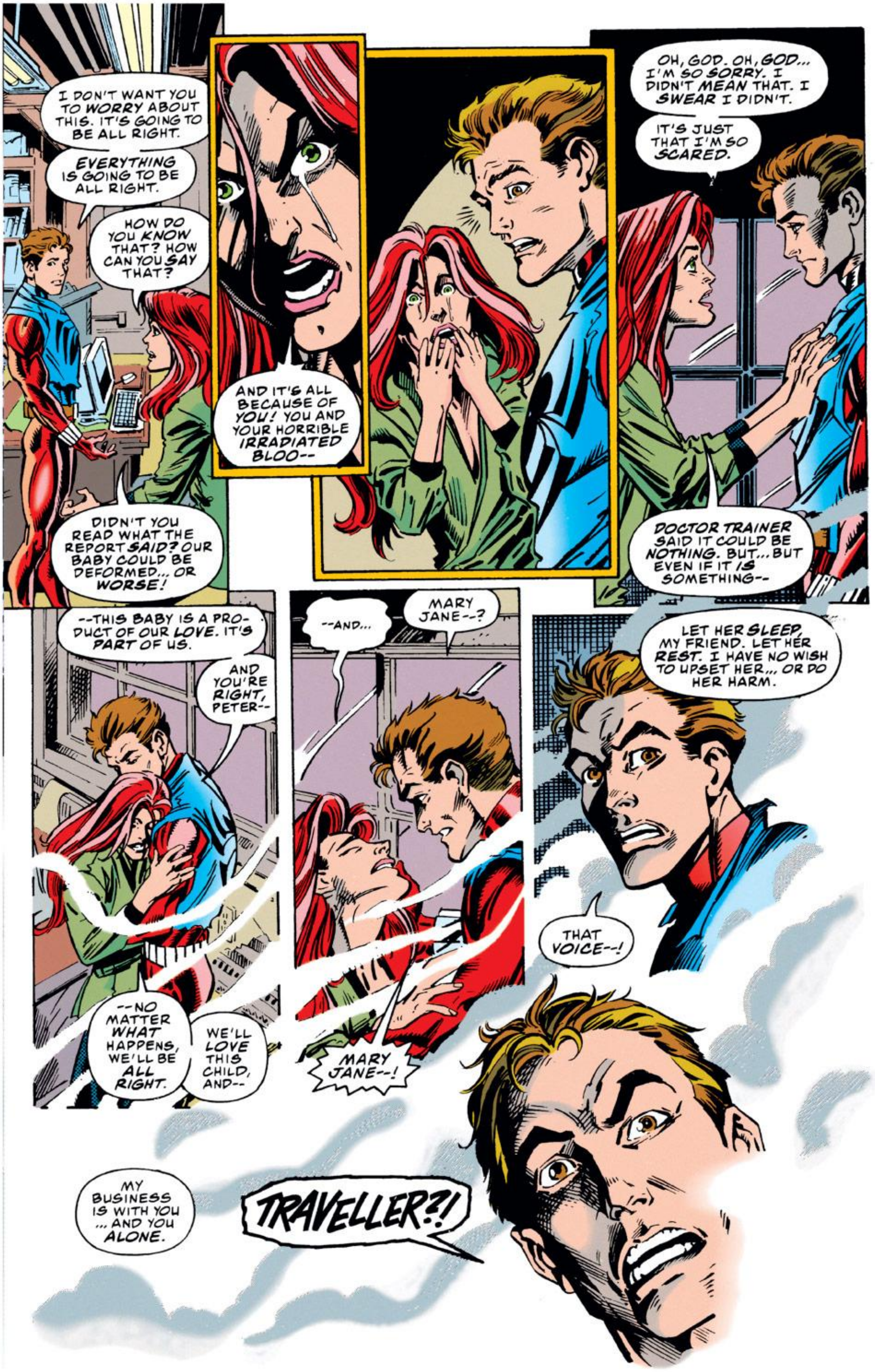



THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE, ISN'T THERE?
TELL ME, MARY JANE. PLEASE.



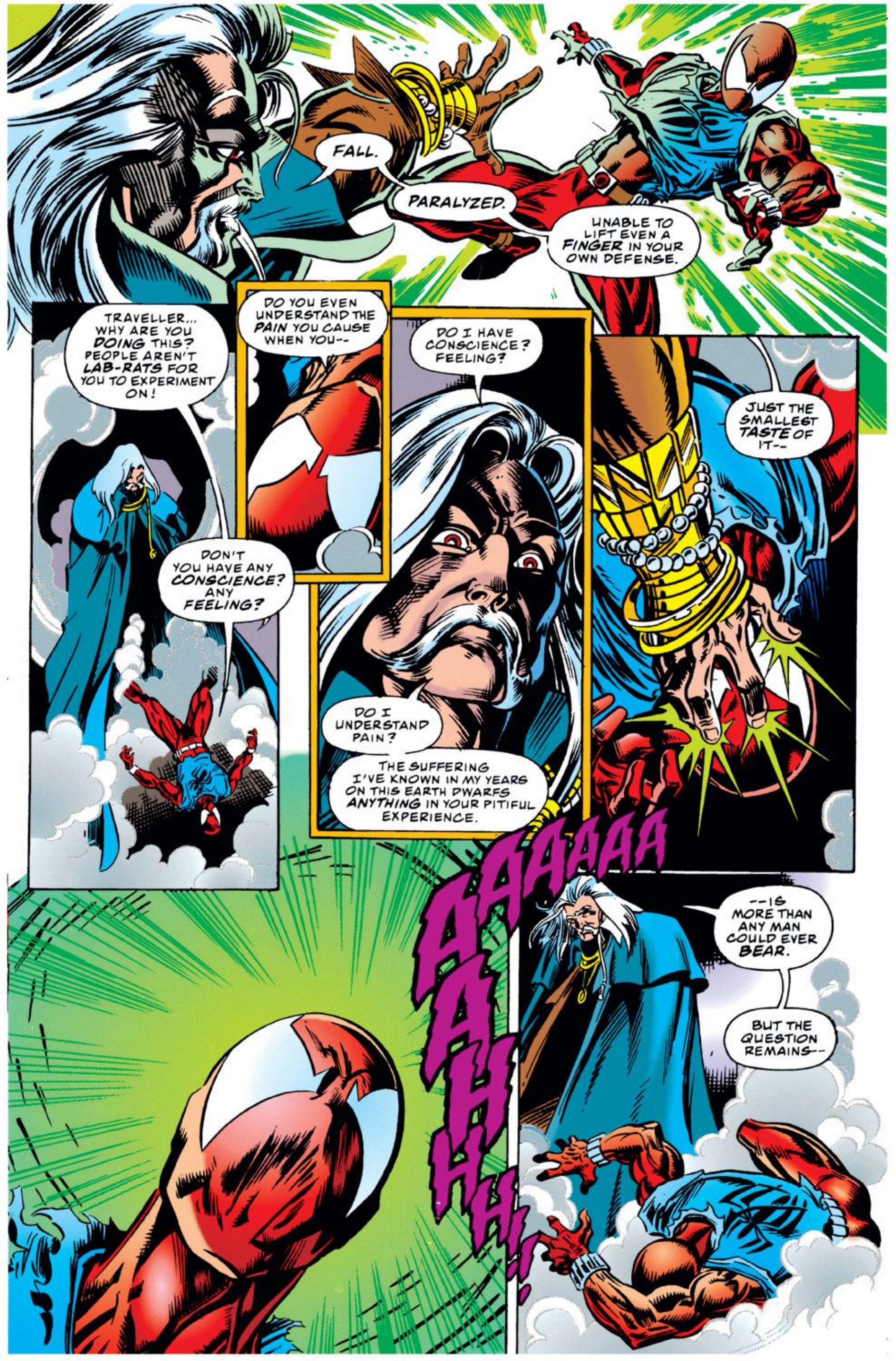




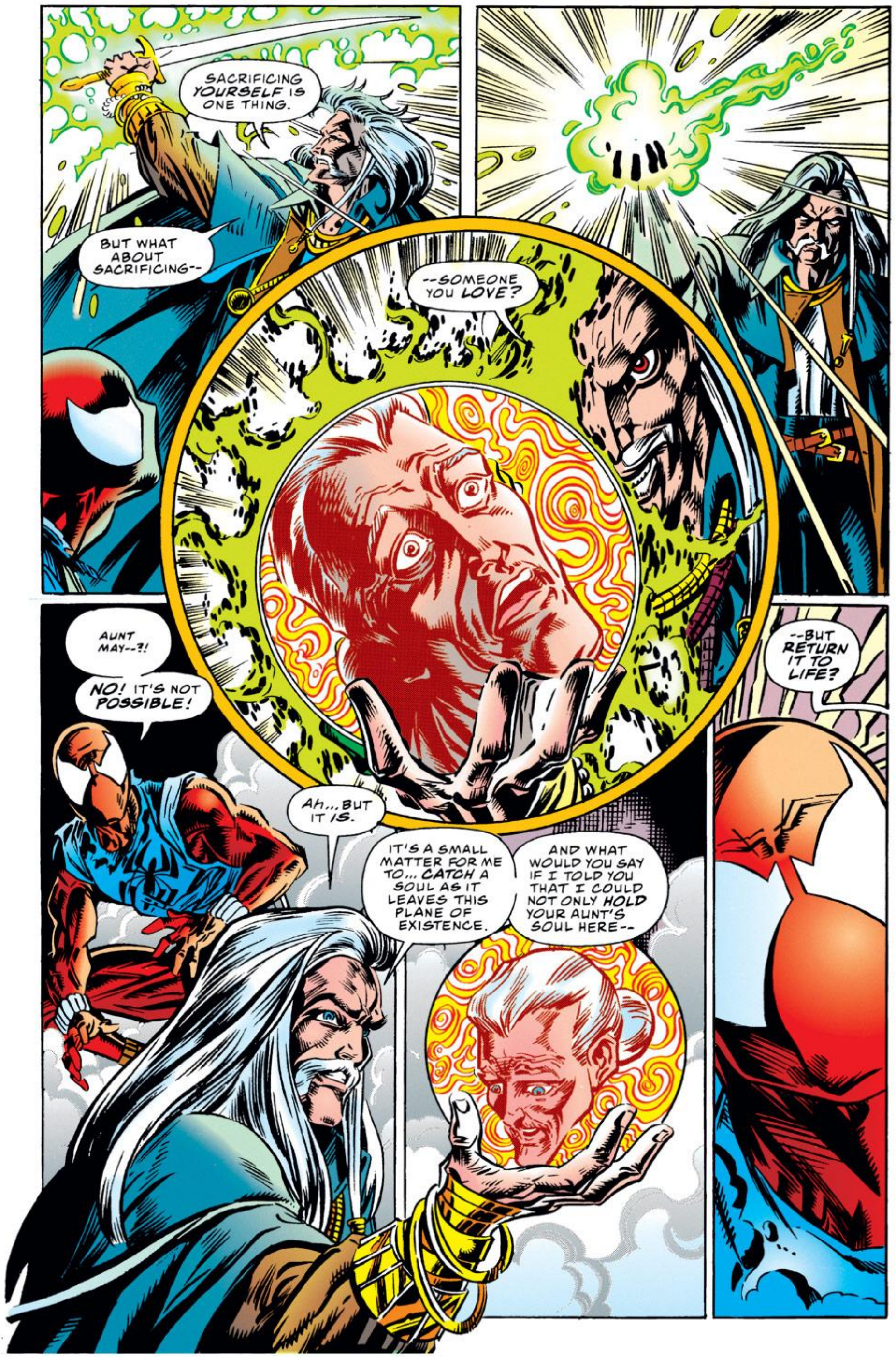

I DON'T WANT YOU TO WORRY ABOUT THIS. IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
DIDN'T YOU READ WHAT THE REPORT SAID? OUR BABY COULD BE DEFORMED... OR WORSE!
AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF YOU! YOU AND YOUR HORRIBLE IRRADIATED BLOO--
OH, GOD. OH, GOD... I'M SO SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN THAT. I SWEAR I DIDN'T.
IT'S JUST THAT I'M SO SCARED.
DOCTOR TRAINER SAID IT COULD BE NOTHING. BUT... BUT EVEN IF IT IS SOMETHING--
--THIS BABY IS A PRODUCT OF OUR LOVE. IT'S PART OF US.
AND YOU'RE RIGHT, PETER--
--NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
WE'LL LOVE THIS CHILD, AND--
--AND...
MARY JANE--?
MARY JANE--!
LET HER SLEEP, MY FRIEND. LET HER REST. I HAVE NO WISH TO UPSET HER... OR DO HER HARM.
THAT VOICE--!
MY BUSINESS IS WITH YOU ... AND YOU ALONE.
TRAVELLER?!

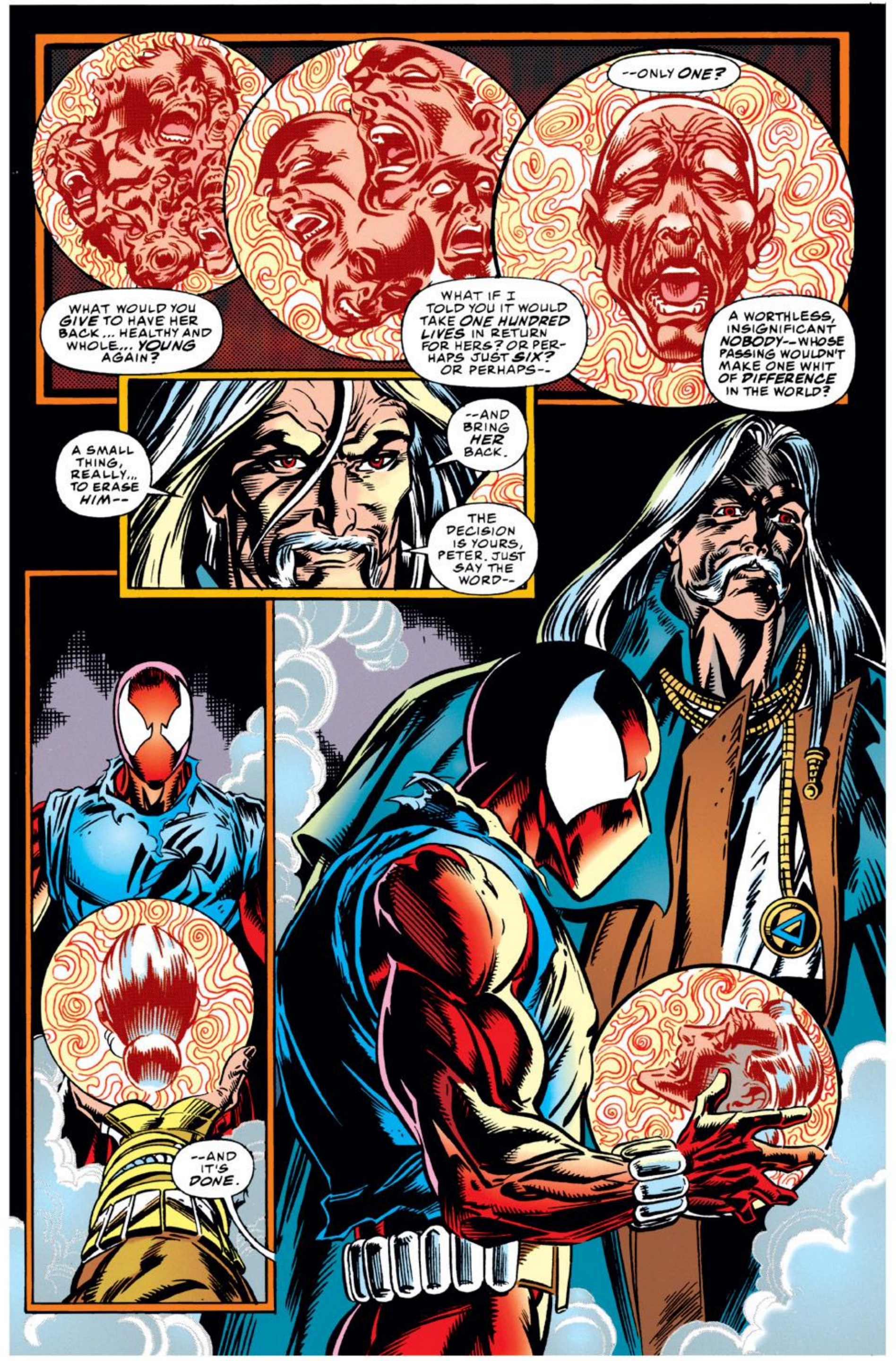
DOESN'T THIS INSANITY EVER END? WON'T YOU MANIACS EVER LEAVE ME ALONE?
WELL, IF IT'S A FIGHT YOU WANT, I--
I HAVEN'T BROUGHT YOU HERE TO DO BATTLE WITH YOU, SPIDER-MAN. I HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE--TO STUDY YOU.
SINCE THAT DAY AT RAVENCROFT, WHEN I LOOKED INTO THE MINDS OF THOSE TWISTED, CORRUPTED SOULS*... AND SAW YOU AS THE COMMON LINK THAT FED THEIR HATE... INSPIRED THEIR LUNACY--
--I HAVE WONDERED: DO YOU FUNCTION AS THE LIGHT, THE BALANCE, TO THEIR DARKNESS? OR ARE YOU SOME-HOW... THE CATALYST?
WOULD THESE MEN NOT HAVE FOUND EXPRESSION FOR THEIR MADNESS IF THEY HADN'T HAD A SPIDER-MAN TO FOCUS ON... REACT TO?
* IN OUR ALREADY-CLASSIC "POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY" CROSSOVER. --Danny.

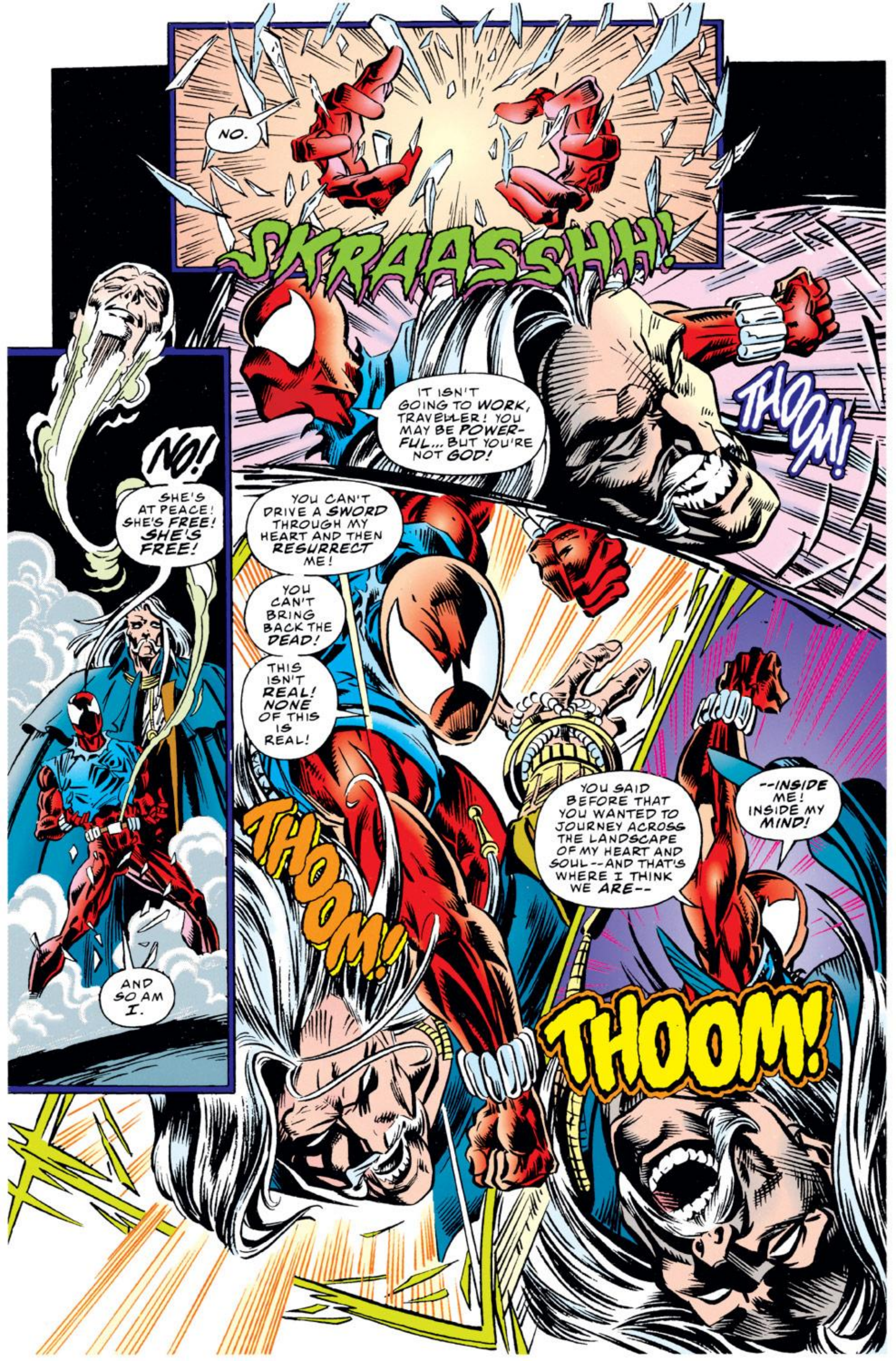
ALL THESE QUESTIONS--AND MORE--I INTEND TO EXPLORE AS I JOURNEY ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUR HEART AND SOUL.
I WANT TO KNOW YOU, SPIDER-MAN... DOWN TO THE CELLULAR LEVEL. I WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOU IN A WAY EVEN YOU CAN'T.
DISSECT YOUR PSYCHE. YOUR VERY--
DISSECT THIS!
THOOM!
KRAAK!
KRA-
KOOOM!

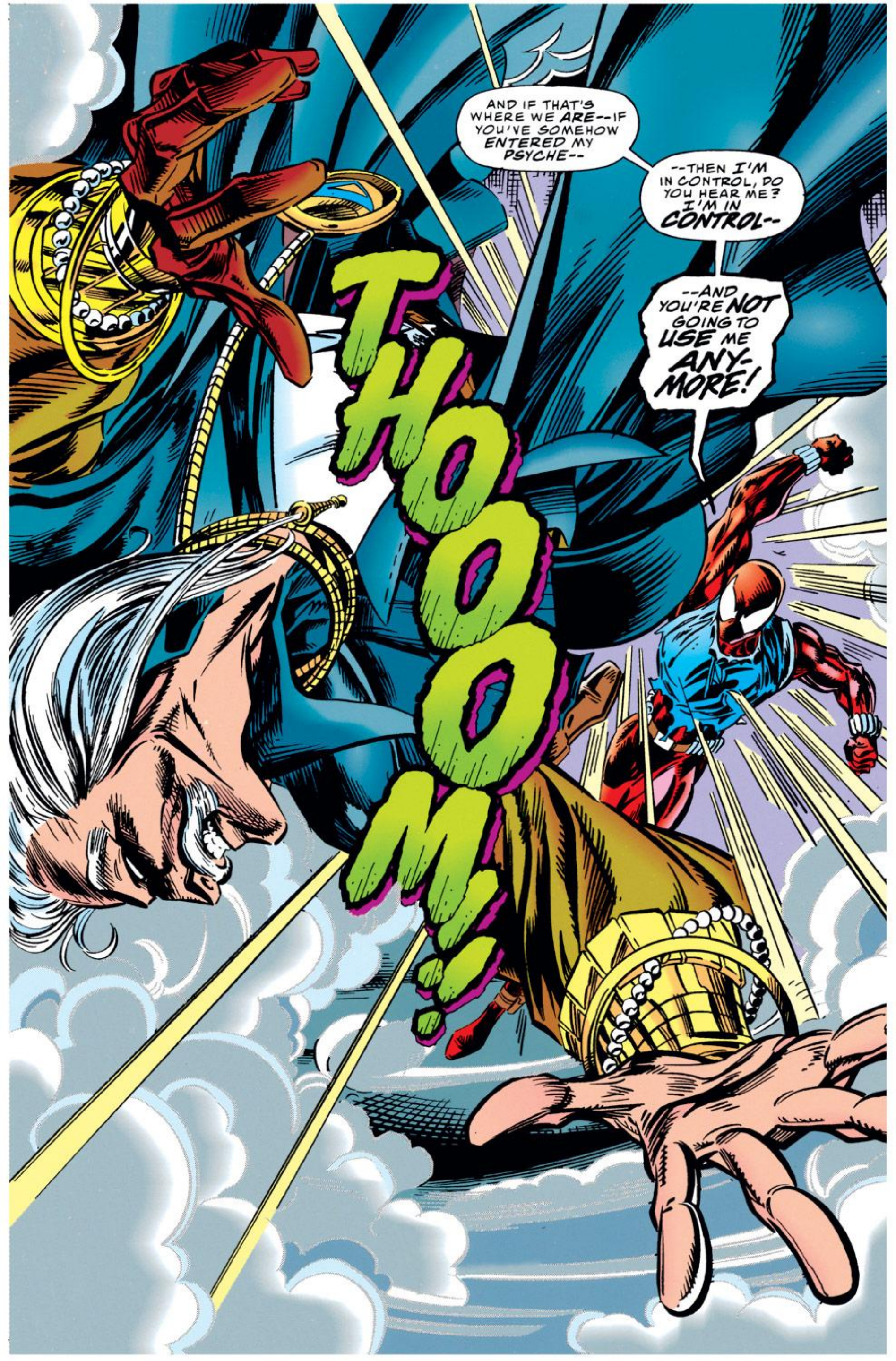

FALL.
PARALYZED.
UNABLE TO LIFT EVEN A FINGER IN YOUR OWN DEFENSE.
TRAVELLER... WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? PEOPLE AREN'T LAB-RATS FOR YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON!
DO YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND THE PAIN YOU CAUSE WHEN YOU--
DO I HAVE CONSCIENCE? FEELING?
JUST THE SMALLEST TASTE OF IT--
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY CONSCIENCE? ANY FEELING?
DO I UNDERSTAND PAIN?
THE SUFFERING I'VE KNOWN IN MY YEARS ON THIS EARTH DWARFS ANYTHING IN YOUR PITIFUL EXPERIENCE.
AAAAAAAHHHH!!
--IS MORE THAN ANY MAN COULD EVER BEAR.
BUT THE QUESTION REMAINS--

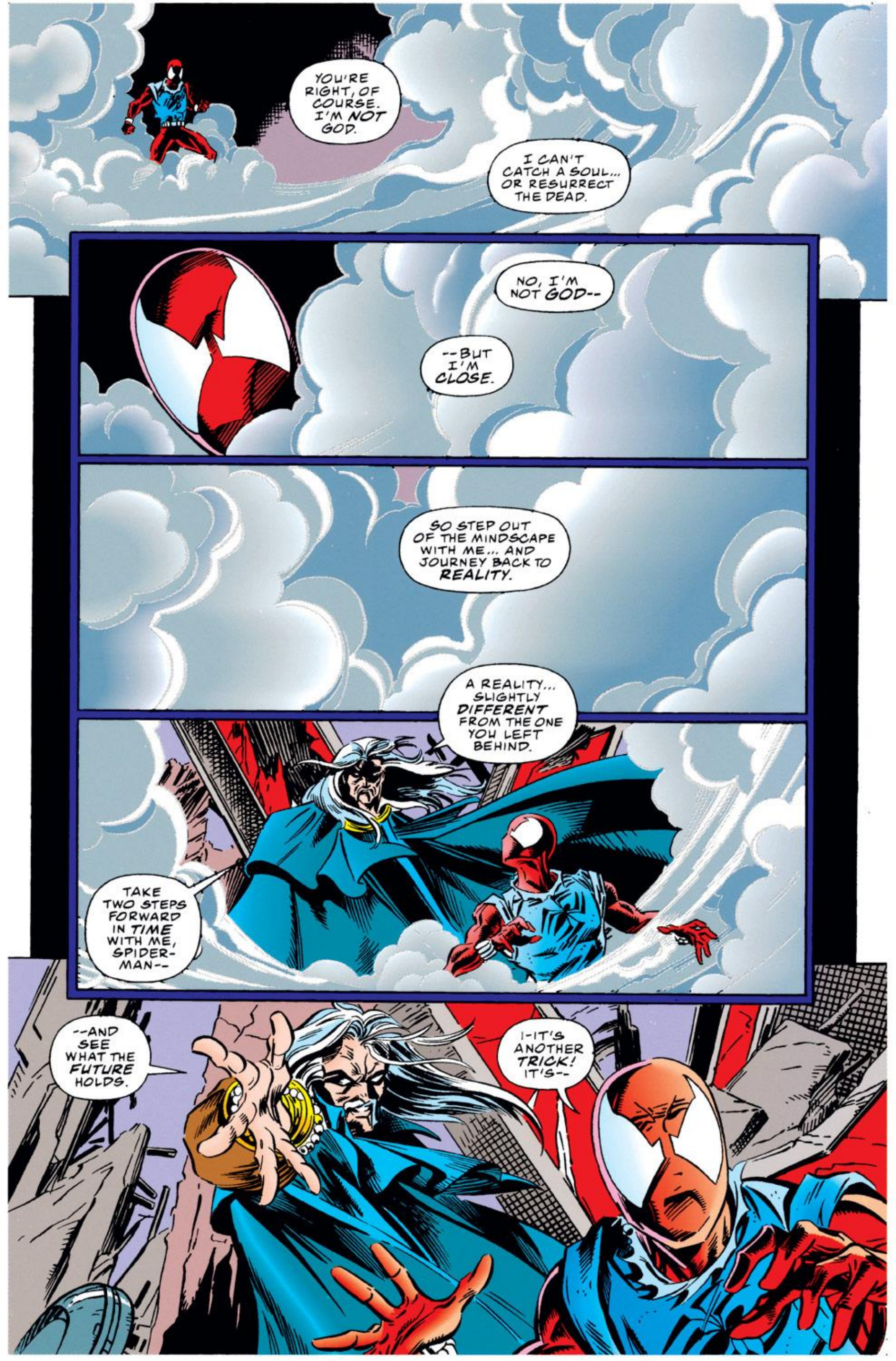
--HOW MUCH SUFFERING--
--CAN YOU BEAR?
YOU'VE SHOWN, TIME AND AGAIN, THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO SACRIFICE YOURSELF FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
WILLING TO DIE FOR PEOPLE YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW.
YES, YOU'RE QUITE THE HERO. BUT NO MAN IS SIMPLY ONE THING. EVERYONE IS CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE OF CONFLICTING IMPULSES.
HOW FAR, SPIDER-MAN, DOES YOUR HEROISM EXTEND?
NO... BLOOD?
NO WOUND?

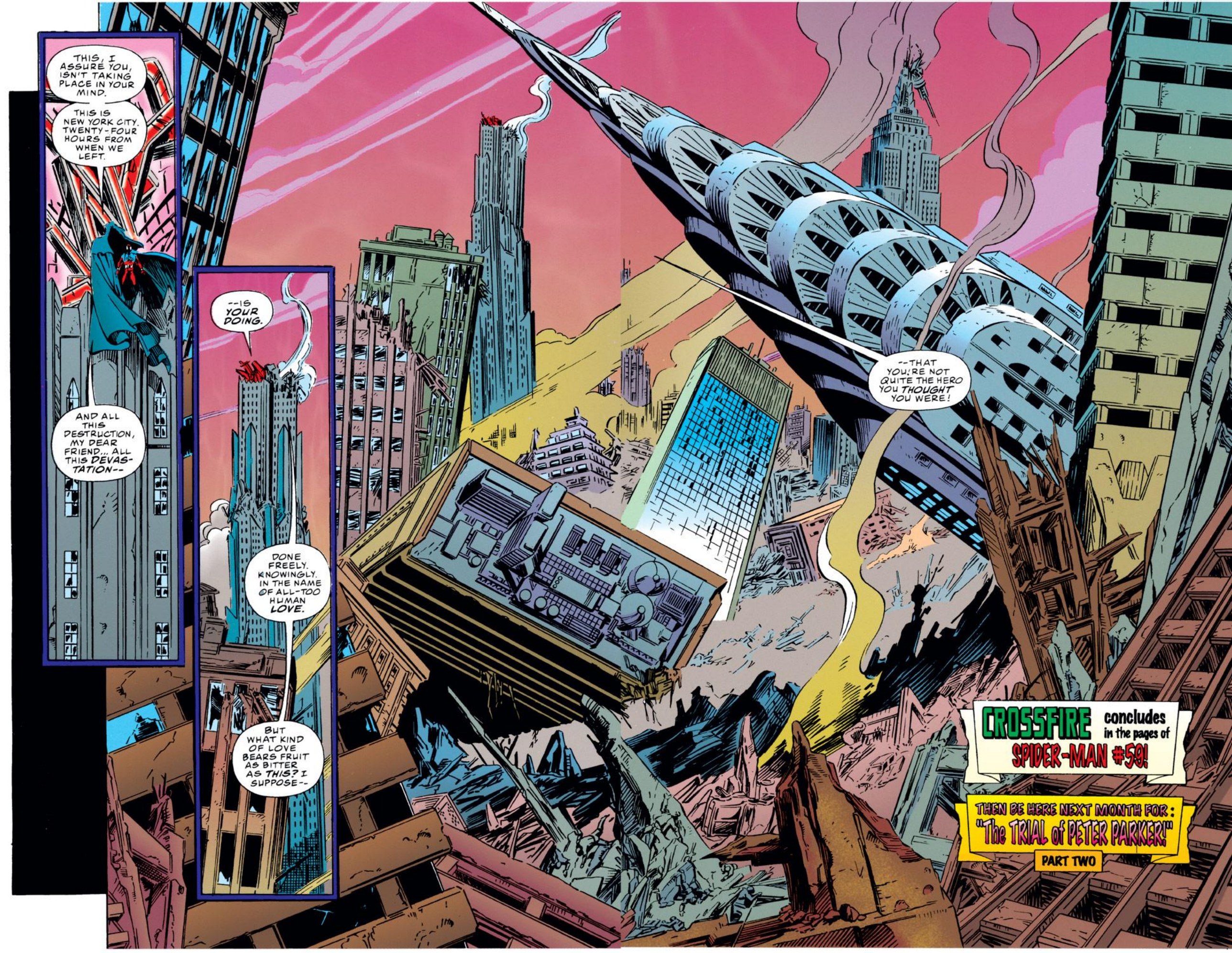

SACRIFICING YOURSELF IS ONE THING.
BUT WHAT ABOUT SACRIFICING--
--SOMEONE YOU LOVE?
AUNT MAY--?!
NO! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
--BUT RETURN IT TO LIFE?
AH... BUT IT IS.
IT'S A SMALL MATTER FOR ME TO... CATCH A SOUL AS IT LEAVES THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE.
AND WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THAT I COULD NOT ONLY HOLD YOUR AUNT'S SOUL HERE--


WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE TO HAVE HER BACK... HEALTHY AND WHOLE... YOUNG AGAIN?
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU IT WOULD TAKE ONE HUNDRED LIVES IN RETURN FOR HERS? OR PERHAPS JUST SIX? OR PERHAPS--
--ONLY ONE?
A WORTHLESS, INSIGNIFICANT NOBODY--WHOSE PASSING WOULDN'T MAKE ONE WHIT OF DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD?
A SMALL THING, REALLY... TO ERASE HIM--
--AND BRING HER BACK.
THE DECISION IS YOURS, PETER. JUST SAY THE WORD--
--AND IT'S DONE.


NO.
SKRAASSHH!
IT ISN'T GOING TO WORK, TRAVELLER! YOU MAY BE POWERFUL... BUT YOU'RE NOT GOD!
THOOM!
NO!
SHE'S AT PEACE! SHE'S FREE! SHE'S FREE!
YOU CAN'T DRIVE A SWORD THROUGH MY HEART AND THEN RESURRECT ME!
YOU CAN'T BRING BACK THE DEAD!
THIS ISN'T REAL! NONE OF THIS IS REAL!
THOOM!
YOU SAID BEFORE THAT YOU WANTED TO JOURNEY ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE OF MY HEART AND SOUL--AND THAT'S WHERE I THINK WE ARE--
--INSIDE ME! INSIDE MY MIND!
AND SO AM I.
THOOM!


AND IF THAT'S WHERE WE ARE--IF YOU'VE SOMEHOW ENTERED MY PSYCHE--
--THEN I'M IN CONTROL, DO YOU HEAR ME? I'M IN CONTROL--
--AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO USE ME ANY-MORE!
THOOOOM


YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE. I'M NOT GOD.
I CAN'T CATCH A SOUL... OR RESURRECT THE DEAD.
NO, I'M NOT GOD--
--BUT I'M CLOSE.
SO STEP OUT OF THE MINDSCAPE WITH ME... AND JOURNEY BACK TO REALITY.
A REALITY... SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE YOU LEFT BEHIND.
TAKE TWO STEPS FORWARD IN TIME WITH ME, SPIDER-MAN--
--AND SEE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.
I-IT'S ANOTHER TRICK! IT'S--


THIS, I ASSURE YOU, ISN'T TAKING PLACE IN YOUR MIND.
THIS IS NEW YORK CITY. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS FROM WHEN WE LEFT.
AND ALL THIS DESTRUCTION, MY DEAR FRIEND... ALL THIS DEVASTATION--
--IS YOUR DOING.
DONE FREELY. KNOWINGLY. IN THE NAME OF ALL-TOO HUMAN LOVE.
BUT WHAT KIND OF LOVE BEARS FRUIT AS BITTER AS THIS? I SUPPOSE--
--THAT YOU'RE NOT QUITE THE HERO YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE!
CROSSFIRE concludes in the pages of SPIDER-MAN #59!
THEN BE HERE NEXT MONTH FOR: "The TRIAL of PETER PARKER!"
PART TWO