the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

THE GAUNTLET BEGINS BY
MARK WAID
PAUL AZACETA
DAVE STEWART

PLUS: BLACK CAT BY
KELLY AND NIIMURA

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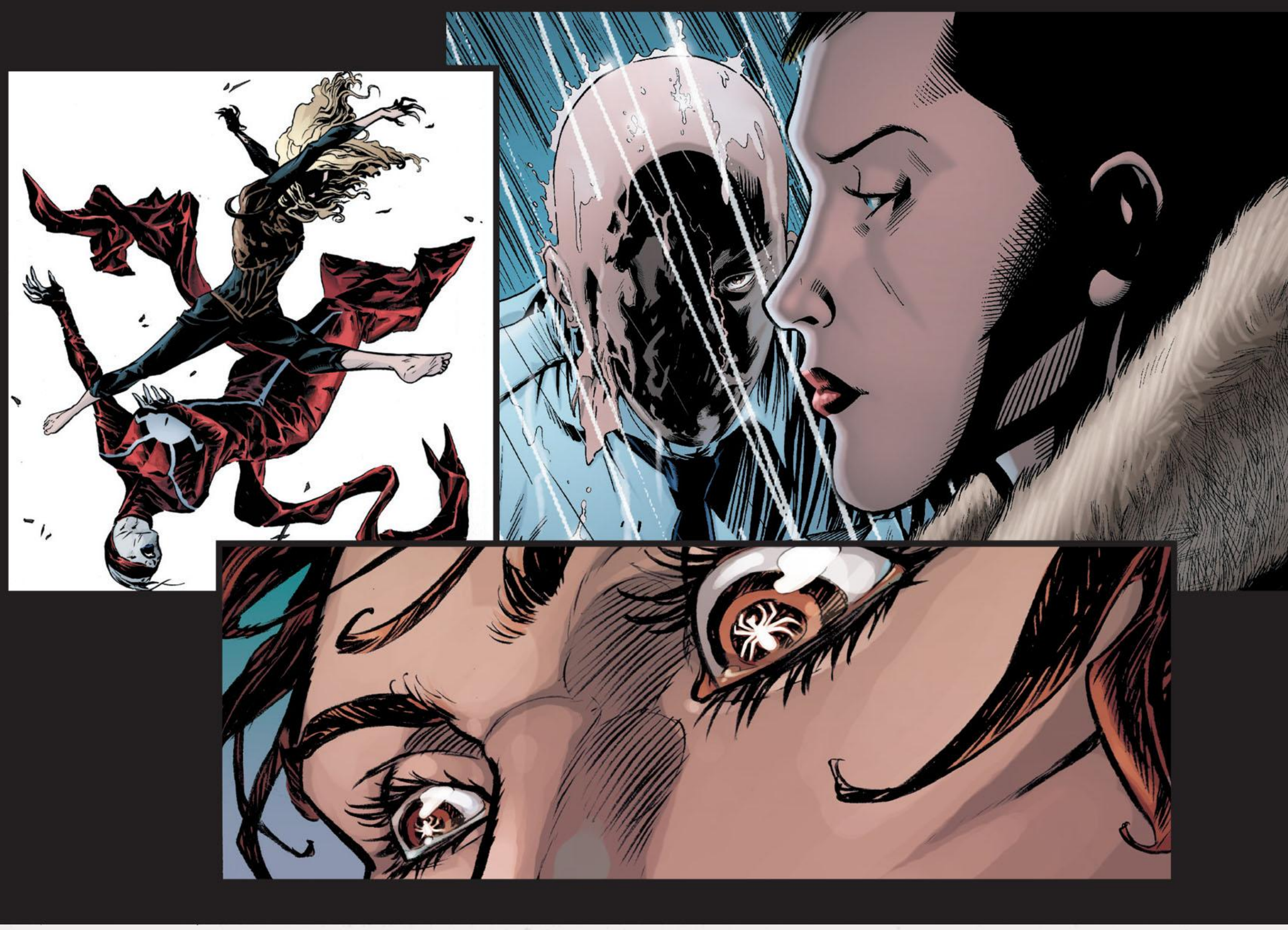
THE DB! FOR EVERY BRAND NEWS DAY!

THE DB

GHOSTLY GOVERNORS? RIVERFRONT SOURCES CLAIM "BIZARRE" NOISES EMANATING FROM GOVERNOR'S ISLAND. THE ISLAND OFF MANHATTAN'S COAST IS PRESENTLY OUT OF USE, BUT COULD THERE BE SECRETS BEHIND ITS SANDY SHORES AND ABANDONED CASTLES?

NOVEMBER 18, 2009 • WEDNESDAY

THE HUNTERS GATHER!



Last year, Ana Kraven, the daughter of Kraven the Hunter, tracked down Spider-Man to kill him. Spider-Man survived her attack, and Ana found herself at the mercy of her mother, Sasha, Kraven's former bride.

Since then, the Kravens have laid low, and have struck methodically – capturing Madame Web, a psychic and former ally to Spider-Man, as well as Mattie Franklin, the former Spider-Woman. Why they're hunting Spiders is unknown, but just as mysterious is who's helping them in their plans.

They have brought in Chameleon, Kraven's half-brother, and even hired the mercenary Deadpool to distract Spider-Man during their attack on Mattie. They have designs on recruiting a few more. The end result remains shadowed, but it cannot bode well for the Amazing Spider-Man…

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ELECTRIC MAYHEM!

By Betty Brant

Con-Ed refused to comment on the streak of freak blackouts and electrical disturbances that have popped up across the city, but to call it a coincidence would be the path of least resistance. It started with the occasional brownouts (often interrupting this intrepid reporter's workday) but escalated to a full blown fire at the Empire State Building last month. The Mayor's Press Secretary, Glory Grant, refused to comment, but sources say…

(continued on page Q47)

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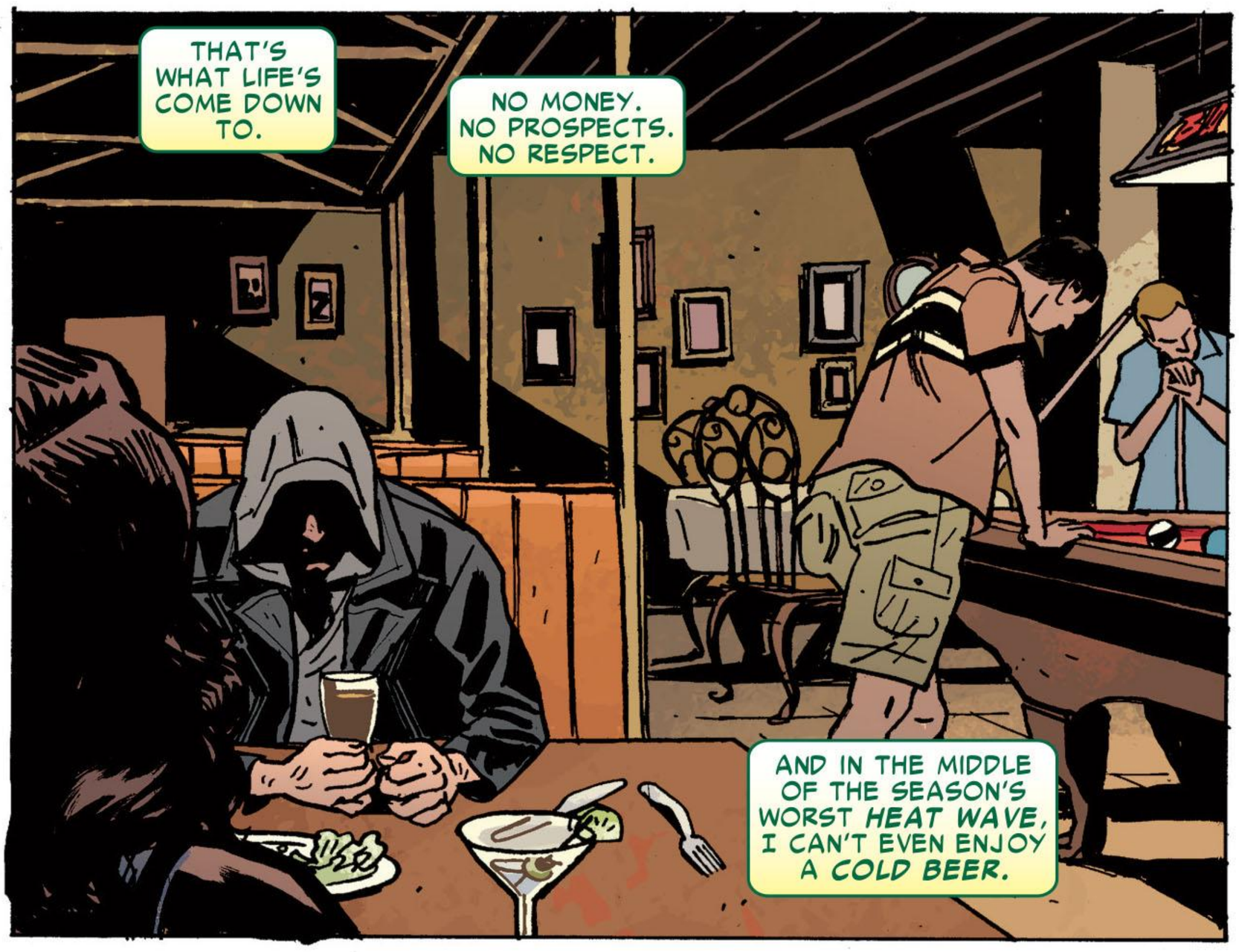
What I have set in motion now begins.
They are coming.
Men of smoke and men of sand.
Predators.
Hunters.
An unrelenting storm of pain and sorrow the likes of which Spider-Man has never known.
I have thrown down my GAUNTLET.
My family's rise begins NOW.

IT STINGS WHEN I DRINK.
OW.


THAT'S WHAT LIFE'S COME DOWN TO.
NO MONEY. NO PROSPECTS. NO RESPECT.
AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEASON'S WORST HEAT WAVE, I CAN'T EVEN ENJOY A COLD BEER.

THE BARFLY SAT DOWN AND STARTED YAMMERING.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I DON'T CARE WHY.
IF I JUST NOD WHENEVER SHE TAKES A BREATH, MAYBE SHE WON'T GO AWAY.

SHE'S...FLIRTING? SHE'S REACHING FOR MY HAND.
GOD, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE I'VE FELT...?
RELAX, MAX. JUST TAKE IT EASY. YOU CAN KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL. YOU CAN.
EASY...

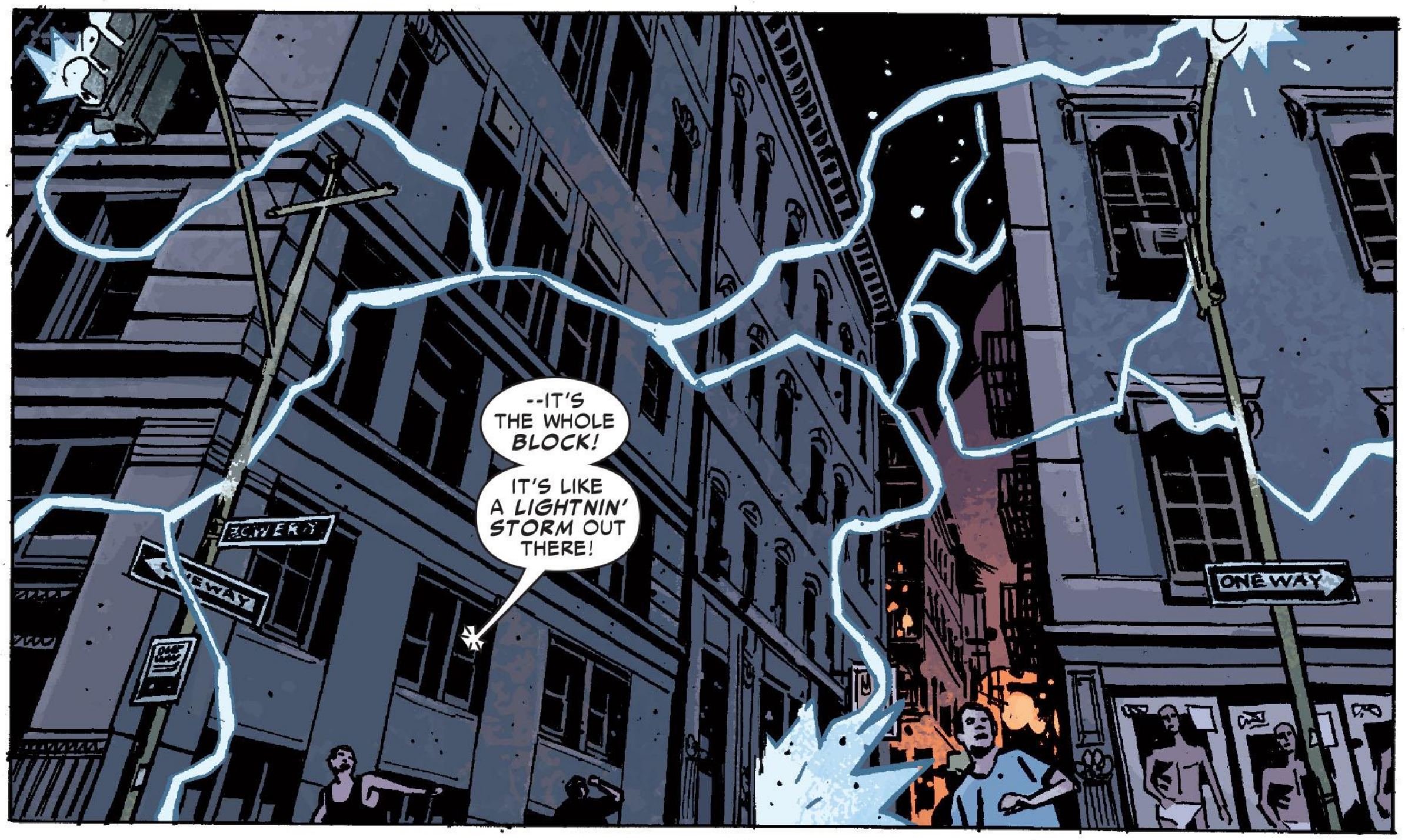
OH!
NO--!

WHAT THE HELL--?
UNNNNNNHH
JEEZ, SHE'S ON FIRE! DO SOMETHIN'!
JIMMY, SHE AIN'T BREATHIN'! WHO KNOWS CPR?
WHAT HAPPENED?
ASK HIM!
AW, NO.
HEY, BUDDY! HE'S TALKIN' TO YOU!
I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH FOR A BAR FIGHT RIGHT NOW.
JIMMY, CALL 911 WHILE WE GET SOME ANSWERS FROM HOODIE THERE.
I CAN SNEAK OUT THE BACK...

WHAT'S HE--
...IF I CAN CREATE A DISTRACTION.

KZAAAT

?
AW, GREAT!
IT AIN'T JUST US, JIMMY--


--IT'S THE WHOLE BLOCK!
IT'S LIKE A LIGHTNIN' STORM OUT THERE!
BOWERY
ONE WAY
ONE WAY

HE DID THIS SOMEHOW! HE--
--HEY-- WHERE'D HE GO?

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

PART ONE

MARK WAID WRITER | PAUL AZACETA ART | DAVE STEWART COLOR ART | VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA LETTERING | TOM BRENNAN CHARGED UP | STEPHEN WACKER FRIED OUT | TOM BREVOORT EXEC. EDITOR | JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF | DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER | ALAN FINE EXEC. PRODUCER

GALE, KELLY, SLOTT, VAN LENTE, WAID & WELLS WEB-HEADS

Nearby...

ANOTHER BLACKOUT?

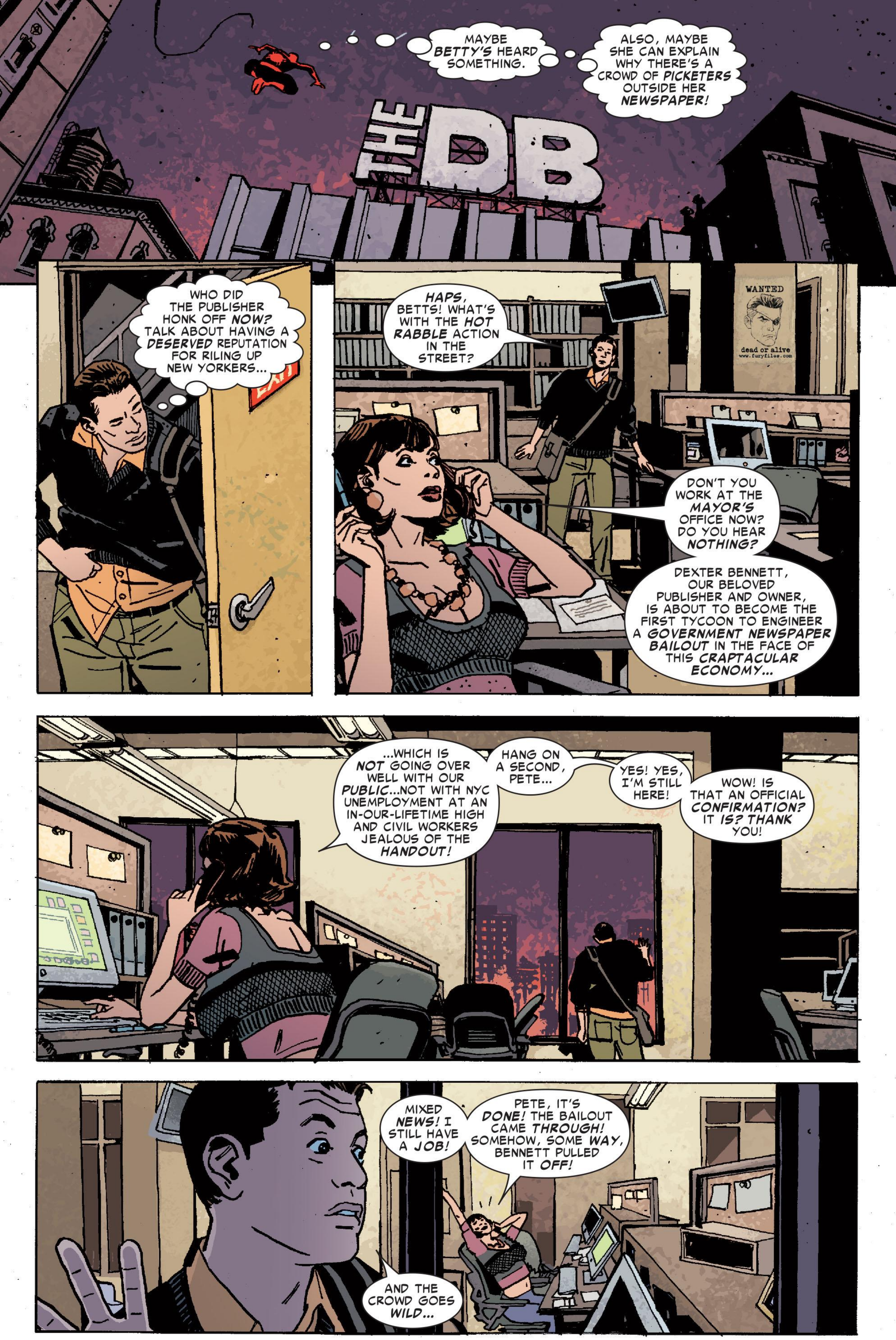
I MEAN, I SHOULDN'T BE *SURPRISED*...IN THIS HEAT, I'D BE USING AIR CONDITIONING JUST TO COOL OFF MY *AIR CONDITIONER*, SO I'M SURE THE POWER GRIDS ARE *MAXED OUT*...

...BUT EVEN *CON ED* SAYS THESE WACKY VOLTAGE UPS-AND-DOWNS ARE HAPPENING PRETTY *UNPREDICTABLY*...

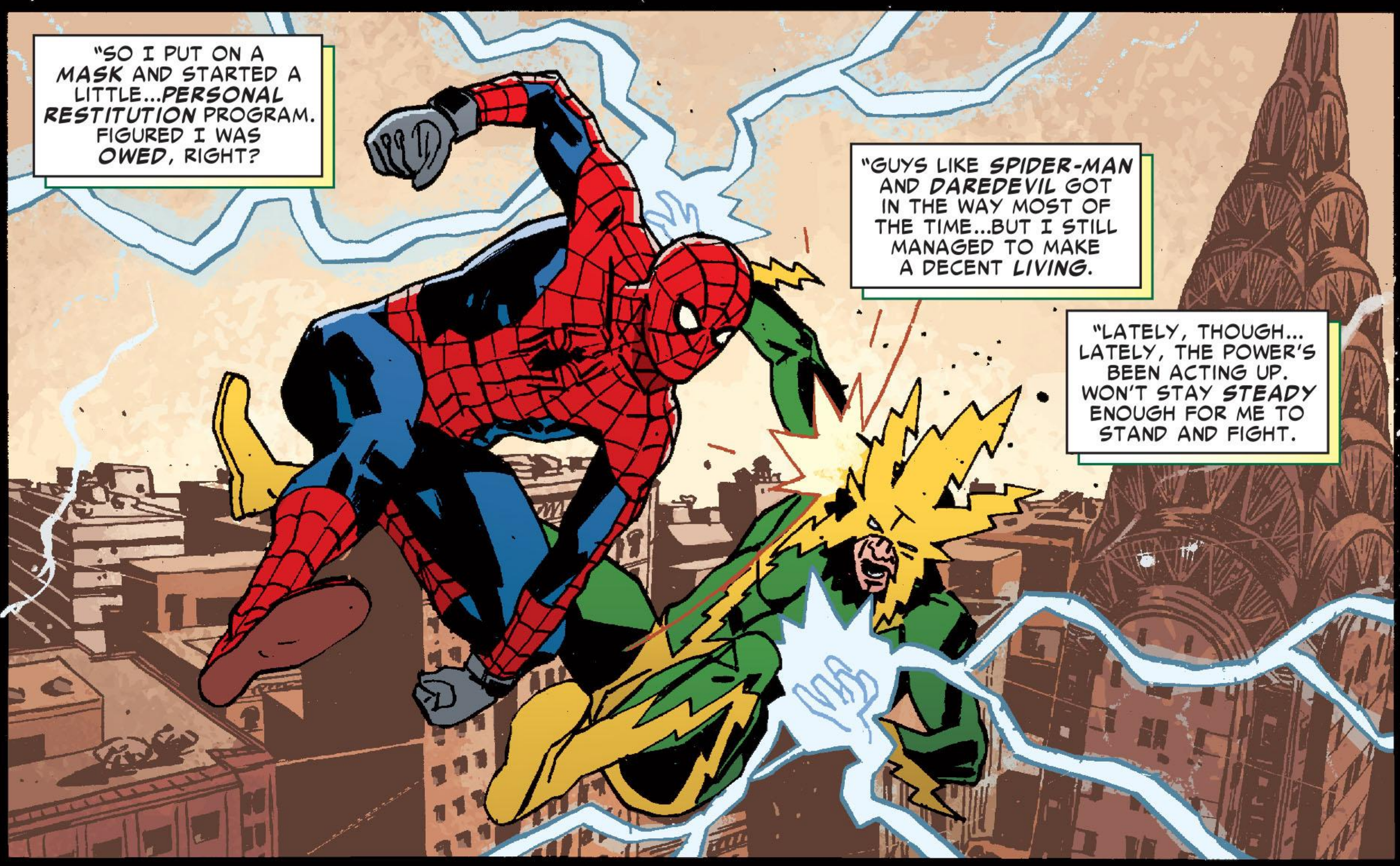
...LIKE THE ONE THAT CAUSED THAT *ELECTRICAL FIRE* AT THE *EMPIRE STATE BUILDING* A COUPLE WEEKS AGO!

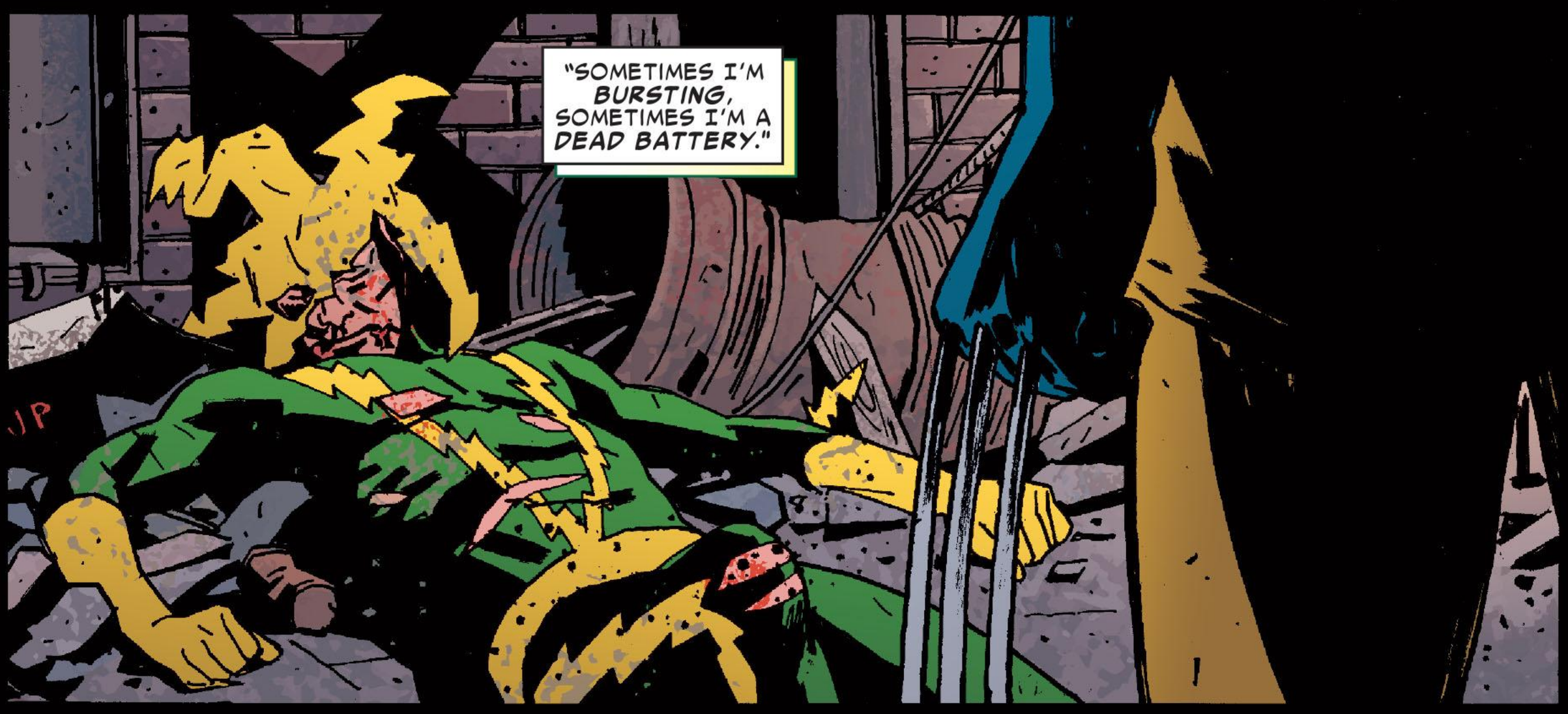
ISSUE #601
--SPARKMASTER STEVE.

WHADDAYA THINK YER DOIN'?
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! GIMME MY PUP BACK, YA--YA DOGNAPPER!
"DOGCATCHER," TECHNICA--
SHADDAP!
COME TO PAPA, CUDDLEBUN! WHO WANTS A TREAT? HUH? HUH?
IF YOU'RE OFFERING, I COULD USE A GLASS OF WA--
SHADDAP!
DON'T LET THE NASTY SPIDER-MAN SCARE YOU, CUDDLEBUN! DADDY'S RIGHT HERE!
FINE. FINE. AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT, I RETURN HIM. BEHOLD.
JUST PROMISE ME YOU'LL LOOK INTO GETTING SOME SORT OF CAGE FOR THAT THING.
I'M NOT PUTTIN' MY CUDDLEBUN IN NO CAGE!
I WAS TALKING TO THE DOG.
"WHY DO YOU DO IT, WEB-SLINGER? WHY DO YOU RISK LIFE AND LIMB AS SPIDER-MAN EVERY NIGHT, RAIN OR SHINE?"
"BECAUSE, OPRAH, THERE'S SIMPLY NO MORE EXPEDIENT WAY TO GET BLAMED BY EVERYONE FOR EVERYTHING."
I OUGHTA TRY FINDING A PATTERN TO THESE BLACKOUTS BEFORE I GET ACCUSED OF THEM, TOO...!


MAYBE BETTY'S HEARD SOMETHING.
ALSO, MAYBE SHE CAN EXPLAIN WHY THERE'S A CROWD OF PICKETERS OUTSIDE HER NEWSPAPER!
THE DB
WHO DID THE PUBLISHER HONK OFF NOW? TALK ABOUT HAVING A DESERVED REPUTATION FOR RILING UP NEW YORKERS...
EXIT
HAPS, BETTS! WHAT'S WITH THE HOT RABBLE ACTION IN THE STREET?
WANTED
dead or alive
www.furyfiles.com
DON'T YOU WORK AT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE NOW? DO YOU HEAR NOTHING?
DEXTER BENNETT, OUR BELOVED PUBLISHER AND OWNER, IS ABOUT TO BECOME THE FIRST TYCOON TO ENGINEER A GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER BAILOUT IN THE FACE OF THIS CRAPTACULAR ECONOMY...
...WHICH IS NOT GOING OVER WELL WITH OUR PUBLIC...NOT WITH NYC UNEMPLOYMENT AT AN IN-OUR-LIFETIME HIGH AND CIVIL WORKERS JEALOUS OF THE HANDOUT!
HANG ON A SECOND, PETE...
YES! YES, I'M STILL HERE!
WOW! IS THAT AN OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION? IT IS? THANK YOU!
MIXED NEWS! I STILL HAVE A JOB!
PETE, IT'S DONE! THE BAILOUT CAME THROUGH! SOMEHOW, SOME WAY, BENNETT PULLED IT OFF!
AND THE CROWD GOES WILD...

"I WAS A LINEMAN FOR THE COUNTY. GOT HIT BY LIGHTNING WHEN I WAS CLIMBING THE HIGH-VOLTS. I SHOULDA DIED.
"I WAS DEAD TO THE ELECTRIC COMPANY. THEY CLAIMED I WAS OFF THE CLOCK. DENIED MY BENEFITS. AND FIRED ME.
"THEY THOUGHT THE ACCIDENT BROKE ME... BUT IT CHARGED ME UP. I STARTED THROWING THUNDERBOLTS AROUND.


"SO I PUT ON A MASK AND STARTED A LITTLE...PERSONAL RESTITUTION PROGRAM. FIGURED I WAS OWED, RIGHT?
"GUYS LIKE SPIDER-MAN AND DAREDEVIL GOT IN THE WAY MOST OF THE TIME...BUT I STILL MANAGED TO MAKE A DECENT LIVING.
"LATELY, THOUGH... LATELY, THE POWER'S BEEN ACTING UP. WON'T STAY STEADY ENOUGH FOR ME TO STAND AND FIGHT.


"SOMETIMES I'M BURSTING, SOMETIMES I'M A DEAD BATTERY."

MY SISTER WAS A DIABETIC WHO ALWAYS HAD A TOUGH TIME MANAGING HER *INSULIN*. THAT'S HOW I FEEL ABOUT STAYING *RECHARGED*, Y'KNOW?

I UNDERSTAND, MR. DILLON, BUT I HAVEN'T TIME TO WASTE BEING YOUR *THERAPIST*. CHARGE THE *EQUIPMENT*.

GENE SEQUENCERS ARE NOW ONLINE AND FUNCTIONAL, THINKER.

THANK YOU, ANNIE. MONITOR THEIR PROGRESS.

I'M FORESEEING A 3.7 PERCENT RISK OF SPONTANEOUS METABOLIC FUSION. KEEP ME APPRISED.

WHAT... *HNNNH*...WHAT ABOUT *ME?*

IT'S MY *BIOCHEMISTRY*, THINKER. IT'S GOING SOUR WITH AGE.

PLEASE... YOU GOTTA *HELP* ME. YOU SAID YOU CAN *CURE* ME. I'M HELPING *YOU...!*

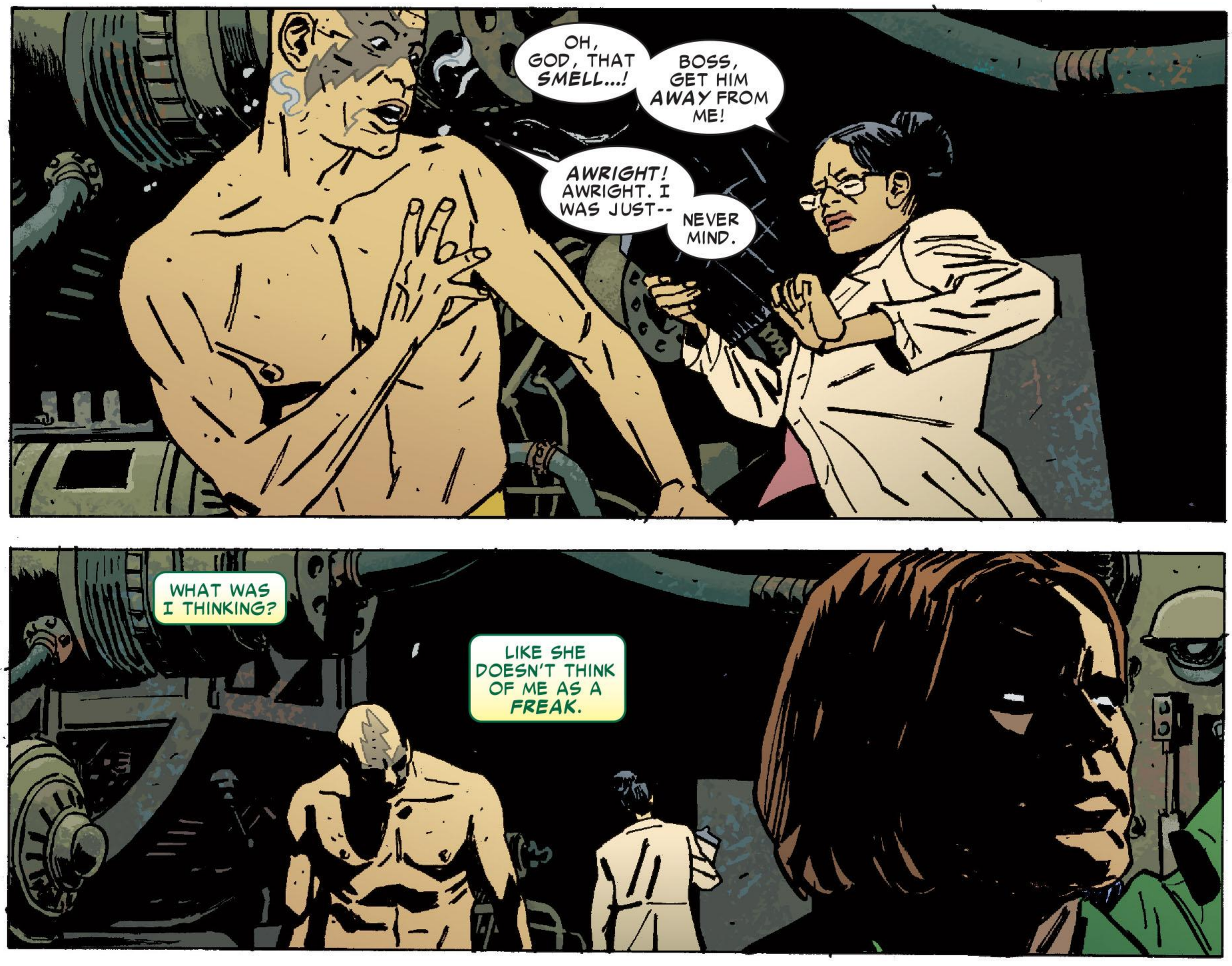
THIS? THIS IS FOR ROOM AND *BOARD*, MAX. I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, THE OPERATION *YOU* WANT WOULD COST UPWARDS OF A *MILLION*.

DO YOU *HAVE* A MILLION PUT AWAY, MR. DILLON?

YOU KNOW I DON'T!
I DON'T HAVE A DIME!
MY LIFE SAVINGS ARE GONE! SWALLOWED BY THOSE FAT PIGS ON WALL STREET!
I WAS SMART ENOUGH TO SHELTER MY TAKE FROM THE FEDS ALL THESE YEARS, AND SO WHAT? NOW SOME RICH BANKER IS SITTING ON IT!

OH--!
I--I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO GO OFF LIKE THAT! DON'T BE SCARED! I WOULDN'T HURT YOU! I LIKE YOU!
PLEASE, MR. DILLON...!

IS IT THE BEARD? I CAN SHAVE FOR YOU! SEE?
KZZKT


OH, GOD, THAT SMELL...!
BOSS, GET HIM AWAY FROM ME!
AWRIGHT! AWRIGHT. I WAS JUST--
NEVER MIND.
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
LIKE SHE DOESN'T THINK OF ME AS A FREAK.

IT'S NOT FAIR.

NO, WORSE. IT'S *CRIMINAL.*

HOW I GET CALLED A *CROOK* WHEN CORPORATE SLEAZEBALLS ARE *OPENLY ROBBING* THIS COUNTRY AT *EVERYONE'S* EXPENSE.

MOMMY, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT MAN?

HUSH.

WHY'ZE WEARIN' A *RUBBER COAT* WHEN IT'S SO HOT?

I SAID, *HUSH.*

STEALING OUR *FUTURE.*

THEY'RE THE ONES WHO OUGHTA BE PAYING...

The NY Times

IS THE DB SPECIAL? GOV. THINKS SO

--NOT ME!

AAAAAAH!

AND I KNOW JUST HOW TO MAKE THAT *HAPPEN.*

Monday.
CITY HALL.

HOW MANY NEWS STATIONS ARE COVERING THIS?

PRETTY MUCH ALL OF THEM, MAYOR JAMESON, SIR--LOCAL AND NATIONAL.

"BENNETT BAILOUT OUTRAGE" SEEMS TO BE THE MOST COMMON TERM FOR IT.

I DO, SIR.

AND WELL-EARNED--NOT A WORD USUALLY APPLIED TO DEXTER BENNETT! YOU KNOW, THAT USED TO BE MY NEWSPAPER!

THE DAILY BUGLE! NEW YORK'S PAPER OF RECORD! BENNETT PRACTICALLY STOLE IT OUT FROM UNDER ME, TURNED IT INTO THAT TABLOID RAG HE CALLS THE "DB!"...

...AND RAN IT INTO THE GROUND BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW A BUDGET WORKS! THIS IS A MEDIA MOMENT!

RECORD THIS!

WHICH STATION, SIR?

ALL OF 'EM! GET EVERY FRAME OF EVERY FEED, BECAUSE THIS IS HOW I PLAN TO SPEND MY RETIREMENT SOMEDAY--

--WATCHING BENNETT'S HUMILIATION OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND--

BILL, WE'VE GOT SOME BREAKING NEWS ON ANOTHER STORY BREWING--THIS ONE'S ALSO IN THE CITY'S FINANCIAL DISTRICT!

IS THAT...?

IT IS! IT'S ELECTRO! WHAT'S HE DOING IN TOWN?

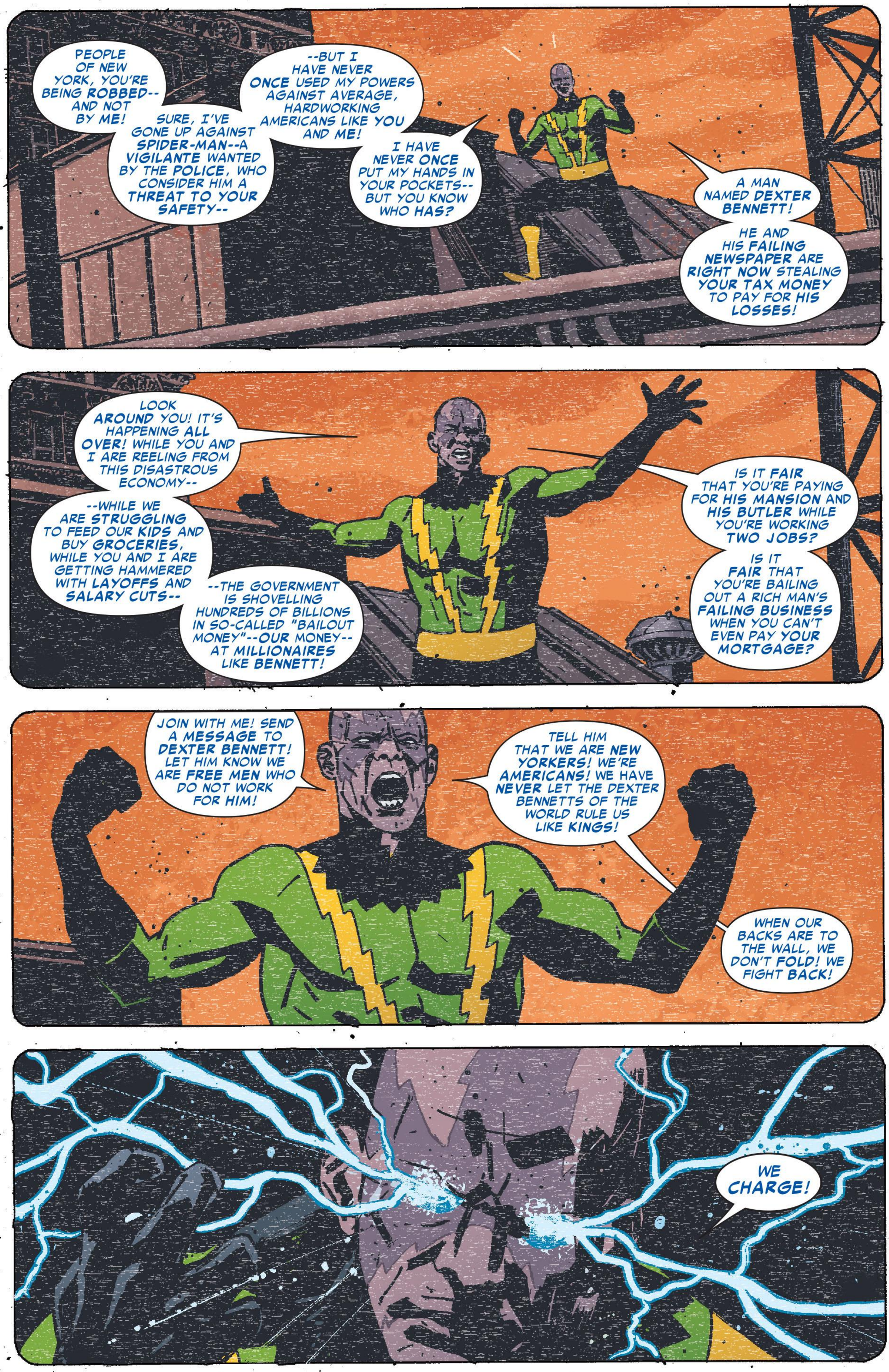
TELL COMMISSIONER VALENTIN TO PUT OUT AN ALL-POINTS BULLETIN ON THAT PSYCHOPATH--

--AND TURN UP THE VOLUME!

ROOFTOP RANT

--TRACKING A NEW VIRAL VIDEO THAT'S JUST BEEN RELEASED ON THE WEB AND HAS ALREADY CLOCKED OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSANDS HITS!

SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT THIS SELF-STYLED PUBLIC AVENGER HAS TO SAY!


PEOPLE OF NEW YORK, YOU'RE BEING ROBBED-- AND NOT BY ME!
SURE, I'VE GONE UP AGAINST SPIDER-MAN--A VIGILANTE WANTED BY THE POLICE, WHO CONSIDER HIM A THREAT TO YOUR SAFETY--
--BUT I HAVE NEVER ONCE USED MY POWERS AGAINST AVERAGE, HARDWORKING AMERICANS LIKE YOU AND ME!
I HAVE NEVER ONCE PUT MY HANDS IN YOUR POCKETS-- BUT YOU KNOW WHO HAS?
A MAN NAMED DEXTER BENNETT!
HE AND HIS FAILING NEWSPAPER ARE RIGHT NOW STEALING YOUR TAX MONEY TO PAY FOR HIS LOSSES!
LOOK AROUND YOU! IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER! WHILE YOU AND I ARE REELING FROM THIS DISASTROUS ECONOMY--
--WHILE WE ARE STRUGGLING TO FEED OUR KIDS AND BUY GROCERIES, WHILE YOU AND I ARE GETTING HAMMERED WITH LAYOFFS AND SALARY CUTS--
--THE GOVERNMENT IS SHOVELLING HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS IN SO-CALLED "BAILOUT MONEY"--OUR MONEY-- AT MILLIONAIRES LIKE BENNETT!
IS IT FAIR THAT YOU'RE PAYING FOR HIS MANSION AND HIS BUTLER WHILE YOU'RE WORKING TWO JOBS?
IS IT FAIR THAT YOU'RE BAILING OUT A RICH MAN'S FAILING BUSINESS WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN PAY YOUR MORTGAGE?
JOIN WITH ME! SEND A MESSAGE TO DEXTER BENNETT! LET HIM KNOW WE ARE FREE MEN WHO DO NOT WORK FOR HIM!
TELL HIM THAT WE ARE NEW YORKERS! WE'RE AMERICANS! WE HAVE NEVER LET THE DEXTER BENNETTS OF THE WORLD RULE US LIKE KINGS!
WHEN OUR BACKS ARE TO THE WALL, WE DON'T FOLD! WE FIGHT BACK!
WE CHARGE!

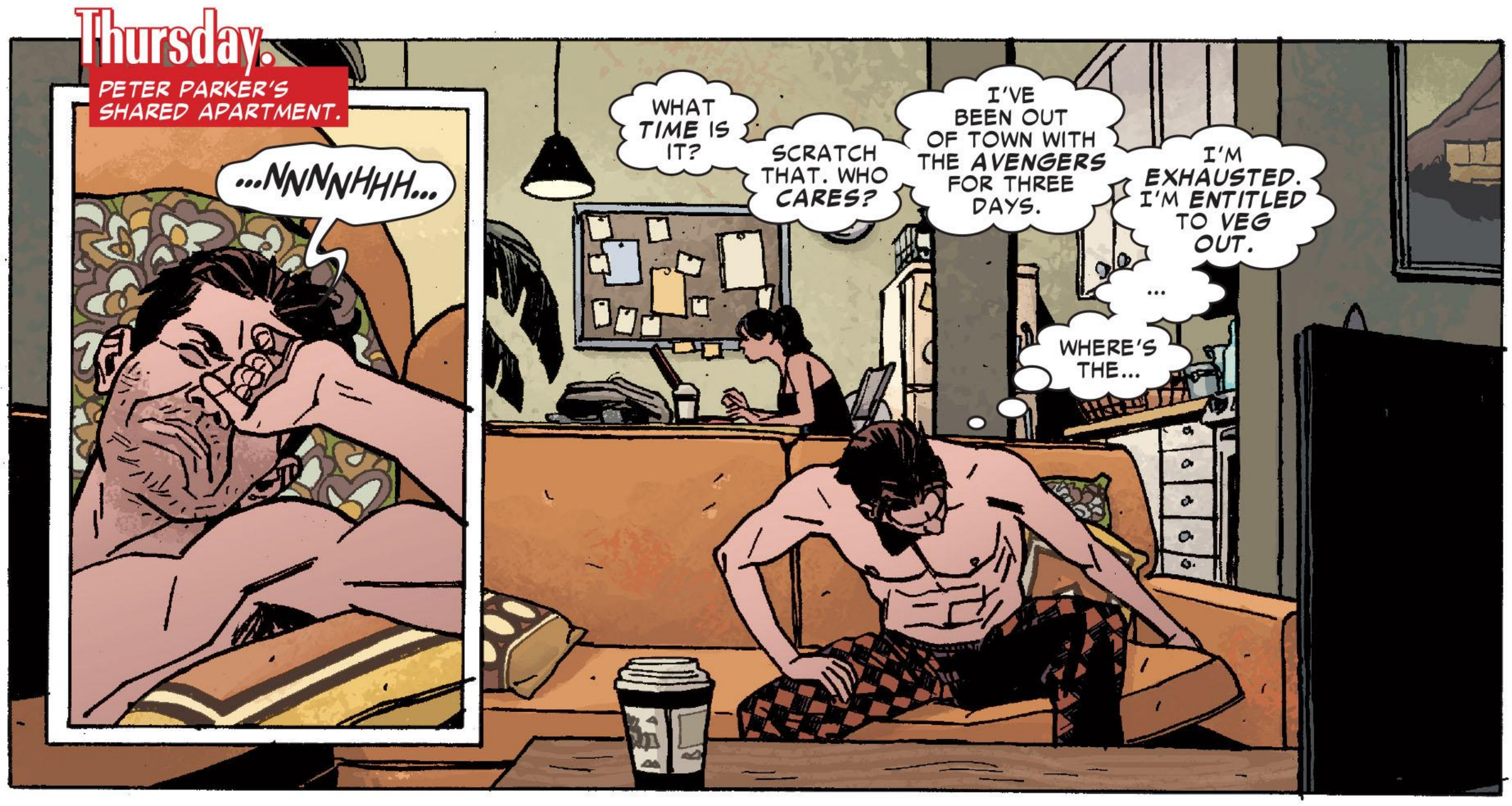
Tuesday.
HERE YA GO, CHARLIE! HOT OFF THE PRESS!
WHAT? NO! I CALLED ABOUT THIS! NO MORE DB!
THE DB
THE DB

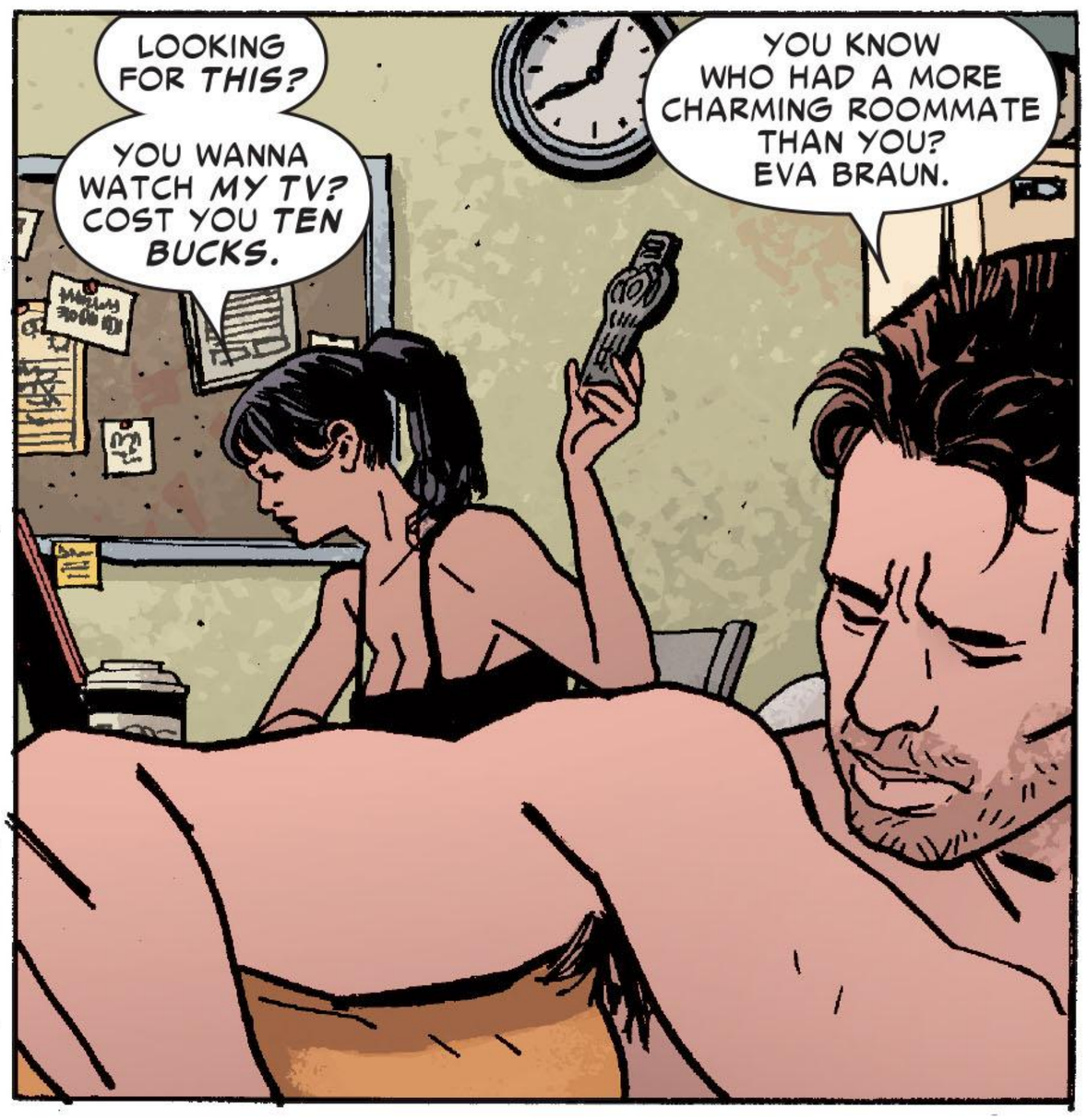
TAKE BACK YOUR TRASH RAG!
I AIN'T SELLIN' IT NO MORE AND NEITHER IS ANYBODY ELSE ON THIS STREET!
I HOPE ELECTRO PUTS YOU LEECHES OUTTA BUSINESS!

Wednesday.
THE DB
YOU BROKE IT? YOU BOUGHT IT!
YOU BROKE IT? YOU BOUGHT IT!
YOU BROKE IT? YOU BOUGHT IT!

GIVE UP YOUR SALARY, BENNETT--NOT MINE!
SHARE THE WEALTH
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "FREE PRESS"?
PRINT THAT IN YOUR PAPER, YOU THIEF!
BAIL FAIL
THE DB HATES BLACK PEOPLE
GREED GREED GREED
THE DB NAY!

STOP CORPORATE GREED!
STOP CORPORATE GREED! STOP CORPORATE GREED!


Thursday.
PETER PARKER'S SHARED APARTMENT.
...NNNHHH...
WHAT TIME IS IT?
SCRATCH THAT. WHO CARES?
I'VE BEEN OUT OF TOWN WITH THE AVENGERS FOR THREE DAYS.
I'M EXHAUSTED. I'M ENTITLED TO VEG OUT.
...
WHERE'S THE...


LOOKING FOR THIS?
YOU WANNA WATCH MY TV? COST YOU TEN BUCKS.
YOU KNOW WHO HAD A MORE CHARMING ROOMMATE THAN YOU? EVA BRAUN.

÷YAWN÷
YOU COULD BAKE A POTATO IN THIS PLACE, MICHELE. I'M GONNA TAKE A COLD SHOWER.
FIVE BUCKS.
OR MAYBE JUST SIT IN FRONT OF THE FAN.
SEVEN.

SATAN! YOU'RE SATAN! WHAT, ARE YOU SAVING UP FOR A NEW PITCHFORK?
AT LEAST I CAN HOLD MY LIQUOR.
...AAAAAND WE'RE BACK TO THAT!

FOR THE *MILLIONTH TIME*, I WAS STARING DOWN THE FIGURATIVE BARREL OF MY *EX-GIRLFRIEND* THAT NIGHT!

I HAVE *NEVER* BEEN DRUNK *BEFORE*, AND I WILL NEVER, *EVER* BE DRUNK *AGAIN!*

NOR WERE YOU DRUNK *THEN.*

AT AUNT MAY'S WEDDING RECEPTION IN ISSUE #601 *--BARTENDER STEVE*

WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? I WAS *THERE!* I HAD, LIKE, A *DOZEN--*

ELEVEN.

--TWELVE--

ELEVEN.

--GLASSES OF--

APPLE-GINGER ALE.

"YOU WERE SO NERVOUS AND OUT OF IT AFTER A *HALF-GLASS* OF *BUBBLY*, YOU NEVER EVEN *NOTICED* I WAS FILLING YOUR FLUTE WITH *SODA*."

CHUMP.

"AT FIRST, I WAS DOING IT TO BE *NICE* AND KEEP YOU SOBER IN FRONT OF *WHAT'S-HER-NAME...*

"...BUT IT WAS SO ENTERTAINING TO WATCH YOU *THINK* YOU WERE GETTING MORE *PLOWED*, I JUST KEPT *POURING*."

MARY JANE! --USHER STEVE.

HOW ENTERTAINING?

I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYONE TRY THE *MACARENA* SINCE *JUNIOR HIGH.*

BUT I WAS *HUNG OVER* THE NEXT DAY...

SAYS THE GUY WHO'S NEVER BEEN *DRUNK*. IT WAS *NERVES*. MAYBE YOU CAUGHT A *COLD*.

I APPRECIATE YOUR TELLING ME.

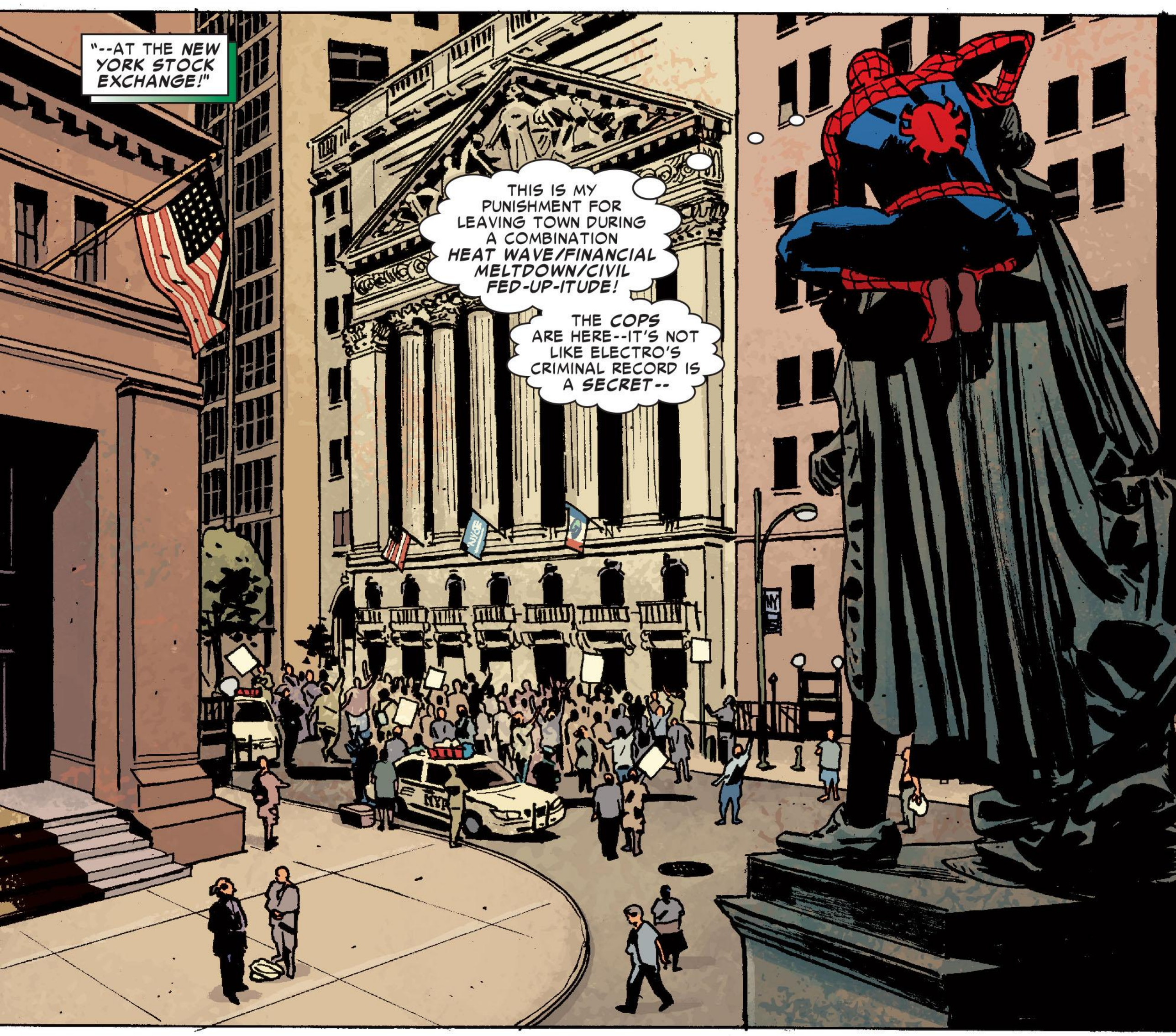
THAT'LL BE *TWENTY* BUCKS.

PUT IT ON MY T--

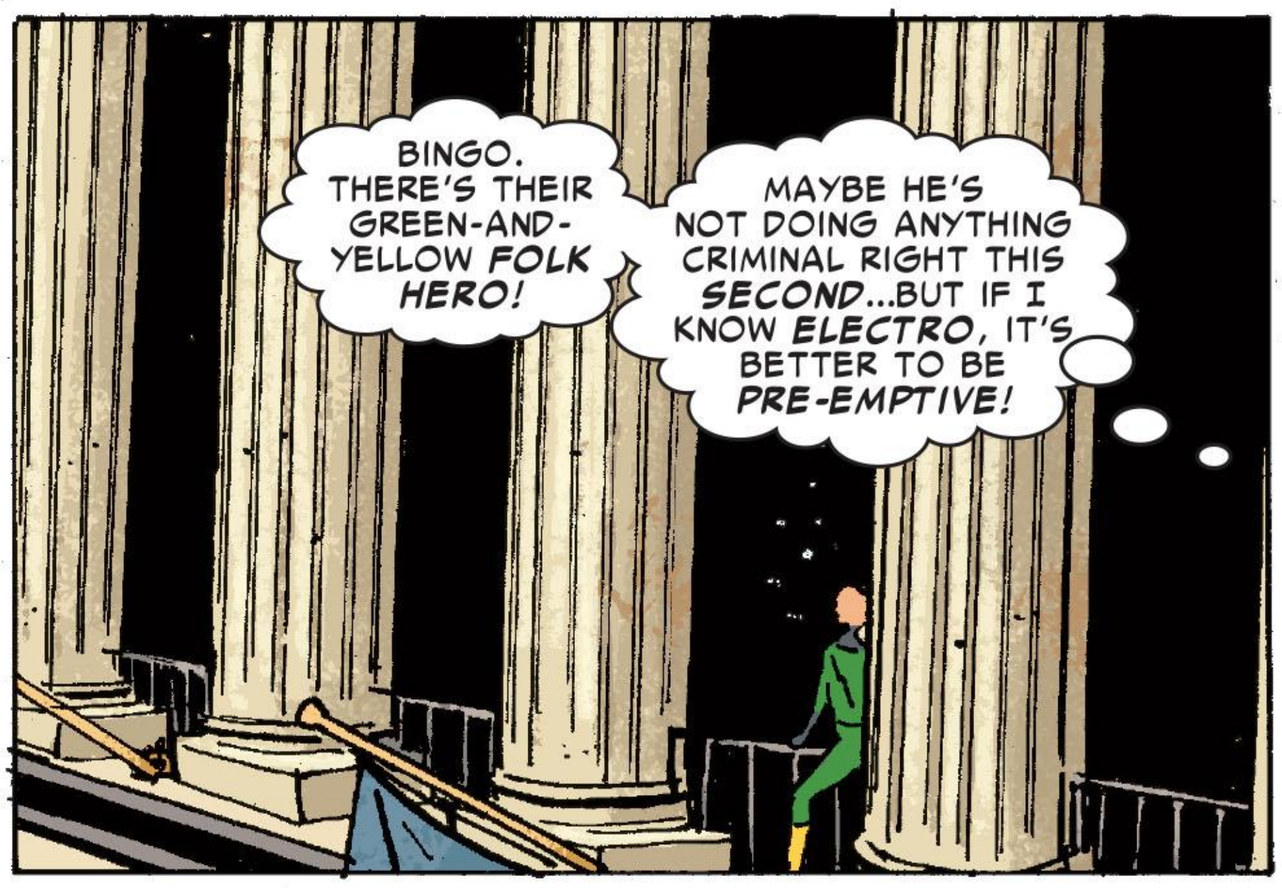
HANG ON. IS THAT *ELECTRO?* HE HAS A *VIDEO?*

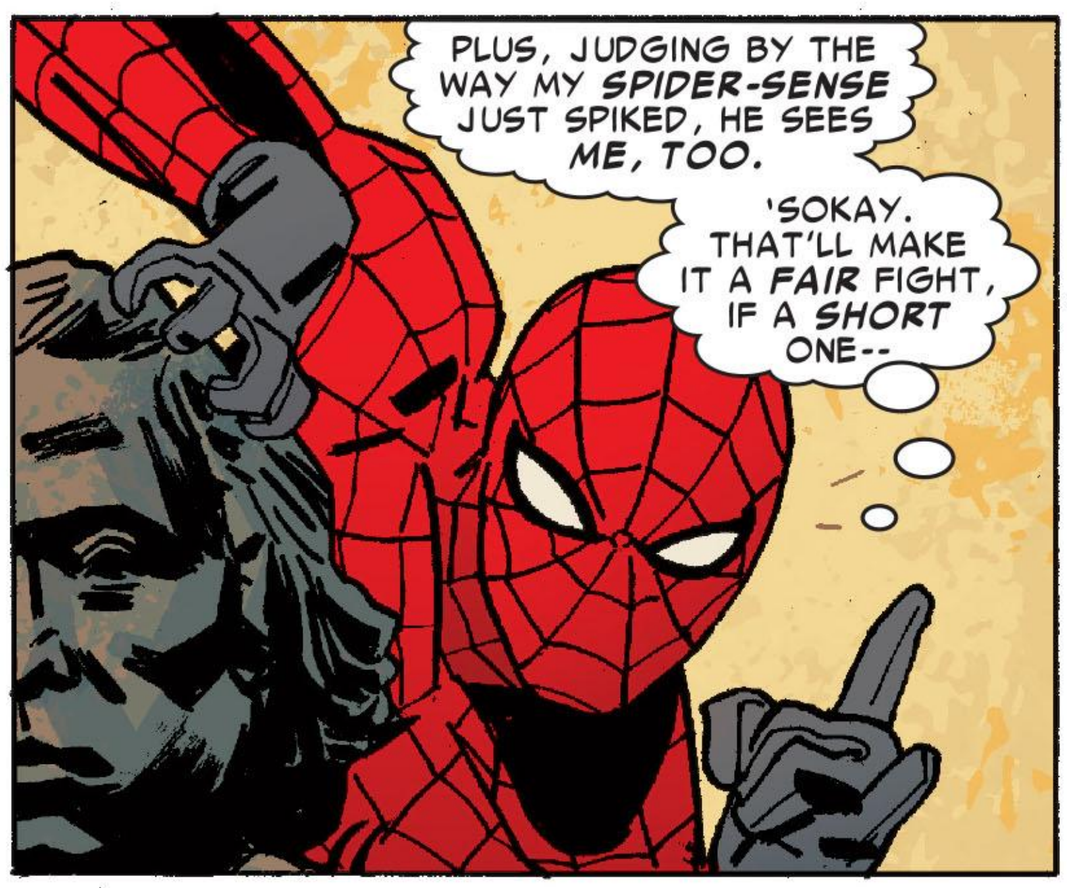
A *SERIES*. *"POWER TO THE PEOPLE."* HE'S GOT THE WHOLE CITY EATING OUT OF HIS HANDS!

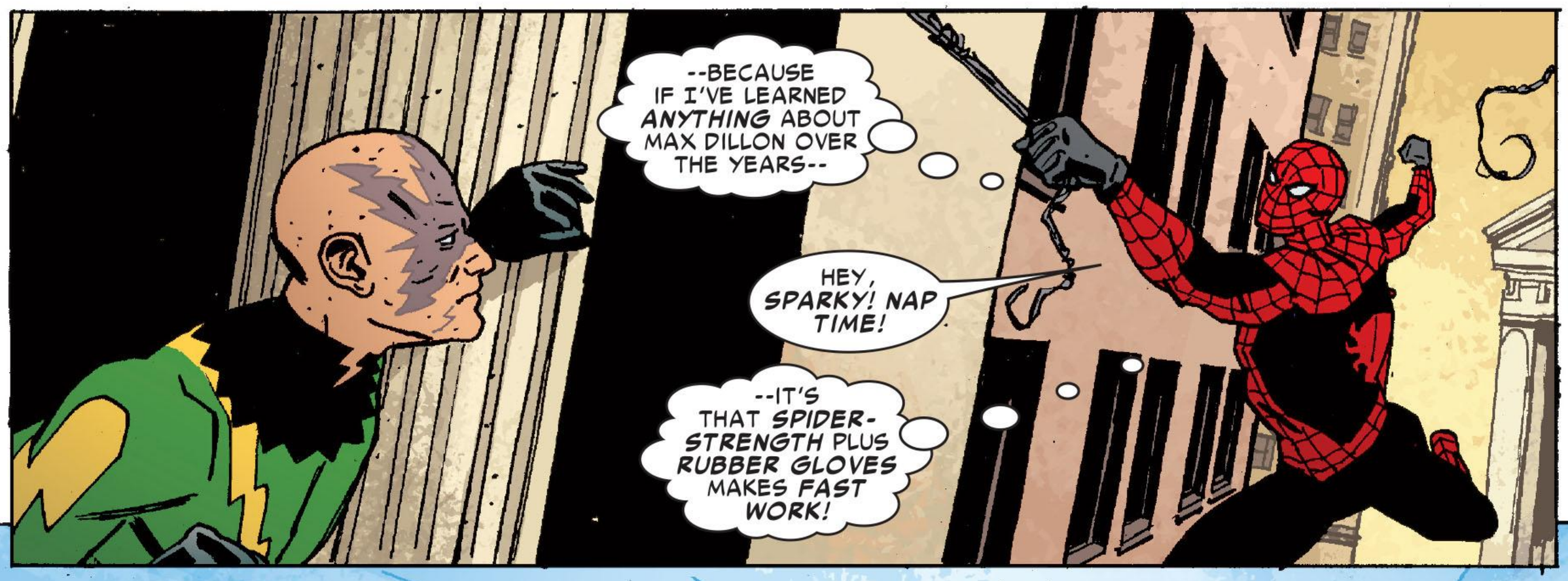
HE'S BEEN CALLING FOR *PROTEST MARCHES*, AND THEY'RE GETTING *BIGGER* AND *BIGGER*. IN FACT, ONE'S GOING ON *RIGHT NOW--*

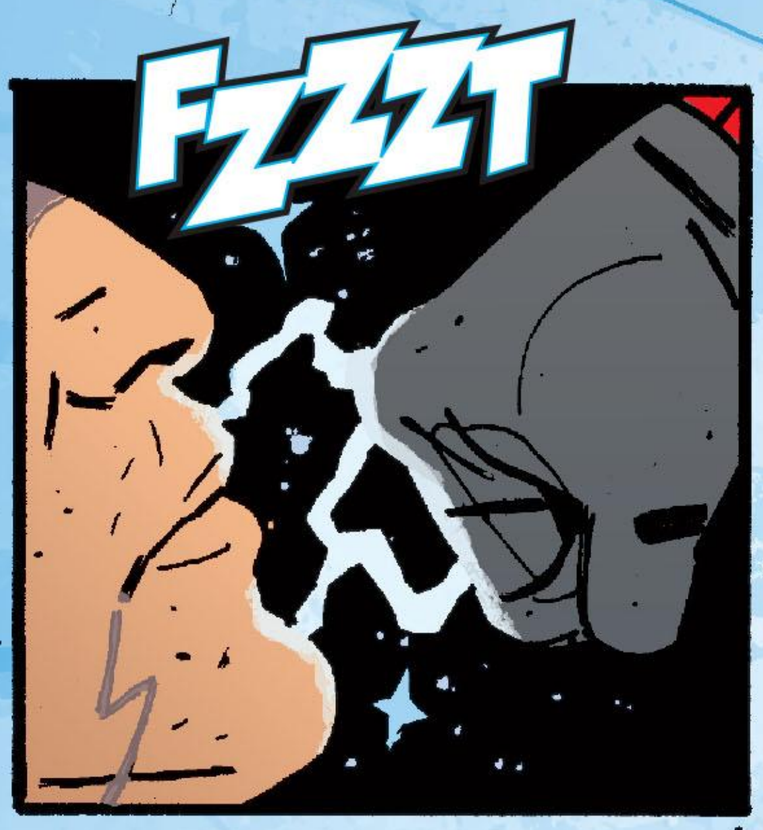

"--AT THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE!"
THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT FOR LEAVING TOWN DURING A COMBINATION HEAT WAVE/FINANCIAL MELTDOWN/CIVIL FED-UP-ITUDE!
THE COPS ARE HERE--IT'S NOT LIKE ELECTRO'S CRIMINAL RECORD IS A SECRET--

--BUT A MOB THAT ANGRY DOESN'T MUCH CARE!
WILL YOU
IN ELECTRO WE

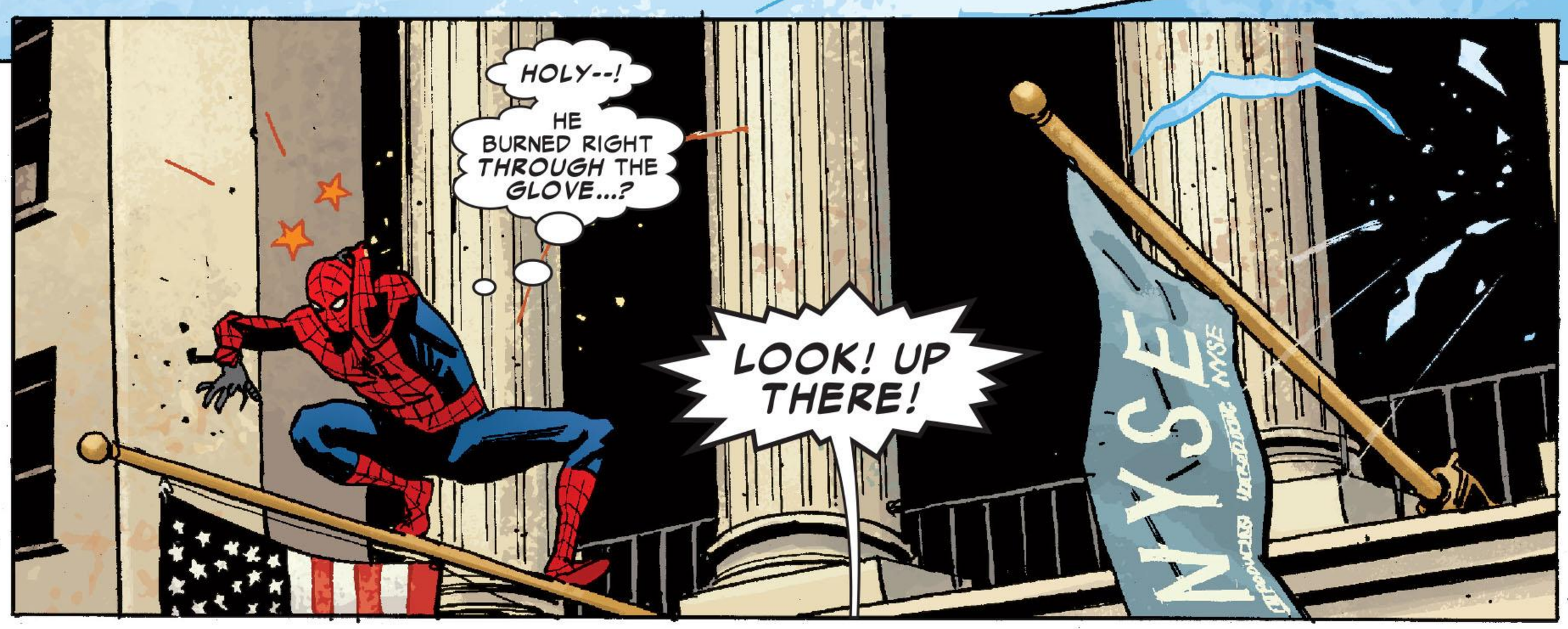

BINGO. THERE'S THEIR GREEN-AND-YELLOW FOLK HERO!
MAYBE HE'S NOT DOING ANYTHING CRIMINAL RIGHT THIS SECOND...BUT IF I KNOW ELECTRO, IT'S BETTER TO BE PRE-EMPTIVE!


PLUS, JUDGING BY THE WAY MY SPIDER-SENSE JUST SPIKED, HE SEES ME, TOO.
'SOKAY. THAT'LL MAKE IT A FAIR FIGHT, IF A SHORT ONE--


--BECAUSE IF I'VE LEARNED ANYTHING ABOUT MAX DILLON OVER THE YEARS--
HEY, SPARKY! NAP TIME!
--IT'S THAT SPIDER-STRENGTH PLUS RUBBER GLOVES MAKES FAST WORK!


FZZZT

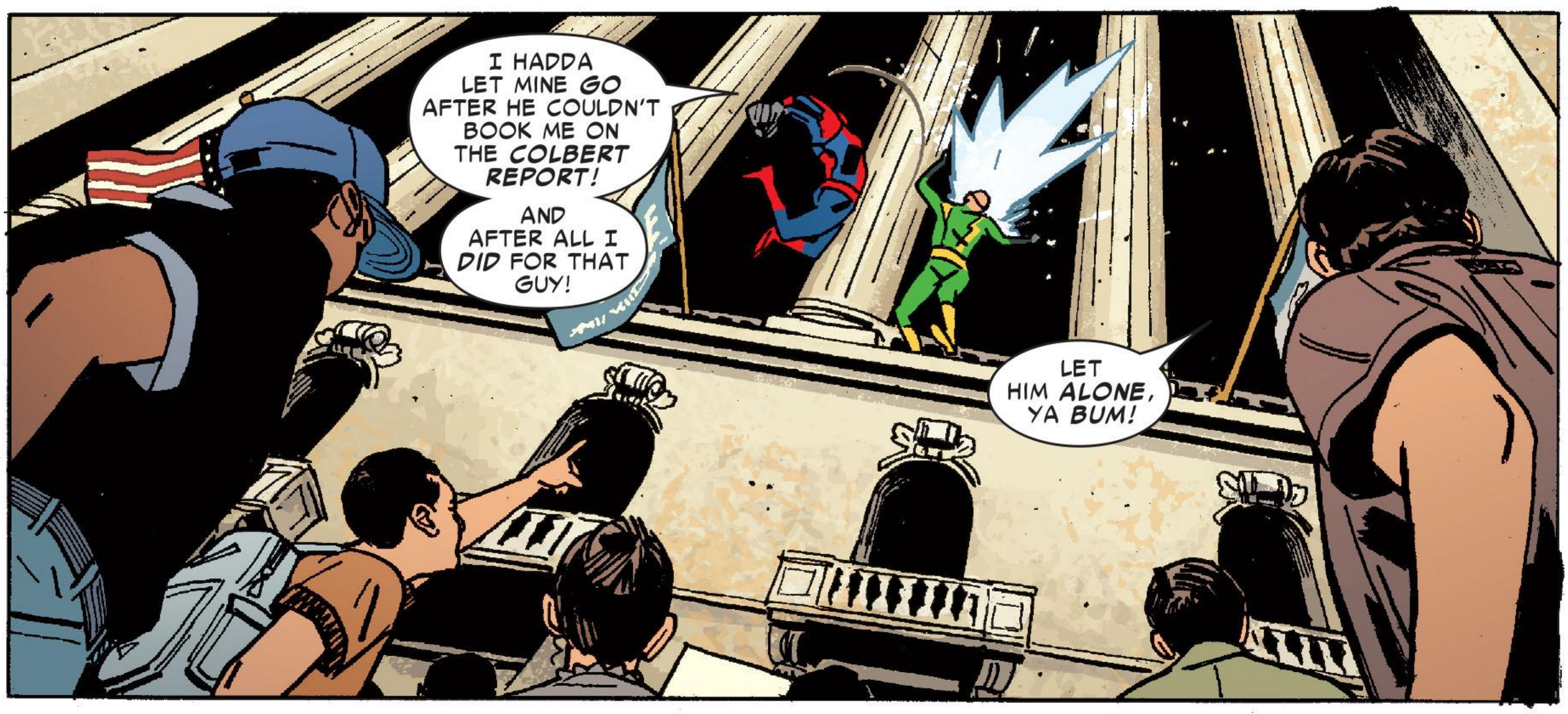
KA-
KRAK!
NOT THIS TIME, SPIDER-MAN!

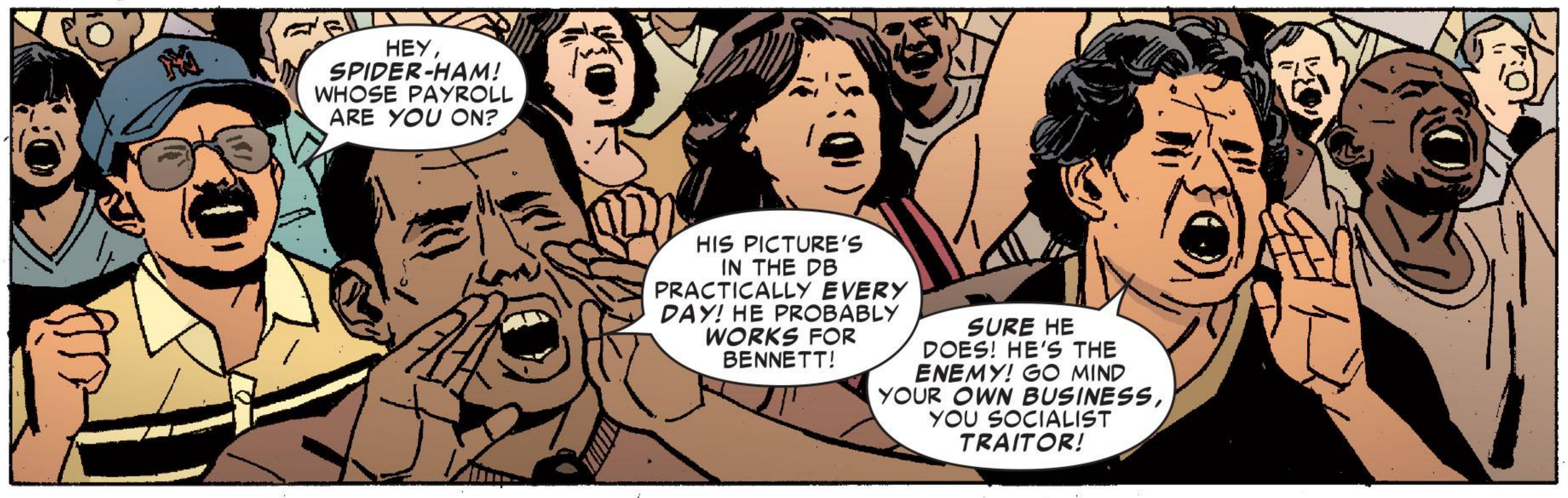

HOLY--!
HE BURNED RIGHT THROUGH THE GLOVE...?
LOOK! UP THERE!
NYSE

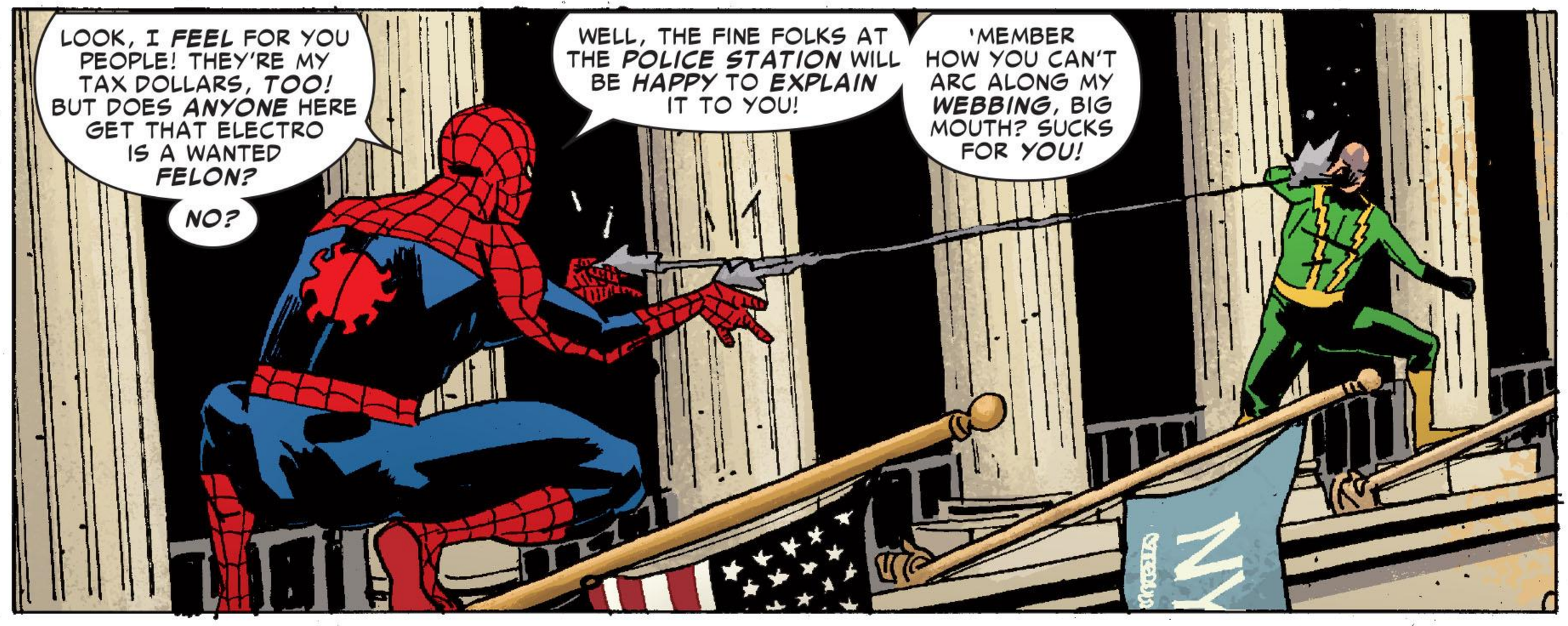
HE'LL SAVE US!
DARN RIGHT I--
GO, ELECTRO!
NERTZ.
UNNHH...
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

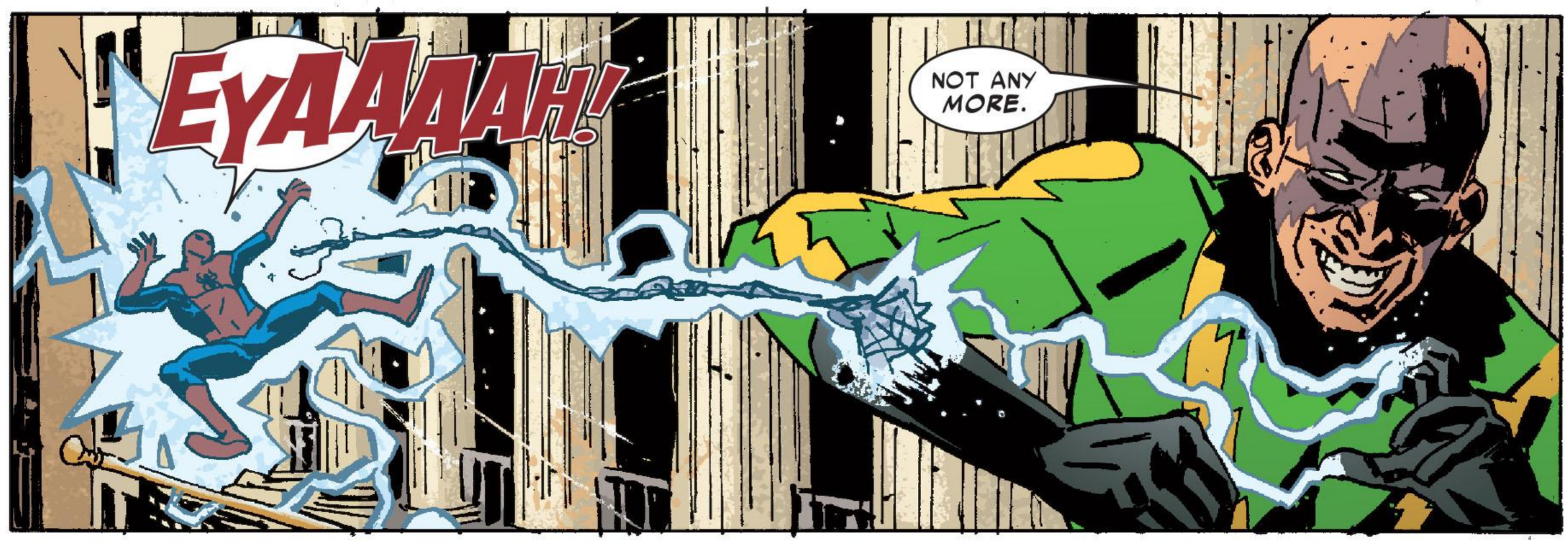
POWER TO THE PEOPLE! POWER TO THE PEOPLE!
LOOKING A LITTLE PEAKED THERE, SPARKY! I WILL SAY THIS, THOUGH--

--I WISH I HAD YOUR PRESS AGENT!
÷HNNGH!÷


I HADDA LET MINE GO AFTER HE COULDN'T BOOK ME ON THE COLBERT REPORT!
AND AFTER ALL I DID FOR THAT GUY!
LET HIM ALONE, YA BUM!


HEY, SPIDER-HAM! WHOSE PAYROLL ARE YOU ON?
HIS PICTURE'S IN THE DB PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY! HE PROBABLY WORKS FOR BENNETT!
SURE HE DOES! HE'S THE ENEMY! GO MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, YOU SOCIALIST TRAITOR!


LOOK, I FEEL FOR YOU PEOPLE! THEY'RE MY TAX DOLLARS, TOO! BUT DOES ANYONE HERE GET THAT ELECTRO IS A WANTED FELON?
NO?
WELL, THE FINE FOLKS AT THE POLICE STATION WILL BE HAPPY TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU!
'MEMBER HOW YOU CAN'T ARC ALONG MY WEBBING, BIG MOUTH? SUCKS FOR YOU!


EYAAAAH!
NOT ANY MORE.

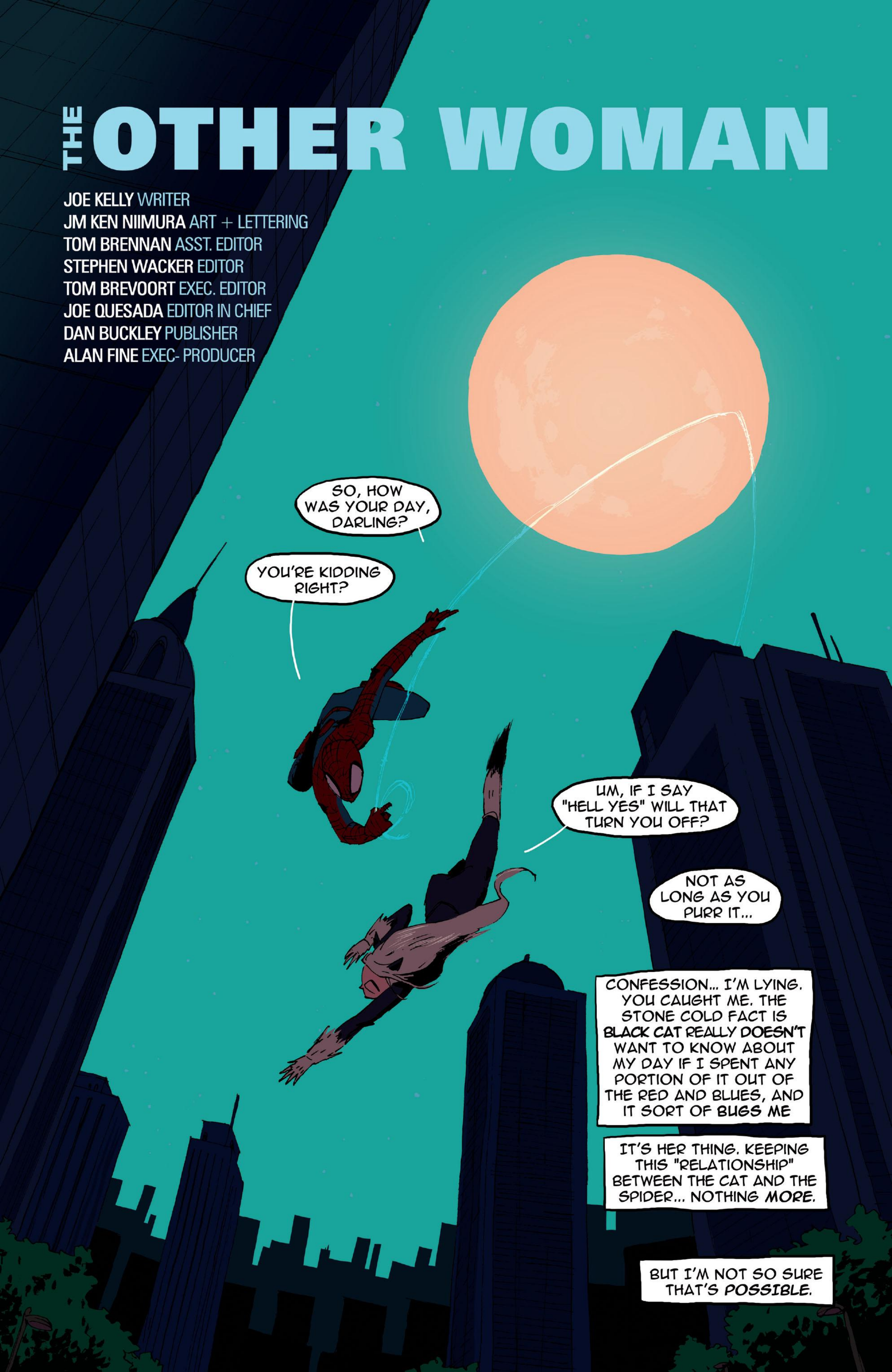
WAKE UP, NEW YORK!

YOU WANT TO SHOW WALL STREET WHO REALLY HAS THE POWER?
WHAT HAPPENS TO BENNETT'S HIRED GUNS WHEN THEY MUSCLE IN TO SHUT YOU DOWN?

IN ELECTRO WE TRUST!
SEND A MESSAGE, NEW YORK!
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!
WHAT ABOUT US?
DOWN WITH DEXTER BENNETT
TO BE CONTINUED!

THE OTHER WOMAN

JOE KELLY WRITER
JM KEN NIIMURA ART + LETTERING
TOM BRENNAN ASST. EDITOR
STEPHEN WACKER EDITOR
TOM BREVOORT EXEC. EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER
ALAN FINE EXEC- PRODUCER



I CAN SEE HER POINT – THE WHOLE SECRET IDENTITY THING CAN BE A MAJOR DRAG...

NNG! DON'T WORRY, I WASN'T USING THOSE RIBS...

ESPECIALLY AT RUSH HOUR. DOWNTOWN. WHEN YOU'RE MEETING SOMEONE ON THE *STREET* AND DROPPING FROM THE SKY IN WEB-COVERED PAJAMAS MIGHT RAISE EYEBROWS.

PETER!

HEY, TIGER! GIVING THE STOCK MARKET A GO TODAY?

OR, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVING AN *EX* WHO YOU MIGHT RANDOMLY BUMP INTO... MARY JANE WATSON.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL I EVER LOST.

DIDN'T YOU HEAR? "PARKER STOCK" IS GOING THROUGH THE ROOF.

SMART MAN.

I'M GONNA SELL ALL MY SHARES AND RETIRE FROM THE *ME* BUSINESS. MOVING INTO "SMITHS." THEY NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE.

THEN SHE SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT MEETING THE PRODUCER OF HER TV SHOW... BUT I DON'T HEAR A WORD SHE'S SAYING.

EVEN THOUGH I'M WATCHING HER LIPS THE WHOLE TIME.

SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT I AM ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING STUPID LIKE, "LET'S GET DINNER RIGHT NOW AT 10 AM--"

SPLSHHHH

WHEN THE *UNIVERSE* STOPS ME FROM EMBARRASSING MYSELF.

PETER!

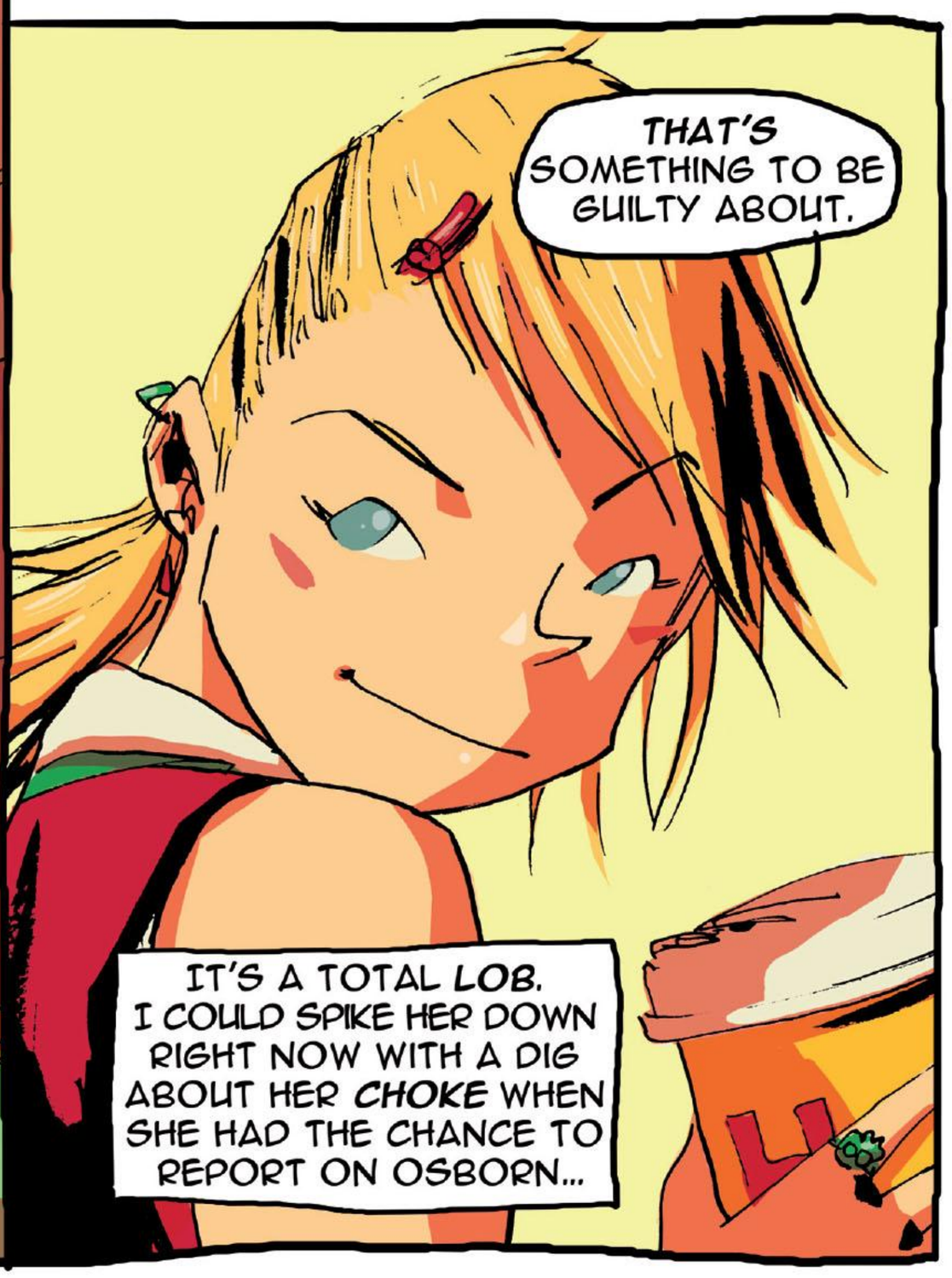
THANKS *UNIVERSE*. YOU'RE A REAL *PAL*.

SO BACK TO THE WHOLE SECRET IDENTITY BIZ...

...EVEN THOUGH I SHOULD KNOW BETTER... I POKE. TO SEE WHAT GIVES.
THOUGH SHE DID OPEN A CAN OF TRIPLE STRENGTH WHUP ASS ON THESE GUYS AS SOON AS I MENTIONED IT... SO MAYBE...
THWACK
SWEETHEART, YOU COULD TELL ME YOU RAN INTO YOUR WIFE TODAY--
I SAW AN OLD GIRLFRIEND TODAY.
S'NO MY BUSINESS, BABY.
MMF?
I THINK THE LADY DOTH PROTEST TOO MUCH...
SO LONG AS WHEN YOU'RE WITH ME, YOU'RE WITH ME.
...YOU CAN SPEND TIME WITH WHOMEVER.
WHY, SPIDER, I DO BELIEVE YOU'RE TRYING TO GET ME JEALOUS.
SMOOTH... SUE STORM ISN'T THIS TRANSPARENT.
WUKT
MAYBE SHE DOES GET JEALOUS... MAYBE--

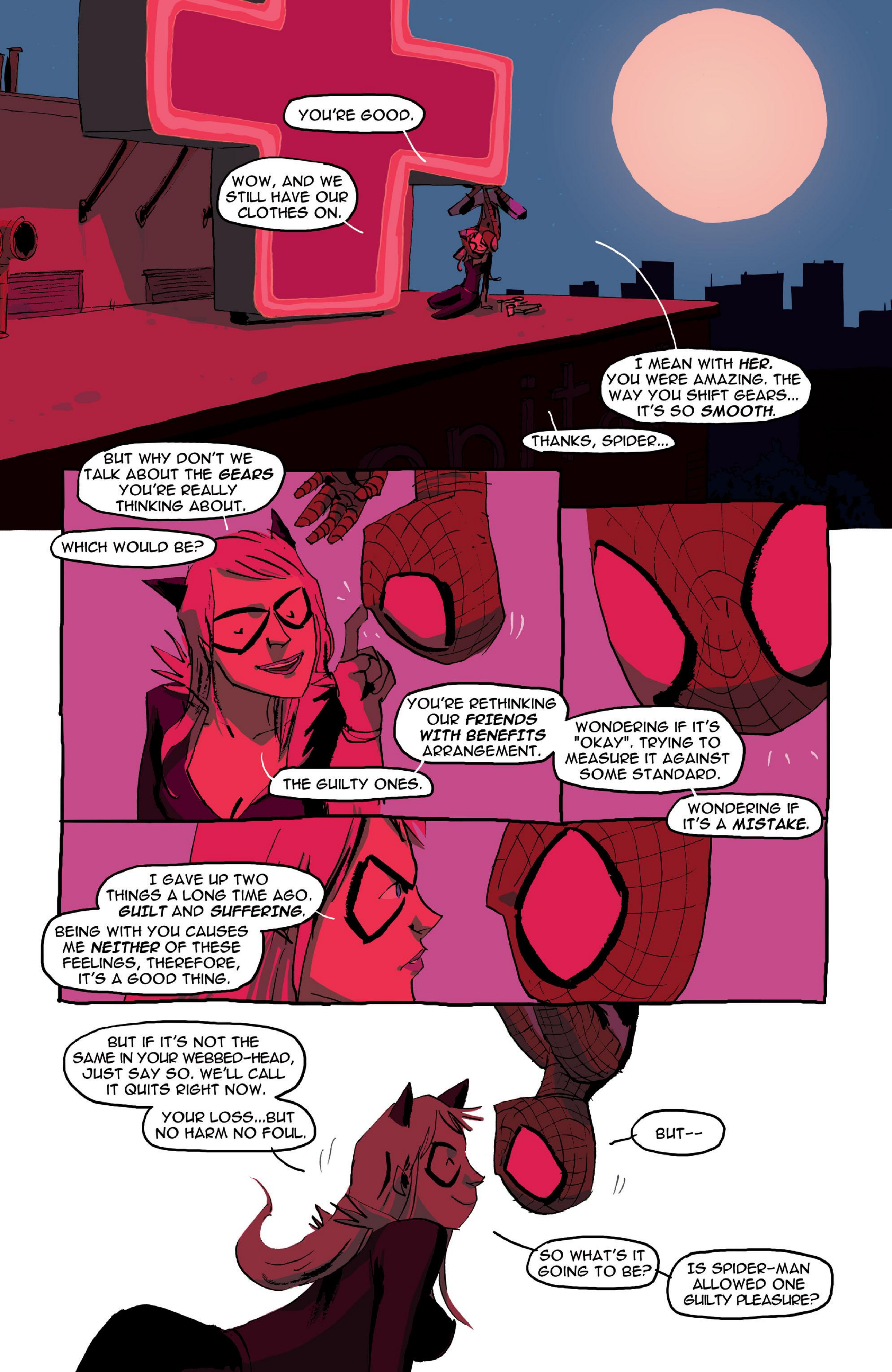
IS "WHOMEVER" PROPER ENGLISH? I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU GET A LOT MORE GRAMMATICAL WHENEVER YOU'RE JEALOUS?
IT'S OVER.
MAYBE... I'M A HELL OF A LOT MORE SELF-CENTERED THAN I THINK.
THEY WON'T TOUCH YOU AGAIN. EVER.
I'M PUNCHING GUYS IN THE FACE TRYING TO MIND-READ MY FWB...
...AND SHE'S TOTALLY FOCUSED ON THE GOAL.
I PROMISE. COME OUT AND WE'LL GET YOU SOME HELP.
ONE SECOND, SHE'S EVERY GUY'S FANTASY COME TO LIFE AND TOO HOT TO BE TRUE...
LASERAW
...AND IN AN INSTANT, SHE TRANSFORMS INTO A CRISIS COUNSELLOR, WHO WILL GET THIS WOMAN THE HELP SHE NEEDS COME HELL OR HIGH WATER.

IT'S COMPLICATED, NORAH.
NO IT ISN'T.
YOU MAKE THE "SPECIAL HUG" WITH SOME BIMB WHO DOESN'T WANT MORE, THAT'S THAT. NO GUILT. YOU CAN SEE WHOEV WHENEV.
THE FACT THAT YOU'RE SHILLING FOR JAMESON WHEN YOU SHOULD BE BLOWING UP HIS SPOT...


THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE GUILTY ABOUT.
IT'S A TOTAL LOB. I COULD SPIKE HER DOWN RIGHT NOW WITH A DIG ABOUT HER CHOKE WHEN SHE HAD THE CHANCE TO REPORT ON OSBORN...

BUT THEN SHE NORAHS ME.
BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU EVER PICTURED ME NAKED?
I- WHAT--?
AND AM I SANS OR AVEC DESERT TOPPING?

AND IT'S THAT SPLIT-SECOND OF HORMONE POISONING THAT MAKES ME IGNORE THE SPIDEY SENSE AND--
BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT NORAH. I DON'T THINK... MAYBE...
I AM SO MESSED IN THE HEAD.

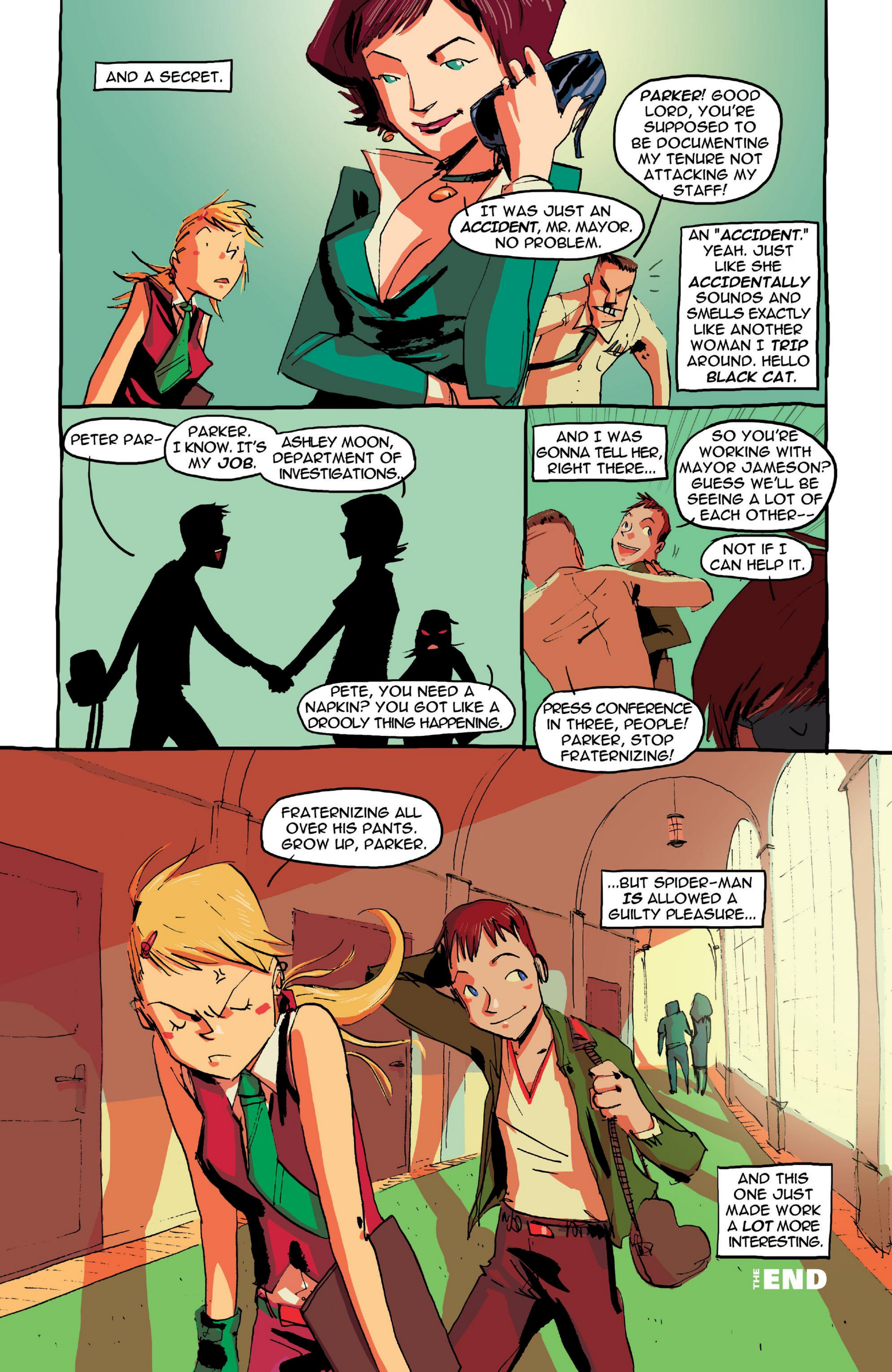

YOU'RE GOOD.
WOW, AND WE STILL HAVE OUR CLOTHES ON.
I MEAN WITH HER. YOU WERE AMAZING. THE WAY YOU SHIFT GEARS... IT'S SO SMOOTH.
THANKS, SPIDER...
BUT WHY DON'T WE TALK ABOUT THE GEARS YOU'RE REALLY THINKING ABOUT.
WHICH WOULD BE?
YOU'RE RETHINKING OUR FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS ARRANGEMENT.
THE GUILTY ONES.
WONDERING IF IT'S "OKAY". TRYING TO MEASURE IT AGAINST SOME STANDARD.
WONDERING IF IT'S A MISTAKE.
I GAVE UP TWO THINGS A LONG TIME AGO. GUILT AND SUFFERING.
BEING WITH YOU CAUSES ME NEITHER OF THESE FEELINGS, THEREFORE, IT'S A GOOD THING.
BUT IF IT'S NOT THE SAME IN YOUR WEBBED-HEAD, JUST SAY SO. WE'LL CALL IT QUITS RIGHT NOW.
YOUR LOSS...BUT NO HARM NO FOUL.
BUT--
SO WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?
IS SPIDER-MAN ALLOWED ONE GUILTY PLEASURE?

IT'S AMAZING WHAT I'LL LET MYSELF DO WHEN SOMEONE GIVES ME *PERMISSION*.

THE FUNNY THING IS...

I *DID* HAVE SOMETHING ON MY MIND TODAY...

SOME *GUILT*...


AND A SECRET.
PARKER! GOOD LORD, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOCUMENTING MY TENURE NOT ATTACKING MY STAFF!
IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT, MR. MAYOR. NO PROBLEM.
AN "ACCIDENT." YEAH. JUST LIKE SHE ACCIDENTALLY SOUNDS AND SMELLS EXACTLY LIKE ANOTHER WOMAN I TRIP AROUND. HELLO BLACK CAT.
PETER PAR-
PARKER. I KNOW. IT'S MY JOB.
ASHLEY MOON, DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATIONS.
PETE, YOU NEED A NAPKIN? YOU GOT LIKE A DROOLY THING HAPPENING.
AND I WAS GONNA TELL HER, RIGHT THERE...
SO YOU'RE WORKING WITH MAYOR JAMESON? GUESS WE'LL BE SEEING A LOT OF EACH OTHER--
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT.
PRESS CONFERENCE IN THREE, PEOPLE! PARKER, STOP FRATERNIZING!
FRATERNIZING ALL OVER HIS PANTS. GROW UP, PARKER.
...BUT SPIDER-MAN IS ALLOWED A GUILTY PLEASURE...
AND THIS ONE JUST MADE WORK A LOT MORE INTERESTING.
THE END

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAIL

Send e-mail to
SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM
(please mark as OKAY TO PRINT)

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ALAN FINE EXEC. PRODUCER

"They're hunting Spiders."

Welcome to start, Spidey readers, as we launch the next great epic in the life of Peter Parker. What might at first have looked like small ripples in a pond over the past few issues will expand over the next few months to reveal a plan deadlier than you can imagine.

The Gauntlet begins here as Spidey classic enemies rise again --some who have been treated as punchlines for years--once again taking their rightful place on a brutal stage built for one purpose--the destruction of Spider-Man.

It's closer than ever before.

We welcome "Pencillin'" Paul Azaceta (not to be confused with "Penicillinin'" Tom Brennan) to the Spidey team for the start of our long-awaited Electro story. Along with Wegular Web-Head Mark Waid they received a lot of acclaim last year for a little comic called Potter's Field over at Boom! Comics and Paul also did some beautiful work on Punisher Noir that we highly recommend. Check it out.

Also thanks to JM Ken Niimura—who along with Joe Joe Kelly brought you this week's Black Cat backup, spilling the beans on her new status quo. (Anyone else think it's time for a Black Cat to get her own series?)

And now…YOU!

Dear Spider-Mail,

I'm a little dismayed at the direction Peter's has taken in issues #601-603. Peter's current attitudes towards alcohol and sex seem not to jibe with the guy I've known for decades.

First in #601, Peter is portrayed as getting drunk steadily, seemingly as a way to avoid confrontation with MJ. That's not the Peter I know, who has faced down problems that would traumatize others without the need for chemical assistance. Alcohol is a liquid-based drug that destroys families, homes and lives. It's all the more dangerous because of its entrenched place in society as a 'fun' thing, allowing it to insidiously infiltrate lives. I don't believe Peter would get drunk like this---his sense of duty would not allow him to be incapable due to alcohol when, at any time, say, The Hulk could demolish New York whilst Peter's unconscious and drunk. If he woke up to find people had died on his watch in those circumstances, Peter would be destroyed--look at the relationships and opportunities he's sacrificed over the years just so he could keep being Spider-Man.

Second, as a result of being drunk (SO drunk he didn't even know who he was in bed with) Peter has sex and then is glib about it. There's none of Peter's established character angst here, when, realistically, he would, being Peter, worry about things like pregnancy, STDs, AIDS (remember, he hardly knows Michelle at all). Yes these are adult concerns but if you want to portray an adult situation then this baggage follows.

And then in issue #603 we have the Chameleon raping Michelle (she is consenting to Peter, not the Chameleon, so it's rape). The Chameleon is now a rapist.

So, we have Peter Parker drunk and engaging in casual sex and the payoff on it is he's denied some cold milk to go with his cookies. To me, that's just not an acceptable portrayal of Peter Parker and does a disservice to the stature of a character who represents most of the better qualities we can aspire to. Just like Bendis and Quesada portray in the backup tale to issue #601, which is what Spider-Man is all about--a shining example of how our behaviour can influence others positively.

There are ways to tell powerful, modern stories that can be relevant and cautionary whilst still being wildly entertaining. I seem to recall Stan Lee giving an excellent example about 500 issues ago.

John Roche
Wales, UK

Great letter, John, and I appreciate you writing.

I don't think anyone disagrees that we all stand in the shadow of Stan and the army of artists who helped invent the Marvel Universe, so right at the outset I'd agree that that goes without saying.

However, John, while you raise some valid points—and to be fair several other readers share your dismay – I feel you jumped the gun on your concerns.

Without getting into a discussion on how society has changed and that comics today aren't always ruled by the same mores as creators in the 1960s were, the simple answer is that none of the things you are concerned about ultimately went down exactly as you described. In each case there was more to the story. (though all of us on the book were hoping to get folks talking for sure). To take your list one-by-one:

#1-As we discover this very issue, Pete did not have as much to drink as it may have seemed. As we've shown in the past, a little alcohol with Pete (and his editor) goes a long way. You are correct that the abuse of alcohol is a horrible affliction that many of us have experienced first hand, but I wouldn't take the next step that any use of alcohol in fiction is therefore off-limits—even by characters as well-intentioned as Peter Parker. We wanted to see Pete acting a bit irresponsibly if only to see him deal with the consequences of his actions.

So we agree: Pete's behavior at the party was out of character for him. However, the context is important.

His longtime love Mary Jane has returned (on top of his Aunt getting married and a deadly fight with Doc Ock). These weren't typical circumstances, and one of the wonderful things about Peter Parker is the fact that he can and does screw up from time to time. (Remember that old story where he made off with the solid gold notebook and it brought him nothing but grief?)

Peter isn't a saint, and can't be a saint—he's a good guy who tries really hard, but who sometimes trips up on his own anxieties and who sometimes trips up by trying to run away from those selfsame anxieties.

As to the fear that people might die while he's passed out, I think that's taking your argument to an interesting, though extreme, place. You can take Peter's responsibility way too far if you start to think this way. For example, people get stabbed and attacked and killed every day—how can Peter go to work (in a newsroom no less) and not feel responsible for every death that he might have prevented were he only being Spidey 24/7? How can he even take a nap in good conscience?

That way, though, lies madness. (Not to plug another company's book's, but Kurt Busiek did a very interesting explorartion of this idea in his first issue of Astro City. Go look for it, but you have to read an extra issue of Spidey as penance!)

#2-Yes, we did show Pete having sexual relations with a woman. Not as an illustration of good behavior, but to show how being irresponsible can play havoc with his personal life.

I recognize that some may think it's too far to show Pete in bed with another woman, but the suggestion of Pete's love life has been a part of the book for a long time.

At the same time, I don't believe Pete is acting any differently than any number of young people in their 20s, trying to find love, but Pete carries an extra burden of being Spider-Man and the closer he gets to someone, the more dangerous it can be for his personal life (which is why he can so easily fall for someone who doesn't care about his private life like Black Cat.).

I grant that we didn't show Pete worrying about STDs and pregnancy --and I believe there is a place for those stories if the topics are handled in the right manner-- but our story wasn't the place to focus on that. Suffice it to say, Peter (and Michele) took appropriate precautions--why would you assume they didn't in this day and age?

This was a scene in the ongoing soap opera of Peter Parker and the plot revolved around Pete dealing with these events in a much more action-packed manner filled with some emotional twists. You may disagree with that, but I just don't think every romantic comedy has to teach a lesson or give you "one to grow on."

#3-As we've found out later, the Chameleon did not "rape" Michelle as you suggest. Even using the word makes me uncomfortable as it suggests a violence that simply wasn't in the scene

Regardless, the Chameleon acted vilely--which is in character for him--but we made that clear by the end of the story that he stole kisses from Michele, setting Pete up for even further confusion with her in subsequent issues. At this point, he's sent her many mixed signals and she's just about had it with Pete.

Could Pete resolve all this by explaining that he's Spidey and that she actually was kissing the Chameleon and not him? Sure. But Pete has to measure whether the cost of his ID would be worth it for some kisses.

It's always interesting from this side of the desk to see what individual readers bring to the table. As is so often the case, we find ourselves living in an impatient world and when readers aren't given what they want when they want, I know it can get frustrating to some. However, I hope you'll at least give the folks working on the book the benefit of the doubt. I promise we love Peter as much as you do, even if we don't see eye-to-eye on every aspect of his character.

And once again, John, thanks for the letter.

Hey Wacker,

I am REALLY disappointed that you did not include the cover gallery in ASM #600. Every other landmark-numbered issue had it...Hulk #600 even had covers of Tales to Astonish that Hulk wasn't in! Shame.

Jeff Logan
Marietta, GA

I hear you, Jeff. The promise I made was that ASM #600 would have 104 pages of all new content, so reprinting the covers didn't seem fair. Believe me, I would have much rather filled the pages with art that's already done! (See below!)

The folks in Marvel's collection department--headed up by Jeff Youngquist-- do a great job with those cover galleries though, so perhaps at some point we'll find a place to create one and run it.

Several issues back a reader had suggested Spidey add some coloring to his web fluid, so he would know it was about to run out. Being Marvel, naturally our first thought was "Variant Cover!"

But our second thought was to throw the idea out to you, the readers in this very column. And, man-alive, if you thought the health care debate in the U.S was controversial, you ain't seen nothing like the Spidey fans' opinion on the ins-and-outs of Pete's web-shooters. I think many readers would love nothing more than entire issues of the comic devoted to this topic. I mean look at this one letter we got from a giant web-shooter geek:

Dear Amazing Spider-Mail,

...it suddenly occurs to me to ask: Why can't a guy with Spider-Sense that warns him of every danger just SENSE when he's about out of fluid?

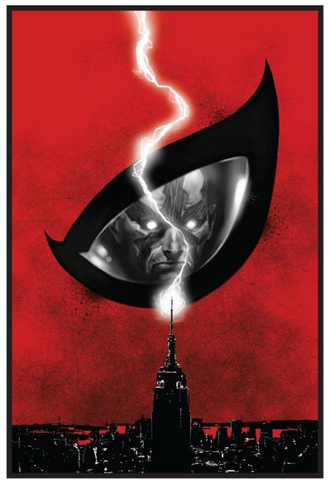
Mark Waid
Metropolis, Illinois

Ha! Nice one, loser! What's next for you? Getting drunk at a wedding?!?!

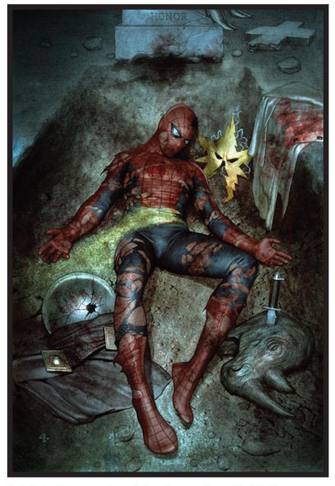
That's it for this double-sized column. See you in one week for POWER TO THE PEOPLE PART 2!

Viva Templar!
Simperin' Steve!
10/28/09

VARIANT COVER CORNER!



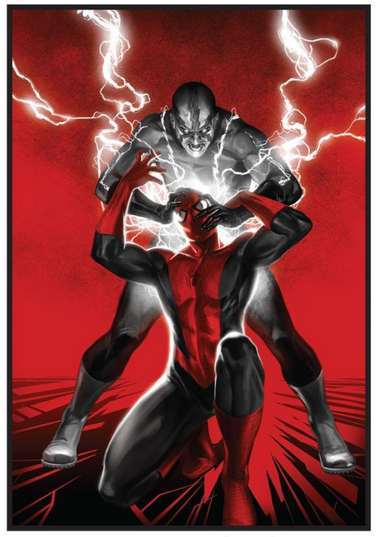
#612 Regular Cover by Marko Djurdjevic



#612 Gauntlet Variant by Adi Granov

#612 Black Cat variant by Ed McGuinness, Dexter Vines, Morry Hollowell

NEXT ISSUE



Face Front, Sizzle Chest!

And don't forget to check out the hard and heavy conclusion to IRON MAN: ARMOR WARS written by Amazing Spider-Man letterer Joe Caramagna!