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Cockrum

While attending a demonstration in radiology, student PETER PARKER was bitten by a spider which had accidentally been exposed to RADIOACTIVE RAYS. Through a miracle of science, Peter soon found that he had GAINED the insect's powers...and had, in effect, become a human spider...

**STAN LEE
PRESENTS: THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®**

MARV WOLFMAN, KEITH POLLARD, MIKE ESPOSITO, J. NOVAK, B. SHAREN, JIM SHOOTER
WRITER/EDITOR LAYOUTS FINISHES LETTERER COLORIST CONSULTING ED.

THE JIGSAW IS UP!

LAST ISSUE, WE SAW ELECTRO CREATE A BLACKOUT IN NEW YORK. NOW WE LEARN WHY!

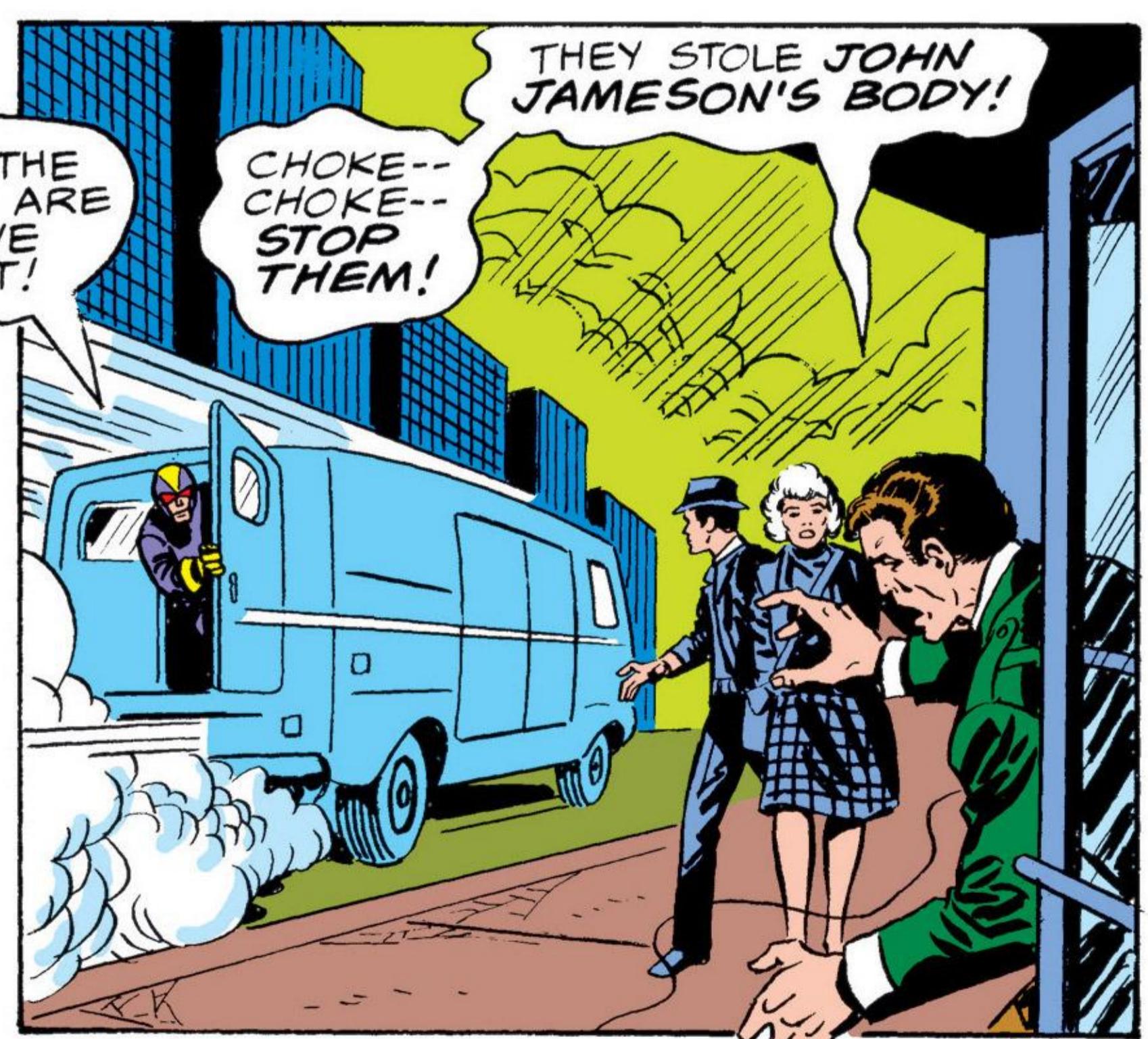
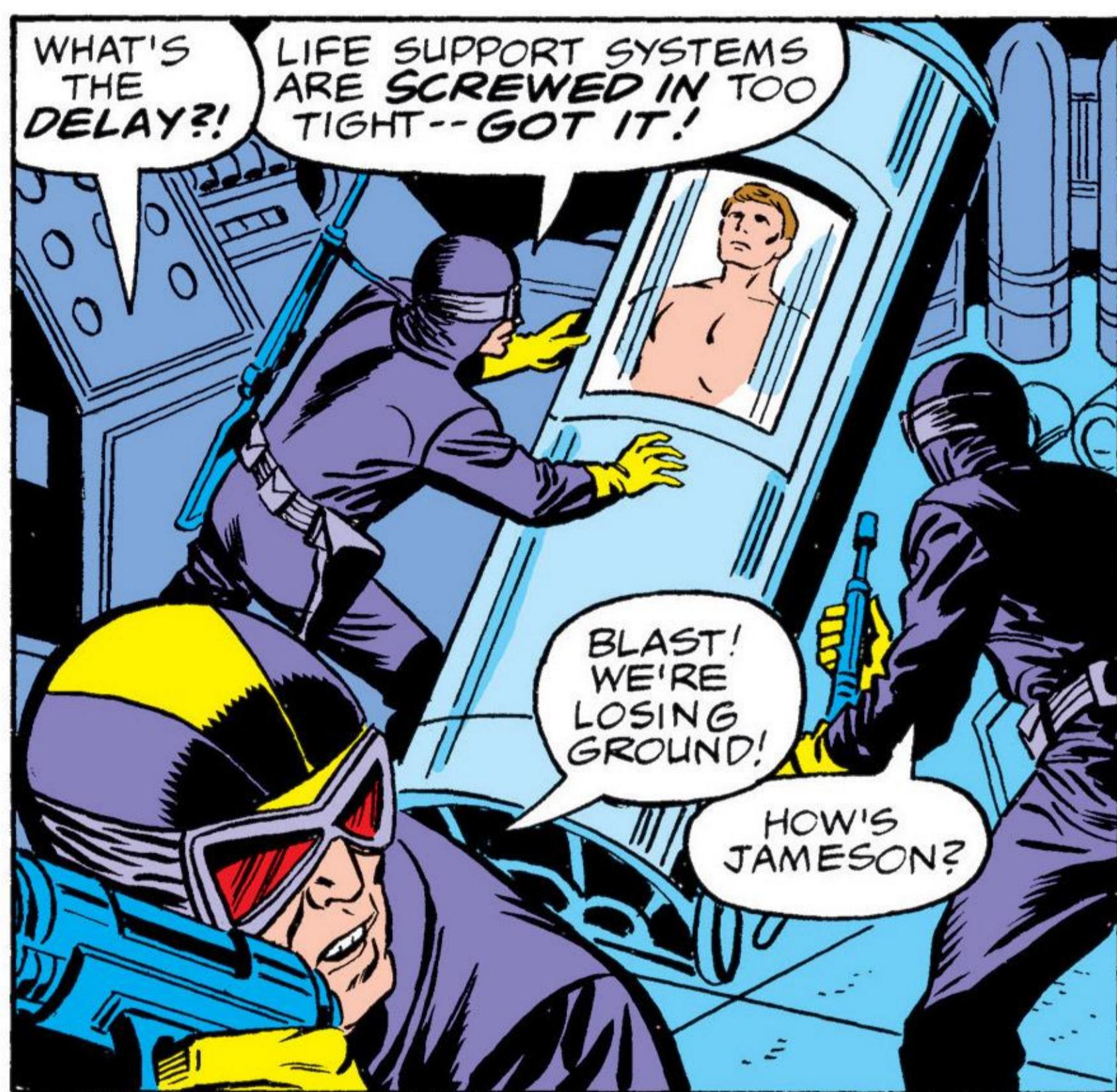
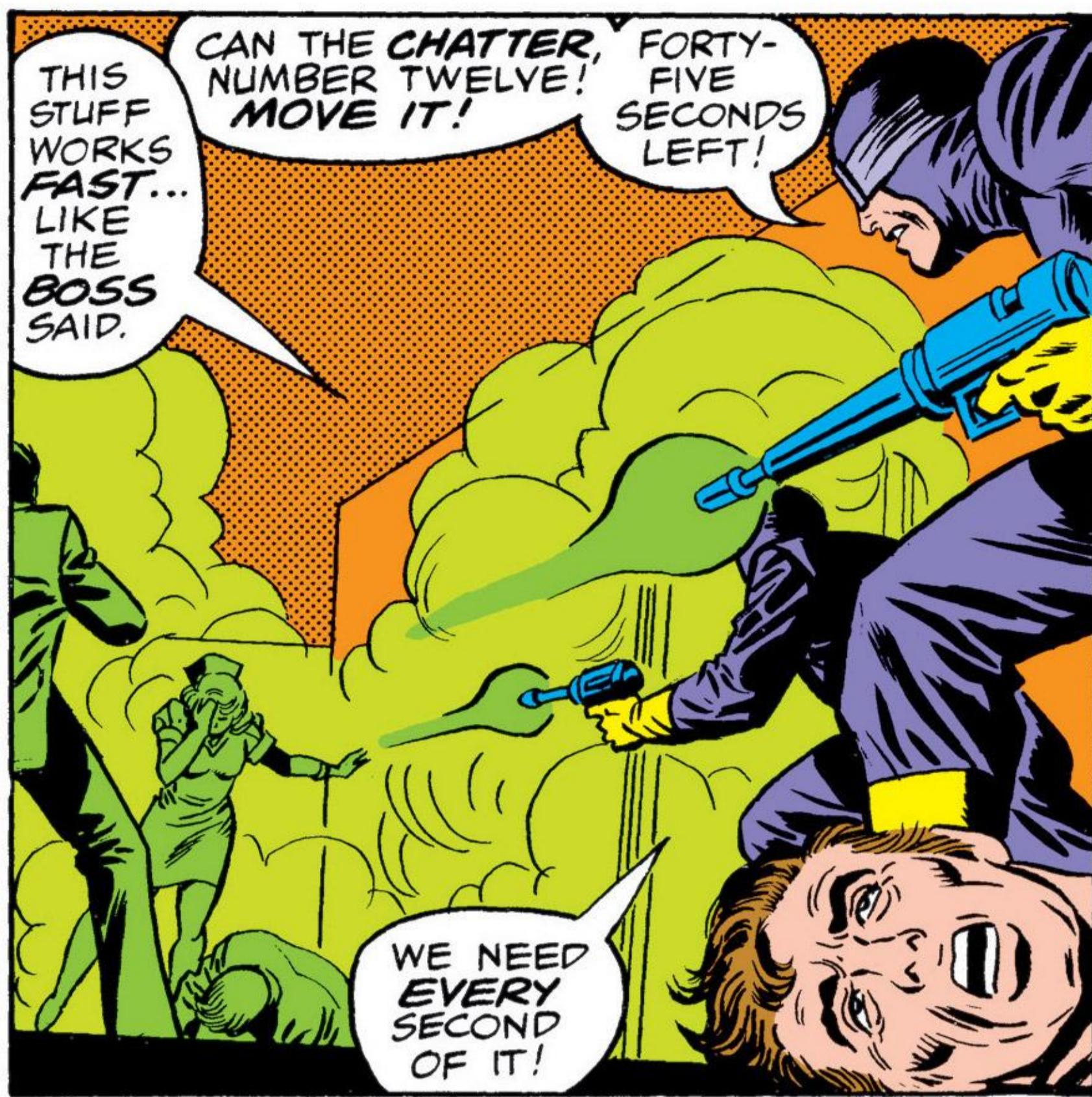
WE PICK UP ON THE EXACT MOMENT DARKNESS STRIKES MANHATTAN... AND AN UPTOWN CRYONICS HOSPITAL...

WE HAVE ONLY SIXTY SECONDS BEFORE THE HOSPITAL'S EMERGENCY GENERATOR CUTS IN-- AND THE ALARMS GO OFF!

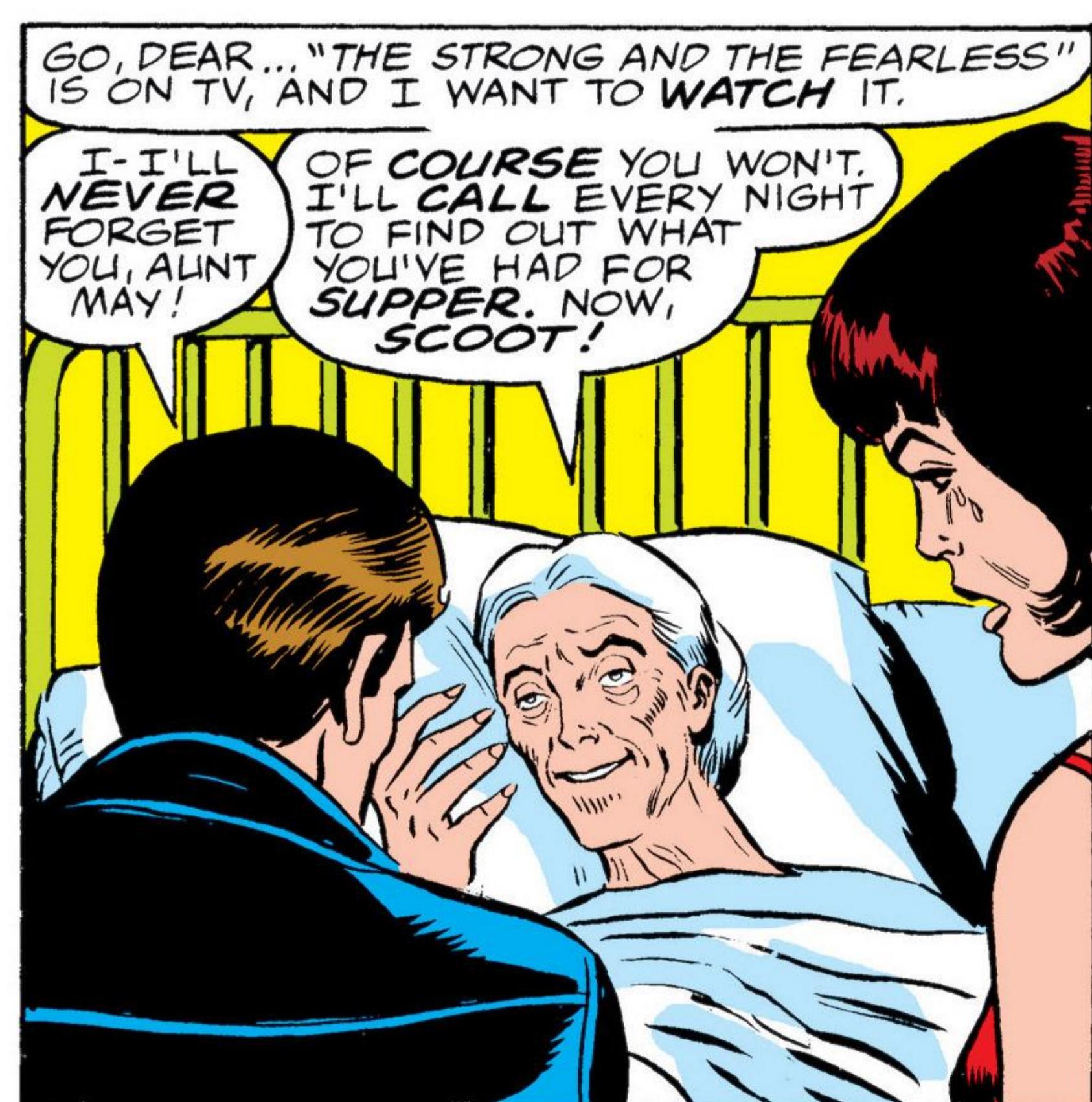
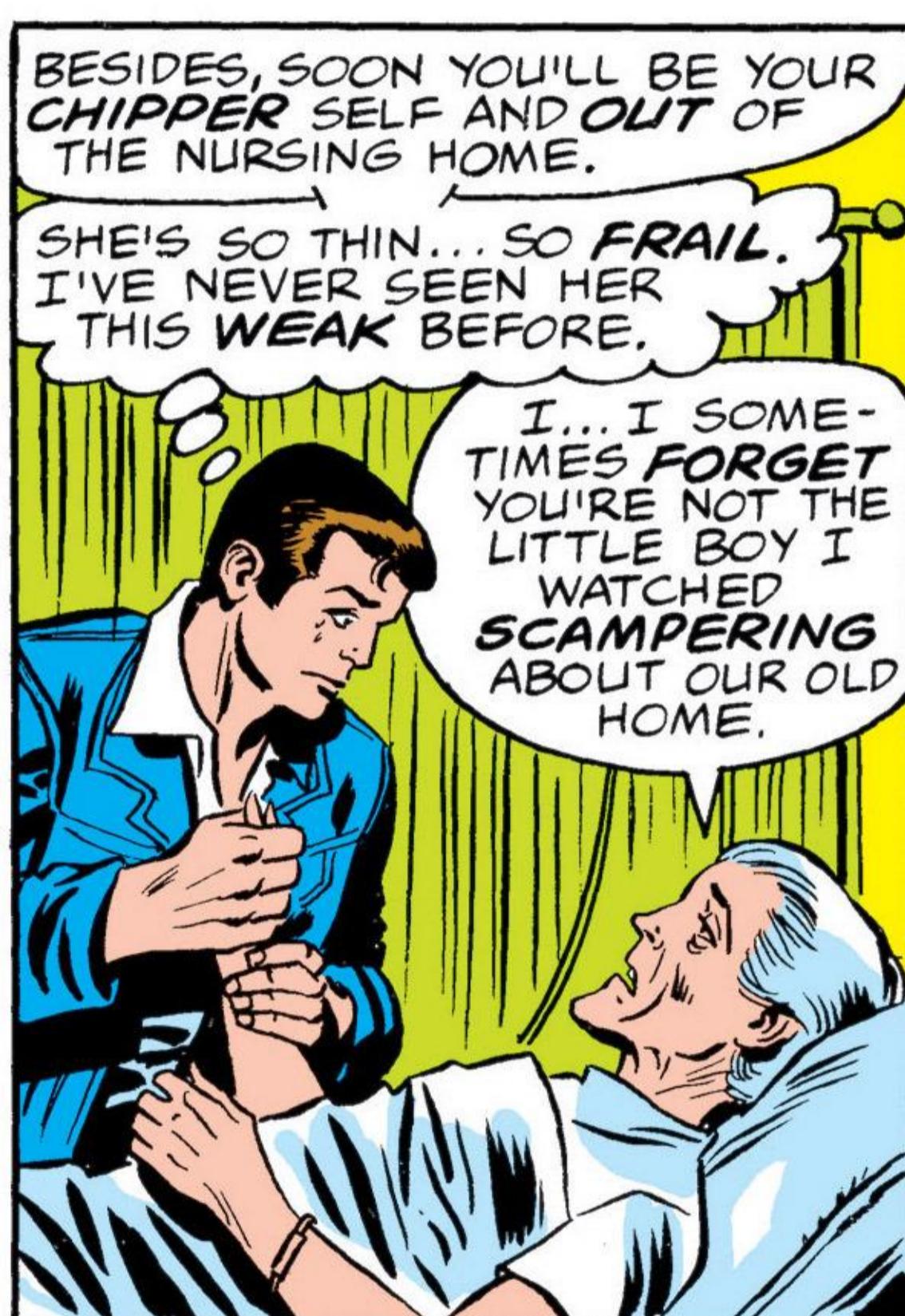
GAS THESE FOOLS-- FAST!



LG 203



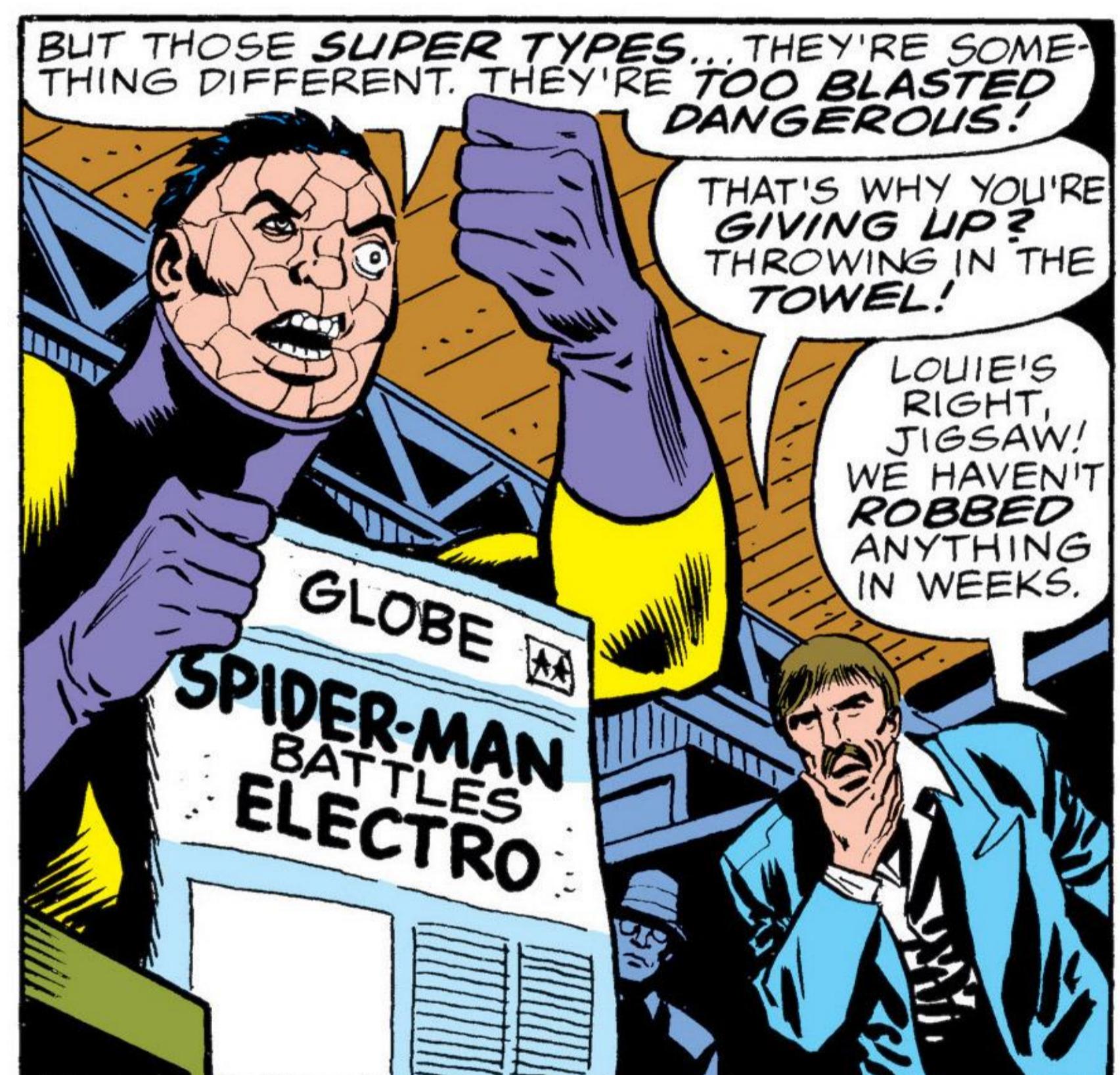
ALTOGETHER AN AUSPICIOUS OPENING. NOW, LET'S LOOK IN ON ANOTHER NEW YORK HOSPITAL, SEVERAL HOURS LATER...



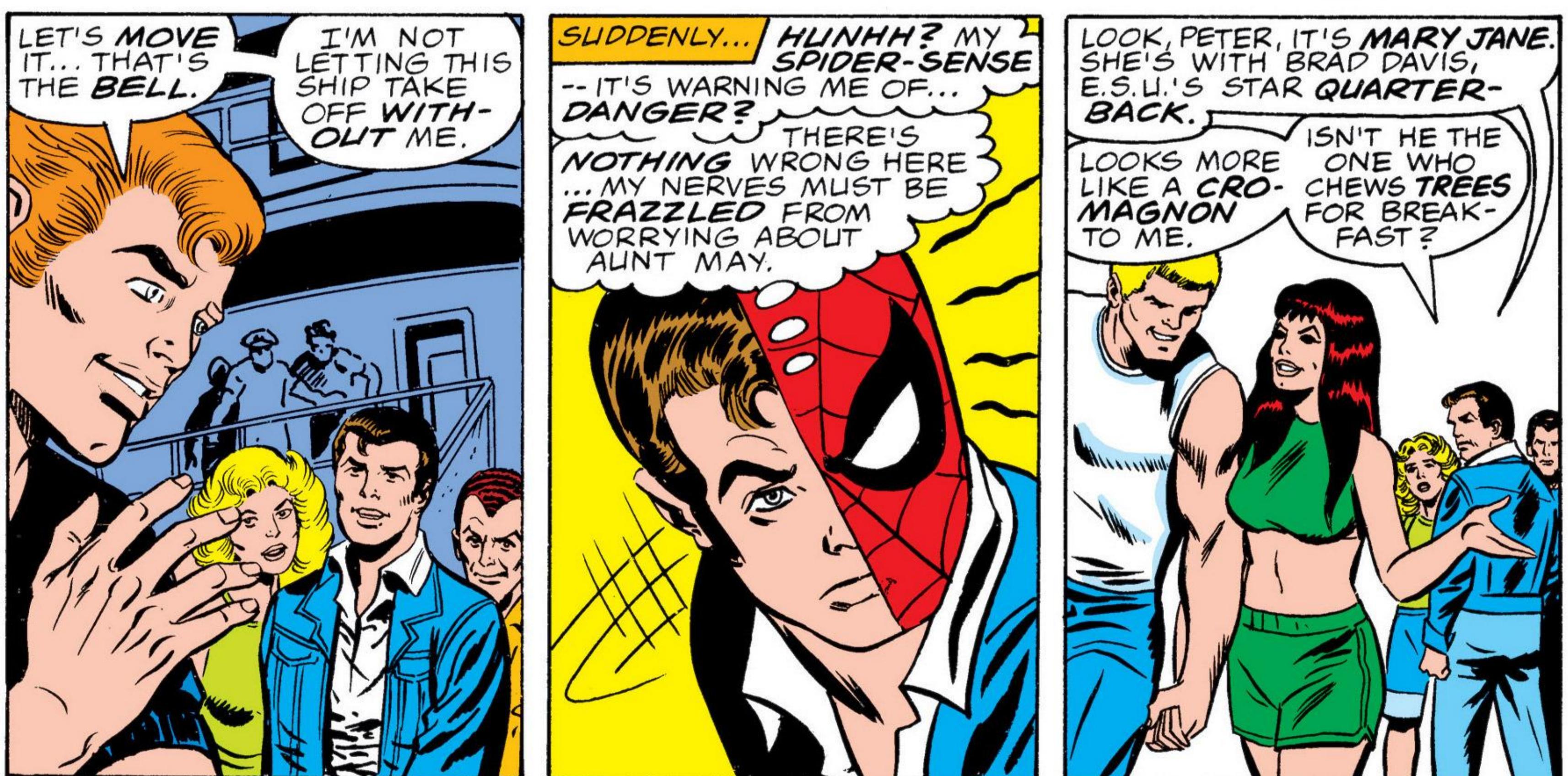
IT IS A MOROSE PETER PARKER WHO LEAVES NEWHOPE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL...



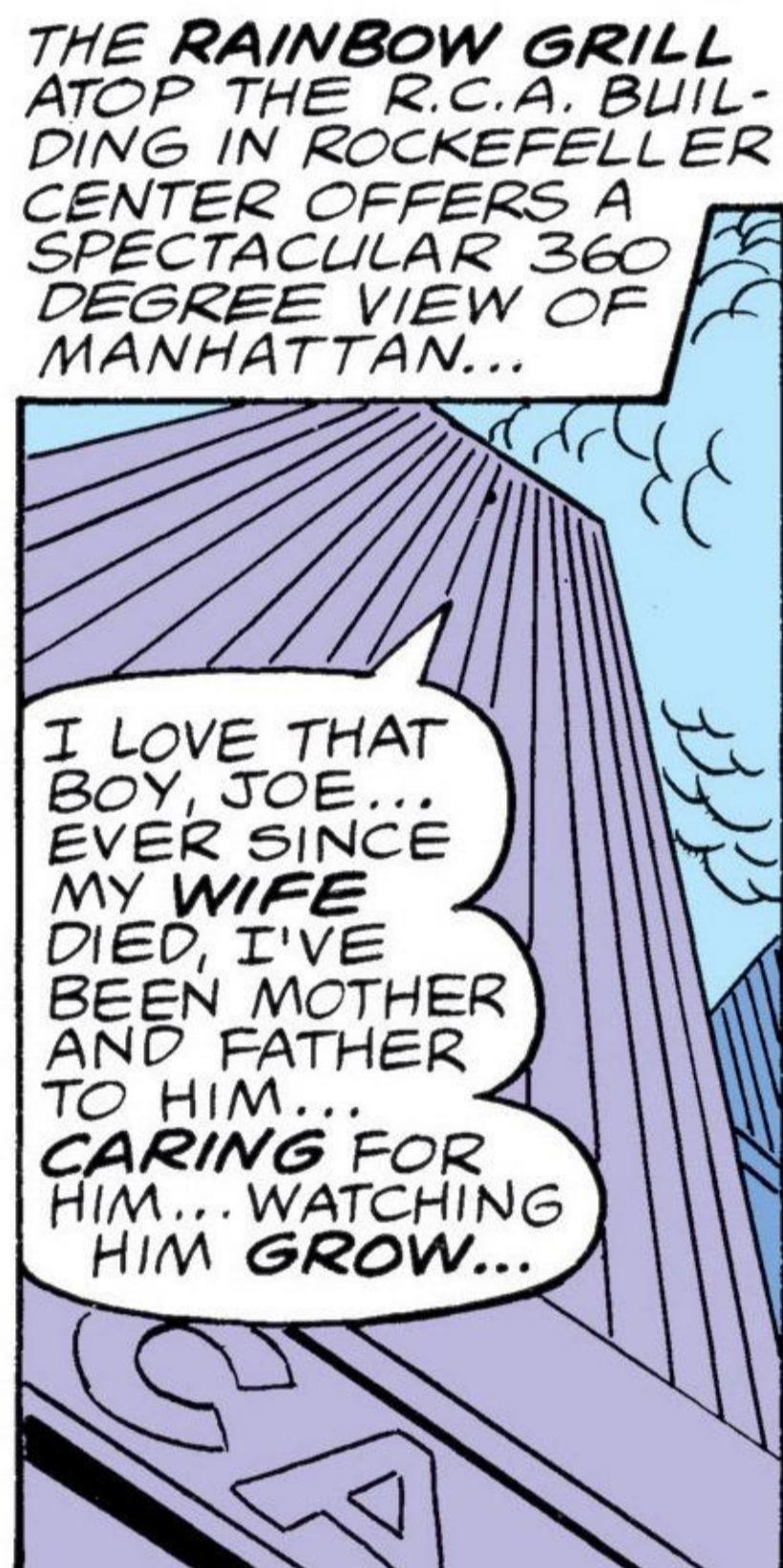
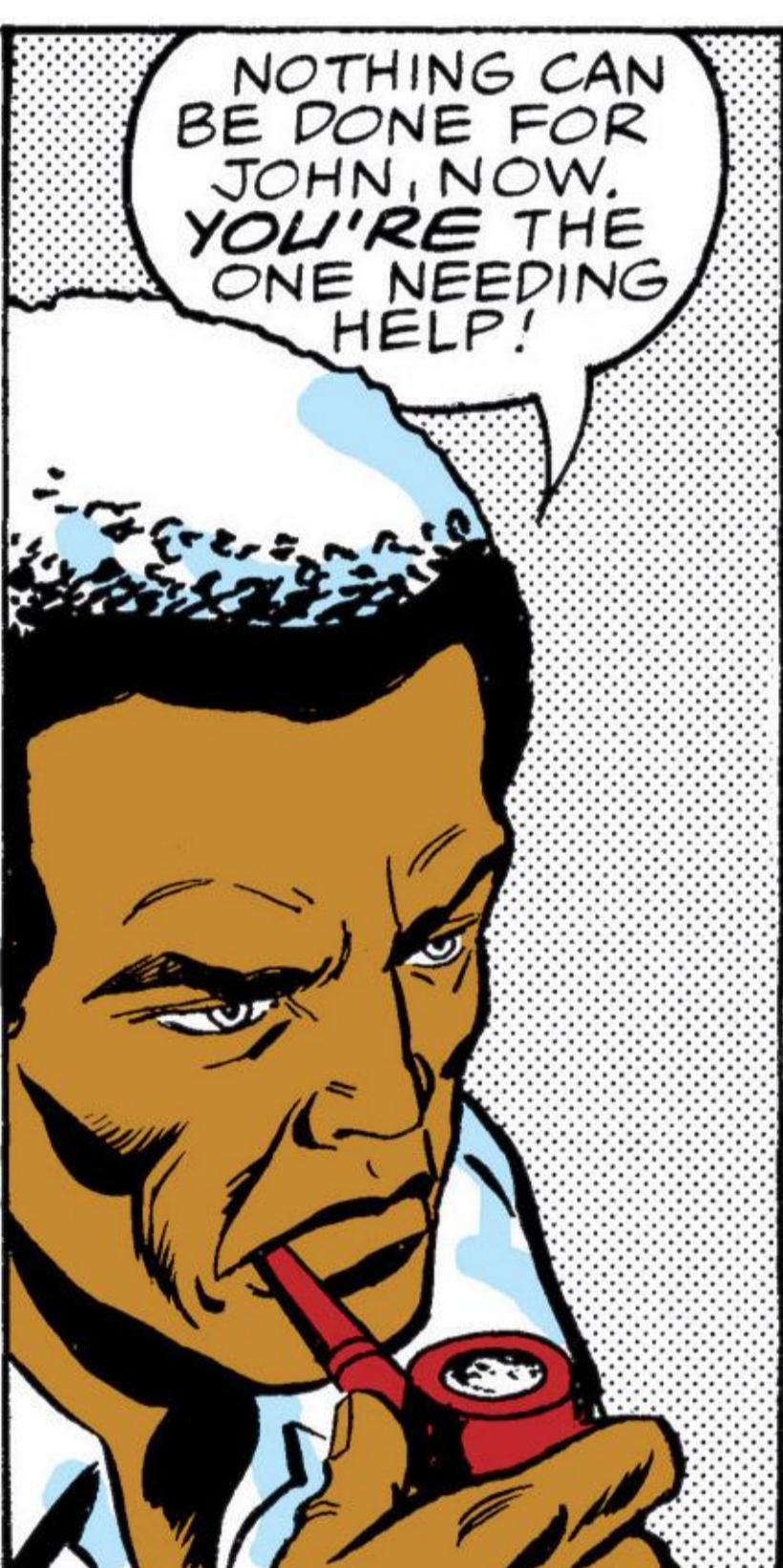
BETTY MAKES SOME MYSTERIOUS PHONE CALLS, WHICH GIVES US TIME TO TRAVEL DOWN TO THE DOCKS...

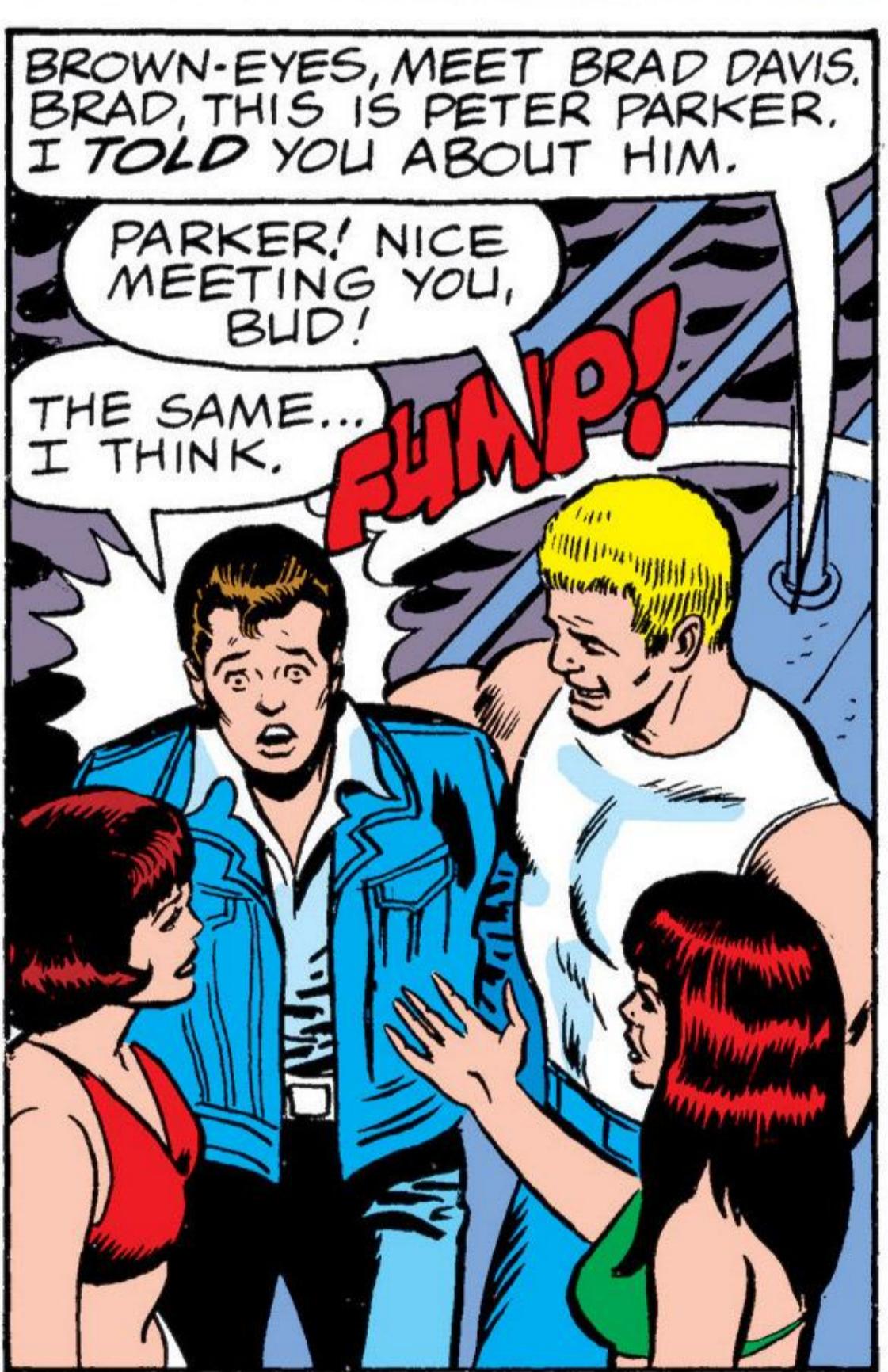
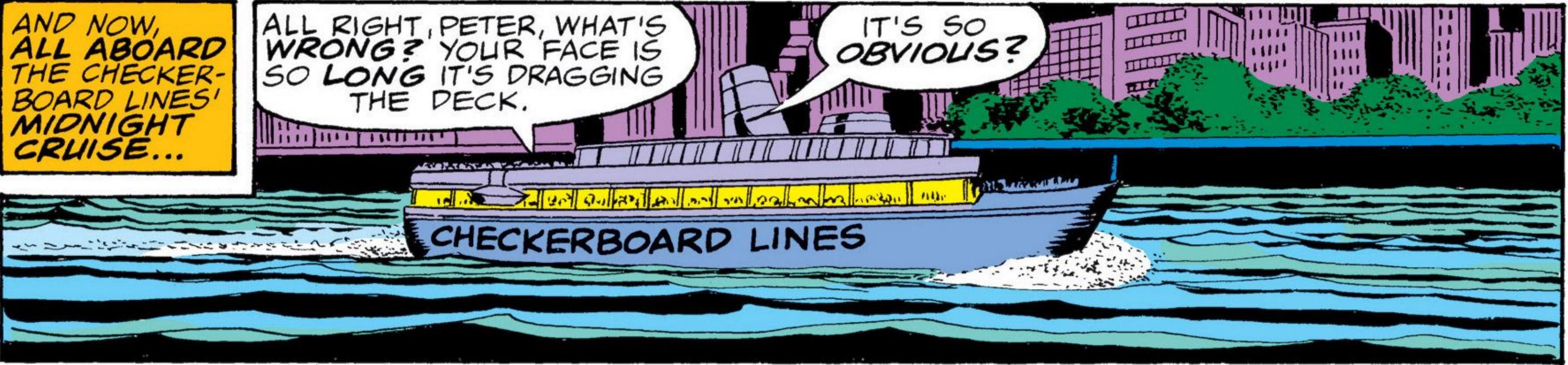


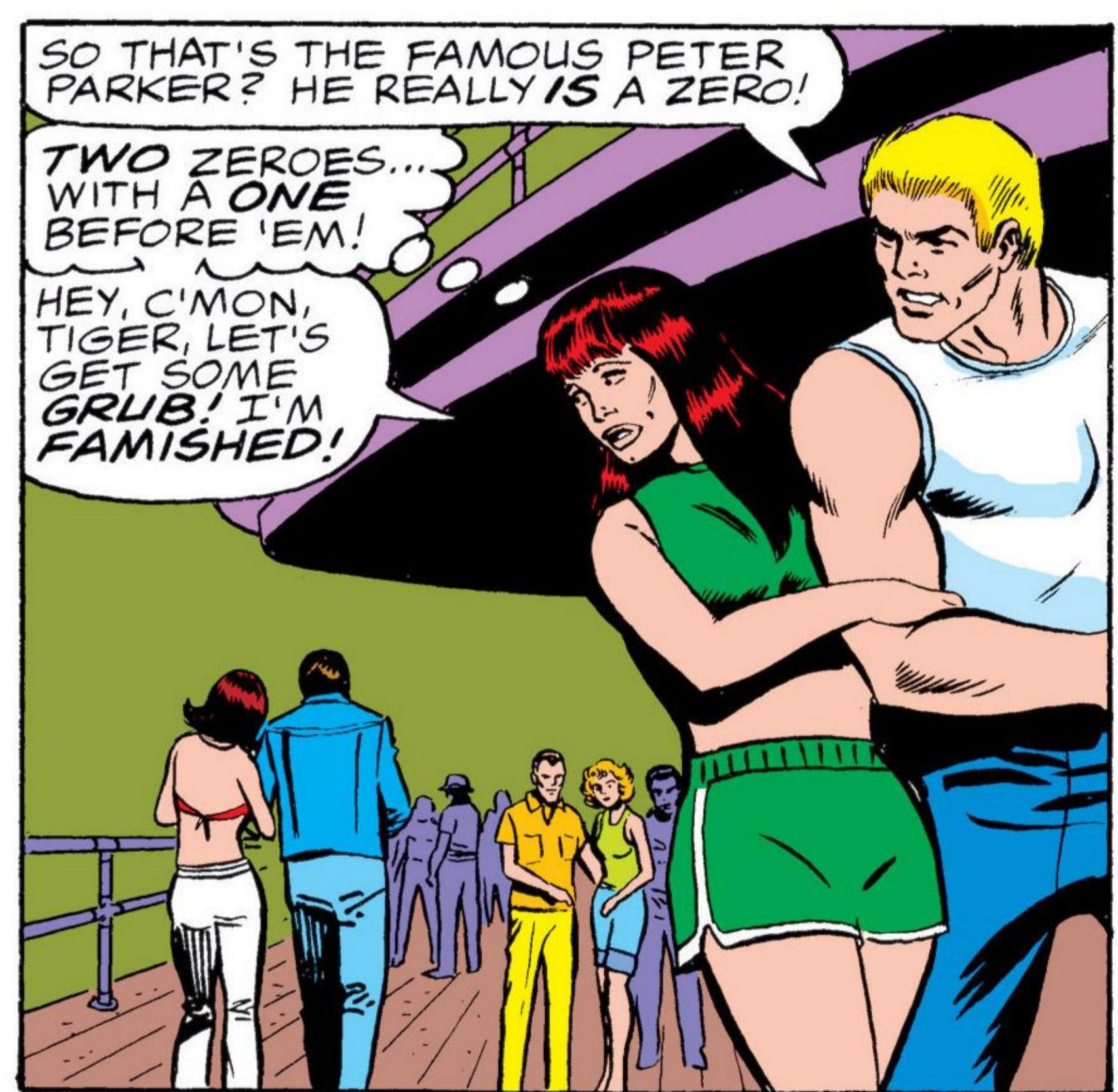
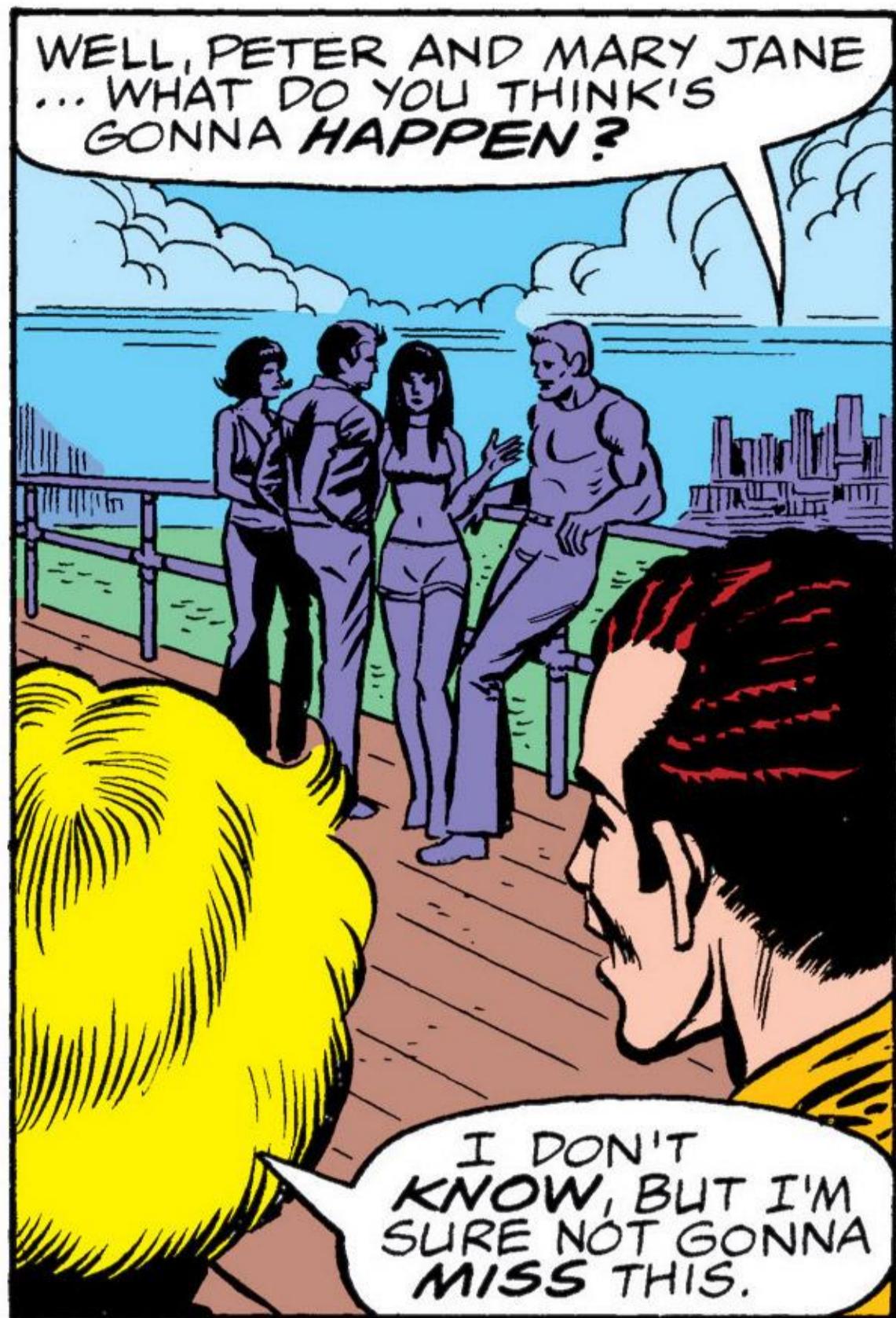
THERE IS A COOL EVENING BREEZE AS PETER PARKER AND BETTY LEEDS FIND THEMSELVES DOWN BY THE 42ND STREET PIER...

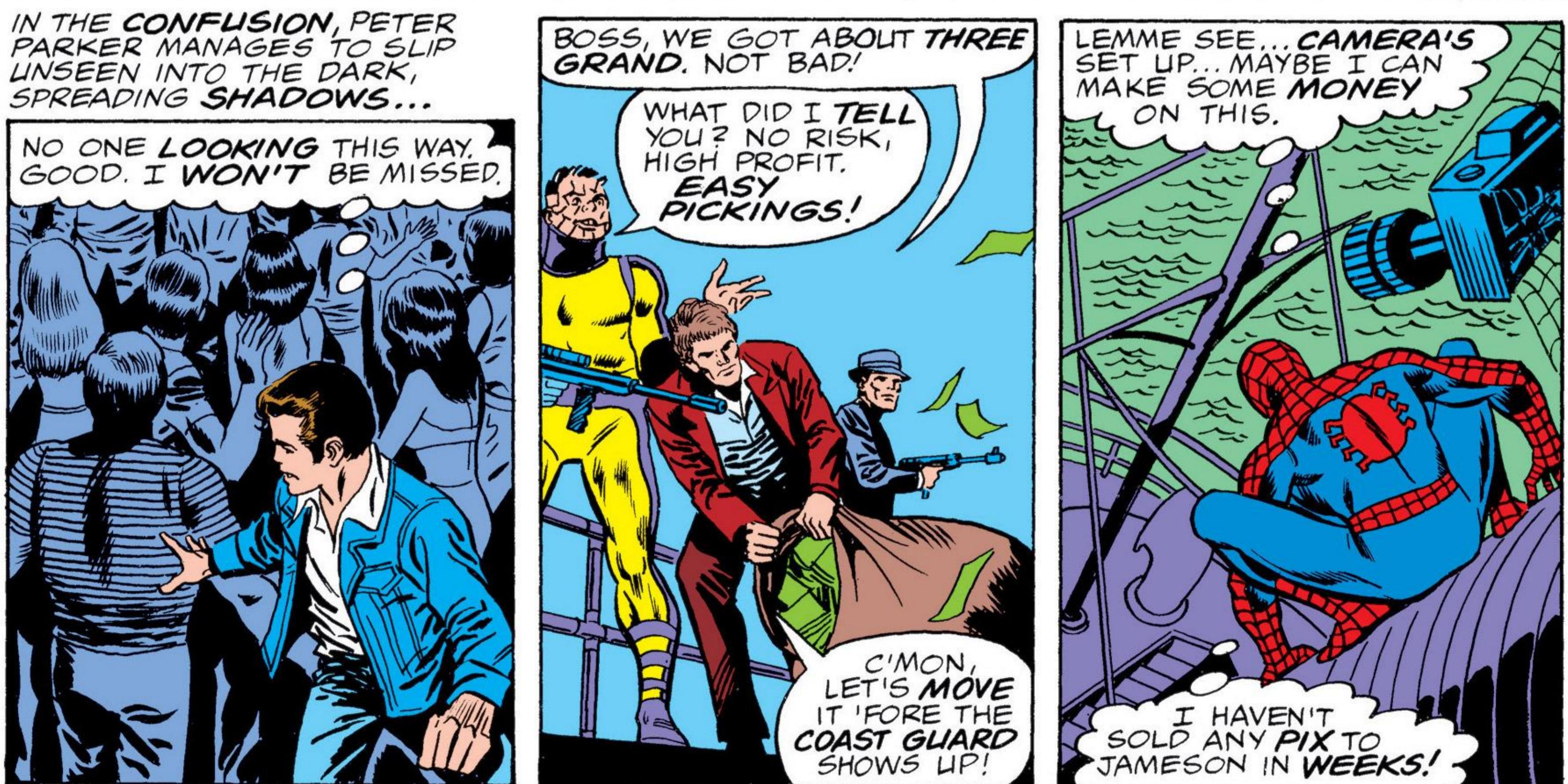
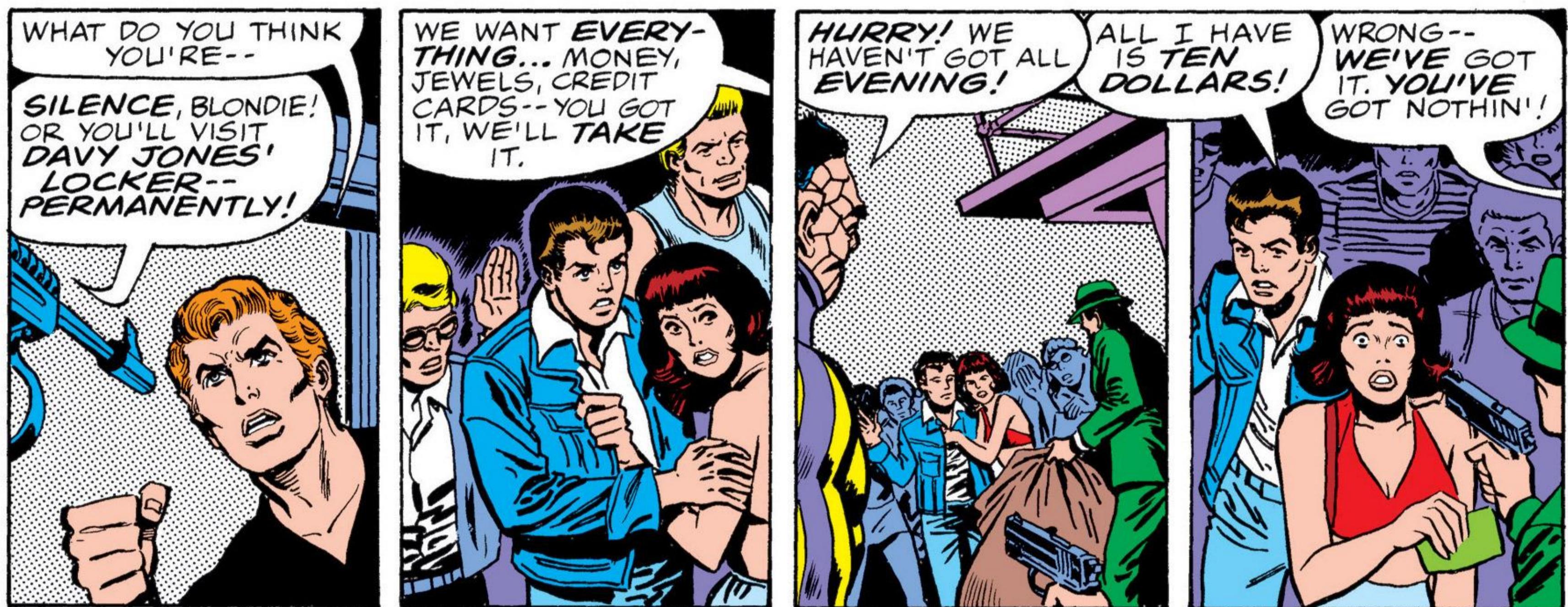
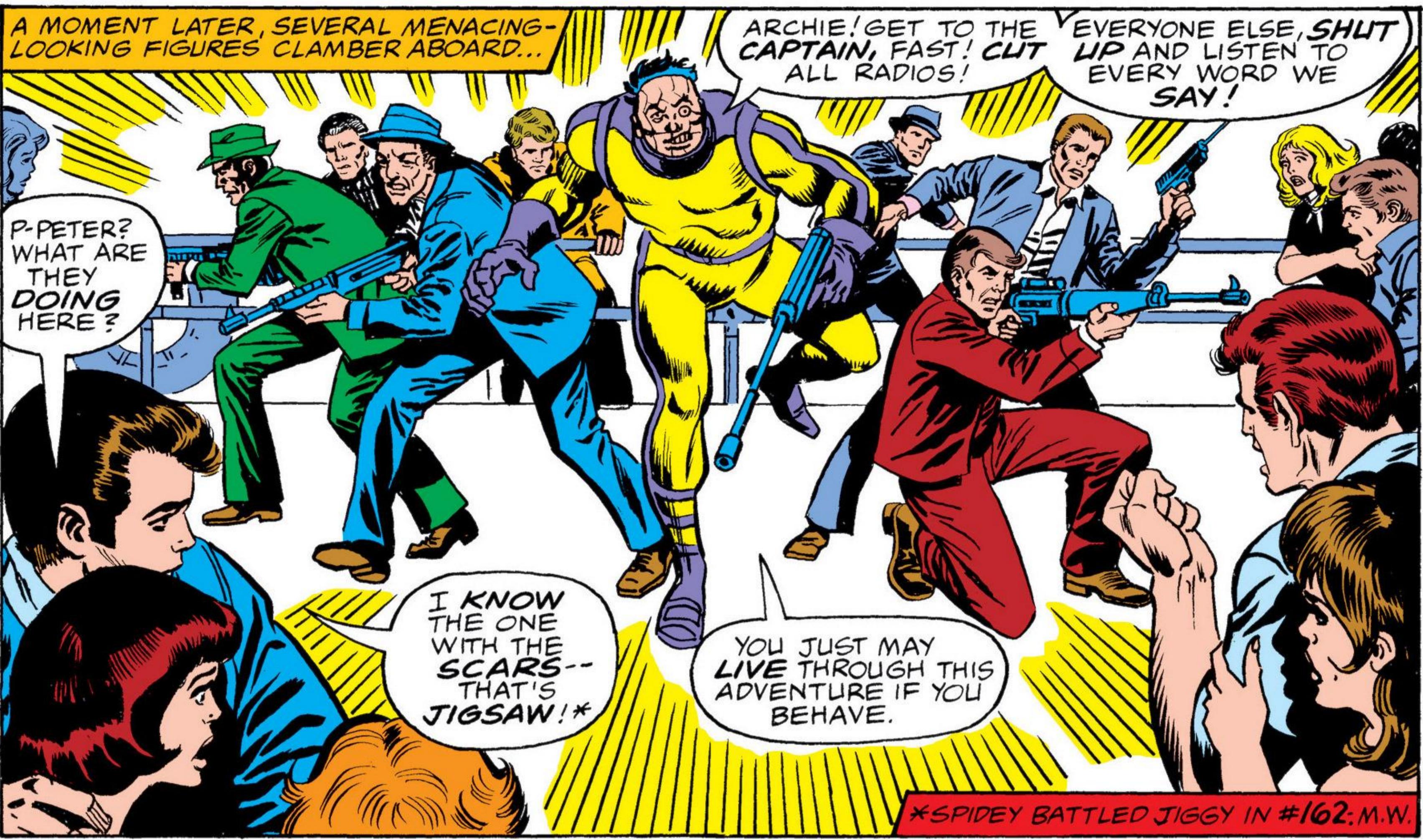


THE CALM OF THE WAITING SEA
IS IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO
THE TURBULANCE IN THE
DAILY BUGLE...









FIVE SECONDS IS
ALL IT TAKES.



ONE: A SILENT WEB
IS SHOT...

TWO: SOFTLY, IT
SLIPS OVER TERRY
O'CONNER, TWO-BIT
HOOD.



THREE: TERRY TAKES
HIS SATURDAY
NIGHT BATH A WEE-
BIT EARLY!

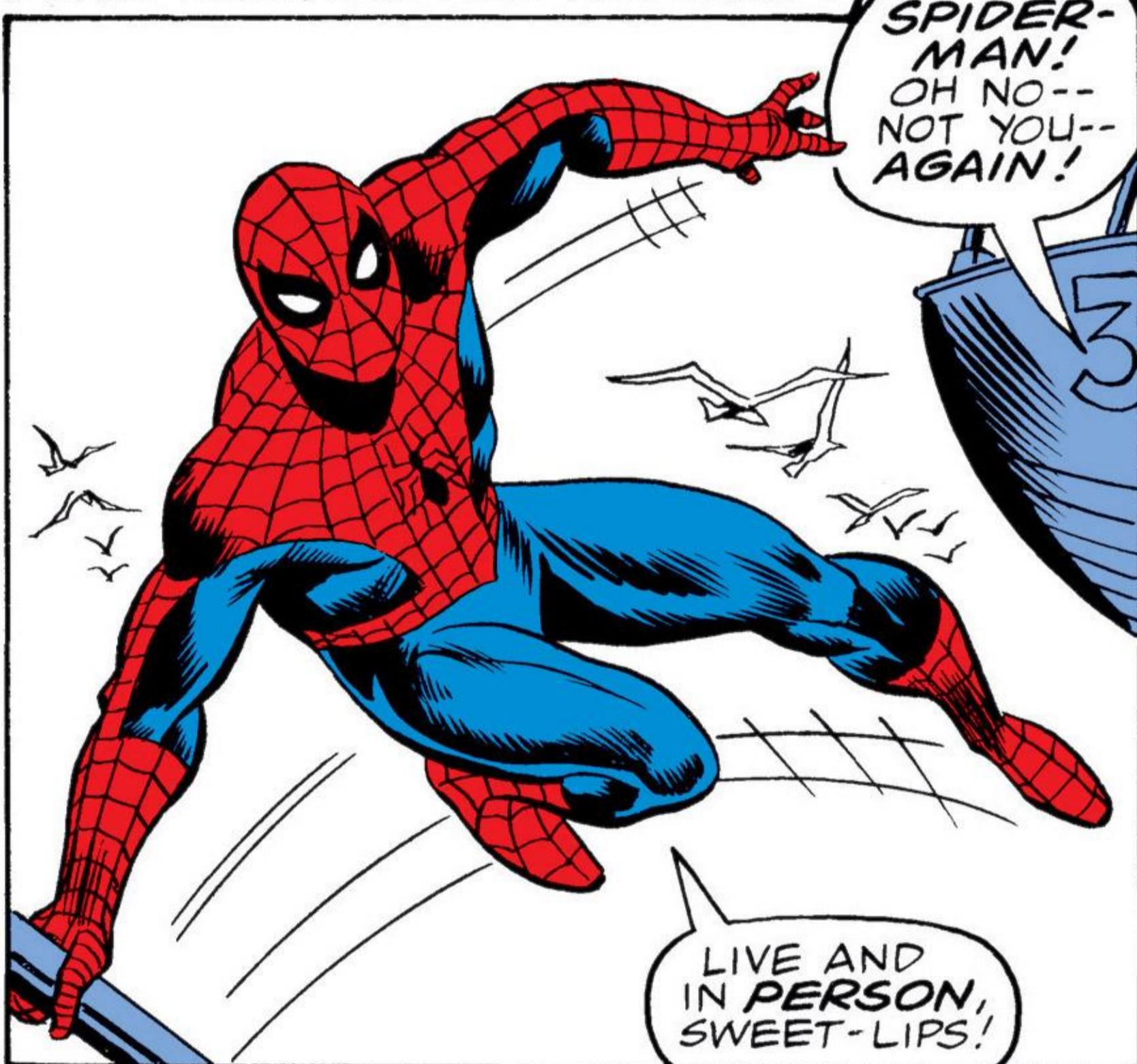


FOUR: JIGSAW BECOMES A
MITE SUSPICIOUS.



WHAT WAS THAT? WHERE'S
TERRY?

FIVE: WELL, SEE FOR YOURSELF!



SPIDER-
MAN!
OH NO--
NOT YOU--
AGAIN!

WANNA MAKE
SOMETHING
OF IT?



SHOOT HIM!
KILL HIM!

WHATEVER HAP-
PENED TO OLD-
FASHIONED
COURTESY?
SHEESH!

NOW, LISTEN TO
ME AND LEARN.

HI THERE,
MY NAME'S
SPIDEY!

"NUTS"!
COME NOW,
I'VE BEEN
CALLED
PSYCHOTIC,
NEUROTIC,
AND OFTEN
LATE FOR
DINNER...

BUT NUTS
IS REALLY
GETTING
PERSONAL.



SPIDER-MAN WHIRLS HIS MIDDLE FINGERS CURL INTO HIS PALM, ACTIVATING HIS WEB-SHOOTERS...

DON'T YOU JOKERS REALIZE HOW MUCH BULLETS COST THESE DAYS?

IT'S GETTING SO YOU GOTTA ROB BANKS JUST TO PAY FOR YOUR AMMO.

THWIP!

N-NO MORE JOKES, CREEP. OR ELSE THE BROAD GETS PLUGGED.

LIZ!

NO, HARRY-- GET BACK!

SORRY, KID, YOUR BOY FRIENDS COMIN' WITH US!

HEAR THAT, WALL-CRAWLER? I GOT TWO HOSTAGES!

AND IF YOU PLAY ONE THE WRONG WAY, IT MIGHT TRIGGER HIS MIND, TURN HARRY BACK INTO THE GREEN GOBLIN.

I'VE GOT TO CALM HIM DOWN!

HARRY, GO WITH LIZ... SHE'LL BE SAFE WITH YOU THERE.

LIZ... ALL I CARE ABOUT IS LIZ.

WITHIN MOMENTS, A SHAKY JIGSAW AND HIS TWO HOSTAGES LOWER THEMSELVES TO HIS BOAT...

IF I EVEN SEE A HINT OF YOU, THESE KIDS GET WASTED.

THERE GOES THAT CRUMB.

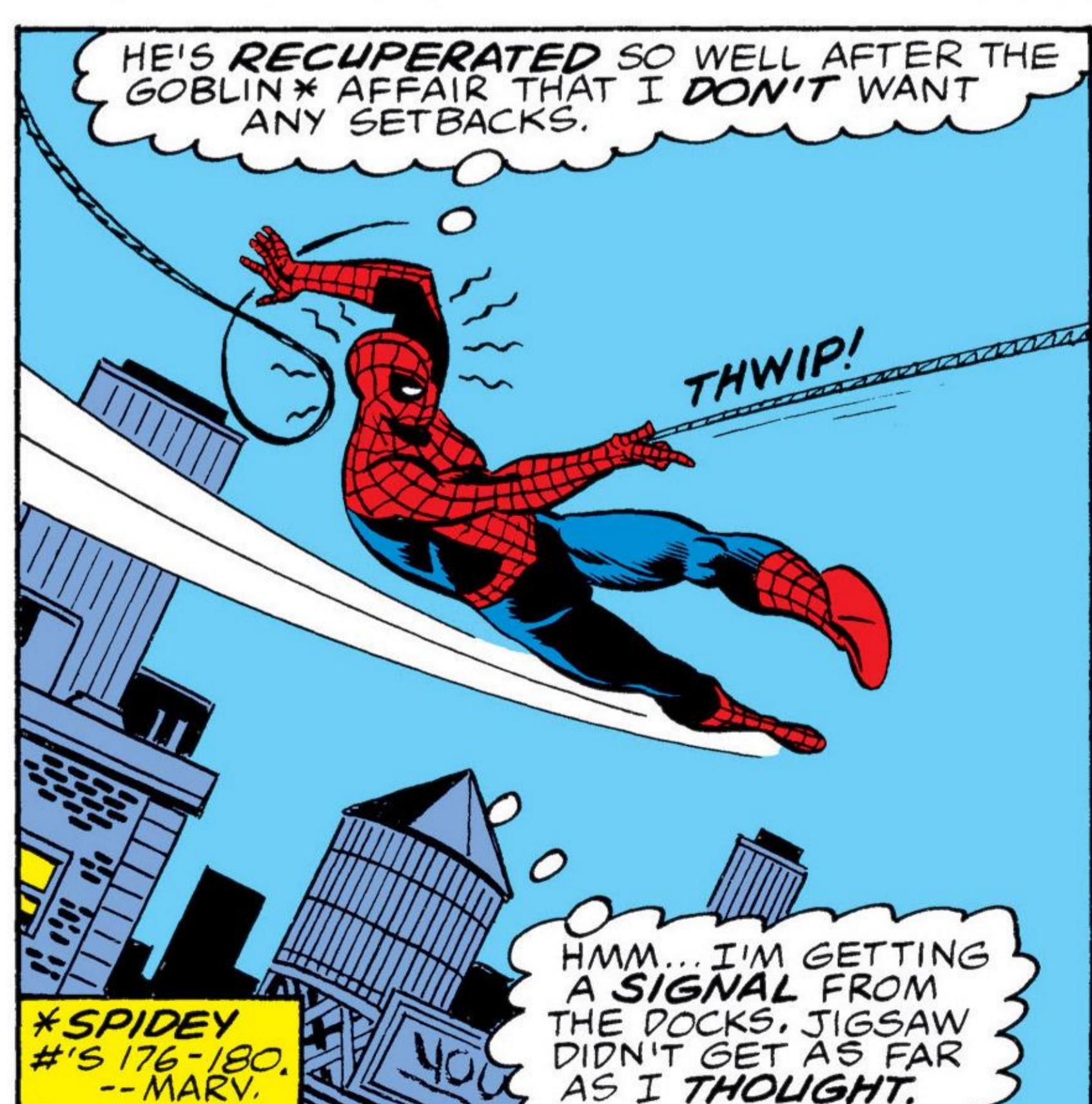
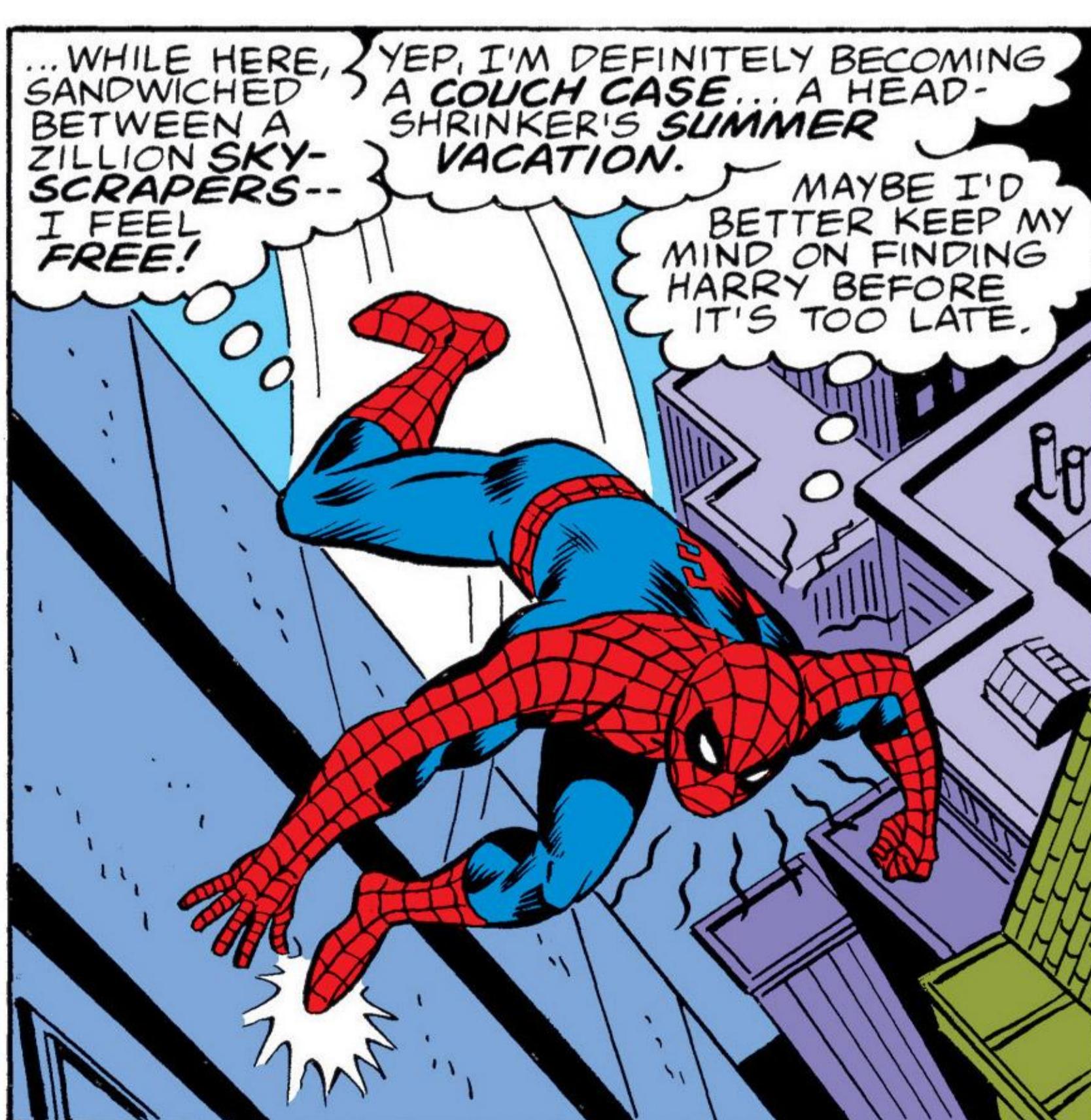
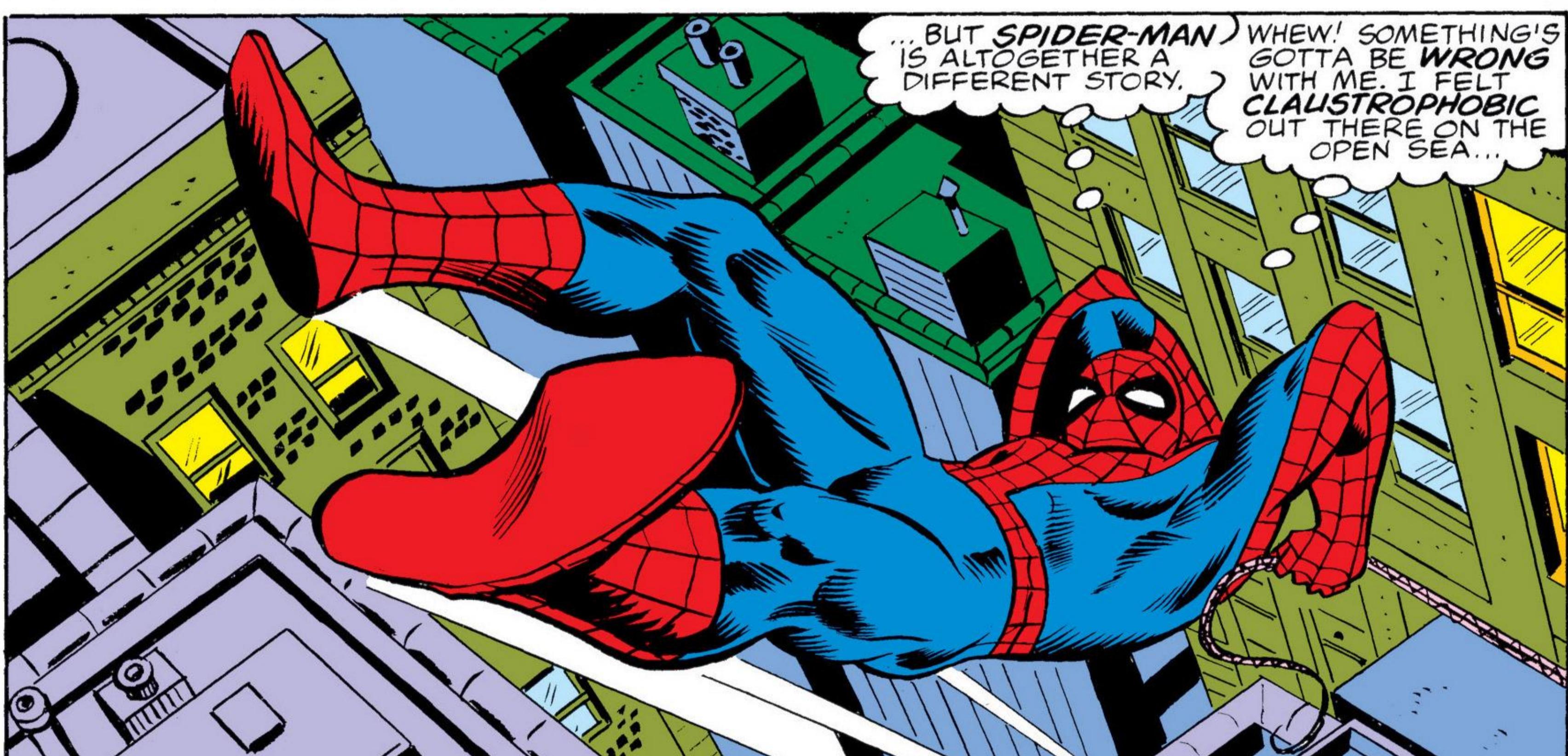
I'VE NEVER FELT SO USELESS. SPIDEY, WHAT ARE YOU--

DON'T BOTHER, FLASH-- SPIDER-MAN TOOK OFF!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE FOR TEN MINUTES, SPIDER-MAN. 'TIL I'M OUT OF SIGHT!

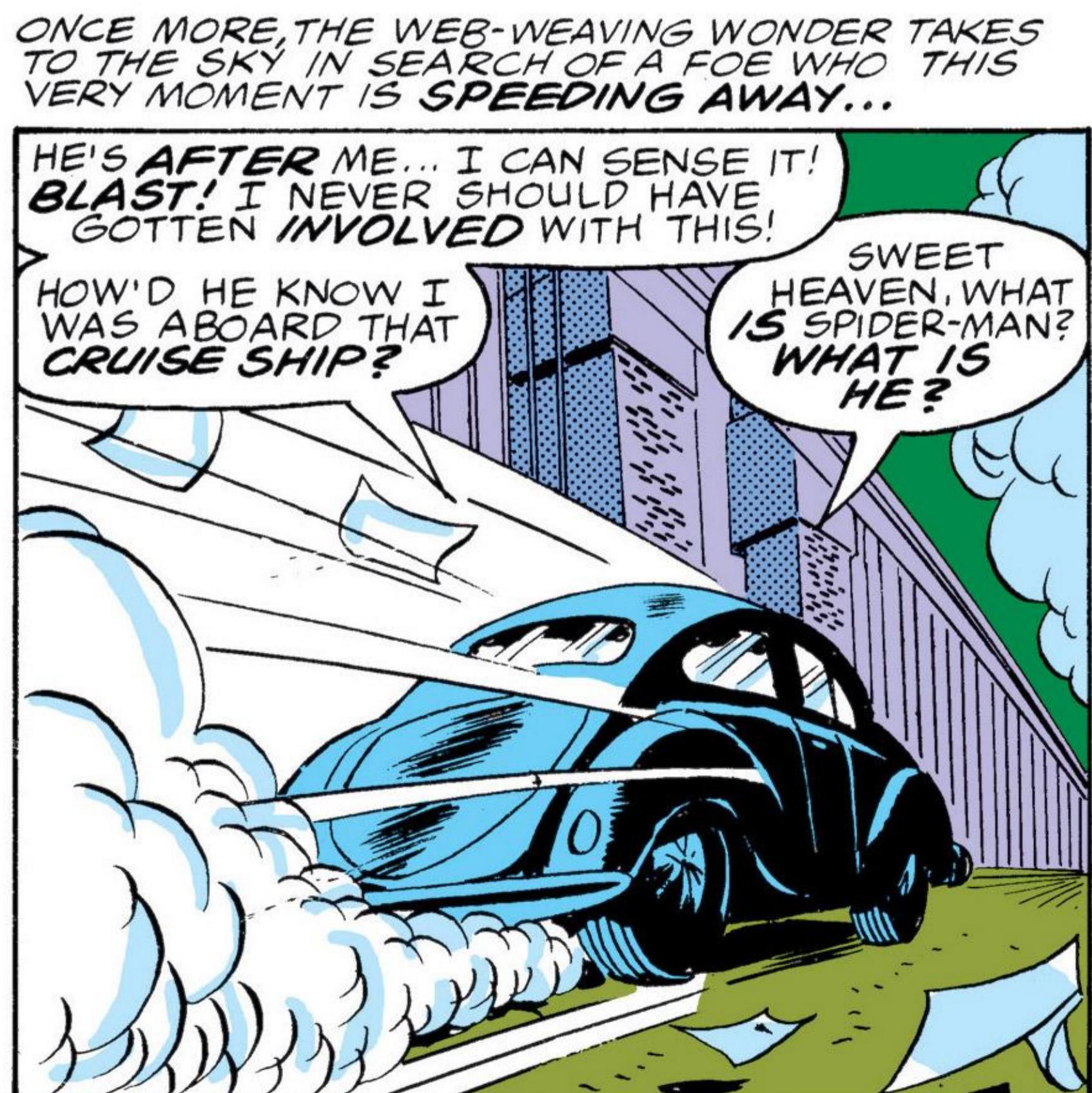
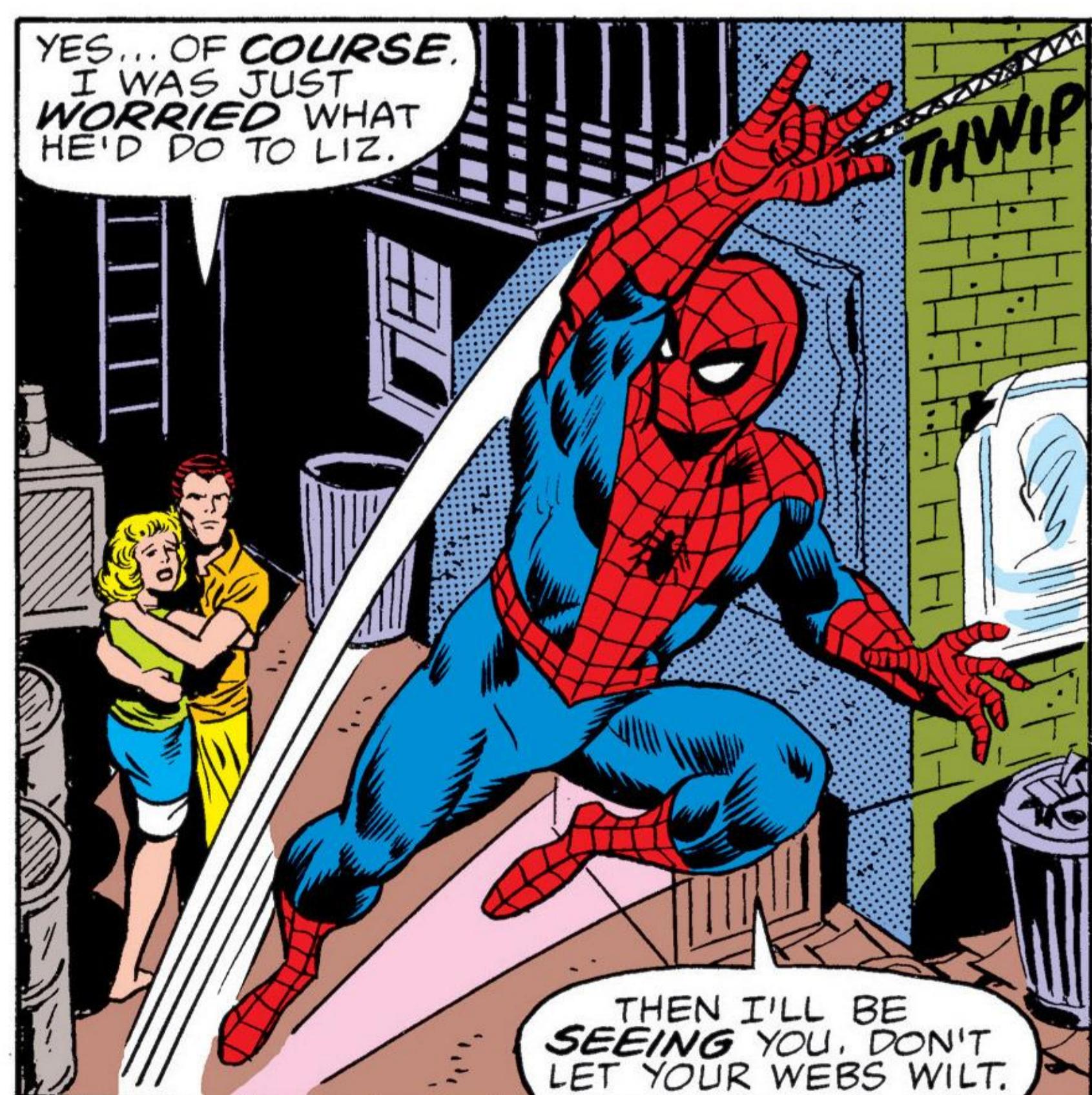
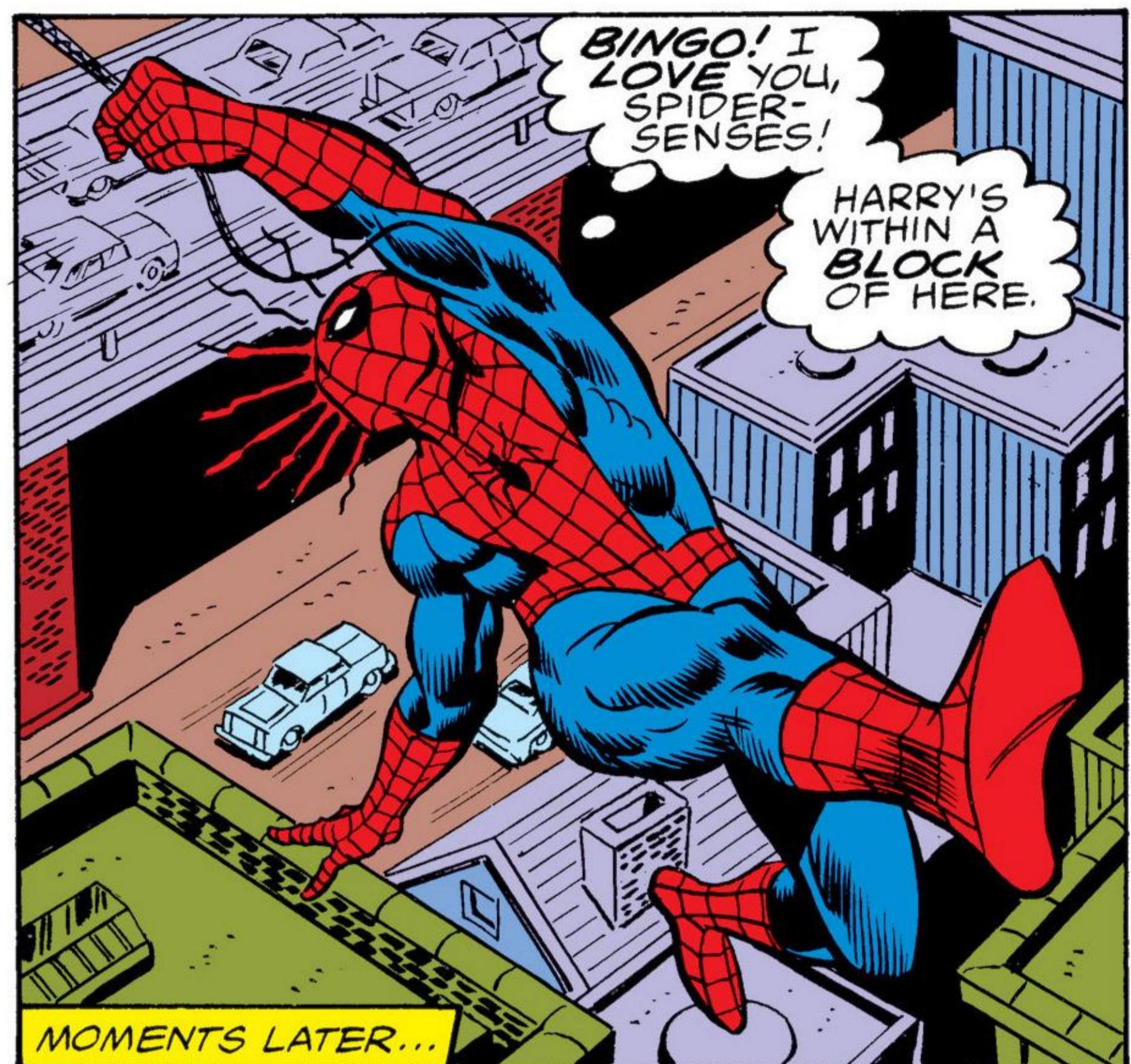
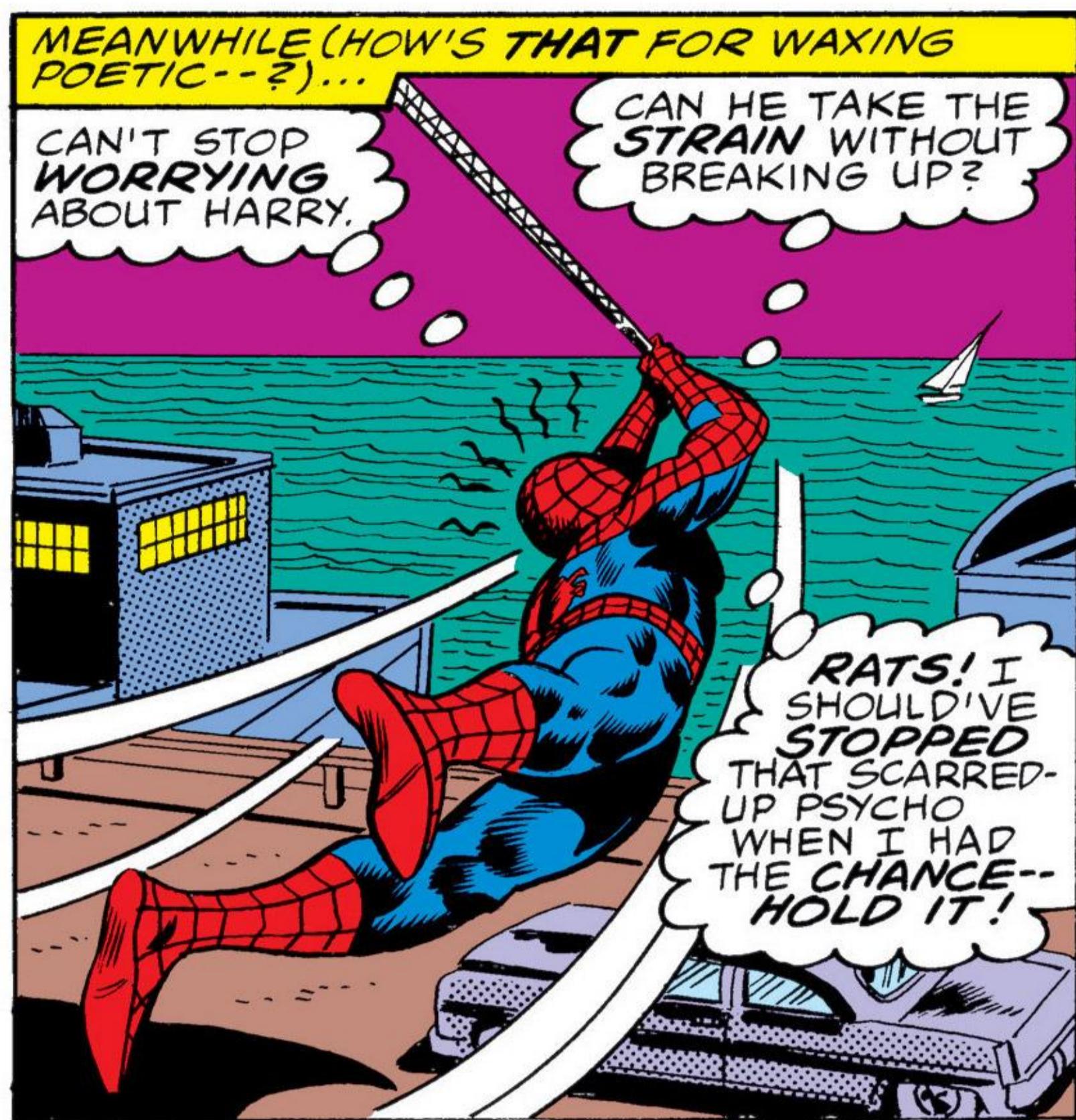
THWIP!

HURRIEDLY, THE STRICKEN CRUISE SHIP RETURNS TO PORT...



AND IF THAT ISN'T A CUE TO
SEGUE OVER TO THE WEST SIDE
PIER...





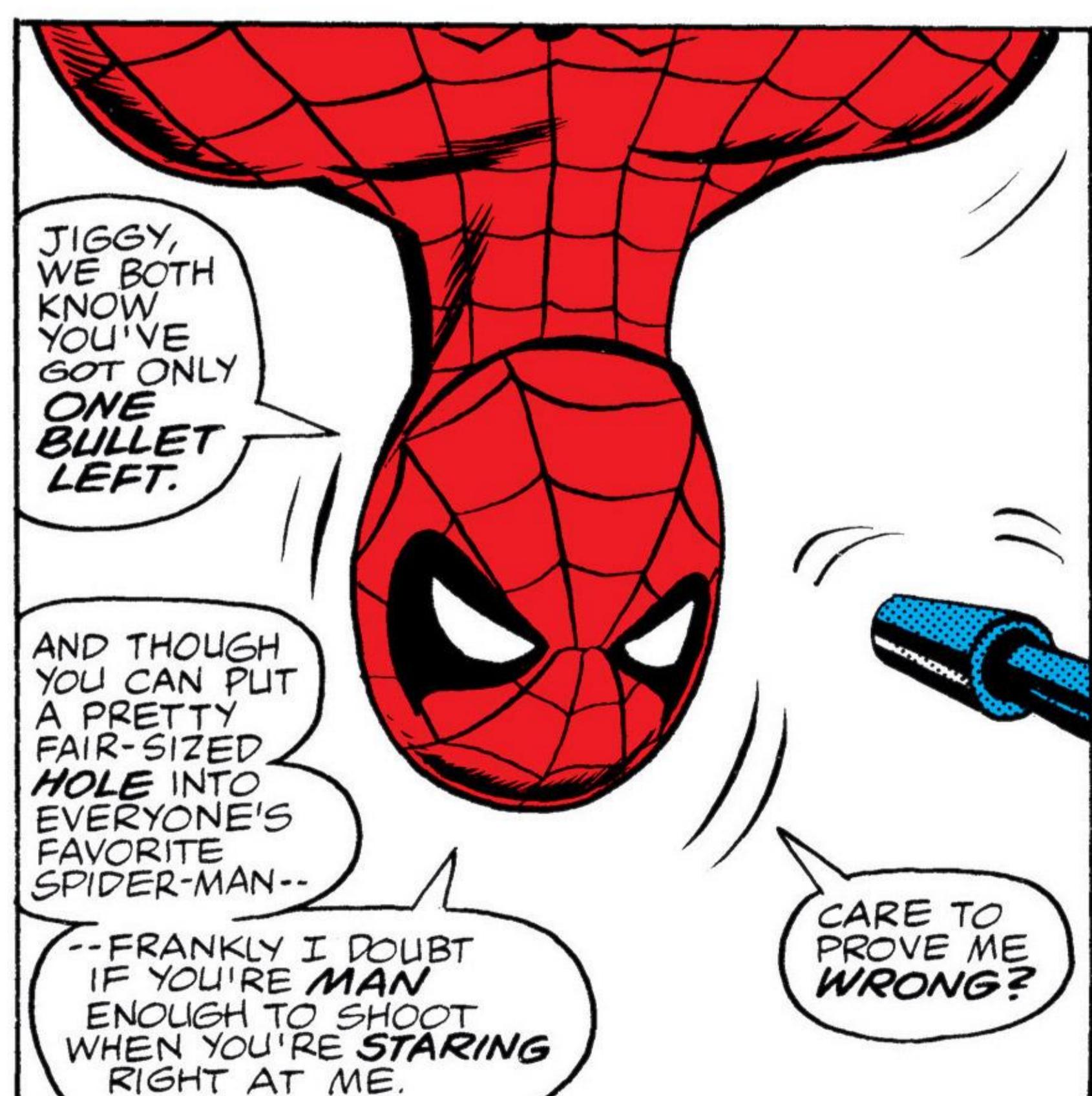
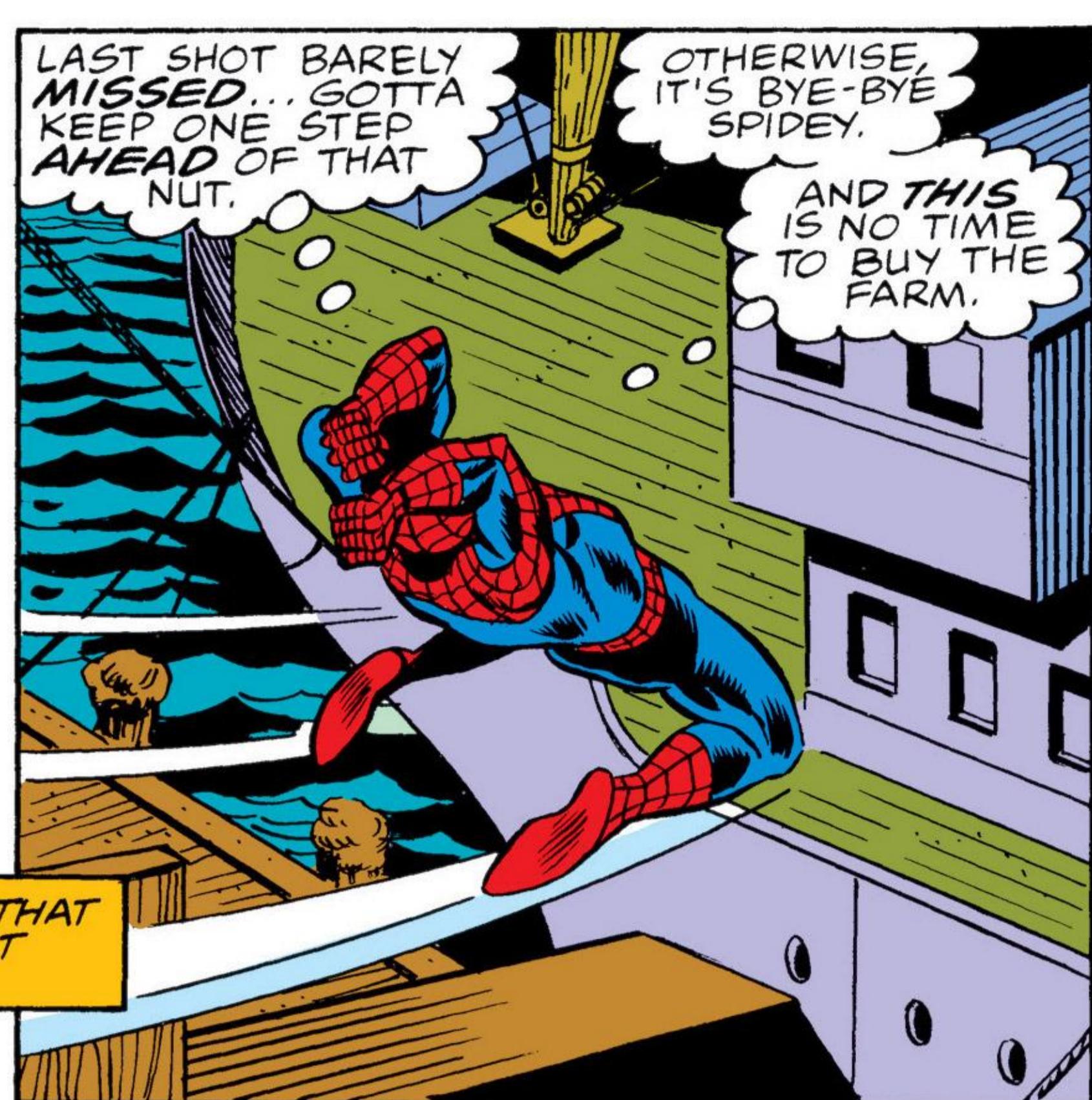
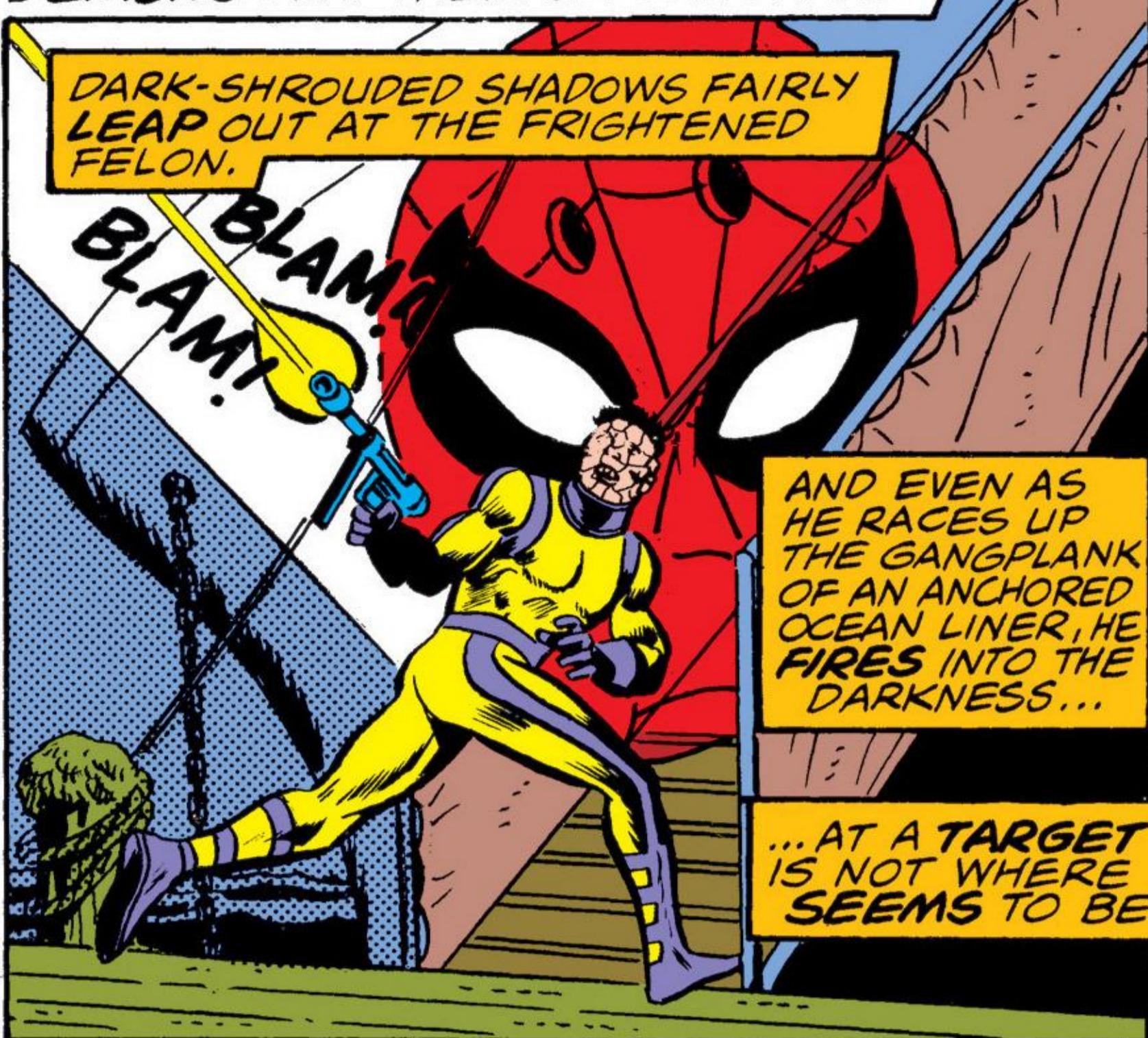
SUDDENLY, STABBING THROUGH THE DARKNESS, SURROUNDING THE HOT-WIRED, STOLEN VOLKSWAGEN...

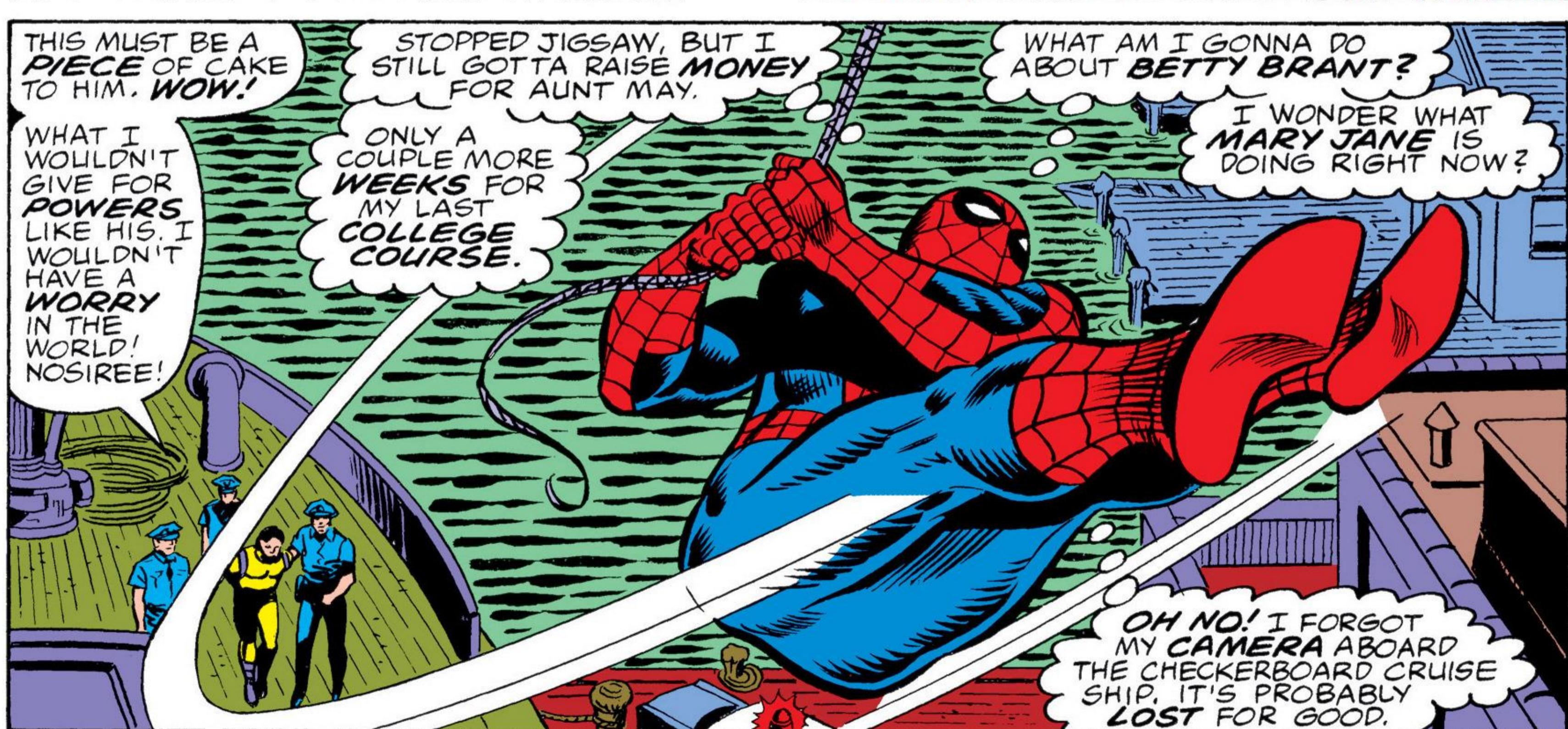
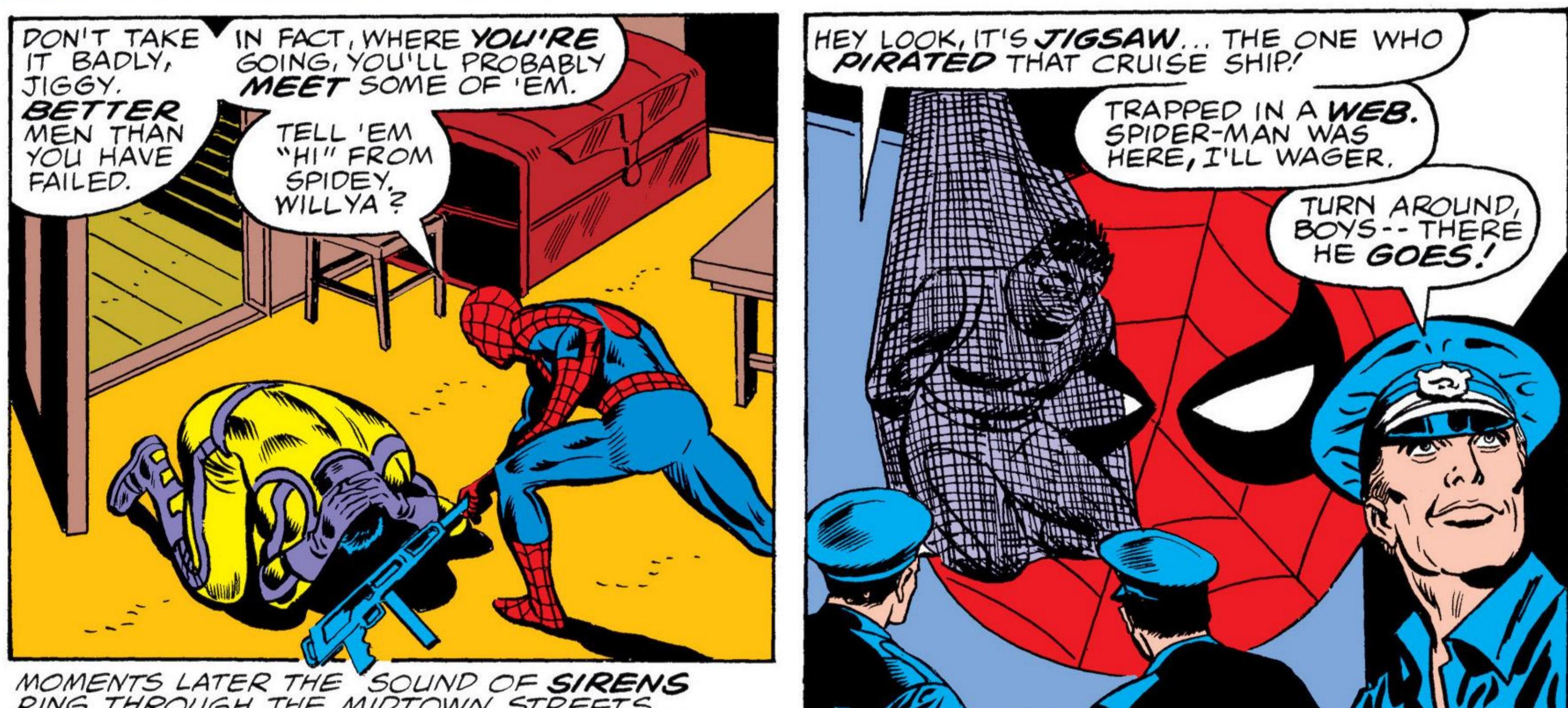
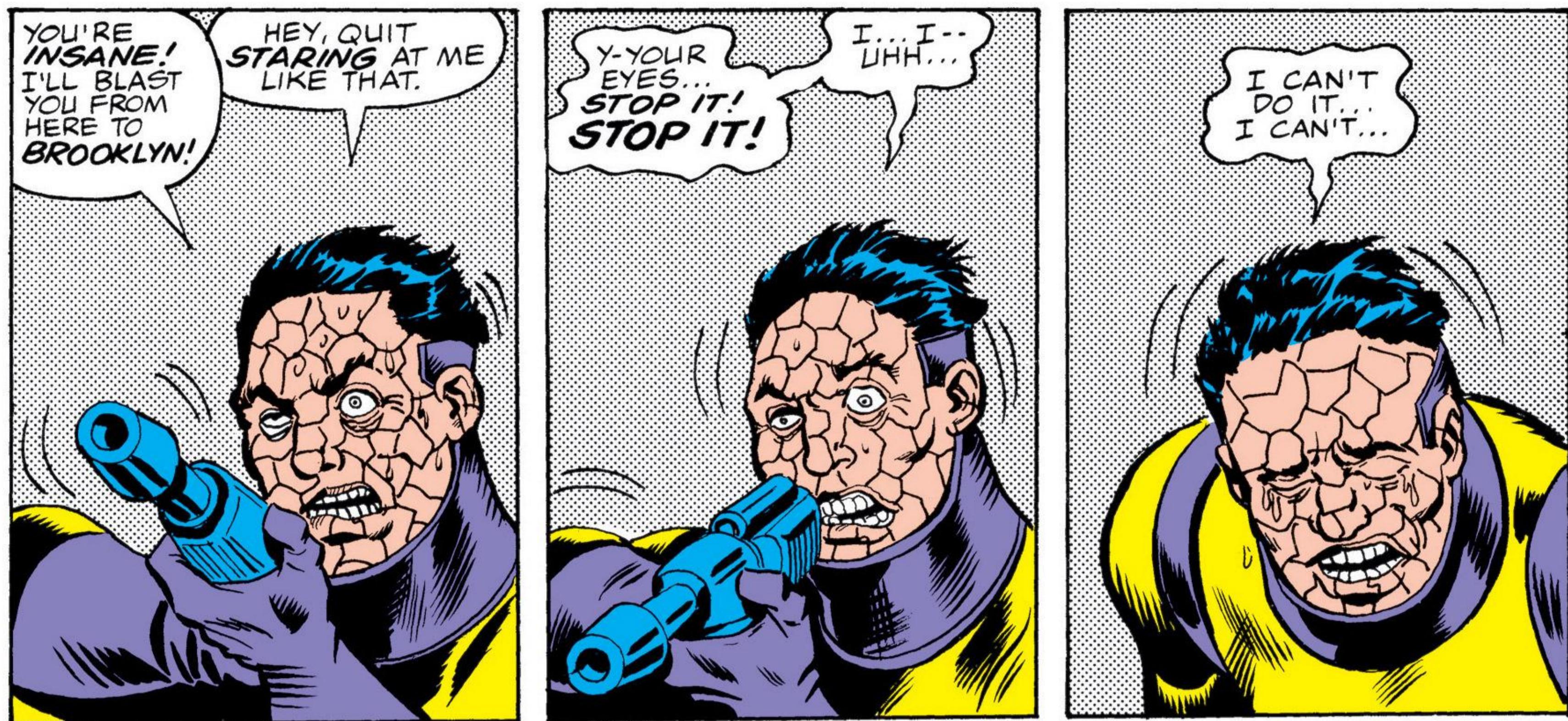


PANICKY, JIGSAW FLOORS THE GAS PEDDLE, SWERVES TO TURN ON TO THE WEST SIDE HIGHWAY, BUT--



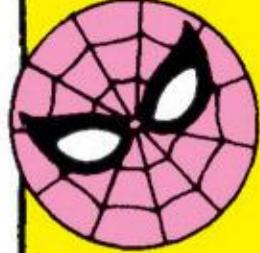
HOW CAN ANY MAN FLEE FROM FEAR? IN THE VELVET DARKNESS, FRIGHTENINGLY OBSCENE DEMONS PLAY THEIR SINISTER HAND.





NEXT ISSUE: **MAYHEM BY MOONLIGHT!**

A SHOCKING GUEST STAR!



THE SPIDER'S WEB

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
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New York, New York 10022

MARV WOLFMAN
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
ASSISTANT EDITOR

What with Peter Parker's proposal of marriage to Mary Jane Watson and the reintroduction of Betty Brant Leeds, SPIDER-MAN #182-183 has triggered an avalanche of mail, even more than Marvel's most popular super-hero usually gets. So what say we dig right in, beginning with this acutely-critical communique... Dear Marvel,

When Spider-Man first appeared on the comics scene, he was immediately a smash hit because (if we are to believe the hype) he dared to do what had never been done before—to be unpredictable, to have that funky element of real life that you never know what's going to happen next. Spider-Man is still the same as he was back then. But this is not such a good thing. Spidey is still daring to be different, but different from what superheroes were in 1960. He was unpredictable back then, but he has now established a record of doing "unpredictable" things over and over again. Speculating about what will happen next in SPIDER-MAN is like wondering if the good guys will win on your seventh viewing of STAR WARS. Spidey has degenerated into a red-and-blue Mego doll; other than the fact that he's a nice package, he's the same as most of the other super-heroes around. He is no longer in the vanguard.

I was talking with some friends about issue #182 where Parker proposes to Mary Jane. It was fairly obvious that she was gonna say no. I mean, when has Marv Wolfman ever exhibited the urge to change something so it shows? Still, we mused, Spider-Man's concept is that of radical change. Wolfman is the new writer, so maybe he's trying to bring back the old unpredictable Spidey. We were wrong. We were caught on guard.

After so long with Gerry Conway and Len Wein, I thought we might be seeing daylight with Marv. So maybe his SPIDER-WOMAN and NOVA mags aren't up to par. DRACULA certainly is. Maybe we'll see that taut characterization, those nice conflicts, in a super-hero mag. Maybe not. Blast! The idea of a married Parker, bouncing between a teacher's assistant job, the Bugle, home strife, and the usual plethora of super-villains, really appealed to me. It would open up a new vista of stories, guaranteeing that the writer would do something new. But, with MJ's turn-down in #183, it is not to be.

I'm sure that Marv thinks he has gobs of "new, exciting ideas that'll really throw ya for a loop, effendis!" But I doubt it. You can't kill off another supporting character, and I'm sure readers wouldn't want you to. You've done it twice (Capt. Stacy and daughter), it won't be any good again.

But maybe you could clear up some of the long-running plot threads and replace them with new ones we're not expecting. Spider-Man's biggest gimmick is his cavalcade of personal problems. What's wrong with his life that hasn't been done before. A three-year old could clear up Parker's life. Take his "wanted by the police" shtick. That has not only been over-used in Spider-Man, but in most of Marvel's other books as well, not to mention a few of DC's. Why not clear him?

Is Spidey in the forefront of the field today? When people ask that question, Marvel usually points to the sales figures and says, see, see, ain't he great? Well, that red-yellow-and-blue goon at DC has pretty impressive sales figures, too, but in no way is he in the artistic forefront of the industry. Which is where Spidey was back in the Stan Lee days. Spider-Man was once famous for his radical changes. Not traditional comic book "changes" that appear for about eight issues and fade away to be replaced by the standard. I mean lasting changes like Peter's high school graduation, his love life, and the Gwen Stacy affair. Something that will still be important fifty issues later.

This may seem a little emphatic and overemotional, but believe me, this letter has been building for some time. The Mary Jane affair was just the proverbial straw. Thanks for the chance to berate you like this. It may not help, but it makes me feel better.

Kurt Busiek
41 Somerset Rd.
Lexington, MA 02173

And it makes us feel the same, Kurt, when we get a gamut of constructive criticisms on the direction of our books. Thanks for caring enough about SPIDER-MAN to get so worked up to write a letter as hard-hitting and sincere as you did. (We only wish we had more room to print your letter in full.) As you can see from issues present and immediately past, Marv and the rest of the creative team on SPIDER-MAN are making a real effort to bring this spirit of innovation and change back to Marvel's trend-setting superhero book. In issues past, you've indeed seen Spider-Man cleared of his police charges as you called for, as well as his graduation from college (for all intents and purposes). Marv in fact intends that each issue of SPIDER-MAN at least until #200 (!) contains a real development in Peter Parker's life. And while he obviously does not have in mind the marriage that you feel will send the book on a rosy path (don't you feel that Marvel has the concept of married super-heroes pretty well staked out elsewhere?), he does have some changes in the wind that will certainly make the book as unpredictable as it had been in the golden days of yesteryear. Check back with us in a few months, friend Kurt, and tell us if you don't agree.

Now for a handful of other reactions...

Dear Bullpen,

I have been a fan of Marvel for two years now, and I've seen great comics come and go. Let me get to the point: if Peter Parker gets married, I'll feel that another great comic has gone. I can't see Peter tied down with a wife to support and all that jazz. It would be boring. Keep Peter Parker single!

Robert Broswell

11304 Marlboro Pk.
Upper Marlboro, MD 20870

Greetings Madmen:

...I find it hard to believe that even Mary Jane, as carefree as she is, would reject Pete's proposal by saying, "Proposal? Oh, that," and "See you around. . .sometime. We can still be friends, right?" That's inhuman! She's supposed to be a good human being with a strong, longtime friendship with Pete, I thought. Be realistic!

Lest you think I'm overly harsh, I must say that I'm glad Pete actually asked MJ to marry him, and I'm also glad she turned him down. Despite the actual dialog, it was a natural, believable progression of their relationship, and necessary in order to keep Spidey the forward-moving strip it has always been.

Will Hevelin

242 Louis #3
East Lansing, MI 48823

Dear Marvel,

I've just finished reading SPIDER-MAN #184 and the fact that Betty Brant has reappeared is frightening. I'm afraid that Peter and Betty might get romantically involved. She shouldn't since she's married, and he shouldn't, because he doesn't need someone like her. Betty despises violence and Spider-Man—she could never understand Peter.

I am relieved that he and Mary Jane did not get married. I don't like her, she seems so shallow. Although I don't know much of her background, I don't trust her. I don't believe she ever really even loved Peter.

Peter Parker needs some new girlfriends. Someone understanding, patient, and willing to tolerate his sudden disappearances. Someone with a little mystery herself. In fact, someone like me. Consider it.

Kathy Wilson
(no address given)

And so it goes. While the reactions to Mary Jane and Betty's upsets of Peter's life were diverse, they were, to a letter, forceful. Thanks for sharing your views with us, one and all—we only wish we had room to print more of them! Keep writing, people, as this page attests we value your opinions, no matter how critical. Oh, and Kathy, if you remember to include your address on your next letter, we'll be sure to pass it on to Peter Parker for consideration of your proposal. Okay?