

MARVEL®
Comics

DEAD RECKONING PART 1 OF 3

IT BEGINS NOW!

DEADPOOL

DEC
#23

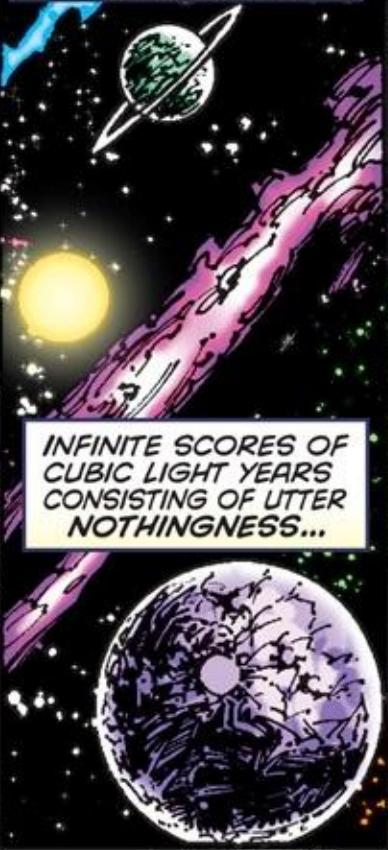
APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



PROLOGUE



THE UNIVERSE AS WE KNOW IT EXISTS IN A STATE OF GREAT IMBALANCE...



INFINITE SCORES OF CUBIC LIGHT YEARS CONSISTING OF UTTER NOTHINGNESS...



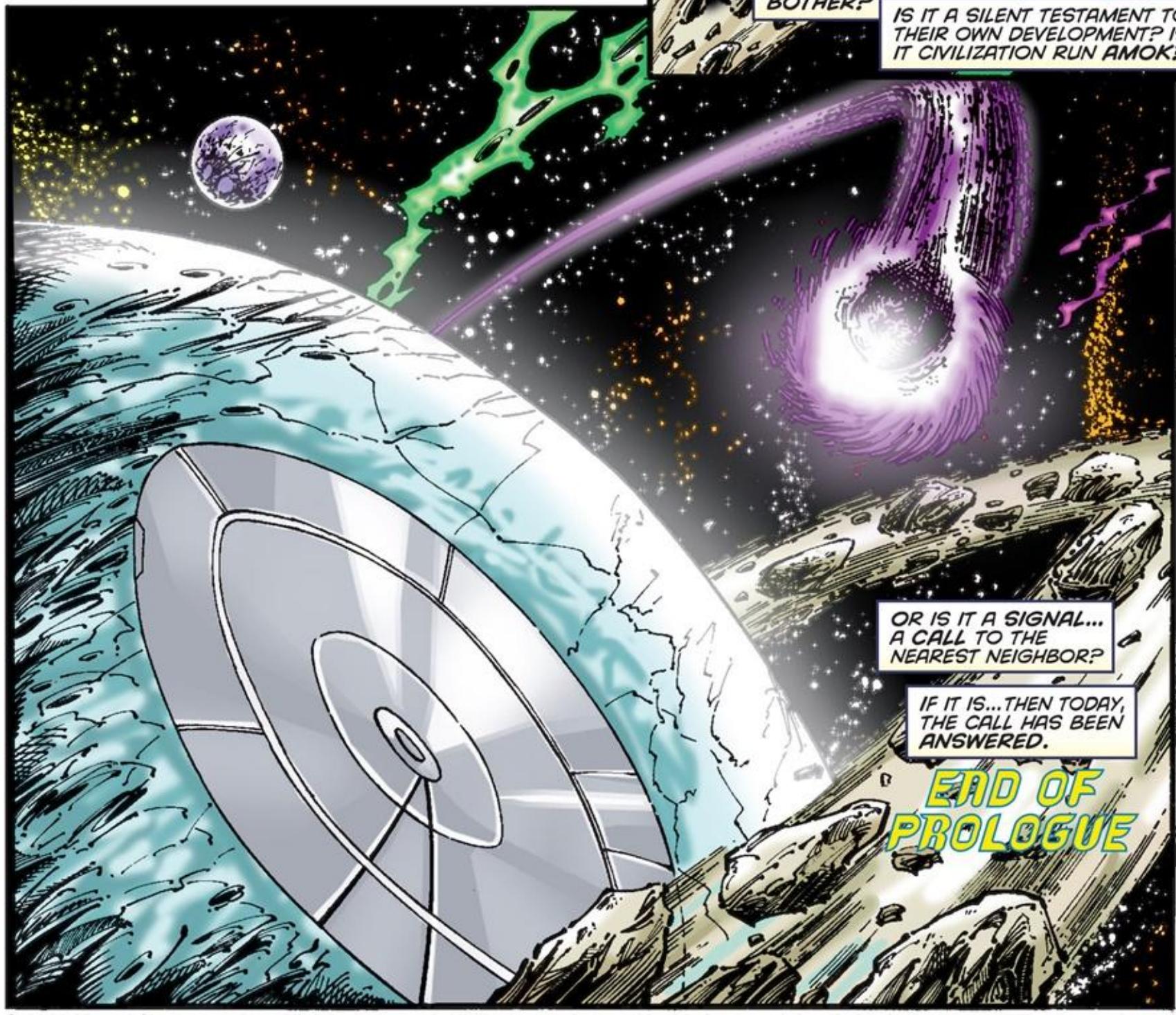
...INTERRUPTED ON OCCASION BY ONE OF A RELATIVE PITTANCE OF CELESTIAL BODIES.

OF THESE, ONLY A HANDFUL ARE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE.



SO WHY, THEN, DID THE INHABITANTS OF THIS BLUE GREEN ORB EVEN BOTHER?

IS IT A SILENT TESTAMENT TO THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT? IS IT CIVILIZATION RUN AMOK?



OR IS IT A SIGNAL... A CALL TO THE NEAREST NEIGHBOR?

IF IT IS... THEN TODAY, THE CALL HAS BEEN ANSWERED.

END OF PROLOGUE



-HGK-
TH-HGK... THE
D-D...

...THE
DAWN RISES
IN THE NORTH,
AND RAINS GLORY
DOWN ON ALL
THE EARTH... I
SEE...

A
MESSIAH
COMES...

A MESSIAH
BRINGING
ULTIMATE PEACE...
AND YOU WILL
WELCOME
HIM.

TA-DA. MY VERY FIRST
VISION OF TOMORROW, AND
OUT OF THE GATE I PREDICT
THE SECOND COMING.

MOM ALWAYS
SAID I WAS AN
OVERACHIEVER.

AN ALIEN LIFE FORM
WILL COME TO EARTH
IN THE LATE 20TH
CENTURY, AND BRING
WITH IT PEACE
AND PROSPERITY.

HOLY
CRUD...

WE'RE
GOING TO
SAVE THE
WORLD.

SO MUCH FOR
THE AGE OF
INNOCENCE...

JUMP TO
MEMORY
30089

...DIXON PROPOSED THAT
THEY KEEP MY PREDICTIONS
SECRET UNTIL THEY KNEW
FOR SURE WHAT I WAS
TALKING ABOUT...

THAT WAY, NO ONE WAS FIRED
IF I WAS *WRONG*... AND NONE
OF THE FOUR L'S OF LANDAU,
LUCKMAN, LAKE & LEQUARE WHO
RULED OUR WORLD COULD MESS
THINGS UP IF I WAS *RIGHT*.

MEMORY
JUMP TO 4567E...
BUFFERING...

AS IT TURNED OUT,
KEEPING ME A SECRET
WASN'T THAT *HARD*.

Mr. LEQUARE, THE PARTNER
OVERSEEING OUR PROJECT,
PASSED AWAY WHILE ON SAFARI
TO A FAR AWAY PLACE. *EATEN*.
NASTY, BUT A HAPPY ACCIDENT
ALL THE SAME...

...BECAUSE NOW WE WERE A FORGOTTEN DIVISION IN A COMPANY TOO FAT TO BE CONTROLLED BY ITS THREE REMAINING HEADS.

ALL RIGHT, PRECOG... THIS WON'T HURT A BIT. JUST RELAX...

AND IF THOSE TECH BOYS GOT THE TRANSLATION SOFTWARE RIGHT... WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE INTO YOUR MIND --

MEMORY FILE
398398...

SO WE PERFECTED OUR CRAFT AS BEST WE COULD WITHOUT RAISING EYEBROWS.

ANOTHER UNCOMFORTABLE PERSONAL MOMENT RUDELY INTERRUPTED BY MY "GIFT."

A MALEVOLENT BEING WILL KILL THE ALIEN MESSIAH... DESTROY THE PEACE... UNLESS THE MESSIAH IS PROTECTED... BY THE MITHRAS!



Uh... I -- OH!

--AHEM-- WELL... NO ONE EVER SAID MY THOUGHTS WOULD BE PRETTY, MS. CULLODEN.

AND PLEASE... DO CALL ME MONTGOMER--

AAIEEE!

WHAT IS IT?!

MUH-MUH-MESSIAH! MESSIAH'S DESTROYER!

NOAH!

I DON'T CARE HOW YOU PRONOUNCE IT... FIND IT.

DIXON USED HIS PROMOTION TO OVERBOSS TO WRITE HIMSELF CARTE BLANCHE RESOURCES FOR OUR LITTLE PROJECT --

-- NOT TO MENTION CERTAIN COSMETIC SURGICAL PROCEDURES --

-- AND THE SEARCH BEGAN... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THEN... THE LOOK ON HIS FACE, THAT HE'D BE WILLING TO GO TOO FAR...

MEMORY SORT:
MP-TB-579982... WAITING...

... THESE WERE NOT HAPPY YEARS... EACH HAD IDEAS ABOUT WHO SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T BE CONSIDERED FOR THE PROGRAM...

...CONSTANT FRICTION, DIXON
DECIDED THAT "FATE" WASN'T GOOD
ENOUGH...WE NEEDED TO ENSURE
THE MITHRAS' EFFECTIVENESS...



WE WOULD CULTIVATE A
HERO. WHATEVER. I KEPT
HAVING VISIONS...BUT ONE
WAS OF SPECIAL COMFORT --

WE FOUR SHALL WITNESS THE
DESTRUCTION OF TIAMAT...
CIRCLE COMPLETE...FOUR IN THE
BEGINNING...FOUR IN THE END.

-- IT WAS REASSURING TO THINK
MY BODY WOULD HOLD OUT LONG
ENOUGH TO SEE ALL THIS PAY OFF.

THE THREE REMAINING L'S
REMEMBERED WE EXISTED, AND
DROPPED IN FOR A VISIT...
NOAH COVERED LIKE A PRO,
COACHED ME TO LOOK DUMB.

IT WORKED...
HOORAY
FOR US...

...BUT WHY WAS IT JUST
NOAH AND I THAT DAY
IN FLESHWERKS? PERHAPS
BECAUSE DIXON AND ZOE
WERE BUSY CAT-FIGHTING
OVER A CERTAIN MITHRAS
CANDIDATE NAMED
WADE WILSON...

(?) AS REVEALED WAAAAY
BACK IN OUR FLASHBACK
ISSUE. -- MATT

FIRST CONTACT MADE
BY ZOE...AND WE
KNOW HOW THAT
TURNED OUT. PROGRAM
BLOWN. WILSON IS
OUT...CANCER. (?)

THINGS LOOKED GRIM
FOR A LITTLE WHILE...
AND THEN...

IMAGINE OUR SURPRISE A FEW YEARS
LATER WHEN WE LEARNED WADE WILSON
HAD GONE UNDERGROUND, AND
TAKEN THE NAME DEADPOOL.

ZOE ONLY RUBBED
EVERYONE'S NOSE IN IT
FOR A MONTH OR SO.

BEHOLD...
THE MITHRAS.

...DASHING, NO? I FINALLY
GOT A CLEAR VISION OF
WHAT THE MANIAC LOOKED
LIKE...AND A NAME...

DEADPOOL.

EVEN THOUGH WADE WAS HARDLY
RECEPTIVE THE FIRST TIME WE
APPROACHED HIM, WE DUMPED
THE OTHER WARDS...

THOUGH IT MIGHT HAVE
BEEN TOO SOON...I HAD
ANOTHER VISION...ONE
ZOE WASN'T PRIVY TO.

(?) REMEMBER ISSUE
#1? -- MATT

TIAMAT IS
TOO STRONG.
TIAMAT IS TOO
DETERMINED.
THE MITHRAS
WILL DIE...

AND ANOTHER
SHALL RISE TO
TAKE HIS PLACE.

SO I SAW DEADPOOL DIE AT
THE HANDS OF TIAMAT. BIG
WHOOP. I'M NOT PERFECT --
I THOUGHT "TITANIC" WAS
GOING TO BLEED MONEY --

BUT DIXON TOOK IT
SERIOUSLY. HE
DESPISED DEADPOOL...
THOUGHT THAT FATE HAD
CHOSEN POORLY.

ORDERED ME TO MONITOR BOTH
DEADPOOL AND THE SECOND STRING --
THE CANDIDATE STATISTICALLY
CLOSEST TO BEING THE MITHRAS --

AND HE WANTED ME TO KEEP IT A SECRET.
I ASSUMED HE WAS BEING CAUTIOUS...
PARANOID...MEGALOMANIACAL...

...I DIDN'T KEEP HIS SECRET.
TOLD ZOE...ZOE WHO HAD A
RIGHT TO KNOW SHE WAS
BEING TOYED WITH...

AND HE BLEW OUT MY
SHORT TERM MEMORY WHEN
I CAME BACK FROM MONTE
CARLO WITH DEADPOOL... 😊

END OF MEMORY
ACCESS. RETURNING
TO PRESENT FEED.

...IF I CAN'T FIGURE
OUT HOW THINGS
WENT SO WRONG?

I'M TOTALLY
IN THE DARK...

AS SHOWN IN HORRIFIC
DETAIL AT THE END OF
ISSUE #20. -- MATT

CATASTROPHIC
MEMORY ERROR.

SO THE QUESTION... WHAT
GOOD DOES IT DO ME TO
HAVE A PHOTOGRAPHIC
MEMORY AND ALL THE
TIME IN THE WORLD TO
RUN PLAY BY PLAY...

...WHICH IS AN ESPECIALLY UNCOMFORTABLE PLACE TO FIND ONE'S SELF WHEN THE DEVIL'S KNOCKING AT YOUR FRONT DOOR...

AND YOUR FRIENDS LAY DEAD AT YOUR FEET.

NOAH'S GONE... NOAH, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO SEE THIS TO THE END, NOAH, MY FRIEND...

IF DIXON IS **RIGHT**, AND TIAMAT DID HIM IN... THEN NOT ONLY IS THE BUGGER **EARLY**... HE'S IN THE **WRONG LOCATION**.

THREE OF THE TRUTHS I'VE LIVED THE LAST SEVEN YEARS OF MY LIFE BY HAVE BEEN SHATTERED IN AN **INSTANT**.

IS HE IN RANGE OF ARECIBO YET, CULLODEN?

SOON. HE'LL HIT THE RADIO TELESCOPE IN **FIFTEEN**. WE'LL MONITOR EVERYTHING FROM HERE.

I'VE GOT ALL THE WAR ROOM FEEDS ON-LINE, SIR. WE'LL BE WITH YOUR MAN ALL THE WAY...

(HE DIED AT TIAMATT'S HANDS LAST ISSUE. -- SOLEMN MATT)

HOW MANY **MORE** TIMES WILL I BE WRONG TODAY... AND WHO **ELSE** WILL PAY THE PRICE?

YOU'RE UNCHARACTERISTICALLY **QUIET**, MONTY... ANY THOUGHTS, VISIONS, OR SNIDE PARABLES YOU'D CARE TO SHARE WITH US?

YES. THIS IS INSANE. WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE. WE NEED MORE TIME...

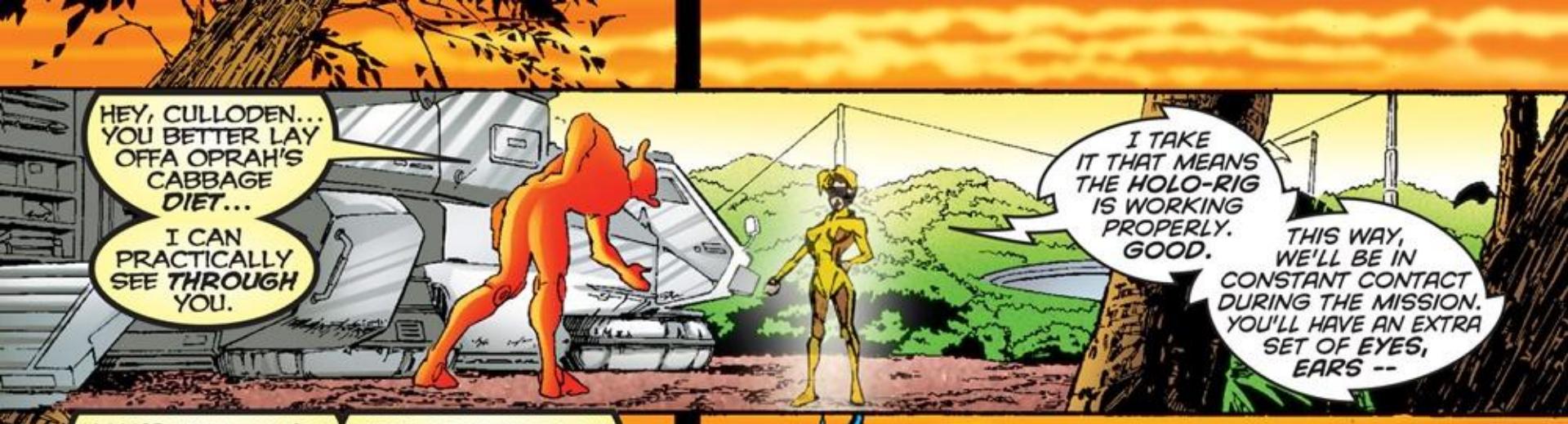
...AND I THINK YOU SENT NOAH TO DIE... YOU PIECE OF **GARBAGE**.

...I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT DEADPOOL... I JUST HOPE HE'S ALRIGHT.

DON'T FRET, MONTGOMERY... DEADPOOL'S **PERFECT**.

THOUGH LET'S HOPE YOU READ THAT **ONE** RIGHT, EH?





I JERKED YOU GUYS AROUND FOR A LONG TIME ON THIS WHOLE MITHRAS DEAL...

AVOIDING MY DESTINY... PLAYING YOU LIKE CHUMPS... GOOFING OFF...

AND THAT MAY HAVE GOTTEN YOUR MAN DEAD.

IF IT DID... I DON'T HAVE THE WORDS TO TELL YOU 'I'M SORRY' IN ENOUGH DIFFERENT WAYS.

BUT ALL THAT HAS GOTTA BE IN THE PAST. I'M NOT ABOUT WHINING ANYMORE OVER MY ROLE IN THIS DRAMA.

I'M NOT ABOUT RUNNING AWAY FROM DESTINY, OR EVEN TRYING TO BE A BIG SHOT HERO.

ALL I AM RIGHT NOW IS FOCUS ON THE JOB. OUR JOB.

I KNOW IT DON'T COUNT FOR MUCH... BUT YOU HAVE MY WORD NOAH WON'T HAVE DIED FOR NOTHING... NOT WHILE I'M ON THE JOB.

YES. YES, OF COURSE...

PEACHY. SEE YOU RINGSIDE, TOOTS.

I AM THE MITHRAS... I'M THE GUY WHO MAKES THINGS RIGHT, DIG? NOW... CAN I COUNT ON YOU TO BE WITH ME IN THERE? NO DISTRACTIONS? NO JUNK BETWEEN US?

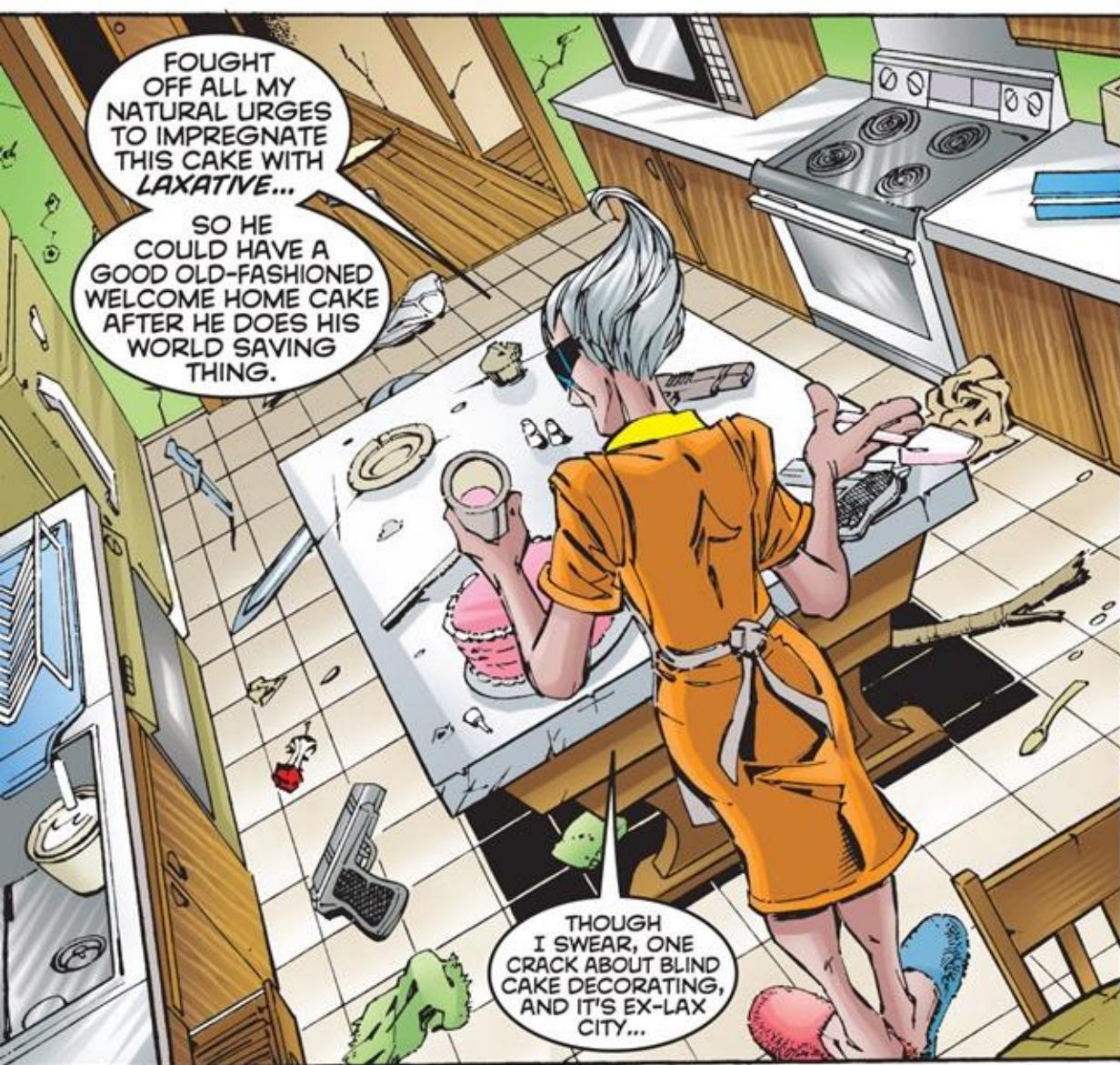
IS EVERYTHING READY -- CULLODEN? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

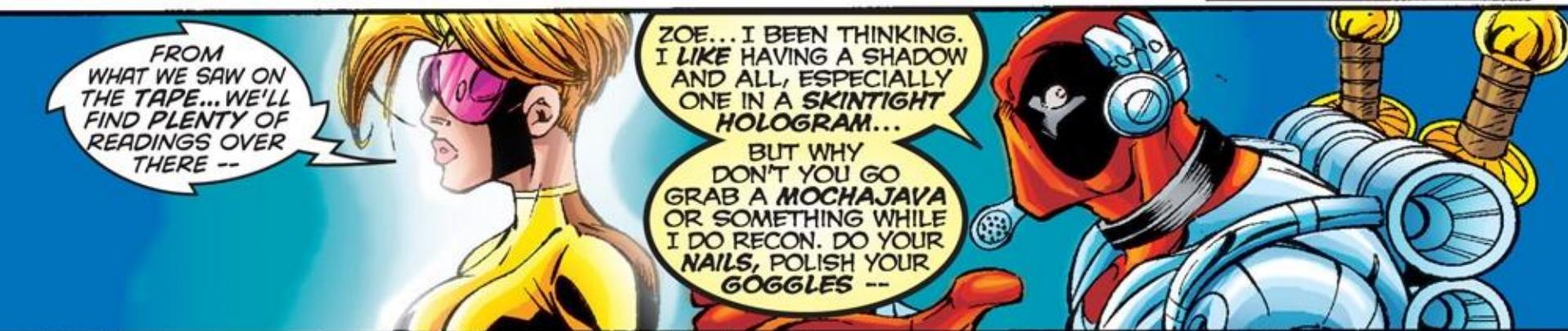
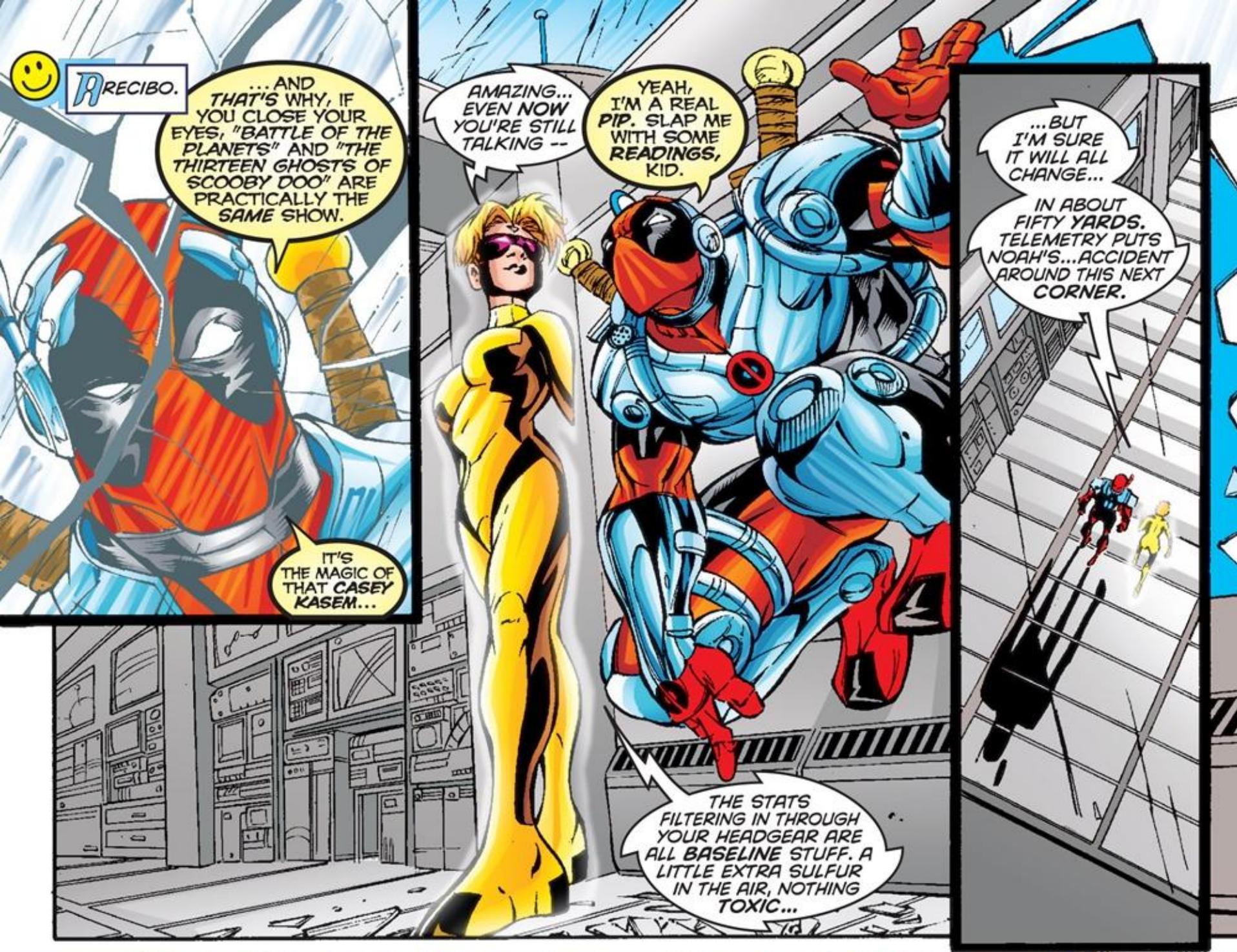
NOTHING, SIR...

JUST SOME FEEDBACK IN MY OPTICS...

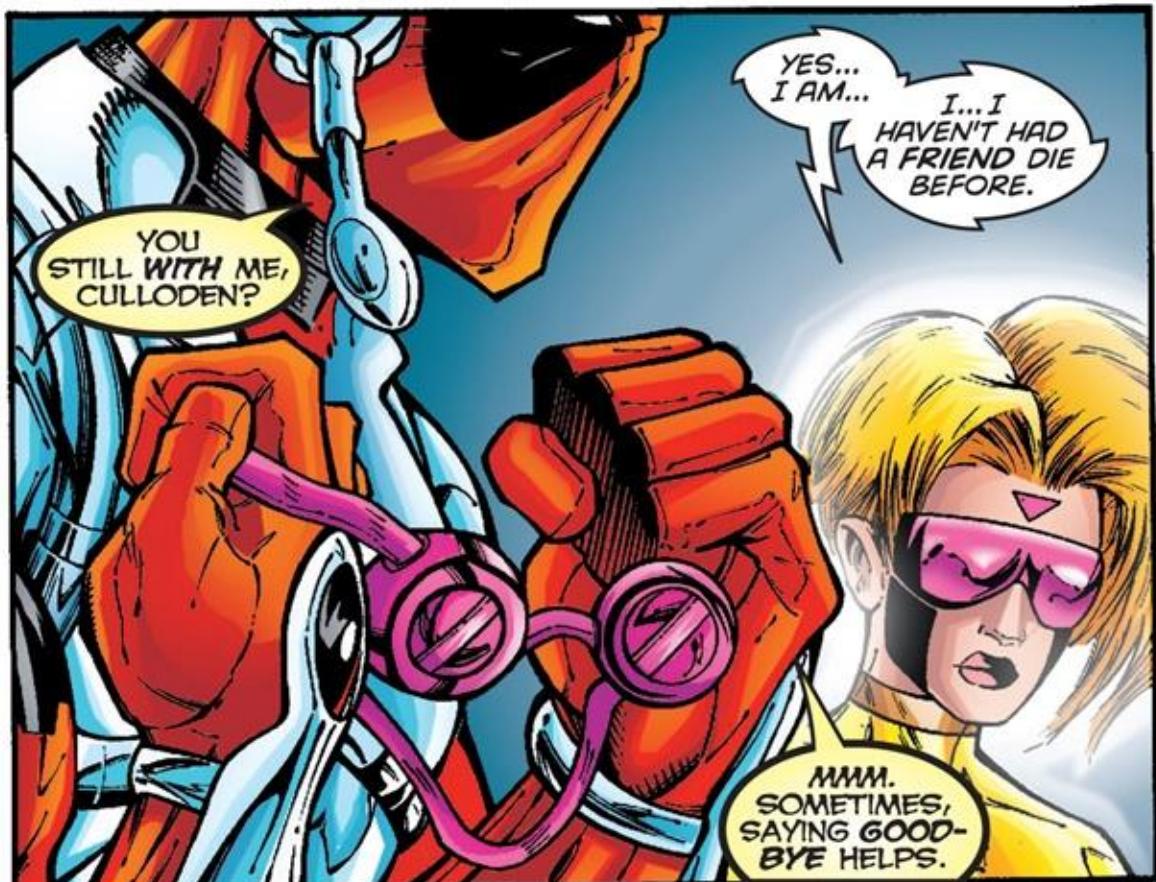
I'M FINE...

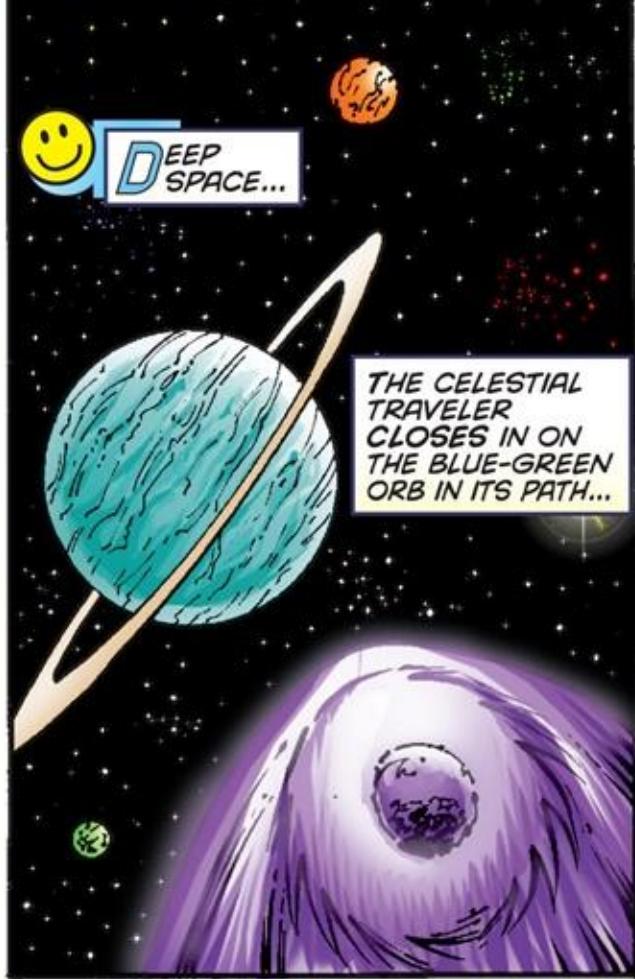
SAN FRANCISCO. THE DEADHUT.
ALMOST... THERE, AAL... MOST... THERE. OH, THAT SLOB BETTER APPRECIATE THIS...













RRECIBO.

A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF GUT-B-GON FRUIT SHAKES SOUNDS DELIGHTFUL, MONTY HALL...

...BUT I'M FEELING PECKISH FOR WHAT'S BEHIND ALIEN-INFESTED DOOR... NUMBER... ONE...

HOLD ON, WILSON... THE COMPUTER'S HOOKED ON TO SOMETHING... A SLIGHT TEMPERATURE VARIANCE...

WE MAY BE CLOSE.

UH... YA THINK?

POOM

SOMEONE CALL E.T. AND TELL HIM HIS RIDE IS WAITING... I THINK HE'S AT THE KEG.



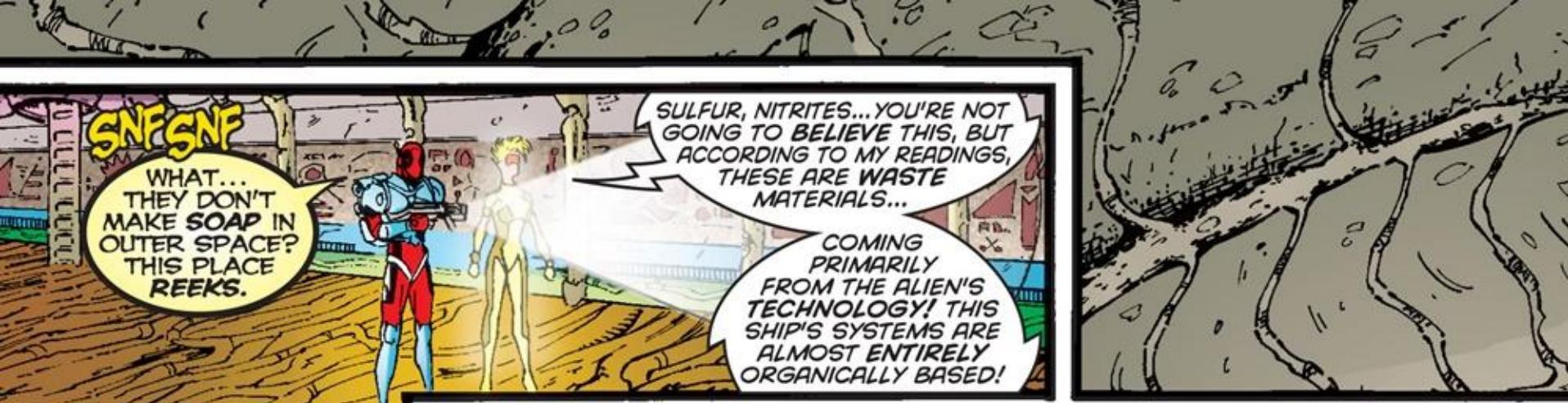
IT'S... IT'S BURROWED UP FROM UNDER THE BEDROCK! MY GOD...

SPECTRAL ANALYSIS READINGS INDICATE HULL DECOMPOSITION CONSISTENT WITH ALMOST A DECADE OF EXPOSURE...

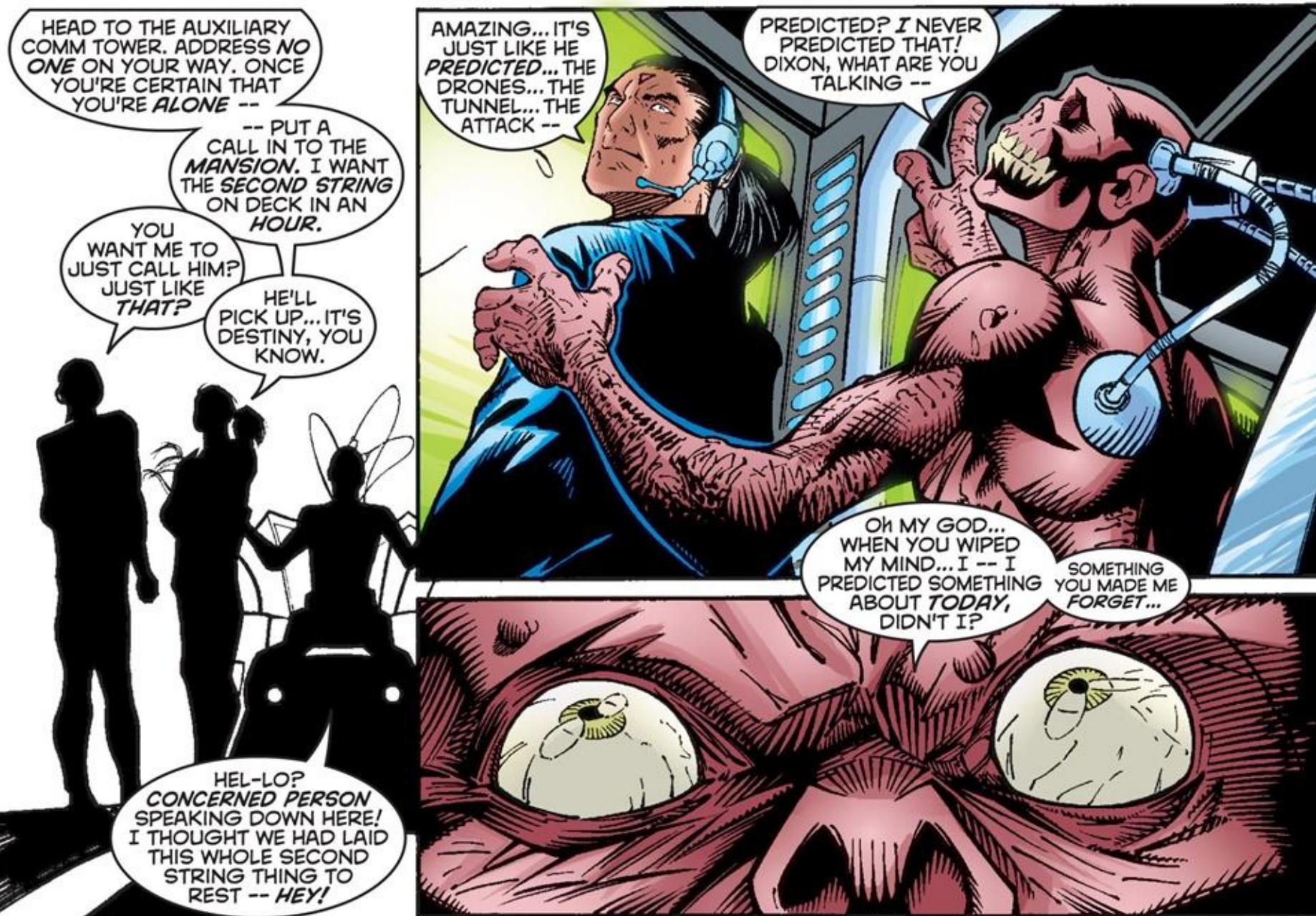
IT'S BEEN HERE FOR YEARS... WAITING.

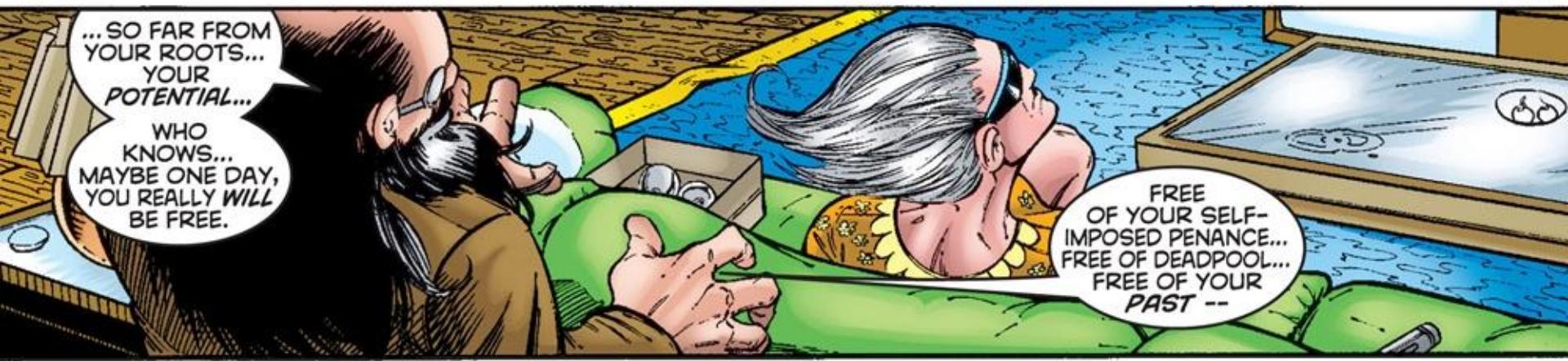
HOLY FRIJOLES!
VERY PROFESSIONAL, MONTY.

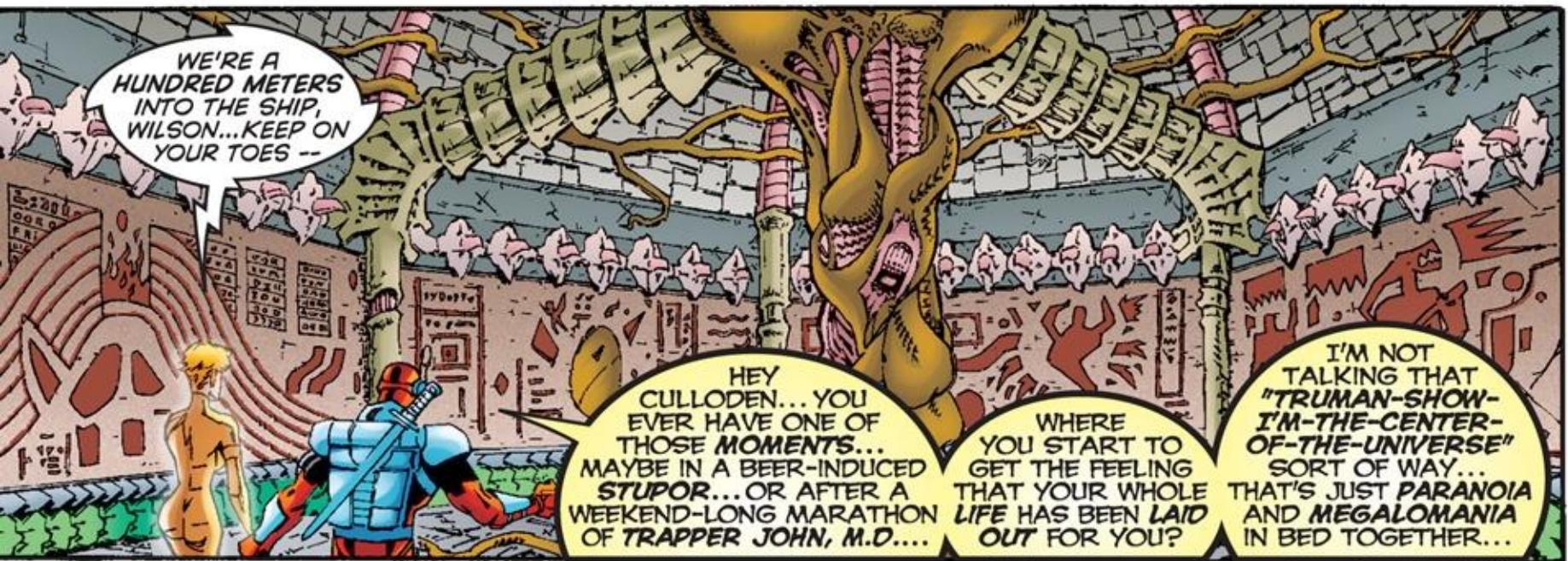
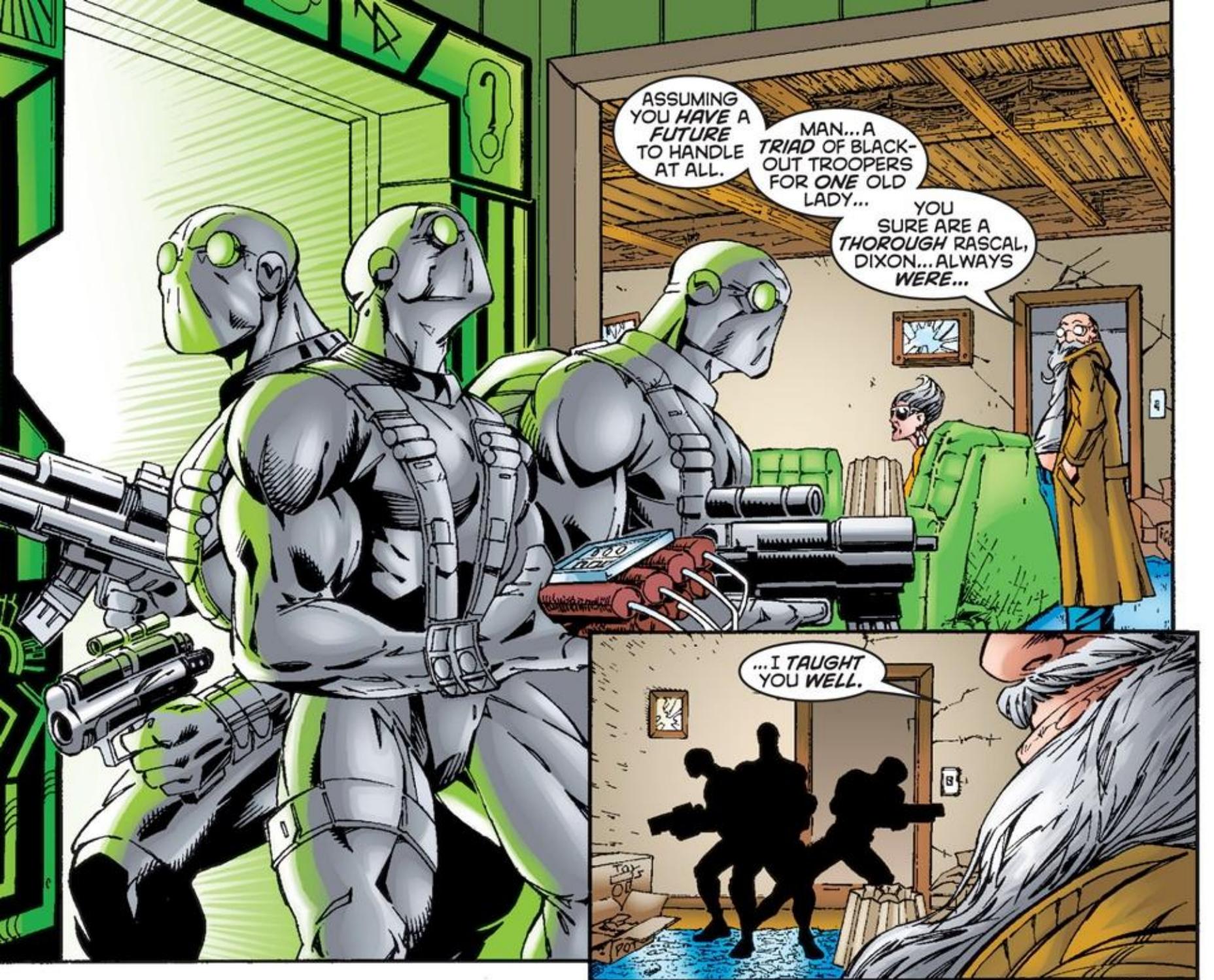












LIKE THIS POOR SLOB...
HE'S HELD UP OVER
HIS PAPPY'S HEAD
LIKE LEVAR BURTON
IN "ROOTS"...

PICKED
AT BIRTH TO BE
THE FREAK SENT TO
EARTH TO WHACK A
MESSIANIC BEING...
GETS THE RED EYE A
MILLION LIGHT YEARS
T'GOOD OL' TERRA
FIRMA.

YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND
IF I IGNORE YOU
FOR A MOMENT
AND GET TO MY
JOB...

THESE
PICTOGRAPHS...
MORE UNIFORM
IN PRESENTATION...
LIKE A HISTORICAL
RECORD --
RECOGNIZE THIS
ONE?

-- JUST
HOW MUCH
DOES TIAMAT
KNOW ABOUT
YOU --?



THE CREATURE APPEARS WITHOUT A SOUND.

NO GNASHING OF TEETH.

NO DEFiant SNARLS...

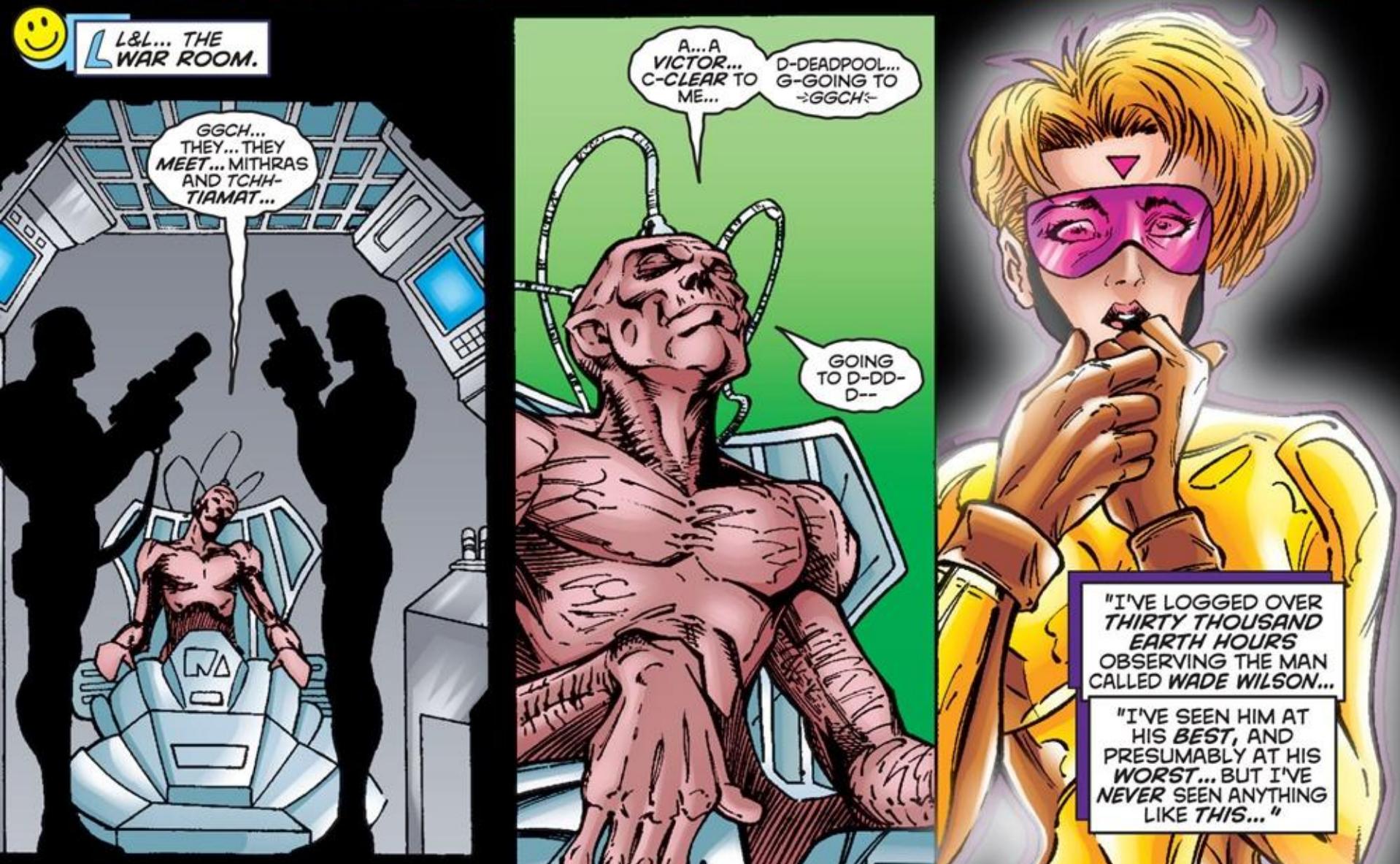
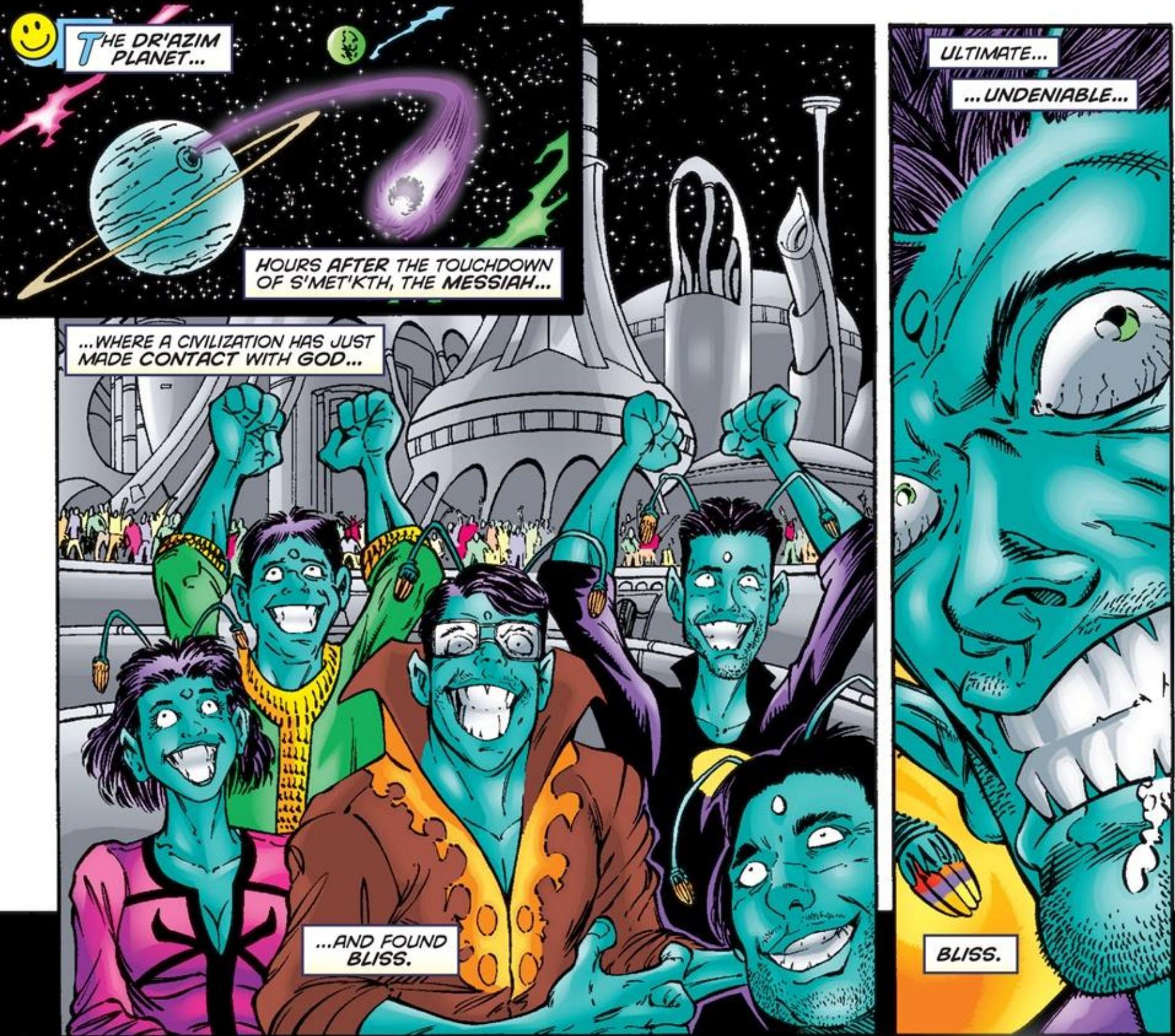
IT JUST STANDS THERE...

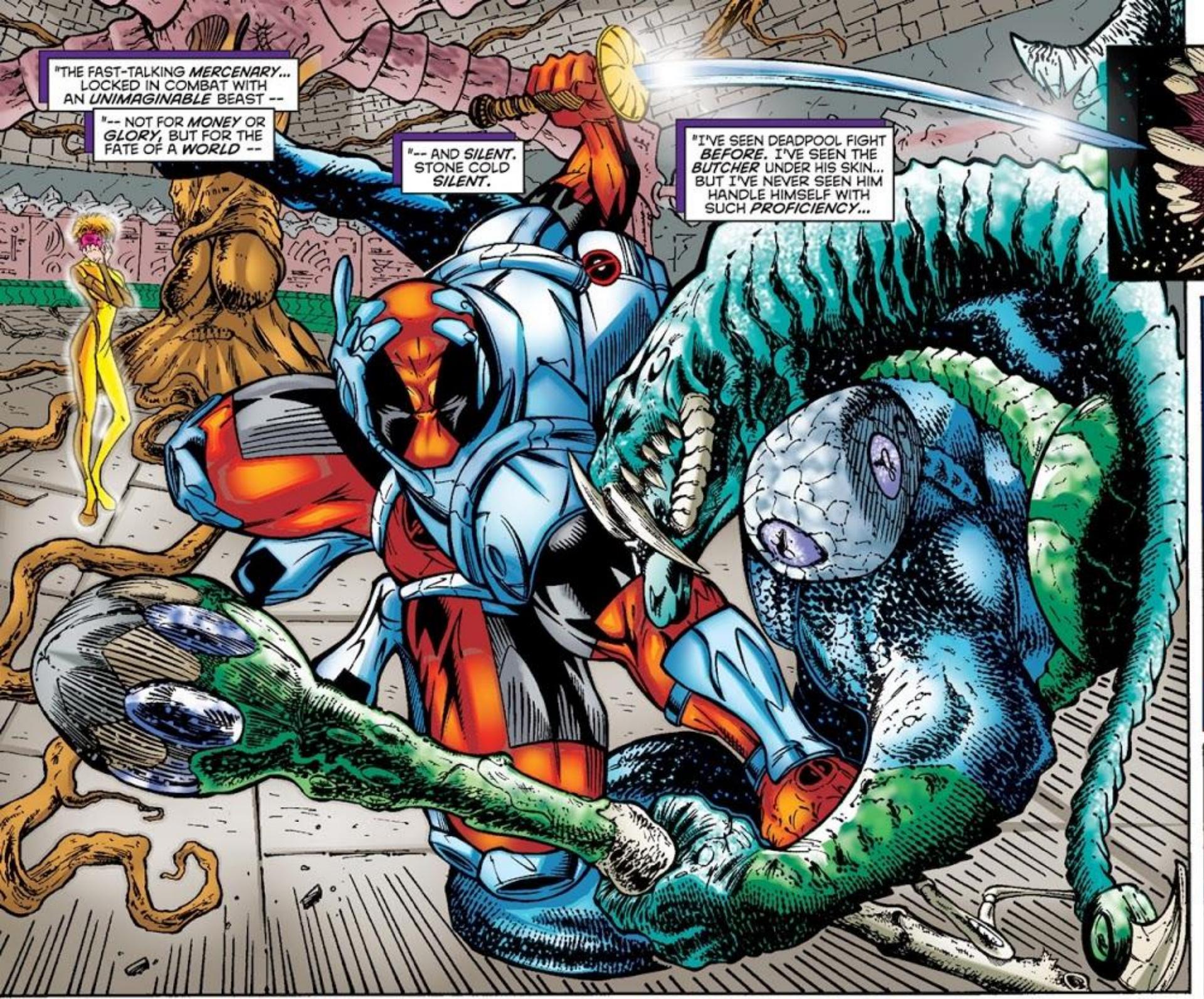
...WATCHING WITH EYES AS COLD AND OLD AS THE EDGE OF TIME...

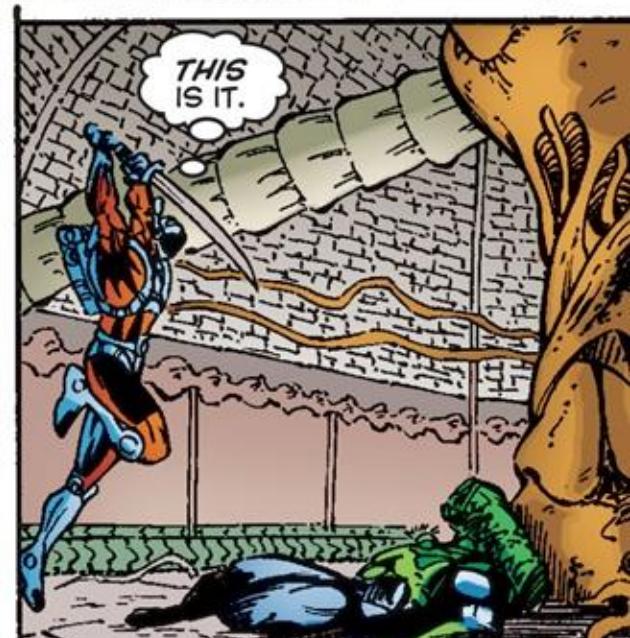
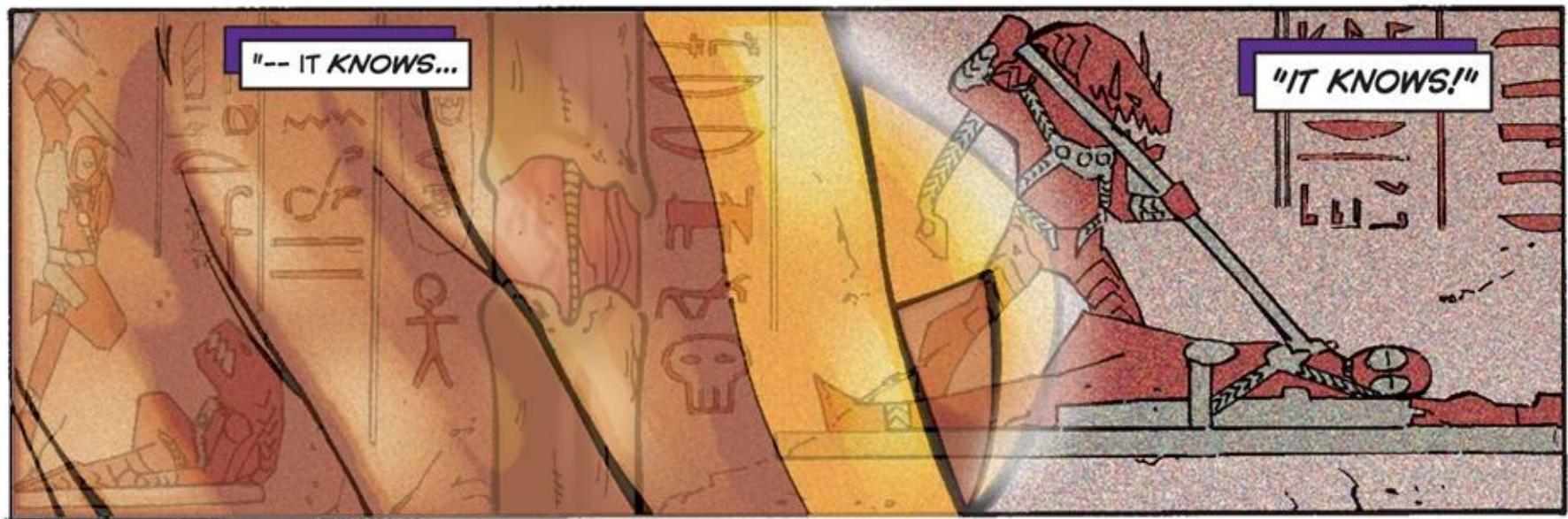
...WAITING FOR DESTINY TO PLAY HER HAND.

SO YOU'RE TIAMAT...

NOW, WERE YOU TRYING TO HIT EVERY BRANCH WHEN YOU FELL OUT OF THE UGLY TREE...OR WERE YOU JUST PLAIN LUCKY?





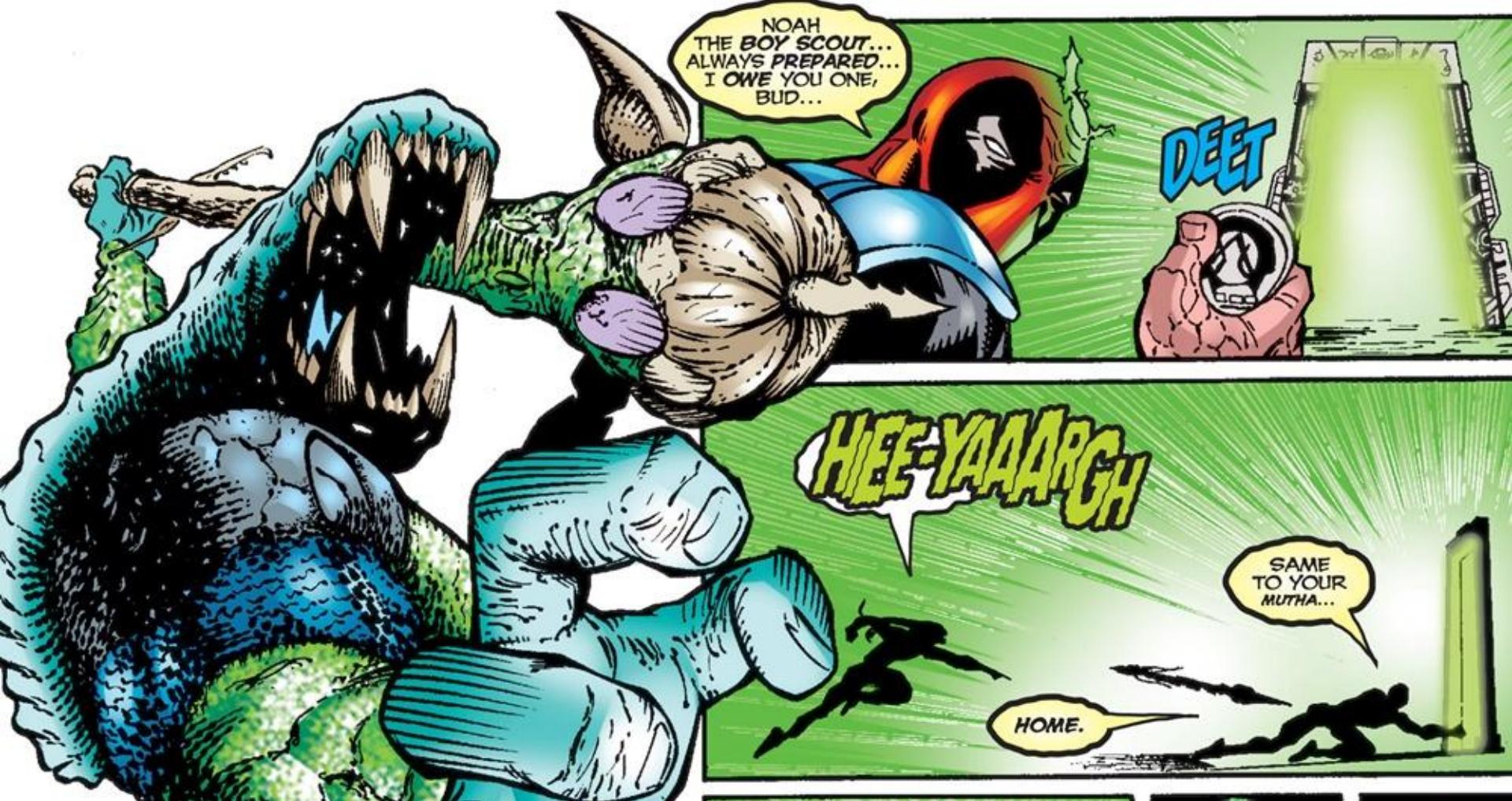


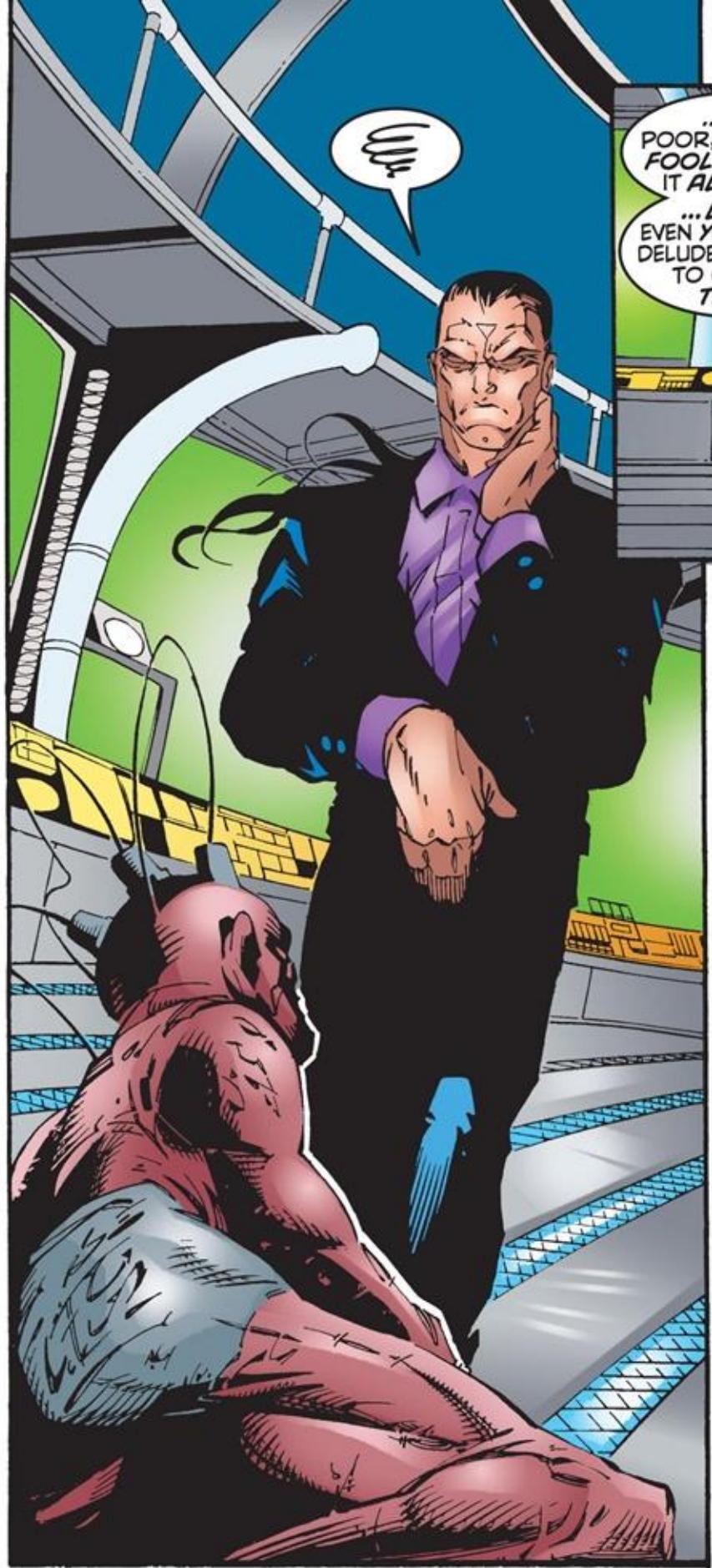


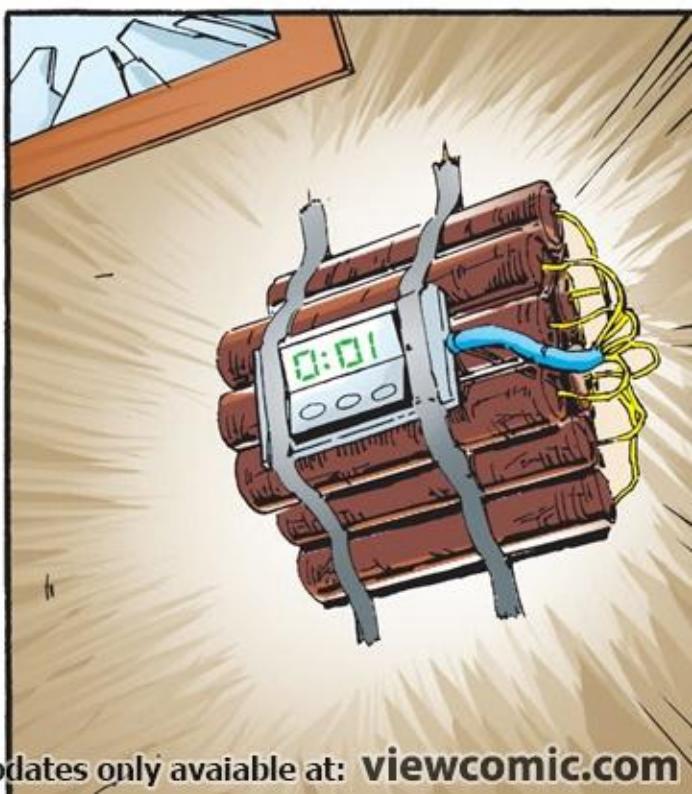














"WE'VE LOST MANY
OPERATIVES ON
THIS MISSION..."

