



THE

AVENGERS

APPROVED
BY THE
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MARVEL
COMICS
GROUP 12¢

5
MAY

"THE INVASION OF THE LAVA MEN!"

THE MIGHTY
THOR

IRON MAN

CAPTAIN AMERICA and
RICK JONES

GIANT-MAN
AND THE WONDERFUL **WASP**

Also Featuring

THE INCREDIBLE
HULK



THE MIGHTY AVENGERS

"The INVASION of The LAVA MEN!"

ANOTHER EPIC IN THE ANNALS OF THE STRONGEST SUPER-TEAM OF ALL! STARRING: THE MIGHTY THOR, IRON MAN, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND RICK JONES, GIANT-MAN AND THE WONDERFUL WASP!



AN ALL NEW SUPER-SAGA
PRODUCED WITH PRIDE BY
THE WORLD-FAMOUS
MARVEL COMICS GROUP

AN EPIC TALE, TOLD WITH HIGH DRAMA
AND HEROIC DIGNITY BY: STAN LEE
ILLUSTRATED WITH DEEP SINCERITY AND
DAZZLING BEAUTY BY: JACK KIRBY
INKED BY: PAUL REINMAN LETTERED BY: S. ROSEN

IN THE UNFORGETTABLE **FANTASTIC FOUR #26** WE SAW THE SENSATIONAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE **HULK** AND THE **THING**... A BATTLE LATER JOINED BY THE MIGHTY **AVENGERS!** BUT ALL THINGS MUST END AND SO, WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE **HULK**, THE AVENGERS RETURN TO THEIR MEETING PLACE TO INSPECT THE DAMAGE...



WELL, THERE'S NOT MUCH MORE WE CAN DO HERE! WE'LL HAVE TO CALL A CONSTRUCTION CREW TO PUT ANTHONY STARK'S HOME IN ORDER AGAIN!

I SUGGEST WE DISBAND FOR NOW! WE ALL HAVE PERSONAL MATTERS TO ATTEND TO!

CONSIDERING THE FIGHT THE HULK PUT UP, IT'S A WONDER THE HOUSE WASN'T DAMAGED EVEN WORSE!

I'M TOO TIRED TO WALK, JAN! LET'S SHRINK DOWN AND I'LL SUMMON MY FLYING ANTS!



YOU'VE GOT IT **MADE**, BIG BOY! YOU RIDE YOUR ANTS, WHILE I HAVE TO FLY BY MYSELF!

AS EACH TAKES A SHRINKING CAPSULE, GIANT-MAN AND THE WASP SEEM TO SUDDENLY FADE FROM SIGHT!



WELL, BIG FELLA, IT WAS A GOOD FIGHT WHILE IT LASTED, AND... **HOLY SMOKE!** WHERE'D HE GO?

C'MON, DOLL! I'LL RACE YOU TO THE LAB! START FLAPPIN' THOSE WINGS, HONEY!



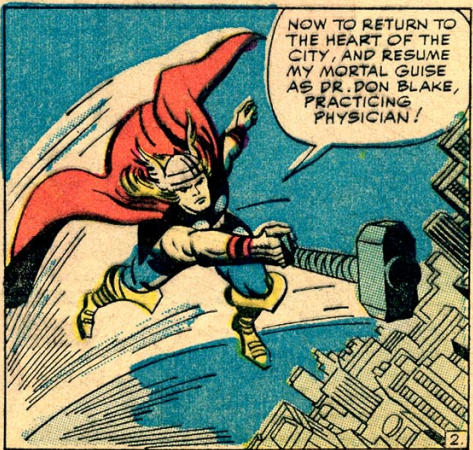
AT LEAST YOU COULD GIVE YOUR LITTLE WASP A **HEAD START!**

STAND BACK, MY FRIENDS! THE TIME HAS COME FOR MY DEPARTURE!



BUT SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, MY ENCHANTED HAMMER AND MYSELF ARE AT YOUR BECK AND CALL, AS EVER!

NOW TO RETURN TO THE HEART OF THE CITY, AND RESUME MY MORTAL GUISSE AS **DR. DON BLAKE**, PRACTICING PHYSICIAN!



IT WAS A PLEASURE TO FIGHT SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA! WE ARE PROUD TO NUMBER YOU AMONG THE AVENGERS...



*SEE THE AVENGERS #4 - EDITOR.

I COULD NOT HAVE SELECTED A FINER FIGHTING GROUP! MY SKILL AND MY SHIELD ARE YOURS, WHENEVER YOU NEED THEM! REMEMBER THAT, IRON MAN!



SINCE THE HULK TURNED AGAINST US... AND AGAINST HIS OWN ALLY, RICK JONES, IT'S LUCKY THAT THE BOY FOUND A FRIEND LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA!

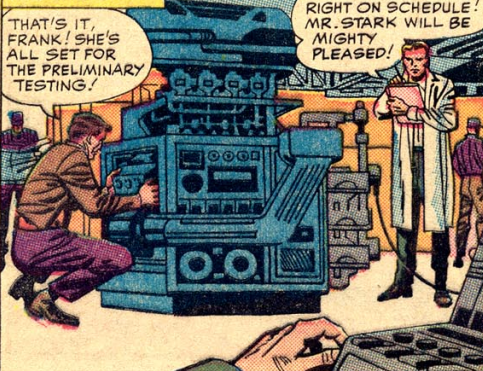
REMEMBER THOSE ACROBATIC TRICKS I PROMISED TO TEACH YOU, RICK? THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY!

THAT'S GREAT, CAP!

A FINE THING! THE MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST, TONY STARK, LETS THE AVENGERS USE HIS NEW YORK MANSION FOR THEIR MEETING PLACE. AND I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT TO FIX THE PLACE UP NOW! WONDER IF THE AVENGERS SUSPECT THAT IRON MAN REALLY IS LOVABLE OL' TONY STARK?!



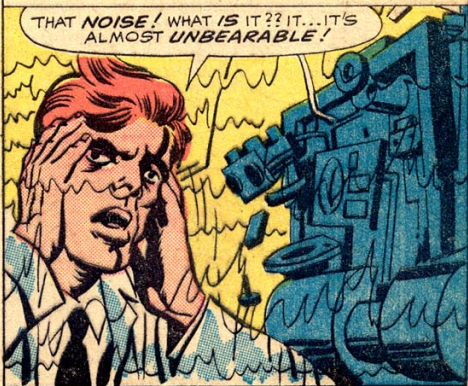
A FEW DAYS LATER, AT TONY STARK'S WEAPONS FACTORY IN FLUSHING, LONG ISLAND, WHERE A NEW TRANSISTORIZED ARTILLERY COMPUTER IS BEING ASSEMBLED...



THAT'S IT, FRANK! SHE'S ALL SET FOR THE PRELIMINARY TESTING!

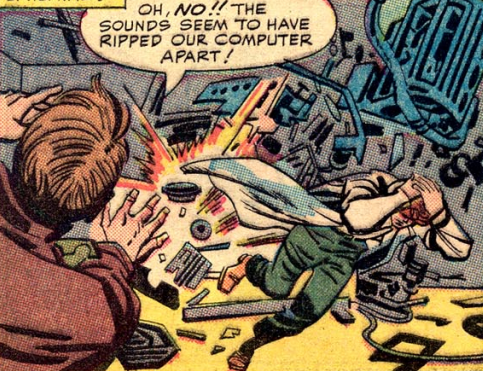
RIGHT ON SCHEDULE! MR. STARK WILL BE MIGHTY PLEASED!

SUDDENLY, A STRANGE, PIERCING SOUND FILLS THE FACTORY... A SOUND OF SUCH PULSE-STOPPING INTENSITY THAT IT SEEMS LIKE A LIVING THING!



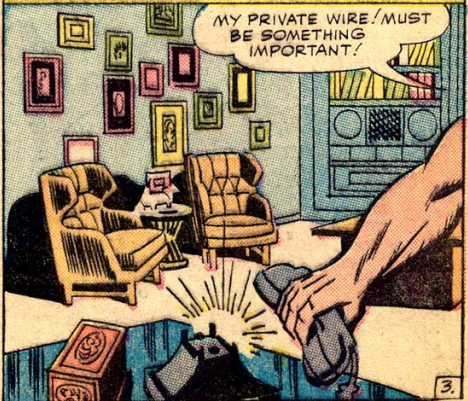
THAT NOISE! WHAT IS IT?? IT...IT'S ALMOST UNBEARABLE!

WITHIN SECONDS, THE SHRILL VIBRATIONS OF THE HIGH-PITCHED BLAST ACTUALLY CAUSE THE DELICATE PROTOTYPE MACHINE TO FALL APART IN ONE SUDDEN UPHEAVAL!



OH, NO!! THE SOUNDS SEEM TO HAVE RIPPED OUR COMPUTER APART!

MINUTES LATER, A PHONE INSISTENTLY RINGS IN TONY STARK'S PRIVATE APARTMENT!



MY PRIVATE WIRE! MUST BE SOMETHING IMPORTANT!

WHAT?? YOU SAY A MYSTERIOUS **NOISE** CAUSED ALL THAT DAMAGE?? I'LL BE RIGHT THERE! IN THE MEAN-TIME, ITEMIZE THE COST OF REPLACEMENT AND DON'T TOUCH A THING UNTIL I ARRIVE!



AND THEN, THE MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY INDUSTRIALIST CONNECTS A CAREFULLY INSULATED WIRE FROM A DEVICE WHICH NEVER LEAVES HIS CHEST TO THE NEAREST WALL OUTLET...

IT IS! I'M THE ENVY OF MILLIONS, BECAUSE OF MY WEALTH AND MY ALLEGED GOOD LOOKS! THERE'S HARDLY A MAN ON EARTH WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO BE IN MY SHOES!



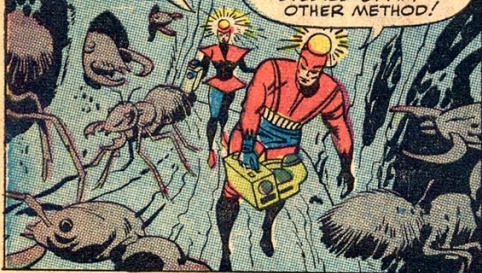
BUT HOW MANY WOULD STILL FEEL THAT WAY IF THEY KNEW THAT MY LIFE WILL LAST ONLY AS LONG AS THIS CHEST DEVICE KEEPS MY HEART BEATING?? IF THEY KNEW THAT I LIVE EVERY MOMENT WITH THE THREAT OF SUDDEN DEATH DUE TO THE PIECE OF SHRAPNEL LODGED IN MY HEART!



BUT LET US LEAVE TONY STARK ALONE WITH HIS SOBER THOUGHTS, AS WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO ANT-MAN AND THE WASP WHO ARE ENGAGED IN A RESEARCH PROJECT DEEP WITHIN A THRIVING ANT HILL...

HAVE YOU FOUND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR YET, HANK? THIS PLACE IS TOO DRY FOR MY DELICATE COMPLEXION!

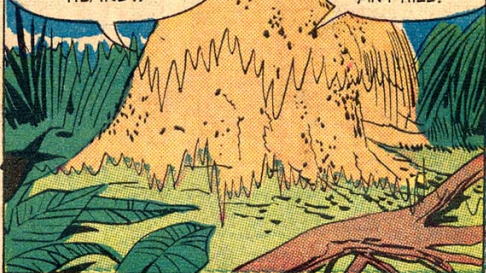
JUST A LITTLE LONGER, JAN! I'M INTERESTED IN OBSERVING THE ACTION OF THESE ISOTOPIES WHICH CANNOT BE STUDIED BY ANY OTHER METHOD!



AND THEN, UNEXPECTEDLY, WITH NERVE-SHATTERING IMPACT, THE SAME MYSTERIOUS SOUND WHICH ROCKED TONY STARK'S FACTORY IS HEARD IN THE DEPTHS OF THE TINY ANT HILL!!

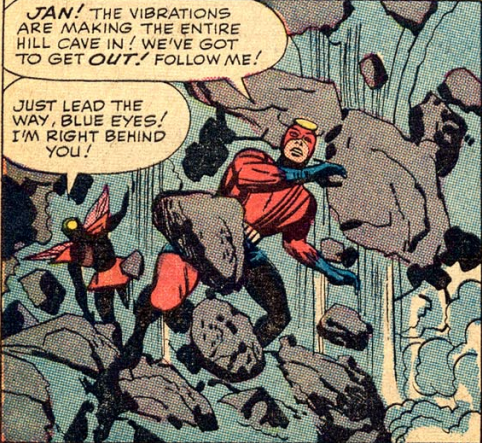
HENRY!! THAT **SOUND!!** WHA... WHAT IS IT?? IT'S THE MOST UNEARTHLY THING I'VE EVER HEARD!!

I DON'T KNOW, JAN!... BUT LOOK HOW IT'S AFFECTING THE ANTS! IT'S DRIVING THEM FROM THE ANT HILL!



JAN! THE VIBRATIONS ARE MAKING THE ENTIRE HILL CAVE IN! WE'VE GOT TO GET **OUT!** FOLLOW ME!

JUST LEAD THE WAY, BLUE EYES! I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

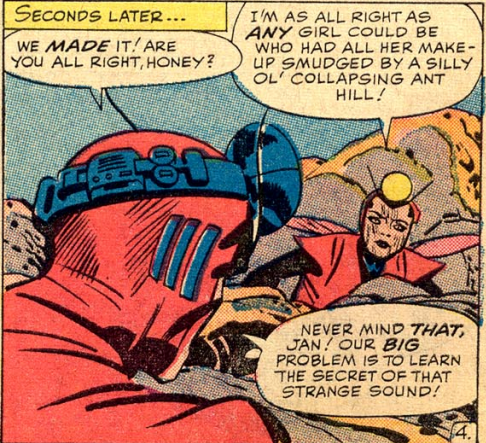


SECONDS LATER...

WE **MADE IT!** ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, HONEY?

I'M AS ALL RIGHT AS ANY GIRL COULD BE WHO HAD ALL HER MAKE-UP SMUGGED BY A SILLY OL' COLLAPSING ANT HILL!

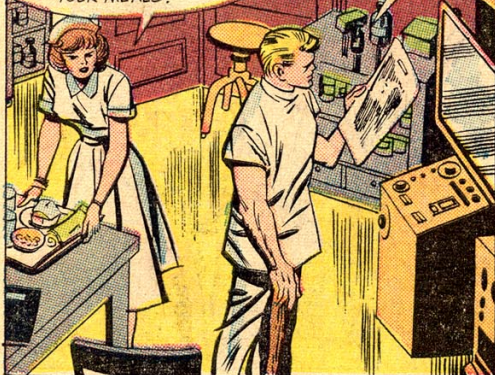
NEVER MIND THAT, JAN! OUR **BIG** PROBLEM IS TO LEARN THE SECRET OF THAT STRANGE SOUND!



A SHORT TIME LATER, IN THE MEDICAL OFFICE OF DR. DON BLAKE...

I BROUGHT YOU YOUR LUNCH AND A NEWSPAPER, DOCTOR! YOU'VE JUST GOT TO TAKE TIME OUT FOR YOUR MEALS!

NOW, JANE...WOULD YOU LOVE ME AS MUCH IF I WERE FAT AND GLUTTONOUS?



DOCTOR BLAKE! WHO EVER TOLD YOU I LOVE YOU?

JUST A JOKE, DEAR! SAY! LOOK AT THIS! ~~ANOTHER~~ DISASTER ASSOCIATED WITH A MYSTERIOUS SUDDEN SOUND!! IT SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY!



THEN, AS SOON AS HIS NURSE HAS RETURNED TO THE OUTER OFFICE, THE SLENDER LAME DOCTOR RUSHES TO THE ROOF OF HIS BUILDING...

THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER DELAY! IT IS TIME TO SUMMON THE AVENGERS!!



BUT I CANNOT SUMMON THE STRONGEST TEAM OF SUPER-HEROES ON EARTH IN THE IDENTITY OF DON BLAKE!



AND SO, WITH ONE STRIKE OF MY CANE UPON THE SURFACE BENEATH, I AM TRANSFORMED TO THE MIGHTY THOR!!

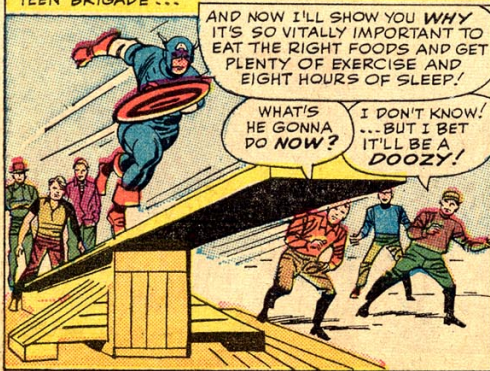


BUT ONCE AGAIN WE SHIFT OUR SCENE...THIS TIME TO ANOTHER ROOFTOP, WHERE WE FIND THE COLORFUL CAPTAIN AMERICA GIVING AN ACROBATIC EXHIBITION TO RICK JONES AND MEMBERS OF HIS TEEN BRIGADE...

AND NOW I'LL SHOW YOU WHY IT'S SO VITALLY IMPORTANT TO EAT THE RIGHT FOOPS AND GET PLENTY OF EXERCISE AND EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEP!

WHAT'S HE GONNA DO NOW?

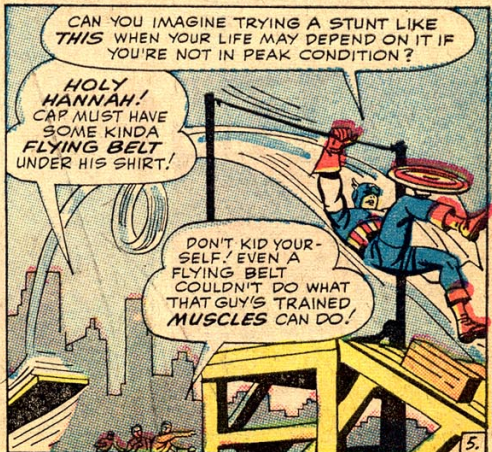
I DON'T KNOW! ...BUT I BET IT'LL BE A DOOZY!

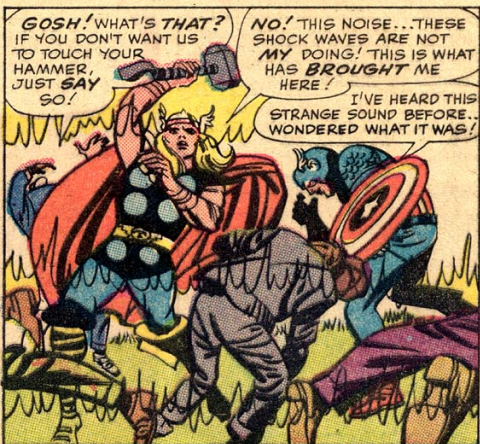
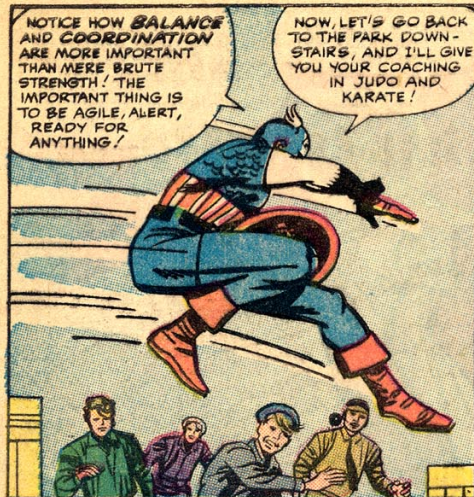


CAN YOU IMAGINE TRYING A STUNT LIKE THIS WHEN YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT IF YOU'RE NOT IN PEAK CONDITION?

HOLY HANNAH! CAP MUST HAVE SOME KINDA FLYING BELT UNDER HIS SHIRT!

DON'T KID YOURSELF! EVEN A FLYING BELT COULDN'T DO WHAT THAT GUY'S TRAINED MUSCLES CAN DO!





CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

A SHORT TIME LATER, WHILE THE UPPER PORTION OF HIS EAST SIDE MANSION IS BEING REPAIRED, THE AVENGERS HOLD THEIR EMERGENCY MEETING IN THE LUXURIOUS BASEMENT OF ANTHONY STARK'S TOWN HOUSE...

FOCUS THE PROJECTOR ON THE SOUTHWESTERN PORTION OF THE COUNTRY, THOR! THAT'S WHERE ALL THE TESTS SHOW THAT THE STRANGE SOUNDS ARE ORIGINATING FROM!

THE SOUTHWEST, EH? ISN'T THAT THE HULK'S STAMPING GROUNDS? I WONDER...

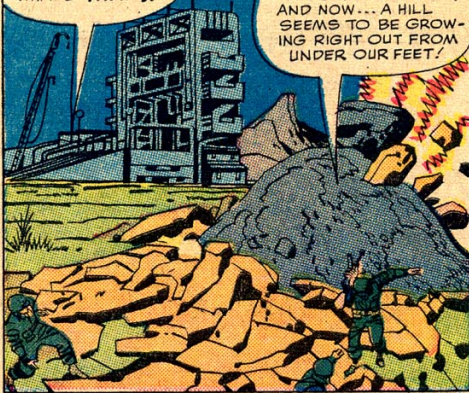
NOT A CHANCE, GIANT-MAN! THAT ISN'T THE WAY THE HULK OPERATES!



AT THAT VERY MOMENT, AT A HEAVILY GUARDED MISSILE INSTALLATION IN THE VERY PART OF THE COUNTRY WHICH THE AVENGERS ARE DISCUSSING...

HOLY HANNAH! WHAT'S THAT?!

I DON'T KNOW! FIRST THAT STRANGE NOISE, AND NOW... A HILL SEEMS TO BE GROWING RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER OUR FEET!



GENERAL ROSS, THERE SEEMS TO BE A DISTURBANCE IN SECTOR THREE, SIR!

DISTURBANCE! IT'S MORE THAN THAT! THERE'S A GOL-DURNED MOUNTAIN POPPING UP RIGHT NEAR MY LAUNCHING SITE!! GET RID OF IT!

Y-YES, SIR! BUT HOW DO YOU GET RID OF A MOUNTAIN?!

WHAT CAUSED IT IN THE FIRST PLACE??



SUDDENLY, AN INTERRUPTION OCCURS AS GENERAL "THUNDERBOLT" ROSS'S DAUGHTER, BETTY, APPROACHES WITH A SLIM, TENSE-LOOKING YOUNG MAN...

DAD! LOOK WHO I FOUND! IT'S BRUCE BANNER! HE'S COME BACK!

BANNER! I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE THE NERVE TO SHOW YOUR FACE HERE AFTER THE WAY YOU DISAPPEARED MONTHS AGO IN THE MIDDLE OF A VITAL ATOMIC TEST!



IF YOU WERE UNDER MY COMMAND, INSTEAD OF BEING A CIVILIAN SCIENTIST, I'D SLAP YOU IN THE GUARD-HOUSE AS SOON AS LOOK AT YOU! WHAT MY DAUGHTER CAN SEE IN A WEAK-KNEED, LILY-LIVERED, MILKSOP LIKE YOU...!!!

DAD, PLEASE! BRUCE SAID HE'S BEEN ILL! THAT'S WHY WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIM! BUT HE'S BETTER NOW!

WELL, WE'LL FINISH DISCUSSING BANNER SOME OTHER TIME! RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOT A MORE IMPORTANT PROBLEM ON MY HANDS!! LOOK! LOOK AT THAT.. THAT MOVING HILL GROWING FROM OUT OF NOWHERE... RIGHT NEAR MY LAUNCHING SITE!!



AND, AS THE RAGING OFFICER TURNS AWAY, BRUCE BANNER REMAINS TRANSFIXED TO THE SPOT, LOST IN HIS OWN STRANGE THOUGHTS...

IF HE THINKS THAT'S A PROBLEM, I WONDER WHAT HE'D SAY IF HE KNEW ABOUT MINE?? IF HE KNEW THAT DR. BRUCE BANNER IS REALLY... THE HULK!!



"CAN I EVER FORGET THAT AWESOME MOMENT, MANY MONTHS AGO, WHEN I WAS STRUCK BY MY OWN GAMMA RAY BOMB WHILE TRYING TO SAVE THE LIFE OF RICK JONES, A BOY WHO HAD WANDERED ONTO THE POST DURING THE BOMB TEST..."



"BY SOME MIRACULOUS QUIRK OF FATE THE GAMMA RAYS DIDN'T KILL ME...ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THEY HAD! INSTEAD, THEY CHANGED ME...TURNED ME INTO THE UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL HULK!"

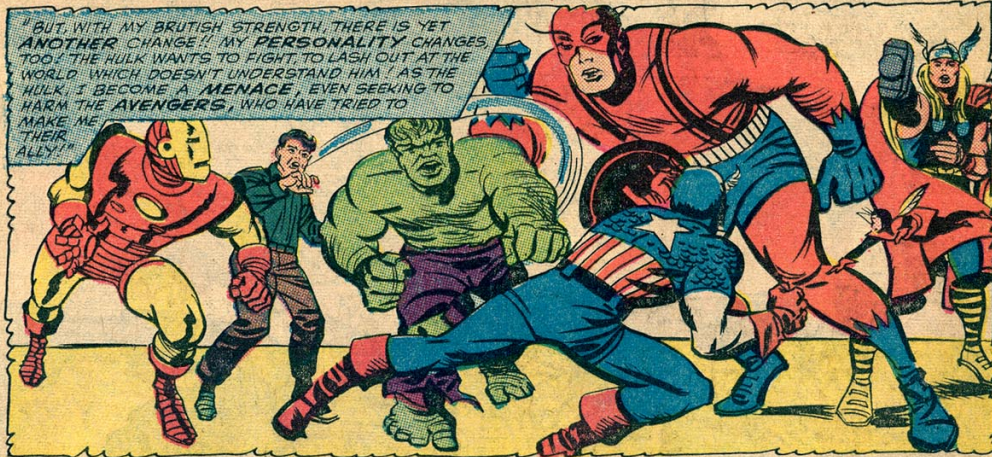


"I'LL STAY WITH HULK! I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT YOU SAVED MY LIFE!"

"AS THE HULK, MY STRENGTH IS VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS! EVEN MY LEG MUSCLES ARE SO POWERFUL THAT BY MERELY LEAPING INTO THE AIR, I CAN JUMP VAST DISTANCES, AS THOUGH I'M FLYING!"



"BUT, WITH MY BRUTISH STRENGTH, THERE IS YET ANOTHER CHANGE!! MY PERSONALITY CHANGES TOO! THE HULK WANTS TO FIGHT, TO LASH OUT AT THE WORLD, WHICH DOESN'T UNDERSTAND HIM! AS THE HULK, I BECAME A MENACE, EVEN SEEKING TO HARM THE AVENGERS, WHO HAVE TRIED TO MAKE ME THEIR ALLY!!"



"I'VE BECOME A MODERN DAY JEKYLL AND HYDE! I CHANGE FROM BANNER TO THE HULK, NEVER KNOWING WHEN THE NEXT CHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE...NEVER DARING TO...HUH?"



"STOP DAYDREAMING AND MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL, BANNER! YOU'RE A SCIENTIST! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT CONFOUNDED GROWING HILL???"

"OH, BRUCE...PLEASE TRY TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY FOR MY FATHER! PERHAPS IT WILL MAKE HIM FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT YOU...ABOUT US!"

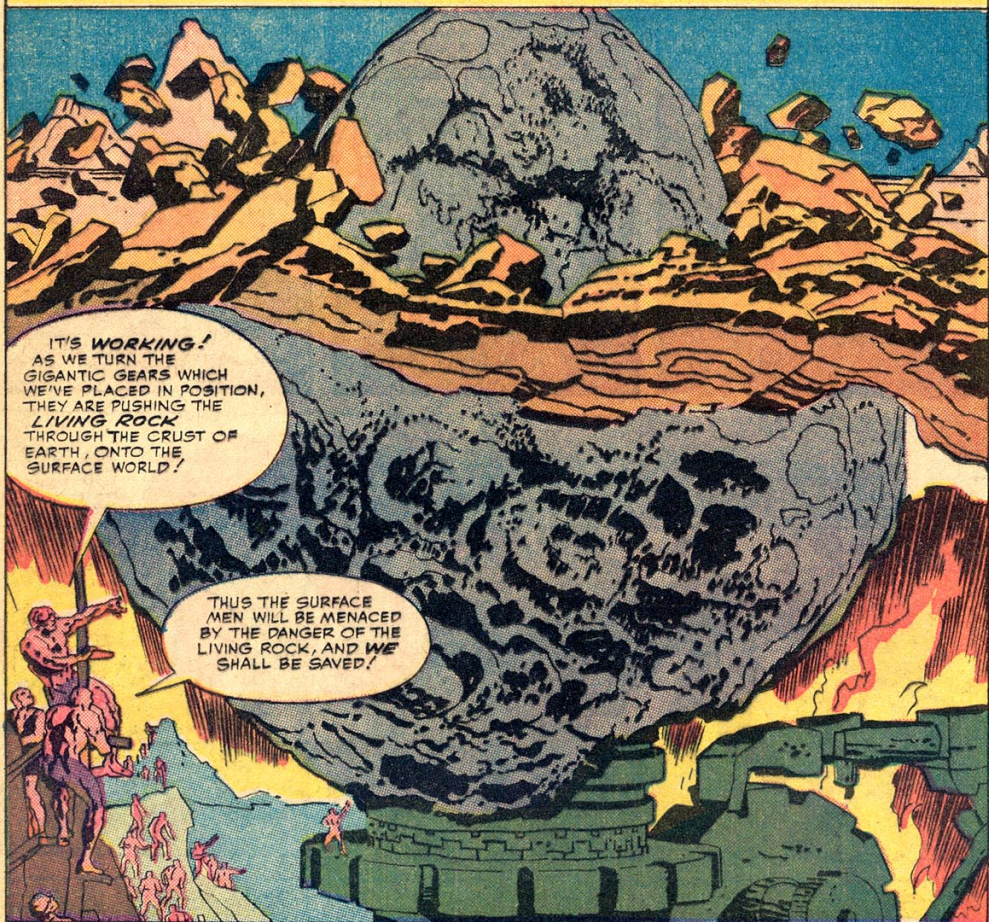


"I'LL TRY, BETTY! BUT, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO! I-I'M STILL A LITTLE CONFUSED!"

"THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A SIMPLE HILL! IT SEEMS TO BE COMPOSED OF A TYPE OF SUBSTANCE I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE! IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT'S BEING PUSHED UP FROM THE GROUND BY SOME MIGHTY FORCE!"



AND, DR. BRUCE BANNER IS CLOSER TO THE TRUTH THAN HE SUSPECTS! FOR, DIRECTLY UNDER THE FEET OF THE MYSTIFIED HUMANS, A FANTASTIC TABLEAU IS TAKING PLACE ...



IT'S WORKING!
AS WE TURN THE
GIGANTIC GEARS WHICH
WE'VE PLACED IN POSITION,
THEY ARE PUSHING THE
LIVING ROCK
THROUGH THE CRUST OF
EARTH, ONTO THE
SURFACE WORLD!

THUS THE SURFACE
MEN WILL BE MENACED
BY THE DANGER OF THE
LIVING ROCK, AND WE
SHALL BE SAVED!

CONTINUE LIFTING THE
ROCK! DO NOT STOP UNTIL
IT IS ALL ABOVE
GROUND!

YOUR MAJESTY, LISTEN
TO ME! WE MUST NOT
DO THIS TERRIBLE
THING! I ALONE, OF
ALL THE LAVA MEN, HAVE
SEEN THE SURFACE PEOPLE!*

THEY ARE
NOT EVIL!
THEY DO
NOT
DESERVE
THIS.

SILENCE, MOLTO! NONE MAY
SPEAK TO HIS MAJESTY THAT
WAY WHILE I, HIS LOYAL WITCH
DOCTOR, LIVE!

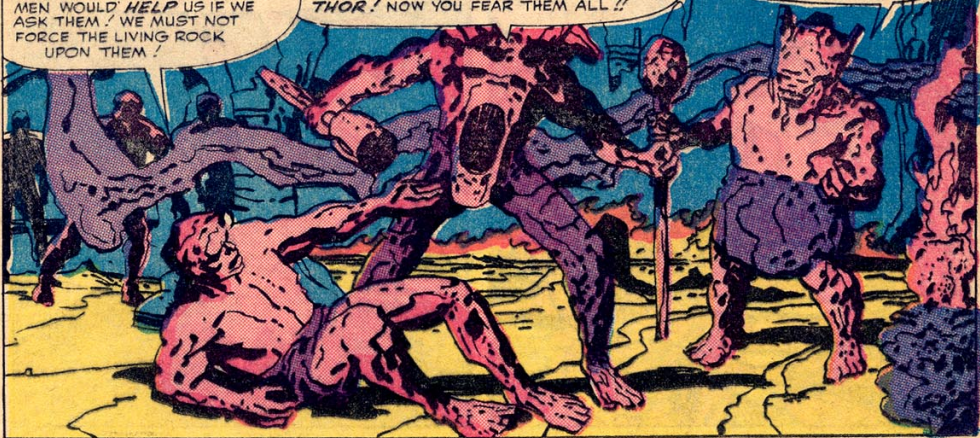
"LOYAL WITCH
DOCTOR"!! YOU
DO NOT FOOL
ME! ALL YOU
WANT IS A WAR
BETWEEN US
AND THE SURFACE
PEOPLE!!

*SEE JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #97
"THOR VS. THE LAVA MAN!"

DO NOT LISTEN TO HIM, YOUR MAJESTY! THE WITCH DOCTOR FEEDS YOU LIES! THE SURFACE MEN WOULD HELP US IF WE ASK THEM! WE MUST NOT FORCE THE LIVING ROCK UPON THEM!

YOU ARE A COWARD, MOLTO! WHEN WE SENT YOU TO THE SURFACE MONTHS AGO, YOU WERE DEFEATED BY ONE NAMED THOR! NOW YOU FEAR THEM ALL!!

ENOUGH! MY DECISION IS MADE! KEEP RAISING THE ROCK!



AND, BACK ON THE SURFACE AGAIN...

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE ANY CHANCES! BANNER TELLS ME HE SUSPECTS THAT THING IS RADIO-ACTIVE!! WE'LL RING IT WITH MISSILES!



THEN, UNEXPECTEDLY...

GENERAL, LOOK! A HELICOPTER! IT'S NOT ONE OF OURS!!

THIS IS OFF-LIMITS TO ANY CIVILIAN CRAFT! I'LL HAVE THEIR HIDES!!



NO, WAIT!! CAPTAIN, DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE THAT SHIP? IT HAS PRIORITY A-1 CLEARANCE TO LAND ANYWHERE!!



IT'S THE AVENGERS! NOW WE'LL GET SOME RESULTS AROUND HERE!!

THERE'S THE GROWING HILL WE HEARD ABOUT IN THE REPORTS!

IT MUST BE THE SOURCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS!! STAY BACK! ... I'LL INVESTIGATE FIRST!

WAIT! WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US??

YOU HEARD THE MAN, RICK! WE DON'T QUESTION EACH OTHER'S COMMANDS! IRON MAN MUST HAVE HIS REASONS!





CAREFUL, IRON MAN! ONE OF MY CIVILIAN SCIENTISTS THINKS THE HILL MAY BE RADIO-ACTIVE!

I SUSPECTED AS MUCH, GENERAL! THAT'S WHY I'M DOING THIS ALONE! MY ARMOR WILL PROTECT ME FROM ANY POSSIBLE RADIATION!



THERE!! BY SETTING MY REPULSER TRANSISTORS TO THE HIGHEST INTENSITY, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO BLAST THROUGH THE OUTER LAYER AND SEE WHAT'S BENEATH!

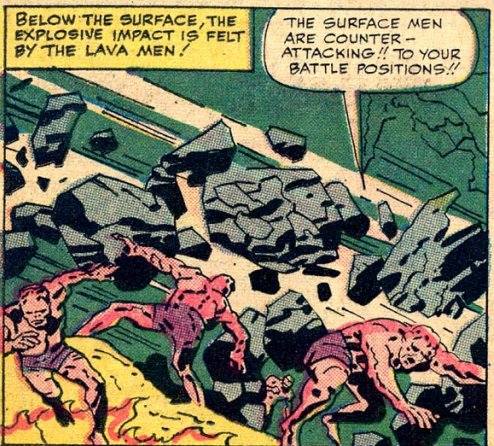


IRON MAN! LOOK! IT ISN'T RADIO-ACTIVE, BUT IT'S EVEN MORE FANTASTIC! IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT'S ALIVE!

BACK, CAP! I'M NOT FINISHED! I'LL GIVE IT ANOTHER BLAST!!

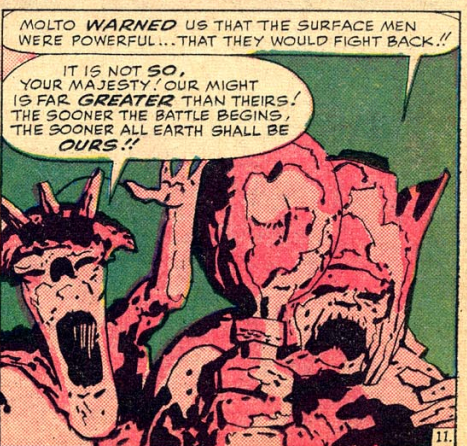


THE HILL IS GROWING EVERY SECOND! MIGHT AS WELL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS BEFORE IT GETS TOO BIG FOR US TO HANDLE!



BELOW THE SURFACE, THE EXPLOSIVE IMPACT IS FELT BY THE LAVA MEN!

THE SURFACE MEN ARE COUNTER-ATTACKING!! TO YOUR BATTLE POSITIONS!!



MOLTO WARNED US THAT THE SURFACE MEN WERE POWERFUL... THAT THEY WOULD FIGHT BACK!!

IT IS NOT SO, YOUR MAJESTY! OUR MIGHT IS FAR GREATER THAN THEIRS! THE SOONER THE BATTLE BEGINS, THE SOONER ALL EARTH SHALL BE OURS!!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

THEN, THE DETERMINED KING ISSUES A MOMENTOUS COMMAND TO HIS SUBTERRANEAN FORCES ...

THE TIME HAS COME! TO THE SURFACE! **ATTACK!!**

THE OPENING IS BEFORE US! I CAN SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY! AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES!!

THE SURFACE SHALL BE **OURS!** NOTHING CAN STOP US!!



BUT SUDDENLY, A DRAMATIC RED AND GOLD FIGURE APPEARS BETWEEN THE LAVA MEN AND THE SURFACE!

MY TRANSISTORS ARE WEAKENED FROM THE LAST BLAST, BUT I CAN STILL CREATE SOME DUST CLOUDS TO BLIND THEM TEMPORARILY!



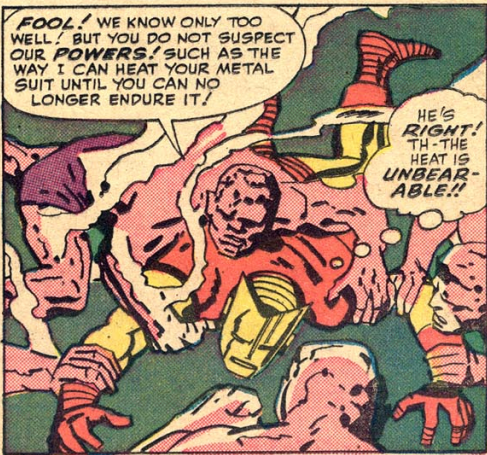
HE IS ALONE! HE CANNOT STOP US! **DESTROY HIM!**

WAIT! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU! YOU'RE JUST A HANDFUL OF UNARMED INVADERS! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'LL BE FACING UP ABOVE!



FOOL! WE KNOW ONLY TOO WELL! BUT YOU DO NOT SUSPECT OUR **POWERS!** SUCH AS THE WAY I CAN HEAT YOUR METAL SUIT UNTIL YOU CAN NO LONGER ENDURE IT!

HE'S RIGHT! TH- THE HEAT IS UNBEARABLE!!



BUT, AT THAT SPLIT SECOND, THE UNDERGROUND CAVERN IS ROCKED BY A BLAST OF ALMOST UNLIMITED POWER!!



AND, WHEN THE SMOKE HAS CLEARED ...

EASY, FELLA! YOU'RE OKAY NOW! WE HAD A **HUNCH** YOU'D BE NEEDIN' US!

NO LIVING BEING, WHETHER ON THE SURFACE OR BELOW IT, MAY ATTACK AN **AVENGER** WITHOUT ANSWERING TO THE THUNDEROUS HAMMER OF **THOR** FOR SUCH AN ACT!





I'D BETTER BRING YOU BACK TO THE SURFACE. IRON MAN, YOUR ARMOR IS STILL RED-HOT!

YES! WITHOUT MY TRANSISTORS OPERATING AT FULL POWER TO COOL THE CIRCUITS, I'M AS VULNERABLE AS ANYONE!

YOU MUST **BOTH** LEAVE! REMAIN ABOVE WITH GIANT-MAN AND THE WASP! ONLY **THOR** CAN ENDURE THE INTENSE HEAT WHICH AWAITS BELOW!!

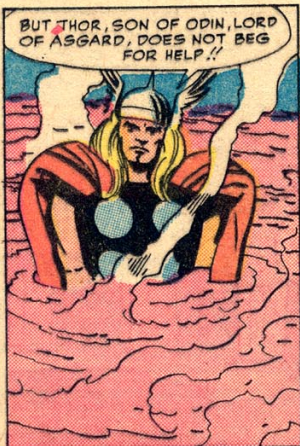


WHO IS RULER OF THE LAVA MEN? TAKE ME TO HIM!

NO STRANGER COMMANDS US! YOU HAVE COME TOO FAR, INSOLENT ONE! SEE HOW WE HEAT THE VERY GROUND BENEATH YOUR FEET, TURNING IT TO LAVA!!



THE GROUND GROWS MOLTEN... IT'S BECOMING SOFT... I'M SINKING INTO IT!



BUT THOR, SON OF ODIN, LORD OF ASGARD, DOES NOT BEG FOR HELP!!



AND THEN, MOLTO APPEARS, AND CRIES...

IT'S **THOR**! THE ONE WHO DEFEATED ME MONTHS AGO... WHO MERCIFULLY RETURNED ME TO MY PEOPLE! **SAVE HIM!**

IT IS TOO LATE!



DO NOT FEAR, LAVA MEN! NO HARM SHALL COME TO THOR!!

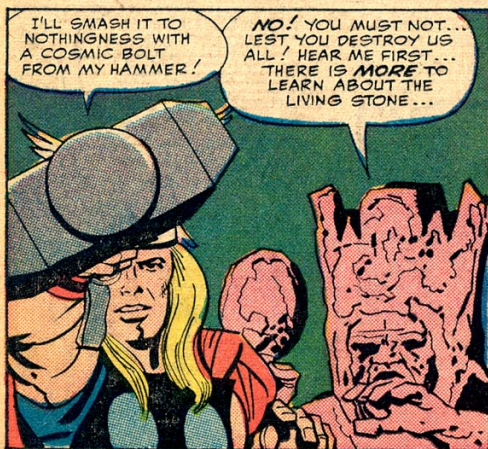
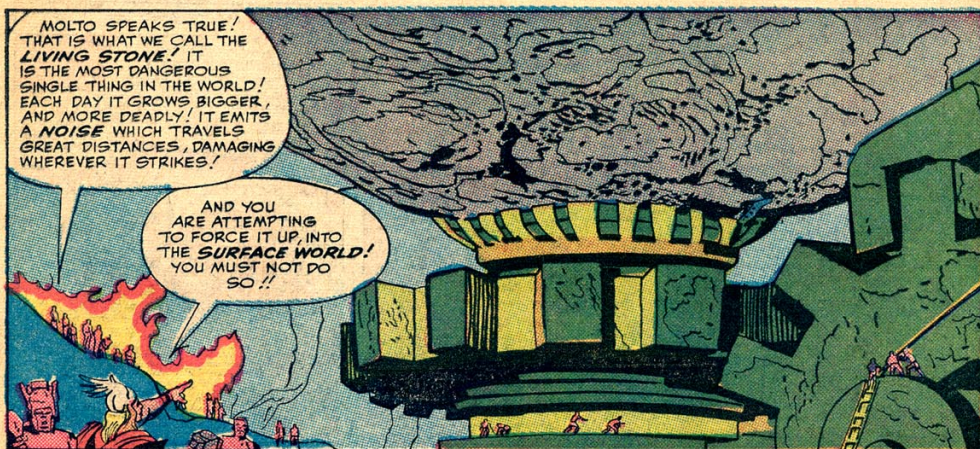
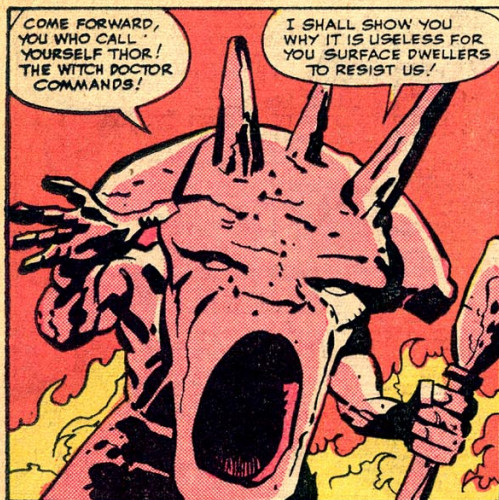


NOT WHILE MY ENCHANT-ED HAMMER CAN GENER-ATE ENOUGH COSMIC POWER TO HARDEN THE MOLTEN LAVA AND LIFT ME UP AGAIN.

RUN! WE MUST WARN THE KING!



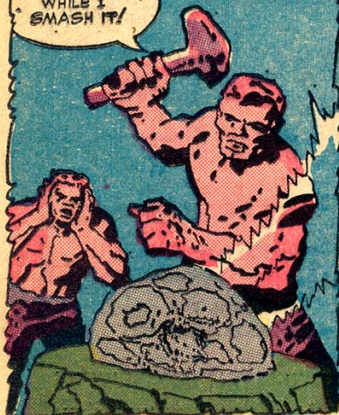
IF THE LAVA MEN DARE ATTACK THE SURFACE, THEY MUST HAVE A WEAPON MORE DEADLY THAN WE SUSPECT!! I MUST NOW LEARN WHAT THAT WEAPON IS!!



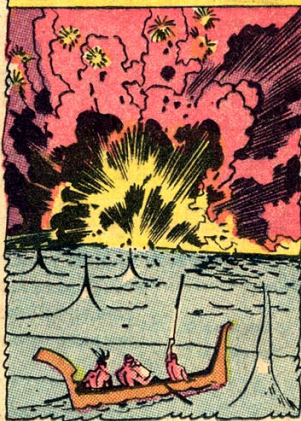
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"AS A RESULT OF THE TITANIC BLAST, WE FOUND ONE SMALL STRANGE PIECE OF ROCK! IN AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE WHAT IT WAS, WE STRUCK IT WITH ONE OF OUR TOOLS..."

STAND BACK, WHILE I SMASH IT!



"ALAS, WE LEARNED TO OUR DISMAY THAT ANY IMPACT CAUSED A VIOLENT EXPLOSION! JUST THE SPEEDING SOUND WAVE WHICH RESULTED CAUSED AN ENTIRE DESERTED ISLE IN YOUR PACIFIC OCEAN TO BE BLOWN TO BITS!"



"SINCE THAT DREAD DAY, THE REMAINING FRAGMENT HAS GROWN AND GROWN! IF IT SHOULD EXPLODE NOW, IN ITS PRESENT SIZE, IT COULD SHATTER THE ENTIRE PLANET, DESTROYING BOTH OUR RACES!"

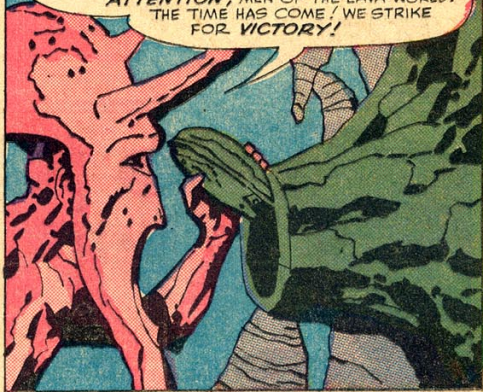


SO, WE HAVE DECIDED ON THE ONLY SOLUTION! WE WILL FORCE IT TO THE SURFACE OF EARTH, WHERE, WHEN IT FINALLY EXPLODES, IT WILL WIPE OUT THOSE WHO DWELL ABOVE US! BUT THE REST OF THE IMPACT WILL GO UP TOWARD THE SKIES, NOT HARMING THE LAVA MEN! THEN WE SHALL COME TO THE SURFACE AND TAKE OVER WHATEVER REMAINS OF YOUR ONCE-PROUD CIVILIZATION!

BY ASGARD! I DARE NOT STRIKE THE LIVING ROCK... BUT THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO SAVE MANKIND!



THERE IS NO WAY! YOU HAVE BEATEN US ONCE BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME VICTORY IS OURS! ATTENTION, MEN OF THE LAVA WORLD! THE TIME HAS COME! WE STRIKE FOR VICTORY!



HEARING THE MERCILESS WITCH DOCTOR'S FRENZIED SHOUT, THE ANXIOUS SQUAD OF LAVA MEN RUSH TOWARD THE SURFACE TO ACT AS AN ADVANCE GUARD FOR THE ARMY THAT WILL FOLLOW! BUT, IN THE MOUTH OF THE TUNNEL, THEY FIND...

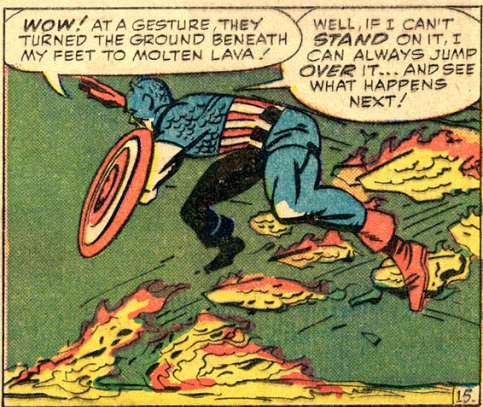
A SURFACE MAN! BLOCKING OUR PATH! DESTROY HIM!

THAT'LL BE EASIER SAID THAN DONE, FELLA! THIS IS CAPTAIN AMERICA YOU'RE TALKING TO!



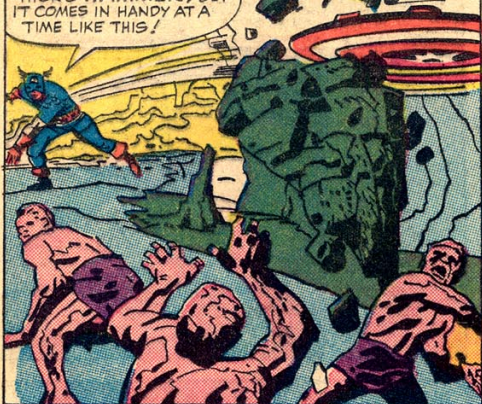
WOW! AT A GESTURE, THEY TURNED THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET TO MOLTEN LAVA!

WELL, IF I CAN'T STAND ON IT, I CAN ALWAYS JUMP OVER IT... AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!



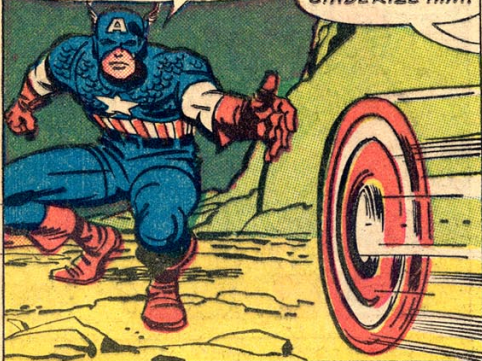
LANDING SAFELY IN FRONT OF THE MOLTEN AREA, THE HANDSOME, COSTUMED CAVALIER HOLDS THE LAVA MEN AT BAY WITH HIS WHIRLING SHIELD!

THIS IS A FAR CRY FROM THOR'S HAMMER, BUT IT COMES IN HANDY AT A TIME LIKE THIS!



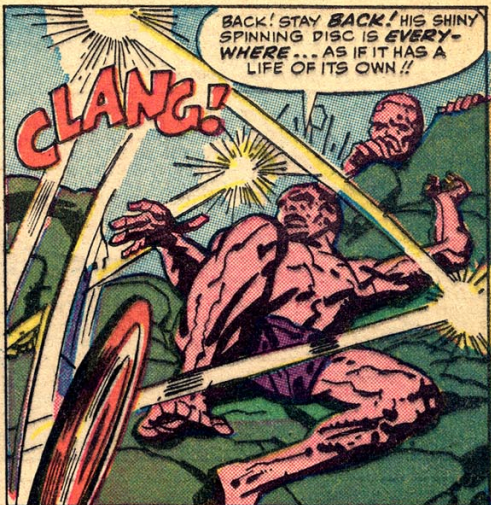
THAT GAVE THEM SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT! GLAD I'M NOT TOO RUSTY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS! AND NOW...

QUICKLY! BEFORE HE CAN UNLEASH HIS SHIELD AGAIN! CINDERIZE HIM!



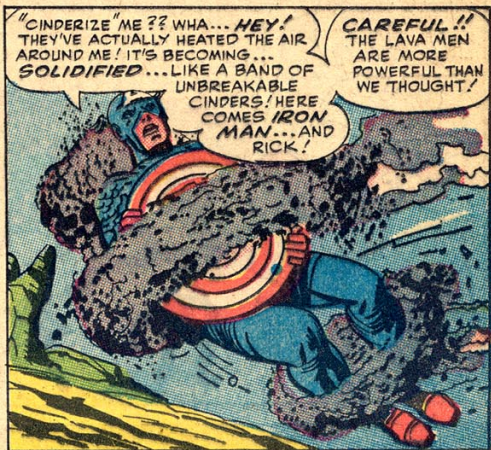
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM, CAP! THE AVENGERS ARE REALLY GETTING INTO HIGH GEAR NOW! WE'LL HAVE YOU FREE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!!

UGH! THIS STUFF IS STRONGER THAN IT LOOKS! AND I HEAR THE LAVA MEN CHARGING TOWARDS US!



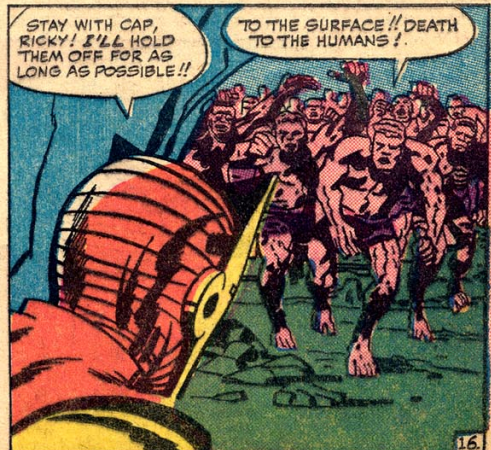
BACK! STAY BACK! HIS SHINY SPINNING DISC IS EVERYWHERE... AS IF IT HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN!!

CLANG!



"CINDERIZE ME ?? WHA... HEY! THEY'VE ACTUALLY HEATED THE AIR AROUND ME! IT'S BECOMING... SOLIDIFIED... LIKE A BAND OF UNBREAKABLE CINDERS! HERE COMES IRON MAN... AND RICK!

CAREFUL!! THE LAVA MEN ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN WE THOUGHT!



STAY WITH CAP, RICKY! I'LL HOLD THEM OFF FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE!!

TO THE SURFACE!! DEATH TO THE HUMANS!!

MEANTIME, DIRECTLY ABOVE, AS GENERAL "THUNDER-BOLT" ROSS'S MISSILES RING THE LIVING STONE, ANT-MAN AND THE WASP MINUTELY EXAMINE EVERY INCH OF ITS SLOWLY-GROWING SURFACE...



I'VE FOUND IT! ONE SMALL AREA WHICH ISN'T PULSATING! IF A STRONG ENOUGH BLOW COULD STRIKE THIS EXACT SPOT, IT WOULD DESTROY THE ROCK WITHOUT CAUSING A CATAclysmic EXPLOSION!

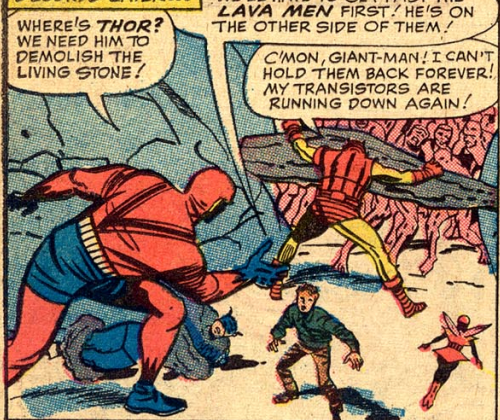
INSTANTLY, THE ANT-SIZED ADVENTURER BECOMES GIANT-MAN, AND THEN...



LET'S GO, WASP! WE'VE GOT TO FIND THOR! ONLY HIS HAMMER HAS THE POWER WE NEED!

I'LL REMAIN WASP-SIZED SO I CAN KEEP UP WITH YOU BY FLYING!

SECONDS LATER...



WE'LL HAVE TO GET PAST THE LAVA MEN FIRST! HE'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THEM!

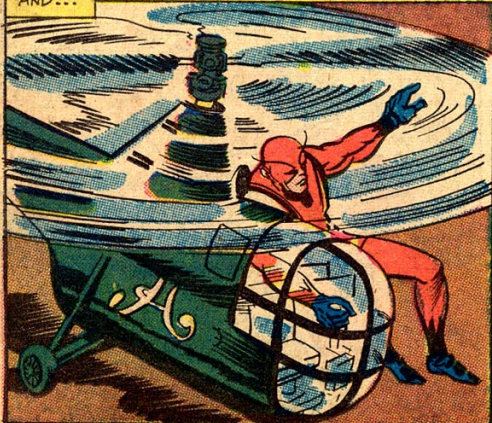
WHERE'S THOR? WE NEED HIM TO DEMOLISH THE LIVING STONE!

C'MON, GIANT-MAN! I CAN'T HOLD THEM BACK FOREVER! MY TRANSISTORS ARE RUNNING DOWN AGAIN!

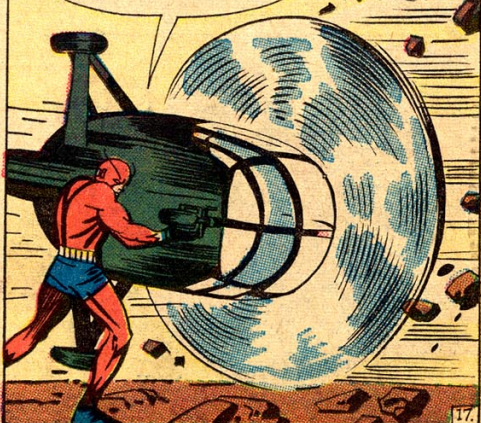


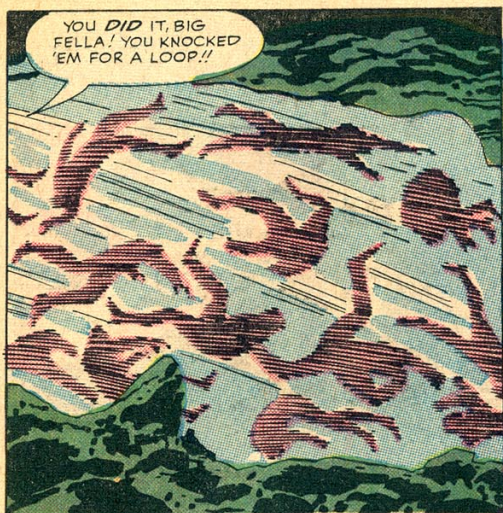
THEY'RE STARTING TO MELT THE BOULDER I'M USING! HEY! YOU... YOU'RE NOT RUNNING OUT ON ME?!!

BUT THE TOWERING TITAN HAS ONLY RACED TO THE SURFACE LONG ENOUGH TO SEIZE THE AVENGERS' HELICOPTER! THEN, AIDED BY ITS SPINNING ROTARY BLADE, HE LIFTS THE CRAFT OFF THE GROUND, AND...



STEP ASIDE, IRON MAN! YOU'VE DONE YOUR SHARE! NOW I'LL COOL 'EM OFF FOR YOU!!





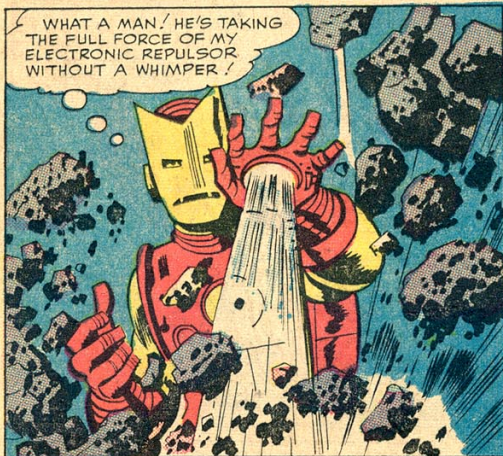
YOU **DID** IT, BIG FELLA! YOU KNOCKED 'EM FOR A LOOP!!



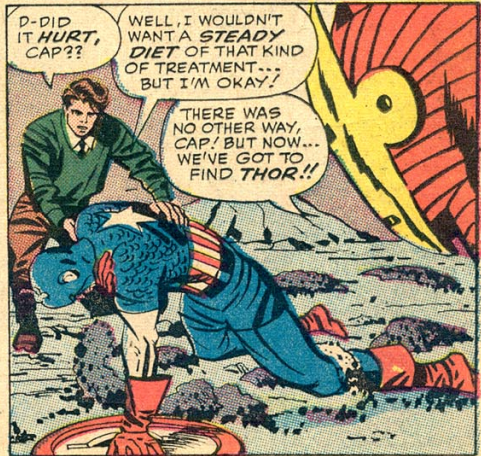
AND NOW WE'VE GOT TO FIND **THOR**!

WILL DO, PARTNER, AS SOON AS I GET CAPTAIN AMERICA FREE OF THOSE SOLIDIFIED CINDERS! THIS IS LIABLE TO **HURT**, CAP!

DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO, IRON MAN!!



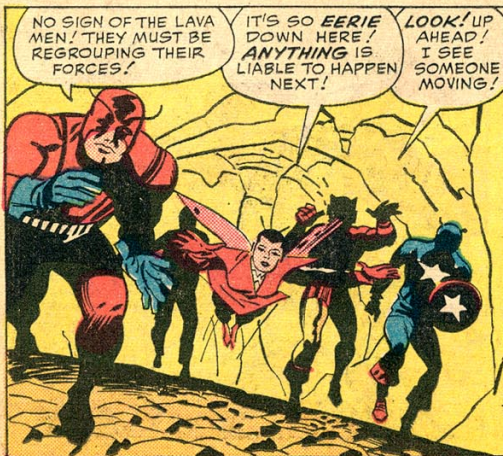
WHAT A MAN! HE'S TAKING THE FULL FORCE OF MY ELECTRONIC REPULSOR WITHOUT A WHIMPER!



D-DID IT **HURT**, CAP??

WELL, I WOULDN'T WANT A **STEADY DIET** OF THAT KIND OF TREATMENT... BUT I'M OKAY!

THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY, CAP! BUT NOW... WE'VE GOT TO FIND **THOR**!!



NO SIGN OF THE LAVA MEN! THEY MUST BE REGROUPING THEIR FORCES!

IT'S SO **EERIE** DOWN HERE! **ANYTHING** IS LIABLE TO HAPPEN NEXT!

LOOK! UP AHEAD! I SEE SOMEONE MOVING!



IT'S **THOR**!!

AT LAST WE ARE **TOGETHER** AGAIN! WE **AVENGERS** SHALL NEED ALL OUR SKILL AND STRENGTH FOR THE TASK THAT LIES AHEAD!!

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE SURFACE, BRUCE BANNER ALSO HAS JUST SOLVED THE MYSTERY OF THE LIVING ROCK...

IT SENDS SOUND WAVES OVER VAST DISTANCES, REACTING LIKE BOMB BLASTS WHERE THEY LAND! IT WILL EVENTUALLY BLOW ITSELF UP, TAKING HALF THE PLANET WITH IT!!



IT WAS PROBABLY CAUSED BY SOME STRANGE UNDER-GROUND UPHEAVAL UNDER...

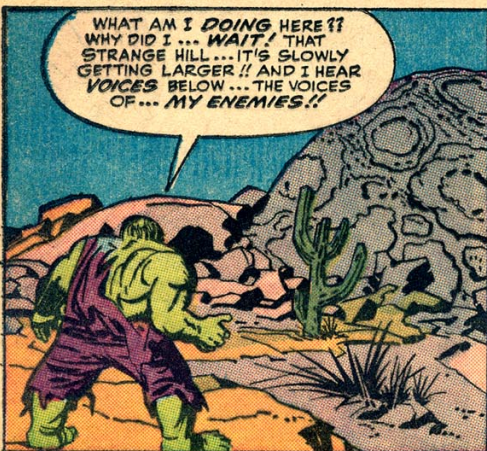
WHA...? I'M... I'M CHANGING! IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN! I CAN FEEL IT! NO!! DON'T LET IT! I MUSTN'T! NOT NOW!



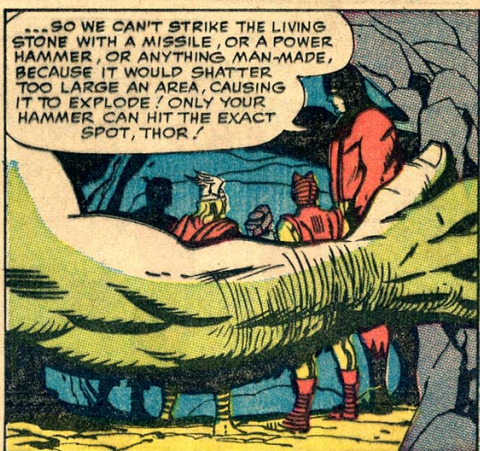
BUT, ONCE THE INCREDIBLE CHANGE BEGINS TO OCCUR TO BRUCE BANNER'S GAMMA-RAY AFFECTED BODY, NOTHING ON EARTH CAN STOP IT! NOTHING ON EARTH CAN PREVENT HIM FROM BECOMING... THE HULK!!



WHAT AM I DOING HERE?? WHY DID I ... WAIT! THAT STRANGE HILL... IT'S SLOWLY GETTING LARGER!! AND I HEAR VOICES BELOW... THE VOICES OF... MY ENEMIES!!



...SO WE CAN'T STRIKE THE LIVING STONE WITH A MISSILE, OR A POWER HAMMER, OR ANYTHING MAN-MADE, BECAUSE IT WOULD SHATTER TOO LARGE AN AREA, CAUSING IT TO EXPLODE! ONLY YOUR HAMMER CAN HIT THE EXACT SPOT, THOR!



BUT SUDDENLY, THE KEEN EARS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA HEAR THE SOUND OF HEAVY BREATHING, AND...

HOLD IT!! LOOK... BEHIND US!! IT'S HIM AGAIN! IT'S... THE HULK!!

WE'VE GOT TO GET RID OF HIM!



THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN! THAT LIVING STONE MAY DETONATE ITSELF AT ANY MINUTE!

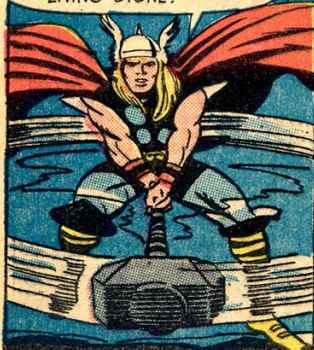
I'LL SMASH YOU ALL! I'LL FINISH WHAT I STARTED LAST TIME WE MET!

HOLD HIM! DON'T LET HIM GO!

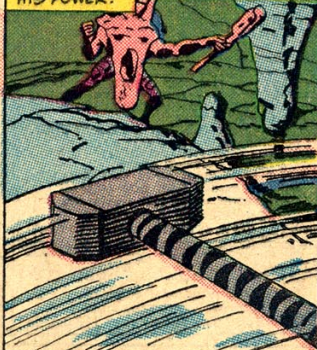


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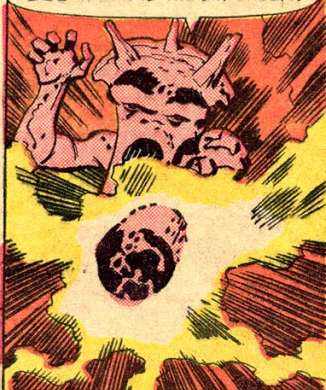
WE HAVEN'T TIME TO WASTE ON THE HULK NOW! **FALL BACK!** ALL OF YOU! MY **HAMMER** WILL STOP HIM UNTIL WE'VE ERASED THE DANGER OF THE LIVING STONE!



BUT, AS MIGHTY THOR SWINGS HIS AWESOME HAMMER, THE LAVA MAN **WITCH DOCTOR** STEALS UP BEHIND HIM, HOLDING THE MYSTERIOUS ROD WHICH IS THE SYMBOL OF HIS POWER!



MY RADIO-ACTIVE ROD AGAINST YOUR WHIRLING HAMMER! LET US **SEE** WHICH IS THE STRONGER!



NOTHING...NOT EVEN AN ATOMIC BLAST...CAN INJURE **THOR** OR HIS ENCHANTED HAMMER...BUT THE POWER RELEASED BY THE GLOWING ROD CAUSES A NUCLEAR SHOCK WAVE!! AND, THEN, IN A FREAK, ONE-IN-A-MILLION COMBINATION OF MOLECULES...THE SHOCK WAVE SERVES AS THE CATALYTIC FORCE WHICH TRANSFORMS THOR INTO DON BLAKE AGAIN!!



BUT, THE TREMENDOUS IMPACT ALSO CAUSES A THUNDEROUS **CAVE-IN**, AS TONS OF ROCK SEPARATE DON BLAKE FROM THE AVENGERS OUTSIDE!!



YOUR POWER IS FAR STRONGER THAN MINE! YOU HAVE MAGICALLY CHANGED INTO ANOTHER BEING! YOU ARE **BE-WITCHED!**

AND, AS THE WITCH DOCTOR FLEES IN MUTE PANIC, THE WEAKENED FORM OF DR. BLAKE SLUMPS AGAINST THE FALLEN ROCKS, TOO WEAK EVEN TO RAISE HIS CANE...

MUST REST...MUST CLOSE MY EYES...STRAIN WAS TOO GREAT...ONLY THOR'S GREAT STRENGTH LET ME SURVIVE THE ORDEAL!



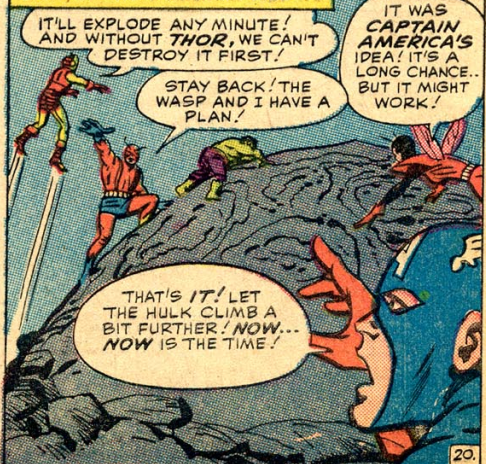
WHILE, ON THE SURFACE, THE LIVING ROCK ALMOST REACHES ITS MAXIMUM SIZE...

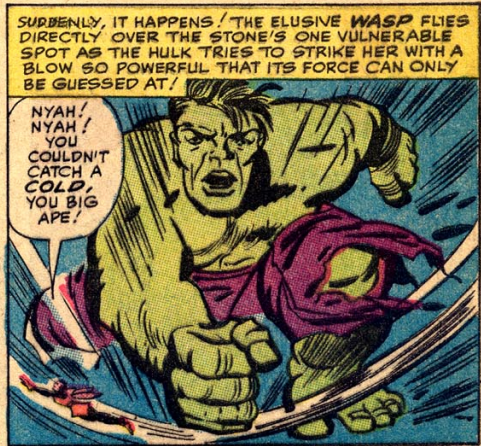
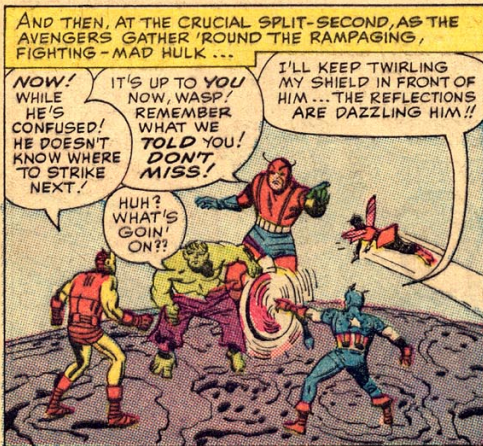
IT'LL EXPLODE ANY MINUTE! AND WITHOUT **THOR**, WE CAN'T DESTROY IT FIRST!

STAY BACK! THE WASP AND I HAVE A PLAN!

IT WAS **CAPTAIN AMERICA'S** IDEA! IT'S A LONG CHANCE... BUT IT MIGHT WORK!

THAT'S IT! LET THE HULK CLIMB A BIT FURTHER! **NOW... NOW** IS THE TIME!





AND, THOUGH HIS MORTAL FLESH IS WEAK, HIS SPIRIT... HIS IRON WILL... ARE STILL THOSE OF THE MIGHTY THUNDER GOD, AND SO...



I'VE DONE IT!!

NOW TO BE SURE THE LAVA MEN NEVER AGAIN MENACE THE SURFACE WORLD!

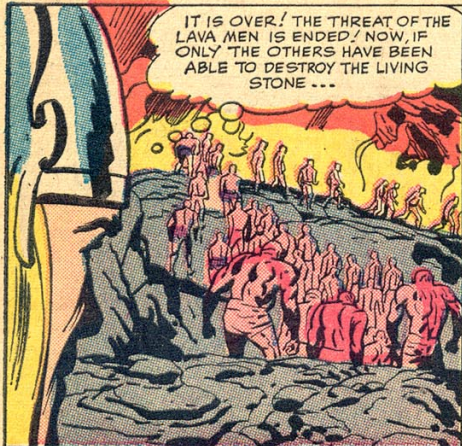


HEAR THE WORDS OF THOR, MEN OF THE NETHERWORLD! THE SURFACE MEN ARE NOT YOUR ENEMIES! THEY ONLY DESIRE TO LIVE IN PEACE! BUT, IF YOU EVER AGAIN THREATEN THEIR EXISTENCE, THEY WILL FIGHT TO THE END WITH WEAPONS OF MORE POWER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE... AND WITH THE AVENGERS AT THEIR SIDE!!



NOW RETURN TO YOUR HOMES, TO YOUR NORMAL LIVES! FOR OUR MERCY IS THE EQUAL OF OUR STRENGTH!

IT IS OVER! THE THREAT OF THE LAVA MEN IS ENDED! NOW, IF ONLY THE OTHERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DESTROY THE LIVING STONE...



AND, BACK ON THE SURFACE...

ORDER THE MISSILES REMOVED FROM STANDBY ALERT, MAJOR! THE DANGER IS OVER!

YES, SIR, GENERAL! LOOKS LIKE THE AVENGERS PREVENTED A SHOOTING WAR!

BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO BRUCE BANNER? THE LAST I SAW, HE WAS INSPECTING THE LIVING STONE!



GET THOSE MEN BACK TO THEIR STATIONS! NOTIFY THE PENTAGON THE EMERGENCY IS OVER! LOOK, ALIVE THERE!

I'VE GOT TO FIND BRUCE! THE HULK HAS DISAPPEARED! IF THEY SHOULD RUN INTO EACH OTHER, ANYTHING MIGHT HAPPEN!!



MEANWHILE, ON THE SITE WHERE THE LIVING STONE HAD BEEN BUT SECONDS BEFORE...

THE HULK IS GONE! BUT WE'RE ALL SAFE!

IT'S AMAZING! THE FORCE OF THE GREAT IMPLISSION TRANSMUTED THE GROUND BELOW US INTO A SHEET OF GLASS!



WELL, THAT WRAPS IT UP! FUNNY... IT'S ALWAYS SOMEWHAT OF A LET-DOWN WHEN A BATTLE IS OVER!

I SUSPECT THIS BATTLE ISN'T FULLY ENDED! THE HULK ESCAPED DURING THE IMPLISSION... BUT WE'RE SURE TO MEET HIM AGAIN!

SAY! WHAT ABOUT THOR? WHERE IS HE?



