



BY
GERRY CONWAY AND
JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ

9
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SEPT. 84
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COMICS
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AUTHORITY

ATARI FORCE



THE NEW

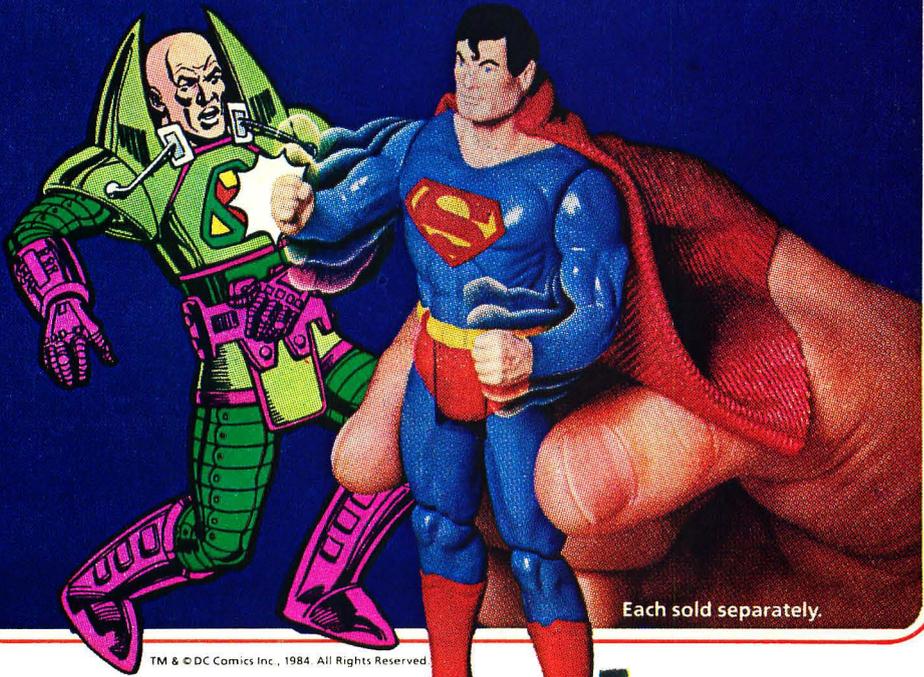
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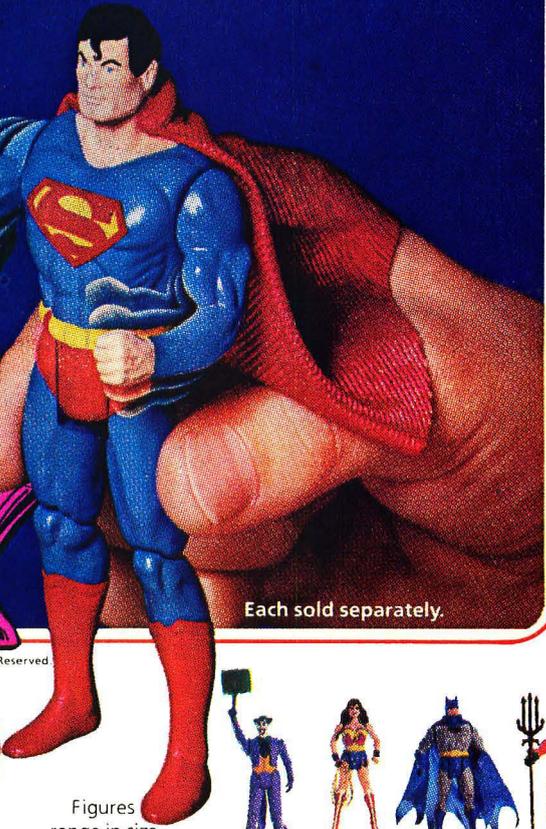
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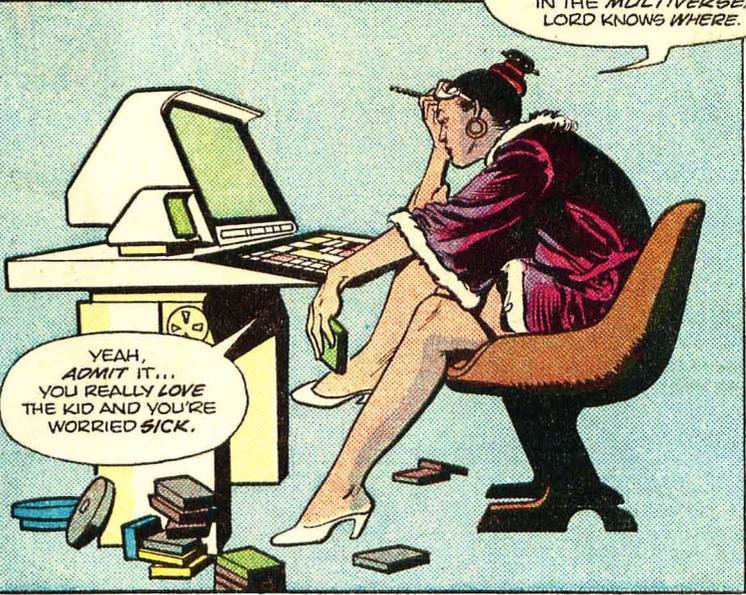
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ATARI STATION, IN ORBIT
OVER THE WORLD CALLED
NEW EARTH:

DAMN AND
DOUBLE DAMN.
EIGHTEEN YEARS OF
RESEARCH--A POTENTIAL
BREAKTHROUGH IN OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF
THE MULTIVERSE--
ALL OF IT
WASTED.

BUT, ADMIT IT,
LUCIA--THE WASTE
ISN'T WHAT **BOTHERS**
YOU MOST.

IT'S THINKING OF
THAT POOR BOY, OFF WITH
HIS FATHER ON SOME MAD HUNT
IN THE **MULTIVERSE**,
LORD KNOWS *WHERE*.



YEAH,
ADMIT IT...
YOU REALLY LOVE
THE KID AND YOU'RE
WORRIED SICK.

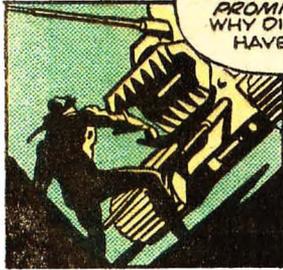
PROFESSOR LUCIA CAITLIN VENTURE SIGHs BEFORE HER HANDS ONCE AGAIN FLASH OVER THE COMPUTER TERMINAL BEFORE HER--

--SHE PLAYS THE KEYS AS EXPERTLY AS ANY PIANO VIRTUOSO.

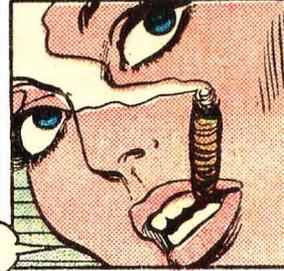
IMAGES FLASH ACROSS THE SCREEN, A LASER-SCAN REPLAY OF CHRISTOPHER CHAMPION'S LAST FULL TESTING PROGRAM IN THE ATARI INSTITUTE'S DEAD-END MAZE.



AND IN SPITE OF HER GENERAL GLOOM, LUCIA VENTURE FINDS HERSELF SMILING AGAIN, WITH SOMETHING LIKE A MOTHER'S PRIDE...

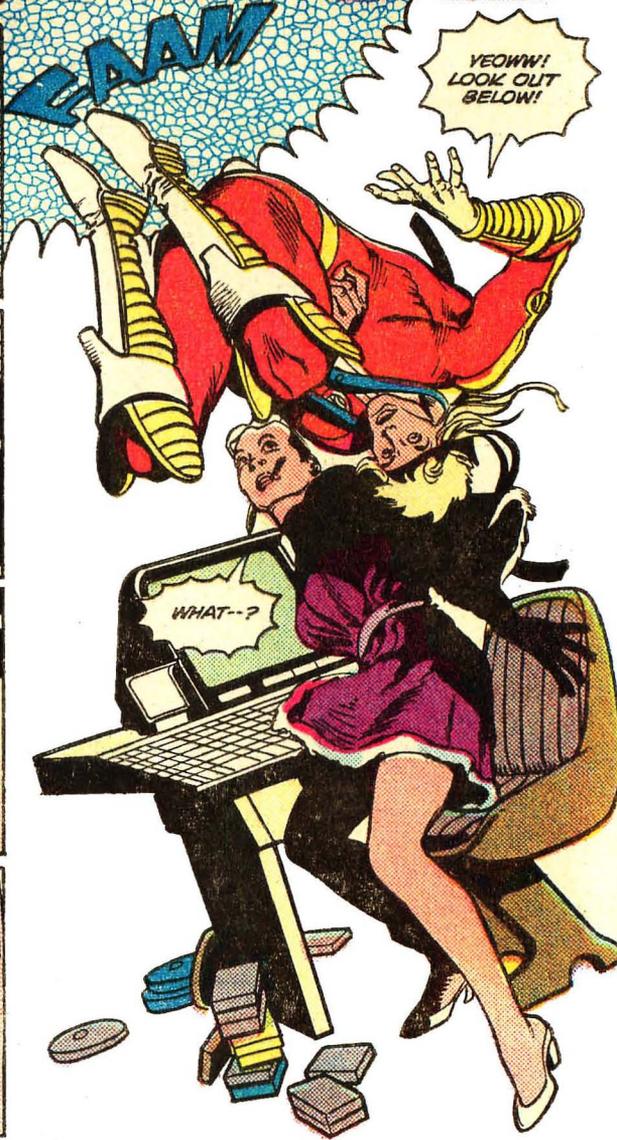
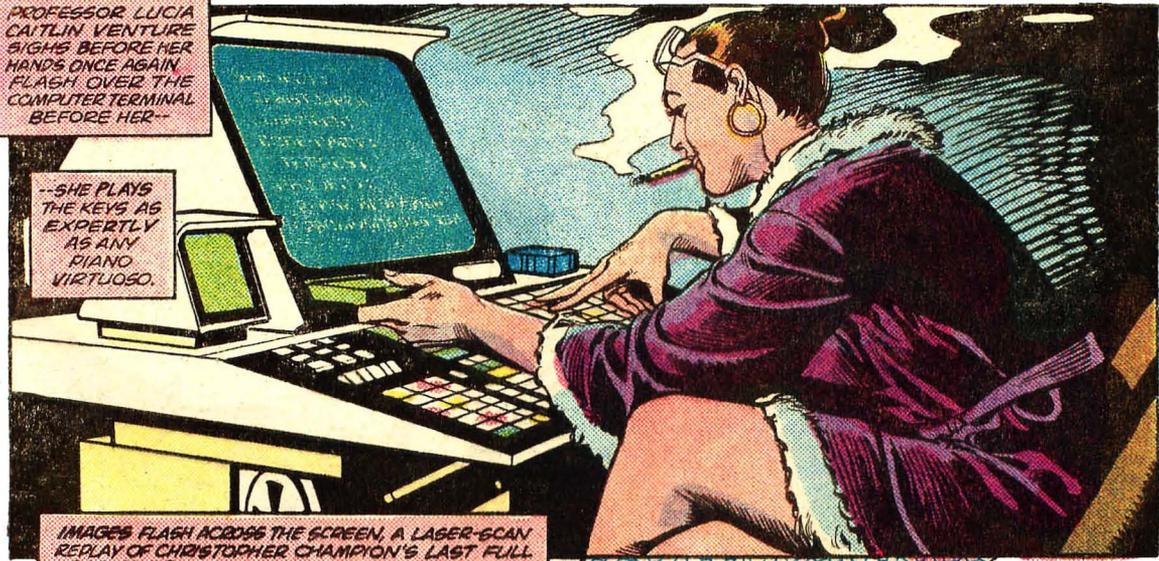


YOU WERE SO GOOD, CHRIS, SO PROMISING. WHY DID YOU HAVE TO--



--LEAVE?

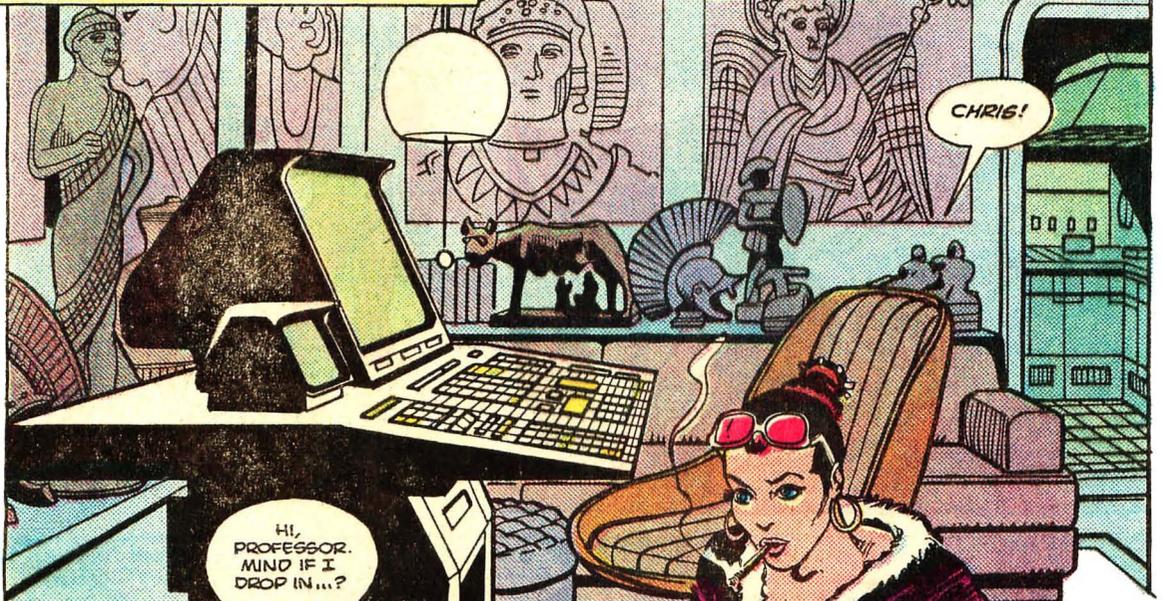
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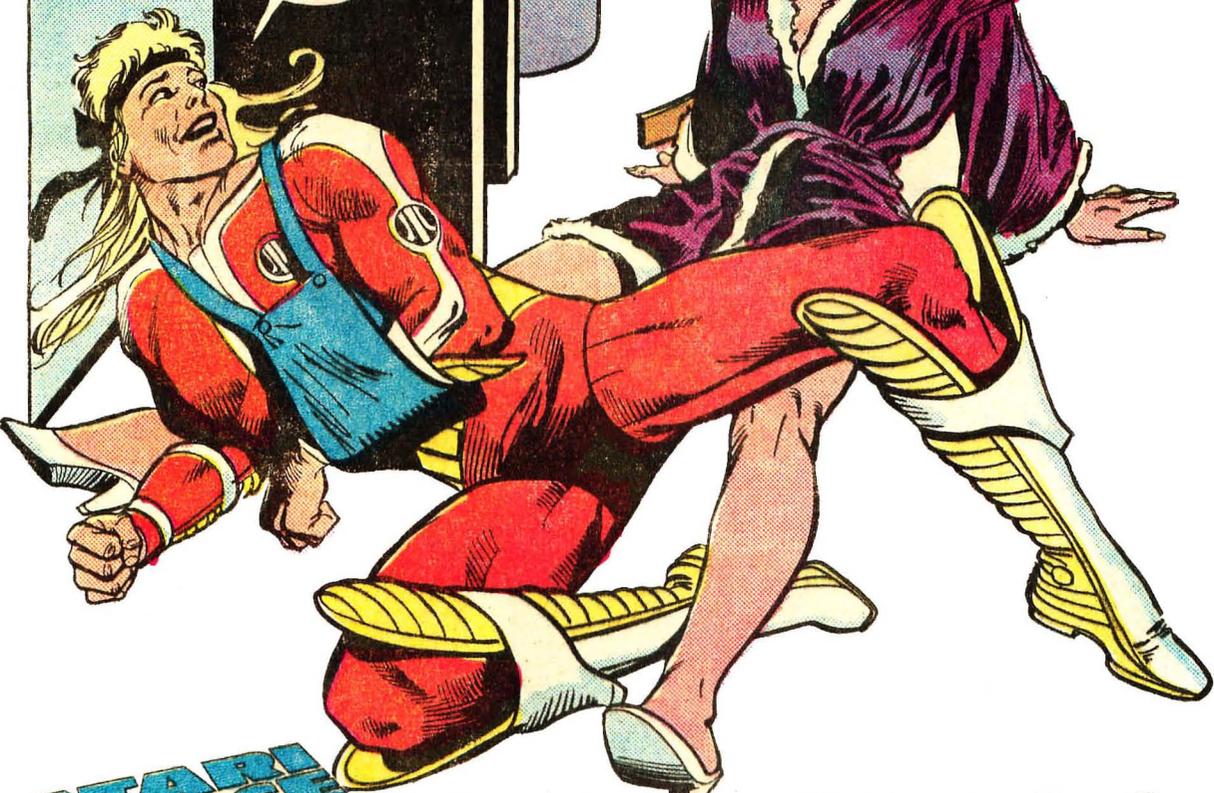
WHAT--?

AT FIRST, SHE IMAGINES SHE'S HALLUCINATING-- THAT TOO LITTLE SLEEP AND TOO MUCH WORRY HAVE DRIVEN HER OVER THE EDGE, TO SEEING WHAT SHE WANTS TO SEE, RATHER THAN WHAT'S REAL.

THAT THOUGHT VANISHES IN AN INSTANT, TO BE REPLACED BY BELIEF -- RELIEF -- AND UNVARNISHED DELIGHT.



HI, PROFESSOR. MIND IF I DROP IN...?



ATARI FORCE PART NINE

DEADLY LARGE

CREATED BY GERRY CONWAY ROY THOMAS JOSÉ GARCÍA LOPEZ

BY GERRY CONWAY JOSÉ GARCÍA LOPEZ BOB SMITH bob labban TOM ZIUKO ANDY HELFER

WRITER

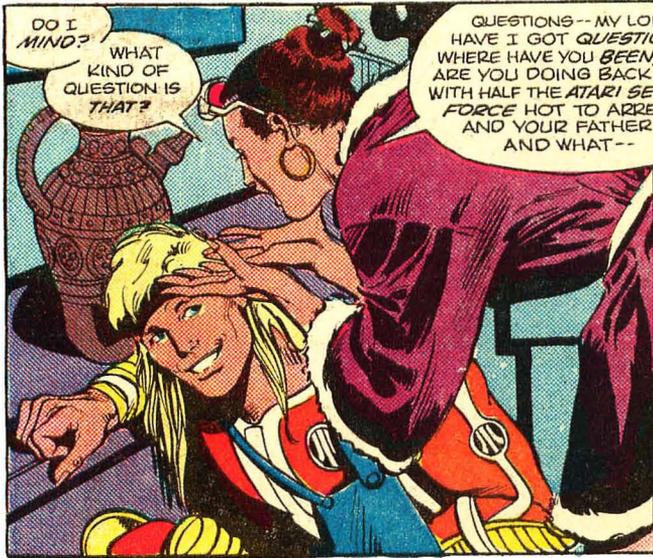
ARTIST

INKER

LETTERER

COLORIST

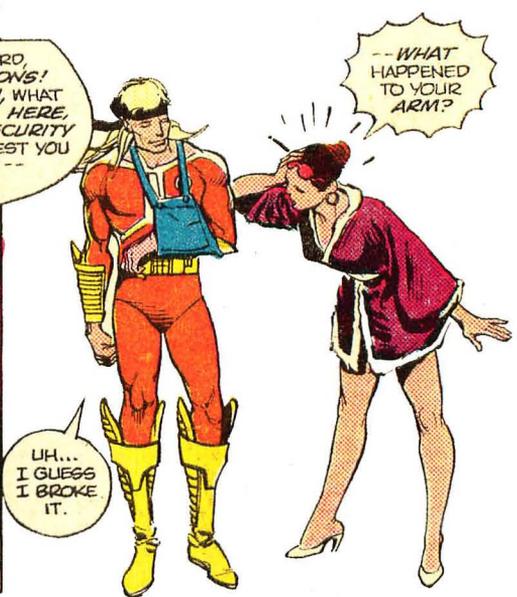
EDITOR



DO I MIND?

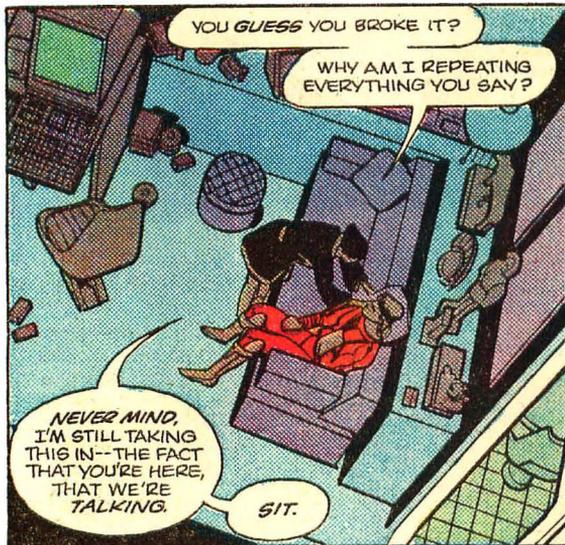
WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT?

QUESTIONS -- MY LORD, HAVE I GOT QUESTIONS! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE, WITH HALF THE ATARI SECURITY FORCE HOT TO ARREST YOU AND YOUR FATHER -- AND WHAT --



-- WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR ARM?

UH... I GUESS I BROKE IT.



YOU GUESS YOU BROKE IT?

WHY AM I REPEATING EVERYTHING YOU SAY?

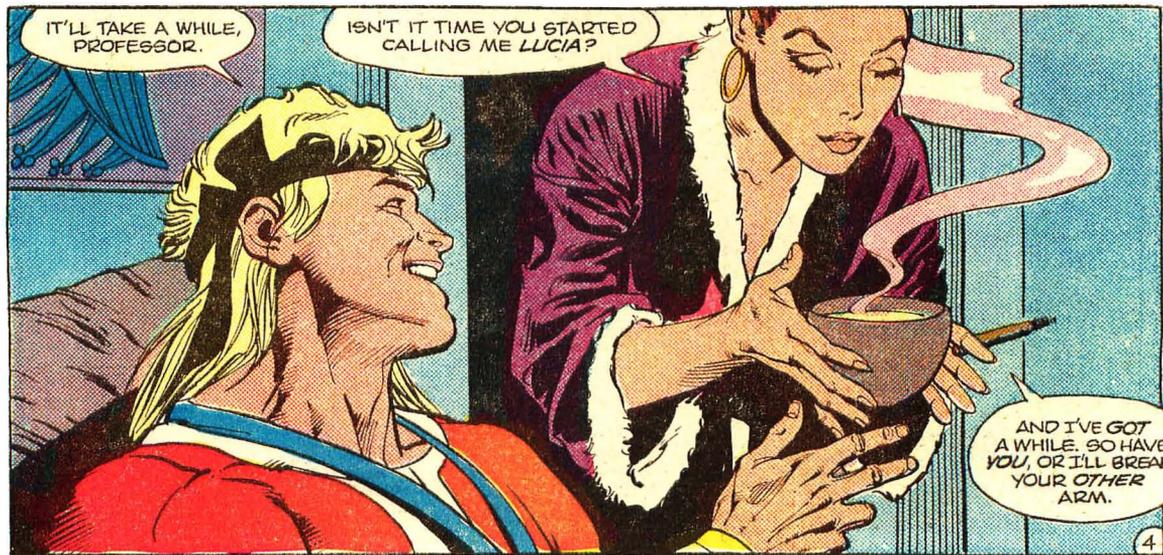
NEVER MIND, I'M STILL TAKING THIS IN -- THE FACT THAT YOU'RE HERE, THAT WE'RE TALKING.

SIT.



WHAT YOU NEED IS A CLIP OF HOT SOUP, GUARANTEED RECIPE FROM MY GREAT AUNT YENTL, ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE.

I WANT TO HEAR IT ALL, CHRIS, FROM THE BEGINNING.



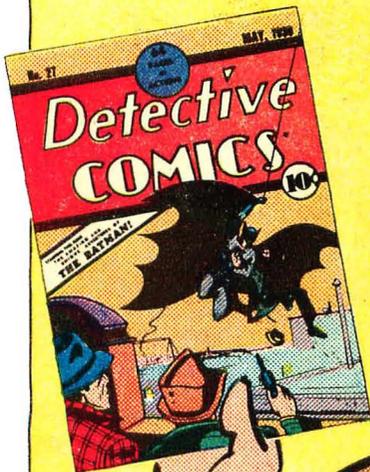
IT'LL TAKE A WHILE, PROFESSOR.

ISN'T IT TIME YOU STARTED CALLING ME LUCIA?

AND I'VE GOT A WHILE, SO HAVE YOU, OR I'LL BREAK YOUR OTHER ARM.

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FROM THE BEGINNING, HUH?

OKAY, THE BEGINNING WAS ON A WAR-TORN LITTLE BACKWATER OF A PLANET CALLED ROC'S WORLD.

"MY ADOPTED SISTER, DART, AND HER FELLOW MERCENARY AND LOVER, BLACKJAK, WERE BETRAYED BY THEIR EMPLOYER--A LOCAL WEADEL NAMED GENERAL KI.

"KI HIRED THEM TO FIGHT A BUNCH OF REBELS-- THEN SOLD THEM OUT, OR TRIED TO, ANYWAY.

"DART AND BLACKJAK ESCAPED, WENT OVER TO THE REBEL SIDE...

"...AND THAT DIDN'T GIT TOO WELL WITH KI'S EMPLOYER, SOMEONE CALLING HIMSELF THE DARK DESTROYER. LATER, WE FOUND OUT HE'D HIRED KI TO DELIVER DART INTO HIS HANDS.

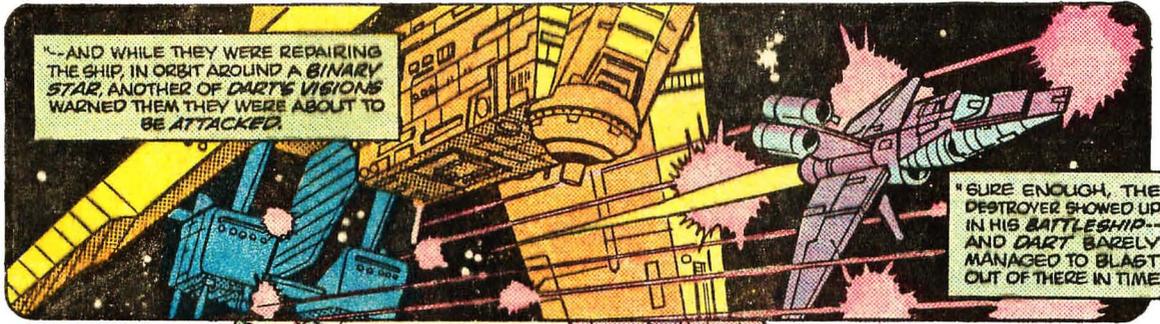
"WHEN KI FAILED-- THE DESTROYER KILLED HIM.

"A FEW NIGHTS LATER, DART WOKE FROM ONE OF HER VISIONS: SHE CAN GLIMPSE POTENTIAL FUTURES, ALTERNATE WORLDS OF THE MULTIVERSE. SOMETIMES WHAT SHE SEES IS PRETTY FRIGHTENING.

"THAT NIGHT, DART SAW HER FRIEND BLACKJAK DIE... BUT HER MIND BLOCKED OUT THE DETAILS.

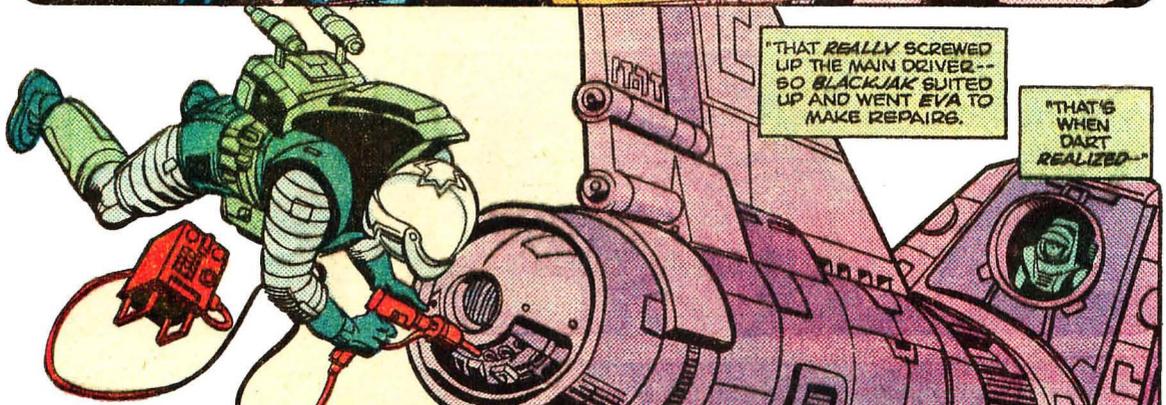
"SINCE THEY'D HELPED THE REBELS BEAT GENERAL KI'S TROOPS, DART AND BLACKJAK WERE FREE TO LEAVE ROC'S WORLD-- WHICH THEY DID, IN A SECOND-HAND SPACECRAFT THAT HAD BEEN TAMPERED WITH BY ONE OF THE DESTROYER'S CRONIES.

"LESS THAN SEVEN LIGHT-YEARS FROM ROC'S WORLD, THE SHIP'S ENGINES CONKED OUT--



--AND WHILE THEY WERE REPAIRING THE SHIP, IN ORBIT AROUND A BINARY STAR, ANOTHER OF DART'S VISIONS WARNED THEM THEY WERE ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED.

"SURE ENOUGH, THE DESTROYER SHOWED UP IN HIS BATTLESHIP-- AND DART BARELY MANAGED TO BLAST OUT OF THERE IN TIME.



"THAT REALLY SCREWED UP THE MAIN DRIVER-- SO BLACKJAK SUITED UP AND WENT EVA TO MAKE REPAIRS.

"THAT'S WHEN DART REALIZED--"

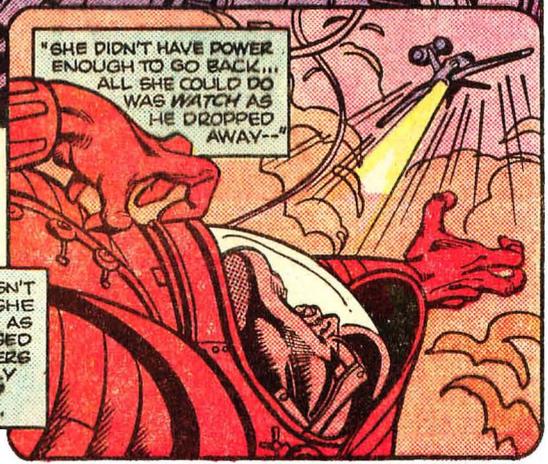


BLACKJAK... MY DREAM... OH, GOD...

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED IN MY DREAM!

BLACKJAK!

"THERE WASN'T A THING SHE COULD DO AS THE BYRAGGED MAIN DRIVERS SUDDENLY FLARED TO LIFE.



"SHE DIDN'T HAVE POWER ENOUGH TO GO BACK... ALL SHE COULD DO WAS WATCH AS HE DROPPED AWAY--"

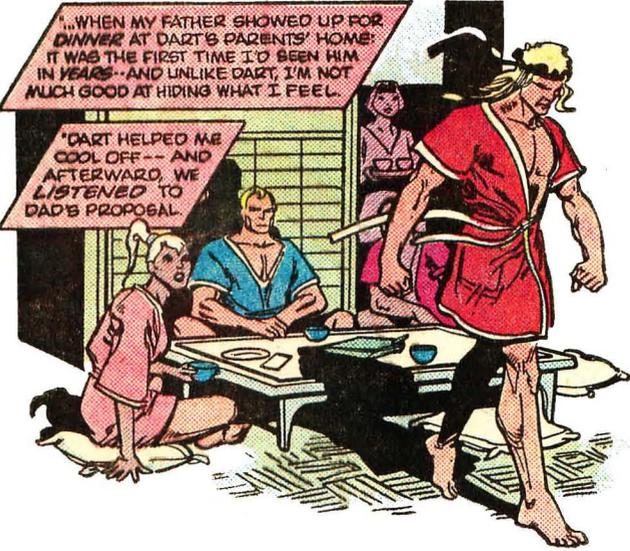


-- INTO THE PLASMA BRIDGE BETWEEN THE BINARY SUNS.

THAT'S WHY SHE RETURNED TO NEW EARTH, THE WEEK BEFORE YOU ALL DISAPPEARED.

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN IN AGONY!

SHE KEPT IT HIDDEN, ESPECIALLY THAT FIRST NIGHT...



"...WHEN MY FATHER SHOWED UP FOR DINNER AT DART'S PARENTS' HOME! IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN HIM IN YEARS--AND UNLIKE DART, I'M NOT MUCH GOOD AT HIDING WHAT I FEEL.

"DART HELPED ME COOL OFF-- AND AFTERWARD, WE LISTENED TO DAD'S PROPOSAL.

"HE WANTED US TO HELP HIM STEAL SCANNER ONE FROM THE ATARI MUSEUM AND TAKE IT ON A HUNT THROUGH THE MULTIVERSE FOR A LOST RESEARCH PROBE."



"I DON'T KNOW WHY DART SAID YES-- BUT I JOINED IN TO PROVE HE'D BEEN WRONG ABOUT ME, ALL THE YEARS HE'D IGNORED ME."



"WE PICKED UP A FEW UNEXPECTED ALLIES IN THE PROCESS-- PSYCH OFFICER MORPHEA, HER WARD BABE, MY ALIEN FRIEND, THE HUKKA--"



"... AND A STOWAWAY THIEF CALLED PAKRAT."



ALONG THE WAY, DAD TOLD US PART OF THE TRUTH. HE SAID HE WAS AFRAID THE PROBE WOULD FALL INTO THE HANDS OF SOMEONE HE CALLED THE DARK DESTROYER AND LEAD THE DESTROYER STRAIGHT BACK TO NEW EARTH...

THE DARK DESTROYER? DIDN'T YOU SAY--?



"RIGHT. WE DIDN'T KNOW IT THEN, BUT THE DESTROYER WAS THE SAME CHARACTER WHO'D HIRED GENERAL KI AND TRIED TO KILL DART BY SABOTAGING HER SPACECRAFT ON ROC'S WORLD, WHICH MEANS HE ALREADY KNEW THE WAY TO OUR PART OF THE MULTIVERSE... MEANING DAD'S STOLEN RESEARCH PROBE WAS BAIT AND WE WERE THE FISH. ONLY WE DIDN'T KNOW IT."

SO WHEN I PHAGED ABOARD THE DESTROYER'S SHIP WITH A CLEVER PLAN TO STEAL THE PROBE BACK--



"AFTER USING ME FOR A HUMAN PUNCHING BAG, THE DESTROYER TURNED ME OVER TO A SADIST NAMED PSYKLOPS."

"PSYKLOPS THRIVED ON PAIN... MINE"



"... GUESS WHO WAS WAITING FOR ME."

"RIGHT."

"I FIGURE THE DESTROYER MUST HATE ME A LOT--"

-- ME AND DART BOTH. BUT I'M DAMNED IF I KNOW WHY. IT'S AS IF HE'S ON A VENDETTA AGAINST DAD AND THE ORIGINAL ATARI FORCE, AND HE'S TAKING IT OUT ON US.

YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS, BUT DAD TURNED HIMSELF OVER TO THE DESTROYER, TRYING TO SAVE MY LIFE WITH A SUICIDE BOMB STRAPPED TO HIS ABDOMEN.

CRAZY, HUH?

HE WAS CAUGHT, ALMOST AS IF THE DESTROYER KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN DAD'S MIND.

*ABOUT THEN, THINGS FINALLY STARTED BREAKING OUR WAY: DART AND PAKRAT BATTLED THEIR WAY TO THE DESTROYER'S ENGINE ROOM...

...AND MORPHEA SHOWED UP TO BRAIN-BLAST PSYKLOPS YOU KNOW. FOR AN INSECT, SHE'S GOT A LOT OF HEART. FUNNY, BUT SHE REMINDS ME OF YOU, PROFESSOR. I MEAN, UH, LUCIA.

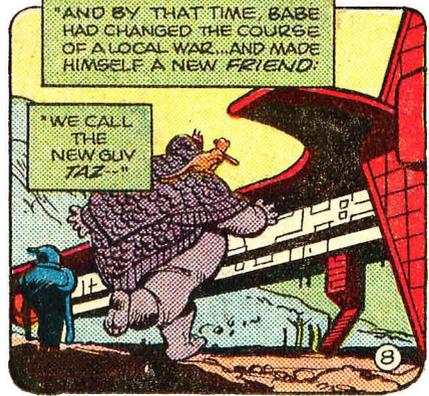
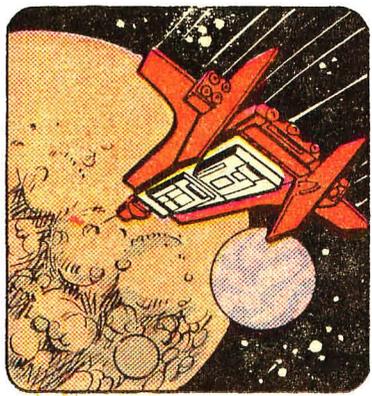
"ANYWAY, DART THREATENED TO EXPLODE THE SHIP'S MAIN DRIVER IF THE DESTROYER DIDN'T TURN US LOOSE--

"--SO HE DID AND WE GOT OUT. JUST SECONDS BEFORE HIS SHIP VANISHED IN THE MULTIVERSE. NATURALLY, WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN HOME FREE, RIGHT?

"WRONG. WHILE MORPHEA WAS OFF SCANNER ONE FREEING ME FROM PSYKLOPS, HER WARD, BABE, AND MY FRIEND, THE HUKKA, TOOK A LIFEBOAT AND WENT SEARCHING FOR HER. THING IS, BABE MAY LOOK LIKE A MINOR MOUNTAIN... BUT HE'S ONLY A CHILD. A GREAT BIG... UH... BABY. IT TOOK US DAYS TO LOCATE HIS BATTERED LIFEBOAT ON A LONELY WORLD NEARBY.

"AND BY THAT TIME, BABE HAD CHANGED THE COURSE OF A LOCAL WAR...AND MADE HIMSELF A NEW FRIEND.

WE CALL THE NEW GLV TAZ





--AFTER "TASMANIAN DEVIL," YOU'D HAVE TO SEE HIM TO BELIEVE HIM. HE'S CUTE--LIKE A BUZZSAW.

ANYHOW, NOW YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW, EXCEPT THE REASON I SNUCK BACK HERE TO ATARI STATION.

I CAN GUESS.

YOU WANT TO PROBE OUR COMPUTERS FOR INFORMATION ON THIS MAN YOU CALL THE DARK DESTROYER.



UH-HUH. DAD DOESN'T KNOW I'M HERE. HE THINKS I'M STILL IN SICKBAY ABOARD SCANNER ONE.

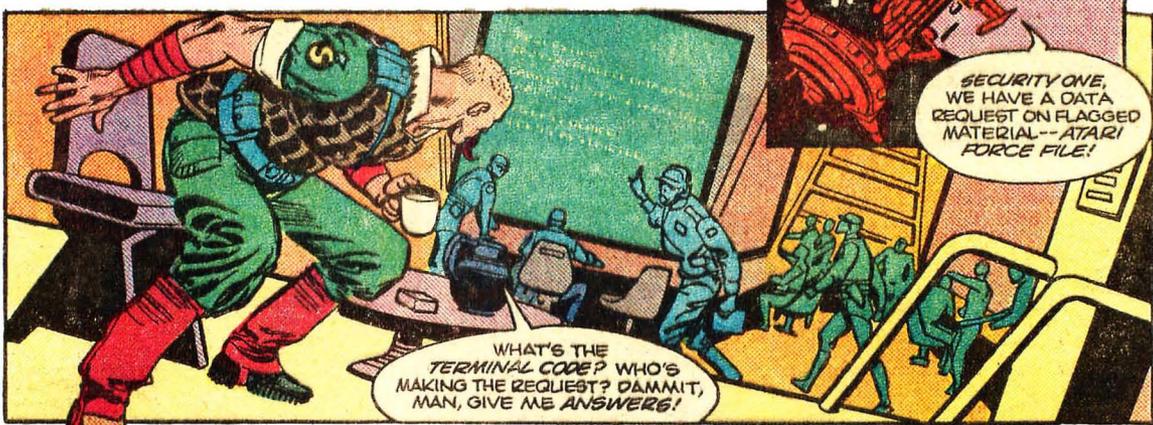
ONE NICE THING ABOUT BEING ABLE TO PHASE FROM ONE DIMENSION OF THE MULTIVERSE TO ANOTHER--

--YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP TRACK OF, I KNOW.

ALL RIGHT, THEN, LET'S SEE WHAT'S IN THE DATABANK, IF ANYTHING...

REQUESTING FE CROSS-REFERENCE DATABASE:
"DARK DESTROYER (ATARI FORCE) DATA"
REQUEST DENIED:
ACCESS RESTRICTED

UH-OH.



WHAT'S THE TERMINAL CODE? WHO'S MAKING THE REQUEST? DAMMIT, MAN, GIVE ME ANSWERS!

SECURITY ONE, WE HAVE A DATA REQUEST ON FLAGGED MATERIAL--ATARI FORCE FILE!



TERMINAL 3826-C, REGISTERED TO PROFESSOR LUCIA VENTURE--

--DIRECTOR, ATARI RESEARCH PROGRAM 6846-93A.

IT FITS.

SIR? FITS WHAT?



SHE WAS LIKE A MOTHER TO THAT CHAMPION BOY. IF HE'S COME BACK, HE'D GO TO HER...



...AND THAT MEANS I'VE GOT HIM.

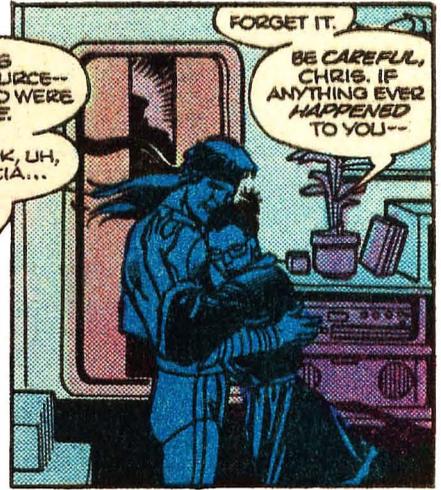


SORRY, CHRIS-- THAT DATA'S RESTRICTED. WHY, I CAN'T IMAGINE. THE ATARI FORCE WAS DISBANDED AFTER THE FOUNDING OF NEW EARTH, MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO...

OKAY, SO I'LL HAVE TO CHECK ELSEWHERE.

THERE'S ANOTHER SOURCE-- PEOPLE WHO WERE THERE.

LOOK, UH, LUCIA...



FORGET IT.

BE CAREFUL, CHRIS. IF ANYTHING EVER HAPPENED TO YOU--



SOMETHING ALREADY HAS, LADY. HE STOLE ATARI PROPERTY. THAT MAKES HIM MY MEAT.

I HAD YOU FIGURED, DIDN'T I, PUNK?

STAND NICE AND QUIET NOW AND DON'T TRY--

TRY WHAT? YOU MEAN-- THIS?



DAMN!

WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, BREAKING INTO A PRIVATE APARTMENT? I'LL CALL SECURITY--



LADY, I AM SECURITY.



SECURITY TASK FORCE, THIS IS CAPTAIN HUNTER.

MOVE THOSE BACK-UP UNITS INTO POSITION. DO IT NOW!

JIMM SON OF SATURN

TM

The human story
of a boy and an alien.

By Greg Potter,
Gene Colan and
Klaus Janson

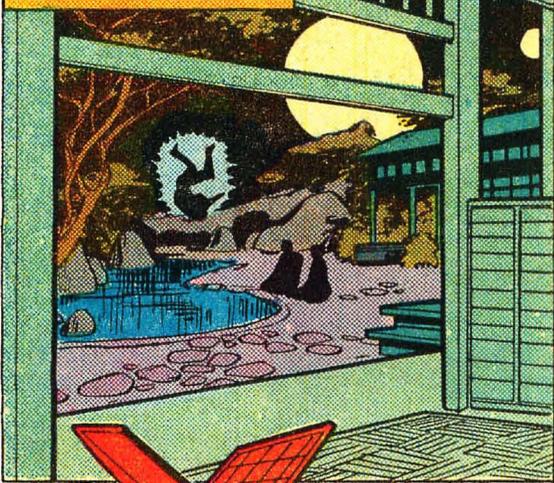
From the new DC.
There's no
stopping us now!



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NEW EARTH: THE GARDEN OF MOHANDAS SINGH AND LISAN O'ROURKE, PARENTS OF ERIN BIA O'ROURKE-SINGH. A WOMAN OF MANY FACETS...

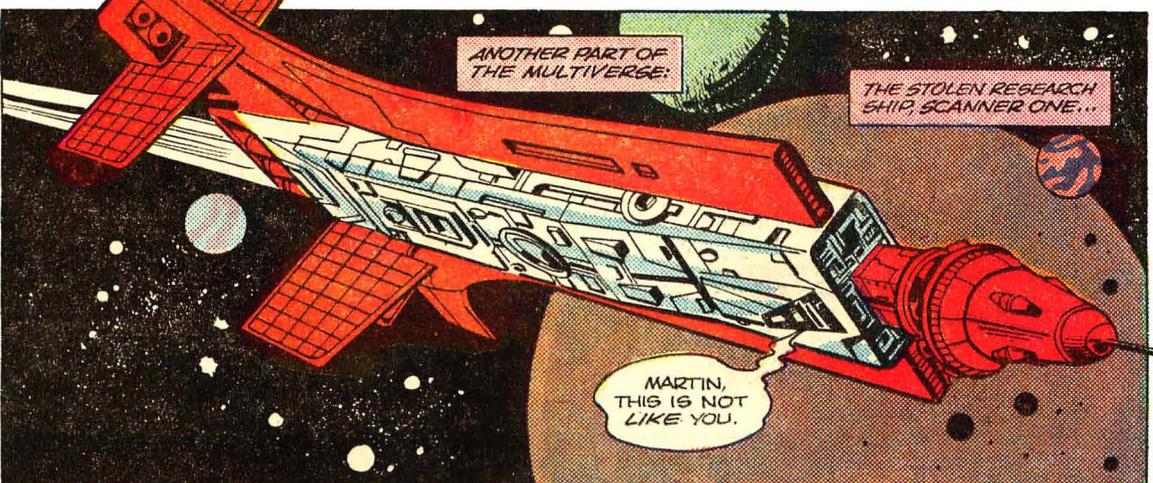
...ONE OF THOSE FACETS IS THE MERCENARY CALLED DART.



CHRISTOPHER! AND WHAT BE YOU DOING HERE, LAD, APPEARIN' FROM NOWHERE TO DOUSE YOURSELF--? YOU'LL CATCH YOUR DEATH!

UH-- I WAS RUSHED!

ERIN-- IS SHE ALL RIGHT? LET'S GET YOU DRY, YOU CAN TELL US EVERYTHING...



ANOTHER PART OF THE MULTIVERSE:

THE STOLEN RESEARCH SHIP, SCANNER ONE...

MARTIN, THIS IS NOT LIKE YOU.

SINCE OUR ESCAPE FROM THE DARK DESTROYER, THIS ONE HAS NOTICED A CHANGE IN YOUR BEHAVIOR.

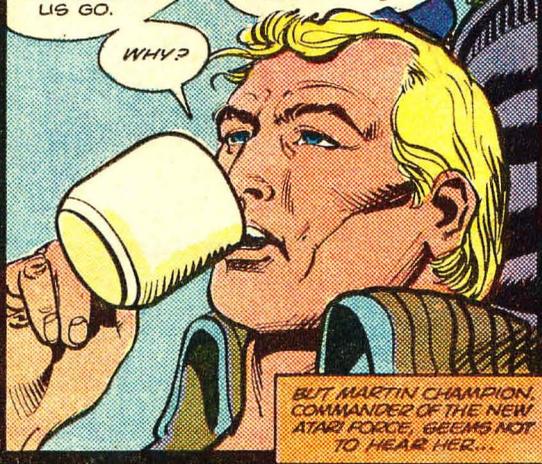
YOU ARE SUBDUED... STRANGELY INTROSPECTIVE. YOU SEEM... UNCERTAIN.

YOU WANT THE TRUTH, MORPHEA? I AM UNCERTAIN.

THE DESTROYER HAD US IN HIS GRASP-- HE COULD HAVE KILLED US ALL EASILY, DESPITE DART'S THREAT-- YET HE LET US GO.

PERHAPS IF YOU TOLD THIS ONE THE REASON FOR YOUR MUTUAL HATRED, THIS ONE MIGHT SUGGEST A MOTIVE.

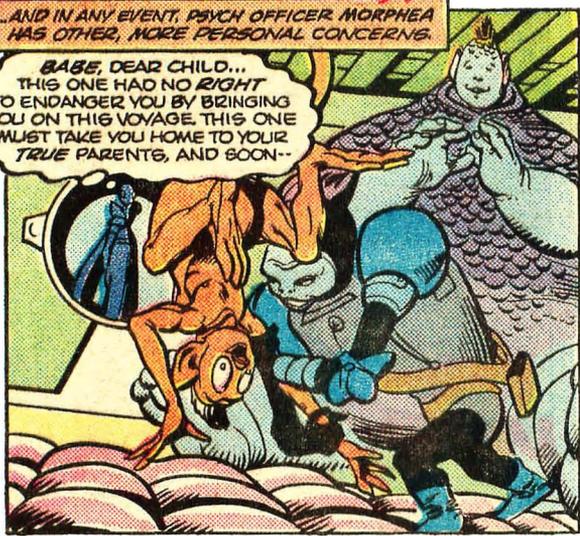
WHY?



BUT MARTIN CHAMPION, COMMANDER OF THE NEW ATARI FORCE, SEEMS NOT TO HEAR HER...

...AND IN ANY EVENT, PSYCH OFFICER MORPHEA HAS OTHER, MORE PERSONAL CONCERNS.

BABE, DEAR CHILD... THIS ONE HAD NO RIGHT TO ENDANGER YOU BY BRINGING YOU ON THIS VOYAGE. THIS ONE MUST TAKE YOU HOME TO YOUR TRUE PARENTS, AND SOON--



-- BUT THE VERY THOUGHT THREATENS TO BREAK THIS ONE'S HEART.

EH? PAKZAT-- WHAT HAVE YOU STOLEN NOW, LITTLE THIEF?



HIDE FROM THIS ONE, IF YOU WISH. WE ALL KNOW WHAT YOU DO. IT DOES NOT MATTER.

YOU ARE-- AMUSING...

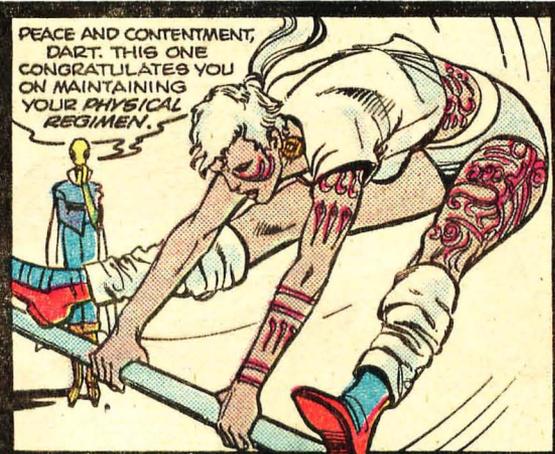


...AND WE DESPERATELY NEED AMUSEMENT.

PEACE AND CONTENTMENT, DART. THIS ONE CONGRATULATES YOU ON MAINTAINING YOUR PHYSICAL REGIMEN.

WUF... THANKS.

OLD HABITS... HARD TO BREAK.



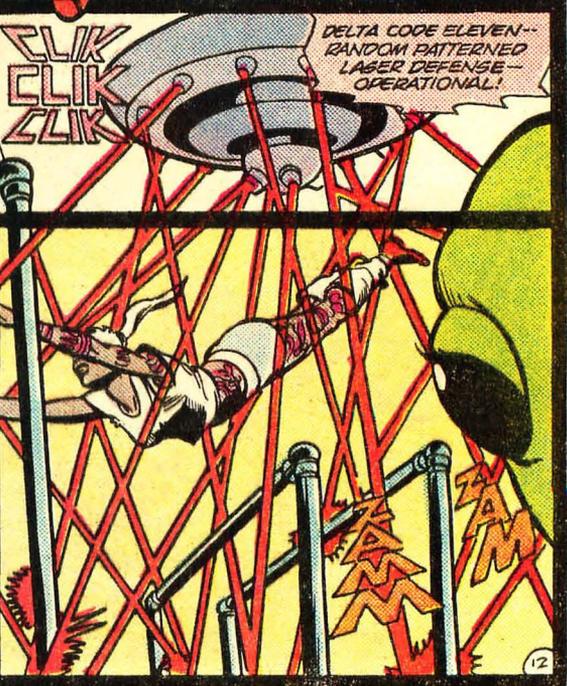
NOW FOR... THE TOUGH PART.

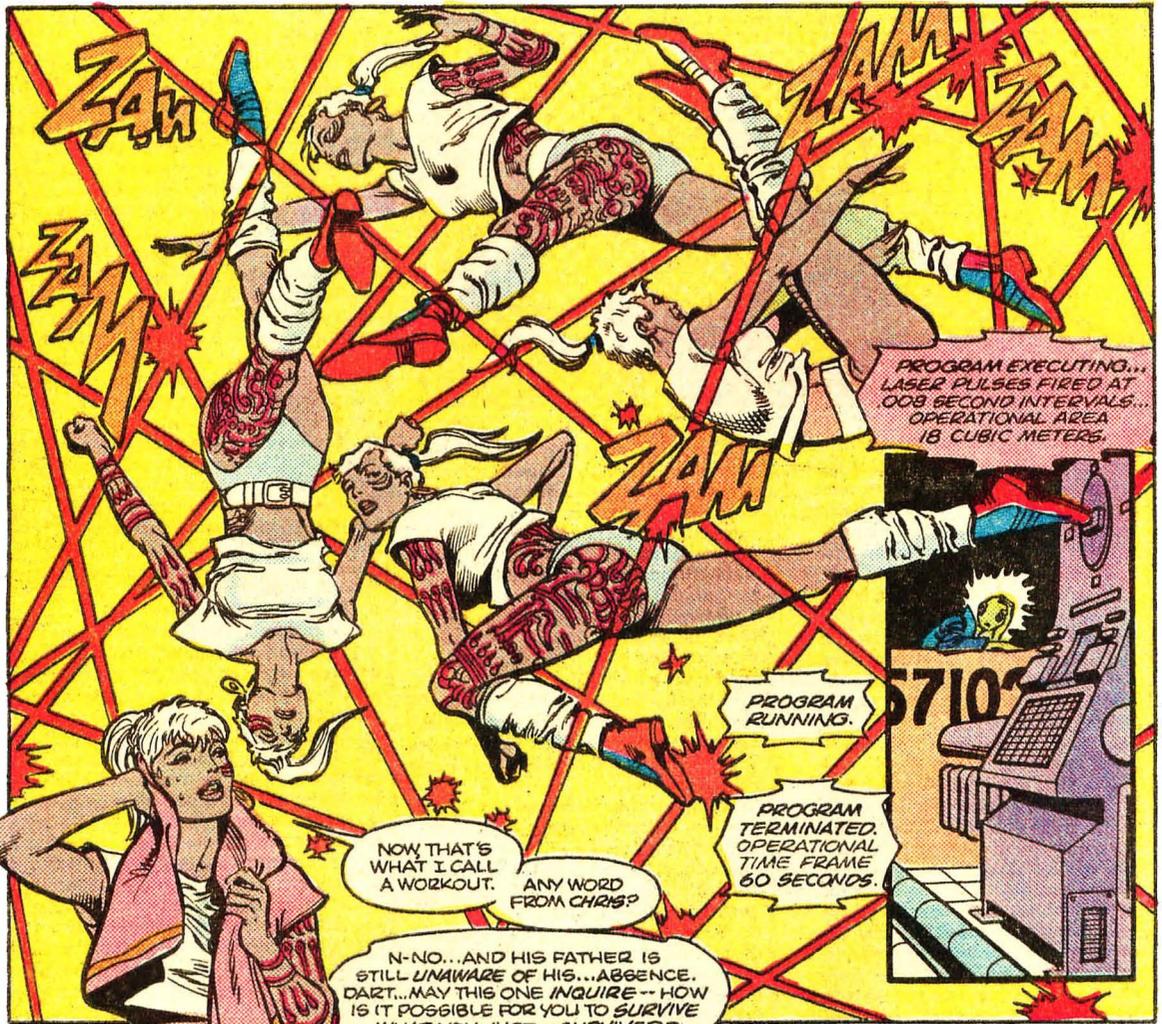
LASER SCREEN... ACTIVATE ON VOICE COMMAND... DELTA CODE ELEVEN!

CLIK CLIK CLIK

DELTA CODE ELEVEN-- RANDOM PATTERNED LASER DEFENSE-- OPERATIONAL!

DART... NO...!





NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A WORKOUT.

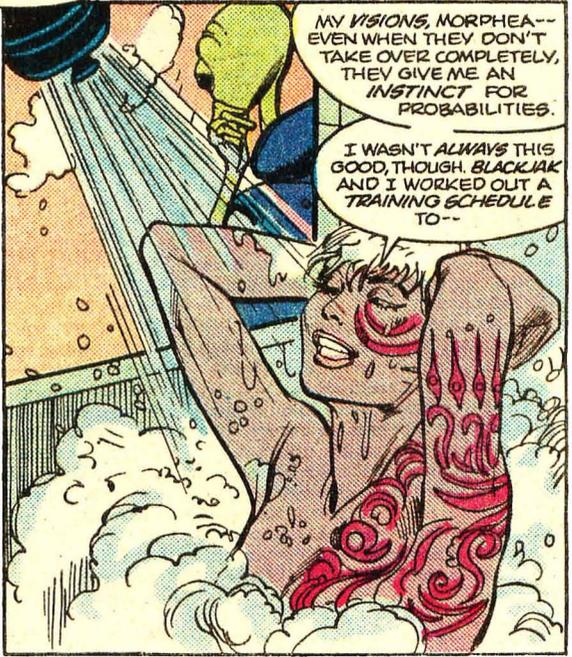
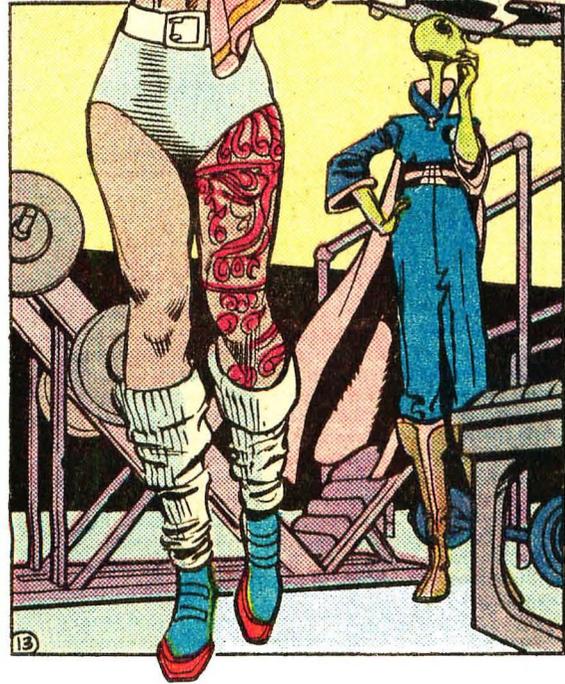
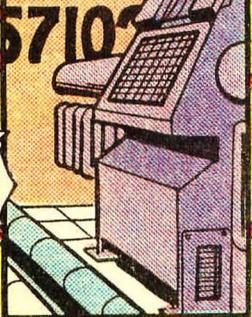
ANY WORD FROM CHRIS?

N-NO...AND HIS FATHER IS STILL UNWARE OF HIS...ABSENCE. DART...MAY THIS ONE INQUIRE-- HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO SURVIVE WHAT YOU JUST--SURVIVED?

PROGRAM EXECUTING...
LASER PULSES FIRED AT
008 SECOND INTERVALS...
OPERATIONAL AREA
18 CUBIC METERS.

PROGRAM
RUNNING.

PROGRAM
TERMINATED.
OPERATIONAL
TIME FRAME
60 SECONDS.



MY VISIONS, MORPHEA--
EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T
TAKE OVER COMPLETELY,
THEY GIVE ME AN
INSTINCT FOR
PROBABILITIES.

I WASN'T ALWAYS THIS
GOOD, THOUGH. BLACKJACK
AND I WORKED OUT A
TRAINING SCHEDULE
TO--

MEANWHILE.

Letters—we get letters!

Actually, we get quite a few letters, considering that this column isn't normally a letters page. Publishing this column weekly allows me to answer a few letters now and then without feeling guilty.

Here's one—no date on it, but I can tell from the cobwebs on it that it's been around a bit, so I better answer it before it crumbles from age. (Besides, it's an interesting letter and the subject matter is as relevant today as when it was written.)

Dear Mister Giordano:

I have no idea what your job is at DC. However, I assume you have lots of clout, since you write "Meanwhile" and your indicia listing indicates that you're the DC version of Jim Shooter. If you're not, then give the letter to the person who is. Now for the message.

I represent W.A.S.P. W.A.S.P. is a private organization dedicated to bettering the lot of super-heroines everywhere. I'm sure you're thrilled by this news. We have been primarily bugging Marvel, but we've decided to expand to DC. Aren't you glad?

As we are not very good at extortion and those pictures we took of you in that sleazy hotel didn't turn out very well, we rely on good fellowship and annoying people to get our suggestions taken. What are our suggestions, you may ask? They are as follows:

1. We would like for the roles of heroines at DC Comics to be upgraded. This could be accomplished by creating new, more interesting heroines and revamping the old ones.
2. It seems that DC considers the few strips about heroines as the dumping ground for untalented hacks. Please do something to rectify this.
3. Heroines like Batgirl and Supergirl, who are spin-offs of male heroes, are featured, and completely original heroines such as Black Orchid and Madame Xanadu are ignored. Of all of DC's female solo characters, the only one who is not a sidekick, relative, or partner is Wonder Woman. Please play up the solo heroines and/or create new ones.

4. The sidekick variety can be helped in a variety of ways. If possible, change some of their names, redesign their costumes, and overhaul their powers to make them less like their counterparts. In other words, liberate the heroines from the heroes.

5. One untapped source of superwomen is the super-groups. Heroines such as Starfire and the Phantom Lady could undoubtedly hold their own strips.

6. A vastly underrated heroine is the Huntress. She should be featured in her own book. Or at least a mini-series. Try her out in **DC PRESENTS** to judge sales reaction.

7. Very few new heroines are being created. I would suggest a revived Showcase featuring all-new characters and concepts. I'm positive your staff has dozens of ideas for new heroes and heroines.

8. When a feature has to be dropped, don't have it always be a heroine's strip. When a strip is added, don't have it always be a hero's strip.

That's about everything I can come up with for now. W.A.S.P. beseeches you to consider these suggestions, and please remember that women are super people.

Michael Pickens
2539 Johnstown-Utica Rd.
Utica, Ohio 43080

Tough letter!

From the top. Yes, I'm DC's version of—the guy you said. Except I'm short.

Whatever W.A.S.P. stands for (your letter didn't say. It is an acronym, isn't it?), I am glad you started bugging us as well—as long as you don't overdo it.

Glad you're not good at extortion (good grief, which sleazy hotel—?)

1. We do plan to do just that! A new heroine to look for is **Jonni Thunder aka Thunderbolt**, in her new mini-series by Roy Thomas and drawn by yours truly. More info on this next month. Wonder Woman is due for a complete revamping in 1985, there'll be a Huntress mini-series early next year, and new fates are in store for Batgirl/Supergirl, et al.

2. You may not like the strips. I might agree. But that doesn't make the folks doing them "untalented hacks."

3. See #1 above. Although **Black Orchid** and **Madame Xanadu** never made it real big either, I think both characters are gold ore waiting to be mined. Soon, I hope!

4. Agreed! Watch us in 1985.

5. I dunno. Characters that work well in a group environment don't always survive a solo attempt. Being female and super-powered isn't a guarantee of success.

6. Agreed (see #1 above)! Though a **DC PRESENTS** tryout wouldn't be definitive. Superman fans will buy it no matter who (or what) is the team-up.

7. Ideas we have! Staff we don't...not enough good people to go around without hurting current best-sellers.

8. Frankly, a strip is only dropped if it's not doing well. If more female strips are dropped than male strips (I doubt that!), it's because they don't do as well.

Don't beseech, I've considered. And some of my best friends are women. Right, Mom?

Thank You and Good Afternoon.

Dick

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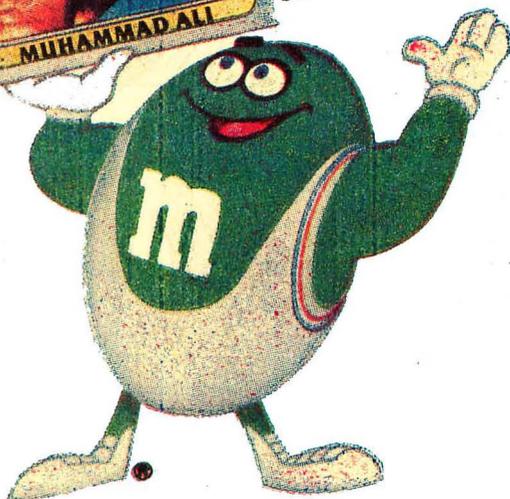
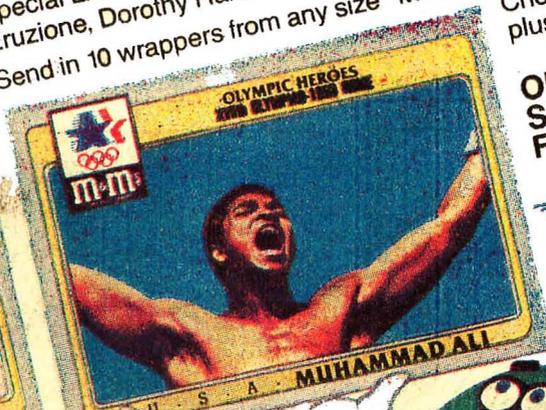
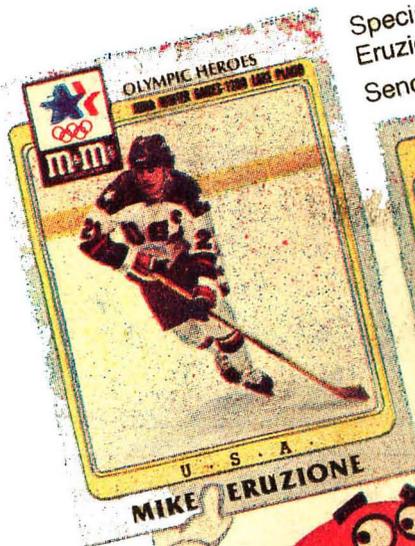
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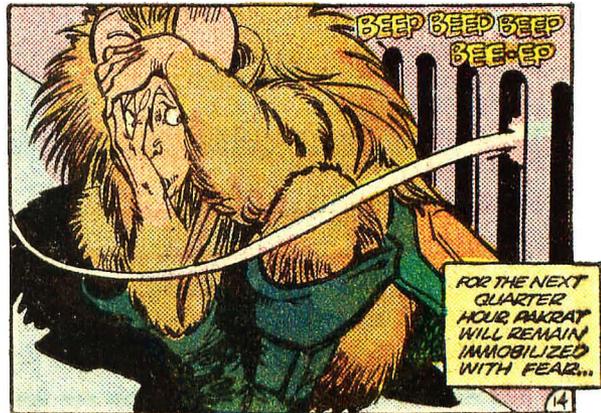
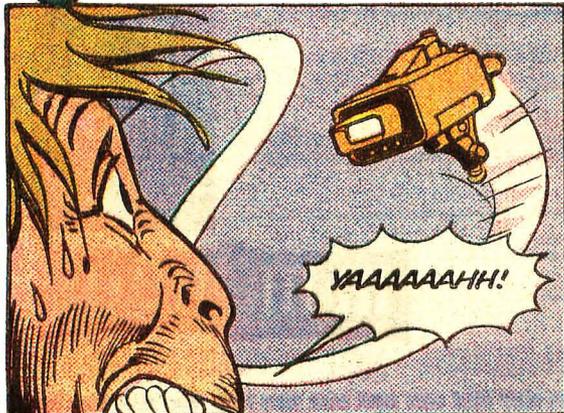
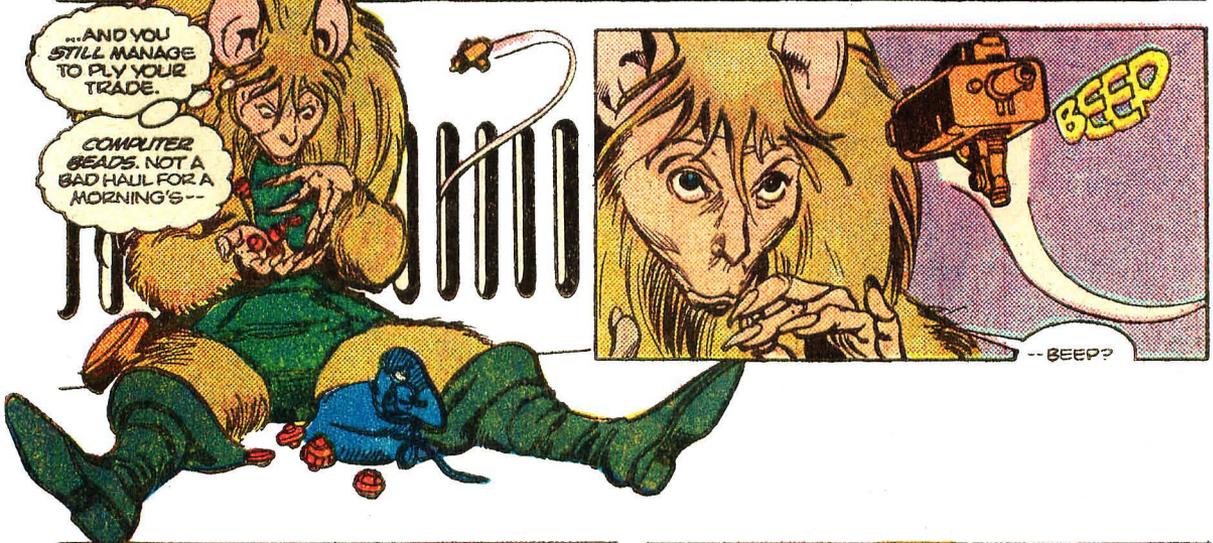
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MEANWHILE, BACK ON NEW EARTH...

THANK YOU FOR THE NEWS YOU BRING OF ERIN BIA, CHRISTOPHER. NOW WE MUST HELP YOU WITH YOUR QUESTIONS.

THEN I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT. THE NIGHT AIR'S STILL FRESH AND UNDER THE STARS, I'LL FEEL CLOSER TO OUR DAUGHTER...

CHRIS, I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE BEING WE CAME TO CALL THE DARK DESTROYER.

IT HAPPENED MORE THAN TWO DECADES AGO--

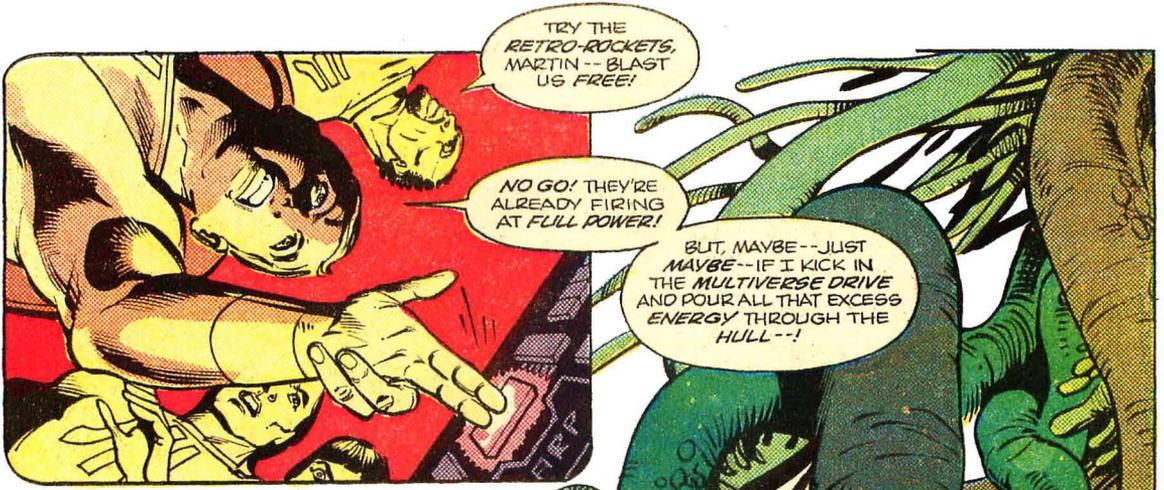
"--WHEN WE OF THE ORIGINAL ATARI FORCE PROBED THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF THE MULTIVERSE ABOARD SCANNER ONE, SEEKING A NEW EARTH FOR THE WAR-WEARY SURVIVORS OF THE OLD."

"WE WERE FIVE: YOUR FATHER, MARTIN; LI SAN AND I; DR. LUCAS ORION, MARTIN'S BEST FRIEND; AND YOUR MOTHER, LYDIA PEREZ, OUR MASTER PILOT...MAY SHE ACHIEVE FINAL PEACE. OUR VOYAGE HAD BEEN UNEVENTFUL, UNTIL THAT MORNING..."

LYDIA-- MARTIN-- WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?

DOCTOR, YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS OURS, BUT WHATEVER IT IS--

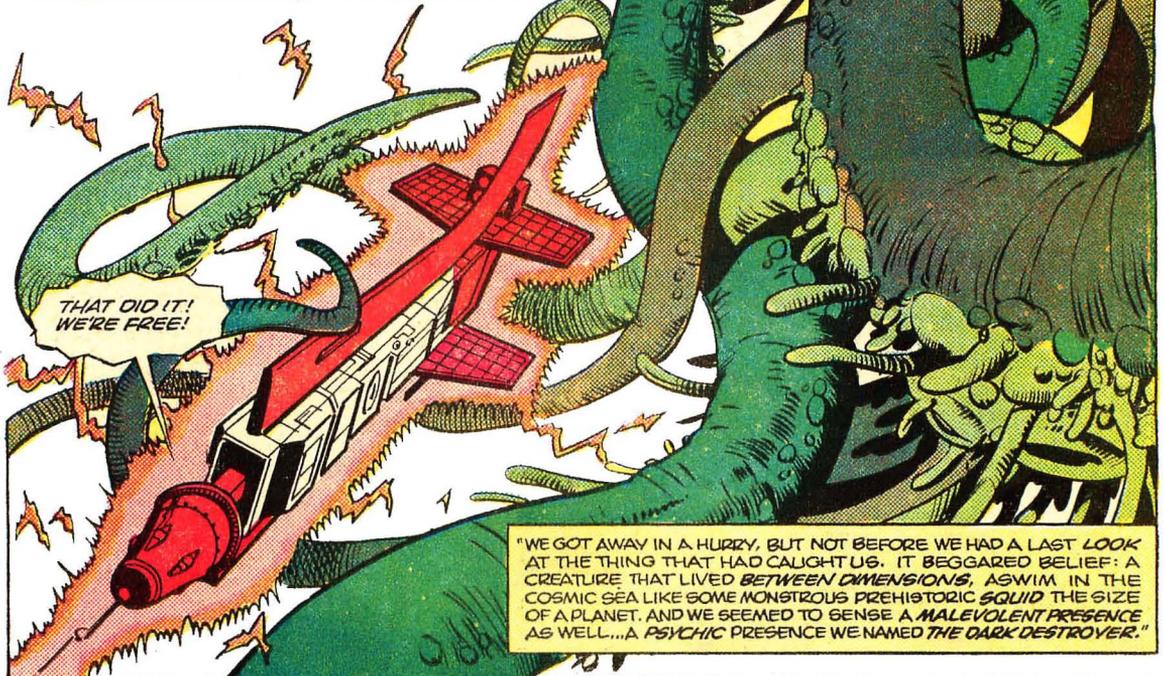
-- IT'S GOT US -- AND IT WON'T LET GO!



TRY THE RETRO-ROCKETS, MARTIN -- BLAST US FREE!

NO GO! THEY'RE ALREADY FIRING AT FULL POWER!

BUT, MAYBE -- JUST MAYBE -- IF I KICK IN THE MULTIVERSE DRIVE AND POUR ALL THAT EXCESS ENERGY THROUGH THE HULL --!



THAT DID IT! WE'RE FREE!

"WE GOT AWAY IN A HURRY, BUT NOT BEFORE WE HAD A LAST LOOK AT THE THING THAT HAD CAUGHT US. IT BEGGARED BELIEF: A CREATURE THAT LIVED BETWEEN DIMENSIONS, ASWIM IN THE COSMIC SEA LIKE SOME MONSTROUS PREHISTORIC SQUID THE SIZE OF A PLANET. AND WE SEEMED TO GENSE A MALEVOLENT PRESENCE AS WELL... A PSYCHIC PRESENCE WE NAMED THE DARK DESTROYER."



SAY WHAT? THAT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE DESTROYER I'M TALKING ABOUT, MOHANDAS.



YOU AND MY DAUGHTER ARE VERY MUCH ALIKE, CHRISTOPHER -- NOT SURPRISING, I SUPPOSE, SINCE YOU WERE RAISED TOGETHER.

BOTH OF YOU, SO IMPATIENT.



IMPATIENCE... IT'S A TRAIT ERIN BIA LEARNED FROM ME, I'M AFRAID.

IF ONLY SHE'D BEEN MORE LIKE HER FATHER, SHE MIGHT BE HERE NOW.

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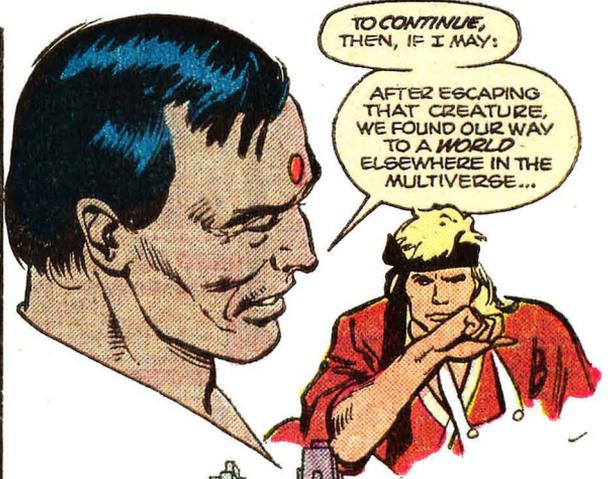
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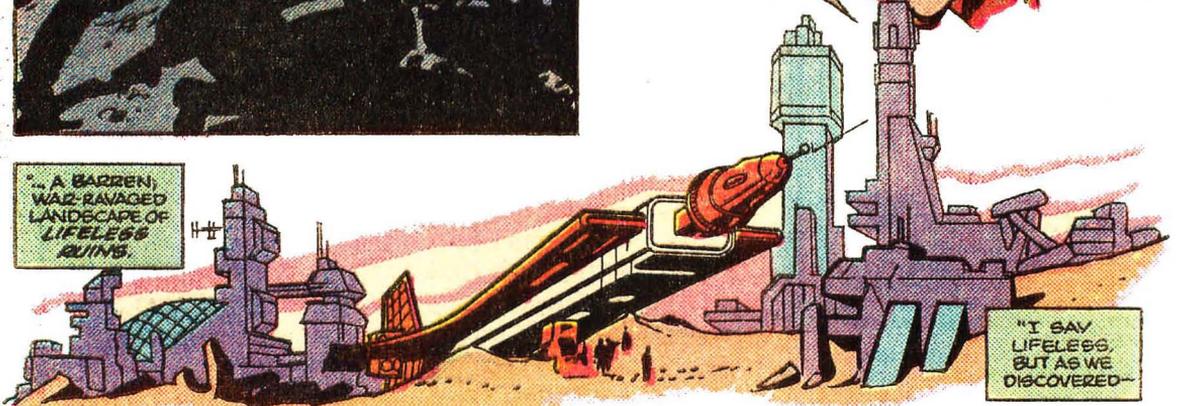
AH, WELL, 'TIS A TRUTH EVERY PARENT MUST FACE. OUR CHILDREN MUST FIND THEIR OWN LIVES, AS WE FIND OURS EVERY LIVING DAY...



TO CONTINUE, THEN, IF I MAY:

AFTER ESCAPING THAT CREATURE, WE FOUND OUR WAY TO A WORLD ELSEWHERE IN THE MULTIVERSE...

...A BARREN, WAR-RAVAGED LANDSCAPE OF LIFELESS RUINS.



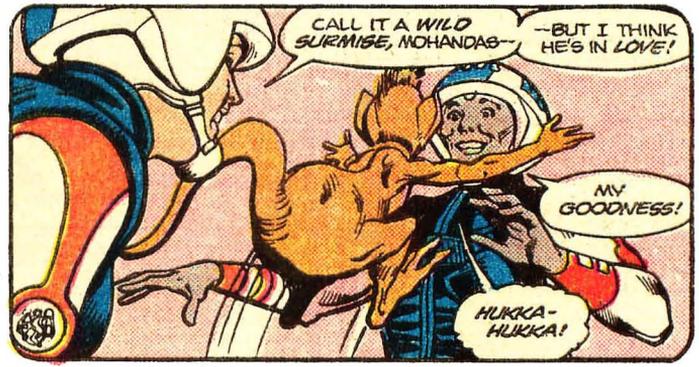
"I SAW LIFELESS, BUT AS WE DISCOVERED--"



"--THAT WASN'T QUITE TRUE."

HURKA-HURKA?

IT'S-- SOME KIND OF BURROWER? FRIENDLY, OR--?



CALL IT A WILD SURMISE, MOHANDAS--

--BUT I THINK HE'S IN LOVE!

MY GOODNESS!

HURKA-HURKA!



"THE HURKA, AS WE CALLED OUR NEWFOUND COMPANION, WANTED US TO FOLLOW HIM INTO THE RUINS."

"ON YOUR FATHER'S ORDERS, WE SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS--"

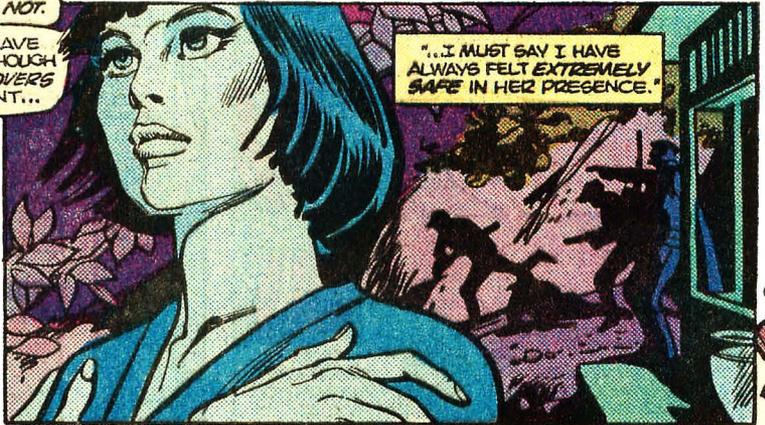
"--LI SAN AND I LETTING THE HURKA LEAD US UNDERGROUND, WHILE THE OTHERS EXPLORED THE SURFACE."

JUST LIKE THAT? I KNOW THE HUKKA'S ADORABLE, BUT WEREN'T YOU TAKING AN AWFUL CHANCE?

PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT.

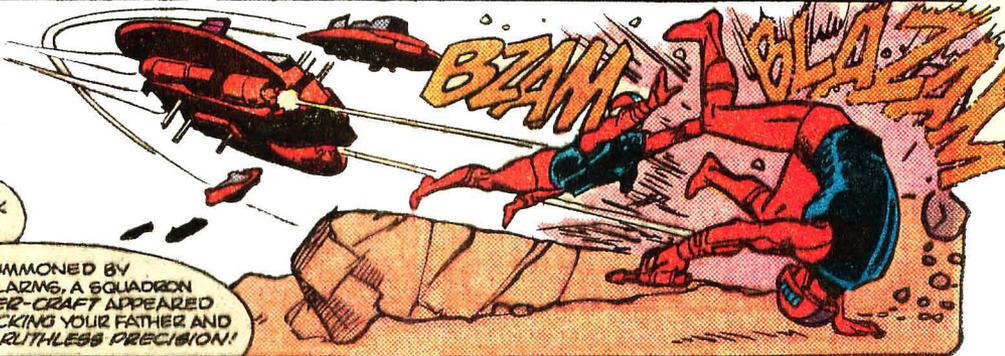
AFTER ALL, I DID HAVE LI SAN ALONG AND, THOUGH WE WERE NOT YET LOVERS AT THAT POINT...

"...I MUST SAY I HAVE ALWAYS FELT EXTREMELY SAFE IN HER PRESENCE."



AT ANY RATE, DANGER FIRST STRUCK OUR COMRADES ON THE SURFACE.

AS IF SUMMONED BY AUTOMATIC ALARMS, A SQUADRON OF ALIEN FIGHTER-CRAFT APPEARED IN THE SKY, ATTACKING YOUR FATHER AND THE OTHERS WITH RUTHLESS PRECISION!



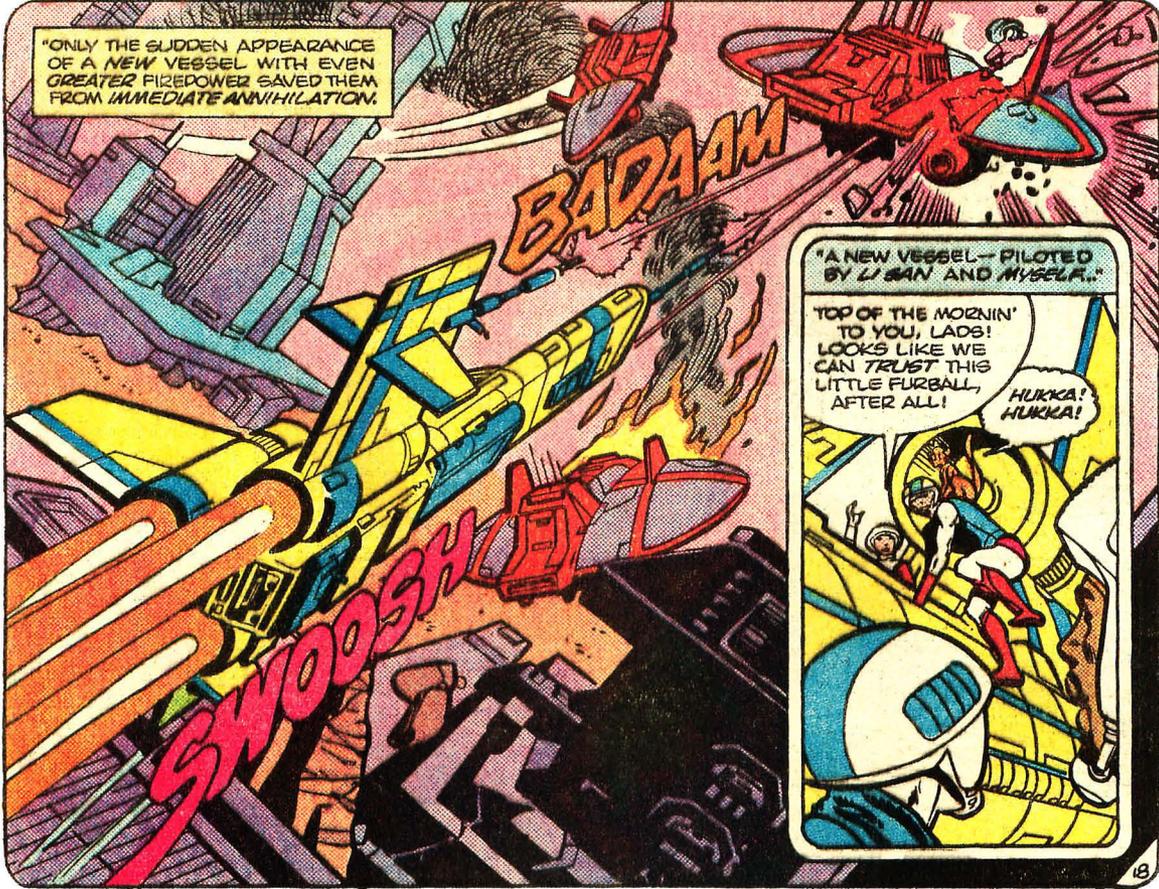
"ONLY THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF A NEW VESSEL WITH EVEN GREATER FIREPOWER SAVED THEM FROM IMMEDIATE ANNIHILATION."

BADAAM

"A NEW VESSEL—PILOTED BY LI SAN AND MYSELF."

"TOP OF THE MORNING TO YOU, LADS! LOOKS LIKE WE CAN TRUST THIS LITTLE FURBALL, AFTER ALL!"

HUKKA! HUKKA!



THE HUKKA LED YOU TO A STAR FIGHTER? OUR HUKKA? I DON'T GET IT... HOW COULD YOU HAVE FLOWN THE THING WITHOUT MONTHS OF TRAINING?

HE ALSO LED US TO THIS, CHRISTOPHER-- A MIND-JEWEL, REPOSITORY OF A DEAD RACE'S TOTAL KNOWLEDGE.

IN TWENTY YEARS, WE'VE ONLY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE OF THE INFORMATION IT CONTAINS.

ONE THING WE DID LEARN--OR RATHER, LUCAS ORION LEARNED, WAS THIS:



"THE SHIPS THAT ATTACKED US WERE PILOTED BY ALIENS CALLED ZYLONS..."

"...AND THE ZYLONS WERE MIND-CONTROLLED BY THE DARK DESTROYER."



DON'T MOVE.



WE WANT TEMPEST, BUT NOBODY HAS TO BE HURT--

--IF YOU COOPERATE.

NOD IF YOU AGREE.

LI SAN O'RURKE DOES MORE THAN NOD.

AT ONE TIME IN HER LIFE, SHE WAS HEAD OF ATARI SECURITY.

SHE'S FORGOTTEN MORE THAN THESE MEN WILL EVER KNOW.



HAI-YAH!



CRASH



STATION SECURITY, CHRISTOPHER-- I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT YOU WERE FOLLOWED!

DAMN!

EVERYWHERE I GO, I BRING TROUBLE! SECURITY'S GOT MY FILE-- I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THEY'D COME HERE AFTER SPOTTING ME AT LUCIA'S!



RIGHT YOU ARE, BOY. I MAY BE OLD, BUT O'ROURKE CAN TELL YOU, I'M NO FOOL.

HUNTER!

I HEARD YOU'D BEEN CASHIERED--!

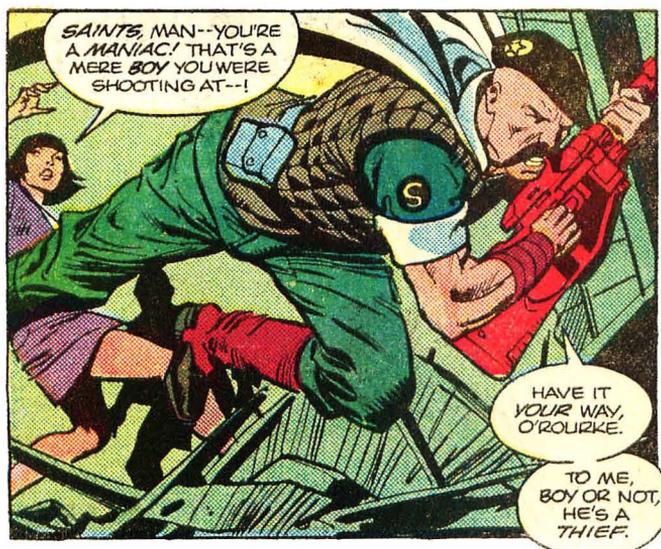


FOR "EXCESSIVE ZEAL," THEY SAID. BUT WHEN SCANNER ONE WAS STOLEN, THE COUNCIL UN-RETIRED ME.

HOLD IT, BOY! I SAID HOLD IT!

FAW

BTOW



SAINTS, MAN-- YOU'RE A MANIAC! THAT'S A MERE BOY YOU WERE SHOOTING AT--!

HAVE IT YOUR WAY, O'ROURKE.

TO ME, BOY OR NOT, HE'S A THIEF.



A THIEF WITH ONLY A FEW FRIENDS LEFT ON NEW EARTH-- AND I KNOW THEM ALL.

NEXT TIME, I WON'T SHOOT TO MISS.

SCANNER ONE!

WILL YOU STOP FEEDING YOUR FACES AND LISTEN TO ME?

SURE, I'M HYSTERICAL. I SAW WHAT I SAW. AN EYE THE SIZE OF MY FIST--



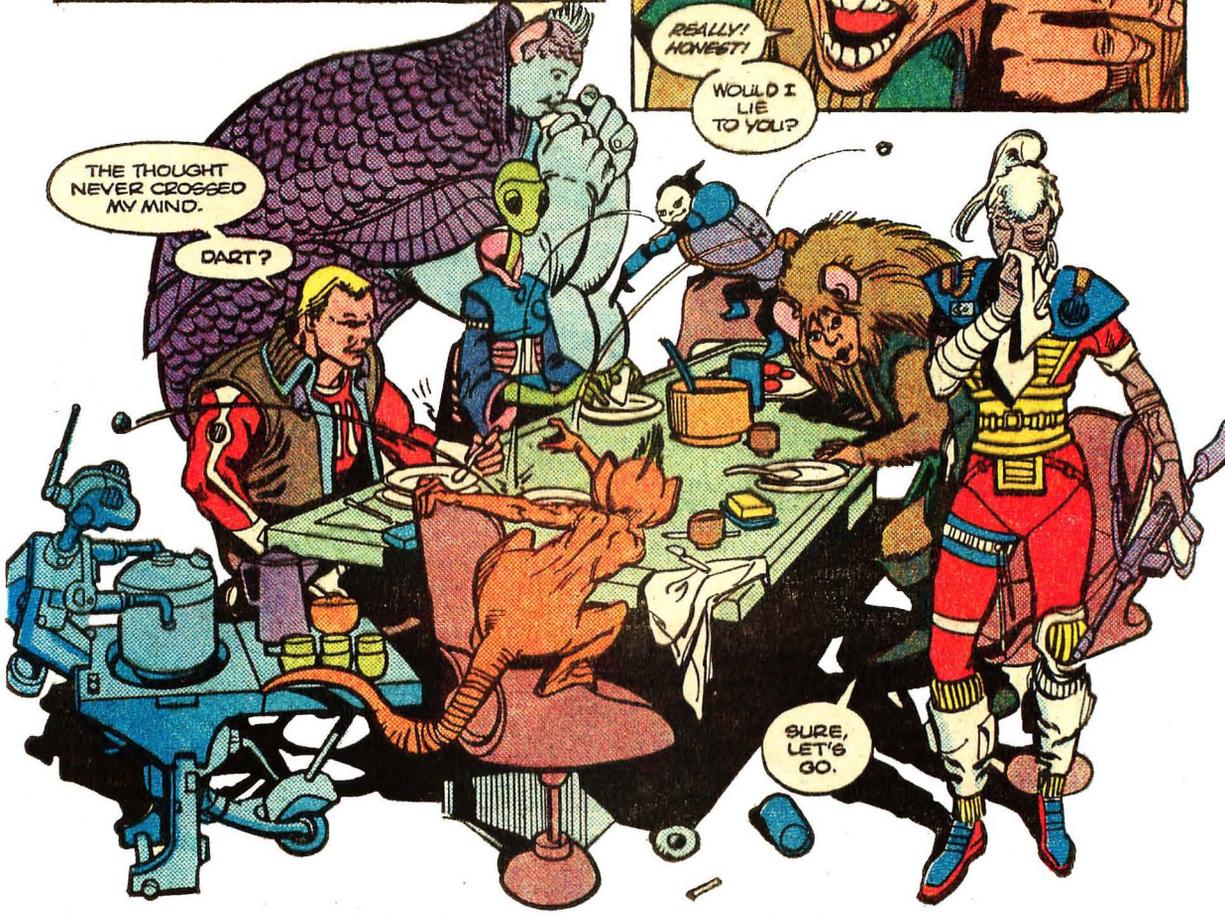
--AND IT TRIED TO KILL ME!

REALLY! HONEST!

WOULD I LIE TO YOU?

THE THOUGHT NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.

DART?



SURE, LET'S GO.



WHERE EXACTLY DID YOU SEE THIS "EYE" OF YOURS, PAKRAT?

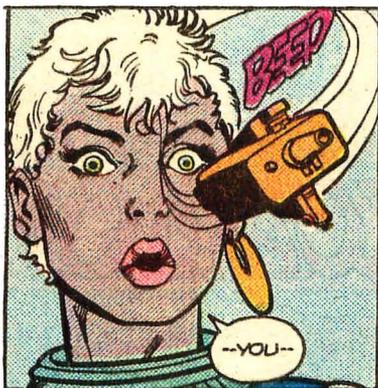
DOWN THERE, IN THE VENT SYSTEM.

UH-HUH, AND WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE VENT SYSTEM?

AH...E2...



OH, NEVER MIND.



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HI, KID.
MISS ME?

KLIK

FORGET THE OLYMPICS!
WHO NEEDS "THE TEMPLE OF DOOM"?
WHATEVER YOU DO NEXT MONTH,
WHEREVER YOU GO, MAKE SURE YOU
READ ATARI FORCE PART TEN--

"BLACKJAK IS BACK!"

FORCE FEEDBACK

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Before we begin—a quick thank you, to Mr. Bob Smith, who inked this issue so Ricardo Villagran, our regular inker, could devote all his time to embellishing the STAR TREK MOVIE ADAPTATION due out soon. Thank you, Bob, for making José's pencils look just as good as ever! And now...

Dear Atari Force,

Having just completed ATARI FORCE #6, I have a few comments:

1) With the phase-field ability Chris has, how could the Dark Destroyer grab him? Surely Tempest could escape without too much trouble.

2) Since I missed the first three issues, I don't know much about Dart's relationship with Blackjak. But surely someone who has created an outcry such as he, can be brought back, either in his original form, or some other one.

3) Why did Martin abandon Chris when Martin's wife died? How did she die?

4) Please send me a subscription blank.

5) The whole book is a masterpiece. (Pat yourselves on the back.) The art, the inking, and the story are wonderful. Keep up the good work!

DENNIS M. GREEN
2816 W. Chicago
Springfield, MD 65803

(To reply to your questions and comments, Dennis:

1) Phasing out requires a bit of concentration for Tempest. Although he used his power to try to stop the Dark Destroyer at the beginning of the battle, by the time the ultimate outcome of the fight was apparent, Tempest was too battered to use his powers.

2) This issue should help you catch up on what you've missed for the first three issues. And, yes, we have heard the cry, and, as you can see by now, have answered it accordingly.

3) Martin Champion was grief-stricken when Lydia Perez, his wife and member of the original ATARI FORCE, died while giving birth to their son Christopher. Martin totally withdrew from society, and this included his son.

4) You may have noticed the subscription blanks that have been appearing in the centerspread of DC comics over the past few months—use them, or Xerox them to order subscriptions.

5) We agree, and we'll try.

NEXT!

Dear Andy,

I have some questions which have me stumped.

1) If Babe is a baby Eggite, when he becomes an adult, won't he turn into a mountain like the rest of the people on the planet Egg?

2) Are you going to add anymore characters to the team?

Sincerely,

BILL TUCKER

11 Washington St.
Penacook, NH 03303

(1) *Precisely! The transformation is a slow one, so stick around to see what happens.*

2) *We're seriously considering it—and last issue's introduction of TAZ is only the beginning! One drawback to adding new characters, though—if we keep on going at this rate, ATARI FORCE is going to become more crowded than the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES!*

Dear Editor,

I'm thoroughly enjoying ATARI FORCE. It's got to be the best comic magazine in years. The characters are very intriguing and also very diverse. They get better every issue.

Issue #6 is the best yet (you get better every ish). Martin's feeling "threatened" by Dart, Chris' wanting to prove his worth to his father, and Pakrat's cowardice and humor were the obvious high points of AF #6, but don't overdo these qualities.

Concerning the Conway story and Garcia-Lopez' art: words cannot do justice to two greats such as they. A tip of the hat also to the rest of the creative team.

Now, I know it's way too early to talk of team-ups, but if you want my opinion the AF would work quite well with Marvel's MICRONAUTS. It wouldn't be hard to swallow when you consider Scanner One has the Multiverse drive (it's painfully easy). Howzabout it, guys?

Yours truly,

HAROLD J. FARRIS
30 Riverside Rd.
Watsonville, CA 95076

(Hmmm... We'll have to think about it. We've been trying to keep the ATARI FORCE out of any particular DC universe—we're not sure how they'd react if they bumped into some strange Earth hero—but the fact that the Scanner One has the Multiverse drive makes it possible for the AF to journey to ANY reality. Who knows? Maybe someday...)

Dear Mr. Helfer,

Fan-tastic! The sight of poor, wet, humiliated Tukla Oly standing there dripping is one that I will long cherish. Also, I'd sort of wondered how much of him was him under there.

Since revenge is to some extent a motive for both sets of antagonists, I hope you'll extend the theme and allow Pakrat the satisfaction of dousing his fellow Atarians at the end of this mission.

I was glad to see Sr. Garcia-Lopez back on the artistic ches. With all due respect to Mr. Andru, which is plenty, neither the art nor the characterization of Tukla Oly seemed quite right in issues #4 & 5. Not enough dignity, primarily, but he also occasionally looked more ape than rodent.

By the way, try to be consistent as to whether or not Pakrat wears shorts, okay?

And why did brother Rident get so nasty in the last couple of issues? He seemed pretty reasonable, as blues go, in issue #3, but since then he seems to have jettisoned some marbles.

Finally, allow me to be a gracious loser (grumble) and say that "Force Feedback" was indeed better than any of my suggestions.

Signed,

JOHN HENRY SAIN
2251 Kings Highway
Medford, OR 97501

Dear Andy and Gerry,

I must say I am really intrigued and entertained by the way ATARI FORCE is unfolding. I find the diversity and originality of the characters fascinating. So, without getting long-winded, I'd like to request of Gerry (and whoever else has story input) that this book maintain a heavy emphasis on *ensemble*. With such interesting characters, each with their own unique background, the temptation is to focus too much on individuals (a current pitfall, I think, in ALPHA FLIGHT) at the expense of group dynamic. You've taken some wonderful first steps in your treatment of the relationships between Babe and Morphea, Morphea and Martin, Martin and Christopher, etc. And what I'd like to see is the present trend to continue in the direction of character development through relationship and group interaction (even though I realize how much more demanding it is to write stories at the level of group than it is at the level of the individual).

And, I know you can do it, Gerry. Your characters make sense on a very basic level. What they say is congruent with the way they look. And I think that comes out of an intimate and cooperative working relationship among the creative team. Keep it up!

All the best,
M.P. HUGHES
515 Jasmine Ln.
Santa Maria, CA 93455

(What Gerry and José have been doing for the past few issues is precisely what you suggest, M.P.—developing characters through interaction with one another. Although each issue has taken some time to spotlight an individual character, we've never done this at the expense of developing the group dynamic. In the not-too-distant future, you'll be seeing special back-up stories featuring individual members of the group. These little vignettes will allow us to further develop our cast of characters without sacrificing the interaction aspect ATARI FORCE readers seem to really enjoy.)

Dear Andy Helfer,

I commend all of you on ATARI FORCE, all 6 issues, but I have a question. In issue #2, Chris phased his hand into Senator Jamieson's garden and pulled a scorp through his phase field and said, "All I did was pull the scorp through my phase field and since nothing but me and this special outfit can phase without exploding, the beastie just went..."

Then, in issue #6, Chris takes a Neural Suppressor with him through his phase field! How?

Also, in issue #1, Chris phases his hand into the Hunter robot and destroys it. In issue #6, in his fight with the Dark Destroyer, why doesn't he just phase his hand into the Dark Destroyer? It would be sort of gross, but couldn't he have done it?

ATARI FORCE fan,
TOM LANG
3171 Fasman Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066

(We've gotten a lot of letters asking the same question, Tom, and we're happy to say that there's a very simple explanation: Chris flipped the scorp through the phase field, and LET GO OF IT as it went in. Without Chris to hold on to it, the scorp was tossed in between two different planes of reality, and naturally was zapped! As far as Chris' remark to Melissa, it WAS incomplete, but certainly not incorrect—he SHOULD have said "(nothing can phase through) unless I'm holding on to it." But under the circumstances, the explanation he delivered was appropriate.

As for your second point, we concede that Tempest MIGHT have tried—if he had the stomach for it—but, given the Dark Destroyer's rather formidable-looking armor, we're not sure what kind of success he would have had.)

Dear Gerry, José, and Ricardo,

It's issue #6 already, and so far we've seen the love-hate relationship of Martin and Tempest, the travelings and tribulations of Dart, the flight and fight of Pakrat, and the emotional stirrings of Morphea. So why do I like Babe best of all the team members? (Especially since Babe is not even regarded as a team member by the others yet.)

I guess part of it is the fact that Babe is, well, a baby. Having an infant as a member of a team is quite unusual, to say the least. But more than that is the mixture of Babe's power and size with his innocence and inoffensiveness.

One of my friends really spurted in size as he neared puberty. When we were youngsters, he was just one of the guys, not outstanding socially, intellectually, or physically. But then he grew quickly to become pretty tall (6 ft., 8 in.) and fairly hefty. Thus, in high school, the football coach wanted to turn him into a lineman. But this friend of mine, not being used to his size and being of a good nature, just couldn't become aggressive enough to be a real success. (Ironically enough, he found his niche in basketball, where his height was an advantage but where he was a little too bulky to be really effective. Double irony: His true love was hockey.)

I see a parallel with Babe. On Egg, he was just "one of the guys," but now he has suddenly become big and strong (in relation to everyone else, that is). Now he is defined in their eyes by his size and strength—but he doesn't see *himself* that way! Will Babe fail to harness his size and strength aggressively (as did my friend) or will he perhaps go overboard and lose self-restraint?

I figure you must bring Babe into the spotlight soon. When you do, I just know he'll get a lot of "fan mail." Consider this an attempt to jump the gun.

Yours truly,
"T.M. MAPLE"
Box 1272, Station B,
Weston, Ontario M9L 2R9

(Thanks for your insights, T.M. Some of your comments foreshadow the happenings of last issue. And now we're waiting to see if others feel the same way you do. As we've said in the past, Babe is one of OUR personal favorites, and we hope our other readers feel the same way. Issue #8 was our way of really introducing the baby Eggite to our readers in a BIG way!

Finally, we actually received a Letter of Comment on issue #7 that could make it into this issue. Sometimes we think you guys out there manage to read the latest issue before WE do! Anyway...)

Dear Andy,

You guys don't let up, do you? AF #7 was yet another great issue. I still feel I have to mention that this story has been building for the first seven issues! Gerry gave this story exactly the amount of time it needed to fully play itself out. I love it. José Luis Garcia Lopez. This is definitely the name for the 80's. His

style seems to encompass such myriad styles, he could draw anything at any time. Oh, and he did okay this issue, too.

"Counter Attack" is one of those perfect titles like "The Empire Strikes Back." Where did the Destroyer find this guy Psyklops? This guy is vicious enough to rival the DD himself. If there's one thing I like in a comic (comic?), it's realism. On pages 2 and 3, I felt Dart's feeling of helplessness. On pg. 10, I felt Martin's sense of helplessness, worry, and astonishment. Later, on p. 12, Morphea wasn't the only one to get her heart torn by Babe (I apologize for any mean things I've said, thought, or almost thought, Babe). Back to Psyklops for a sec: Does he actually feed on pain, or just like it a whole bunch? Boy, does Martin Champion have guts. Few people stay in one piece emotionally when looking down the barrel of a gun. Not only does he hold up, he cracks jokes! The Duke would be proud.

After Babe ripped out my heart, Morphea's memories started it bleeding. Being a slightly sensitive person myself, I know the feeling of hurt and rejection she must have went through as a child. It was nice to see her fight back and start Psyklops begging for pain (boy, that sounds sadistic!). I loved the ending to the conflict. Instead of your usual "villain gets caught in midst of explosion screaming 'Noooooo!'" we get a logical end. The ol' Mexican Standoff.

Who could buy an E.T. doll after seeing a Hukka? I'm glad to see the Hukka being used as a sentient being, as in STAR RAIDERS. In the graphic novel, the Hukkas were the ones that maintained the ship and taught others to do so. I can't wait to see what kind of trouble he(she?) and Babe get into.

The Dark Destroyer has departed. For a spell. So now is the time for all good Gerrys to come to the aid of the readers by getting in to some hard-up characterization. And as for the Star Raiders crew, BRING THEM BACK! IMMEDIATELY!!

See you in 30,
ERIC JONES
11-8 Ross Ave.
West Lafayette, IN 47906

NEXT ISSUE: We continue our recapping of the adventures of the ORIGINAL ATARI FORCE, with Tempest's visit to the home of LUCAS ORION. But with Hunter and Atari Security hot on his trail, how much can he find out before he's captured? If you missed any of the ATARI FORCE mini-comics, make sure not to miss this one! This is where the mystery of the DARK DESTROYER REALLY begins to come together. And before we forget—What about Blackjak? All coming in 30 days! Be there—or else!



NOT FOR SUNDAY DRIVERS!



Bob Glidden's Thunderbird

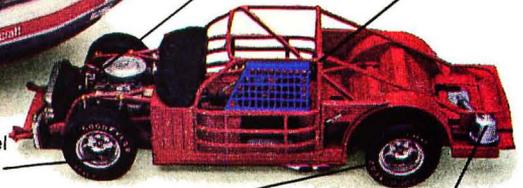


Terry Labonte's Piedmont Monte Carlo



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"Boss 492" Ford engine



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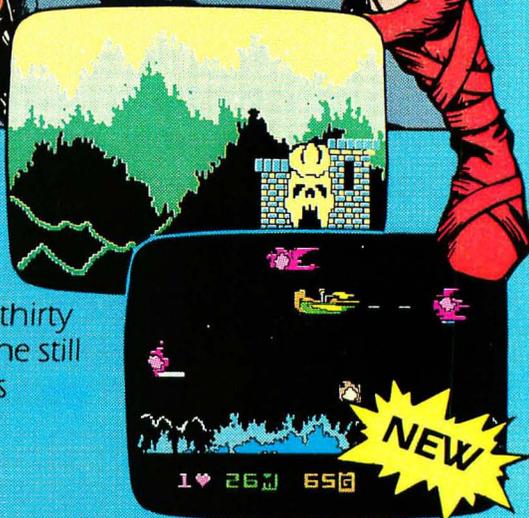
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