

MARVEL
PG 23

WINICK
WALKER

EXILES™

**WITH AN
IRON FIST
PART 1**



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KEY

**NEW YORK CITY.
THE UNITED STATES CAPITAL.**



It is a reality unlike any other. It is different in so many ways from the worlds we have come to know.

This reality-- this Earth-- has known plagues, wars, famine, and natural catastrophes beyond imagination.



But in any reality there are common facts. Such as, in times of great strife, greater leaders are made.



That in times of great weakness, strong leaders must assume control.



This was a weak and desolate planet.

WITH AN IRON FIST

PART ONE

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And Tony Stark-- Iron Man-- is a strong leader.

He is not merely the President of the United States, and President for life as part of an emergency edict some ten years ago--

--he is also the undisputed monarch of Earth.

It was a long and agonizing road that brought him to power. In the end, nearly every living being on Earth begged and prayed for him to assume this mantle.

He slowly did so. With great reluctance. With a heavy heart.

What very few living beings know is that Tony Stark had planned it this way all along.

One does not take a planet by force, that is, if one wants to remain in power. It is always better to be given control.

In times of great weakness, a single individual can rise up and assume immense control. Stark knew this.

All he had to do was make the world weak enough.

He spent his early career acquiring conglomerate after conglomerate.

It was done with such care, such patience... a parent company here... a subsidiary of another three subsidiaries there... figure-heads... untraceable origins.



In no time at all, Stark Industries had an economic stranglehold over the globe. But since Tony Stark never tightened that grip, they would never know.



Iron Man entered the world theater when The Mutant War began.



Under the command of Magneto, a worldwide army of mutants launched an unwavering attack upon all of humanity.

It pitted every super being on the globe against the mutant soldiers of Magneto. There was terrorism on American soil the likes of which had never been conceived before.



Many were lost-- both hero and civilian.



Stark had succeeded in thinning out the world's super-being population.



In return for his traitorous acts against his own race--

--Magneto promised Iron Man leadership of the remaining vestiges of humanity.



But it was unknown-- to all but a few-- which secret individual actually assisted in creating this mutant army. Funding their murderous operations over and over again.

That was the role that Stark sought, but not in the manner in which it was being granted.



Not as an underling.



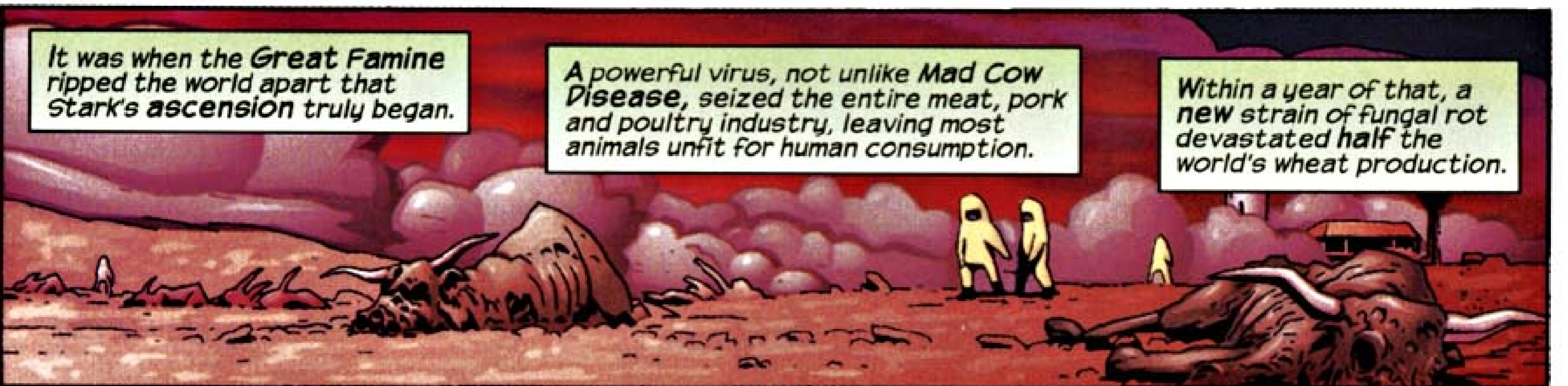
Slaying Magneto while millions watched on, Iron Man became the hero of the conflict. But a soldier does not make a leader.



It was when the Great Famine ripped the world apart that Stark's ascension truly began.

A powerful virus, not unlike Mad Cow Disease, seized the entire meat, pork and poultry industry, leaving most animals unfit for human consumption.

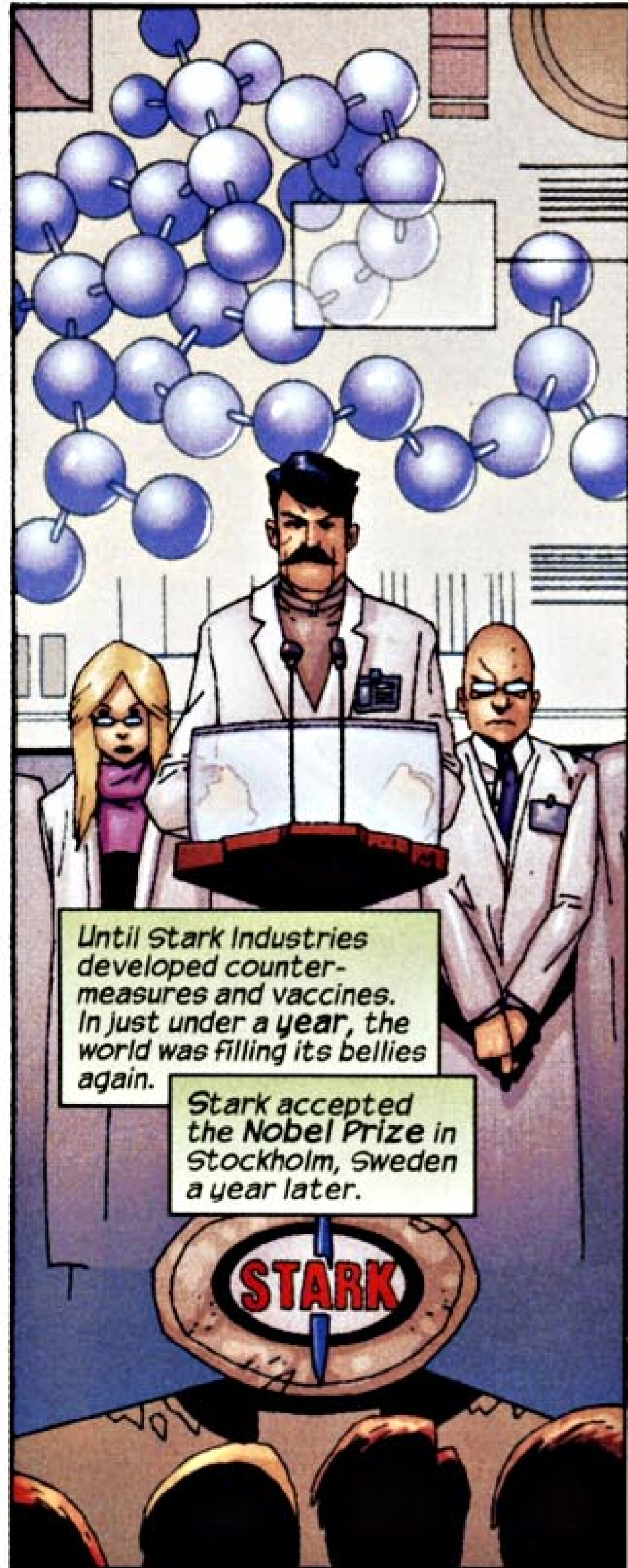
Within a year of that, a new strain of fungal rot devastated half the world's wheat production.





Worse than any war it ever faced, the United States felt true hunger for the first time. The rest of the globe suffered, as well.

Millions died.



Until Stark Industries developed counter-measures and vaccines. In just under a year, the world was filling its bellies again.

Stark accepted the Nobel Prize in Stockholm, Sweden a year later.



Stark would never admit it, but he was surprised at how quickly his "bugs" threw the world into starvation--

--but not how quickly his name was suggested as a presidential nominee when he put food back on the plates of the world.



Hero, scientist, savior... he won with the highest popular and electoral vote in history. He was nearing his final goal.

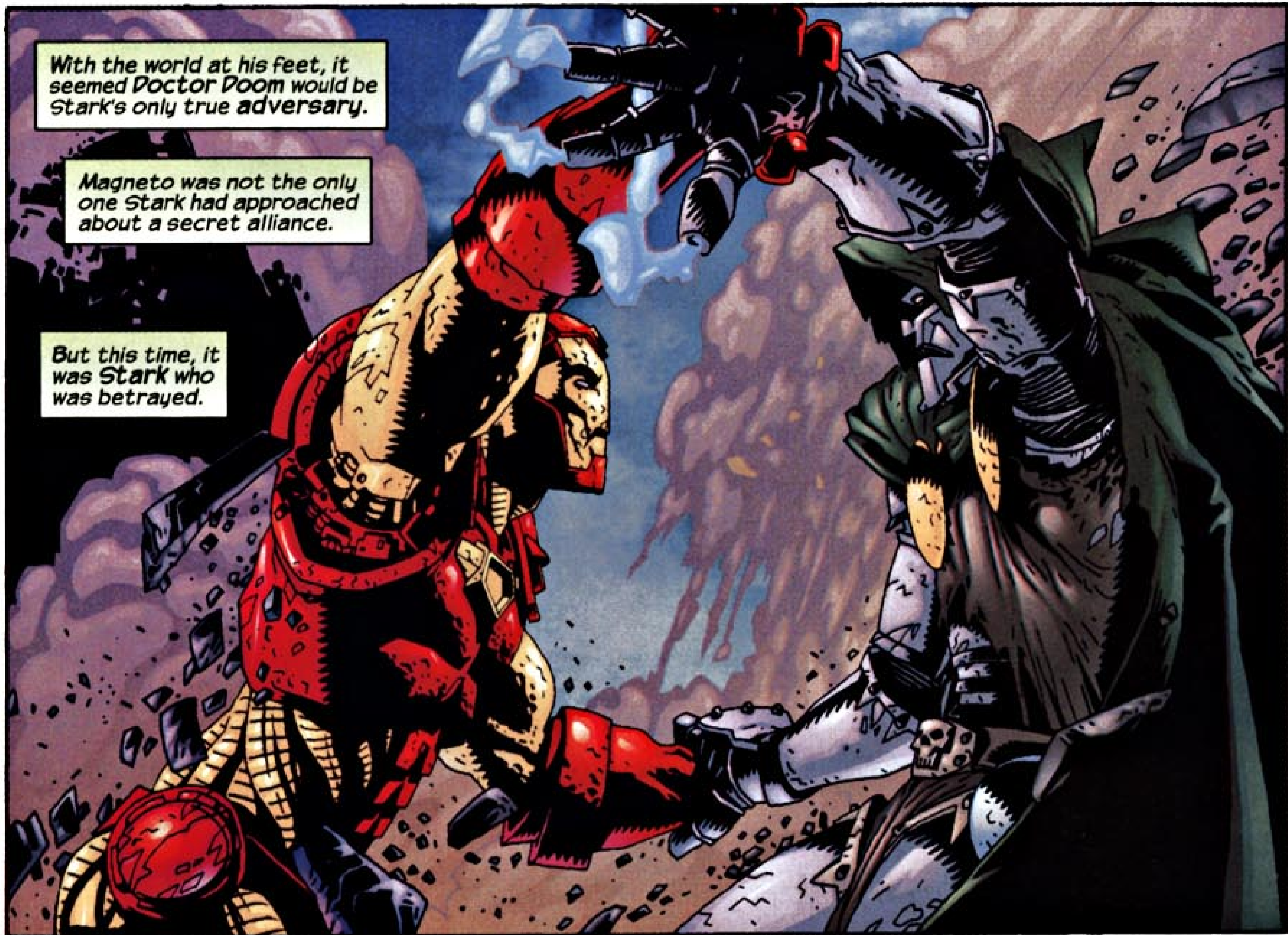


When he secretly developed technology to control weather and seismic activity, all the other dominoes fell into place.

Massive "natural" disasters of biblical proportions in Europe and Asia led to those countries' pleas for assistance, and of course, their willingness to relinquish control.

Economic downspins in Central America and Canada paved the way for the remainder of North America to fall under his direction.

They all came to him. He never asked. He never twisted any arms. The sun would never set on the empire of the United States.



With the world at his feet, it seemed Doctor Doom would be Stark's only true adversary.

Magneto was not the only one Stark had approached about a secret alliance.

But this time, it was Stark who was betrayed.

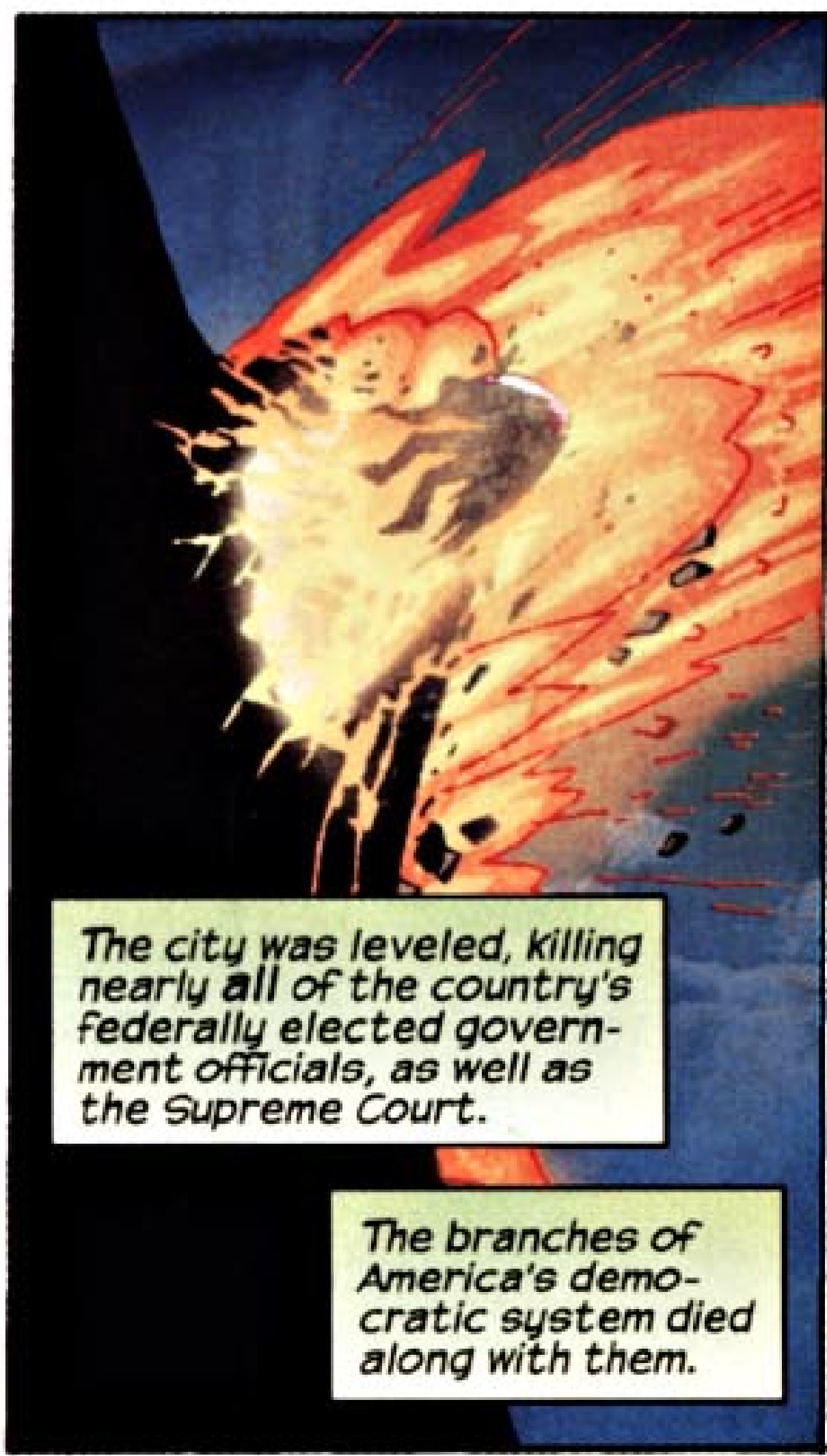


Their original agreement stipulated that Doom would launch an attack on Washington, D.C.--

--destroying the last remnants of the United States' political structure.



The leader of Latveria kept his part of the bargain.



The city was leveled, killing nearly all of the country's federally elected government officials, as well as the Supreme Court.

The branches of America's democratic system died along with them.




The blame was to fall on the last remnants of the rebel mutants' army. Their last gasp.




Unfortunately,
Doom attempted to
overthrow Stark.



He failed.



In the end... as
it has been since
that day...



...there is only Tony
Stark-- Iron Man.

Sovereign
of Earth.

NEW YORK CITY
THE PRESENT...

Who wants to know this, Marcus?

Roxanne Malveer of *The National Review*, Mr. President.

I wasn't aware that *The National Review* had become a fashion periodical.



Well, no sir, but I don't think their inquiry about when you might be redesigning your armor is necessarily *fashion*.



I know. I was being facetious.

Remind them that my current armor was specifically designed to aid in the *recovery* from my battle with *Doom*.

Inasmuch as I'd like to update it, I'm told by my physicians that it will be at *least* three years before that day comes.

Let's have the *Washington Bulletin* run an op-ed comparing President Stark's heroism to FDR, a president wheelchair-bound from polio.

No. We *won't* do that. Just let the quote ride as is...



...and *speaking* of *The National Review*, I want the Editor in Chief *removed*.

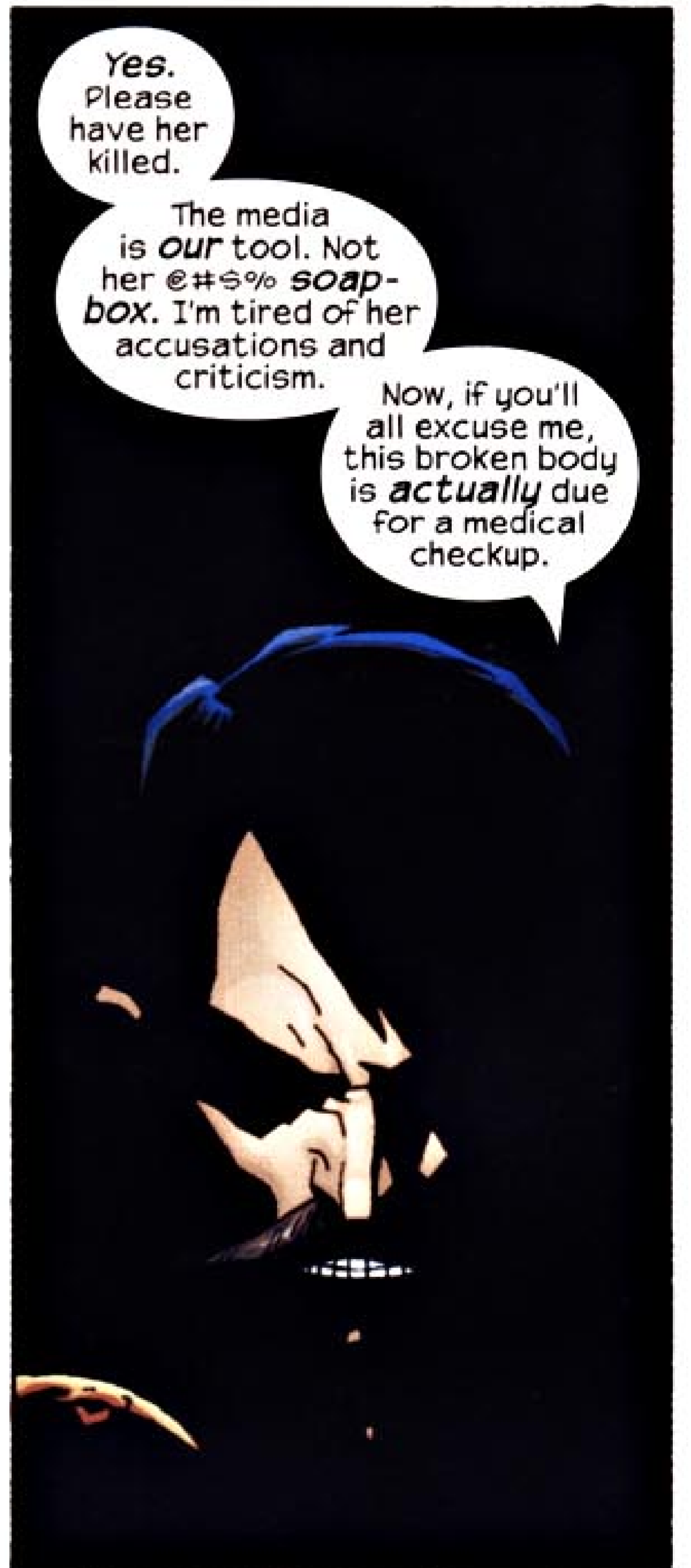
When you say *removed*, sir, do you mean...?



Yes. Please have her killed.

The media is *our* tool. Not her @#%\$% *soap-box*. I'm tired of her accusations and criticism.

Now, if you'll all excuse me, this broken body is *actually* due for a medical checkup.



**STARK'S PERSONAL
MEDICAL CENTER...**







**THE CITY OF ATTILAN
DEEP BELOW THE PACIFIC OCEAN...**

The glorious city of ATTILAN, the home of the Inhumans, is actually a massive vessel that migrates from locale to locale.



They run for their preservation.

They flee to ensure their way of life.

The Inhumans run in fear.





Take us to sea level, **Arcutus**, and begin your repairs.

Gorgon... prepare all that you can for **battle**.



Sire, is that not **pre-mature**?



No... of course, Sire... I know... it is **inevitable**...



I **never** thought this day would come, Cousin **Karnak**. I suppose I have deluded myself.

No, **Gorgon**, we had all **hoped** we could evade this encounter, but-- this human-- this **monster**-- **Stark**-- is not **satisfied** with merely lording over the planet of his birth.



He seeks to rule **the stars** and conquer other warring hordes like the **Skrulls** or the **Kree**. To do that, to enslave a **universe**, one needs an **army**.

No **human** army will do.



Given the chance, he will do what he has always **threatened**. To him, we are not **living** creatures with blood pumping through our veins, but **untapped** sources of **power**.



We will all be captured and used as **breeding stock** for his wars among the stars.

He will tear into our **flesh** and study our **DNA**. The only future for us will be **pain** and **death**.



Does **Black Bolt** have a **plan**, **Karnak**?

Black Bolt **always** has a plan, **Gorgon**.

THREE HOURS LATER...

The repairs are complete, but Arcutus believes that we've been discovered.

Black Bolt... please... tell me what... what we're to do?



G? The G... barrier? Oh... oh. Yes...

Our last gift from Reed... yes.

We won't be able to use the Cloak with it activated. It disrupts all the power couplings and we...

All right.

I'll go tell Arcutus to begin the necessary preparations.

It was Reed Richards, Sue's husband, who discovered Tony Stark's ultimate plan during the Mutant Wars. It would mean death for Richards as well as Medusa, the wife of Black Bolt, and dozens of others. It was only a matter of time before Sue and Black Bolt found comfort from their grief in each other's arms.

Comfort that would become love.

THE CITY OF ATILAN'S ENGINE ROOM...

Sue Richards has loved just two men in her life. Reed Richards was a man so full of knowledge that he could barely restrain himself from speech.

The other, Black Bolt, is cursed with an uncontrollable power brought on by his voice.

One whisper from his lips could topple a mountain. A spoken word could level entire cities.



So Reed could never shut up, and Black Bolt never talks.

Both of them were very emotionally distant, as well.



The irony is not lost on her. Nor is it appreciated.



**NEW YORK CITY
THE OVAL OFFICE...**

Mr. President, we have confirmation on satellite. *Attilan* is visible just 100 miles off the coast of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific.

Do we have a "go"?

GO. Take them alive. Or at least *most* of them.

OVER THE PACIFIC OCEAN...

This is Generator Alpha. Operation Impound is a go! I repeat-- we are a go!

Battalions Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma-- follow my lead!

We have visual contact with the Inhumans. A division of flyers are coming at us.

Prepare for evasive action. Capture, not kill. Repeat--



--capture, not ki-aa

ARRGGGG!!!

INSIDE ATILAN...

Arcutus! We need the G-Barrier **now!** A few more minutes and they'll be *inside* the perimeter!

We are just a moment away, m'lady!

We have to make sure that it's properly **powered up!** If we activate it too soon, we won't have enough power for a **second try!**

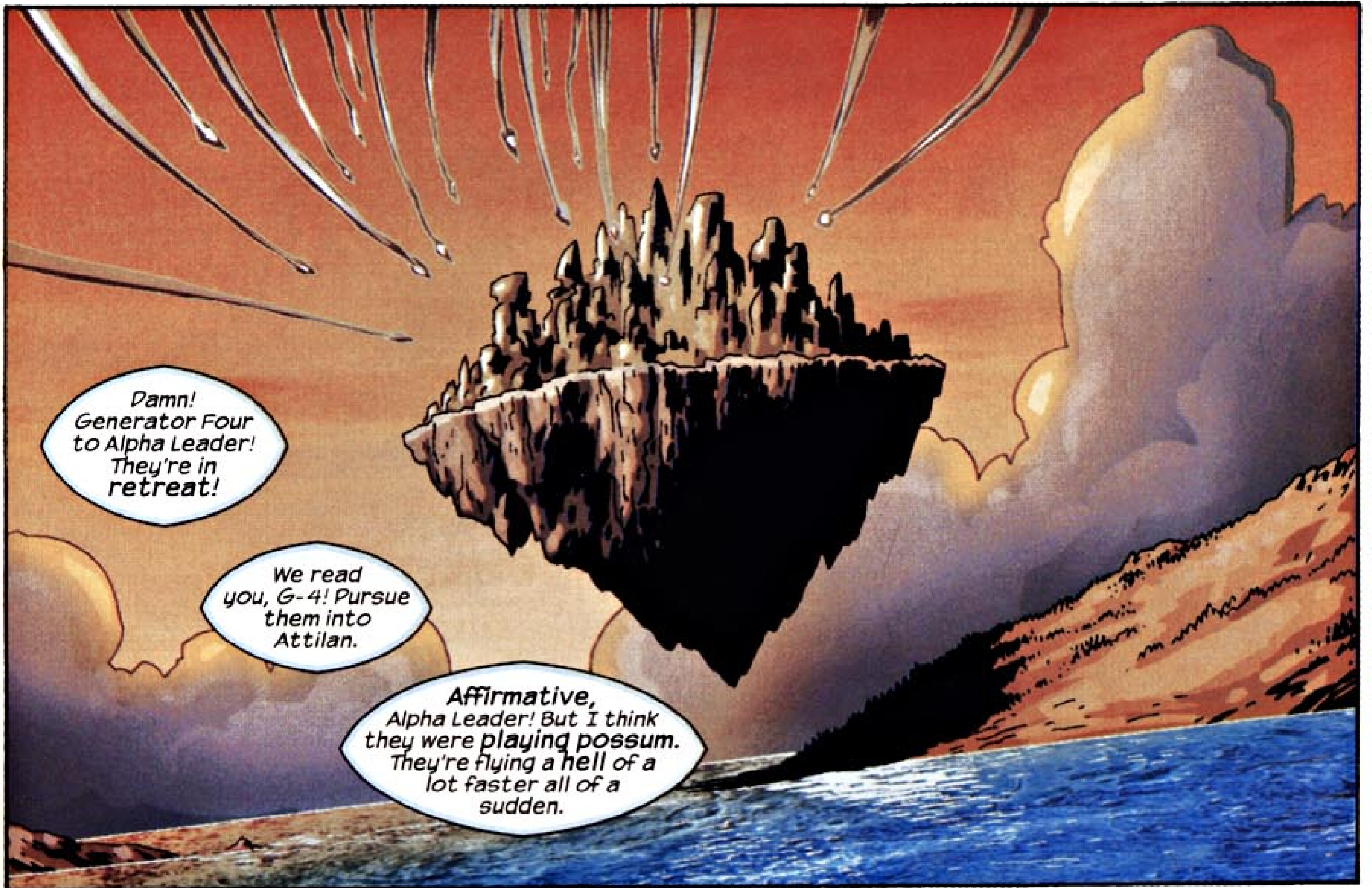


This is Gamma Leader-- we have **eight** secured and in need of **transport!**

Affirmative, Gamma. Contain targets. Shuttle Echo-Delta Niner is en route. Be ready for stage two.

We're **ready!**

Fall back!
All divisions fall back!



Damn!
Generator Four
to Alpha Leader!
They're in
retreat!

We read
you, G-4! Pursue
them into
Attilan.

Affirmative,
Alpha Leader! But I think
they were playing possum.
They're flying a hell of a
lot faster all of a
sudden.



Alpha
Squad, shake and
bake! We've got them
wetting themselves!
Pursue and
capture!



This is
Brakon! We
are all *within*
the perimeter,
Arcutus!



Repeat--
all flyers are
inside the perimeter,
Arcutus! We're
safe!

Then
you will be
the *only*
ones.

CRA-KAACK!!

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

Before Tony Stark was President, before the Mutant War, the demigod Galactus, the World Devourer, came to Earth to feed upon its energies.

Arriving in a weakened state, the mighty being was defeated by Earth's most powerful heroes. While Galactus lay dying, Reed Richards struck a bargain. He would save Galactus' life in exchange for assurances that he would never return to feast on Earth.

Galactus agreed. To ensure that he be forced to keep his word, Galactus left Reed Richards the means to create a force field that even Galactus could not breach.

Before his death, Richards left it to the Inhumans.

He knew that Galactus was not the only power-hungry creature to desire Earth...



THE OVAL OFFICE...

...some were born here.


Sir... the activation of the shield alone sent a shock wave that... well...

...they're gone, sir. All four battalions. Nearly 40,000 in all--

And the force field is *impene-trable*.

Yes. It's *disintegrating* everything we're throwing at it.





I'm
Gambit.

We're
Weapon X...

...and we're
here to set things
right.