

\$2.95

0-88038-436-0

MARVEL SUPERHEROES®

ADVENTURE GAMEBOOK #5

THE THING



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ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER

By Warren Spector



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By Warren Spector

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MARVEL SUPER HEROES®
STATS CARD
ONE THING AFTER
ANOTHER



NAME: THE THING™

SECRET IDENTITY:
BENJAMIN GRIMM

ABILITY POINTS:

Fighting:	8
Agility:	2
Strength:	15
Endurance:	15
Reason:	2
Intuition:	2
Psyche:	6
Piloting:	8

KARMA POINTS: 10

HEALTH POINTS: 35

To my wife, Caroline, who put up with me while I wrote this, and to my editor, Jane Cooper, who put up with me after it was "finished."

ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER
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First printing: June, 1987

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 86-91540

ISBN: 0-88038-436-0

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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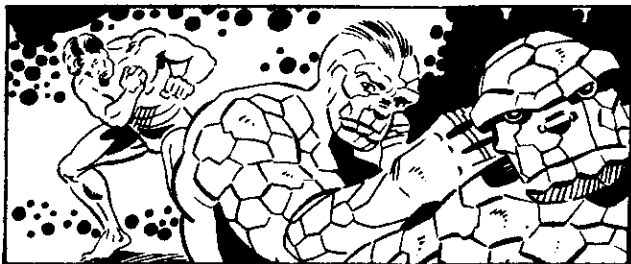
FACE FRONT, TRUE BELIEVERS!

In this book, you will assume the role of the mighty Thing, as he battles the one enemy his awesome strength can't defeat-death itself!

Based on the popular MARVEL SUPER HEROES Role-Playing Game from TSR, Inc., MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game-books require only a single standard, six-sided die; a pen or pencil; a moderate supply of luck; and, most of all, your own personal skill in making decisions as you play the game. If dice are unavailable, see page 12 for a simple alternative that requires only paper and pencil.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game-books have been designed to read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you finish reading the rules that follow, you should seldom find it necessary to refer back to them. Your choices are clearly stated at each choice point, with occasional reminders of additional options available to you.

Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute-with YOU as your favorite MARVEL SUPER HERO!



YOUR CHARACTER

Your name is Benjamin J. Grimm, but the world knows you as the Thing, one of Earth's mightiest heroes, and a member of the renowned group of super heroes, the Fantastic Four.

You grew up in the slums of Yancy Street, but managed to attend college on a football scholarship. After graduation, you became an Air Force fighter pilot, and then an ace test pilot. Your college roommate and best friend, Reed Richards, who was establishing himself as a research scientist, developed a rocket ship capable of traveling through outer space. He asked you to pilot the ship on its secret maiden flight. Also on board were Reed Richards's fiancée, Susan Storm, and her brother, Johnny Storm.

During the flight, the spaceship was bombarded by cosmic rays that sliced through the ship's untested shields. The ship went out of control, and only your incredible piloting skill prevented a disastrous crash. The spaceship suffered irreparable damage, but the passengers were unhurt. Unhurt-but changed. The cosmic rays gave Reed Richards the ability to stretch his body into

fantastic shapes. Sue Storm found that she could become invisible and project impenetrable force fields. And Johnny Storm acquired the ability to burst into flame: in his flame-form, he could even fly! You were the most changed of all, though. You turned into an orange, 500-pound, rocky-skinned monster, capable of uprooting trees and lifting cars as if they were toys.

That day, Reed Richards became Mr. Fantastic, Sue Storm became the Invisible Woman, Johnny Storm became the Human Torch, and you became the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing. Together, you make up the Fantastic Four, and you've been fighting evil and injustice ever since. Together, you have faced death many times. You are about to face it again. .

PLAYING THE GAME

This book is divided into numbered sections. Read section 1, then select the next section you'll read from the choices offered there. By making choices, you guide the story to its conclusion. Naturally, your objective is to bring about the best possible ending to your adventure. There are many endings, and you can play again and again until you find them all!

The Marvel Super Heroes portrayed in this series of books have certain powerful abilities far beyond those of the average human being. As the Thing, your special abilities, which allow you to attempt feats a normal person wouldn't even consider, are listed on the removable MARVEL SUPER HEROES Stats Card located at the front of this book. The Stats Card lists everything you need to keep track of in order to play the game in

this book. At the same time, it doubles as a handy bookmark.

SCORING

Playing the game requires that you keep track of three things--**Health points**, **Karma points**, and **Ability points**--on the Marvel Super Heroes Stats Card located at the front of this book. An explanation of each of these follows.

HEALTH POINTS

Health points represent your general health or life strength. If you are injured or become ill, you lose some of these points. If you lose all your Health points, you will fall unconscious and possibly even die. In other words, if your Health points drop to zero or less, your adventure is over. If you are hurt or sick, you may regain some or all of your Health points by spending Karma, which is explained in the following section. Always remember, however, that it's impossible to increase your Health points beyond your beginning total.

The Thing begins this adventure with a total of 35 Health points.

KARMA POINTS

Karma points represent the effects your actions will have on your future. You can earn Karma by doing heroic deeds, by making the right decisions, and in general by being a good person. Conversely, if you do things you shouldn't, you may lose Karma. There is no limit to the "number of Karma points you can earn", but you will do better to "spend" your Karma rather than to hoard it.

You may spend Karma on any die roll you make to increase your chance of success. Rolling high numbers on the die is the way to succeed, and the Karma points you spend on a die roll increase the number rolled on a one-for-one basis. Here's how it works:

You must make your decision to spend Karma before you roll the die.

Once you commit yourself to spending Karma on a die roll, you must spend at least 2 Karma points. (This will increase the number rolled by 2.) You may add as many more Karma points as you need to make your die roll successful, providing you have enough Karma to spend. If you decide to spend Karma on your roll, but fail the roll because you didn't have enough Karma points to spend, or because you chose not to spend that much Karma, you still lose the original 2 Karma points.

Karma may also be spent to regain lost Health points whenever you reach a choice point in the story. For every Karma point you decide to spend in this manner, increase your total Health score by 1 point. Be sure to subtract the same number from your Karma total. The reverse is not true, however--Health points may not be converted to Karma points.

The Thing begins this adventure with 10 Karma points.

ABILITY POINTS

Ability points determine how easy or difficult it is for you to perform certain actions, called FEATS. Whenever you are asked to attempt a particular type of FEAT, consult the ability called for on your Stats Card, roll one die, and add the

result of the die roll to your Ability Score. The text will indicate what you should do next, according to the total.

The abilities used in this gamebook are described below.

FIGHTING determines how good you are in armed and unarmed combat. Your size alone makes you a formidable opponent, though your tactics are sometimes less than subtle.

AGILITY is a measure of your coordination. For your size, you are remarkably agile and quick on your feet, with reflexes that rival those of most humans.

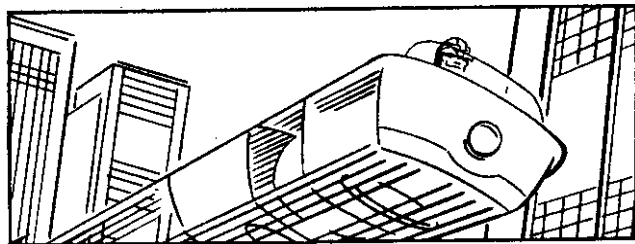
STRENGTH determines how much damage you inflict when you hit something. It also tells how much weight you can lift. Able to lift up to 85 tons, you are one of the strongest creatures in existence.

ENDURANCE measures how long you can exert yourself physically without resting or when injured. It also determines how well you can stand up to punishment. Your virtually impenetrable rocky exterior allows you to take more punishment than the average army tank can deliver, and your lung capacity and general fitness are also exceptional.

REASON reflects how well you can solve problems with your mind. Your intelligence was unaffected by the cosmic rays that changed your body, but you do not perceive of yourself as a thinker or a "big brain."

INTUITION gauges how well you observe with your senses and are able to act on that knowledge. You don't rely much on intuition: you just plow ahead.

PSYCHE is based on your willpower and inner strength. You live by brute determination. Once your mind is made up, you seldom change it.



PILOTING is a skill you have developed beyond normal proficiency. At one time or another, you've probably flown every kind of aircraft imaginable (and some that are unimaginable!). Years of experience as a fighter pilot, test pilot, and rocket jockey have honed your skills to an incredible sharpness. You have an intuitive understanding of aircraft of all sorts, and can put them through maneuvers most pilots never even dreamed of.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play the adventure when dice are unavailable, there is a simple substitute that requires only pencil and paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. When a FEAT roll is called for, draw one of the slips, note the number, place the slip back in the container, mix the numbers up again, and draw once more. Each draw represents one roll of a die.

You, as the Thing, are now ready to face ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER. Go to page 13 to begin your adventure. Good luck and good choices.

1 The limousine glides quietly toward 4 Freedoms Plaza, your home, headquarters of the Fantastic Four.

Sure was nice of the mayor to drive us home from the reception tonight, you think. Since he hadta go an' bore us all evenin' with speeches about what great joes we all are, it's the least he could do, though.

Your reverie is interrupted by the voice of Johnny Storm, the Human Torch, a teammate and longtime friend: "Hey, buddy, how about a game of pool in the rec room when we get home?"

"What's at, Torchie?"

"I asked if you want to get out of these monkey suits and play a hot game of pool."

"Nah, count me out. I'm pooped. Savin' the world is one thing, but sittin' around in a tux listenin' to speeches—that's too much! I'm goin' to bed."

"I can't say I blame you, Ben," says Reed Richards, the Fantastic Four team leader, and your oldest and best friend. "Unfortunately, the alarm system at 4 Freedoms Plaza is giving us trouble, and with the World Astrophysics Conference beginning tomorrow, I may not have another chance to work on it for weeks. Don't be surprised if your sleep is disturbed by my work—even I can't think of a way to test our alarm system quietly."

"Terrific, Stretch," you say, shutting your eyes and trying to catch a nap while you can.

"Hey, Sis," the Human Torch says, turning to his older sister, Sue Storm Richards, the Invisible Woman.

"What say we shoot some nine ball? Alicia's out of town for a big art opening, and I could use a little excitement. Beating you at nine ball would be just that—a little excitement."

"Johnny Storm! You know good and well you could never beat me at nine ball. Talk to me tomorrow and we'll see who's the real hustler in the family. Tonight, I'm going to check on Franklin and then follow Ben's lead. You'd do well to get some sleep yourself."

"Aw, gee, Mom . . . do I hafta?" the Human Torch whines, jokingly.

"Would you jokers mind puttin' a sock in it?" you say. "Can't ya see I'm tryin' to get my beauty sleep over here?"

Finally, the limousine pulls up in front of 4 Freedoms Plaza. Johnny heads for the rec room alone. Sue goes to check on her son, Franklin, as Reed sets off to check his alarm system. And you go to your quarters to try and get some sleep.

You can't remember the last time you had a good night's sleep in your own bed. *Sheesh*, you think. *It's about time this cockamamy outfit got a break from savin' the world. Reed's a nut case to keep on workin'. Me, I'm pooped.*

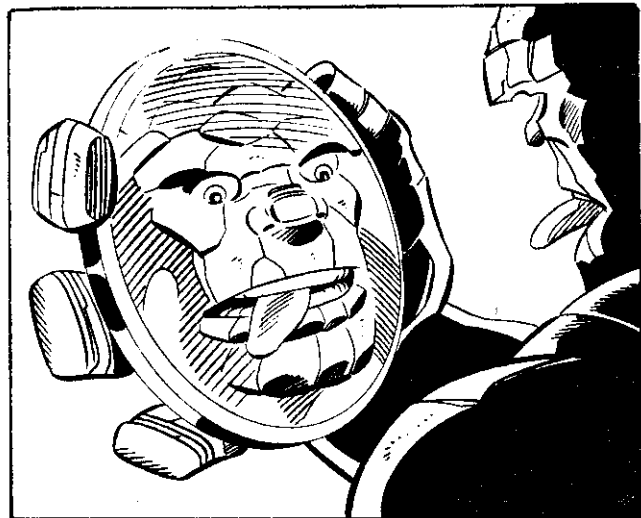
You flop down in an oversized bed designed to support your 500 pounds, drag a huge, rough hand across your face, and stare into a hand-mirror—the only mirror in your quarters. You're not thrilled with what you see.

You are the Thing, one of Earth's mightiest heroes, a respected member of the Fantastic Four, but you are also one of Earth's most horrifying nightmares.

Maybe I oughtta ditch the hero business and join a circus, you think. Yeah, I could be a clown—wouldn't even hafta wear any makeup.

You wrinkle your rocky nose, curl your orange lips into the nearest thing to a smile you can muster, and stick your tongue out. The image in the mirror just looks worse.

Great. Instead of just lookin' ugly, I look stupid, too. I



shoulda stuck with wrestling. Most of the boys in that racket look even worse'n me. Some o' the women, too.

Wallowing in self-pity, you reach under the bed and pull out a box, a box you keep hidden from your teammates, a box that contains the only thing that can pull you out of a blue funk like the one you're in now.

"Come to papa!" you say aloud, even though there's no one else in the room to hear.

Opening the box, you see a dozen cigars—fat, round, foot-long beauties. You take one as daintily as your ham-fists will allow, roll it between two fingers, run it under your nose, and breathe deeply. "Ah, gen-u-ine Havanas. Mother's milk! I been savin' you fer just the right time, and this looks like it—my first rest in I-don't-know-how-many years o' world-savin'."

This reverie is cut short by a sudden, searing heat as a gout of flame passes just inches in front of your face. You're unharmed, but the stogie in your mouth is incinerated.

"Dad-blasted, Torch!" you yell. "Where are ya, ya

blamed match-headed excuse for a cigar lighter! When I get my hands on you . . ."

"What's eating you?" asks the Human Torch, as he circles just out of reach above your head. "You don't want to smoke those things—they'll make you sick. Come to think of it, you look a little sick already. In fact, you look worse than usual, and that's saying something. Even a cat wouldn't drag you in looking like that!"

You sigh and get ready to put on your best angry-act—you and the Human Torch are good friends, almost brothers, but you've been going after each other like this since that fateful day when the two of you, along with Reed Richards and Sue Storm, went up in an untested rocket ship and came down changed, blessed . . . or, maybe, cursed . . . with the powers of the Fantastic Four. Things have been different between you and Johnny since he and Alicia Masters, your old girlfriend, started going together, but you're trying hard not to let on just how hurt you feel.

"Awright, Torchie, it's time I taught you a lesson once and for all. Me an' that stogie you just fried go back a long ways. This time yer goin' down for the count."

You run through your options: There's a water pipe buried in the wall behind your head. You could reach through the wall, rip it open, and douse the Torch. Or you could just try to grab your hot-headed pal. You know from long experience just how much heat your rocky body can withstand without sustaining damage; you also know the Torch can make himself far hotter than that—if he chooses.

If you want to grab the Torch as he flies past you, move on to **30**. If you want to try to douse the Torch, turn to **38**. If you want to just tell the Torch to cut the clowning before things get out of hand, go to **144**.

2 Even as you reach the kid, he touches you. Instantly, you feel your strength being sapped. Roll one die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point

total. Before you know it, you're too weak to stand, let alone fight. You can only watch as the kid makes his escape.

You awaken some time later to find that you're still in the Watcher's home, still beneath the wall of flashing lights. The kid is long gone. Subtract 1 Karma point from your total. The Watcher appears. Turn to **251**.

3 "I'm sorry, but I don't have anything that will help. I'm . . . I'm sorry. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm feelin' a little poorly. I think I'm gonna lie down for a while."

"Sure, Ben, we understand. You've earned your rest."

Alicia enters the room and takes you by the hand. You walk together in silence toward your quarters. No words are necessary. You stretch out on the bed, relishing the silence, the feel of Alicia's hand in yours. You may have met the enemy you couldn't defeat, but it wasn't for lack of trying. Your eyes close and you feel the darkness closing in around you.

"We had us some good times, didn't we, babe?"

"Yes, Ben, we surely did."

"Yeah . . ."

You think of your friends, wondering what will become of them. Your thoughts drift to paths not chosen, opportunities not seized. Your adventure is over.

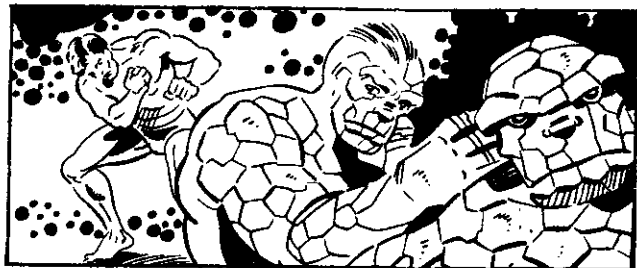
4 You concentrate as hard as you can—and nothing happens. Turn to **102**.

5 Talking things through, you and the Thingpin determine that you can be cured in this world—using his blood, and consulting Doctors Banner and Pym, or, rather, their counterparts in this dimension.

Once your cure is complete, you leave the Thingpin, knowing that you were destined to be foes.

You wonder, on occasion, what happened to Kingpin.

You wonder far more often what became of your teammates. In your heart, you know they couldn't have survived. You emerge from this adventure more or less unscathed, but the victory will ever be a hollow one.



6 "Hey there, tall, orange an' handsome. I think I can help ya out. I got a body just burstin' with cosmic rays, remember? Couldn't ya think o' some way to suck some o' mine out an' stick 'em in cold storage to power yer machine there?"

Grimm looks up, amazed.

"Why, of course I could . . ." he says, with renewed enthusiasm in his voice. "That would be child's play! And I could even help you out. It shouldn't be too difficult to irradiate a power cell with your cosmic rays and then use the cell, unaffected by your disease, to charge some of my own blood! Of course, I'd draw the blood before charging it, so I'd be at no risk. There's no reason why it wouldn't work!"

"Sounds great," you respond. "You get your machine back; I get my blood. Let's get started."

"Yes, yes, by all means. Release me and we'll get started at once!"

Once Grimm begins, he works like a man possessed. *Just like my pal, Stretch*, you think, amazed when you realize that could be you, tinkering like a genuine engineer.

The process takes but a few hours and goes exactly as planned. Touching the Watcher's device to Grimm's arm, it draws blood instantly and painlessly. Charging

it with cosmic rays takes no time at all. Before you know it, you're ready to depart. It occurs to you that you have no idea what Grimm's machine is really for, and that nags at you for a moment, but you've got other things on your mind, so you bid your alter ego farewell.

Turn to **86**.

7 At first, all you see are red, blue, and green lights. As you watch the flashing, mesmerizing colors, however, you begin to detect patterns. Then, suddenly, you understand—the Watcher did help you, despite his oath. You know what the Watcher meant when he said there are many *Things*. *Things* that are "blood of your blood . . . devices that may be of use to you." *The blood of other Things. If I can collect the blood of other Things . . . ? Things from other dimensions! That's it! If I can collect the blood from other Things, I may be able to help my pals back home. Sheesh, I s'pose this must have something to do with the cosmic charges in the blood or something, but whatever, I sure am glad the Watcher is a good enough joe to have given me a hint. "Devices . . ." Now I have to find the devices he was talkin' about.*

As these thoughts cross your mind, you notice that the lights are swirling again, and the pattern has changed! Again, you stare at the flashing panel; again, understanding comes to you—there are several devices that might help you:

An image of a red sphere forms in your mind. This is replaced by an image of a green tube and then a blue sphere. You know you must find these three devices quickly. They provide the key to curing the disease! Turn to **43**.

8 You wake up to find yourself in the center of Grimm's lab. Before you, you can see a wall lined with Thing-suits—like Iron Man's armor, only fashioned to look like you! You try to swivel your head, to look left

and right, but find that you can't move.

You're seated in a throne-like chair that is part of a machine the likes of which you've never seen before. Your hands and legs are manacled and, try as you might, you can't break your bonds. A helmet of sorts sits on your head.

The machine is emitting a maddening, low-frequency hum that throbs at the base of your neck and pulses up and down your spine.

Ben Grimm stands at a control console nearby, flipping switches and reading dials. "Ah, I see you're conscious again," he says. "Good, good. I can see by your face that you're confused . . . you're in what I call Project Alpha—a cosmic ray analyzer, neutralizer, transmitter. I've just completed an analysis of your blood. You're a regular cosmic ray battery. You're also dying of a disease that feeds on those cosmic rays. In a moment, I'll begin draining the rays, and the disease, from your body. The rays from your body will power this device for years!"

You try to respond, but all you manage to do is move your lips a fraction of an inch. Grimm notices your attempt to speak.

"Don't worry," he says "the paralyzing effects of the device last only as long as it's in operation. Now, let's proceed."

He twists a dial on the console, and the humming of the machine rises in pitch until it becomes a high-frequency wail. There's no pain, just a feeling like a vacuum cleaner sucking the breath out of your body.

And then it's over. Your hands and feet slip out of manacles set for someone far larger than yourself. Looking down at your feet, you see that you're human again . . . you're Ben Grimm!

"Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle!" you exclaim.

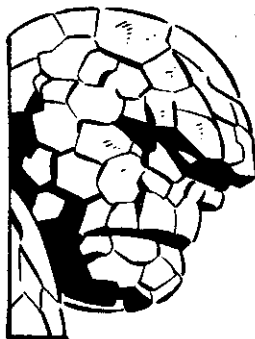
"Welcome back to the world of humanity, Mr. Grimm," your twin says. "You know, I had a suspicion you and I were really one and the same. I couldn't be sure until now, but seeing is believing."

"Well, we sure are one an' the same! Ya know, I forgot

how good it feels to be human!"

Even as you revel in your restored humanity, however, your thoughts turn to your fallen comrades back home. Explaining your situation to your alter ego, you pull the Watcher's device from the pocket of your now quite baggy uniform. You touch the bump that appears on its surface, but nothing happens.

You sense what's wrong immediately—the device is useless to you now because your human body isn't up to the stresses of interdimensional travel. You're stuck here—probably for good.



9 You figure the only way to save Alicia is to stop the Thingpin—and fast. You step between your alter ego and the crime king. Behind you, you hear Kingpin whisper, "Oh, this is good . . . this is very good."

You don't have time to worry about Kingpin—yet. The Thingpin is almost upon you. Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, go to **85**. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **103**.

10 The Cosmic Control Rod is yours, but to your dismay, you realize that you have no idea how to make it work. You could ask Annihilus, but he'll be out cold for hours.

You put the Cosmic Control Rod in your pocket. May-

be you'll figure out how to use it later. For now, you've got to figure out where to go from here. *Maybe the Watcher can help save the Fantastic Four*, you think. *Yeah, that's it. The Watcher always makes a big deal about not interferin', but he always does in the end. Maybe he can help us outta this spot we're in.*

If this will be your first trip to the Moon, go to **252**. If you've been to the Moon already, go to **22**.

11 You grab the necklace and throw it as hard as you can toward the balcony. You manage to toss the bomb to the balcony before it explodes. When it does, glass flies everywhere—*Dern, I'm gonna be pickin' glass outa my hide fer weeks . . . assumin' I live that long.* You shudder as you think of your situation. You look up to see the Thingpin make short work of Kingpin. After a time, he walks over to you, offers you a hand up, and says, "Thanks, friend, I'm in your debt. If there's anything I can do for you, just name it."

You ask him casually for a pint of his blood and are surprised, not to mention pleased, when he says, "No problem." Turn to **245**.

12 You concentrate as hard as you can, and a beam of pure white light hits your counterpart—he turns into Ben Grimm! You return to the street, turn Grimm over to the police, and pull the Watcher's device from a pocket in your uniform. Add 2 points to your Karma for saving Alicia and restoring your counterpart's humanity. You didn't get the blood you needed to save yourself and your teammates, but you saved countless people in this alternate dimension.

You activate the Watcher's device, heedless of the crowd around you. Turn to **141**.

13 *That guy is off his nut. Kinda scary ta think I coulda ended up like that!* You look around the lab and

office, not quite sure what you're looking for.

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **37**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **27**.

14 The Watcher says he'll take the kid off your hands and see that he gets back to Attilan (breaking his oath of noninterference again!). He urges you to concentrate on what he is about to tell you. Turn to **251**.

15 "Well, now that you mention it, I did pick up a souvenir in the Negative Zone, but I can't get the blamed thing to work. Maybe you'll have better luck."

You pass the Cosmic Control Rod over to Johnny. He takes it and concentrates with all his might in an effort to get it to work, but to no avail.

"Ben," Bruce Banner says, "this seems pointless. Didn't you bring back any cosmic ray-charged blood? Time is of the essence."

If you have any blood, turn to **53**. If you have no blood, move on to **3**.

16 You watch the colored lights dance on the wall, but after a while you begin to grow restless. "Wonder what was goin' through the Watcher's mind? If he thought a light show was gonna relax me, he's gone off the deep end . . . not that ya could tell, o' course."

Still, the Watcher did say there were things in here that could help you, and you've never known him to lie, so you set off in search of something—anything—that looks useful. "Guess if I keep my eyes open I might spot somethin' I can use."

You search for a while, amazed that the Watcher's home appears so much bigger from the inside than it does from the outside. You're about to give up and head on out when your thoughts drift back to the Watcher's light show. *Ya know, the Watcher doesn't do anything without a reason. There musta been more to those*

flashing lights than I thought . . . I bet he was tryin' to tell me to be on the lookout fer stuff that's colored like the lights. Apparently, you're right, for you soon find three objects that match exactly the hues of the flashing lights. You gather them together and lay them on the floor, a sinking feeling in your heart—you haven't got the vaguest idea what they do or how they work.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, go to **26**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **34**.

17 "With Reed up and around, he can use these plans I got from Doomsie to effect a cure for me," you say excitedly.

With the help of the doctors—and the blood you brought—Reed is soon back on his feet. Turn to **261**.



18 From your hiding place in the stairwell, you hear the club staff setting up and, later, the arrival of the first guests. Soon you hear the voices of Kingpin and Alicia. A bit later, you hear the muffled sound of helicopter blades overhead, followed by machine-gun fire and breaking glass. Then, the fun really starts. You leap through the door into the room. Turn to **133**.

19 The lights are fascinating, but you came here to get the kid, not gawk at a light show. If you want to talk to Gorvath, go to **113**. If you want to jump him before he can jump you, turn to **69**.

20 You decide to stand your ground against the monster. Make a Strength FEAT roll. If the total is 19 or more, go to **52**. If the total is 18 or less, go to **102**.

21 The final adjustments made, Grimm turns to you and asks, "Well, what will it be? A complete blood work-up seems like a good starting point . . ."

"Yeah, sure," you say. "Hook me up to this gizmo and let's get the show on the road."

Grimm motions you into the throne-like seat at the core of the huge machine and fastens the arm and leg manacles.

"Pal, if you're up to somethin', it'll be the last somethin' yer ever up to!"

Grimm makes no response, but sets the head-piece down on your rocky orange scalp. "There," he says. "We're ready now. I'm going to begin by running a blood exam, but don't worry, you won't feel a thing."

He walks to a control panel on the other side of the room, turns some dials, and throws some switches. A low-level hum fills the air. It's more than a little disconcerting. Your skin begins to prickle, and your body seems charged with static electricity. On a lab table near the control panel, a jar begins to fill with blood.

"Holy cats! Is that my blood?" you ask.

"It is," your alter ego responds, "and the test results are already in."

"Yeah . . . and . . ."

"And the blood in that jar is, in fact, highly charged with cosmic rays or, rather, it was before my machine transferred them to its power supply!"

"Well, awright!" you exclaim. "Now ya can charge up some o' yer own blood fer me, right?"

"Quite right, my friend. Hold on for a minute and I'll take your place in the machine. You'll be on your way in just a moment."

He loosens the manacles and you stagger out of the machine, a little dizzy from the loss of blood. (Subtract 1 from your Health point total.)

Grimm takes your place in the machine and a new jar fills with blood—Grimm's blood, charged with cosmic rays by his machine. Finally, he too staggers away from the machine.

You touch the green device you received from the Watcher to the jar and it wraps itself around the blood-filled vessel. After a moment, you remove it, and the jar is empty.

The Watcher's device is nearly full now, and you're ready to return to your own dimension. Before you do, however, you think again about the uses to which Grimm's machine will be put. Millions of lives are at stake.

If you want to destroy the machine, subtract 2 from your Karma point total (for reneging on the offer you made earlier to give him what he wants, and then go to **282**.

If you want to leave this dimension and return to your friends without destroying the machine, subtract 2 from your Karma point total (for leaving such a deadly machine in the hands of someone as unstable as the Ben Grimm of this world), then go to **86**.

22 *Maybe the Watcher already has helped us an' I just haven't figured it out yet, you think. As the thought crosses your mind, you hear the voice of the Watcher in your head.*

"Though I am sworn never to interfere, your continued survival is part of the grand plan. Take this red sphere. Blood is the answer. Find the other Things. Draw their blood with this green tool. Your friends will understand."

You activate the red sphere and go to **28**.

23 "That's easy, Doc. Lookit here!" you say, producing Doctor Doom's flashlight-like device. "This here thing'll do the trick, no problem!"

You make a beeline for Reed Richards and aim the device at him without hesitation. You activate the device, which bathes Richards in a pure white light. Almost instantly, the color begins to return to his cheeks. Moments later, he opens his eyes and tries to sit up, but before you can convince him that sitting up is a bad idea, he's standing groggily, asking a hundred questions, pushing himself to his severely reduced limits.

"Listen, Stretch," you say, "if you wanna go an' kill yourself now that I saved your scrawny little, well, now that I saved ya, you go ahead, but do it by helping us out, wouldja? I'll satisfy yer intellectual curiosity later. Right now, you gotta build us a machine."

You show him the blueprints. Go to **261**.

24 You hesitate for just an instant. There's no way you can reach Alicia—and accomplish anything—before Kingpin can trigger the bomb. You stop. "Good," Kingpin says sneering, "now that I've got your attention . . ." He smiles and twists the jeweled handle of his walking stick, detonating the bomb. Alicia disappears in a burst of fire and a cloud of smoke. She doesn't even have a chance to scream. The explosion tears at your rock-hard skin. You must subtract 5 from your Health point total, but you hardly feel the pain.

As you fight back tears brought on by smoke and rage, you hear the Thingpin bellowing hideously, insanely. The kings of crime are wrestling again. You don't envy Kingpin right now.

The battle takes them away from you, toward the windows that open onto the balcony. In a shower of glass, the two titans are gone. Then, you hear Kingpin scream in utter terror. The scream seems to last for days, lowering in pitch with each passing second. Then, all is silent, but the memory of that scream will

stay with you for the rest of your life.

For the first time, you notice that the police have arrived. The battle has been brought under control. You rush to the balcony, but there's no sign of Kingpin or your alter ego. You lean over the parapet, searching for them, but they're gone, without a trace.

Alicia is gone. Kingpin is gone. The Thingpin is gone. The knowledge that you did everything you could to make things come out right doesn't help. The tears flow freely now—for those who are gone, for those who await your return, and for yourself. But you regain control. You've got lives to save—your own and those of your teammates. At the thought, the cold hand of fear grips you. You didn't get the blood you needed.

Reaching into your uniform, you pull out the Watcher's interdimensional transporter device. You touch the bump that appears on its surface and head for you know-not-where. You do know you'll have to do better if you and your friends hope to survive. Turn to **284**.

25 The colored devices sail past the kid. He leaps to grab you. Turn to **2**.

26 You stare at the items on the floor for some time. They're smooth and shiny. Two of them look like Christmas tree ornaments—one red ball, one blue ball. The green tube looks like, well, a green tube or maybe an odd-shaped blood-pressure cuff.

"Come on, Benjie," you say aloud. "Yer friends're countin' on you. What would the Big Brain, Reed Richards, do?"

You know one thing: Mr. Fantastic wouldn't give up. You heft the red device in your hand, roll it around in your rocky orange paws, feeling for anything that might provide a clue to the operation of the device. There! You felt it—the slightest of bumps on the almost perfectly smooth surface. You apply pressure to the raised spot, and before your mind can wrap itself

around the concept, a metal sphere has wrapped itself around you. The Christmas tree ornament has become a full-size vehicle of some kind—a flying vehicle. And if there's anything you know about, it's things that fly.

You're surrounded by controls now, but as you examine them, they don't seem any more bizarre than some of the stuff Reed has asked you to test fly. You can get this baby going anytime! And you're willing to bet all three devices work in somewhat the same way.

The only question, you think, is which one to try?

Directly in front of you is a floating ball that looks an awful lot like the Christmas ornament form of the device. You press the bump on its surface and, instantly, the craft returns to its original, miniature form. You look at the two metallic balls—one red, one blue. Picking up the green tube, you feel a bump and press it. Instantly, the tube changes from what looks like a distorted blood-pressure sleeve to a sealed beaker, not unlike those Reed uses to collect specimens and samples.

Sheesh! I'm no big brain, but I do know that this gizmo ain't gonna get me anywhere. 'Spect the Watcher wouldn't keep it layin' around for nothin', though, you tell yourself. You press a bump on the device, and it returns to its original form. Guess I'd best pocket this and figger out if these other two gadgets kin get me anywhere useful.

If you want to try the blue device, turn to **54**.

If you want to stick with the red one, go to **73**.

27 Looking around the lab, you find little of interest besides a photo on Grimm's desk—it's a photo of Alicia Masters and three children. The inscription reads, "To my loving husband, Ben. Love always, The 'Little Woman.'"

"Well, I'll be . . ." you say aloud, "an' I was just startin' to feel sorry fer that guy 'cause he's off his nut! He's rich, famous, and married to the woman I love and can't ever have. He's got it made, an' I feel sorry fer him! Some joke. Then again, he ain't got my looks . . .

Ah, what's the use, I could spend the rest o' my life—what little I prob'ly got left—chasin' after that guy. I'm headin' home!

Turn to **268**.

28 You feel a strange, gut-wrenching sensation as you activate the device you found in the Watcher's home. *Sheesh, you think, if Dee-troit ever tried ta sell a car that bucked like this bronco, they'd be outta business in a week!* You pass through spaces that aren't spaces, times that aren't times. You see colors the likes of which you've never imagined and see sights that make those in the Watcher's home look ordinary. But eventually, you sense that you've popped back into normal space. You press the stud on the control ball of the Watcher's device, and you find yourself standing on the streets of New York. You're back home! Looking around, you see that you're on Yancy Street—your old stomping grounds. A wave of dizziness threatens to knock you off your feet—the disease must be taking its toll. Subtract 1 from your Health point total.

You've barely had time to get both feet on terra firma when you hear people shouting: "It's him! It's . . . the Thing!" yells an elderly woman.

Well, awright! you think, *Sometimes bein' a celebrity ain't half bad. Just wish I had time ta sign some autographs, but I got work ta do.*

Even as these words leave your lips, though, the thought strikes you that the people shouting and running don't seem happy to see you—actually, it's a brick that strikes you, right in the back of the head.

"What the? . . . If that was some Yancy Streeter, I'm gonna tear the old neighborhood apart!" But before you can turn on your attacker, several more people turn and begin pelting you with debris, trash cans, pop bottles, and anything else that comes to hand.

If you want to fight the angry mob, turn to **40**. If you want to find a hiding place, turn to **49**. If you would prefer to make a dash for 4 Freedoms Plaza, go to **60**.

29 You awaken before your fallen foe, and take the opportunity to look around for some way to bind him before he comes to. The machine in the center of the room looks just perfect—like a huge, high-tech throne with the toughest-looking arm and leg manacles, just perfect for binding nutball Things.

You pick Grimm up and hoist him over your shoulder, dropping him not too gently into the chair. Slapping the manacles around his arms and legs, you wonder if it'll be worth your while to wait for him to come to—after all, he hasn't done much but try and kill you since you got here.

If you want to wait around, turn to **134**. If you want to head back home, go to **86**.

30 Grabbing the Human Torch won't be easy. Make an Agility FEAT roll. Roll the die and add the number you roll to your Agility score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **87**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **105**.

31 You leave the office and grab a cab to the party site. If you want to wait outside the Penthouse Club and see what develops, turn to **266**. If you want to charge right in, go to **257**.

32 You realize that this is the best shot you're going to get with Doctor Doom's device.

Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **12**. If the total is 9 or less, go to **4**.

33 "Suzie, take the Cosmic Control Rod . . . You've made it work before; maybe you can make it work again. It messes with cosmic stuff. Maybe it'll knock this cosmic disease out!"

Sue Richards takes the rod from you and studies it for a moment. "You're right, Ben. I feel it. Now hold still

while I concentrate."

Her brow furrows, and beads of sweat appear on her face. For what seems like a long time, nothing happens. Then, suddenly, you feel a tingling sensation, and you know that the disease is gone.

"I'm sorry, Ben. It wouldn't work . . ."

"What do you mean, 'It wouldn't work'? It worked just fine! I'm a little groggy, but the disease is gone!"

"Do you really mean it, Ben? Why, that's wonderful!"

"You bet it is! Hey, I'd like ta stay an' party with the rest o' yas, but I'm bushed!"

You drag yourself to your quarters, stretch out on the bed, and close your eyes, weary to the bone. A tear, hot and damp, rolls down your orange, rocky cheek. You taste its salt in your smile, and smiling, drift off to sleep. You rest easily, knowing you've succeeded, knowing that when next you open your eyes, the Fantastic Four will be reunited, ready to face whatever adventure fate has in store!

34 You stare at the three devices for a long time, but you're stumped. *Where's the Watcher when you really need some first-class interference? Where's that no-good big-brain-rubber-band of a team leader I got? He'd know what ta do in a situation like this. Why, I oughtta just bust these things . . .* You pick up the red device and get ready to do just that, but as your hand closes around it, you feel a small bump on its surface. One of your meaty fingers presses the bump and, instantly, you're inside a shiny red metal sphere.

Well, now, what have we here? you wonder. Looking around, you quickly figure out that you're inside some sort of vehicle. Your hand is still on the red sphere which, to your surprise, has grown another small stud.

You press the bump that got you inside the sphere in the first place, and find yourself with red sphere in hand, safely in the Watcher's home. *Well, no time like the present. I think that's what they say. I guess if I'm gonna get ta where those other Things are, I'd best get*

goin'. You feel along the surface of the sphere for the small bump that you now know will put you inside the red ship. Turn to **73**.

35 "Gee, tall, orange, an' handsome, I'm real sorry about yer machine, but you started this ruckus. Ya know somethin'? I think yer a little bit of a loony, an' I ain't got the time to waste cryin'. You're a bright boy. You'll come up with somethin'. As fer me, I'm headin' home. I'd say it was nice meetin' ya, but my Aunt Alyce didn't raise no liars." Turn to **86**.

36 You hit the kid, who crumples to the ground. The colored devices seem undamaged. They roll a few feet from the kid and stop. You walk over to the unconscious Inhuman, pick him up, and prepare to leave, when the Watcher appears. Turn to **14**.

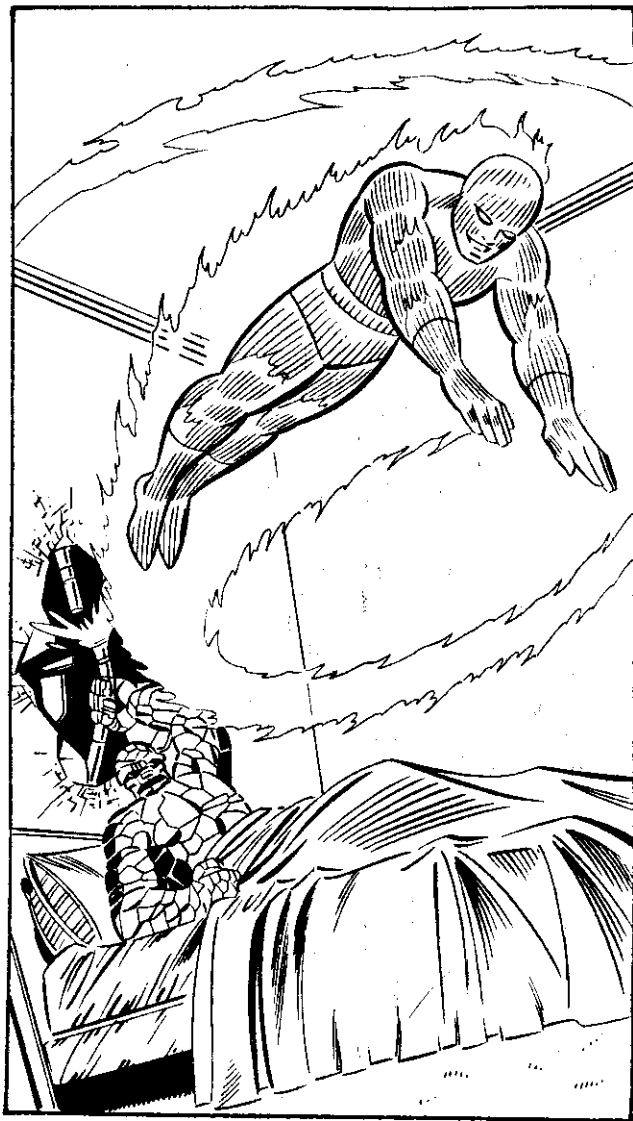
37 Your tour of the lab reveals that the Ben Grimm of this world, never having become the Thing, was forced to develop his mind. The walls of the lab are covered, not with celebrity photos, but with diplomas.

Sheesh, you think as you rummage through papers on Grimm's desk, this guy's a real engineering whiz. Could I o' done that if things had worked out different?

Then, you stumble across a sheaf of papers labeled "Cosmic Ray Project Alpha."

You don't understand much of what you read, but what you do understand looks good—these are plans for a machine that can detect and either eliminate or transmit cosmic rays.

"Come to papa!" you shout, knowing this could be the answer to your prayers. "I bet a machine like this could suck the cosmic rays right outta my body—and Reed's and Sue's an' Johnny's. It's the cosmic rays that're killin' us. Gettin' rid o' them oughtta kick the disease right back where it came from!"



You clutch the precious plans to your chest and prepare to leave this dimension. Make a note of this find on your Stats Card and turn to **86**.

38 Smoldering stogie still between your lips, you reach back over your head and plunge steel-strong fingers through the reinforced concrete wall behind your bed. The Torch flits inches above your prostrate figure.

"Hey, Ben," he says as he passes, "Reed isn't going to appreciate you wrecking our new headquarters."

"Worry about yerself, punk," you respond, as your fingers close around the water pipe in the wall. Ripping it in two, you bend the pipe out from the wall so the spray catches the Torch full in the face. He plunges to the ground in a soggy, flameless mass.

"What's the idea, ya big galoot? I was just trying to cheer you up!"

"Well, quit tryin'. Maybe I don't wanna be cheered up. Maybe all I want is to catch some shut-eye!"

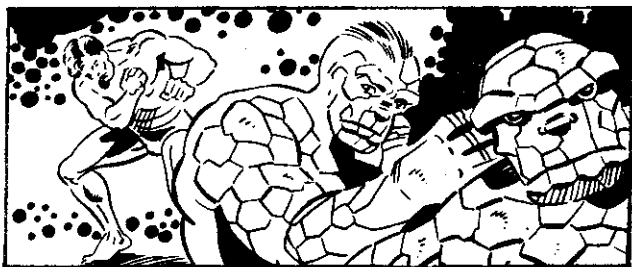
Suddenly, you and your young teammate hear the unmistakable sound of an alarm from the roof of 4 Freedoms Plaza. If you want to let your Fantastic Four teammates investigate the alarm while you try to get some much-deserved rest, turn to **167**. If you want to investigate the alarm yourself, go to **157**.

39 After a perfect landing from the Thingpin's chopper, you head for the glass doors leading inside the building. Other choppers hover above the building, disgorging their loads of armed men.

Kingpin's men who are stationed on the balcony have already opened fire on you and your companions with automatic weapons. The battle has begun. Your alter ego bursts through the glass doors well ahead of you. By the time you enter, the area is a shambles. Gunfire, people ducking under tables, screaming and running . . .

Turn to **133**.

40 "Okay, that's it! Ya want a fight, I'll give ya one!" Subtract 1 Karma point for even considering fighting ordinary folks. Considering is all you'll get to do, for even as you ready yourself for battle, you realize that the mob couldn't possibly do you any harm, while you could wreck the entire area without raising a sweat. *Better try plan B, you think.* If you want to try hiding until you can figure out what's going on, turn to **49**. If you want to contact the Fantastic Four, turn to **60**.



41 *Cosmic rays? you think, Handsome here just said the magic words. My body's chock full o' cosmic rays. I could prob'ly power that machine fer years, but do I want to?* If you want to offer to help Grimm reconstruct his machine, turn to **6**. If you feel like you've wasted enough time in this dimension, go to **35**.

42 You continue searching the office and find more information about Alicia's public appearance with Kingpin. You find references to, and plans for, a raid on tonight's party at the Penthouse Club, where Kingpin plans to put Alicia, his latest conquest, on public display. But even as you ponder the ramifications of everything you've learned, you're interrupted by the return of the Thing of this world. (He enters via a secret entrance.) He's surprised. You've caught him off-guard. You decide to press your advantage and tell him exactly why you're here. Turn to **51**.

43 The wall of flashing lights dims. As your eyes become accustomed to the dim light inside the Watcher's home, you see before you the three devices you saw in your mind's eye just a moment ago! There's the red one, the green one, and the blue one. They're right in front of you! You're quite sure these are the things the Watcher said would help you. *But two balls and a tube that looks like a blood-pressure sleeve? What'm I s'posed ta do with these? you wonder. That Watcher interferes plenty, but he sure never makes things easy for a guy. Especially for us orange, rocky types.*

You turn the red sphere over in your hand, and to your surprise, a small bump appears on its surface. *Well, that's a good sign. I s'pose the others have bumps, too.* You pick them up, and sure enough, a bump appears on the surface of each. *I guess there's nothin' ta do but push one, but I don't even know what any of 'em's s'posed ta do.* "Here goes nothin', Watcher," you say aloud, hoping maybe he'll reappear and give you a little more non-interfering advice. Naturally, you're still in the room by yourself with a red sphere, a blue sphere, and a green tube.

If you want to try the red sphere, turn to **73**.

If you want to try the blue sphere, proceed to **54**.

If you want to try the green tube, go to **64**.

44 You turn to your alter ego, and say, "So what's the machine for, anyway?"

"This is a cosmic ray channeler. Powered by a piece from Reed's experimental rocket ship, it can perform a variety of functions: It can detect the presence of cosmic rays; it can store and transmit them; or it can suck them up, like a cosmic vacuum cleaner. Certain factions in the government would like to see these rays beamed throughout the Communist world.

"You were lucky, my friend. My research shows that the effects of such concentrated doses of cosmic rays are ninety-five percent fatal. The other five percent cause change, as experienced by you and your friends.

With one swift stroke, the free world can be truly free."

"You'd do that—kill off ninety-five percent of the people in Communist countries?"

"Of course not. I'm just a scientist, an engineer. I do nothing but sell my services to the highest bidder. I'm willing to help you for nothing."

"Pal, where I come from, you're just as guilty as the people who use your stuff."

"I've heard all that before, and never much believed it. Now, look, I can use this device to charge some of my own blood, making it of use to you. I can even cure you of the disease entirely and change you forever into just plain Ben Grimm. The machine can be a great boon to you and, in the right hands, to mankind. What will it be—self-righteousness or your own salvation?"

You grit your teeth. If you destroy the machine, you may save millions of lives; yet, if you destroy it, you and your friends may not survive.

Not much of a choice, you think, as your twin putters around the machine, making final adjustments, preparing it for you.

If you want to destroy the machine, turn to **282**. If you want to allow Grimm to use it on you, to turn you back into Ben Grimm, go to **241**. If you want to ask him to charge some of his own blood so you can return to your own world and cure your friends, turn to **21**.

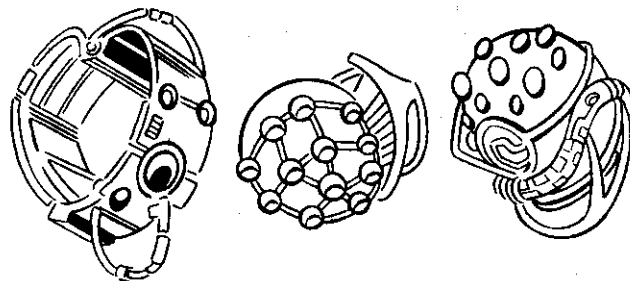
45 You turn the now-human Ben Grimm over to the police. They're more than a little curious about you, but you've got no interest in answering their questions. You've got friends to save and no cosmic-ray charged blood to do it with. You pull the Watcher's device from a pocket and activate it to get to **141**.

46 You move quickly for something your size, but your foe moves quicker still. He lets loose with repulsor rays that pound into you even harder than the first time. The machine you hoped to hurl at him drops on

you. The combined ray blasts and crushing weight knocks you to the ground, unconscious. Roll one die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total, then turn to **8**.

47 You charge the kid. Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **267**. If the total is 10 or less, go to **2**.

48 "Well, I don't know if they'll help, but I have a set of blueprints here . . ." Turn to **137**.



49 You look around, searching for someplace to hide 500 pounds of orange, rocky monster. You duck down alleyways unchanged since you were a boy here, alleyways you know better than you know the back of your hand. Before you know it, you've lost them. You're alone and all is quiet—for a moment. You duck behind a barricade of garbage cans overflowing with the refuse of everyday life on Yancy Street. *Just need a minute to figger out what's goin' on. This sure ain't my Earth, where everybody loves the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing. Wonder what Reed'd do next?*

Before you have a chance to think much more about that, you hear voices approaching and hurried footsteps. The footsteps stop at the alley entrance, and you hear a voice that's all too familiar, a voice that would set

your hair standing on end, if you had any hair.

"He must be here somewhere, officer," says the mysterious yet oddly familiar voice. "We must keep looking. The Thing is once again on a rampage through the streets of New York. We must find him and put a stop to his reign of terror once and for all!"

That voice . . . you know it, but from where? You just can't place it. And then it comes to you: DOOM! Victor Von Doom, the Fantastic Four's most deadly enemy, a man who will stop at nothing in his quest for world domination. But his voice sounds strange—clearer, less maniacal than usual.

You peek around a corner and find, to your astonishment, that Doom is in the company of several of New York's Finest, and he isn't wearing his armor! That's why the voice seemed clearer to you, why you didn't recognize it right away—it wasn't muffled by Doom's armor. The last time you saw Doom without his armor was back when you, Reed Richards, and Victor Von Doom were college classmates, before Doom had the accident that scarred him for life.

Thoughts race through your head: *Is this one of Doom's androids? How did Doom get so palsy-walsy with the police? No telling what a villain like Doom is up to.* You toy with the idea of leaping from behind the garbage cans and confronting him, but then you realize you wouldn't know whether to attack Doom or talk to him or what. You decide to sit tight for a while. You hear one of the police officers say to Doom, "Sir, I'm confused. How could the Thing have gotten from Alicia Masters' home to Yancy Street so quickly? He's super-human, but that's beyond even him."

"I'm as confused on that point as you are, officer," Doom responds. "Come, our only hope is to keep after him and hope we find him before he harms the girl."

With that, they leave the alley entrance and head off down the street.

Holy cats! Thoughts whirl in your brain. What the heck is goin' on? I ain't been anywhere near Alicia's house. Must be a Thing in this dimension who's not as

charming as me, an' he's on a rampage! But where does Doom fit in? He seems to know a lot about what's what, an' he's awful friendly with the police.

If you want to head for Alicia's house and see if you can save her on your own, turn to **217**.

If you want to track down Doctor Doom and find out what's really going on, go to **199**.

50 You search the area around the warehouse thoroughly and, finally, find an entrance in an alleyway. The metal door is well-hidden behind garbage cans and empty boxes that seem to have been placed here specifically to conceal the entrance. You push through the trash and try the door. No surprise—it's locked.

If you want to go back around to the front entrance, go to **63**. If you want to try forcing the lock, make a Strength FEAT roll. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **77**. If the total is 17 or less, go to **94**.

51 You tell your alter ego why you're here. He agrees to give you the blood you need, if you'll help him defeat Kingpin and free Alicia. Without your help, he says, Alicia Masters is doomed. If you agree, turn to **168**. If you don't want to help this master criminal, go to **213**.

52 The monster lifts a huge leg and tries to squash you like a bug, but you catch his foot as it descends. Straining your muscles to the limit, you stop its downward flight and push the off-balance creature off the edge. The creature you've dubbed Thing Kong plummets to the ground. The fall knocks it unconscious. You take a slower and safer route down the elevator. Once you reach ground level, you push your way through the crowds surrounding the fallen Thing, and use the green device the Watcher gave you to take and store the blood you need. You then turn the monster over to the police. Turn to **127**.

53 "Well, maybe there is a way . . ."
"What is it, Ben? You've got to tell me!"
"See, I've got this blood, cosmic ray-charged blood. Don't know if there's enough. Take it. Me, I ain't movin'. So tired . . ."

You collapse into a chair and fall into a troubled sleep.
If you have one pint of blood, proceed to **259**.
If you have two pints of blood, turn to **206**.
If you have three pints of blood, move on to **286**.

54 You push the stud on the blue sphere and find yourself inside a strange blue vehicle. You reach for the small blue sphere suspended in mid-air before you, take a deep breath, and press the stud you find there.

Suddenly, your world is turned upside down. You feel yourself stretching and twisting like a superhuman moebius strip. You fight off a feeling of vertigo and hold tight as you burst into a realm you recognize as the Negative Zone. Turn to **81**.

55 You land and rush to the spot where Alicia fell. There you find that she survived the fall, but isn't expected to live long. You turn and, shrugging off the attention of the police, you enter the Empire State Building, return to the top, and pick up Grimm. There's no blood for you here—not anymore. You'll have to try elsewhere. Turn to **45**.

56 Grimm is ranting now, going on about how you are responsible for ruining his life—how you prevented him from boarding Reed's rocket ship and how you are responsible for the deaths of his closest friends.

His eyes narrow with hatred and he stares at you with cold fury. "You come here seeking my help," he says slowly. "How dare you . . . How dare you!" With that he raises his hands, palms toward you. "You're going to help me, now, to make up for what you did to

Reed, and Sue, and Johnny! It's clobberin' time!"

Twin beams of yellow light burst from his palms and strike you full in the chest.

Make an Endurance FEAT roll. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **270**. If the total is 16 or less, go to **254**.

57 "Fore I go anywhere, I want a couple o' questions answered, okay?"

Reed looks distressed at this, but nods agreement.

"First off, where are the rest of the Fantastic Four—Johnny an' Sue—an' where's the Baxter Building . . . uh, I mean 4 Freedoms Plaza?"

Richards, looking confused by your questions, walks around behind his desk and sits down. "I wish I could help you, but I don't know what you're talking about. I used to know someone named Sue and she had a brother named Johnny, but they . . . died. Long ago. I've never heard of any 'Fantastic Four,' and I don't know of any 'Baxter Building' or a '4 Freedoms Plaza'."

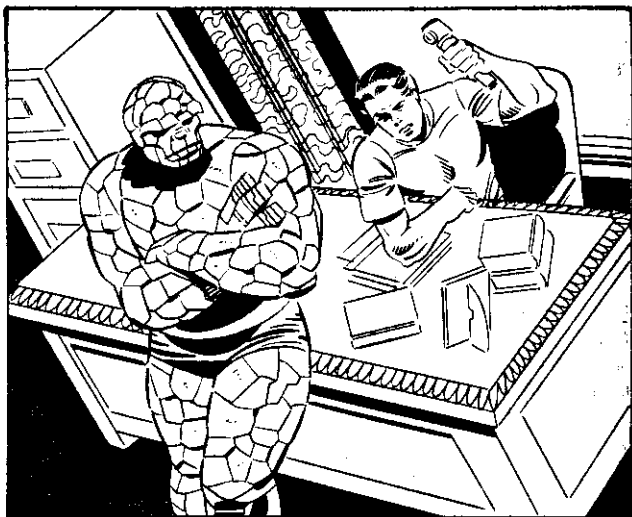
"Died?" you question, walking toward Richards. "Johnny and Sue, dead? How? When?" You lean heavily on the desk, your heart feeling like a dead weight inside your rocky shell.

"I sent them up in an experimental rocket ship. It blew up. Years ago. You were piloting, Ben, you should know!" Richards leans forward in his chair, head in hands. "I killed them. Only you survived, and you came back changed—a monster. I've spent my life trying to make it up to you, to find a way to return you to normal. My last attempt backfired horribly, causing you to mutate even further. You grew, became enormous. Even more of a threat than before."

He looks up suddenly, and says, "But how is it you can talk? How did you return to your normal size? And how did you regain control? I must run some tests . . ."

"Whoa, there, Stretch, hold yer horses. I'm not who you think I am . . ."

But before you can finish your thought, Richards pulls something that looks like a flashlight from his



desk drawer. "I've waited years for an opportunity to get close enough to use this, Ben, old friend. I said I'd end your misery, and now I will!"

You're looking down the barrel of a loaded flashlight wielded by your best friend (or this world's equivalent). You have no idea what the flashlight-device does, but you're about to find out—the hard way. Your only chance is to try and grab it away from him before he can set it off.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **135**. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **142**.

58 You grab the three devices and prepare to throw them.

"This is all right!" you roar, as you pelt the kid with them. Subtract 1 Karma point for showing so little regard for the Watcher's property. Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, go to **36**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **25**.

59 You hurl the multi-ton hunk of machine at your foe. It strikes him a devastating blow, burying him in rubble.

"That woulda put me out fer the count, so I don't figure good-lookin' there is gonna be gettin' up any time soon."

You look around for something you can use to bind Grimm and soon find a pair of manacles attached to what's left of the machine in the center of the room, now a crumbling hulk. Clamping these onto your fallen alter ego, you wait for him to come around.

While you wait, you take a quick tour of the lab and find, to your amazement, that the Ben Grimm of this world, never having become the Thing, was forced to develop his mind. The walls of the lab are covered not with celebrity photos, but diplomas.

"Sheesh," you say, "this guy's a real engineering whiz. Could I o' done that if things had worked out different?"

"Of course you could, you fool. You had it in you all the time."

You turn to your alter ego, now quite wide awake, as he continues. "You graduated from college, you were a test pilot—one of the best. Do you think any idiot could have done that? All Ben Grimm ever needed was a chance, a chance I got. Now, you've ruined it all. For the second time in my life, you've come along and blown it all."

"Waitaminute there, buster! Maybe I'm guilty o' keepin' you off that rocket an' maybe I'm not. But as for this 'second time' business, you tryin' to tell me a big-time superhero—an' a rich one, ta boot—you can't rebuild that dern machine there?"

"That's right. I can't. It depended upon a power cell fueled by cosmic rays from a piece of Reed Richards's experimental rocket. Without the cosmic rays that chunk of metal provided, the machine is useless. It can never be rebuilt."

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **41**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **35**.

60 You figure your best bet is to find the Fantastic Four of this world. The Thing of this world will surely offer you some blood when you explain what it's for. And what better place to hide from an angry mob than in 4 Freedoms Plaza.

Luckily, the back alleys of the Yancy Street area are unchanged from your days here as a youth. You duck from alleyway to alleyway and eventually shake your pursuers. Finally, you peer out from an alley at . . . an old warehouse standing where 4 Freedoms Plaza should be!

Forgetting about the effect you seem to have on people in this world, you walk dazedly toward the strange building. Pedestrians scatter as you approach, and you hear the squeal of brakes as you cross the street, oblivious to traffic signals. You walk right up to the front door, and there above the door, you read the words, "VVD Enterprises."

"VVD Enterprises? What the heck is that? Where's 4 Freedoms Plaza? Where's the Fantastic Four?"

You hear footsteps behind you and, spinning, see a man with a baseball bat creeping up on you. You grab him by the lapels and lift him high above your head.

"Gee," you say with a snarl, "I sure do hate it when pip-squeaks sneak up on me like they're gonna clobber me, ya know? It just gets my dander up. Now, suppose ya tell me what VVD Enterprises is and where the Fantastic Four might be?"

The small man's eyes bug out in terror, but he manages to stammer out an answer. "I . . . I . . . I thought you was pea-brained, an' that you was bigger. I mean, lots bigger . . . I, uh, I . . . oh, never mind. I mean, I'm sorry, Mr. Thing. Oh god, oh god, oh god . . ."

"Sonny boy, quit yer yammerin' and get on with the explanation or this could get ugly."

"Ye . . . ye . . . yes, sir. VVD Enterprises. Victor Von Doom Enterprises. Where Doctor Doom works. And I don't know any Fantastic Four. I ain't never heard of the Fantastic Four. Honest."

"No Fantastic Four? But there's a Thing? This gets

stranger by the minute. Now what gives with Doc Doo—"

But before you can get an answer from the little fellow, he faints dead away. You set him down on the now deserted sidewalk and walk through the front door. "Heck," you say, "might as well just barge right in. Things couldn't get any stranger!"

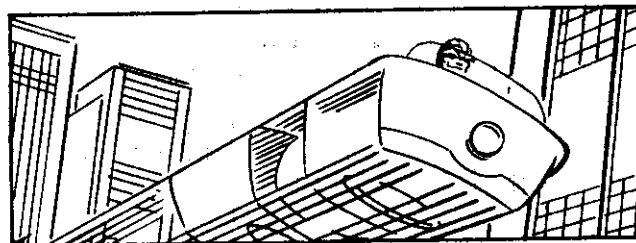
You pass a snoring guard and check out the building directory on the wall by a bank of elevators. Two listings interest you very much—the Cosmic Radiology lab and the Office of the President. The first sounds as if it might provide a cure for the disease that afflicts you and your teammates; the second sounds as if it might lead you to Doctor Doom, and that might lead to all sorts of things . . .

If you want to visit the Cosmic Radiology lab, turn to **71**. If you want to check out the Office of the President, go to **83**.

61 You're outside the King's Bowling Supply warehouse. You can only see one way to get in—the front door. Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **50**. If the total is 4 or less, go to **126**.

62 "All I gotta do is flash this here light on Suzie, an' she'll be up an' around in no time. Then she can use the Cosmic Control Rod to effect a cure!"

Move on to **33**.



63 Opening the alleyway door would be noisy and destructive. No sense calling attention to yourself. You return to the front of the warehouse and enter as cautiously as you can. Turn to **126**.

64 You push the raised stud on the green tube. Instantly, the tube changes from what looks like a distorted blood-pressure sleeve to a sealed beaker, not unlike those Reed uses to collect specimens and samples. *Sheesh! I ain't no big brain, but I do know that this gizmo ain't gonna get me anywhere. 'Spect the Watcher wouldn't keep it layin' around for nothing', though, you tell yourself. You press a bump on the device, and it returns to its original form. Guess I'd best pocket this and figger out if these other two gadgets kin get me anywhere useful.*

If you want to try the blue device, turn to **54**.

If you want to try the red one, go to **73**.



65 You hesitate for a moment. You're close enough to Alicia to notice the similarity between the jeweled handle of Kingpin's walking stick and the jeweled necklace around Alicia's neck. You've confronted evil in many forms, but never have you encountered a human being

who would stoop as low as Kingpin. The necklace . . . each jewel is a small explosive!

You stop, hoping to buy some time, and consider your options. You look back at Kingpin and see him playing with the handle of his walking stick. He looks straight at you and smiles as evil a smile as you've ever seen. In that instant, you know Alicia's dead unless you do something . . . quickly. Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **75**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **260**.

66 *Whoa, Nellie, you think. This bozo's goin' off the deep end. Gotta put a stop to this fast.*

"Listen to me, pal. I can understand how you feel about losin' yer friends, but I'm here to save mine. Ya get me? Ya gotta help me or they'll die again. Think about it . . ."

This calms him noticeably.

"Yes, yes, of course you're right. I'm . . . sorry for that outburst. Of course, I must help you. I must. Come over here," he says, motioning toward a large machine in the center of the room.

"What's this?" you ask. "Looks like somethin' outta Doc Doom's dungeon."

"So, there's a Doctor Doom in your world, too, eh? It figures—tyranny exists wherever man sets foot. This device may one day help to put an end to Doom, though I suspect its first use will be against the filth and plague of Communism—I hope so, at any rate. I want to repay them for what they did to Tony Stark!"

Oh, boy, you think, I was right. This guy is a little off the deep end. Can't shake the feelin' this machine ain't quite kosher. But you keep your thoughts to yourself, for the moment. Turn to 44.

67 You land and leave Alicia with the police. You then rush back into the Empire State Building, ride the elevator to the top, and pick up Grimm. Turn to **45**.

68 "Come on, pal," you taunt, "gimme yer best shot. Let's see what yer made of."

You stand your ground, waiting to see what your foe does. He bellows with rage and lets loose with twin repulsor rays at maximum intensity. The air is split by the sound of shattering bolts of energy as the rays push their way toward you. You brace yourself and, for a moment, seem to be holding your own.

Your foe advances toward you and his repulsor rays push you back until you're braced solidly against the machine behind you and can move no more.

"That's . . . as . . . far . . . as I go," you spit from between gritted teeth. Grimm seems not to hear as he continues toward you.

Finally, he gets close enough to touch you, repulsors still operating at peak capacity. His armored gloves meet your battered palms.

"This is it, monster," he says, "this is the end!"

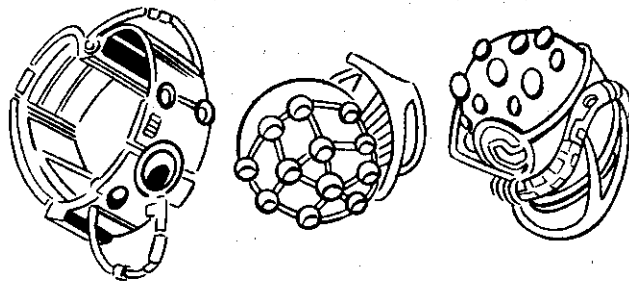
You haven't the energy to respond. All you can do is hang on. Then, your eyes widen as you see his palms begin to smoke. The repulsors howl even louder—the noise is so loud it causes you physical pain (subtract 1 point from your Health point total).

There's a sudden burst of smoke and flame from your foe's armor as his chest plate explodes, no longer able to contain the force of repulsor rays turned back upon themselves. You've won this particular duel, but it's a hard-won victory.

Your foe's hands drop to his sides and he slides to the floor. You join him there in blissful unconsciousness.

Make an Endurance FEAT roll. If the total is 18 or more, go to **29**. If the total is 17 or less, turn to **8**.

69 Quick as you are, your battle-tested reflexes aren't quick enough—the kid sprays you with the contents of the canister he's carrying. It's the Terrigen Mist! You feel . . . different, but looking at yourself, you seem unchanged, and your strength is definitely unaffected. You leap to attack. You look around you and see



three odd-looking devices—one red, one blue, and one green. If you want to throw these at the Inhuman, turn to **58**. If you want to attack hand-to-hand, go to **47**.

70 You don't like fighting cops, but you've got to get into the Penthouse Club before Kingpin's party starts—too much is at stake here. You pull your punches and still defeat the policemen without too much difficulty. Subtract 1 Karma point for fighting innocent men and women who were just doing their jobs.

Once inside the building, you climb the stairs and hide in the stairwell where you wait for the evening's festivities to begin. Turn to **18**.

71 *Hmmm . . . Cosmic Radiology.* You're not sure what's going on, but if somebody in this world is doing research on cosmic rays, they might be able to help you! You decide to check it out.

You bound up the stairs four at a time and prowl the halls of the VVD Enterprises Building. The odor of chemicals and the sound of heavy machinery are everywhere, but no one is in sight.

You finally reach the Cosmic Radiology laboratory and, to your surprise, you hear a familiar voice murmuring within. You burst through the door, shouting, "Stretch, it's you! I had a hunch it'd be smart to check

this place out!"

Reed Richards turns, shocked at your sudden and unexpected entrance, but instead of joy, you see fear writ large on his face.

"You . . . what are you doing here? And how did you return to your normal size? But wait, you can't understand me . . . the shock of transformation caused total memory loss. You're not Ben Grimm any longer . . . you're a monster! Must notify Doom."

He reaches for the phone on his workbench.

Turn to **93**.

72 "Holy cow, I must be slippin'! I almost forgot—Suzie made this doohickie work before once long ago; maybe she can do it again . . . If I can wake her."

"Do you have anything that might bring her out of the coma she's in, Ben?" Doctor Banner asks. "Any cosmic ray-charged blood? Anything at all?"

If you have any cosmic ray-charged blood, go to **53**.

If you have a flashlight-like device from another dimension, turn to **62**.

If you have tried these things without success, or if you have neither, turn to **3**.

73 You push the raised stud on the red sphere and find yourself inside a strange vehicle. You reach for the small red sphere suspended in mid-air before you, take a deep breath, and press a second stud that has appeared there.

Suddenly, your world is turned upside down. You feel yourself stretching and twisting like a superhuman moebius strip. You fight off a feeling of vertigo and hold tight. Turn to **28**.

74 You feel woozy, but you suck in your breath and hold it, having inhaled just a little of the gas. You stagger backward, dropping the Thing head, and fall to the

ground. As you try to fight your way back to normalcy, your foe awakens.

"You pack quite a punch," he says. "I've had about enough fighting for one day, though. Seems to me we have too many mysteries to solve here, mysteries we can solve a lot better by talking than by fighting."

"Yeah, right. Whatever you say," you respond, too dizzy to care about much of anything besides keeping your lunch down.

The Thing of this world picks his helmet up off the floor, puts it back on, and slings you over his shoulder. You're too weak to resist.

"Come on, we're going to the Grimm Building."

"Yeah, right. Whatever you say," you repeat.

By the time you reach the building, you're feeling well enough to walk. "What say ya put me down? If any o' my fans saw me like this, I'd never live it down!"

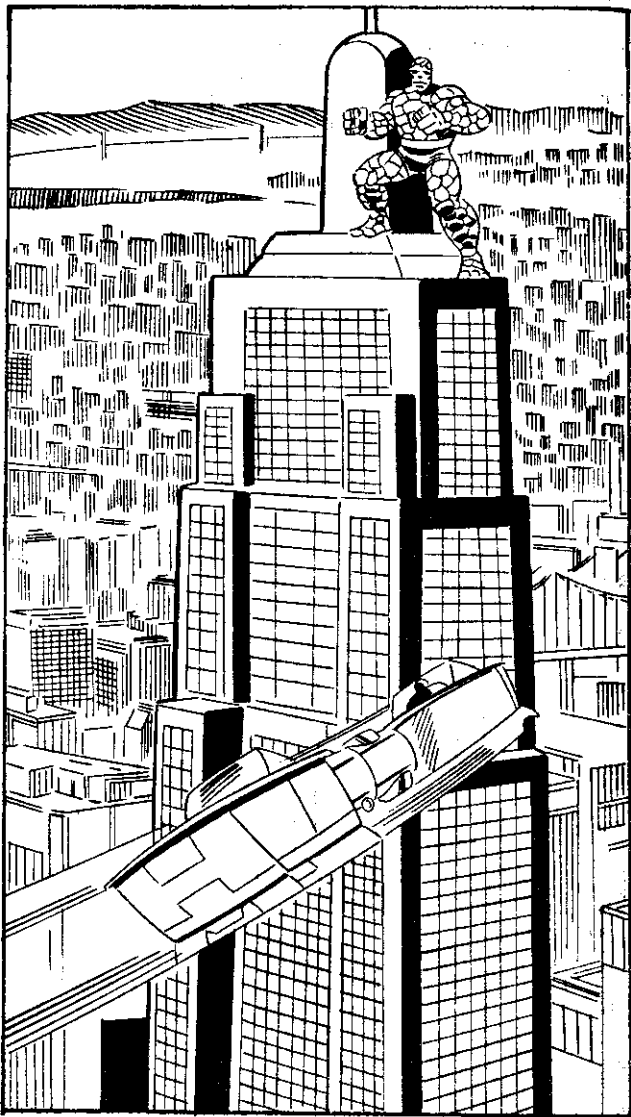
Grimm sets you down. You accompany him into the Grimm Building. Turn to **178**.

75 You cover the distance between yourself and Alicia in no time, grabbing the necklace even as the Kingpin's hand twists on the shaft of his walking stick.

One thought rushes through your mind. *Hope I'm right about the bomb being in this necklace.*

Sure enough, the bomb bursts in your hand before you can fling it away. Alicia faints, but you're pretty sure she's unharmed. Add 2 to your Karma point total. You weren't as lucky as Alicia. Your rocky skin can withstand a lot of damage—you've withstood direct hits from light tank weapons. Still, you never tried to catch a tank shell . . . your hand is a mess. Roll one die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total. From now on, subtract 1 from your Fighting score before making Fighting FEAT rolls.

Once you're sure Alicia is okay, you turn to see how the Thingpin is faring. You're not surprised to find the Thingpin carrying the unconscious form of the Kingpin by his belt.



"Listen, friend," he says. "I'm in your debt. If there's anything I can do for you, just name it."

"Thanks, pal. I haven't got time for palaverin', so I'll keep this short an' sweet . . ."

You tell the Thingpin your story and, to your amazement, he believes you—no questions asked. *Guess us Things stick together!* you think. He gives you the blood you need and you prepare to leave. Turn to **245**.

76 You reach the Empire State Building and circle the upper stories from some distance away.

Your eyes strain to catch a glimpse of the monster and the girl. Suddenly, you spot them. But . . . no, it can't be—the girl, it's Alicia Masters, long the love of your life, now the wife of Johnny Storm, at least in your world. In this dimension, it looks as if the Thing has other ideas. And what a Thing! The Thing of this world is colossal. *Looks like a regular Thing Kong. Must be 40 feet tall! And ugly? . . . whew!*

You're pretty far away, but you just might be close enough to get off a blast—the only blast—from Doctor Doom's flashlight-device. If you want to give it a shot, move on to **188**. If you want to wait for a better opportunity, go to **179**.

77 You put your back into the task of forcing the door open. It's a heavy door—far heavier than it needs to be to protect bowling equipment—but you throw a little more weight into it and yank the door clear off its hinges. *Hope no one heard the noise*, you think belatedly as the clatter rings through the alleyway. You set the door to one side and enter. Turn to **110**.

78 You open the throttles wide and point the Fantasticar toward the ground. You drop below the falling Alicia and pull the flying machine out of its dive beneath her. You've never flown better in your life—but it's not

good enough. Alicia falls past you. The fire department waits below with a huge net, but you know Alicia's chances of survival are slim at best. Turn to **55**.

79 You return to the city of the Inhumans, Gorvath by your side. The Inhumans are grateful, and offer to help you, if they can. They give you a small canister of Terrigen Mist. They also offer to help you return to Earth. If you need the help, turn to **185**. If your spaceship is intact, go to **197**.

80 Important as your mission here is, you can't fight cops. You give up, hoping you'll be able to explain what's going on.

Several hours later, you've managed to convince them you're not a criminal mastermind, and you're released. It's getting on toward morning and you realize with a start that you're probably too late—the Kingpin's party is no doubt long over. Grabbing a newspaper from a nearby machine, you find that you are right. Your alter ego attended the party. There was much death and destruction. Alicia was among the casualties. You lose all your Karma points.

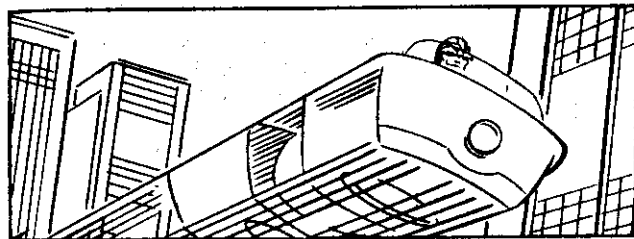
There is nothing more to accomplish here. If you want to try to get blood elsewhere, use the Watcher's device again, and go to **284**. As you activate the device, you must subtract 1 from your Health point total because the disease is taking its toll. You may prefer to use the Watcher's device to head home (**268**), also subtracting 1 from your Health point total as you do.

81 You pilot your craft expertly through the black void of the Negative Zone. Knowing what you do about the disease, you begin searching for Annihilus, the keeper of the Cosmic Control Rod. *One good zap from the Rod and we'll all be good as new*, you think. *Rotate a couple o' cells, and, pow, the Fantastic Four's back in*

action . . . now all I gotta do is find Annihilus.

Eventually, you come upon him. He stands imperiously upon an asteroid, gazing down at a planet far below. You land on the asteroid and leave your craft. Annihilus is an old and deadly foe who, upon your approach, stiffens noticeably, preparing for battle.

You feel a sudden rush of adrenalin. The sensation passes quickly, but leaves your knees a little weak. Subtract 1 point from your Health point total. If you want to give him the battle he expects, hoping to take the Cosmic Control Rod from him by force, turn to **91**. If you want to try reasoning with the self-proclaimed ruler of the Negative Zone, go to **100**.



82 Your disappointment grows, as you realize the machine you hoped would save the Fantastic Four will never be built.

"Have you got anything else that might save the Fantastic Four—anything? Time is of the essence, Ben. Help us . . . help yourself!"

If you've got any cosmic ray-charged blood, turn to **53**.

If you have something from the Negative Zone, proceed to **23**.

If you have neither blood nor something from the Negative Zone, move on to **3**.

83 Office of the President . . . sure sounds like the place to find Doom. Maybe Doom will have answers to some of your questions. You bound up the stairs four at

a time and prowl the halls of the VVD Enterprises Building. The odor of chemicals and the sound of heavy machinery are everywhere, but you see no one.

Finally, you reach the President's office. You push open the door and bully your way past a very shocked receptionist. Then, you're in the office of Dr. Doom. Doom whirls at your sudden entrance, unruffled, assured, ready for anything. Turn to **116**.

84 You feel woozy. Then you feel nothing. Everything goes black. Turn to **8**.

85 A split second before the Thingpin is upon you, you realize you can kill two birds with one stone and maybe save Alicia in the bargain, if you just play your cards right. The Thingpin'll be expecting a punch, but you've got something else in mind—all you've got to do is use his own momentum against him, throw him straight into Kingpin, and take 'em both out at once. You brace yourself.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **112**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **123**.

86 It's time for you to leave. You pull the Watcher's device from the pocket in your uniform and activate it. Turn to **268**.

87 You leap to your feet with surprising speed and tense your powerful leg muscles. The Human Torch, thinking himself safely out of your reach, continues to circle just below the high ceiling of your bedroom. When he gets close, you leap.

"Hah! Gotcha fly-boy!" Your hands close around the Torch's midsection and you pull him toward you. "Howja like a little bearhug Benjie-style?"

You start putting the squeeze on your little buddy.

Your grip is strong, but as you squeeze, the Torch begins to increase the heat of his flame.

"Hey! This is starting to hurt, Squirt!"

"Well, what did you expect, you big gorilla? Let go, willya? You're breaking my ribs!"

You let him go (but not before his flame causes you some real problems—subtract 1 point from your Health point total). As soon as you release your grip, the Torch rises out of reach, holding his chest. You think again about the water pipes in the walls.

"All right, Match-Head, I'm gonna teach you a lesson you won't ever forget!"

Turn to **38**.

88 You open the throttles wide and point the Fantasticar toward the ground. You drop below the falling Alicia and pull the flying machine out of its dive beneath her. You've never flown better in your life—and a lucky thing, too. Anything less than the best flying of your life would have resulted in Alicia being seriously injured or killed. But you are flying your best, and you scoop her up to the cheers of those on the street below. Add 2 to your Karma score and proceed to **67**.

89 The truck has slowed enough that you think you can leap onto the back before it gets too far away. You tense your muscles, wishing you were on the Moon where you could leap farther (and where it wouldn't hurt so much if you didn't make it!). You leap and fall to the ground just inches short! Instantly, a suited man runs over to you, checks to see that you're okay, and recommends you head back to headquarters for a little rest—"Big doin's tonight, boss," he reminds you.

The fall did only 1 point of damage to your Health, but you're a bit dazed by everything that's happened to you in the last few minutes. Not knowing what else to do, you allow the man to escort you to the door of a nearby skyscraper—on Yancy Street! Turn to **210**.

90 The young Inhuman is unmoved by your words. You see him tense as if to attack. Turn to **69**.

91 Fighting off the odd sensation—a symptom of the disease, no doubt—you turn to face Annihilus. “Annihilus, ol’ Buddy, You’re lookin’ ugly as ever. Sorry I ain’t got time for chitchat, but I’m gonna be borrowin’ yer Cosmic Control Rod for a while, okay?”

You cover the distance between you and Annihilus in no time. As you charge, Annihilus utters an inhuman cry that chills you to the bone. He’s ready for you. He doesn’t question your sudden attack—you and he are enemies. That is explanation enough for your hostile action. Annihilus understands this. You’re upon him in an instant. Despicable as he is, Annihilus is a formidable foe, whose strength dwarfs that of most men. Luckily, you’re not most men.

Make a Strength FEAT roll. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **109**. If the total is 16 or less, go to **120**.

92 *Okay, he’s got repulsor rays like Iron Man, you think. Big deal. I get close enough, an’ they won’t do him any good.*

You charge toward him and, judging by the look on his face, take him completely by surprise. He continues firing his repulsors. The only way to reach Grimm is to dodge the rays the way you used to dodge tacklers on the football field back in your college days.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **212**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **278**.

93 He punches up the number and whispers into the phone. “No . . . no . . . normal size. He seems calm enough . . . don’t know why he hasn’t attacked. Yes . . . Very well.” He hangs up and turns toward you. “I don’t know why you’re here or why you haven’t killed me, but I’m grateful. Do you understand me?”

You nod. “Of course I understand you, Stretch. What-taya think I am, an idjit or somethin’?”

“No, no, of course not,” he says quickly, as if talking to a child who’s gotten hold of a live hand grenade. “Would you come with me? There’s someone who would like to see you.”

If you go with Reed Richards, turn to **104**. If you’d rather stay here, turn to **57**.

94 You put your back into the task of forcing the door open. It’s a heavy door—far heavier than it needs to be to protect bowling equipment, you think, and far heavier than you expected. It doesn’t want to budge. The disease must be weakening you (subtract 1 Health point from your total). You return to the front of the warehouse and enter cautiously.

Turn to **126**.

95 The moment is charged with tension. The Ghost stands rigid and solid waiting to see what you do. You stand equally motionless, trying to decide what to do. In the end, there isn’t any choice: the arch-villain stands, glowing evilly, surrounded by your friends.

Glowing? you marvel. The Ghost musta picked up a new power while he was out o’ sight. But I’ll deal with that later. Right now, I got some friends to save.

Your mind made up, you reach down and grab a handy medicine ball—a handy 1000-pound, Thing-style medicine ball—and hurl it toward the Ghost, hoping to catch him unawares, before he can make himself untouchable. It’s a nice try, but not good enough. He shimmers and fades, and the ball passes right through him, destroying the wall behind him.

“I hoped not to have to do this, Thing. Intangibility is the one thing I can’t afford right now, but you leave me no choice . . .”

What’s he talkin’ about, you wonder. Intangibility was always his first, best, line of defense.



The Ghost drifts toward you, looking for all the world like the apparitions from which he derives his name. You try desperately to think of something you can do, some way to use your strength against an untouchable foe. You come up with nothing, but it doesn't matter—to your astonishment, the Ghost stops just before he reaches you. His eyes widen in pain and amazement. A scream leaves his lips, and he begins to glow even brighter, bathing your body in a cold, yellow light.

Then he's gone.

You stand in 4 Freedoms Plaza, alone, wracking your brain, trying to figure out what just happened. You rush over to your fallen comrades. They're out cold, and they don't look good. Could the Ghost have been telling the truth about a disease? He didn't seem to be too much in control of his power . . . and his exit didn't look planned.

You pick your friends up off the ground and carry them tenderly to their quarters. Then you return to your own quarters and spend the rest of the night trying to think of a way to fight a killer disease. You come up with nothing.

The next morning, you awaken to find Sue and Johnny still in bed where you left them. They're alive, but they won't be going anywhere for a while. Reed, bless him, is in his lab. Though weak almost beyond imagining, he insists on running tests to determine just what the Red Ghost did to the Fantastic Four.

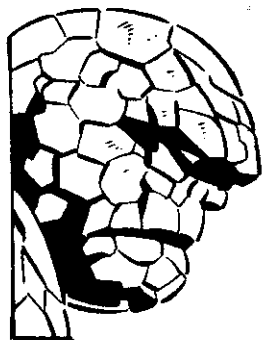
You seem to be nearly unaffected by the Ghost's attack, so you act as Reed's guinea pig. Finally, Reed completes his tests and staggers to a chair. He looks haggard, and, as he speaks, each word seems to take its toll. "Ben, the Ghost passed some kind of disease along to us . . . Affects only cosmic ray-charged blood. Disease acts fast. We're all infected. Mutates blood cells . . . have to find way to reverse mutative effect . . ." Before he can get out the next word, he falls unconscious.

What did Reed mean by "reverse mutative effect?" you wonder. Again, you fall deep into thought. Finally, a possibility springs to mind: If the disease mutates

cells the way Reed said it does, reversing the mutation would cure you and your friends. Reed once said something about your old foe Annihilus, ruler of the Negative Zone . . . something about his Cosmic Control Rod having the power to change the atomic structure of matter. Maybe it would work on living matter and change your mutated cells, effecting a cure.

You call Alicia Masters and ask her to watch over the fallen members of the Fantastic Four while you're gone. She's out of town for an art opening, but when she hears the news, she agrees to return at once. She arrives not long after.

To enter the Negative Zone and find Annihilus, turn to 244.



96 "Heck, I don't have to think about that. I gotta save the Match Head. He an' Alicia just found happiness together. I ain't gonna be responsible for bustin' 'em up. Reed and Sue had their time together, an' me, nobody cares about me."

Having made your decision, you rush to Johnny Storm's bedside. Without hesitating, you aim the flashlight-like device at him and activate it. Almost instantly, the color begins to return to his cheeks. Moments later, he comes out of his coma. Though still terribly weak, he tries to sit up, to speak.

"B- B- Ben? Is that you?"

"Yeah, Johnny, it's me. Your days as the Human Torch are over, but you're gonna be okay."

"The others, Ben, how are they?"

"Uh, we'll talk later. You rest now, okay?"

Hours pass, hours in which you realize how weary you've become, hours in which you wonder whether you made the right decision.

Gotta lay down. Gotta rest, you think. You head for your quarters, hoping to lie down for a while and get some sleep. The disease is catching up with you. Roll the die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total.

You sleep fitfully for some time. Then Johnny Storm, looking weak, but very much alive, comes to you.

"Hey old timer, Dr. Banner told me what you did. I'm so grateful I could pick you up and give you a bear hug, but . . . wasn't there any other way?"

"I'm afraid not, squirt. I didn't like havin' to make a choice, but there it was, an' I guess I voted for young love. I didn't want you an' Alicia being separated so soon after ya found each other. Know what I mean?"

"Sure, I understand that, but we've always managed to survive in the past, I can't believe it's over. There's got to be some way!"

If you have any cosmic ray-charged blood, go to **53**.

If you have some plans, turn to **48**.

If you have something from the Negative Zone, turn to **15**.

If you have none of these things, or have already tried them without success, turn to **3**.

97 Your mind races. If you don't think of something, you're going to plummet to your doom. That's it! The Watcher's device—it can transport you to safety. You didn't get the blood you needed, but there are bound to be other dimensions, other Things.

You pull the sphere out of a pocket in your uniform and push the small bump that appears on its surface. Instantly, you're enclosed in the large sphere. Hands on

the controls, you're ready to jump to another dimension.

Turn to **141**.

98 The truck has slowed enough that you think you can leap onto the back before it gets too far away. You tense your muscles, wishing you were back on the Moon where you could leap farther (and where it wouldn't hurt so much if you didn't make it!). You leap . . . and just barely manage to grab the rear of the truck! The driver crashes through the roadblocks and speeds crosstown, heading for the waterfront district. Finally, the truck stops and you hear the driver let loose a blast from the airhorns. You leap off and move on to **61**.

99 "Yours is an interesting story . . . and not at all what I expected. In this world, things happened differently. You see, Reed Richards asked me to pilot his spaceship, but I never made that flight. I was selfish, wanted no part of Reed's scheme. He took the ship up himself. It crashed. Reed, Sue, Johnny—they . . . died. I never forgave myself."

"That's rough, pal," you respond. "I guess spending my life as a monster ain't so bad—least I was there to set the rocket's autopilot before the cosmic rays got the better of me. We changed, but we survived."

"How I envy you . . . After the rocket disaster, I decided to devote my life to testing experimental aircraft," your twin continues, "and got a job working for Tony Stark. As far as the world knows, he never returned from a trip to Southeast Asia. I was named as his replacement. And that's how I got where I am today."

You still look puzzled, and Grimm says, "But that doesn't answer the key question, does it? In your world, Ben Grimm and the Thing are one and the same. That's true here, too, but not in quite the same way. Come with me and your question will be answered."

You follow Grimm through the empty corridors of the

just-dedicated building until you reach what seems to be a blank wall. There, Grimm touches the buckle of his belt, and you notice that it has the familiar FF symbol on it. Seeing your stare, he says, "'For Freedom'—FF—it's the only fight worth fighting."

"Uh, yeah, right," you stammer, amazed at how the familiar can seem so strange in an alternate dimension.

Then, an elevator door opens in the previously blank wall! You step in, and your companion says, "Get ready for a rapid ascent."

The elevator is motionless one second and anything but motionless the next. "Holy cow, you weren't kidding about that rapid ascent business!" you grunt as the elevator rises as rapidly as any rocket ship you've ever piloted.

"I work constantly to make sure no outsiders discover the secret of the upper stories of this complex—can't jeopardize freedom to inferiors. I was counting on your physical prowess to protect you from the acceleration."

After seconds that seem like minutes, the elevator stops, and you enter a high-tech world matched, in your experience, only by Reed Richards's lab. But you're not much concerned with the machines, for your eye is caught by the glass display cases that line the lab walls—cases displaying powered body armor.

The lab looks like an Iron Man museum. You see early Iron Man armor prototypes, later models, and, to your astonishment, a series of armor suits made to look like you—the Thing.

Grimm explains: "Tony Stark did return from Southeast Asia, bringing with him the secret of powered armor. He lived just long enough to reveal those secrets to me. Then, he succumbed to a heart ailment. I continued his work, with the assistance of a few trusted members of Stark's research team. We fashioned suits of armor designed to strike terror in the hearts of communists and other evildoers. We fashioned them in the shape of the orange monster responsible for the death of Reed Richards, Sue Storm, and Johnny Storm . . . in your image! We fashioned them so we—I—could pre-

serve the saner things of this world. Do you understand? Do you?"

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **66**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **56**.



100 "Annihilus, I know you an' me've been enemies since the day we first met—an' I wouldn't have it any other way—but I need yer help . . ."

He listens impassively as you tell him of your predicament. But he stands, unmoved, unmoving.

I don't know why I bothered, you think. I shoulda just clobbered 'im.

But before you get a chance to clobber anyone, Annihilus speaks, his bone-chilling voice reverberating throughout the Negative Zone.

"I will do something for you," he says, "if you will do something for me."

You're shocked at this response, but not too shocked to respond yourself. "Name it, pal."

"The planet below. It vexes me. They have developed a weapon of such devastating power that it will surely result in the destruction of this universe. Bring the weapon to me."

"Uh, I don't much like the sound o' this . . ."

"You said, 'name it,' and I have. You can bring this

weapon to me, or I can destroy the entire planet and refuse to aid you—the inhabitants of the planet and your accursed friends are condemned to death. Bring the weapon to me and the planet lives, you live, your friends live. Choose."

If you think the whole deal sounds fishy, and you don't want to do Annihilus's dirty-work, turn to **130**. If you agree to his terms, go to **139**.

101 The kid is convinced by your words. Together, you return to Attilan. Turn to **79**.

102 The monster lunges and, to your horror, you both topple off the edge. You're plummeting toward the street over 100 stories below!

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn quickly to **97**. If the total is 4 or less, go even more quickly to **118**.

103 You don't have a heck of a lot of time—there's folks dying back home . . . Got to get the blood, save Alicia, stop Kingpin, and get going. No telling how Reed and the rest of the Fantastic Four are doing . . .

You set yourself up to throw a punch that'll stop the Thingpin cold. You're counting on the fact that he's out of shape to help. Here he is! Get ready . . .

Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 13 or more, move on to **136**. If the total is 12 or less, turn to **145**.

104 You follow Richards into the hallway and up several flights of stairs. Eventually, you reach the President's Office.

"This was gonna be my next stop," you say, but Richards makes no reply. You breeze past the receptionist, but not before you notice the look of utter terror on her face. Then, you're inside.

You were ready for just about anything, anything but what you see: The Doctor Doom you've come to know and hate, the mad, armored supervillain, isn't here. In his stead, you see the Victor Von Doom you knew in college—arrogant, to be sure, but brilliant, handsome . . . and no armor!

Regaining your composure, you say, "Hope you got some answers for me, pal, 'cause I got some friends to save back home, an' it looks like they may need some help here, too. Now, what have you done with the Fantastic Four?"

"Certainly, Grimm, certainly. All of your questions will be answered. But first, let's send this lackey away, shall we? Richards, leave us."

"Yes, sir, Doctor Doom. I'll be in my office if you need me." And with that, Richards takes his leave.

You look at Reed Richards, an old and dear friend, and see a broken man. It saddens you, and makes you all the more determined to figure out what Doctor Doom is up to. Turn to **124**.

105 You tense your powerful leg muscles and leap as the Human Torch passes, but he's ready for you and dodges out of reach. Your fingers burn as they pass through his semi-solid form, but you can't get a purchase on him.

"Quit yer stallin'. Sooner or later I'm gonna get you. Ya might as well make it sooner."

The Human Torch makes no reply, but stops in mid-air to one side of your bed. "You couldn't catch me if your life depended on it, Ben. Quit fooling yourself!"

"Oh, yeah?" you reply.

You roll off the bed and make another grab at the Torch, but he really is faster than you. He darts easily out of reach.

"Why'n't ya stand still so's I can turn ya into a little pile o' kindling, ya blamed chicken?"

*This little fight may be beginning to get out of hand, you think. Turn to **144**.*

106 Having made your decision, you rush to Sue Richards's bedside. Without hesitating, you aim the flashlight-like device at Sue and activate it. Almost instantly, the color begins to return to her cheeks. Moments later, she comes out of her coma. Though still terribly weak, she tries to sit up, to speak.

"B-B-Ben? Is that you?"

"Yeah, Suzie, it's me. You're gonna be okay."

"The others, Ben, how are they?"

"Uh, we'll talk later. You rest now, okay?"

Hours pass, hours in which you realize how weary you've become, hours in which you wonder whether you made the right decision.

Gotta lay down. Gotta rest, you think. You head for your quarters, hoping to lie down for a while, get some sleep. The disease is catching up with you. Roll the die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total.

You sleep fitfully for some time. Then Sue Richards, looking weak, but very much alive, comes to you.

"Ben, Dr. Banner and Dr. Pym told me what you did. I'm so very grateful, but . . ." She bursts into tears.

"It's okay, Suzie, I didn't want my god-son growin' up without his mom. Know what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand, Ben, but wasn't there any other way? Any way to save us all?"

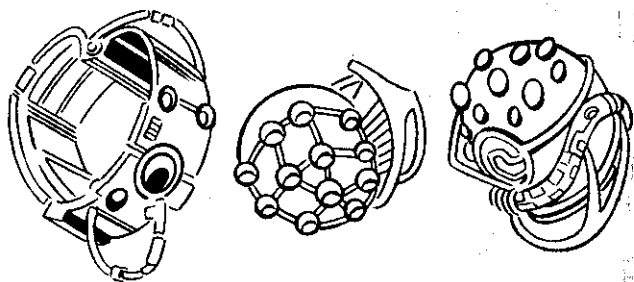
If you have something from the Negative Zone, go to **33**. If you have any cosmic ray-charged blood, proceed to **53**. If you have a set of plans, turn to **48**. If you have tried these other options without success, or if you have none of these things, turn to **3**.

107 You decide that further conversation can only get you into trouble. You nod agreement and study your hands intently. The man shrugs and drops you off in a beautifully decorated office. It appears to be empty.

Looking around, you find curiously business-like memos about Alicia's disappearance. These explain that Alicia, the Thingpin's moll, went to Kingpin in the

naive belief that she could put an end to the gang war by appealing to his sense of humanity. Unfortunately, Kingpin had no sense of humanity. He took her hostage. He sent word to the Thingpin that he was to get out of town, or Alicia was doomed. Kingpin further twisted the knife by coercing Alicia into making a public appearance at his side, threatening to destroy the Thingpin, his underworld empire, and half the Eastern Seaboard, if necessary, if she didn't accompany him to a party—a party taking place this very night!

You wonder if there's anything more to be learned here. If you know where the party is being held and want to head there now, go to **31**. If you don't, or you'd like to stick around and keep looking, turn to **42**.



108 "Yer dern straight you ain't done anything to earn my trust. You may be on the up an' up, but, frankly, I don't have the time to find out."

You get up and pull the green device the Watcher gave you from the pocket in your uniform. You touch it to Grimm's arm, but, as you suspected, Grimm's blood won't do you any good, so the device doesn't draw any.

"Well, it was worth a try. 'Fraid you're no good to me, so I'd better be headin' home. I may just come back here someday to find out what's goin' on. I gotta admit I'm a little curious 'bout how you came up with the imitation Iron Man suit. Be seein' you."

You pull the red device out and touch the control bump that emerges on the interdimensional transporter. And with that, you're gone. Turn to **268**.

109 You battle fiercely, two leviathans on an asteroid orbiting a planet in a strange and distant universe. Annihilus lifts you clear off the ground, and shouts, "Prepare to die, cretin!"

He carries you to the very edge of the asteroid and hoists you high over his head, but with one last sudden burst of strength, you grab one of his wings and hold on for dear life.

"Go ahead, bucko, throw me off. Where I go, you go!"

Annihilus hesitates, giving you the barest fraction of a second to reach around and grab the Cosmic Control Rod he wears mounted on his throat.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **148**. If the total is 4 or less, go to **161**.

110 You find yourself in the strangest "warehouse" you've ever seen. Looks more like a posh apartment—except there are no windows, and the doors are all heavy, metal, and locked.

You overpower the guard and start poking around, looking for . . . well, you're not really sure just what you're looking for. From the outside, the King's Bowling Supply warehouse looked like an ordinary warehouse—inside, it's anything but ordinary. You find yourself in what looks like a high security prison.

You poke about for a while, wandering through maze-like corridors, knocking the occasional guard senseless. Rounding a corner, however, you run head-on into a crowd—a crowd of heavily armed men. They open fire. You duck into a handy doorway, and find yourself in a suite. In the suite you find Alicia Masters!

"Ben, is that you?"

"Yeah, babe, I mean, no, not exactly . . . Aw, heck, we gotta get outa here. I'll explain later!"

Motioning for her to stay behind you, you plow through the crowd of armed men, knocking them down like so many bowling pins.

The next few hours are a blur. After hearing your explanation, Alicia takes you to the Thingpin—your counterpart on this world. In return for saving Alicia's life, he gives you the blood you need.

If you think you have enough blood, and want to return home, turn to **268**.

If you want to try and get more blood, go to **284**.

111 You succeed in grabbing Alicia away from the monster. She seems dazed—it isn't every day she sees two Things!—but she clambers to safety. When you're sure she's safe, you turn your attention to the monster. Turn to **102**.

112 You fall to your back and kick your legs up, catching the Thingpin square in the stomach. His momentum, with a little help from your powerful leg muscles, sends him up and over you. "Awright!" you shout as you complete a somersault and leap to your feet. Kingpin's eyes widen as he realizes what you've done. For the first time tonight, he looks out of control . . . afraid. You like that look.

Kingpin reaches frantically for the jeweled handle of his walking stick. "No!" you shout. That must be the triggering device for the bomb planted on Alicia. However, luck is with you tonight. Before the Kingpin can detonate the bomb, he's struck by 850 pounds of rocky, orange Thingpin!

The two kings of crime roll ignominiously on the ground, giving you time to rush to Alicia's side and rip the explosives from her trim form.

"Who are you?" she cries.

"Baby, ya wouldn't believe it if I told ya!"

You turn back to the battle royal between Kingpin and the Thingpin, only to find that Kingpin has disap-

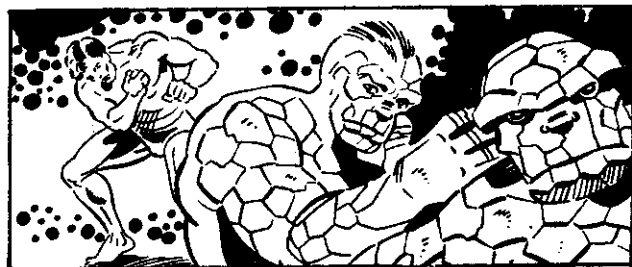
peared, leaving the Thingpin, unconscious, in a heap on the ground.

"Come on," you tell Alicia. "We gotta find a cop, so you'll be safe—and listen, a friendly word of advice. Don't mess around with mugs like me . . . I mean, like the Thingpin. Okay?"

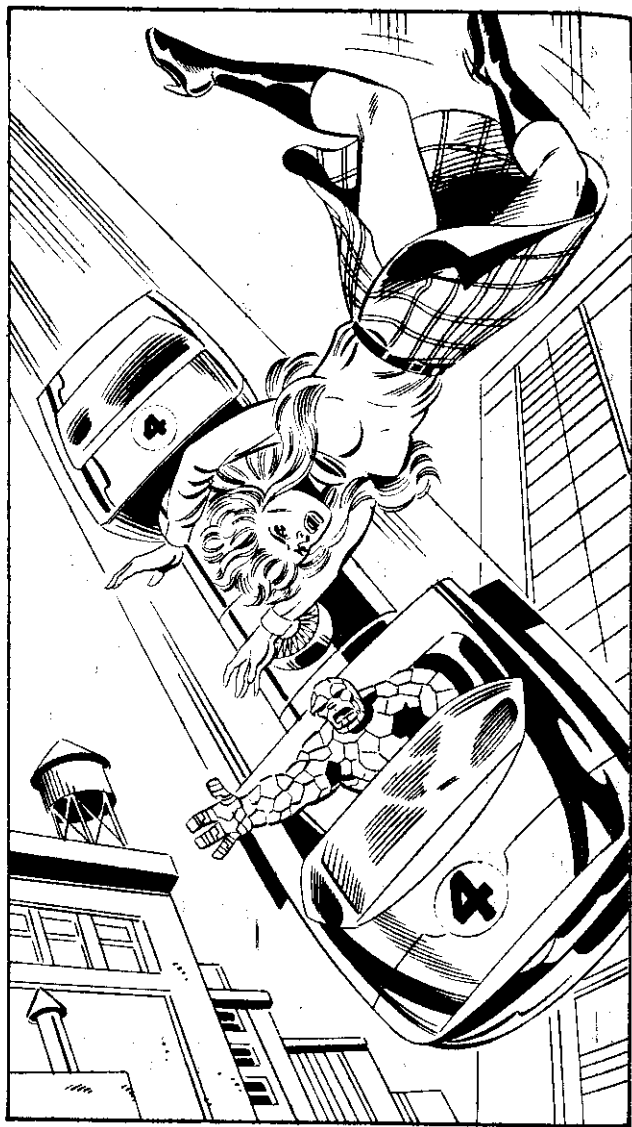
You take Alicia's hand and guide her toward the Thingpin. "Waitaminate," you say, as you pull out the green device the Watcher gave you. You press it, and the Thingpin's arm is enveloped in the cuff. An instant later, the cuff is a beaker and then a cuff again. You've got the blood you need. Turn to **245**.

113 "Hey, kid," you say, "I don't know what's goin' on here, but I'm bettin' it isn't anything that can't be handled by talkin' it out.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **101**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **90**.



114 You concentrate as hard as you can, and a beam of pure white light hits your counterpart. Alicia seems unaffected by the beam, but the same can't be said of the gigantic Thing. He turns into Ben Grimm! But before you can pat yourself on the back, you see, to your horror, that Grimm has dropped Alicia—only a superb pilot (which, luckily, you are) would have any hope of catching her in mid-flight. You open the throttle



wide and dive toward Alicia.

Make a Piloting FEAT roll. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **88**. If the total is 12 or less, go to **78**.

115 You look around in an attempt to find something you can use to counter your foe's repulsor rays. The only thing handy is the machine near which you landed. You rip a huge chunk of the machine loose.

"No . . . leave that machine alone!" Grimm shouts. "It's my life's work! You're destroying the free world's only hope!" He readies his repulsor rays. You know you've got scant seconds to hurl your missile before he lets loose with the rays once again.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **59**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **46**.

116 You're ready for just about anything, anything but what you see: The Doctor Doom you've come to know and hate, the mad, armored supervillain, isn't here. In his stead, you see the Victor Von Doom you knew in college—arrogant, to be sure, but brilliant, handsome . . . and no armor!

Regaining your composure, you say, "Hope you got some answers for me, pal, 'cause I got some friends to save back home, an' it looks like they may need some help here, too. What have you done with the Fantastic Four?" Turn to **124**.

117 "Heck, I don't have to think about that. I got no choice but to save Suzie. Franklin Richards ain't gonna grow up without a mom the way I did. No sir."

Turn to **106**.

118 Your mind races, but it's tough to think clearly when you're falling from the top of one of the world's tallest buildings. You count the seconds, knowing you

haven't long to live.

The fire department stands ready with their huge nets, far below. You hit—hard. Darkness closes in around you, and your adventure is over.

119 “Yer dern straight you ain’t done anything to earn my trust, but I’m all fought out. You got an idea, I’m willin’ to listen. So start talkin’.”

“Well, I could talk myself blue in the face, but I’d rather show you.”

He shrugs his massive shoulders and snaps the bonds that hold him. “How about giving me back my helmet and coming with me?”

“Sure, sure, here you go,” you say, handing him the Thing head and following him out of the shop. “Wonder who’s gonna pay for all the damage we done?”

You follow Grimm back to Yancy Street and into the Grimm Building behind the now empty stage.

The walls of the lobby are covered with photographs of Ben Grimm—and the Thing—meeting world leaders, noted scientists, sports figures, and movie stars. You gape in amazement.

“Hey, you’ve done all right fer yerself. How about tellin’ me *your* story. I’m mighty curious.” Turn to **99**.

120 You and Annihilus attack each other fiercely, two leviathans battling on an asteroid in a strange and distant universe. You’re stronger than Annihilus, but he’s quicker. He throws you to the ground and tears at your survival suit, like a starving animal ripping at its prey.

You hear a sudden, horrifying hiss—the sound of your air rushing out into the void of the Negative Zone. It’s the sound of sure death.

Annihilus has you in his grasp. You feel his fetid breath on your face, his hands tightening around your neck. You hear him laugh and say, “Fool! You thought you could best me, steal the source of my power! You were, of

course, mistaken. But I am nothing if not forgiving. I will cure you, though you sought to destroy me.”

You feel a strange tingling sensation: Annihilus is using the power of the Cosmic Control Rod to alter the cells in your body, destroying the disease that would have killed you.

Then, you hear the inhuman voice of Annihilus again: “You are cured. Enjoy your last moments of life! Enjoy knowing that your friends are dying in your accursed world . . . and there is nothing you can do to save them!”

Your oxygen is almost gone now. The last sound you hear is Annihilus’s malevolent laughter. Your last thought is of paths not chosen. Then all is still and dark. This story is over.

121 You succeed in grabbing Alicia away from the monster. She seems dazed—it isn’t every day she sees two Things!—but she clambers to safety. Unfortunately, the monster has grabbed you.

If you’ve been given a weapon that looks like a flashlight, and you want to use it, turn to **32**.

If you have no such weapon or you prefer to fight the monster, go to **20**.

122 You are completely mesmerized by the pulsating lights. Through your stupor, you realize that Gorrath is escaping, but you don’t much care. Subtract 1 Karma point from your total. The lights are all that matter to you.

Suddenly the Watcher appears. Turn to **251**.

123 You fall to your back and kick your legs out, hoping to catch the Thingpin in the stomach and send him flying over your head . . . right into Kingpin!

It’s a good plan, but it doesn’t work. The Thingpin twists at the last second, and you catch him in the side.

He flies off toward Alicia, instead of toward Kingpin.

"So that's your plan," hisses Kingpin. "You thought you could work together to defeat me. You fools! Now watch as Alicia dies!"

He holds his walking stick out at chest height, one hand on the shaft, the other on the jeweled handle. He gives the shaft a sharp twist. Alicia and the Thingpin are gone, as the floor drops out beneath them in a burst of fire and smoke. Your ears nearly burst from the sound of the sudden explosion.

When the smoke clears, Kingpin is gone. You pull yourself to your feet and scan the room, hoping to catch sight of Alicia and the Thingpin. They're gone, too.

"Dead . . . they must be dead. I blew it." Tears well up in your eyes, but you fight them back. Your voice is thick and hoarse as you shout, "I'll make it up ta ya, Alicia. I promise. I'll be back here someday . . . soon. I'm gonna lick this disease . . . AN' THEN I'M COMIN' BACK FER THE KINGPIN! I swear it!"

You pull the interdimensional transporter sphere from a pocket in your uniform and press the bump that appears on its surface. Instantly, you're inside the enlarged sphere, heading for you-know-not-where.

Turn to **284**.

124 "Now, my orange friend," Doom says, "who or what are you talking about? 'Fantastic Four?' Perhaps you'd care to enlighten me?"

"I'll enlighten you, all right. The Fantastic Four—Reed Richards, Mr. Fantastic . . . Sue Richards, the Invisible Woman . . . Johnny Storm, the Human Torch. An', o' course, me, Ben Grimm, the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing. Back home, in my world, we beat you into the ground more times'n I can remember, but you always managed ta come back fer more."

"Well, well, well . . . that's quite a tale," Doom says, chuckling. "Sue Storm and her younger brother, Johnny, died years ago in a tragic accident caused by the unpreparedness of that fool Reed Richards. He sent

them to their deaths in an untested rocket ship. I'm sure in your world, you, and they 'beat me into the ground,' but here, you alone survived the crash of that rocket; you are the menace, my friend—you, not I. Which brings me to the reason I've allowed you to insult me . . . and live. I need your help, Mr. Grimm."

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **238**. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **246**.

125 You rush to Reed's bedside and, without a moment's hesitation, activate Doctor Doom's device. A pure white light bursts from the lens and bathes the still form of Reed Richards. Within moments, the color begins returning to his cheeks, and a few moments later, his eyes open and a smile stretches across his face.

"Ben . . ." he gasps, weakly.

"Hey there, Stretch, don't you be goin' an' tryin' to say any eighteen syllable words for a while. Ya gotta get your strength back, ya hear?"

"Mm-hmm," he mutters, and drifts off to sleep.

A few hours later, he awakens, still weak, but strong enough to sit up and demand an explanation. You tell him of your adventures and show him Doom's device.

"That's simply amazing, old friend—Doctor Doom, a hero in a world without a Fantastic Four. Remarkable. And this device, why I can see how it might be improved, but the overall design . . . brilliant!"

"Sheesh, what is it with you big brains? Can ya build another one o' these or not?"

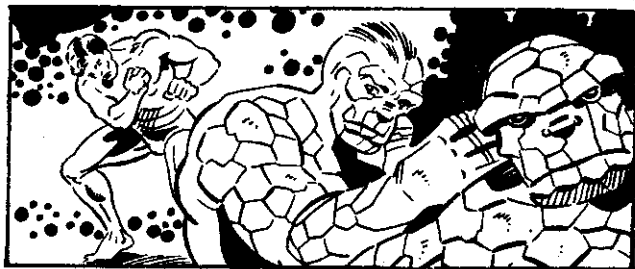
"Why, of course I can. Here, help me to my lab."

"Well, awright! Let's get to it!"

You carry the still-weak Reed Richards to the lab where, true to his word, he recreates the device, incorporating several improvements. Then, turning to you, he says, "Well, it looks like Doom's world will no longer be the only one without a Fantastic Four. Are you ready, Ben? Are you ready to give up the fame, the glory, the awesome strength of the Thing?"

"Are you kiddin'? Let me have it!"

Hours later, you're all gathered together—four adventurers who will adventure no more. The world will miss the Fantastic Four, but at least you're all alive. You feel immensely satisfied. You've saved your friends' lives and given them—and yourself—a shot at what passes for a normal life these days. That's a happy ending in anyone's book.



126 You enter as cautiously as you can, but that's not good enough. The King's Bowling Supply warehouse is like an armed camp—armed men everywhere. You could fight, but you'd either lose or hurt lots of people. You have no choice but to give up.

You're taken to Kingpin who demands to know who you are and what's up. He claims to have Alicia as his prisoner. You tell him what he wants to know. He offers you a deal—help him defeat the Thing of this world and Alicia goes free. Whether or not you take the blood you need is of no concern to him. If you don't cooperate, Alicia dies. Will you help him defeat your alter ego? If yes, go to **143**. If no, turn to **158**.

127 If you have a flashlight-like device and you haven't used it, make a note of it on your Stats Card.

You've now acquired one pint of blood. If you want to return home with it now, turn to **268**. If you want to collect more blood, go to **141**.

128 You reach into your uniform and pull out Annihilus's Cosmic Control Rod.

"This little baby ought to do the trick just fine, don'tcha think? All we got to do is figure out how to make it work. Come on, let's go see if we can wake up my pals."

You lead the doctors to the bedside of Reed Richards and concentrate with all your might, hoping your will is strong enough to activate the Control Rod. Apparently, it isn't. Each of your companions gives it a shot, but to no avail.

"Guess we just don't send off the right kind o' brain waves, or somethin'."

Turn to **72**.

129 Your return trip is mercifully uneventful. You regretfully tell the Inhumans that you couldn't find their young one. Subtract 1 Karma point from your total. They are disappointed, but you are still their friend and ally. Gorvath took their principal supply of the Terrigen Mist, and it will be some time before they can replenish it, but they are able to provide you with a small amount of the mist in a sealed canister. You can only hope it will help your dying teammates.

Medusa asks if you need help returning to Earth. If you do, turn to **185**. If your ship is intact, proceed to **197**.

130 "Frankly, Bug-face, I think yer full of it. I bet you'd destroy that planet an' let me an' my pals die no matter what I did! Don't know why I bothered talkin' to you in the first place. Now, if you don't mind, I'll just borrow yer Cosmic Control Rod for a while."

The asteroid you're on isn't very big, and before Annihilus can react, you're on him, pinning him to the rough, rocky surface.

Make a Strength FEAT roll. If the total is 17 or more, proceed to **109**. If the total is 16 or less, go to **120**.

131 "Okay, buddy, listen up. You can trust me. Why don'tcha put the girl down—easy." You speak as soothingly as you can, hoping the monster recognizes you as his miniature twin, hoping he trusts you.

For a moment, your hopes soar, as the monster does put Alicia down, but as soon as she's out of his grasp and running for safety, the monster charges, seeming not to care that you're 100-plus stories up!

If you've been given a weapon that looks like a flashlight, and you want to use it, turn to **32**.

If you have no such weapon or you prefer to fight the monster, go to **20**.

132 For a minute, you thought you saw something strange about the Thing of this world, but now that you look, he just looks like you. Funny that someone would build a Thing robot, you think, but you don't have time to investigate. You've got to head back home.

You push the bump on the Watcher's device and leave. Turn to **268**.

133 The scene in the penthouse is total chaos. Men in tuxedos and women in designer originals crawl along the floor, seeking what shelter they can find. Men with guns are everywhere. On one side of the room is Kingpin—and he's got Alicia nearby. On the other side of the room is your alter ego, looking surprisingly chubby in his black commando outfit.

The Thingpin advances toward Kingpin, oblivious to you and to the carnage all around him. The Kingpin is calm—too calm, given the circumstances—and totally focused on his foe. He fondles the handle of his jewel-topped walking stick and says quietly, "Stop right there, Grimm, or the woman dies."

You spin around to face Kingpin, wondering what he's talking about.

"You unwitting fool," Kingpin continues, "your precious Alicia carries just enough high explosives on her



person to ensure her death . . . if I decide it is time for her to die!"

The Thingpin freezes. "This time you've gone too far, Kingpin!" he shouts. "Let the girl go so we can settle this man to man."

"Surely you jest. Why would I put myself at risk when, by placing an innocent in peril, I assure myself of victory?" Kingpin says, chuckling.

"That's it . . . that's it!" the Thingpin cries as he leaps to the attack, seemingly unconcerned about the Kingpin's warning. "You think I'm soft, that I'm weak. Well, you're wrong. You're going down . . . now, 'cause IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!"

Holy cow, you think, they've both gone off the deep end. "Okay, boys," you pipe up, "I ain't got time for pal-laverin', and I ain't about ta see Alicia get hurt, and I sure ain't about ta let any two-bit hood steal my best line, even if he is me . . . sort of. You want clobberin' time, you're gonna get it!"

If you want to throw your support to Kingpin, hoping your alter ego can be defeated, allowing you to get the blood you need, turn to **9**. If you want to throw your support to the Thing of this world, in the hopes that you can save Alicia and convince your alter ego to part with some of his blood, proceed to **155**. If you want to make an immediate attempt to rescue Alicia on your own, go to **171**.

134 Feeling a little sorry for your alter ego, you decide to wait. Looking around the lab, you find little of interest besides a photo on Grimm's desk—it's Grimm, his wife Alicia Masters, and their three children!

"Funny," you say aloud, "me feelin' sorry fer him. He's rich and famous and married to the woman I love and can't ever have. He's got it made, an' I feel sorry fer him. Some joke. Then again, he ain't got my looks . . ."

"No, I haven't your looks," says Grimm, awake at last, "but at least you don't carry the guilt I must bear. You're not responsible for the deaths of your closest

friends. You haven't built your life on the work of a fallen comrade. I live a lie. Can you understand that?"

You return the photo to its place on the desk and walk toward the machine.

"Yeah, I can understand that. Ya think it's easy puttin' on a happy face, when yer happy face scares kids worse'n most horror movies? Listen, you're not a bad joe—a little gonzo, but not bad. If I let ya down, will ya promise not ta try anything stupid?"

"Please, let me down. I'm no threat to you. I swear I'm not. In fact, if this machine were in one piece, I could save you and maybe your friends. I'm afraid it's beyond repair, though."

"Waitaminute. You tryin' to tell me a big-time superhero—an' a rich one, ta boot—can't rebuild that dern machine there?"

"That's right. I can't. It depended on a power cell fueled by cosmic rays from a piece of Reed Richards's experimental rocket. Without the cosmic rays that chunk of metal provided, the machine is useless."

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **41**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **35**.

135 You see Richards's hand tense on the barrel of the flashlight-device, but before he can activate it, your hand closes around his. A little squeeze, a little crunch, and no more flashlight. Richards sags in his chair.

"I failed . . . failed again. Last chance."

"Last chance, my foot, Stretch. You can still help me out."

"Why do you keep calling me 'Stretch'?"

"Long story, Stretch, an', frankly, I ain't got the time. Now listen up—kin you get into the police computer network from that terminal on your desk?"

"Why, yes. I've never had any reason to, but it shouldn't be terribly difficult. Why? Why don't you just kill me and get it over with?"

"Sheesh, yer as hard on yerself as the Reed I know back home, an' that's sayin' somethin'. Look, just hook

into the police network an' let's find out where your Thing is. I'll go mop the floor with him, get the blood I need, an' make sure he gets turned over to you, see?"

"Yes, yes. I'll do it!"

Reed bends over his terminal, fingers flashing on the keyboard. A moment later, he looks up and says, "I've got him—he's been spotted heading for the Empire State Building . . . and he's got a girl with him!"

You rush from the room. Before you know it, you're at the base of the Empire State Building. Turn to **208**.

136 You throw a punch that could knock down a bull elephant, a punch the Thingpin might have been able to dodge if he were in better shape. The Thingpin staggers backward. You press your advantage, grabbing a table and slamming it down on your foe.

"Very good . . . very, very good," says the Kingpin, obviously enjoying himself. You pick up another table and advance on the fallen Thingpin, ready to pound him through the floor.

"Listen to him," hisses the Thingpin. "He's enjoying this. Whoever you really are—whatever you are—he's your enemy, not me. Together we can shut him up once and for all!"

You hesitate, sensing the truth of the Thingpin's words. A plan begins to form in your mind. "Okay, pal," you whisper, "here's how it's gonna work. You give me a shove. I fall to the ground on my back an' you pretend yer gonna grab me. Then we make like a circus act an' I send you flyin' through the air with the greatest of ease right into ol' smiley back there. Got it?"

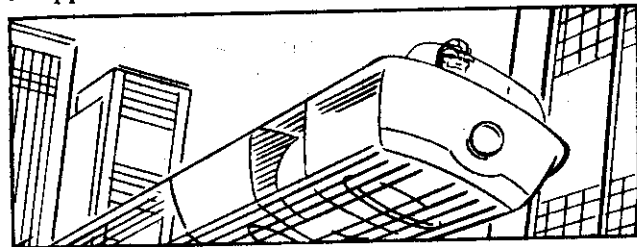
The Thingpin nods assent. Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, go to **112**. If the total is 6 or less, turn to **123**.

137 You reach into your uniform and pull out the plans you got from Ben Grimm. "These are plans for some kind o' cosmic ray vacuum cleaner. I can't figure

'em out, but maybe one o' you big brains can."

Banner and the other doctors study the blueprints for hours, but, after much head-shaking and muttering of oaths, they turn to you with bad news: "We can't build this. Oh, with enough time, we could build most of the major subsystems, but there are some innovations here that are quite remarkable. . . . Frankly, we're a bunch of amateurs compared to the man who designed this device."

Under any other circumstances, you might feel a touch of pride at this. After all, it was your alter ego who came up with the device. Right now, all you can feel is disappointment. Turn to **82**.



138 You continue your search for Gorvath. Rounding what you think is a corner in the Watcher's home, you see the lad standing before a wall of flashing lights. Gorvath warns you to leave him alone, but you hardly notice him. The lights are mesmerizing.

Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **19**. If the total is 7 or less, turn to **122**.

139 "Guess you got me over a barrel," you respond, thinking to yourself, *There's no way this gorilla gets the weapon, but I've gotta buy some time.*

"Sure, I'll go down there an' get yer weapon for ya. Now don't go away, ya hear?"

"I will be here when you return. Now, go."

You prepare for take-off and head for the planet below. It's an easy flight for a seasoned Negative Zone

Explorer and ace pilot. Leaving the craft, you find yourself on a surface that reminds you of Mars—red, bleak, and desolate. A harsh wind whips the red surface dust into eddying clouds that threaten to rip right through your survival suit, but you know this is just your imagination.

To your surprise, there's nobody around. In fact there's nothing here at all—no plants, no buildings, no surface features other than the omni-present dust.

"Wonder where everybody is?" you say aloud, though there's no one to hear.

"We're right here," a squeaky voice responds.

"Wha—! Who was that?" you ask, whirling around in a circle that kicks up dust.

"We're right here," the voice responds, "all around you."

"Awright, enough's enough. Come out, come out wherever you are. I ain't got all day!"

Then you notice the eddying dust clouds taking on a semblance of human form. Well, not exactly human form, more like Thing form—your form!

"Does this help any, meat-creature?" one of the dust-Things asks.

"How can we be of service?" adds another.

You're surrounded now by red, dusty Things. They mill about you, poking and prodding.

"Hey, what gives here? Lay off, will ya? Ya know, you got a crazy, bug-face, self-styled ruler of the galaxy up on that asteroid up there lookin' to take over this dust bowl of a planet. Come on, quit pokin' me!"

"Him?" says one of the dust-Things, laughing. "We have no fear of him—we are perfectly safe, meat-creature. Though we appreciate your concern."

"Safe? Safe from Annihilus? Are you nuts? I don't see any weapons around here—he sent me to get a weapon from ya. It must be a doozy if he's too scared to come get it himself. Where is it?"

"Where is it?" a dust-Thing answers. "If we thought you could take it from us, we wouldn't tell you of course, but you can't, so we will. It's here."

"Well, give it to me an' I'll use it on ol' Bug-face myself."

"I'm afraid we can't do that."

A dust-Thing forms a few feet away from you. This one holds a gun. It looks like an old six-gun, like something out of an old western movie.

"I knew the goody-two-shoes, inscrutable alien-bit was too good to be true! If you think a six-shooter's gonna stop me, yer nuts!"

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, go to **181**. If the total is 6 or less, turn instead to **173**.

140 You're fighting mad as you rush toward your downed foe. You grab him by the throat and pull your fist back, ready to deliver the final blow, until you notice that he's out like a light. "Sheesh, I'm goin' bananas. I coulda killed 'im."

You stand up, shaken, and grab a handy heating duct. You wrap the metal tubing around him as tightly as you can, pinning his arms and legs to his sides.

"Come on, Benjie, nap time's over. Rooster's crowin' an' all that. We got us some talkin' to do."

You slap him again . . . his head feels strange, not at all like your rocky hide. It feels . . . metallic. Your hands explore the Thing's head and find two small studs. Pushing them causes the head to come off in your hands! His head . . . it's a helmet of some kind!

"Now there's somethin' ya don't see everyday!" you say. "Looks to me like there's more to this Thing than meets the eye. You oughta be ashamed o' yourself, impersonatin' the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing! Let's see who's inside this super-powered monkey suit."

You pull the head-helmet loose and, inside, you find Ben Grimm!

"Aw, man," you exclaim, dropping to the floor. "I don't know how many more shocks I can take. I mean this is too much."

The fresh air seems to rouse Grimm from his slumber, and he tries to pull himself to his feet, but your

improvised straitjacket holds him fast. You start to tell him your story.

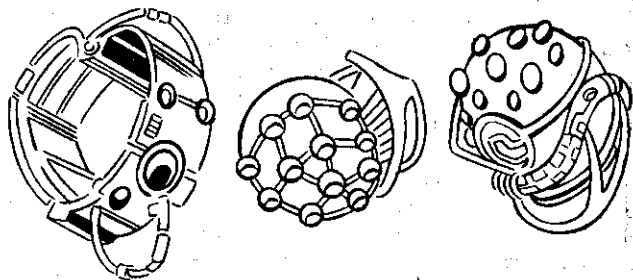
"First, I find out the Red Ghost gave me some dumb disease. Then I find out the entire Fantastic Four has it. Then I go to the Moon. Then I start meeting myself everywhere I turn, an' I'm a real swell guy, but one o' me is enough. Now, I think I've found a place where Ben Grimm isn't the Thing, an' I run into a Thing robot, an' find that it's a Thing suit with Ben Grimm inside of it. What next? I mean, I gotta get some cosmic ray-charged blood or I'm a goner."

"Interesting story, friend," Grimm says.

"Say what?" you respond, eloquently.

"Interesting story, and I think I may be able to help you out . . . not that I've done much to earn your trust."

If you want to put yourself in Grimm's hands, turn to **119**. If you don't trust him, go to **108**.



141 You're ready for the lurching sensation as you activate the Watcher's interdimensional vehicle. *This ain't no worse'n' puttin' the X-15 through its paces*, you think. Again, you see the non-spaces, experience the non-times, and pop out in a world that appears to be your own. This time, however, you're fairly sure it isn't. *What will my alter ego be like in this dimension?* you wonder.

You touch the bump on your control ball, and the large sphere disappears. Pocketing the control, you

take a look around—*Well, bust my britches! I'm on Yancy Street! Now how the heck did I end up here?*

Instinctively, you prepare yourself for attack—the members of the Yancy Street gang never pass up an opportunity to pelt you with bricks or throw garbage cans your way. Sure enough, you see several gang members running your way!

"Hey, hey, Mr. Thingpin! Howya doin'?" Ain't seen you in a long time!"

What the heck is going on? you wonder. They're treating me as if they like me or something! You single one of the gang members out and say, "You, kid, c'mere."

He looks at you, doe-eyed, full of admiration.

"Muh . . . me, sir?" he asks, his voice cracking with emotion and adolescence.

"Yeah, you. You look like a bright guy, maybe you can tell me what's goin' on around here—how come you ain't throwing orange peels an' rocks an' stuff at me?"

The kid, nervous before, begins to look terrified.

"Whatcha mean, Mr. Thingpin?" he manages to spit out. "You . . . you're my hero. You started out a . . . a nothin' like me an' the other guys, and now you're a big wheel!" His nervousness seems to be fading rapidly, as he gets wrapped up in his private world of hero worship. "I mean, you're the greatest, Mr. Thingpin, the absolute greatest. You just about run New York, man. Ain't nobody . . ."

"Yeah, yeah, that's great. Now tell me—where'll I find the Fantastic Four?"

"Fantastic Four?" he responds. "What's the Fantastic Four?"

"Come on, kid, the Fantastic Four . . . the Fantastic Four. You know, the folks I save the world with every once in a while. The Fantastic Four."

"Gee, Mr. Thingpin, I never heard of any Fantastic Four. I mean, you're pretty fantastic, an' all, but I always thought you were a loner, ya know. I never heard about you teamin' up with nobody or nothin'."

Well, you've learned that there's no Fantastic Four in

this dimension, which raises a hundred questions to go with the hundred you've already got, but a crowd is gathering—and some of the people pressing about you don't seem friendly.

Before you can worry about this, however, another of the gang members sticks a copy of the *Daily Bugle* under your nose and says, "Sign it for me, wouldja, Mr. Thingpin? Put yer monicker on the pitcher there, huh?"

"Awright, awright, enough o' the fan club gorp. I didn't know any o' you Yancy Streeters went in fer readin', but if I sign yer newspaper willya all leave me alone?"

You're about to put your John Hancock on the front page when you notice that pictures of you—or, rather, of your alter ego—are plastered all over it, right next to fuzzy photos of Kingpin. The headline reads, "New York trembles as gang war enters third week. Thingpin gang battles Kingpin mob for control."

Aw, no, you think, shaking your head. *This is all startin' to make sense, an' I don't like it one doggone bit. In this world, I musta gone bad, usin' my strength to build a crime ring, or somethin'. That's why these Yancy Streeters think I'm the bee's knees—heck, the Thing o' this world prob'ly recruits kids like these fer his gang! Ain't there no place where I ended up just the plain old, ever-lovin', blue-eyed Thing?*

The crowd around you is getting larger all the time. You figure you'd better get someplace where you can do some thinking. "Gimme some room, here," you tell the crowd. "Lemme alone."

The crowd begins to break up. Funny, you figured shaking your adoring fans, and some very vocal detractors, would be tougher. Then you notice some men in suits in the crowd—suits tend to stand out on Yancy Street. They seem to be pushing people around, clearing the area for you. Before you can get to one of the well-dressed strangers, though, they're gone. You're alone on the street, and glad of it. Maybe now you can collect your thoughts and figure out what to do next.

Then you notice you're still holding onto the kid's *Daily Bugle*. Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **150**. Otherwise, go to **160**.

142 You reach out quickly, hoping to grab the flashlight-device out of Reed Richards's hand before he can put it to use, but you're just a bit too slow. A beam of pure white light strikes you full in the chest.

"What the—?" you start. "It's just a crummy flashlight? What gives?" Turn to **151**.

143 You agree to Kingpin's terms. You don't like allying yourself with a rat like Kingpin, but saving Alicia's life—even an other-dimensional Alicia—is just too important.

You spend an unpleasant afternoon being civil to one of the most justifiably feared and hated men in the United States. That night, you find yourself in the Penthouse Club, stationed in a stairway, waiting for the arrival of your alter ego. You're here as the Kingpin's personal bodyguard.

From your position, you hear the arrival of the first guests. Then you hear Kingpin's voice—and that of Alicia! He didn't say anything about bringing her along! Before you can act, you hear the sound of shattering glass and machine-gun fire. The Thing of this world is here. Turn to **133**.

144 "Hey, Torchie, what say we call it a night, huh? I just want to get some shut-eye, okay?"

"Well, you sure are a stick in the mud," the Torch says as he cuts off his flame and lands lightly near the door of your room. "This place is getting pretty dull."

"Yeah, well, talk to me when you reach my advanced age, there, youngster."

Before Johnny can think of a clever reply to your self-deprecating remark, however, a siren begins sounding

from one of the upper stories of 4 Freedoms Plaza.

Is it Reed testing the security systems, like he said he was going to, you wonder, or could it be a real intruder?

If you want to ignore the alarm and get some much-deserved rest, turn to **167**.

If you want to investigate, go to **176**.

145 The Thingpin ducks your punch and throws one of his own that lands square on your chin and sends you flying across the room. You stagger backward and, with a start, you realize that you're heading straight for Kingpin!

This may work out okay yet, you think as you stretch out your fall, hoping to get close enough to grab Kingpin before he realizes what's happening. The Thingpin turns toward Alicia, almost as if he knows what you are thinking. You reach back over your head, hoping you haven't miscalculated the distance to Kingpin. You've got hold of him!

"You fools," he spits. "You've doomed your pretty friend. Pity. She might have been . . . diverting."

Your position is awkward, at best, so you turn to face Kingpin, hoping to get a better hold of him. You see him raise his walking stick, one hand on the jeweled handle, the other on the shaft, and give it a sudden twist.

Your ears nearly burst from the sound of the explosion. The room is filled with smoke and fire. Alicia and the Thingpin are gone, as if they never existed.

Now you turn toward Kingpin, eyes burning from the smoke—and from bitter hatred. You see fear in Kingpin's eyes. His fear strengthens you. Your hand closes around his throat and you speak—softly, slowly, calmly: "I've never killed a man. Never wanted to. Till now. You killed Alicia. You killed the Thing of this world. You may have killed me an' the rest of the Fantastic Four by keepin' me from gettin' the blood I needed. No tellin' how many others you've killed in your pitiful life. Time to put an end to all that, Kingsy. Say good-bye now."

At that, Kingpin goes limp in your hands—he's faint-

ed. Looking at him you see a pitiable figure, a man alone. The sight brings you back to your senses. You'll never know if you would have killed Kingpin or not.

You look around you and notice that the room is filled with cops. After turning Kingpin over to the police, you pull the Watcher's interdimensional transporter from a pocket in your uniform. You press the bump that appears on its surface and head for who-knows-where.

Turn to **284**.

146 You think about climbing up the outside, like your monstrous counterpart, but there's an easier way—the elevator!

You rush into the building, pushing policemen out of the way, and finally cornering one young cop whose job was to guard the elevator. "Take this elevator to the top, sonny, and be quick about it!"

The young officer faints dead away, so you pick him up and set him down in the hallway. Then you make a hasty return to the elevator only to suffer through an agonizingly slow ascent.

To your relief, both the monster and Alicia are there when you reach the upper deck. If you want to try talking some sense into your counterpart, turn to **131**.

If you want to try to grab Alicia away from him before you do anything else, make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **121**. If the total is 12 or less, go to **111**.

147 "This ain't fair," you think. "Who should I raise? Reed? With his brains, he'd prob'ly do the most for the world even without his powers. Sue? That'd give Franklin a mom, an' that's important. Johnny? That'd keep Alicia happy . . . I don't know what to do, but I gotta do somethin'."

If you want to save Reed Richards, go to **125**.

If you want to save Sue Richards, turn to **117**.

If you want to save Johnny Storm, proceed to **96**.

148 You've got it! The Rod rips loose from its mount, and Annihilus, shocked, teeters on the edge of the asteroid. For a moment, it looks like you'll both go over, but he regains his balance.

Without the Rod, Annihilus is hardly a threat to you, but he continues to fight bitterly, if ineffectually.

"Ya know, Bug-face, without yer little toy here, you ain't nothin'" you say, as you nail him with a punch that could stop the Incredible Hulk in his tracks. Needless to say, it knocks Annihilus silly. He'll be out for hours . . . maybe days!

"Well, pal, I'd love ta stay an' chitchat with ya, but I got friends ta save." Move on to **10**.

149 You can't see anything resembling a trail. The kid covered his tracks too well. There's nothing for you to do but return to Attilan empty-handed. Turn to **129**.

150 You slip through the paper, figuring the more you know about this world, the better off you'll be. You find more than you bargained for: You read about a party being thrown tonight at the posh Penthouse Club in midtown Manhattan by Kingpin himself. Trouble is expected from the Grimm gang, which is out to avenge the disappearance a week ago of Alicia Masters.



Good ol' J. Jonah Jameson, you think. I never thought I'd be glad he'd print stuff with or without evidence. I'll hafta thank him, next time I see him!

If you want to check out the party-site, even though it's a little early, turn to **170**. If you would prefer to use this time to try and find your alter ego, move on to **180**.

151 Even as the words leave your lips, you know this is no ordinary flashlight. You feel a warmth in your chest, spreading throughout your body. Suddenly, you feel yourself beginning to change. You're no longer the monstrous Thing; you're Ben Grimm.

"It worked!" Reed exclaims. "You're Ben Grimm again!"

And so you are. After years of imprisonment in a monster's body, you're free. You're human.

But you're no longer capable of withstanding the terrible beating a body takes when traveling between dimensions.

The thought strikes you like a blow from the Hulk. You can't leave this dimension. You can't help your friends . . . unless you can turn yourself back into the Thing. Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **163**. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **175**.

152 There's something odd about your foe's head. It's kind of twisted around funny, and you notice that where the eyes should be there are just two holes.

"Hmmm . . . if that was a robot, the eyes woulda moved around with the head. Maybe that ain't a robot I just clobbered. But what is it?"

You put the Watcher's device back in your pocket and approach the Thing of this world. You lean down close to peer through the eye holes in the Thing's head. To your surprise, you see an ear in there—a human ear!

It's some kind o' cockamamy helmet! Wish I knew what the heck was goin' on here. Guess there's only one way to find out.



You grasp the helmet in both hands and twist. It pops off in your hands and you find Ben Grimm inside what you now know to be a suit of armor shaped like you!

Before you can act on this knowledge, however, you hear a hissing and smell gas. Subtract 4 from your Health point total and make an Endurance FEAT roll. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **74**. If the total is 17 or less, go to **84**.

153 The blow is as hard as any you've ever felt. Roll the die twice and subtract the numbers you roll from your Health point total. You go flying into the ladies' clothing section, where you're engulfed in skirts, blouses, and lacy underthings.

"Hope there ain't no Yancy Streeters around. I'd never live this down," you think, as you try to shake off the effects of the blow. You pull yourself to your feet, only to be knocked flat again by another blow. The blackness closes in around you. Turn to **8**.

154 You concentrate, but nothing happens. *Nuts*, you think, *I knew nothin' good could come o' one o' Doc Doom's schemes! Better land this jalopy so's I can get close enough to clobber Thing Kong before he gives all us Things everywhere a bad name!* Turn to **165**.

155 You turn to Kingpin and shout, "You might be able to beat one of us—maybe—but two Things can lick anybody!" You turn to your crazed alter ego, feeling a similar anger well up inside you, and say, "Let's clean this guy's clock!"

Fear flickers across Kingpin's face. He never expected to come face to face with two Things! His eyes flit from you to the Thingpin to Alicia.

Your alter ego looks over at you with a look that's both questioning and friendly, and says, "Pal, I don't know who—or what—you really are, but I like the way

you think. Let's go bowling for Kingpins!"

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **166**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **174**.

156 "Now how'm I supposed to decide who to save an' who to let . . . die? It ain't fai—Hey, waitaminute! That ain't no decision at all. I gotta raise the Big Brain! Maybe he can build another one o' these fancy flash-lights an' save everybody! Yeah, give it here, Doc!"

Turn to **125**.

157 "Hey, Squirt, I'd love to stay an' teach you a real lesson, but I got some investigatin' to do."

The Human Torch is still dazed from the dousing you gave him, but he manages to shout, "Sure, ya big ape, leave me here like this. This is just great! I'm going to check out the exercise room, if you need any help!"

You leave the Human Torch to check the dumbbells while you head for the roof. You charge up the stairs and throw open the door. The moon is bright, but you see . . . nothing. There's no sign of any forced entry. Everything looks normal enough.

Maybe Reed's gal-danged tests weren't done with, you think. Guess I better go see if the squirt found anything in the exercise room.

As you hurry back down to the exercise area, you run into Reed and Sue Richards—Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Woman.

"Hey, Stretch, what gives?" you ask. "Is this some blamed test? 'Cause if it is I'm gonna have to pop you one fer disturbin' my beauty sleep."

"No, Ben," the Fantastic Four's leader replies. "This is no test. Building security has been breached. Have you seen the Human Torch?"

"Yeah, he was headin' fer the exercise room."

"Well, gentlemen, can we get a move on?" Sue pleads. "My little brother may need help!"

The three of you charge toward the exercise room

where, to your horror, you see the Human Torch, still soggy from your dousing, in the clutches of your old foe, the Red Ghost!

You'd often wondered what became of the Red Ghost—the Russian scientist who subjected his body to the same cosmic rays that turned you and your friends into the Fantastic Four. The rays affected him and several experimental apes in a variety of ways—he was able to make his body completely untouchable. The Ghost has always given you trouble—your strength isn't much good against him—but he's been out of sight for a while.

As these thoughts pass through your mind, you notice something strange and turn to your team leader to ask him about it. "Hey, Reed," you whisper. "Notice anything strange about the Ghost?"

"Yes, Ben, he seems to be glowing. That's a new development."

"Yeah, well, while you're thinkin' about it, let me try talkin' to the guy." You turn to the villain and say, "Okay, Ghost, whattaya want? An' make it fast. I don't usually palaver with arch-villains, especially when they're holdin' a buddy o' mine by the neck. Know what I mean?"

"I appreciate your position, monster. I hope you can appreciate mine. A crack team of Russian research scientists has created a disease aimed only at those whose blood and tissue have been charged with cosmic rays. They hope to eliminate you and the rest of the Fantastic Four. My beloved apes were their first guinea pigs. I followed shortly thereafter. The apes are finished . . . in a coma. I escaped the Motherland and came to you seeking aid. Perhaps Reed Richards can effect a cure. I cannot."

Sheesh, you think, next thing you know, Doc Doom'll be comin' around wantin' Reed to get rid of his corns! Don't know whether to believe this joker or not!

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. Roll the die and add the number you roll to your Intuition score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **195**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **186**.



158 You don't like the idea of teaming up with a rat like Kingpin.

"No way, pinhead," you say defiantly. "You got about six seconds to tell me where Alicia is, or it's clobberin' time!"

"Brave words, little man." Kingpin replies. "Brave and foolish. I only hope your counterpart in this dimension is more sensible when I offer him the same deal."

He touches a button on his desk. You hear a hissing sound and smell something sweet and pungent in the air. You feel dizzy and cold. Then the world fades into blackness. Your adventure is over.

159 Suddenly, you spot the trail! *Well, whattaya know! Guess my ever-lovin blue pilot's eyes're still pretty good.* The trail leads straight into the Watcher's home. You put your hands on the domed wall of the edifice and push.

You ooze through the wall, thinking, *Why couldn't the Watcher just have a normal door like everyone else?* Your guts feel as if they're being twisted inside-out as you move through the semi-solid wall.

You fall to the floor inside the Watcher's home. There's no sign of the young Inhuman. At least, you don't think there's any sign of him—it's a little tough to tell in here.

As you try to get your bearings in the Watcher's non-Euclidean home, the Watcher himself appears. His otherworldly voice sends chills up your spine. "The boy, Gorvath, has played his part in this cosmic drama. Save yourself and the others. I can say no more."

With that he disappears.

Sheesh, that guy's spooky, you think. Wonder what he meant?

You think about the Watcher's words. He implied that pursuing the kid would be pointless, but he didn't come right out and say that.

If you want to continue looking for Gorvath, go to **138**. If you want to return to Attilan alone, go to **129**.

160 You look again at your picture on the front page and toss the paper to the ground. *Now what? you wonder. Guess the first order o' business is fer me ta find myself. . . Sheesh, this alter ego business has me soundin' like I need a shrink! Who knows—maybe I do, but I ain't got time ta worry about that now. Gotta figger out where I'd be if I was a big wheel crime boss. . .*

Make another Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **189**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **198**.

161 Your hands rake Annihilus's throat, distracting him just enough so he doesn't throw you off the asteroid's edge to certain doom. Unfortunately, the Cosmic Control Rod remains firmly lodged in its mounting at the arch-villain's throat. But you don't have time to worry about that now—Annihilus throws you to the ground and leaps on top of you.

"This just ain't dignified, Bug-face. What would my fan club say if they could see me rollin' around with the likes o' you?"

"You would do well to worry about your life rather than your image, cretin!" Go to **120**.

162 Your blows land simultaneously, with a sound like thunder. You feel as if you've just been run over by a steamroller (roll the die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total), but you stand firm. The same cannot be said of your alter ego. He sits down, hard, in the women's clothing section. Clothes racks crash all around him.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **140**. If the total is 3 or less, go to **172**.

163 You concentrate as hard as you are able, hoping you can turn yourself back into the Thing through sheer effort of will.

Then, your emotions running the gamut, you feel

yourself beginning to change. Your skin grows hard. Your mass doubles. You're the Thing again, and the disease that sent you on your mission still threatens your life. You had a moment of hope, but the few lingering cosmic ray-charged cells that allowed you to turn yourself back into the Thing carried the disease, and you're stricken once more.

Richards's face registers shock, dismay, and disappointment. "Wait . . . how? How could you turn back into the Thing? How could I have failed?"

"Listen, buster, I wish I had an answer for ya, but I guess it's back to the drawing board. Now, suppose ya tell me what that flashlight thing does and whether it'd do my pals back home any good."

Richards slumps in his chair, a beaten man. You don't like seeing Reed Richards this way—even if the Reed Richards of this world is little like the forceful leader of the Fantastic Four.

"Come on, pal," you say as gently as possible, "take it nice an' easy an' tell me what's what."

"Yes, I suppose that's the least I can do," he replies. "This is a cell reorganizer—a sort of x-ray and cellular vacuum cleaner. It detects the presence of cosmic rays in cells and eliminates them, leaving the cells 'cleansed,' but it didn't work. You turned back into the Thing. You shouldn't have been able to do that."

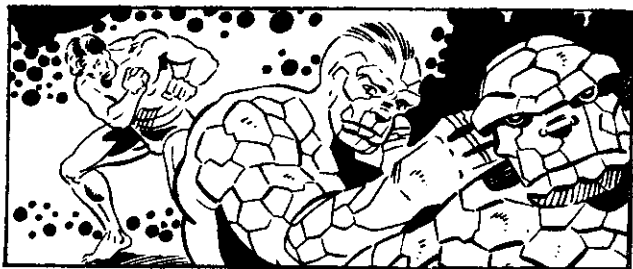
"Great theory, Big Brain. That flashlight worked just the way you planned, but it musta left a couple o' cosmic rays in my body. I felt 'em an' hadta change back to help my friends. Now, if ya could think o' some way to up the horsepower on that sucker, we'd be in business."

Richards looks somewhat encouraged by this, and says, "Yes, that's precisely what Doctor Doom said when I showed him the blueprints for the cell reorganizer. In fact, he's been working on a prototype of an improved model on his own . . . or so I hear. Lord knows, he wouldn't take me into his confidence."

"Well what're we waitin' for. Take me to yer leader."

"Yes, yes, of course. . . Ben."

Turn to **183**.



164 You show the assembled doctors the flashlight-like device you got from the Doctor Doom of another dimension.

"This doohickie can zap the cosmic rays right out of yer body. I figure it can knock out a disease that thrives on cosmic rays. Whatcha think, Doc?"

"Here, let me look at that," Banner says. He turns the device over and over in his hands, examining it closely.

"Where did you get this, Ben? This is a remarkable device. Why its circuitry is so advanced I've . . ."

"Yeah, yeah, spare me the yammerin' and just tell me if ya think it'll work, willya? Ya wouldn't believe me if I told ya where I got it anyway, an' me an' the rest of the Fantastic Four ain't got all day, ya know!"

"Yes, of course, I'm sorry—I can't be sure, of course, but this device looks like it will do what you claim, and that should rob the disease of the nutrients it needs to survive . . . Yes, I believe it will work, but if I read the circuitry correctly, it's got only enough charge to work once. And there's something else."

"Well?" you say, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

"Well, stripping the blood of cosmic rays is sure to strip you of your powers—Reed would no longer be able to stretch, Sue would no longer be able to turn invisible or use her force field, and Johnny would no longer be able to flame on."

"Yeah, that's what Doomsie said when I got it. I didn't think that was so bad, but now we gotta decide who to

save. That's just great!"

"Not 'we,' Ben," says Banner. "This is a decision you'll have to make on your own."

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, proceed to **156**. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **147**.

165 Years of practice make landing the Fantasticar a piece of cake. The police and crowds of gawkers on the ground are shocked to see a second Thing in their midst, but you push past them, trying hard not to hurt anyone, but not slowing down much, either.

You have to find a way to reach the top of the Empire State Building, and you don't have time to waste.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **146**. If the total is 4 or less, go to **190**.

166 You think briefly about the Thingpin's crack about bowling—you might be able to throw something at Kingpin and knock him out from here. That'd be plenty quick, but you're just not sure you can hit him. No, better to make a full frontal assault, hope he's off-guard. Turn to **193**.

167 The alarm continues to blare, but you pay it no mind as you advance on your fallen buddy. "Don't think you're gonna be saved by the bell, Match-Head. I know Reed's just testin' the security systems."

"I'm not so sure, Ben. I think I'll go see what's going on—I'll be back later to finish our little tete-a-tete."

"Yeah, I can hardly wait."

You climb into bed and toss and turn for what seems like hours, but the alarm keeps on blaring, so finally, you get up and try to find out what's going on.

As the alarm continues to blare overhead, you bound up the stairs to the roof and throw open the door. Your eyes take a minute to adjust to the moonlight, but when you can see again, you see . . . nothing. Every-

thing looks normal enough. The same is true when you check the hangar decks and upper-level storage areas.

Maybe Reed's gal-danged tests weren't done with, you think. Guess I better go see if the squirt found anything.

You make tracks back to where you last saw the Human Torch, and there, to your horror, you see Mr. Fantastic, his body stretched and distorted, on the ground. You also see the Invisible Woman, quite visible and equally unconscious. The Human Torch is beside her, out cold and still soggy from your dousing. And they're all in the clutches of your old foe, the Red Ghost!

You've often wondered what became of the Red Ghost—the Russian scientist who subjected his body to the same cosmic rays that turned you and your friends into the Fantastic Four. The rays affected him and several experimental apes in a variety of ways—he was able to make his body completely untouchable. The Ghost has always given you trouble—your strength isn't much good against him—but he's been out of sight for a while.

As these thoughts pass through your mind, you notice something strange about the Red Ghost—he seems to be glowing. But you'll have to solve that mystery later. Right now, you've got teammates to save.

"Okay, Ghost, whattaya want? An' make it fast. I don't usually palaver with arch-villains, especially after they beat up my buddies. Know what I mean?"

"I appreciate your position, monster. I hope you can appreciate mine. A crack team of Russian research scientists has created a disease aimed only at those whose blood and tissue have been charged with cosmic rays. They hope to eliminate you and the rest of the Fantastic Four. My beloved apes were their first guinea pigs. I followed shortly thereafter. The apes are finished . . . in a coma. I escaped the Motherland and came to you seeking aid. Perhaps Reed Richards can effect a cure. I cannot."

Sheesh, you think. Next thing you know, Doc

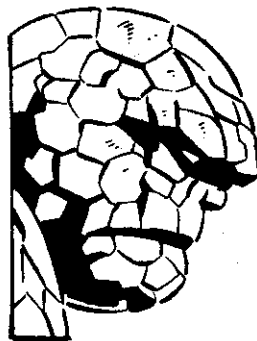
Doom'll be comin' around wantin' Reed to get rid of his corns!

Subtract 1 from your Karma point total for ignoring a real threat, and go to **95**.

168 You agree to help the Thing of this world defeat Kingpin. That night, you find yourself piloting a chopper. Your alter ego sits next to you. Armed men fill the rear of the craft. Other choppers follow behind. As instructed, you land on the roof of the Penthouse Club. You leap from the copter. Turn to **39**.

169 It doesn't take you long to pick up Gorvath's trail, but as you look around, your heart sinks: Gorvath's path seems to lead everywhere. *Oh, man, the kid must've been so scared—or nuts—he couldn't figger out where he wanted to go.*

The situation looks hopeless, but you decide to take one more look at the maze of tracks. Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **159**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **149**.



170 *Alicia's missing, an' I'll just bet Kingpin's ta blame, you think. Well, I may be the new Thing on the block, but I gotta find that no good pinstriper an' help*

Alicia if I can.

You hail a cab. Ordinarily, you have to convince cabbies to haul your 500 pounds around. This cabbie requires no convincing at all—you can't tell if he's scared or honored at the thought of having you in his cab, but he takes you where you want to go. Eventually, you arrive at the Penthouse Club.

If you want to head right inside and wait for the party to begin, turn to **257**. If you want to wait outside and watch what happens for a while, go to **266**.

171 *Both these bozos're nuts. Neither one of 'em cares a hoot about Alicia. Looks like I gotta save her myself.*

Your alter ego charges Kingpin, shouting back to you, "Look, pal, I don't know who—or what—you really are, and right now, I don't care. You get the bomb off Alicia. Kingpin's mine!"

You race toward Alicia, hoping the Thingpin can keep Kingpin occupied while you take care of the explosives. She's just a few feet away when, glancing back over your shoulder, you see this world's twin kings of crime grappling. Suddenly, Kingpin pulls free, raises his walking stick and says, "One move and the woman dies! All I have to do is twist the jeweled handle of this stick and she's gone. Surrender and she lives. It's really quite simple."

Your alter ego stops dead in his tracks. If you want to stop, too, turn to **24**. If you want to grab Alicia, go to **65**.

172 You toss clothes and racks aside, hoping to reach your foe before he can regain his balance. You jump on him and land a blow to his head strong enough to knock his block off, which it does . . . literally.

Your foe's head goes flying through the air, and you catch a glimpse of a human being inside what you now know is a suit of armor . . . It's you, or rather, the



Ben Grimm of this world inside a Thing suit! But before you can act on this knowledge, you hear a hissing noise—gas! Subtract 4 points from your Health point total.

Make an Endurance FEAT roll. If the total is 18 or more, proceed to **74**. If the total is 17 or less, go to **84**.

173 *Okay, Benjie, what do ya do now?* you think. *These jokers think that popgun's gonna stop Annihilus—an' for all I know, it might. Annihilus sure thinks it will. He seemed scared up there. But I need that thing, too. Annihilus can cure me an' the rest of the Fantastic Four, but he won't do it unless I give him the weapon. Tough choice, Benjie. Don't blow it . . .*

If you want to leave the dust-Things their weapon, turn to **211**. If you want to try taking it by force, go to **240**.

174 *Bowling for Kingpins . . . That's it!* you think. *Chances of reaching him in time are real slim. Got to knock him down before he blows Alicia to kingdom come!*

Unfortunately, there's nothing nearby you can throw—nothing except the Watcher's interdimensional transporter device.

If you want to throw it at Kingpin, hoping to knock him out with one blow, turn to **184**.

If you want to join the Thingpin in a full-tilt charge and hope you can get to Kingpin before he can set off the bomb, turn to **193**.

175 You concentrate as hard as you're able, but try as you might, you're stuck in human form. The disease that threatened your life is gone—you can feel it! Richards is delighted. He's already planning a regimen of tests to see what residual cosmic-ray effects may still linger.

Your emotions run the gamut—you're thrilled to be human again, and your life is no longer threatened by disease, but your friends are doomed, and your adventure is over.

176 You know Reed Richards planned to test the security system, but that should have been finished a while ago. "Hey, squirt, I'd love ta stay an' teach you a real lesson, but I got some investigatin' ta do."

"Not without me, you don't, ya big ape! I'm going to check the exercise room. Flame on!" And with that, the Human Torch flies toward the stairs leading to the exercise room on the floor above.

"I'm headin' for the roof," you shout, as you leap for the stairs. The Human Torch is moving like a comet and pulling away from you like you were standing still. In moments, you reach the roof. Throwing open the door, you find . . . nothing. No sign of forced entry.

"Nuts, musta come from somewhere else."

You check the hangar decks, the storage rooms, and several other areas, but don't find a thing.

"This is gettin' mighty strange," you say. "Maybe the Torch had it right from the start." Or maybe this was all just a false alarm, you think. As you make your way to the exercise room, you run into Reed and Sue Richards—Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Woman.

"Hey, Stretch! Is this just you testin' the security systems? 'Cause if it is, I'm gonna pop you a good one."

"No, Ben, I wish I could take the blame for this disturbance, but the threat is real, and it's coming from the exercise level."

"Oh, no—that's where the Human Torch—"

"Well, gentlemen, let's not just stand around here. Let's go see what trouble my little brother's managed to get himself into this time!" Sue Richards says brusquely. "Let's get a move on!"

As the three of you enter the exercise area, you see a sight you thought you'd never see again: the Red Ghost!

"You! How many times have we gotta beat you before you get it through yer thick, untouchable, Russian skull that you an' yer blasted apes just can't beat us!"

"I am not here to 'beat' anyone, monster," the Ghost says, his voice as thickly accented as ever. "I come seeking your aid."

"Sure, and I hear the President's defecting to your side!" you shout.

"Hey, folks," Johnny shouts from above, "I've been keeping an eye on our friend here for a while, and he hasn't made any threatening moves . . ."

"Hey, Stretch," you say to Mister Fantastic. "Notice anything strange about the Ghost?"

"Yes, I do, Ben. He's glowing!"

"I mean . . . you . . . no harm," the Ghost says haltingly. "You must believe me. You must listen!"

If you want to listen, go to **201**. If you've heard enough and want to stop the Ghost before he causes any trouble, turn to **209**.

177 There is a sudden burst of activity as two of the greatest medical minds in the world act in concert to save the Fantastic Four. They seal off a room and set up a duct to release the mist.

"Go into the room, Ben," says Bruce Banner.

"No thanks, guy," you say. "I'll wait an' see if this stuff works. If it does, we can always get more; if it doesn't, I wanna be in one piece so I can find another way to save my friends."

There is an expectant hush in the lab as the canister holding the mist is released. A blue-purple haze fills the room, obscuring the shapes of your friends. Pym monitors a computer readout of the Fantastic Four's vital statistics. You hear him muttering "Come on, work . . . work!" Finally, the mist dissipates and you look anxiously toward the scientists.

"C'mon already, did it work?" you ask, but looking at their faces, you see the answer.

Pym gives his report: "There was no apparent

change. The bottom line is that the disease is still alive and kicking. Which is more than you'll be able to say about the Fantastic Four unless we do something soon."

Even as the full import of Pym's words sinks in, a voice sounds in your head. You whirl around and see the Watcher, floating in mid-air behind you.

"Ben Grimm," he intones, "there are more worlds than you see, more things than you can imagine. Their blood must be your blood must be their blood. I can say no more. I am the Watcher."

"Sheesh, what a time for him to pop up," you say hesitantly, not sure anyone else saw the cosmic presence.

Apparently, the Watcher's presence was felt by everyone in the room, though, for within moments, the scientists are muttering to each other about the meaning of the Watcher's words.

"Wait a minute," cries Banner. "That's it—alternate dimensions! Other worlds, other *things*."

"Huh?" you query.

"I do not fully understand the Watcher's words," Banner says, "but I suspect his message was for you to seek out other *Things* in other dimensions. Their blood must be your blood. A blood serum . . . that must be it. Create a blood serum from the blood of your alter egos in other dimensions! That's the secret of the cure."

"You got all that outa what the Watcher just said? You're almost as gonzo as my buddy Reed."

"I'll take that as a compliment, Ben, but enough of this. You must return to the Moon and seek the Watcher out, for I know of no force on Earth that can transport you between the dimensions."

"Here we go again," you say as you head one more time for Hydro-Base.

Soon you're rocketing through the void and landing in the Blue Area of the Moon. A short walk takes you to the domed walls of the Watcher's home. You put your hands on the walls and push. You ooze through the wall and wonder, as always, why the Watcher couldn't just have a normal door like everyone else.

You try to regain your bearings as the Watcher appears.

Turn to **251**.

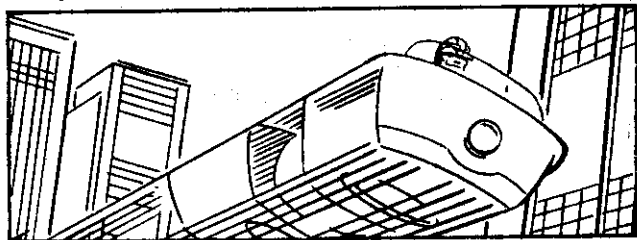
178 You enter the Grimm building, wide-eyed with amazement. The walls of the lobby are covered with photos of yourself—as both Ben Grimm and the Thing!—rubbing elbows with world leaders, noted scientists, sports figures, and movie stars.

"Boy, looks like you done all right fer yourself," you say. "But howzabout explainin' how Ben Grimm an' the Thing exist in the same world, when Bashful Benjamin and the ever-lovin' Thing are one an' the same."

He stops in his tracks.

"I don't know how you know about that, though looking at you, I have my suspicions. Suppose you tell me about yourself before I bore you with the story of my life. After all, you're the stranger around here."

You tell him your story—how you became the Thing, how your fellow outer space explorers were affected by cosmic rays, how you were all infected with a dread disease, and how you desperately now need cosmic ray-charged blood. Go to **99**.



179 *I've only got one shot with Doc Doom's doohickie, you think. Better make it a good one—an' this ain't it.*

You have to get closer . . . but how? You can't fly any closer. You'll have to land and get to the top somehow.

Turn to **165**.

180 *I'll bet if I find my other self, the big crime boss, I'll find out what's what with Alicia an' maybe he'll be a good egg an' gimme some blood cells he ain't usin'.*

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **189**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **275**.

181 "Okay, wise guy, put the gun down. It ain't gonna stop me, but it might get me mad. Can't we talk about this?"

"Certainly, we can talk. This device is for your benefit. It serves no useful purpose." He raises his arms and gestures all around. "We are the weapon. It's us . . . we . . . I . . . forgive, us, we are not used to your . . . speech."

"Uh, yeah, sure. Ya mean the whole planet's a weapon? I don't get it."

"Yes, that is it. We are the planet and the planet is a weapon."

"That's screwy," you respond. "How d'you plan to defend yourself against Annihilus? He could just point that crazy Cosmic Control Rod at yer planet here an' turn it into atoms!"

"Ah, but you are wrong. In fact, Annihilus has no idea just how . . . uh . . . how powerful we are. We have already defeated him, though he may not know it yet. In fact, we have already cured you of your disease."

"Cured . . . how'd you know about that? An' what-taya mean, you cured me?"

Turn to **192**.

182 "Well, Ben, what will it be?" Banner says.

"I dunno, Doc. I wanna live, o' course. But they're my friends . . . Sheesh, I don't know what to do!"

You've faced physical dangers most men can't even dream of. You've traveled through time and space, saved whole galaxies so many times you can barely keep count of them all. Now, for the first time, you feel the icy grip of death tightening around you.

"Give it to me, Doc! I'll track down more blood for

'em. I wanna live!"

Banner administers the serum and leaves without a word. Alicia Masters does the same. You're alone—alive, but alone. You've survived another adventure, defeated death in a one-on-one match. But you've let down your friends. Not much of a victory after all.

"I'll get more blood!" you shout at the four walls.

"I'll save you, yet!" you shout to your comatose friends. "I'll . . . I'll . . ."

You fall to your knees and cry, knowing that you have let down your closest friends. Your adventure is over.

183 Richards leads you to the Office of the President, regaling you with tales of Doctor Doom's brilliance and benevolence all the way. He ushers you past a very surprised secretary into Doctor Doom's office. Doom turns at your entrance, unruffled, unsurprised.

"Ah, Mr. Grimm, I've been expecting you. Sit down, please," he says, motioning you toward a chair.

"Thanks, Doom, but I'd rather stand. Ya know, back on my Earth, yer the biggest baddie around. I'm havin' a little trouble adjustin' to the fact that I'm jawin' with ya 'stead o' punchin' ya out."

"I trust you will control your desire to 'punch me out,' Mr. Grimm."

"Yeah, I think I can control myself, long as you don't make any sudden moves. Now, whattaya say you tell me about a high-power version of Stretch . . . I mean Reed's cell reorganizer? I think it may be just what I need to save myself and some friends back home."

You tell Doom your story. He listens attentively, and when you're done, he speaks. "I have such a device, Mr. Grimm, and I suspect it would cure you. In fact, you've already seen Reed Richards's primitive prototype in action, so you know it works. But I have bad news for you on several counts. The first is simply that my device is activated by powers you cannot begin to understand. In layman's terms, it runs on one part nuclear energy, one part willpower, and one part . . .

magic. And it will work only once.

"It will work on you or on one of your friends, but I had another use in mind when I designed it. Since your friend, Richards, turned the already monstrous Thing into an oversized mockery of his former self, I have devoted my life to putting an end to your counterpart's reign of terror. New Yorkers have lived in fear of the Thing for too long. Even now, he's headed for the Empire State Building with an innocent woman in one huge hand. With your help, this monster's humanity can be restored. What will it be?"

You ponder everything Doom has said. "Can't ya just build another one o' these doohickies?" you ask.

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Grimm. The forces that power this device are fickle and not easily harnessed. This device is one of a kind."

You're faced with a tough decision. If you want to take the device and use it on yourself, proceed to **194**. If you want to take the device to your world, to use it on one of your teammates, turn to **205**. If you want to help Doom and this world out by restoring the monster Thing's humanity, take the device and go to **229**.

184 You reach into your uniform and pull out the small, hard sphere. It's cold in your hands. You've got one shot at this and that's it. You prepare to throw.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **202**. If the total is 6 or less, go to **216**.

185 From behind you a bright light flashes—the trademark of your friend Lockjaw. The time has come for you to leave your Inhuman companions and return to 4 Freedoms Plaza. You turn to wave good-bye to Gorgon, Medusa, Black Bolt, and Karnak as you place a huge, rocky hand on Lockjaw's back. Another flash of unearthly light and you are back in the medical unit of 4 Freedoms Plaza.

Bruce Banner and Hank Pym rush toward you, their

faces hopeful. You hand the canister of Terrigen Mist to Banner and turn to thank Lockjaw, but he has already disappeared.

"Just like Lockjaw, always running off without saying so long," you say. Turn to 177.



186 "That's a pretty good story there, Ghost, but not good enough! I ain't about to listen to nobody until you set Torchie there down. You got about six and a half seconds before I turn you into hamburger, Ghost."

You hear Reed shout, "No, Ben, wait!" but you're not about to stop now—you wanted to whip the Torch yourself, and you're not about to let any arch-villain steal your thunder! You charge straight for the Ghost.

"I should have known better than to expect help from the likes of you!" the Ghost says, dropping the Torch. "Come, then, old foe, let's fight to the death. I would rather go that way than face the alternative."

"Sounds good to me, Ghost. It's Clobberin' Time!"

Even as you shout your familiar battle cry, though, the Red Ghost begins to shimmer, his body becoming hazy and, true to his name, ghostlike. You know that when he is in his intangible form, your strength is pretty well useless against him. All you can hope to do is keep him busy so your teammates can try something.

"Chew on this for a while, Ghost," you say as you pick up a 500-pound medicine ball and hurl it with enough force to . . . well, to destroy the wall behind the Ghost as it passes harmlessly through his untouchable body.

"Stop it, Ben! Stop it, now!" Your team leader shouts. "The Ghost can't do us any harm until he solidifies at least a part of his body! Wait for it. Wait for it."

"I ain't much good at waitin', Stretch. You oughtta know that by now." And true to your word, you charge, head down into your foe, and right through him. "I figure if I keep poundin' away at this guy, he's not gonna be able to solidify, an' he won't be able to hurt us."

"That's where you're wrong, fool!" the Ghost shouts. "You should listen more carefully to your leader. In the first place, all I need do is solidify a small portion of my body to affect the material world. In the second, I am no longer the Red Ghost you once knew. I am . . . changed!" And with that, he begins to glow brighter and brighter, until the entire room is bathed in an unearthly yellow glow. It's a cold light, and you shiver involuntarily, but other than the chill, you feel nothing.

The same is not true of your teammates. As the glow bathes Reed Richards, he drops to his knees, as if he'd been punched by the Hulk. Sue Richards puts a hand to her forehead and fights to maintain her balance. Johnny moans, but remains motionless on the ground.

Turn to 226.

187 You think fast and start blurting out whatever comes into your head. "Listen, how do ya figure there's two of us here? Don't ya wanna know about that? Ain'tcha the least bit curious?"

Apparently, your alter ego doesn't care, for he continues his advance.

"Okay, okay, so you're not interested in that," you say, getting a little angry. "Well, maybe I'm curious about some stuff, an' maybe I'm just the joe who can get some answers outta you. Like fer instance where

are the rest of the Fantastic Four? Where's Reed Richards, an' Sue Richards, an' Johnny Storm?"

At the mention of your teammates names your twin's eyes glaze over. "How dare you mention their names!" he says. "Everyone knows what happened to them. You're like everyone else . . . can't let them be . . . can't let me be!" He goes berserk, charging you with a look that chills you to the bone. It's a look you've seen only once before—on the face of the rampaging Hulk. You like that look even less on your own face than you did on that of the green-skinned giant.

You don't have time to think—you barely have time to act. You prepare to meet his charge.

Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 13 or more, move on to **280**. If the total is 11 or 12, turn to **162**. If the total is 10 or less, go to **153**.

188 *Okay, you think, I've only got one shot with this thing an' I may not get another chance—no tellin' what that monster'll do to Alicia. Better take him out now.*

You fly as close as you can and concentrate as hard as you can on making the device operate—Doom said your willpower would be strong enough to activate it. You hope he was right.

Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **114**. If the total is 10 or less, go to **154**.

189 "Heck, if I was a crime boss, I'd stay right here on Yancy Street!"

You look around, not sure exactly what you're looking for. Then, you see it—a skyscraper. On Yancy Street! *Bet that's the place. Sure ain't no skyscrapers on Yancy Street where I come from.* Turn to **210**.

190 "Heck, if climbing up the side was good enough fer my pal up there, it's good enough fer me!"

And with that, you begin climbing, like an orange.



rocky almost-human fly. Finally, you reach the top, a little weary from such a tough climb. Subtract 1 from your Health point total.

The monster and Alicia are still there. The air is filled with police helicopters, but the police don't dare fire on the monster for fear of hurting Alicia. It's up to you to rescue her and stop Thing Kong.

If you want to try talking some sense into your counterpart, turn to **131**. If you want to try to grab Alicia away from him before you do anything else, make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **121**. If the total is 12 or less, go to **111**.

191 And you throw a doozy of a punch, the sort of punch that could lay out the Hulk! Your alter ego drops to the ground, and he won't be getting up for a while. You pull the green device the Watcher gave you from a pocket inside your uniform and press the bump that appears on its surface. The cuff expands around the fallen Thingpin's arm. In the blink of an eye, it becomes a beaker and then a cuff again, and you know that you have the blood you wanted.

You're just about ready to leave when you think of Alicia—you'd like to help, but you've got your friends to save, too. Subtract 1 Karma point from your total.

If you want to travel to yet another dimension to gather more blood, go to **284**. If you think you have enough and want to return home, turn to **268**.

192 "We are everywhere—the very stuff of this planet. It was no effort at all to send some of our number through space to infiltrate Annihilus's body. As long as he . . . behaves?—yes, behaves himself, we will do him no harm. Similarly, we knew everything about you the instant you set foot on our surface. It was a simple matter to penetrate your suit and act on that knowledge to cast out the invaders that threatened you. Return with your friends and we can do the same for them."

"Well whattaya know! You guys are all right! You know, I'll do that little thing. I'll be back before ya know it!"

Go to **203**.

193 You and the Thingpin run full tilt toward Kingpin, who seems shocked at your actions. "N—No," he says. "You were supposed to stop. To save the woman."

That moment of hesitation is Kingpin's downfall. As you expected, the Kingpin is no match for the twin haymakers that hit him. The battle is over almost before it begins.

The Thingpin gladly offers you his blood. Using the green device the Watcher gave you, you get the blood you need.

Turn to **245**.

194 You take the device. Concentrating as hard as you can, you turn it on yourself. You're bathed in a pure white light and feel the warmth spreading from your chest. Again, you feel yourself transformed, this time, you know, for good. The disease is conquered. You're human once again. Unfortunately, as such you are vulnerable and can't withstand interdimensional travel. Your friends are doomed, and your adventure is over.

195 "Okay, Ghost, you put Torchie down, an' we can talk. You don't put Torchie down, an' you can hurt. What's it gonna be?"

The Ghost answers by laying the Torch on the ground with surprising tenderness. "I come seeking your aid, my old enemies. I am sick—dying—need hel—" Before he can finish, he falls to the ground. Reed and Sue rush warily to his side. You lag behind, thinking this is a trick. Your suspicions are soon confirmed, or so it seems. As they reach his side, he begins to glow! The room is bathed in a cold, yellow light.

"What the—Why do I get the feelin' we've just been set up? What gives, Reed?"

"I don't know, Ben, but the Ghost's collapse seems genuine. Quick, help me get him to the lab."

But as you stoop to pick him up, the Ghost's body fades into nothingness and drifts eerily through your fingers, through the floor, and out of sight.

"Ben, search the building. Bring him back here if you can. Then meet us in the lab. I want to begin running some tests."

You rush from the room and make a thorough search of the building. Finally, you find the Ghost. His screams lead you to him. He's caught half in and half out of the floor in the reception area.

"Come on, Ghost. I don't know what's goin' on here, but desolidify or somethin'. Get yerself outta there."

"I would . . . if . . . I could, you fool," he spits from between gritted teeth. "Aaargh! The agony. Can't stand it. Must try . . ."

You see the concentration on his face as he shimmers and fades, drifting up toward you. Finally, he collapses in a heap on the ground at your feet. You lift him as a child would lift a rag doll and head for the lab.

Turn to **218**.

196 You think fast, and start blurting out whatever comes into your head. "Listen, how do ya figure there's two of us here? Don't ya wanna know about that? Ain'tcha the least bit curious?"

Apparently, your alter ego doesn't care, for he continues his advance.

"Okay, okay, so you're not interested in that," you say, getting a little angry. "Well, maybe I'm curious about how you an' Ben Grimm can exist in the same place when I know you're Ben Grimm . . ."

That does it. Your alter ego stops dead in his tracks.

"What's that you say?"

"You heard me—how's it happen that you an' Ben Grimm both exist on this cockamammy excuse for a

planet Earth?"

"Uh, maybe you'd better come with me . . ."

He takes you back to the Grimm Research Complex, scene of the ceremony you left a while before. The ceremony ends shortly after you arrive, and the crowd is dispersing. They seem intrigued at the appearance of two Things in their midst, and you hear whispered comments about this odd sight as you pass.

"Yeah," says your twin, "this ought to make the six o'clock news!"

You enter the building behind the stage.

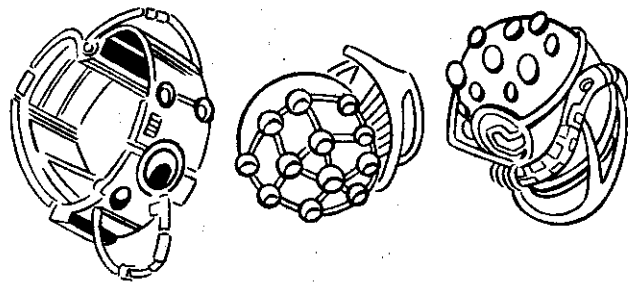
Turn to **178**.

197 You leave the city of Attilan with a heavy heart—if the Terrigen Mist doesn't help, you may never see Attilan again.

You return to the site of your landing and blast off. Piloting the ship cheers you up some, and you head for Hydro-Base. From there, it's a short Fantastical hop to 4 Freedoms Plaza.

You land on the roof and rush to the medical unit where Doctors Bruce Banner and Hank Pym wait, monitoring the condition of your teammates.

You thrust the container toward the gathered scientists and say, "Okay, geniuses, let's get this show on the road." Move to **177**.



198 You think for a while, but you don't get anywhere. Heck, I ain't no crime lord an' I don't have any idea how to think like one.

Not knowing what to do, you drop your bulky frame to the curb, sitting with your legs sticking out into the gutter, your elbows on your knees, and your chin in your hands, just the way you did when you were a kid on Yancy Street. Turn to **219**.

199 You jump from behind your garbage cans and run in the direction you think Doom and the policemen went. Sure enough, you see them up ahead.

"Hey, Doomsie," you yell, "wait up a minute, willya. You an' me gotta talk."

Doom spins around. The police officers surrounding him draw their guns. For a moment, there's a tense stand off. Then, Doom speaks. "Wait. Hold your fire. Despite all appearances, this isn't the Thing, or if it is, it's a changed Thing, a thinking Thing."

"Dern right I'm a thinkin' Thing," you say. "I'm a reg'lar Einstein. Now, whatsay you an' me talk?"

Over the protests of the police, Doom takes you back to his headquarters in the VVD Enterprises Building—which, you're shocked to find, stands where 4 Freedoms Plaza stands in your world!

He takes you to his private office, where he tells you of the fateful rocket trip that resulted in the deaths of Sue and Johnny Storm, and how the incident turned Reed Richards into a broken shell of a man and turned the Ben Grimm of this world into a monster—both without and within. He asks to hear your story—who you are, how you came to be here. Turn to **238**.

200 Ordinarily, you could lay the Thingpin low with ease. Unfortunately, these are not ordinary times. Your body is fighting a losing battle against a killer-disease. Your best punch hardly phases your opponent. His punch sends you reeling.

You come to in a cell. You pound on the walls, but they were designed to the Thingpin's specifications, and the disease is taking its toll. You know your adventure is over and that you will never be able to help your companions.

201 The moment is charged with tension, as the Ghost stands rigidly, waiting to see how you react. Finally, you break the tension. "Come on, guys, let's sit down an' talk things over. I could use a cup o' java—how about you, Ghost?"

"I am afraid my thirst takes a back seat to my fear, Grimm. I haven't long to live and, I'm afraid, neither have you."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that my presence here has placed you in jeopardy. This is unfortunate, but it was necessary. My beloved Mother Russia infected me with a dread disease, a disease for which there is no cure. I hoped Reed Richards could find a cure where I could not. I thought the only way to convince you to save me, your bitterest foe, would be to provide some, shall we say, special incentives. Yes, that was my plan—I knew I had to infect you with the disease, as the Russian scientists intended. Then you would have reason to find a cure, a cure that would save me as well as yourselves. If you still refuse to help me, well, your deaths will give me some small sense of satisfaction!"

"You're mad, Ghost," says Reed. "We would have helped you anyway, had you but told us what was going on. Your 'special incentives' were unnecessary, but that can wait. We must get to the lab quickly. I want to begin running my own tests right away."

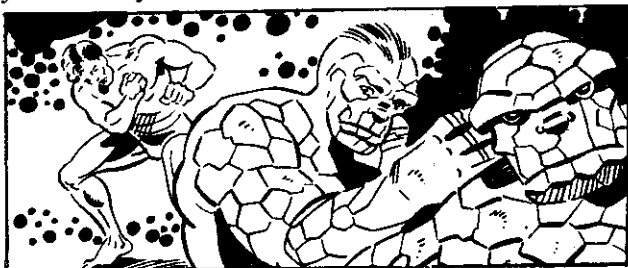
Turn to **218**.

202 You throw the strange alien sphere and feel a tingle of satisfaction as you see it strike Kingpin square in the forehead. It feels as if you hit him with your fist,

as if you could feel what the sphere felt! The force of the blow staggers him.

That's enough—he's in no condition to detonate explosives, at least for the time being. You and the Thingpin charge the staggering Kingpin. Your twin haymakers take him out without any trouble. The battle is over almost before it begins, and to your relief, the sphere seems undamaged.

The Thingpin is grateful and more than willing to give up a little blood for your cause. Alicia is saved, and you're ready to move on. Turn to **245**.



203 As you leave the planet in your craft, you let loose a whoop of joy heard throughout the Negative Zone. Annihilus hears it, too, and knowing he's been double-crossed, leaps into the void. You know he'll pursue you until one of you is dead. You begin bobbing and weaving like a fighter pilot caught in an enemy fire's sights. You've got to lose him and return to Earth, or your friends are doomed!

Make a Piloting FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, go to **269**. If the total is 10 or less, turn to **279**.

204 "Cripes, there's nothin' fer me here. I'm headin' home!" You pull the Watcher's device from a pocket in your uniform. With a touch on the bump that appears there, you're encased in the interdimensional sphere, and with a touch on the floating ball before you, you're on your way back home. Proceed to **268**.

205 You thank Doom, take the device, return to your own dimension, and use the device on one of your teammates. Which one will it be? If you use it on Reed Richards, turn to **215**. If you use it on Sue Richards, go to **224**. If you use it on Johnny Storm, turn to **233**.

206 "Ben, we can save your friends with this blood, but there's not enough to save you, too," says Banner. "Did you bring anything else back from your travels?"

If you have a set of plans, as well as two pints of blood, turn to **17**. If you have something from the Negative Zone, as well as two pints of blood, proceed to **62**. If you have a flashlight-like device from another dimension, turn to **125**. If you have nothing but two pints of blood, go to **227**.

207 The crowd seems on the verge of becoming an out-of-control mob, but then you're spotted. A voice cries, "Look, there! It's the Thing, and he has Gorrath!"

The courtyard falls suddenly silent and the crowd seems to part before you. You wonder if that's because they're in awe of you and your great strength or if they're terrified of Gorrath's strength-sapping power. Either way, you don't like it.

Reaching the palace steps, you say to Black Bolt, "Okay, antenna-head, whatsay we go inside and talk this thing through?"

You hand the canister over to Black Bolt and entrust Gorrath to the care of the Inhuman, Crystal. Black Bolt turns to enter the Imperial Palace. You and the rest of the royal family follow. As you pass through the marble arches, Medusa speaks, "Black Bolt and I wish to express our gratitude for the return of Gorrath and the Terrigen Mist. Once again you have come to the aid of our people and we are indebted to you. We know not why you have come to us, but if there is anything we can do for you—anything—it is as good as done."

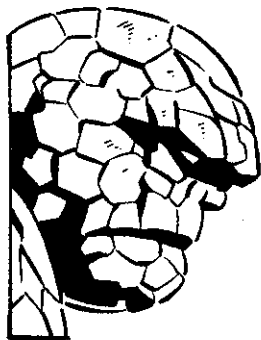
"Well, Dusie, matter o' fact, there is somethin'—you can let me have a little o' your Terri-whatever Mist."

You tell her of your predicament, and after a quick conference with Black Bolt, she returns to your side.

"Here," she says, offering you a container similar to the one you took from Gorvath. "Here is a sample of Terrigen Mist. It is all we can spare. We cannot guarantee you success, but our best wishes go with you."

Due to your selfless acts in helping the Inhumans, you gain 1 Karma point.

If you want to seek the aid and advice of the Watcher, proceed to **276**. If you want to return to Earth and you have a working rocket ship, turn to **197**. If your rocket ship was wrecked, go to **185**.



208 You arrive at the Empire State Building in time to see the Thing of this world climbing up the side of it, Alicia Masters in one huge hand.

You have to find a way to reach the top of the building, and you don't have time to waste.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **146**. If the total is 4 or less, go to **190**.

209 "I think yer full of it, Ghost! Now why don'tcha just come over here nice an' slow an' give yerself up. That, or just leave—yer trespassin', ya know."

In answer, the Ghost fades, making himself untouchable. "You stupid fool!" he shouts. "I have no desire to fight. I'm sick and tired—"

"Well, ya broke into the wrong building, then. Next time, try a rest home!"

You reach to the floor and grab a medicine ball, a Thing-size medicine ball, weighing several hundred pounds. With hardly a thought, you fling it at the Ghost, but it passes harmlessly through him.

How is it I can just tell that stupid power o' his is gonna give me grief? you wonder.

You wrack your brains, trying to think of some way to fight a foe you can't touch. While you think, your teammates give the Ghost their best shots, but they prove equally ineffective. Luckily, the Ghost seems to have as much trouble affecting you as you have affecting him.

"What's wrong, Ghost?" you shout. "Scared to solidify parts o' your body the way you used to? Afraid we might just turn you into a Red Sandwich if you do anything? Quit just standin' there!"

"You fools! You poor, doomed fools!" the Ghost says. Then he begins glowing brighter and brighter.

"Everyone back," Reed commands. "No telling what the Ghost has up his sleeve!"

"What I have up my sleeve is my end and your certain doom, Reed Richards!"

You're all bathed in a cold, yellow light, and you see your teammates drop to the ground. You feel a little dizzy, but otherwise, you're fine.

"What gives, Ghost? You can talk now, or you can hurt later."

You know your words are all bluff and bluster, but there's nothing else you can do. The Ghost looks strangely subdued, not at all his usual ranting, raving self. He answers quietly. Turn to **226**.

210 You head for the skyscraper that has no business being on Yancy Street, wondering nervously what the Thing of this world will be like. Entering the lobby,

you see several men in suits and sunglasses carrying barely concealed weapons. They eye you suspiciously, but don't make a move. *What now?* you wonder, but before you can worry about where to go or what to do, one of the suited, sunglassed, and well-armed men falls in next to you and says, "Office, boss?"

"Yeah, sure," you reply, and he ushers you into a waiting elevator. Inside, your companion says, "Hey, boss, you're lookin' good. You been workin' out? Guess ya been gettin' ready fer tonight, eh?"

If you want to question him about his comments, go to **285**. If you want to continue the elevator ride in silence, turn to **107**.



211 "Awright," you say, "you guys seem okay. I guess I can find some other way to save the day than to make deals with a jerk who wants to rule the universe." "We thank you for your . . . consideration . . . and hope you find a way to cure yourself and your friends."

"Yeah, thanks loads."

You prepare to leave the planet, but you've got a vague, unshakable feeling that you've missed something, something important.

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **222**. If the total is 3 or less, go to **231**.

212 You dodge the rays expertly, bobbing and weaving like the ex-running back you are. Grimm grows more and more crazed as you approach.

"No!" he exclaims. "It's not possible. You can't dodge all of my blasts!"

"Guess again, good-lookin'," you say as you pull back your fist for a colossal blow.

But as your fist hurls toward Grimm's nose, he ducks and, the next thing you know, he's grown wheels on the soles of his feet—rocket-powered roller skate wheels!

"What the—?" you stammer, too shocked to make a move as your foe skates toward the elevator.

"Hey, come back here!" you shout. "I ain't finished clobberin' ya yet!"

But Grimm has already entered the elevator. He shouts, "I'll be back shortly, monster!" and the doors shut tight. You're alone.

If you feel like you've wasted enough time in this dimension and want to begin your journey home, move on to **86**.

If you want to look around for a while and see if you can find anything useful, turn to **13**.

213 You refuse to help your alter ego defeat Kingpin, even though this means risking Alicia's life. He asks what kind of man you are—won't even help the woman you love. You explain that you've got to save your friends and yourself, but he won't listen. He challenges you and begins stripping off his suit. He looks a little soft—as if he'd spent too much time telling other people to do his fighting for him—but you learned long ago not to underestimate your foes.

Sure enough, he leaps to the attack with surprising speed, yelling your familiar line, "It's Clobberin' Time!"

It's clear that the Thingpin wants this to be a one-punch affair. He's putting everything he's got into this attack. *Okay, buddy boy, you think. You want it this*



way, you're gonna get it. You set yourself up for the punch of your life.

Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **191**. If the total is 11 or less, go to **200**.

214 You've been called a lot of things in your time, but "thief" isn't one of them. You jiggle the handle one last time, to be sure it's really locked, and head back the way you came. Go to **265**.

215 Reed Richards awakens from his coma—he's no longer Mr. Fantastic. But his greatest power—the power of his intellect—still exists, and he uses that power now, to create a duplicate of Doctor Doom's device. He can save you all! The story of the Fantastic Four is over, as is your adventure. Still, you know you made the right decision. You defeated death itself for yourself and your friends—and that's a happy ending in anybody's book.

216 You throw the alien sphere, but Kingpin moves with startling speed and snatches it out of mid-air.

"Well," he says, "what have we here? This looks like no baseball I've ever seen . . ."

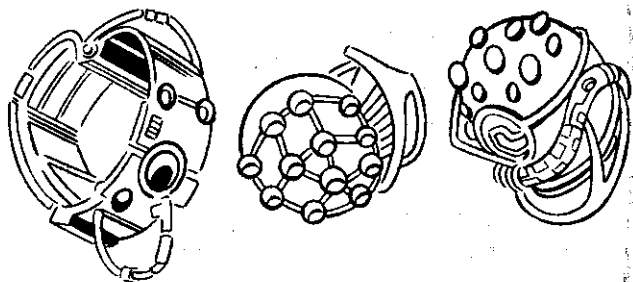
Now I've done it, you think. Without that gizmo, I'll be stuck here for the rest of my life . . . which ain't gonna be too long, 'less I find a way to cure myself and my pals back home!

Luckily, the sphere distracted Kingpin, allowing the Thingpin to close in. Before a punch can be thrown, Kingpin hurls his walking stick at the advancing crime boss, shouting, "Here, you orange-skinned cretin. I give you the woman's life—just don't twist the jewel atop the stick or her life is forfeit."

The Thingpin bats the stick away, but his assault is delayed long enough to allow Kingpin to take the few steps to the balcony. The Thingpin turns to Alicia,

while you follow the fleeing Kingpin, hoping you're not too late to retrieve the interdimensional transporter.

Make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, go to **225**. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **234**.



217 I'll worry about Doomsie later. Right now, I'm thinkin' I got me a damsel in distress ta save."

You rush to Alicia Masters' home, hoping the Alicia of this world lives in the same place as the one in your own world. She does, and though she and the Thing of this world are long gone, following them to their destination doesn't prove any problem at all—all you have to do is follow the path of destruction.

The path leads to the Empire State Building.

Turn to **208**.

218 Reed begins running tests on the Red Ghost. You leave them in the lab—nothing you can do to help, and you really need some shut-eye. Your other teammates feel the same way—in fact, they feel worse. The Ghost was, it seems, telling the truth about the disease.

Hours later Reed's tests are complete, and he emerges looking tired, sick, and shocked.

"What gives, Stretch?" you ask when he staggers into your quarters.

"The Ghost . . . he just disappeared. There was nothing I could do. He's gone. Incorporeal. A true Ghost

doomed to drift with the wind forever."

"That's awful poetic, Big Brain, but it don't mean a thing to me. Wanna try again?"

"He just faded away, Ben. The disease he spoke of is all too real. It affects only those whose cells have already been charged by exposure to cosmic rays and then it . . . how should I put this? . . . it supercharges them. Did you notice the strange, yellow glow he seemed to emit earlier? In some way I don't as yet understand, that was the disease being transmitted to us. The effect of the disease is to supercharge our already supercharged cells—it attacks cosmic ray-charged cells and allows them to use energy far more efficiently than they were intended to."

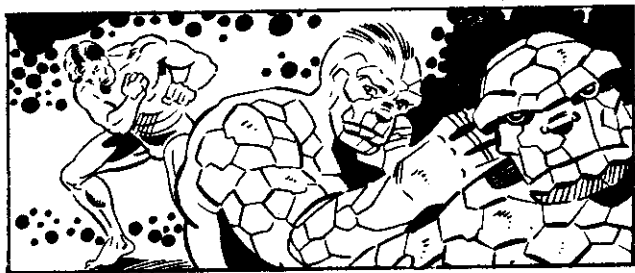
"That sounds great, Stretch," you say, wondering what the big deal is. "Sounds like this 'disease' is gonna make me even stronger, allow you to stretch even better, make the Torch's flame even hotter, make Suzie's force fields even stronger! What's the big deal?"

"The big deal, old friend, is that the natural limits of our supercharged cells are being violated. We're literally burning up from the inside! My body will become more and more pliant until I can no longer take on human form. Sue's invisibility power will become uncontrollable—she may even be lost from sight—and her force field power could go out of control, making her completely untouchable. Johnny will probably become a human star, unable to control his flame. And you, Ben, you will doubtless grow stronger and more massive, as if you'd been hit with a megadose of cosmic rays.

"I always theorized that you might have grown far stronger if you'd been exposed to the rays longer. My tests of this disease indicate that I may have been right. But that's not the point: The supercharging will make our powers more effective for a wink of time, and then we'll burn out—our bodies incapable of supplying fuel to the cells in sufficient quantities to keep us alive!"

"Oh," is all you can say.

"I may be able to come up with a cure, but, from the few clues I have right now, the serum which will



reverse the effects of the disease may not be available on this Earth. I must get back to the lab, now. I may not be able to keep working long."

Hours pass, and Reed, growing, by the minute, more pliant and less able to handle experiments, is unable to come up with a cure. In desperation, he calls in two of Earth's greatest scientists—Bruce Banner, the Incredible Hulk, and Hank Pym. Together, they formulate a plan, but their findings may not do you any good.

"Well, what's the answer, Big Brains? There's gotta be an answer."

"There is, Ben," Reed answers. "The Moon. We need a blood serum made of untainted cosmic ray-charged blood. You seem to be more resistant to the disease than any of us. We need Thing-blood, Ben."

"Well what's that got to do with the Moon? Why don'tcha just take some o' my blood?"

"It must be uncontaminated blood, Ben. We know there are other dimensions paralleling our own. There may be other Things there. You must seek them out, get blood, as much as possible—I have no idea how much we'll need. Bring it back here before it's too late. Unfortunately, our science has no way of reaching these other dimensions. You must consult the Watcher. His super-science may be able to help you."

"Not to worry, Stretch. You get to bed. I'm gonna call Alicia and get her back here to keep an eye on things. Me? I'm headin' for the Moon!"

Turn to **252**.

219 You're deep in thought and getting nowhere fast when, out of the corner of your eye, you notice a truck careening toward you at great speed. Quickly, your battle-trained mind spots two options: If you want to stand your ground, and try to stop the truck in its tracks, turn to **230**. If you want to try to leap out of the way before the truck hits you, turn to **239**.

220 *Uh oh, you think, I gotta feelin' this has somethin' to do with the juvie I didn't stop a while ago.*

As if in response to your thought, Black Bolt spots you at the rear of the crowd and gestures imperiously. The crowd falls silent. Medusa, speaking the thoughts Black Bolt dare not utter himself, says, "There is a visitor among us, one trusted by all. If he will consent, perhaps he will return Gorvath to us—and the Terrigen Mist to all the inhabitants of Attilan." The crowd agrees and raises a cry of friendship, support, and hope.

"Sheesh! I knew I shoulda stood in bed this mornin'." you mutter. *I got important business of my own to attend to.* But even as you think this, you know you will help your friends in any way you can.

In moments you are whisked into the Imperial Palace where Medusa explains the situation. "Ben, you have been our friend and ally for many years. Now, we need you as never before. One of our number has committed an unthinkable act—Gorvath, a young cousin of the royal family, has stolen the formula for the Terrigen Mist and made off with the bulk of our supply.

"As you know, the mist gives Inhumans their unique forms and capabilities. It is as essential to our culture as . . . as television or religion is to yours. He must be punished, certainly, but the mob outside would tear him limb from limb. We cannot have that. The people trust you to return the mist. We trust you to return Gorvath to us. Will you seek him out and bring him back?"

Your answer is quick in coming. "O' course, I will. In fact, I could stand to take a quick dip in the mist myself."

"You, Ben?" says a surprised Gorgon. "Why would you risk the mutating effects of the Terrigen Mist?"

You tell the silent royal family of the disease from which you suffer. You tell them of your hope that the mist will mutate the cells of your blood and that of your teammates, destroying the deadly disease.

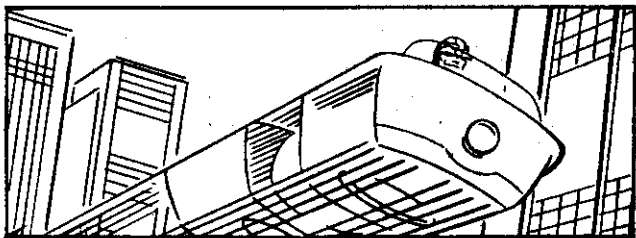
"If I could think of any other way, I wouldn't ask, but I'm pretty desperate. If the mist doesn't work, I don't know what to do."

"You and the other members of the Fantastic Four have done so much for us in the past, there is nothing we would not do for you in your hour of need," Medusa says, speaking for all Inhumans. "The mist is yours for the asking. I pray it does you some good."

"Me, too, Dusie, but first let's see about bringing that juvie back home."

As you turn to leave the palace, Medusa urges you to be careful. "Gorvath appears harmless enough, but he is not—he is an energy vampire who saps the life from any living creature he touches."

"Couldn't be any worse'n what's allin' me now," you say as you make your way through the cheering throng outside the palace and back to the desolate lunar surface. Turn to **169**.



221 "Heck, Doc, that ain't no choice at all. Save them. The world'll probably be better off with one less monster like me roamin' around anyway."

You pick yourself up from the chair, surprised at the effort it takes, and return to your quarters. Stretching out on the bed, you feel something hard and cold

against your back—your hand-mirror, the only mirror in your quarters. You throw it to the ground without glancing into its silvered face. You close your eyes.

You're just about to give up the fight when you hear the voice of the Watcher in your head.

"Though I am sworn never to interfere, I cannot simply watch you die. What else have you brought with you, Ben Grimm? What else? I can say no more." If you collected anything else that you believe may be of use to your friends, turn to **250**. If you have nothing but two pints of blood, turn to **227**.

222 You're about half a second away from leaving the planet's surface when it hits you: *I never told those dust-bozos about the disease, or needin' a cure, or anything. But they knew—think maybe I better check that out...*

You return to the planet's dusty surface, now as barren and, apparently, devoid of life as when you first arrived. "Hey, guys, can I ask ya somethin'? Howdja know I was sick, an' that I had friends who were sick, too?" Turn to **192**.

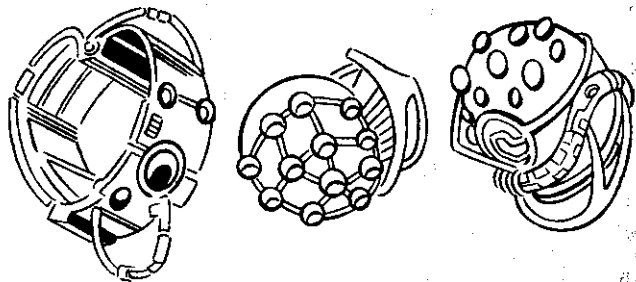
223 "Uh, hey there, good lookin'," you manage to blurt out, "listen, let's talk about this. I wouldn't wanna hurt ya. I need yer help."

But the Thing of this world continues his advance. He'll be on you in a second. You wrack your brain, trying to think of something you can say, something that'll get him to listen to you.

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 5 or more, go to **196**. If the total is 4 or less, go to **187**.

224 Sue Richards awakens, no longer the Invisible Woman. She blesses you for curing her, but in your heart, you know she's heartbroken. You didn't think how empty her life will be without Reed. Subtract 1

Karma point from your total. You've made a mistake, but there may still be time to correct it. You activate the Watcher's device once more. Turn to **141**.



225 You react with a quickness you didn't know you possessed—but life-threatening situations have always brought out the best in everybody's favorite everlovin' Thing. You reach the balcony at the same time as Kingpin, shouting, "Stop . . . Kingsy, listen, ya don't know what yer doin'. Stop!"

But it's clear Kingpin has no intention of stopping. You're close enough to see that the smooth surface of the ball has grown a control bump. You know that the Watcher's device can travel between the dimensions. You know it can do this when your mind guides it—you have some kind of mental link with the thing.

But you have no idea what it will do in response to the subconscious directions of a madman like the Kingpin. And even as these thoughts race through your mind, you see Kingpin preparing to touch the bump on the control ball.

Make a Reason FEAT roll. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **243**. If the total is 3 or less, go to **253**.

226 "I did Mother Russia's bidding by infecting you with the disease; that much is true, but I had my own reasons for coming, as well. There is no cure for the dis-

ease which is killing me—and now you. I knew that the only way to convince you to save me, your bitterest foe, would be to provide some, shall we say, special incentives. Being infected with the disease yourself would give you a reason to find a cure, a cure that would save me as well as yourselves. I was wrong, I see, but your deaths will give me some small sense of satisfaction!"

"Pretty speech, Ghost, even if I don't understand all of it. Now, be a good boy an' . . ."

But before you can finish, the Red Ghost's face contorts in pain and terror, as his intangible body slips through the floor and out of sight.

Some time later, having searched the building from top to bottom, and having found no trace of your foe, you return to the exercise room, gather up your fallen comrades, and take them to their quarters.

Now what, Benjie? What if the Ghost was tellin' the truth about that disease? I think I need some high-power medical help.

You head for the communications room where you radio for assistance. Within hours, Bruce Banner and Hank Pym have joined you at 4 Freedoms Plaza.

Banner and Pym spend hours in the lab, running test after test on you and your fallen teammates. Finally, Earth's greatest minds admit that they understand very little of the disease you have all contracted. They do know that no cure exists here on Earth.

They offer little hope, but suggest several possible courses of action. Reed Richards, Sue Richards, and Johnny Storm are very, very weak. Only you remain strong enough to act on the doctors' advice, thanks to your incredible strength and stamina—and even you can feel the disease taking its toll. (Subtract 1 from your Health point total.) You will go it alone.

Banner and Pym suggest three courses of action, any one of which might result in a cure.

In running some of your blood through the Fantastic Four computer banks, they discovered that the disease is mutating the cells of your blood, in effect, supercharging your already cosmic-ray-charged blood.

You're burning up from the inside. They noted certain similarities between the disease you've contracted and the operation of something called the Terrigen Mist, a substance used by the Inhumans on the Moon. They're unfamiliar with this mist, but apparently, its mutagenic effects are quite well-known to the Fantastic Four. Exposure to the mist might reverse the mutations caused by the disease.

As an alternative, they propose a trip into the Negative Zone where you will find the dread Annihilus. His Cosmic Control Rod can be used to alter the atomic structure of any substance known to man. It might be able to alter living matter—again, reversing the cell mutation caused by the disease.

Finally, they suggest consulting the Watcher—the strange, nearly omniscient being whose home can be found in the mysterious Blue Area of the Moon. His super-intellect and equally super-science might be able to suggest a cure.

Turn to **235**.



227 A voice in the back of your mind keeps on repeating, "What else? What else?" but after a while, you stop paying attention. Finally, the voice seems to move away until you can't hear it at all. You think for a

moment about your friends, and wonder what will happen to them. You think about paths not chosen, opportunities not seized. Then all is quiet. All is still. Your adventure is over.

228 You approach Attilan carefully, not out of fear, but to give your body a chance to adjust to the lower gravity of the Moon. Soon, you reach the gates, expecting to be greeted by your Inhuman friends.

Heck, I can usually count on Lockjaw or Gorgon meetin' me here. Wonder what's up?

As you enter the city, you are struck by a sense that something is wrong. The streets are empty. "Wonder where everybody is?" you say to yourself. "Guess I'll try the palace, see if I can find Black Bolt or Medusa or somebody."

You approach the Imperial Palace with caution, and when you reach it, you know something's wrong—it looks as if the entire population is gathered in the courtyard. Black Bolt, whose voice can shatter worlds, stands silent on the steps of the palace. Before him stands his love, Medusa, her hair flying through the air about her as she addresses the crowd:

"Fellow Inhumans, the royal family will deal with the problem. Have no fear. Gorgon is young. The mist will be returned to us forthwith. We will . . ."

But before the lovely Medusa can finish her thought, shouts are heard from the crowd:

"You speak of justice, but we see none!"

"The thief is one of the royal family! How can we be sure he'll be punished?"

"Yes, the mist belongs to all!"

If you're alone, turn to **220**. If you're not alone, go to **207**.

229 Doom leads you to the roof of the VVD Enterprises Building where you see . . . the Fantasticar!

Doom notices the look of shock on your face—"Is

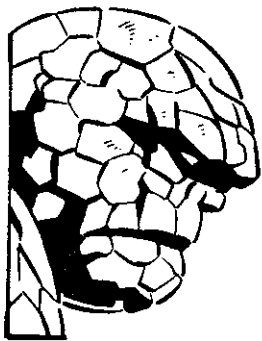
anything wrong? I planned to offer you this vehicle as transportation to the Empire State Building."

"No, no, nothin's wrong. It's just, well, I been flyin' that baby over there fer years—Reed Richards designed it way back."

"Why, yes, he did. Now take it, quickly. And god-speed!"

"Well, ya don't have to tell me twice, Doomsie." You reach out to shake Doom's hand, something you thought you'd never do, and say, "I'll take care o' your boy, Doc. Don't worry about a thing."

Chuckling at your pun, you lift off and head for the Empire State Building. Turn to **76**.



230 The speeding truck plows right into you with the force of a piledriver. Lucky for you, you've taken worse from any number of two-bit supervillains! "Hey!" you exclaim. "That doesn't tickle. Whyn't ya watch where yer goin', ya Sunday driver!" The truck doesn't do much damage to your rock-hard skin (subtract only 2 from your Health point total), but you're thrown thirty feet through the air, through the front window of a greasy spoon, and into the kitchen. There, in a pile of potato peelings and soup bones, you think, *I knew I couldn't leave Yancy Street without takin' a dunkin' in a garbage can! Somebody's gonna pay!*

You pull yourself up, brushing napkins, peas, and

cake crumbs from your body, and check out the truck—or what's left of it.

"Okay, where's the so-called driver o' this heap? Me an' him got a little scrappin' ta do!"

You check out the wreck—that's what the truck is now—and notice that it's a King's Bowling Supply truck. "Sheesh! That's gotta be the dumbest cover operation I ever heard of—I thought Kingpin was cleverer than that!" Filing the information away, you continue your search for the driver. You finally spot him running away, but he's got too big a head start for you to catch him.

Even if you wanted to, you couldn't, for you find yourself surrounded by guys in suits and sunglasses—all armed with submachine guns.

"That's it! Back off, guys. I mean it. I've been pushed around enough today an' I'm spoilin' fer a fight, even if it is with a buncha runts with pop guns!"

You leap to the attack, throwing the armed men around like rag dolls.

"Hey!" shouts one of the thugs. "What's gotten into him?"

"Beats me," another answers. "The boss's gone nuts an' I'm gettin' out of here!"

In just a moment, all of the armed men have run off without firing a shot—all except the one you hold high above your head in your huge paw.

"Okay, pal, I'm gonna ask ya once and that's all," you say, waving him over your head. "What the blue blazes is goin' on here? First, a truck tries ta mash me, then you bozos show up with tommy guns—what gives?" You lower him to the ground and ask again for an explanation. Turn to **248**.

231 The feeling of having missed something won't quit, but you don't have time right now to worry about it. You've got to go deal with Annihilus.

You leave the planet's surface and head for the asteroid orbiting high overhead. As he promised, Annihilus

is still there, awaiting your return.

"Did you bring me the weapon, cretin?" he asks.

"No, I didn't bring ya the weapon, an' watch it with that 'cretin' stuff or I'll have to pop you one. Listen, those joes down there don't seem like they could give you a lick o' trouble. Why don'tcha just leave 'em alone?"

"You made a bargain and went back on your word, cretin," he says, taking entirely too much pleasure in the word. "Prepare to die!"

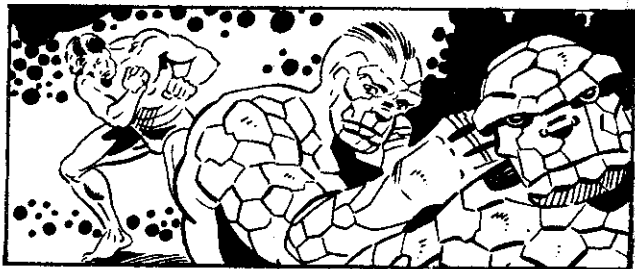
Sheesh, you think, this is what I get fer trying to be a nice guy an' helpin' out the dust-people. "Come on, Bug-face, let's get this over with . . ."

Annihilus leaps into the void of the Negative Zone, his wings carrying him high over your head.

"Hey," you shout, "come on down here so's I can clobber ya—I'm gettin' real tired o' fly-boys makin' me look bad."

"Looking bad will be the least of your worries, fool!"

He gestures at you with his Cosmic Control Rod. Caught in the tight beam it emits, you feel your body tingling. You're shrinking! No, not shrinking . . . turning back into Ben Grimm!



"There, monster, you're cured—of the affliction that turned you into the Thing, of the disease which would have killed you, and, soon, of life itself!"

He swoops down on you, like a great bird of prey. As the Thing, you might have been able to hold him off,

even defeat him. As Ben Grimm, you stand no chance. He extends a single claw and pops a tiny pin-hole in the survival suit that hangs limply on your now-human frame. You hear the hiss of air escaping into the void, and the sound of Annihilus's hideous laughter. These are the last sounds you hear before you black out. Your adventure is over.

232 "Ya know somethin', I been pushed around all day, an' I'm gettin' more'n a little tired of it. I don't care how good lookin' you are—IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!"

"Ya know, buddy," your opponent responds, "I'm real glad you said that, fer two reasons. First, ya saved me the trouble, and second, ya got me real mad. I don't like it when people steal my lines."

The Thing of this world continues his advance and you move toward him, feeling a little like a character in a bad western movie. Finally, you meet and throw twin punches, each powerful enough to fell a bull elephant.

Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, move on to **280**. If the total is 10 or less, turn to **162**.

233 Johnny Storm awakens, no longer the Human Torch. He thanks you for saving his life, but realizes with a start that he alone will survive the disease that threatens the rest of the Fantastic Four. Without his flame powers, he can't do much to help you, but he urges you to continue your adventure. You activate the Watcher's device once more. Turn to **141**.

234 It takes you longer than you thought to push your way through the wreckage that used to be one of New York's poshest restaurants. Finally, you reach the glass doors leading onto the balcony. To your horror, you see Kingpin turning the Watcher's interdimensional transporter in his hands. You see his fingers stroke the control bump forming on it.

You burst through the glass yelling, "No, don't! There's no tellin' what'll happen if you push—"

But your words come too late. Kingpin presses the bump and disappears inside the travel sphere. To your horror, the sphere disappears, leaving you stranded.

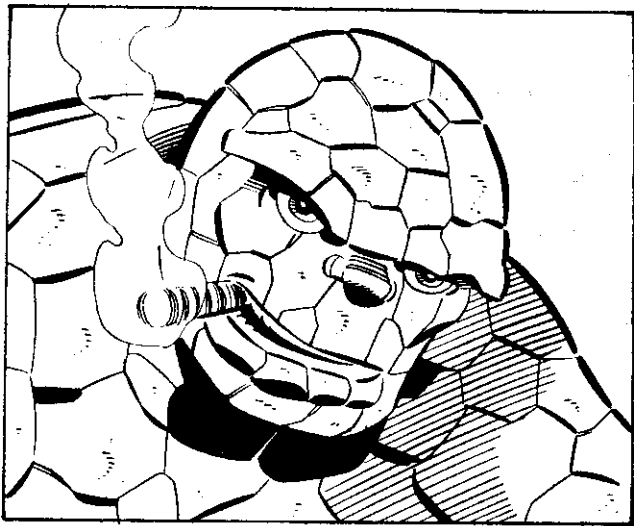
As the full impact of the situation becomes clear, you feel a hand on your shoulder—it's the Thingpin.

"Don't tell me," he says, "that magical device was your ticket out of here, right?"

You can only nod your head in confirmation. "Well, I suggest we get out of here before the police arrive. We can talk back on Yancy Street."

And talk you do. Eventually, you return to something resembling normal. Turn to **5**.

235 What will it be? If you want to go to the Moon to consult the Watcher or see the Inhumans about the Ter-rigen Mist, turn to **252**. If you want to visit the Negative Zone and try to get the Cosmic Control Rod, go to **244**.



236 "You bet I got the stuff—here!" you say, handing the Watcher's device over to Dr. Banner. "Here's two pints o' fresh Thing-blood. Hope it's enough!"

You realize that you're profoundly tired, and sink into a chair as the doctors hurry to Reed's lab to prepare the blood serum you hope will cure the disease. They return hours later, their faces drawn and haggard.

"Ben, we've got some bad news," says Banner. "You didn't bring back enough blood. We can create a serum that will cure Reed, Sue, and Johnny . . . or you. We can't cure you all. We thought you should be the one to make the decision."

You think back to your years in college with Reed, to your first meeting with Sue and Johnny, to your adventures as a member of the world's greatest team the Fantastic Four. You love your friends, maybe more than life itself, but . . .

If you want to save your friends, turn to **221**.

If you want to save yourself, go to **182**.

237 You tense your leg muscles and push off. The next thing you know, you're flying high over the head of the startled Inhuman. He glances up, but then sprints into the Watcher's nearby home.

"Sheesh!" you exclaim, startled. "Forgot all about the lighter gravity. I look like the dad-blamed Hulk! Good thing Torchie ain't here to see this!"

The thought of the Human Torch and the rest of your teammates brings an end to your reverie as gravity brings an end to your amazing leap.

You're back on luna firma, but the kid is nowhere in sight.

If you want to head for Attilan, go to **228**.

If you want to find the Watcher, go to **276**.

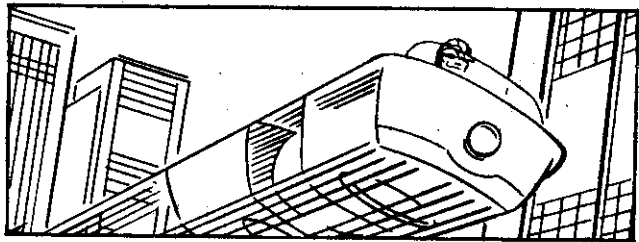
238 Time passes as you tell Doctor Doom your story. When you're done, he says, "I can help you get the

blood you need, if you will help me in return. I have a device that will turn the Thing—the Thing of this world, that is—back into Ben Grimm. All we have to do is track him down and then get close enough to use the device. The first step is child's play—I simply tap into the police network from the terminals in this building.”

Doom swivels in his chair and punches some buttons on the computer terminal on his desk. It seems mere moments before he turns back to you and says, “He’s been spotted! He’s heading for the Empire State Building . . . and he’s carrying a girl!”

He gives you a device that looks like a flashlight and says, “This device can turn the Thing back into Ben Grimm, forever. It operates on principles you can’t begin to understand. Suffice to say, its use is tied to the willpower of the wielder. I suspect your will is strong enough to activate the device. Go. Get your blood if you can, and then use the device on your monstrous counterpart. But remember, no effort of will can activate the device more than once, and its range is limited, so use it wisely.”

Turn to **229**.



239 You leap out of the way of the speeding truck, surprising even yourself with your agility. The truck barrels past you, half on, half off the sidewalk. Unexpectedly, suited men emerge from alleys and doorways up and down the street, spraying the fleeing truck with automatic weapons fire. Cars you didn’t notice before swing around at both ends of the street in an attempt to

block off all avenues of escape, and the truck slows to a crawl, while the driver surveys the situation.

If you want to ask one of the armed men nearby what’s going on, turn to **248**. If you want to make a flying leap for the truck before it gets too far away, make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 7 or more, go to **98**. If the total is 6 or less, turn to **89**.

240 “Ya know, you joes seem okay to me, but I’m sick and tired, and runnin’ outta time. Now gimme that weapon so’s I can get outta here, okay?”

“As we said, we cannot. We are sorry.”

“Sorry, my foot,” you respond as you reach out to grab the dusty six-shooter. Unfortunately, the dust-Thing reacts more quickly than you thought possible—as if it knew what you were going to do before you did. Instead of firing the gun, the armed dust-Thing disappears, along with all the other dust-Things. Before you can react to their sudden disappearance, a dust storm more furious than any you’ve ever seen begins to blow. The dust slices through your survival suit. To your relief, you find that this planet has a breathable atmosphere, but with every breath, you swallow mouthfuls of dust. You’re drowning in the stuff! Then, as suddenly as it began, the storm subsides.

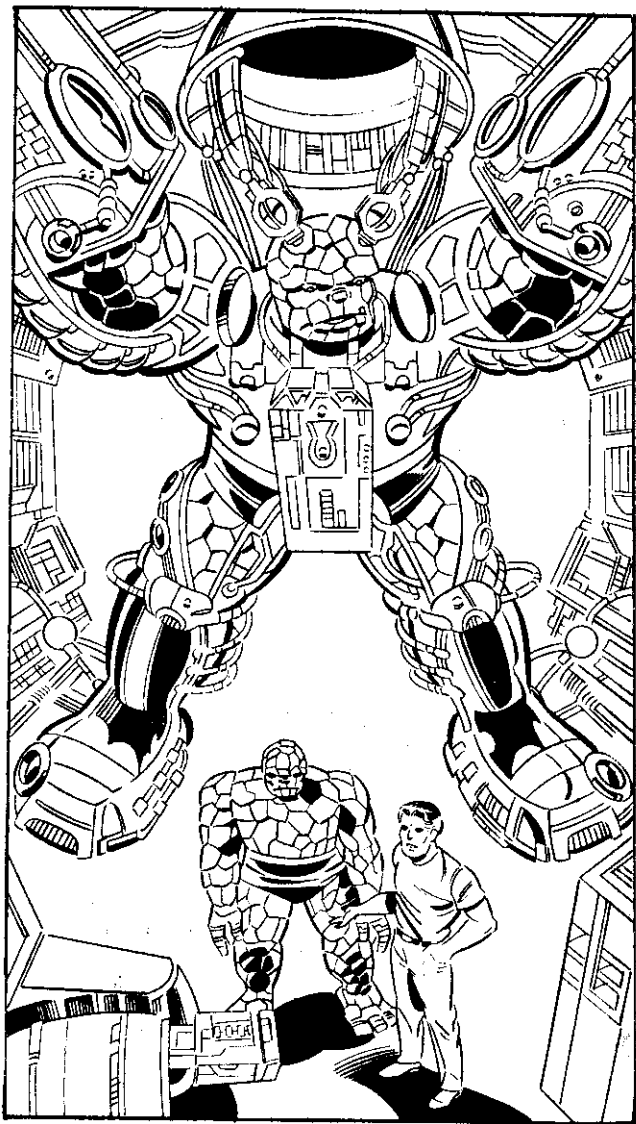
You feel . . . different. Only then do you notice that your survival suit hangs loosely on your now-human frame—you’re Ben Grimm again, and you’re cured of the disease; you can feel it!

“You see, Ben Grimm, why we have no fear of Annihilation. We have already infiltrated his body. Any threatening move on his part and we will neutralize him as we have neutralized you.”

“So that’s your weapon . . . is there anything you can’t do by jumpin’ down someone’s throat?”

“We have always done what needed to be done.”

“Can ya turn me back into the Thing? The fancy-shmancy ship that brought me here was designed to be piloted by a super-strong monster, not a 200 pound



weaking. I don't think I can make it home like this."

"We can try. Open yourself to us. Then concentrate."

Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 9 or more, go to **249**. If the total is 8 or less, turn to **258**.

241 You decide to allow Grimm to use the device on you—a cure, at last, not just for the disease, but for your . . . "Thing-ness." It's more than you can resist.

"Let's get started, pal. I wanna be human again!"

Grimm instructs you to climb into the heart of the machine, arms out to your sides, secured by huge manacles. A helmet-like attachment fits securely over your head. You feel a little like Frankenstein's monster.

"How much longer ya gonna be there, big brain?"

"Not much longer at all," your twin replies. "We're just about ready to begin."

He flips several switches, and the machine begins to hum. Your body tingles and your bones ache. And then it's over.

"Izzat all?" you ask.

"That's all, Mr. Grimm," your alter ego answers.

"Have a look," he says, pulling a hand mirror from a desk drawer.

You look in the mirror and see the face of Ben Grimm!

"You're human again," your twin says. "There's not a trace of cosmic ray activity in your blood, the disease is in complete remission."

You thank Grimm and prepare to head back home. You pull the Watcher's device from your pocket and activate it—or try to.

"It won't work," you say. "It won't work!"

It comes to you then. You can almost hear the Watcher's voice explaining that the stresses of interdimensional travel are too much for the human body to stand. Only as the Thing could you use the device.

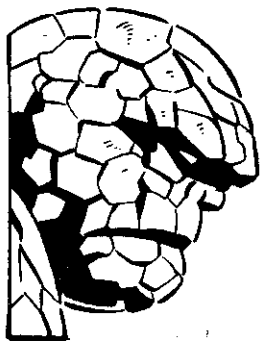
You're stuck here forever! Grimm tries to console you, but it's no good. Reed, Sue, Johnny . . . doomed because you didn't think, because you were selfish. Your adventure ends here.

242 "Aw, cripes," you say, "Of all the luck . . . an' this is the only clothing store fer miles."

You just can't bring yourself to break in, no matter how badly you want or need a disguise.

What now? you wonder. *I guess I could always go back to that ceremony back there an' try to figure out what's goin' on. But what's the use of that? Sure looks ta me as if there's a human me here— an if Ben Grimm's here, there ain't no Thing, which means there ain't no blood. Maybe I oughtta just be gettin' back home . . .*

If you want to risk returning to the ceremony without a disguise, turn to **214**. If you want to give up your search for cosmic ray-charged blood in this dimension, go to **204**.



243 You know you'll never reach Kingpin in time. Your only hope—and it's a slim one—is to try to establish a psychic link with the control ball from a distance, something you've never tried before. Gathering your thoughts, you try to project them.

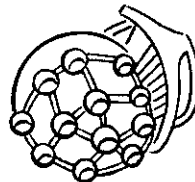
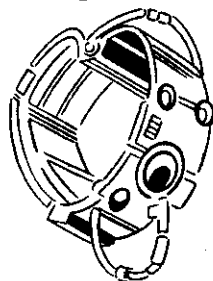
Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **263**. If the total is 10 or less, go to **272**.

244 You go to the Negative Zone Explorer bay. The Explorer, designed by Reed Richards to allow safe exploration of the Negative Zone, looks like a high-tech

flower, its petals open to catch the sun. You don one of Reed's latest inventions—a skin-tight Negative Zone survival suit. Should you run into trouble, the suit will provide oxygen and protection from the elements for about five minutes. You hope that'll be enough as you climb into the pilot's seat, hit the power switch, and close the "petals" of the "flower," sealing the craft tight.

Here goes nothin', you say to yourself.

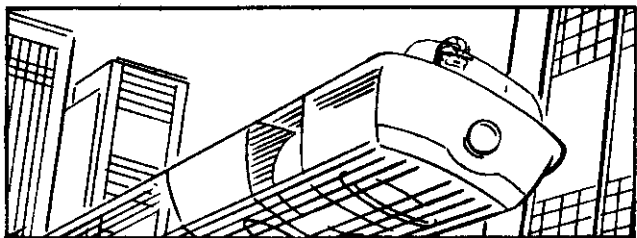
The craft hums with energy as it slices an opening into the Negative Zone. The first part of the ride is smooth enough, but then you leave this plane of existence and pass into the nether region between your own dimension and the dimension of darkness known as the Negative Zone. Turn to **81**.



245 If you want to return with what you have now, go to **268**. If you want to collect more blood serum, turn to **284**.

246 "Listen, pal, you've conned more people more times than anyone in history. I never believed you before an' I ain't about ta start now. You need my help—some laugh! Well, don't call me, I'll call you. Now, how-about you tell me everything you know about the Thing of this world. Or do I . . . get rough?"

"No, Mr. Grimm, I assure you there won't be any need of that. I have a complete dossier on the Thing in my desk drawer . . . you won't object if I get it out?"



"Naw, go right ahead." You settle into a chair as Doom reaches into a drawer for the file. When his hand emerges, however, it holds not a file, but a flashlight.

"I knew I couldn't trust you," you say, "but if you think you can scare me with a flashlight, you got another thing comin', Doom."

"Ah, my friend, this is much more than a flashlight, I assure you of that. I had hoped to use this to save my world from your monstrous counterpart, but I fear I shall have to use it on you."

Make a Fighting FEAT roll. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **255**. If the total is 9 or less, go to **264**.

247 You tense your leg muscles and push off, knowing that the lesser gravity of the Moon will allow you to leap farther than you could on Earth.

"Geez! Lookit me—just like the Hulk! If only Torchie could see me now!" you say cheerfully as you spring forward.

But the Torch is back on Earth, in a coma from which he'll never awaken unless you find a way to save him. With this somber thought in mind, you land near the fleeing Inhuman.

"Okay, kid, what's your hurry? Don'tcha know a guy could get lost out here all alone?" You wrap your arms around the boy, pinning his arms to his sides. He tries to free his hands but you have taken him by surprise

and he can hardly move a finger. The canister he is holding drops softly to the Moon's surface, kicking up a bit of Moon dust.

"Let me go!" he exclaims. "I won't go back there. I won't! They won't do to my brother what they did to me!" Suddenly, you feel weak, dizzy. Subtract 1 from your Health point total. Only an effort of will keeps you from dropping the young Inhuman.

"Whoa there! Suppose ya tell me what's goin' on as we walk nice an' peaceful-like back to Attilan. Okay?"

"Oh, what's the use," he says, as you drop him to the ground. He bends to grab the canister he dropped, but you beat him to it.

"Uh, uh. I'll just take that. Wouldn't want ya to strain yerself."

The youngster looks disappointed but resigned to his fate. The two of you march to Attilan, the young Inhuman looking more and more depressed with each step.

"Hey, kid," you say. "What's up? You look as sad as a clown without a seltzer bottle."

Surprisingly, the sullen youngster opens up, as if he'd been looking for an excuse to talk. "You wouldn't understand. You couldn't. You're a hero—everyone knows about the mighty Thing. I'm a monster. They made me one. The mist—it changed me, made me an outcast. I can sap the strength of those I touch. I did it to you a minute ago, but you were too strong.

"I was shunned, and didn't want my baby brother to suffer a similar fate, so I made off with the supply of mist earmarked for him. I knew it wouldn't do any good—they'd just make more—but I thought maybe the Watcher would tell me what to do before they could get around to it."

"Kid," you say tenderly, "sounds like you an' me got a lot in common. Look at me—I'm a monster, too. I can't even touch nobody without worryin' about hurtin' 'em. But runnin' away ain't the answer. Frankly, the whole Terrigen Mist thing always sounded cockamammy to me, but there's plenty about you Inhumans I'll never understand.

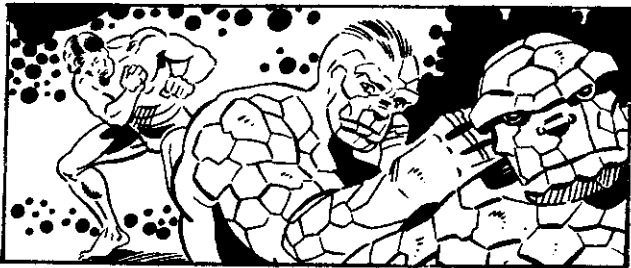
"Gotta say, though, that Watcher's pretty good—for all his talk about never interferin', he sure butts in a lot! Fact is, I got me a problem he might be able to help with, but let's get you straightened out first."

You head toward Attilan, knowing you'll have no more trouble from the youngster. Turn to **228**.

248 "Hey, sonny! I wanna know what's goin' on, and I wanna know now!"

He seems cowed, and a bit puzzled. Giving you a funny look you can't quite identify, he says, "Well, I don't know for sure, but I guess Kingpin got wind of the plan for tonight—I mean that newspaperman, Jameson, figured out we'd be at the Penthouse Club tonight. Seems like Kingpin'd know, too."

"The Penthouse Club," you say, "Yeah, thanks, squirt. Now get lost." He gives you another funny look but gets lost, leaving you to your thoughts. *Guess I better check out this Penthouse Club, see what's what.* Turn to **170**.



249 The dust flies into the air and flows into your nose and throat. You begin to choke, but a voice in your head urges you to remain calm. With an effort, you relax. Seconds later, it's over. You're the Thing again! The dust flows out of your body and all is still.

"There," the squeaky dust-voice says, "you are as you were. Return with your friends and we can cure

them as well."

"I will . . . I will!" you say as you prepare to leave the planet and the Negative Zone. Go to **203**.

250 "Don't you mind about any blood, Doc, I got somethin' better here."

"Better?" Banner replies.

"Lookit here," you say.

If you've got a flashlight-like device from another dimension, move on to **164**. If you've got a set of plans, turn to **137**. If you acquired something in the Negative Zone, go to **128**.

251 The Watcher says he knows of your predicament and that there are many worlds, many *Things* that are blood of your blood. There are many devices in his home that might be of use to you. He would help you, but he has sworn never to interfere in the affairs of men. Pointing to a wall with strange glowing lights on it, he vanishes.

Make a Psyche FEAT roll. If the total is 9 or more, move on to **7**. If the total is 8 or less, go to **16**.

252 You call Dr. Newell, head man at Hydro-Base, site of the Fantastic Four's rocket-launching facilities, and tell him of your predicament. He promises to have a rocket ship ready for take-off upon your arrival. A quick Fantastical hop to Hydro-Base and you'll be on your way to the Moon. The flight over Manhattan is uneventful and before long, you're out over the Atlantic Ocean. Hydro-Base looms on the horizon.

Sheesh. A ship disguised as an island—what'll they think of next? you wonder. You land the Fantastical, and Dr. Newell rushes out to meet you. A shuttle car takes you to the rocket-launch area. "Let me know if I can be of assistance when you return," he says. "Reed Richards was my hero when I was in grad school."

Great. Another o' Reed's egg-head groupies, you think as you climb into the rocket, say a quick prayer to the powers that be, and lift off.

Make a Piloting FEAT roll. If the total is 11 or more, go to **262**. If the total is 10 or less, turn to **281**.



253 You realize that there's no way you can stop Kingpin from activating the sphere, but you're not about to let him take the sphere without a fight!

Kingpin's finger brushes the bump just as you take to the air. Next thing you know, you're inside the sphere with Kingpin. More precisely, Kingpin's in the sphere and you're stuck partway in, partway out. The pain is excruciating.

"Well, well, well," says Kingpin, "this is quite an interesting development. A lesser man than I would probably have a difficult time dealing with this most recent turn of events, but suppose we see what happens if I grasp this sphere here and push the little bump I see growing even now . . ."

He touches the hovering control sphere that sends the transporter hurtling through the dimensions. You feel the sphere shudder and then the pain of a moment before is amplified a hundredfold.

Kingpin howls in pain, too, but you can't hear him over the sounds of your own screams. You see him pass

out and know, somehow, that he'll never threaten an innocent again. A moment later, you join him in blissful oblivion, knowing that your presence half in, half out of the sphere, left it unsealed, open to the non-time, non-color, non-matter through which it was designed to travel. Your adventure is over.

254 *Holy cats! you think, repulsor rays, like Iron Man's!*

The rays slam into you like a hurricane, lifting you off the ground and throwing you toward a machine in the center of the room. You land hard (subtract 2 from your Health point total), but you're back on your feet almost instantly.

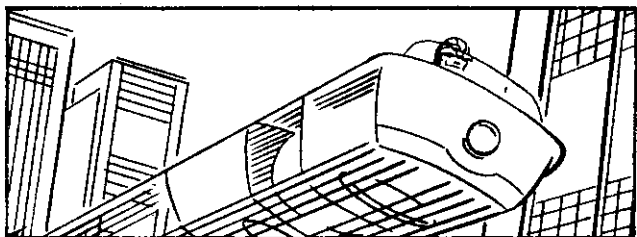
"That does it, pal!" you shout. "Up till now I tried to be nice to you 'cause I figured you were me, know what I mean? Now it's really clobberin' time!"

Your foe has weapons that can strike at a distance; you don't. If you want to look around for something to throw, turn to **115**. If you want to charge toward Grimm and close the distance as quickly as possible, turn to **92**. If you want to wait for Grimm to make his next move, go to **68**.

255 Your battle-trained reflexes are operating at peak efficiency, and you roll out of the chair before the shocked Doctor Doom can react. In an instant you're upon him, his human speed and quickness no match for yours. The flashlight-device is yours. "Now suppose you tell me what this thing does," you say.

"I have very little choice in the matter," Doom replies. "The device in your hands can change you back to your human form. It will work only once and then it is useless. I had hopes of using it to save New York from your rampaging counterpart, but that hope is shattered."

If you want to hear Doom's original plan, turn to **283**. If you want to use the device on yourself, go to **271**.



256 You apply the merest fraction of your strength to the door and the lock gives way, but even as you push the door open, a siren starts blaring.

"Aw, fer heaven's sake, a used clothing store with an alarm? What's the world comin' to?!"

Alarm? You duck inside, searching frantically for the alarm... there's the siren, high on the wall. You rip the wires loose and the air is blessedly still.

"Sheesh, guess this is what I get fer tryin' ta keep a low profile. Bet I don't even find any clothin' that fits in this dump."

But to your surprise, in the Large and Tall Men's section, you find a trench coat and a fedora that do fit. "Heck, didn't know the Hulk gave his clothes to second hand shops when he was done rippin' 'em up!" you say to yourself, as you put on your disguise—such as it is.

You admire yourself in the mirror for just a moment. Then, you see in its reflection that the crowd from the ceremony around the corner is breaking up.

The shop owner returns, and sees you standing there—a monster in a trench coat. He faints, but before he can hit the ground, he's caught under his arms and lowered gently to the ground.

"Take it easy there, ol' timer, you're okay," says the good Samaritan. "I'll have this, uh, fellow, out of here in no time."

Turning to you, he says, "Now take it easy, pal, this won't hurt a bit."

As the speaker finishes, you make a valiant effort to retrieve your jaw from its position on the ground, a

position it took when you saw him enter. For the speaker is you, or rather, the Thing. Not Ben Grimm, but the Thing... but you saw Ben Grimm on the stage. How can it be?

You barely have a chance to think about all of this before you're jarred back to reality by your twin's advance. He looks just like you except he's wearing the old blue trunks of the Fantastic Four, instead of your new tank-top uniform. Fashion statements are far from your thoughts, however—he's coming toward you, and it's obvious he's spoiling for a fight.

If you want to fight back, turn to **232**. If you want to try talking to him, go to **223**.

257 You head straight for the front door... or try to. Police are everywhere. They order you to stop. If you want to give up, turn to **80**. If you want to fight, move on to **70**.

258 The dust flies into the air and flows into your nose and throat. You begin to choke, but a voice in your head urges you to remain calm. You try, but can't stop gagging. After a while, the dust flows out of your body and all is still. You're still Ben Grimm.

"We are sorry, Ben Grimm. We cannot return you to your former state."

You're stuck in the Negative Zone, on a barren, dusty planet.

"We will try to make your stay here enjoyable," says the squeaky dust-voice. "You will be well cared for—you will never be ill, never want for sustenance. You will never know the touch of fear. And perhaps, someday, we will be able to return you to your original form."

You hardly hear these consoling words. You think of your friends and know you've let them down. You wonder what choices you might have made, what opportunities you might have grabbed to make things turn out differently.

The dust swirls and blows, creating dust-images of your friends, but these shadows only make you feel worse as they dance across the alien landscape. Your adventure is over.

259 "You bet I got the stuff—here!" you say, handing the Watcher's device over to Dr. Banner. "There's a pint o' fresh Thing-blood in there. Hope it's enough!"

You realize that you're profoundly tired, and sink into a chair as the doctors hurry to Reed's lab to prepare the blood serum you hope will cure the disease.

They return hours later, their faces telling you everything you need to know.

"We're . . . sorry, Ben," Dr. Banner says. "There just isn't enough blood here to do any good. We're all very, very sorry."

You're tired almost beyond caring now. The chair you're in feels so good . . .

"We'll keep working, Ben. Now that we have this small serum sample, we may be able to synthesize more, but it will take time . . . Ben? Ben!"

You hear the doctor's words, but they seem far away. You're just about to give up the fight when you hear the voice of the Watcher in your head.

"Though I am sworn never to interfere, I cannot simply watch while the Fantastic Four die. What else have you brought with you, Ben Grimm? What else?" If you collected anything else that you believe may be of use to yourself or your dying friends, turn to **250**. If you have nothing but a pint of blood, turn to **227**.

260 You try to get to Alicia before Kingpin can detonate the bomb, but the rubble that used to be one of New York's poshest night spots slows you down. You trample broken tables and chairs, sending shards of wood flying in all directions with each 500-pound step. Finally, you are close enough to lunge for Alicia, knocking her to the ground.

You look up to see Kingpin twisting the shaft of his walking stick. You've got a split second to act. You grab the necklace. If you want to smother the explosion in your hand, turn to **277**. If you want to throw it as far away as you can before it blows, go to **11**.

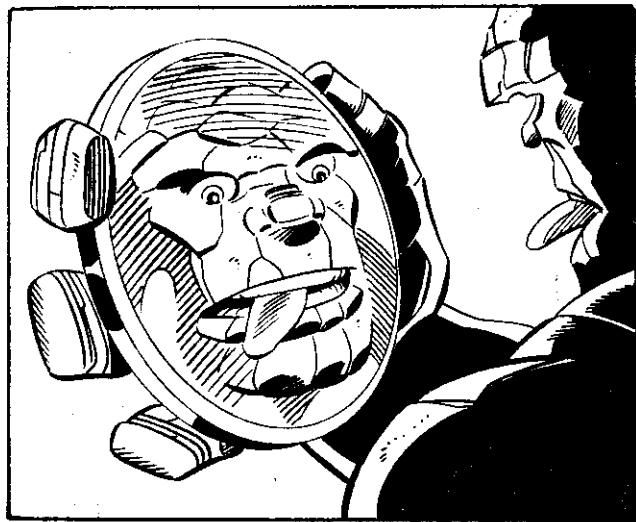
261 "These plans are absolutely brilliant, Ben. Who designed this?" asks Reed.

"Well, I did, sorta," you say sheepishly. "Actually, it was my alter ego in another dimension that did it, but I'll tell you all about it later. Just build the machine, would ya?"

"Yes, yes, of course. It will be just a moment's work. I'll call you when I need supplies or assistance."

Reed Richards throws himself into the job with all his remaining energy. A moment's work stretches into several hours, but eventually, the machine is completed.

"Well, Ben," he says, "it's finished. You know that using this machine will mean the end of the Fantastic



Four, don't you?"

"Yeah, I know. For my part, I ain't gonna miss bein' a 500-pound orange monster. An' I don't guess Suzie's gonna have too hard a time just bein' a normal human mom to Franklin. An' you'll do just fine—it was always yer brain that made you Mister Fantastic anyways, not that stupid stretching bit. The Match Head'll be a problem, but he'll get over it."

"That's a cogent analysis, old friend."

"Yeah, yeah. Let's get on with it."

Moments later, the Fantastic Four are no more—and you're no longer a monster. But, of greater importance, you and your friends will survive. You succeeded in cheating death, the unbeatable foe.

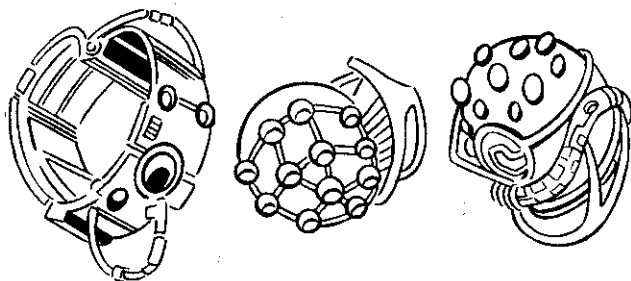
You stretch out in a bed that is now many times too large for your human frame, and stare at your human face in your hand mirror. *Not bad-lookin' if I do say so myself. Guess the circus'll have to get along without a rocky orange clown. Maybe I'll get back into test pilot-ing, you think. Maybe Tony Stark's hirin'...*

But these thoughts drift from your mind as exhaustion finally catches up with you. You'll rest easily this night and many nights to come. This adventure is over, but who knows what tomorrow will bring?

262 The trip through the void of outer space is a piece of cake for a pilot of your skill. Your instincts—and Reed's navigational equipment—take you to the Moon. A quick circle above the Blue Area, home of the Watcher and site of the Inhuman city, Attilan, reveals nothing amiss, so you push the nose of the ship down.

You descend slowly through the Blue Area's atmosphere, the pale blue cratered surface growing larger as your rockets kick up lunar dust. A young Inhuman scampers across the lunar landscape, but you think little of it as the ship settles down in one of the many meteor pockets.

You could land here in your sleep. Wide awake, you make a perfect three-point landing. Turn to **273**.



263 And you succeed! You sense the link between yourself and the ball. At your command—and to Kingpin's shock and amazement—the ball flies out of his hand and hits him square on the chin with a force that knocks him clear out of his shoes. He's out like a light.

You gather up the ball and hide it back in your uniform, just moments before the Thingpin and Alicia show up on the balcony.

"Listen, friend," the Thingpin says, "I'm in your debt." He picks up Kingpin as easily as an ordinary man would heft a doll, and says, "If there's anything I can do for you, name it."

"Thanks, pal. I haven't got time for palaverin', so I'll keep this short an' sweet..."

You tell the Thingpin your story and, to your amazement, he believes you—no questions asked. "Guess us Things stick together!" you say cheerfully as he gives you the blood you need. Of necessity, you prepare to leave quickly.

Turn to **245**.

264 Your battle-trained reflexes propel you out of the chair with astonishing speed, but Doom is just a little quicker. With what seems like the speed of thought, he activates the flashlight device.

Turn to **271**.

265 You stand at the rear of the crowd, listening to the speaker on the stage. It's the mayor of New York City, looking no different from the Mayor who spoke so glowingly about the Fantastic Four just a short time ago in your own world. But the words the Mayor of this New York City would never—could never—be said in your world: "... Many of you have heard the story of Benjamin Grimm, but it's an inspirational story. A story of a young man who dragged himself up from the gutter, the gutter of this very street, to become a pillar of society, a man whose generosity is matched only by his technological genius. We dedicate this complex—the Grimm Research Complex—to a man who went from delinquent—I don't mind telling you he ran afoul of the laws of this fair city on many an occasion in his youth—from delinquent to college football star to test pilot to, well, to here. I give you the President of Stark International—Benjamin J. Grimm!"

The crowd begins to applaud madly as Grimm steps to the microphone, but before he can utter a word, you hear a child shout, "Look, Mommy, look—looka the funny orange man!"

Thousands of pairs of eyes turn toward you.

"Well, willya lookit that!" you hear.

"Hey, it's the Thing! Awright! Let's hear it for the Thing!"

"He's a hero, honey, a gen-u-ine hero!"

"Hey, Mr. Thing, how come you're not up on the stage?"

"Yeah, how come?"

And before you know what's happening, you're being herded to the stage, where you take your place next to a shocked Ben Grimm.

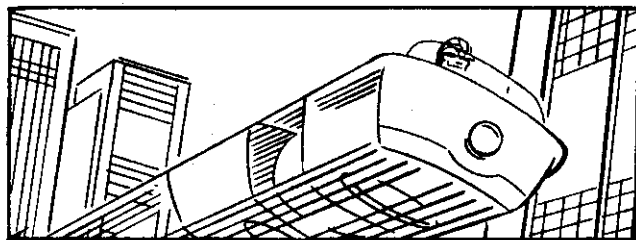
"Hey, pal," you say to him, "if you think you're surprised to see me here, think how I must feel!"

Grimm pulls himself together, makes a pretty speech about the Grimm Complex of Stark International providing jobs to Yancy Streeters and helping others help themselves. After a quarter hour of fancy talk, he steps back from the podium, thanking the crowd for coming,

and hoping they enjoy the refreshments provided by Stark International.

With that, the ceremony ends, and Grimm turns toward you and says, "I don't know who you are, but something tells me we've got a lot to talk about. Come with me."

He leads you down the stairs from the stage and into the brand-new building behind it. Turn to **178**.



266 You keep an eye on the entrance to the Penthouse Club. The police are thick as flies. Night falls. Several chauffeur-driven cars pull up and disgorge passengers dressed to the nines, but no sign of Kingpin or your alter ego. Finally, your patience is rewarded. A large black limousine pulls up to the entrance, and Kingpin emerges with Alicia. They go inside. Just moments later, you hear the whup-whup-whup of a helicopter overhead, followed by the sound of machine-gun fire. It's begun.

Policemen stationed around the building tense noticeably, but you pay them no heed as you charge toward the front entrance. Within seconds, you're up the stairs. You burst through the door in time to see a gala party ... or what's left of one. Turn to **133**.

267 You reach the kid before he can get to you. One punch drops the kid to the ground. He crumples like paper. You pick him up and prepare to leave. The Watcher appears. Turn to **14**.

268 By now, the sensations you feel as the Watcher's device hurls you through time and space to another dimension are quite familiar—first you're stretched, then you're squeezed, then you're turned inside out. The buffeting is almost more than your sick body can take. Subtract 1 from your Health point total.

Eventually, the device comes to a stop. You hope it followed your psychic instructions and took you back home. You touch the control ball. The sphere changes back to its baseball size, and you're on Yancy Street.

Sure looks like the Yancy Street I know and hate.

Ignoring the taunts of the Yancy Street gang members sprawled on the stoops of buildings that should have been condemned when you had to live in them, you head toward 4 Freedoms Plaza. Arriving there, you burst into Fantastic Four headquarters, surprising Alicia Masters, who's been taking care of your fallen teammates in your absence.

"Ben, you're back!" she cries.

"Yeah, babe, it's me. How's yer hubby, an' the Big Brain, an' Suzie?"

"Oh, Ben, there hasn't been any change, no change at all. I've been so worried."

"Don'tcha worry 'bout a thing, babe. I'm back, an' I think I've got just the stuff to bring 'em back to their senses. Where's the docs?"

"The doctors . . . why, they're all asleep. They've been working so hard . . ."

Before she can finish her sentence, you're rushing off to the guest sleeping quarters.

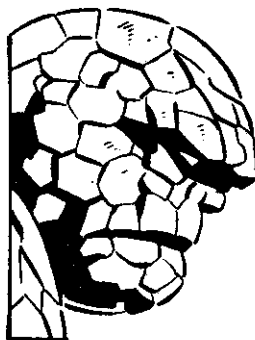
"Sorry to run off on ya, babe, but I got me some saw-bones to wake up!"

Moments later, you've gathered the great medical minds to your side. Their report isn't encouraging.

"Well, Ben," Bruce Banner says, "we've kept a vigil here, but there's really been nothing we could do. There's been no change in their condition since you left. Did you bring back cosmic ray-charged blood? It's the only thing that can help them now."

If you acquired cosmic ray-charged blood in one

alternate dimension, turn to **259**. If you acquired cosmic ray-charged blood in two alternate dimensions, proceed to **236**. If you acquired cosmic ray-charged blood in three alternate dimensions, go to **286**. If you have something else you think may help your teammates, proceed to **250**.



269 You fly like the ace test pilot you are, straining your craft to the limits of its capabilities. As well as you fly, however, you can't shake Annihilus. He's right on your tail. "I'll get rid o' you yet!" you cry. And then you know how to do it.

The sun looms large in front of you. If you can just lure him in a little closer, fly straight toward the sun, and then pull out at the last second, maybe he won't be able to pull out in time—even Annihilus couldn't survive a dive straight into the heart of a star!

Your mind made up, your course clear, you slow a bit, allowing Annihilus to get closer. Beads of sweat form on your brow as you near the sun.

I haven't played chicken since I was a punk back on Yancy Street, you think as you continue to head for the center of the white hot sphere. The heat is becoming unbearable.

Just a little longer, Benjie. You can do it.

Then, as the sun fills your vision, you pull out, the craft straining, screaming . . . but holding together! You look back and let out a cry of joy. Annihilus took the bait! He followed close behind you and couldn't pull out in time! His screams will linger long in your memory.

Not long afterward, you return to your own world, to your home. Your friends are still comatose, but you've found a cure. It's just a matter of time before the Fantastic Four are reunited once again, ready to face whatever evil, whatever adventures, fate has in store.

You breathe a sigh of relief as you load your fallen friends aboard your Negative Zone craft. This adventure is over, and you've emerged victorious.

270 *Holy cats! you think, repulsor rays, like Iron Man's! The rays slam into you like a hurricane, but you stand your ground.*

"Is that the best ya can do? I felt worse breezes comin' from ceilin' fans!"

You hold your hands out in front of you, catching the repulsor rays in your palms. The pain is agonizing (subtract 2 from your Health point total), but you push and push and push until your palms are just inches from Grimm's. The two of you stand there for an instant, titans locked in deadly combat, neither willing to budge.

Then, your palms touch Grimm's. The force of his rays turns inward, having nowhere else to go, and with a mighty burst, your foe's armored gloves disintegrate. He screams in pain, his hands hanging limp before him. He drops to his knees.

"What have you done!" he shouts. "I'm ruined! My hands . . . how will I continue my work?"

"Ya shoulda thought o' that a little earlier, now, don'tcha think? Here, let me get ya patched up . . . Come on, where's the first aid kit?"

He motions toward a nearby lab desk. As you head for it and rummage through its contents in search of bandages, he says, "You . . . you'd help me, after what I

tried to do to you?"

"Course," you reply. "It's the price I gotta pay fer bein' a hero—gotta take care o' yer enemies an' all that."

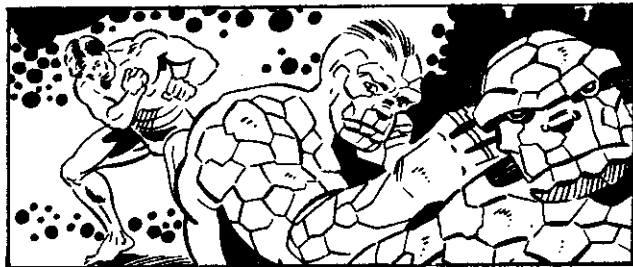
"I . . . I'm ashamed of myself," he sobs as you tend to his wounds. "I think . . . I think I can help you . . . help your friends."

"Yeah, that's swell, pal. Thanks a lot, but no thanks."

"No, really. I can help you," he pleads, as if salvation—his, if not yours—depends on your believing him. "That machine," he says, pointing to a large machine in the center of the room, "it's a cosmic ray analyzer. I've been researching cosmic rays since the disaster that took Reed Richards, Sue Storm, and Johnny Storm from me. It wasn't the crash that killed them, but the cosmic rays—you were lucky, my friend. Those rays are ninety-five percent fatal! The machine can charge some of my blood, make it usable in a serum of the sort you need!"

"Well," you say, finishing up his bandages, "what're ya waitin' for? Tell me what to do."

Grimm takes you to a control panel not far from the machine and shows you how to operate the cosmic ray machine. He then steps into the machine and tells you to fasten a helmet-like device on his head and bind his arms and legs with heavy manacles, from which tubes lead to the machine itself.



"Good," he says "this will extract blood and charge it, depositing it in a jar over there by you. Now, turn the machine on!"

You follow his instructions to the letter and, within moments, the jar is full.

"Shut it off and let me loose," says Grimm, a little woozy from loss of blood. He stumbles over to the control panel, examines some dials, and exclaims, "It worked! The blood is charged with cosmic rays! Now go and save yourself and your friends—my friends—don't let them die again!"

You touch the Watcher's device to the now full jar. When you remove it, the blood is gone, sucked into the device.

You thank him and prepare to leave, but Grimm grabs your arm. "Wait. Help me destroy my machine. I didn't tell you what its true purpose was—I planned to turn it against the people who killed Tony Stark. I hoped its ninety-five percent fatality record would right the wrongs I perceived, make up for Tony's death. But you showed me how a true hero acts, by helping one who wanted nothing but to see you dead. Tony would have done the same. Reed, Sue, and Johnny would have done the same. Now, help me to do the right thing. Help me destroy the machine."

Together, you make short work of it and, before long, you find yourself pulling the now familiar interdimensional transfer device from your pocket.

"So long, pal," you say. "Welcome to the ranks of heroes!"

You touch the control bump of the device and you're gone. Add 1 to your Karma point total for having saved Grimm from a life spent pursuing vengeance.

Turn to **268**.

271 You are bathed in a warm, white glow. A feeling of peace descends upon you. Then, you feel yourself becoming human again. In moments, your transformation is complete. You're Ben Grimm.

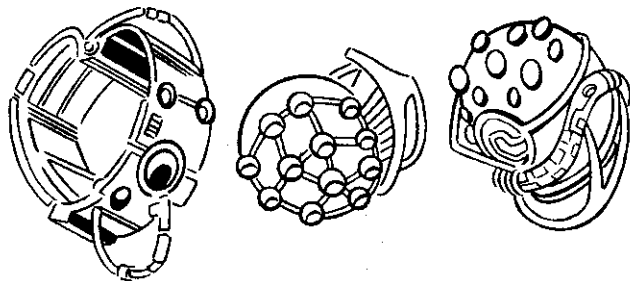
Doctor Doom stands over you, glowering.

"You poor, pitiful fool. I had hoped to use this device to save my world from your rampaging counterpart, but you proved to be no less a monster than he!"

He throws the device to the floor.

"It's useless now, you know. The sources of its power are fickle and difficult to harness. I can never build another one. Congratulations, Mr. Grimm. I trust that once you regain the use of your limbs—which should be a matter of moments—you will leave and never return to this building."

As Doom predicted, you regain control of yourself. You leave, knowing you were wrong about Doom, knowing as well that your human form can't withstand the rigors of interdimensional travel. Your teammates are doomed now, and you are stuck in a dimension like your own, and yet, very, very different.



272 You try with all your might to focus your thoughts and transmit them to the sphere, but it's no use. *Always was better with my fists than with my brain, you think, ruefully.*

Kingpin pushes the tiny bump on the small sphere and is immediately encased in the larger one that appears. In an instant, he's gone. You'll never know where he ended up.

At that moment, the Thingpin and Alicia show up on the balcony. "Listen, friend," the Thingpin says, "I'm

in your debt." He strides over, holds out a monstrous, rock hand to you, and says, "If there's anything I can do for you, name it."

Turn to 5.

273 The young Inhuman leaps out of sight in the general direction of the Watcher's home as you turn toward Attilan. Kids. They're the same all over—always out galavantin' around. I bet that kid gets a lick-in' when he gets home, but I ain't got time to play nursemaid to any juvenile delinquents right now. Turn to 228.

274 You sidle around a corner, away from the crowd and the activity on the stage. Once around the corner, you find yourself on the Yancy Street of your youth—a slum, from which only the very lucky escape.

What gives? you wonder. Back there, Yancy Street looks like Wall Street or somethin'. Over here, it's a slum. It's like someone came in, shoveled out a huge chunk of the ol' neighborhood, and dropped a fancy-shmancy island right in the middle of it.

You're mulling this over, when you find a second-hand clothing store. The sign in the door reads, "Closed. Back soon." Sure enough, the door is locked.

"Nuts," you say, "this is the only clothin' store for blocks." If you want to force the door, turn to 256. If you want to forget about a disguise, go to 242.

275 You realize you have no idea where your alter ego might be. Turn to 219.

276 You gaze up at the Watcher's home as you approach. Once there, you put your hands on the walls and push. You ooze through the wall, thinking, *Why couldn't the Watcher just have a normal door like*

everyone else?

You fall to the floor inside the Watcher's home. As you try to get your bearings, the Watcher appears. Turn to 251.

277 The bomb explodes, blowing a hole in the floor beneath your hand . . . and threatening to blow a hole in your hand, too. Alicia is knocked silly, but she'll recover. Add 2 to your Karma point total. Your hand is throbbing. Subtract 10 from your Health point total—you've never tried to catch what amounts to a tank shell in one hand before! Also, from now on, subtract 1 from your Fighting score before making Fighting FEAT rolls.

Looking up, you see the Thingpin make short work of Kingpin, before he walks over to you, offers you a hand up, and says, "Thanks, friends, I'm in your debt. If there's anything I can do for you, just name it."

You ask him casually for a pint of blood, and are surprised when he says no problem. Turn to 245.

278 You dodge the rays expertly, bobbing and weaving like the ex-running back you are. You're almost on top of Grimm, when—POW! you take a repulsor shot to the jaw that knocks you senseless.

Turn to 8.

279 You fly like the ace test pilot you are, straining your craft to the limits of its capabilities. As well as you fly, however, you can't shake Annihilus. He's right on your tail. "I'll get rid o' you yet!" you cry. And then you know how to do it.

The sun looms large in front of you. If you can just lure him in a little closer, fly straight toward the sun, and then pull out at the last second, maybe he won't be able to pull out in time—even Annihilus couldn't survive a dive straight into the heart of a star!

Your mind made up, your course clear, you slow a bit,

allowing Annihilus to get closer. Beads of sweat form on your brow as you near the sun.

I haven't played chicken since I was a punk back on Yancy Street, you think as you continue to head for the center of the white hot sphere. The heat is becoming unbearable.

Just a little longer, Benjie. You can do it.

Then, as the sun fills your vision, you try to pull out of your dive, but it's too late. You waited too long! You look behind you and see that your sucker play worked—Annihilus is plunging into the heart of the sun with you.

Your last thoughts before the heat becomes too much to bear are of Annihilus—at least he'll never threaten anyone again—and of your friends. Your victory over Annihilus hardly makes up for letting your friends down. As you plummet to certain doom, you wonder what choices you might have made, what opportunities you might have grabbed, to make things come out differently, but this adventure is over.

280 The blow is one of your best, sending pieces of your twin's armored hide flying through the air as he crashes through the back wall of the store. Only the Hulk and the Silver Surfer ever managed to chip your skin! The Thing of this world lies dazed on the ground, seemingly no threat to you.

Whew, sometimes I don't know my own strength, you think as you approach him. As you get closer, however, you see something even stranger than the chipped skin—what lies beneath it. Where the skin has been chipped away, you see metal—not muscle and sinew, but glistening metal plates!

"What the . . ." you blurt out. "If I just risked my neck to take out a fancy-pants robot, somebody's gonna pay! Hey, wait a minute. That's it! That's how Ben Grimm an' the Thing can both exist in this world. Thing robots! What'll they think of next!"

But your amazement is cut short by the realization

that, if there's no Thing, there's no cosmic ray-charged blood. You've spent a lot of time seeking blood. Back home your teammates lie in comas. You're not feeling too good right now, either. That punch took a lot out of you. Roll the die and subtract that number from your Health point total.

You pull the Watcher's device from a pocket in your uniform and prepare to activate it, but as your hand brushes the control bump, you pause . . .

Make an Intuition FEAT roll. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **152**. If the total is 3 or less, go to **132**.

281 The trip through outer space is pretty dull, and you have to fight off the urge to drift off to sleep.

Get yer act together, Benjie, you chide yourself. This ain't no hayride. Yer sittin' on top of a mess o' TNT here!

You manage to find the Blue Area of the Moon without much trouble. This is the home of the Watcher and site of the Inhuman city, Attilan. You've been here dozens of times before. But as you begin your descent through the atmosphere of the Blue Area, you feel a wave of fatigue and dizziness, and your ship veers suddenly toward Attilan. *Guess I'm sicker'n I thought!* you think, as you fight to keep the ship from crashing. Subtract 1 from your Health point total.

The controls are heavy in your hands, but you manage to pull the nose of the ship up. The spires of Attilan quake as your ship passes close above them. There's no time to pat yourself on the back, however, for the surface of the Moon grows closer by the second. You put all of your great strength into one final effort to keep the ship's nose up, and you do, but your muscles seem out of control. The ship's nose comes up and over, and next thing you know, you're tumbling out of control. The ship hits hard, the impact causing an explosion of fuel, debris, and moon rocks visible from Earth!

After a while, you wake up, examine yourself, and determine that you've suffered some injury—nothing

serious, but roll the die and subtract the number you roll from your Health point total. Unfortunately, your ship is now a pile of scrap.

Hope Lockjaw's around to help get me off this two-bit excuse for a planet, you think, as you force your way through the wreckage of your ship and head for the surface.

There, you survey the situation—you're smack dab in the middle of the Blue Area of the Moon. To your right is the city of Attilan, to the left, the home of the Watcher, site of your first encounter with the Red Ghost.

As you think back to that earlier encounter, your eye is caught by the sight of a young Inhuman, leaping across the desolate lunar landscape. Under his arm, you see a metal cylinder. He seems to be heading from Attilan toward the Watcher's home.

If you want to ignore the youngster and head for Attilan, move on to **273**. If you want to ignore the youngster and head for the Watcher's home, turn to **276**. If you want to pursue the young Inhuman, make an Agility FEAT roll. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **237**. If the total is 5 or less, go to **247**.

282 Before your armored foe can react, you're tearing into the machine. Glass and metal shower down around you.

"No! Why? I could have saved you, saved your friends, saved the free world!" Grimm screams through hot, bitter tears.

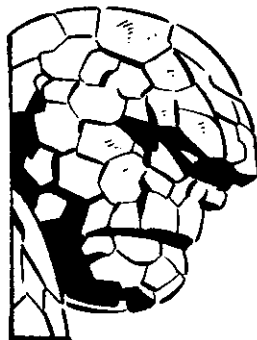
"Benjie-boy," you say, "you may be a big brain like Reed Richards, but you got a lot to learn."

Within moments, the machine is a junk heap, one he'll never be able to rebuild without the cosmic rays only you can provide. You turn to your alter ego and say, "Grimm, if there's one thing I've learned in my time with the Fantastic Four, it's that we're all just people—just 'cause they're 'commies,' don't mean they deserve to die or be mutated or somethin'. Just look what happened to me . . . lookit what happened to

Reed, and Sue, and Johnny. No way, pal. You ain't got the right, no matter what some two-bit jerks did to yer buddy Stark."

But Grimm is beyond hearing you. He wanders around the lab aimlessly, muttering incomprehensibly. You pull the Watcher's device from your pocket and prepare to return home. You've achieved some kind of victory here, but the taste of victory is anything but sweet today.

You activate the interdimensional transporter and go to **268**.



283 "Awright, Doom, maybe I was wrong about you. Suppose you tell me what yer plan is an' then I'll decide whether or not I want to clobber you."

"Very well, Grimm," Doom replies through clenched teeth. "Your counterpart in this dimension is a wanton killer. He's just been spotted heading for the Empire State Building . . . with a girl. I hoped you would fly there in a vehicle I would provide, use this device to turn him back into Ben Grimm, and save the innocent girl."

"An' I could get the blood I need to save myself an' the rest of the Fantastic Four . . ."

"You could do whatever you wanted, Grimm, as long as the Thing's rampage was ended."



"I'll do it, Doom. Take me to yer flyin' machine. I got me a Thing to clobber!"
Turn to **229**.

284 By now you can handle the Watcher's device like a champ, but you still don't know how or why it always manages to set you down on Yancy Street. This time, the interdimensional transporter has set you down in an alleyway, and a lucky thing, too—there's a crowd here, a crowd like none you've ever seen on Yancy Street. Where you'd expect to see bums and street gangs, you see the city's elite, the well-to-do, the cream of New York society. The crowd surrounds a stage that stands before a complex of brand-new skyscrapers, gleaming towers of glass and steel.

This sure ain't like the Yancy Street back home, you think. "Well, will ya get a load o' that!"

There on the stage, you see . . . **BEN GRIMM!**

Not the Thing, not some orange monstrosity, but your human self, the man you never had a chance to be, the man whose life ended when an experimental rocket ship failed to shield you from the mutagenic effects of cosmic rays . . . Ben Grimm!

The crowd pays rapt attention to the activity on the stage, so they haven't noticed you yet, but it's only a matter of time—rocky orange monstrosities are hard to hide. There's no telling how they'll respond to you, but with Ben Grimm on the podium it's a safe bet there's no Thing in this world!

If you want to look around for a disguise of some kind, turn to **274**. If you want to remain in your Fantastic Four uniform, go to **265**.

285 You ask him what he's talking about. He gets suspicious and clams up. The elevator stops a moment later and you get off. The doors slide shut behind you. There you see . . . yourself. Your alter ego sits behind a desk, dressed to the nines in a gray pinstripe suit. He looks bigger than you, but your best guess is that the extra bulk is flab, not muscle.

So that's what I'd look like if I let myself go to seed, you think. Aloud, you say, "Hiya, Benjie-boy. What's cookin'?"

Ignoring your lighthearted greeting, your alter ego addresses you in a chilling voice that sounds like an evil mockery of your own, "My men spoke of how much you resembled me, stranger, but I'm still a bit surprised. As far as 'what's cookin'?', suffice to say there is more cookin' than you can possibly imagine. But suppose you tell me what it is you want, hm?"

Seeing no reason to withhold anything from him, you explain your presence. Turn to **51**.

286 "You bet I got the stuff—here!" you say, handing the Watcher's device over to Dr. Banner. He and the other doctors take the device, now filled with three pints of cosmic ray-charged blood, and rush to the lab.

Suddenly, you realize that you're profoundly tired, and sink into a chair, hoping the doctors will be able to prepare a blood serum that will cure you and your friends.



They return hours later, their faces telling you everything you need to know.

"You did it, Ben!" says Banner excitedly. "We were able to create enough serum to cure you all!"

You close your eyes, weary to the bone. A tear, hot and damp, rolls down your orange, rocky cheek. You taste its salt in your smile, and smiling, drift off to sleep. You rest easily, knowing you've succeeded, knowing that when next you open your eyes, the Fantastic Four will be reunited, ready to face whatever adventure fate has in store!