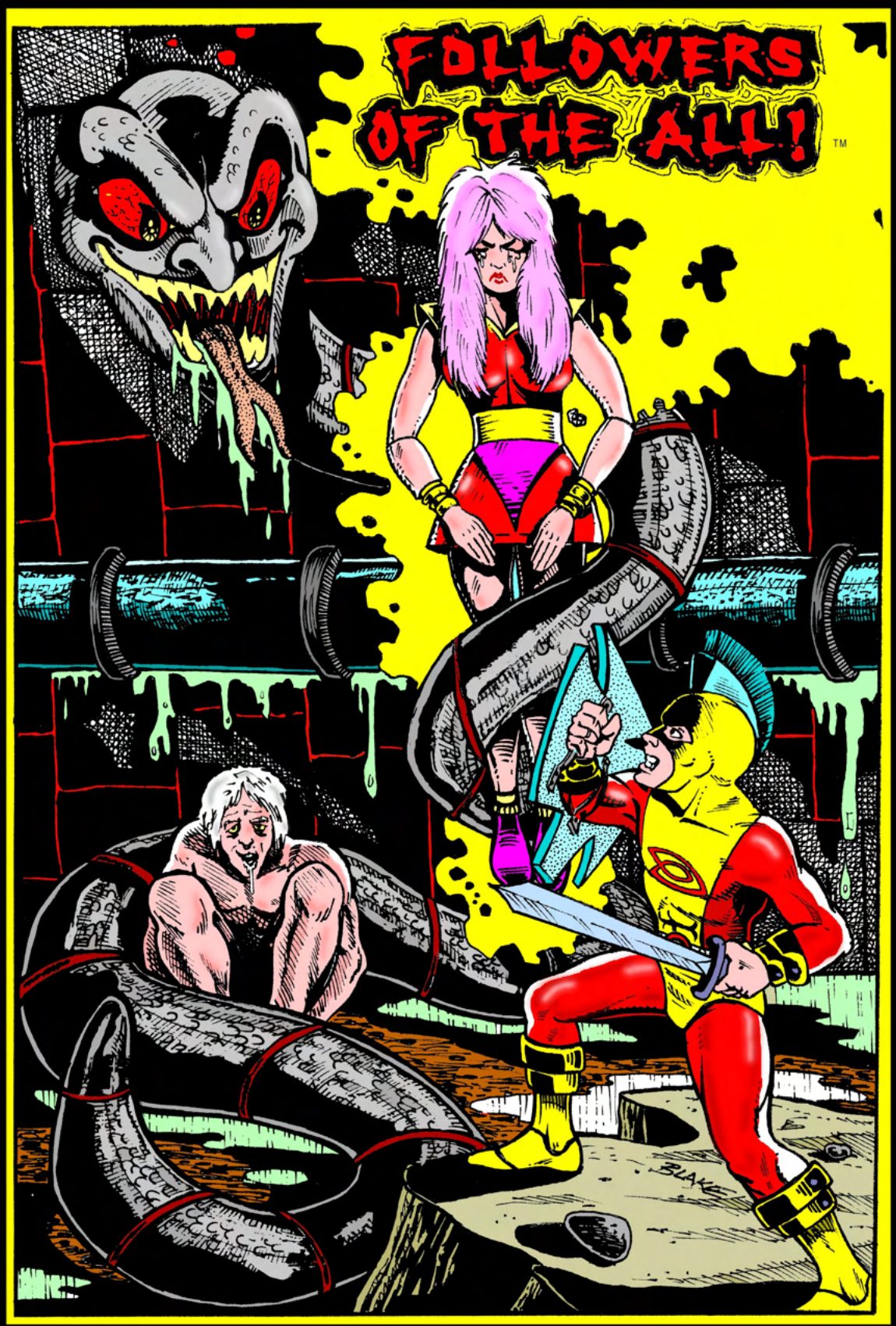
ALTERNATIVE COMICS' MOST PROPHETIC VISION OF THE FUTURE!

FOLLOWERS OF THE ALL!™

1B

GOD AND I



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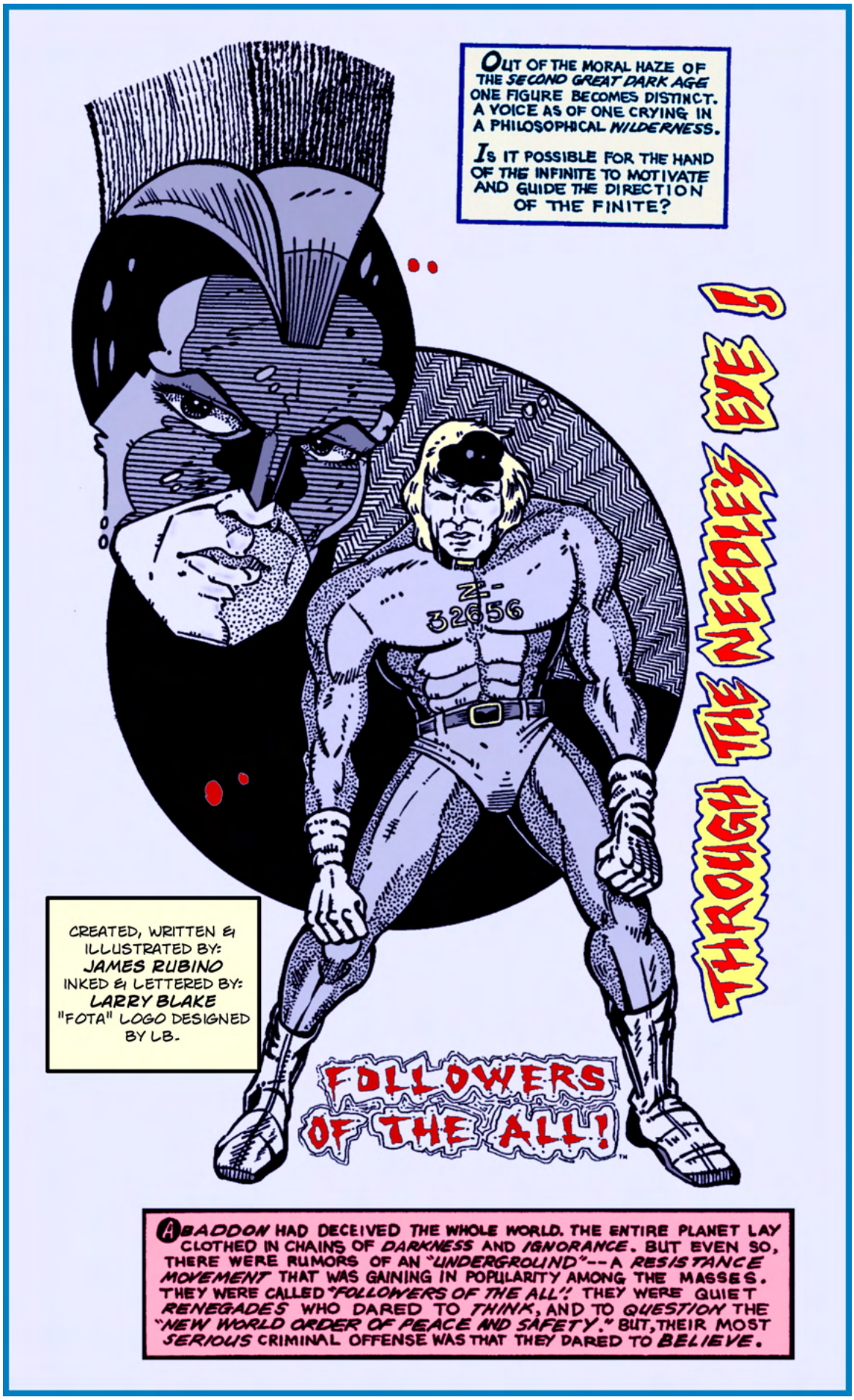
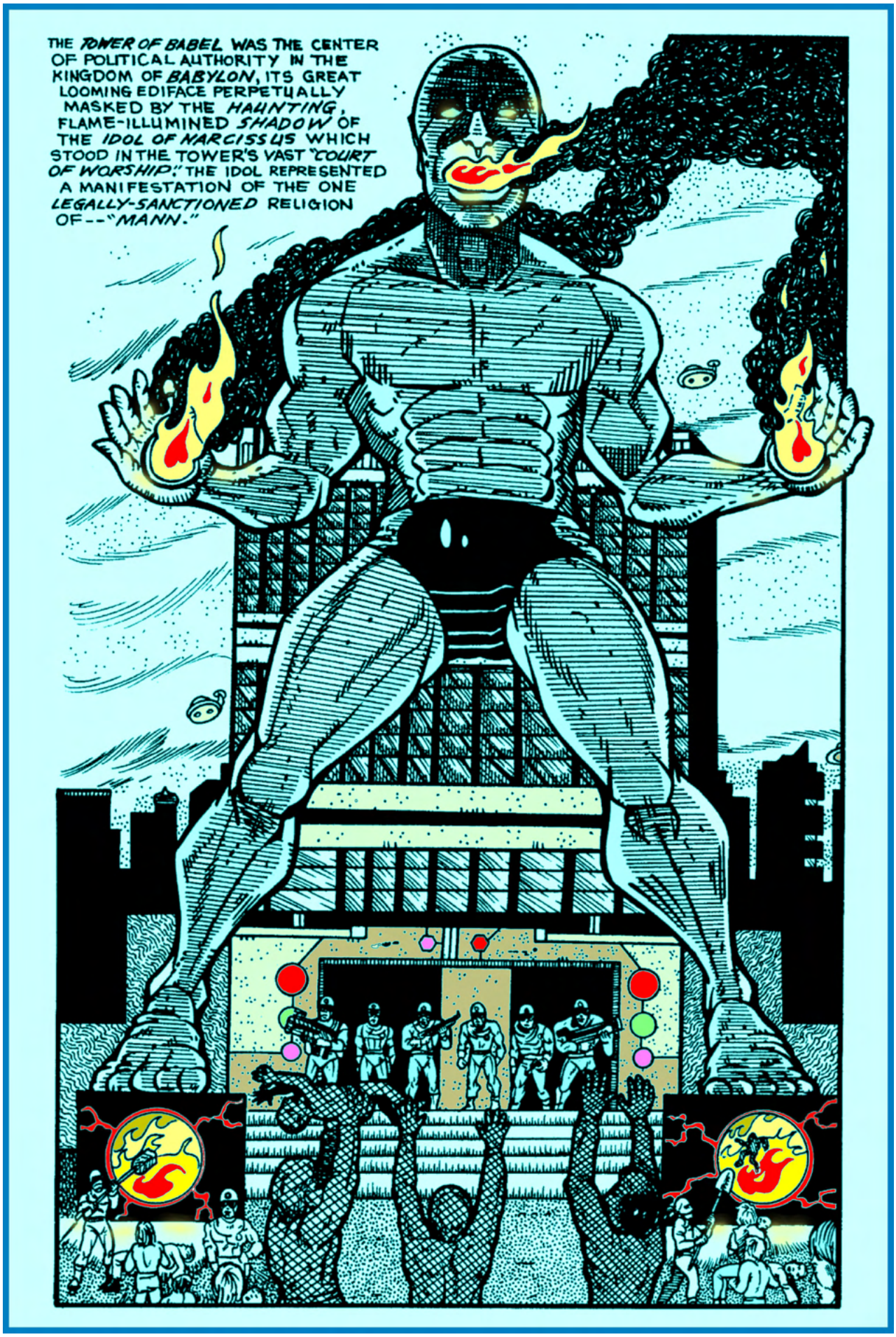
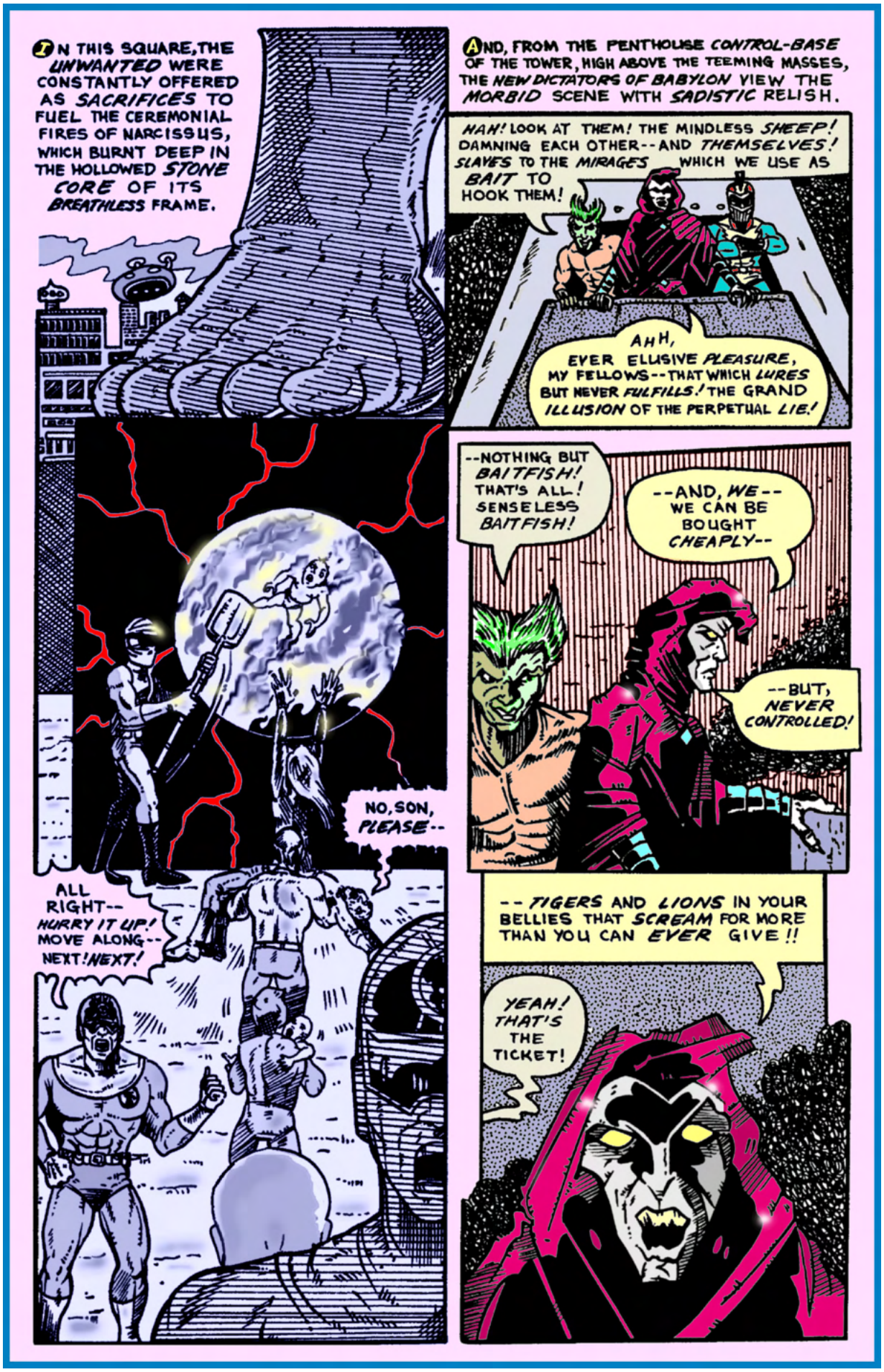
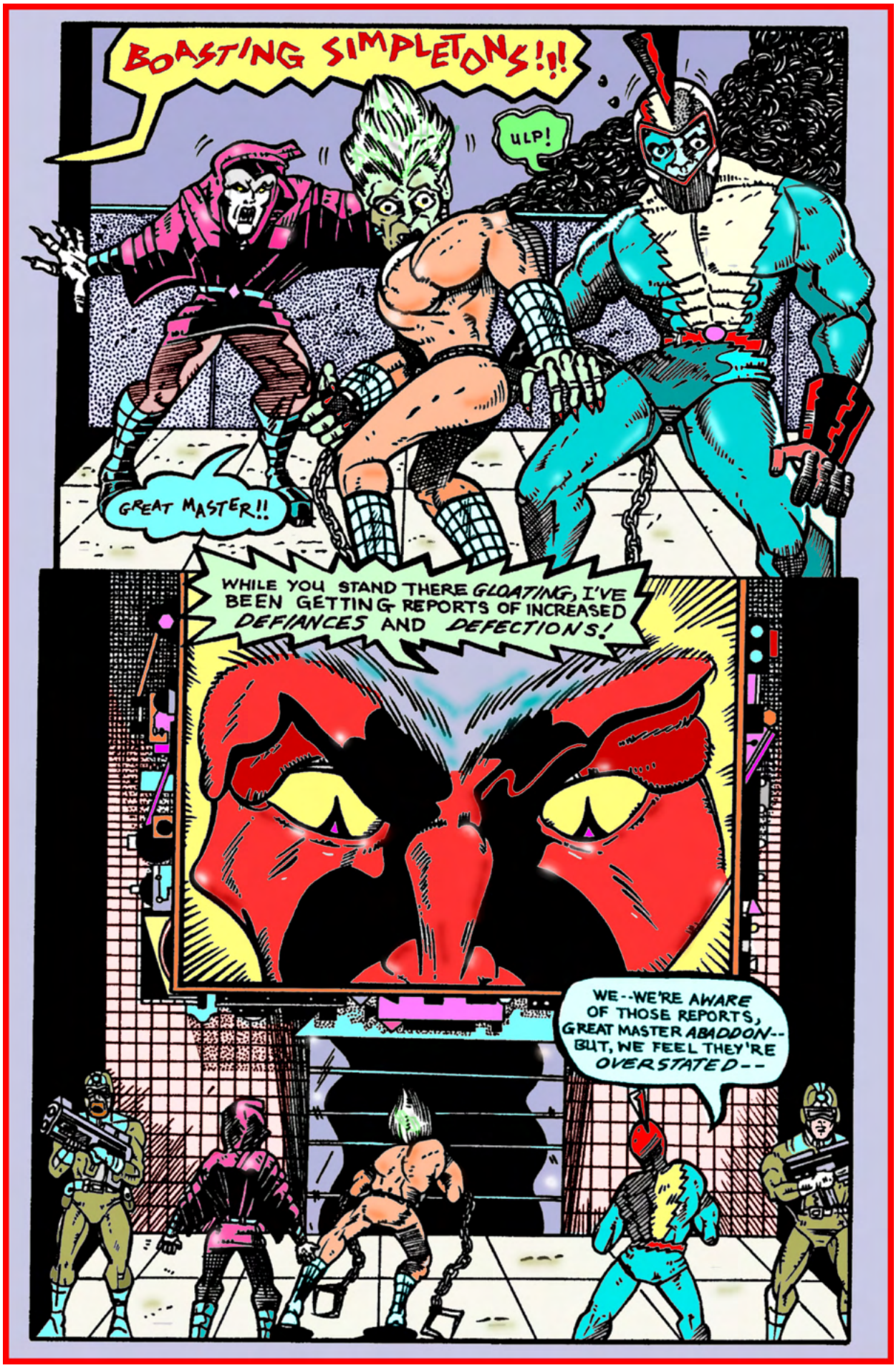
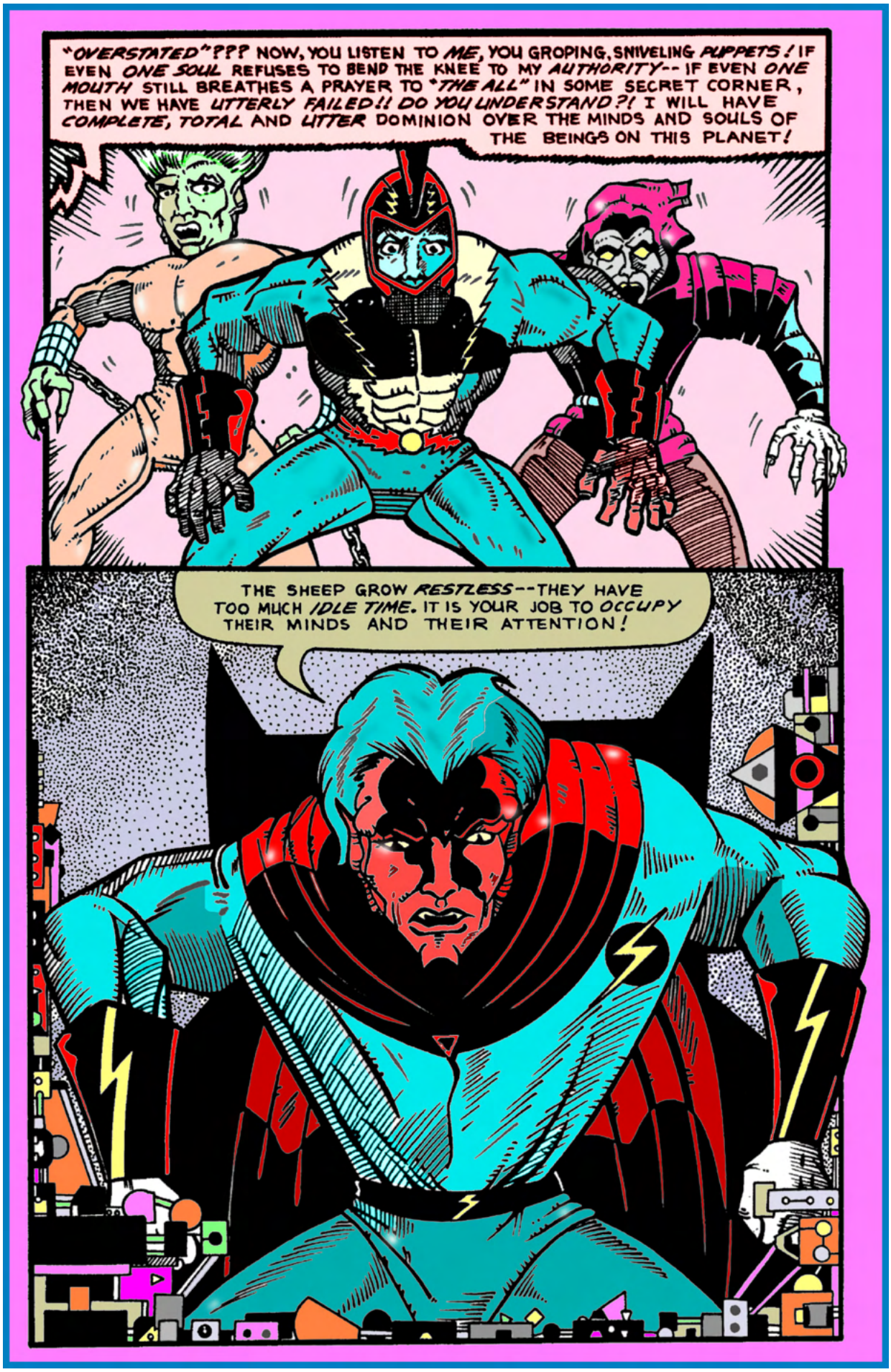
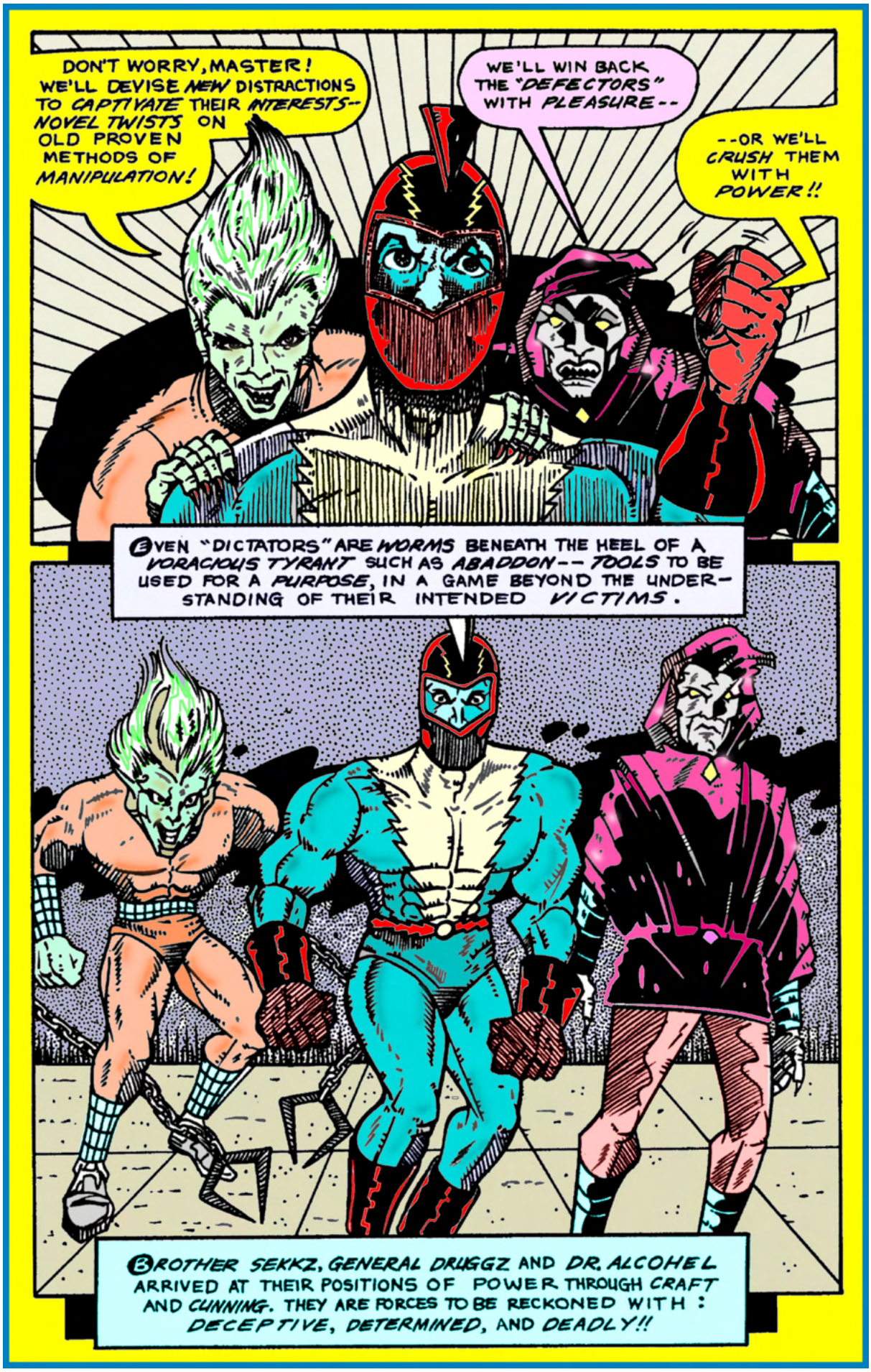

OUT OF THE MORAL HAZE OF THE SECOND GREAT DARK AGE ONE FIGURE BECOMES DISTINCT. A VOICE AS OF ONE CRYING IN A PHILOSOPHICAL WILDERNESS.
IS IT POSSIBLE FOR THE HAND OF THE INFINITE TO MOTIVATE AND GUIDE THE DIRECTION OF THE FINITE?
THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE!
Z-32656
CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY: JAMES RUBINO
INKED & LETTERED BY: LARRY BLAKE
"FOTA" LOGO DESIGNED BY LB.
FOLLOWERS OF THE ALL!
ABADDON HAD DECEIVED THE WHOLE WORLD. THE ENTIRE PLANET LAY CLOTHED IN CHAINS OF DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE. BUT EVEN SO, THERE WERE RUMORS OF AN "UNDERGROUND"--A RESISTANCE MOVEMENT THAT WAS GAINING IN POPULARITY AMONG THE MASSES. THEY WERE CALLED "FOLLOWERS OF THE ALL"! THEY WERE QUIET RENEGADES WHO DARED TO THINK, AND TO QUESTION THE "NEW WORLD ORDER OF PEACE AND SAFETY." BUT, THEIR MOST SERIOUS CRIMINAL OFFENSE WAS THAT THEY DARED TO BELIEVE.

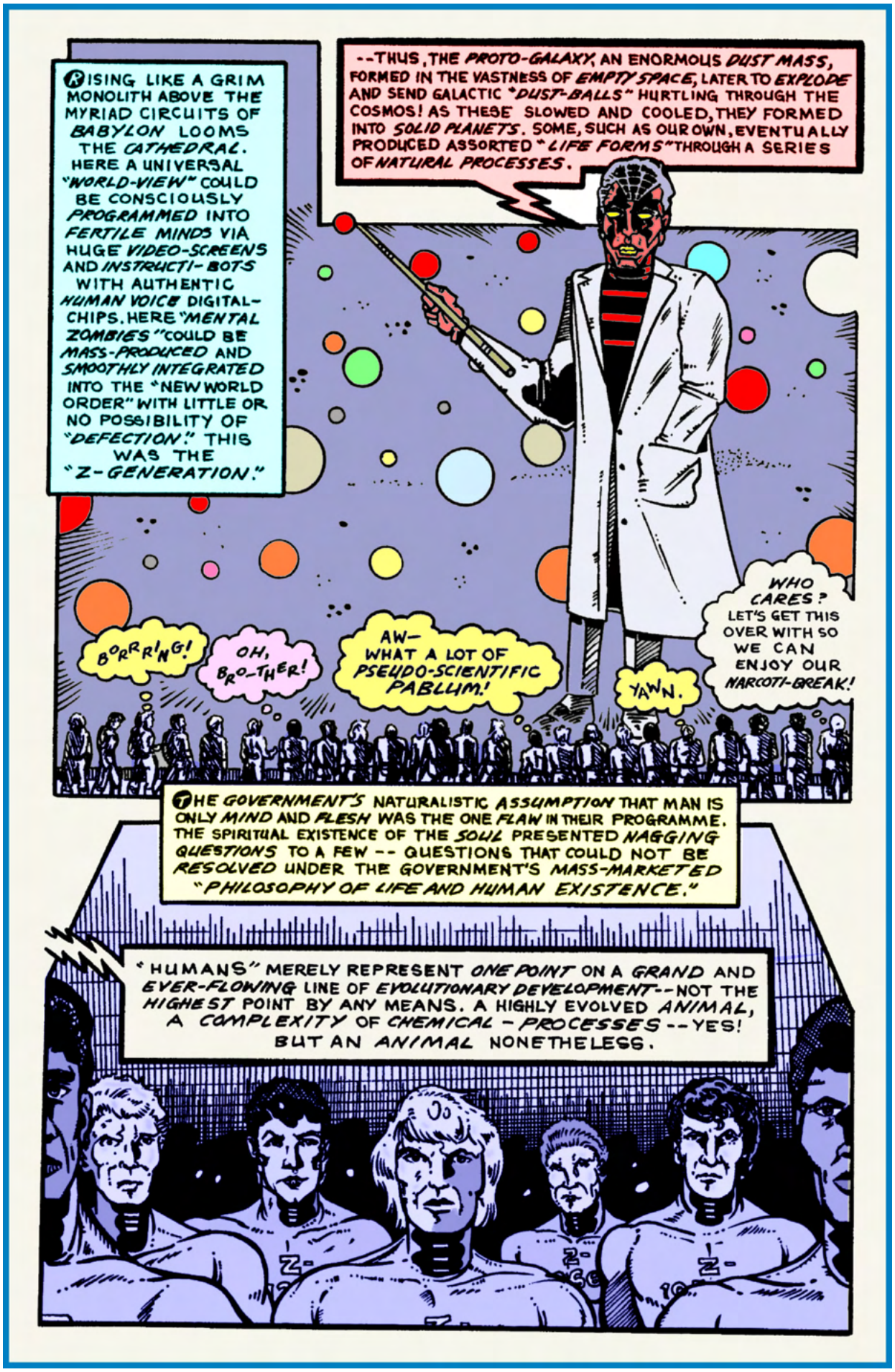

THE TOWER OF BABEL WAS THE CENTER OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY IN THE KINGDOM OF BABYLON, ITS GREAT LOOMING EDIFACE PERPETUALLY MASKED BY THE HAUNTING, FLAME-ILLUMINED SHADOW OF THE IDOL OF NARCISSUS WHICH STOOD IN THE TOWER'S VAST "COURT OF WORSHIP." THE IDOL REPRESENTED A MANIFESTATION OF THE ONE LEGALLY-SANCTIONED RELIGION OF--"MANN."


IN THIS SQUARE, THE UNWANTED WERE CONSTANTLY OFFERED AS SACRIFICES TO FUEL THE CEREMONIAL FIRES OF NARCISSUS, WHICH BURNT DEEP IN THE HOLLOWED STONE CORE OF ITS BREATHLESS FRAME.
AND, FROM THE PENTHOUSE CONTROL-BASE OF THE TOWER, HIGH ABOVE THE TEEMING MASSES, THE NEW DICTATORS OF BABYLON VIEW THE MORBID SCENE WITH SADISTIC RELISH.
HAH! LOOK AT THEM! THE MINDLESS SHEEP! DAMNING EACH OTHER--AND THEMSELVES! SLAVES TO THE MIRAGES WHICH WE USE AS BAIT TO HOOK THEM!
AHH, EVER ELUSIVE PLEASURE, MY FELLOWS--THAT WHICH LURES BUT NEVER FULFILLS! THE GRAND ILLUSION OF THE PERPETUAL LIE!
NO, SON, PLEASE--
--NOTHING BUT BAITFISH! THAT'S ALL! SENSELESS BAITFISH!
--AND, WE-- WE CAN BE BOUGHT CHEAPLY--
--BUT, NEVER CONTROLLED!
ALL RIGHT-- HURRY IT UP! MOVE ALONG-- NEXT! NEXT!
--TIGERS AND LIONS IN YOUR BELLIES THAT SCREAM FOR MORE THAN YOU CAN EVER GIVE!!
YEAH! THAT'S THE TICKET!


BOASTING SIMPLETONS!!!
ULP!
GREAT MASTER!!
WHILE YOU STAND THERE GLOATING, I'VE BEEN GETTING REPORTS OF INCREASED DEFIANCES AND DEFECTIONS!
WE--WE'RE AWARE OF THOSE REPORTS, GREAT MASTER ABADDON--BUT, WE FEEL THEY'RE OVERSTATED--


"OVERSTATED"??? NOW, YOU LISTEN TO ME, YOU GROPING, SNIVELING PUPPETS! IF EVEN ONE SOUL REFUSES TO BEND THE KNEE TO MY AUTHORITY-- IF EVEN ONE MOUTH STILL BREATHES A PRAYER TO "THE ALL" IN SOME SECRET CORNER, THEN WE HAVE UTTERLY FAILED!! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?! I WILL HAVE COMPLETE, TOTAL AND UTTER DOMINION OVER THE MINDS AND SOULS OF THE BEINGS ON THIS PLANET!
THE SHEEP GROW RESTLESS--THEY HAVE TOO MUCH IDLE TIME. IT IS YOUR JOB TO OCCUPY THEIR MINDS AND THEIR ATTENTION!


DON'T WORRY, MASTER! WE'LL DEVISE NEW DISTRACTIONS TO CAPTIVATE THEIR INTERESTS-- NOVEL TWISTS ON OLD PROVEN METHODS OF MANIPULATION!
WE'LL WIN BACK THE "DEFECTORS" WITH PLEASURE--
--OR WE'LL CRUSH THEM WITH POWER!!
EVEN "DICTATORS" ARE WORMS BENEATH THE HEEL OF A VORACIOUS TYRANT SUCH AS ABADDON-- TOOLS TO BE USED FOR A PURPOSE, IN A GAME BEYOND THE UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR INTENDED VICTIMS.
BROTHER SEKKZ, GENERAL DRUGGZ AND DR. ALCOHEL ARRIVED AT THEIR POSITIONS OF POWER THROUGH CRAFT AND CUNNING. THEY ARE FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH: DECEPTIVE, DETERMINED, AND DEADLY!!


RISING LIKE A GRIM MONOLITH ABOVE THE MYRIAD CIRCUITS OF BABYLON LOOMS THE CATHEDRAL. HERE A UNIVERSAL "WORLD-VIEW" COULD BE CONSCIOUSLY PROGRAMMED INTO FERTILE MINDS VIA HUGE VIDEO-SCREENS AND INSTRUCTI-BOTS WITH AUTHENTIC HUMAN VOICE DIGITAL-CHIPS. HERE "MENTAL ZOMBIES" COULD BE MASS-PRODUCED AND SMOOTHLY INTEGRATED INTO THE "NEW WORLD ORDER" WITH LITTLE OR NO POSSIBILITY OF "DEFECTION." THIS WAS THE "Z-GENERATION."
--THUS, THE PROTO-GALAXY, AN ENORMOUS DUST MASS, FORMED IN THE VASTNESS OF EMPTY SPACE, LATER TO EXPLODE AND SEND GALACTIC "DUST-BALLS" HURTLING THROUGH THE COSMOS! AS THESE SLOWED AND COOLED, THEY FORMED INTO SOLID PLANETS. SOME, SUCH AS OUR OWN, EVENTUALLY PRODUCED ASSORTED "LIFE FORMS" THROUGH A SERIES OF NATURAL PROCESSES.
BORRRING!
OH, BRO-THER!
AW— WHAT A LOT OF PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC PABLUM!
YAWN.
WHO CARES? LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH SO WE CAN ENJOY OUR NARCOTI-BREAK!
THE GOVERNMENT'S NATURALISTIC ASSUMPTION THAT MAN IS ONLY MIND AND FLESH WAS THE ONE FLAW IN THEIR PROGRAMME. THE SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL PRESENTED NAGGING QUESTIONS TO A FEW -- QUESTIONS THAT COULD NOT BE RESOLVED UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S MASS-MARKETED "PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE."
"HUMANS" MERELY REPRESENT ONE POINT ON A GRAND AND EVER-FLOWING LINE OF EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT--NOT THE HIGHEST POINT BY ANY MEANS. A HIGHLY EVOLVED ANIMAL, A COMPLEXITY OF CHEMICAL - PROCESSES --YES! BUT AN ANIMAL NONETHELESS.

--THEREFORE, "HUMAN-KIND'S" ORIGIN IS IMPERSONAL--ONE MIGHT EVEN GO SO FAR AS TO SAY ACCIDENTAL. HUMAN-BEINGS ARE REALLY NOT MUCH MORE THAN A SORT OF FLESH AND BLOOD MACHINE.
--STUDENTS YOU ARE PRIVELEGED TO EXIST IN A TIME SUCH AS THIS -- WHEN HUMANS ARE NO LONGER HAMPERED BY THE OPPRESSIVE YOKE OF RELIGIOUS SUPERSTITION. YOU ARE NOW FREE TO BECOME WHAT YOU TRULY ARE: NOTHING. "LIFE" NEED NOT HAVE "VALUE" OR "MEANING" TO VALIDATE ITSELF. YOUR FUNCTION IN THE GREAT DESIGN OF EVOLUTION IS JUSTIFICATION ENOUGH FOR YOUR EXISTENCE.
--THERE IS NO "TRUTH" AND THERE ARE NO "MORAL ABSOLUTES."
A SENSE OF QUIET DESPAIR MEANS YOU HAVE ARRIVED--AND WELCOME TO THE GREAT SOCIETY! AND NOW, CLASS IS ENDED...
-AND, HAVE A NICE DAY!
EMOTION
LOVE
INTELLECT
ASPIRATION
NOBILITY
AWARENESS
CREATIVITY
PURPOSE
EXISTENCE
NOTHING.
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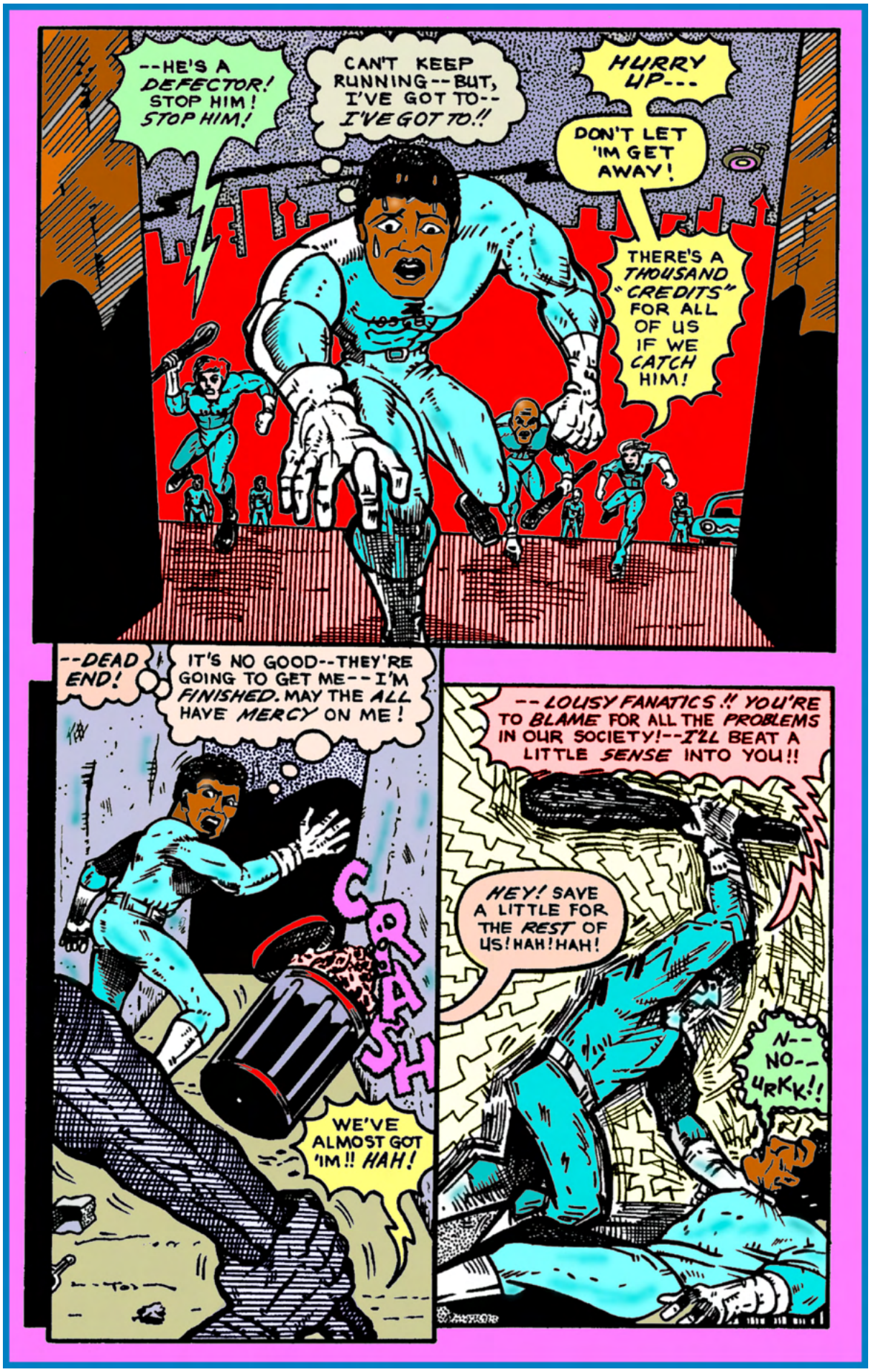
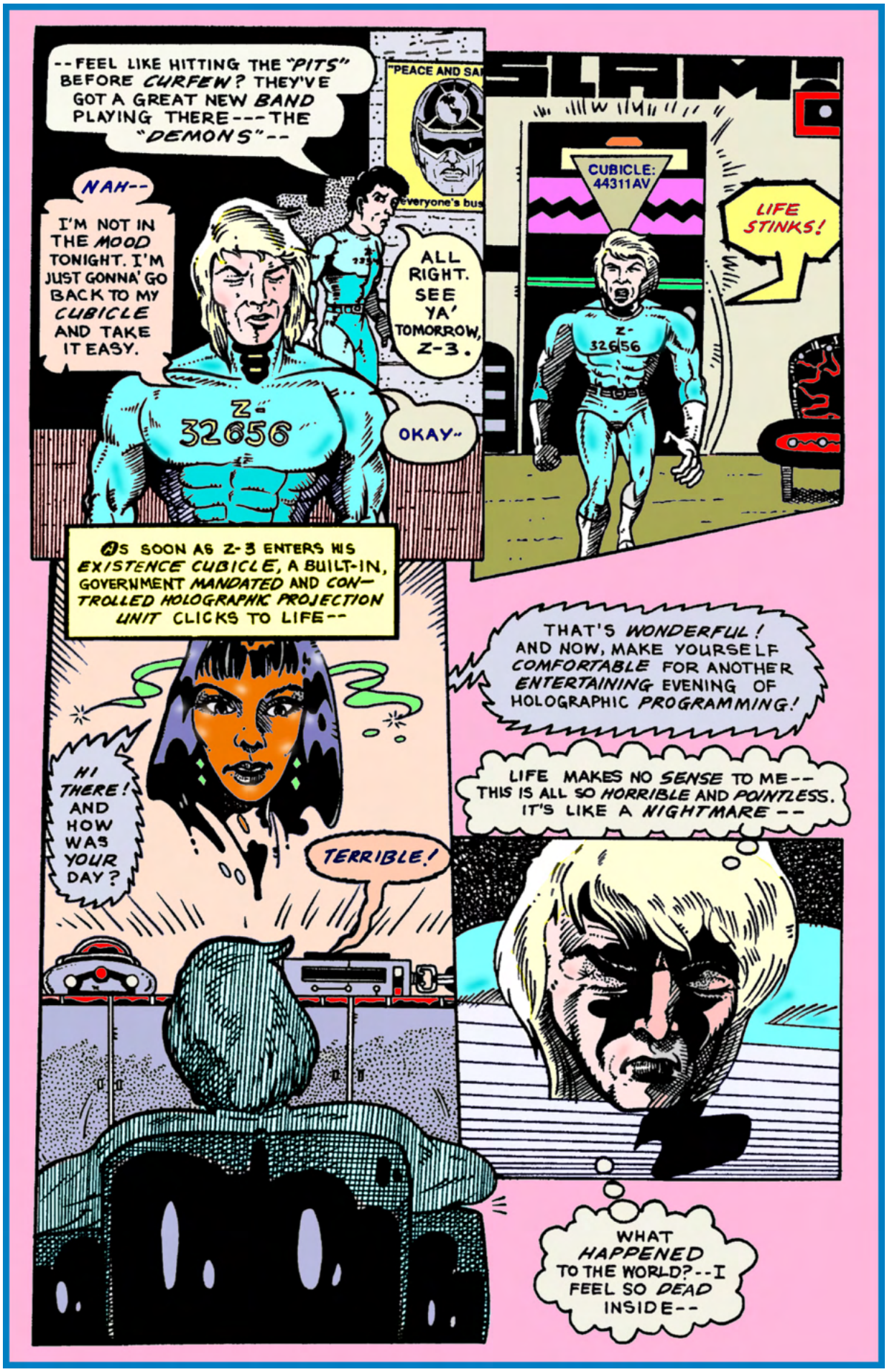
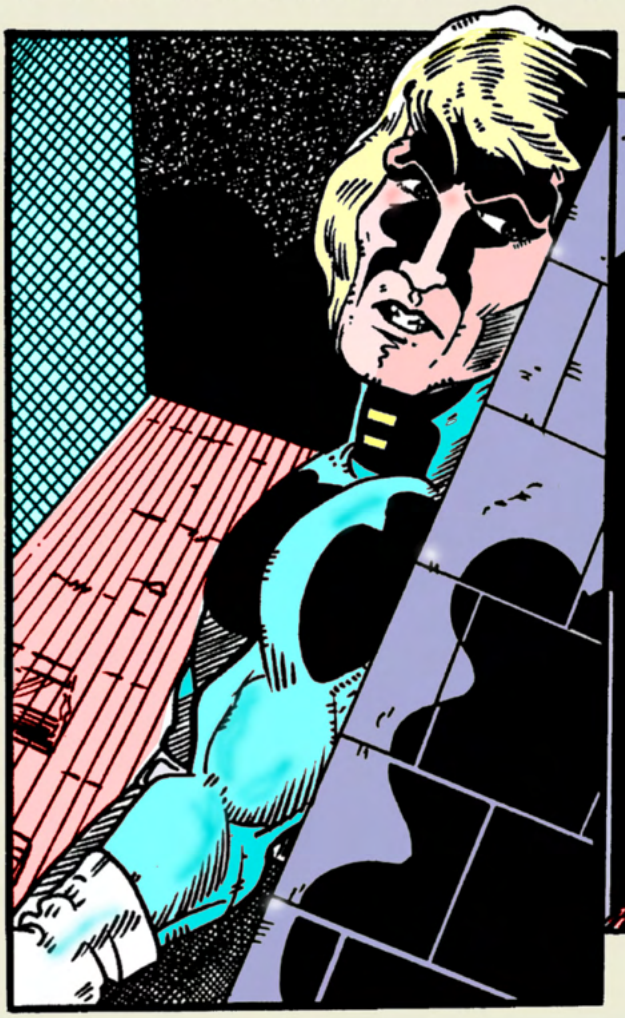

--HE'S A DEFECTOR! STOP HIM! STOP HIM!
CAN'T KEEP RUNNING--BUT, I'VE GOT TO-- I'VE GOT TO!!
HURRY UP---
DON'T LET 'IM GET AWAY!
THERE'S A THOUSAND "CREDITS" FOR ALL OF US IF WE CATCH HIM!
--DEAD END!
IT'S NO GOOD--THEY'RE GOING TO GET ME--I'M FINISHED. MAY THE ALL HAVE MERCY ON ME!
CRASH
WE'VE ALMOST GOT 'IM!! HAH!
--LOUSY FANATICS!! YOU'RE TO BLAME FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS IN OUR SOCIETY!--I'LL BEAT A LITTLE SENSE INTO YOU!!
HEY! SAVE A LITTLE FOR THE REST OF US! HAH! HAH!
N-- NO-- URKK!!

ALL RIGHT--
STEP ASIDE! C'MON!
HUH? --SECURITY!
WELL, WELL, WHAT HAVE WE GOT HERE?
UHHNNN--
A "FOLLOWER OF THE ALL"--
--OR WHAT'S LEFT OF 'IM! HEH-HEH!
WHEN WILL THESE SICKOS EVER LEARN??--WELL, MAYBE A FEW MONTHS IN THE READJUSTMENT WARD WILL WISE YOU UP!!
N-- NO --PLEASE--
OKAY-- OKAY!
YOU'VE ALL HAD YOUR "FUN AND GAMES" NOW LET'S MOVE ALONG!
WHAT'S GOING ON THERE?
SECURITY-POLICE ROUNDING UP ANOTHER "SUBVERSIVE" --SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE HERE! MOVE IT!!
POLICE
Z-756

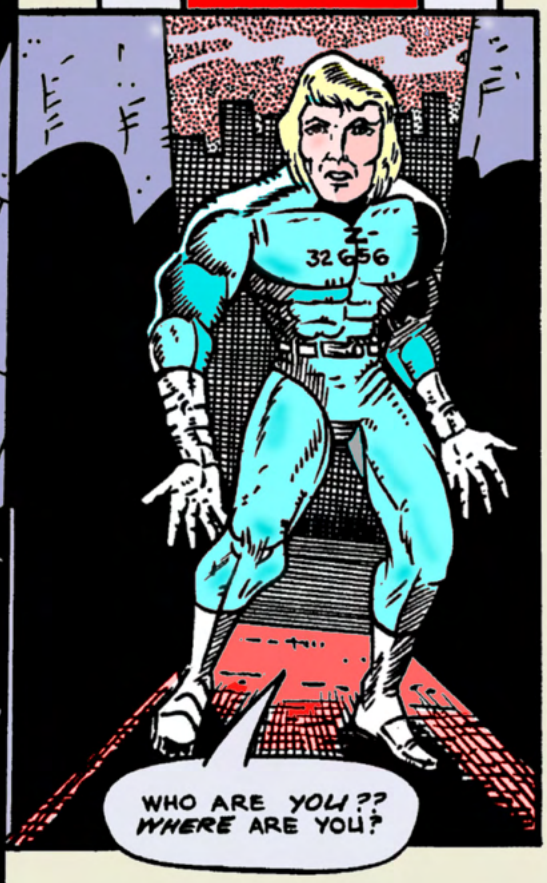

--FEEL LIKE HITTING THE "PITS" BEFORE CURFEW? THEY'VE GOT A GREAT NEW BAND PLAYING THERE---THE "DEMONS"--
NAH--
I'M NOT IN THE MOOD TONIGHT. I'M JUST GONNA' GO BACK TO MY CUBICLE AND TAKE IT EASY.
ALL RIGHT. SEE YA' TOMORROW, Z-3.
OKAY--
Z-32656
"PEACE AND SA
everyone's bus
SLAM
CUBICLE: 44311AV
LIFE STINKS!
Z-32656
AS SOON AS Z-3 ENTERS HIS EXISTENCE CUBICLE, A BUILT-IN, GOVERNMENT MANDATED AND CONTROLLED HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION UNIT CLICKS TO LIFE--
THAT'S WONDERFUL! AND NOW, MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE FOR ANOTHER ENTERTAINING EVENING OF HOLOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMING!
HI THERE! AND HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
TERRIBLE!
LIFE MAKES NO SENSE TO ME-- THIS IS ALL SO HORRIBLE AND POINTLESS. IT'S LIKE A NIGHTMARE --
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WORLD?--I FEEL SO DEAD INSIDE--

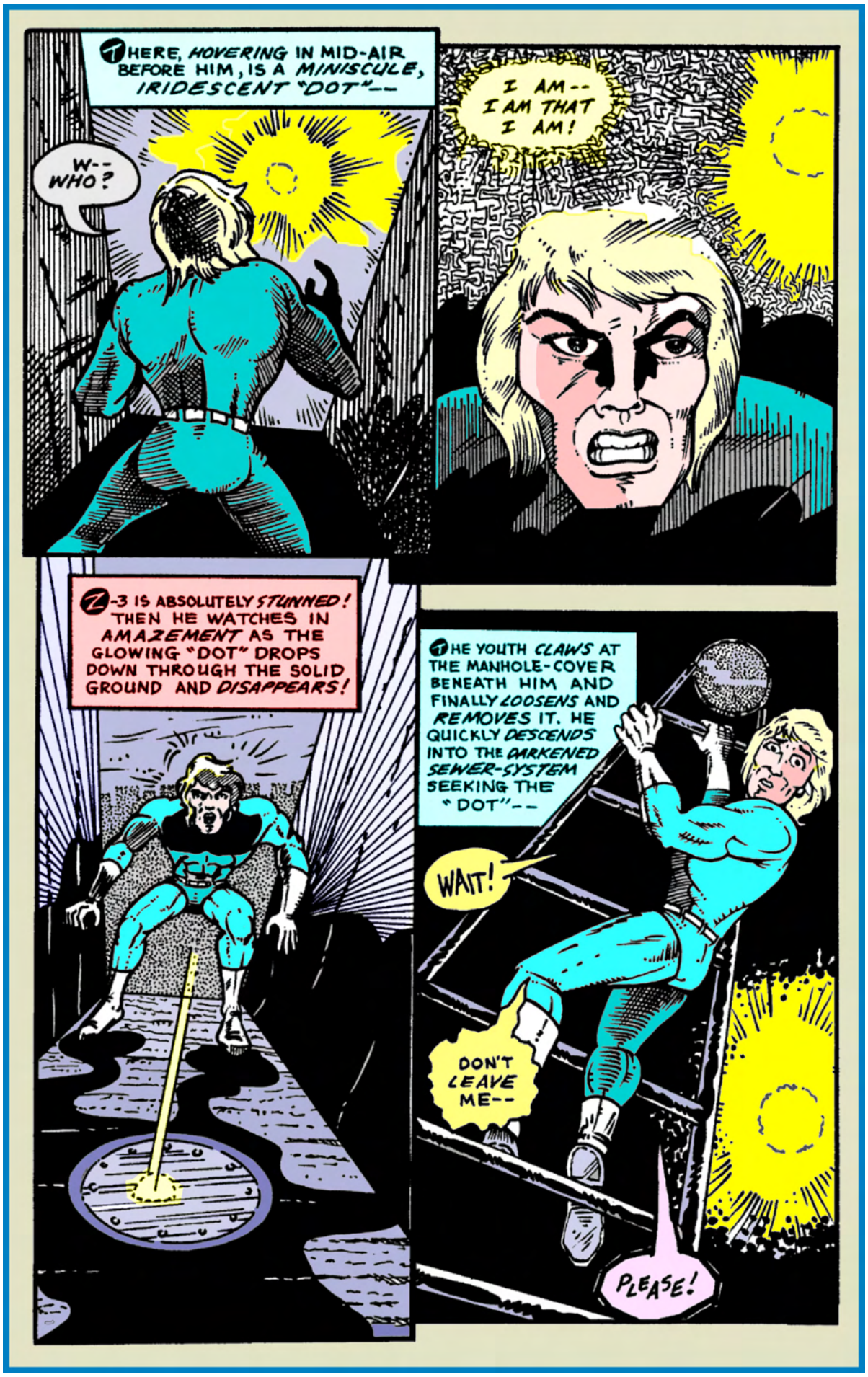
THE VOICE WAS STILL AND SMALL--AND SAD IN ITS' EXPRESSION.

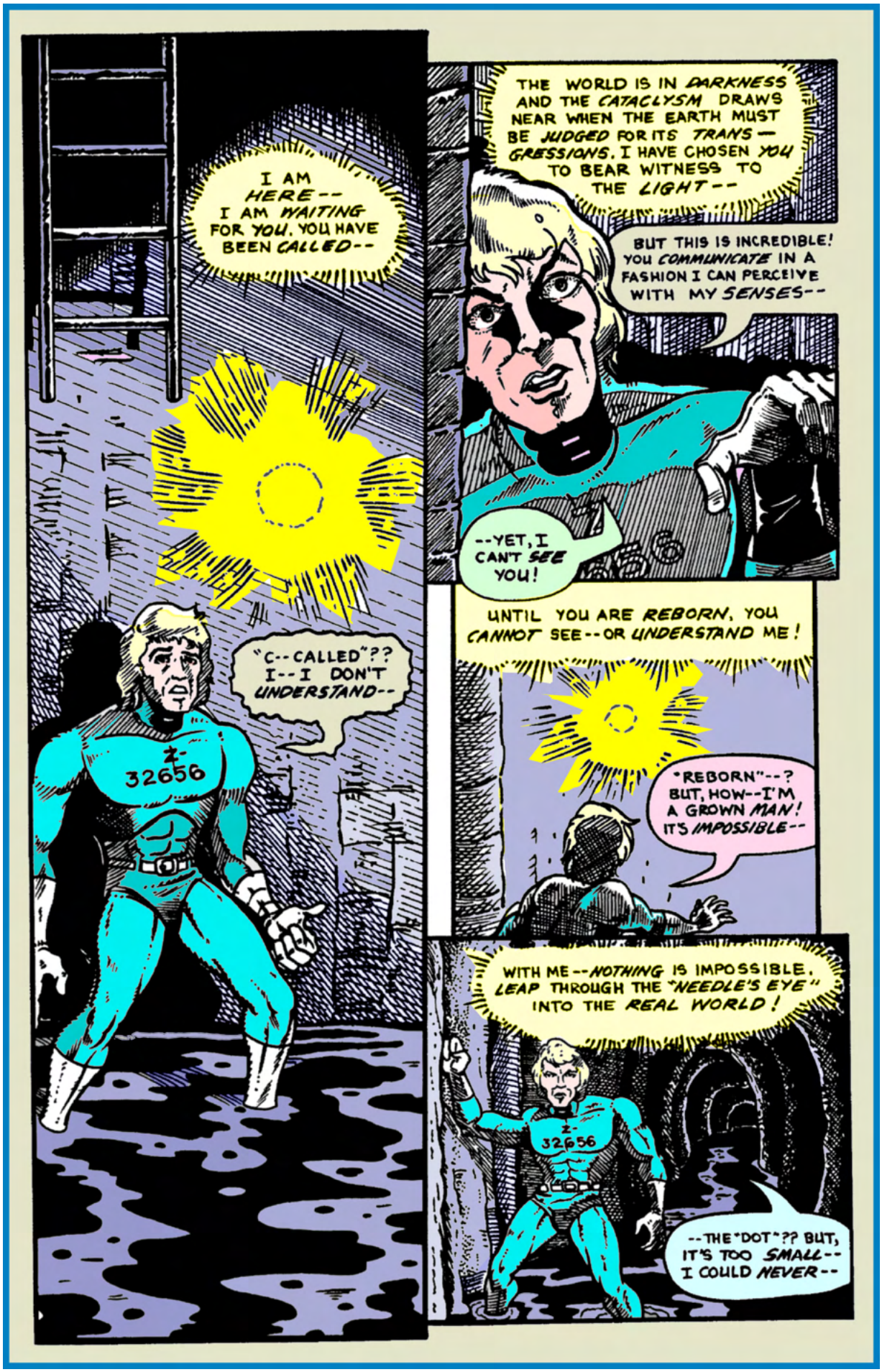
Z-32656 KNOWS NOT WHETHER THE VOICE IS MERELY PART OF HIS IMAGINATION OR A REMNANT OF SOMETHING IN HIS MEMORY THAT HE HAD HEARD LONG AGO, BUT HE IS CURIOUS ENOUGH TO DEFY CURFEW AND TO PURSUE THE VOICE INTO THE STREETS BELOW.

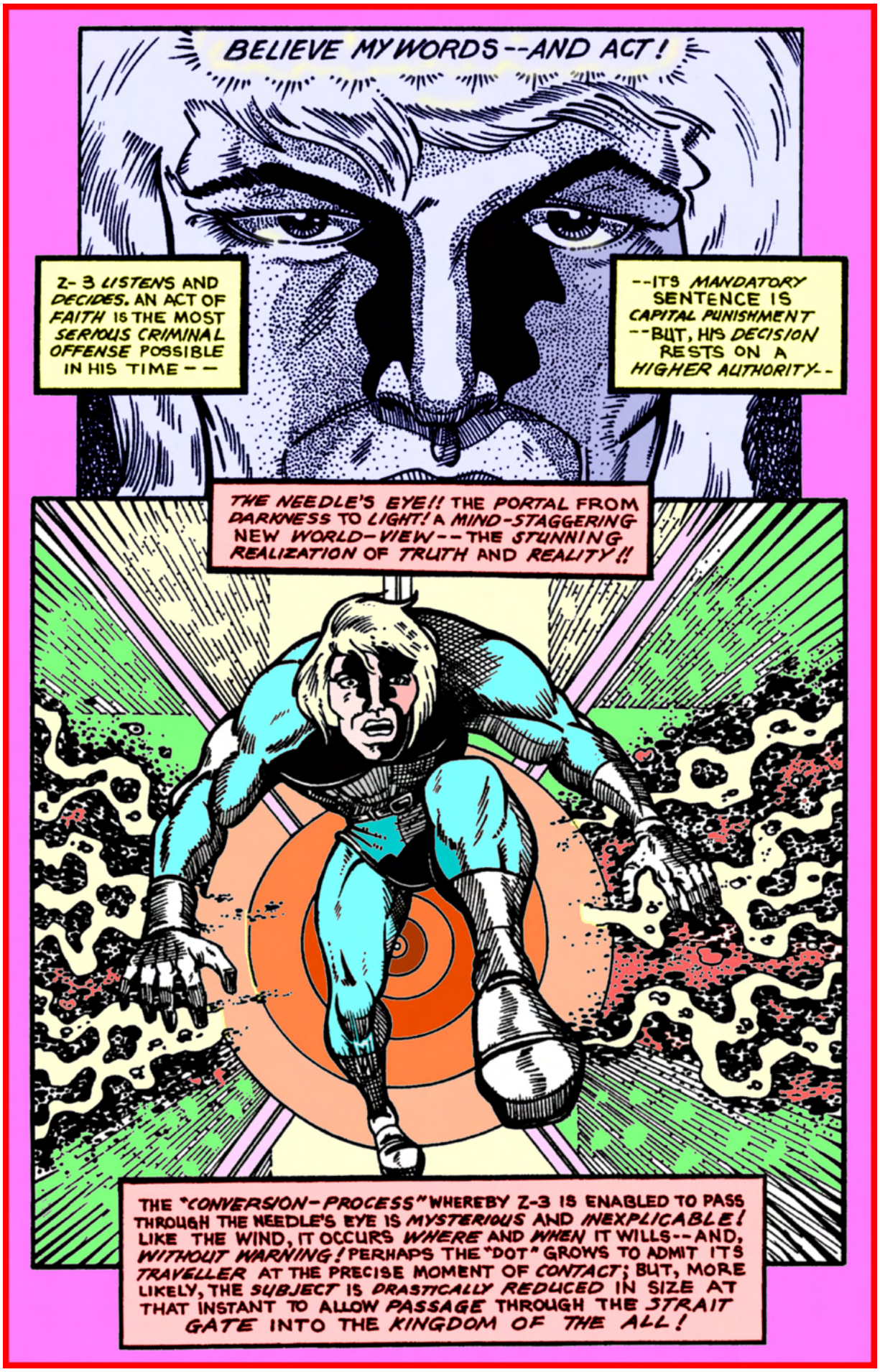


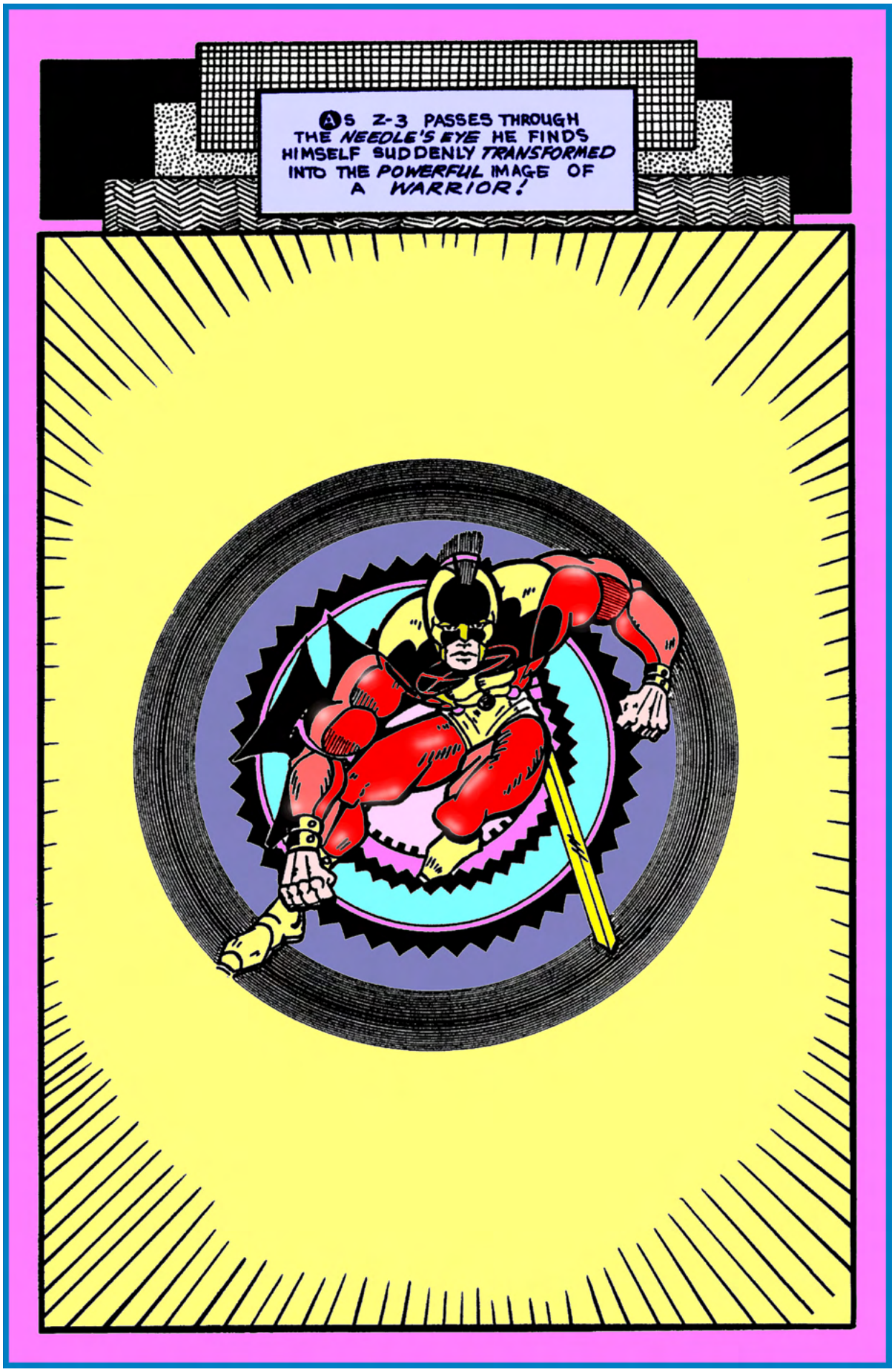
IN THE PASSAGEWAY BETWEEN TWO HUGE CUBICLE-HOUSING COMPLEXES, Z-3 CRIES OUT IN A FORBIDDEN ACT OF "FAITH"--

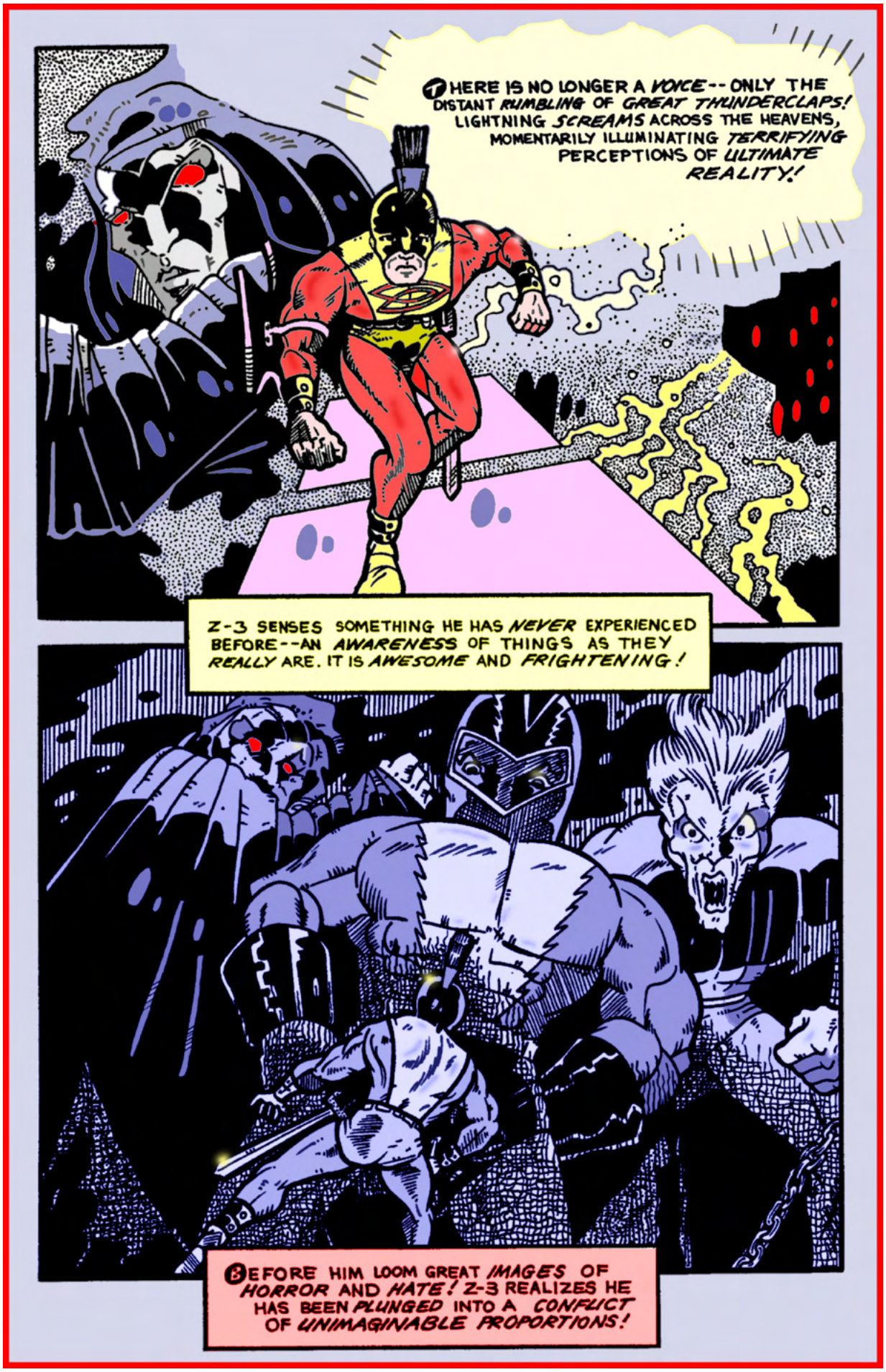


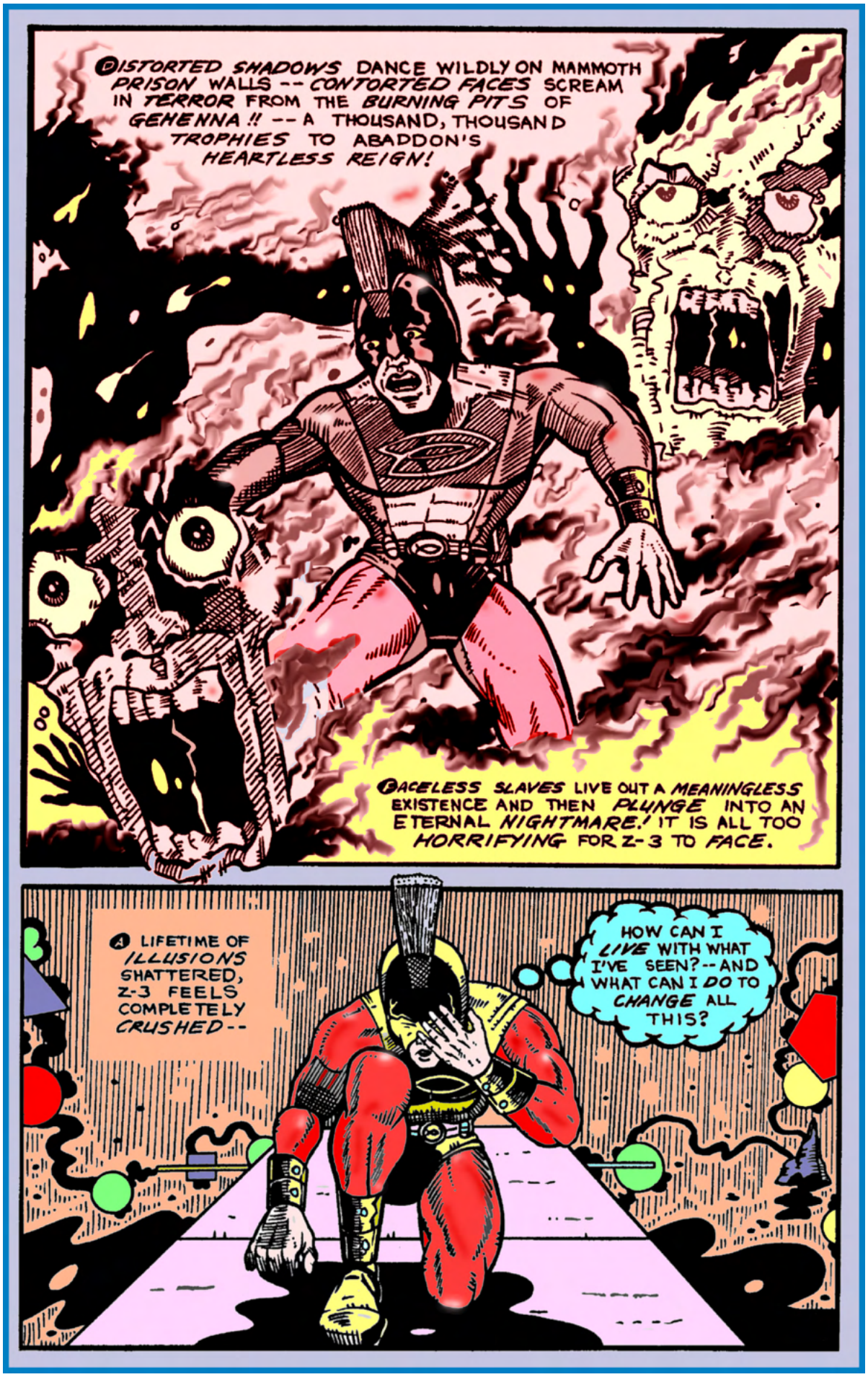

THERE, HOVERING IN MID-AIR BEFORE HIM, IS A MINISCULE, IRIDESCENT "DOT"--
W-- WHO?
I AM-- I AM THAT I AM!
Z-3 IS ABSOLUTELY STUNNED! THEN HE WATCHES IN AMAZEMENT AS THE GLOWING "DOT" DROPS DOWN THROUGH THE SOLID GROUND AND DISAPPEARS!
THE YOUTH CLAWS AT THE MANHOLE-COVER BENEATH HIM AND FINALLY LOOSENS AND REMOVES IT. HE QUICKLY DESCENDS INTO THE DARKENED SEWER-SYSTEM SEEKING THE "DOT"--
WAIT!
DON'T LEAVE ME--
PLEASE!

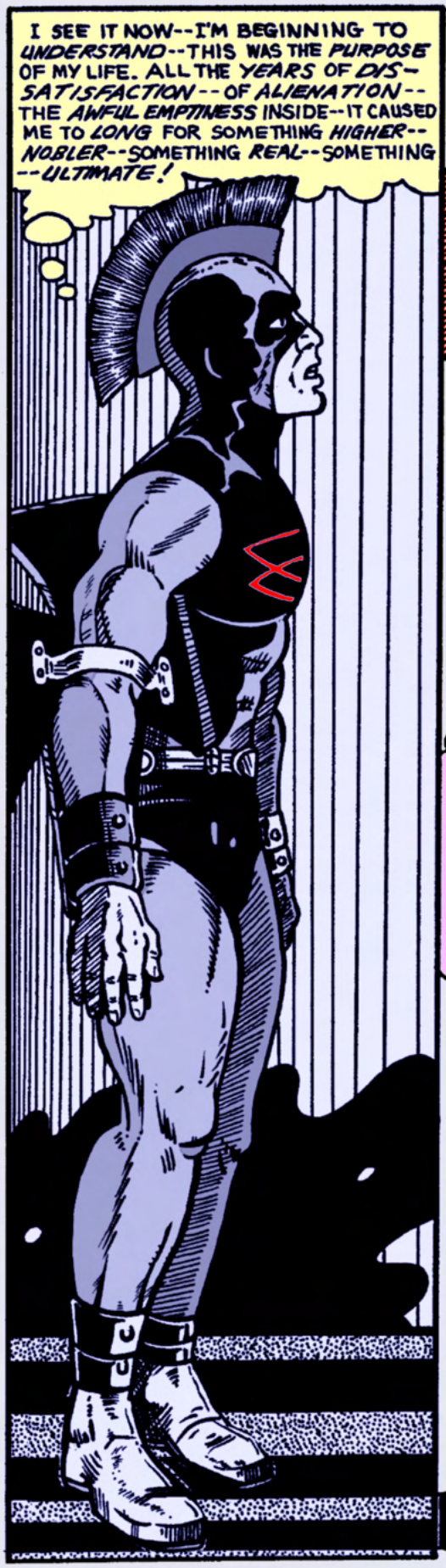

I AM HERE-- I AM WAITING FOR YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED--
"C--CALLED"?? I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND--
Z-32656
THE WORLD IS IN DARKNESS AND THE CATACLYSM DRAWS NEAR WHEN THE EARTH MUST BE JUDGED FOR ITS TRANS-GRESSIONS. I HAVE CHOSEN YOU TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE LIGHT--
BUT THIS IS INCREDIBLE! YOU COMMUNICATE IN A FASHION I CAN PERCEIVE WITH MY SENSES--
--YET, I CAN'T SEE YOU!
UNTIL YOU ARE REBORN, YOU CANNOT SEE--OR UNDERSTAND ME!
"REBORN"--? BUT, HOW--I'M A GROWN MAN! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE--
WITH ME--NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE. LEAP THROUGH THE "NEEDLE'S EYE" INTO THE REAL WORLD!
Z-32656
--THE "DOT"?? BUT, IT'S TOO SMALL-- I COULD NEVER--


BELIEVE MY WORDS--AND ACT!
Z-3 LISTENS AND DECIDES. AN ACT OF FAITH IS THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMINAL OFFENSE POSSIBLE IN HIS TIME--
--ITS MANDATORY SENTENCE IS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT --BUT, HIS DECISION RESTS ON A HIGHER AUTHORITY--
THE NEEDLE'S EYE!! THE PORTAL FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT! A MIND-STAGGERING NEW WORLD-VIEW--THE STUNNING REALIZATION OF TRUTH AND REALITY!!
THE "CONVERSION-PROCESS" WHEREBY Z-3 IS ENABLED TO PASS THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE IS MYSTERIOUS AND INEXPLICABLE! LIKE THE WIND, IT OCCURS WHERE AND WHEN IT WILLS--AND, WITHOUT WARNING! PERHAPS THE "DOT" GROWS TO ADMIT ITS TRAVELLER AT THE PRECISE MOMENT OF CONTACT; BUT, MORE LIKELY, THE SUBJECT IS DRASTICALLY REDUCED IN SIZE AT THAT INSTANT TO ALLOW PASSAGE THROUGH THE STRAIT GATE INTO THE KINGDOM OF THE ALL!

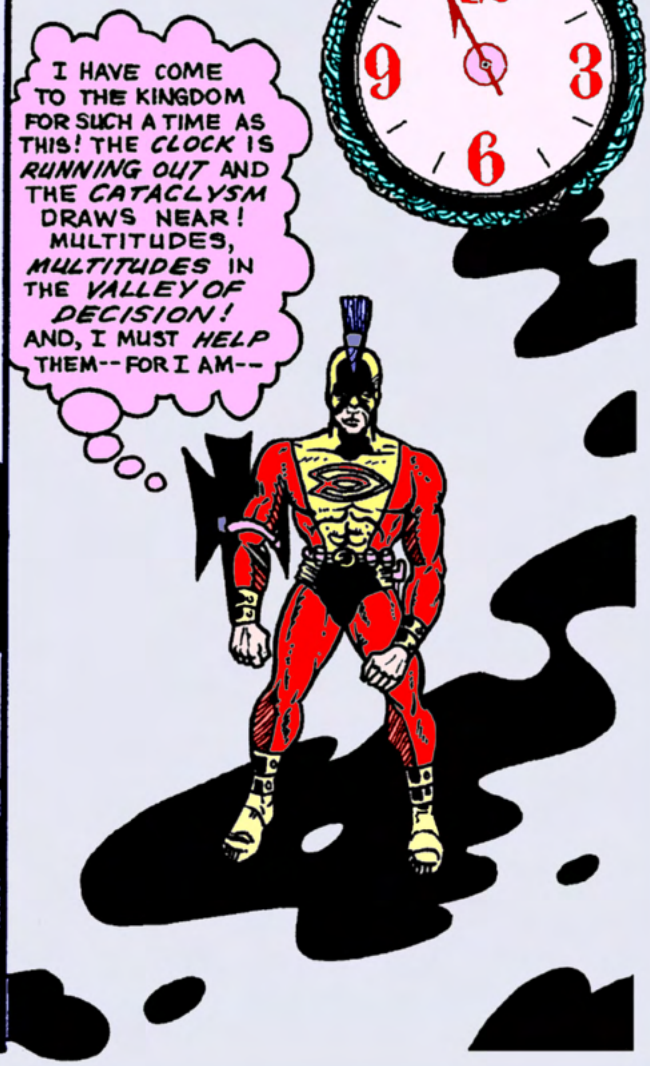

AS Z-3 PASSES THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE HE FINDS HIMSELF SUDDENLY TRANSFORMED INTO THE POWERFUL IMAGE OF A WARRIOR!


THERE IS NO LONGER A VOICE--ONLY THE DISTANT RUMBLING OF GREAT THUNDERCLAPS! LIGHTNING SCREAMS ACROSS THE HEAVENS, MOMENTARILY ILLUMINATING TERRIFYING PERCEPTIONS OF ULTIMATE REALITY!
Z-3 SENSES SOMETHING HE HAS NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE--AN AWARENESS OF THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE. IT IS AWESOME AND FRIGHTENING!
BEFORE HIM LOOM GREAT IMAGES OF HORROR AND HATE! Z-3 REALIZES HE HAS BEEN PLUNGED INTO A CONFLICT OF UNIMAGINABLE PROPORTIONS!

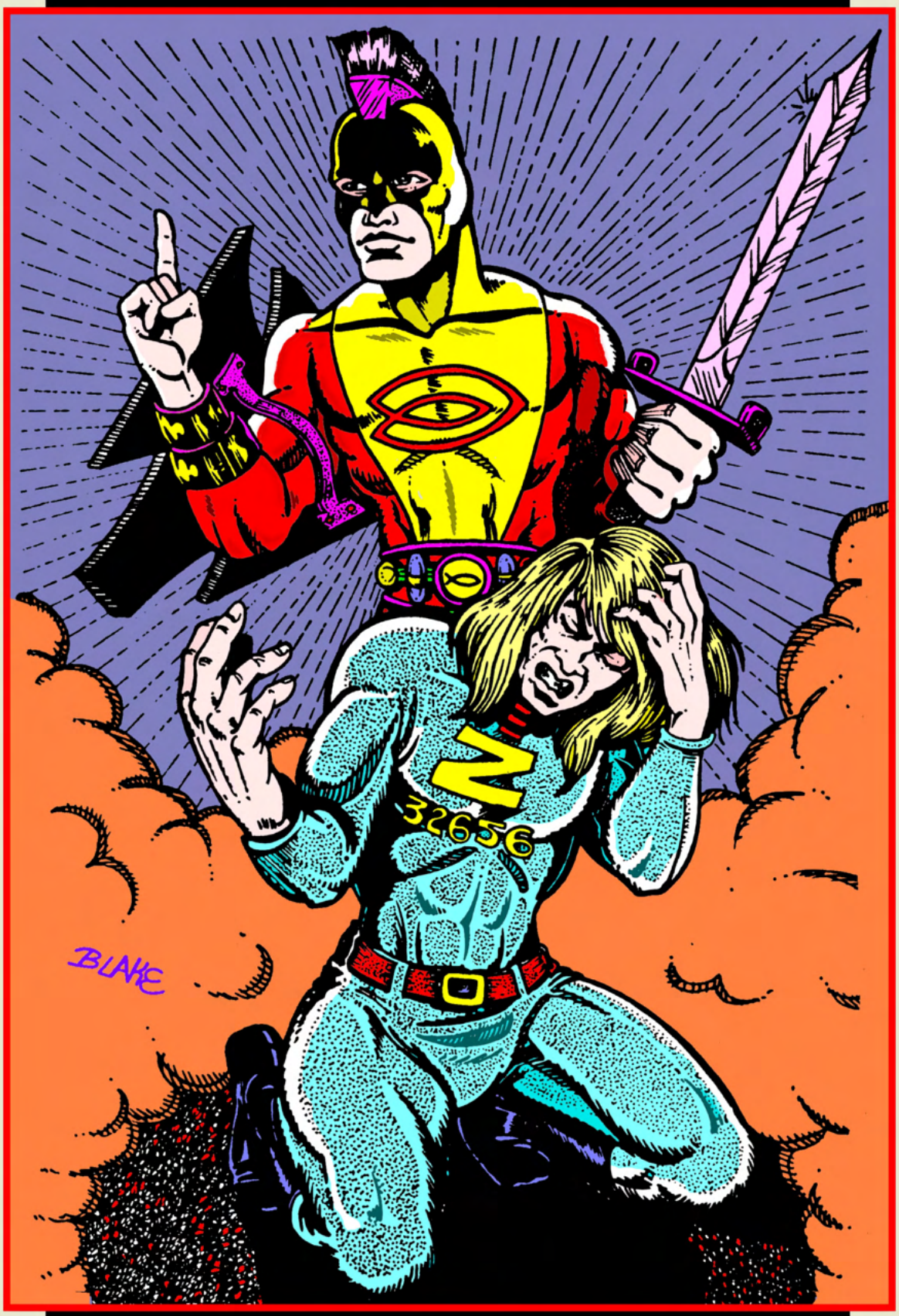

DISTORTED SHADOWS DANCE WILDLY ON MAMMOTH PRISON WALLS -- CONTORTED FACES SCREAM IN TERROR FROM THE BURNING PITS OF GEHENNA !! -- A THOUSAND, THOUSAND TROPHIES TO ABADDON'S HEARTLESS REIGN!
FACELESS SLAVES LIVE OUT A MEANINGLESS EXISTENCE AND THEN PLUNGE INTO AN ETERNAL NIGHTMARE! IT IS ALL TOO HORRIFYING FOR Z-3 TO FACE.
A LIFETIME OF ILLUSIONS SHATTERED, Z-3 FEELS COMPLETELY CRUSHED--
HOW CAN I LIVE WITH WHAT I'VE SEEN? -- AND WHAT CAN I DO TO CHANGE ALL THIS?

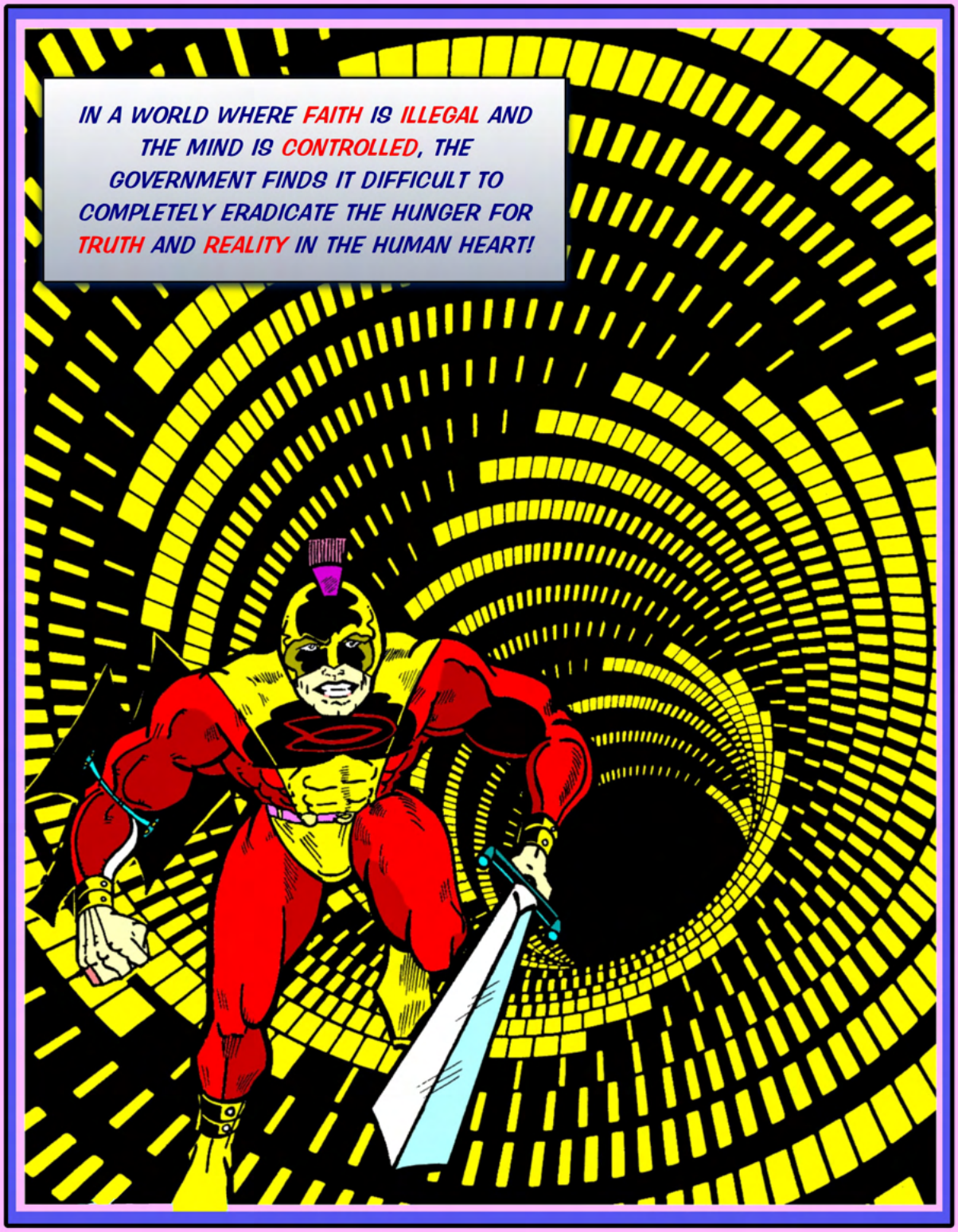


Z-3 BEGINS TO REALIZE WHO HE *REALLY IS* NOW--AND *WHY* HE EXISTS--AND WHAT HE *MUST DO*--THE *MISSION OF HIS LIFE!* THIS IS *WARFARE* ON THE *SICKEST OF BATTLEFIELDS*, WITH OPPONENTS WHO ARE *MORE REAL* THAN THE MIND CAN *BEAR* TO ACCEPT! Z-3 IS NO LONGER MERELY THE MAN HE ONCE WAS--OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY--ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME *NEW!*



MR. FAITH !
NR
T. BLAKE
NEXT:
THE DEFECTOR



"...And this is the victory that overcomes the world: even our faith" - The Logos

FOLLOWERS OF THE ALL!