

# FANTASTIC FOUR #511

## “Hereafter”

Part 3 of 3/Full Script for 22 pages

First Draft/December 28, 2003

CRUCIAL DIALOGUE REVISIONS/February 3, 2004

### PAGE ONE--RECAP PAGE

- 1) A team--and a family--of adventurers, explorers and imaginauts, the Fantastic Four lead lives both ordinary--and extraordinary. As of today:
- 2) The team has battled Victor Von Doom twice in rapid succession, and they bear the scars--some external, far more of them internal. Doom, having transferred his mind into Ben Grimm's rocky form, craftily manipulated Reed into obliterating his enemy the only way possible--by killing Ben.
- 3) In the weeks following, the trauma of Ben's death has torn the family apart. They have reunited--tensely, and only barely--because Reed has determined that a spark of life remains in Ben's body. In order to restore Ben, however, they'll need his soul--so, using modifications on Doom's own technology, Reed, Sue and Johnny have forced their way into where they know that soul to be: Heaven.
- 4) There, struggling heroically past impossible barriers and incredible odds, they have found their friend--and, against Ben's wishes, a mysterious locked door.

PANEL, LOWER RIGHT: ON REED'S HAND EXPLORING THE INSET DOOR MECHANISMS.

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE, BIG: A FULL ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE INSET DOOR AS REED AND JOHNNY EXAMINE IT.

1 REED: It's a HODGEPODGE of TECHNOLOGY, but these are my amalgamated designs.

2 JOHNNY: It's like every whatchamacallit in your LAB rolled into one giant...THINGAMAJIG.

PANEL TWO: JOHNNY, EYES NARROWED IN INTENSITY, FIDDLES WITH THE DOOR.

3 JOHNNY: Yeah. Yeah. I can't make heads or tails out of the ENGINEERING, but there's no question it's got your fingerprints all OVER it.

4 JOHNNY: I don't get it. Since when are you teaching shop class up HERE?

PANEL THREE: JOHNNY, PUZZLED, TURNS TO SEE BEN AND REED EXCHANGING A SILENT GLANCE--REED ASHAMED, AS IF TO SAY, "I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID THIS," BEN AS IF TO SAY "I KNOW. WE GOTTA TALK." NOT ANGRY, JUST CONCERNED.

5 JOHNNY: Reed?

PANEL FOUR: SUE, WORRIED, GRABS BEN'S ARM GENTLY, PLEADS WITH HIM. BEN, GRIM--NO PUN INTENDED--CONTINUES TO LOOK AT REED. REED JUST STARES DOWN AND AWAY, EMPTY-EYED IN DAWNING HORROR (AN EXPRESSION I PROBABLY ASK FOR TWICE AN ISSUE. SORRY).

6 SUE: Ben, TALK to us. What's HAPPENING?

7 BEN: Yer husband's catchin' ON, but this ain't gonna be easy f'r him ta HEAR.

8 BEN: I wanted ta plow through that door on my OWN, Reed. I didn't want ya t' ever hafta find OUT.

9 SUE: Find WHAT out?

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE: DAN.

1 DAN: That Reed's responsible for locking my brother  
OUT OF HEAVEN.

PANEL TWO: PULL BACK FOR A BIG GROUP SHOT OF EVERYONE REACTING  
SILENTLY TO THIS NEWS.

PANEL THREE: ON REED, BAFFLED, FRUSTRATED, RUNNING HIS FINGERS  
OVER HIS FACE OR THROUGH HIS HAIR.

2 REED: No...

3 REED: ...no, that's...not POSSIBLE.

4 BEN: Reed...

5 REED: I'm...your LIFELINE...

PANEL FOUR: BEN, TRYING TO BE COMFORTING, PUTS HIS ARM AROUND  
REED'S SHOULDERS. REED'S STILL IN A DAZE.

6 BEN: Reed, I been WATCHIN' ya these last few weeks.  
Ya keep thinkin' that I ain't GONE 'cause there's  
a spark o' LIFE in my body. Which is why you got  
it floatin' in a TANK 'n' wired up like CON ED.

7 BEN: And I appreciate what ya think y'r DOIN', an'  
there ain't no QUESTION y'r heart's in th' right  
PLACE...but in y'r DESPERATION, ya got it all  
MIXED UP.

PANEL FIVE: ON BEN. BEHIND HIM, A SYMBOLIC SHOT OF THE THING-  
CORPSE FROM ISSUE #509 FLOATING IN ITS TANK.

8 BEN: Whatever life is THERE is ONLY there 'cause yer  
gizmos dug it out, amped it up INTA somethin',  
an' won't let it GO like they OUGHTA. It ain't  
SALVAGEABLE...but it's holding me BACK all th'  
SAME. Y'unnerstand?

9 BEN: It ain't that I'm stuck HERE, Reed.

10 BEN: I'm stuck THERE.

PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE: A SILENT BEAT AS THEY ABSORB THIS BLOW.

PANEL TWO: BEN AND SUE HUG TIGHT.

1 SUE: So we...

2 SUE: ...we came all this way for NOTHING?

3 BEN: Not exactly.

4 BEN: Ya came ta say GOODBYE.

PANEL THREE: LIKewise, BEN AND REED HUG FAREWELL.

5 REED: Ben, I'm so sorry. I--I never DREAMED that--

6 BEN: 'course not. Gonna miss ya, pal.

PANEL FOUR: BEN LOOKS WORRIEDLY IN REED'S EYES, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING OTHER THAN REED'S DEAD, EMPTY, UNFOCUSED STARE.

7 BEN: Y'know?

8 BEN: Reed? Pull it t'gether, okay? I needja to get me THROUGH.

PANEL FIVE: BEN APPROACHES JOHNNY, WHO'S STILL INTENTLY EXAMINING THE DOOR.

9 BEN: 'kay, Matchstick. It's that time.

10 BEN: Reed, you wanna monkey with th' door while I tell Johnny how all 'em NEKKID PICTURES of him got put up onna web...?

PANEL SIX: ON JOHNNY, TURNING, SNEERING WITH RAGE AS HE FLAMES ON.

PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE: JOHNNY--FLAMING EXCEPT FOR HIS ARMS AND HANDS--LEAP-ATTACKS A VERY SURPRISED BEN, KNOCKING HIM BACK WHILE WRAPPING HIS HANDS AROUND HIS THROAT. IF YOU CAN WORK IT, REED'S STANDING IN B/G, EQUALLY SHOCKED.

1 JOHNNY/HUGE burst: Get AWAY!

2 BEN: ?

PANEL TWO: JUST BEHIND JOHNNY, WE CAN SEE THE BACKGROUND LITERALLY CRACKING, SHIFTING SLIGHTLY OUT OF ALIGNMENT. IT'S A SMALL THING, BUT IT PRESAGES SOMETHING MUCH WORSE.

3 SFX: chkkk

PANEL THREE: ALARMED, EVERYONE NOW CHARGES FORWARD AS TORCH TAKES BEN DOWN. BEN'S STRUGGLING, BUT ALL HE CAN DO IS TRY TO PRY TORCH'S HANDS LOOSE.

4 JOHNNY: It's some kind of TRICK! This isn't BEN!

5 JOHNNY: Ben would never roll OVER that easy!

6 SUE: JOHNNY!

7 BEN: It ain't...=gkkk=...ain't my CALL, Bic-head...!

PANEL FOUR, BIG: EVERYONE'S PITCHING IN TO WRESTLE TORCH OFF BEN, BUT DAN'S THE ONLY ONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEING BURNED, AS JOHNNY'S FLAMES HAVE NO EFFECT ON HIM. (NOR, PRESUMABLY, BEN, BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY AN ISSUE.)

8 JOHNNY: So that's IT, you big COWARD? You're just gonna GIVE UP and call it a DAY? Life's OVER for you?

9 BEN: Kid, it's my TIME, fair 'n' SQUARE! It's not UP ta me!

PAGE SIX

PANEL ONE: TORCH WHIRLS ANGRILY ON REED.

1 JOHNNY:                   Then YOU!

2 JOHNNY/burst:           FIX this! FIX IT!

PANEL TWO: TIGHT ON SUE OR REED'S FEET. UNNOTICED IN THE EMOTIONAL CHAOS, THE GROUND BEGINS TO FISSURE BENEATH THEIR FEET.

3 SFX:                    CHHKKK

PANEL THREE: JOHNNY, BERSERK, STARTS THROWING FIREBALLS AT REED, WHO ELONGATES TO DODGE THEM.

4 REED:                   Johnny, I would if I COULD, but there's nothing TO fix!

5 JOHNNY/burst:         LIAR!

6 JOHNNY:               What is WRONG with you? You're supposed to be the LEADER!

7 JOHNNY:               You used to have GOOD IDEAS! We could COUNT on you! And NOW--!

PANEL FOUR: MEANWHILE, BEN AND DAN--NOW SEVERAL YARDS AWAY FROM THE THREE-ON-ONE BRAWL--LOOK AROUND IN DISMAY AND NOTICE EVERYTHING AROUND AND ABOVE THE BRAWLERS, INCLUDING THE SKY, BEGINNING TO CRACK FROM THE BUILDING EARTHQUAKE.

8 BEN:                   Aw, Jeez.

9 BEN:                   Can I say that up here?

10 DAN:                  It's not his favorite.

11 DAN:                  But this is NOT good.

((more))

PAGE SIX, continued

PANEL FIVE: SUE, ANGRY, USES HER FORCE-FIELD TO PULL TORCH OFF AND CLAMP HIS MOUTH SHUT.

12 JOHNNY: All you do THESE days is bust everything all to  
PIECES!

13 JOHNNY: Tell him, Sue! Tell him why we can't stand to be  
AROUND him anyMMPH--!

14 SUE: Jonathan Storm, don't you SPEAK for me! You  
don't have any CLUE how I feel!

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE: REED, PISSED, ATTACKS JOHNNY IN TURN, PUNCHING HIM WITH HIS (INSULATED BUT SMOLDERING) GLOVES.

1 REED:                   That's nothing NEW! Since when does Johnny think of anyone but HIMSELF?

PANEL TWO: ON REED, ENRAGED, SCREAMING, AS THE GROUND ERUPTS ALL AROUND HIM.

2 REED:                   In fact, you want to know the REAL reason your brother left the team, Sue?

PANEL THREE: TIGHT ON REED, STILL YELLING, TEARS OF RAGE IN HIS EYES.

3 REED/burst:           He's afraid I'll pull the trigger on HIM like I did on BEN! And that's INSANE!

PANEL FOUR: REED SCREAMS IN ANGUISH AS A FISSURE BREAKS HIM AWAY FROM SUE AND TORCH AND MORE CRACKS APPEAR. AGAIN, IT'S NOT A SIMPLE EARTHQUAKE--IT'S ALSO LIKE THE VERY REALITY AROUND THEM IS FRACTURING FROM STRESS.

4 REED/BIG burst:       HOW COULD ANYONE LIVE WITH THAT?

5 SUE/BIG burst:        REED!



PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE: NOW DAN AND BEN ARE SHAKING, VIBRATING, AS THE QUAKE EFFECT RIPPLES EVERY WHICH WAY.

1 BEN: Danny, dial down the QUAKE! There ain't no point in drivin' 'em OFF anymore!

2 DAN: This isn't ME, Ben! It's THOSE three! It's the INFECTION they brought WITH them! I kept WARNING them how DANGEROUS it was for them to BE here, but--

3 BEN: What? WHAT?

PANEL TWO: THE SKY ITSELF, BLACKNESS BEHIND IT, STARTS FALLING IN GIANT SHARDS.

4 DAN/off: They didn't leave their RAGE behind, Ben!

PANEL THREE: BLAM! TRYING AS BEST THEY CAN TO SHIELD THEMSELVES FROM ALL THE CHAOS AND COLLAPSE, SUE AND TORCH REACT IN HORROR AS THE GROUND COLLAPSES BENEATH REED'S FEET AND HE FALLS.

5 DAN/burst/off: THEY DIDN'T LEAVE THEIR PAIN!

PANEL FOUR: CHAOS AND ERUPTIONS ALL AROUND, BEN--PANICKED--LUNGES MADLY FOR THE INSET DOOR. DAN TRIES AND FAILS TO GRAB HIM.

6 BEN: The DOOR! We gotta get everybody through th' DOOR! But HOW?

PAGE NINE

PANEL ONE: MEANWHILE, SUE'S USING HER FORCE-FIELDS TO SHIELD HERSELF AND TORCH FROM FALLING DEBRIS WHILE TORCH SCREAMS OUT TO REED.

1 TORCH: Reed, stretch THIS way! You're gonna FALL!

PANEL TWO: REVERSE ANGLE TO FOCUS ON REED SITTING MOTIONLESS ON A PRECARIOUS FRAGMENT OF EARTH, HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS, COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN, PAYING NO ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT EARTH AND SKY ARE CRUMBLING ABOUT HIM AND AT ANY MOMENT, THE SLICE OF GROUND BENEATH HIM IS GOING TO SHAKE LOOSE AND FALL INTO THE BLACKNESS BELOW.

2 TORCH/BIG burst: REED!

PANEL THREE: BEN STRUGGLES FRANTICALLY WITH THE DOOR TO NO END.

3 BEN: How'm I supposed ta figger this out when Reed COULDN'T? And it's HIS WORK!

4 BEN: I mean, I recognize this thing HERE from his lab, and this piece HERE...hell, there ain't one gizmo ON here I ain't remembering from...

PANEL FOUR: BEN STARTS TO PULL PIECES OFF THE DOOR, DISASSEMBLING IT.

5 BEN: ...from...

6 BEN: Aw, no.

7 BEN: No, no, NO, NO, N--

PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE: OVER BEN'S SHOULDER, WE SEE THAT HE'S STOPPED. HE'S TORN AWAY MOST OF THE DOOR'S VARIOUS PARTS, LEAVING ONLY SOME PIECES AROUND THE PERIMETER--AND THROUGH THAT HOLE, WHICH ISN'T MORE THAN A FEW INCHES DEEP, WE CAN SEE WHAT'S BEHIND THAT DOOR: A BARRIER OF ROUGH, ORANGE BRICK.

PANEL TWO: FRANTIC, LEAVING DANNY BEHIND, BEN RUNS MADLY AWAY FROM THE DOOR AND INTO THE CHAOS.

1 BEN/burst: REED!

PANEL THREE: BEN CHARGES BY SUE AND TORCH, GESTURING FOR THEM TO FOLLOW HIM INTO THE UPHEAVAL.

2 BEN: Suzie! Johnny! I'm goin' AFTER him! COVER me!

3 SUE: Ben, WE'RE the ones with POWERS! Stay back and let US--

4 BEN: That won't WORK! It's gotta be ME! C'MON!

PANEL FOUR: BEN LIES ON HIS STOMACH, LEANS OVER THE WALL OF A FISSURE TO SEE REED BELOW--JUST OUT OF REACH, IGNORING HIM AND IGNORING THE DANGER HE'S IN, HIS FACE STILL BURIED IN HIS HANDS.

5 BEN: Big Brain, LISSEN! Ya had it RIGHT, and we all MISSED it!

6 BEN: Ya said it's, whatchacallit, "FORCE OF WILL." That what we see up here--HOW we see it--gets shaped by whoever's takin' POINT, right?

7 BEN: Well, I got t' this spot before ANY o' you guys! That means th' HILLTOP, th' giant WALL--

PANEL FIVE: TIGHTER ON BEN, REACHING DOWNWARDS.

8 BEN: --th' DOOR--

9 BEN: --I built it!

10 BEN: I made myself BELIEVE the problem was you--that YOU was holdin' me back--but it was ME all ALONG!

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL ONE: MEANWHILE, SUE AND TORCH, USING FORCEFIELDS AND FIREBLASTS, WORK LIKE CRAZY TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AND BEN FROM FALLING AND ERUPTING DEBRIS.

1 SUE: For God's sake, you're not SERIOUS! Ben, why would you DO that to yourself?

2 BEN: I ain't doin' it "TO" NOBODY.

PANEL TWO: REED, IN HIS BORDERLINE-AUTISTIC COMA, SLIPS FURTHER DOWN TOWARDS BLACKNESS AS THE GROUND BENEATH HIM CONTINUES TO FALL AWAY.

3 SFX: CHHKKK

PANEL THREE: BEN STRETCHES TO REACH EVEN FURTHER TOWARDS OBLIVIOUS REED.

4 BEN: I'm doin' it FOR somebody.

5 BEN: Come on, pal! I ain't ready t' take no DIRT NAP yet, and neither are YOU! You 'n' me--let's GO!

PANEL FOUR: BEN STRAINS TO REACH FURTHER, EVEN FURTHER.

6 BEN: Ya HEARIN' me? Th' bad times are finally OVER, buddy! Ya don't gotta put y'rself through all this GRIEF no more! I'm RIGHT HERE!

PANEL FIVE: TIGHT ON REED, STIRRING FOR THE FIRST TIME, AS IF BEN'S WORDS ARE FINALLY PENETRATING.

7 BEN: I'm NOT LEAVIN' YA, Reed!

PANEL SIX: TIGHT ON BEN.

8 BEN: I'm NEVER LEAVIN' YA.

PANEL SEVEN: THE REST OF THE GROUND FALLS AWAY UNDERNEATH REED'S FEET.

9 BIG SFX: CHHKKK

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL ONE, BIG: REED HANGS SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR--BUT SAFE, HIS ELASTIC ARM ENTWINED WITH BEN'S. THEY EXCHANGE A SMILE. NO DIALOGUE.

PANEL TWO: A MOMENT LATER. BACK ON SAFE, LEVEL GROUND, BEN AND REED--BOTH LAUGHING WARMLY--EXCHANGE A QUICK HUG. HERE AND THROUGHOUT, THE TERRAIN IS CALM AGAIN--THE SKY IS OF ONE PIECE, AND WHILE THERE'S STILL DEBRIS AROUND, THERE'S NO MORE TURMOIL.

1 REED: Ben, no. What kind of friend would ask you to give up HEAVEN?

2 BEN: What kinda friend wouldn't DO it?

3 REED: You're the best man I've ever known.

4 BEN: I got my moments.

PANEL THREE: REED WATCHES WITH AMUSEMENT AS SUE AND JOHNNY GROUP-HUG POOR BEN, WHO PULLS AWAY AND LOOKS DOWNRIGHT FED UP WITH ALL THE SENTIMENT.

5 BEN: Now that you troublemakers dialed down th' ANGST a little, whaddaya say we go hop on Reed's li'l ANGELICAR 'n' head HOME?

6 JOHNNY: YEAH! Great to have you BACK, Benjy!

7 BEN: Awright. AWRIGHT with th' SCHMALTZ, already! We had enuff SLOBBERIN' TIME f'r one day! Let's GO!

**PAGE THIRTEEN**

PANEL ONE: TIGHT ON SUE, LOOKING AT SOMETHING OFF-PANEL.

1 SUE: Uh-oh. Not so fast.

PANEL TWO: BEN, SUE AND JOHNNY WATCH REED, WHO'S NOW STARING AT THE INSET DOOR, STROKING HIS CHIN.

2 BEN: Aw, f'r Pete's sake. Stretcho, get AWAY from there!

3 REED: Hmmmm?

PANEL THREE: JOHNNY WAVES HIS FLAMING HAND IN FRONT OF REED'S FACE BUT CAN'T BREAK REED'S STARE.

4 JOHNNY: He said STEP. AWAY. FROM. THE LOCKED. DOOR.

5 JOHNNY: I realize that's like asking ANNA NICOLE to step away from the RING DINGS, but how weird does it GET when I learn faster than YOU? STEP. AWAY.

6 DAN/off: Or...consider a BETTER proposal.

PANEL FOUR: THEY LOOK AT DAN, WHO GESTURES TOWARDS THE INSET DOOR.

7 DAN: You can't blame Reed for being CURIOUS. After all, this is the doorstep to GOD'S REALM.

8 DAN: And in light of all you've BEEN through--not only today, but in the service of mankind through the years--I've been empowered by the Man In Charge to offer the four of you this INVITATION:

PANEL FIVE: AN AMAZED REACTION SHOT FROM THE FOUR.

9 DAN/off: STAY.

PAGE FOURTEEN

MIKE: PACE THIS SEQUENCE AS YOU WILL SO LONG AS THE LAST PANEL IS IN PLACE, THANKS!

1 DAN: I'm not joking. We can bring your children, too, if you like, or you can simply wait for them. Either way, you'll forever be at one with the maker, in a place of eternal bliss.

2 REED: In the province of ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE.

3 DAN: Yes.

4 REED: The solutions to every mystery of the universe will be at our fingertips? Every answer CONCEIVABLE ours simply for the ASKING?

5 DAN: Absolutely.

6 REED: Then speaking on behalf of this team...

7 REED: ...we DECLINE.

8 REED: You may tell your boss that we're tremendously HONORED by his gracious gesture--but we're not yet done EXPLORING.

9 REED: What gives this family its PURPOSE and its JOY isn't the DESTINATION...it's the JOURNEY.

LAST PANEL: ON DAN, SMILING--AND, BEHIND HIM, WE SEE THE LARGE DOOR--NOT THE LITTLE INSET DOOR BEN WAS STRUGGLING WITH, BUT THE MASSIVE DOOR IN WHICH IT WAS INSET--OPENING SLIGHTLY, BLINDING LIGHT SPILLING FROM BEHIND IT.

10 DAN: Good answer.

11 SFX: klak

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL ONE, HUGE: A BIG ESTABLISHING SHOT OF THE GIANT OPEN DOOR AND THE LIGHT BEYOND, OUR FIVE CHARACTERS TINY IN RELATIONSHIP TO IT.

1 DAN:               Enjoy your VISIT.

PANEL TWO: REED AND DAN EXCHANGE A SMILE, BEN LOOKS PUZZLED.

2 REED:             A visit? Not a one-way TRIP?

3 DAN:             I promise. You passed his TEST.

4 REED:             Well...NOW we're TALKING.

5 BEN:             Huh? What kinda test?

PANEL THREE: DAN AND BEN SAY A HEARTFELT FAREWELL AS THE OTHER THREE FFers JUMP INTO THE LIGHT.

6 DAN:             He'll explain. And, Ben...glad you came by. Old neighborhood still the same?

7 BEN:             Not without you there, Danny boy. Love ya. Take care.

8 DAN:             See you soon.

9 DAN:             Figure of speech.



PAGE SIXTEEN

FULL-PAGE SPLASH. OKAY, I'M WILLING TO DO MY HOMEWORK ON THIS ONE RATHER THAN FOB IT OFF ON OUR POOR COLORIST (AGAIN), SO LET'S DISCUSS--BUT WHAT WE NEED HERE IS OUR FOURSOME FLOATING THROUGH SPACE AGAINST ONE OF THOSE GREAT KIRBY B&W PHOTOMONTAGE EFFECTS HE USED TO USE.

1 JOHNNY: Got a LUMP in your throat there, big fella?

2 BEN: Yeah. I'm chokin' on yer HOSPITAL CHART.

3 JOHNNY/small: Understood.

4 REED: Stay TOGETHER, everyone! Keep yourselves LIMBER!  
There's something up ahead!

PAGE SEVENTEEN, REVISED (\*)

PANEL ONE: THE FOUR ALIGHT ON A FLOATING PATCH OF GROUND ON WHICH STANDS A HUMAN-SIZED DOOR--SOMETHING ORNATE AND IMAGINATIVE, BUT UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE WE'VE YET SEEN.

1 BEN:                   Another DOOR? If I was sellin' SEEDS, I'd be RICH by now!

2 JOHNNY:               What?

3 BEN/small:           Kids.

\*4 SUE:                 This is IT, isn't it? So am I the only one who's the least bit NERVOUS? I mean...GOD'S on the other side, right? Do we...KNOCK, or...?

PANEL TWO: THEY OPEN THE DOOR.

5 REED:                 We take the PLUNGE.

\*6 REED:                After all, we were INVITED. Ready...?

PANEL THREE: THROUGH THE DOOR, WHAT THEY SEE: A SHORT, FIFTYISH MAN WITH A BRUSH CUT, PENCILING WHILE SITTING AT A DRAWING TABLE IN A SPACIOUS, SUNNY SUBURBAN-HOME STUDIO, CALIFORNIA LANDSCAPE OUTSIDE THE WINDOW. HE'S INTENT ON HIS DRAWING.

7 GOD:                 Well?

8 GOD:                 You coming IN, or WHAT?

PANEL FOUR: A GOBSMACKED REACTION SHOT OF THE FOUR, SPEECHLESS.

PANEL FIVE: STAT.

9 JOHNNY:              Don't ask.

10 JOHNNY:             Just BUY it.

PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL ONE: ESTABLISHING INTERIOR, GOD'S STUDIO. TENTATIVELY, HESITANTLY, LOOKING ALL AROUND, THE FF ENTER. GOD CONTINUES TO DRAW. MIKE, AS YOU SUGGESTED AND TOM OKAYED, GOD CAN HAVE A CIGAR PROMINENT IN AN ASHTRAY OR AS A PROP JUST SO LONG AS HE NEVER ACTUALLY SMOKES IT.

1 JOHNNY: So where are the ELVES?

2 BEN: That's SANTA, butthead.

3 BEN: Mebbe we shoullda called AHEAD so he could DECORATE. I dunno what I was EXPECTIN', but I ain't exactly feelin' th' AWE 'n' MAJESTY.

4 BEN: You sure we're in th' right JOINT?

PANEL TWO: SUE, PUZZLED, STANDS OVER GOD, WHO CONTINUES DRAWING.

5 SUE: HUSH, you two. Show proper respect for...for...

6 SUE: ...Reed, why am I taller than the ALMIGHTY?

7 GOD: What you SEE is what I AM to you. Don't worry. It's a COMPLIMENT, not an INSULT.

PANEL THREE: ON GOD.

8 GOD: That's what my creations DO.

9 GOD: They find the HUMANITY in GOD.

PANEL FOUR: THE FF LOOK STUNNED AT THE SOUND OF A PHONE RINGING.

10 SFX: RING! RING!

11 GOD: Pardon me one moment.

((more))

PAGE EIGHTEEN, continued

PANEL FIVE: AS GOD CRADLES THE RECEIVER BETWEEN SHOULDER AND EAR AND CONTINUES TO DRAW, JOHNNY TURNS TO BEN.

12 JOHNNY: God has a PHONE?

13 JOHNNY: What's the NUMBER? "1"?

14 GOD: ...uh-huh...uh-huh...and then they're in the FORBIDDEN CITY...the HUMAN JUNGLE. Right. Suddenly, the BLACK PANTHER springs from the trees!

15 GOD: Okay, we'll make it the SILVER SURFER! Yeah! Yeah! Write it up and I'll start the DESIGNS!

PANEL SIX: SUE WATCHES GOD HANG UP THE PHONE.

16 SFX: klik

17 SUE: Who...

18 SUE: Who CALLED?

19 GOD: My COLLABORATOR.

20 GOD: 'nuff said.

PAGE NINETEEN, REVISED (\*)

PANEL ONE: PAST REED AND GOD AS REED LOOKS AT SOME OF THE DRAWINGS ON GOD'S TABLE--A COUPLE OF OVERLAPPING, INCOMPLETE PAGES, ONE OF THEM WITH A COUPLE OF ROUGH DRAWINGS THAT WE CAN USE IN THE NEXT STORY (LET'S DISCUSS), THE OTHER PAGE WITH SOME SKETCHES OF OTHER UPCOMING MOMENTS--A HEAD SHOT OF SUE WEEPING, A QUICK GLIMPSE OF GALACTUS, MAYBE A SHOT OF THE WINGLESS WIZARD.

\*1 REED:           Your COLLAB--? But these DRAWINGS are YOURS?

2 GOD:            My contribution to the grand tapestry. Ideas.  
                  Notions. Passions.

PANEL TWO: TIGHT ON GOD'S HAND DRAWING A PICTURE OF A FUTURISTIC KIRBY-TECH/INHUMANS/SUPERTOWN-ISH CITY ON FRESH PAPER.

\*3 GOD/off:       We're all a part of the PROCESS. Think about your world.

4 GOD/off:        It starts with words AND pictures. The ordinary AND the cosmic. THAT'S what sets the stage.

\*5 GOD:           The PLAY is YOUR lives. Your ADVENTURES become OUR EXPLORATIONS. My window into TOMORROW.

PANEL THREE, BIG: PULL BACK TO SEE GOD STILL DRAWING AND THE FF GAPING IN AMAZEMENT AS THEY LOOK AROUND TO SEE THAT THEY'RE NOW STANDING ON A ROOF INSIDE THAT SAME CITY--FULLY DRAWN AROUND THEM, STILL SKETCHY AROUND ONE EDGE.

6 GOD:            How far out is the world that's coming?

7 GOD:            What is it? Where is it going? How will it evolve?

8 GOD:            The mystery intrigues me.

PAGE TWENTY, REVISED (\*)

PANEL ONE: TIGHT ON AN ORDINARY #2 PENCIL IN REED'S HAND.

\*1 REED: Forgive me. I...I find it hard to believe that the wellspring of all reality is a yellow STICK.

PANEL TWO: GOD REACHES UP TOWARDS REED'S FACE WITH THE ERASER END OF A PENCILS.

2 GOD: History's greatest inventions were crafted using its simplest tools. You're smart enough to know that.

3 GOD: Besides, the beauty of pencils is this:

PANEL THREE: TO REED'S PLEASANT SURPRISE, GOD BEGINS TO "ERASE" THE SCAR FROM HIS FACE.

4 GOD/off: They have ERASERS.

PANEL FOUR: BOTH REED AND SUE, EQUALLY DELIGHTED, TOUCH REED'S HEALED FACE. JOHNNY AND BEN, BOTH SMILING--IT'S A NICE MOMENT--LOOK AT GOD, IMPRESSED. GOD SHARPENS HIS PENCIL.

5 JOHNNY: Wow. Too good to BE.

6 JOHNNY: Are you imagining US, or are we imagining YOU?

7 GOD: You're no one's PUPPETS, if THAT'S what you're getting at. Nobody can do your living for you. No one can do your DYING for you.

8 GOD: We're all our own storytellers...

PAGE TWENTY-ONE, REVISED (\*)

PANEL ONE: GOD DRAWS ORANGE ROCKS BACK ON BEN'S BODY. BEN WATCHES, ANNOYED.

1 GOD:                   ...and there are plenty of stories still left IN you.

2 BEN:                   Wh--?

3 BEN:                   Aw, NERTZ.

PANEL TWO: GOD CLIMBS BACK INTO HIS CHAIR AS THE FOUR STAND TOGETHER. BEN LOOKS DOWN AT HIMSELF IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

4 BEN:                   I gotta go home like THIS? Wotta GYP.

\*5 GOD:                  You were going to wake up in Reed's healing tank, anyway. I just condensed your SUBPLOT a little.

\*6 GOD:                  And about that. Getting you HOME, that is. What say we make that MY job? The gadget that BROUGHT you here?

\*7 GOD:                  It's not going to work a second time. TRUST me. Still, it was a clever THOUGHT. I admire your IMAGINATION. Always HAVE.

PANEL THREE: GOD AND REED, BOTH SMILING, SHAKE HANDS WITH MUTUAL RESPECT.

8 GOD:                   You know never to stop asking "WHY." That was the test.

9 REED:                  I gathered.

10 REED:                 Thank you.

((more))

PAGE TWENTY-ONE REVISED (\*), continued

PANEL FOUR: AS GOD ERASES, THE FF WATCH THE BACKGROUND AROUND THEM FADE AWAY TO WHITE.

11 JOHNNY: Wait. Do you have a gift shop?

12 SUE: JOHNNY...!

\*13 GOD: You kids want a souvenir? Hang on. Let me whip something up.

PANEL FIVE: AS THEY ALL STAND IN A WHITE VOID, GOD LEANS OVER HIS DRAWING BOARD AND HANDS THEM A SKETCH WE CAN'T YET SEE.

14 GOD: There. You've earned it.

15 GOD: Enjoy.



PAGE TWENTY-TWO, REVISED (\*)

PANEL ONE: THE FF ALONE NOW AS THE BAXTER BUILDING INTERIOR  
FADES IN AROUND THEM--PENCILS FIRST--

PANEL TWO: --THEN STAT, BUT INKED AND COLORED.

1 JOHNNY: Home.

2 JOHNNY: Who wants pizza?

PANEL THREE: CLOSE ON THE FOUR CROWDING AROUND/LEANING IN TO  
LOOK AT THE DRAWING IN REED'S HANDS. THEY'RE SMILING.

3 BEN: Way to savor the MOMENT.

\*4 JOHNNY: KIDDING. My mind's as blown as yours, dude. All  
that AND a going-away present! What'd he GIVE  
us? Huh? Huh?

5 REED: ...

PANEL FOUR, BIG: THE SKETCH. IT'S OF THE FF 25 YEARS OR MORE  
FROM NOW--IN THEIR OLD AGE, BUT STILL TOGETHER, ALL FOUR  
GRINNING WARMLY IN A GROUP-PHOTO EMBRACE. ALONG THE BOTTOM OF  
THE SKETCH IS A BIG HAND-LETTERED CAPTION THAT READS "TO BE  
CONTINUED!"

6 REED/off: A happy ending.