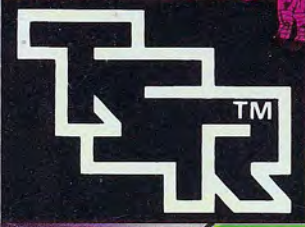


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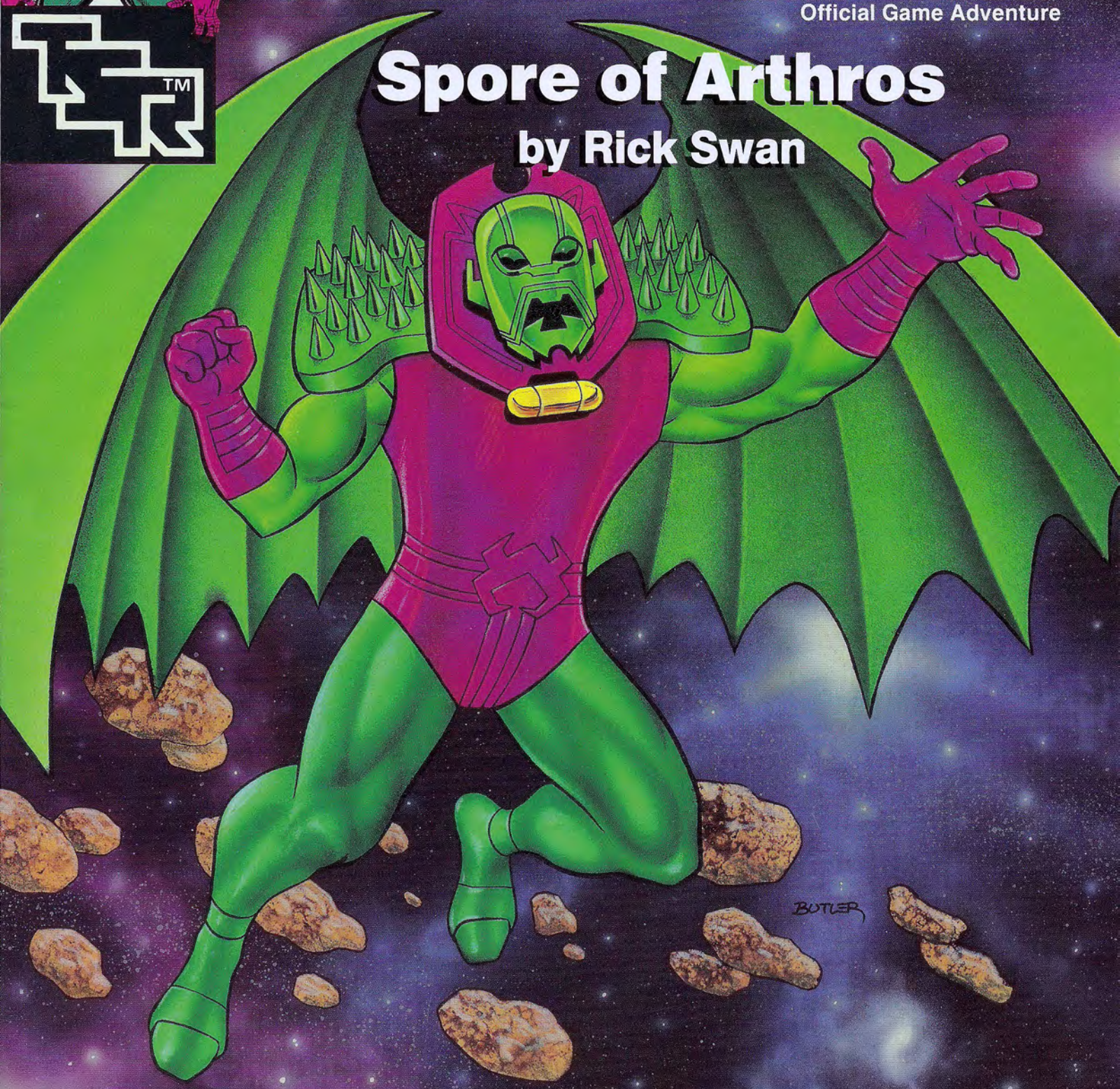


FOR THE FANTASTIC FOUR™ or FOUR HEROES

MARVEL SUPER HEROES™

Official Game Adventure

Spore of Arthros by Rick Swan





Official Game Adventure

SPORE OF ARTHROS

by Rick Swan

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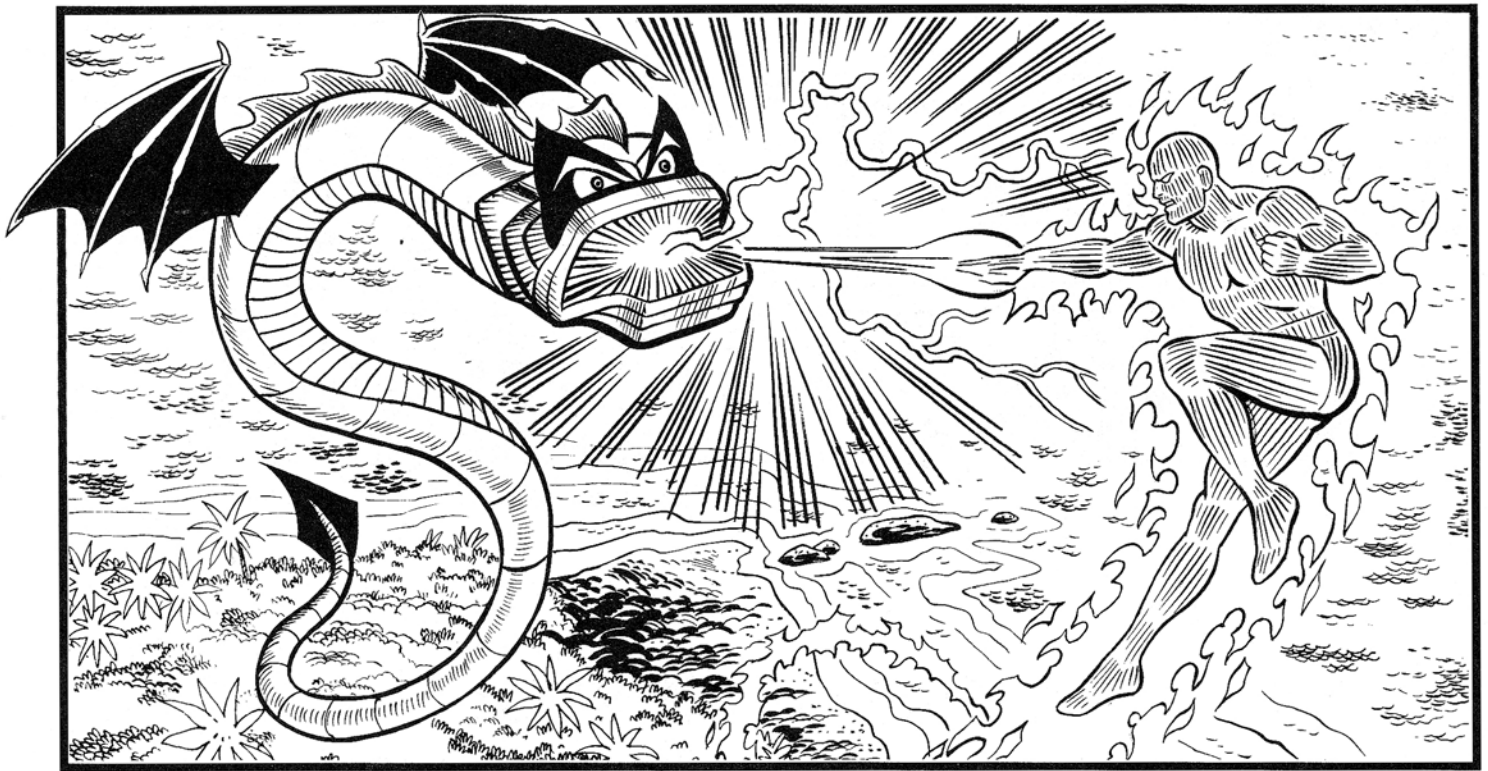
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CHAPTER ONE: MYSTERIOUS ISLAND

OVERVIEW: This chapter details the heroes' exploration of the island of Nop Yaan. Use the map of Nop Yaan (Map 1) for reference. In this chapter, the heroes should accomplish the following:

- Explore Nop Yaan.
- Meet Yellow Claw, the lord of the island.
- Enter the Negative Zone through the island's portal (encounter 15).

When you're ready to begin the adventure, proceed to the Dark Waters section. Read or paraphrase the boxed text to the players.

Dark Waters

Judge's Note: The following assumes the heroes are being transported aboard a SHIELD mini-sub. If the heroes prefer, they may use transportation of their own choosing; for instance, if Mr. Fantastic is among the heroes, he may wish to use his own sub. In either case, assume the heroes have all of the equipment listed in the

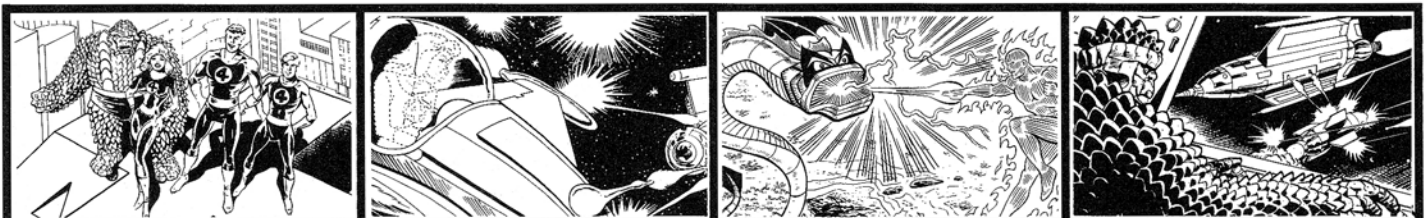
Introduction and are in radio contact with Nick Fury. If the heroes use their own transportation, SHIELD Operative Taylor (see below) won't be with them; modify the text accordingly.

Except for the steady hum of the nuclear engine, the mini-sub is silent. Effortlessly it glides through the dark waters of the Pacific Ocean, en route to a tiny island you'd never heard of prior to accepting this mission.

You settle back on the narrow bunk, intending to get some rest before the sub reaches its destination. But you're too anxious to sleep. Though your old friend, SHIELD commander Nick Fury, filled you in as best he could, much of the mission remains a mystery. Doug Taylor, the young SHIELD operative who's piloting the sub, hasn't been much help—there's not much information available.

You close your eyes and review what you know.

Recently, SHIELD became aware of unusual activity on Nop Yaan, a barren island about 500 miles east of mainland China. Large amounts of sophisticated elec-



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tronic equipment were being shipped to the island, and SHIELD surveillance satellites detected pulsations of unidentifiable energy radiating from the island. SHIELD analysts speculated that the energy might be of alien origin.

Two of SHIELD's top field operatives, Leslie Bachman and Sean Petersen, were dispatched to investigate. Nothing has been heard from them in three days. In their final report, Bachman and Petersen indicated that they'd discovered what they believed to be a trans-dimensional portal on the island. From the operatives' information, SHIELD analysts believe the portal leads to the Negative Zone. "If it does, then we gotta get it closed," Fury had said before you embarked upon this mission. "You know all the trouble we had with the last one." (He was referring to the events described in the previous adventure, *Warlord of Baluur*.)

So that SHIELD could track them, Bachman and Petersen had special homing devices imbedded in their skin. "We aren't gettin' any kind of transmission," explained Fury. "And we can detect those gizmos anywhere within a thousand miles." Fury's conclusion: the operatives are no longer on Earth.

Records show that Nop Yaan is privately owned by International Devotions, a corporation headed by an ex-official of the Chinese government named Chu-tsu Tum. SHIELD believes Chu-tsu is an alias of the Yellow Claw.

"Bachman and Petersen are too valuable to lose," said Fury. "We want 'em back. And if that really is a portal to the Negative Zone, we gotta get it closed. But we need to keep a low profile, cause if we're wrong about all this, we could set off an international incident—who knows what kinda ties this Chu-tsu or whoever he is still has with China? That's why I figger you people are just the folks for the job."

You agreed with Fury that there's a good chance Bachman and Petersen are lost inside the Portal in the Negative Zone. You've come prepared for just such a trip. You open your eyes and cast an appreciative glance at the anti-matter harness, survival belt, and other gear stacked on the deck near your bunk, gear

designed for a mission into the Negative Zone.

The SHIELD analysts detected erratic energy pulsations from the island over the last few hours, similar to those occurring on the night of the operatives' disappearance.

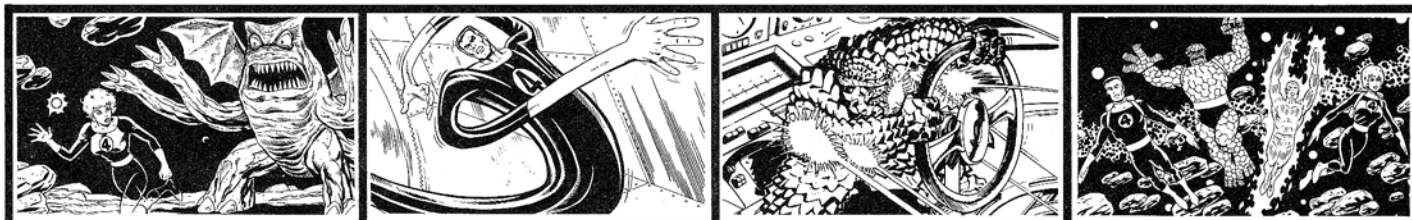
You check your watch. It's nearly midnight.

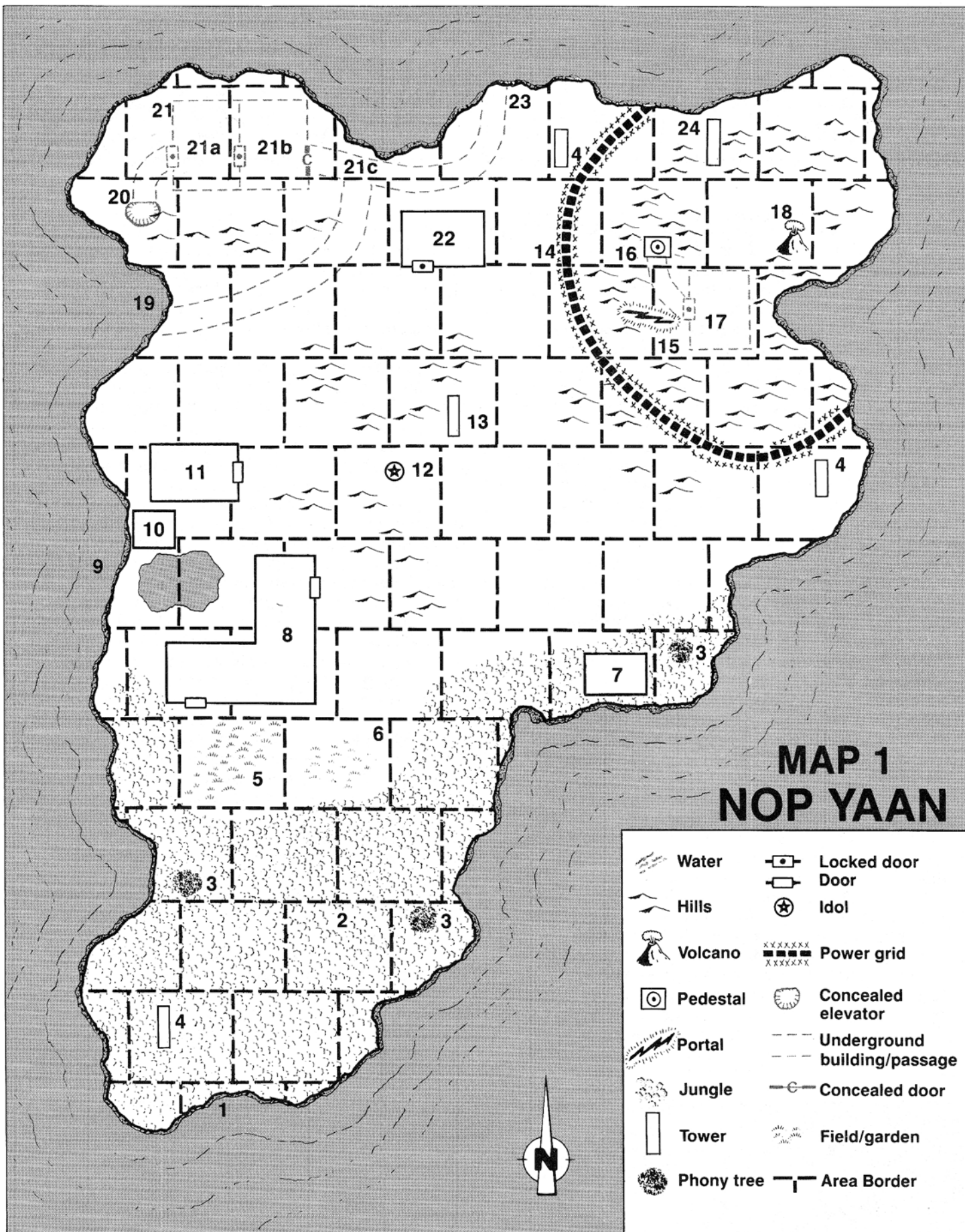
"Excuse me, sir," crackles Taylor's voice over the intercom. "Contact with Nop Yaan in fifteen minutes."

While the SHIELD mini-sub (Remarkable Control, Excellent Speed in the water, Excellent Body, and armed with six pulse torpedoes that cause 30 points of damage at Remarkable range) noses toward the surface, the heroes may converse with Taylor (use generic SHIELD operative statistics from the appendix). Taylor is a small man in his mid-twenties; he's competent, reserved, and clearly in awe of the heroes. He's eager to make small talk and listens avidly to their speculations about the island or the fate of the missing SHIELD operatives, earnestly agreeing with everything the heroes say. (If the heroes doubt Taylor's integrity, assure them that he's been thoroughly checked by Fury himself and is completely trustworthy.)

The sub breaks the surface and eases toward a small cove surrounded by sloping cliffs (encounter area 1). Before the heroes leave the sub, Taylor gives them a bio-locator, a device resembling a silver pencil with two red LEDs (light emitting diodes) and two green ones. According to Taylor, the bio-locator responds to the homing devices implanted on Petersen and Bachman. The red LEDs, when glowing, indicate that the SHIELD operatives are alive. The green LEDs will glow when the heroes are anywhere within a hundred miles of the SHIELD operatives. "The closer you get, the brighter they'll glow," Taylor advises. None of the LEDs are currently glowing since the signals cannot carry across dimensions from the Negative Zone.

Taylor also gives each hero a small disk that adheres to their costumes. "These are communications devices that allow us to stay in contact with each other." Fury can also contact the heroes via the devices, though the





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devices won't function in the Negative Zone.

When the heroes are ready to leave the sub, Taylor double-checks their communicators, makes sure they have their anti-matter harnesses and other special equipment, then wishes them good luck. After the heroes disembark, the sub sinks beneath the surface of the cove where Taylor will anxiously await their return.

Exploring Nop Yaan

After leaving the sub, the heroes may explore Nop Yaan (an island about 1 x 2 miles) and examine the features described below in the Encounter Key. Proceed to the It's Showtime section when any one of the following conditions occurs:

- The heroes use dramatic displays of force (quietly attempting to pick a locked door doesn't qualify as a dramatic display of force, but repeatedly blasting fireballs at a building does).
- The heroes are on the verge of destroying the video screen tower (area 13).
- The heroes shout, fire weapons, or otherwise intentionally draw attention to themselves.
- In the Judge's opinion, the heroes have seen as much as the island as they need to see, or he senses the players are becoming bored and are ready to move on.

When the heroes arrive on the island, the Yellow Claw begins to monitor them from area 21a (see below). He will effectively ignore them as they explore the island, however, unless they overtly prove they are heroes (again, by one of the four events listed above). Should the heroes discover the elevator (20), the Claw escapes through the door in area 21b and uses the secret passage (21c) to go to either his hydrofoil (19) or plane (23). In this case, he makes his video broadcast (described in It's Showtime) from the vehicle; the remainder of the chapter plays out as described.

General Features of the Island

Nop Yaan consists of a jungle area in the south, and

rocky hills covered with sparse vegetation in the north. A dormant volcano rises from the hills in the northeast.

The heroes land at the island just after midnight. The sky is black and clear, dotted with twinkling stars. Occasional clusters of burning torches provide the island's only illumination. Trees, rocks, and shadows provide enough cover to allow cautious heroes to explore the island without being seen by the peasants who live here.

Unless otherwise specified, the heroes may disable the island's various electronic devices and machines (such as the cameras in area 4 and the water purification system in area 10) by disconnecting them (requiring a Reason FEAT roll) or destroying them (inflicting 10 points of damage against Good material).

Mind-Controlled Peasants

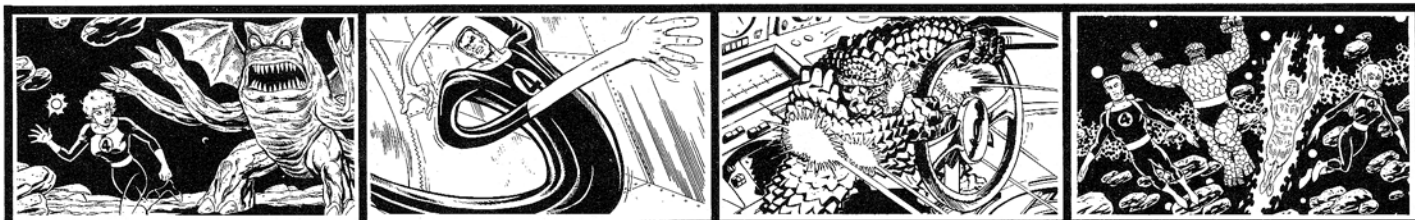
About 300 peasants live on Nop Yaan, most of them immigrants from nearby islands, a few from mainland China. The peasants were drawn to Nop Yaan by the promise of spiritual salvation, but once here, they were subjected to Yellow Claw's "id paralyzer" (see encounter area 12). They are now completely under the Claw's control.

Nop Yaan Peasant

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
PR	TY	TY	TY	TY	FE	FE
4	6	6	6	6	2	2
Health = 22						Karma = 10

Most peasants are armed with clubs, small axes, and other simple weapons capable of inflicting 5 points of damage.

Dozens of peasants can be seen milling about the island, making adjustments on the power grid (14), tending to the crops (5 and 6), and wandering aimlessly through the jungle (2). If the heroes approach them, the peasants ignore them. The peasants appear glassy-eyed and sluggish; unless otherwise indicated, they will not speak with the heroes. If the heroes attack, the peasants will defend themselves but otherwise remain docile.





Encounter Key-Map 1

1. **Cove.** This is the heroes' arrival area.
2. **Jungle.** This is a dense jungle of high weeds and tall palm trees. Chattering monkeys and chirping birds can be heard in the branches, but there isn't anything in the jungle that poses a threat to the heroes.
3. **Phony Tree.** Three of these trees are spaced around the island. They are about 15 feet thick (noticeably thicker than normal trees) and 75 feet tall. They appear to be normal trees, but are actually made of steel alloy. Each of these trees is hollow and contains a robotic flying snake.

Flying Robotic Snake

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
EX	EX	EX	EX	FE	FE	FE
20	20	20	20	2	2	2

Health = 80

A robotic snake's steel alloy body gives it Amazing protection. It flies at a top speed of four areas per round. Once per round it can fire an electric bolt (Incredible range, 20 points of damage). Its tail gives it a second attack per round, swatting a victim behind it in the same area to inflict Excellent damage.

The robotic snakes are activated by a control device that Yellow Claw keeps with him at all times. When activated, the top of the tree flips open, and the 50-foot serpent flies out. The Claw won't activate the snakes until the events of the Into the Portal section occur (see below).

If the heroes discover the phony trees, they may be able to disable the snakes. The trees are made of Amazing material; inflicting 20 points of damage on the trunk gives the heroes access to the inactive snake inside. Reducing the snake to 0 Health destroys it. Alternately, a hero who makes a Yellow Reason FEAT roll figures out how to disable the snake's guidance system, rendering it useless.

If the heroes use dramatic displays of force to destroy a snake or its tree (fireballs, loud pounding, and so on), Yellow Claw activates the snake, and it attacks the heroes, fighting until either it or the heroes are destroyed. If

the heroes later ask Yellow Claw about the snakes (most likely in the It's Showtime section below), the Claw claims that the heroes accidentally activated one of the island's defensive devices.

4. **Light Tower.** Three of these 150-foot-tall steel towers dot the island. At the top of each tower is a bank of powerful floodlights (currently dark) and several video cameras which silently track from side to side to survey the island, relaying the information to the Claw in his quarters (area 21). The heroes may disable the cameras if they like, but it won't do them much good; the Claw has numerous backup systems concealed in the trees.

5. **Fields.** Rice, nuts, and various fruits and vegetables grow in these modest fields to feed the peasants.

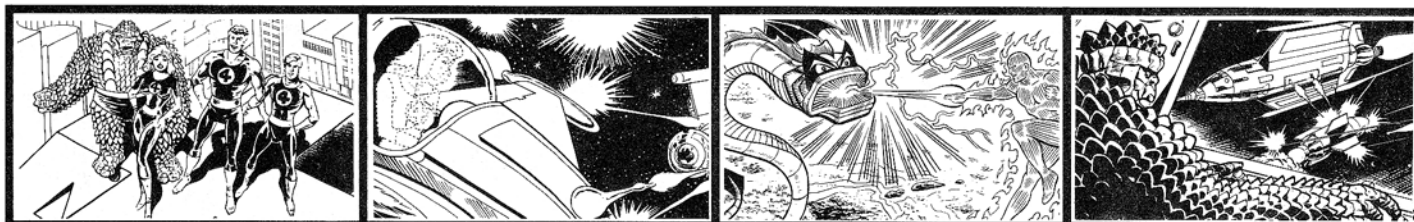
6. **Herb Garden.** This is a small garden filled with a variety of unusual herbs, some resembling golden clover, others resembling tiny ferns that smell like cinnamon. A hero making a Red Reason FEAT roll realizes the herbs are associated with Chinese alchemy.

Shortly after the heroes approach the garden, a worker approaches them. Like the other peasants, he is glassy-eyed and expressionless. Speaking in a sluggish, slurred voice, he asks the heroes if they've come to Nop Yaan to accept the Divine Dragon as their savior. If the heroes ask about the Divine Dragon, the worker responds with vague platitudes, such as "He is bliss, he is joy and peace." The worker has no useful information but will follow the heroes around the island (as long as the Judge likes), pestering them to accept the Divine Dragon. If the heroes agree to accept the Divine Dragon, the worker leads them to the dragon idol (12) and tells them to lay their hands on it.

7. **Power Plant.** This is a generator that supplies power for the island. Destroying the generator (40 points of damage against Good material) triggers the activation of an emergency generator located 100 feet underground.

8. **Barracks.** The floor of this large thatched building is lined with straw cots. There are about 100 peasants sleeping here at any given time.

9. **Dock.** Dozens of crude canoes (Typical Control, Feeble Speed, Poor Body) are tied to this wooden dock. The canoes belong to the peasants who came to Nop Yaan from nearby islands.



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10. Water Purification System. This device pumps and purifies water from the ocean. Pipes lead from the device to the pool of fresh water southeast of the purification system pump house.

11. Storehouse. This wooden building contains farming supplies, tools, extra cots, and other mundane items.

12. Dragon Idol. This is a 20-foot-tall steel alloy statue of a dragon's head. The Yellow Claw tells peasants lured to the island that the idol is a religious symbol. Actually, the idol contains an id paralyzer that subjugates the will of the peasants, enabling the Claw to control them as helpless puppets.

If the heroes use the wave analyzer, it reveals unusual electromagnetic energy radiating from the idol. A hero making a Yellow Reason FEAT determines that the energy interferes with normal brain functions, comparable to a powerful hypnotic drug. The heroes won't be affected by the device (the Claw isn't interested in attempting to control them at this time), but any hero who touches the idol feels a jolt in his head. He must make a successful Psyche FEAT roll or suffer a headache for the next hour, making all Reason, Intuition, and Psyche FEAT rolls at a -1CS during that time.

The heroes can destroy the idol by inflicting 40 points of damage against Amazing material. There is no noticeable affect on the peasants if the heroes destroy the idol; the peasants will still suffer residual effects from the mind control, proceeding with their tasks in much the same way as before and still refusing to talk with the heroes. However, the peasants won't be as likely to fight for the Claw (as described in the Into the Portal section below).

13. Video Screen Tower. Four 30-foot-square video screens surround the top of this 150-foot steel alloy tower. Currently, the screens are dead.

14. Grid. This complex network of metal grids consists of computer chip bundles, micro-conductors, and similarly sophisticated components. The unfinished grid surrounds a valley enclosed by high hills and has no apparent function. (The grid absorbs and focuses the energy from the glowing crack (area 15) to power the robotic dragon in area 17.)

15. Glowing Crack. This jagged crack in the ground is about 12 feet long and 5 feet wide. A faint violet glow

radiates from the crack. The interior of the crack is impenetrable. The wave analyzer reveals erratic waves of unidentifiable energy radiating from the crack. A hero making a Yellow Reason FEAT roll determines that the energy is of unnatural origin, possibly magical or other-dimensional. (This is the portal to the Negative Zone, currently inactive.)

16. Pedestal. Mounted on a steel alloy pedestal is a silver dragon's head. A hero closely examining the dragon's head notices that it is covered with fingerprints.

If the head is rotated 180 degrees, then tilted back, a section of the ground opens to reveal an elevator. The elevator opens to an underground passage that leads to an electronically locked door (Amazing strength). The door opens to area 17.

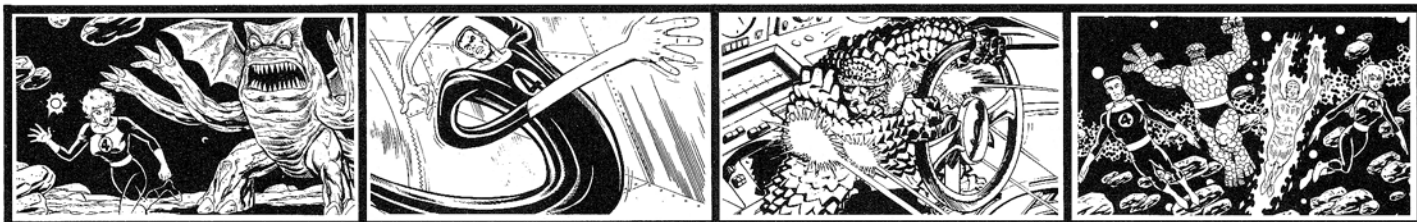
17. Construction Room. This room contains a robotic dragon, nearly 200 feet long. The dragon is still under construction; only one eye (actually, a sophisticated video lens) is in place, and not all of its steel plate hide has been attached. Thick cables lead from various points on the robot to the wall (the cables lead to the power grid, area 14). When the robot is activated, the entire room rises to surface level, and the roof (disguised as a portion of the ground) moves aside, allowing the robot to take to the air.

The heroes can disable the robot by inflicting 100 points of damage against it (Amazing resistance to all physical attacks, and Excellent resistance to all energy attacks) or by disabling its guidance system (requiring a Red Reason FEAT roll).

18. Volcano. Thin wisps of smoke curl from the mouth of this 450-foot-tall inactive volcano.

19. Concealed Boat. Within a concealed cave in the rocky shore of this cove is Yellow Claw's personal hydrofoil. The hydrofoil has Good Control, Remarkable Speed, Excellent Body, and is armed with two explosive missiles (40 points of damage, Remarkable range) that can be fired at targets in the air or water. The cave is reached by a secret passage (21c) from the Claw's underground bunker.

20. Boulder. A large boulder conceals an elevator leading to the Claw's underground quarters (21). The Claw carries an electronic device that causes the boulder to rise, revealing the elevator. The boulder is made of



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Excellent Strength material; inflicting 20 points of damage destroys it, revealing the elevator (which can be activated by a hero making a Yellow Reason FEAT roll.

21. Underground Quarters. About 50 feet underground are the Claw's private quarters. The rooms are made of steel alloy that gives them Amazing protection; all doors are electronically locked (Amazing strength). Inside the main room (21a) are video consoles (fed by the encounter area 4 cameras), monitoring consoles, computer systems, and an extensive library (scientific and occult volumes on a variety of topics). A hero attempting to examine the computer files can do so by making a Yellow Reason FEAT roll; the files contain detailed information about world financial markets and the defense capabilities of all major powers.

Claw's personal quarters (21b) are rather spartan; they contain only a sleeping mat, a small desk, and a folding screen that conceals a door leading to a secret passage (21c). On the desk is a blueprint of the power grid (14). A hero making a Red Reason FEAT roll determines that the grid is intended to tap the energies of the violet crack (15); it is unclear how the energies will be used.

22. Lab. This steel alloy building is made of Amazing material. The doors are electrically locked, giving them Amazing strength. A dozen peasants guarding the door attack relentlessly if the heroes attempt to enter; however, if the heroes have disabled the idol (12), the peasants flee at the first sign of hostility. The building contains a variety of lab equipment for performing sophisticated experiments in genetics and physics. The experiments seem relatively innocuous, such as calculating positions of stars and developing new strains of insects.

23. Concealed Hangar. Inside this hangar concealed by trees and brush is Yellow Claw's personal VTOL mini-jet. The mini-jet has Remarkable Control, Remarkable Speed, Excellent Body, and is armed with a plasma beam (Amazing range, 20 points of damage). This hangar is accessed from the secret passage (21c) via trap door in the floor of the hanger

24. Laser Cannon Tower. Mounted on top of this 100-foot steel alloy tower is a laser cannon, capable of inflicting 20 points of damage at Incredible range. Two peasants stand ready to operate the cannon.

It's Showtime

As the heroes are exploring Nop Yaan, all the encounter area 4 floodlights are abruptly switched on, bathing the entire island in bright light. The video screens (area 13) flicker to life, filling with the immense grinning visage of a pale-skinned oriental man with a drooping moustache, a metallic headpiece, and steely eyes. This is the Yellow Claw.

Thanks to hidden loudspeakers, the Claw's voice thunders from all corners of the island. "You are trespassing on private property," his voice booms. "Fortunately, I am generous of spirit and bear you no malice. Approach the screen and state your business."

Concealed microphones enable the Claw to hear the heroes. The Claw listens impassively to whatever the heroes say, feigning ignorance if they ask about the missing SHIELD agents. The heroes may question the Claw if they like; his answers to some questions are provided below. Since the Claw knows the heroes can't prove any allegations against him, he relishes the opportunity to trick them with his lies.

What is this place? "This is Nop Yaan, owned by International Devotions. It is a religious retreat for followers of the Divine Dragon." (Not true.)

What's the Divine Dragon? "The holy word, the soul of the universe, the sacred spirit." (More baloney.)

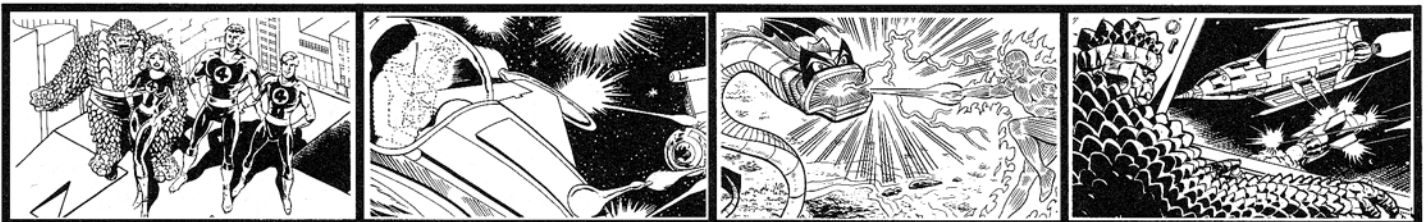
Who's Chu-tsu Tum? "You speak to him now." If the heroes call him Yellow Claw, the Claw says, "You use my old name, prior to my religious conversion." (A lie. There was never any religious conversion.)

What's the purpose of the idol? "A sacred artifact of the Divine Dragon." (More lies.)

What's wrong with the people here? Did you hypnotize them? "These are acolytes of the Dragon, enraptured and blissful, filled with the spirit of the Divine Dragon." (Absolutely untrue.)

What's the grid for? "A network of power lines to help Nop Yaan become self-sufficient." (A blatant falsehood.)

What do you know about the glowing crack? "The glowing crack is a symbol of the Divine Dragon's love of his followers." (More nonsense; in fact, the Yellow Claw doesn't know that the crack is a portal to the Negative



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Zone.)

Why don't you show yourself? "Alas, I have business elsewhere. I am broadcasting this message from my headquarters in mainland China." (Not true. The Claw is broadcasting from area 21 or the mini-jet or hydrofoil, if the heroes found the elevator to his underground HQ.)

When the heroes finish with their questions, or at an especially dramatic moment of the Judge's choice, proceed to the Into the Portal section.

Into the Portal

Yellow Claw stops in mid-sentence as the violet crack (area 15) suddenly flares, spraying brilliant purple beams high into the air like powerful searchlights. The Claw panics, fearing that the flaring energy might somehow damage his power grid or robotic dragon. "What is happening?" he shrieks at the heroes, abandoning his cool demeanor. "Is this your doing? I demand that you stop it, immediately!"

If the heroes deny responsibility, the Claw ignores them, assuming they're lying. Beginning with the first round following the Claw's accusations, the heroes are attacked as described below. The Judge is free to have these attacks occur sooner or later if he wishes.

Round 1. The peasants on the laser tower begin to fire the laser cannon once per round at random heroes within range. They continue to fire until the cannon is disabled or all the heroes have left the island. (The peasants firing the cannon will do so regardless of whether the idol in area 12 has been disabled.)

Round 2. All intact flying robotic snakes soar from their phony trees (area 3) and attack the heroes. Airborne heroes are the snakes' preferred targets. The snakes attack with electric bolts; they will also use their tails to swat any victims within reach.

Round 3. The light from the crack begins to subside, indicating that the portal is about to become inactive again.

Round 4. If the heroes have destroyed the id paralyzer (12), the peasants do not attack them; instead, they scatter in random directions. If the id paralyzer is still functional, the peasants begin to swarm at the heroes,

waving clubs, spears, and other simple weapons. Assume that all heroes on the ground are subject to peasant attacks; the peasants concentrate on heroes not under attack by the robotic snakes or the laser cannon. For convenience, assume that a hero actively defending himself against the peasants won't suffer any damage from them. Otherwise, make a roll on the Typical column; a Green result means the peasant swarm inflicts 5 points of damage, a Yellow results means 10 points, and a Red result means 15 points.

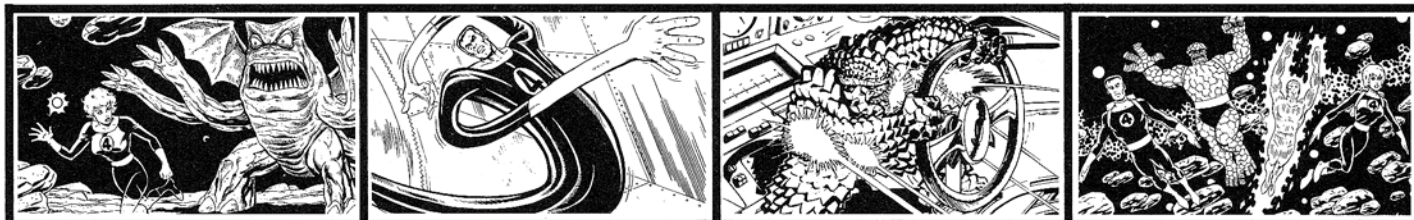
Round 5. If the heroes haven't yet figured out that this is an opportune time to enter the Negative Zone, Fury suddenly barks at them on their communicators. "What's goin' on down there! Our readings are going nuts, just like when Bachman and Petersen disappeared!"

AFTERMATH: The attacks continue until all of the heroes have entered the portal; fearing a trap, neither the Claw nor his minions will follow. When all of the heroes have entered, proceed to **Chapter Two**.

TROUBLESHOOTING: If the heroes insist that Taylor joins them on the island, Taylor informs them that he has direct orders from Fury to remain with the sub. Under no conditions will he violate these orders and join the heroes.

KARMA:

Unnecessarily attract attention to themselves while investigating the island:	-10
Each robotic snake disabled:	+20
Disable the id paralyzer:	+10
Disable the robotic dragon:	+20
Enter the Negative Zone before Fury urges them to do so:	+10





CHAPTER TWO: OMINOUS REALM

OVERVIEW: In this chapter, the heroes explore the Negative Zone to continue their search for the missing SHIELD operatives. Use the two Negative Zone maps (Maps 2 and 3) for reference.

During this chapter, the heroes should:

- Battle Quasimodo (a minion of Annihilus), who is guarding the induction transmitters (encounters areas 7 and 16) that keep Annihilus' stronghold hidden.
- Reveal Annihilus' hidden stronghold by destroying the induction transmitters (7 and 16), the beam reflectors (6 and 15), or the transducer tube (10).
- Rescue Volstagg (22).

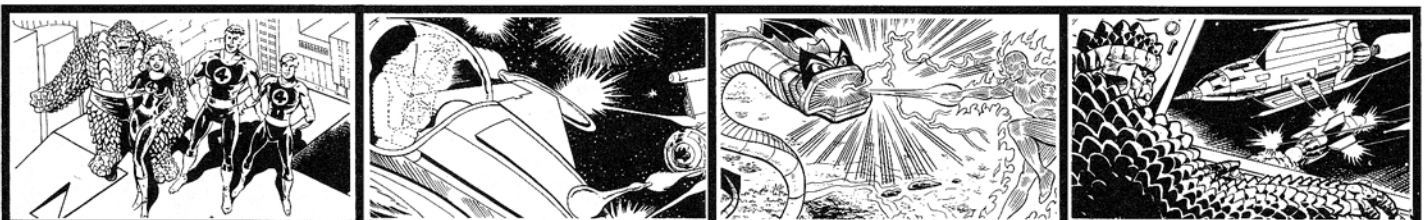
The heroes begin this chapter with the Light Show section below.

About the Negative Zone

The Negative Zone is a universe comprised of antimatter. Contact between matter and antimatter normally results

in a powerful explosion, but fortunately for interdimensional travelers, a buffer region called the Distortion Area allows safe passage between Earth and the Negative Zone. Matter from Earth en route to the Negative Zone first passes through the Distortion Zone where it is converted to antimatter. Antimatter traveling from the Negative Zone to Earth is likewise changed to positive matter. These changes are automatic. Characters and objects surrounded by a force field, however, are not converted.

In the past, heroes entering the Negative Zone have immediately found themselves in orbit around Negative Earth in a dangerous area of exploding debris called the Zone of Antimatter. However, in this adventure the portal from Nop Yaan delivers the heroes to a region of the Negative Zone far from Negative Earth. Though the heroes will still have plenty of problems, the Zone of Antimatter and Negative Earth won't be among them. In the sections of the Negative Zone described in this chapter, the heroes find themselves in a breathable, gravity-free void. The heroes can use their antigravity harnesses to move through the void. Heroes with the ability to fly can do so in the Negative Zone as they would on Earth.





JUDGE'S NOTES

Maps and Encounters

Map 2 and Map 3 show two different sections of the Negative Zone, thousands of miles apart. The sections are linked by a permanent portal (encounter area 10). Heroes, NPCs, and inanimate objects may freely and instantly travel between these sections of the Zone by entering this portal. As the heroes pass in and out of the portal, the Judge should move between the maps as necessary. Map 2 shows encounters 1-16. Map 3 features encounters 17-23.

Various-sized chunks of floating debris are shown on the map, but have no encounter numbers. These chunks are made of Excellent strength material and have no special properties.

Impaired Vision

The regions of the Negative Zone shown on Maps 2 and 3 are dark and murky. The darkness is considered to be Typical Intensity for FEAT rolls. Maximum normal sight range is 5 areas; weapons and Powers may not be fired beyond this range. Firing occurs normally within a range of 1 area. Firing within a range of 2-5 areas is done at -1CS. Melee combat occurs normally. Denizens of the Negative Zone suffer no combat penalties due to darkness.

Glowing objects (indicated as such on the maps) can be seen from anywhere on the maps they occupy.

Distances

For ease of play, all encounters on the maps are shown on the same plane. Judges uncomfortable with this simplification are free to place encounters above or below the plane to more accurately simulate three-dimensional space, adjusting the distances accordingly.

Though compass directions won't have much meaning to the heroes, they're provided on the maps for the convenience of the Judge.

Using the Wave Analyzer

Cautious heroes may wish to use the wave analyzer to examine various Zone phenomena from a distance. Each encounter includes the results of such a reading (abbreviated "WA Reading").

The information to the left of the slash gives the basic results of the reading; similarities to energies present in other encounter areas is given in parentheses. (Of course, the heroes won't know this unless they've been in the indicated encounter areas.) To the right of the slash is the additional information available to a hero making a Yellow Reason FEAT roll. If there is no WA Reading for an encounter, it means there is no significant or unusual energy to analyze.

Incentive

If the heroes drag their feet, forget their goal, or lose momentum for any other reason, point out that the red lights on the bio-locator are flickering and beginning to dim, indicating that the lives of Bachman and Petersen may be slipping away. Time is of the essence!

Getting Stuck

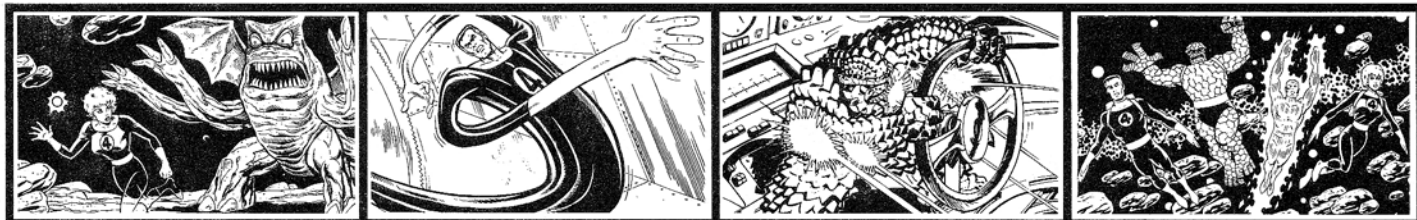
If the heroes are floundering and have no idea what to do next, feel free to have the alien trader appear (encounter 13) any time when the heroes are exploring the Map 2 region. Likewise, you can run the Winged Visitor encounter (21) any time when the heroes are exploring Map 3.

LIGHT SHOW

No sooner do you step through the portal than a kaleidoscope of shifting colors and shapes surrounds you. A tingle ripples through your body as you pass through the prismatic turbulence, buffeted by a barrage of flashes and sparkles. An instant later, you emerge from the turbulence into the stillness of space, a black void stretching as far as the eye can see.

The heroes have just passed through the Distortion Area and are now at the arrival point indicated on Map 2.

The flaring light of the portal begins to recede shortly after the heroes enter the Zone. Within moments, the light has faded to a dim glow; the portal is no longer active. (As was the case when the SHIELD operatives disappeared, the portal opened temporarily because of an





accidental surge of energy from the area 10 transducer tube.)

A beam of bluish light, about 15 feet in diameter, glows near the portal. If the heroes use the wave analyzer, they determine it to be concentrated waves of radioactive energy (similar but not identical to the area 5 and 11 beams). A Yellow Reason FEAT roll indicates that the energy is unlike any normally found in Earth's universe.

This beam is intended to enlarge the portal and make it permanent and originates from the transducer tube (area 10). The beam is only a threat if a hero intentionally touches it; contact with the beam causes 100 points of damage.

So far, the beam has been ineffective at making the portal permanent. Therefore, if the heroes disable the transducer tube or otherwise negate the beam, there will be no noticeable effect on the portal.

Encounter Key—Map 2

Since the missing SHIELD operatives aren't in this region of the Negative Zone (they are in encounter area 23), the green lights of the bio-locator won't glow while the heroes are anywhere on Map 2. However, the red lights glow continuously, indicating that the operatives are alive somewhere in the Negative Zone.

1. Bizarre Assembly. Hundreds of alien creatures stalk these broad islands of gray rock. Most are human-sized, but many are much larger; all are vaguely insectoid in appearance. Some have long necks and multiple arms, others have barbed tails and sharp claws. If the heroes observe the area for a few minutes, they notice that new creatures occasionally swoop from the void to join their comrades on the islands. (This is a staging area for Annihilus' gathering minions; see the inner cover panel for their statistics. As soon as the Nop Yaan portal is widened and made permanent, Annihilus plans to order minions to invade Earth to search for the stolen Cosmic Control Rod.)

As long as the heroes keep their distance, the minions ignore them. However, if any hero comes within four areas of an island, two minions swoop to attack (they can fly eight areas per round). One of the minions is armed

with an energy pistol causing Remarkable damage at Excellent range. (The minions armed with such weapons have red skin, pink wings, and three bulging eyes; this information will be relevant to the heroes when they experience encounter 13.) The unarmed minion attacks once per round with its claws or barbed tail (inflicting 10 points of damage). Destroyed minions are immediately replaced by new minions from the nearest island.

The minions attempt to chase the heroes into the debris band (2); unlike the heroes, the minions suffer no movement penalty in the debris band. If the heroes elude the minions for ten rounds, or defeat a total of four, the surviving minions stop attacking and return to their island.

2. Debris Band. This is a thick band of floating chunks of rock-like matter. The chunks pose no threat to the heroes, but maneuvering through the chunks requires the heroes to either move at half their normal speed, or make an Agility roll (one roll per area); a failed roll means the hero has collided with a chunk, suffering 5 points of damage.

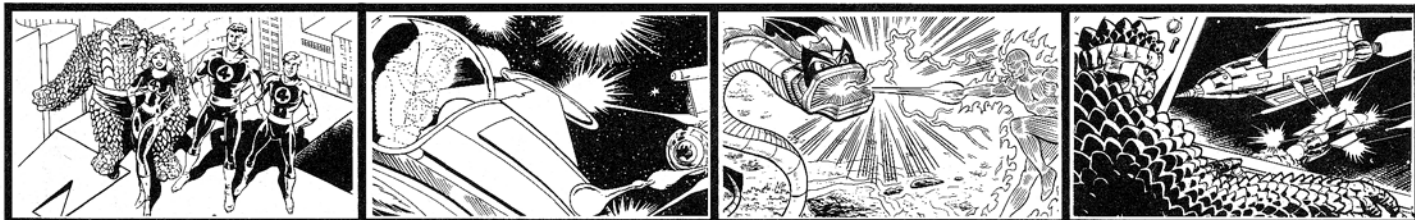
3. Organic Magnet. *WA Reading:* Powerful electromagnetic radiation (the radiation is similar to that in encounter 22)/magnetism seems to be attuned to organic matter.

This is a huge chunk of iron-like mineral (Amazing Strength material), emitting a soft blue glow. The chunk radiates a powerful magnetic force that attracts organic material.

Any hero coming within four areas of the chunk feels a slight tug drawing him in the chunk's direction. The tug is easily resisted. However, any hero coming within two areas of the chunk and whose Strength is less than Monstrous must make a Strength FEAT roll or be irresistibly drawn to the chunk. (Heroes with Monstrous Strength or better are automatically immune to the chunk's pull.)

A magnetized hero will be drawn to the chunk in three rounds. A non-magnetized companion who has resisted the chunk's pull (or a hero with Monstrous Strength or better) can drag a magnetized hero out of range by making a Strength FEAT roll.

If a magnetized hero isn't intercepted, he suffers 20 points of damage when he strikes the chunk; the hero is then stuck tight, held with Monstrous Strength magnet-



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ism. A stuck hero can't take any actions requiring movement. Inflicting 80 points of damage on the chunk causes a disruption in the magnetic field; its glow dims, and all stuck heroes are automatically released.

4. Crystal Mist. This immense cloud is made of tiny golden ice crystals. The cloud slows movement by 80 percent (for instance, a normal movement of ten areas per round is reduced to two areas per round). Normal vision is restricted to one area.

An immense bat made of solid ice lurks in the cloud.

Ice Bat

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
EX	RM	EX	EX	FE	PR	TY
20	30	20	20	2	4	6
Health = 90			Karma = 12			

KNOWN POWERS *Body Armor:* The creature's solid ice body provides Remarkable protection against physical attacks and Good protection against energy attacks. Heat and fire-based attacks weaken its armor by the rank number of the attack.

Flight: It can fly three areas per round (its movement is not slowed by the crystal mist).

Ice Entrapment: It sprays blasts from its mouth to entrap victims in solid ice of Remarkable Strength, up to one area distant.

Ice Missiles: It fires missiles of solid ice from its mouth at targets up to two areas distant. The missiles cause Remarkable damage.

The ice bat attacks within three rounds after the heroes enter the cloud (the bat sees normally within the cloud). It first attempts to entrap a hero in ice (to eat later), then attacks any other heroes in the cloud with its ice missiles. The bat will fight relentlessly but will not leave the cloud.

5. Energy Beam. *WA Reading:* Concentrated waves of radioactive energy. The energy is identical to that in encounter area 11 (and contributes to the make up of the beams in encounter area 18 and in the Light Show section at the beginning of the chapter) this energy is unlike any normally found in Earth's universe. This is a concentrated beam of radioactive energy, originating from the

induction transmitter (encounter area 7), bouncing off the beam reflector (encounter area 6), and ending at the transducer tube (area 10). The 5a section of the beam appears as a 15-foot-diameter column of brilliant white light; the 5b section is a 10-foot diameter column. The beam is easy to avoid and poses no threat unless a hero is foolish enough to touch it; the 5a section of the beam causes 75 points of energy damage, while the 5b section causes 100 points of damage.

6. Beam Reflector. This is a huge curved metallic slab, its surface as shiny as a mirror. An energy beam (5) bounces off the reflector, where it is amplified and focused. The beam is then reflected to the encounter 10 transducer tube. (See encounter 5 for the risks of touching the beam.)

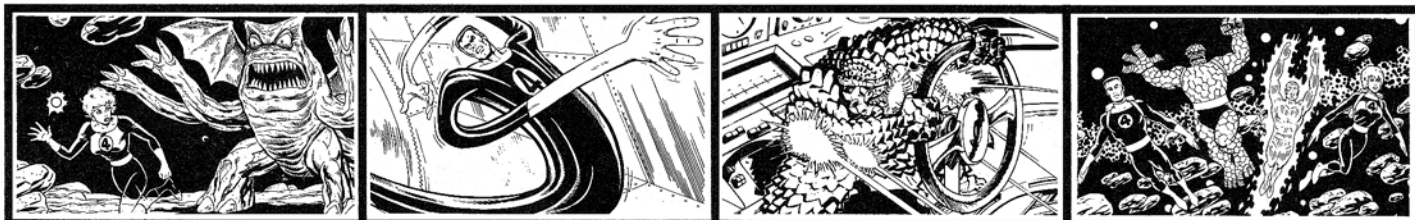
An invisible force field of Unearthly intensity protects the reflector, but allows passage of the energy beam. The reflector is made of Monstrous Strength material; 100 point of damage destroys it.

In the unlikely event that the heroes find a way to destroy the reflector, the energy beam (5) will be projected straight "north," no longer striking the transducer tube. (If the beam no longer strikes the transducer tube, Annihilus' stronghold may also become visible; see encounter 23).

7. Transmission Base. *WA Reading:* Two types of energy are evident here: high frequency waves similar to radio waves and low-intensity radioactivity (identical to that in encounter area 16) the high frequency waves are apparently being broadcast for miles in every direction; the radioactivity is confined to the immediate area.

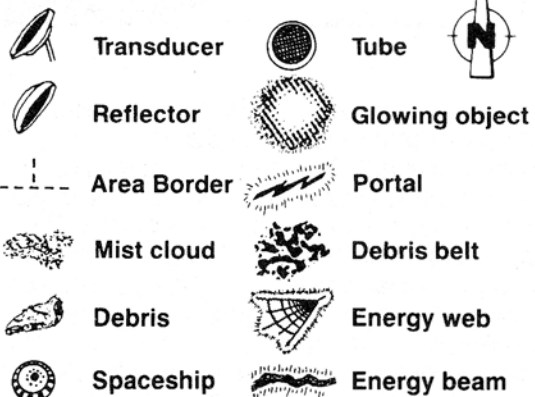
This is one of two planetoids containing Annihilus' induction transmitters. Under orders from Annihilus, Quasimodo guards the transmitters. He is also responsible for broadcasting signals to summon minions to the staging area (encounter area 1).

Features. The planetoid is bowl-shaped, made of Amazing Strength material similar to iron. A lake of radioactive mud fills the bowl. Though the radioactivity is only Poor intensity, the mud itself is red-hot, inflicting 20 points of damage per round on any unprotected creature immersed in it. Additionally, any character who comes in contact with the mud, even for a single round, must make a Yellow Endurance FEAT roll; failure means the

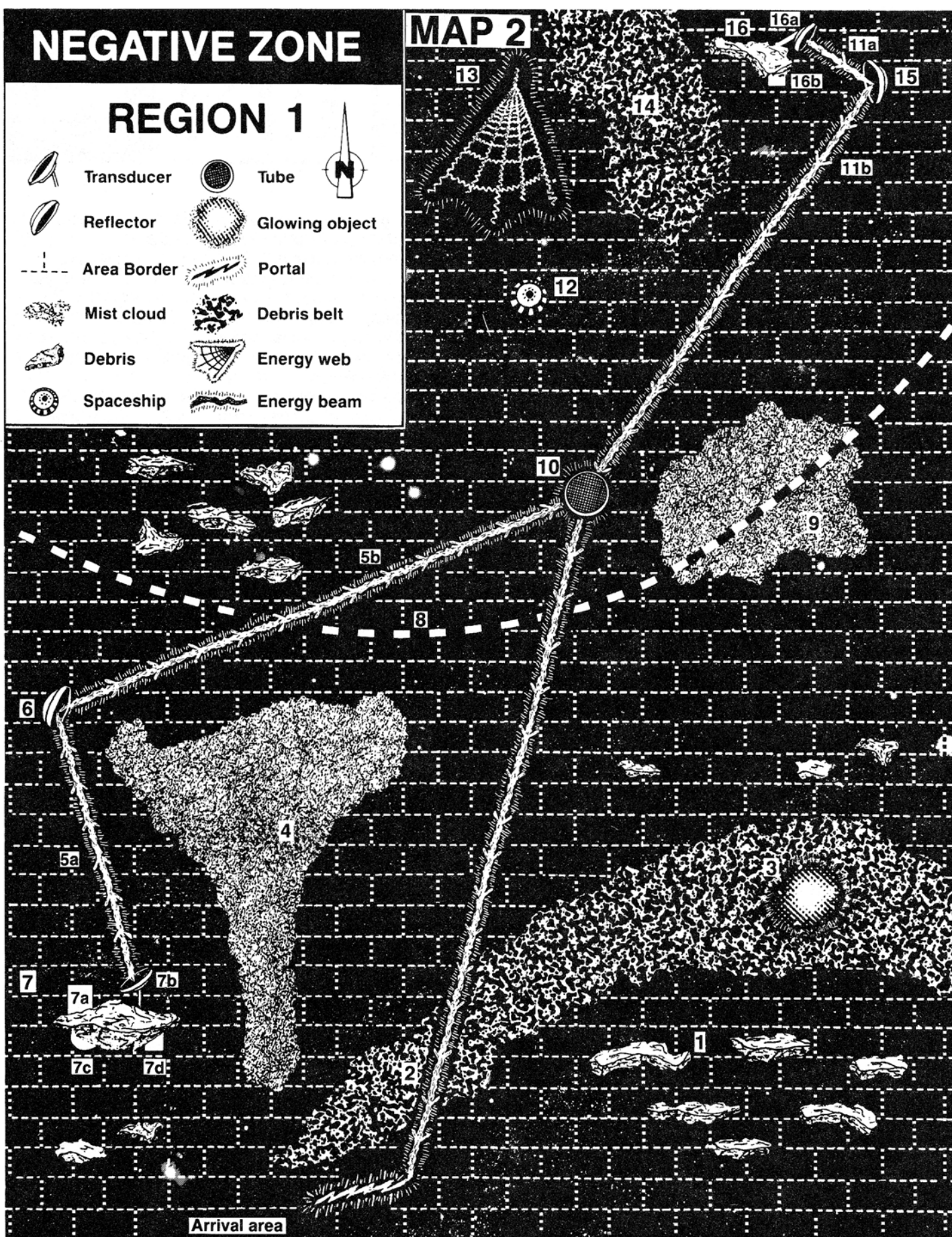


NEGATIVE ZONE

REGION 1



MAP 2














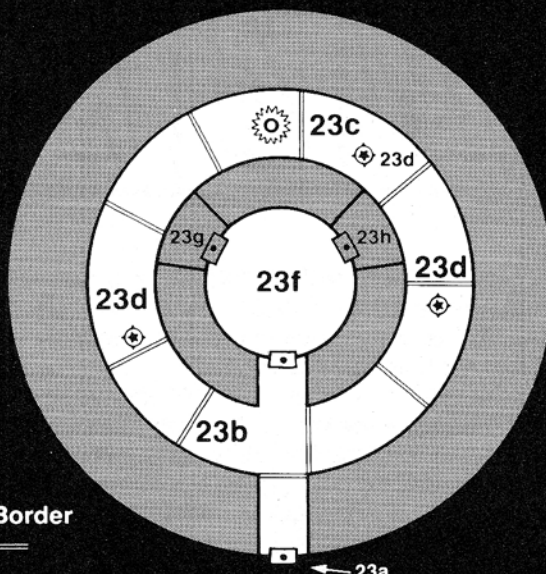
NEGATIVE ZONE

REGION 2

MAP 3

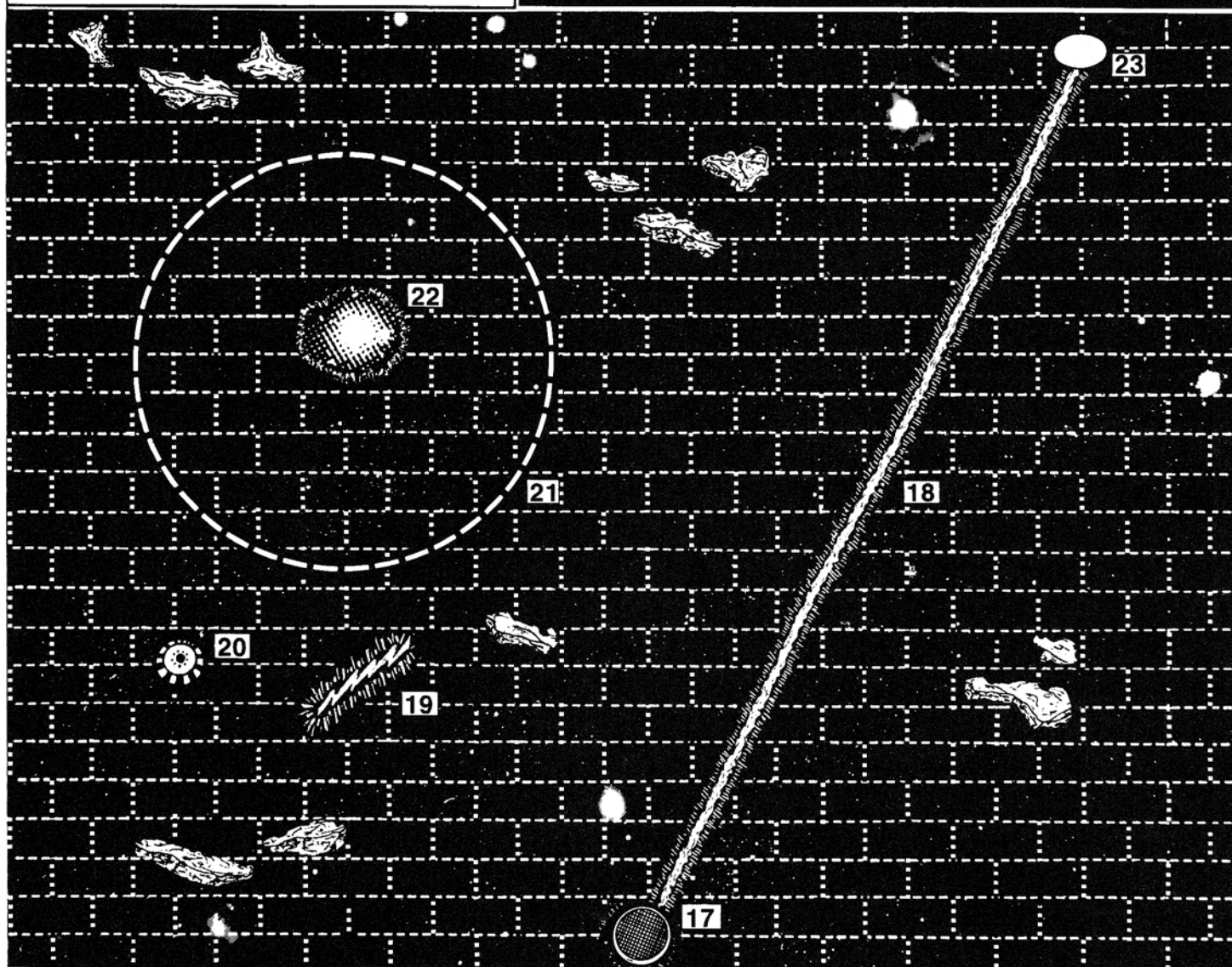


-  Nozzle
-  Gyrosaw
-  Spacecraft
-  Tube
-  Debris
-  Area Border
-  Portal
-  Locked door
-  Glowing object
-  Invisible stronghold
-  Energy beam



Area Border

Detail Map of Encounter 23



MARVEL

hero becomes sick, losing one rank of Endurance (and the corresponding amount of Health) for a week.

Centered in the lake is a massive cube-shaped computer complex (7a). At the top of the cube is a glass dome, displaying the visage of Quasimodo. A long antenna rises from each corner of the cube. These antennae broadcast signals throughout the Negative Zone, summoning minions to the staging area (1). The computer complex is made of Amazing strength material.

Secured on the stony shore is the induction transmitter (7b), a large metallic device resembling a radar dish. The device absorbs radioactive energy from the planetoid, then transforms it into an energy beam (5a) that is bounced off a reflector (6) and sent to the transducer tube (10). An invisible force field of Unearthly intensity protects the transmitter, but allows passage of the energy beam. The transmitter itself is made of Monstrous Strength material; 100 points of damage destroys it.

Attached to the bottom of the planetoid is a second glass dome (7c). Quasimodo can freely move his consciousness between this dome and the dome on top of the computer complex, but can't be in both domes at the same time.

Near the glass dome at the bottom of the planetoid is an assembly of electronic devices contained in a large cube-shaped structure (7d). Quasimodo mentally controls this assembly, which operates an elevator system that raises and lowers the computer complex (7a) into the mud lake. The cube also contains one of Quasimodo's humanoid-shaped bodies, kept here in case he needs to make an emergency escape.

Approach. If the heroes come within two areas of the planetoid, or if they attack the planetoid from a distance, the glass dome on top of the computer complex (7a) suddenly lights up, filling with the twisted face of Quasimodo. "Stay away!" he screeches at them. "Get out of here, or I'll kill you all!" Quasimodo will not negotiate with the heroes, repeatedly blasting them with his eye beam once per round (Incredible damage). The beam can reach any heroes within three areas in any direction except directly beneath the planetoid; if the heroes hide beneath the planetoid, Quasimodo activates the lower dome (7c), which can attack heroes in any direction, except those directly above the planetoid. Quasimodo

continues his eye beam attacks, switching between the domes as necessary.

One round after his first attack, Quasimodo activates the elevator system and the computer complex begins to sink into the mud lake; this process takes three rounds to complete. If the PCs manage to inflict 150 points of damage on the computer complex before it completely descends into the lake, the complex stops moving and the induction transmitter ceases functioning (proceed to the Showdown With Quasimodo section). Otherwise, at the end of three rounds, the computer complex will be safely submerged (Quasimodo will resume summoning minions to the staging area after the heroes leave).

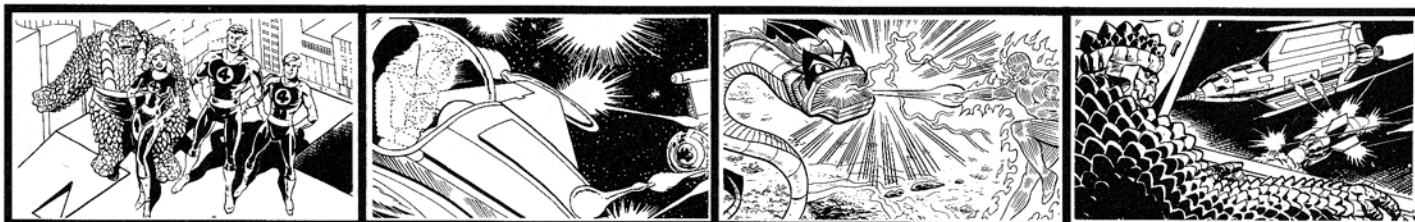
Disabling the Transmitter. There are three ways to disable the induction transmitter:

1. Attack it directly (difficult, considering the force field).
2. Attack the computer complex and inflict 150 points of damage, which will be especially difficult if the complex is submerged. It is surrounded by 100 feet of radioactive mud on all sides, which acts as Amazing body armor.
3. Attack the control assembly on the bottom of the planetoid (7d). Even if the computer complex is submerged, Quasimodo defends the electronic circle by blasting eye beams from the lower glass dome (7c). The heroes can disable this dome by inflicting 40 points of damage against Amazing Strength material (forcing Quasimodo's consciousness to remain in the 7a dome). Inflicting 60 points of damage against the Amazing Strength material of the control assembly instantly disables the induction transmitter. This causes the energy beam (5) to completely disappear and the computer complex (7a) to rise from the lake. The complex completely resurfaces in three rounds.

If the heroes inflict an additional 50 points of damage against the control assembly, they will also disable Quasimodo's hidden humanoid body.

If the heroes disable the induction transmitter, Quasimodo panics. What happens next depends whether the heroes have experienced encounter 16.

If the Heroes Haven't Experienced Encounter 16. Qua-



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simodo abandons his post, instantly projecting his consciousness to his body at the transmission base (16).

If the heroes have experienced Encounter 16. If his humanoid body is available, he transfers his consciousness into it and flies away as fast as he can. If the heroes don't catch him (or don't notice him), he flees to a distant region of the Negative Zone and will no longer be a factor in this adventure.

If the heroes intercept the fleeing Quasimodo—or if his humanoid body wasn't available and he's confined to the computer complex—he attacks with his eye beam until it's clear he's on the verge of defeat. He begs for mercy, whining about how Annihilus took advantage of him. At the slightest coercion, Quasimodo tells what he knows:

- He's working for Annihilus, who's desperate to recover his stolen Cosmic Control Rod. (Quasimodo doesn't know who stole it.)
- Annihilus is planning an invasion of Earth to search for the Rod.
- The induction transmitters are generating energy beams that in some way protect Annihilus from attack.
- Annihilus' stronghold is thousands of miles away. (Quasimodo doesn't know exactly where.)

What the heroes do with the defeated Quasimodo is up to them. In any case, he'll no longer be a threat in this adventure.

8. Distress Signal When the heroes enter the region bordered by the dotted line, they hear a steady beeping in their heads; a hero making a Reason FEAT roll determines that the sound may be a distress signal of some kind. The beeping continues as long as the heroes remain in this region, growing louder as they approach encounter area 12.

9. Crystal Mist This is identical to area 4, except that it contains no ice bat. If the heroes travel through this area, they will hear insectoid chirps and feel small flying creatures brush against them, but nothing in the mist poses any danger.

10. Transducer Tube. *WA Reading:* Powerful waves of unidentifiable energy. The energy is similar to that in the

violet crack in Nop Yaan (**Chapter One**, encounter 15)./ The energy is of a type associated with interdimensional portals.

This is a gigantic metal tube that surrounds a pool of violet light; the violet light is a portal leading to a distant region of the Negative Zone. Assuming the beam reflectors (6 and 15) and the induction transmitters (7 and 16) are functional, two energy beams (5 and 11) enter opposite ends of the transducer tube. The energy beams bounce inside the inner reflective surfaces of the tube, creating a shifting web of light. The beams do not leave the tube, however, their energy being harnessed to form the beams in (18) and in the Light Show section at the beginning of the chapter.

A hero attempting to use the portal must avoid being struck by the bouncing energy beams inside the tube, which requires a successful Agility FEAT roll. If only one of the two energy beams (either 5 or 11) is bouncing inside the tube, then the hero isn't as likely to be struck; the Agility FEAT roll is made with a +4CS. A hero failing his FEAT roll suffers 100 points of damage.

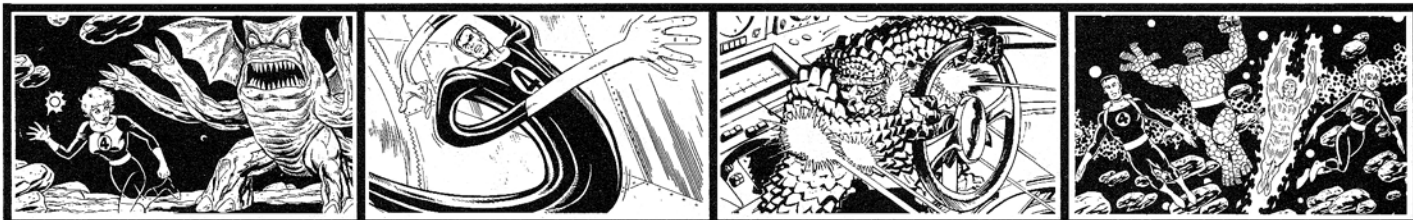
If neither energy beam is active, heroes can use the portal at no risk; the transducer tube contains only violet light.

When a hero uses the portal, go immediately to encounter area 17 on Map 3. Even if the hero has been struck by a beam (by failing his Agility FEAT roll), he is still transported.

The heroes can travel freely between the two regions of the Negative Zone by using this portal. However, if one or both energy beams (5 and 11) are present, an Agility FEAT roll is required for each trip.

Though it won't be easy, the heroes can try to destroy the transducer tube. The tube is made of Monstrous Strength material and an invisible force field of Unearthly intensity protects it; 300 points of damage destroys the transducer. If destroyed, the violet light stays in place, and the portal is still functional. However, if one or both of the energy beams were present, they now pass harmlessly by the portal (for the purposes of encounter 23, consider the beams to be neutralized).

11. Energy Beam. *WA Reading.* Concentrated waves of radioactive energy identical in every respect to that in encounter area 5 (also contributing to the make up of the





encounter area 18/Light Show beams this energy is unlike any normally found in Earth's universe.

This is a concentrated beam of radioactive energy originating from an induction transmitter (16), bouncing off a beam reflector (15), and ending at the transducer tube (10). The appearance and damage potential of the 11a and 11b sections are the same as those of the 5a and 5b sections, respectively).

12. Derelict Craft. A small spherical craft, riddled with holes, hovers motionless in space. The beeps in the heroes' heads (see encounter 8) grow louder as the heroes approach the craft.

Within three rounds after the heroes enter this area, a blue mist oozes from the holes in the craft. The mist solidifies to form two man-sized insectoid creatures with long stingers and metallic wings. The creatures buzz towards the heroes, stingers erect.

Vapor Wasp

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
EX	GD	GD	EX	FE	PR	FE
20	10	10	20	2	4	2
Health = 60			Karma = 8			

KNOWN POWERS *Body Armor:* Metal plates cover the creature's body, providing Excellent protection against physical and energy attacks.

Flight: It can fly ten areas per round.

Sting: It can sting victims in the same area, causing 10 points of damage.

Vapor Form: It can turn to blue vapor at will, giving it Unearthly protection against physical and energy attacks. It can fly but cannot attack in this form.

The vapor wasps intend to kill the heroes for invading their territory by stinging them to death. (The wasps attacked the spacecraft and killed its occupants for the same reason.)

The wasps attack viciously, turning to vapor when under especially intense assaults from the heroes. Since the wasps can't sting when in vapor form, they'll stay solid as much of the time as possible. In vapor form, the wasps are particularly vulnerable to wind and air control attacks; a single blast from a Compressed Air Unit (or its

equivalent) scatters the essence of a wasp's vapor form, defeating it.

If the heroes examine the spacecraft, they discover two dead alien creatures. The creatures are shaped like basketballs, have two eyes centered in their bodies, and thin arms and legs. Red fur covers their skin, which is punctured with holes (inflicted by the vapor wasps). There is nothing of interest on the ship; the ship itself is inoperable. (The aliens were scouts for the alien trader in encounter 13.)

13. Radiant Web. *WA Reading:* Bands of powerful electromagnetic energy "frozen" in place by some unknown means/energy is unlike any normally found in Earth's universe.

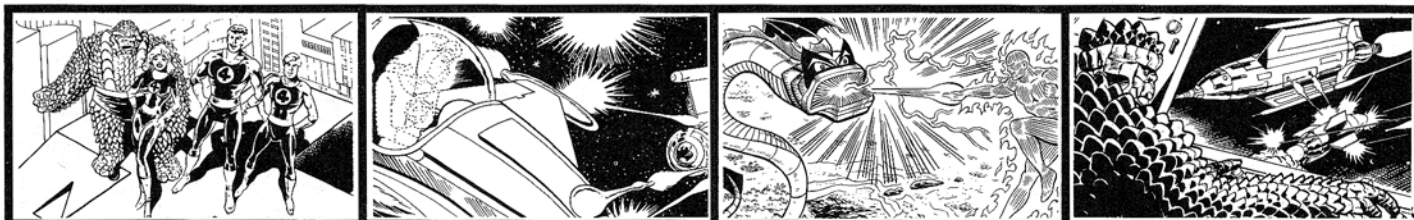
This resembles a gigantic spider web made of strands of greenish energy (Incredible Strength). Man-sized worms made of stone, gauzy-skinned blobs of protoplasm, and an assortment of other bizarre creatures are trapped in the web, all of them dead. Any hero touching the web automatically becomes stuck tight.

Two rounds after the heroes approach the web (or immediately after a hero becomes stuck to the web), an egg-shaped space shuttle (Excellent Control, Remarkable Speed, Incredible Protection, and equipped for Dimension Travel at a Monstrous level) suddenly materializes overhead. A metallic rope lowers from the craft, and an alien creature scuttles down. The creature is shaped like a basketball, with thin arms and legs, two eyes centered in its body, and red fur covering its skin; it is identical to the corpses found on the ship in area 12. If any heroes are stuck to the web, the creature touches a button on its belt, and the heroes are instantly released.

The creature introduces itself as Torr, "an intergalactic entrepreneur from the Protux Galaxy." He eyes the heroes with interest.

Alien Trader (Torr)

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
TY	PR	TY	RM	RM	TY	TY
6	4	6	30	30	6	6
Health = 46			Karma = 42			





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Torr is amiable and shrewd, a skilled businessman who loves to bargain. He carries a hand-blaster capable of inflicting damage at a range of three areas. He rubbery hide is the equivalent of Excellent body armor.

Speaking in a high-pitched friendly voice, Torr apologizes for the web, explaining that he was trapping Negative Zone denizens to trade in his home galaxy. Trapping has been poor, he says, and he hasn't yet caught anything of interest. A few hours ago, Torr sent two scouts to search for specimens, but the scouts haven't yet returned. (The scouts were killed by vapor wasps; see encounter 12.) If the heroes mention that they found the scouts' bodies, Torr shrugs. "Too bad. Scouts are expensive."

Torr will attempt to barter for any of the heroes' possessions that he can see; he's especially fascinated by boots, gloves, and other articles of clothing. For trade, he offers small black plastic pyramids, the currency of the Protux Galaxy, which he assures them can be exchanged for valuable items in Protux. For all practical purposes, the pyramid currency is worthless to the heroes. When the heroes tire of the bartering, Torr offers them another deal. Specifically, he is interested one of the red-skinned, pink-winged, three-eyed creatures that he has seen flitting about the Zone (the heroes may have met such creatures in encounter 1). "What would you take to retrieve such a creature for me?" Whatever the heroes ask for, Torr says they want too much. However, if the heroes mention Annihilus, Torr says he has some interesting information about Annihilus which he'll give them in exchange for the creature. Torr won't give them any weapons, nor does he know where any of the creatures live. Further, the heroes must return with the creature within two hours. (At the Judge's discretion, Torr may exchange his information for something else instead of the creature; for instance, he may be interested in a piece of a the area 6 beam reflector, or a chunk of the area 3 organic magnet.) If the heroes decline the deal, Torr shrugs and disappears along with his spacecraft; the encounter is over. Likewise, if the heroes attack him at any point, Torr vanishes. If they agree, they must return with a captured creature matching Torr's description within two hours (if they're late, Torr's gone). The heroes can find such creatures in encounter area 1.

If the heroes present Torr with the creature, Torr tells them the following:

- Two induction transmitters generate energy beams to keep Annihilus' stronghold hidden. Torr tells them the general location of the transmitters.
- Annihilus has six prisoners in his stronghold. "They may be of interest to you." Torr mentions no names and offers no descriptions of the prisoners.

If the heroes complain that the information is vague, Torr says that he only promised that the information was "interesting." Torr, the captured creature, and the space shuttle then disappear.

14. Debris Band. This is identical to the encounter 2 debris band.

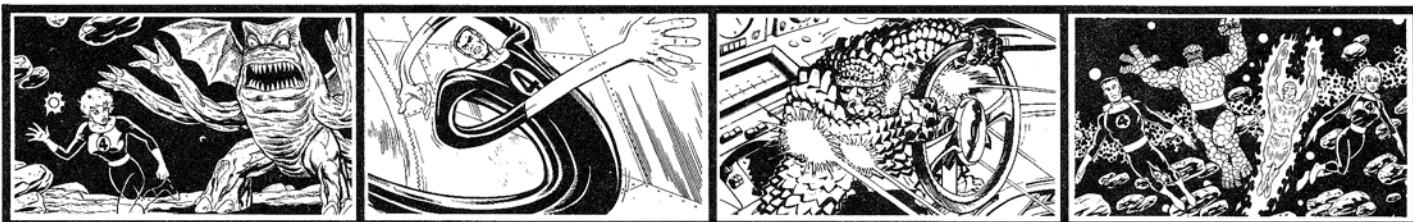
15. Beam Reflector. This curved metallic slab is identical to the encounter area 6 reflector. It bounces the energy beam (11) to the transducer tube (10).

16. Transmission Base. *WA Reading:* Two types of energy are evident here: low-intensity radioactivity and massive concentrations of electromagnetic energy. The radioactivity is similar to that in encounter area 7/wave patterns indicate that the electromagnetic energy may represent some type of life form.

This is one of two planetoids containing Annihilus' induction transmitters. Quasimodo guards this base, as well as the encounter area 7 base, projecting his consciousness between them as necessary. On this base, Quasimodo's consciousness occupies a humanoid body (described in his entry in the inner panel cover).

Features. The surface of this hollow spherical planetoid is made of Amazing Strength material similar to iron; the surface is about 1000 feet thick. Radioactive mud, similar to the mud on the encounter 7 planetoid, fills the core of the planetoid (see encounter 7 for the effects of making contact with the mud). A sizzling, crackling "cage" of electricity surrounds the entire planetoid, about 100 feet from the surface.

Centered on the top of the planetoid, firmly secured in the surface, is the induction transmitter (16a). This is a large metallic device resembling a radar dish that absorbs radioactive energy from the planetoid's interior and transforms it into an energy beam (11) that is bounced off





a reflector (15) and sent to the transducer tube (10). Like the encounter 7 transmitter, an invisible force field of Unearthly intensity protects it, but allows passage of the energy beam. The transmitter itself is made of Monstrous Strength material; 100 points of damage destroys it.

Attached to the bottom of the planetoid is an assembly of electronic devices contained inside a metallic cube (16b). This is the planetoid's control assembly, similar to the assembly on the encounter 7 planetoid, except that this one has no elevator or computer controls since the planetoid lacks these features. However, like the encounter 7 cube, this cube also contains a spare humanoid body for Quasimodo.

The electrical cage is actually made of thousands of small featureless starfish-like creatures composed of electrical energy. The creatures link arms to form the cage; the transmitter's energy beam passes harmlessly through an opening in the cage.

The starfish cage more closely resembles an energy field than a living creature. The cage has no physical form and hence has Unearthly protection against physical and kinetic attacks. Additionally, it has Monstrous protection against energy attacks and Unearthly protection against all types of mental attacks. Though the starfish are incapable of making attacks, they generate a continuous electrical field that causes 30 points of electrical damage to anyone coming within one area; anyone touching the starfish automatically suffers 50 points of electrical damage. Their vulnerabilities are discussed in the Assaulting the Planetoid section below.

Quasimodo remains on the surface of the planetoid near the induction transmitter.

Assaulting the Planetoid

As they approach the planetoid, the heroes see the crackling energy cage, but there is no obvious indication that the cage is made of thousands of individual creatures. The spaces between the "bars" of the cage allow the heroes to see the induction transmitter on the surface of the planetoid and Quasimodo lurking beside it. If the heroes have made no efforts to conceal themselves, Quasimodo spots them and demands that they leave immediately. (Quasimodo won't fire eye beams at the

heroes, for fear of harming the starfish.)

If the heroes attempt to attack Quasimodo from outside the starfish cage, Quasimodo retreats into a crack in the planetoid, safely hidden beneath the surface.

If the heroes attempt to communicate with Quasimodo, he responds with vague threats, insisting that they leave at once. Under no circumstance will Quasimodo negotiate with the heroes.

There are two general strategies for defeating Quasimodo:

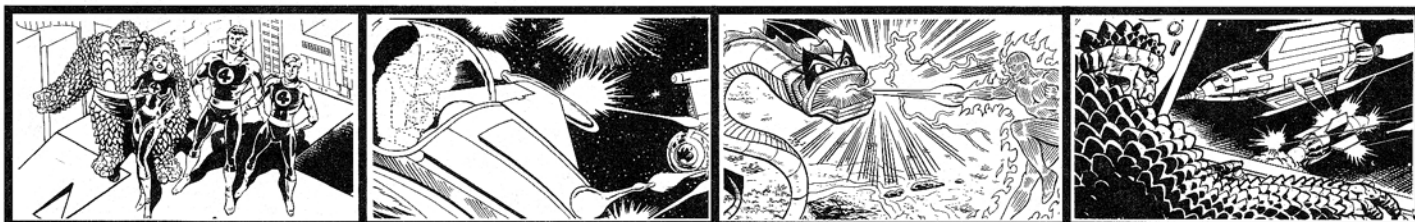
1. If the heroes teleport or otherwise get through the starfish cage to the planetoid's surface, they can engage Quasimodo in combat. This is a risky strategy; not only will Quasimodo repeatedly blast them with eye beams, but heroes on the planetoid suffer an automatic 30 points of electrical damage per round from proximity to the starfish cage (Quasimodo is immune to the starfish). If the heroes discover the control assembly on the bottom of the planetoid, Quasimodo makes a special effort to protect it.

2. The heroes can attempt to disperse the starfish cage by inflicting "disruptions" upon it. Each disruption causes the cage to ripple and emit a shower of harmless sparks.

The heroes can cause disruptions to the cage as follows:

- Each 50 points of damage inflicted on the starfish cage counts as one disruption.
- Any other type of attack that in the Judge's opinion affects the cage adversely but doesn't directly inflict damage counts as one disruption. (for instance, if a magic-wielding hero transforms a section of the cage from electricity to fire).
- The starfish have an extreme aversion to water. Every round the cage is doused with water—an amount equivalent to one blast from a Compressed Water Unit—counts as two disruptions. Heroes attempting to hit the cage with the Water Unit do so with a +4CS due to the cage's immense size and immobility.

When the cage has suffered a total of six disruptions, all of the starfish release each other's arms and soar as a



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swarm in a random direction. If the starfish soar away, Quasimodo panics. Likewise, he panics if he is on the verge of defeat (for instance, if the heroes have teleported to the surface or otherwise bypassed the starfish cage to engage Quasimodo in combat).

What happens next depends whether the heroes have experienced encounter 7.

If the Heroes Haven't Experienced Encounter 7: Quasimodo abandons his post, instantly projecting his consciousness to the computer complex at the encounter 7 transmission base.

If the Heroes Have Experienced Encounter 7: If his spare humanoid body is available (that is, if the heroes haven't yet destroyed the control assembly where the body is hidden), he transfers his consciousness into it and flies away as fast as he can. If the heroes don't catch him (or don't notice him), he flees to a distant region of the Negative Zone and will no longer be a factor in this adventure. If the heroes catch Quasimodo, they may coerce him to reveal the information described in encounter 7.

Disabling the Transmitter. The heroes can disable the transmitter by attacking it directly (difficult because of the force field), or by disabling the control assembly on the bottom of the planetoid. Inflicting 60 points of damage against the Amazing Strength material of the control assembly instantly disables the induction transmitter, causing the encounter 11 energy beam to permanently disappear. Inflicting an additional 50 points of damage against the control assembly disables Quasimodo's hidden body, assuming he hasn't yet fled in it.

Encounter Key—Map 3

This region of the Negative Zone is misty and gray, but is not as dense with debris as the Map 2 region. However, the heroes suffer the same vision restrictions as elsewhere in the Zone.

As soon as the heroes enter this region, the green lights of the bio-locator begins to glow. The closer the heroes get to encounter area 23, the brighter the glow.

17. Portal Guardian. *WA Reading:* Powerful waves of unidentifiable energy. The energy is similar to that in the violet crack in Nop Yaan (encounter 15, **Chapter One**)/

the energy is of a type associated with interdimensional portals.

This gigantic metal tube surrounding a pool of violet light is, in fact, the transducer tube from encounter 10 as viewed from this side of the portal. Heroes can move freely between the Map 2 and 3 regions of the Negative Zone by passing through the portal. Remember that each time the heroes use the portal, they risk being hit by the bouncing energy beams described in encounter 10.

Immediately after one or more heroes uses the portal to enter this region, a creature emerges from behind a nearby debris chunk and heads in their direction. The creature resembles an undulating blob of white plastic spheres with a single bulging black eyeball and a long horn-like snout.

Bubble Beast

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
EX	GD	EX	EX	TY	PR	TY
20	10	20	20	6	4	6
Health = 70				Karma = 16		

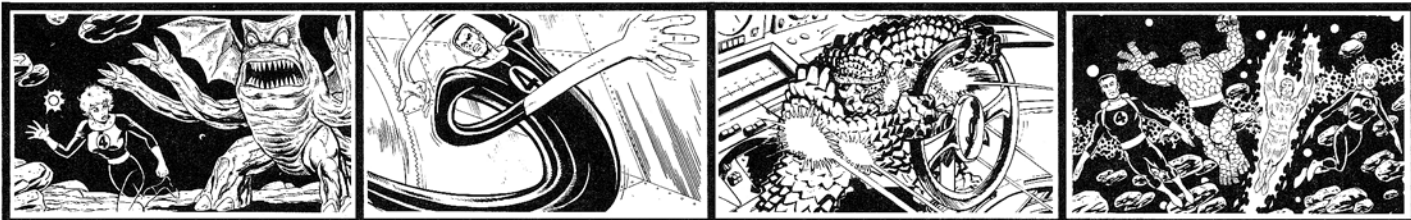
KNOWN POWERS

Body Armor: The creature has Monstrous body armor against physical attacks, and Amazing resistance to heat, cold, and energy attacks.

Flight: It can fly eight areas per round.

Sphere Projection: The creature can fire a transparent bubble once per round at a range of two areas with Remarkable accuracy. If the bubble hits, it enlarges and traps the victim inside, hardening into a tough plastic shell; all air trapped in the bubble is instantly negated (the beast eventually intends to feast on its suffocated victims). The plastic shell has protection equal to the bubble beast's body armor; 30 points of damage destroys the shell and frees the trapped victim.

Heroes have the option of battling the bubble beast or retreating through the portal (returning to encounter area 10). The bubble beast will not pursue victims through the portal. However, as soon as the heroes return, the bubble beast will attack again; it continues to attack until defeated.





The bubble beast attempts to entrap all of the heroes in bubble shells in order to suffocate them. Unless the hero uses a special breathing apparatus (such as his Compressed Air Unit), a trapped hero must make an Endurance FEAT roll at the end of every round to remain conscious. A hero with Unearthly or better Endurance won't become unconscious (and hence doesn't have to make Endurance FEAT rolls), and a hero with Monstrous Endurance can resist the vacuum inside the bubble for five rounds before needing to make an Endurance FEAT roll.

The bubble shells are tough, but they're not particularly elastic. Instead of destroying a bubble shell by inflicting damage on it, a trapped hero can shatter it by increasing the volume contained inside. A trapped hero with the Growth Power could shatter the bubble by expanding to approximately triple the size of a normal human. This also requires a Endurance FEAT check; if it fails, the hero suffers an amount of damage equivalent to the shell's current Health—each shell begins with 30 points—due to the stress of shattering the shell. Invisible Girl could use her force field to expand and shatter the bubble. A hero could also release all of the air in his Compressed Air Unit, automatically shattering the shell (no Endurance FEAT roll required).

18. Energy Beam *WA Reading:* Concentrated waves of radioactive energy. The energy is similar but not identical to the beams in encounter areas 5 and 11, containing wave elements of both those beams (much like the energy beam in the Light Show section at the beginning of the chapter)/the energy is unlike any normally found in Earth's universe.

This is a concentrated beam of radioactive energy, a combination of the energy beams (5 and 11) broadcast into this region of the Negative Zone via the transducer tube (10). The beam is projected in a straight line to Annihilus' stronghold (23). The beam is otherwise identical to the beam in encounter 5; if either beam 5 or 11 has been neutralized, beam 18 is about half as thick but is just as deadly. If both beams 5 and 11 have been neutralized, beam 18 doesn't exist.

19. Glowing Crack *WA Reading:* Powerful waves of unidentifiable energy (the energy is similar to that in the violet crack in Nop Yaan (encounter 15, **Chapter One**)/

the energy is of a type associated with interdimensional portals.

This is a jagged opening in the air, about 75 feet long and 30 feet long. The opening emits a faint purple glow. This is a portal linking the Negative Zone and Asgard—Volstagg used this portal to pursue the missing Asgardian youths (encounter 22.) The portal responds only to Odin's magic; it is useless to the heroes. (If one or more of the heroes is an Asgardian, assume that the portal is temporarily weakened and is non-functional).

20. Abandoned Ship *WA Reading:* Faint waves of unidentifiable energy/the energy is of a type associated with magic.

This is an empty vessel, resembling a small version of a Viking long ship. The vessel is made of solid gold and contains four sets of oars. The heroes can operate the ship by rowing at least one set of oars, but the ship has only Feeble Speed in the air (Typical Control, Amazing Body).

This is the magical vessel used by the Asgardian youths to run away from home (see encounter 22 for details).

21. Winged Visitor. When the heroes enter the region bordered by the dotted line, a magnificent winged stallion with a gleaming white coat soars towards them from behind a large chunk of debris.

Flying Stallion (Ashta)

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
GD	EX	RM	RM	FE	PR	PR
10	10	30	30	2	4	4
Health = 90				Karma = 10		

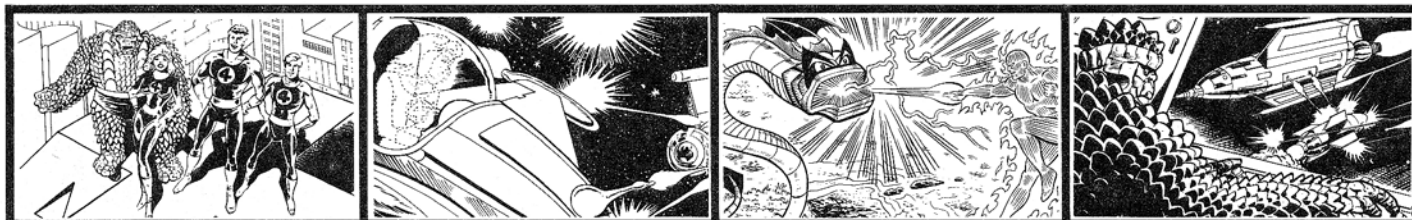
KNOWN POWERS

Body Armor: Ashta has Good Body Armor.

Flight: The magical horse can fly up to ten areas per round.

This is Ashta, the magical mount of Volstagg, abandoned when Volstagg was trapped by an organic magnet (see encounter 22).

Ashta takes no hostile actions, instead flying in broad



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circles around the heroes. Any hero with the Animal Empathy Power, or any hero making an Intuition FEAT roll, realizes that the horse wants the heroes to follow it. If the heroes follow Ashta, he leads them to encounter area 22. Otherwise, Ashta eventually gives up trying to attract their attention and flies off to encounter area 22 by himself.

22. Magnetized Warrior *WA Reading:* Powerful electromagnetic radiation. The radiation is similar to that in encounter 3/the magnetism seems to be attuned to organic matter.

This huge mineral chunk (Amazing Strength material) is similar to the encounter 3 organic magnet; the risks are the same as described in encounter 3.

When the heroes approach the chunk, read the following:

A humanoid figure of unbelievable girth is stuck tight to the iron-like chunk. The figure wears a magenta tunic, orange gloves, and orange boots. He has a thick orange beard and long orange mustache. His enormous stomach quivers like jelly as he struggles in vain for release. At some distance from the chunk, the magnificent winged stallion circles frantically.

The warrior is Volstagg (his statistics are in the appendix). The winged stallion is Ashta (see encounter 21). Heroes who have never met Volstagg recognize him as an Asgardian if they make an Intuition FEAT roll; heroes who have met Asgardians before automatically recognize him as an Asgard native.

If the heroes get close enough to the chunk for Volstagg to speak to them, he puffs himself up and announces, "Thou hast arrived in time to see the valiant Volstagg, lion of Asgard, renounce his foe and free himself as befits a warrior born!" Despite his boasts, Volstagg is stuck tight, unable to free himself.

If the heroes decline to help, assume that Volstagg is eventually freed when a meteorite collides with the chunk, disrupting its magnetic field. (At the Judge's discretion, Volstagg may reappear at the beginning of **Chapter Three**, at which time he may ally with the he-

roes if they can come up with a convincing reason why they didn't help him earlier. Alternately, the Judge may have Volstagg meet the heroes at the end of **Chapter Three** to take custody of the freed Asgardians from Annihilus' stronghold.)

If the heroes free Volstagg—most likely by inflicting 40 points of damage on the chunk to disrupt its magnetic field—he thanks them profusely, then introduces himself if they don't know who he is. Ashta soars to Volstagg's side. Volstagg strokes the horse's neck, then hoists his great bulk onto Ashta's back.

Open and affable, Volstagg speaks freely with the heroes, asking what brought them to "this forsaken domain." Volstagg knows nothing about Annihilus or his plans but listens raptly to anything the heroes care to share.

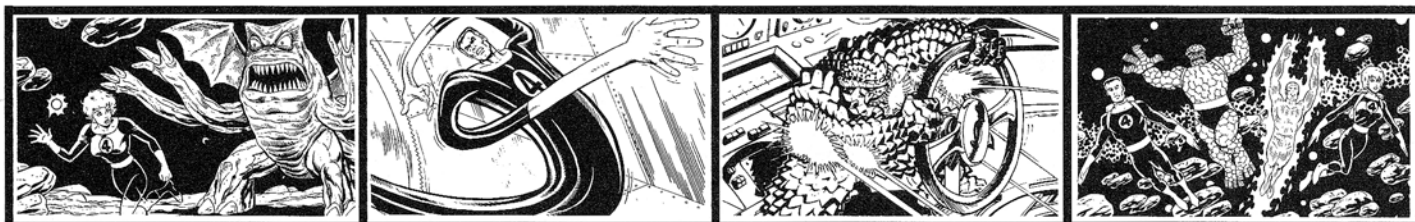
If asked what he's doing in the Negative Zone, Volstagg says that a few weeks ago, four youths fled from Asgard in a borrowed skyboat (which the heroes may have seen in encounter 20). "The youths are my children, off on a lark," he says. "Their actions were foolish but understandable. Volstagg, too, was young once." Volstagg volunteered to find the youths, eventually determining that they entered a portal linking Asgard with this universe (see encounter 19). "But no sooner had I arrived than I became trapped on that foul rock. Without thy aid, I might be trapped still."

If the heroes ask Volstagg to join them, he graciously accepts (if not, he may join them again in **Chapter Three**, as described above). If they ask him to return to Asgard to fetch help, Volstagg regretfully declines, saying that it would take too much time; if pressed, Volstagg grudgingly admits that he doesn't always command respect in Asgard, which could make recruiting allies awkward and difficult.

Volstagg will fight bravely on the heroes' behalf. More a follower than leader, he will defer to their judgement when decisions need to be made.

23. Sinister Image. *WA Reading:* A variety of powerful energy waves originate from this area; distinctions among the types of waves are difficult to make/there is no additional information.

What the heroes see here depends if the energy beams (5 and 11) have been neutralized:





If neither beam has been neutralized: The heroes see nothing but empty space. The encounter 18 beam ends abruptly in the middle of nowhere.

If one of the two beams has been neutralized: The heroes see a shimmering image of an immense disc-shaped stronghold. The image has no physical properties. If the heroes touch it or attempt any other type of contact, it shimmers out of existence, reappearing a moment later. The energy beam (18) appears to pierce the side of the image.

If both beams have been neutralized: The heroes see an immense disc-shaped stronghold suspended in mid-space. The stronghold is featureless and appears to be made of gleaming steel. (Note that in this situation, the encounter 18 beam doesn't exist.) If the heroes approach the stronghold, proceed to the Aftermath section.

AFTERMATH: When the heroes come within two areas of the stronghold, a section on the side suddenly disappears, revealing an opening (23a) that glows with a faint golden light.

Proceed to **Chapter Three**.

TROUBLESHOOTING: *If the heroes return to Earth prematurely:* Though the violet crack is temporally closed, the heroes may come up with some other way to return to Earth in order to recruit allies, obtain better weapons, or for some other reason. If so, Fury will contact them via their communicators, urging them to return to the Negative Zone before the missing operatives die (penalize the heroes for abandoning the Asgardian youths and SHIELD operatives as listed below).

KARMA:

Defeat ice bat:	+20
Defeat Quasimodo:	+30
Quasimodo escapes:	-20
Defeat vapor wasps (per wasp):	+20
Capture creature for Torr:	+10
Find a clever way to disperse starfish cage (such as by using a Compressed Water Unit):	+20
Defeat bubble beast:	+20
Find a clever way to shatter bubble shell (such as using a Compressed Air Unit):	+10

Rescue Volstagg:

+20

Meet Volstagg, but decline to rescue him:

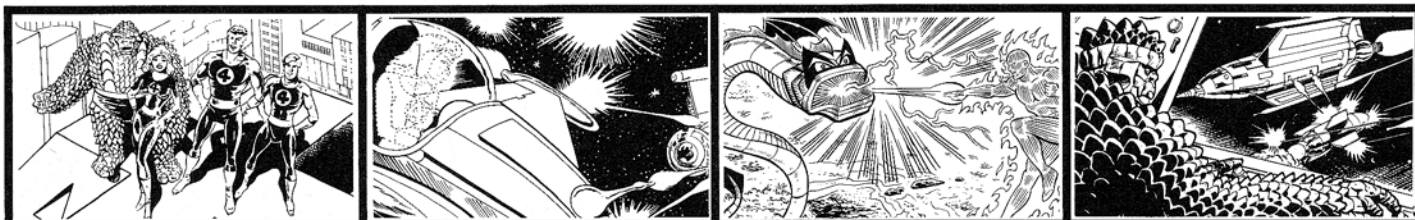
-20

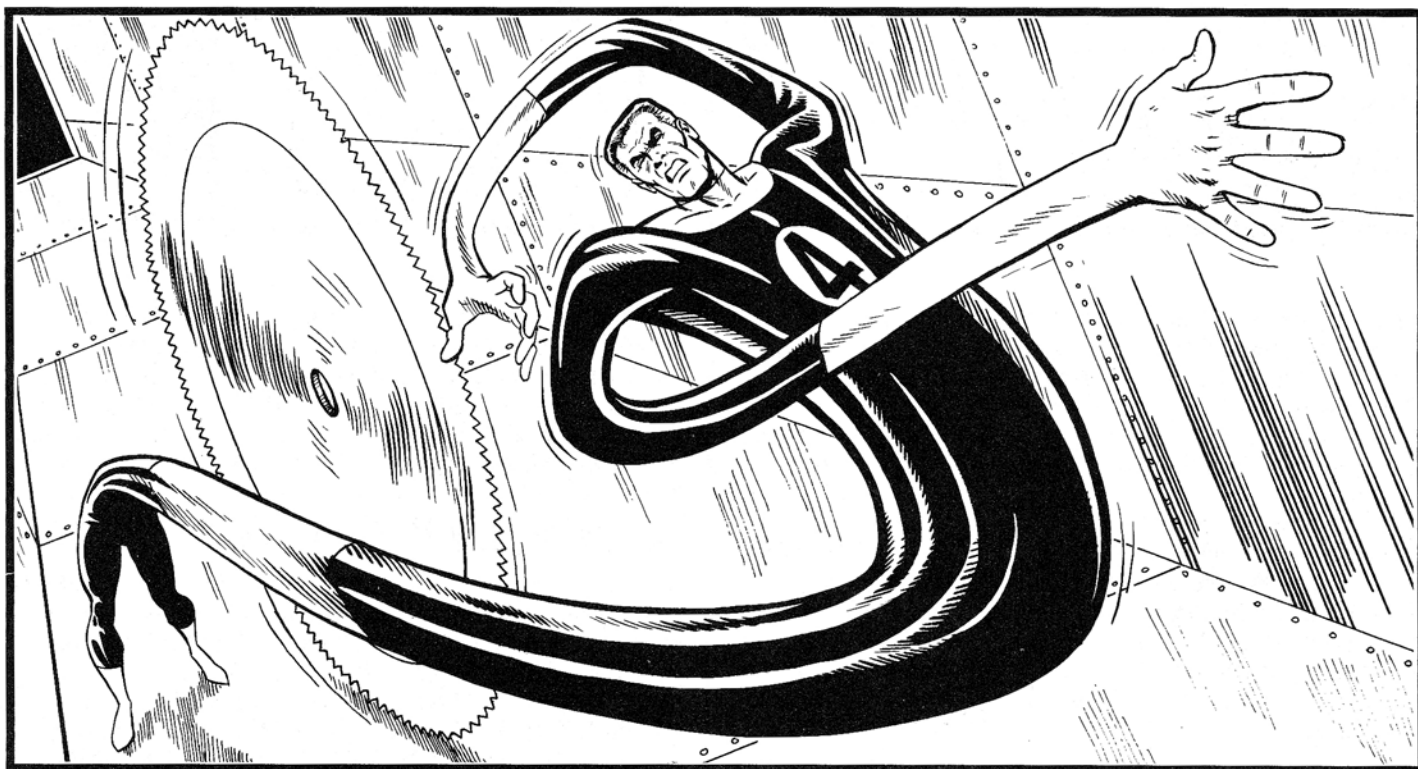
Cause stronghold to appear:

+20

Leave the Zone prematurely:

-20





CHAPTER THREE: DANGEROUS CORRIDORS

OVERVIEW: This chapter features the heroes' showdown with Annihilus. Use Map 3 of the Negative Zone for reference. In this chapter, the heroes should accomplish the following:

- Navigate the defenses of the stronghold and face-off with Annihilus.
- Locate and rescue Leslie Bachman and Sean Petersen, the captured SHIELD operatives.
- Locate and rescue the Asgardian youths.

Warm Welcome

A gleaming silver cone shoots from the glowing opening of the stronghold, soaring erratically in your direction. The cone jerks to a stop about 50 feet away, hovering in mid-air, and projects a hologram of a steely green face, a nightmarish alien visage resembling an insectoid robot.

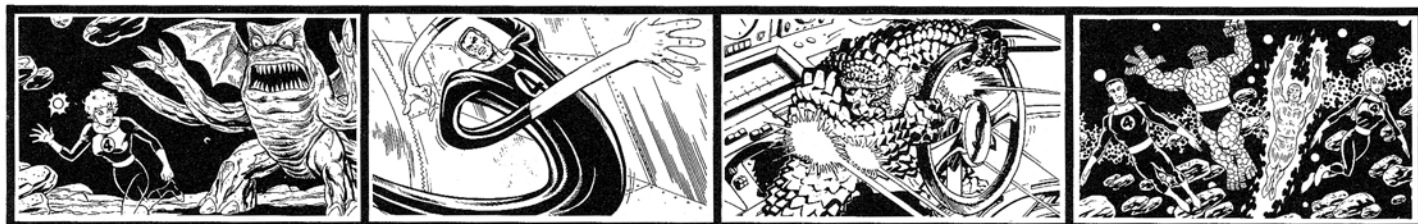
"Resistance is futile," hisses the creature. "Your lives now belong to me. Such is the fate of all who dare enter the realm of Annihilus!"

The image of Annihilus shimmers and fades, and the cone begins to vibrate. Two rounds later, the cone explodes in a ball of fire. (Heroes may detonate the cone from a distance by inflicting 20 or more points of damage against Excellent strength material.) Make a FEAT roll on the Excellent column for each hero within two areas of the exploding sphere. Check for effects on the Hack & Slash column of the Effects Table. A hit causes 30 points of damage.

Breaching the Stronghold

General Features

The stronghold resembles a thick featureless disc. The only entrance is the 23a opening. The stronghold is made of a synthetic polymer, a substance with Monstrous





protection against all physical attacks, and Amazing protection against heat, cold, and energy attacks. All doors are electronically locked; the locks have Amazing strength. Special circuits in the walls bathe the entire stronghold in a soft golden glow and also generate artificial gravity throughout the stronghold, comparable to that of Earth.

Annihilus runs all of the stronghold's defenses and operational systems from his control throne in area 23f. Bachman and Petersen are imprisoned in room 23g. The Asgardian youths are secured in room 23h.

As soon as the heroes enter area 23f—which probably will require them to navigate the outer ring defenses described below—proceed to the Audience with Annihilus section.

Outer Ring Defenses

The outer section of the stronghold is a narrow circular passage (23b). As soon as the heroes enter this passage—most likely through the 23a opening—the gyrosaw (23c) becomes active. An immense buzz saw with razor-sharp serrated edges, the gyrosaw roars and slashes through the passage like a wheel, making a complete trip every two rounds. Any hero in the path of the gyrosaw must make an Agility FEAT roll to dodge it. Those failing their FEAT rolls suffer Excellent Hack & Slash damage. The gyrosaw is made of Incredible material; 80 points of damage destroys it.

If the gyrosaw is neutralized (for instance, if the Thing demolishes it or the Invisible Woman creates a force field to stop it), dark blue gas that smells like burning rubber begins to spray from three nozzles spaced around the ceiling of the passage (23d). A nozzle is disabled if it sustains 10 points of damage (the nozzles are made of Amazing strength material) or if it is covered (by the Invisible Woman's force field, for example) or clogged (Spider-Man's webbing would do it). If all three nozzles aren't disabled within ten rounds, the gas fills the passage, and all heroes exposed to the gas must make an Endurance FEAT roll or lose one rank of Strength (and the corresponding amount of Health) for the next hour. Heroes who use their Compressed Air Units or otherwise protect themselves automatically avoid the gas effects.

If the heroes disable all of the gas nozzles, the 23e doorway opens automatically. Otherwise, the doorway opens automatically after the heroes have suffered (or successfully avoided) the effects of the gas. Once the door is open, tiny ventilation tubes concealed in the walls suck away all of the gas.

Audience with Annihilus

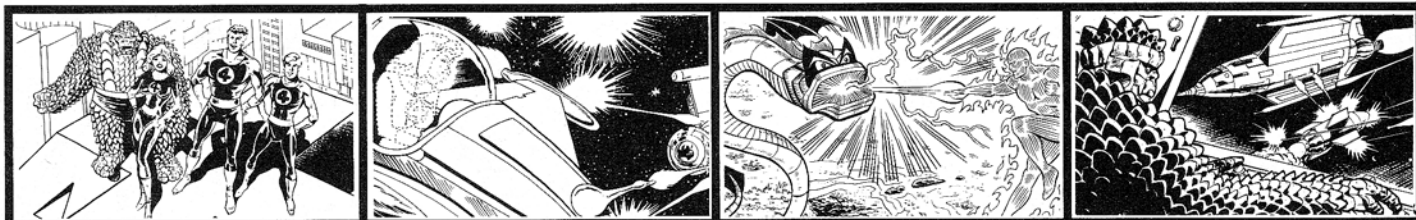
Area 23f is a dome-shaped room with smooth walls made of synthetic polymer. Aside from two sealed doors toward the north end of the room (23g and 23h), the room is featureless. Directly opposite the 23e opening, Annihilus sits on a tall metal throne. Before him is a control panel, a complex assembly of levers, buttons, and monitoring devices. Thick cables connect the control panel to the throne, which conceals power units and computer processors.

When the heroes enter this room, Annihilus commands them to approach. "You have entered the Arena of Execution," he hisses "You survived the stronghold's defenses as I knew you would, but I have no patience to toy with you further. You will tell me what you know of the theft of my Cosmic Control Rod, and death will be quick and merciful. Fail to cooperate, and death will be long and agonizing. The choice is yours."

If the heroes attack Annihilus, proceed to the Arena Battle section. If the heroes attempt to negotiate with Annihilus or offer any information about the Rod, Annihilus listens to what they have to say, asks them for specific details, then snarls, "Enough of your lies! As I suspected, you know nothing. You are as ignorant as you are insignificant, barely worth the effort required to snuff out your meaningless lives. I can tolerate your presence no longer!" Proceed to the "Arena Battle" section.

Arena Battle

Annihilus flicks several switches on his control panel and the 23e door instantly closes. Simultaneously, a transparent synthetic polymer shield rises to surround him and his throne, and concealed panels in the ceiling and floor open to release the opponents listed below. Under Annihilus' direction, the opponents attack the heroes relentlessly.



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lessly. (If Volstagg is with the heroes, or if there are a large number of heroes, include one or more minions—their statistics are on the inner panel cover—among the opponents.) For movement purposes, the arena comprises one area.

Wherever possible, the match-ups of opponents and heroes should exploit the heroes' weaknesses. For instance, the flame tank is a good opponent for the Invisible Woman, and the robotic sponge is a good opponent for the Human Torch.

At any point, the heroes may free the Asgardian youths or the SHIELD operatives (see the Freeing the Prisoners section). Freeing the SHIELD operatives ends the battle (as described below, in the Ending the Battle section). The operatives may join the battle, but since they have been disarmed, they will have to employ hand-to-hand tactics or borrow weapons from the heroes.

Annihilus doesn't enter the battle directly, remaining safely behind the polymer shield to control the opponents.

The Opponents

1. Pounder. This is a giant metallic fist that descends from a panel in the ceiling. The fist makes one pounding or swatting attack against any single hero per round. Make a Good FEAT roll, and check for damage on the Slugfest column; a successful hit causes 20 points of damage. The pounder can reach anywhere in the arena except the ceiling; heroes near the ceiling are safe from its attacks. There are two ways to neutralize the pounder: (1) inflict 80 points of damage against Remarkable strength material, or (2) a hero can disable the computer control mechanism connecting the pounder to the ceiling by making a REASON Feat roll.

2. Flame Tank. Emerging from the floor is a small vehicular robot (Excellent Control, Poor Speed, Remarkable Body) with a gun that shoots a column of flame once per round. Make a Poor FEAT roll; it inflicts 20 points of damage if successful. The flame column can reach anywhere in the arena. The tank has both visual and body heat sensors, so even invisible heroes (such as the Invisible Woman) are potential targets. The tank is destroyed if it suffers 50 points of damage (against Excellent Strength

material).

3. Robotic Sponge. Also emerging from the floor is a flying robot that resembles a giant spherical sponge (Excellent Control, Excellent Speed, Excellent Body). A single glass eyeball moves continuously along the surface of the sponge's body in random directions.

Any type of energy, heat, or cold attack that hits the sponge does no damage. Such an attack is instantly directed back at the hero who made it, hitting automatically with the same potential for damage. Physical attacks don't hurt the sponge either; these attacks are instantly directed back at the hero as a beam of force, hitting automatically with the same potential for damage as the original physical attack. The heroes can destroy the sponge if they manage to inflict 80 points of damage. Otherwise, they can disable it by destroying its eyeball, which is made of Excellent strength material (20 points of damage to destroy it), and is susceptible to all forms of attack, including energy, heat, cold, and physical. Attacks directed against the eyeball are made at a -2CS penalty (because the eye is constantly in motion) and are not re-directed at the hero.

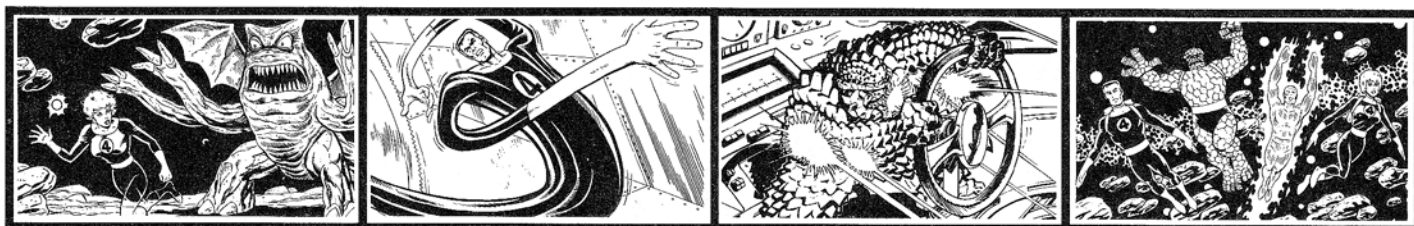
Ending the Battle

The battle continues until one of the following conditions occurs:

- Annihilus is on the verge of defeat (for instance, the pounder, the flame tank, and the robotic sponge have all been defeated), or the heroes have managed to breach the shield surrounding Annihilus and his throne. (Proceed to the "Annihilus Escapes" section.)
- The heroes free the Asgardians. (See "Freeing the Prisoners" for details, then proceed to "Annihilus Escapes.")
- All of the heroes are defeated. (See the "Trouble-shooting" section).

Freeing the Prisoners

At any point, the heroes may attempt to free the imprisoned SHIELD operatives (23g) and the Asgardians (23h).





There are two ways they might accomplish this:

- Break through the doors. As is the case elsewhere in the stronghold, the doors are electrically locked (Amazing strength). Both the SHIELD operatives and the Asgardians are chained to the floor, secured with special electric locks of Monstrous strength; the chains are made of synthetic polymer. If a hero touches a chain, he receives 30 points of electrical damage; the charges in the chains don't effect the prisoners. Additionally, cables lead from the Asgardians' chains to a control unit beneath the floor. (The cables sap the special energies unique to Asgardian body cells to provide power for Annihilus' Astral Command Staff; in effect, the entire stronghold serves as a power battery for the Command Staff.)
- If the heroes gain access to Annihilus' control panel (most likely after Annihilus raises the shield to abandon the stronghold; see "Annihilus Escapes") they can disable the control panel by (1) inflicting 30 points of damage against Amazing strength material, or (2) making a Yellow Reason FEAT roll to disconnect it. Then all electric doors become inoperative and are no more difficult to open than ordinary doors. Disabling the control panel also automatically opens the electric locks on the prisoners' chains. The heroes will suffer no damage from touching the Asgardians' chains.

Both the Asgardians and the SHIELD operatives are unconscious when the heroes find them (use generic statistics in the appendix), but are otherwise unharmed. They have only vague memories of what has happened to them. Weakened from their ordeal, the Asgardians and the operatives can move under their own power, but won't be able to fight or take any other strenuous actions.

Annihilus Escapes

Annihilus' Actions

If the heroes are winning the battle, Annihilus decides it's in his best interests to abandon the stronghold. As he

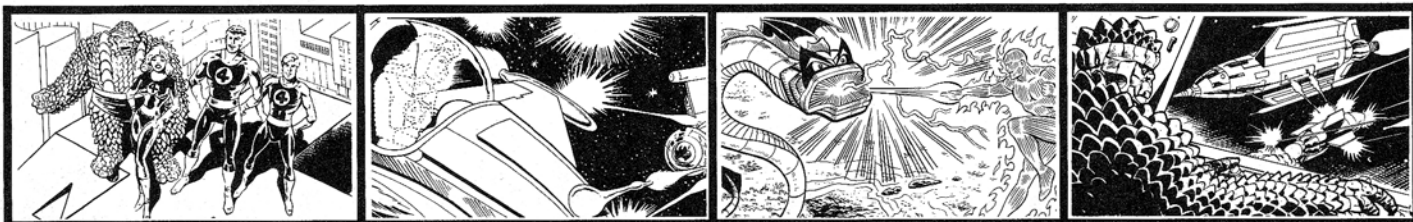
leaves, he activates several switches on his panel, which cause the following events to occur simultaneously:

- If the heroes haven't already disabled them, Annihilus puts the pounder, the flame tank, and the robotic sponge on auto-pilot; they continue to attack the heroes as described in the Opponents section above. However, because Annihilus is no longer directing them, they make all attacks at a -1CS penalty.
- The shield surrounding the throne disappears.
- A ball of light shoots upward from the control panel, then passes through the ceiling. (The light ball will temporarily activate the Negative Zone portal to Nop Yaan; see **Chapter Four**.)
- A panel opens in the floor behind the throne. Annihilus enters the opening and closes the panel behind him. (Annihilus' escape shuttle is hidden below.)

Heroes' Actions

After Annihilus escapes through the panel, the heroes may pursue any or all of the following options:

- They may disable the control panel, as described in the Freeing the Prisoners section above. Not only does this neutralize the electronic locks holding the prisoners, it also instantly neutralizes any active opponents (the pounder, flame tank, and the robotic sponge).
- They may free the SHIELD operatives and the Asgardian youths.
- Chase Annihilus. The heroes must act quickly to have a chance of nabbing him. Once Annihilus escapes through the panel, he immediately enters his escape shuttle (Excellent Control, Amazing Speed, Remarkable Body, armed with a force beam that causes 30 points of damage at a range of five areas). He exits through an opening in the bottom of the stronghold, then flies away as fast as he can, heading towards area 17. He intends to enter the temporarily activated portal to Nop Yaan and make a quick search for his stolen artifact Rod before the power of his Astral Command Staff begins to wane.



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If the heroes catch up with Annihilus, he fires his shuttle's force beam at them. If his shuttle is disabled, he blasts them with his Astral Command Staff. If captured, Annihilus rants and raves about his missing Cosmic Control Rod, and snarls idle threats; he has no useful information for the heroes. Volstagg and the Asgardians ask to take the captured Annihilus back to Asgard to answer for his crimes. (If the heroes agree, the Asgardians devise a special prison for Annihilus, from which he will eventually escape to plague the forces of good another day.)

For the purposes of awarding Karma, defeating Annihilus requires only that the heroes drive him away from his stronghold and rescue the imprisoned Asgardians, thus depriving Annihilus the power source for his Astral Command Staff.

AFTERMATH: The SHIELD operatives and the Asgardian youths are shaky, but in reasonably good shape; all are anxious to get home. If Volstagg didn't participate in this chapter, he shows up after Annihilus abandons the stronghold. Volstagg chastises the youths for running away from home, the mortified youths apologize, and then thank the heroes for their help.

If the heroes don't seem anxious to get back to Earth, one of the Asgardian youths suddenly remembers that he heard Annihilus cackling about "an emergency device, a beam of light that can temporarily give access to your planet." Volstagg urges the heroes to return to Earth as quickly as possible to investigate. If the heroes ask Volstagg to return with them, Volstagg says he is duty-bound to return to Asgard. (Volstagg will recover the encounter 20 vessel and return with the youths to Asgard via the encounter 19 portal).

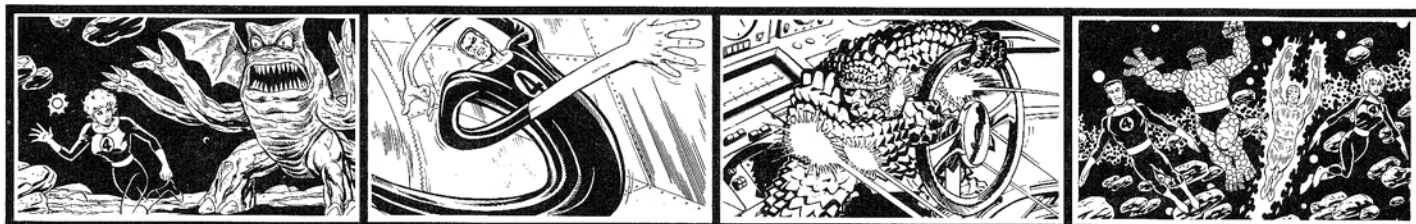
The SHIELD operatives are eager, of course, to return with the heroes to Earth. As soon as the heroes make their way back to the portal leading to Nop Yaan, proceed to **Chapter Four**.

TROUBLESHOOTING: *If the heroes are defeated* Annihilus chains the heroes and imprisons them with the captured SHIELD operatives in 23g. Shortly, a group of Asgardian warriors storms the stronghold, drives off Annihilus, and rescues the heroes. The remainder of the

chapter plays out as described in the Aftermath section.

KARMA:

Disable gyrosaw:	+10
Neutralize gas nozzles:	+10
Disable pounder:	+10
Disable flame tank:	+10
Disable robotic sponge:	+10
Disable Annihilus's control panel:	+10
Free the SHIELD operatives:	+20
Free the Asgardian youths:	+20
Defeat Annihilus:	+30
Defeat and capture Annihilus:	+50
Imprisoned by Annihilus:	-30





CHAPTER FOUR: HIDEOUS VISITOR

OVERVIEW: This chapter details the heroes' final confrontation with Annihilus and Yellow Claw. Use the map of Nop Yaan (Map 1) for reference. In this chapter, the heroes should accomplish the following:

- Engage Yellow Claw and Annihilus in battle.
- Reunite with SHIELD Operative Doug Taylor and escape from Nop Yaan. (Remember to make the appropriate changes if Doug Taylor is not being used.)

This chapter assumes that Annihilus wasn't captured in **Chapter Three**. If he was, modify the text accordingly; when the heroes return to Nop Yaan, Yellow Fang attacks them with his robotic dragon and snakes. Assume that when Yellow Fang attempts to escape, his mini-jet malfunctions and crashes near the id paralyzer as described.

Nightmare in Nop Yaan

Passing through the turbulence of the Distortion Area, you find yourself once again on the rocky hills of Nop Yaan. But the island is now in chaos. The ground quakes beneath your feet as thick curls of smoke rise from the mouth of the volcano. Frightened peasants scatter in all directions. High overhead, Annihilus is inside his shuttle craft, blasting force beams at an immense robotic dragon. The image of a panic-stricken Yellow Claw fills the video screen. "Annihilus!" he cries. "Call off your attack!"

Before Annihilus abandoned his stronghold, he sent an energy sphere to temporarily open the portal to Nop Yaan (see "Annihilus Escapes" in **Chapter Three**). After arriving in Nop Yaan, Annihilus demanded that Yellow Claw tell him about the stolen Cosmic Control Rod. Yellow Claw, of course, had no idea what Annihilus was

talking about. Annihilus attacked, and the Claw defended himself by activating his robotic dragon (the area 17 building has now risen to the surface). The enraged Annihilus intends to cause as much damage as he can before the power of his Astral Command Staff wanes.

Statistics for Annihilus' shuttle craft are in **Chapter Three**.

Robotic Dragon

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
MN	EX	IN	IN	FE	FE	FE
75	20	40	40	2	2	2
Health = See text						

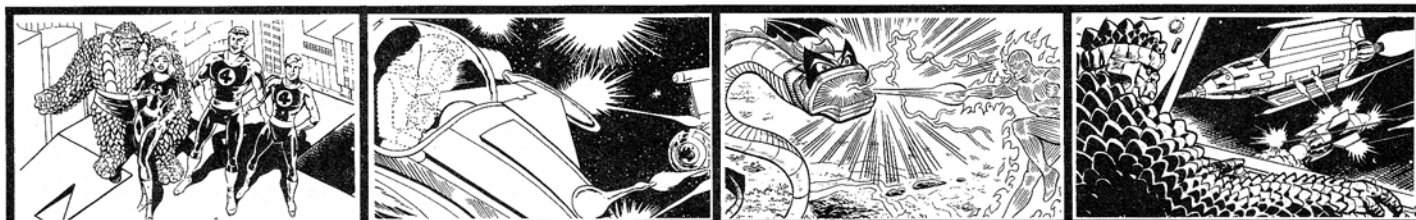
Since the dragon isn't quite finished, its powers are limited. It can fly at Good airspeed and can make one claw or tail attack per round (Incredible damage). It can also breath a cloud of fire at a range of three areas (Incredible damage) once per round. Its metal hide gives it Amazing resistance to all physical attacks and Excellent resistance to all energy attacks. Because of Annihilus' attacks, its current Health is 120.

Events

Beginning on the round immediately after the heroes' return to Nop Yaan, the events occur in the order described below. The Judge is free to vary the order if he wishes, but the events should occur as rapidly as possible for maximum dramatic effect. To add to the tension, the intensity of the earthquakes and volcanic activity should steadily increase, but don't have the island break apart (see the Aftermath section) until the heroes have a reasonable amount of time to escape.

Bachman and Petersen will assist the heroes, but let the heroes make the decisions.

Round 1. The quakes intensify, and the battle between Annihilus and the robotic dragon continues.



HEROES

Round 2. Yellow Claw demands that Annihilus call off his attack. Annihilus blasts the video screen with his Astral Command Staff. The screen topples to the ground, exploding in a shower of sparks.

Round 3. If the robotic serpents (3) weren't destroyed in **Chapter One**, Yellow Claw activates them. The serpents soar towards Annihilus, who immediately blasts them out of the sky with his Command Staff.

Round 4. If the id paralyzer (12) is intact, Annihilus blasts it to rubble. The peasants respond by racing to the dock (9) and jumping into their canoes to paddle away as fast as possible. The peasants manning the laser cannon (24) scramble from the tower and also head for the dock.

Round 5. Lava begins to spill from the volcano, igniting the shrubs and other vegetation in its path. Contact with the lava causes 50 points of damage. However, because the lava moves slowly (about one area per hour), it poses no immediate threat to the heroes or anyone else on the island.

Round 6. Yellow Claw activates the robotic dragon's auto-attack mechanism, and the dragon continues its attacks against Annihilus. The Claw attempts to flee the island in his mini-jet (23). But no sooner does the jet become airborne then Annihilus blasts him from the sky. The mini-jet spirals to the ground, crash-landing near the site of the id paralyzer (12).

Round 7. Dazed but unharmed, Yellow Claw drags himself from the wreckage of his mini-jet and begins to scramble on foot to his hidden hydrofoil (19). Meanwhile, the battle between the robotic dragon and Annihilus continues, the peasants continue to flee in their canoes, lava continues to spill from the volcano, and the island threatens to shake itself apart from the increasingly violent earthquakes.

Outcomes

At any point, the heroes can rendezvous with SHIELD Operative Taylor at the cove (1) and escape the island in the mini-sub; when they do, proceed to the Aftermath section. But before they leave, the heroes may wish to deal with Annihilus and the Yellow Claw.

Attacking Annihilus and the Dragon

If the heroes attack either Annihilus or the robotic dragon, Annihilus and the dragon stop fighting each other and attack the heroes. Annihilus blasts them with his Command Staff. The dragon uses its fire cloud, swooping close to make claw and tail attacks whenever possible. If the heroes inflict 80 points of damage against the dragon, it spirals to the ground and crashes. If Annihilus seems to be on the verge of defeat (for instance, if the heroes disable his shuttle craft and he loses a third or more of his Health), he retreats through the portal to return to the Negative Zone. If the heroes capture him, he snarls idle threats, but he has no useful information.

If the heroes flee the island before defeating the robotic dragon or driving away Annihilus, Annihilus blasts the dragon to pieces, then circles the island, blasting trees, buildings, and anything else he sees. Just before the island crumbles apart (see Aftermath), he retreats through the portal, not wishing to remain on Earth when his Astral Command Staff runs out of power.

Defeating Yellow Claw

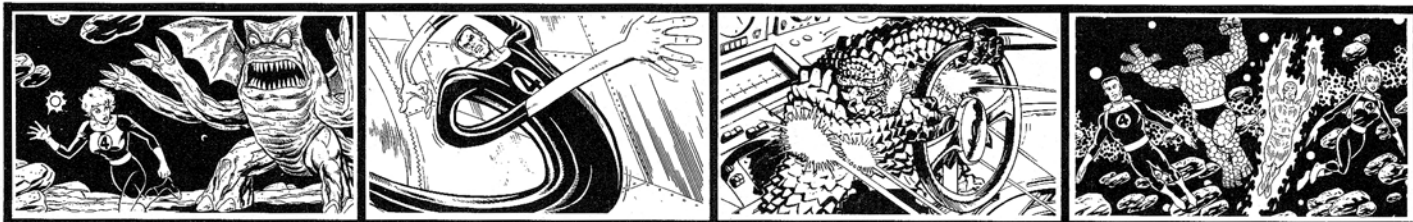
Once he reaches encounter area 9, it takes Yellow Claw five rounds to prepare the hydrofoil. The Claw plans to use the hydrofoil to flee the island as quickly as possible. If the heroes intercept the Claw before he has a chance to escape, he defends himself with his fingernails.

If the Claw escapes in his hydrofoil, he defends himself with the hydrofoil's missiles. If the heroes act quickly (say, within 10-15 minutes after the Claw escapes in his hydrofoil), they may also be able to run him down with the SHIELD mini-sub.

If the heroes drag their feet before pursuing the Claw, or if the Claw otherwise eludes the heroes, he eventually escapes to a secret hideout on the shore of mainland China. Though the heroes won't get credit for defeating him, he'll no longer be a threat in the immediate future.

AFTERMATH: What happens next depends upon whether you plan to continue with the next module of the series.

The Adventure Ends Here. As the SHIELD mini-sub





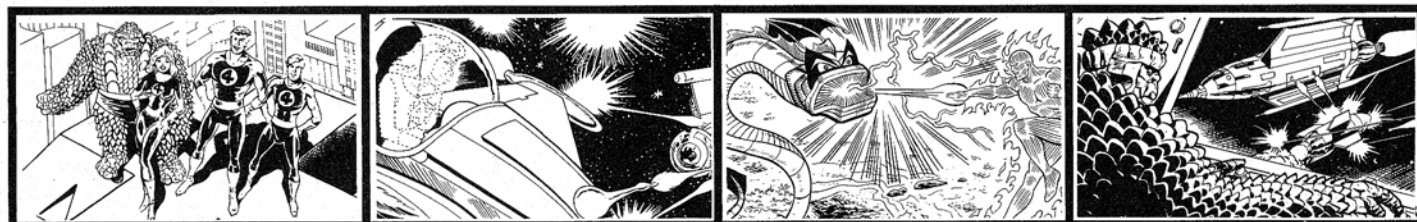
begins to descend, Nop Yaan shakes apart and crumbles into the ocean. Bachman and Petersen again thank the heroes for their efforts. Taylor says he's proud to have worked with them. In the weeks to come, the heroes will be able to piece together exactly what happened on Nop Yaan. They will also hear rumors of a new, even more threatening menace from the Negative Zone, but thankfully there are other heroes available to deal with it.

The Adventure Continues. As the SHIELD mini-sub descends and Nop Yaan shakes apart, crumbling into the sea, a cackling voice thunders from above. "I owe you my thanks for destroying the Nop Yaan portal," says the voice, originating from no apparent source. "It will make my plans of conquest that much easier!" Spine-tingling laughter echoes across the waves, and the voice fades.

The adventure continues in MLS4, *Stygian Knight*.

KARMA:

Defeat Yellow Claw:	+30
Yellow Claw escapes	-20
Drive out Annihilus before he escapes on his own	+20
Defeat and capture Annihilus	+50
Defeat robotic dragon before Annihilus destroys it	+20





Official Game Adventure

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by Rick Swan

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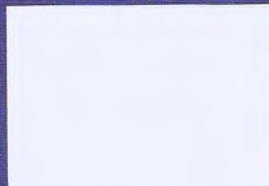


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