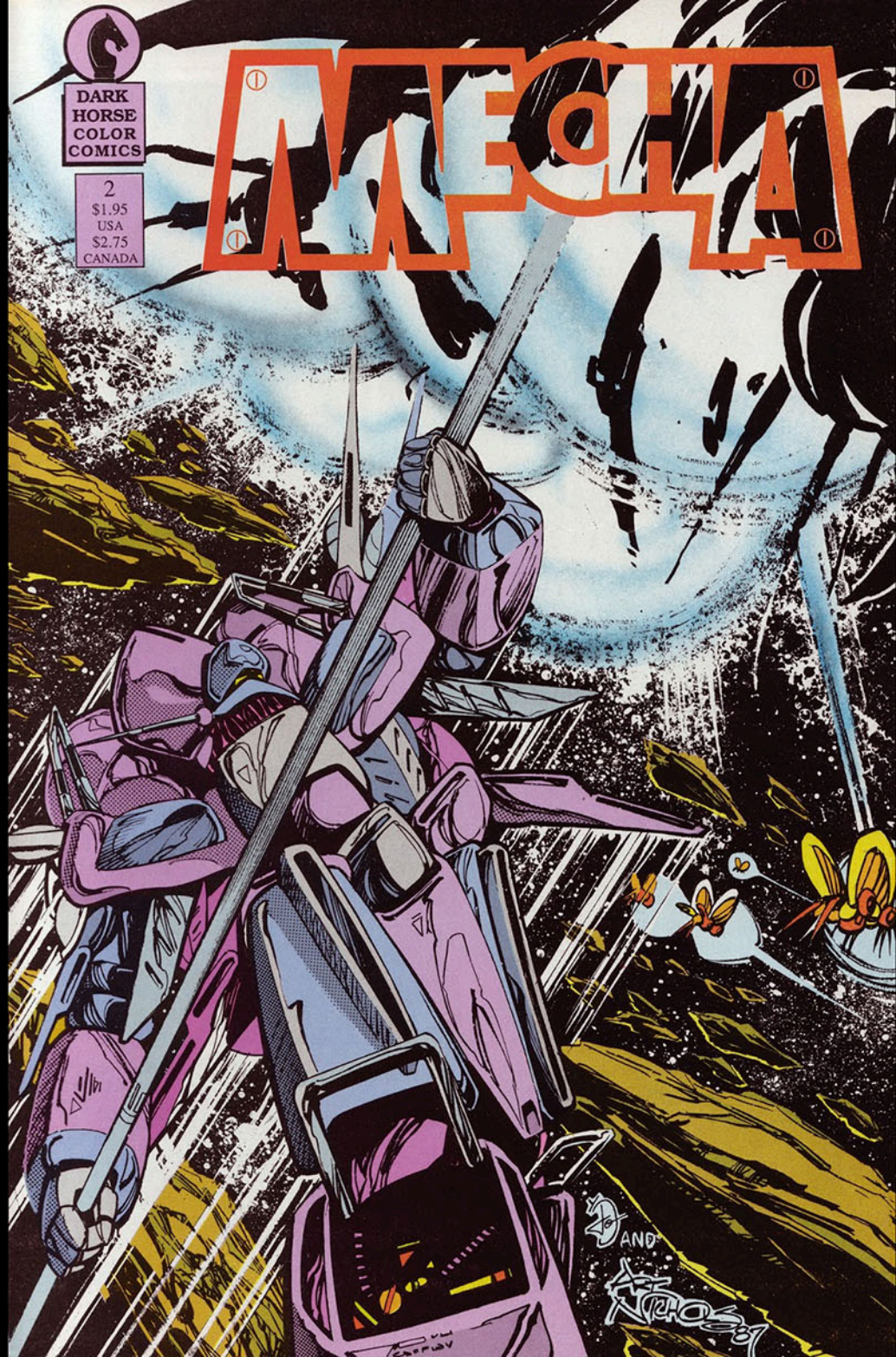




DARK
HORSE
COLOR
COMICS

2
\$1.95
USA
\$2.75
CANADA

MEGA



AND
KROG

First Contact

In the first issue of *Mecha* you were introduced to as disparate a cast of characters as one could hope to meet: Hyer, the undisciplined, dare-anything spelunker; Hana Rezkova, an eager-to-please captain in the Russian Army; Professor Bjornseth, a strong-willed marine biologist; an un-named, suicidal Japanese girl; Keene, a by-the-book Air Force pilot; and twelve year-old Terry Pierce, who, with the help of an aged Aborigine, finds his destiny on a tiny island in the South Pacific.

Each of these people had an encounter with something mysterious, something beyond their understanding, and their lives were forever changed.

We must have done something right, because the reorders began coming in within days of the issue hitting the stands. Shop owners were telling us of first day, and even first *hour* sellouts. But the real measure of our success were the letters we received from you, the readers. First issues are often *expected* to sellout, but beyond any assurance of a continued paycheck, it's gratifying to know that your work is appreciated for what it is rather than what number is on the cover. The positive response garnered by the first issue is a boost to everyone involved with this book, and all of us (Harrison, Art, John, Steve, and myself) are working to make each issue better than the last.

Randy

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks go to Murphy Anderson and all the kind folks at Visual Concepts for the fine work they've done on our color separations, and to everyone at Sleepack Printing for their patience, their diligent efforts, and for the support they gave us at this year's Chicago Con.

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Randy Stradley
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Art Nichols
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Next Issue:



Hyer and Terry make a desperate escape from the Air Force base, while in the South Pacific, Jack, Worely and Chang are kidnapped by an unknown Mecha in "Prisoners."



THE PAIN HAS
DISPERSED
WITH TIME--

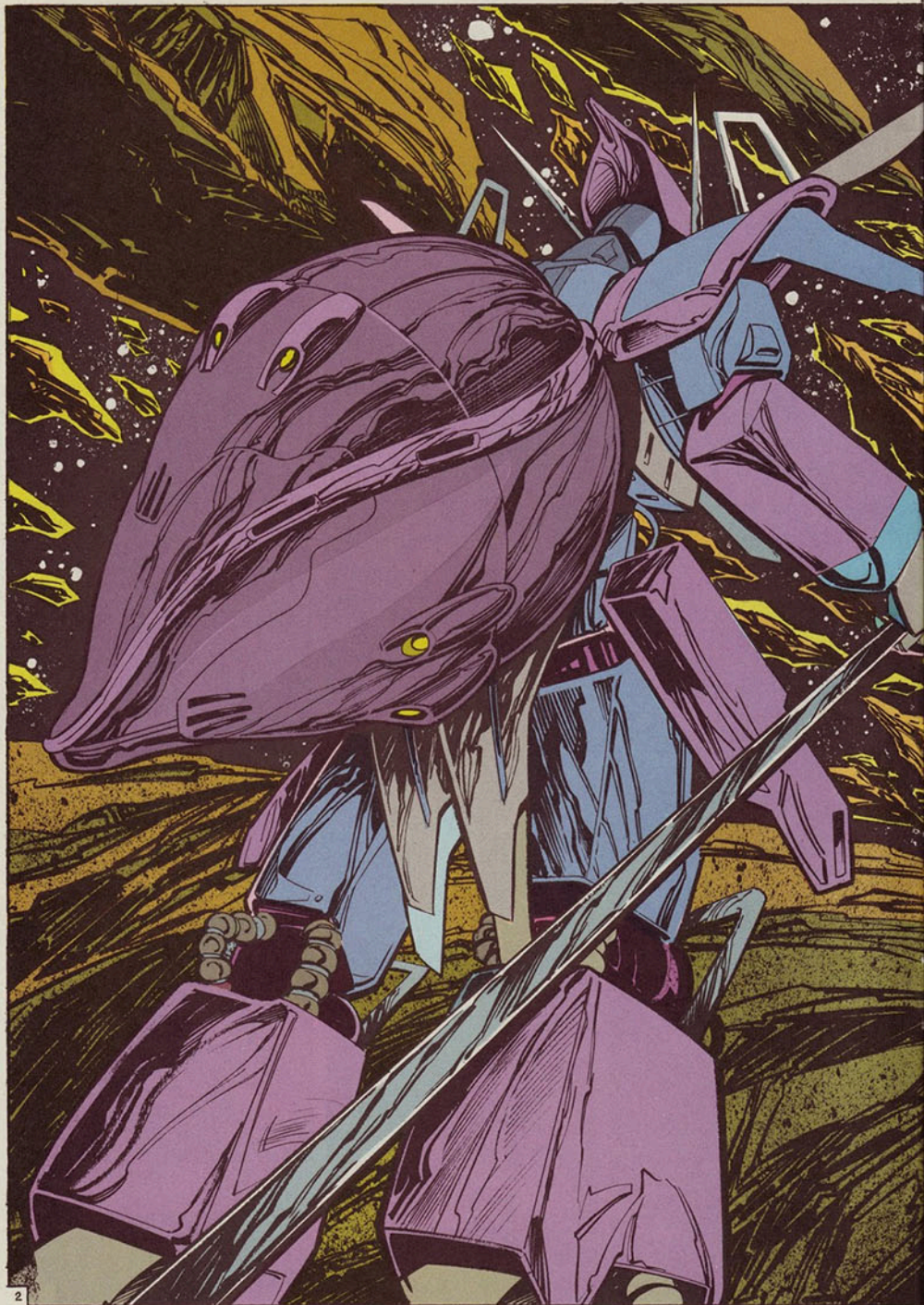
WHILE I HAVE BEEN
MADE WHOLE AGAIN--

FORGED ON THE
ANVIL OF MY PAIN;
TEMPERED IN THE
GLARE OF DYING
SUNS...

A THOUSAND RAZOR-
EDGED SHARDS
SCATTERED TO
THE VOID--

A NEW VESSEL
READY TO BE
FILLED... WITH A
NEW ACHE

WHO COULD HAVE GUESSED
THAT HELL WOULD BE
SUCH A LONELY PLACE?

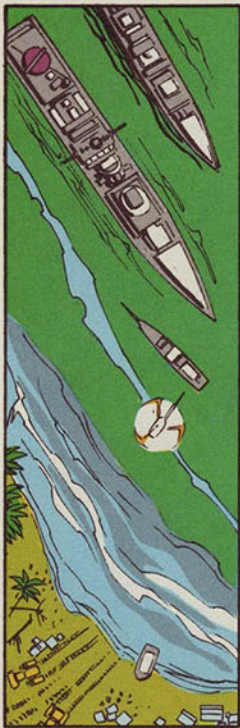


IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE DEMONS, THERE WOULD BE NO ONE ELSE AT ALL.

ON THE INSIDE, LOOKING OUT

WRITER • RANDY STRADLEY
PENCILLER • HARRISON FONG
INKER • ART NICHOLS
LETTERER • JOHN WORKMAN
COLORIST • STEVE MATSSON

CREATED BY
MIKE RICHARDSON AND RANDY STRADLEY
MECHA DESIGNS BY HARRISON FONG



THE SOUTH PACIFIC.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU'RE "NOT AT LIBERTY TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION?"



THE WAY I SEE IT, COMMANDER, WE ARE THE SITUATION!

YOU THROUGH, MR. PIERCE?



NO. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I'M NOT!

CAREFUL, JACK.



TWO GIANT SLUG ROBOTS SLUG IT OUT--

WE WERE WITNESSES TO SOMETHING STRANGE--SOMETHING THAT THE NAVY AND THE AIR FORCE ARE APPARENTLY TRYING TO COVER UP!



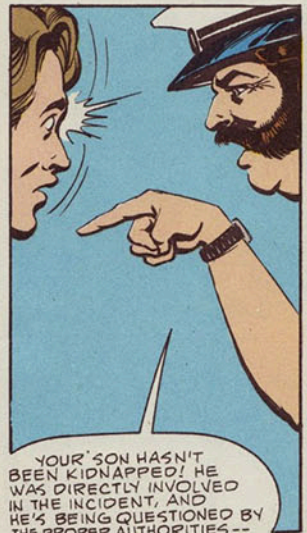
A MAN IS KILLED--

YOU MEN--

--MAKE SURE YOU GET EVERY PIECE. I WANT THE LAB BOYS TO BE ABLE TO PUT THIS THING TOGETHER GOOD AS NEW.

NOW THERE'S A BRILLIANT IDEA!

--AND MY SON IS KIDNAPPED BY THE AIR FORCE!



YOUR SON HASN'T BEEN KIDNAPPED! HE WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT, AND HE'S BEING QUESTIONED BY THE PROPER AUTHORITIES--



PROPER AUTHORITIES! THESE ARE INTERNATIONAL WATERS!

YOU TAKE ME TO TERRY OR I'LL HAVE YOUR FAT ASS BEFORE AN INTERNATIONAL COURT--

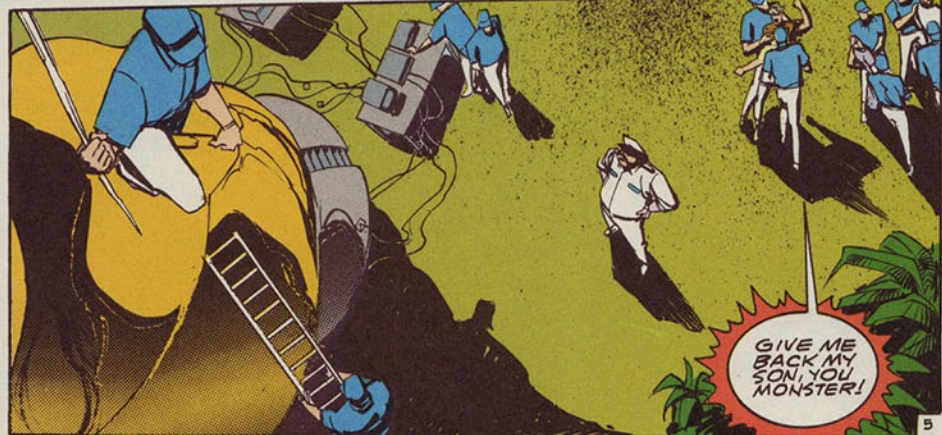


HEY! LET ME GO!



YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!

CONFINE THEM TO THEIR SHIP!



GIVE ME BACK MY SON, YOU MONSTER!

ELSEWHERE...



MONSTER...

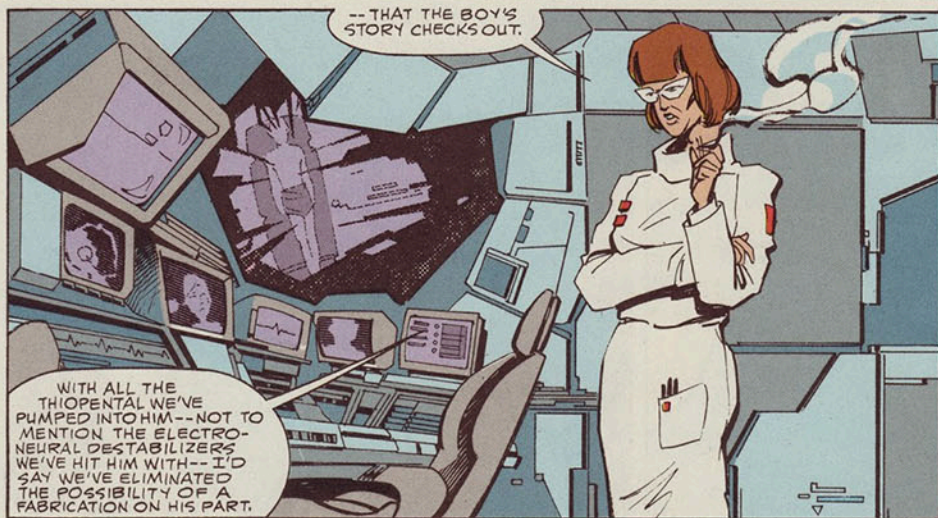


OLD MAN...



I'D SAY THERE'S LITTLE DOUBT--

-- THAT THE BOY'S STORY CHECKS OUT.



WITH ALL THE THIOPENTAL WE'VE PUMPED INTO HIM-- NOT TO MENTION THE ELECTRO-NEURAL DESTABILIZERS WE'VE HIT HIM WITH-- I'D SAY WE'VE ELIMINATED THE POSSIBILITY OF A FABRICATION ON HIS PART.

AT THE VERY LEAST, HE BELIEVES HIS OWN STORY, COLONEL.



OKAY, LET'S SAY WE BELIEVE HIM, CONOVER...



LET'S SAY THE ROBO-UNIT WASN'T ACTIVATED UNTIL AFTER THE OLD GUY KICKED. WHAT DOES THAT TELL US?

PERHAPS IT CONFIRMS WHAT WE'VE SUSPECTED ALL ALONG.

DOES IT?



HOW CAN WE BE SURE THAT THE KID HAD CONTACT WITH THE UNIT BEFORE THE OLD MAN CROAKED?

AS I'VE STATED, COLONEL, WE HAVE HIS TESTIMONY.



YEAH, BUT KIDS IMAGINE LOTS OF THINGS THAT NEVER REALLY HAPPEN.

I WISH THERE WERE SOME WAY WE COULD TEST OUR THEORY ON THE UNIT'S LINKING PROCESS.

WELL, THERE ARE STILL THE BOY'S FATHER AND FRIENDS TO INTERROGATE...



...OR...

...YOU COULD GO AHEAD WITH THE PLAN WE'VE DISCUSSED...

HOLD ON, DOCTOR! I'M NOT READY FOR THAT--



--YET.

BUT IT REMAINS A POSSIBILITY.



YES, BUT THERE'S ANOTHER THING THAT CONCERNS ME--



--WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF THE KID'S STORY ABOUT A "MONSTER"?



THE MONSTERS ARE BUSY--



TOO BUSY, IT SEEMS, TO NOTICE ME.



WHERE ARE THEY RUSHING TO? AND WHY ARE THERE SO MANY OF THEM ABOUT?

MY OWN QUESTIONS ASTOUND ME.



IS MY SENSE OF ISOLATION SUCH THAT I CAN FIND COMFORT IN THE PRESENCE OF MONSTERS?



BETTER THAT I SHOULD ATONE FOR MY SINS IN SILENCE. LIVE OUT MY TORMENT ALONE.



ALONE.



HOW WELCOME THE PEACE OF DEATH WOULD BE-- EVEN AT THE HANDS OF DEVILS.

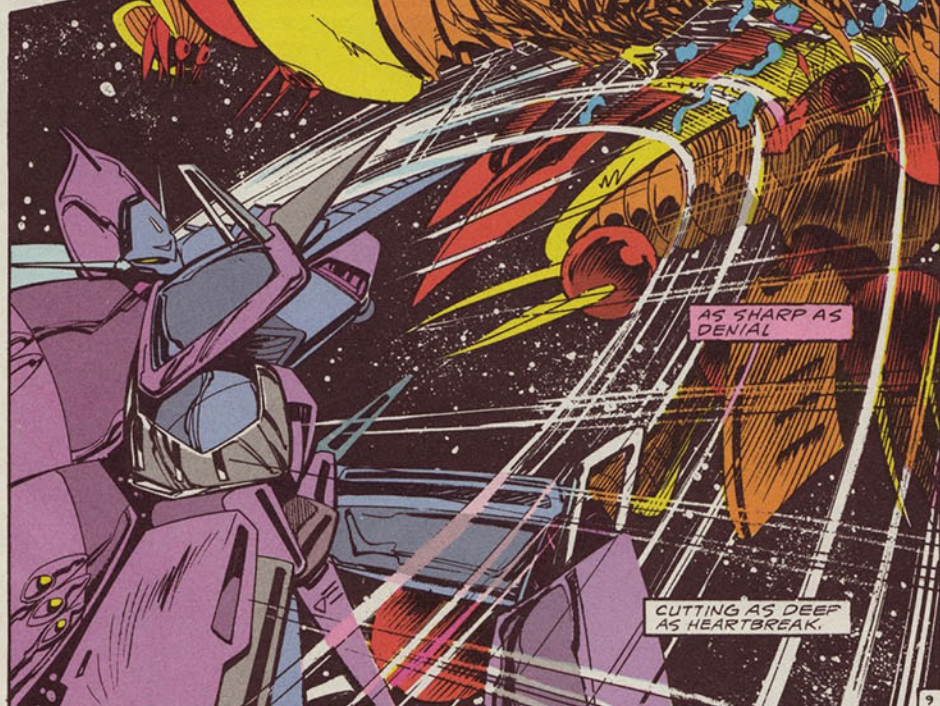


--THRIVES ON STRIFE.



BUT IT IS A VAIN WISH. THIS METAL CURSE I WEAR--

AS THE DEMON POUNCES, MY NAGANATA STRIKES OF ITS OWN ACCORD. ITS BLADE AS KEEN AS A LOVER'S SCORN...



AS SHARP AS DENIAL

CUTTING AS DEEP AS HEARTBREAK.



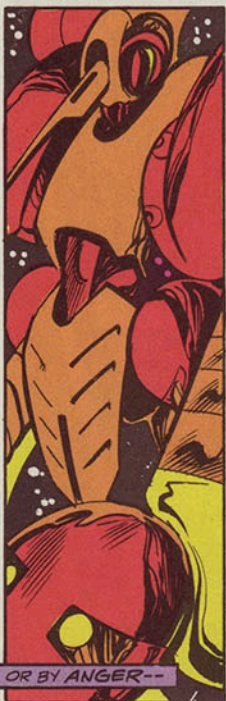
THE DEVIL SPINS OUT OF CONTROL, AND I WONDER--
WHAT DO DEMONS FEEL--



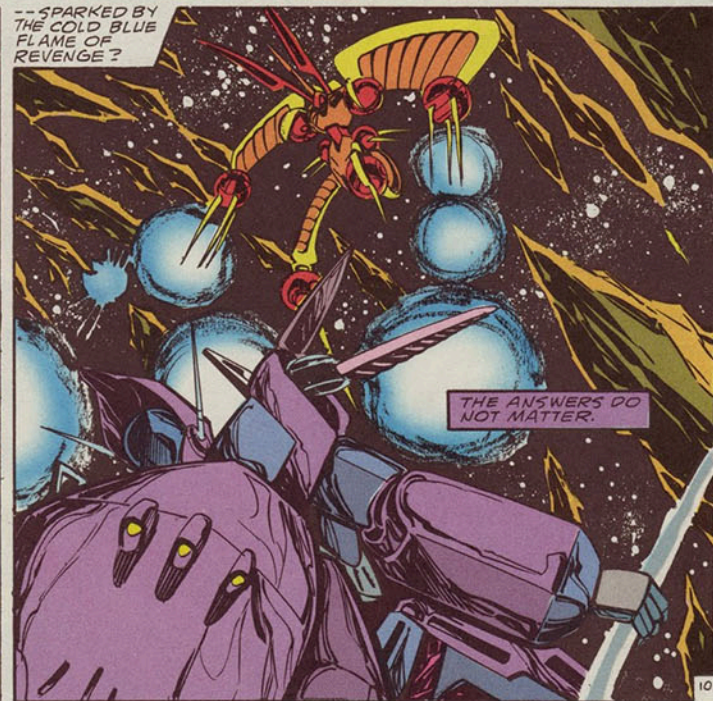
--AS THEY FLASH THEIR
LAST UNHOLY OATH TO
THE COLD, REMORSE-
LESS VOID?



ARE THOSE WHO SURVIVE TRANS-
FORMED, AS I HAVE BEEN BY
SORROW?



OR BY ANGER--



-- SPARKED BY
THE COLD BLUE
FLAME OF
REVENGE?

THE ANSWERS DO
NOT MATTER.



WHETHER IMPASSIONED RAGE...

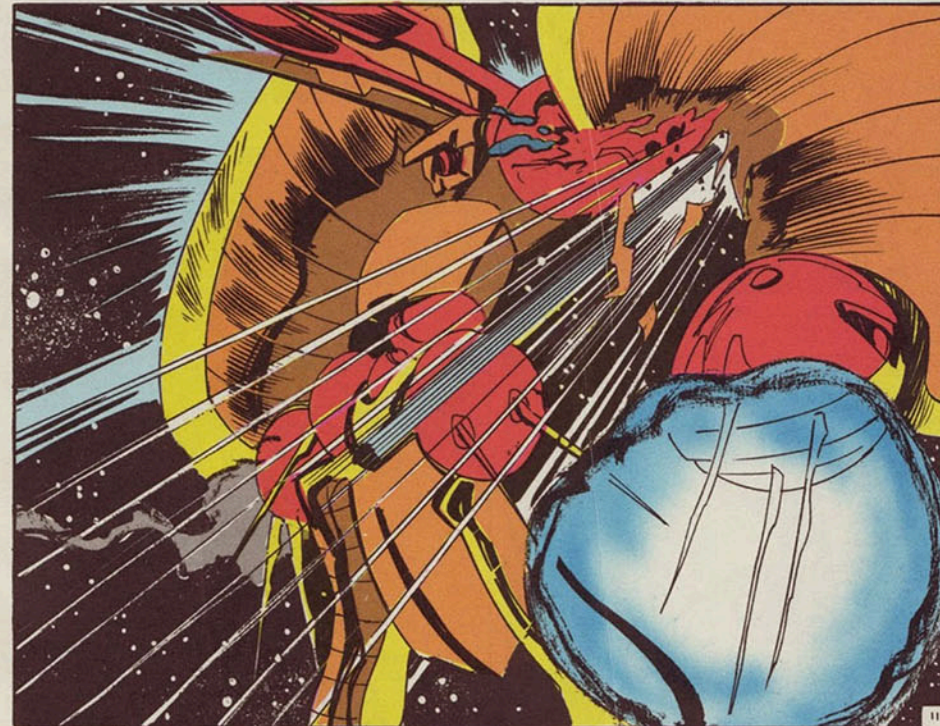
OR IMPLACABLE
EVIL...

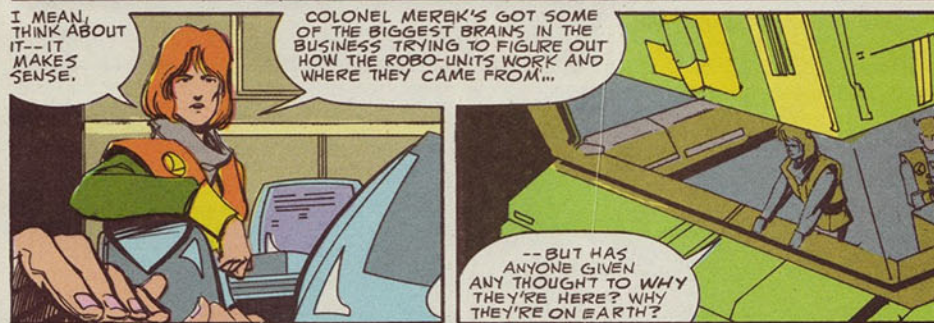
MY UNWILLED
RESPONSE MUST
BE THE SAME.

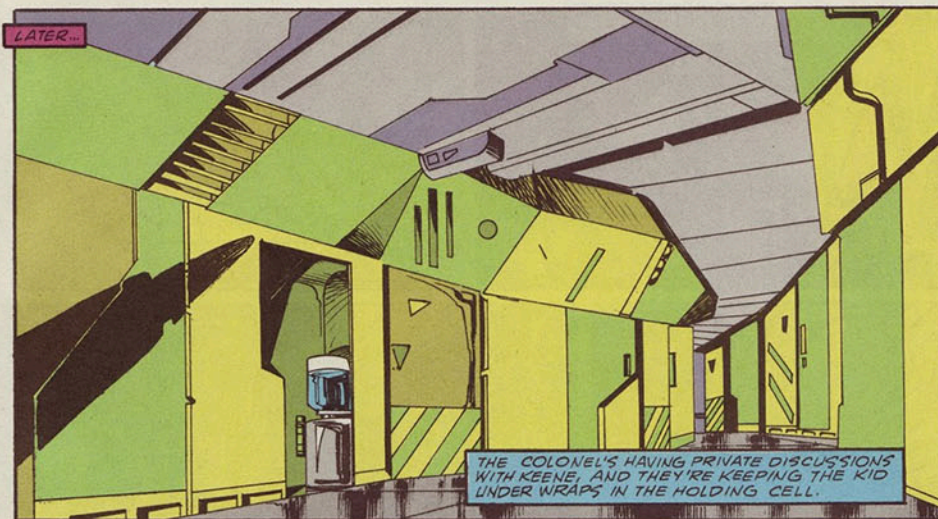
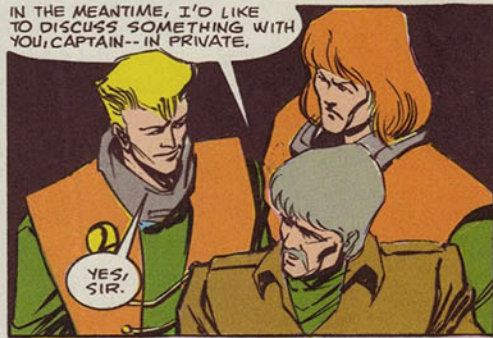
I FEEL THE HATED POWER
SURGE ABOUT ME--



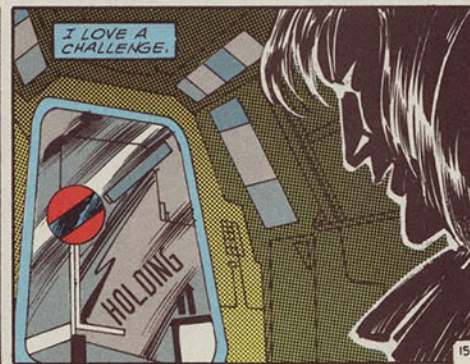
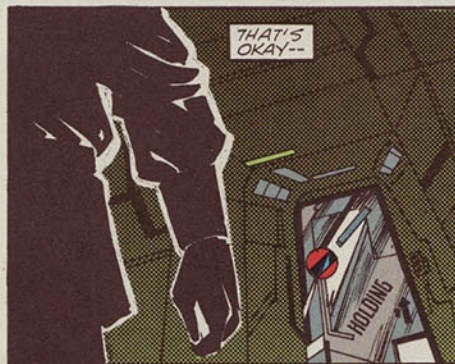
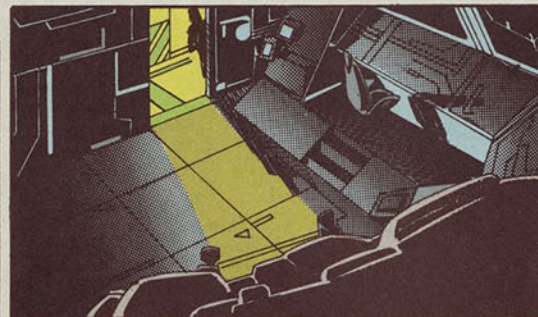
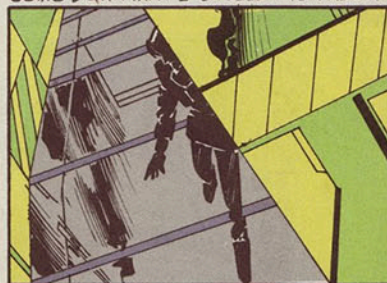
-- A FEARSOME STRENGTH
THE MONSTER CANNOT
MATCH.





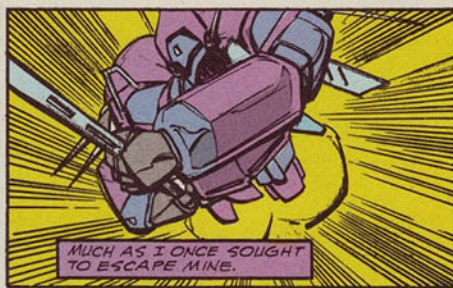


SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING GOING DOWN THAT I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT.

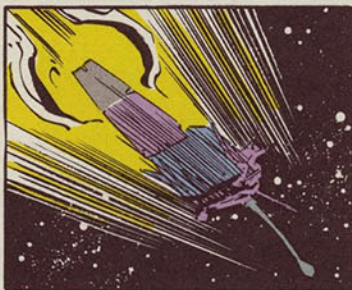




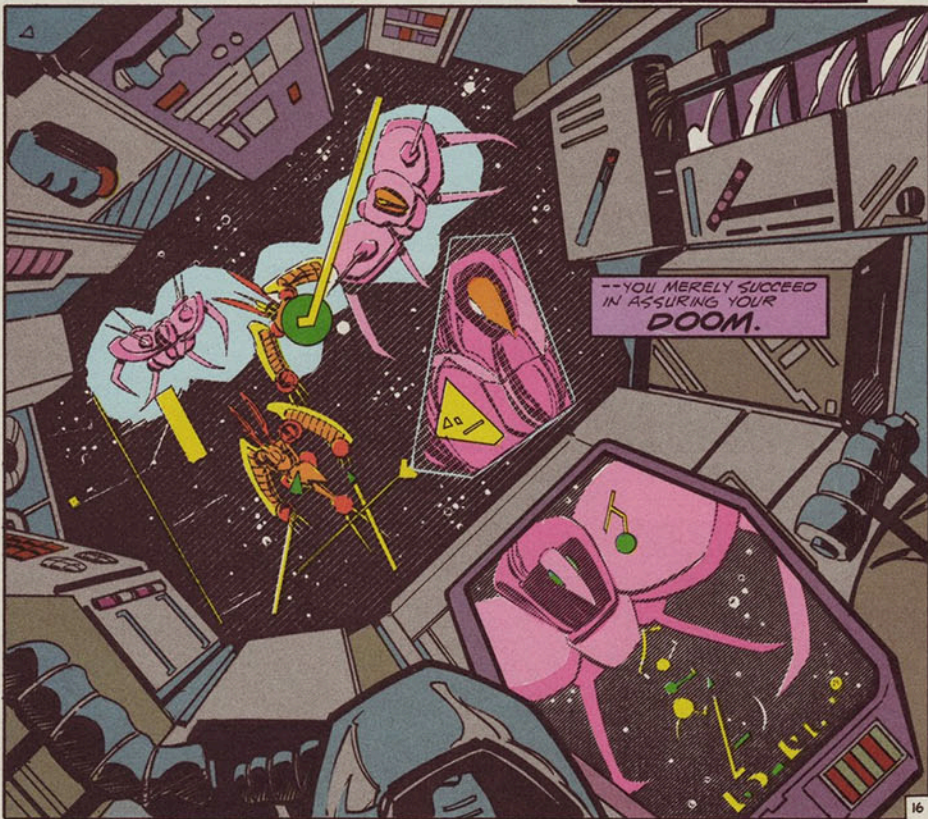
THE DEVIL SEEKS TO ESCAPE ITS DESTINY.



MUCH AS I ONCE SOUGHT TO ESCAPE MINE.



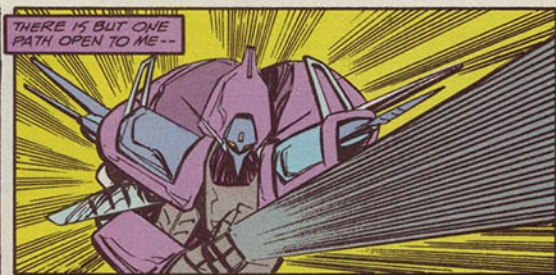
IT WILL LEARN, AS I DID, THAT BY FLEEING YOUR FATE--



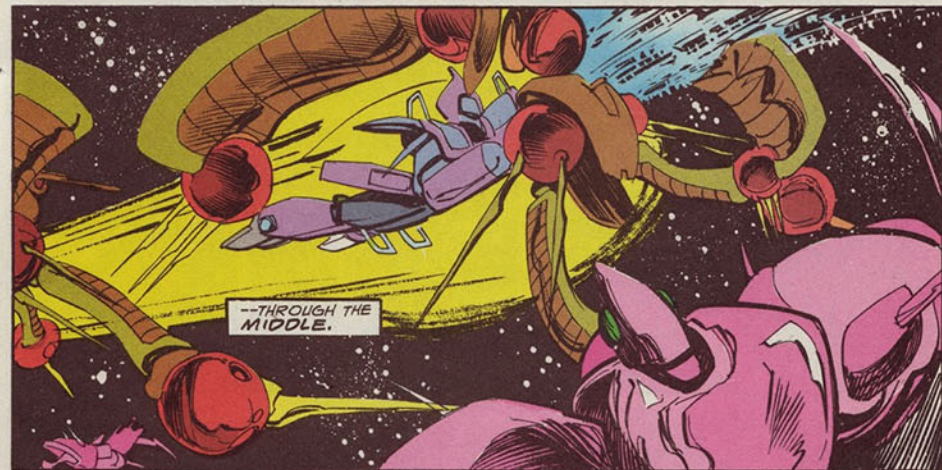
--YOU MERELY SUCCEEDED IN ASSURING YOUR DOOM.



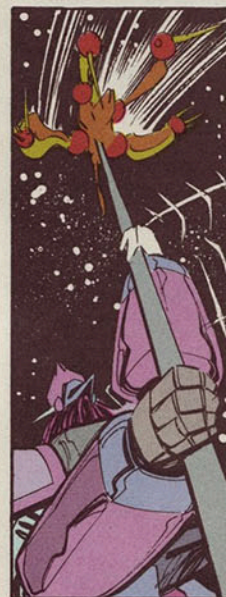
THEY COME AT ME FROM ALL SIDES.



THERE IS BUT ONE PATH OPEN TO ME--



--THROUGH THE MIDDLE.



THEN I FEEL SOMETHING RUPTURE WITHIN IT--



AND I SEND IT HURLING TOWARD ITS COMPANIONS--



WHERE ITS DEATH IS A SHARED EXPERIENCE.

I WONDER: WHAT HELL DO DEVILS GO TO WHEN THEY DIE?



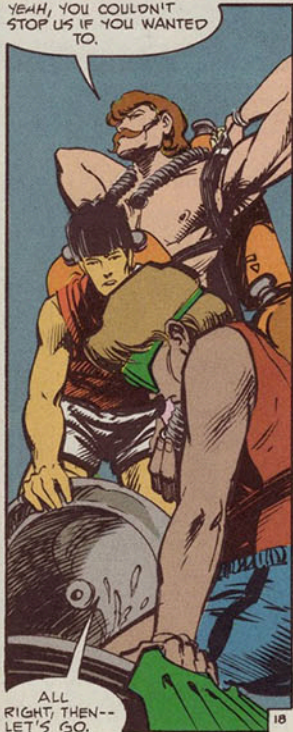
IT'S JUST LIKE WE THOUGHT, JACK--

--THEY'VE GOT THE ISLAND LIT UP LIKE DAYLIGHT, BUT EVERYTHING'S QUIET OCEANSIDE.



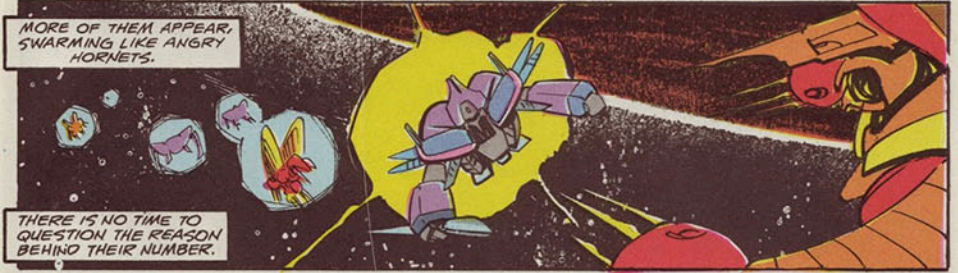
THANKS, WORELY. YOU KNOW, IT ISN'T NECESSARY FOR YOU AND CHANG TO COME WITH ME...

FORGET IT, JACK. THEY'VE GOT TERRY--



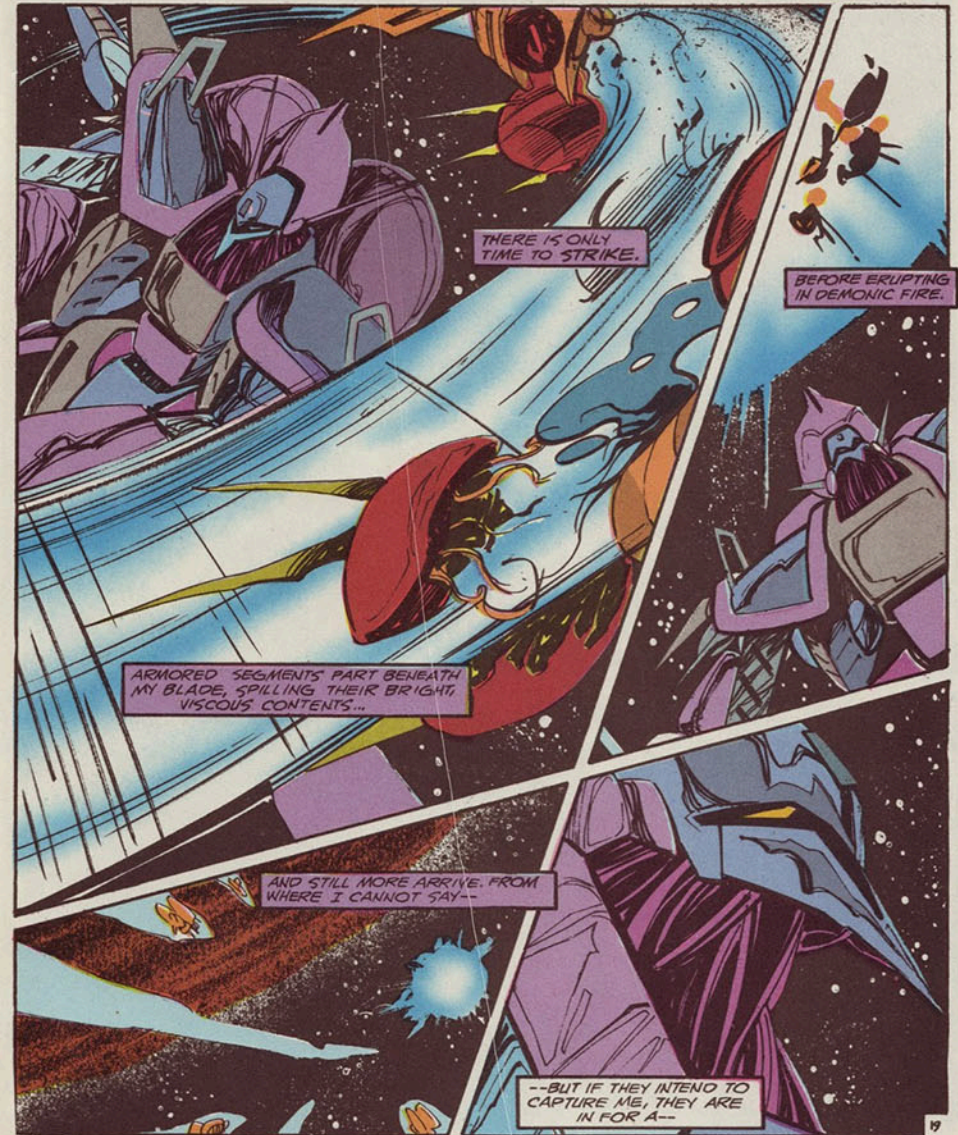
YEAH, YOU COULDN'T STOP US IF YOU WANTED TO.

ALL RIGHT, THEN-- LET'S GO.



MORE OF THEM APPEAR, SWARMING LIKE ANGRY HORNETS.

THERE IS NO TIME TO QUESTION THE REASON BEHIND THEIR NUMBER.



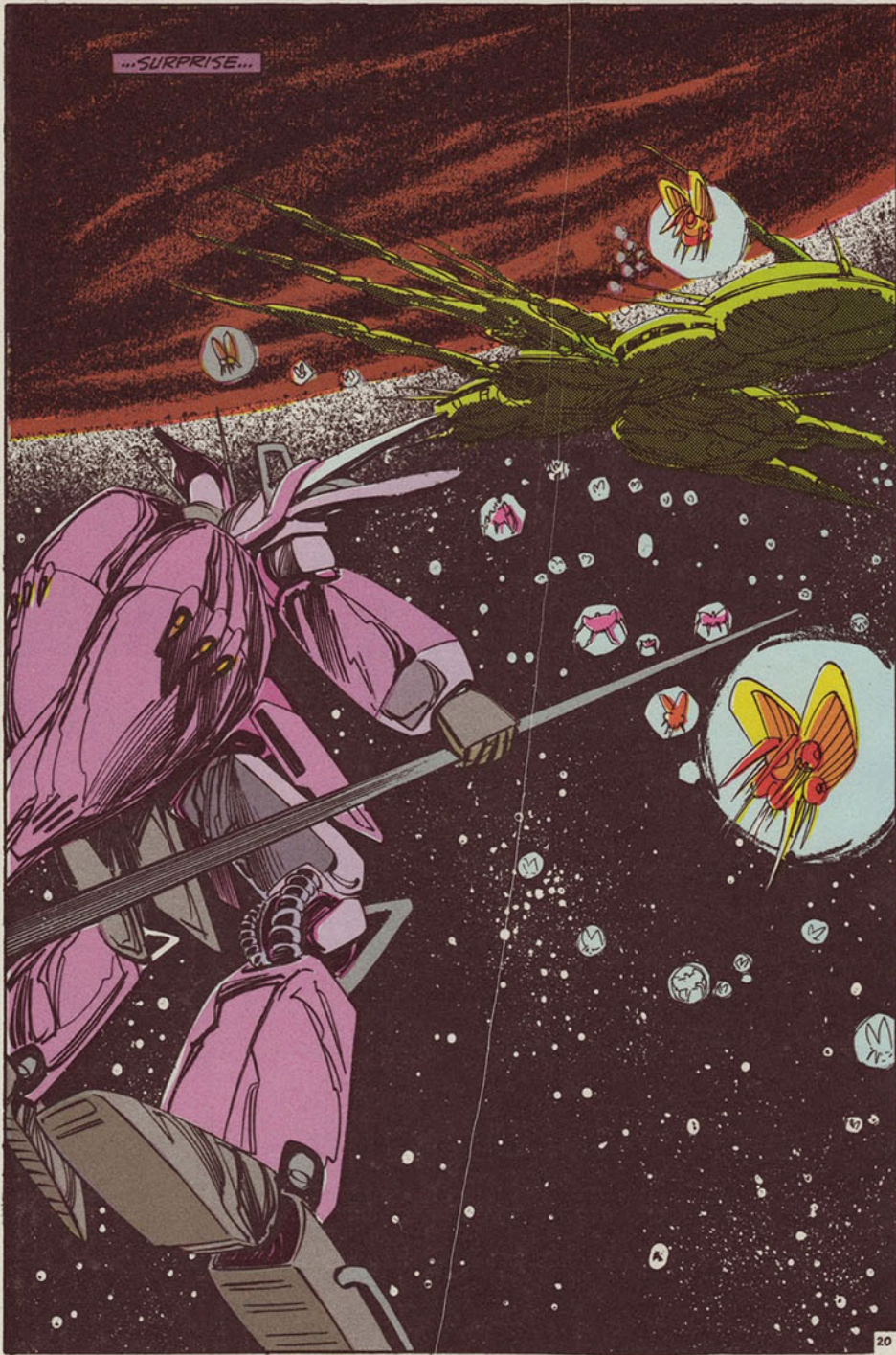
THERE IS ONLY TIME TO STRIKE.

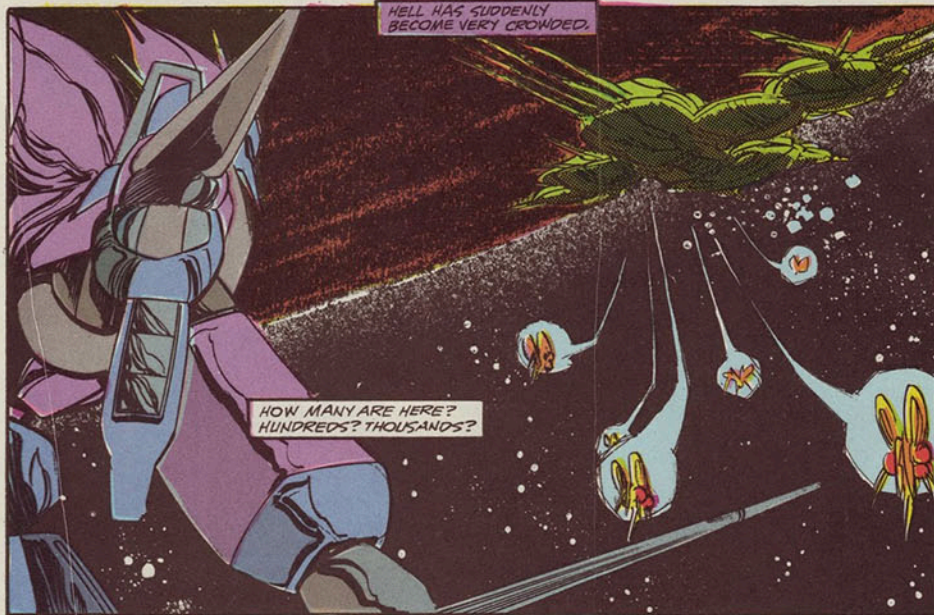
BEFORE ERUPTING IN DEMONIC FIRE.

ARMORED SEGMENTS PART BENEATH MY BLADE, SPILLING THEIR BRIGHT, VISCOUS CONTENTS...

AND STILL MORE ARRIVE FROM WHERE I CANNOT SAY--

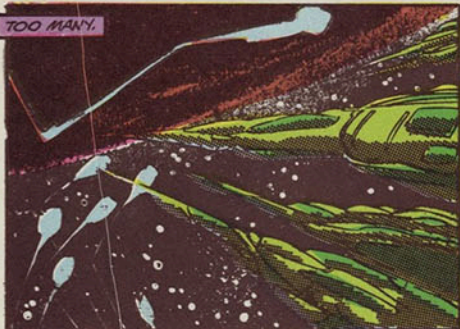
--BUT IF THEY INTEND TO CAPTURE ME, THEY ARE IN FOR A--





HELL HAS SUDDENLY
BECOME VERY CROWDED.

HOW MANY ARE HERE?
HUNDREDS? THOUSANDS?



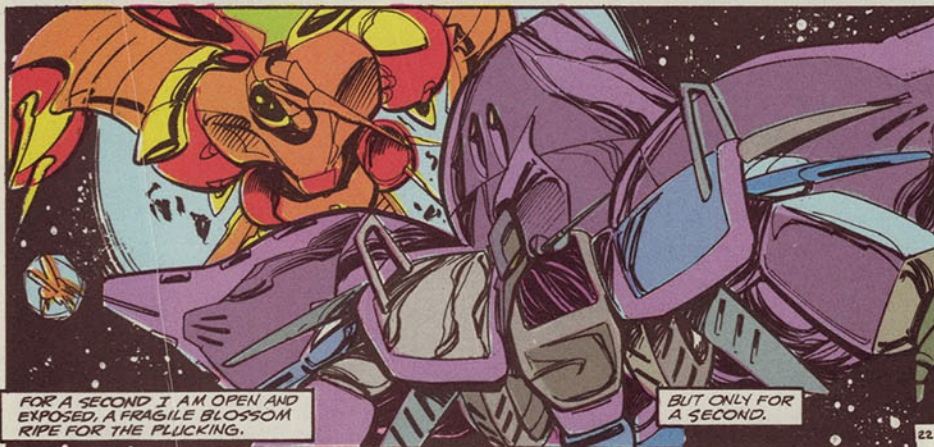
TOO MANY.



I CALL UPON ALL MY
RESERVES...



AND HEAR THE ANSWERING
HUM BEHIND ME.

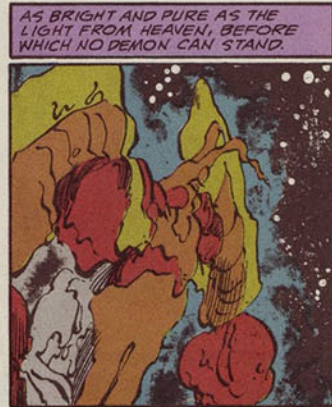


FOR A SECOND I AM OPEN AND
EXPOSED, A FRAGILE BLOSSOM
RIPE FOR THE PLUCKING.

BUT ONLY FOR
A SECOND.



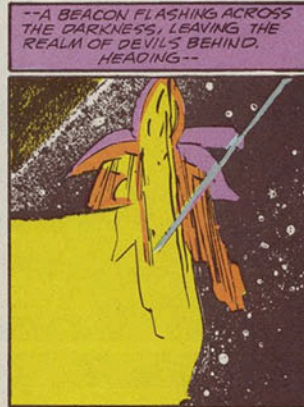
THEN I FLARE LIKE A
NEWBORN SUN...



AS BRIGHT AND PURE AS THE
LIGHT FROM HEAVEN, BEFORE
WHICH NO DEMON CAN STAND.



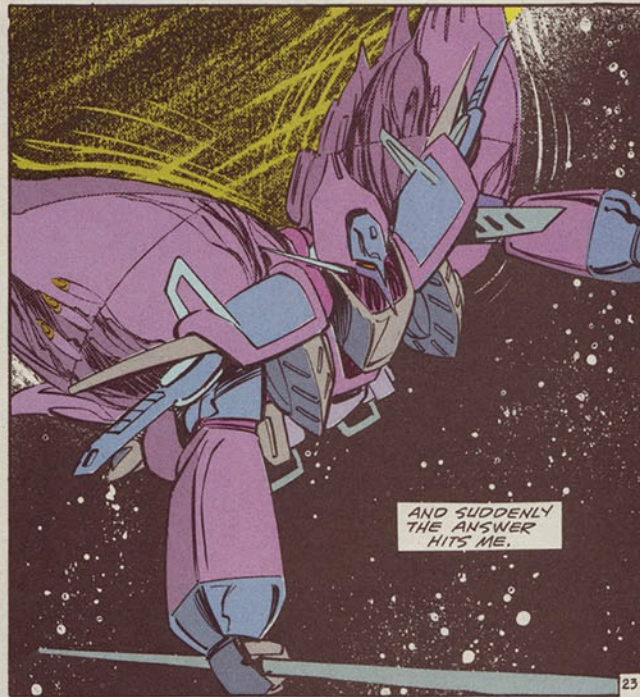
AND I AM GONE--



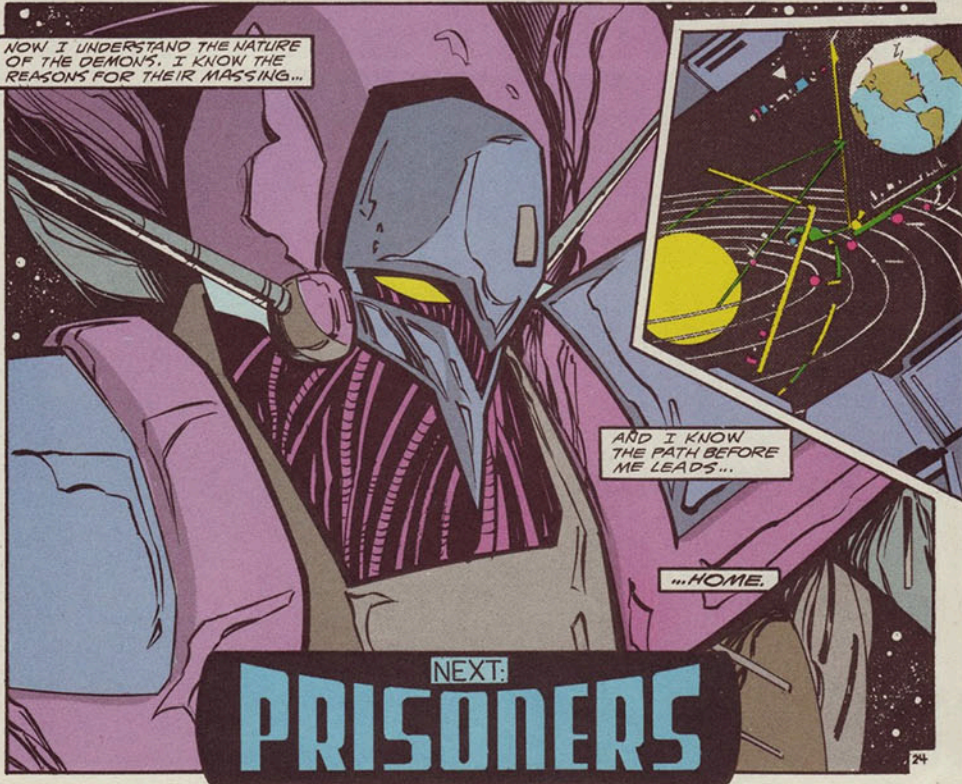
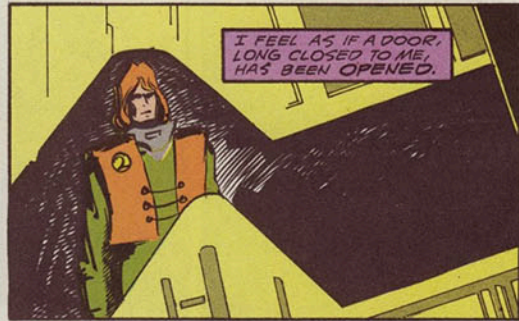
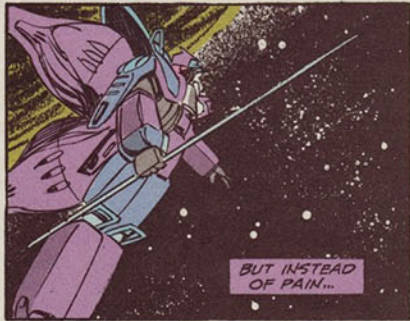
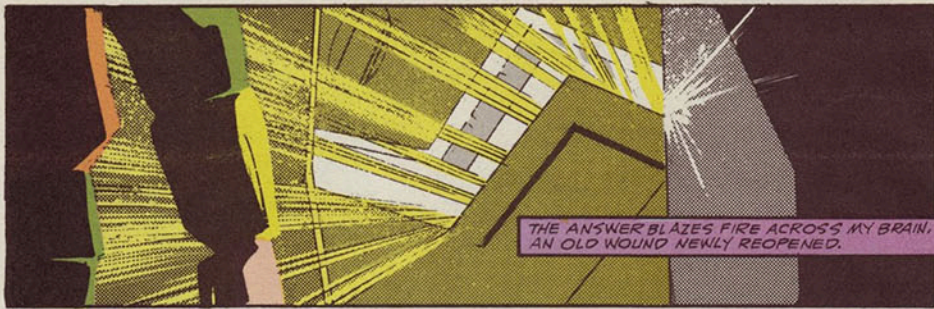
--A BEACON FLASHING ACROSS
THE DARKNESS, LEAVING THE
REALM OF DEVILS BEHIND.
HEADING--



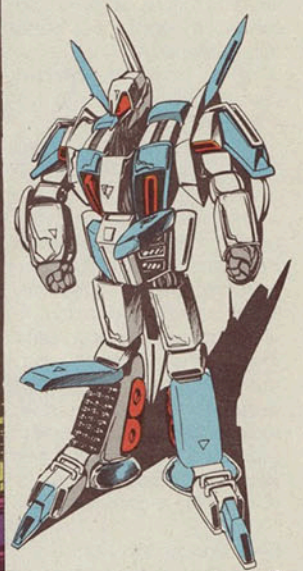
--WHERE?



AND SUDDENLY
THE ANSWER
HITS ME.



HYER HAS HAD BETTER DAYS. THIS ISN'T ONE OF THEM.



IN COLOR!



DARK HORSE COMICS

ISSUE # 3: "PRISONERS"
BY RANDY STRADLEY,
HARRISON FONG & ART NICHOLS.

Feedback

Send your comments c/o Dark Horse Comics, 3376 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR 97232

Dear Dark Horse Comics,
I love all your comics, but my favorite is *Mecha*. I picked up the first issue and loved it! The only disappointing thing about it was that it was bi-monthly!! I have talked to several different people and they were as furious as I was! Like others, I thought it was better than *Robotech*! If it is possible, please, please make it monthly!
Sincerely,

Mathew Farrell
Houston, TX

I'm glad you liked the book so much, Matthew! Harrison and I would like nothing better than for Mecha to be monthly, and we're doing our best to get it there -- though as you may have noticed, the space between the first two issues was more like ninety days than sixty. However, the next issue will be on schedule (or I'll know the reason why!).

Dear Randy and Harrison,
Mecha #1 was intriguing and held my interest. The artwork was very clean and precise, while seeming elaborate, although Terry bears a strong resemblance to Zot.

I'm over 30 and not a big fan of manga or robots but I think I'll try issue two anyway. See you there!

Charlie Harris
Tucson, AZ

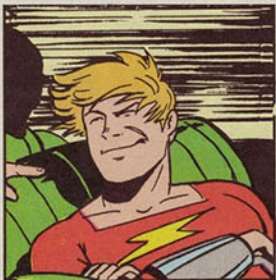
P.S. Is this going to tie in to a toy promotion comic? (Please say no.)

Please say no? All right, Charlie, no, Mecha is not (currently) a toy tie-in or a promotion for a line of toys

(but if there are any toy company executives out there looking for a line of sophisticated robot toys, Harrison, Mike and I have such a deal for you!). And frankly, I don't see the resemblance between Terry and Zot at all...



Terry Pierce...



Zot...? (© 1987 Scott McCloud)

Dear Randy and Harrison,
Just finished reading *Mecha*. At first I thought this would be some kind of *Robotech* ripoff, but it isn't -- it's more confusing.

It seems that several years ago these robots were put on earth to defend it against some interstellar foe. It also appears that just about anybody can fly them. This would be necessary so

whoever left the robots wouldn't need to train pilots. Now, (about 50 years later) these aliens are coming and so the robots must be activated to defend earth.

Some questions: 1) What does the Air Force have to do with anything? 2) Was there any forethought or destiny control to get good pilots? 3) Are the robots under control by somebody (I mean, what's to keep the Russians from using their's on the U.S.?) 4) If they are Air Force Mecha, where are the markings? 5) Lastly, doesn't it seem a bit unbelievable that these robots just start right up -- after sitting 50 years? Let's keep some reality in this comic, shall we?

I have lots more questions but they can wait and might be answered in future issues. This book shows a lot of promise and could get a good following eventually. Looking forward to the next issue.

Sincerely,

Noel Tominack
Indian Head, MD

More confusing than Robotech, eh? You seemed to have figured it out pretty well, Noel, though your "fifty year" estimate is perhaps a little conservative in the case of some of the Mecha. But to answer your questions: 1) The (U.S.) Air Force has its hands on two of the Mecha, and is obviously interested in getting its hands on as many more as it can. 2) In the case of Hyer the U.S. doesn't have much choice, but as you saw, the Air Force did make some effort with Keene, and presumably the Russians had something in

mind before Hana Rezkova's accident. It's probably the very fact that the U.S. has two to their one that keeps the Soviets from using their's against this country. 4) You'll see markings on some of the robots in upcoming issues. 5) Reality? We're talking giant robots here, Noel! But for more information on what powers the Mecha, see the diagram of Hyer's on the following pages, and stay with us for future issues!

Gentlemen:

I am writing this letter to let you know how incredibly good the first issue of *Mecha* is. Starting at the front: the cover is wonderful, the varying styles of illustration for the different segments of story make it visually interesting. The story itself is great (although I would not mind at all having to carry home another ten pages or so!). The technique of the story panels is great. And the list goes on. All I can say is that you have a fantastic thing started here -- let's have more (and more and more). I particularly like the way you have presented the mecha/pilot interface; it all fits.

I have two small complaints, though. 1) the storyline is a little disjointed, although this is to be expected from the number of events you are trying to cover in twenty-eight pages. 2) this fantastic book is coming out only once every sixty days. I would love to have it become a monthly release, if you can keep the quality up to standards shown in this first issue.

Sincerely,

William Wicker
McKinney, TX

Things should become clearer as the events in Mecha progress, William. And you needn't worry about keeping up the quality -- Harrison's work is getting better with each issue. Write again and let us know how we're doing!

Dear Mr. Fong & Co.,

The best! That's the only way to describe *Mecha*! It's the only sci-fi comic that has good art, good storytelling and good coloring & inking.

My favorite Mecha is the one Terry found.

Now I have some questions to ask. 1. Could you send me some information & pictures of the Mecha or tell me where I might find some? 2. Why not make up some names for the Mecha? 3. Why not make a letter column? It could be called "Mecha News" or "Technical Readouts."

Now onto the suggestions, first I think all the Mecha should form together into a big group with Terry and Captain Rezkova as the leaders. Second, the enemy should be equal in power, function etc. only not in shape. Lastly, since I am going to try to convince people to buy your comics, make them monthly.

Your new very enthusiastic fan,

Chris Butler
Mission Lompac, CA

Monthly! Monthly! All right, we get the message! Thanks for your comments, Chris. It seems all I'm doing is answering questions this month, so I'll have a go at yours. 1) Since Mecha is an original creation, the only place you can find information on the robots is in the pages of this book -- but

don't worry, we've got plans to provide you with all you need to know, beginning this issue. 2) The Mecha do have names, and they'll be revealed as the story unfolds. 3) What do you think this is? Letters are a very important part of our daily routine here at Dark Horse. We read every one we get. Also, comics is one of the few mediums where you can make comments or suggestions and receive any kind of feedback from the folks running the show, so we feel letter columns are a necessary feature of our titles. I like both of the names you've suggested for the column, Chris, but I'm going to throw this open to the rest of the readers: How about it? Anyone out there think they have the perfect name for a letter column for Mecha? Mike Richardson will decide the best name from all those submitted by the time issue #3 goes to press, and the winner will receive a free subscription to Mecha, and some other "special stuff."

Send your entries to:

Mecha
c/o Dark Horse Comics
3376 NE Sandy Blvd.
Portland, OR 97232

We'll see you all next issue as things heat up not only for Hyer and Terry, but for Terry's dad and his friends as well in "Prisoners."

Randy



Ion Cannon.

I'm not sure how it works, but it's great! With this baby I can light a candle from ten miles away, or blow a hole in a battleship big enough to drive a locomotive through.

Scanning and communications.

Maiden has all kinds of detection and targeting systems that make radar as obsolete as a lookout in a crow's nest. It drives the Air Force technicians mad that they can't figure out how half of it works. The "look-through" and "over-the-horizon" features are my favorites. The sub-space radio comes in handy too.

Cockpit (in the chest cavity).

This is where I sit to control Maiden. It's pretty comfortable unless you try to squeeze two people into it.

Power packs (for the cannon).

Each "clip" holds enough charge for twenty-four "rounds," and I have twelve stored in each hip compartment. They're rechargeable too.

Missiles.

I've got forty-eight (24 in each lower leg) long-range guided missiles at my disposal. There are armor-piercing, H.E., and "confounders" (to confuse enemy scanning systems). Merck confiscated all my atomics. I guess he didn't trust me with them.

Lifting rockets.

Steering rockets.

Iron Maiden is what I call her, but Merck and his boys designated her "Unit One." Original, huh?
Height: 25 feet
Weight: 55 tons (including ion cannon)
Land speed: 40 mph
Air speed: mach 4 is what the Air Force clocked her at, but I didn't tell them I only had her at half throttle. Maiden has to have a few secrets, right?

Cannon holder.

So I can carry the ion cannon with me while I'm flying.

Steering rockets.

Armor-cutting blade.

Ejects hydraulically. I guess it's for use in "hand-to-hand" combat -- but with what?

Auxiliary engines and stabilizing systems.

The thrusters push me forward in flight, and the gyros and whatall keep Iron Maiden rightside up and on her feet. It all works automatically, so I don't mess with it.

Ailerons.

To stabilize Maiden during supersonic flight.

"Zappers."

Short-range, armor-piercing missiles that pack a high-voltage charge. Twelve at each elbow.

Lasers.

You can't see them here, but Maiden has a laser cutting torch in the end of each finger. They'll cut through steel like a diamond drill through styrofoam.

Armor plating.

The techs don't know what it's made of, but it has the overall equivalent of six-inch steel.

Main engines.

Merck's team spent weeks trying to crack the casings on these pups, but they were never able to figure out what makes them tick. All I know is they get me where I want to go, and in the two years I've had Maiden they haven't needed refueling.

CHECK IT OUT!

