

There's a whole lot of metacommentary on the first couple of pages, when Mr. Fantastic gives pronouncement that "the time for talking is over. It's time for action." In a comicbook?! You don't say, Reed? I sure wish that was the goal for many other comics on the stands today. And despite such resolution, Mr. Fantastic proceeds to give us nothing but exposition, a heart to heart with his daughter, and an explanation to the villain how he tracked them down. The Quiet Man in turn says "I can't wait for your conclusion," and at that point I'm wondering if I should even be writing reviews if the characters themselves are already doing such a good job. The action Mr. Fantastic is talking about, then, must come from the Thing and his allies, battling back the invasion from Counter-Earth, or to avoid conclusion, simply "Franklin Richards' dreamscape." The shifting inkers is not very consistent, resulting in some pages having a smooth, polished look with others looking very blocky, cross-hatched, and indistinct. Similarly, the colors look too split. Whereas before scenes could be distinguished by deliberate palette choices, every page brings a new and sometimes jarring transition of color. Sometimes it flows, such as the Things' charge down the street until confronted by the new Frightful Four, but mostly it's too often it's jumbled. As often happens in this issue, on one same page there can be contrastingly both bright pinks and greens. But really we should talk about Bentley, right? I'm only half-joking and admittedly shameful at this point, that my appreciation for this comic is in direct proportion to the amount of Bentley in it. It's only for a couple of pages, sadly, but I would imagine that his interaction with the Wizard isn't over yet, as it's through his eyes that we bridge into the Thing's encounter with the Wizard/Frightful Four. It's likely that next issue's follow up leads Bentley to convince the Wizard to actually help in the fight, which would cap off a nice thematic arc. We're learning through them (and also, to some extent, through Sandman and She-Thing, also in attendance) what it means to be a hero. It's just too bad that this really big theme couldn't have been done more overtly and through the regular cast. Sleepwalker, too, seems to add a bit to this theme, as Rick Sheridan is reluctant to heed the heroic call to action. (There's some inherent incongruity that such a call to action means it's a call to fall asleep, but maybe that's reading too much into things.) Unfortunately, Sleepwalker himself just shows up because, you know, dreams. And also to make a Vincent Price running gag. (As an aside, it's a nice token to acknowledge Mr. Price, who sadly passed away in 1993, although I wonder if the writer was going for "creepy" because of the actor's association with campy horror flicks. In my mind, however, the voice actually ends up being distractingly comedic, for exactly the same reasons.) If there's one thing this run of FF has done, it's give us hints of various permutations of the four-person team. In this issue, we have a version of the Fantastic Four that's Invisible Woman, Sub-Mariner, the original Human Torch, and Sleepwalker. Would not have seen that coming. The post Fantastic Four #644 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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