

EXHIBIT WW

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SON OF ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS

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By
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KUMITA

THE YEAR 1963 was a bounteous bonanza for superheroes. At Marvel Comics we were grinding them out like popcorn, and they seemed to be just as habit-forming.

Now, since we have to start somewhere, let's zero in on the creation of one of the most oddball teams of costumed cavorters to make their debut that year, or any other year. In the riotous realm of superhero-dom, they're not exactly what you'd call a typical group of gregarious grapplers, but then Marvel has never quite been known for being overly typical.

It all started when Jolly Jack Kirby and I were scrounging around for a dynamite new feature to inflict upon the hapless hordes of fandom. For those of you who may have been injudicious enough not to have read our preceding volume, let me explain that Jolly Jack was our numero uno when it came to illustrating superhero strips. Jack was (and still is) to superheroes what Kellogg's is to corn flakes. When such fabulous features as The Fantastic Four, the Mighty Thor, and The Incredible Hulk were just a-borning, it was good ol' Jackson with whom I huddled, harangued, and hassled until the characters were designed, the plots were delineated, and the layouts were delivered so that I could add the little dialogue balloons and captions with which I've spent a lifetime cluttering up the illustrations of countless long-suffering artists.

At any rate, I was anxious to come up with a new concept, and there was a germ of an idea buzzing around my head. Almost all of our heroes had gotten their superpowers from some outside source. Spider-Man had been bitten by a radioactive spider (could happen to anyone); the Hulk had been the victim of a gamma-ray explosion; with The Fantastic Four it was a sudden prolonged dose of cosmic rays; and, just to show we weren't getting into a rut, Thor had gained his godlike power by picking up a rough wooden cane inside a mysterious cave.

Of course, it's hard to remember that far back, but I suspect that I was beginning to fear our readers might get the idea we were implying that gaining a superpower was as easy as getting an insect bite, being in the vicinity of a gamma or cosmic ray, or picking up a stick. 'Twas time for a new approach—and I thought I had the angle.

Why not create a group of characters who were born with their unique abilities? Why not offer the reader a protagonist who was not dependent upon some far-fetched pseudo-scientific accident? But, if a character has a superpower (and superpowers are the name of the game in the madcap world of Marvel) and if no explanation is given, how do we make that character's attributes acceptable to our finicky far-flung audience? There was only one possible answer—we would create a team of mutants!

Mutant! One who undergoes a hypothetical unexpected change in heredity, producing a new individual who is basically unlike the parent. Or, to put it more succinctly, a freak, an aberration of nature—one who has been changed for the better, or the worse.

The minute it hit me I knew the concept was basically sound. Mutation is a scientific fact of life; it's plausible, possible, practical, and provable. Best of all, it would allow Jack and me the fullest scope for our imaginations. When thinking of all possible variations of normal human beings, the sky's the limit—whatever power we conceived of could be justified on the basis of its being a mutated trait.

No sooner did I discuss the basic premise with Jack than we were off and running. We decided to create two groups of mutants, one evil and the other good. One would be eternally striving to subjugate mankind, and the other would be ceaselessly battling to protect the human race. The more we discussed it, the better I liked it. One of the biggest problems in the comicbook field is the difficulty of finding new storylines which don't seem to be bland imitations of the thousands of stories that have gone before. It's a mind-boggling task to be compelled to come up with dozens of new heroes and villains regularly, and still to give them an air of freshness and surprise. But this time it seemed we had a ready-made vehicle, something refreshingly new and totally different.

Let me digress long enough to mention another problem that always crops up in the development of any new strip—the problem of the title. This time I thought we had it made. There was one logical, obvious, perfect title for such a feature. It would look dra-

SAY, did you wonder why we didn't show you the cover of the magazine in which The Watcher's origin story appeared? That's because it's the very same magazine in which our next origin tale appears. Since we don't want to show you the same cover twice, I decided to save it till you finish reading this scintillating section, the very last intro I'll be writing for this valiant little volume.

And so we come to the big one, perhaps the most long-awaited origin tale of all. Let me clear my mind of earthbound matters as I return in memory once again to the early days of Marvel—to the beginning of The Silver Surfer.

The year is 1966. The scene is a little luncheonette where Jack Kirby and I had gone for a quick bite, and where we could continue our discussion of what to do for the next issue of *Fantastic Four*. The FF had already fought Dr. Doom, The Mole Man, The Sub-Mariner, and many, many other superpowerful foes. Both Jack and I were wracking our brains for some opponent who would be able to offer a still greater challenge than any of those the FF had yet encountered. We knew we needed a menace which would prove to be dynamic, daring, and totally different. Sounds easy, huh?

There's no need to make you suffer through the whole tortuous process with us. Suffice it to say that we eventually came up with just what we had been looking for. The FF's next super-foe would be more than just a man, more than just a group of men, more than a mere creature from another planet, or any group of planets. No, the FF's next super-foe would be a seemingly omnipotent being who could destroy entire planets at will . . . who could alter and reshape entire worlds . . . who was as superior to Homo sapiens as a man is to an ant. The FF's next super-foe would be—Galactus!

It's hard to describe Galactus' impact upon our readers without having you think I'm exaggerating. The fans went ape. Our sales