

He asked what was happening. Then he made a kind of strangling sound, like his throat was compressed.

And the change began.

Any time I remember that day or that night, it's with years of hindsight on top. But in that moment, I thought he was already dead.

His skin turned gray, all over, like a corpse. Every part of his body ballooned up like it was about to burst. I heard the cracking noise of his bones stretching.

Who could live through that? He had to be dead—and it was all my fault.

I remember praying—praying like I never had before—for him to live. “Please, God.” Over and over.

“Please don’t let Doc Banner die.”

**SHADOW BASE SITE B.
LOCATION UNKNOWN.**



Funny how things work out.



I was just a kid. I hadn't even lived yet.

I didn't know where my life was going to lead me.

And I didn't know there were worse things than dying.

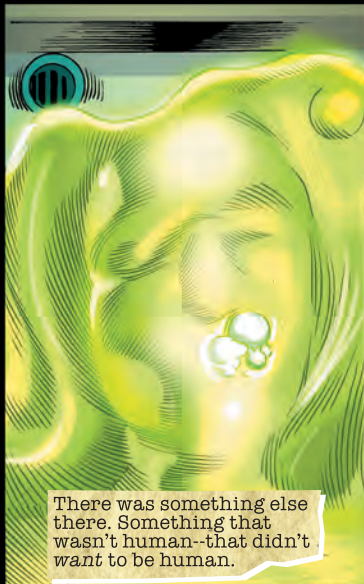


Back then, it was all strange and new. I didn't know what I was seeing.

How do I describe what I saw?



The Doc's face was gone.



There was something else there. Something that wasn't human--that didn't want to be human.



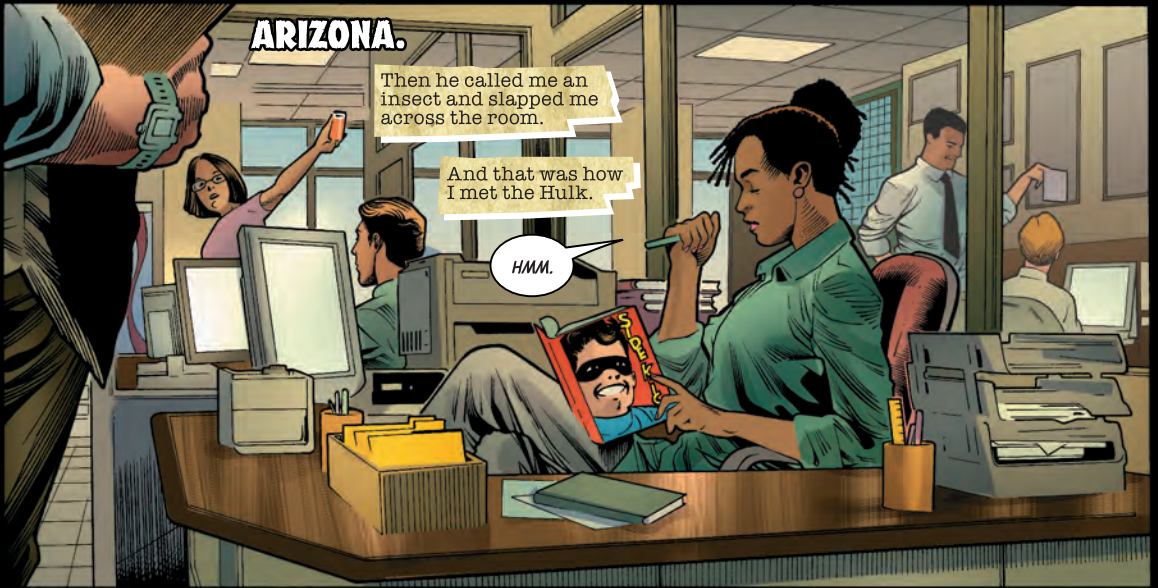
Something angry.

ARIZONA.

Then he called me an insect and slapped me across the room.

And that was how I met the Hulk.

HMM.



HEY, JACKIE.
LISTEN, CAN I HAVE A WORD?

SURE, MURRAY.

I WAS JUST FLIPPING THROUGH RICK JONES' AUTOBIOGRAPHY.



I'M THINKING THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING THERE. HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO MEET THE HULK.

IT COULD BE, I DON'T KNOW--A HUMAN INTEREST PIECE--

RIGHT. NOT A NEWS PIECE.



JACKIE--YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU SAID WE BROKE THE HULK STORY, SO WE HAD TO KEEP BREAKING IT?

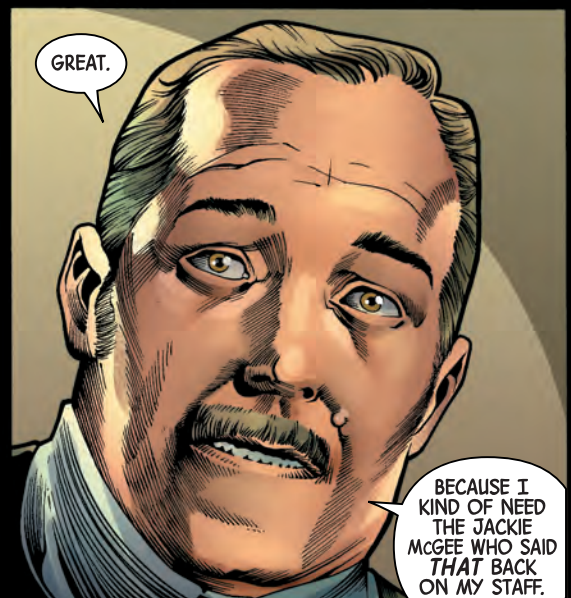
IT WAS RIGHT BEFORE YOU GOT US THAT EXCLUSIVE FROM CAPTAIN MARVEL IN SPACE.

...YEAH. I REMEMBER.



GREAT.

BECAUSE I KIND OF NEED THE JACKIE MCGEE WHO SAID THAT BACK ON MY STAFF.





MURRAY...

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. IT'S YOUR STORY, JACKS.

IT'S THE HERALD'S STORY.



YEAH. BUT IT COMES WITH A PRICE.

BRUCE BANNER'S WORLD, HIS LIFE...IT'S HORROR, MURRAY. IT'S HELL.

YOU SEE THINGS THERE.



THINGS YOU CAN'T UNSEE.



AND WHAT IS OUR BIG HULK STORY, ANYWAY? THAT HE'S BACK? THERE'S FOOTAGE OF HIM CHATTING WITH SPACE RACCOONS IN MANHATTAN.

WHAT DO WE HAVE NOW THAT THE NATIONAL PAPERS DON'T?

WELL... THERE'S THIS.



AN OLD CONTACT IN CALIFORNIA SENT ME THESE.

CRIME SCENE PHOTOS. HOUSE NEAR THE BEACH--TORN APART FROM THE INSIDE.

SO JUST ANOTHER SIGHTING? MURRAY, COME ON--



THE PROPERTY IS REGISTERED TO ELIZABETH ROSS-BANNER.



LORD...

AFTER HER DAD'S FUNERAL, SHE TOOK A TAXI FROM THE AIRPORT. DRIVER SAID SOME HOMELESS GUY WAS WAITING FOR HER-- SKINNY, BROWN HAIR. AND NOW SHE'S MISSING.



THERE'S A FLIGHT TO LAX IN THREE HOURS. YOU CAN GET OUT TO THE PROPERTY BY SUNDOWN.

AND JUST BETWEEN US? THE BOARD TOOK A MEETING THIS MORNING. WE'RE EXPANDING.

NEW OFFICES, MORE STAFF...WIDER DISTRIBUTION.



THE HERALD IS GOING NATIONAL-- THANKS TO THE HULK.

NO PRESSURE.

A lot of people ask why I keep chasing after Bruce. Is it envy?



RIGHT. NO PRESSURE...

I'll admit--early on, I was curious about what it was like being him.

But there was always more to it than that.