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THE MIGHTY THOR

APPROVED
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MY LORD--THE
DEMON DRAGS
US DOWN--
DOWN--

BUT--
WHAT WILL
BE OUR
FATE??

THE FATE,
MILADY, OF THOSE
WHO HAVE GONE
BEFORE--

OBLIVION--
AND
DEATH!!



THE DEMON FROM THE DEPTHS!

THE MIGHTY THOR!

INGRACIOUS
UPSTART! THOU
DOST DARE TO
QUESTION THINE
OWN FATHER?
TO MOCK ME,
TO TURN AWAY
FROM ME?

FOR THIS AND OTHER, MORE PAINFUL INSULTS
SHALT THOU BE EXILED--YEA, FOR ALL ETERNITY--

EXILED ON EARTH!



SPEAK,
THOR--BEG
THY FATHER'S
FORGIVENESS.

ASK ODIN'S
MERCY--
ERE THE MOMENT
PASS--AND
ALL BE LOST!

'TIS ALREADY
DONE: I HAVE
SAID WHAT I
MUST--

THOU
MUST ASK
NO MORE!

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LEE
PRESENTS:
GERRY
CONWAY,
SCRIPTOR
JOHN
BUSCEMA,
PENCILLER
JIM MOONEY,
FINISHED ART
SHELLY
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ENOUGH! I'LL HEAR NO FURTHER CARPING--

THE UNIVERSE HAD NEED OF A NEW RACE, A RACE ONLY EARTH COULD PROVIDE--

WHAT RIGHT HAST THOU TO JUDGE THY FATHER'S MEANING OR INTENT? WHAT I DID,* I DID BECAUSE I FOUND IT NECESSARY!

*LAST ISSUE.--ROY



--AND 'T WAS ODIN'S CHOICE --AND ODIN'S ALONE--

--AND NONE MAY SAY ME NAY!

ON EARTH, THE GODS OF ASGARD GLANCE FROM ONE TO ANOTHER-- THEIR JAWS FIRM THEIR HEADS TURN--AND ALL LOOK AWAY FROM ODIN, AND CAST THEIR LOT WITH THOR--



FOR ONE TIMELESS MOMENT, THEIR SKINS BURN-- AND THEN--



--'TIS DONE.

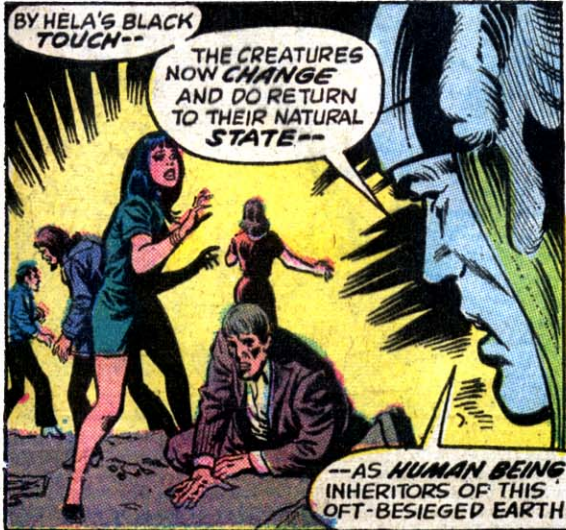
STUNNED, THEY STUMBLE FORWARD--THRU THE RUBBLE LEFT FROM THEIR BATTLE WITH THE MONSTER CALLED EGO-PRIME-- SLOWLY, UNTIL --

HO, FRIENDS--



--PERHAPS THE BATTLE IS NOT YET OVER!

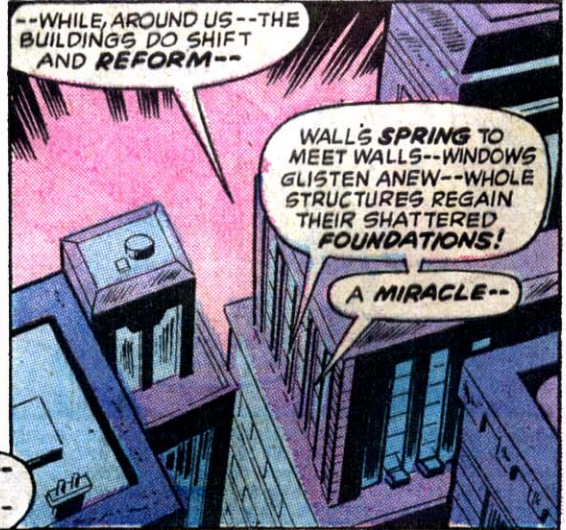
YONDER--THE CREATURES MUTATED BY EGO-PRIME WITH THEIR MASTER'S DEMISE--WILL THEY FIGHT, OR--?



BY HELA'S BLACK TOUCH--

THE CREATURES NOW CHANGE AND DO RETURN TO THEIR NATURAL STATE--

--AS HUMAN BEING-- INHERITORS OF THIS OFT-BESIEGED EARTH--



--WHILE, AROUND US--THE BUILDINGS DO SHIFT AND REFORM--

WALL'S SPRING TO MEET WALLS--WINDOWS GLISTEN ANEW--WHOLE STRUCTURES REGAIN THEIR SHATTERED FOUNDATIONS!

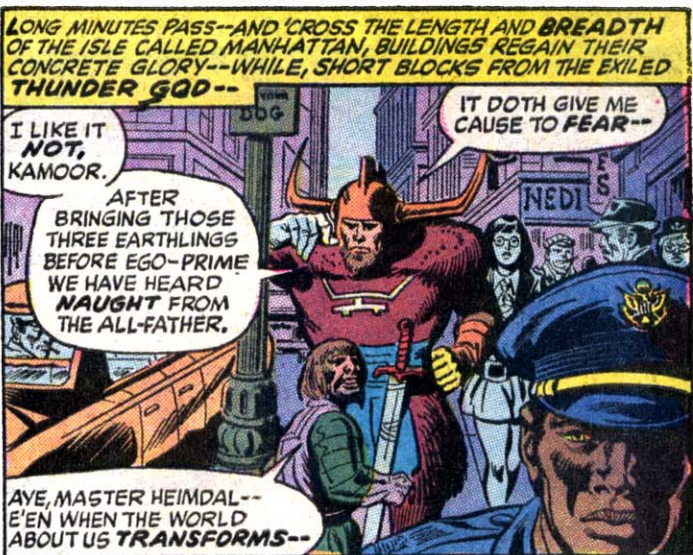
A MIRACLE--



--ONE WROUGHT BY ODIN, METHINKS --TO RIGHT WHAT **WRONGS** HE DID THIS DAY--

--AND RIGHT THEM ALL-- WITHOUT A WORD OF **SORROW**--

NOR AN ADMISSION OF DESERVED **GRIEF!**

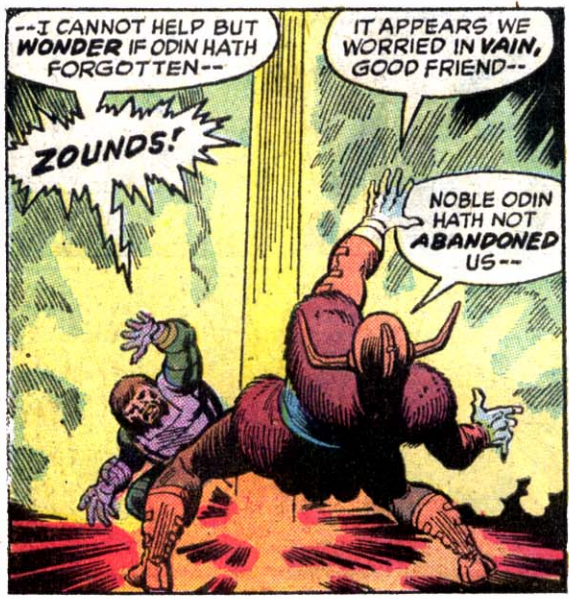


I LIKE IT **NOT,** KAMOR.

AFTER BRINGING THOSE THREE EARTHINGS BEFORE EGO-PRIME WE HAVE HEARD **NAUGHT** FROM THE ALL-FATHER.

IT DOTH GIVE ME CAUSE TO **FEAR**--

AYE, MASTER HEIMDAL-- E'EN WHEN THE WORLD ABOUT US **TRANSFORMS**--

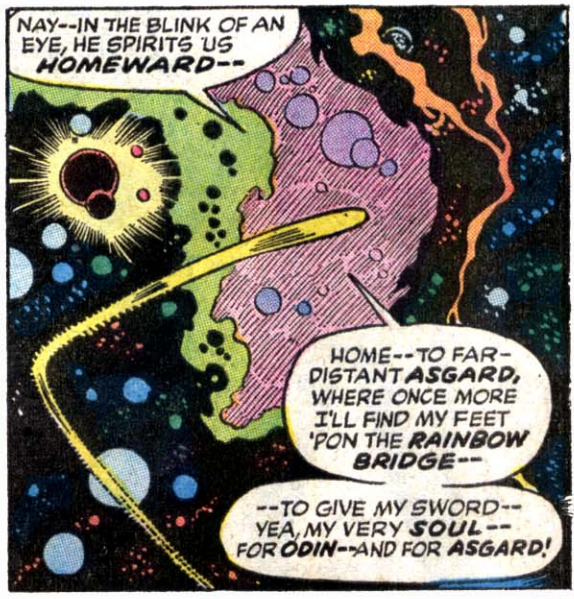


--I CANNOT HELP BUT **WONDER** IF ODIN HATH FORGOTTEN--

IT APPEARS WE WORRIED IN **VAIN,** GOOD FRIEND--

ZOUNDS!

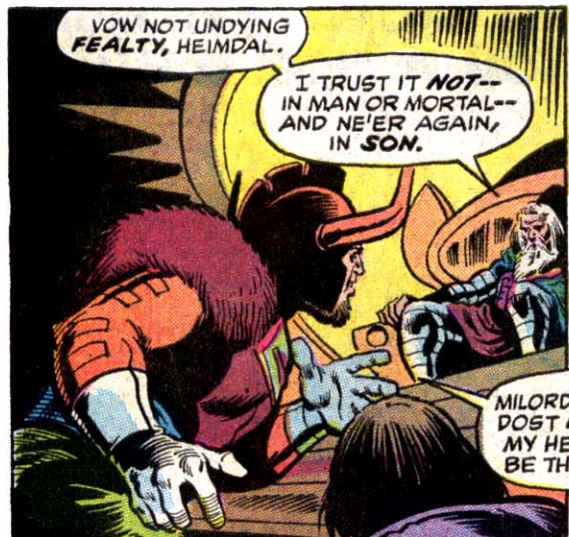
NOBLE ODIN HATH NOT **ABANDONED** US--



NAY--IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, HE SPIRITS US **HOMEWARD**--

HOME--TO FAR-DISTANT **ASGARD,** WHERE ONCE MORE I'LL FIND MY FEET 'PON THE **RAINBOW BRIDGE**--

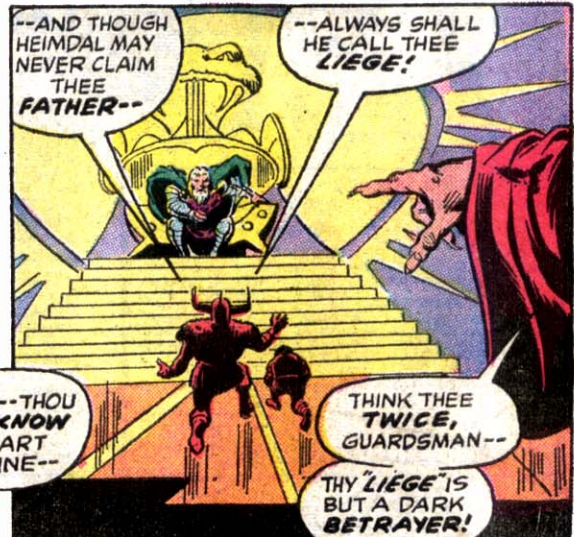
--TO GIVE MY **SWORD**-- YEA, MY VERY **SOUL**-- FOR ODIN--AND FOR **ASGARD!**



VOW NOT UNDYING **FEALTY,** HEIMDAL.

I TRUST IT **NOT**-- IN MAN OR MORTAL-- AND NE'ER AGAIN, IN **SON.**

MILORD--THOU DOST **KNOW** MY HEART BE THINE--



--AND THOUGH HEIMDAL MAY NEVER CLAIM THEE **FATHER**--

--ALWAYS SHALL HE CALL THEE **LIEGE!**

THINK THEE **TWICE,** GUARDSMAN--

THY **LIEGE** IS BUT A DARK **BETRAYER!**



KARNILLA, WATCH THY TONGUE!

AS NORN QUEEN, THOU ART BUT A GUEST IN ODIN'S REALM--

BE STILL, OLD ONE-- AND THOU, HEIMDAL-- LET THEE SPEAK--

--AND ASK THY LORD WHERE BE HIS SON AND KIND COMPANIONS!



MILORD-- DARE I ASK?

HAS THE NOBLE THOR FALLEN? ARE WE TO LOSE SUCH A BLESSED PRINCE?

FALLEN NAY--



--IF ONLY IT WERE SO!

DEATH WOULD BRING GRIEF-- NOT SO BITTER AN ANGER--

NOT SO DEEP A DISGRACE!

HE SAW FIT TO CALL ME UNTHINKING-- TO SAY I CARED NOT THAT EARTHMEN MIGHT BE INJURED BY MY COSMIC PLAN--

MY OWN SON-- DID CALL ME CRUEL--



AND FOR THAT SHALL HE DEARLY PAY!

STARS! NEVER HAVE I SEEN ODIN RAGE SO--

YEA--BUT NOT SO MUCH AT THOR, I THINK--

--AS AT HIMSELF!

A PRETTY THOUGHT, VIZIER--BUT POINTLESS--



--FOR WHAT CAN IT MATTER WHEN MY BELOVED BALDER STANDS TRAPPED UPON A DISTANT WORLD--

--AND ALL ASGARD WAITS FOR HIS--AND THEIR--MOST SWIFT RETURN!

BUT NOT ONLY THE GODS OF ASGARD SUFFER THE FATE OF EXILE-- OTHERS, WHOSE DESTINY IS INEXTRICABLY INTWINED WITH THEIRS, ARE ALSO UNKNOWINGLY DOOMED--

OTHERS-- SUCH AS THE RIGELLIAN COLONIZER NAMED TANA NILE, AND THE LONE SURVIVOR OF ANNIHILATED BLACKWORLD, SILAS GRANT, WHO LOOK NOW FROM THEIR PLACE OF HIDING TO SEE--

THOR-- AND THOSE OTHER LADS--

WHY, THERE'S EVEN THAT LOVELY LASS, WILDEGARDE--

BUT-- THEY LOOK SO-- GRIM!

GRIM, SILAS GRANT--?

A WORRIED FROWN MARRING THE DELICATE SYMMETRY OF HER ALIEN FEATURES, TANA NILE LEAVES THE BUILDING AT A RUN-- AND QUICKLY QUESTIONS THE SOMBER ASGARDIANS SHE ENCOUNTERS--

EXILED? NO IT CAN'T BE TRUE--

I'D HOPED-- BEYOND REASON-- THAT ONE OF YOU MIGHT RETURN ME TO MY PEOPLE-- BUT NOW--!

FEAR NOT, RIGELLIAN!

THOU'ST STAY WITH US, TILL A WAY IS FOUND--

I AM NOT SO MUCH A FOOL AS TO BELIEVE IN MIRACLES, THUNDER GOD--!

NO, THE FACT REMAINS-- MY SHIP WAS DESTROYED WITH BLACKWORLD--

--MY PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE THAT I, TOO, WAS CONSUMED--

--AND SO-- I MUST CAST MY LOT-- WITH EARTH!

HER HAND TOUCHES A GLISTENING KNOB ON HER CONTROL PACK-- TWISTS-- AND IN A SUDDEN BRILLIANT GLOW, HER FORM SEEMS TO MELT--

--AND WHEN THE INSTANT PASSES, ALL EYES REMAIN RIVETED TO THE ALIEN'S ALTERED FORM!

OLD MAN, I LIKE THY TASTE--

PERHAPS THIS TIME ON EARTH WILL BE TO FANDRAL'S LIKING AFTER ALL!



TIME WILL TELL, ASGARDIAN. I THINK WE'LL EACH HAVE ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE, IF WE'RE ALL TO SURVIVE.

THOUGH I'VE LIVED ON THIS WORLD BEFORE, I LIVED ALOOF...APART FROM THE STREAM OF LIFE, AN OUTSIDER...

NOW...AS I'VE CHANGED MY APPEARANCE ...SO MUST I CHANGE MY MIND.



SENTIMENTS MOST FAIR, TANA NILE...ONES WE'D ALL DO WELL TO EMULATE IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

YET BEFORE WE DO LEARN HOW TO LIVE AMONGST THE MEN OF EARTH...

...WE MUST FIND WHERE TO LIVE...

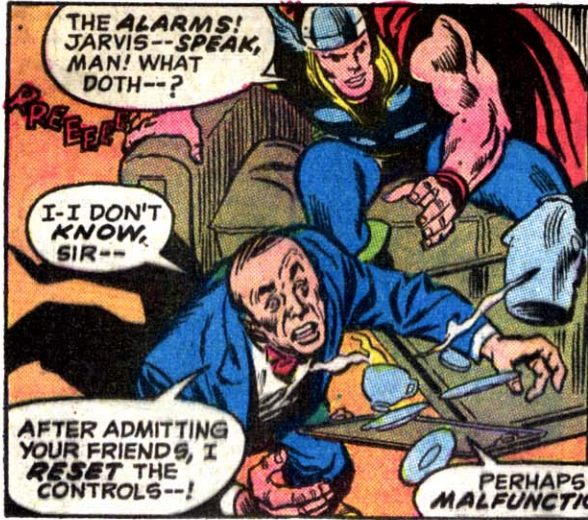
...AND METHINKS I DO HAVE AN ANSWER!

ON A FAMILIAR STREET IN THE EAST SIXTIES, OVERLOOKING THE GREEN AND BROWN HILLOCKS OF MANHATTAN'S CENTRAL PARK, THERE STANDS A CERTAIN MANSION--OWNED BY MILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST TONY STARK--AND CURRENTLY ON PERMANENT LEASE TO THE GROUP OF WORLD-FAMOUS ADVENTURERS CALLED--THE AVENGERS!



IT IS THERE, SEVERAL HOURS LATER, THAT WE FIND THOR AND HIS MOROSE COMPANIONS--EACH SUFFERING, JUST A LITTLE, FROM HIS OWN PRIVATE FORM OF DELAYED SHOCK--

--AND SUFFERING IN SILENCE, UNTIL--

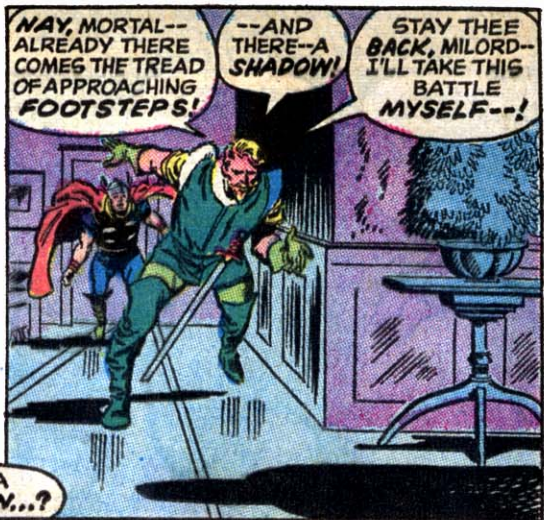


THE ALARMS! JARVIS--SPEAK, MAN! WHAT DOETH--?

I-I DON'T KNOW, SIR--

AFTER ADMITTING YOUR FRIENDS, I RESET THE CONTROLS--!

PERHAPS A MALFUNCTION...?



HAY, MORTAL-- ALREADY THERE COMES THE TREAD OF APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS!

--AND THERE--A SHADOW!

STAY THEE BACK, MILORD-- I'LL TAKE THIS BATTLE MYSELF--!



THERE'S A FRUSTRATED RAGE BOILING WITHIN ME--

--IT DOETH NEED AN OUT--

--AND NOW-- SHALL HAVE IT!



WHAM!



FANDRAL, HOLD--THOU DOST NOT KNOW THIS WORLD, MY FRIEND--!

WHAT NEED HAVE I FOR KNOWLEDGE, THUNDER GOD?

ONCE STRUCK... FANDRAL DOETH STIKE IN TURN!



THEN STRIKE SOME-BODY ELSE, BUDDY--!

TAKE MY WORD FOR IT--YOU'VE GOT NO QUARREL--WITH IRON MAN!

INTRODUCTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS QUICKLY FOLLOW, AND THE GRIM STORY UNFOLDS, TEMPERS SLOWLY COOL...

I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU ASGARDIANS, THOR... YOU DO HAVE A CERTAIN STYLE!

I GATHER YOUR FATHER WASN'T TOO PLEASED WITH YOUR OVERALL REACTION...?

AN UNDER-STATEMENT, AVENGER...

"...AS PUNISHMENT FOR OUR "DISLOYAL CRITICISM" WE HAVE BEEN MARDOONED ON THY PLANET... A SITUATION LESS DESIRED THAN THOU WOULDST THINK.

TELL ME SOMETHING NEW, THUNDER GOD.

ONE CITY SEEMS MUCH LIKE ANOTHER, MY FRIEND...

I'M A NEW YORKER, REMEMBER?

...AND NONE SATISFACTORY.

YEAH... I SEE YOUR POINT.

GUESS YOU'LL BE STOPPING HERE A WHILE, RIGHT?

FOR A TIME.

TOMORROW, FANDRAL, HOGLIN, AND LOUD VOLSTAGG SHALL-- HOLD!

FANDRAL-- ARE WE BLIND? VOLSTAGG--

GONE!

TO THINK OF IT, MILORD-- I'VE NOT SEEN HIM SINCE BATTLE BEGAN, HOURS AGO--!

DON'T WORRY, FANDRAL. FROM WHAT THOR'S TOLD ME--

"--HE'S PROBABLY OFF TREMBLING IN A CELLAR SOMEWHERE--!"

WELL, LITTLE ONE? FOR NIGH ON TWO HOURS HAVE WE HID--

DOST THOU YET FEEL FRIGHTENED OF THE FIGHTING WITHOUT?

GEE, MISTER WOHLSTAGG-- I DON'T KNOW.

MISSIE POMPADOUR IS STILL SCARED--

COULD WE STAY JUST A LITTLE LONGER? PLEASE?

AS THOU DOST WISH, CHILD--

--AND I ALWAYS LISTEN TO MISSIE POMPADOUR.

--THOUGH THE HEART-- OF NOBLE VOLSTAGG YEARS ALWAYS-- FOR BATTLE-- Z-ZZZZZZ

RECEIVING NO ANSWER, THE CHILD MOVES CLOSER TO THE NOW-SLUMBERING ASGARDIAN, HER EYES-- THOUGH INQUISITIVE-- STRANGELY COLD-- AND HARD.

MISTER WOHLSTAGG?

SILENT, SHE STARES AT THE GIANT'S MASSIVE FIGURE... THE STEADY RISE AND FALL OF HIS BULGING CHEST...

SATISFIED WITH WHAT SHE SEES, THE GIRL TURNS TOWARD THE SHADOWS AT THE REAR OF THE MUSTY BASEMENT, HUMMING SOFTLY TO HERSELF AS SHE WALKS INTO A SEEMING CORNER...



...AND WITH A SMILE, GREET'S SOMETHING TALL... AND DARK.



AS IN ALL THINGS, THERE ARE DEGREES OF DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR--AND FOR ONE WHO LOVES AS STRONGLY AS THOR LOVES, AND HAS HAD THAT LOVE SEEMINGLY BETRAYED BY HIS OWN FATHER'S HAND--THE DESPAIR IS GREAT--THE DEPRESSION, DEEP--

AND SO, IN THE AVENGERS MANSION LATER THAT AFTERNOON, AS THE OTHERS EXPLORE THEIR NEW LAND--AND SEARCH FOR THE MISSING VOLSTAGG--THOR SITS BROODING, LOST IN DARK THOUGHTS, UNTIL--



FORGIVE ME, FAIR ONE--MY MIND DOTH WANDER, THOU WERT SAYING--?

IF THE LADY SIF MAY BE GO BOLD, MY LORD--

--I DO THINK 'TIS TIME THOU DIDST SHOW ME THIS WORLD--



--THE SCARLET WITCH.

THEY FIT THEE WELL, SIF...

...AND PERHAPS THOU ART CORRECT. TOO LONG HATH THOR SAT MUSING HERE...



...MAYHAP 'TIS TIME FOR ANOTHER TO TAKE HIS PLACE...

...ANOTHER, MORE SUITED TO THIS LAND...



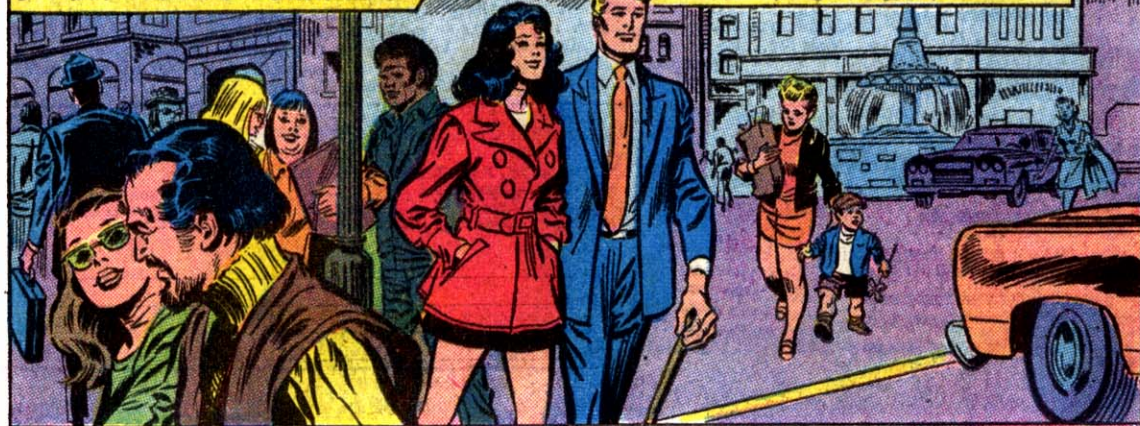
...THE THUNDER GOD'S HUMAN ALTER EGO...

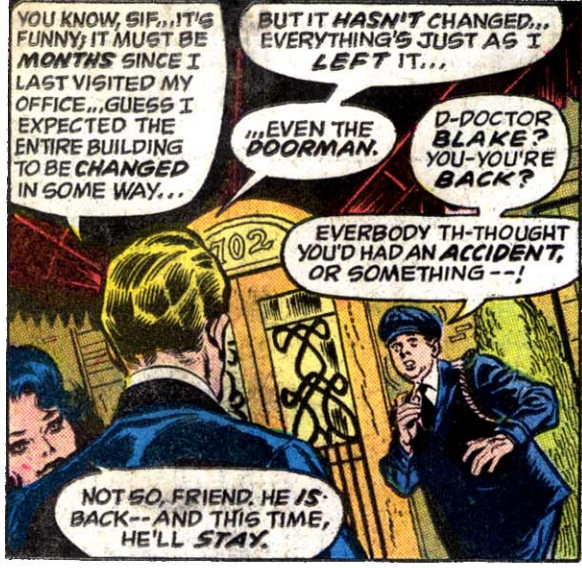
...DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE!



SOON, SEVERAL BLOCKS SOUTH AND EAST, TWO MORE PEDESTRIANS JOIN THE CITY'S FLOW...ONE WALKING TALL, PROUD...THE OTHER WITH A SLIGHT, BARELY NOTICEABLE LIMP...

... AND ON THE LATTER OF THESE TWO, STERN FEATURES SLOWLY LOOSEN... RELAX... AND FORM A SMILE...





YOU KNOW, SIF... IT'S FUNNY; IT MUST BE MONTHS SINCE I LAST VISITED MY OFFICE... GUESS I EXPECTED THE ENTIRE BUILDING TO BE CHANGED IN SOME WAY...

BUT IT HASN'T CHANGED... EVERYTHING'S JUST AS I LEFT IT...

...EVEN THE DOORMAN.

D-DOCTOR BLAKE? YOU-YOU'RE BACK?

EVERBODY TH-THOUGHT YOU'D HAD AN ACCIDENT, OR SOMETHING--!

NOT SO, FRIEND. HE IS BACK-- AND THIS TIME, HE'LL STAY.



HE-HELLO, MR. SARRON?

THIS IS LOU, DOWNSTAIRS... LOU, THE DOORMAN, MR. SARRON.

LOOK-- YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE WHO JUST WALTZED IN--!

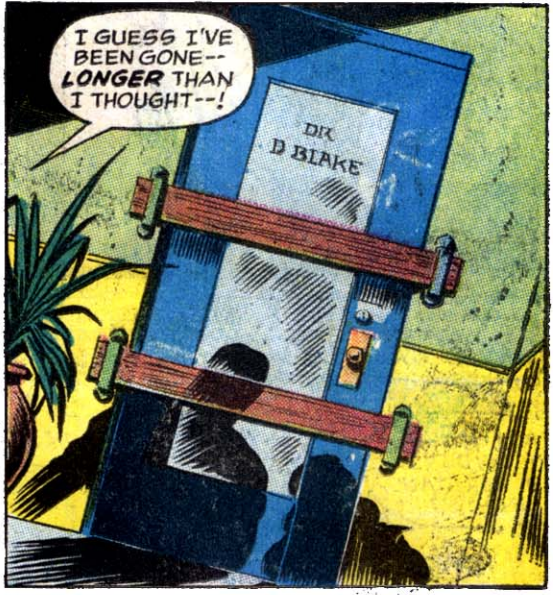


MOMENTS LATER, AS THE ELEVATOR SLIDES TO A HALT ON THE SIXTEENTH FLOOR--

...LIKE THIS PLACE, I THINK, SIF. IT'S...

GOOD LORD--NO!

MILORD, WHAT IS IT?



I GUESS I'VE BEEN GONE-- LONGER THAN I THOUGHT--!



QUITE, DOCTOR BLAKE. THAT IS... IF YOU ARE DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE.

BUT BE THAT AS IT MAY, I DON'T THINK WE'VE EVER MET, SIR...

MY NAME IS SARRON... KARL SARRON.

I'M THE OWNER OF THIS BUILDING.



THEN MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT THIS'S ALL ABOUT--

I'VE PAID RENT MONTHS IN ADVANCE-- ALMOST THROUGH NEXT YEAR--

HOW IN HEAVEN'S NAME DO YOU--

DOCTOR BLAKE... YOU SEEM LIKE A SENSIBLE MAN... WE'RE BOTH SENSIBLE MEN.

...AND I SWEAR TO YOU, MY FRIEND, AMONG ALL THE PAPERS FORWARDED TO ME... THERE WAS NO MENTION OF YOUR LEASE... OR ANY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT YOU MAY HAVE HAD WITH YOUR FORMER LANDLORDS...

I ACQUIRED THIS BUILDING ONLY RECENTLY... THE PREVIOUS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION COULD NO LONGER AFFORD THE UPKEEP, I'M AFRAID...

HOWEVER, IF YOU CAN PRODUCE YOUR OWN COPY...

LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO, SARRON...

EXCELLENT, DOCTOR BLAKE.

I'LL EXPECT TO SEE YOU IN MY OFFICE MONDAY... AND PERHAPS THEN WE'LL MANAGE TO STRAIGHTEN THIS MATTER OUT...

...TO OUR... MUTUAL... SATISFACTION!

...NOT E'EN IN ASGARD HAVE WE A PLACE SUCH AS THIS.

TRUE, THERE ARE GARDENS... PARKS WITH WALKS, FOUNTAINS... SCULPTURE LIKE NOTHING IN ALL LANDS OF MEN... AND STILL THIS CONCEPT OF A CENTRAL PARK...

AH, LASS--YE TRULY DUNNA UNDERSTAND, DO YE?

IT'S NOT THE IDEA OF IT, HILDEGARDE--

IT'S THE FEEL! --BREATHE IT, LASSIES--IT'S ALMOST LIKE ME BLESSED HOME.

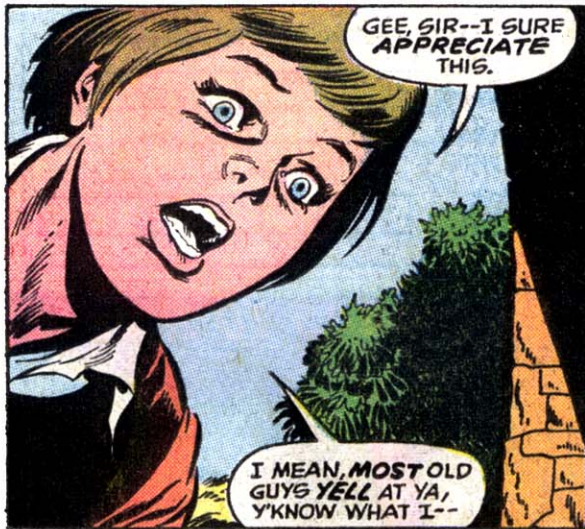
NOW DO YE UNDERSTAND, ASGARDIAN... AND YE, TANA NILE...?

SUMMER, ME GIRLS... SUMMER ON A WORLD LIKE EARTH, IT'S LIKE NO HEADY DRINK YE'VE EVER TASTED!

IT'S NOT THE PLACE, YE SILLY FOOLS... IT'S THE TIME!

CHUCK... THE BALL! I CATCH IT!

I-I CAN'T--! IT'S GOING TOO HIGH!



WITH A DISINTERESTED SHRUG, THE BARTENDER RETURNS TO HIS SERVICE DUTIES, HIS HANDS MOVING IN A MECHANICAL RHYTHM, BETRAYING NOT THE SLIGHTEST KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURE-- OR IDENTITY-- OF HIS UNFAMILIAR GUESTS--

I PRITHEE, BALDER--SMILE-- THOU ART TOO GRIM--

IN TRUTH, THOU DOST MAKE HOGUN LOOK LIKE THE MOST WILY SPRITE.

SAVE THY LIGHT HEARTED HUMOR, FANDRAL.

BALDER MOANS THE LOSS OF KARNILLA--

--WHILE WE DO HAVE ONLY ASGARD FOR WHICH TO GRIEVE,

THINKEST THOU I BE COLD, HOGUN? AS MUCH AS THEE OR FANDRAL, I ACHIEVE FOR DISTANT BIFROST--

--FOR 'T WAS A LOVE I'D DARED DENY--

--YET GREATER IS MY PAIN THAN HIS-- FOR ONLY NOW DO I FULLY UNDERSTAND MY LOVER'S NEED--

A LOVE FORSWORN, FOR THE NORN-QUEEN DID WAR 'GAINST ODIN--AND THUS, 'GAINST ME--

--A WAR NOW SEEMINGLY OVER, THOUGH REPLACED BY STILL ANOTHER--

--ONE I WAGE-- A WAR, WITH MY OWN NOBLE LIEGE!

AS DO WE ALL, BALDER--YET WE STILL DO LIVE, AND--EH?

MAY WE AID THEE, MILADIES?

GOSH, I HOPE SO...!

ASK IT, CHILD-- AND 'TIS THINE. YET BEFORE THOU DOST--

...ANSWER ME THIS: KNOW THEE A GOODLY GUIDE--ONE WHO DOTH UNDERSTAND THIS CITY--AND COULD DULY DIRECT MY FRIENDS' AND MYSELF--?

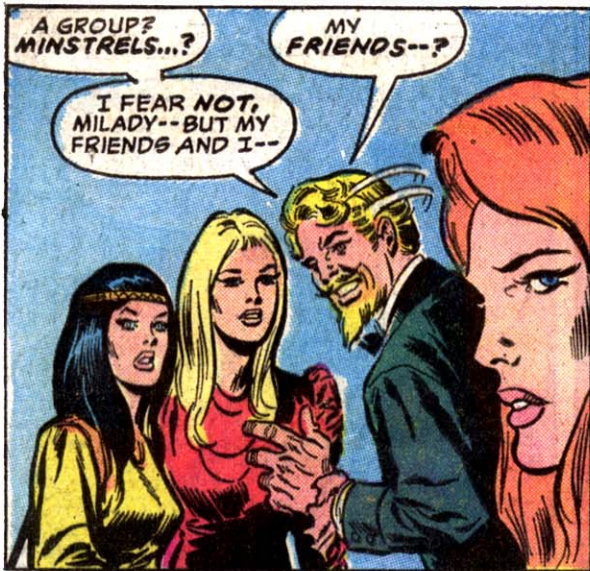
WELL, GOSH-- I MEAN, WE ALL LIVE HERE, SHIRLEY AND CHARLENE AND ME--

IF YOU WANT, WE COULD SORTA--YOU KNOW--SHOW YOU THINGS.

CHILD--A TRULY ADMIRABLE SUGGESTION NOW--

--THY QUESTION?

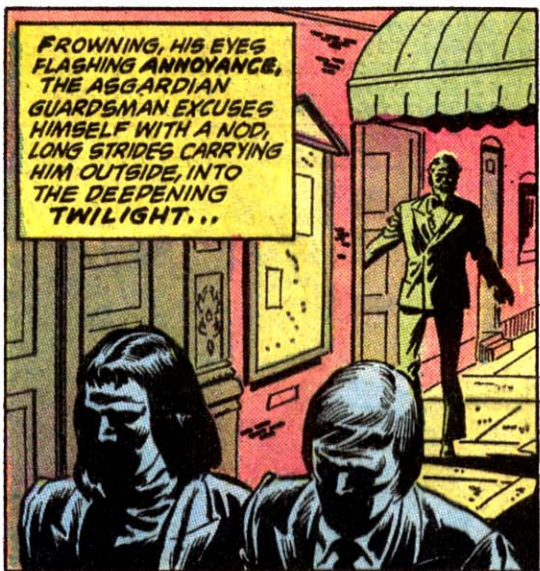
ARE YOU WITH A GROUP?



A GROUP?
MINSTRELS...?

MY
FRIENDS--?

I FEAR NOT,
MILADY--BUT MY
FRIENDS AND I--



FROWNING, HIS EYES
FLASHING ANNOYANCE,
THE ASSGARDIAN
GUARDSMAN EXCUSES
HIMSELF WITH A NOD,
LONG STRIDES CARRYING
HIM OUTSIDE, INTO
THE DEEPENING
TWILIGHT...



EYEBROWS RAISED, HE WONDERS--
HAS HE GONE TOO FAR, THIS
TIME? A HARMLESS SHAM, HAS
HIS ACT BECOME MORE THAN
THAT--CAUSING ANGER INSTEAD
OF LAUGHTER--?

HE BEGINS
TO CALL
OUT--



--AND
CHOKES--
STUNNED!

BY ODIN'S
SILVER
BEARD--

GONE!



FOR AN INSTANT, FANDRAL
STARES, SPEECHLESS--THEN,
HE LUNGES--

--AND AS HE
STEPS FROM
LIGHT TO
SHADOW, HE
FEELS A
SUDDEN, EERIE
CHILL--



--A CHILL WHICH
ENGULFS HIM--

--GRASPS
HIM--

--AND, LIKE A
THING ALIVE--
JERKS HIM AWAY!

ELSEWHERE, THE MIDNIGHT HOURS LIE HEAVILY ON THE ALL-TOO-MORTAL SHOULDERS OF DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE--FOR THESE ARE THE COLDEST HOURS, THE EMPTIEST MOMENTS, WHEN THE DARKER THOUGHTS OF A MAN'S EXISTENCE FIND THEIR MEAT--IN THE FOOD OF AN ACHING DEPRESSION--!

MILORD, PLEASE-- EASE THY BURDENED SOUL-- BLAME NOT THYSELF FOR OUR FLIGHT--

'T WAS A DECISION FOR EACH-- A DECISION FREELY MADE--

--WHICH WE NONE OF US REGRET!

IT'S NOT JUST THAT, SIF...

...HOW CAN I BE REALLY SURE I MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE...?

WHO AM I TO QUESTION ODIN? GOD OR MAN-- I'M NOT INFALLIBLE--

--BUT MAYBE--JUST MAYBE--I'M A BIT TOO PROUD!

BALDER, DO YOU--? BALDER?

LOVE, DOST THOU FORGET? THEY DID LEAVE THREE HOURS AGO--

--TO SEARCH FOR LOST VOLSTAGG, I SUPPOSE!

THREE HOURS? THAT LONG...?

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS, SIF? TANA NILE, SILAS...

...WHERE...?

GONE TOO... I NEVER DID THINK...

MY LORD... THAT SOUND...!

I HEARD IT, SIF.

AND PERHAPS I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF SELF-RECRIMINATIONS...

...PERHAPS... THE PROPER PLACE FOR THOR IS BATTLE...

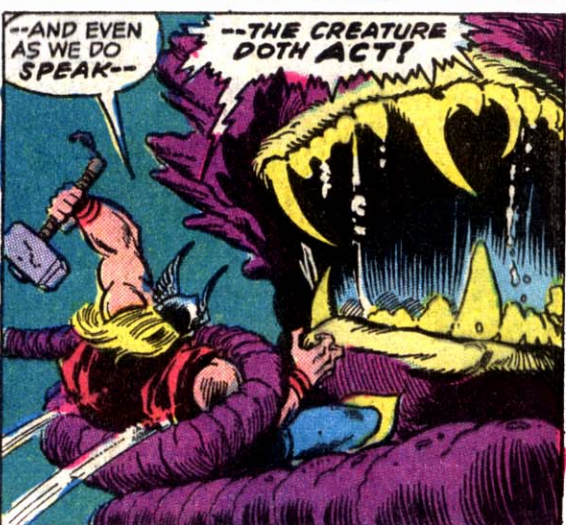
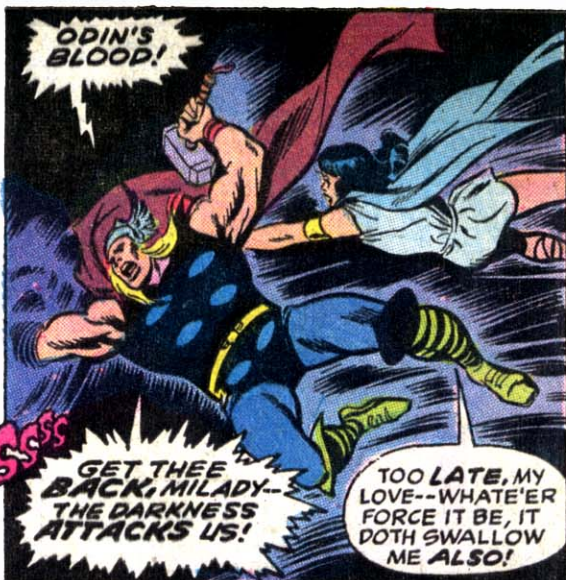
...BATTLE WITH THE STENCH OF BLOODY WAR!

AGAIN THERE COMES THE SOUND... A WHISPER UNLIKE ANY I HAVE E'ER HEARD BEFORE.

STAY THEE HERE, MILADY, I'LL SEEK THE CAUSE ALONE.

NOT SO, THOR. MY SWORD IS WITH THEE...

THIS, I SWEAR!



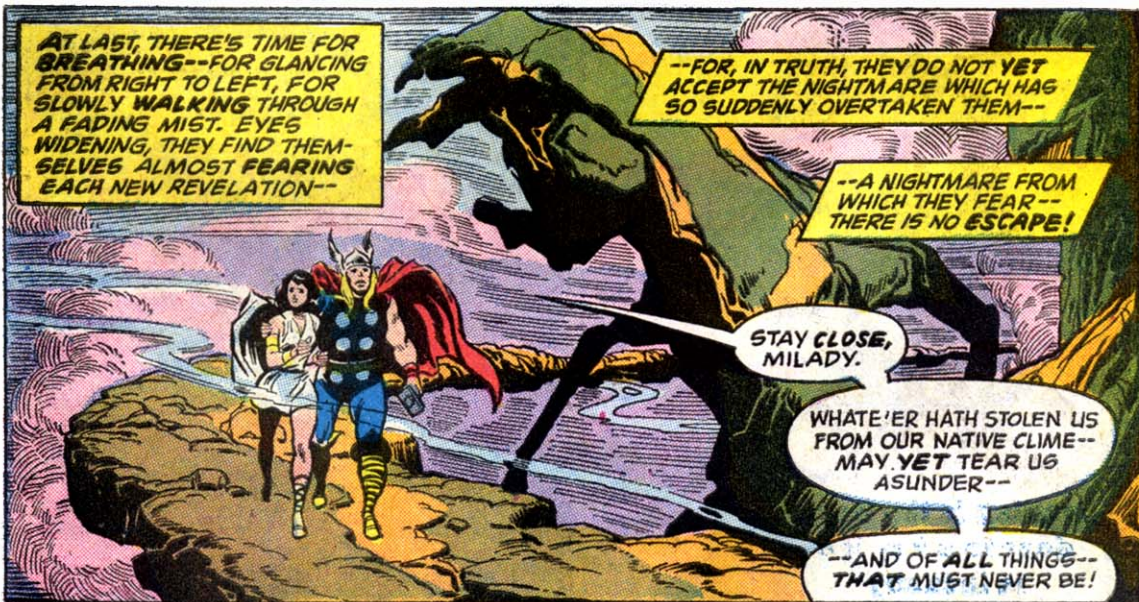
BRACING HIMSELF, MUSCLES STRAINING 'GAINST THE CREATURE'S TIGHTENING TENTACLES--THOR SLAMS FORWARD, HIS HAMMER FLASHING LIKE A BEE'S STING--



--A STING WHOSE STRIKING ECHOES IN THE EMPTY DARKNESS--SHATTERING A SMALL PORTION OF REALITY--AND WITH THAT DYING PORTION, SHATTERING THE NIGHT AS WELL--!



AT LAST, THERE'S TIME FOR BREATHING--FOR GLANCING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT, FOR SLOWLY WALKING THROUGH A FADING MIST. EYES WIDENING, THEY FIND THEMSELVES ALMOST FEARING EACH NEW REVELATION--



--FOR, IN TRUTH, THEY DO NOT YET ACCEPT THE NIGHTMARE WHICH HAG SO SUDDENLY OVERTAKEN THEM--

--A NIGHTMARE FROM WHICH THEY FEAR-- THERE IS NO ESCAPE!

STAY CLOSE, MILADY.

WHATE'ER HATH STOLEN US FROM OUR NATIVE CLIME-- MAY YET TEAR US ASUNDER--

--AND OF ALL THINGS-- THAT MUST NEVER BE!

THOR, THAT LIGHT--

YEA, I FEEL IT, SIF--

WHY DOH IT ATTRACT ME SO?

--AND MORE, SOMEHOW I DO KNOW--

YONDER LIES THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR QUESTIONS--THE CAUSE, THE FINAL CLUE--

--THE ULTIMATE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE WHICH HATH ENTRAPPED US ALL!

BUT WAIT-- NAY, NOT E'EN THIS DID I DREAM!

'TIS THE MOST DEADLY--MOST DREADED--ONE OF ALL



...**MEPHISTO!**

**WELCOME,
THUNDER
GOD--**



**AS YOU CAN NO
DOUBT SEE--**

**--WE HAVE
BEEN
EXPECTING
YOU!!**

**NEXT
ISSUE THE HOUNDS OF HADES!**