

SEPT # 311 50c

MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

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# THE MIGHTY THOR

pollard

**CRISIS IN THE INNER CITY!**



When DR. DONALD BLAKE strikes his wooden walking-stick upon the ground, it becomes the mystic hammer MJOLNIR—and the lame physician is transformed into the Norse God of Thunder, Master of the Storm, Lord of the Living Lightning—and heir to the throne of eternal Asgard...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: **THE MIGHTY THOR!**

# GRIEF MORE THAN A GOD MAY BEAR

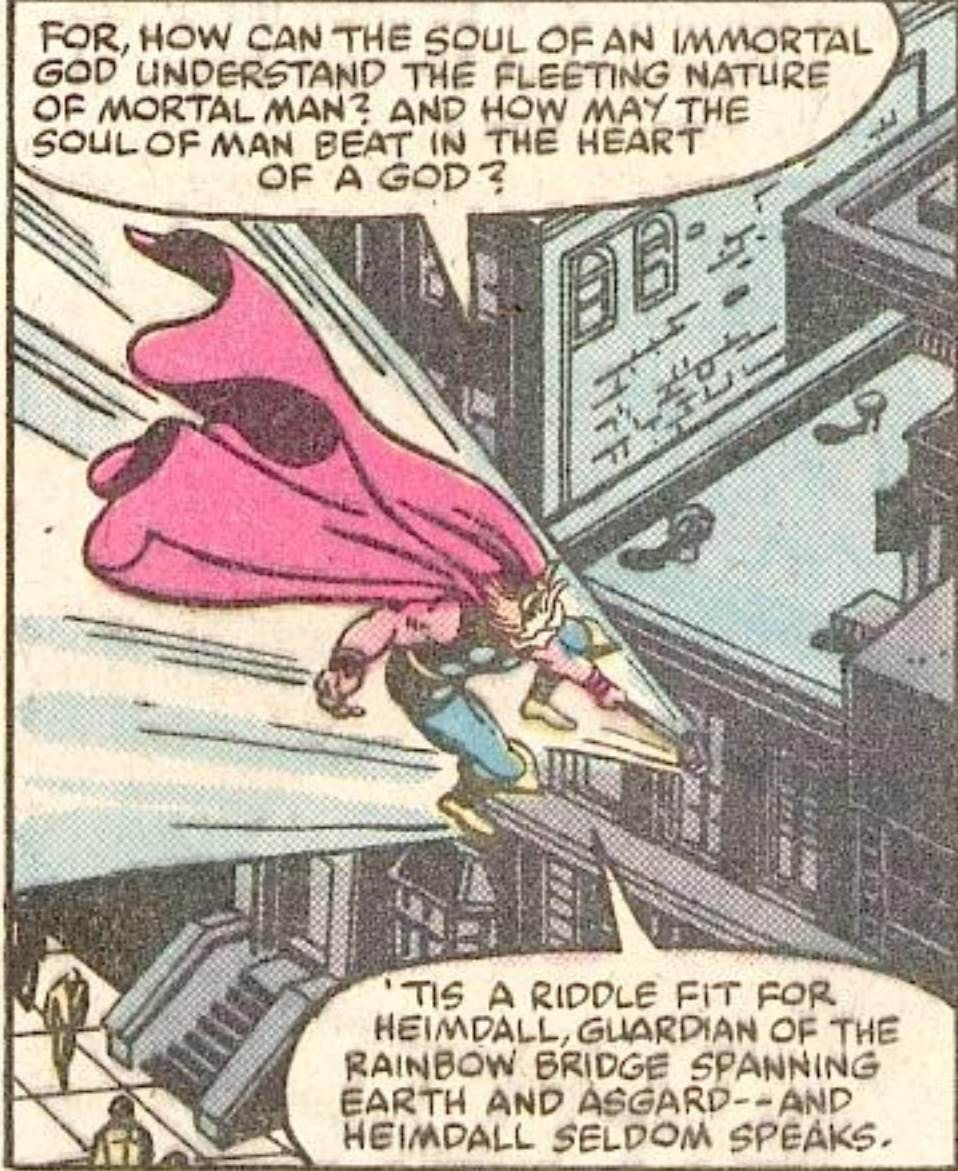
AN HOUR AFTER DAWN THE TEMPERATURE IS ALREADY 86 DEGREES AND STILL CLIMBING. THOR HEADS FOR DR. DONALD BLAKE'S APARTMENT AND THE START OF A NEW DAY...

HAVE I MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE, I WONDER, IN CHOOSING MIDGARD OVER ASGARD-- EARTH OVER THE SHINING REALM ETERNAL?

OR HAVE I IN TRUTH MERELY SUCCEEDED IN WIDENING THE GULF BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES OF MY SOUL?

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FOR, HOW CAN THE SOUL OF AN IMMORTAL GOD UNDERSTAND THE FLEETING NATURE OF MORTAL MAN? AND HOW MAY THE SOUL OF MAN BEAT IN THE HEART OF A GOD?

'TIS A RIDDLE FIT FOR HEIMDALL, GUARDIAN OF THE RAINBOW BRIDGE SPANNING EARTH AND ASGARD--AND HEIMDALL SELDOM SPEAKS.



YET THE RIDDLE VEXES ME-- FOR I BE BOTH MAN AND GOD.

OR, AT THE HEART OF IT, ARE BOTH ACTUALLY THE SAME?



IN THUNDER, HAMMER BECOMES WALKING STICK...

...AND MIGHTY THOR--



--BECOMES THE LAME PHYSICIAN, DR. DONALD BLAKE.

QUESTIONS I FEAR I'LL NEVER ANSWER-- AND MAYBE IT'S NOT EVEN WISE TO ASK THEM.

I'M FATED TO REMAIN BOTH BLAKE AND THOR.



AND MAYBE IT'S THE VERY CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO WHICH MAKES ME, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, WHAT I TRULY AM.

OFTEN CONFUSED... BUT NEVER DOUBTING.

AND BLAKE ENTERS THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE...



...WHERE, A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...

HOLD IT, SON! WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE?

M-ME? NOTHIN', MAN... I JUST--

THEN C'MERE AND SHOW ME!



NO! GOTTA GET AWAY!

STOP! THIEF!

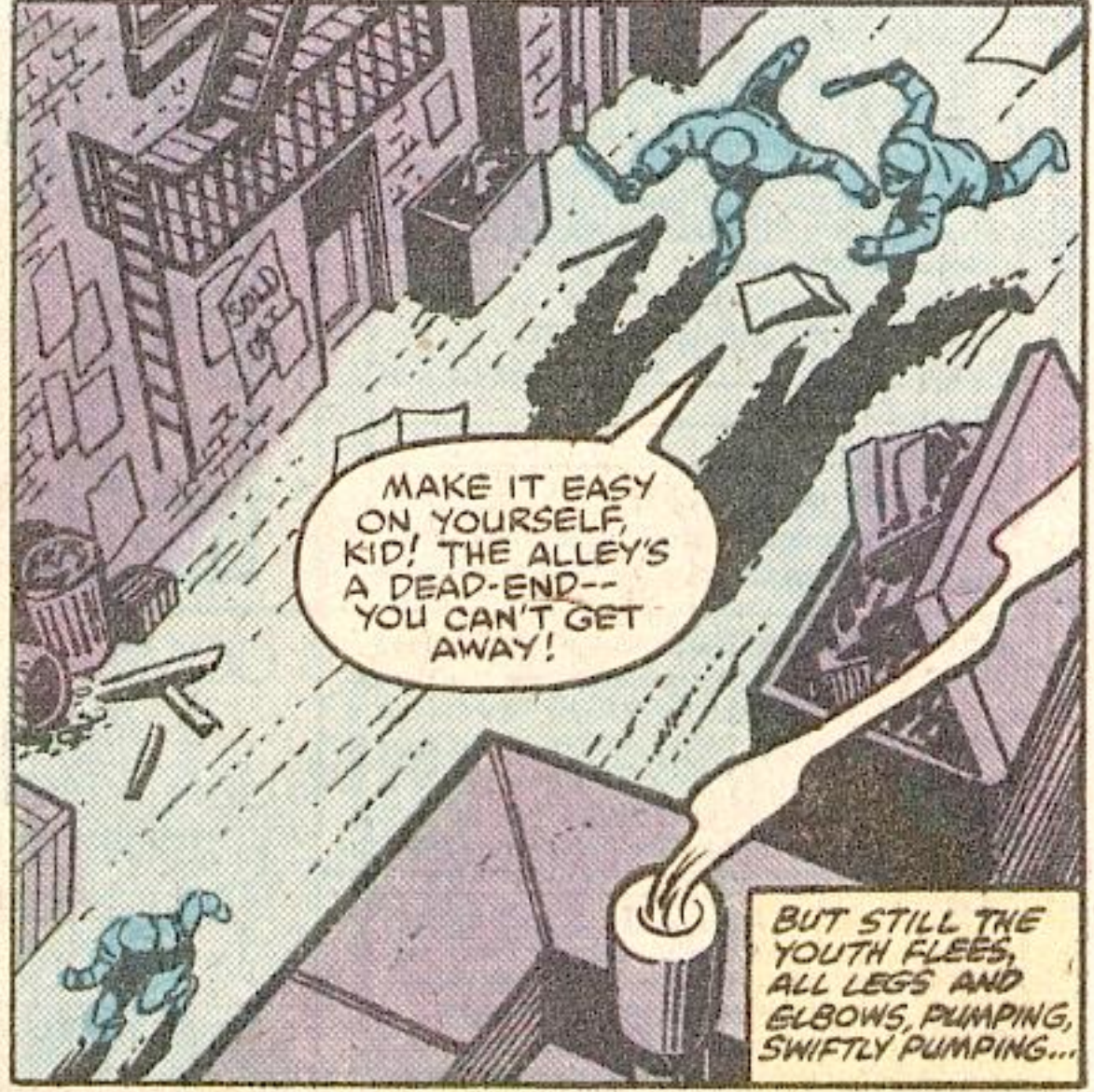


HELP! POLICE! STOP THAT KID! HE WAS STEALIN' FROM MY STORE!



COME ON-- HAVE TO LEAVE THE CAR-- TAKE HIM ON FOOT!

HOLD IT, KID! STOP!



MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF, KID! THE ALLEY'S A DEAD-END-- YOU CAN'T GET AWAY!

BUT STILL THE YOUTH FLEES, ALL LEGS AND ELBOWS, PUMPING, SWIFTLY PUMPING...



...UNTIL--

MY... CHEST!

HE'S STOPPING!



ALL RIGHT-- FREEZE!

WATCH HIM-- HE'S REACHING INTO HIS JACKET!



HE'S GOT A WEAPON!

BRAM

NO-- WAIT!



WHAT DID YOU DO, SIMMONS?! I DIDN'T SEE ANY WEAPON!

BUT HE... HE REACHED INTO HIS JACKET--!

YEAH, BUT HE'S JUST A KID...



NOTHING-- NOT EVEN A PEA-SHOOTER.

IT CAN'T BE-- NO! THEN WHAT WAS HE REACHING FOR?!

NEVER MIND THAT-- HE'S HURT BAD!

NO TIME FOR AN AMBULANCE, BUT THERE'S A CLINIC JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY-- WE'LL TAKE HIM IN THE PATROL CAR!

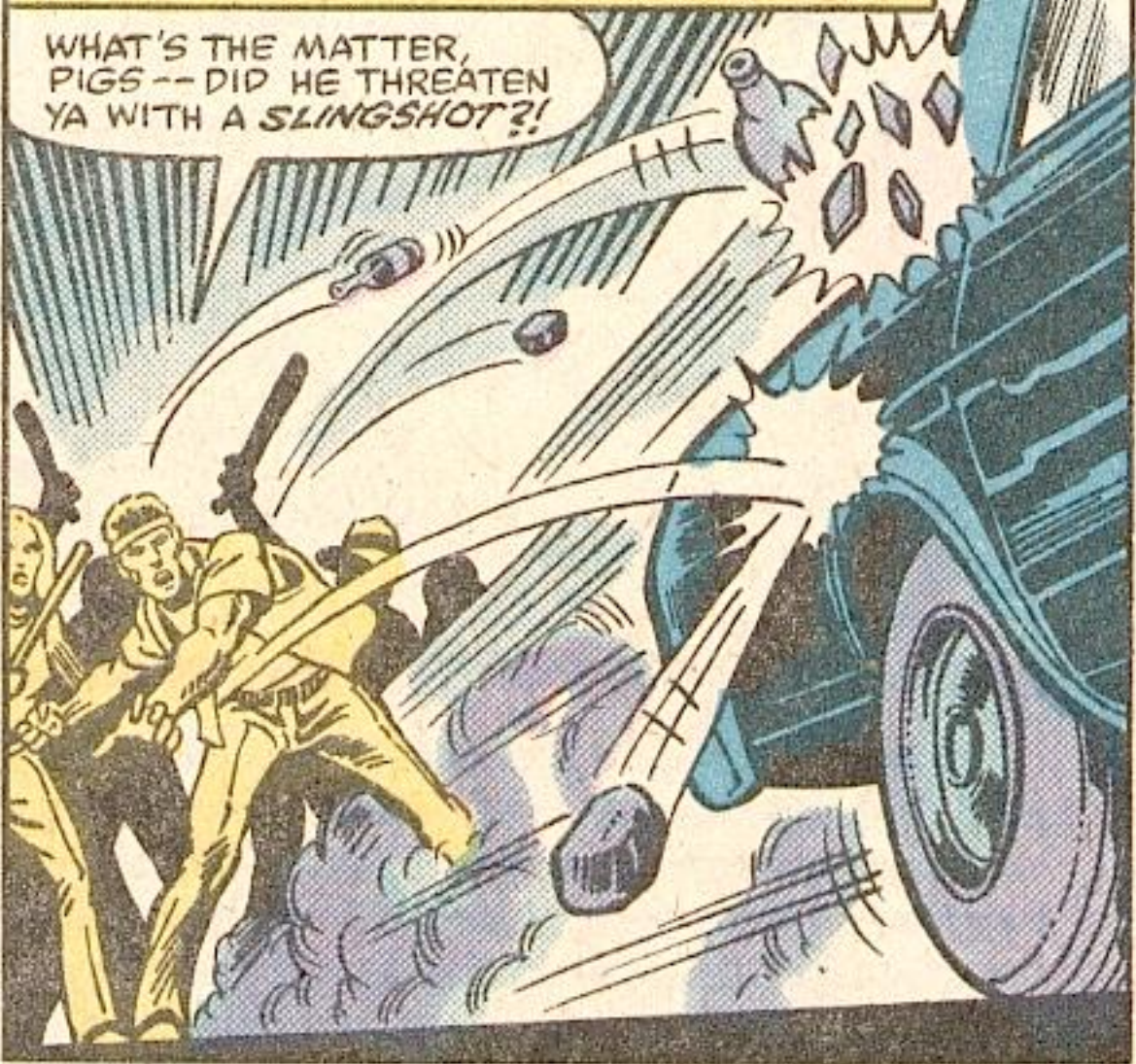
THE DAY IS HOT; A CROWD HAS ALREADY BEEN DRAWN TO THE MOUTH OF THE ALLEY...



WHO'D YA NAIL-- PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE?

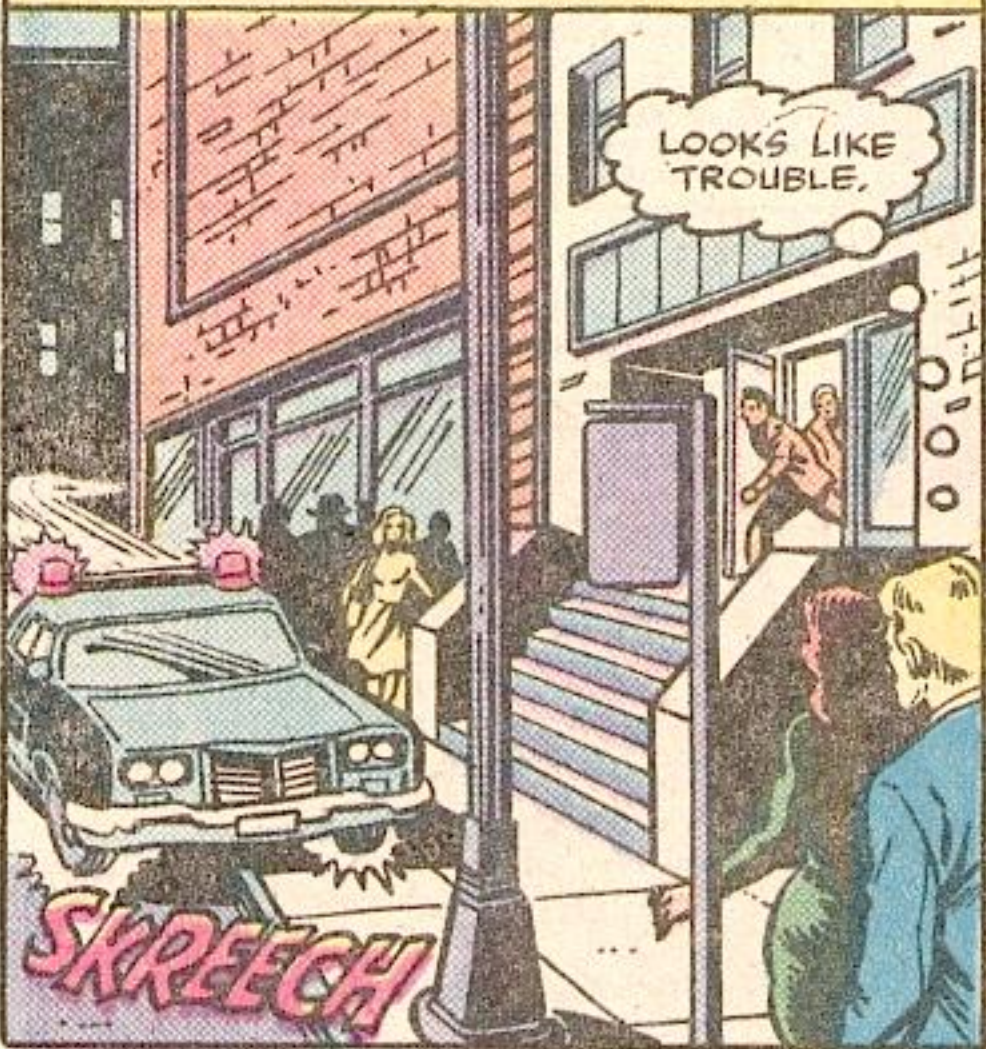
YOU HEAR? THEY SHOT THAT KID FOR NO REASON!

...AND THE PATROL CAR IS LUCKY TO ESCAPE.

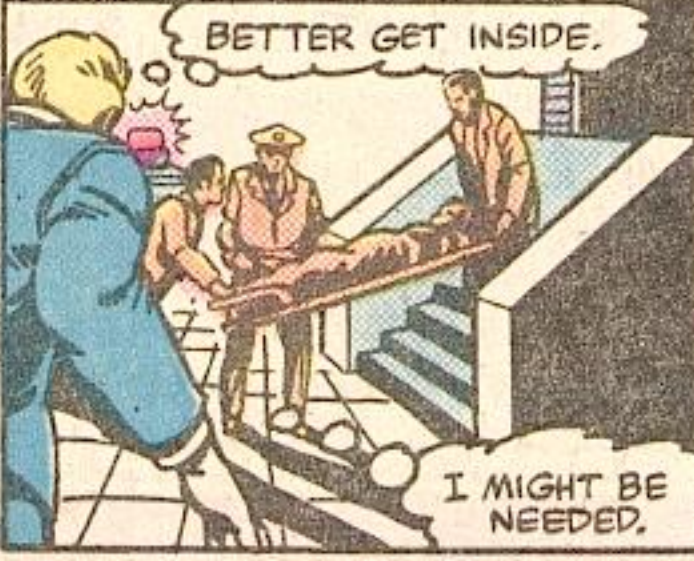


WHAT'S THE MATTER, PIGS-- DID HE THREATEN YA WITH A SLINGSHOT?!

AT THE CLINIC MINUTES LATER, BLAKE AND THE CAR ARRIVE SIMULTANEOUSLY...



LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE.



BETTER GET INSIDE.

I MIGHT BE NEEDED.



YOUR REPORT CAN WAIT, OFFICERS. I MIGHT BE FORCED TO HANDLE THIS EMERGENCY CASE MYSELF--



DR. JEFFRIES, CAN I--

BLAKE! THIS ONE IS YOURS-- THE REST OF THE STAFF IS ALREADY INVOLVED IN OTHER SURGERY.

GOOD THING YOU GOT HERE.

AND SO...



READY, NURSE?

YES, DR. BLAKE. HIS VITAL SIGNS ARE NONE TOO STABLE, BUT THEY WON'T BE GETTING ANY BETTER.



DO YOU KNOW THE PATIENT'S NAME, OFFICER?

HE HAD THIS WALLET ON HIM-- JIMMY SAYERS, 73 99th STREET, AGE 13...

THIRTEEN. OH, NO...

OUTSIDE, THE CROWD HAS FOLLOWED THE HEAT AND THE HEAT HAS LIT THE FUSE...

-- DIDN'T EVEN TAKE THE KID TO A REAL HOSPITAL--



-- JUST THIS LOUSY CLINIC WHERE THEY SEND ALL THE TRASH!

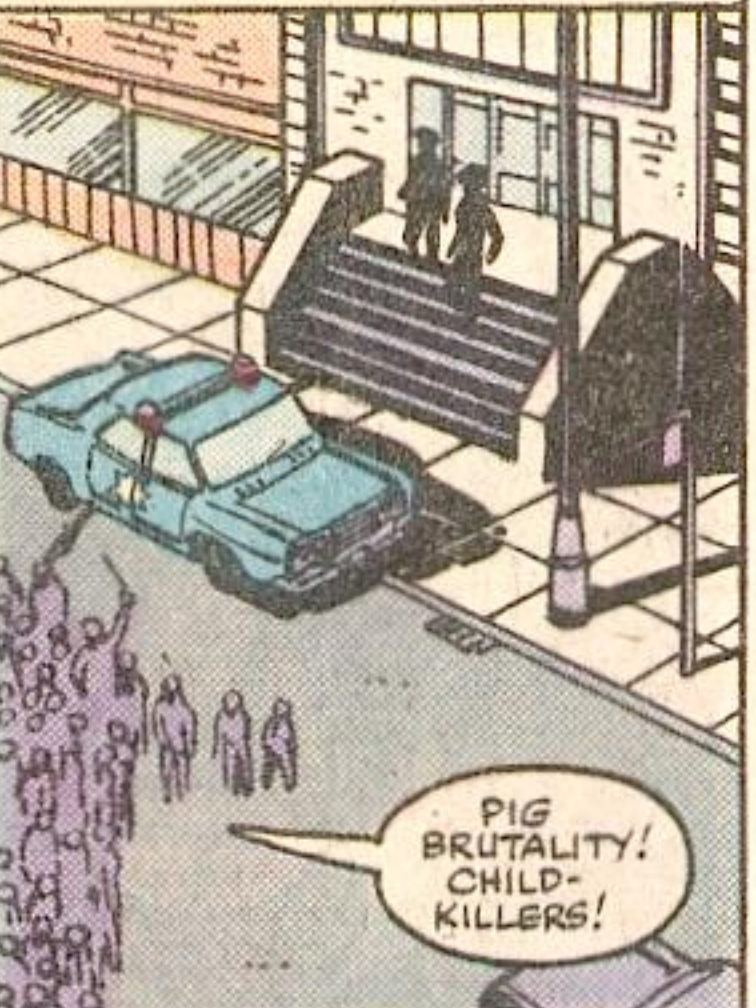
WHAT THE--? THAT'S A RIOT BREWING OUT THERE! WHAT SET 'EM OFF SO FAST?



WHO KNOWS? THE WEATHER.

WE'D BETTER GET TO THE CAR AND RADIO FOR HELP BEFORE THEY GET ANY UGLIER.

BUT THE MERE SIGHT OF POLICE BLUE INFLAMES PASSIONS EVEN FURTHER...



PIG BRUTALITY! CHILD-KILLERS!

...AND THE FUSE BURNS OUT OF ROOM.



TAKE THE CLINIC!

TAKE IT OVER SO THEY DON'T GET AWAY WITH IT WITHOUT NOBODY NOTICING!



KID-KILLERS!

THIS IS CAR 63-- OFFICERS IN DISTRESS! HURRY!



OCCUPY THE CLINIC!



WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?! YOU CAN'T COME IN HERE AND--

JUST BE COOL, BIG DOCTORS! NOBODY WANTS TO HURT NOBODY!



WE JUST WANT THAT BOY'S LIFE SAVED-- AND WE WANT THE MEDIA TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! SO YOU JUST GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS WHILE WE TAKE OVER THE CLINIC'S PUBLIC RELATIONS!

JOE, YOU CALL CHANNEL 3 NEWS. MARY, YOU CHECK THE ADMISSIONS RECORDS--FIND OUT THE BOY'S NAME AND NOTIFY HIS FAMILY.

RIGHT ON.

NURSE, GO SEE WHAT ALL THAT NOISE IS OUT THERE.

ALL RIGHT, DOCTOR, AS SOON AS I--

THE CLINIC HAS BEEN OCCUPIED, BUT DON'T PANIC, AS LONG AS WE REMAIN CALM, I DON'T THINK THERE'LL BE ANY--

OCCUPIED? BUT WHY?

YOU'RE WORKING ON THE REASON RIGHT NOW, DR. BLAKE--

--AND I SUGGEST YOU SUMMON ALL THE SKILLS YOU COMMAND TO MAKE SURE THAT BOY DOES NOT BECOME A MARTYR.

A COMMENDABLE ATTITUDE.

I ASSURE YOU, DR. JEFFRIES, THAT *WHOMEVER* MY PATIENT IS, I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF WITHHOLDING ANY OF MY SKILLS.

JUST SEE THAT YOU BACK IT UP WITH RESULTS.

OUTSIDE, A CROWD OF A DIFFERENT COLOR GATHERS--TO FIND THE OCCUPATION OF THE CLINIC COMPLETE...

JIMMY SAYERS VICTIM OF POLICE BRUTALITY

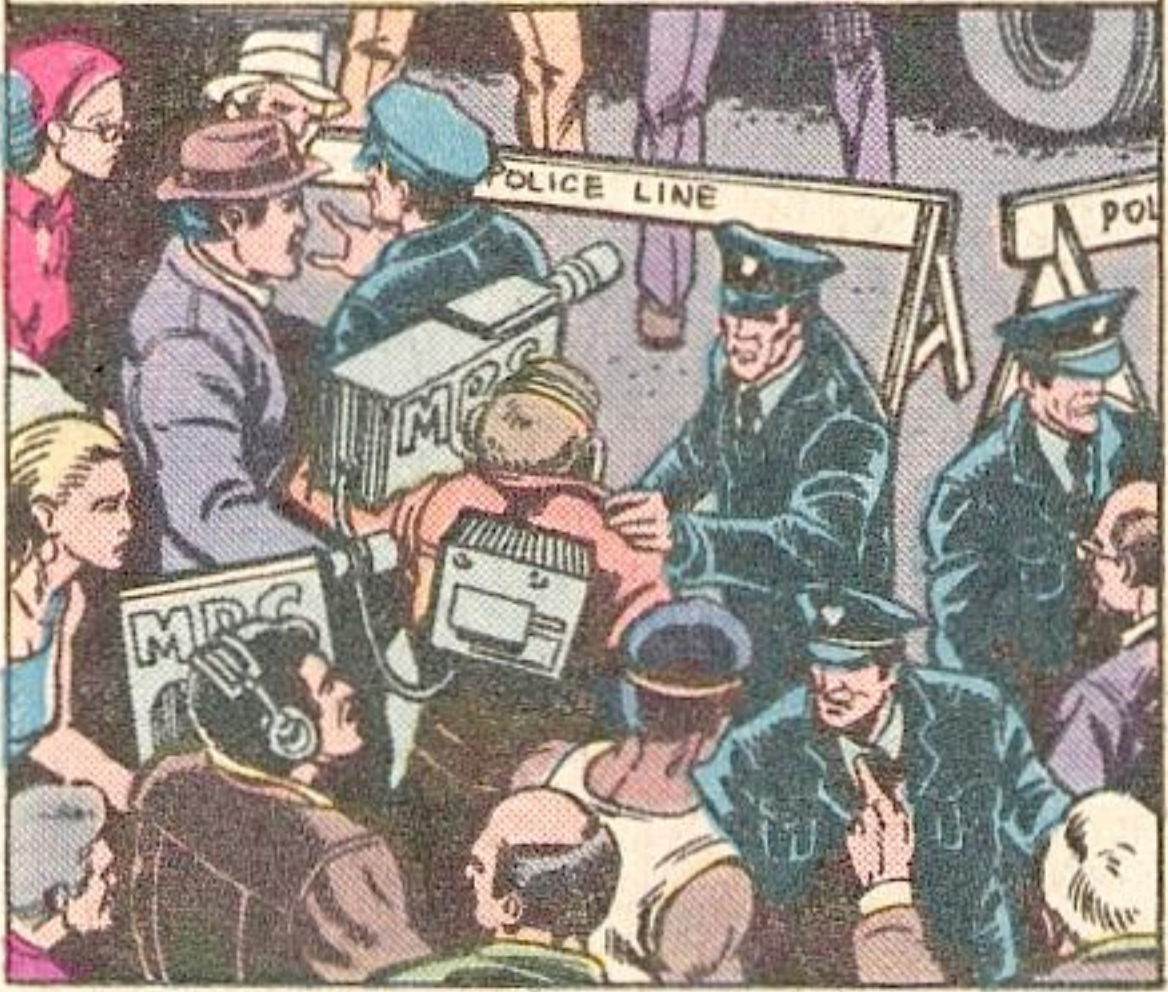
BRING 'EM HERE. I WANT SOME ANSWERS.

--ANOTHER RIOT SQUAD ON THE WAY, AND WE GOT THE TWO ARRESTING OFFICERS, THEY'VE BOTH BEEN ROUGHED UP.

IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST, CAPTAIN. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO TO STOP THEM, THE MOB MUST'VE BEEN STIRRED UP BY A FEW PEOPLE WHO WITNESSED THE SHOOTING...

YEAH, THE SHOOTING, WE'LL DISCUSS THAT LATER, PATROLMAN...

"RIGHT NOW, WE GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES ON OUR HANDS-- THERE'S A NEW MOB GATHERING BEHIND THE BARRICADES, MEANING WE'D BETTER GET THE OCCUPIERS OUT OF THAT CLINIC FAST!"



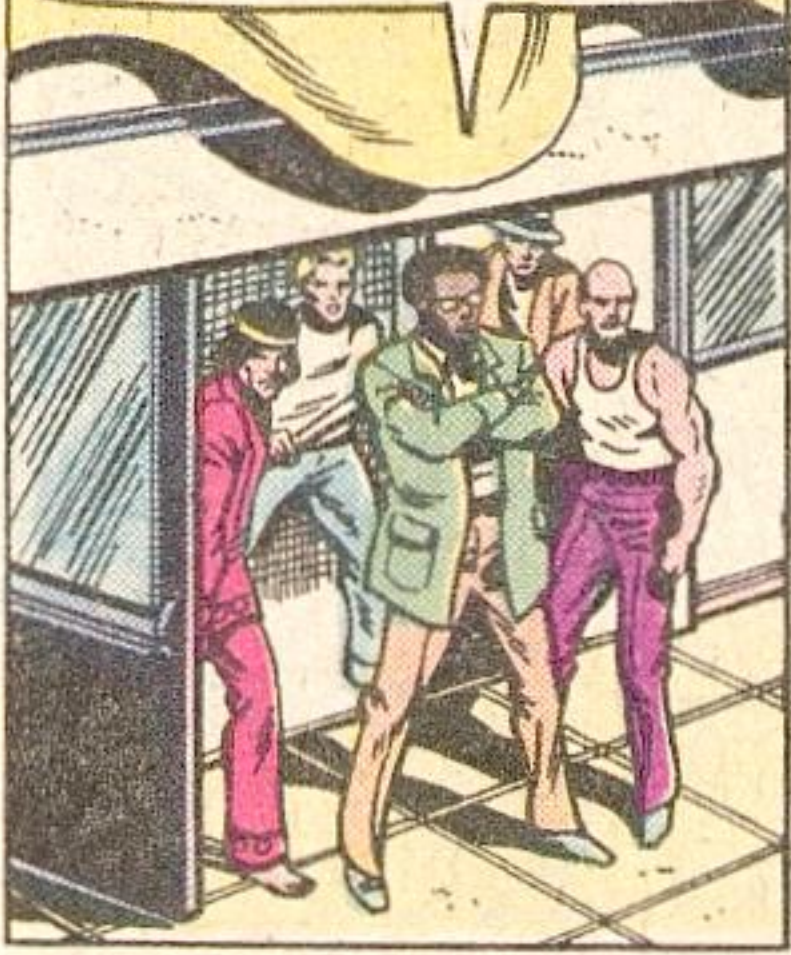
THIS IS CAPTAIN OAKLAND OF THE WEST SIDE TASK FORCE! WE UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN! THE INCIDENT WILL UNDERGO A FULL INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW, I ASSURE YOU!



YEAH-- A REVIEW BY OTHER COPS!

LEAVE THE CLINIC NOW WHILE YOUR ACTION CAN STILL BE CONSIDERED MINOR! REFUSE, AND YOU'LL BE CHARGED WITH TAKING HOSTAGES!

WE'RE THE HOSTAGES, BROTHER-- HOSTAGES TO YOUR LAWS OF THE STREETS-- HOSTAGE TO UNDERSTAFFED, UNDEREQUIPPED CLINICS LIKE THIS ONE!



YOU GONNA SHOOT US TOO? AIN'T ENOUGH ROOM IN THIS PITIFUL CLINIC FOR ALL OF US!



JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS!



STAND YOUR GROUND-- BUT EXERCISE EXTREME RESTRAINT!

JIMMY SAYERS! JIMMY SAYERS!



HERE'S THE BULLET, NO DAMAGE TO MAJOR ARTERIES, ONCE WE STOP THE BLEEDING, HE SHOULD PULL THROUGH, HOW'S HIS HEART?

SLOW BUT STEADY, DOCTOR.

GOOD, LET'S SEW HIM UP.



JIMMY! MY JIMMY! THEY CALLED ME-- SAID HE WAS HERE! HE AIN'T BAD-- NOT REALLY! I TRIED TO STOP HIS STEALIN'...



HIS MOTHER! IT'S THE BOY'S MOTHER! LET HER THROUGH!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE! KEEP YOUR DISTANCE! WE DON'T WANT TO USE THE TEAR-GAS, BUT--



TEAR-GAS?! IT'S THE BOY'S MOTHER, YOU PIGS! HIS MAMA!!



STAY CALM! HOLD YOUR FIRE!



THAT'S ALL WE CAN DO FOR NOW-- JUST HAVE TO WATCH OVER HIM AND WAIT. THANKS FOR ATTENDING.



EXCELLENT SURGERY, DOCTOR.

THANK YOU, NURSE. IF YOU'LL STAY, THE OTHERS CAN LEAVE.

NOW TO SEE WHAT ALL THE NOISE IS--



OH, NO-- IT'S FAR WORSE THAN JEFFRIES INDICATED!

-- TAUNTING THE POLICE FOR SOME TIME, THEIR TEMPERS FLARING IN THE HEAT--



-- AND THEY HAVE NOW BEGUN HURLING DEBRIS...

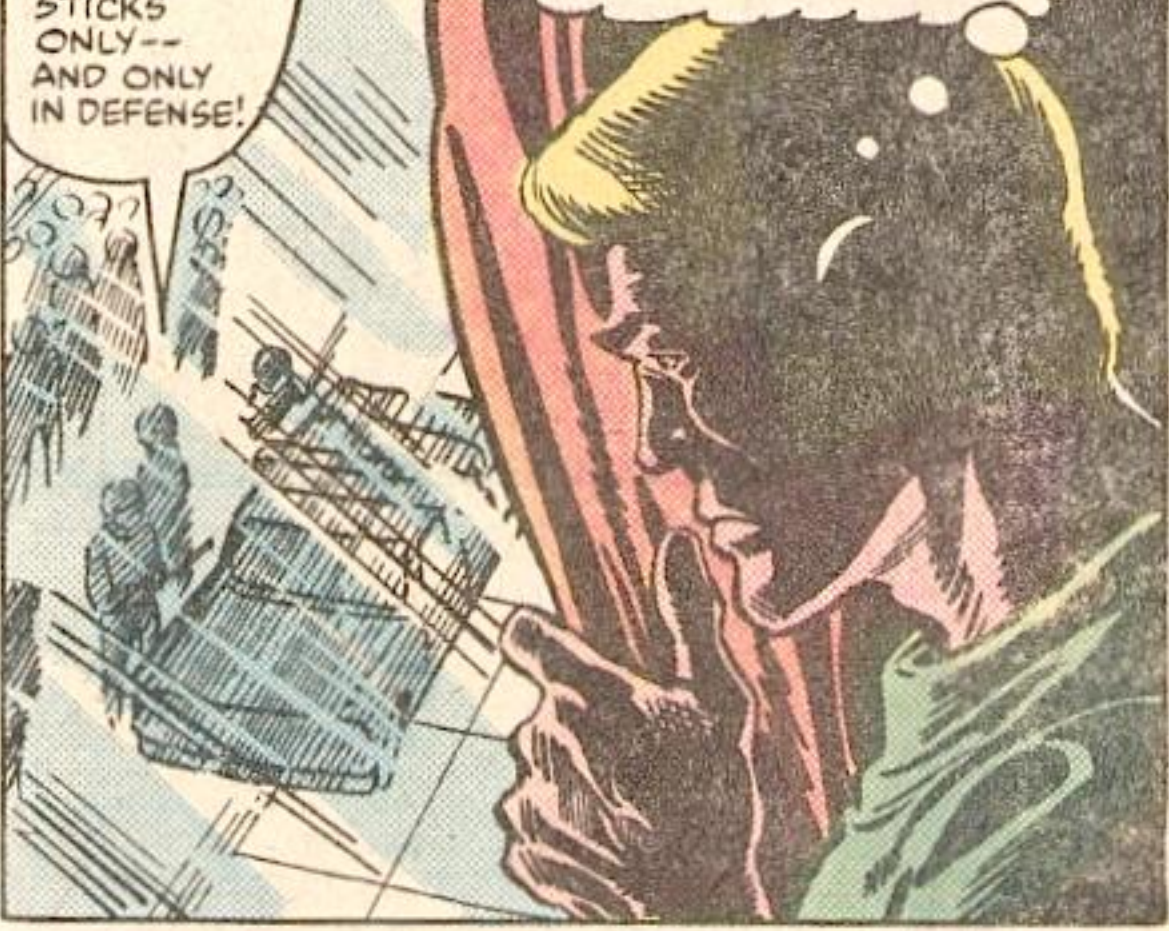
TOO LATE FOR TEAR-GAS NOW-- THEY'RE TOO CLOSE AND THE BREEZE IS BLOWIN' THE WRONG WAY.



IT WAS ALWAYS TOO LATE FOR IT-- JUST TRIED TO BLUFF 'EM WITH THE THREAT.

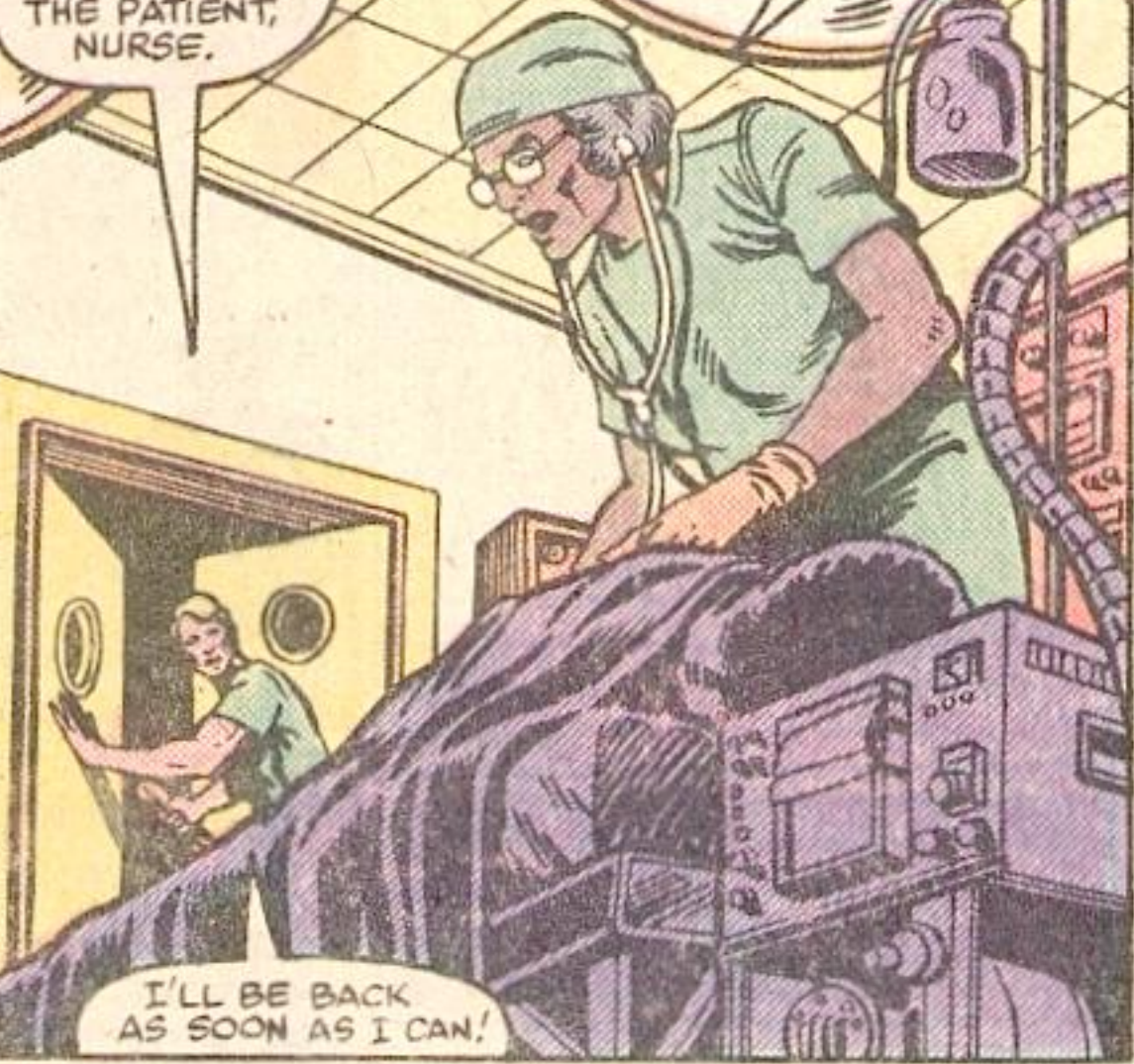
NO GUNS!  
IF THEY  
PRESS ANY  
CLOSER,  
USE YOUR  
NIGHT-  
STICKS  
ONLY--  
AND ONLY  
IN DEFENSE!

IT COULD ERUPT INTO SERIOUS  
VIOLENCE AT ANY MOMENT, THE BOY  
HIMSELF MAY NOT DIE, BUT OTHERS  
*MIGHT*--IF SOMETHING ISN'T  
DONE TO QUELL THE RAGE AND  
FEAR OUT THERE...



STAY HERE  
AND MONITOR  
THE PATIENT,  
NURSE.

BUT DOCTOR--!



I'LL BE BACK  
AS SOON AS I CAN!

I'VE DONE ALL I CAN  
AS BLAKE.



NOW IT'S  
TIME FOR THE  
*OTHER*  
SIDE  
OF MY SELF  
TO TAKE THE  
MATTER IN  
HAND...



TIME...

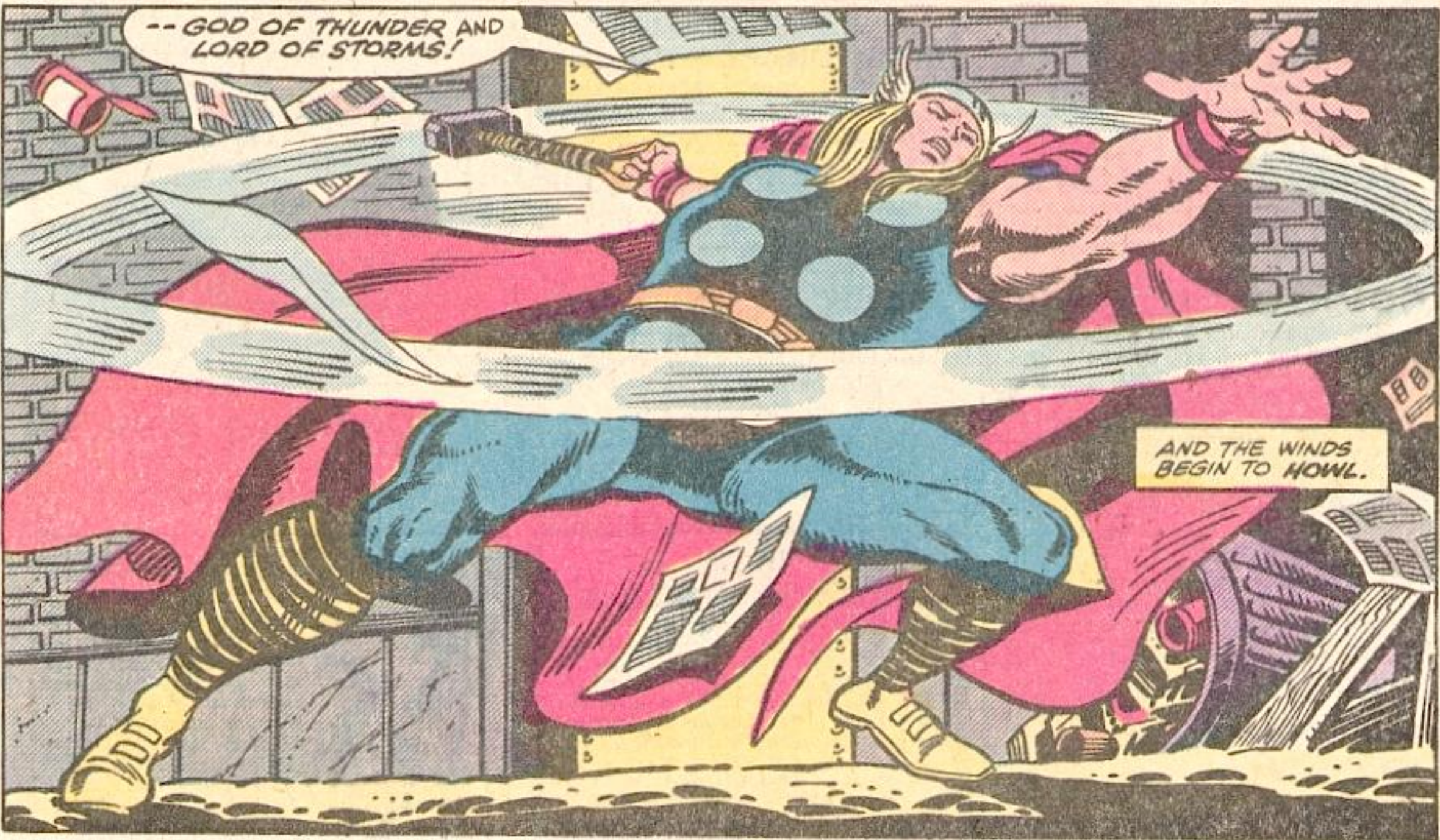


...FOR...

**BOOM**



...THOR THE  
MIGHTY--



-- GOD OF THUNDER AND  
LORD OF STORMS!

AND THE WINDS  
BEGIN TO HOWL.



JIMMY!  
I'VE GOT TO  
SEE MY JIMMY!  
SOMEBODY  
HELP ME SEE  
MY BOY!



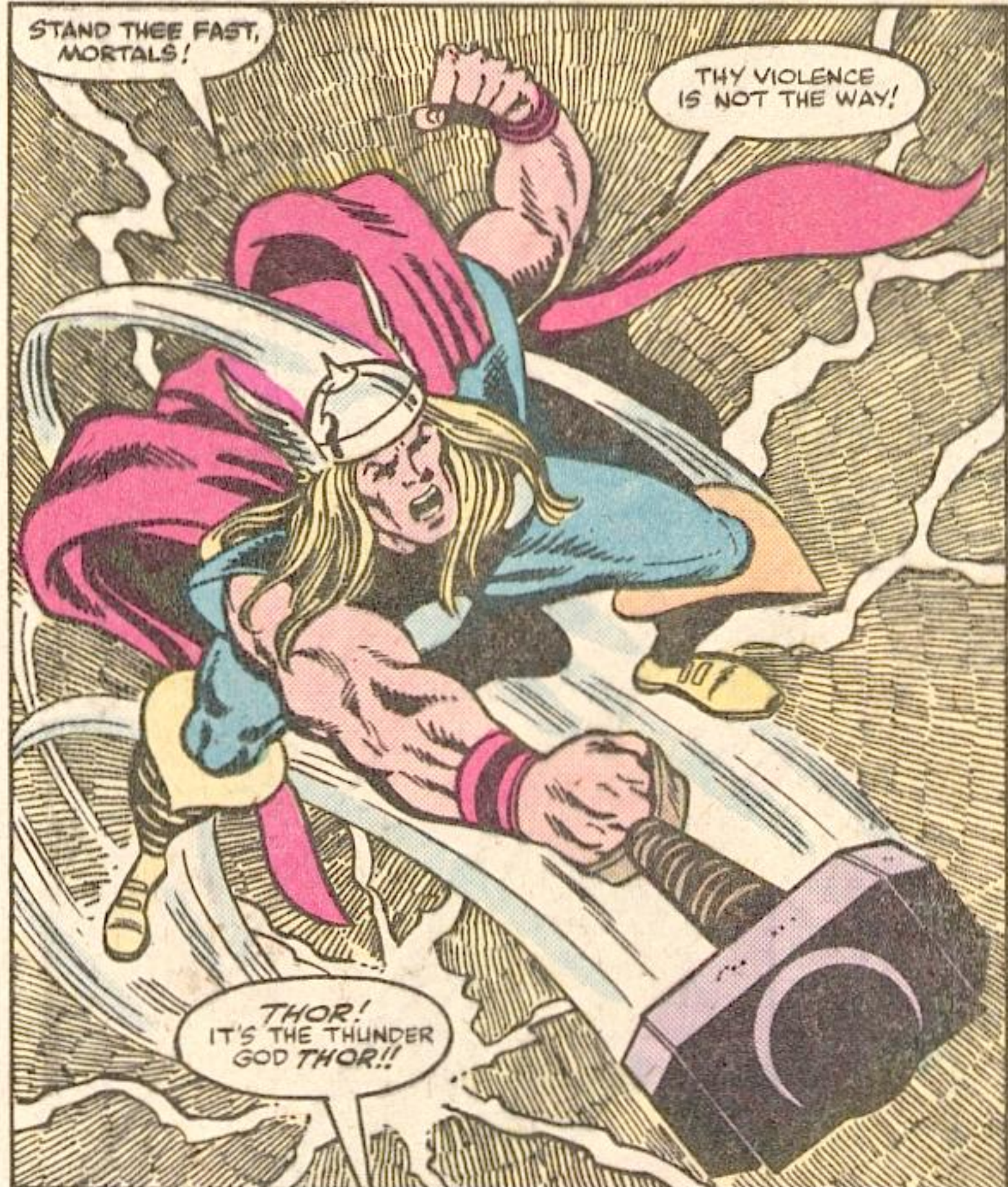
YEAH! PUSH  
THOSE COPS  
BACK! MAKE  
WAY FOR HER!

DRAW YOUR  
NIGHTSTICKS AND  
STAND FIRM!  
HERE THEY--



BOOOOH

WHAT THE--?!  
A THUNDER  
STORM?! BUT  
THERE AIN'T  
A CLOUD IN  
THE SKY!



STAND THEE FAST,  
MORTALS!

THY VIOLENCE  
IS NOT THE WAY!

THOR!  
IT'S THE THUNDER  
GOD THOR!!



--EVEN NOW, AS WE REPORT LIVE  
FROM THE SCENE, A DRAMATIC NEW  
FIGURE HAS ENTERED THE TENSE  
CONFRONTATION-- THE MAJESTIC  
FIGURE OF THE GOLDEN-HAIRED  
AVENGER KNOWN AS THOR!

I WISH I COULD  
CONVEY THE VIBRANT  
SENSE OF ELECTRICITY  
CREATED BY HIS ADVENT,  
BY HIS-- WAIT! HE'S  
GOING TO SPEAK!

PERHAPS OUR MICROPHONES  
CAN PICK UP HIS WORDS...



VIOLENCE HAS CAUSED THY CONFLICT!

RESORTING TO MORE OF THE SAME IS SHEER FOLLY!



WILT THEE FUEL THE FIRES OF VIOLENCE WITH MORE HATE? WILT THEE RISE UP IN BITTER ANGER ONLY TO IGNITE AN EVER GREATER CONFLICT IN THE DAYS TO COME?

THOR SAYS TO THEE... MAY!

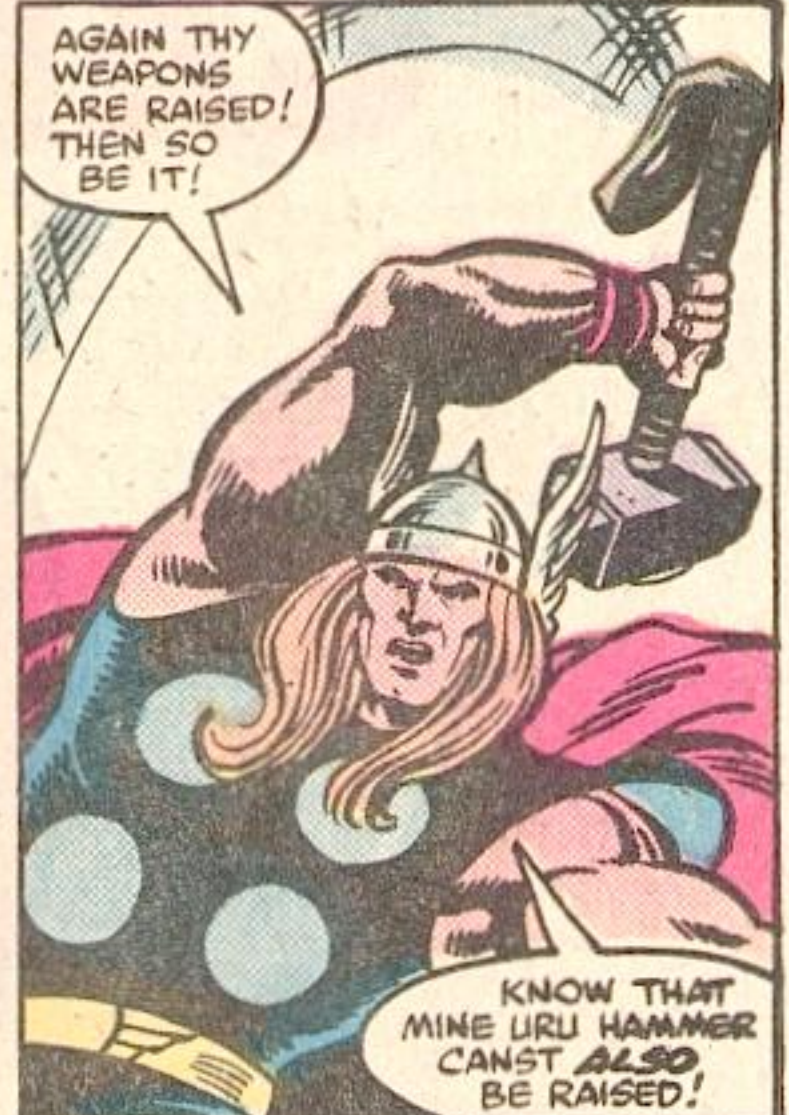


DON'T YOU COME UP IN OUR FACES, GOLDIE! AUTOMATICALLY TAKIN' SIDES WITH THE COPS-- JUST ANOTHER FAIR-HAIRED HONKIE!



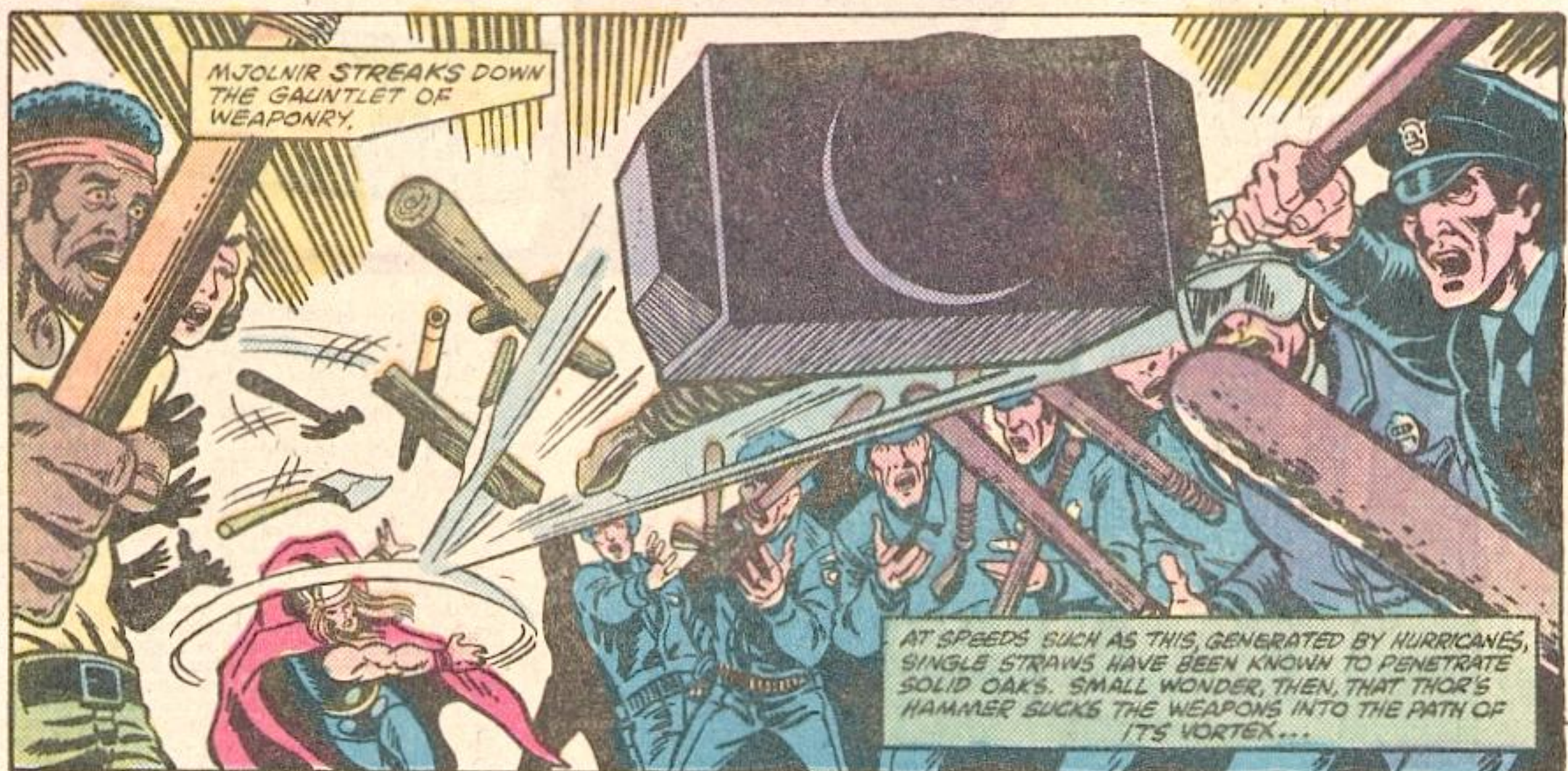
AND THE TWO SIDES SURGE FORTH--

--THREATENING TO BRIDGE THE GAP OF HATE.



AGAIN THY WEAPONS ARE RAISED! THEN SO BE IT!

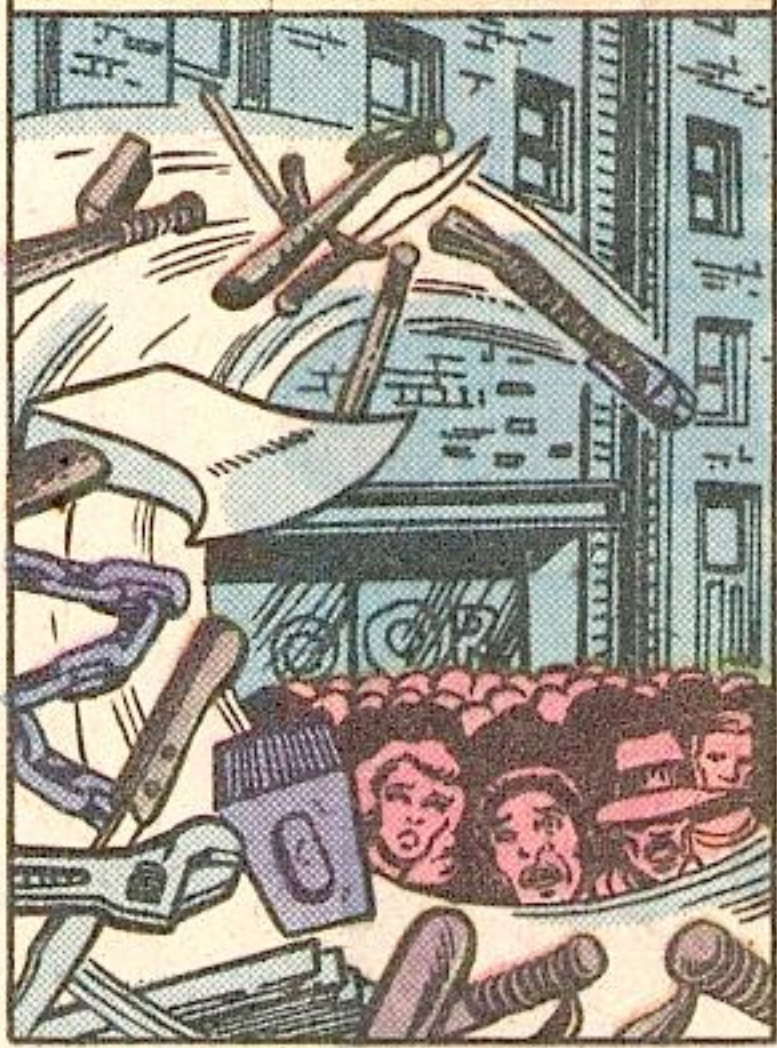
KNOW THAT MINE LIRU HAMMER CANST ALSO BE RAISED!



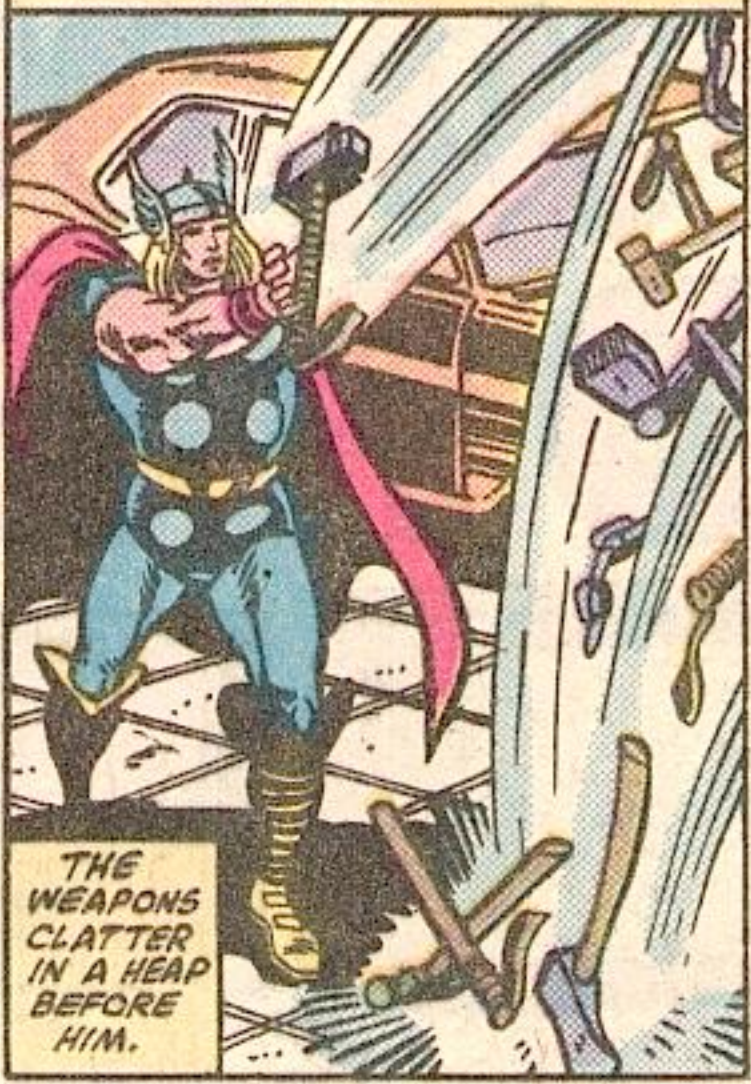
MJOLNIR STREAKS DOWN THE GAUNTLET OF WEAPONRY.

AT SPEEDS SUCH AS THIS, GENERATED BY HURRICANES, SINGLE STRAWS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO PENETRATE SOLID OAKS. SMALL WONDER, THEN, THAT THOR'S HAMMER SUCKS THE WEAPONS INTO THE PATH OF ITS VORTEX...

AT THE END OF THE GAUNTLET, STILL DRAGGING THE WEAPONS BEHIND, THE HAMMER MAKES ITS MYSTIC TURN--

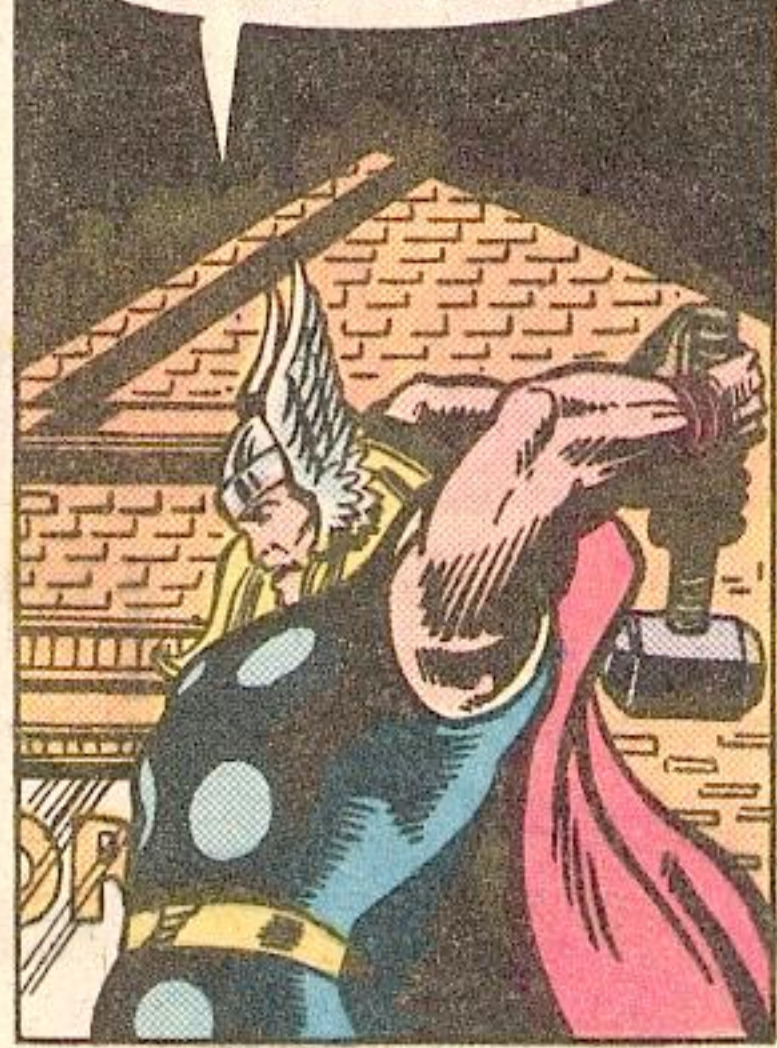


--SNAPPING BACK INTO THOR'S WAITING HAND.

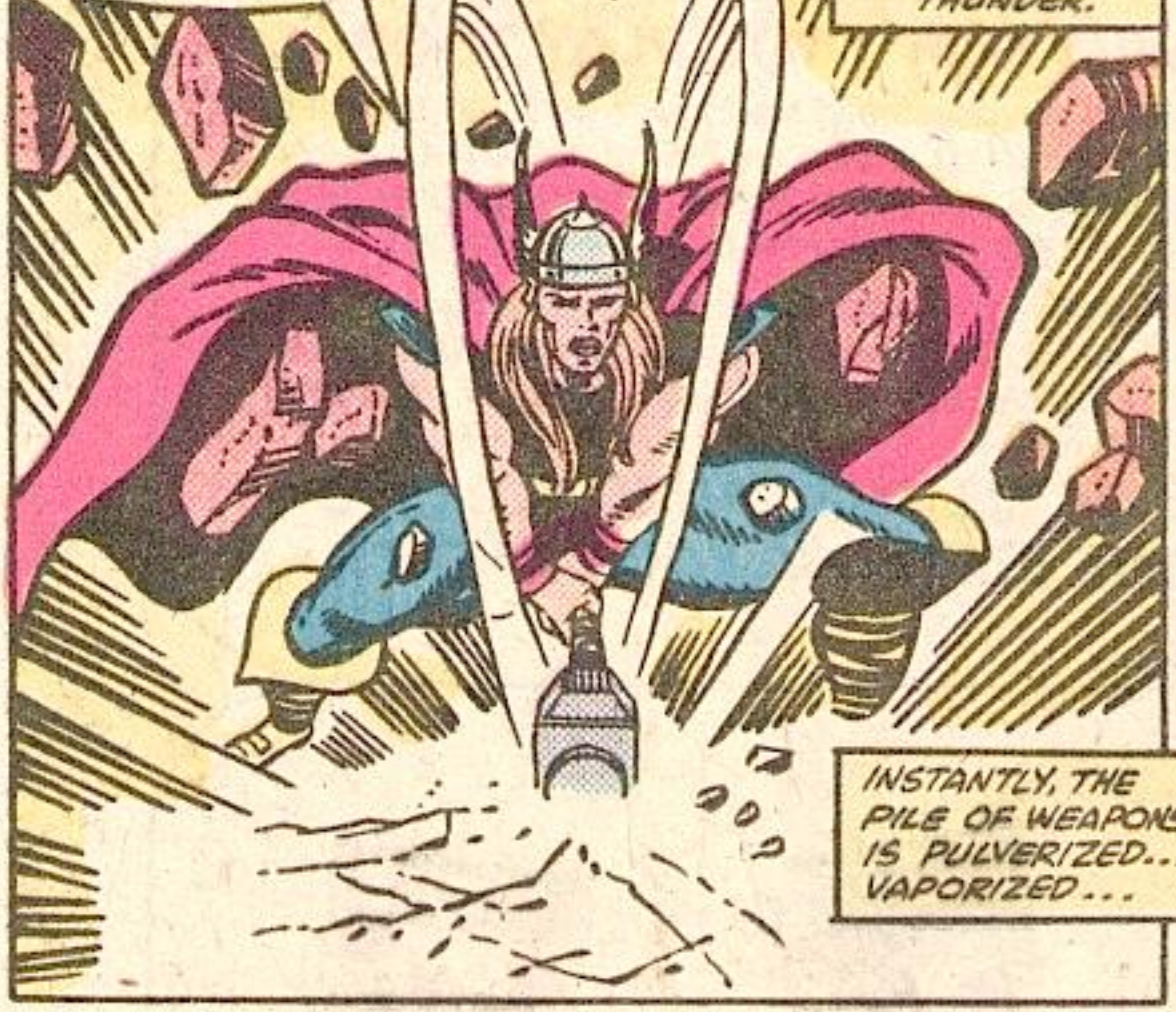


THE WEAPONS CLATTER IN A HEAP BEFORE HIM.

NOW, MORTALS, SINCE YOU SO STRONGLY DESIRE THE POWER OF A WEAPON--

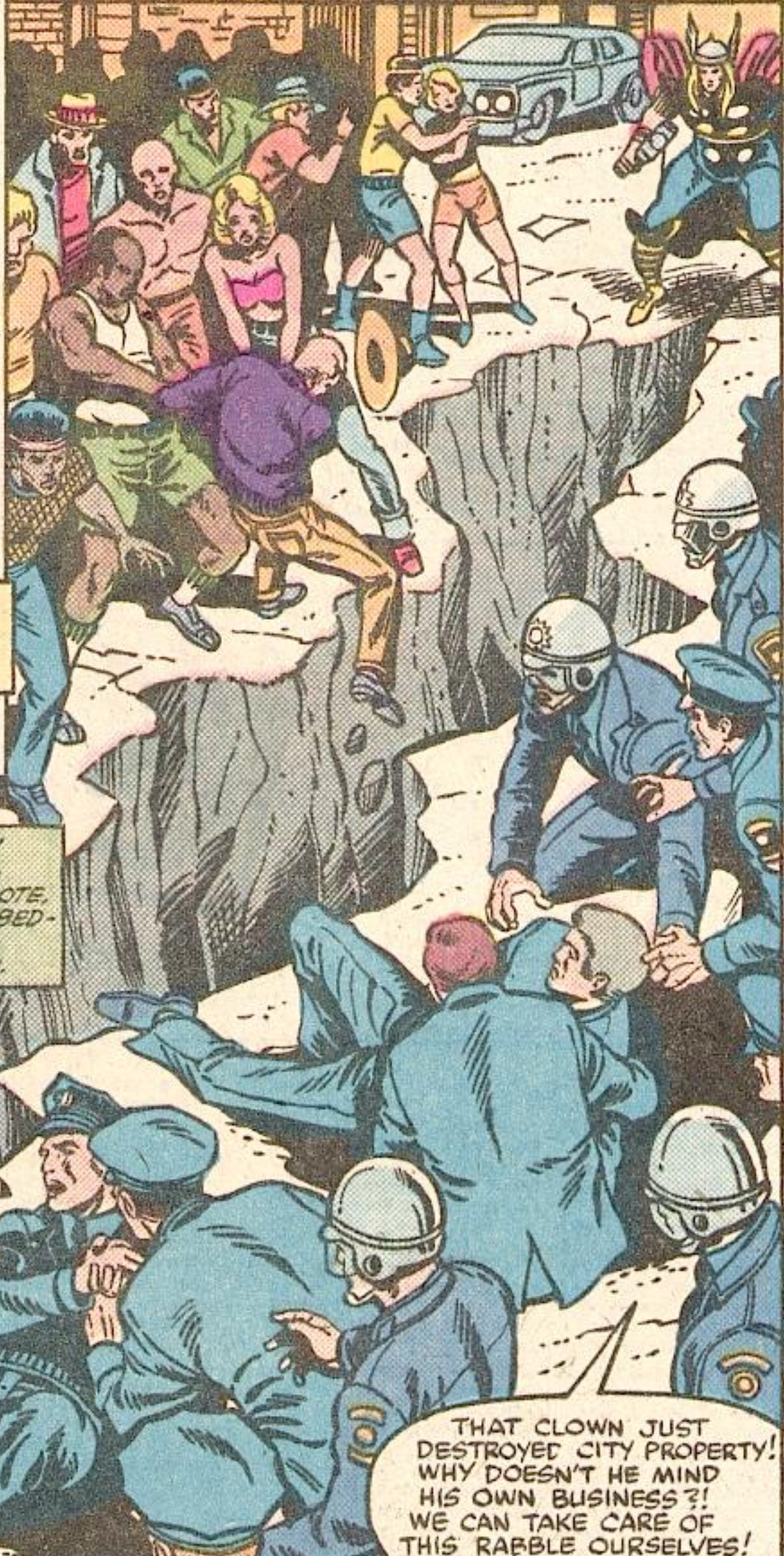


--I WILL GIVE IT TO THEE!!



THE HAMMER SLAMS, IN THUNDER.

INSTANTLY, THE PILE OF WEAPONS IS PULVERIZED... VAPORIZED...



...AND THE VERY STREET ITSELF-- CONCRETE, CREOSOTE, EARTH, AND THE BED-ROCK BENEATH-- SPLITS ASUNDER.

I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT! HE'S CRAZY-- A MANIAC!!

THAT CLOWN JUST DESTROYED CITY PROPERTY! WHY DOESN'T HE MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS?! WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS RABBLE OURSELVES!



HEAR ME, MORTALS! YOU HAVE JUST WITNESSED A DISPLAY OF GREAT POWER AND AWESOME VIOLENCE!

IT HAS INSPIRED NOTHING BUT FEAR IN THEE -- AND ANGER TOWARD THE WIELDER OF THAT POWER AND VIOLENCE!

ANGER TOWARD ME!

YOU LOOK UPON ME AS A STRANGER-- AN ALIEN IN THY MIDST-- AND THAT IS THY GRAVEST MISTAKE!

THOUGH DIFFERENT WE BE IN DEGREES, THOU AND I, WE ARE YET THE SAME!

AND, TOO, YOU COMPOUND THE ERROR BY LOOKING UPON EACH OTHER AS STRANGERS, AS ALIENS, AS MEMBERS OF TWO SEPARATE RACES!

BUT I SAY TO THEE... THOUGH DIFFERENT, THOU ART THE SAME!

MISTAKES HAVE BEEN MADE ON BOTH SIDES, FOR THOU ART MORTALS AND FALLIBLE -- BUT MUTUAL PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE MISTAKES IS A FALSE GOAL--

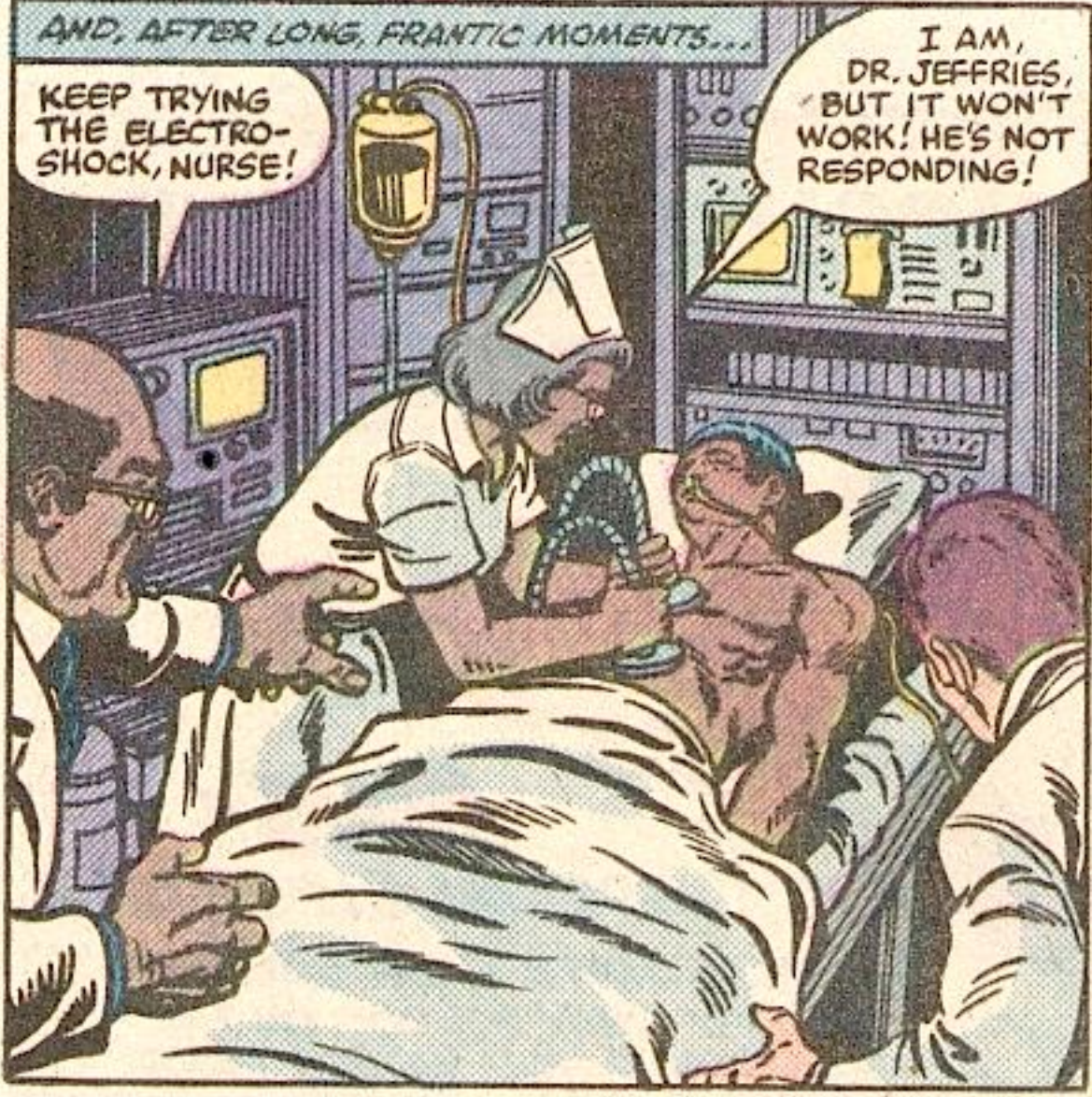
PREVENTION OF FURTHER MISTAKES IS THY ONLY TRUE GOAL-- AND MINE AS WELL!

SOME STILL RESPOND IN ANGER, WHILE OTHERS GROW MORE RECEPTIVE TO THE MESSAGE... BUT ONE, IT SEEMS, HAS NOT EVEN HEARD...

MY BOY... GOT TO LET ME SEE HIM... HE'S GOT A BAD HEART...

THE HEART MONITOR--IT'S GONE DEAD!

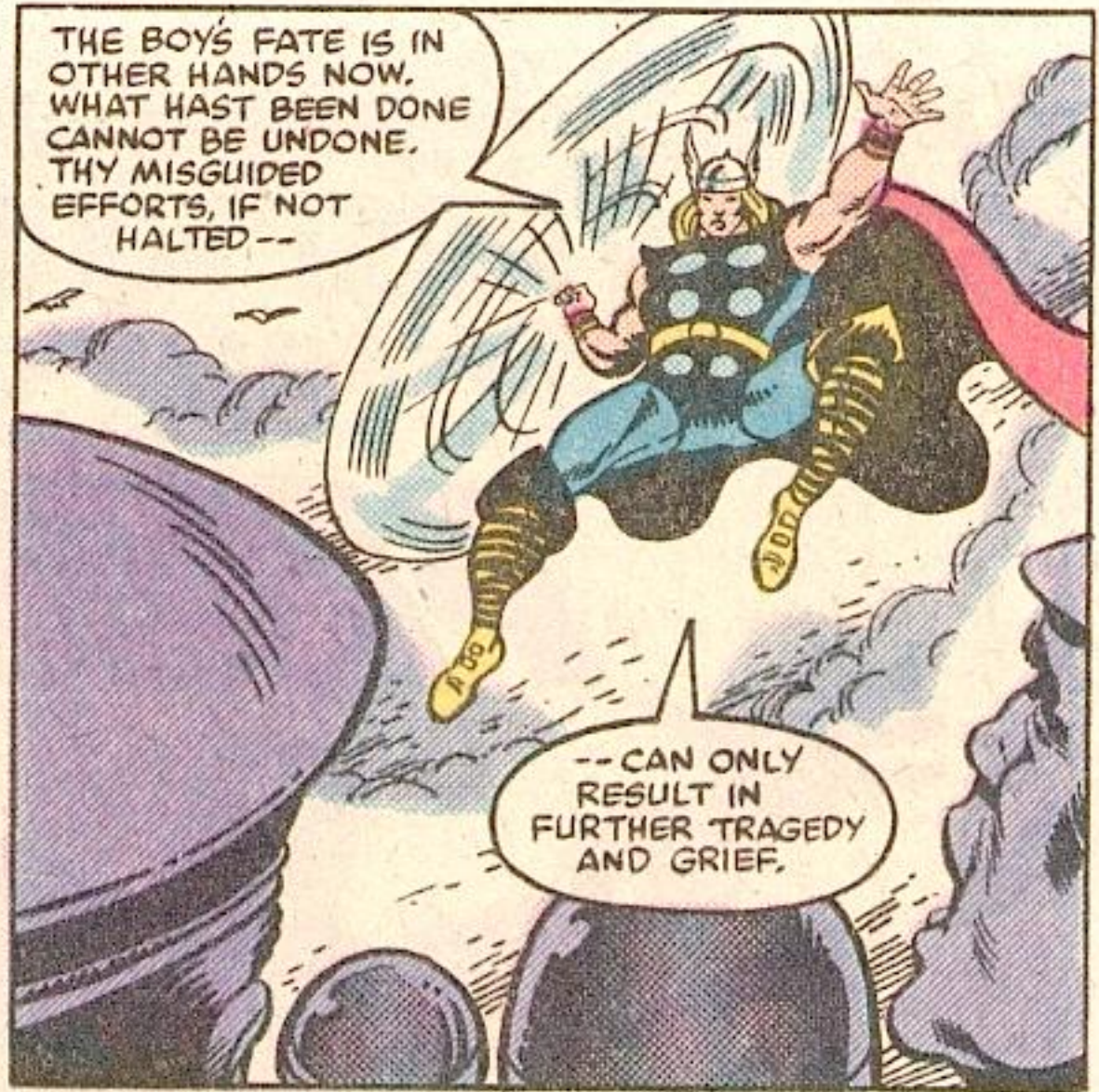
DR. JEFFRIES-- COME IN HERE-- QUICKLY!



AND, AFTER LONG, FRANTIC MOMENTS...

KEEP TRYING THE ELECTRO-SHOCK, NURSE!

I AM, DR. JEFFRIES, BUT IT WON'T WORK! HE'S NOT RESPONDING!



THE BOY'S FATE IS IN OTHER HANDS NOW. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE CANNOT BE UNDONE. THY MISGUIDED EFFORTS, IF NOT HALTED --

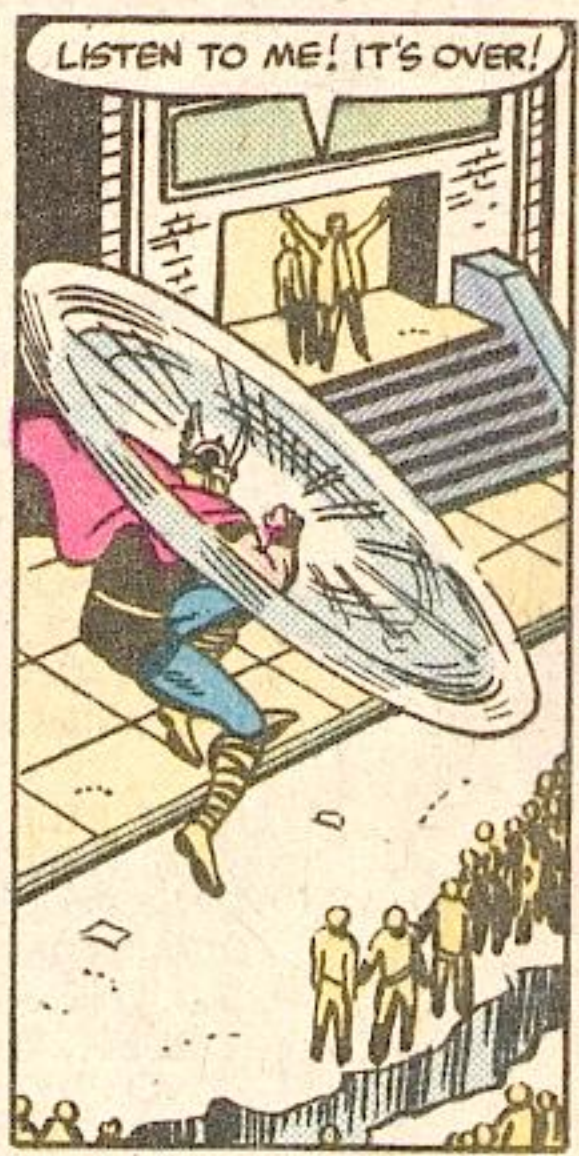
-- CAN ONLY RESULT IN FURTHER TRAGEDY AND GRIEF.



WE... WE DID... ALL WE COULD.

THE OCCUPIERS GASP, AND STIFFEN.

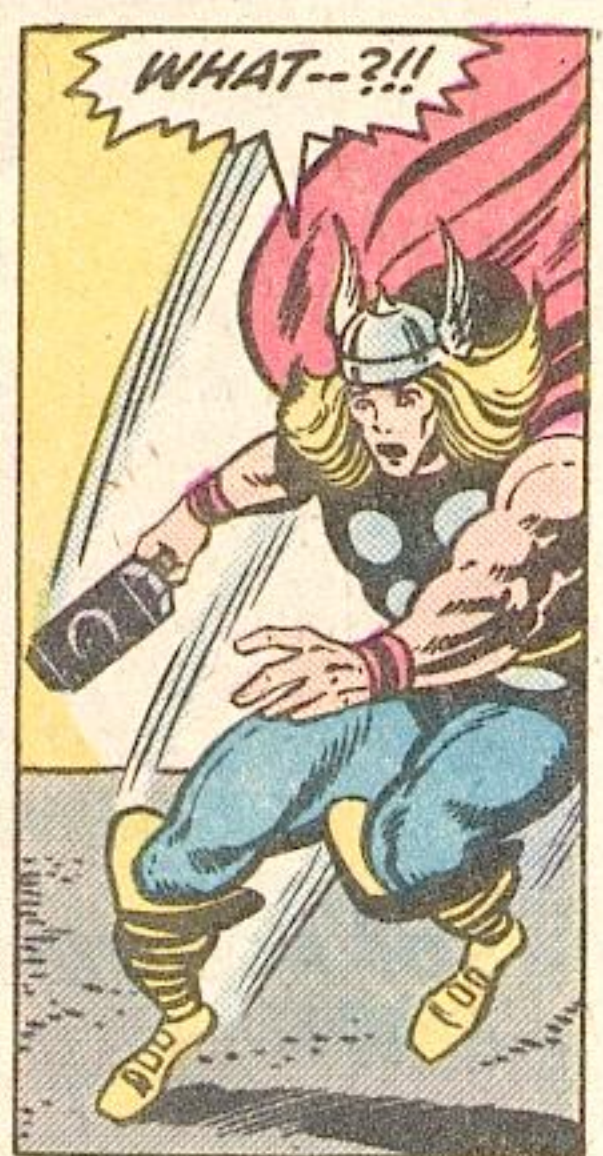
THEIR LEADER TURNS TO THE DOOR...



LISTEN TO ME! IT'S OVER!



JIMMY SAYERS IS DEAD.



WHAT--?!!



NOOO!! I DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HIM! HE REACHED INTO HIS JACKET--! I THOUGHT HE HAD A GUN!!

IT WAS A MISTAKE! OH, GOD HELP ME, IT WAS A MISTAKE--!



HIS... HIS HEART... I KNEW IT... I KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN...

BUT A FEW GRUMBLE DARKLY AND START TO MOVE FORWARD...

MOST OF THE CROWD IS NUMBED BY THE TWIN DISPLAY OF GRIEF...



NO! DON'T YOU DARE! ONE KILLING IS ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY! ENOUGH FOR ALL THE TIME GOD'S GIVEN US!!

DON'T YOU DARE SPOIL MY GRIEF WITH MORE!

THOR WAS RIGHT. IT'S OVER NOW, IT CAN'T BE UNDONE. SO GO HOME... PLEASE... JUST GO HOME.

AND THE STRICKEN WOMAN'S EMOTION WIELDS A POWER NO AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE CAN EVER POSSESS...

THE CROWD DISPERSES... ON BOTH SIDES.

SHE DID HEAR THE THUNDER GOD'S WORDS, THEN, AND WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY ONE WHO TRULY HEARD.

MOTHER AND COP LOOK ACROSS THE CHASM INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES, AND SOMETHING PASSES ALONG THE BOND OF GRIEF BETWEEN THEM.

AND THOR, HIS HEART HEAVIER THAN ANY MORTAL CAN CONCEIVE, IS THE LAST TO DEPART...

EPilogue: YOU DESERTED YOUR PATIENT, BLAKE! HE DIED.

BUT I--

NO EXCUSES, BLAKE!

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT... BUT PERHAPS IT IS GRACED WITH JUST A TOUCH OF UNDERSTANDING.

...HIS HEAD LOW.

I DON'T CARE WHAT THE REASON WAS-- FEAR OF THAT MOB OR SOME PETTY PERSONAL REASON!

I WANT YOU TO KNOW, DR. BLAKE, THAT I THINK DR. JEFFRIES IS BEING A LITTLE EXTREME. THE BOY HAD A WEAK HEART-- RHEUMATIC FEVER WHEN HE WAS AN INFANT.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION...

IT ISN'T, NURSE, BUT THANK YOU.

IT WAS AN EXTREME BREACH OF PROFESSIONALISM! YOU ARE HEREWITH SUSPENDED FROM PRACTICE AT THIS CLINIC--

--AND YOUR POSITION HERE IS BEING PLACED UNDER IMMEDIATE REVIEW, STARTING TOMORROW. THAT IS ALL.

I WATCHED YOUR SURGERY--NO ONE COULD HAVE PERFORMED IT BETTER. SO, IF YOU HAD GOOD REASON TO LEAVE WHEN YOU DID... WELL, ONCE HIS HEART FAILED, NO ONE COULD HAVE SAVED HIM.

FROM ONE WHO HAS TRIED HIMSELF... BOTH HIS SELVES.

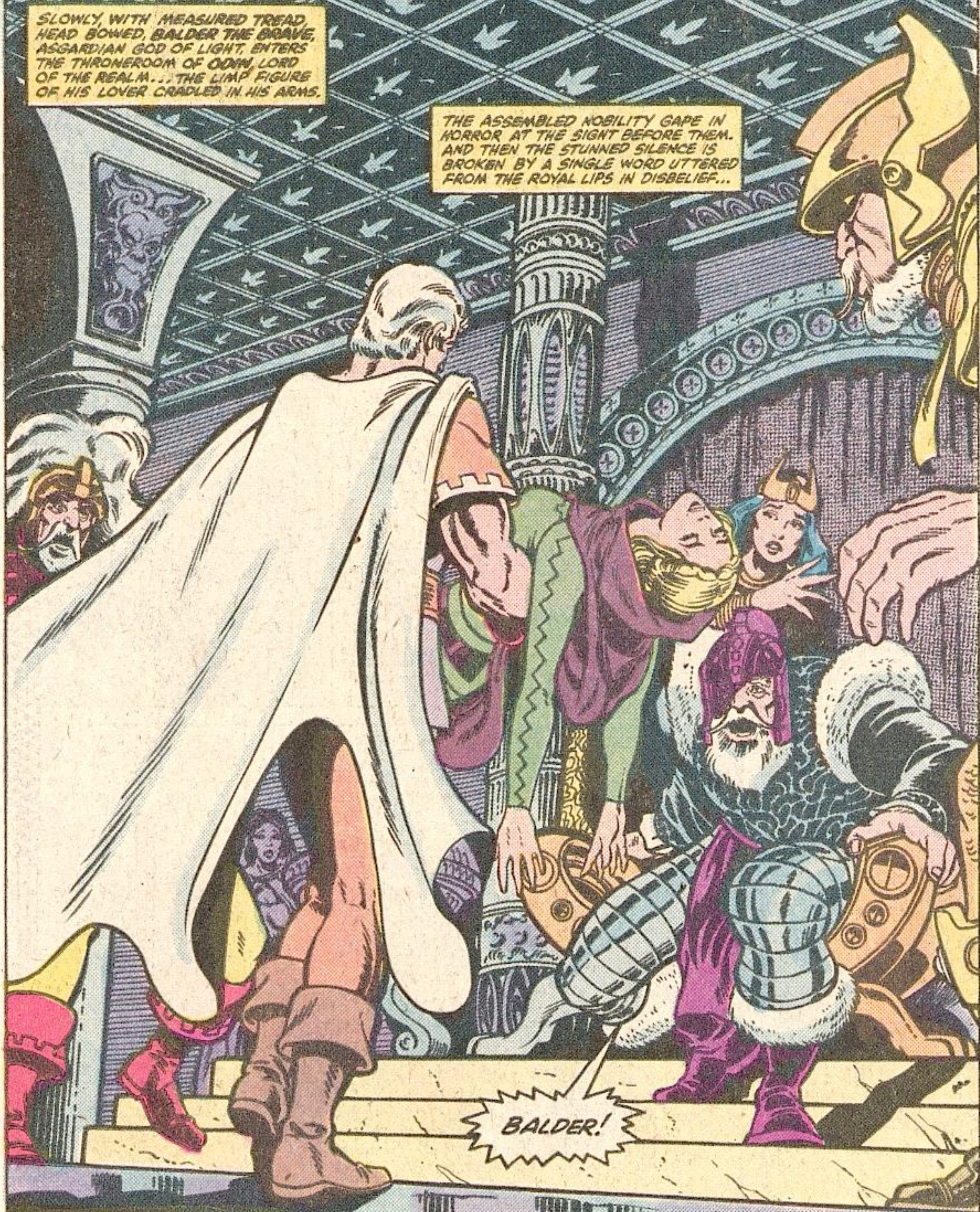
NEXT THE JUDGMENT OF TYR!



# A CALL TO ARMS!

SLOWLY, WITH MEASURED TREAD, HEAD BOWED, BALDER THE BRAVE, ASGARDIAN GOD OF LIGHT, ENTERS THE THRONEROOM OF ODIN, LORD OF THE REALM... THE LIMP FIGURE OF HIS LOVER CRADLED IN HIS ARMS.

THE ASSEMBLED NOBILITY GAPE IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT BEFORE THEM. AND THEN THE STUNNED SILENCE IS BROKEN BY A SINGLE WORD UTTERED FROM THE ROYAL LIPS IN DISBELIEF...



BALDER!

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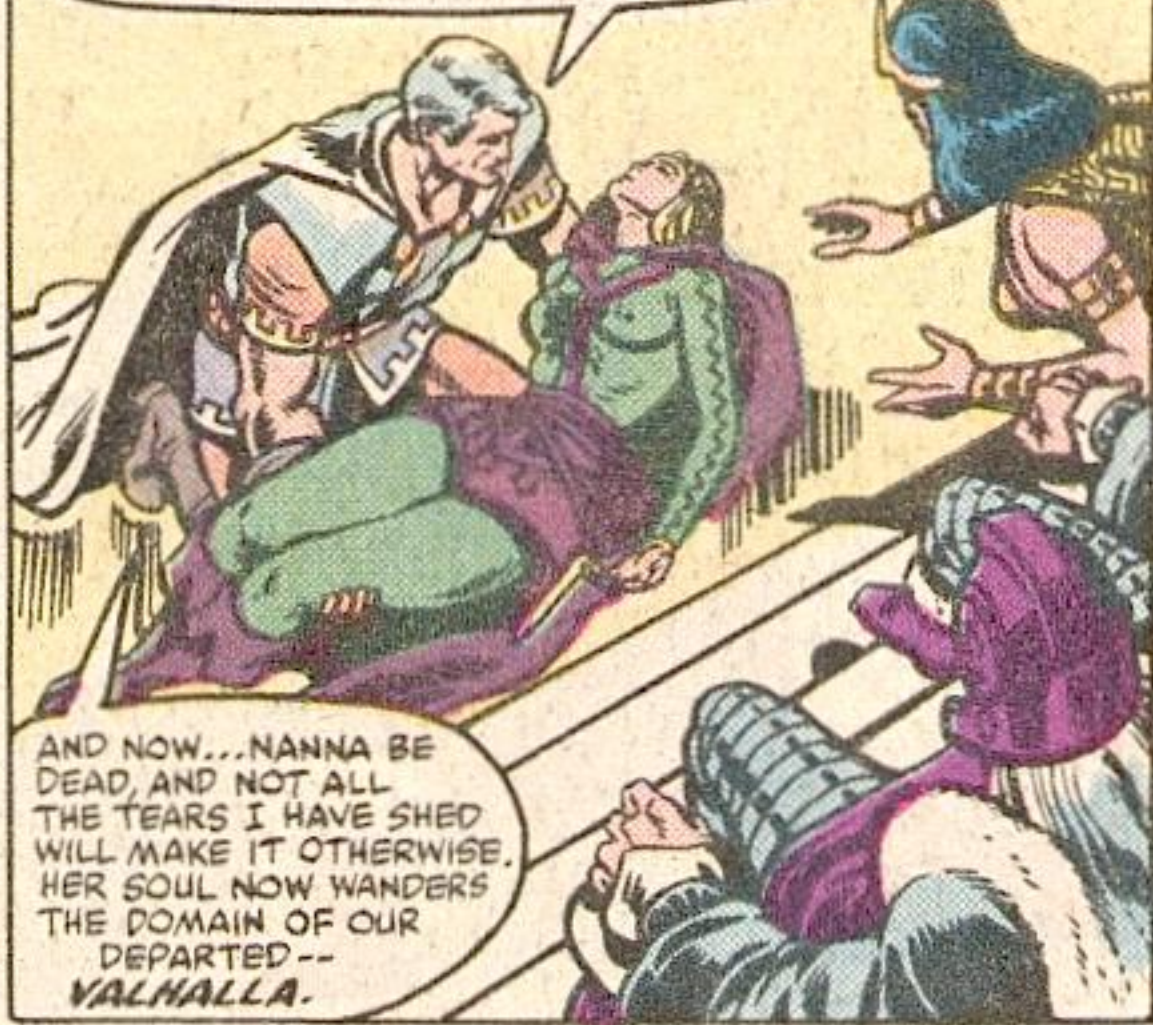
AYE, MY LIEGE, I HAVE RETURNED FROM THE LAND OF THE *NORMS* TO WHICH I WAS ABDUCTED BY ITS EVIL QUEEN, *KARNILLA*.

*KARNILLA*... SHE, WHO SOUGHT, THROUGH MEANS MOST VILE, MY HAND IN WEDLOCK, FORCING MINE ACCEPTANCE OF A MARRIAGE PACT WHICH ONLY THE DEATH OF MY BE-LOVED *NANNA* COULD BREAK.\*



\*IN ISSUES #304-306 -- J.S.

BEFORE MINE EYES, SHE PLUNGED A DAGGER INTO HER HEART, THAT I MIGHT BE FREE OF THE WITCH, *KARNILLA*.



AND NOW... *NANNA* BE DEAD, AND NOT ALL THE TEARS I HAVE SHED WILL MAKE IT OTHERWISE. HER SOUL NOW WANDERS THE DOMAIN OF OUR DEPARTED-- *VALHALLA*.

BUT THE AGONY WOULD BE LESS O'ERWHELMING, MILORD, IF I DID KNOW *NANNA*'S SPIRIT DWELT IN THE *VALHALLA* OF LEGEND... A SUNLIT LANDSCAPE THAT BECKONS THOSE WEARY OF LIFE.



YET, THAT IS NOT *VALHALLA* TODAY, IS IT, ODIN...

"...NOW, IT IS A DISMAL LAND OF CLOYING MIST AND SHIFTING SHADOWS. AND THIS I KNOW TO BE TRUE, FOR I HAVE SET FOOT THERE, OF LATE, AND SEEN ITS HORROR."



THOU SPEAK TRUE, BRAVE ONE-- TO MY SHAME, FOR TOO LONG ODIN HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH MATTERS CELESTIAL...



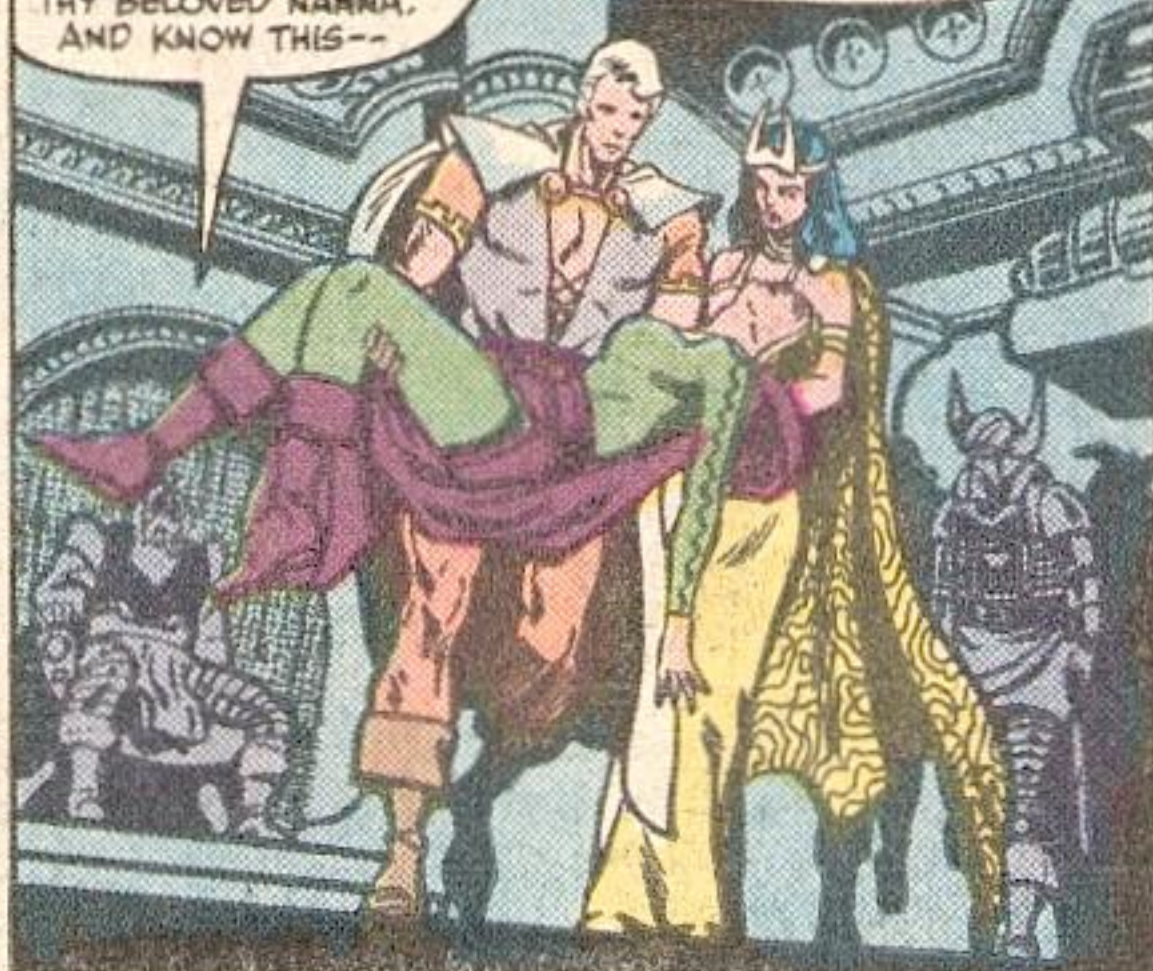
...AND THUS ALLOWED *HELA*, DREAD GODDESS OF DEATH, TO ANNEX *VALHALLA* TO HER OWN DOMAIN OF *NIFFLEHEIM*--



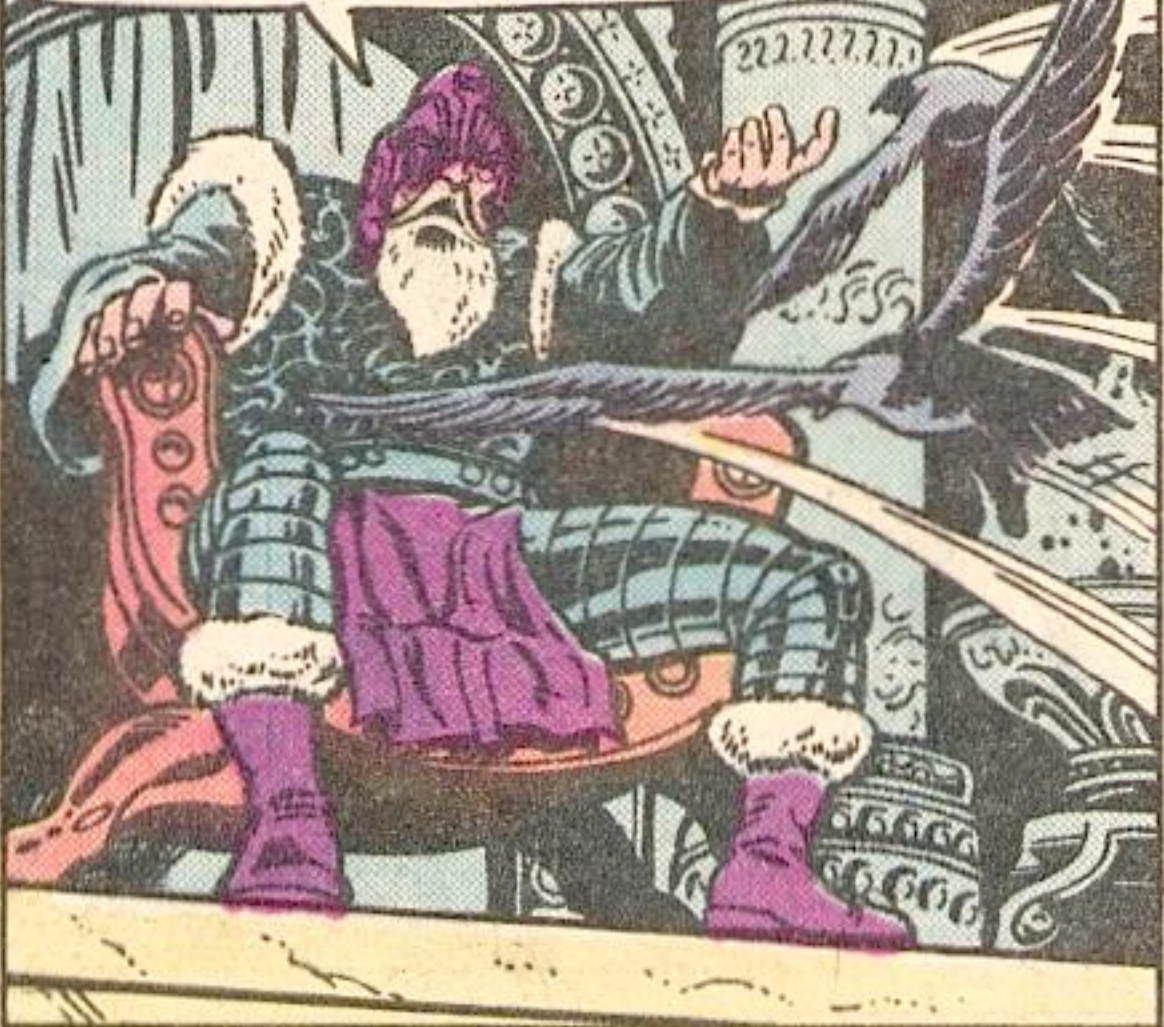
--TRANSFORMING IT INTO AS COLD AND BARREN A PLACE, AND 'TIS ODIN'S FAULT ALONE.

GO NOW, *BALDER*, AND WITH THEE, MY QUEEN, *FRIGGA*. PREPARE THEE FOR THE FUNERAL OF THY BELOVED *NANNA*. AND KNOW THIS--

--ALMIGHTY ODIN WILL RECLAIM *VALHALLA* FOR ASGARD'S HONORED DEAD. THIS DO TH HE SWEAR!



LET NOT A MOMENT PASS ERE I MAKE AMENDS. HUGIN AND MUNIN-- TO ME, MY RAVENS. I HAVE A TASK FOR YE.



GO NOW, FAITHFUL ONES... GO AND SEEK THOSE NINE OF ASGARD'S FINEST, WHOM I HAVE NOT CALLED UPON IN AN AGE.



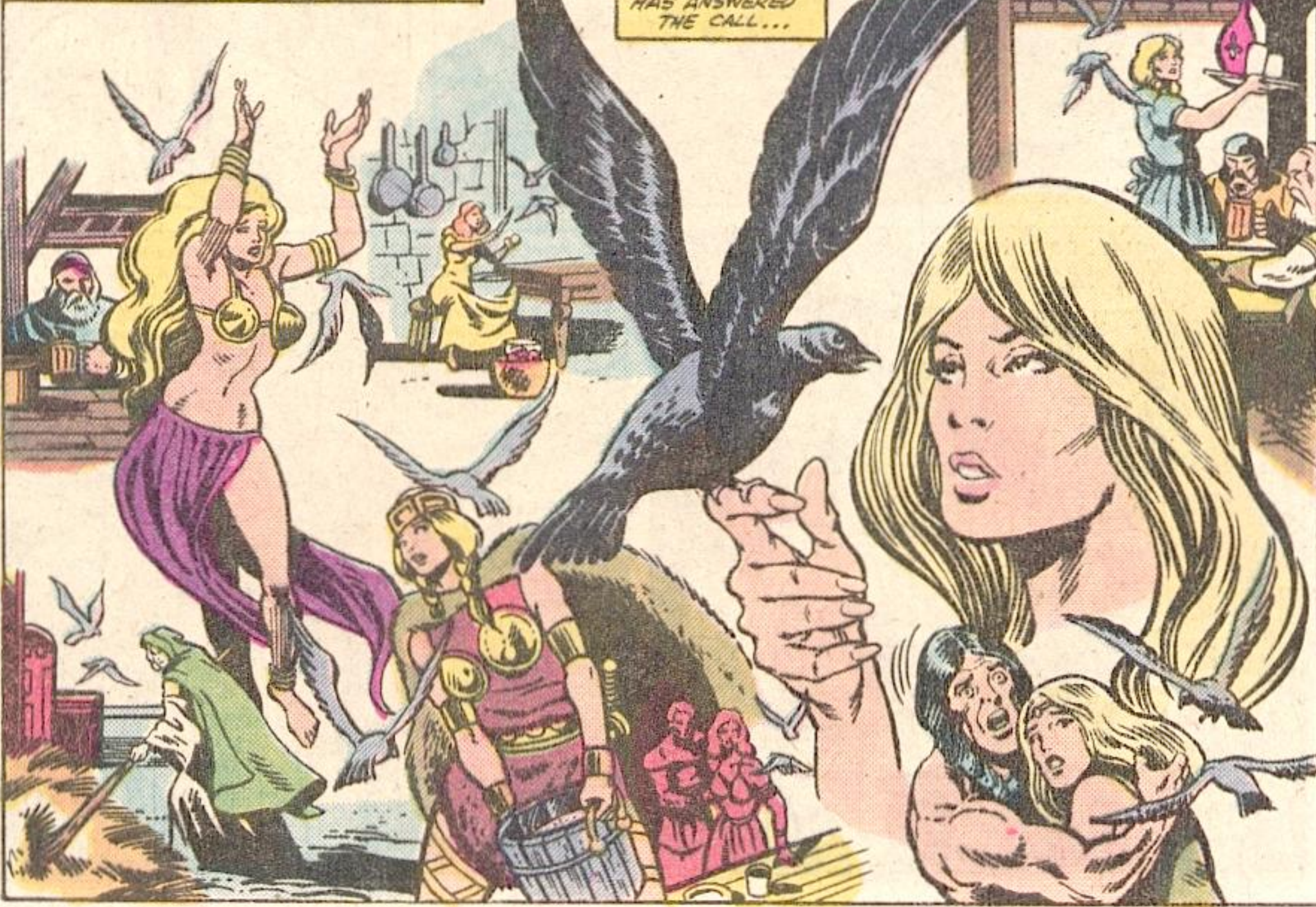
BRING TO ODIN-- HIS VALKYRIES. GO.

UNERRINGLY, THE EBONY EMISSARIES SCOUR THE REALM ETERNAL... SEEKING THOSE THEIR MASTER REQUESTS--



-- GUIDED BY SENSES BEYOND MERE SIGHT.

THE BEASTS ARE TIRELESS IN THEIR FLIGHT. THE SOUND OF BEATING WINGS IS HEARD IN TAVERN AND DWELLING ALIKE--



-- UNTIL ALL BUT ONE GODDESS HAS ANSWERED THE CALL...

...AND MADE THEIR WAY BEFORE THE THRONE OF THEIR KING.



NOT SINCE THE DAYS WHEN GRIMVIKINGS SAILED THE NORTHERN SEAS OF MIDGARD, HAVE I SUMMONED YE AS ONE...



...FOR YOU MUST NEEDS ACCOMPANY YOUR LIEGE ON A VOYAGE ONLY YE ARE CAPABLE OF MAKING.

NOW, BY THE POWER OF THE SACRED SPEAR *GUNGNIR*-- ONCE AGAIN WILL YE DON THE REGALIA OF CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN.



-- ONCE AGAIN WILL YE BE --



-- VALKYRIES!



BUT ONE TASK REMAINS. THY LEADER *BRUNNHILDA* HAS BEEN ABSENT FOR A TIME ON MIDGARD COHABITING THE BODY OF A MORTAL.

*VALTRAUTA, GRIMGERTA.* ATTEND ME.



"HIE YE TO EARTH ATOP THY WINGED STEEDS AND RETURN WITH HER WHO ONCE LED YE."

SOON, THE SPIRES OF ASGARD ARE LEFT BEHIND AS THE TWO FIGURES STREAK LIKE COMETS TOWARD THE SPHERE BELOW.

I HAVE CALLED YE TOGETHER FOR A MISSION MOST URGENT...ONE UNLIKE THAT WHICH YE DID PERFORM FOR ME IN AGES PAST--WHEN YE DID GATHER THE SOULS OF THOSE FALLEN IN BATTLE...

... AND BRING THEM, AT MY BIDDING, TO VALHALLA--FOR ETERNITY. NOW THOSE SPIRITS ARE IN TORMENT.

VALHALLA HAS FALLEN TO HOSTILE POWERS.

AND AS THE HEARTSICK MONARCH RECOUNTS THE TAKING OF THAT DOMAIN BY HELA, VALTRAUTA AND GRIMGERTA RETURN TO THE ROYAL CASTLE.

ALL-FATHER, WE BEG THY FORGIVENESS, FOR WE HAVE FAILED THEE.

BRUNNHILDA HATH REFUSED THY SUMMONS AND REMAINS ON MIDGARD. THAT BE HER PLACE NOW, SHE SAID.

SHE HATH REFUSED A ROYAL COMMAND! VERY WELL, NE'ER AGAIN SHALL SHE BE CALLED THY LEADER.

BY MY DECREE DO THOU NOW LEAD THE CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN, SO BE IT.

VALTRAUTA.

APPROACH THE PRESENCE.

AS THOU WISH, MILORD.

STILL MUST ONE BE FOUND TO COMPLETE THE RANKS OF NINE AND REPLACE THE BANISHED BRUNNHILDA. ARISE NOW, MY VALKYRIES, FOR THE TASK IS THINE. RETURN ON THE MORROW WITH THY CHOICE.

AS ODIN COMMANDS, SO SHALL IT BE DONE.

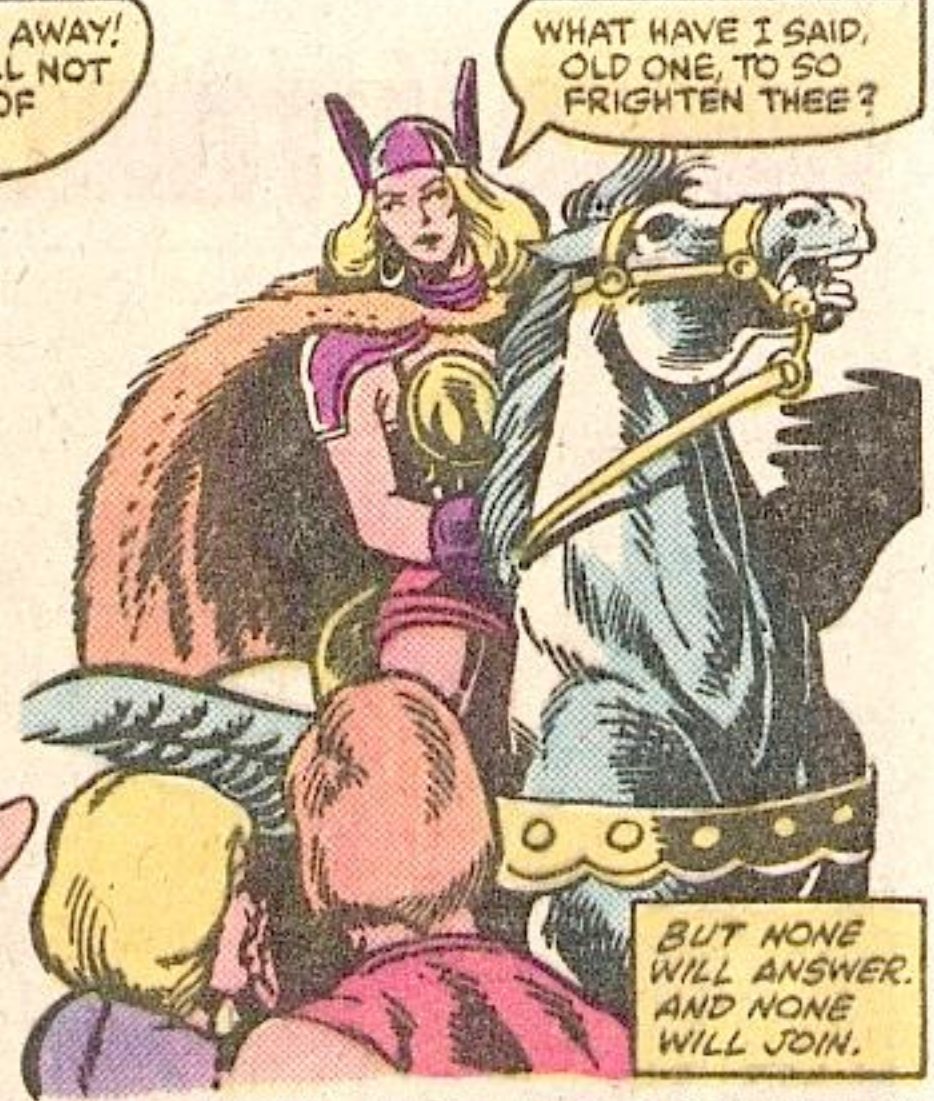
IN ALL OF ASGARD, SURELY THERE BE ONE WORTHY ENOW TO JOIN US.

LET THE SEARCH BEGIN!

BUT THE QUEST GOES BADLY. WHEREVER THE VALKYRIES APPEAR--ASGARDIANS RECOIL IN SEEMING FEAR.



BE OFF, MAIDEN-- AWAY! MY DAUGHTER WILL NOT JOIN THE LIKES OF THEE. BE OFF!



WHAT HAVE I SAID, OLD ONE, TO SO FRIGHTEN THEE?

BUT NONE WILL ANSWER. AND NONE WILL JOIN.

AND AS NIGHT FALLS, EIGHT CRESTFALLEN COMPANIONS MEET AT THE HOME OF THE VALKYRIE--



--HILDEGARDE... 'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE, ALL I ENCOUNTERED ON MY JOURNEY WAS FEAR.

AS DID I.

AND I, YET, WHAT BE THE CAUSE?



PERHAPS-- EH?! BY THE HORN OF HEIMDALL-- LOOK! IN THE WATER OF THAT WELL...

... OUR REFLECTIONS!



THAT BE THE CROWN OF THE DEATH-GODDESS, HELA, BEHIND OUR HEADS. NOW IT BECOMES CLEAR WHY WE DID RECEIVE SUCH STUNNED REACTION.

SUCH A SIGN CAN MEAN BUT ONE THING.

THE BATTLE IN WHICH WE ARE TO BE LED WILL BRING ABOUT OUR DEATHS. HOW THEN MAY WE ASK ANOTHER TO JOIN US?



HO, HILDEGARDE! WHY ART THOU SO GLUM? I HAVE HEARD OF THY SEARCH FOR A LAST VALKYRIE. I WISH TO JOIN THEE.



NAY, NAY-- KRISTA.

THOU MUST NOT BECOME ONE OF US.

NOT YOU--

--MY SISTER!

NEXT: INTO DEATH'S DARK DOMAIN!