

MARVEL[®]



60¢
338
DEC
02450

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

the mighty THOR[®]



THIS PLACE IS BEYOND
THE FIELDS WE KNOW.

THIS FORGE IS THE FORGE
OF DESTRUCTION.

THE SMITH IS A BREAKER
OF STARS.

AND THIS SOUNDING ANVIL RINGS MORE LOUDLY WITH EVERY BLOW.



ART AND STORY: WALTER SIMONSON · LETTERING: JOHN WORKMAN, JR. · COLORS: GEORGE ROUSSOS · EDITING: MARK GRIENWALD · EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JIM SHOOTER

THOR • Vol. 1, No. 338, December, 1983. (ISSN 0274-533X) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Second Class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Published monthly. Copyright © 1983 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 60¢ per copy in the U.S. and 75¢ in Canada. Subscription rate \$7.20 for 12 issues. Canada and Foreign, \$9.20. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. THOR (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. Postmaster: Send address changes to Subscription Dept., Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.

STAN LEE PRESENTS: **the MIGHTY THOR**

ORDINARILY, DR. DONALD BLAKE CAN SIMPLY TAP HIS ENCHANTED CANE AND BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE MIGHTY THOR, AS THE CANE BECOMES HIS MIGHTY HAMMER, MJOLNIR.

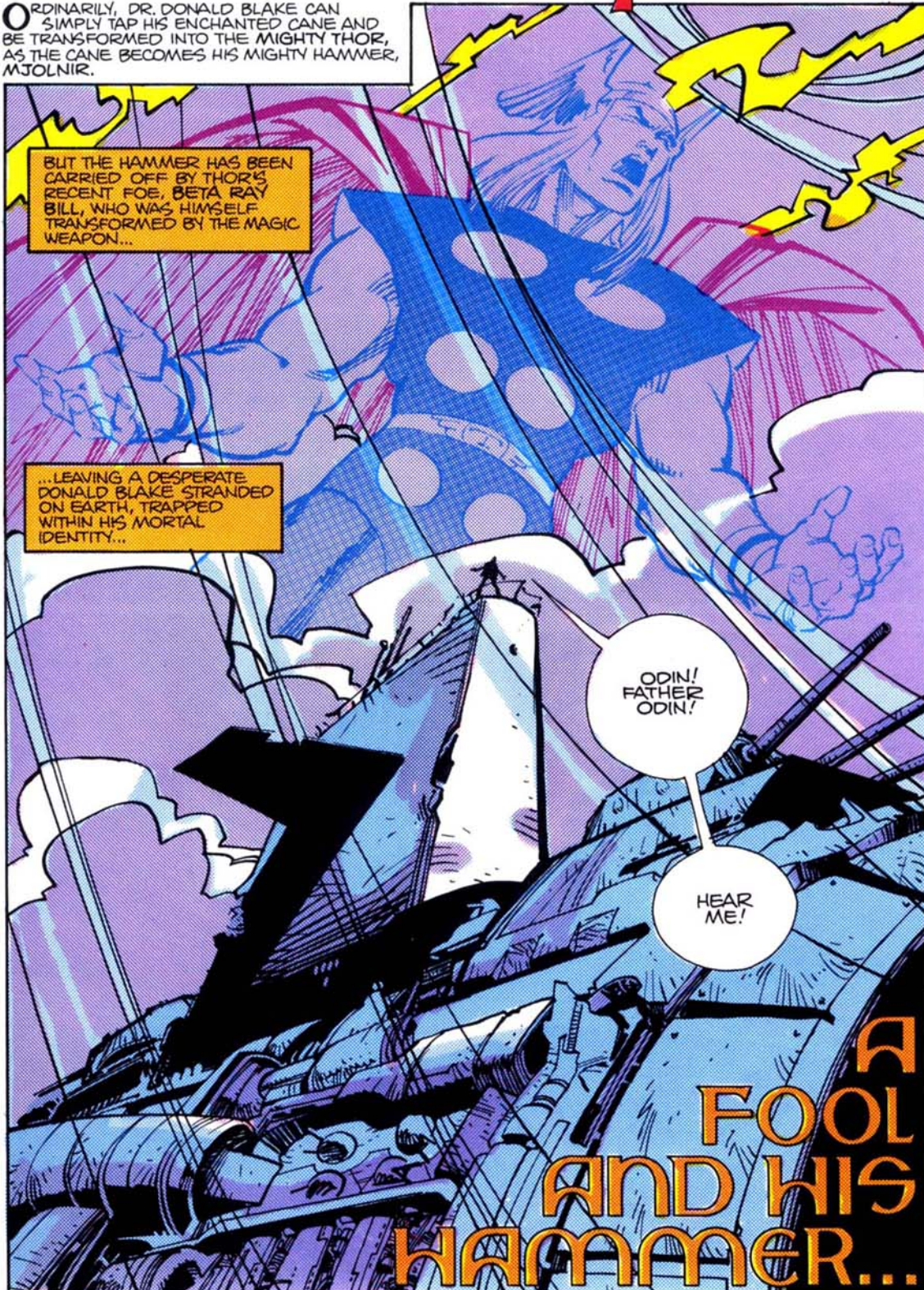
BUT THE HAMMER HAS BEEN CARRIED OFF BY THOR'S RECENT FOE, BETA RAY BILL, WHO WAS HIMSELF TRANSFORMED BY THE MAGIC WEAPON...

...LEAVING A DESPERATE DONALD BLAKE STRANDED ON EARTH, TRAPPED WITHIN HIS MORTAL IDENTITY...

ODIN!
FATHER
ODIN!

HEAR
ME!

A
FOOL
AND HIS
HAMMER...



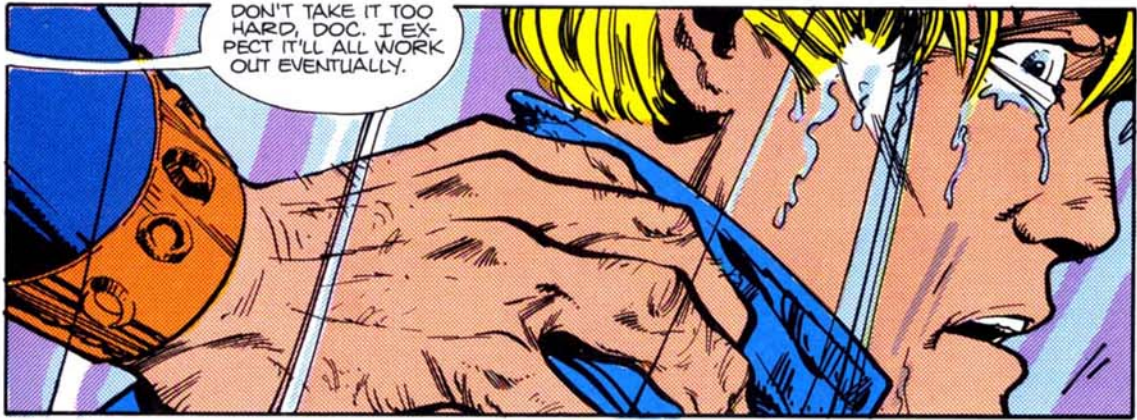


HEAR ME.

IT'S NO USE. THE HAMMER'S GONE AND WITHOUT IT, I'M DOOMED TO REMAIN A MORTAL, UNABLE TO CONTACT ASGARD OR ODIN, MY FATHER.



WHAT WILL I DO? WHAT WILL I DO? ODIN, HELP ME.



DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD, DOC. I EXPECT IT'LL ALL WORK OUT EVENTUALLY.



COLONEL FURY! I... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU'D BE HERE.



I'VE LOST EVERYTHING, NICK! THERE WAS AN ALIEN ON BOARD THIS SHIP. WE FOUGHT AND I TURNED BACK INTO DON BLAKE AT THE WRONG MOMENT.

HE KNOCKED ME OUT AND NOW IT LOOKS AS THOUGH HE'S TAKEN MY HAMMER. THAT'S NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE. AND WITHOUT MJOLNIR, I'M MAROONED HERE, PERHAPS FOREVER.

MAYBE NOT, DOC. AN OLD GUY WITH ONE EYE APPEARED AND THEN VANISHED, TAKING THE ALIEN WITH HIM.

SURE THING, DOC. SHIELD'S BEEN TRACKIN' THIS SHIP ALL THE WAY. THOUGHT YA MIGHT NEED A LITTLE HELP WHEN IT CRASHED ON EARTH.

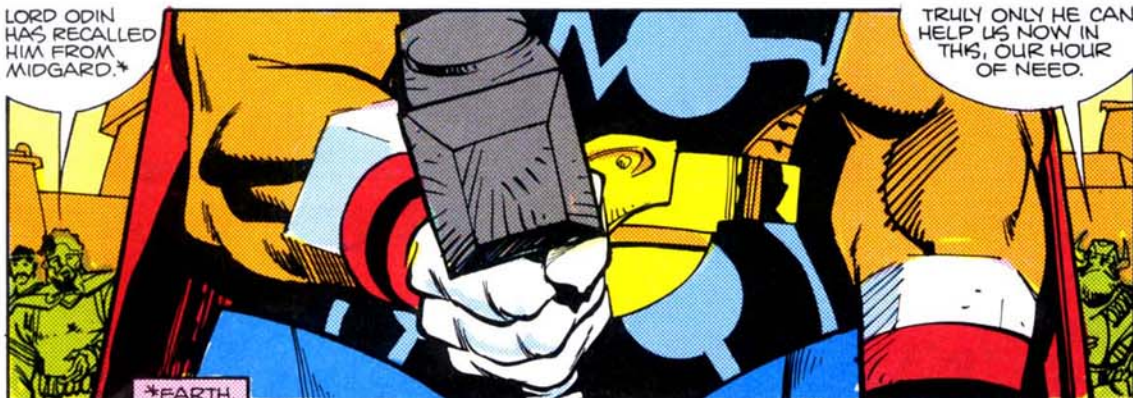
LOOKS LIKE WE WERE RIGHT. YOU OKAY?

IF THAT WAS YER OLD MAN, HE AIN'T GONNA BE REAL HAPPY TO SEE SOMEBODY ELSE WEARIN' YER THREADS AND HEFTIN' YER HAMMER.



'TIS THOR!

LORD ODIN HAS RECALLED HIM FROM MIDGARD.*



TRULY ONLY HE CAN HELP US NOW IN THIS, OUR HOUR OF NEED.

*EARTH.

BACK, DEMONS! YOU'VE MORE TRICKS ABOUT YOU THAN I DREAMED OF BUT IT WILL AVAIL YOU NAUGHT!




WHO... WHO ARE YOU THAT WEARS THE COSTUME AND CARRIES THE HAMMER OF THE MIGHTY THOR?

NO ASGARDIAN COULD EVEN LIFT THE ENCHANTED MALLET, LET ALONE DEFEAT THOR IN BATTLE.


IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO QUESTION ME! TELL ME RATHER WHERE THIS PLACE IS... AND WHO YOU DEMONS SERVE.



BETA RAY BILL'S ONSLAUGHT IS DEADLY AND OVERWHELMING! BUT THE SHOCK OF THE ATTACK SCARCELY EQUALS THE ASGARDIAN'S SUBSEQUENT SURPRISE!




STAY YOUR HAND, IMPETUOUS ONE! I HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE AND AT MY SUFFERENCE YOU REMAIN!



THE POWER THAT CLOAKS YOU BELONGS TO ANOTHER AND BY IT I MISTOOK YOU!




NOW SPEAK! WHERE IS MY SON?




AND WOE TO YOU IF YOUR ANSWER DISPLEASES ME!



THIS IS MY ANSWER!



IF YOU ARE TRULY THE LEADER OF THESE DEMONS, THEN IT IS YOU WHO MUST BE SLAIN TO SAVE MY PEOPLE!



AND THIS MIGHTY WEAPON I HAVE WON IN COMBAT SHALL DO THE DEED!



PERHAPS AND PERHAPS NOT!



COME, MJOLNIR!



STRIKE NOT YOUR CREATOR NOR RETURN TO THIS FALSE MASTER!

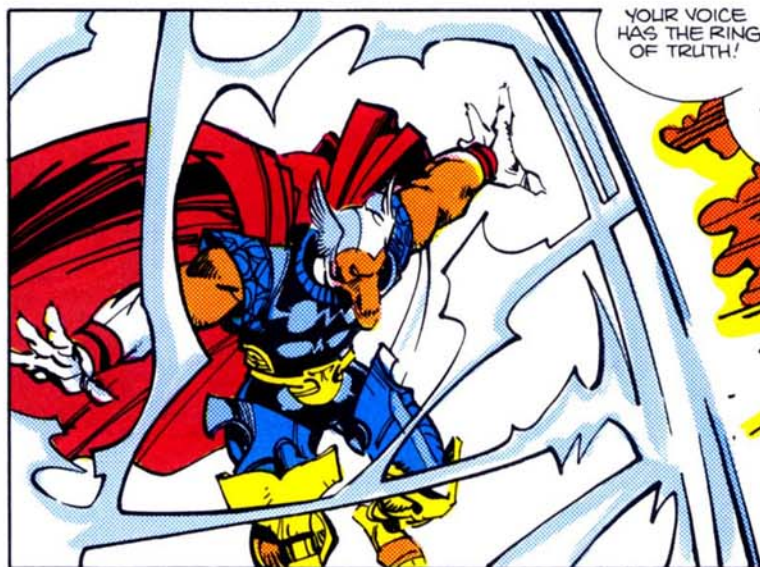


WHERE IS THOR?

WHERE IS MY SON?

I KNOW NOT WHO YOU MEAN!

BUT I FAIRLY WON THE HAMMER IN COMBAT AND NOT ALL YOUR POWER CAN CHANGE THAT!



YOUR VOICE HAS THE RING OF TRUTH!

LET ME STAY MY WRATH A MOMENT AND SEEK TO KNOW MORE OF THIS MATTER.

EVEN THOR'S PRODIGIOUS STRENGTH WOULD BE HARD PUT TO SHATTER A VESSEL OF ETHEREAL FORCE.



AND NOW WE SHALL LEARN WHAT WE MUST, NO MATTER THE COST!



SURELY THIS IS NO ORDINARY DEMON!

IN FACT, I BEGIN TO WONDER IF THERE IS NOT MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE BEFORE ME.

LET THE CRYSTAL OF VISION SHOW ME WHAT I WISH TO SEE.



WHERE IS MY SON?

IF THAT WAS YER OLD MAN, HE ISN'T GONNA BE REAL HAPPY TO SEE SOMEBODY ELSE WEARIN' YER THREADS AND HEFTIN' YER HAMMER.

FACT IS, I'M SURPRISED HE HASN'T...

IS IT MY IMAGINATION OR IS IT GETTIN' DARKER?



I HOPE IT WASN'T SOMETHIN' I SAID.



YEOW!
NOT AGAIN!

NOW DOCK'S GONE, TOO. BROTHER, THIS IS GONNA MAKE ONE HECK OF A REPORT!

WELL, GOOD LUCK, BLAKE. I THINK YER GONNA NEED IT.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S STARTIN' TO RAIN AGAIN, TOO.

SWELL. DON'T THESE GUN'S EVER TRAVEL IN DRY WEATHER?

AT THAT MOMENT, ON AGGARD...

FATHER!

WELCOME HOME, MY SON. HOW STANDS THY ZEST FOR ADVENTURE NOW?

UNABATED, MY LORD. THOUGH I CONFESS THAT A MOMENT AGO, I FEARED THAT PERHAPS ALL MY ADVENTURES WERE OVER.

AH, MY YOUTHFUL SON, DOES THIS MEAN THAT YOUR MORTAL FRIEND HAS MORE FAITH IN A ONE-EYED VISION THAN MY BOY HAS IN HIS OWN FATHER?

THAT FRIEND
HAD NOT
HAD HIS WITS
KNOCKED
ABOUT BY A
SUPERB
FIGHTER.

MY
MORTAL
GUISE IS
POORLY
EQUIPPED
FOR
BATTLE.

AHE, WE MAY
HAVE TO ATTEND
TO THAT. BUT NOW
IT IS TIME TO LEARN
MORE OF THIS
AFFAIR.

FIRST, I
MUST FREE THE
WARRIOR.

MIGHTY STRANGER,
WILL YOU FORGIVE
MY ANGER OF A
MOMENT AGO?

IT WAS
THE HONEST
REACTION OF
A FRIGHTENED
PARENT.

I ASK
YOU PLEASE
TO ACCEPT THE
HOSPITALITY OF
MY HOME.

SUCH BONDS
OF LOVE AS I
SEE BETWEEN
FATHER AND SON
PERSUADE ME
THAT WHATEVER
YOU ARE, YOU
ARE NOT
DEMONS.

I
ACCEPT.

THEN FOL-
LOW ME UP
THE MOUNTAINS.
WE WILL CON-
VERSE ON
HLIDSKJALF,
THE HIGH SEAT,
ITSELF!

FROM THERE, WE CAN
SEE ALL THE NINE
WORLDS, AND PERHAPS
WE SHALL LOOK
CLEARLY INTO EACH
OTHER'S HEARTS.

LET ME BEGIN. I AM
ODIN, SON OF BOR, SON
OF BURI, AND LORD OF
ASGARD. THIS IS MY
SON, THOR.

SINCE THE DAWN
OF TIME, NONE
BUT WE HAVE
EVER LIFTED
MJOLNIR, THE
ENCHANTED
HAMMER.

UNTIL
NOW.

SIT BESIDE
US, STRANGER,
AND TELL US OF
YOURSELF.

MEANWHILE, BELOW THE HIGH SEAT, AT THE GARDEN ENTRANCE TO ODIN'S NOBLE HALL, WE FIND THE LADY SIF...



MY BROTHER, HEIMDALL THE WATCHER, MAY BE RIGHT. ONLY ODIN HIMSELF CAN HELP ME EASE MY EMPTY HEART NOW THAT THOR AND I ARE NO LONGER PROMISED TO EACH OTHER.



WOULD THAT ODIN HAD NEVER GIVEN THOR HIS MORTAL IDENTITY SO LONG AGO. I STILL LOVE THE NOBLE WARRIOR BUT HIS HEART MAY EVER BE DIVIDED BETWEEN ASGARD AND MIDGARD.

AND THOUGH MY LOVE SURPASSES UNDERSTANDING, I CANNOT SHARE THOR'S JOY FOR EARTH.

BUT WHAT'S THIS I HEAR?

SURELY MY SENSES DECEIVE ME!



AH, LADY LORELEI, TO FEEL YOUR ARMS ENTWINED ABOUT ME, YOUR SWEET BREATH UPON MY FACE, YOUR LIPS PRESSED TO MINE... 'TIS ALL THAT I DESIRE.

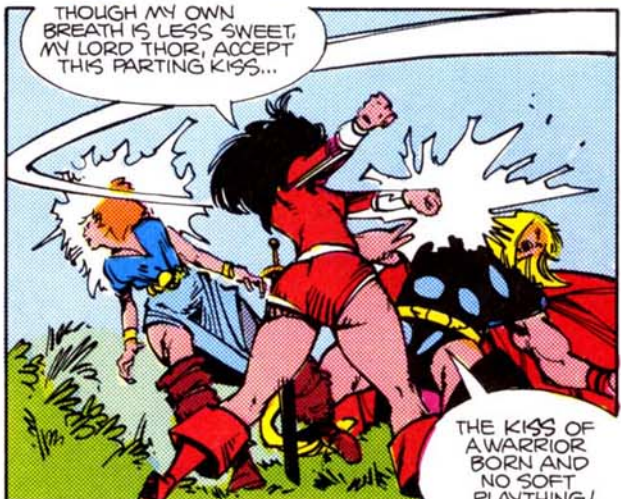


FOR SUCH KISSES, I WOULD FORSAKE EVEN MIDGARD ITSELF!



I...UH...I... MILADY SIF?

SO.



THOUGH MY OWN BREATH IS LESS SWEET, MY LORD THOR, ACCEPT THIS PARTING KISS...

THE KISS OF A WARRIOR BORN AND NO SOFT PLAYTHING!

AS FOR YOU, YOU BAWD,
I LEAVE THOR TO YOUR
TENDER EMBRACES!
BUT HAVE A CARE!

FALSE HEART
ONCE IS
FALSE HEART
FOREVER!



SPUTTER
SPUT



HAHAHA! WHAT A
RARE JEST! A
WONDERFUL
FOLLY!

AH, LORELEI, I
WOULD HOLD YOU
IN MY ARMS FOR-
EVER FOR SUCH
SPORT AS
THIS.



PERHAPS, MY
LORD, I WOULD
NOT HAVE UNDER-
TAKEN THIS
JEST HAD I
KNOWN BEFORE-
HAND THAT IT
WOULD BE SO
DANGEROUS!

NONSENSE!

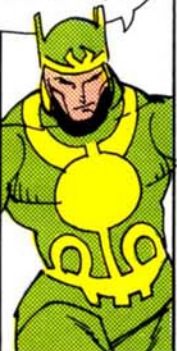
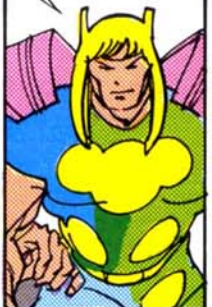
THE LADY SIF
WILL NOW SHORTLY
DEPART THIS
IMMORTAL
SPHERE.



AND
YOU, MY
SWEETLING...



... MAY YET SUCCEED
WHERE YOUR SISTER,
THE ENCHANTRESS...



... HAS
EVER
FAILED.



BUT EVEN AS LOKI CHORTLES IN HIS GLEE, WE RETURN TO THE HIGH SEAT AND ITS OCCUPANTS...

LISTEN WELL
THEN, LORDS,
AND I WILL
TELL MY TALE,
THE STORY OF
BETA RAY
BILL.



MINE IS AN ANCIENT AND
NOBLE RACE THAT HAS LIVED
IN THE HEART OF A GALAXY
FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL.



WE BUILT
OUR CITIES IN
THE BURNING
SKIES AND
DANCED
IN THE
SUNLIGHT.

"FOR LONG AGES WE DWELT THERE IN HARMONY, UNTIL WITHOUT WARNING, THE CORE OF OUR GALAXY EXPLODED, DESTROYING MUCH OF OUR CIVILIZATION.



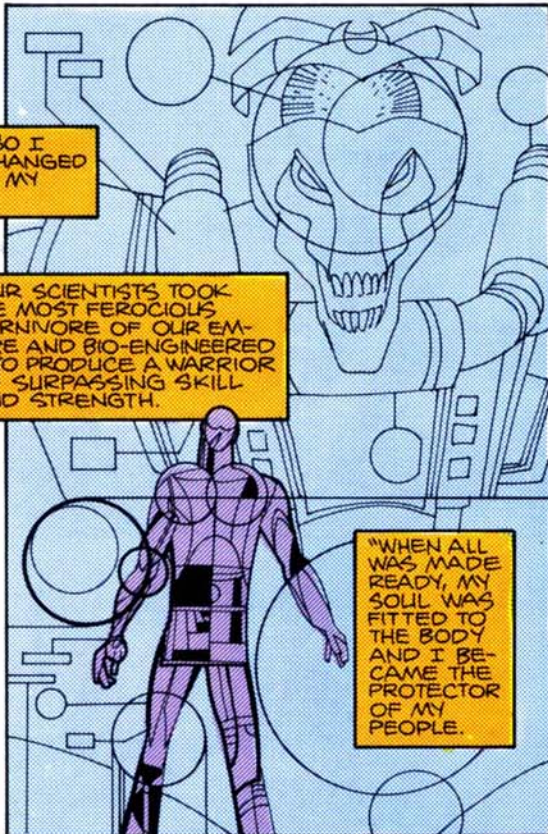
"THE SURVIVORS WERE FORCED TO FLEE FOR, AS TIME PASSED, THE REMAINING GALACTIC CORE GREW HOTTER THAN WE COULD WITHSTAND.

"I ALONE WAS CHOSEN BY OUR LEADERS TO BE THE GUARDIAN OF THE EXODUS...



"... AND SO I WAS... CHANGED TO SUIT MY TASK.

"OUR SCIENTISTS TOOK THE MOST FEROCIOUS CARNIVORE OF OUR EMPIRE AND BIO-ENGINEERED IT TO PRODUCE A WARRIOR OF SURPASSING SKILL AND STRENGTH.



"WHEN ALL WAS MADE READY, MY SOUL WAS FITTED TO THE BODY AND I BECAME THE PROTECTOR OF MY PEOPLE.

"I WAS GIVEN A WARSHIP TO RIDE, THE SKUTTLEBUTT, WHO HAS BECOME MY COMPANION... AND MY FRIEND.

"BUT WE HAD NOT FOOD ENOUGH FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE IN THE GREAT FLEET NECESSARY TO CARRY THEM TO SAFETY.



"SO THEY WERE LOCKED IN COLD-SLEEP, AND ON TEN THOUSAND SHIPS, WE FLED OUR ANCESTRAL HOME.

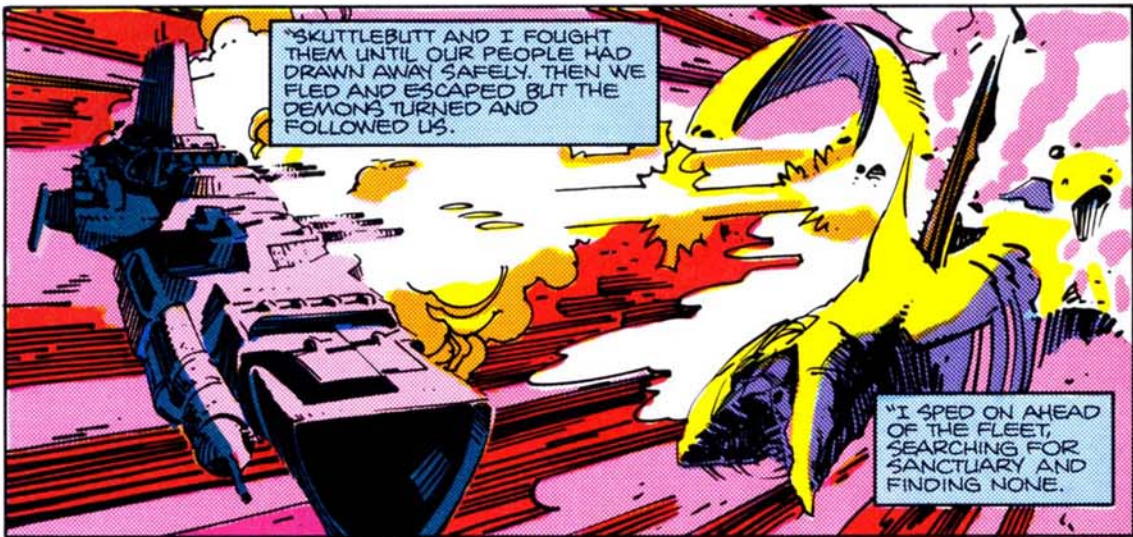
"IT WAS WELL THAT SKUTTLEBUTT AND I WERE PREPARED FOR WE FOUND THAT OUR FLEET DID NOT TRAVEL ALONE.



"SCARCELY HAD WE LEFT THE BURNING REGIONS WHEN WE WERE ATTACKED BY A HOST OF DEMONS UNKNOWN TO US TILL THEN.



"THEY CAME OUT OF THE FIERY CORE HARD ON OUR HEELS AND HARRIED US AND DESTROYED THOSE THEY CAUGHT.



"SKUTTLBLUTT AND I FOUGHT THEM UNTIL OUR PEOPLE HAD DRAWN AWAY SAFELY. THEN WE FLED AND ESCAPED BUT THE DEMONS TURNED AND FOLLOWED US.

"I SPED ON AHEAD OF THE FLEET, SEARCHING FOR SANCTUARY AND FINDING NONE.

THE PURSUIT STILL GOES ON ACROSS COUNTLESS LIGHT-YEARS. THEY ARE SLOWLY OVERTAKING US BUT WE CANNOT FIND A HAVEN.



NOW I HAVE FOUND A WEAPON THAT MAY PROTECT MY PEOPLE FOR ALL TIME, AND I AM LOATHE TO GIVE IT UP.

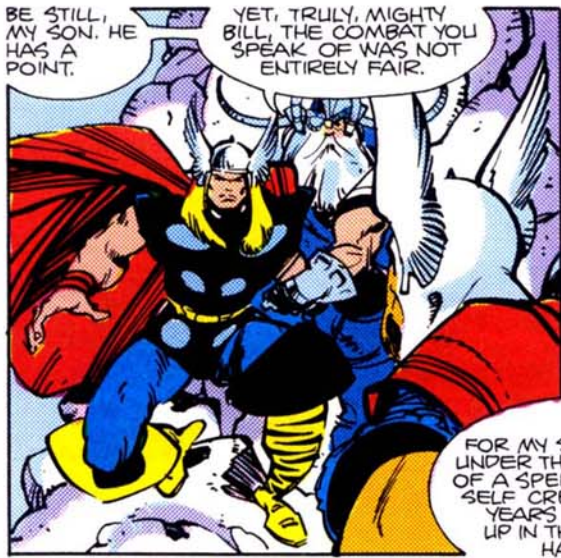
ESPECIALLY AS I HAVE WON IT IN FAIR COMBAT.



WHAT?

I SAY THEE NAY, NOBLE WARRIOR.

IT WAS NOT THOR THOU DID DEFEAT BUT A MORTAL SHELL! I--!



BE STILL, MY SON. HE HAS A POINT.

YET, TRULY, MIGHTY BILL, THE COMBAT YOU SPEAK OF WAS NOT ENTIRELY FAIR.

FOR MY SON FOUGHT UNDER THE HANDICAP OF A SPELL THAT I MYSELF CREATED MANY YEARS AGO, BOUND UP IN THIS VERY HAMMER.



IN THOSE DAYS, THOR WAS PROUD AND HEADSTRONG. I SOUGHT TO TEACH HIM THE WISDOM OF PATIENCE.

IN MY OWN PRIDE, I FASHIONED A MAGIC ABOUT THE HAMMER.



YOU SEE IT NOW INSCRIBED UPON THE HEAD.

LITTLE DID I DREAM THAT ONE OTHER THAN MY SON WOULD EVER BE WORTHY OF THIS TERRIBLE POWER. YET SOMEONE IS, AND HERE WE SIT IN THIS DILEMMA...

WHOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER IF HE BE WORTHY SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR

... DEMONSTRATING THAT YOU, MY SON, WERE NOT ALONE IN YOUR NEED FOR A LESSON IN HUMILITY.

SO BE IT.

BUT MY EYE TELLS ME THAT WE SHARE A COMMON PROBLEM.



BILL, I CALLED THOR HERE IN HASTE BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE MORTAL REALM THAT DEFIES MY UNDERSTANDING.

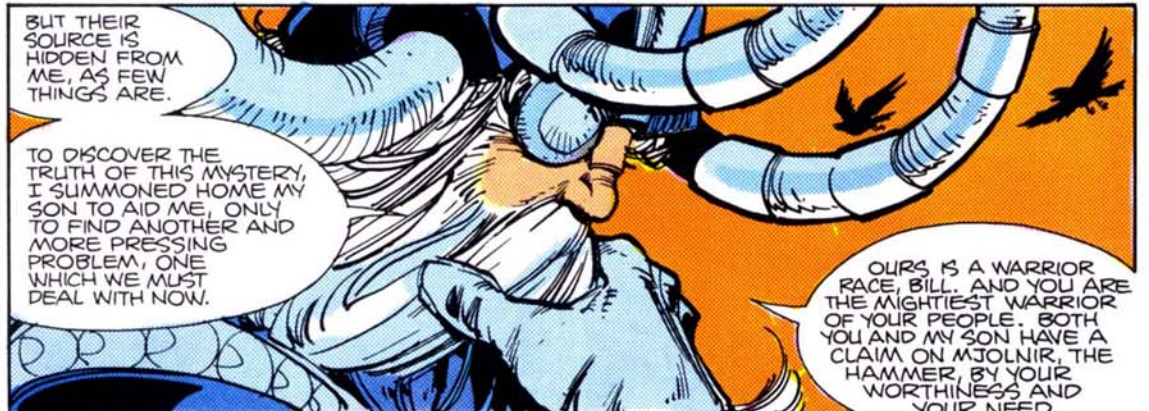
FROM HLIDSKJALF, I CAN SEE EVERYWHERE, BUT NOW A POWER IS AT WORK UNKNOWN TO ME.

AND I FEAR IT.

LOOK WITH ME!



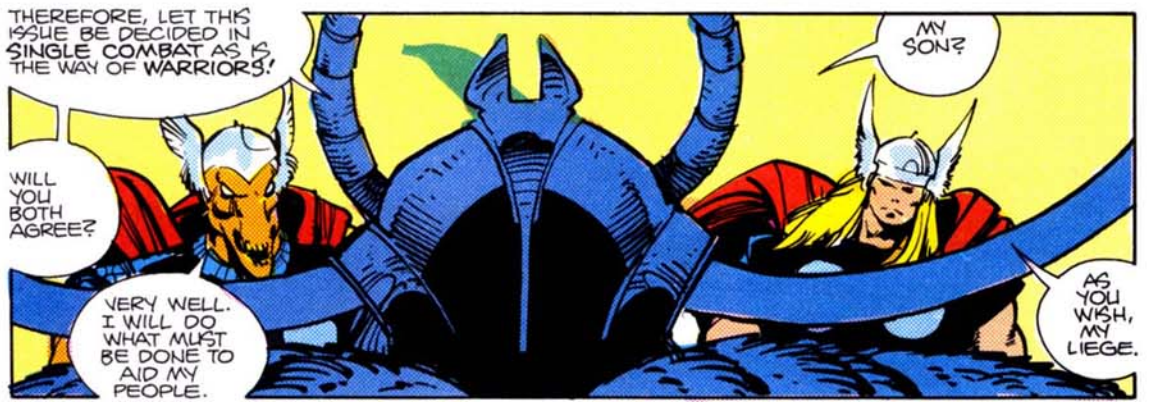
"THERE, AT THE EDGE OF ALL THINGS--TIS THE VERY GALAXY FROM WHICH YOU FLED... FROM WHICH THE DEMONS CAME."



BUT THEIR SOURCE IS HIDDEN FROM ME, AS FEW THINGS ARE.

TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH OF THIS MYSTERY, I SUMMONED HOME MY SON TO AID ME, ONLY TO FIND ANOTHER AND MORE PRESSING PROBLEM, ONE WHICH WE MUST DEAL WITH NOW.

OURS IS A WARRIOR RACE, BILL, AND YOU ARE THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR OF YOUR PEOPLE. BOTH YOU AND MY SON HAVE A CLAIM ON MJOLNIR, THE HAMMER, BY YOUR WORTHINESS AND YOUR NEED.



THEREFORE, LET THIS ISSUE BE DECIDED IN SINGLE COMBAT AS IS THE WAY OF WARRIORS!

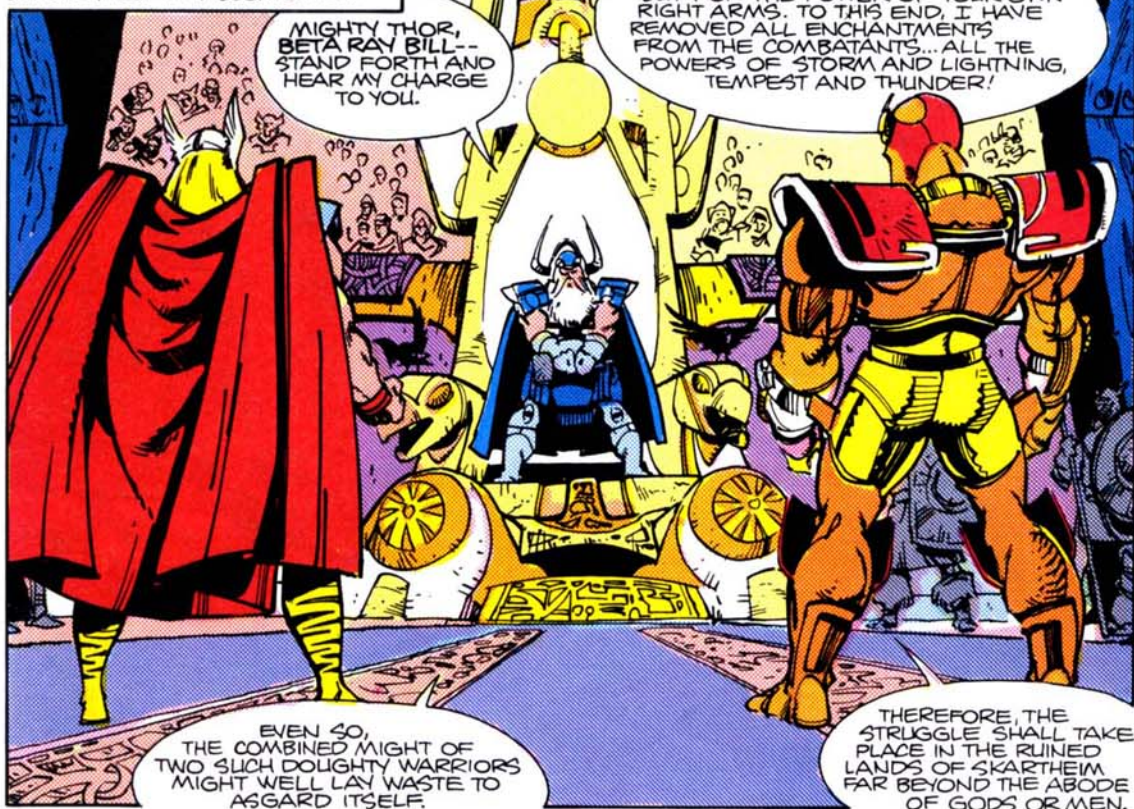
WILL YOU BOTH AGREE?

VERY WELL. I WILL DO WHAT MUST BE DONE TO AID MY PEOPLE.

MY SON?

AS YOU WISH, MY LIEGE.

SHORTLY, IN ODIN'S MIGHTY HALL,
BEFORE ASGARD ASSEMBLED...



MIGHTY THOR,
BETA RAY BILL--
STAND FORTH AND
HEAR MY CHARGE
TO YOU.

YOU WILL FIGHT WEAPONLESS,
BUT FOR THE POWER OF YOUR OWN
RIGHT ARMS. TO THIS END, I HAVE
REMOVED ALL ENCHANTMENTS
FROM THE COMBATANTS... ALL THE
POWERS OF STORM AND LIGHTNING,
TEMPEST AND THUNDER!

EVEN SO,
THE COMBINED MIGHT OF
TWO SUCH DOLIGHTY WARRIORS
MIGHT WELL LAY WASTE TO
ASGARD ITSELF.

THEREFORE, THE
STRUGGLE SHALL TAKE
PLACE IN THE RUINED
LANDS OF SKARTHEIM
FAR BEYOND THE ABODE
OF GODS OR MEN.



THE VICTOR'S
REWARD SHALL
BE MJOLNIR,
THE ENCHANTED
HAMMER.

THE LOSER'S
REWARD
SHALL BE
A FUNERAL
PYRE.

FOR STAKES SO
HIGH, THE
PRICE
MUST BE
GREAT.



THIS FIGHT...
IS TO THE
DEATH!



I
HAVE
SPOKEN!



GET
THEE TO
SKARTHEIM!

PASHHAMMM!

AN INSTANT LATER, THOR MATERIALIZES ABOVE A FORBIDDING LANDSCAPE...



SKARTHEM!
WHERE EVEN GODS
MAY PERISH!



MY
FATHER SURELY
HAS ENTRUSTED
OUR FATES TO
THE NORNS*
THEMSELVES!

*THE THREE FATES!

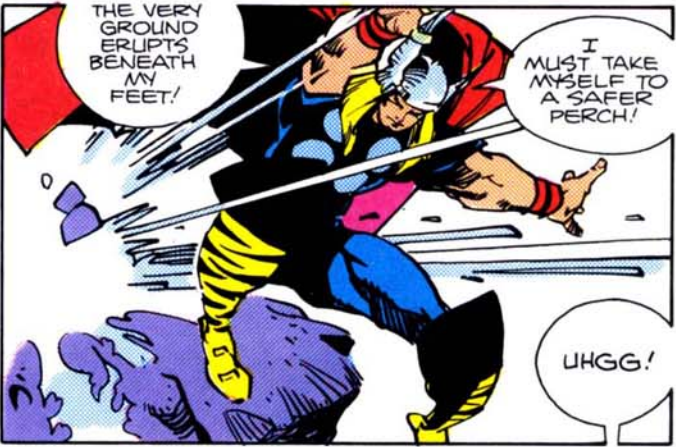
BUT I DO
NOT SEE MY
OPPONENT.



NO
DOUBT LORD
ODIN CAUSED
HIM TO APPEAR
ELSEWHERE IN
THIS DANGEROUS
REALM.

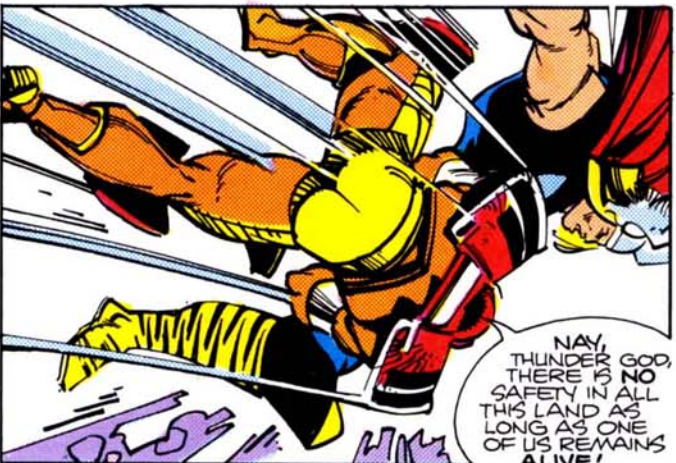
I FEEL
THE HEAT
OF THE
EARTH
ITSELF!

THE VERY
GROUND
ERUPTS
BENEATH
MY FEET!



I
MUST TAKE
MYSELF TO
A SAFER
PERCH!

UHGG!



NAY,
THUNDER GOD,
THERE IS NO
SAFETY IN ALL
THIS LAND AS
LONG AS ONE
OF US REMAINS
ALIVE!

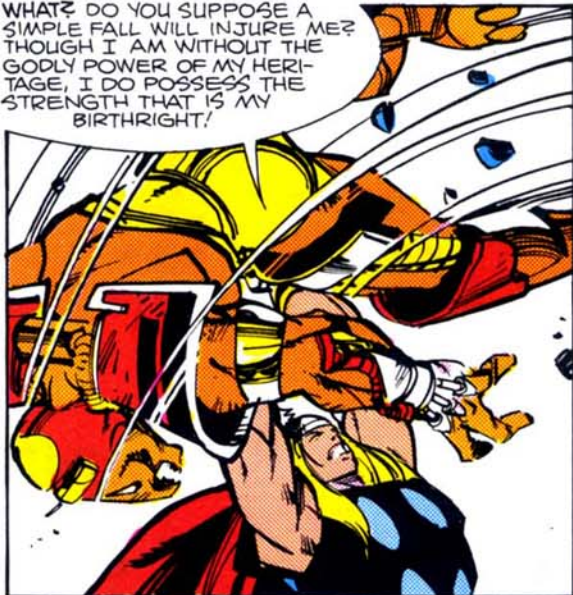
RASH WARRIOR!
SO BOOTLESS AN
ATTACK UPON A
PRINCE OF ASGARD
WILL SCARCELY
WIN YOU THE
HAMMER!



NOT EVEN
WHEN THE
PRINCE WILL
CUSHION OUR
DEADLY PLUNGE
FROM THE
CLIFFS WITH
HIS OWN
BODY?



WHAT? DO YOU SUPPOSE A
SIMPLE FALL WILL INJURE ME?
THOUGH I AM WITHOUT THE
GODLY POWER OF MY HERI-
TAGE, I DO POSSESS THE
STRENGTH THAT IS MY
BIRTHRIGHT!



STILL I AM
STRONG ENOUGH
TO GIVE THEE
PAUSE.



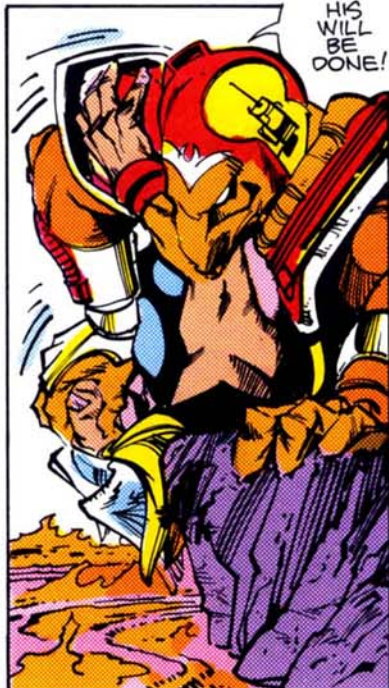
BUT PAUSE IS NOT
A VICTORY, THUNDERER!




AND
VICTORY WILL
SOON BE
MINE!

THOUGH I
DO GRIEVE TO DO
THIS DEED, YOUR
OWN FATHER
HAS COM-
MANDED IT.

HIS
WILL
BE
DONE!




NOT EVERYONE IN ASGARD, HOWEVER, IS ATTENDING THE MIGHTY HALL OF ODIN TO WITNESS THIS TITANIC STRUGGLE. ELSEWHERE IN THE DESERTED BOULEVARDS OF THE GOLDEN CITY...




BALDER, MY FRIEND, I FEAR YOU DO NOT PROPERLY APPRECIATE THE TRUE PHILOSOPHY OF EATING!

TAKE ME, FOR INSTANCE. SOME SAY I EAT BECAUSE I HAVE A WIFE WHO COULD SINK A LONGSHIP AND EIGHTEEN SCREAMING OFF-SPRING WHOSE FURY WOULD DAUNT NOBLE ODIN HIMSELF!



SCURRILOUS LIES! I EAT BECAUSE I ENJOY IT. IT IS POSSIBLY THE GREATEST PLEASURE IN LIFE! AND ONE OF THE FEW I HAVE LEFT, IF I MAY SAY SO.

BUT NOBLE FRIEND, EATING SHOULD BE AN AFFIRMATION OF LIFE, NOT AN ESCAPE FROM IT.

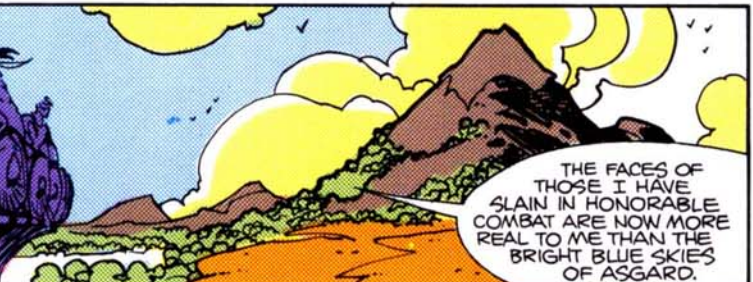


SHOULD YOU NOT TASTE MORE KEENLY THE JOYS OF LIVING, BALDER, YOU WHO ALONE AMONG US HAS TASTED DEATH ITSELF?




ONE WOULD THINK SO, VOLSTAGG, MY FRIEND.

BUT THE VISIONS I HAVE SEEN TROUBLE ME CEASELESSLY.




THE FACES OF THOSE I HAVE SLAIN IN HONORABLE COMBAT ARE NOW MORE REAL TO ME THAN THE BRIGHT BLUE SKIES OF ASGARD.



AND THE SAVOR OF LIVING SEEMS FOREVER DUST TO ME NOW. AN EMPTY DREAM.

EH? WHO--?

THEN PERHAPS THE DREAMER SHOULD RETURN TO HIS FINAL REST!



I AM AGNAR, SON OF HROTHGAR! I HAVE COME FROM VANAHEIM SEEKING BALDER, WHOSE FAME TELLS OF HIS PROWESS IN BATTLE.

I WOULD CHALLENGE HIM TO FIGHT IF HE BE NOT A COWARD...

...AND PROVE TO ME THAT HE IS A BETTER WARRIOR THAN I!

NAY, AGNAR, I AM DONE WITH FIGHTING. I'LL FIGHT NO MORE FOREVER.

SPURN ME, WILL YOU? THEN DIE WHERE YOU STAND! I'LL... HUH?

WHAT TRICKERY IS THIS THAT ALLOWED YOU TO ESCAPE MY BLOW?



COME BACK! I'LL NOT LET YOU WALK AWAY AS THOUGH I WERE SOME THRALL!

COME BACK! OR BY THE MOTHER THAT BORE ME, I'LL SPLIT YOU WHERE YOU STAND!

HOLD, MY YOUNG FRIEND. PERMIT ME TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE NOBLE BALDER.

OWW! MY FOOT! GET OFF, YOU CLUMSY OAF!

TUT, TUT, AGNAR, I AM BEYOND SUCH INSULTS! IN FACT, TO DEMONSTRATE MY GENEROUS NATURE, LET ME SHOW YOU SOME OF THE WONDERS OF THE ETERNAL REALM WHILE BALDER CONTINUES HIS WALK.

NO. I WANT TO... OW, MY FOOT! I THINK IT'S BROKEN!

I AM OLDER THAN YOU, AGNAR. OLDER THAN BALDER. AND IN HIS PRIME, BRAVE VOL-STAGG FOUGHT BESIDE MANY FAMOUS FIGHTERS! BUT NEVER HAVE I BEHELD A MORE COURAGEOUS, MORE GENTLE WARRIOR THAN BALDER THE BRAVE.

HERE'S A SHADY SPOT.

OOF!

SURELY THOSE OF VANAHEIM ARE MADE OF STERNER STUFF. ALLOW ME TO CARRY YOU. WE'LL VISIT THE PALACE GARDENS. VERY SOOTHING AND WE CAN CONVERSE THERE AT OUR LEISURE.

HIS DEEDS ARE LEGENDARY-- THE SLAYING OF THE UGARD DRAGON, THE BINDING OF THORN OF THE FOUR RINGS-- THE SAVING OF ASGARD A HUNDRED TIMES! NOW ALL THAT HAS CHANGED-- PERHAPS FOREVER!

PATIENCE, LITTLE ONE, YOU FEEL YOU'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO FACE DEATH, DO YOU? WELL, BALDER IS THE ONLY GOD AMONG US WHO HAS HIMSELF DIED AND RETURNED TO TELL THE TALE...

OFF! GET OFF!

...AND A BLOOD-CHILLING TALE IT IS, TOO! JUST THE SORT OF STORY FOR A SUMMER'S AFTERNOON.

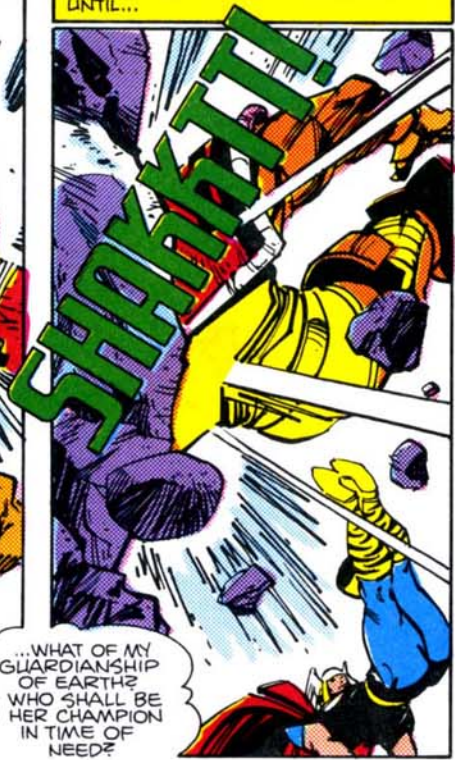


IT IS, HOWEVER, A TALE WE WILL HEAR ANOTHER TIME, FOR IN THE REMOTE LAND OF SKARTHEIM, WE FIND...

BACK, WARRIOR! THE HAMMER IS NOT YET THINE!

NEVER BEFORE HAVE I FOUGHT ONE SO WORTHY OR NOBLE... BUT IF I FAIL...

NEITHER HERO SURRENDERS AN INCH AS THE BATTLE RAGES ACROSS THE ANCIENT LAND, TEARING THE VERY MOUNTAINS FROM THEIR ROOTS UNTIL...



...WHAT OF MY GUARDIANSHIP OF EARTH? WHO SHALL BE HER CHAMPION IN TIME OF NEED?

I SENSE THAT MY FOE IS TIRING EVEN AS I! THE MOMENT OF DECISION IS UPON US!



WILL THE THUNDER GOD NEVER BREAK? AGAIN HE LEAPS TO DO BATTLE WITH UNDIMINISHED FEROR!



BUT NOW, HE HAS LEFT HIMSELF OPEN...

...FOR THIS!

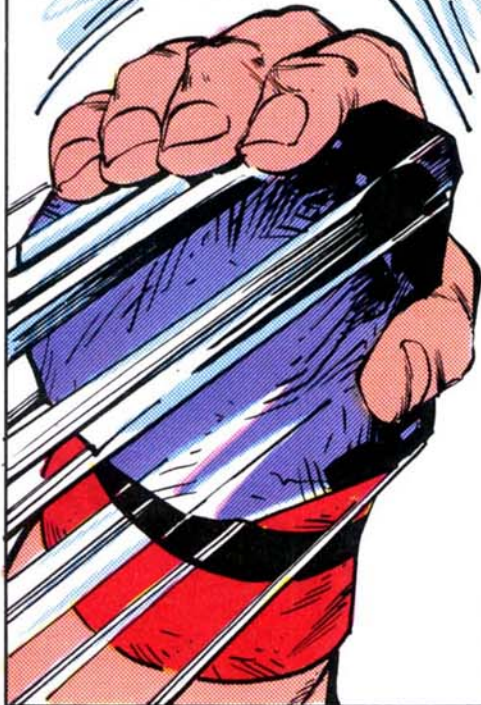


BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN, HE HAS SHATTERED THE HILLSIDE ITSELF TO CREATE A RAIN OF BOULDERS!

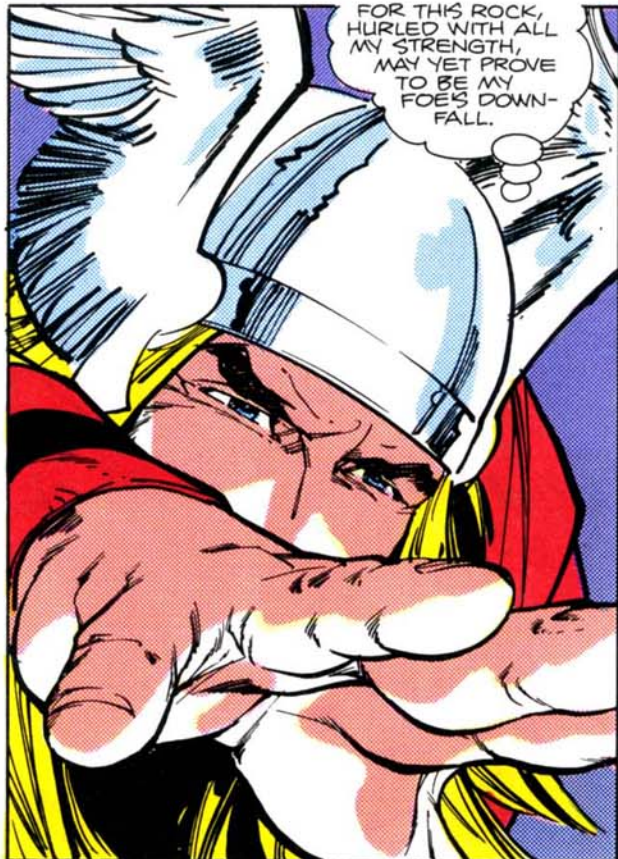
I CANNOT CHANGE MY DIRECTION IN TIME-- UHH!

TRULY HIS STRENGTH IS BEYOND COMPREHENSION!

STILL, I AM PROVIDED WITH A WEAPON THAT MAY SERVE ME AS WELL AS THE HAMMER OVER WHICH WE FIGHT!



FOR THIS ROCK, HURLED WITH ALL MY STRENGTH, MAY YET PROVE TO BE MY FOE'S DOWNFALL.



BTHOUUM!



I'M FALLING INTO THE RIVER OF LAVA! CAN THIS BE THE END OF MY QUEST?

BUT WAIT! THERE! THAT RAFT OF OBSIDIAN! IF ONLY I CAN TWIST MYSELF AROUND IN TIME--!

SAVED! YET EVEN NOW, MY FOE LEAPS UPON ME! SURELY, I MUST GIRD MYSELF FOR THE SUPREME MOMENT IS AT HAND!





MERE WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE THE POWER OF THE BLOWS AS BOTH COMBATANTS UNLEASH THEIR FULL FURY IN ONE FINAL CATAclySMIC EFFORT!

THE BLAST LEVELS THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE...

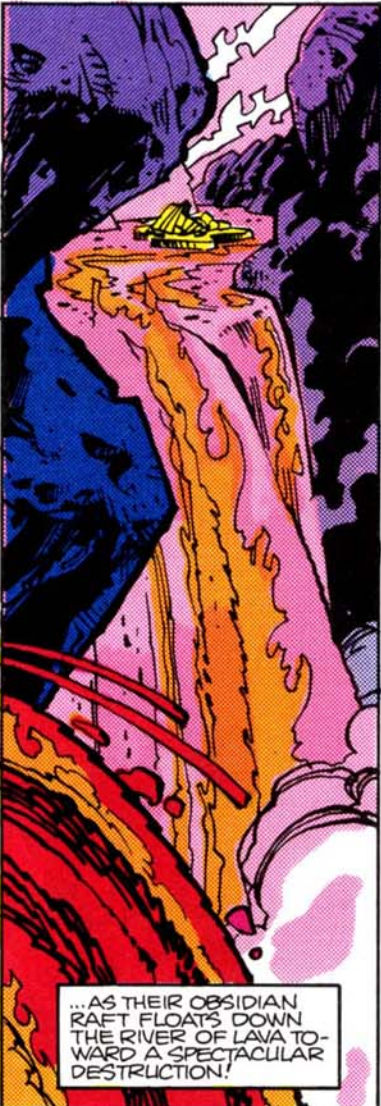
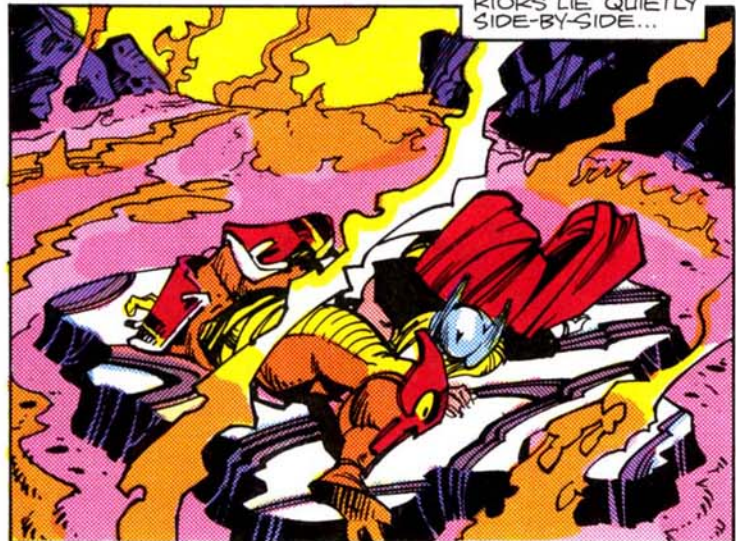
...TIME IS FROZEN IN THE INSTANT...



...AND ALL OF NATURE SEEMS TO HOLD ITS BREATH...

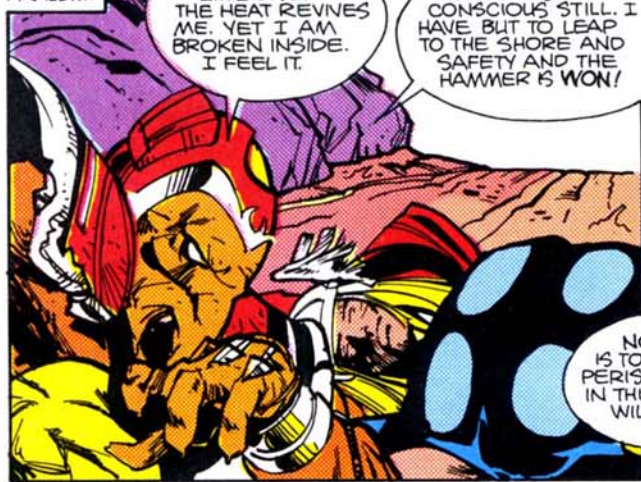


...UNTIL BOTH WARRIORS LIE QUIETLY SIDE-BY-SIDE...



...AS THEIR OBSIDIAN RAFT FLOATS DOWN THE RIVER OF LAVA TOWARD A SPECTACULAR DESTRUCTION!

FINALLY...



I... I LIVE!
THE HEAT REVIVES
ME. YET I AM
BROKEN INSIDE.
I FEEL IT.

THOR LIES UN-
CONSCIOUS STILL. I
HAVE BUT TO LEAP
TO THE SHORE AND
SAFETY AND THE
HAMMER IS WON!



QUICKLY--
THE FALLS ARE
JUST AHEAD!

NO! MY FOE
IS TOO BRAVE TO
PERISH SO MEANLY
IN THIS FORSAKEN
WILDERNESS.

I... UGH... I
MUST CARRY
US BOTH TO
SAFETY.



TOO LATE!
THE RAFT AL-
READY PLUNGES
O'ER THE FIERY
BRINK! BUT I
MUST TRY!



AND WITH A
FINAL GROAN,
BETA RAY BILL
LEAPS FOR THE
SHORE...



...ONLY TO BE
ENVELOPED
BY A BLINDING
FLASH OF
ENERGY...



...THAT TRANSPORTS HIM IN
THE WINK OF AN EYE TO THE
GLEAMING HALLS OF ASGARD
BEFORE A SHOCKED AND
SILENT GATHERING.

LORD ODIN,
YOUR SON YET
LIVES. THE FINEST
FOE I HAVE EVER
FOUGHT, BUT I
HAVE BESTED
HIM.



THE
HAMMER...
IS
MINE!

**NEXT. SOMETHING OLD,
SOMETHING NEW...!**

BETTER STOCK UP
ON COPIES, KIDS!
THIS ONE'LL BE A
COLLECTOR'S ITEM
FOR SURE!