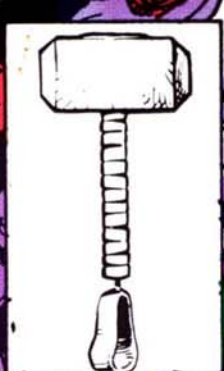


MARVEL

# the mighty THOR



60c 346  
U.K. 30p AUG  
CAN. 75c



22784

THE

# WILD HUNT!

NIGHTTIME,  
NEW YORK  
CITY...

ROGER WILLIS, INHABITANT OF ROSLYN,  
LONG ISLAND, WALKS THE STREETS OF  
GREENWICH VILLAGE HEADING FOR THE  
WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN ISLAND...

...AND HE'S  
WORRIED.

I THINK I  
PREFERRED MY  
TIME IN KOREA.  
THERE, AT LEAST, I  
KNEW WHO THE GOOD  
GUYS AND THE  
BAD GUYS  
WERE.

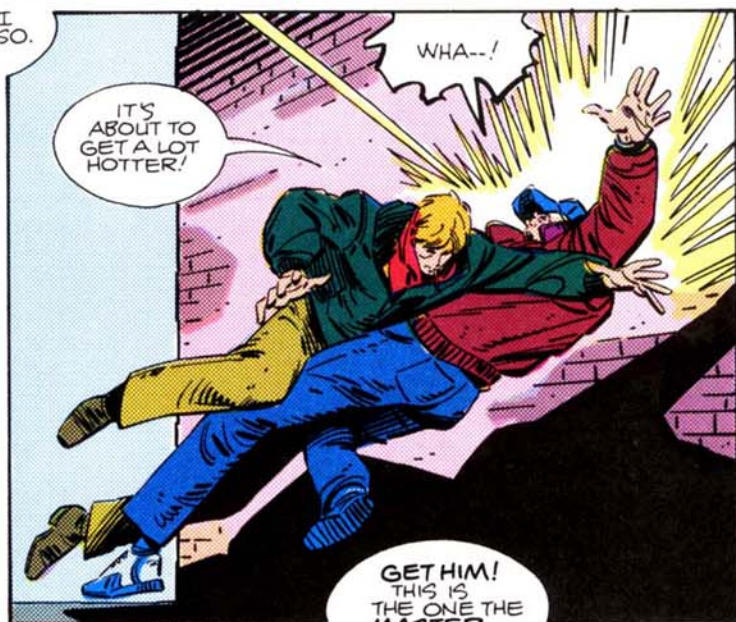
I'M STILL NOT  
CONVINCED ANYBODY'S  
OUT HUNTING FOR ME.  
BUT THERE'S NO SENSE  
IN TAKING CHANCES.  
ERIC'S LETTER WAS  
PRETTY GRIM!

I'VE CHANGED  
TRAINS AND CABS SO  
OFTEN, EVEN I'M NOT  
SURE WHERE I'M  
GOING ANYMORE.

BUT  
SO FAR,  
SO GOOD.

STORY AND PENCILS: WALTER SIMONSON • INKS: TERRY AUSTIN • LETTERING: JOHN WORKMAN, JR.  
COLORING: CHRISTIE SCHEELE • EDITING: MARK GRUENWALD • EDITOR IN CHIEF: JIM SHOOTER

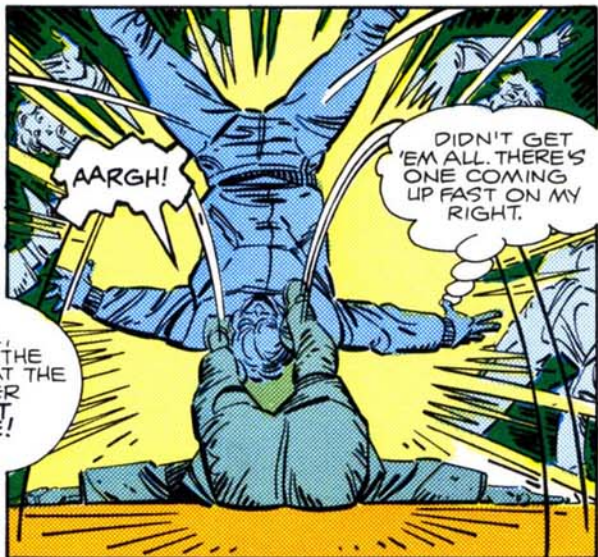
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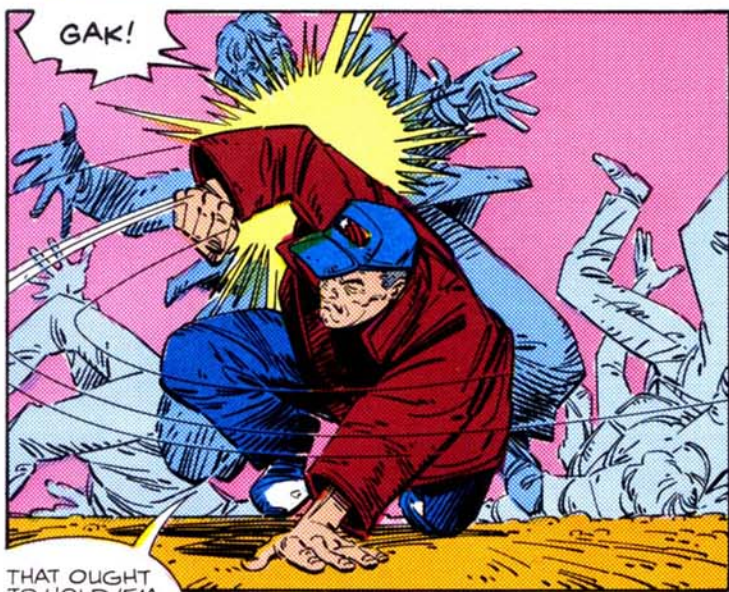
OOF!

WELL, THIS IS THE ONE THAT THE MASTER CAN'T HAVE!



AARGH!

DIDN'T GET 'EM ALL. THERE'S ONE COMING UP FAST ON MY RIGHT.



GAK!

THAT OUGHT TO HOLD 'EM FOR A SECOND.

NOW BEFORE THEY CAN UNTANGLE THEMSELVES, I'D BETTER SEE ABOUT GETTING SOMEWHERE ELSE FAST!



CAB!

SCREECH!

ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, ON THE 45TH FLOOR OF A MIDTOWN OFFICE BUILDING IN THE LAW OFFICES OF STROTHER AND MARTIN...



THAT'S ALL I KNOW, THOR. ERIC WILLIS HAS BEEN MY CLIENT FOR YEARS.

AND HE'S BEEN MY FRIEND, BUT I KNOW AS LITTLE OF HIS PAST AS I KNOW OF YOURS.

HE ONCE MENTIONED SOMEONE NAMED MALEKITH AND SPOKE OF THE CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS. I GATHERED THE MATTER INVOLVED SOME PERSONAL DANGER.

BUT HE LEFT A SEALED PACKAGE WITH ME TO BE SENT TO HIS FATHER ON LONG ISLAND IF EVER HE SHOULD BE OUT OF TOUCH FOR MORE THAN 24 HOURS.



WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT HE MEANT, HE DROPPED THE SUBJECT.

THE STORY OF HIS ARREST I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU.\*

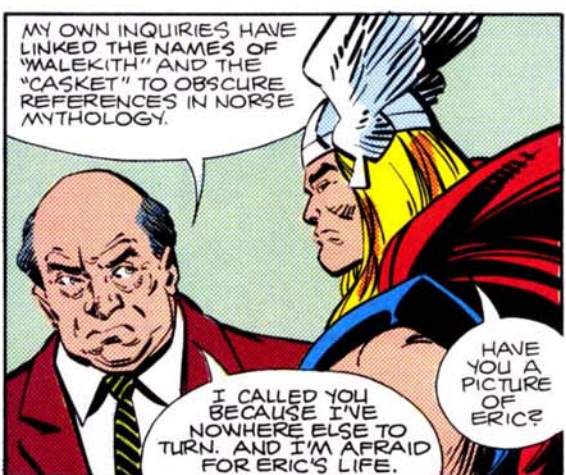
\*ERIC'S FATE WAS EXAMINED IN DETAIL LAST ISSUE.

I'VE HAD NO CONTACT WITH HIM NOW FOR OVER A DAY, AND I'VE SENT THE PACKAGE TO LONG ISLAND AS REQUESTED.

I'VE CHECKED REPEATEDLY WITH THE POLICE, BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO REACH ERIC.



THAT WORRIES ME. SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG.



MY OWN INQUIRIES HAVE LINKED THE NAMES OF "MALEKITH" AND THE "CASKET" TO OBSCURE REFERENCES IN NORSE MYTHOLOGY.

I CALLED YOU BECAUSE I'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, AND I'M AFRAID FOR ERIC'S LIFE.

HAVE YOU A PICTURE OF ERIC?



YES, HERE.

YOU DID WELL TO CONTACT ME. THIS MATTER MAY BE MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE.

FAREWELL.



I SHALL JOURNEY TO THE POLICE PRECINCT FIRST AND SEEK NEWS OF ERIC THERE.

I DID NOT WISH TO ALARM MR. STROTHER, BUT IF MALEKITH THE ACCURSED IS INDEED LOOSE AGAIN AND SEEKING DR. WILLIS, THERE IS NO TIME TO LOSE!

BUT AS THOR TAKES TO THE AIR, WE TURN TO A SINGLES BAR SOMEWHERE ON MANHATTAN'S WEST SIDE...



SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I'VE EVER SEEN.

HEY, DON'T CROWD, GUNS.

I SAW HER FIRST!

C'MON, GIVE US A BREAK!

AT LEAST TELL US YOUR PHONE NUMBER!

...TO FIND LORELEI, SEDUCTRESS OF ASGARD, SURROUNDING HERSELF WITH THE THINGS SHE LOVES BEST...

...MEN.



SORRY, LOVERS, BUT I BELONG TO ANOTHER.

I REALLY ONLY STOPPED IN TO ENJOY THE CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE.



HEY, GUESS WHAT, GANG. I JUST SAW THE MIGHTY THOR SAIL BY HEADING EAST.

AA, SO WHAT? THAT BIG STIFF. I BET HE ISN'T NEARLY AS TOUGH AS THEY SAY HE IS.

WHY, CARY, FOR SHAME! THOR IS THE VERY MAN OF MY HEART.



YOU'RE KIDDING, HIM?

WERE I TO LIFT A FINGER, HE WOULD SATISFY MY EVERY WHIM.

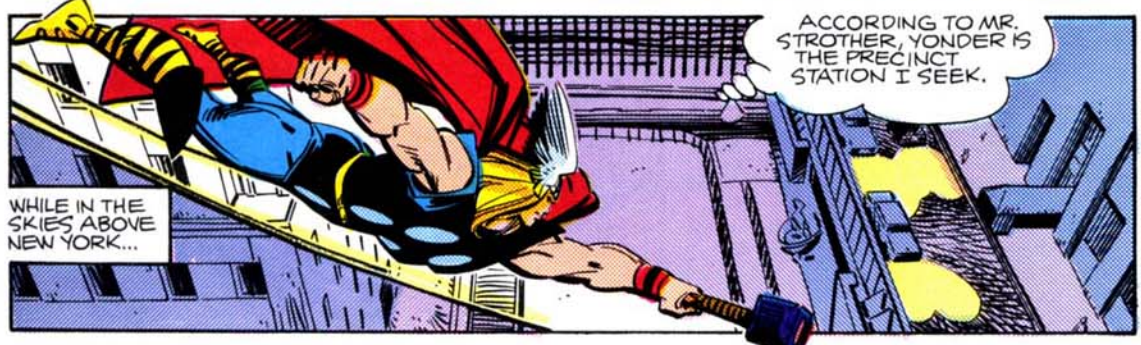
OR RATHER, HE WILL, AS SOON AS HE HAS TASTED MY ENCHANTED MEAD.

PLEASING LORELEI WILL BE THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS TO HIM THEN.

I THINK PERHAPS I'D BETTER MAKE A PHONE CALL.



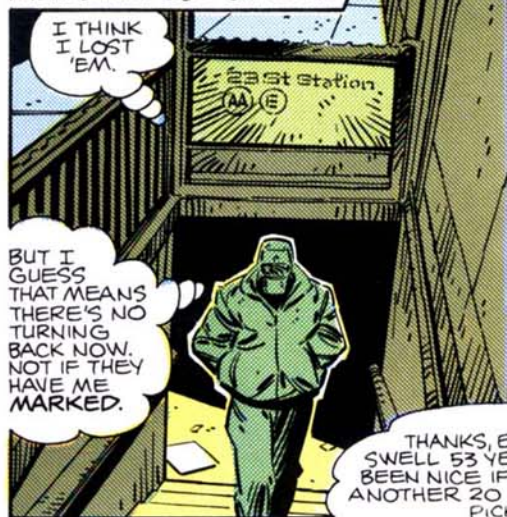
THE MASTER MIGHT WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS.



WHILE IN THE SKIES ABOVE NEW YORK...

ACCORDING TO MR. STROTHER, YONDER IS THE PRECINCT STATION I SEEK.

MEANWHILE, AT THE SUBWAY EXIT OF EIGHTH AVENUE AND 23RD STREET...



I THINK I LOST 'EM.

BUT I GUESS THAT MEANS THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW. NOT IF THEY HAVE ME MARKED.

THANKS, ERIC. I'VE HAD A SWELL 53 YEARS. WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE IF I COULD HAVE HAD ANOTHER 20 WITHOUT HAVING TO PICK UP YOUR BURDEN.



BUT MAYBE NOW, I'LL FIND OUT JUST WHAT MADE YOU TICK.



AND JUST WHO THE HECK YOU WERE!

AND ROGER WILLIS WALKS ON THROUGH THE EMPTY STREETS OF THE LOWER WEST SIDE...



...WHILE FURTHER EAST, BEFORE A NEW YORK CITY PRECINCT STATION...

WOW! LOOK! IT'S THOR!

I THOUGHT HE WAS ALWAYS OUT SAVING THE WORLD FROM COSMIC MENACES OR SOMETHING!



HEADS UP, JACK. WE GOT COMPANY. AND TROUBLE.

SO I SEE, LET ME HANDLE THIS.

I SEEK THE MAN BROUGHT  
HERE EARLIER TODAY, DR.  
ERIC WILLIS.

CERTAINLY,  
THOR. WE'RE  
ALWAYS READY  
TO HELP ONE  
OF THE MIGHTY  
AVENGERS.

PLEASE, HAVE  
A SEAT, WE'LL BRING  
DR. WILLIS' OUT  
TO YOU.

EVERYONE  
HERE HAS  
ENJOYED  
THEM.

WHILE YOU WAIT,  
WOULDN'T YOU HAVE SOME  
COOKIES? THEY'RE A VERY  
SPECIAL TREAT OF  
THE STATION.

THEY ARE DELICIOUS.  
I HAVE NEVER TASTED  
ANYTHING QUITE LIKE  
THEM BEFORE.

PERHAPS NOT. BUT  
THEY WILL BE ALL  
YOU EVER TASTE  
FROM NOW UNTIL  
THE END OF TIME.

EVEN NOW, YOUR KNEES  
BEGIN TO BUCKLE AND  
YOU CANNOT REMAIN IN  
YOUR CHAIR.

WHAT?

IS YOUR  
STRENGTH  
EBBING?  
YOUR HAMMER  
BECOMING TOO  
GREAT A WEIGHT  
EVEN FOR YOU  
TO BEAR?

MY  
LIMBS  
GROW  
WEAK! I  
CANNOT  
STAND!

WHAT  
HAVE YOU  
DONE  
TO ME?

I HAVE MADE  
YOU ONE OF US! YOU  
HAVE TASTED THE EN-  
CHANTED FOOD OF  
FAERIE AND NO  
LONGER IS YOUR  
WILL YOUR OWN!

I... I  
CANNOT  
RISE!





IN A MOMENT, YOUR STRUGGLING EGO SHALL BE SUBMERGED FOREVER AND YOU WILL LIVE ONLY TO SERVE THE MASTER.

...EVEN AS WE, WHO HAVE ALREADY TASTED THE FRUITS OF THE FAERIE REALM AND BECOME MORTAL SERVANTS TO THE DARK ELF!

HOW MALEKITH THE DARK ELF SHALL LAUGH TO LEARN THAT THE SON OF ODIN IS HIS SLAVE FOREVER!

BUT COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY, YOU, AT LEAST, LIVE!

MALEKITH HIMSELF HAS SLAIN THE HATED ENEMY, ERIC WILLIS!



...AND WHEN HE HAS RECOVERED THE CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS...

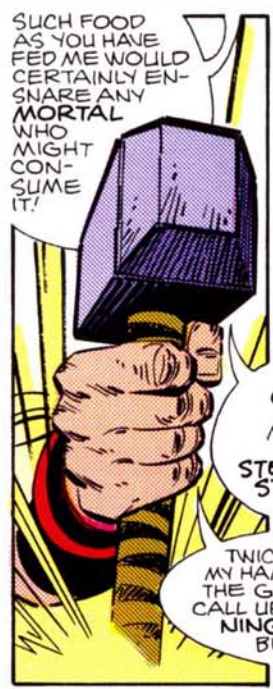
...THEN SHALL HIS SERVANTS STEP FORTH FROM THEIR CLOAK OF SECRETY!

AND GREAT WILL BE OUR GLORY!



BY THE ROLLING THUNDER, I HAVE HEARD ENOUGH!

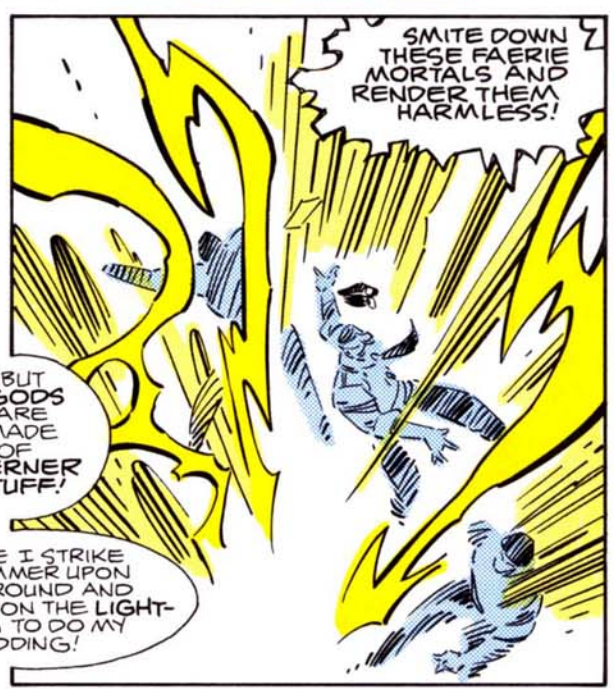
WHAT?



SUCH FOOD AS YOU HAVE FED ME WOULD CERTAINLY ENSNARE ANY MORTAL WHO MIGHT CONSUME IT!

BUT GODS ARE MADE OF STERNER STUFF!

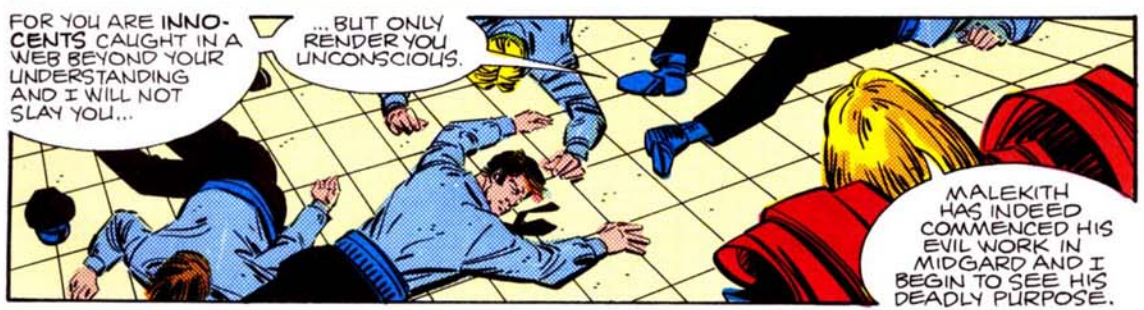
TWICE I STRIKE MY HAMMER UPON THE GROUND AND CALL UPON THE LIGHTNING TO DO MY BIDDING!



SMITE DOWN THESE FAERIE MORTALS AND RENDER THEM HARMLESS!

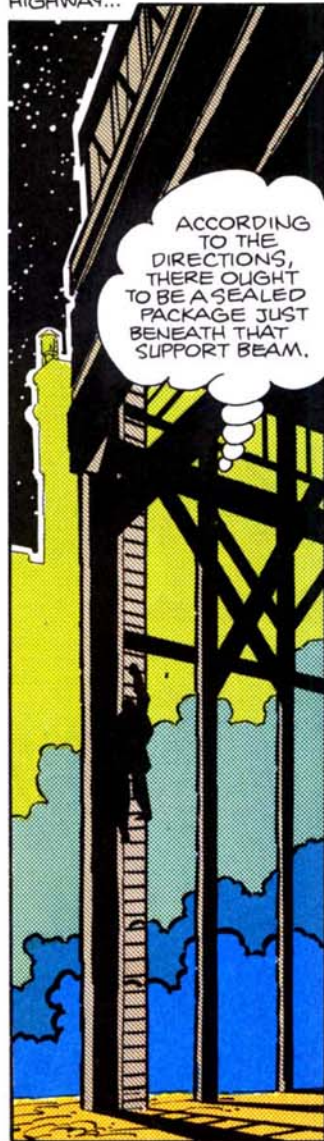
FOR YOU ARE INNOCENTS CAUGHT IN A WEB BEYOND YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND I WILL NOT SLAY YOU...

... BUT ONLY RENDER YOU UNCONSCIOUS.



MALEKITH HAS INDEED COMMENCED HIS EVIL WORK IN MIDGARD AND I BEGIN TO SEE HIS DEADLY PURPOSE.

MEANWHILE, IN MANHATTAN, BENEATH AN ABANDONED SECTION OF THE WEST SIDE HIGHWAY...

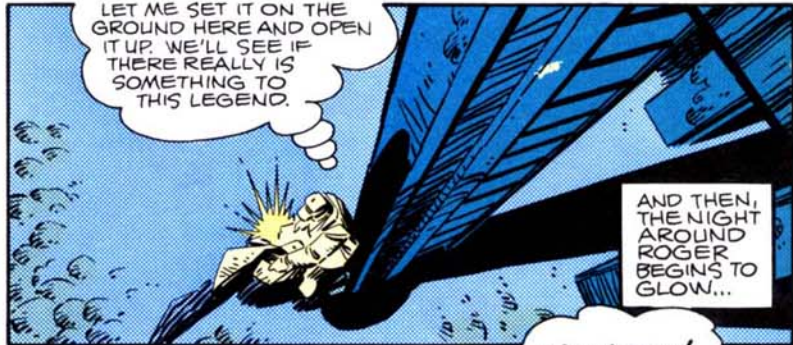


ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIONS, THERE OUGHT TO BE A SEALED PACKAGE JUST BENEATH THAT SUPPORT BEAM.



AND SO THERE IS. WRAPPED IN BLACK CANVAS AND HELD IN PLACE BY ELECTRICAL TAPE.

IN THE SHADOWS WHERE NOBODY WOULD EVER FIND IT.



LET ME SET IT ON THE GROUND HERE AND OPEN IT UP. WE'LL SEE IF THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING TO THIS LEGEND.

AND THEN, THE NIGHT AROUND ROGER BEGINS TO GLOW...

JACKPOT!



THE CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS!

I'VE FOUND IT!



HOW COOL IT IS TO THE TOUCH, I COULD ALMOST BELIEVE IT DOES CONTAIN THE ESSENCE OF WINTERS' FAST.



BUT I'LL STOP TO ADMIRE IT LATER.

SOMEBODY MIGHT NOTICE A GUY CARRYING A MYSTERIOUS BLACK CANVAS PACKAGE, BUT WHO'LL LOOK TWICE AT SOMEONE LUGGING A MACY'S BAG AROUND NEW YORK CITY?

BUT NO SOONER HAS ROGER TURNED THE CORNER ON 24TH STREET, HEADING FOR THE SUBWAY WHEN...

AT LAST! THE CASKET IS NEARLY MINE AGAIN!

NOW SHALL ALL MANKIND RUE THE DAY WHEN IT WAS STOLEN FROM ME SO LONG AGO!



BUT WAIT! WHAT'S THIS UPON THE GROUND?

BLACK CANVAS! THE CASKET'S PROTECTIVE SHEATH!

SOMEONE HAS BEEN HERE BEFORE ME AND SNATCHED THE CASKET FROM MY GRASP ONCE AGAIN!

STILL, THE FAMILY OF ERIC LIVES ON TO PLAGUE ME.

BUT THE CANVAS IS COOL! THE CASKET WAS HERE ONLY MOMENTS AGO!



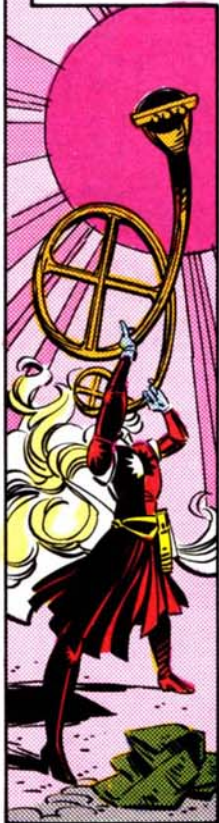
AND THIS TIME, IT SHALL NOT ELUDE ME! FOR THE SCENT ON THE CANVAS IS FRESH!

NOW SHALL THE HUNTING HORN BE SOUNDED!

TONIGHT, THE WILD HUNT WILL RIDE AND THE CASKET SHALL AT LAST BE MINE!



AND A SINGLE NOTE, UNHEARD BY HUMAN EARS, RINGS IN THE NIGHT AIR.



WHILE AT THAT SELFSAME MOMENT IN THE PRECINCT HOUSE...

I HAVE NOTIFIED THE PROPER AUTHORITIES CONCERNING THESE MORTALS WHO HAVE BEEN LOST TO THE DARK ELF.

I SWEAR THAT WHEN THIS PRESENT BUSINESS IS CONCLUDED...

...I SHALL LEARN THE SECRET OF THE FAERIE ENCHANTMENT AND FREE THESE POOR SOULS FROM BONDAGE...

...BUT HERE INDICATES THE WHEREABOUTS OF ROGER WILLIS.

PERHAPS--!



NAY! I KNOW THAT SOUND! 'TIS THE HUNTING HORN OF FAERIE!

SOMEONE HATH CALLED THE WILD HUNT! IT CAN ONLY BE MALEKITH!

HARK! WHAT IS THIS MY EARS DO HEAR? SOME TRICK OF THE WIND?

THEN HIS PREY MUST SURELY BE WITHIN HIS GRASP!

WHILE IN A CAB IN MIDTOWN...



I'VE SWITCHED CABS A COUPLE OF TIMES, BUT I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT SOME SORT OF PURSUIT IS CLOSE BEHIND.

I'LL FEEL SAFER WHEN I'M OUT OF MANHATTAN.

THERE'S AN EXTRA TWENTY BUCKS IN IT FOR YOU IF YOU CAN GET ME ACROSS THE 59TH STREET BRIDGE IN TEN MINUTES.



I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, MAC, BUT THEATER TRAFFIC FRIDAY NIGHTS IS FERROCIOUS.

THAT'S WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF.

AT LEAST I'M ARMED WITH STEEL JACKETED BULLETS.



IF ERIC WAS CORRECT, IRON IN ANY FORM WILL BE DEATH TO WHATEVER PURSUES ME THAT CAN'T BE KILLED BY ORDINARY MEANS.

AT LAST, THE BRIDGE! BUT TRAFFIC'S SLOWED ALMOST TO A STANDSTILL.



FEELS LIKE A STORM BREWIN' TONIGHT, MAC.

HOLY COW! HERE IT COMES! A REAL CLOUD-BURST, TOO!



NOW THE TRAFFIC'S COMPLETELY STUCK. %\*!\*\$#&!!

MIGHT AS WELL BE PARKED!

AND WHAT'S ALL THAT HOWLING? SOUNDS LIKE ALL HELL JUST BROKE LOOSE!



THE CABBIE IS NOT FAR FROM WRONG!

FOR TONIGHT, THE WILD HUNT IS UP AND THE QUARRY IS IN SIGHT!

THERE IN THE SKY!  
IT'S TRUE!  
IT WAS ALL TRUE!

THEY'VE FOUND ME! THE HOUNDS OF THE HUNTER!

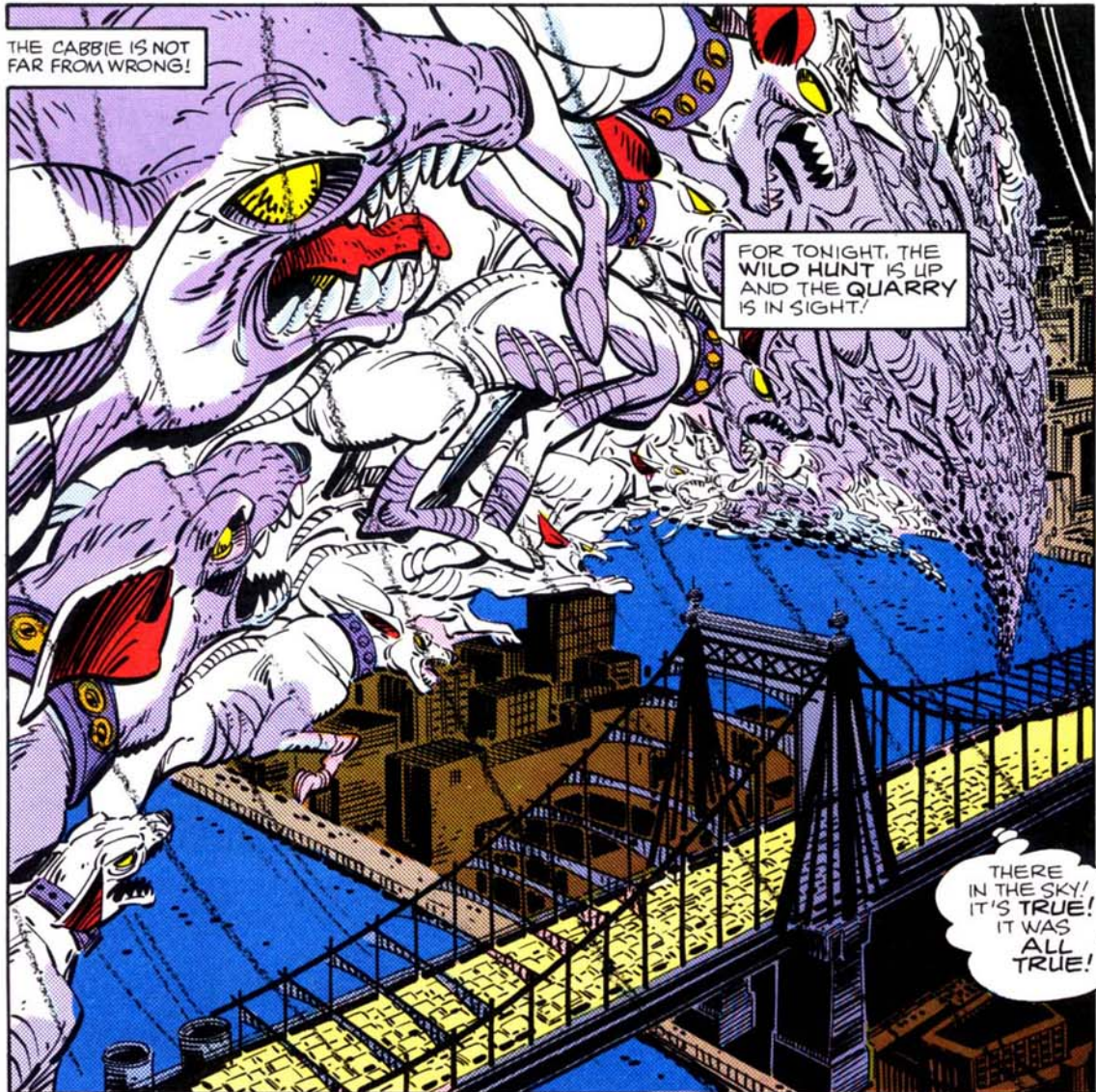
WHILE I'M CAUGHT HERE LIKE A SITTING DUCK!

HEY, MAC!  
WHAT ABOUT MY FARE?

HOLY HANNAH!  
WHO'S THEM?

LEMME OUTTA HERE!

BUT AS THE CABBIE LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER...



BUT WHILE THE CABBIE FLEES...

THE DOGS  
HAVE ALMOST  
CAUGHT UP  
WITH ME.

I GUESS IT'S  
TIME WE LEARNED  
WHETHER OR NOT IRON  
CAN REALLY KILL  
THESE THINGS.

LOOKS LIKE IT'S  
HAGARU-RI, KOREA,  
ALL OVER AGAIN!

ONLY THERE I HAD A  
PLATOON TO BACK ME UP  
AND HERE, THIS OLD .45 IS  
MY ONLY FRIEND!

**KA-POW!**

GOT HIM!  
BUT HERE COME  
THE REST OF  
THEM!

WELL, IF THEY WANT  
THE CASSET THAT BADLY,  
THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE  
TO GET IT THE OLD  
FASHIONED WAY!

THEY'LL  
HAVE TO  
EARN  
IT!

**KA-POW!  
KA-POW!  
KA-POW!**

THE DOGS ARE  
PULLING BACK! THIS  
IS IT! HERE COMES  
THE MASTER OF  
THE HOUNDS!

TREMBLE  
AND DESPAIR,  
MORTAL!

YOUR  
DOOM HAS  
COME  
AND THE  
CASSET  
IS MINE!

BUT EVEN AS THE HUNTER SWOOPS DOWN ON HIS PREY, WE TURN TO THE FURTHEST REACHES OF THE ENDLESS DESERT...

...WHERE **BALDER THE BRAVE** TRUDGES EVER DEEPER INTO THE EMPTY WASTELAND...

I HAVE PASSED THE POINT OF NO RETURN. I AM WITHOUT WATER AND CANNOT RETREAT IN TIME TO THE OASIS I HAVE PASSED.



SUDDENLY...

SOON, THE ARMS OF HELA SHALL ENFOLD ME AND I SHALL BE RELEASED FROM THE WAKING NIGHTMARE OF LNING.



HELP! OH, HELP ME, GOOD SIR!

A YOUNG WOMAN IN DISTRESS!



OHH!

SHE'S FALLEN AND BEHIND HER--THE SCOURGE OF THE DESERT!

'TIS A GIANT SAND DEVIL! ABOUT TO CRUSH HER!

AND WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, BALDER THE BRAVE GRASPS THE NEAREST WEAPON AT HAND AND LEAPS TO THE ATTACK!



WHILE UNSEEN BEHIND HIM, A SHADOWY FIGURE CROUCHES IN THE LEA OF A DUNE AND WATCHES THE HOPELESS BATTLE BEGIN...

BUT I COULD NOT CATCH HIM, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ONE SO FAT COULD MOVE SO QUICKLY!



NOW HE ATTACKS A SAND DEVIL WITH ONLY A STICK OF WOOD! SURELY THIS IS THE VERY SOUL OF MADNESS!

I CANNOT BELIEVE IT! BALDER SEEKS DEATH IN THE ENDLESS DESERT AND HAPPILY WOULD I SLAY HIM.

PERHAPS THE STORIES OF HIS BRAVERY AND PROWESS IN THE PAST ARE NOT SO EXAGGERATED AS I THOUGHT.

BUT AS BALDER BATTLES FOR THE LIFE OF THE GIRL, LET US RETURN TO EARTH WHERE...



THE STEED HAS FALLEN BUT THE RIDER IS UNHURT! AND MY CLIP IS EMPTY!

CURSE YOU, MORTAL! NEVER BEFORE HAS ANYONE SLAIN THE HUNTS-MAN'S MOUNT!

FOR THIS AFFRONT I SHALL NOT DESTROY YOU!



INSTEAD, AT THE TOUCH OF MY SPEAR, YOU SHALL WRITE IN A THOUSAND UNTOLD AGONIES AND LONG FOR DEATH...

...A MERCY I MAY NEVER GRANT YOU.



**BARR-  
DOOM!**

WHA--! LIGHTNING STRIKING ME DOWN!

MY FORM! I'M LOSING MY HUNTS-MAN GARB!

SO! 'TIS TRUE! MALEKITH THE ACCURSED IS INDEED FREE IN THE WORLD!

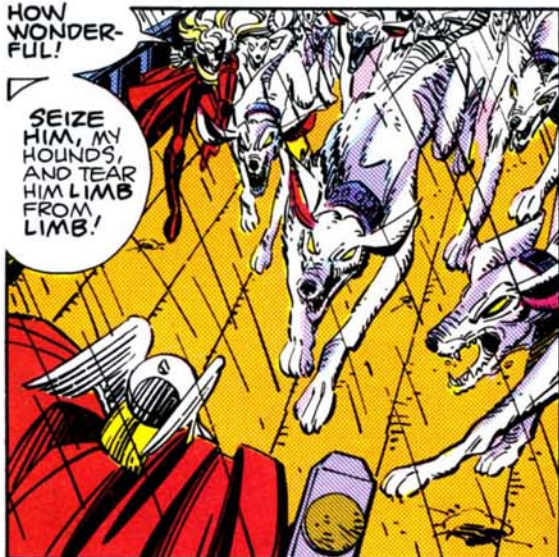


THOR!



HOW WONDERFUL!

SEIZE HIM, MY HOUNDS, AND TEAR HIM LIMB FROM LIMB!



THUS DO WE SERVE THE SONS OF AS-GARD!

LET THOR'S END BE THE HARBINGER OF THE DOOM TO COME!



BACK! BACK, YOU SCURRILIOUS DOGS OF DEATH!

BUT THE BEASTS OF MALEKITH FIND THAT ODIN'S SON IS NO SIMPLE PREY AS HE MEETS THEIR ATTACK WITH A FEROCITY THAT MORE THAN EQUALS THEIR OWN.

YOUR SLAVERING ANGER IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE WRATH OF THE GOD OF THUNDER!

MORTAL, HOW FARE YOU?



DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME! I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO RELOAD!

BUT WATCH YOUR BACK, THOR!

THEN COMMEND YOUR SPIRIT TO ODIN AND WE SHALL SHOW THESE BEASTS THE VERY HEART OF THE STORM UNLEASHED!

THE CREATURES ATTACK FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BRIDGE!



ELSEWHERE, BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW, A MIGHTY HOST STANDS TO ARMS.

AND A VOICE AS OLD  
AS TIME CRIES OUT...

SONS OF  
MUSPELL! DAUGHTERS  
OF FURY! DEMONS OF  
THE FLAME!

OUR  
TIME  
HAS  
COME!

SOUND THE  
BATTLECRY  
THAT ALL WHO  
LIVE MAY  
HEAR IT AND  
DESPAIR!

AND THE LAND OF  
FIRE EXPLODES WITH...

**DOOM!**

WHILE ON THE QUEENSBORO BRIDGE IN NEW YORK, AS THE HUNTING DOGS OF MALEKITH FALL BEFORE THE BLUDGEONING HAMMER OF THOR...



COME ONE, COME ALL! EACH OF YOU SHALL I SERVE IN TURN!

WHEN SUDDENLY...



MY WRIST!



HOUND OF EVIL! HERE IS THE REWARD FOR THY TEMERITY!

TO BE TURNED INTO A WEAPON 'GAINST THINE OWN FELLOWS AND FELL A DOZEN OR MORE WITH A SINGLE BLOW!

BUT THOUGH I DESTROY A DOZEN DOZEN FOUL CREATURES AT A BLOW, A HUNDRED TIMES THEIR NUMBER RENEW THE ATTACK!



AND WHILE THE MORTAL FIGHTS AS VALIANTLY AS ANY WARRIOR OR LATER, SOONER OR LATER WE SHALL BE OVERWHELMED AND FALL!

YET THE DOGS DO NOT ATTACK IN ALL THEIR NUMBERS! AS IF THEY FEAR THE VERY GROUND ON WHICH WE STAND! I WONDER...

THOR! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



AT LAST! THE SON OF ODIN FLEES FROM THE INEVITABLE! EVEN THOR SEES THAT VICTORY CANNOT BE DENIED US!

AND YOU, MORTAL, SHALL BE THE FIRST TO FEEL OUR FORGIVING NATURE FOR HAVING PROVIDED US WITH SUCH RARE SPORT.



TAKE HIM, HOUNDS! AND CARRY HIM WITH US TO OUR ANCIENT REALM IN THE COTSWOLDS OF ENGLAND.

THERE SHALL WE ENTERTAIN HIM WITH ENDLESS NIGHTS OF DELIGHT AND PAIN!

MASTER WILLIS MUST REFUSE YOUR GRACIOUS INVITATION, ACCURSED ONE!

BUT BE THOU NOT DOWNCAST! WE HAVE DECIDED TO GRANT THEE A GIFT OF THE GODS!

AND PROVIDED US WITH THE WEAPON THAT SHALL END IT!

IRON, MALEKITH! 'TIS IRON! THE BANE OF ALL INHABITANTS OF THE REALM OF FAERIE!

**SCHRAKK!**

FOR SUDDENLY, I HAVE REALIZED WHY ALL YOUR HOUNDS HAVE NOT ATTACKED US AT ONCE! AND THIS SHALL BE OUR SAVING GRACE!

THE VERY BRIDGE ON WHICH WE STAND PROTECTS US FROM THE FULL FURY OF THE HUNT!



NOOOO!

**RIPPPP!**

AH, MY SHOULDER!

SON OF HATED ODIN!

I AM WOUNDED AND, SURROUNDED AS I AM BY THAT ACCURSED METAL OF MEN, I CAN NO LONGER REMAIN TO FINISH THE HUNT!



BUT THINK NOT THAT MALEKITH IS DEFEATED NOR THAT THE CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS CAN BE DENIED ME FOREVER!

MALEKITH HAS DEPARTED THE FIELD OF BATTLE!

AND WITHOUT HIS GUIDANCE, THE DEMON DOGS RETURN TO THEIR FEARFUL KENNELS.

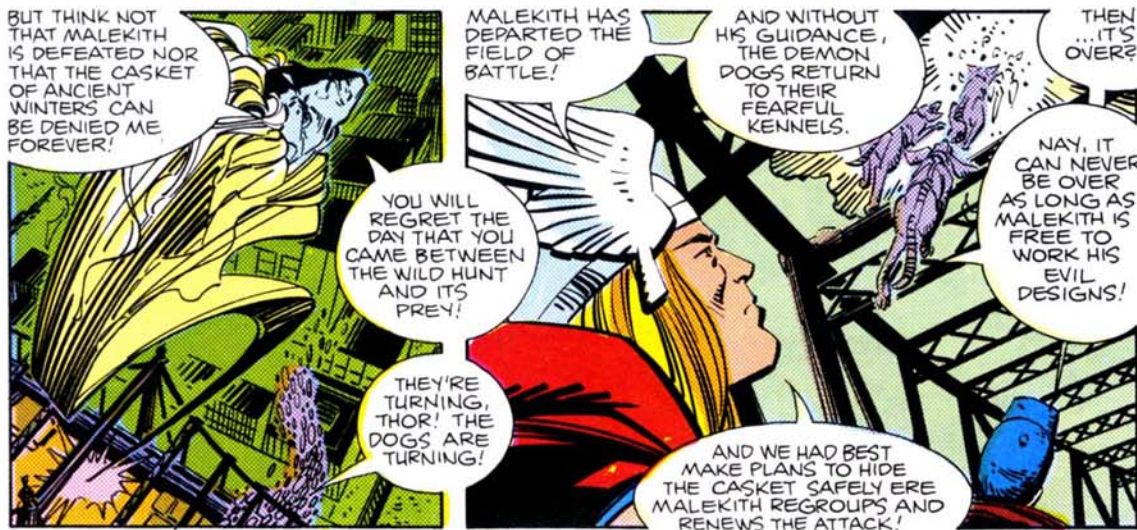
THEN ...IT'S OVER?

YOU WILL REGRET THE DAY THAT YOU CAME BETWEEN THE WILD HUNT AND ITS PREY!

THEY'RE TURNING, THOR! THE DOGS ARE TURNING!

AND WE HAD BEST MAKE PLANS TO HIDE THE CASKET SAFELY ERE MALEKITH REGROUPS AND RENEWS THE ATTACK!

NAY, IT CAN NEVER BE OVER AS LONG AS MALEKITH IS FREE TO WORK HIS EVIL DESIGNS!



AT THAT MOMENT, THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR OF LORELEI'S PENTHOUSE ON THE FAR SIDE OF CENTRAL PARK...



AT LAST! IT MUST BE THOR! I KNEW HE'D RETURN!

I'M GLAD YOU CAME-- OH!

AND SO AM I, DEAR LADY! AFTER ALL, I MAY NOT BE THE MIGHTY THOR...

...BUT I, TOO, HAVE NEED OF TENDER LOVING CARE...

...AND I CAN SEE THAT I'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.

WHILE ON THE QUEENSBORO BRIDGE...



WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL THE SLAIN ANIMALS?

WITH THE DAWN, THEY WILL MELT AWAY AND BE RECLAIMED BY THE REALM OF FAERIE!

BUT OF MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO US IS THE CASKET YOU NOW POSSESS.

FOR IT MAY WELL BE THE MOST DANGEROUS OBJECT ON EARTH.



WILL YOU NOT TAKE IT, THOR? SURELY IT WILL BE SAFER IN YOUR HANDS THAN MINE.

THOUGH THE BATTLE HERE WAS WON WITH MY HELP, I DID NOT FIND THE CASKET NOR HIDE IT ALL THESE CENTURIES.

ERIC WILLIS WAS APPARENTLY THE GUARDIAN OF THE CASKET. NOW, HE IS DEAD.

AS MUCH AS IT BELONGS TO ANY MAN, I THINK THE CASKET BELONGS TO YOU. IT IS A MORTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

YOU SOUND LIKE ERIC, THOR. BUT I DON'T KNOW THE WHOLE STORY YET.

I SUSPECTED AS MUCH. THE NATURE OF THE CASKET IS NOT UNKNOWN TO ME.

THE NOTES I RECEIVED FROM STROTHER WERE SO URGENT I HID THE REST OF THE DOCUMENTS AND CAME SEARCHING FOR THE CASKET IMMEDIATELY.

AS YOUNG AS HE LOOKED, HE WASN'T MY SON; HE WAS MY FATHER!

STILL, I CAN TELL YOU THIS ABOUT ERIC WILLIS, THOR.

BUT NOW, WE NEED TIME TO PLAN OUR NEXT MOVE.

WE DARE NOT GO TO THE AVENGERS MANSION SINCE IT WILL CERTAINLY BE WATCHED BY OUR ENEMIES.

BUT I HAVE AN IDEA WHERE WE MIGHT FIND REFUGE FOR A FEW HOURS; SOMEPLACE MALEKITH WILL NEVER EXPECT US TO BE.

AND I WILL REVEAL TO YOU MY MORTAL IDENTITY OF SIGURD JARLSON. SUCH KNOWLEDGE CANNOT BE HIDDEN FROM THE GUARDIAN OF THE CASKET!

SHORTLY, THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR OF LORELEI'S PENTHOUSE ON THE FAR SIDE OF CENTRAL PARK...



SIGURD!  
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GLAD I AM TO SEE YOU.

I WAS HOPING YOU'D COME BY.



I'VE BROUGHT A FRIEND OF MINE, MELODI.

WE'RE... HAVING A LITTLE TROUBLE AND WONDERED IF WE MIGHT STOP BY FOR A LITTLE WHILE TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.



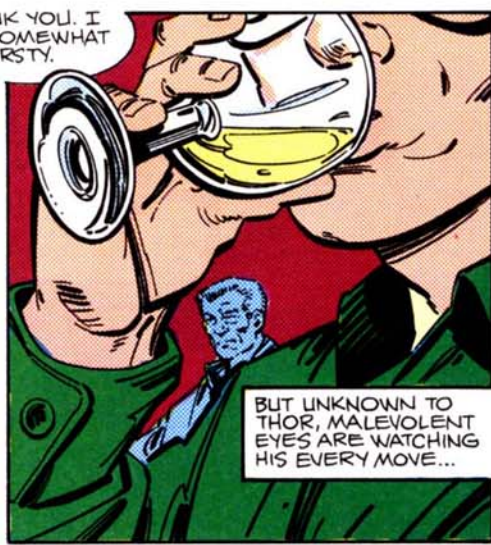
OF COURSE, ANY FRIEND OF YOURS. SIT DOWN.

YOU BOTH LOOK TIRED. LET ME GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK.



A LITTLE GOLDEN MEAD IS JUST WHAT YOU NEED.

THANK YOU. I AM SOMEWHAT THIRSTY.



BUT UNKNOWN TO THOR, MALEVOLENT EYES ARE WATCHING HIS EVERY MOVE...

AH, HE DRINKS!  
HE DRINKS!



THAT WAS SUPERBLY DONE, MY DEAR. I SHOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT OF SUCH A SIMPLE DEVICE AS AN ENCHANTED DRINK!



WHY, WHEN I DETECTED THE MAGICAL EMANATIONS OF THE MEAD IN YOUR APARTMENT, I KNEW INSTANTLY THAT THERE WAS JUST THE THING I SOUGHT TO MAKE MY DREAMS COME TRUE!



THOR IS THE FISH AND YOU, MY BEAUTY, ARE THE BAIT!

WHILE IN LORELEI'S APARTMENT...



UHH!  
SIGURD!  
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?  
JUST... JUST A MOMENTARY DIZZY FEELING. I FEEL... FEEL...

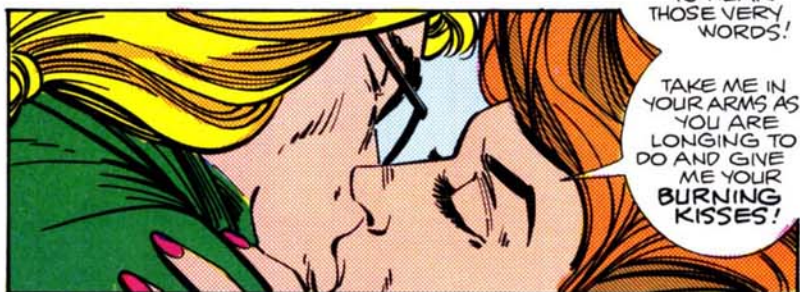
I FEEL AS THOUGH I'VE JUST SEEN YOU FOR THE FIRST TIME, MELODI.

AS THOUGH YOUR BEAUTY ONLY NOW HAS PIERCED THE VEIL BEFORE MY EYES, SEARING MY VERY SOUL WITH PASSION!

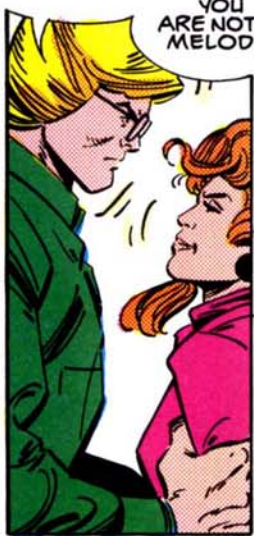


YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE WAITED TO HEAR THOSE VERY WORDS!

TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS AS YOU ARE LONGING TO DO AND GIVE ME YOUR BURNING KISSES!



BUT WAIT! SOMETHING'S WRONG! IN TRUTH, YOU RESEMBLE THE WOMAN I LOVE AS THOUGH YOU WERE HER TWIN BUT YOU ARE NOT SHE!



YOU ARE NOT MELODI!

THE LOVER'S HEART--HOW KEEN ITS POWERS OF PERCEPTION!

YOU ARE RIGHT, NOBLE THOR, I AM BUT A STOCK OF WOOD, ANIMATED BY FAERIE GLAMOUR AND SORCERY.



YOUR LOVE IS FAR FROM, HERE, HELD HOSTAGE AGAINST YOU.

SEEK HER IN THE COTSWOLDS OF ENGLAND, IN THE HEART OF THE REALM OF FAERIE.

AND BRING THE CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS. FOR ONLY THAT WILL BUY THE FREEDOM YOUR LOVER IS NOW DENIED!

BRING THE CASKET! OR SHE WILL LANGUISH IN WRETCHED SERVITUDE FOREVER! FOREVER! FOREVER! FOREVER!

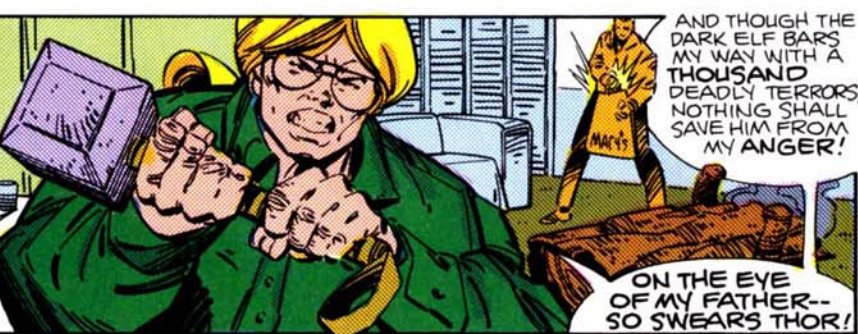


THAT WAS MALEKITH'S VOICE! HOW HE LEARNED OF MELODI, I KNOW NOT.



BUT HE SHALL REGRET THIS HEINOUS ACT!

I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL I HAVE RESCUED HER, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!



AND THOUGH THE DARK ELF BARS MY WAY WITH A THOUSAND DEADLY TERRORS, NOTHING SHALL SAVE HIM FROM MY ANGER!

ON THE EYE OF MY FATHER--SO SWEARS THOR!

**NEXT: INTO THE REALM OF FAERIE!** (THERE TO FIND LOVE'S FIRST SWEET KISS--AND A GOOD DEAL OF TROUBLE BESIDES!)