



THE MIGHTY
THOR

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"THE VERDICT OF ZEUS!"

THE MIGHTY THOR!

"THE VERDICT OF ZEUS!"

NO MATTER HOW SOPHISTICATED NEW YORKERS MAY BE, WHEN THE NOBLE FIGURE OF THE GOD OF THUNDER HURTTLES DOWN FROM THE SKIES ABOVE, YOU CAN BE SOMEWHAT CERTAIN HE'LL RECEIVE MORE THAN A PASSING GLANCE--!

IT'S MIGHTY THOR! IF ONLY I HAD MY CAMERA!!

HARKEN, YE!

STAN LEE,
WRITER

JACK KIRBY,
PENCILLER

VINCE COLLETTA,
INKER

ONCE OVER THEIR INITIAL FEELING OF AWE AND ASTONISHMENT, THE PASSERSBY SOON MUSTER UP ENOUGH NERVE TO CROWD AROUND THE COSTUMED IMMORTAL, PLYING HIM WITH ENDLESS QUERIES--



THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF TALK ABOUT YOU RUNNIN' INTO HERCULES ON THE COAST, THOR! THEY SAY YOU BEAT 'IM TO A FARE-THREE-WELL THIS TIME!

NONE CAN BEST THE PRINCE OF POWER THUS EASILY!

YET, YOU MAY SAY I ACQUITTED MYSELF WITH HONOR!

WHAT HAPPENED TO HERCULES? WHERE IS HE NOW?

WHY'D YOU LET HIM GET AWAY?

IS IT TRUE??

I FEAR IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT HERCULES HAS TRULY "GOTTEN AWAY!" BUT, IT IS BEST THAT THESE MORTALS DO NOT LEARN THAT PLUTO HAS TRICKED THE PROUD OLYMPIAN INTO REPLACING HIM AS CUSTODIAN OF THE DREAD NETHERWORLD --FOREVER!*

BUT, IF HE DIDN'T ESCAPE, THEN WHERE IS HE?

WHY'D YOU RETURN TO NEW YORK? IS THERE TROUBLE BREWING?

WADDAYA KNOW?! IT'S THE THUNDER GOD, HIMSELF!



*ANOTHER SNEAKY, SUGAR-COATED SUBLIMINAL SUMMARY! -- SLY STAN.

WHAT ABOUT THE AVENGERS? WHEN ARE YOU GONNA REJOIN THEM? EVERYONE'S BEEN ASKING--!

HEY! LET'S SEE YA DO SOME TRICKS WITH THAT JAZZY HAMMER OF YOURS, HUH? C'MON, SHOW US WHATCHA CAN DO!

BACK, ALL OF YOU! STAND YE BACK! THE ENDLESS PRATTLE OF THY VOICES PROVES WEARISOME TO MINE EARS!

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? WE'VE GOT A RIGHT TO SAY WHAT WE WANT!



WAIT, THOR! I WANT YOUR AUTOGRAPH FOR MY KIDS! QUICK! TEAR OFF A PIECE OF HIS CAPE-- FOR A MEMENTO!

ONE LOCK OF HIS HAIR! THAT'S ALL I WANT-- JUST ONE!

YOU CAN USE SOME HELP, FELLA! C'MON, HOP INTO MY HACK!

THE GOD OF THUNDER-- IN A PUBLIC CONVEYANCE??

BUT THEN-- WHY NOT??



WHERE TO, PAL? YOU NAME IT-- I'LL GETCHA THERE! MY DESTINATION IS THE TOWN TOWERS, ON EAST 75TH STREET!

SURE! I KNOW THE PLACE!

SIT BACK 'N RELAX, CURLY! I'LL HAVE YA THERE IN NO TIME!



YOU GOTTA EXCUSE THEM RUBBER-NECKS, MISTER! THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT YOU IMMORTALS CAN GET SICK OF CROWDS JUST LIKE ANY ORDINARY JOE!

THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU AINT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN A GUY LIKE ME--!



YOU CARRY A NUTTY HAMMER AND WEAR THEM WINGS ON YER HAT, WHILE I DRIVE ME A HACK AND WEAR A BUTTON IN MY CAP!

BUT, I'LL BETCHA YOU WORRY ABOUT DAMES, 'N POLITICS, 'N THE WORLD SERIES JUST LIKE ME 'N EVERYBODY ELSE!

YOU ARE QUITE A PHILOSOPHER, MY FRIEND!



SURE! WHAT CABBIE AINT? BUT, I BEEN AROUND, TOO! I CAUGHT ME A BULLET AT ANZIO, IN THE BIG WAR!

THEN YOU TOO HAVE DONE YOUR SHARE FOR FREEDOM!

YEAH, JUST LIKE YOU! I READ PLENTY ABOUT YOU, PAL!

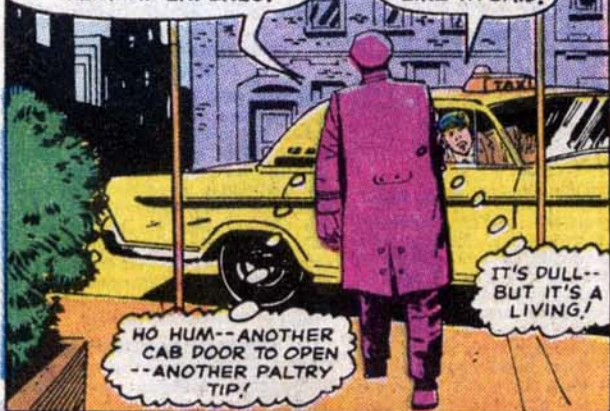
IN SPITE OF THEM CRAZY GOLDEN CURLS, YOU'RE AN A-1 JOE IN MY BOOK!



I HAVE RECEIVED PLAUDITS AND ACCOLADES FROM THE HIGHEST AND MIGHTIEST OF MEN AND IMMORTALS--YET, THE WORDS YOU HAVE SPOKEN SHALL GLADDEN MY HEART FOR AS LONG AS MEMORY ENDURES!

IF THAT MEANS WHAT I THINK IT DOES, I'M MUCH OBLIGED, MISTER!

NOW, HERE WE ARE--THE TOWN TOWERS, JUST LIKE YA SAID!



IT'S DULL-- BUT IT'S A LIVING!

HO HUM-- ANOTHER CAB DOOR TO OPEN -- ANOTHER PALTRY TIP!

GOOD HEAVENS!! IT--IT'S THE GOD OF THUNDER!!

WHAT DOES ONE DO IN HIS PRESENCE? BOW? TIP ONE'S HAT?

HOW SHALL I CORRECTLY ADDRESS HIM?

ACCEPT MY THANKS FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

SURE, CURLY! I'LL SEE YA AROUND, HEAR?



BE SURE TO KEEP YER NOSE CLEAN, PAL!

YOU--YOU SPOKE TO HIM AS THOUGH HE'S JUST AN ORDINARY FARE!

WHY NOT? HE'S A REAL SWINGER, THAT GUY! HIM 'N ME'S BUDDIES! HE TAKES MY HACK WHENEVER HIS HAMMER'S ON THE BLINK!

BUT AN ORDINARY FARE HE AINT! HE CLEAN FORGOT ABOUT PAYIN' ME!



MOMENTS LATER--

A COSTUME PARTY-- ON THIS FLOOR-- AND I WASN'T INVITED!!

I HOPE I SHALL FIND JANE FOSTER AT HOME! IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I SPEAK WITH HER!



BUT, RIGHT NOW, IT'S MORE IMPORTANT FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO FAR-OFF OLYMPUS! READY? THEN, LET'S GO--!

OLYMPUS-- WHERE REIGNS THE SPIRITED **ZEUS**, FATHER OF **MERCULES**, SUPREME SOVEREIGN OF ALL HE SURVEYS--!

AHHH, MY LORD **ZEUS**, HOW MERRY IS THY CELEBRATION! WHERE, BUT IN ETERNAL **OLYMPUS**, CAN SUCH REVELS CONTINUE WITHOUT END?!!

IN TRUTH, MY MERRY **DIONYSIUS**, WHEN THERE ARE NO **BATTLES** LEFT TO FIGHT--NO **ENEMIES** TO OVERCOME-- THEN 'TIS TIME TO PARTAKE OF **FROLIC** AND OF **GAMBOLS** IN THIS HALCYON CLIME!

BUT **SOFT!** I FEEL THE PRESENCE OF **EVIL** APPROACHING! THE **SUBTLE SCENT OF MENACE** PERVADES THE VERY AIR WE BREATHE!



WE WISH YOU COULD HEAR THE JOYOUS MUSIC WHICH FILLS THE HALLOWED AIR OF **OLYMPUS**-- BUT, ALAS, MORTAL-- SUCH GODLIKE MELODIES ARE NOT FOR SUCH AS THEE! AND SO-- ON WITH OUR TITANIC TALE--

SUDDENLY, THE REVELS CEASE, IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE HEARTBEAT--AS THE GRIM, FOREBODING FIGURE OF PLUTO, PRINCE OF DARKNESS, MYSTICALLY TAKES SHAPE-- IN FULL REGALIA AS EX-MONARCH OF THE NETHERWORLD--!

LET ALL ATTEND MY WORDS!!

NO LONGER NEED REMAIN IN THE STYGIAN DEPTHS!

HARKEN, O ZEUS! I DO CLAIM MY RIGHTFUL PLACE, IN THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS-- HERE, ON MOUNT OLYMPUS!

SILENCE, THOU PRINCE OF DECEIT! HAST THOU FORGOTTEN THY SENTENCE?? NOT YET HAVE I SEEN FIT TO SET THEE FREE!

'TIS YOU WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN, MY LORD! THERE WAS ONE CONDITION IN THE CONTRACT--

IF I COULD FIND AN IMMORTAL WHO WOULD CONSENT TO REPLACE ME IN THE NETHERWORLD, I WOULD THEN BE FREED!

AT LAST-- I HAVE FOUND SUCH A ONE!

IF ANY HAVE BEEN WITLESS ENOW TO SIGN THY CONTRACT, IT WAS BECAUSE THOU RESORTED TO BASE TRICKERY! BUT, NO MATTER!

WHAT'S DONE, 'TIS DONE!

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THY HAPLESS VICTIM??

'TIS A NAME THOU KNOWEST FULL WELL, SIRE!

HE WHO HATH CARELESSLY SIGNED THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT IS NONE OTHER THAN THINE OWN SON-- HERCULES!!

BUT, EVEN AS THE THUNDERSTRUCK ZEUS RECOILS IN STUNNED SURPRISE, THE LONELY FIGURE OF THE PRINCE OF POWER SCALES THE MASSIVE PEAK OF MOUNT OLYMPUS-- COMPLETING A CLIMB WHICH VERILY DEFIES MERE HUMAN COMPREHENSION--!

I MUST REACH THE THRONE OF ZEUS! ONLY HE CAN FREE ME FROM THE DIRE TERMS OF THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT TO WHICH I SO BLINDLY AFFIXED MY MARK!

I, WHO AM HERCULES-- WHO AM POWER INCARNATE-- WHO HAVE BESTED EVERY FOE-- MET EVERY DANGER-- SURMOUNTED EVERY OBSTACLE-- I CANNOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF AN ETERNITY, SPENT IN THE SHADY DESOLATION OF THE NETHERWORLD!

-AHHE--THE SUMMIT AT LAST! NOW TO-- STAY! WHAT IS THIS?!!

STAND THOU ASIDE, MONSTROUS MARAUDER! HERCULES SO COMMANDS!

A YELLOW-CRESTED TITAN!! FIERCEST AND MOST POWERFUL OF ALL THE SAVAGE BREED!

BUT, THE DIM-WITTED, RAMPAGING CREATURE IS TOO CONSUMED WITH SAVAGERY, WITH UNREASONING HATRED, TO DO AUGHT BUT STRIKE OUT--

KHOOM!



I AM ON A MISSION MOST URGENT! GLADLY WOULD I HAVE LET THEE GO THY WAY, SINCE THOU ART OF NO IMPORT TO ME!

BUT NOW, THOU HAST AROUSED THE FLAMING ANGER OF HERCULES!!!

LET THE NETHERWORLD WAIT! LET THE PLANETS BE STILL! NOTHING SHALL SAVE THEE NOW!

KRAKK!



BOON!



SKAKK!



BOOM!

SLOWLY, THE OLYMPIAN IMMORTAL TURNS FROM HIS FALLEN FOE, AND, WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, CONTINUES ON HIS WAY! SO REPLETE WITH VICTORY IS HIS PAST, THAT ONE ADDITIONAL TRIUMPH IS OF VIRTUALLY NO CONSEQUENCE--TO HERCULES!



NOW, TO SEEK AUDIENCE WITH HONORED ZEUS!

A SHORT TIME LATER, HIS DESTINATION REACHED, HERCULES ENTERS THE GLEAMING CASTLE--



'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE! THOUGH I AM SEEN BY ALL, NONE THERE ARE WHO APPROACH ME!

THEN, SUDDENLY--



ADVANCE NO FURTHER, TRAGIC OFFSPRING! THERE CAN BE NO SANCTUARY FOR THEE IN OLYMPUS!

THE VOICE OF MY FATHER! THEN--HE ALREADY KNOWS!

IS MY PLEA TO BE THUS DENIED--ERE I AM ALLOWED TO PRESENT IT?

MY SON-- I KNOW THOU HAST BEEN GROSSLY DECEIVED! YET, THOU DIDST SIGN THE COMPACT--AND, MORE PRECIOUS TO THY FATHER THAN LIFE ITSELF IS--HONOR!



THOU MUST BE TRUE TO THY DEED! THOUGH THOU BE FAVORED ABOVE ALL IN MINE EYES, I DO BANISH THEE TO THE NETHERWORLD!

HEAR ME, MY FATHER! A CHANCE IS ALL I CRAVE! THE CHANCE TO FIGHT FOR MY FREEDOM!

I BEG NO FAVOR--I ASK NO PITY! BUT, I AM HERCULES!! I KNOW NOT HOW TO YIELD!!



ALAS, MY SON! THY PRIDE HATH BEEN THY DOWNFALL! NOW MUST THOU LEARN THE LESSON OF--HUMILITY!

MY ONLY CHANCE! I MUST FIND A CHAMPION WHO WILL DO BATTLE IN MY BEHALF!

BUT WHERE IN THE UNIVERSE IS THERE ONE SO SELFLESS??!



FIND YE ONE WHO WILL FIGHT IN THY STEAD! ONE WHO WILL RISK HIMSELF TO SAVE THEE!

AND, EVEN AS HERCULES PONDER'S HIS FATE, ON THE PLANET EARTH A DOOR SLOWLY OPENS, AND THE GOD OF THUNDER BEHOLDS--

A FEMALE! ONE WHOM I HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE--AND YET-- SHE IS STRANGELY FAMILIAR!

YOU WISH TO SEE JANE FOSTER?

THOR! IT'S YOU--AT LAST!

JANE! I HAVE RETURNED!

I KNEW YOU'D COME BACK! I KNEW NOTHING COULD CRUSH YOUR FIGHTING SPIRIT--YOUR PROUD HEART--NOT EVEN HERCULES!

MY DARLING! MY OWN TRUE LOVE! IF ONLY I COULD KNOW THAT YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE ME AGAIN!

EVEN A THUNDER GOD MAY NOT PREDICT THE FUTURE, MY BELOVED!

OH, FORGIVE ME! I ALMOST FORGOT--!

THOR, THIS IS TANA NILE, MY NEW ROOMMATE! TANA HAS JUST MOVED TO THE CITY, LOOKING FOR A JOB!

IT WAS MOST KIND OF JANE TO LET ME SHARE THIS APARTMENT WITH HER!

YOU SPEAK ENGLISH PERFECTLY! AND YET, YOU DO NOT SOUND LIKE A NATIVE OF THIS LAND!

YOU ARE RIGHT, GOD OF THUNDER! I COME FROM-- A DISTANT PLACE!

BUT, THERE IS NO NEED TO DISCUSS THAT NOW!

THEN, WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT, THE SON OF ODIN BENDS HIS KNEE, KNEELING, AS THOUGH IN THE PRESENCE OF A REGAL BEING--!

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HER--SOME-THING WHICH JANE CANNOT RECOGNIZE--SOME-THING STRANGELY MAJESTIC!

MAY THE STARS OF ASGARD SHINE UPON THEE, TANA NILE!

THANK YOU, THOR!

THOR! YOU TOO?

SHE IS NAUGHT BUT A MORTAL FEMALE, AND YET-- I FELT COMPELLED TO MAKE OBEISANCE!

'TIS CERTAIN AN ENIGMA IS UPON US!



TANA SEEMS TO AFFECT EVERYONE THE SAME WAY! I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT!

HOW DID YOU MEET? FROM WHENCE DOES SHE COME?

ACTUALLY, I KNOW ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT HER! I PUT AN AD IN THE PAPER FOR A ROOMMATE TO SHARE EXPENSES, AND TANA WAS THE FIRST TO ANSWER!

BUT, ENOUGH OF HER, MY DARLING! LET'S TALK ABOUT US!



IN TRUTH, MY LOVED ONE, THERE IS MUCH FOR US TO DISCUSS!

SINCE A GOD MAY NOT WED A MORTAL, THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO SHED THE MANTLE OF IMMORTALITY!

THOR!! YOU MEAN--YOU'D BECOME DR. DON BLAKE--FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?!!



ALTHOUGH IT IS WHAT I HAVE PRAYED FOR, YOU CANNOT MAKE SUCH A GRAVE DECISION SO QUICKLY! YOU--YOU'D BE GIVING UP SO MUCH--!

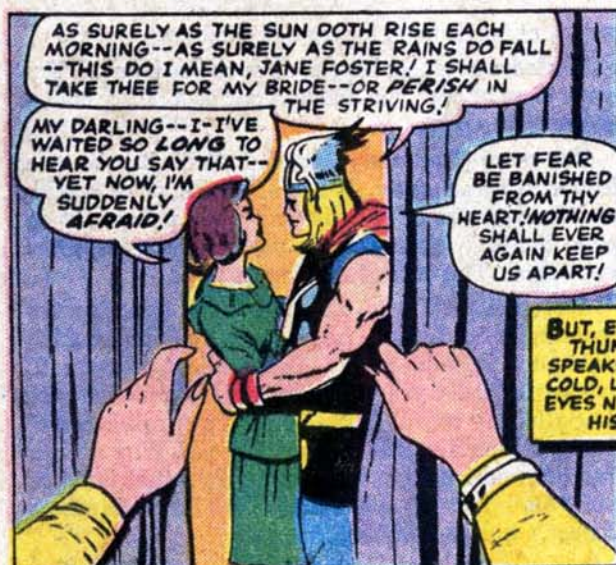
BUT, CONSIDER THE GAIN! IS ALL THE GLORY OF ASGARD WORTH ONE EMBRACE FROM THE WOMAN I LOVE?



ONCE AGAIN I SHALL LEAVE YOU, MY DEAREST! BUT, IT SHALL BE FOR THE FINAL TIME!

I MUST RETURN TO THE COURT OF ODIN, THERE TO TELL MY FATHER OF MY DECISION-- THERE, TO RENOUNCE MY GODLY HERITAGE--FOREVER!

THOR! YOU --YOU REALLY MEAN IT?!!



AS SURELY AS THE SUN DOTHS RISE EACH MORNING--AS SURELY AS THE RAINS DO FALL --THIS DO I MEAN, JANE FOSTER! I SHALL TAKE THEE FOR MY BRIDE--OR PERISH IN THE STRIVING!

MY DARLING--I-I'VE WAITED SO LONG TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT-- YET NOW, I'M SUDDENLY AFRAID!

LET FEAR BE BANISHED FROM THY HEART! NOTHING SHALL EVER AGAIN KEEP US APART!

BUT, EVEN AS THE THUNDER GOD SPEAKS, A PAIR OF COLD, UNBLINKING EYES NEVER LEAVE HIS FACE--



THOR MUST NOT RETURN TO EARTH AGAIN! FOR, IF HE SHOULD, IT WOULD SPOIL ALL MY CAREFULLY LAID PLANS!

AND, I HAVE COME TOO FAR TO BE STOPPED NOW!

MOMENTS LATER, AFTER A BRIEF BUT TENDER FAREWELL...

NOW TO RETURN TO THE GOLDEN REALM...

...PERHAPS FOR THE FINAL TIME!



CREATING A SPACE/TIME-DISTORTING VORTEX, THE IMMORTAL AVENGER REACHES THE FABLED RAINBOW BRIDGE TO ASGARD JUST IN TIME TO SEE--

BRAVE BALDER-- ABOUT TO SET FORTH UPON SOME MISSION! I MUST GREET THE MOST FAITHFUL OF ALL WHO SERVE THE THRONE!

MIGHTY THOR!! YOU HAVE SAVED ME FROM MY INTENDED JOURNEY!



GIVE WORDS TO THY THOUGHT, LOYAL ONE! OF WHAT NATURE WAS THY MISSION?

I AM UNDER DIRECT ORDERS OF NOBLE ODIN HIMSELF! HE COMMANDED ME TO LOCATE YOU!

FOR WHAT PURPOSE, VALIANT FRIEND?



HE MUST TELL YOU THAT HIMSELF!

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT HE IS SORELY DISTURBED! I AM ORDERED TO BRING YOU TO HIM AT ONCE!



BUT WHY, BRAVE BALDER? WHAT CAN BE AMISS?

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THUS SOON?
'TIS THE LONG-AWAITED DAY OF
THE THREE WORLDS!

THE DAY OF MOMENTOUS
DECISION FOR THE GOD
OF THUNDER--AS
PREDICTED IN THE
BOOK OF ENCHANTERS!

ALAS--THAT
IT SHOULD
FALL AT SUCH
A TIME!



GOOD MY
LORD--THOU
HAST
SUMMONED
ME!

COME FORTH, SON OF MY HEART!
'TIS TIME FOR ME TO SEND THEE
THRU THE DOORWAY TO, ALL THE
WORLDS!



THOUGH I BE SORELY
TROUBLED AT THE FATE
THAT MAY BEFALL THEE
--IT MUST BE DONE!

'TIS THY
DUTY TO
WAIT IN
LIMBO,
MY SON!

FOR, ON THIS
FATEFUL DAY,
THE
WHISPERING
WIND SHALL
CALL THEE--

--AND, THOU MUST FUL-
FILL THY DESTINY BY
FOLLOWING WHERE'ER
IT MAY LEAD! SO HATH
IT BEEN WRITTEN!



THE PROPHECIES HAVE SAID: IN THREE WORLDS
SHALL THE GOD OF THUNDER STAKE ALL--ON
BEHALF OF ANOTHER!

BUT, MOST NOBLE
FATHER, I YET HAVE COME TO
THEE FOR YET ANOTHER
PURPOSE-- TO DISCUSS A
MOST MOMENTOUS DECISION--

BE THOU SILENT!
AFTER THE DAY OF THE
THREE WORLDS SHALL
HAVE PASSED, ONLY THEN
SHALL WE DISCOURSE OF
LESSER MATTERS!



NOW, MIGHTIEST OF
THE MIGHTY--NOBLEST
OF THE NOBLE--
PREPARE THYSELF!!

I SEND THEE TO LIMBO!
THERE, WHAT IS TO BE--
SHALL BE!



I MUST BE
TRUE TO MY
DESTINY! FIRST,
MY DUTY SHALL
BE DONE! AND
THEN--MY MOMENT
OF GREATEST
DECISION!

THEN, FASTER THAN THE FLICKER OF AN ASGARDIAN EYE, THE MOST HEROIC IMMORTAL OF ALL FINDS HIMSELF IN THE DOMAIN OF DESOLATION--THE EVER-CHANGING, EVER-ETERNAL SHADLOWY REALM OF NOWHERE--THE LEGENDARY LAND OF LIMBO--

HERE MUST I REMAIN, TILL THE WINDS OF THE WORLD SUMMON ME-- TO DO BATTLE FOR ANOTHER!



I KNOW NOT OF THE PERILS THAT AWAIT ME, BUT THIS DO I VOW-- THE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL FACE THEM--AS BEFITS THE SON OF IMPERIAL ODIN!

THUS DO WE LEAVE MIGHTY THOR, ENGULFED BY EMPTINESS--AS ONCE AGAIN WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE PRINCE OF POWER, IN FABLED OLYMPUS--

LONG HAVE I DESPISED THY BLUSTERING MANNER--THY VAIN CONCEIT--THY OVER-POWERING STRENGTH--STRENGTH WHICH, BY RIGHTS, SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE!

THEN--THOU DOTH REFUSE ME??!

AY! LOOK NOT TO ARES FOR SUCCOR!

NOW, STAND THOU ASIDE! I MUST EVER PRACTICE HURLING MY FATEFUL JAVELINS!



ARES! I CRAVE A BOON! BECAUSE I SIGNED AN OLYMPIAN CONTRACT, MY ARM MAY NO MORE BE LIFTED IN BATTLE!

I MUST FIND ONE WILLING TO RISK ALL IN ORDER TO FIGHT--TO DARE--FOR THE CAUSE OF HERCULES!



THEN THOU MUST SEEK HIM ELSEWHERE, SON OF ZEUS!

GOD OF WAR THOU ART CALLED! WHERE THEN IS THY WARLIKE SPIRIT? WHERE THEN THY LUST FOR COMBAT??

UNHAND ME, DOOMED ONE! EVEN ARES IS NOT WITLESS ENOUGH TO DO BATTLE WITH MIGHTY PLUTO--AND HIS DEADLY LEGIONS!



NEVER SHALL I FORGET HOW THOU HAST TURNED THY BACK UPON THY FELLOW OLYMPIAN...BASE, BLACK-HEARTED COWARD!

REMEMBER THEN, HERCULES--AS THOU SPENDEST ETERNITY IN THE NETHERWORLD!



WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD--WITH GRIM, BURNING DESPERATION GNAWING AT HIS HEART, THE PRINCE OF POWER SWIFTLY TURNS AWAY!

ONLY SECONDS OF FREEDOM ARE LEFT TO ME!

I MUST FIND A CHAMPION TO STRIKE FOR HERCULES--OR ALL IS LOST--FOREVER!



IN THE DISTANCE-- 'TIS HERMES-- MOUNTED UPON HIS FLYING CHARIOT!

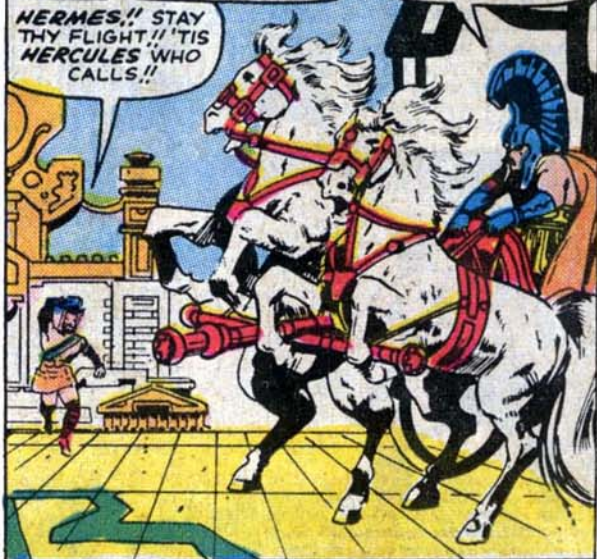


HERMES-- WHO KNOWS NOT THE MEANING OF FEAR! HERMES, WHOSE SPEED IS ALMOST THE EQUAL OF MY OWN STRENGTH!

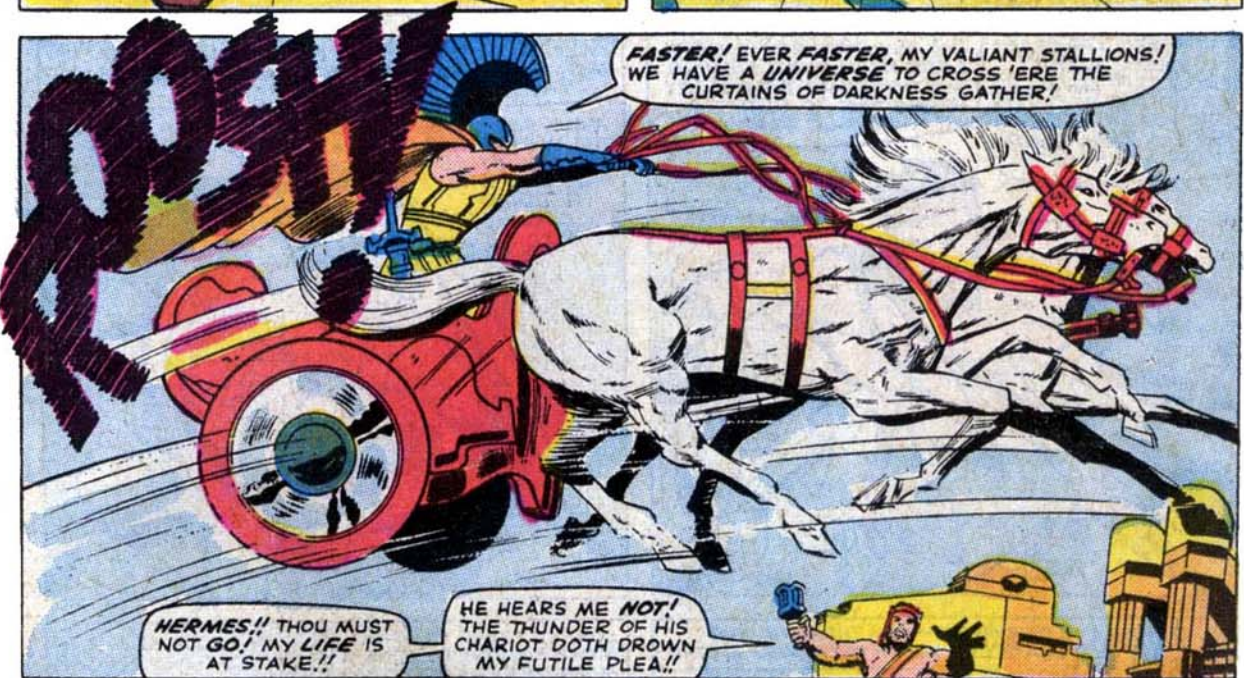
HE PREPARES TO EMBARK UPON A NEW QUEST!! I MUST REACH HIM 'ERE HE DEPARTS!

UP, MY PEERLESS STEEDS! GET THEE TO FLIGHT!

HERMES!! STAY THY FLIGHT!! 'TIS HERCULES WHO CALLS!!



FASTER! EVER FASTER, MY VALIANT STALLIONS! WE HAVE A UNIVERSE TO CROSS 'ERE THE CURTAINS OF DARKNESS GATHER!



HERMES!! THOU MUST NOT GO! MY LIFE IS AT STAKE!!

HE HEARS ME NOT! THE THUNDER OF HIS CHARIOT DOETH DROWN MY FUTILE PLEA!!

BUT HARK-- THE SANDS OF TIME HAVE RUN OUT! IN TRUTH, THE SON OF ZEUS IS SURELY UNDONE!

NONE THERE ARE WHO CAN SAVE HERCULES NOW!



HOW DARK GROW THE SKIES ABOVE ME! HOW HEAVY LADEN WITH DREAD IS THE AIR I BREATHE!

MY TIME IS COME! THE NETHERWORLD CALLS OUT TO ME!



AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME-- SINCE THE DAWN OF CONSCIOUSNESS-- HERCULES KNOWS AT LAST-- THE MEANING OF --FEAR!

AND THEN, A VOICE RINGS OUT! A VOICE TOTALLY LACKING IN PITY, IN WARMTH, IN ANY SEMBLANCE OF HUMAN EMOTION OR FEELING-- THE VOICE OF PLUTO, THE INEXORABLE!

PREPARE THYSELF, HERCULES! THOU HAST SIGNED THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT-- NOW MUST THOU PAY THE PRICE!



EVEN AS I SPEAK, MY LEGIONS APPROACH FROM THE LAND BELOW -- TO TAKE THEE TO THY FATE!

AFTER ALL THESE AGES, I AM FREED AT LAST-- WHILE THOU SHALL SERVE IN MY PLACE-- TILL TIME ITSELF DOTHS VANISH!

ARISE, DENIZENS OF THE ABYSMAL DEPTHS-- ARISE, AND CLAIM THY NEW KING!



A HUNDRED SPEARS?? LEVELLED AGAINST HERCULES?? LEVELLED AGAINST ONE WHO HATH THE POWER TO TURN ASIDE A THOUSAND TIMES A HUNDRED??!

BUT, THY STRENGTH IS USELESS NOW! SINCE SIGNING THE PARCHMENT, THOU ART FORBIDDEN TO STRIKE A SINGLE BLOW!



ONLY ANOTHER MAY DO BATTLE IN THY BEHALF! BUT, NONE WOULD BE SO FOOLHARDY! PREPARE THYSELF THEN-- TO YIELD--!

NAY! SOMEWHERE-- SOMEWHERE IN THE VAST, LIMITLESS UNIVERSE THERE MUST MUST BE ONE-- ONE WHO WILL HEED MY CALL--!!!



AND, IN THE LAND OF LIMBO-- ONE THERE IS WHO HEARS THE DESPERATE CRY WHICH IS CARRIED BY THE ENCHANTED WINDS--!

IT CANNOT BE-- IT MUST NOT BE-- THAT THE PRINCE OF POWER-- THAT HERCULES-- WHO HATH NEVER BEEN DEFEATED IN BATTLE-- SHALL BE TAKEN WITHOUT AN ARM UPRaised-- WITHOUT A BLOW BEING STRUCK--!



HERCULES!! THEN IT MUST BE ME FOR WHOM I AM FATED TO DO BATTLE!

SURELY THERE IS NONE MORE WORTHY-- NONE MORE DESERVING-- THAN THE SON OF ZEUS!



IF THE POWER OF THE THUNDER GOD CAN AID THE OLYMPIAN-- THEN SO BE IT!

WITH A DEAFENING ROAR THE WINDS SUDDENLY
CEASE THEIR SWIRLING, AND--WHEN THE MISTS
HAVE CLEARED, THE IMMORTAL AVENGER FINDS
HIMSELF IN--

OLYMPUS!!
THE REALM
OF REGAL
ZEUS!



IT IS
HERE
THEN
THAT MY
DESTINY
AWAITS
ME!

AHEAD OF ME--THE
HUBBUB OF VOICES--
AND ONE MORE
POWERFUL, MORE
DESPERATE THAN ANY
OTHER--THE VOICE OF
HERCULES!

HERCULES--HE WHO HAD
BEEN MY FOE--HE, FOR
WHOM I AM NOW PREPARED
TO RISK ALL ON THE FIELD
OF BATTLE--AGAINST
UNKNOWN ODDS!



SEIZE HIM! FEAR NOT
HIS STRENGTH--HE IS
FORBIDDEN TO EMPLOY
IT SO LONG AS I HOLD
THIS CONTRACT!



ALL HAIL THE
NEW LORD OF THE
NETHERWORLD!
PLUTO IS THUS
FREED--WHILST
HERCULES SHALL
SERVE IN HIS
STEAD--FOREVER!

LET ME THEN BE TAKEN! OF WHAT USE IS IT TO
REMAIN IN A WORLD WHERE NONE WILL STAND UP
FOR ANOTHER WHO HATH BEEN UNJUSTLY USED?



THE TIME OF VALOR IS
PAST! THE AGE OF THE
WARRIOR IS DEAD! LET
HERCULES THEN PERISH
WITH THEM!

HAA! IT IS THINE OWN
ACCURSED POWER WHICH HAS
PROVEN TO BE THINE UNDOING!
ONLY ENEMIES HAST THOU
MADE IN BATTLE--NEVER
FRIENDS!



I SAY THEE NAY, EMPEROR OF
EVIL! ONE THERE IS WHO SHALL
FIGHT FOR THE PRINCE OF POWER!

LET THY WARRIORS GATHER!
LET THY OWN AWESOME FORCES
BE ASSEMBLED! AGAINST THEM
ALL, I SHALL PREVAIL!



IMPOSSIBLE!!
NONE THERE
ARE WHO WOULD
DARE--!!

NONE--SAVE
A WARRIOR
BORN!

THE GOD OF
THUNDER
DARES!!



NEXT ISSUE:
**INTO THE
NETHERWORLD!**

TALES OF **ASGARD**, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS

"THE HORDES OF HAROKIN!"

Know Ye This:

IT HATH BEEN PREDICTED THAT TRAITOROUS **LOKI**, BY UNITING THE FORCES OF EVIL, WOULD ONE DAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR **RAGNAROK**, THE END OF THE WORLD!

THEREFORE, IMPERIAL **ODIN** DOTH ISSUE A GRIM COMMAND...

NO! NO! I AM INNOCENT! IT IS LIES-- ALL LIES!! SPARE ME--!

TO THE WELL OF ETERNAL SLEEP WITH HIM! I HAVE SPOKEN!

FABULOUSLY WRITTEN BY... STAN LEE
FANTASTICALLY DRAWN BY... JACK KIRBY
RASTIDIOUSLY INKED BY... V. COLLETTA
FINALLY LETTERED BY... ARTIE SIMEK

THUS, IT COMES TO PASS THAT THE HALF-BROTHER OF THOR IS SENTENCED TO PAY FOR FOUL DEEDS EARLIER COMMITTED--AND DARK DEEDS YET UNDONE--!

SO BE IT!



NO SOONER DOES THE PRINCE OF EVIL HURTLE INTO THE DREADED WELL, THAN A BARRAGE OF VAPORS INSTANTLY ENGLUFS HIM, PLACING HIM IN A PAINLESS STATE OF UNENDING SUSPENDED ANIMATION...!

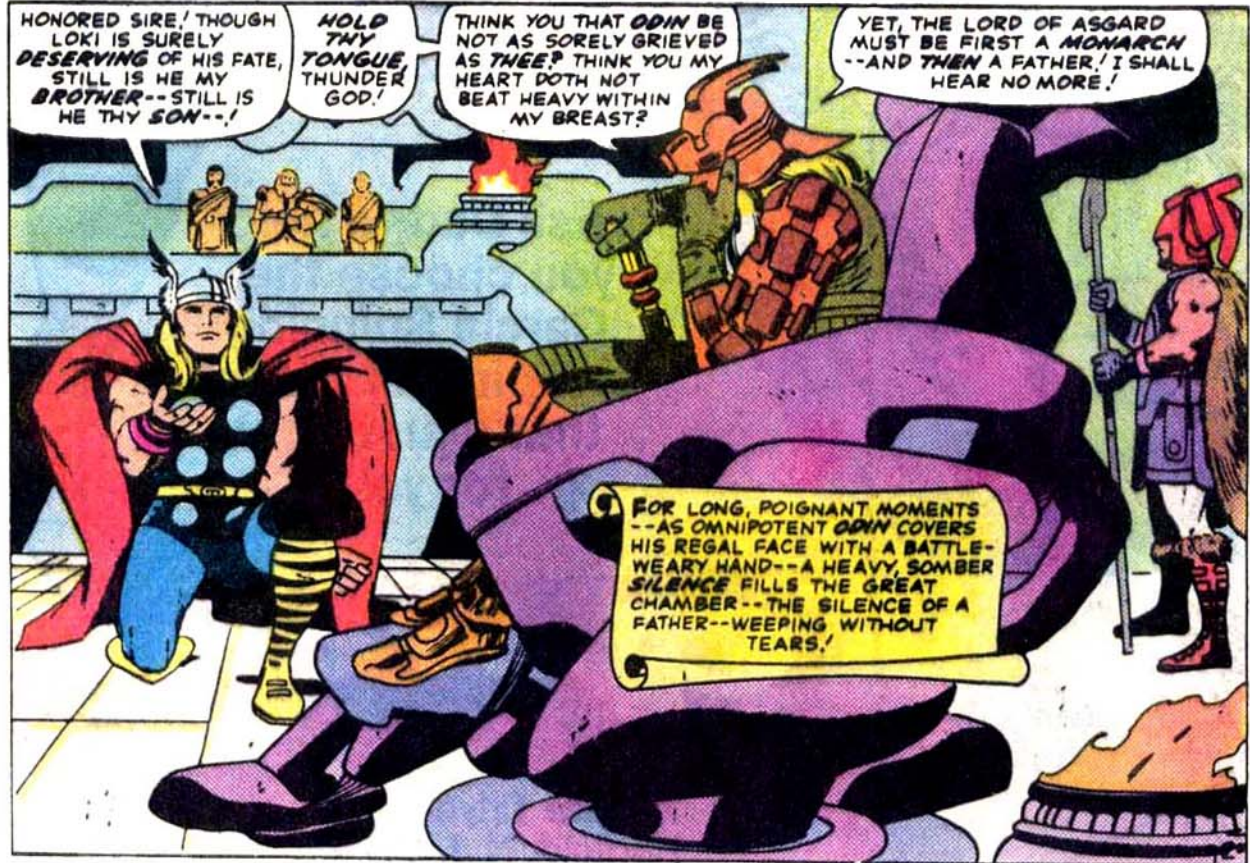


HONORED SIRE! THOUGH LOKI IS SURELY DESERVING OF HIS FATE, STILL IS HE MY BROTHER--STILL IS HE THY SON--!

HOLD THY TONGUE THUNDER GOD!

THINK YOU THAT ODIN BE NOT AS SORELY GRIEVED AS THEE? THINK YOU MY HEART DOETH NOT BEAT HEAVY WITHIN MY BREAST?

YET, THE LORD OF ASGARD MUST BE FIRST A MONARCH--AND THEN A FATHER! I SHALL HEAR NO MORE!



FOR LONG, POIGNANT MOMENTS--AS OMNIPOTENT ODIN COVERS HIS REGAL FACE WITH A BATTLE-WEARY HAND--A HEAVY, SOMBER SILENCE FILLS THE GREAT CHAMBER--THE SILENCE OF A FATHER--WEEPING WITHOUT TEARS!

BUT THEN, AT LAST, THE SPELL IS SHATTERED BY THE STENTORIAN VOICE OF THE SOVEREIGN OF ASGARD---

REMAIN WHERE THOU ART, GOD OF THUNDER!

AND NOW, LET HOGUN, VOLSTAGG, AND FANDRAL APPROACH THE ROYAL PRESENCE!

:-ANN!:- NOW SHALL MY HEART SING-- FOR A MISSION IS IN THE OFFING!



THE LIFE OF HOGUN, THE GRIM IS THINE NOBLE ODIN--FOR THOU ART TRULY ASGARD!

SO TOO SPEAKS VOLSTAGG, SIRE! I, THE EAGLE OF WARRIORS, FLY TO THY SERVICE!

THOUGH A THOUSAND KNIVES OPPOSE ME, THE BLADE OF FANDRAL, THE DASHING, SHALL SING FOR MY LORD!

THEN COME YE FORTH-- ALL-- AND HEED MY WORDS--!



TO THE LAND OF MUSPELHEIM SHALT THOU JOURNEY--THERE TO FETCH FOR THY LIEGE THE ENCHANTED HARLOCK'S EYE FROM THE TEMPLE OF MYSTICS!

ONLY BY KEEPING SUCH WEAPONS FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL CAN THE DAY OF RAGNAROK BE POSTPONED!

THEN GET THEE HENCE, MY WARRIORS! MAY THE EYES OF ASGARD BE EVER UPON THEE!



BUT, EVEN AS ODIN SPEAKS, CALAMITY HAS ALREADY STRUCK! AT A FAR OUTPOST, NEAR THE LAND OF MUSPELHEIM, A FATEFUL ALARM RINGS OUT--!

TO ARMS!! TO ARMS!! THE HORDES OF HAROKIN ATTACK!

BENOLD! IN THE DISTANCE-- MUSPELHEIM IS ALREADY AFLAME! HAROKIN HATH BROKEN THRU!

HE HATH SEIZED THE HARLOCK'S EYE!

THEN-- TRULY WE ARE IMPONE!



THE EYE IS
MINE! NOW LET
US STRIKE! NO
POWER IN THE
UNIVERSE CAN
STEM THE TIDE!!
TODAY, IT IS
MUSPELHEIM!!
TOMORROW--
ASSGARD ITSELF!!

'ERE I AM DONE,
THE ENTIRE COSMOS
SHALL PAY HOMAGE
TO NAROKIN--WHILE
ALL THAT LIVE SHALL
BE TRAMPLED UNDER
FOOT BY MY
INVINCIBLE HORDES!



NOW SHALL THE WARLOCK'S EYE
CONQUER THIS FINAL, HELPLESS
OUTPOST--!



WITH THOSE WORDS,
HAROKIN PRESSES A
HIDDEN STUD ON HIS
GLEAMING HELMET,
AND THEN--WONDER
OF WONDERS--

GAZE YE DEEP INTO
THE WARLOCK'S EYE
--FOR NONE CAN
RESIST ITS
ENCHANTMENT!

GAZE, AS HAROKIN
COMMANDS--AND
THEN SUFFER THOU
THE CONSEQUENCE!



INCREDIBLY, AS THE MYSTERIOUS BEAM SWEEPS THE
BATTLEMENTS, THE HAPLESS DEFENDERS FALL LIKE
STALKS OF WHEAT BEFORE AN INEXORABLY-SWINGING
SCYTHE--!



THIS, THEN, IS THE MURDEROUS MENACE THAT
AWAITS THE MIGHTY QUARTET WHICH, EVEN NOW,
RIDES WITHIN EARSHOT OF THE GALLOPING
HOOVES OF HAROKIN AND HIS MERCILESS HORDE--!



NEXT:
**"THE FATEFUL
CHANGE!"**