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THE MIGHTY

THOR



THE SKY ABOVE...
THE PIT
BELOW!

HERCULES!
STAND THEE AT MY
SIDE AGAINST THESE
HELLSPAWN--

--OR
ALL THE
EARTH IS
DOOMED!



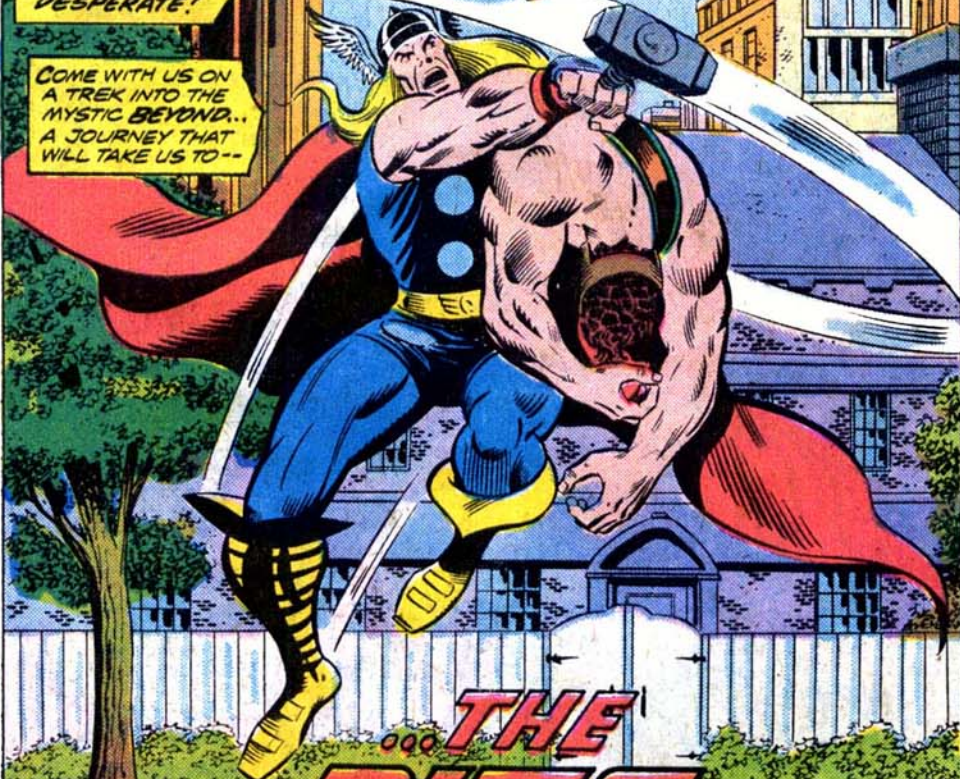
SPECIAL NOTE:
YOU'LL NEVER GUESS THE SHOCKING SURPRISE-STAR WHOSE COMING IS HERALDED IN THIS ISSUE!!

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

THE SCENE: A QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET IN MANHATTAN'S EAST EIGHTIES, LOCATION OF THE AVENGER'S MANSION.
THE PLAYERS: AN ASGARDIAN NAMED THOR, AND AN OLYMPIAN NAMED HERCULES.
THE SITUATION: IN A WORD... DESPERATE!

COME WITH US ON A TREK INTO THE MYSTIC BEYOND... A JOURNEY THAT WILL TAKE US TO--

THE SKY ABOVE...



...THE PITS BELOW!

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BOOTED FEET
LAND ON
CONCRETE
PAVEMENT.

AN IRON
GATE SWINGS
WIDE.

HE LOOKS NEITHER TO THE
RIGHT NOR THE LEFT. HE SEEMS
UNAWARE OF THE WORLD
AROUND HIM.

HE IS--
INTENT.

BEARING A
STRANGELY LIFE-
LESS HERCULES,
THE GOD OF THUNDER
ENTERS THE
MANSION'S GROUNDS

I HEAR HIM
COMING NOW,
LADIES.

THANKS FOR
WARNING ME.
I'D BETTER SEE
IF I CAN
HELP.

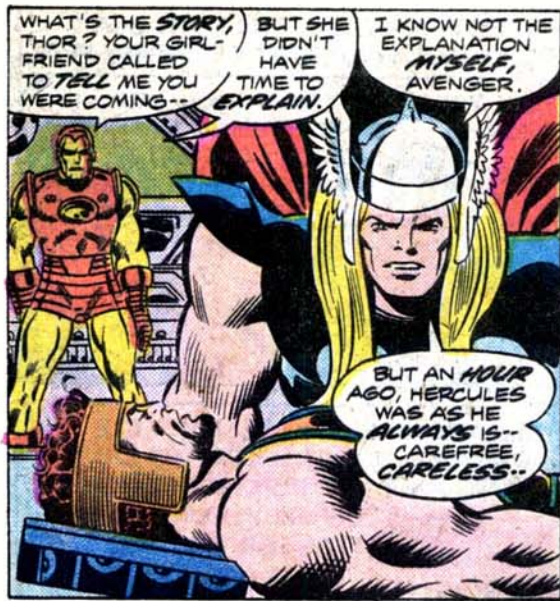
IRON
MAN!

IF FRIEND
THOU ART, THEN
THOU MUST
AID ME.

READY YON
MEMORY INDUCER--
FOR WE MUST PROBE
THE MIND OF
HERCULES, AS
ONCE WE PROBED
BEFORE*--!

PRAY THAT *THIS*
TIME, WE MEET
WITH MORE
SUCCESS
THAN LAST.

* CHECK IT IN
AVENGERS #99.
FEARLESS FACT-
FOLLOWER! --ROY.



WHAT'S THE *STORY*, THOR? YOUR GIRL-FRIEND CALLED TO TELL ME YOU WERE COMING--

BUT SHE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN.

I KNOW NOT THE EXPLANATION MYSELF, AVENGER.

BUT AN HOUR AGO, HERCULES WAS AS HE ALWAYS IS-- CAREFREE, CARELESS--



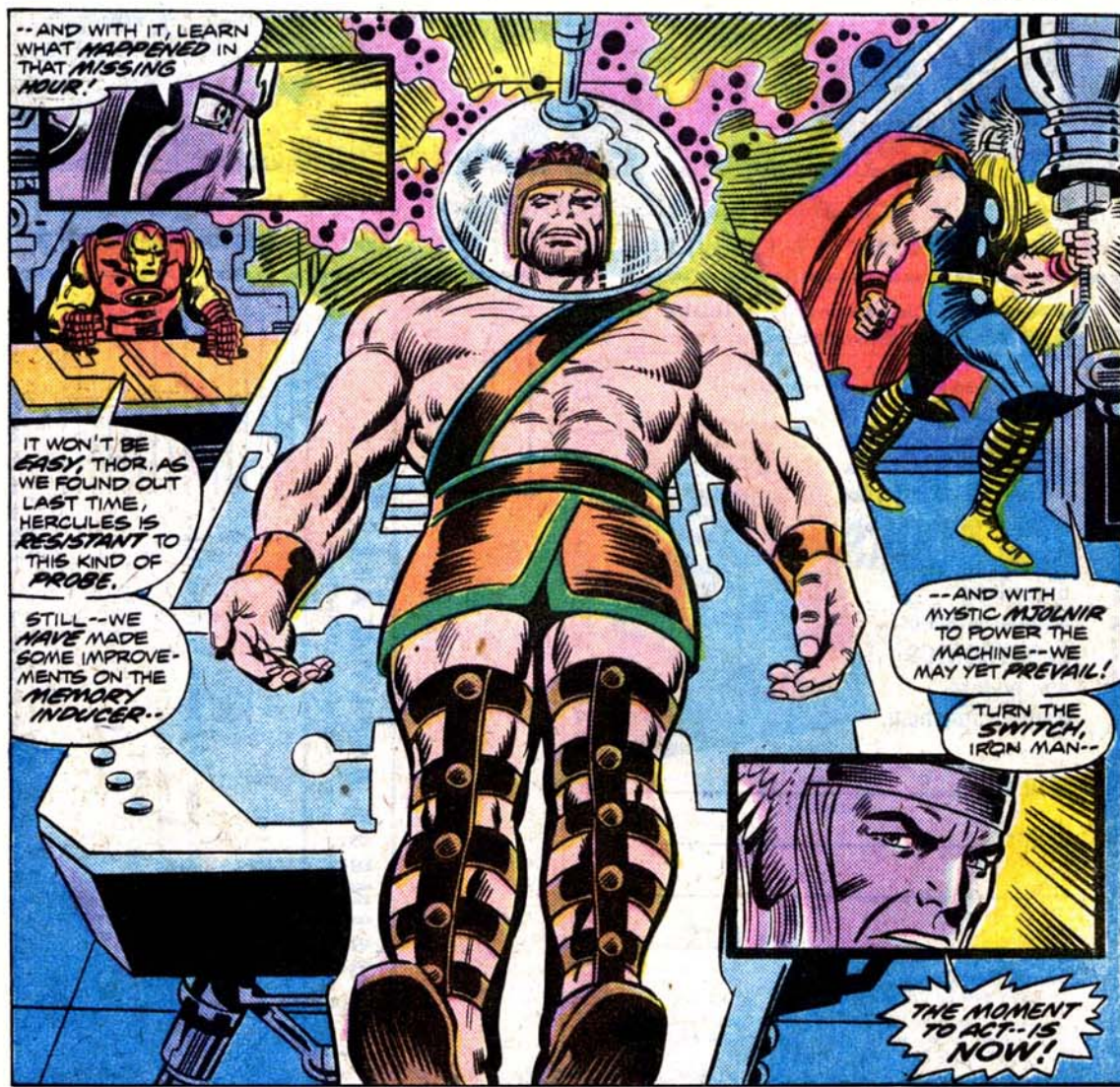
--THEN HE *DISAPPEARED*-- AND WHEN HE RETURNED, HE RAVED LIKE ONE GONE MAD!

"WHERE DARKNESS DWELLS, DWELL I"-- THAT WAS THIS HE SAID, NO MORE.

AFTER WHICH HE PASSED OUT.

I CAN GUESS WHY YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE.

TO USE THIS MACHINE, INVENTED BY TONY STARK--



-- AND WITH IT, LEARN WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT MISSING HOUR!

IT WON'T BE EASY, THOR, AS WE FOUND OUT LAST TIME, HERCULES IS RESISTANT TO THIS KIND OF PROBE.

STILL--WE HAVE MADE SOME IMPROVEMENTS ON THE MEMORY INDUCER--

-- AND WITH MYSTIC Mjolnir TO POWER THE MACHINE--WE MAY YET PREVAIL!

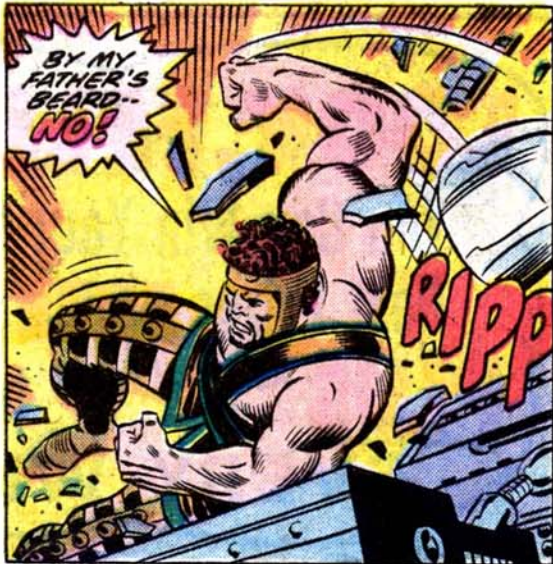
TURN THE SWITCH, IRON MAN--

THE MOMENT TO ACT-- IS NOW!

SOFTLY AT FIRST, THEN WITH INCREASING LOUDNESS, A RHYTHMIC HUM BEGINS TO THROB WITHIN THE LOW-CEILINGED CHAMBER...! WITH EACH PASSING SECOND, IT GROWS EVER LOUDER... UNTIL IT BECOMES AN EAR-SPLITTING WHINE...



...AND SEEMS TO WAKE THE UNCONSCIOUS HERCULES!



I WILL NOT REMEMBER!

LET PLUTO TEAR ME FROM THIS WORLD --LET ZEUS EXILE ME FROM FAIR OLYMPUS--



DEMONS! DEVILS! THOU HAST RETURNED TO HAUNT ME ANEW!

APPROACH, AND I'LL DESTROY THEE!

I SWEAR IT BY MY UNDYING SOUL!



SIR, THE TWO YOUNG LADIES YOU TOLD ME ABOUT HAVE ARRIVED.

SHALL I SEND THEM IN, OR WOULD YOU PREFER--

OH MY LORD!



WHAK!

BE GONE, DEMON!

I COMMAND THEE, GET THEE BEHIND ME!



WHOA, BIG FELLA--IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, WE'LL LOSE OUR INSURANCE ON THIS PLACE!

GIVE ME A HAND HERE, THOR--HE'S--



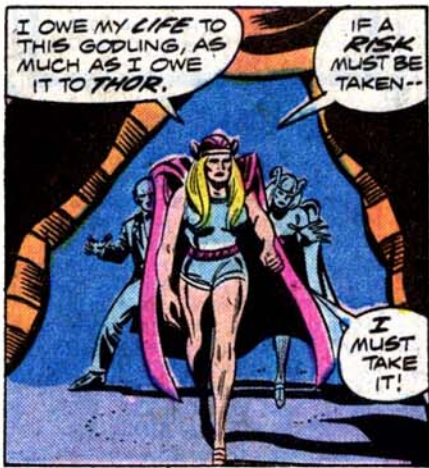
SPARROOM!



WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING--HE'S DESTROYING EVERYTHING!

PERHAPS IF I--

NOT THEE, MORTAL.



I OWE MY LIFE TO THIS GODLING, AS MUCH AS I OWE IT TO THOR.

IF A RISK MUST BE TAKEN--

I MUST TAKE IT!



HEIMDAL'S EYES! KRISTA, 'TIS NOT THE HERCULES THOU DOST KNOW--

--BUT A GOD GONE MAD!

TAKE CARE LEST HE--

"HE WILL DO NOTHING, THOR," THE YOUNG GODDESS SAYS SOFTLY. "HE IS FRIGHTENED-- AFRAID-- AND YES, DELUDED

"BUT HE WILL NOT HARM ME. HIS NOBILITY IS FAR TOO GREAT, TOO MUCH A PART OF HIM.

"HE WILL SEE ME-- AND HE WILL KNOW ME--



"-- AND FOR THE MOMENT--



"-- HIS NIGHTMARE--



"-- WILL BE GONE."



THE MOMENT STRETCHES TO A MINUTE, THE MINUTE TO AN HOUR, AND WHEN HERCULES STIRS ONCE MORE... HIS EYES ARE LIT WITH THE GLOW OF REASON...

THE WOMAN SAVED ME, THOR. MY MIND WAS ASWIRL WITH A THOUSAND PHANTOMS--



--TILL SHE BROKE THROUGH THE MIST AND RETURNED MY SANITY.

CANST THOU NOW REMEMBER THE HOURS THAT WERE LOST TO THEE?

AVE... AND THE MEMORY IS ALMOST AS TERRIBLE AS THE EVENT ITSELF.

HAVE NO FEAR, ASGARDIAN-- I'M NOT ABOUT TO LOSE CONTROL AGAIN.



STILL, I MUST HAVE TIME-- TIME TO ABSORB WHAT I NOW RECALL. THEN WE'LL TALK, THEE AND I--

AND WHEN WE HAVE FINISHED TALKING, WE'LL MAKE OUR PLANS-- TO FIGHT!



PERHAPS THE GENTLEMEN AND LADIES WOULD LIKE SOME TEA.

IF YOU WISH, I CAN ALSO PREPARE A SMALL **SNACK** -- SOMETHING TO TIDE YOU OVER UNTIL **DINNER**--?

THANK YOU, JARVIS--BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'LL BE **NECESSARY**.

FEELING ANY **BETTER**, HERCULES?



AS WELL AS I CAN FEEL, WITH THESE VISIONS HAUNTING MY **BRAIN**.

DID I TRULY **SEE** WHAT I REMEMBER SEEING-- OR WAS IT ONLY ANOTHER **DELUSION**--

-- THE IMAGININGS OF A MIND **INSANE**?

THOU MUST NOT **TORMENT** THYSELF, HERCULES.



TORMENT? WHAT CANST THOU KNOW OF **TORMENT**?

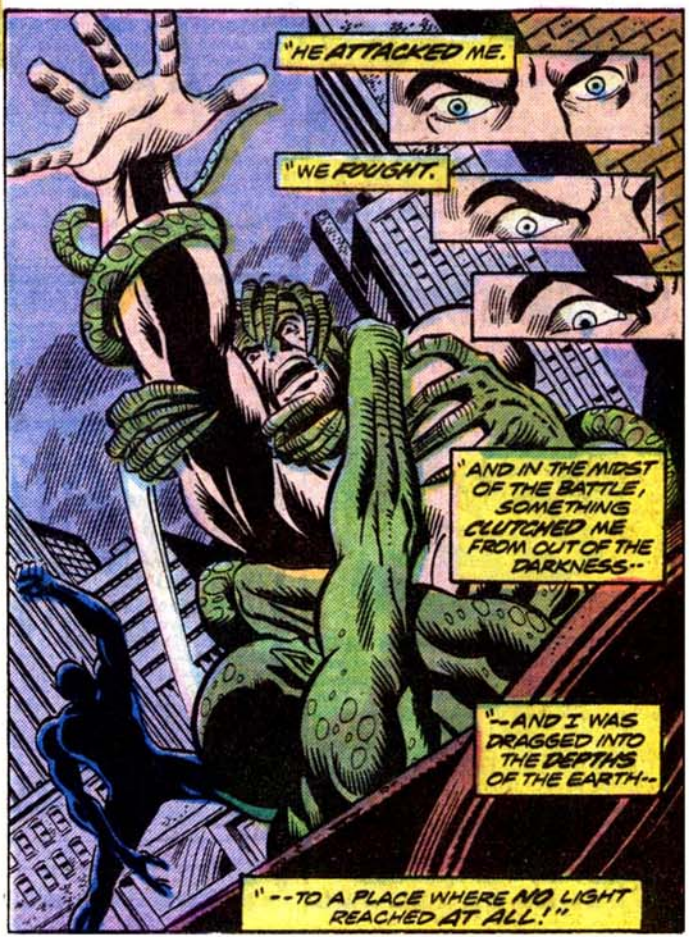
BY MY SOUL, I'VE ALWAYS COUNTED MYSELF A **BRAVE** MAN--

BUT CAN EVEN **BRAVERY** MATTER, 'GAINST THE FOULNESS I HAVE SEEN?



"IT BEGAN SEVERAL HOURS AGO, IN EARLY EVENING, AS I LEFT **THOR*** AND WANDERED THROUGH THE DARKENED SIDESTREETS OF THIS CITY'S **SLUM**.

*LAST ISSUE.--ROY.



"HE **ATTACKED** ME.

"WE **FOUGHT**.

"AND IN THE MIST OF THE BATTLE, SOMETHING **CLUTCHED** ME FROM OUT OF THE **DARKNESS**--

"--AND I WAS **DRAWN** INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE **EARTH**--



"I WAS **FOLLOWED**, BY A FIGURE WHOSE BODY WAS COMPLETELY **OPAQUE**, REFLECTING NO **LIGHT**--

"**ABSORBING** ALL **LIGHT**--

"--A MAN OF **UTTER BLACKNESS**, LIKE NOTHING IN THIS OR ANY OTHER **WORLD**!

"--TO A PLACE WHERE **NO LIGHT** REACHED AT **ALL**!"



AND THEN, HERCULES? PRAY, TELL US--

WOMAN, I SWEAR TO THEE-- 'TIS *SOME* FROM MY MEMORY!

YET WHEN I THINK UPON THAT TIME--

--WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

--I FEEL A DREAD --SUCH AS I HAVE NEVER KNOWN!



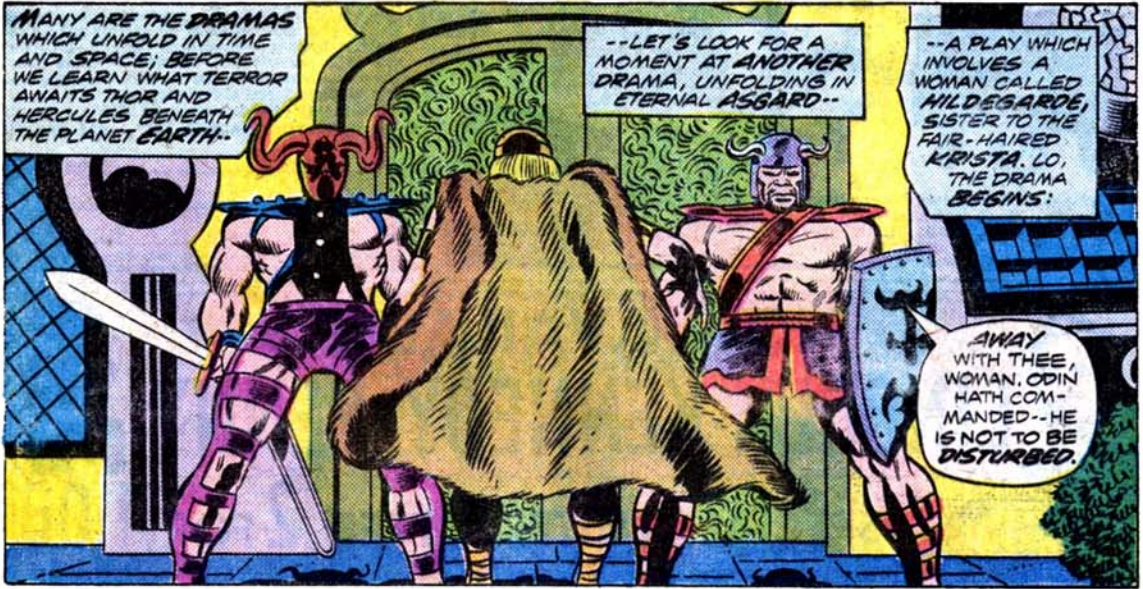
THINKEST THOU WE CAN FIND THIS STREET, OLYMPIAN?

'TIS SEARED IN MY BRAIN, THUNDER GOD.

THEN LET US BE OFF.

GIVE US ONE HOUR, IRON MAN. IF WE DO NOT RETURN IN THAT TIME-- FOLLOW US, IF THOU CANST!

I PRAY THEE-- FOLLOW THEM, AND NOT BEFORE!



MANY ARE THE DRAMAS WHICH UNFOLD IN TIME AND SPACE, BEFORE WE LEARN WHAT TERROR AWAITS THOR AND HERCULES BENEATH THE PLANET EARTH--

--LET'S LOOK FOR A MOMENT AT ANOTHER DRAMA, UNFOLDING IN ETERNAL ASSGARD--

--A PLAY WHICH INVOLVES A WOMAN CALLED HILDEGARDE, SISTER TO THE FAIR-HAIRED KRISTA. LO, THE DRAMA BEGINS:

AWAY WITH THEE, WOMAN. ODIN HATH COM-MANDED--HE IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED.



'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE! FOR NIGH ON SEVEN DAYS, ODIN HATH BEEN HIDDEN FROM ALL PRYING EYES.

AND EVEN WHEN HIS SON DID ASK HIM FOR AID*--

*LAST ISSUE. --ROY.



--ODIN REFUSED IT, AND SENT THE LADY SIF TO THOR INSTEAD!

'TIS ODD--IT WORRIES ME!

PERHAPS IF I TRY ANOTHER ENTRANCE--



BUT NO--! THESE GUARDS SEEM AS STERN AS THE OTHER PAIR.

IT LEAVES ME LITTLE CHOICE.

I MUST SEE THE ALL-FATHER...



BUT, INSTEAD OF ALLAYING THE GODDESS HILDEGARDE'S FEARS... THE AGE-WEARY VIZIER CONFIRMS THEM...

YES, HILDEGARDE-- ODIN HAS VANISHED!

EVEN I, HIS MOST TRUSTED SERVANT, KNOW NOT WHERE HE MAY BE.

FOR IF I DID, I WOULD WARN HIM OF THE DANGER FACED BY THOR--



"--WHO EVEN AS WE SPEAK--"



"--DESCENDS TO THE PITS OF DARKNESS!"

ART THOU CERTAIN THIS IS THE PLACE OF THY ABDUCTION, HERCULES?

AYE, MY HEART POUNDS --MY BLOOD CONGELS--!



THIS IS INDEED THE PLACE, ASSGARDIAN.

...FOR THE VERY THOUGHT OF ENTERING THIS BLACKNESS AGAIN... DO TH MAKE MY SKIN CRAWL!

STEEL THYSELF, HERCULES.

NO DREAM OR MEMORY ALONE IS ENOUGH TO BREAK A MAN--!

SO SAYEST THOU.

THOU WHO HATH NEVER TASTED FEAR AS A TANGIBLE-- WAIT!



"A SNATCH OF MEMORY-- I SEEM TO RECALL BEING HERE, SOMETHING I COULD NOT RECALL BEFORE!"

"AND THE SHADOWS-- I REMEMBER THE SHADOWS, ASSGARDIAN-- SO DEEP, SO FULL OF HIDDEN IMPLICATIONS--! BY MY SOUL, MY MIND REELS!"





FEAR NOT, OLYMPIAN. 'TIS ONLY A MEMORY.

A TRICK OF THE IMAGINATION, TAKING THE UNREAL-- MAKING IT REAL UNTIL--



BACK, YE MINIONS OF HELL!

WHAM!

HEIMDAL'S EYES! 'TIS A DEMON IN THE DARKNESS BEFORE US!

GET THEE BACK, OR FEEL THE POWER OF MINE MYSTIC MALLET--



THE POWER OF MY HAMMER, MJOLNIR--

EH?

THE DEMONS-- DIS-APPEARED--?

YET, HOW COULD THEY FADE SO QUICKLY--

UNLESS--THEY WERE NEVER THERE?



PERHAPS NOW, THOU DOST BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.

WHATEVER POWER IS BEHIND THIS MYSTERY-- 'TIS A POWER WE CANNOT TOUCH.

'TIS A POWER WHICH DOETH AFFECT--



--THE MIND!

MORE THAN THE MIND, THOR-- IT SEEMS TO HAVE ITS WILL OVER OUR VERY SOULS!

IN THAT CASE, WE MUST INDEED LOCATE THIS POWER--

--AND HAVING LOCATED IT--

--WE MUST DESTROY IT!

THE GRIM OLYMPIAN ONLY NODS IN ANSWER, AS HE CONTINUES TO LEAD THE WAY DOWNWARD THROUGH THE DARK ABYSS...DEEP INTO THE BEDROCK UNDERLYING THE CITY OF MANHATTAN...THROUGH A MAZE OF TUNNELS AND BURROWINGS WHICH IMPLY A HORROR GREATER THAN THOR EVER IMAGINED...

THEN, WHEN THE AIR--ALREADY STIFLING--HAS BECOME SO DENSE IT ALMOST SUFFOCATES...

HERCULES...
...IN THE BECKONING GLOOM AHEAD...



DOST THOU SEE?

A SHAPE--A
SHADOW--A
FORM WITHOUT
DIMENSION OR
DEPTH--?

BY BIFROST'S
RAINBOW
SPAN--

--TIS AS THOUGH
THE DARKNESS
WERE ALIVE!

BUT HOLD!
THE FORM
DOTH
VANISH--

--AND DOTH
BECOME BUT A
SHADOW
ONCE MORE--

--AS THOUGH
IT WERE BUT A
TRICK OF MINE
EYES--



--ONLY THIS,
AND NOTHING
MORE!

WE MUST
BE WARY OF
OUR SUSPICIONS,
HERCULES. THEY'LL
BETRAY US YET.

HERCULES...?





ODIN'S BLOOD! MATERIALIZING FROM ALL SIDES--

DEMONS--OF EVERY SIZE AND SHAPE!

THEN--T'WAS NO ILLUSION--

AAAARRR



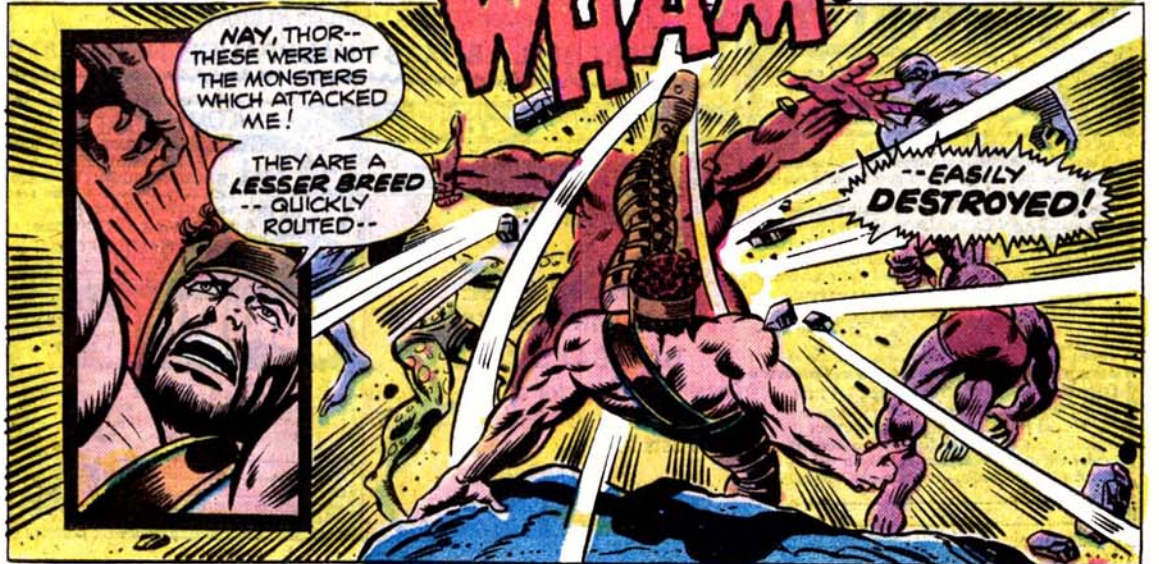
--THE DARKNESS IS ALIVE--

--AND IT STRUGGLES AGAINST US--

---SEEKING OUR VERY LIVES!

KAPLOW!

WHAM!



NAY, THOR-- THESE WERE NOT THE MONSTERS WHICH ATTACKED ME!

THEY ARE A LESSER BREED -- QUICKLY ROUTED--

--EASILY DESTROYED!



THE DEVILS I FOUGHT WERE STRONGER, MORE QUICK-WITTED THAN THESE DEMON DRONES!

I FEAR THEY ARE BUT MEANT TO WEARY US!

--TO READY US FOR AN ATTACK BY THEIR MASTER--

"HE WHO DWELLS IN DARKNESS!"

HE IS THE THREAT!

HE IS THE POWER--THAT IS UNKNOWN!



BUT THOR DOESN'T HEAR THE SHOUTING HERCULES --RATHER, HIS ATTENTION IS ALL BUT CONSUMED BY THE ATTACKERS SWARMING OVER HIM--

--AND THE OLYMPIAN'S WARNING GOES UNHEARD-- AND UNHEEDED!



BELATEDLY, HERCULES UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS MAY BE THE TRUE THREAT--



HE KNOWS HE CANNOT DESTROY US --IN A PHYSICAL ATTACK--

--THEREFORE, HIS ATTACK CANNOT BE PHYSICAL--DESPITE THESE SWARMING MONSTERS!

NAY, HE KNOWS TO CRUSH US IN ANOTHER WAY--A SPIRITUAL WAY--

--BY OVERWHELMING US WITH INCREDIBLE ODDS--AND FOR JUST A MOMENT--

---MAKING US DESPAIR!

IN DESPAIR, HE WILL CONQUER US --IN DESPAIR HE WILL CAPTURE OUR VERY SOULS!



--AND WITHOUT A WORD TO HIS COMRADE IN ARMS, HE WHIRLS ABOUT-- AND RUNS!





MAY THE HALLOWED
HIGH-LORDS OF
OLYMPUS PROTECT
ME--

THIS
MUST NOT
BE!

REACHING A
NARROW POINT IN
THE MUSTY TUNNEL,
WHERE THE CEILING
ALMOST MEETS
THE RUBBLE-STREWN
FLOOR--THE SON OF
ZEUS THROWS
HIS ARMS ABOVE
HIS HEAD--

--PLANTS HIS
FEET LIKE
ROCK UPON
THE ROCK--

-- AND STRAINS UPWARD,
WITH ALL THE MIGHT OF A
GODLING BORN!

AT ONCE, THE EARTH
HEAVES A THOUSAND
FEET ABOVE--AS A VAST
GRANITE PLUG SLOWLY
RISES FROM THE GROUND--

--A PLUG PUSHED FROM
BENEATH BY THE GOD WHOM
MEN CALL HERCULES--WHOSE
MUSCLES BAND AND RIPPLE--
WHOSE BODY GLISTENS WITH
SWEAT--

--TILL THE COLUMNS OF
EARTH BLAST FREE!

RUM
RUM

KRAPOOM!

HERCULES,
WHERE ART
THOU?

FOR EACH DEMON I DISPATCH,
TEN MORE APPEAR! THEIR
NUMBERS SEEM ENDLESS!

ALMOST
IT MAKES
ME--

BEFORE THE THUNDER GOD CAN COMPLETE
HIS SENTENCE, A BRILLIANT SHAFT OF DAWN
SUNLIGHT WASHES OVER HIM--

--SHATTERING
THE GLOOM--

--AND
SENDING THE
DEMONS
SCURRY-
ING--FOR
DARKNESS!

PRAISE, ZEUS, THOU DIDST NOT
SPEAK THE WORD, ASGARDIAN!

IF THOU DIDST
DESPAIR--'TWOULD
HAVE BEEN THE END
OF THEE --

--FOR HE DOTHS
FEED UPON DESPAIR
--'TIS HOW HE SPENDS
ETERNITY!

"HE"?

