

APR #294 40c

MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

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THE MIGHTY

THOR

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REVEALED AT LAST!
THE AWESOME
ORIGIN OF ODIN!

pollard



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!**

ROY THOMAS * KEITH POLLARD & CHIC STONE * C. GAFFORD * JIM SHOOTER
WRITER / EDITOR ILLUSTRATORS COLORIST LETTERER CONSULTING EDITOR

NEW ASGARDS FOR OLD!

NINE ELDER GODS! ALL THAT REMAIN OF AN OLDER ASGARD, THE FALL AND RUIN OF WHICH THOR HAS WITNESSED IN HIS MIND'S DARK EYE.

NINE ELDER GODS! ALL SAVE ONLY BALDER POSSESSED OF NAMES WHICH OUR GOLD-TRESSED THUNDER GOD DOES NOT REMEMBER...

... AND EVEN THAT NAME BELONGS TO A FACE AND FORM HE HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

SMALL WONDER THEN THAT THE SON OF ODIN CRIES OUT--

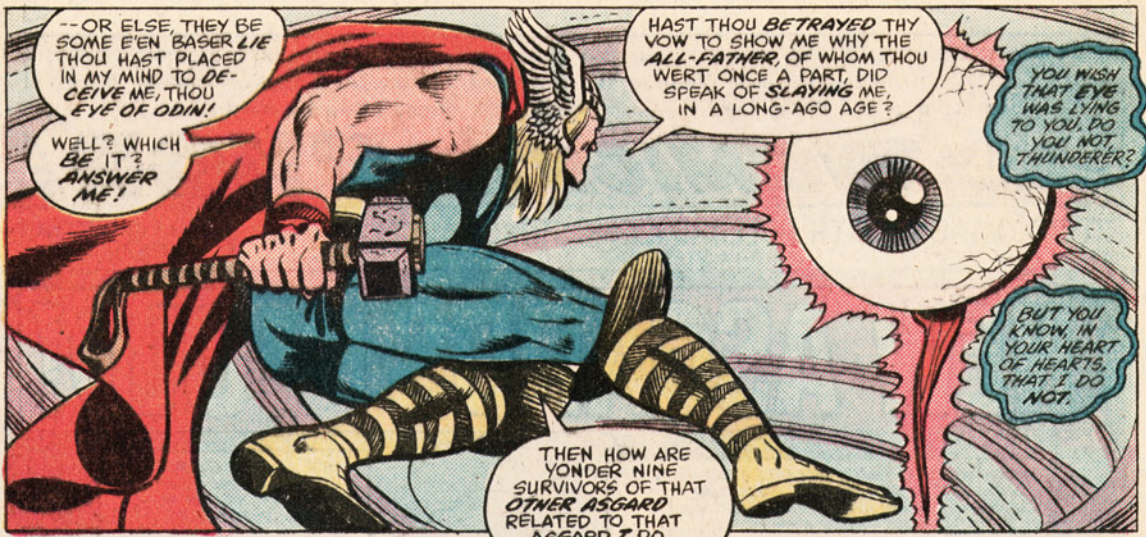
IMPOSTERS!

THEY BE BASE IMPOSTERS, ALL--

*AND WHICH YOU SAW LAST ISSUE RIGHT? --R.T.

LF69

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--OR ELSE, THEY BE SOME E'EN BASER LIE THOU HAST PLACED IN MY MIND TO DECEIVE ME, THOU EYE OF ODIN!

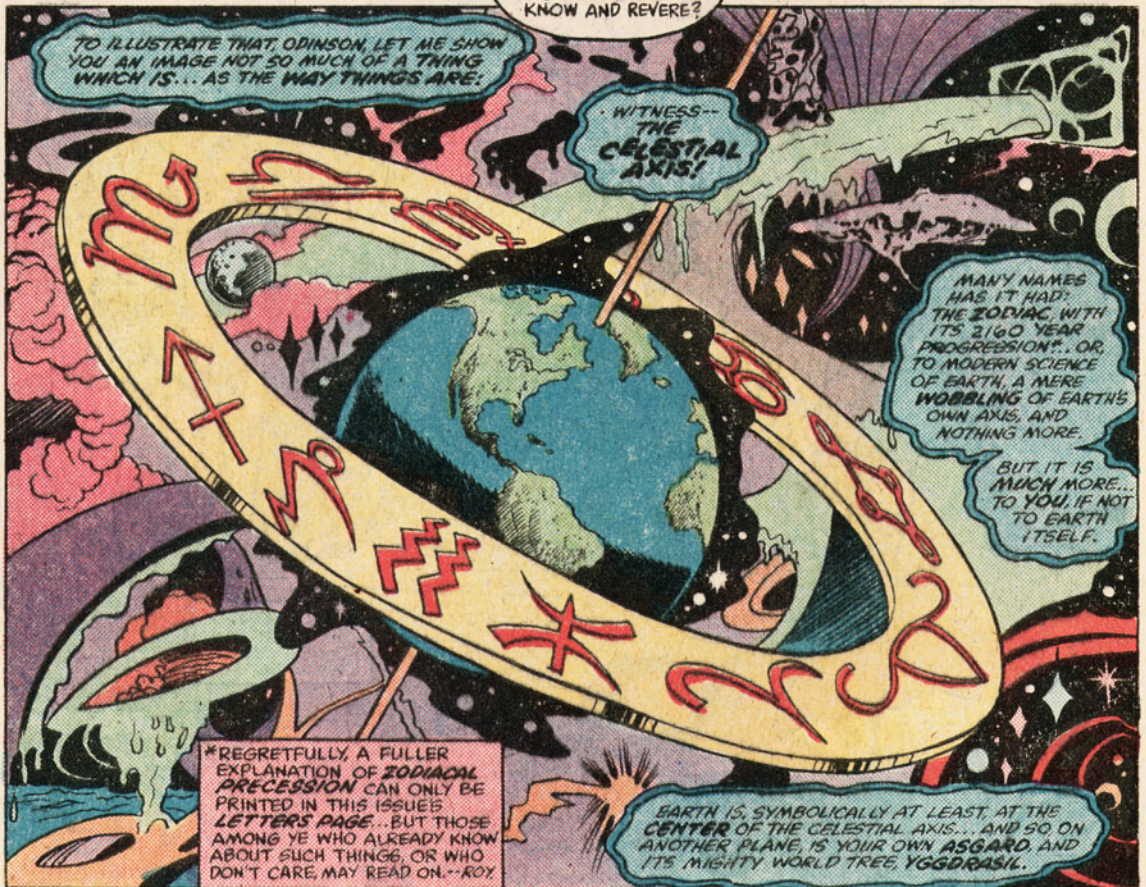
WELL? WHICH BE IT? ANSWER ME!

HAST THOU BETRAYED THY VOW TO SHOW ME WHY THE ALL-FATHER, OF WHOM THOU WERT ONCE A PART, DID SPEAK OF SLAYING ME, IN A LONG-AGO AGE?

YOU WISH THAT EYE WAS LYING TO YOU, DO YOU NOT, THUNDERER?

BUT YOU KNOW, IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS, THAT I DO NOT.

THEN HOW ARE YONDER NINE SURVIVORS OF THAT OTHER ASGARD RELATED TO THAT ASGARD I DO KNOW AND REVERE?



TO ILLUSTRATE THAT, ODINSON, LET ME SHOW YOU AN IMAGE NOT SO MUCH OF A THING WHICH IS... AS THE WAY THINGS ARE!

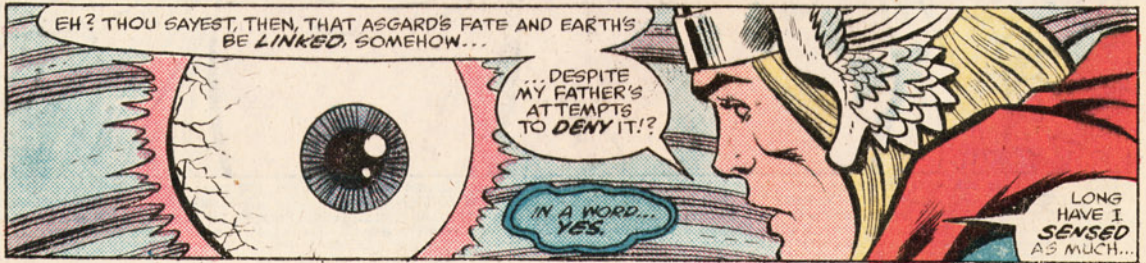
WITNESS-- THE CELESTIAL AXIS!

MANY NAMES HAS IT HAD: THE ZODIAC, WITH ITS 310 YEAR PROGRESSION... OR, TO MODERN SCIENCE OF EARTH, A MERE WOBBLING OF EARTH'S OWN AXIS, AND NOTHING MORE.

BUT IT IS MUCH MORE... TO YOU, IF NOT TO EARTH ITSELF.

*REGRETFULLY, A FULLER EXPLANATION OF ZODIACAL PRECESSION CAN ONLY BE PRINTED IN THIS ISSUE'S LETTERS PAGE... BUT THOSE AMONG YE WHO ALREADY KNOW ABOUT SUCH THINGS, OR WHO DON'T CARE, MAY READ ON...ROY

EARTH IS, SYMBOLICALLY AT LEAST, AT THE CENTER OF THE CELESTIAL AXIS... AND SO ON ANOTHER PLANE, IS YOUR OWN ASGARD, AND ITS MIGHTY WORLD TREE, YGGDRASIL.



EH? THOU SAYEST, THEN, THAT ASGARD'S FATE AND EARTH'S BE LINKED, SOMEHOW...

... DESPITE MY FATHER'S ATTEMPTS TO DENY IT!?

IN A WORD... YES.

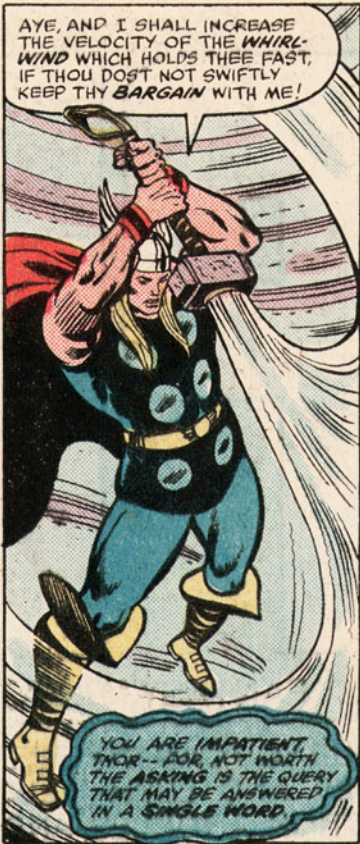
LONG HAVE I SENSED AS MUCH...



YET, EEN IF ALL THOU HAST EEN SHOWN ME BE TRUE, WHAT HATH IT DO WITH ODIN HIMSELF?

THE ODIN OF THAT OTHER ASGARD I SAW SLAIN-- VICTIM OF THE FENRIS WOLF, AS FORE-TOLD IN THE MYTHS OF THE NORSEMEN, AND --

NOT MYTHS, THOR-- BUT MEMORIES! REMEMBER-- ALL THAT EYE SHOWED YOU OCCURRED SOME TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO.



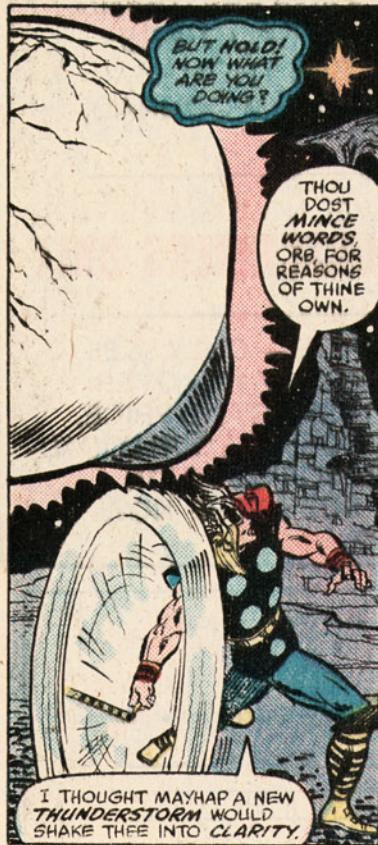
AYE, AND I SHALL INCREASE THE VELOCITY OF THE WHIRL-WIND WHICH HOLDS THEE FAST, IF THOU DOST NOT SWIFTLY KEEP THY BARGAIN WITH ME!

YOU ARE IMPATIENT, THOR-- FOR, NOT WORTH THE ASKING IS THE QUERY THAT MAY BE ANSWERED IN A SINGLE WORD.



IN YOUR OWN WAY, YOU'RE AS FIDGETY AS YONDER DWARFLINGS FROM WHOM EYE WRESTED THIS DESOLATE WORLD--

-- WHEN EYE CAME HERE, FRESH FROM BEING RIPPED BY ODIN FROM HIS OWN SKULL AND TOSSED INTO MIMIR'S FIERY WELL.



BUT HOLD! NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

THOU DOST MINCE WORDS, ORB, FOR REASONS OF THINE OWN.

I THOUGHT MAYHAP A NEW THUNDERSTORM WOULD SHAKE THEE INTO CLARITY.



NO NEED FOR THAT, EYE WILL TELL YOU ALL EYE PROMISED.

MANY ARE THE THINGS I MUST KNOW ERE I MAY REST, EYE--

THE SECRET OF ODIN'S OATH, MADE TO THE STAR-SPAWNED CELESTIALS A MILLENNIUM AGONE--

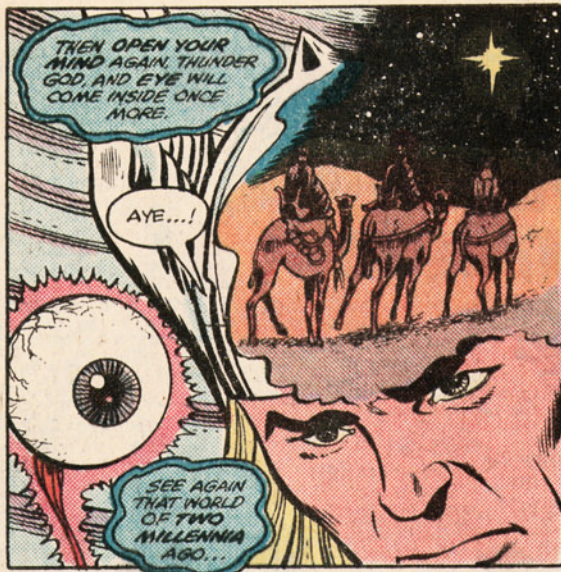
--THE CAUSE OF MINE O'ERWEENING LOVE FOR THE PLANET MEN CALL EARTH--



-- BUT MOST OF ALL, AS I TOLD THEE, THAT WHICH MADE THE ALL-FATHER CRY OUT--

NAY! I'LL NOT SLAY MINE ONLY BLOODSON AGAIN!

-- THEN HURL HIS SACRED SPEAR GUNGNIR FROM HIM, LIKE UNTO A THING DESPISED!



THEN OPEN YOUR MIND AGAIN, THUNDER GOD, AND EYE WILL COME INSIDE ONCE MORE.

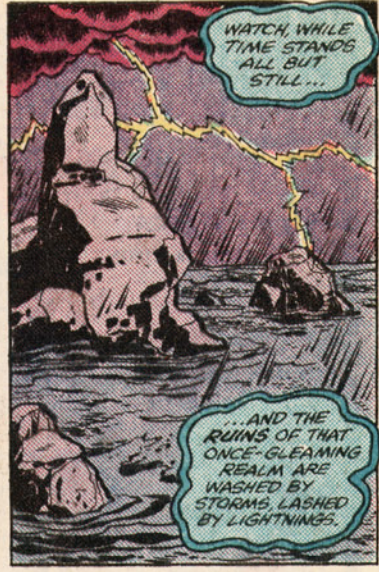
AYE...!

SEE AGAIN THAT WORLD OF TWO MILLENNIA AGO...



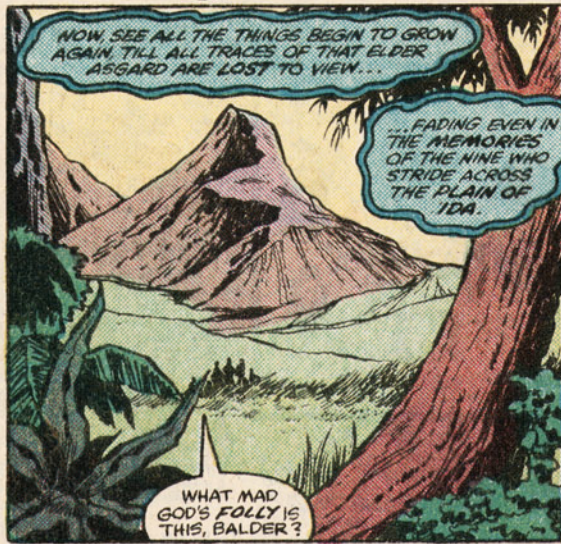
NOW TURN YOUR INNER EYE FROM EARTH...

...TO THAT MOLTEN ROCK WHICH IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE ELDER ASSGARD.



WATCH, WHILE TIME STANDS ALL BUT STILL...

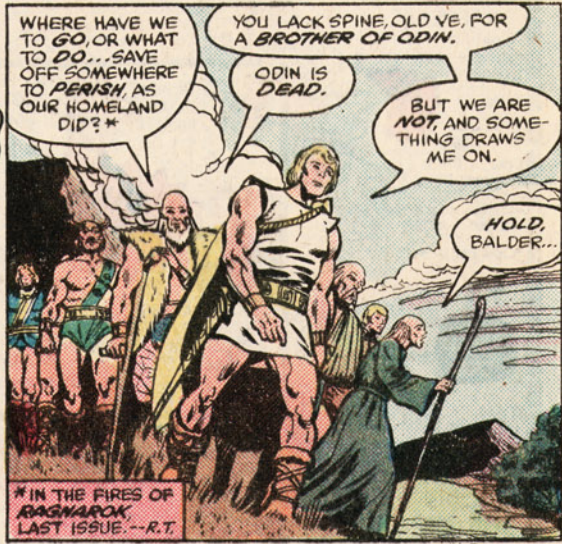
...AND THE RUINS OF THAT ONCE-GLEAMING REALM ARE WASHED BY STORMS, LASHED BY LIGHTNINGS.



NOW SEE ALL THE THINGS BEGIN TO GROW AGAIN, TILL ALL TRACES OF THAT ELDER ASSGARD ARE LOST TO VIEW...

...FADING EVEN IN THE MEMORIES OF THE NINE WHO STRIDE ACROSS THE PLAIN OF IDA.

WHAT MAD GOD'S FOLLY IS THIS, BALDER?



WHERE HAVE WE TO GO, OR WHAT TO DO...SAVE OFF SOMEWHERE TO PERISH, AS OUR HOMELAND DID?*

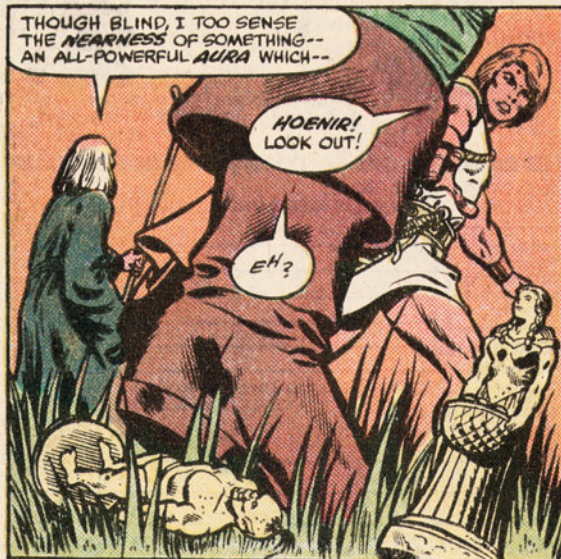
YOU LACK SPINE, OLD VE, FOR A BROTHER OF ODIN.

ODIN IS DEAD.

BUT WE ARE NOT, AND SOMETHING DRAWS ME ON.

HOLD, BALDER...

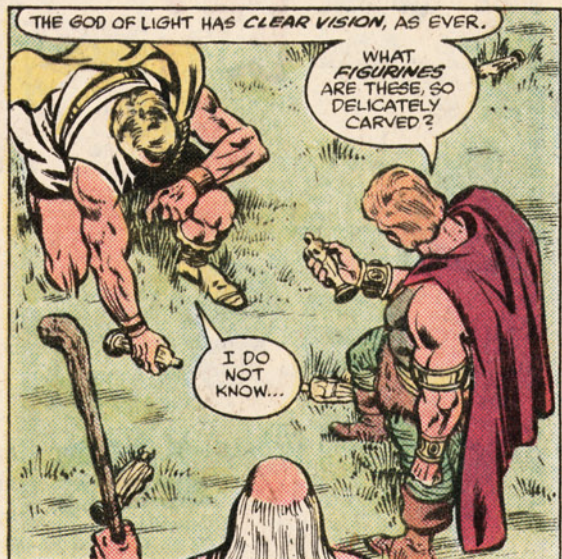
*IN THE FIRES OF RAGNAROK, LAST ISSUE. --R.T.



THOUGH BLIND, I TOO SENSE THE NEARNESS OF SOMETHING-- AN ALL-POWERFUL AURA WHICH--

HOENIR! LOOK OUT!

EH?



THE GOD OF LIGHT HAS CLEAR VISION, AS EVER.

WHAT FIGURINES ARE THESE, SO DELICATELY CARVED?

I DO NOT KNOW...

... BUT THEY LIE STREWN ABOUT THE PLAIN IN SUCH *PROFUSION*, AS IF PUT HERE BY SOME *PLAN*--!

LOOK YOU, BALDER! THEY ARE FIGURES OF OUR DEAD FELLOW-GODS... AND OF OUR FALLEN FOES, AS WELL!

YES, YOU HAVE *LOKI*, AND *ODIN* HIMSELF...

AND SEE-- HERE IS THE *FENRIS WOLF*-- AND *THOR*, LACKING ONLY HIS DREADED *STORM HAMMER*.

COME, BALDER... HOENIR, DO NOT OUR LEGENDS TELL US THAT, AFTER RAGNAROK, WE SHALL LIVE IN A GOLDEN REALM FOREVER?

WE MUST PRESS ON, TILL WE DO FIND IT!

BUT THE OTHER TWO AESIR SCARCELY HEAR HIM, SO ABSORBED ARE THEY IN THE FANTASTIC FIGURINES.

MEANWHILE, *MODI* AND *MAGNI*, THE TWO SONS OF THAT *THOR* WHO DIED IN THE ELDER ASGARD, HAVE WANDERED AHEAD, AS RECKLESS AS EVER WAS THEIR SIRE...

VE WAS RIGHT, *MAGNI*, WE *MILL ABOUT*, BUT THERE IS NO-WHERE TO GO.

I KNOW... YET, I FEEL AN *INNER CALL*, JUST AS *BALDER* DID.

ALREADY, *MEMORIES* OF ASGARD FADE FROM MY MIND, LEAVING NO TRACE, SOON, I FEAR I SHALL HAVE FULLY *FORGOTTEN* OUR FORMER GLORY.

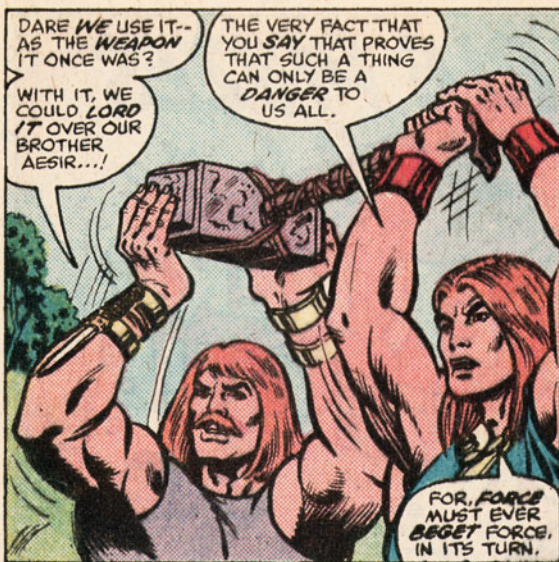
PERHAPS... BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WE BOTH REMEMBER, EH, MY BROTHER?

THE HAMMER OF OUR FATHER *THOR*!

IT WAS THE MIGHTIEST WEAPON OF ITS DAY, DESPITE ITS TOO-SHORT HANDLE... BUT ONLY OUR SIRE COULD LIFT--EH?

WE CAN LIFT IT NOW, IF WE ACT TOGETHER--SEE?

MASTERLESS NOW, THE ENCHANTED Mallet IS *OURS*!

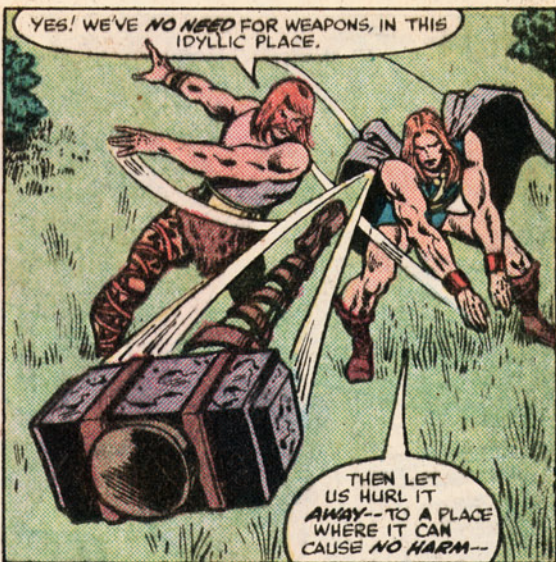


DARE WE USE IT-- AS THE WEAPON IT ONCE WAS?

WITH IT, WE COULD LORD IT OVER OUR BROTHER AESIR...!

THE VERY FACT THAT YOU SAY THAT PROVES THAT SUCH A THING CAN ONLY BE A DANGER TO US ALL.

FOR, FORCE MUST EVER BEGET FORCE, IN ITS TURN.

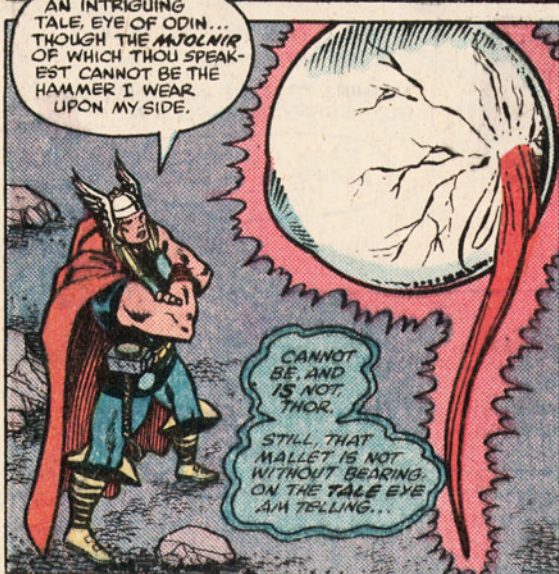


YES! WE'VE NO NEED FOR WEAPONS, IN THIS IDYLIC PLACE.

THEN LET US HURL IT AWAY-- TO A PLACE WHERE IT CAN CAUSE NO HARM--



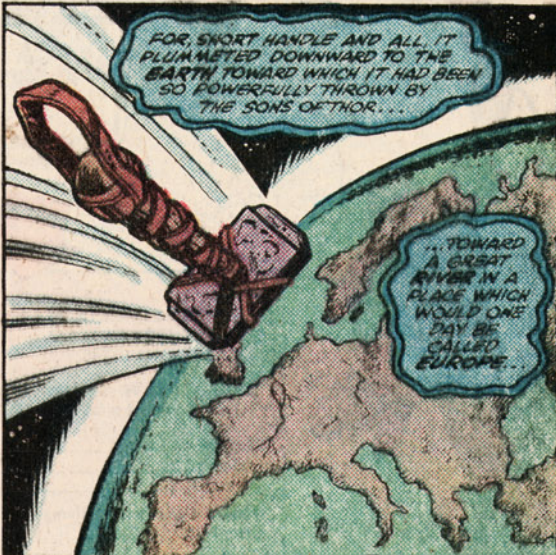
--THE WORLD CALLED M'IDGARD!



AN INTRIGUING TALE, EYE OF ODIN... THOUGH THE M'IDGARD OF WHICH THOU SPEAKEST CANNOT BE THE HAMMER I WEAR UPON MY SIDE.

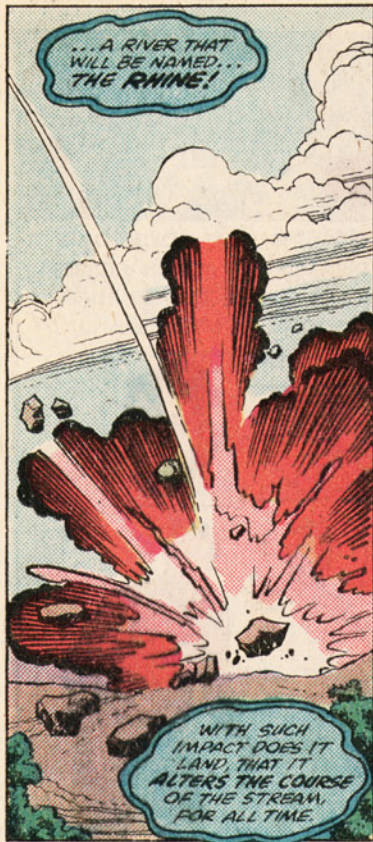
CANNOT BE, AND IS NOT, THOR.

STILL, THAT MALLET IS NOT WITHOUT BEARING ON THE TALE EYE I'AM TELLING...



FOR, SHORT HANDLE AND ALL, IT PLUMMETED DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH TOWARD WHICH IT HAD BEEN SO POWERFULLY THROWN BY THE SONS OF THOR...

...TOWARD A GREAT RIVER IN A PLACE WHICH WOULD ONE DAY BE CALLED EUROPE...



... A RIVER THAT WILL BE NAMED... **THE RHINE!**

WITH SUCH IMPACT DOES IT LAND, THAT IT ALTERS THE COURSE OF THE STREAM, FOR ALL TIME.

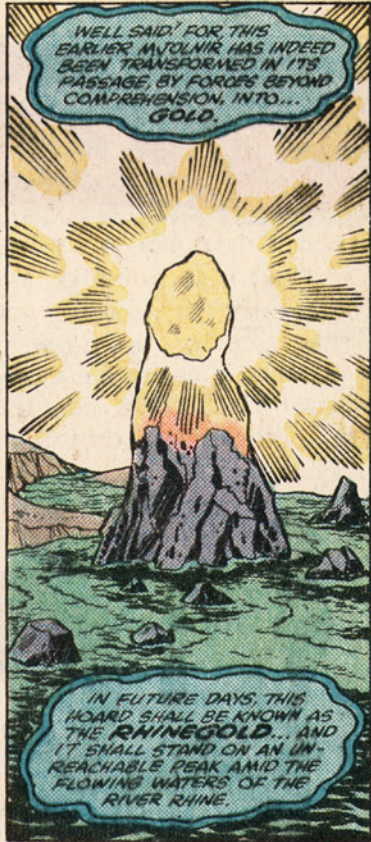


MORE THAN THE RIVER HOWEVER, THE **HAMMER** ITSELF IS CHANGED IN PASSING FROM THE RUINS OF THE ELDER ASGARD INTO THE EARTH-PLANE.

TELL ME WHAT NOW YOU SEE, ODINSON!

THERE BE-- A **GLOW** AMID THE WINDING RIVER!

IT DOTH **BLIND**, LIKE UNTO THE VERY **SUN!**



WELL SAID! FOR THIS EARLIER Mjolnir HAS INDEED BEEN TRANSFORMED IN ITS PASSAGE, BY FORCES BEYOND COMPREHENSION, INTO... **GOLD.**

IN FUTURE DAYS, THIS HOARD SHALL BE KNOWN AS THE **RHINEGOLD**... AND IT SHALL STAND ON AN UNREACHABLE PEAK AMID THE FLOWING WATERS OF THE RIVER RHINE.



MEANWHILE LET US REJOIN THE DEAD ODIN'S BROTHERS, **VILI** AND **LAME VE**... AND ODIN'S SURVIVING SONS, **VIGDAR** AND **VALLI**... AS THEY MAKE A STARTLING DISCOVERY...

LOOK THERE-- AGAINST THAT **STUMP!**

IT'S ODIN'S SPEAR **GUNGNIR**, MIGHTIEST OF ALL WEAPONS!



SHOULD WE HURL IT AWAY IN THE NAME OF **PEACE**, AS THOR'S SONS DID THEIR FATHER'S **HAMMER**?

NO! I CLAIM THE HEAVEN-SPEAR, IN THE NAME OF THE **SONS** AND **BROTHERS** OF ODIN!

BUT-- ITS POWER MAY **CORRUPT** US WHO ARE NOT AS **STRONG** AS WAS ODIN--!



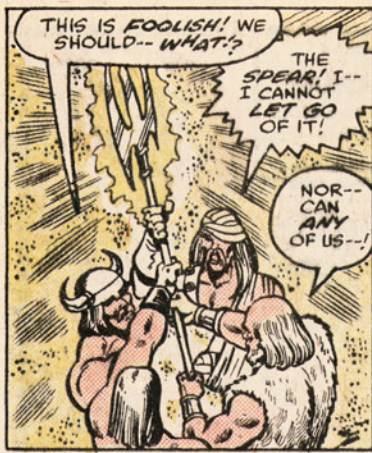
THEN LET IT BELONG TO **NO** SINGLE AESIR, BUT TO **WE FOUR**--

-- WHO ARE THE **CLOSEST** IN BODY AND MIND TO ODIN HIMSELF!

NO GOOD... WILL COME OF THIS, I FEAR.

I NOTICE YOU **GRASPING**, ALL THE SAME, **VE!**

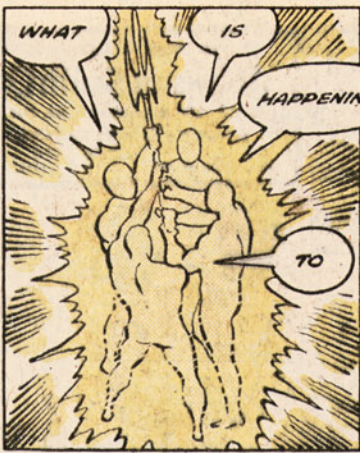
WE ARE **ALL** GRABBING HOLD, **VILI!**



THIS IS FOOLISH! WE SHOULD-- WHAT?!

THE SPEAR! I-- I CANNOT LET GO OF IT!

NOR-- CAN ANY OF US--!



WHAT

IS

HAPPENING

TO



THE NEXT WORD, OF COURSE, WOULD BE "US"-- BUT NOW, SUDDENLY, AMID A DEAFENING BURST OF LIGHT, THERE IS NO "US"--

THERE IS ONLY--



ODIN!

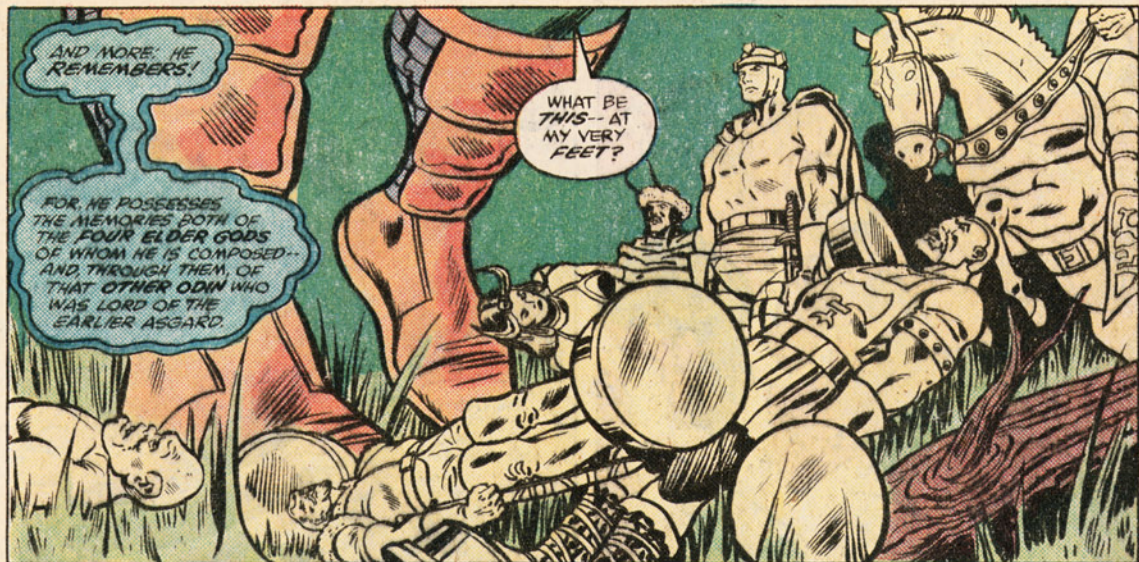
YES, THUNDER GOD-- WIDE IS YOUR WIND'S EYE NOW, AND WIDE IT SHOULD BE-- FOR, THIS IS YOUR OWN SIRE WHO NOW STANDS UPON THE PLAIN OF IDA, HOLDING ALOFT GREAT GUNGNIR.

GONE FROM THE PLAIN ARE VILI AND VE... VIDAR AND VALI...

... LIKEWISE HOENIR AND HODER... MAGNI AND MODI... AND EVEN BRIGHT BALDER...

FROM THIS MOMENT WHERE ONCE THE ELDER ASSGARD STOOD... WHERE OF LATE GODS AND DEMONS FOUGHT AND DIED--

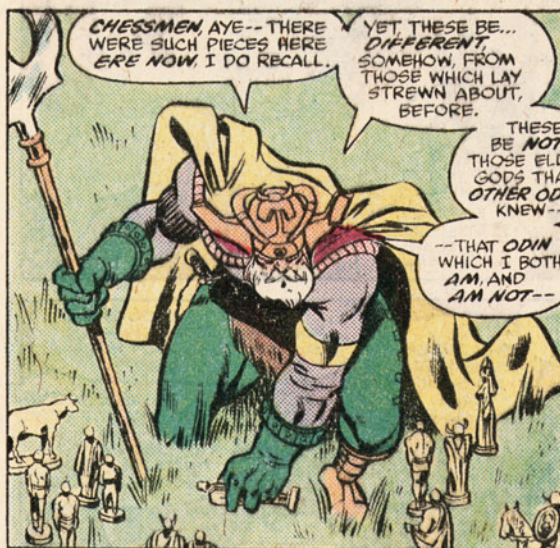
--NOW ONLY ODIN LIVES!!



AND MORE: HE REMEMBERS!

WHAT BE THIS-- AT MY VERY FEET?

FOR, HE POSSESSES THE MEMORIES BOTH OF THE FOUR ELDER GODS OF WHOM HE IS COMPOSED-- AND, THROUGH THEM, OF THAT OTHER ODIN WHO WAS LORD OF THE EARLIER ASGARD.



CHESSMEN, AYE-- THERE WERE SUCH PIECES HERE ERE NOW, I DO RECALL.

YET, THESE BE... DIFFERENT, SOMEHOW, FROM THOSE WHICH LAY STREWN ABOUT, BEFORE.

THESE BE NOT THOSE ELDER GODS THAT OTHER ODIN KNEW--

-- THAT ODIN WHICH I BOTH AM, AND AM NOT--



-- BUT FIGURES OF SOME BRIGHTER INNER HUE-- LESS LIKE GODS, MAYHAP-- YET MORE LIKE HEROES!

STRANGE! THE OTHER CHESSMEN-- AYE, AND ALL THE NINE WHO SURVIVED RAGNAROK-- HAVE VANISHED FROM THESE PLAINS OF IDA--

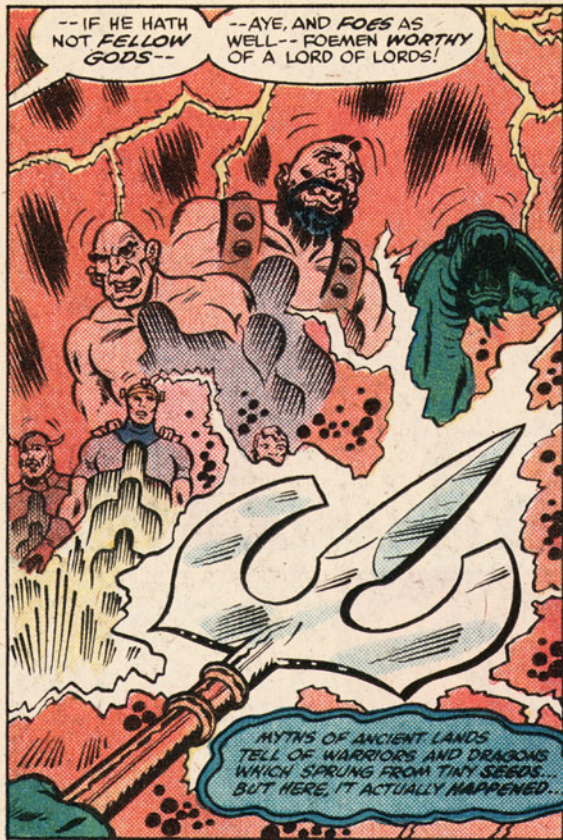
-- TO BE REFASHIONED IN THESE GLEAMING IMAGES!



WELL, I AM ODIN-- NOT THE ODIN THAT WAS, BUT THE ODIN THAT SHALL BE, FROM NOW TILL FOREVERMORE!

GREAT SHALL BE MY GLORY-- GREATER FAR THAN EER DID BLAZE FROM THAT ELDER ASGARD.

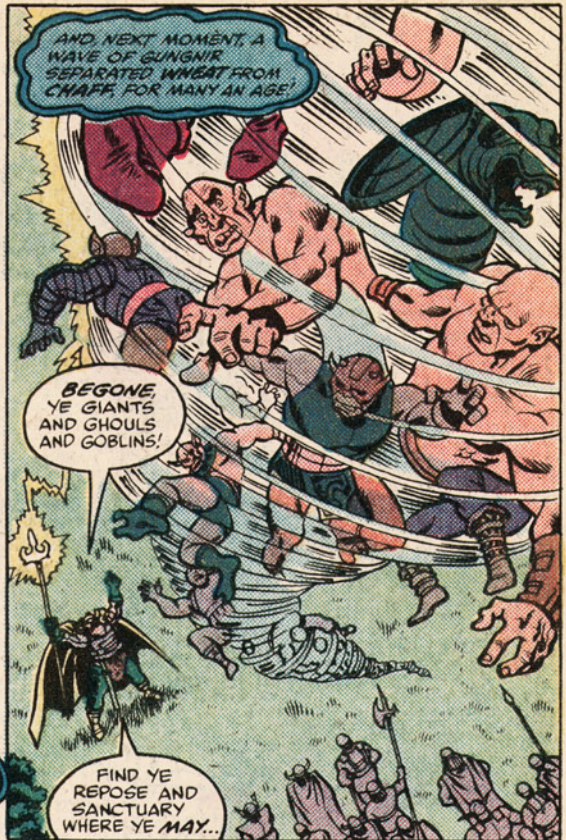
AND WHAT DOETH IT GAIN A GOD THAT HE BE LORD OF THE HEAVENS-- MASTER E'EN OF SACRED GUNGNIR WHICH BESTOWETH POWER--



-- IF HE HATH NOT FELLOW GODS--

--AYE, AND FOES AS WELL-- FOEMEN WORTHY OF A LORD OF LORDS!

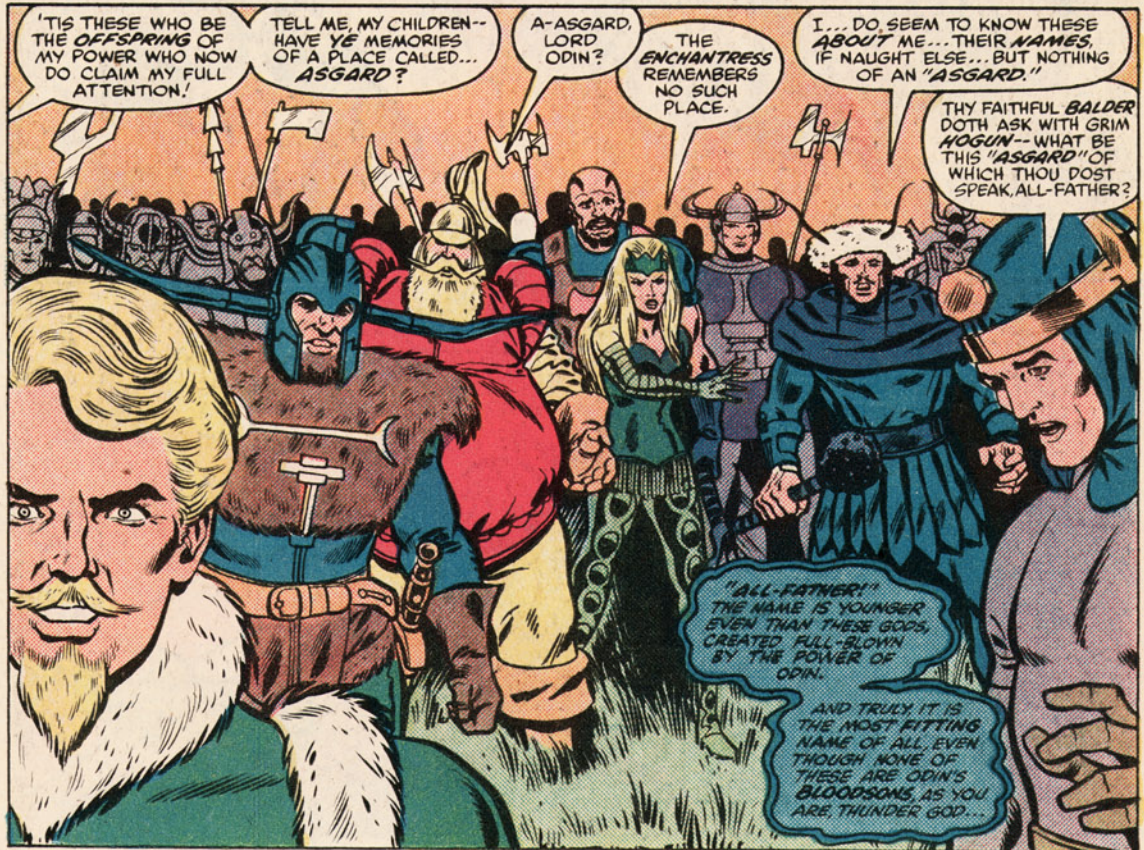
MYTHS OF ANCIENT LANDS TELL OF WARRIORS AND DRAGONS WHICH SPUNG FROM TINY SEEDS... BUT HERE, IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED...



AND NEXT MOMENT, A WAVE OF GUNGNIR SEPARATED WHEAT FROM CHAFF, FOR MANY AN AGE!

BEGONE YE GIANTS AND GHOULS AND GOBLINS!

FIND YE REPOSE AND SANCTUARY WHERE YE MAY...



'TIS THESE WHO BE THE OFFSPRING OF MY POWER WHO NOW DO CLAIM MY FULL ATTENTION!

TELL ME, MY CHILDREN-- HAVE YE MEMORIES OF A PLACE CALLED... ASGARD?

A-ASGARD, LORD ODIN?

THE ENCHANTRESS REMEMBERS NO SUCH PLACE.

I... DO SEEM TO KNOW THESE ABOUT ME... THEIR NAMES, IF NAUGHT ELSE... BUT NOTHING OF AN "ASGARD."

THY FAITHFUL BALDER DOTH ASK WITH GRIM HOGUN-- WHAT BE THIS "ASGARD" OF WHICH THOU DOST SPEAK, ALL-FATHER?

"ALL-FATHER!" THE NAME IS YOUNGER EVEN THAN THESE GODS, CREATED FULL-BLOWN BY THE POWER OF ODIN.

AND TRULY IT IS THE MOST FITTING NAME OF ALL, EVEN THOUGH NONE OF THESE ARE ODIN'S BLOODSONS, AS YOU ARE THUNDER GOD...

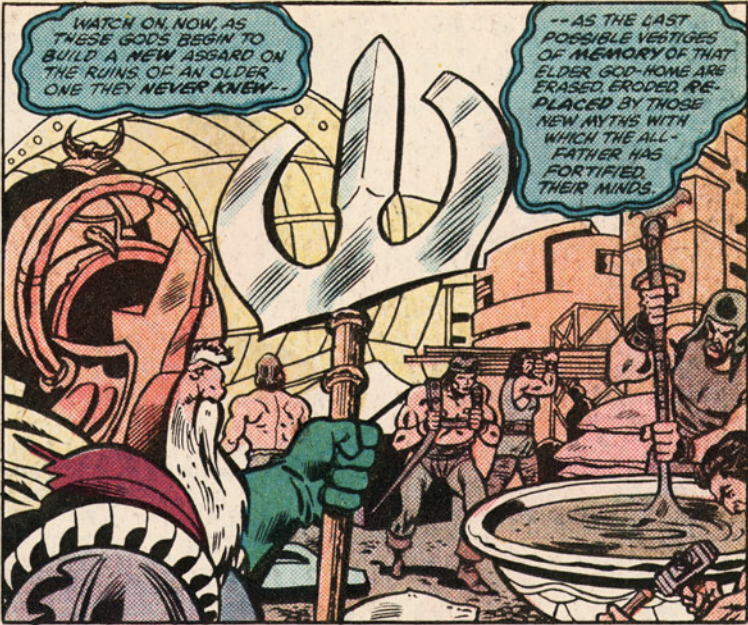


YET EVEN THE GODS MUST HAVE THEIR CREATION LEGENDS. IT SEEMS.

AND SO WERE BORN TALES OF HOW THE GREAT FROST-BEING YMIR GAVE BIRTH TO THE EVIL GIANTS AND THEIR PROGENY--

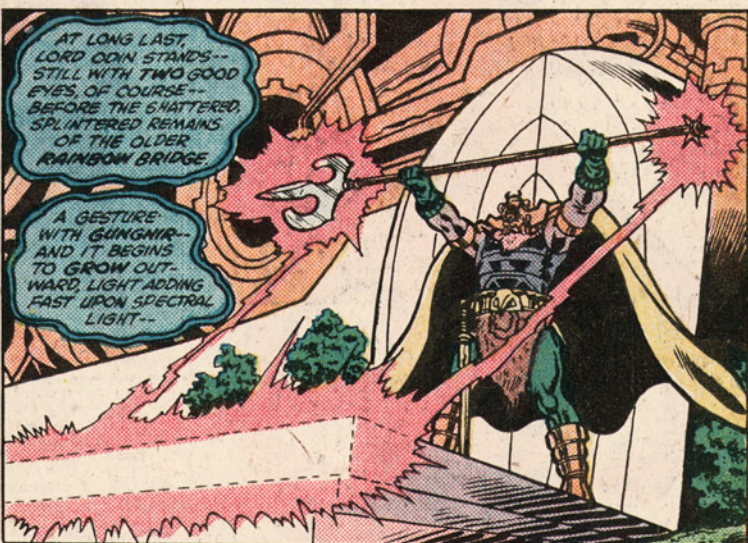
--OF HOW THE GODS CREATED ASKE AND EMBLA, THE FIRST HUMANS--

--AND THOSE OTHER MYTHS WHICH ALL ASGARDIANS BUT YOU STILL HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE!



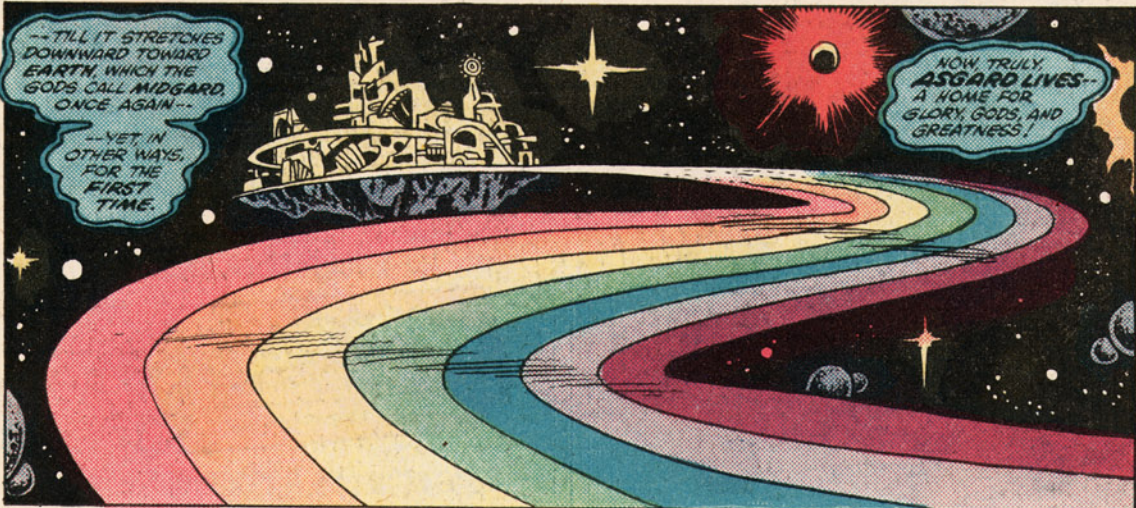
WATCH ON, NOW, AS THESE GODS BEGIN TO BUILD A NEW ASGARD ON THE RUINS OF AN OLDER ONE THEY NEVER KNEW--

-- AS THE LAST POSSIBLE VESTIGES OF MEMORY OF THAT ELDER GOD-HOME ARE ERASED, ERODED, REPLACED BY THOSE NEW MYTHS WITH WHICH THE ALL-FATHER HAS FORTIFIED THEIR MINDS.



AT LONG LAST, LORD ODIN STANDS-- STILL WITH TWO GOOD EYES, OF COURSE-- BEFORE THE SHATTERED, SPLINTERED REMAINS OF THE OLDER RAINBOW BRIDGE.

A GESTURE WITH GUNGNIR-- AND IT BEGINS TO GROW OUTWARD, LIGHT ADDING FAST UPON SPECTRAL LIGHT--

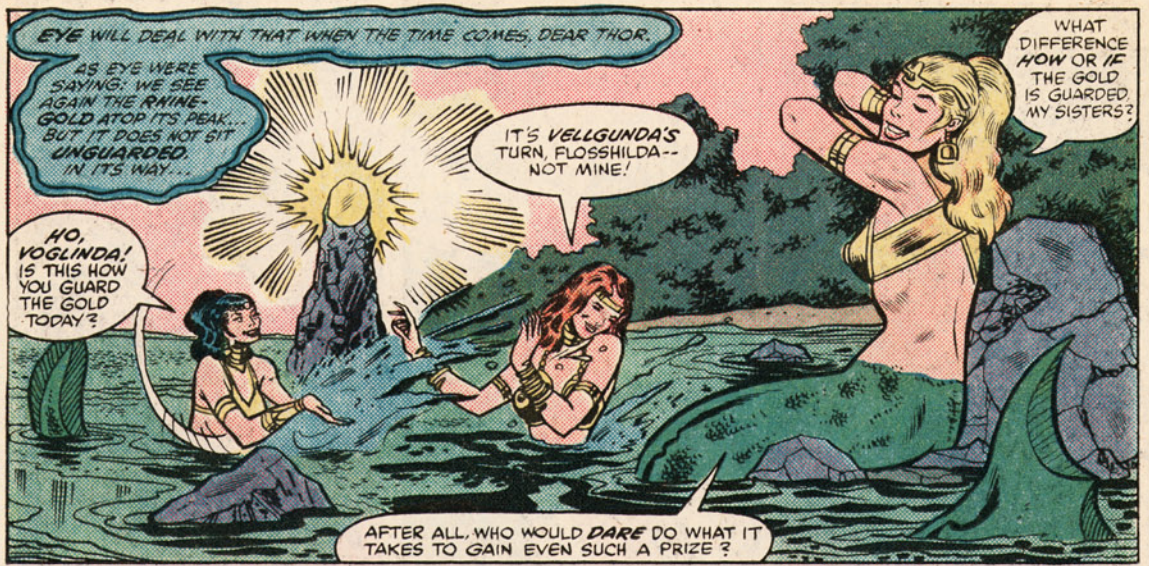


--TILL IT STRETCHES DOWNWARD TOWARD EARTH, WHICH THE GODS CALL MIDGARD, ONCE AGAIN--

--YET IN OTHER WAYS, FOR THE FIRST TIME.

NOW TRULY ASGARD LIVES-- A HOME FOR GLORY, GODS, AND GREATNESS!





EYE WILL DEAL WITH THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES, DEAR THOR.

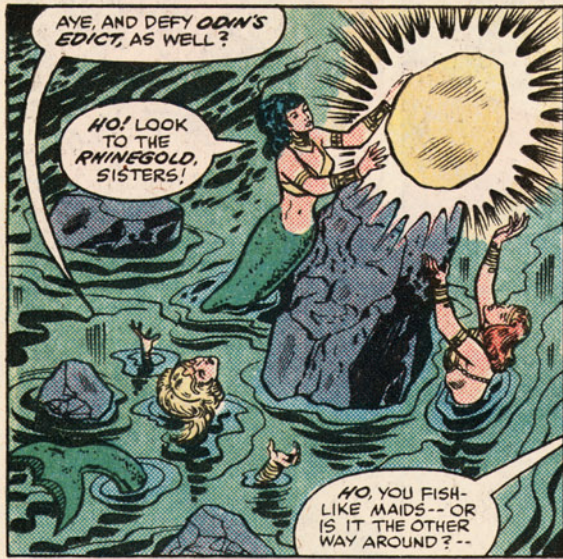
AS EYE WERE SAYING: WE SEE AGAIN THE RHINEGOLD ATOP ITS PEAK... BUT IT DOES NOT SIT UNGUARDED IN ITS WAY...

HO, VOGLINDA! IS THIS HOW YOU GUARD THE GOLD TODAY?

IT'S VELLGUNDA'S TURN, FLOSSHILDA-- NOT MINE!

WHAT DIFFERENCE HOW OR IF THE GOLD IS GUARDED, MY SISTERS?

AFTER ALL, WHO WOULD DARE DO WHAT IT TAKES TO GAIN EVEN SUCH A PRIZE?



AYE, AND DEFEY ODIN'S EDICT, AS WELL?

HO! LOOK TO THE RHINEGOLD, SISTERS!

HO, YOU FISH-LIKE MAIDS-- OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?--



MAY I JOIN YOUR WATERY FROLIC?

LOOK TO THE RHINEGOLD, SISTERS!

THE ALL-FATHER WARNED OF SUCH A FOE.

FOE? YOU WRONG ME, LASSES.

I BUT WISH TO KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT GLEAMS FROM YONDER ROCK.



WATCH ME TEASE HIM, SISTERS!

THAT IS THE RHINEGOLD-- BUT IT'S NOT FOR YOU, OR ANY MORTAL.

NOT EVEN FOR POOR ALBERICH, GNOME OF THE NIBELUNG CLAN?

WHAT'S ITS SECRET, THEN?



WHY, FOOL-- IT'S SAID THAT WORLD-CONQUEST WILL BE THE PRIZE OF ONE WHO FORGES A RING OF THAT GOLDEN HORDE.

BUT NO ONE WOULD DO THAT.

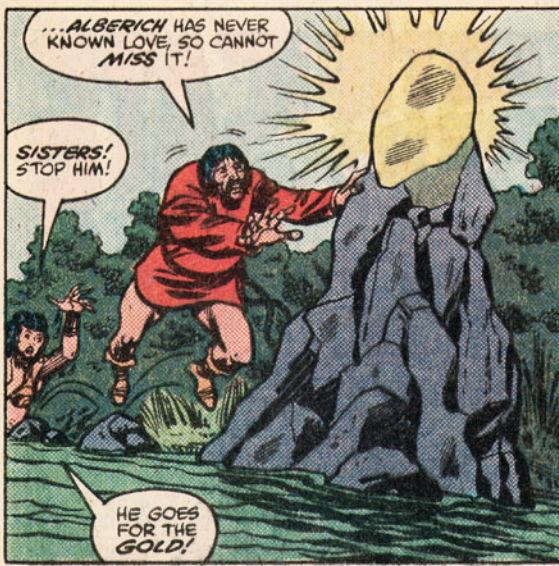
OH? AND WHY NOT PRETTY NIXIE?



BECAUSE ONLY ONE WHO RENOUNCES LOVE, IN ALL ITS MYRIAD FORMS, WILL EVER FIND MAGIC ENOUGH TO FORGE SUCH A RING.

AND WHO IS MAD ENOUGH TO RENOUNCE LOVE, WHICH RULES ALL THAT LIVES?

WHY, AS TO THAT...



...ALBERICH HAS NEVER KNOWN LOVE, SO CANNOT MISS IT!

SISTERS! STOP HIM!

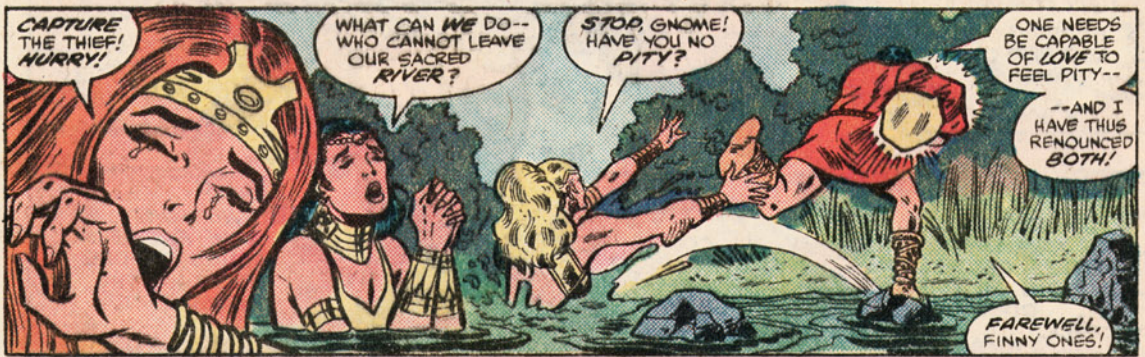
HE GOES FOR THE GOLD!



HAH! NOW DO YOU FEAR, RHINEMAIDENS?

THEN TREMBLE MORE, WHEN YOU HEAR THESE WORDS--

I RENOUNCE LOVE-- AYE, AND I CURSE IT!



CAPTURE THE THIEF! HURRY!

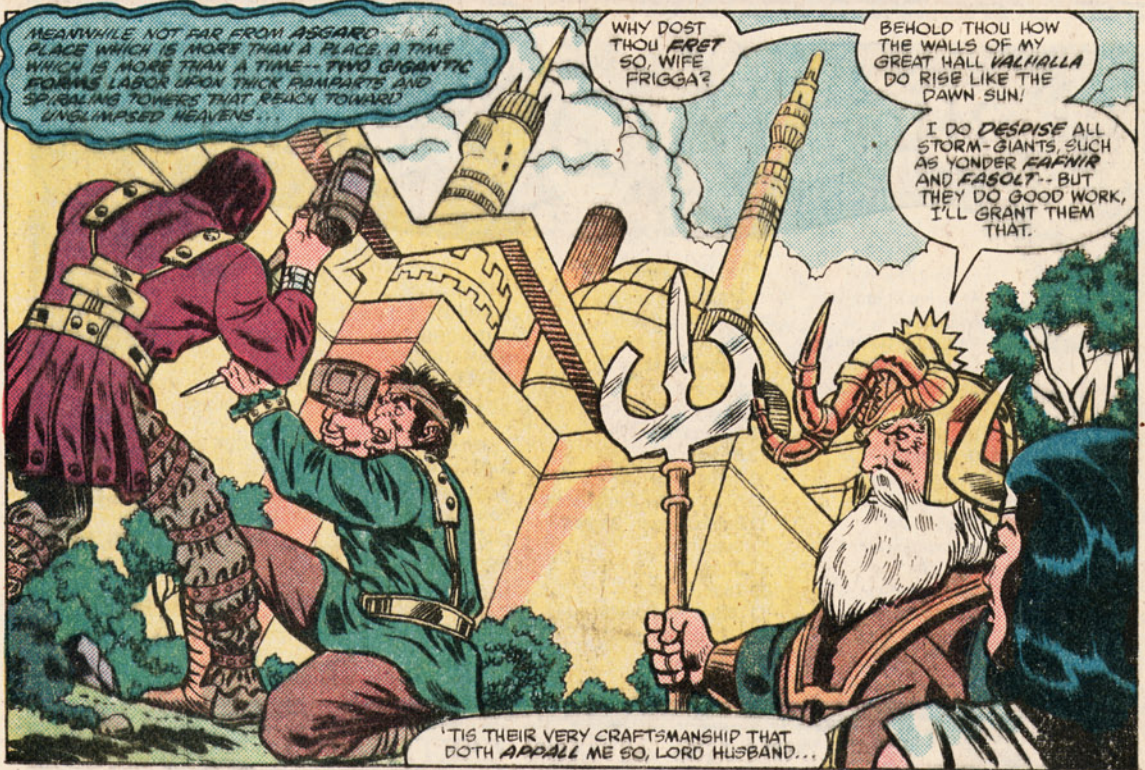
WHAT CAN WE DO-- WHO CANNOT LEAVE OUR SACRED RIVER?

STOP, GNOME! HAVE YOU NO PITY?

ONE NEEDS BE CAPABLE OF LOVE TO FEEL PITY--

--AND I HAVE THUS RENOUNCED BOTH!

FAREWELL, FINNY ONES!



MEANWHILE NOT FAR FROM ASGARD-- IN A PLACE WHICH IS MORE THAN A PLACE, A TIME WHICH IS MORE THAN A TIME-- TWO GIANTIC FORMS LABOR UPON THICK PAMPARTS AND SPIRALING TOWERS THAT REACH TOWARD UNGLIMPSED HEAVENS...

WHY DOST THOU FRET SO, WIFE FRIGGA?

BEHOLD THOU HOW THE WALLS OF MY GREAT HALL VALHALLA DO RISE LIKE THE DAWN SUN!

I DO DESPISE ALL STORM-GIANTS, SUCH AS YONDER FAFNIR AND FASOLT-- BUT THEY DO GOOD WORK, I'LL GRANT THEM THAT.

'TIS THEIR VERY CRAFTSMANSHIP THAT DOTHS APPALL ME SO, LORD HUSBAND...

WHAT MEANST THOU, WOMAN?

THOU KNOWEST WELL!

THOU DIDST PROMISE THEM IDUNN, *GODDESS FAIR, FOR THEIR LABORS.



'T WAS A VILLAIN-
OUS
THING TO DO!

*TEUTONIC = FREIA. --R.T.

AND THOU KNOWEST WELL, I'D NE'ER HAVE MADE SUCH A VOW, BUT THAT LOKI DID PROMISE HE WOULD SEE THE PRICE NEED NEER BE PAID!

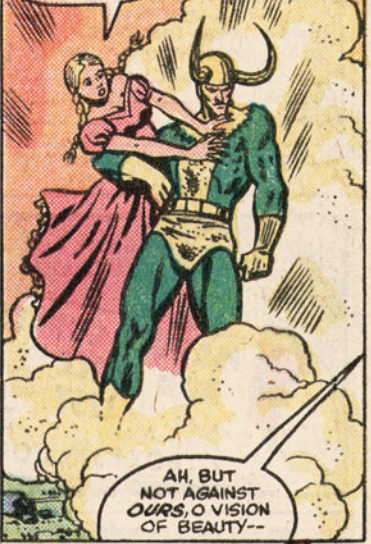
STILL, WHERE DO TH LOKI HIDE IN THIS HOUR?



I CONFESS, I'LL STAND LINEASY TILL I LEARN HOW HE MEANS TO--

FRET NO MORE, SIRE! THINE ADOPTED SON IS HERE... AND WITH HIM, THE FAIR IDUNN!

HELP ME, ALL-FATHER! HE DID BRING ME HERE MOST AGAINST MY WILL!

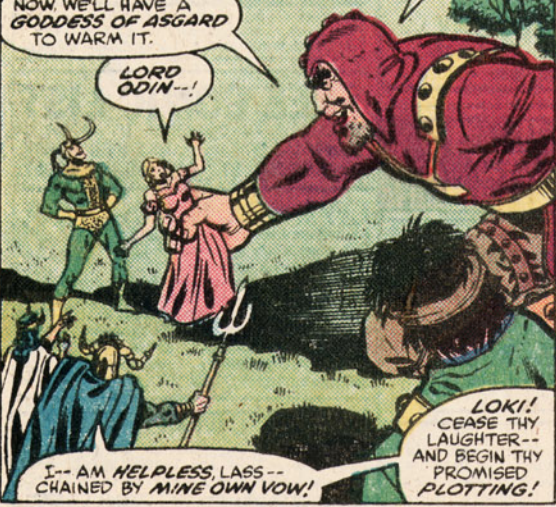


AH, BUT NOT AGAINST OURS, O VISION OF BEAUTY--

-- EH, FASOLT? THOU HAST E'ER COMPLAINED OUR CAVE-DWELLING DID NEED A WOMAN'S GRACE.

NOW WE'LL HAVE A GODDESS OF ASSGARD TO WARM IT.

LORD ODIN--!

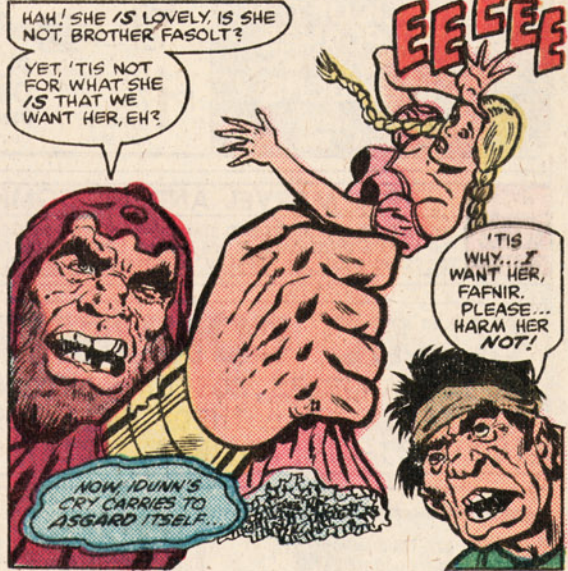


LOKI! CEASE THY LAUGHTER-- AND BEGIN THY PROMISED PLOTTING!

I-- AM HELPLESS, LASS-- CHAINED BY M'INE OWN VOW!

HAH! SHE 'S LOVELY. IS SHE NOT, BROTHER FASOLT?

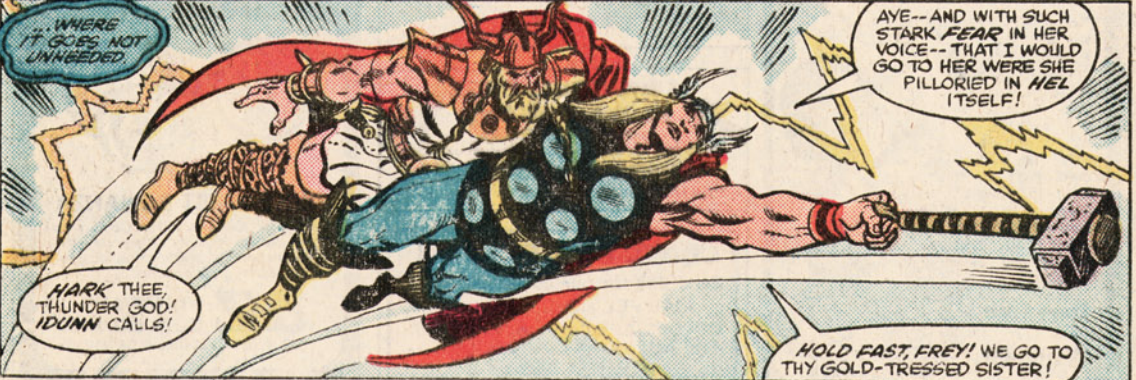
YET, 'T IS NOT FOR WHAT SHE 'S THAT WE WANT HER, EH?



'T IS WHY... I WANT HER, FAFNIR, PLEASE... HARM HER NOT!

NOW, IDUNN'S CRY CARRIES TO ASSGARD ITSELF...

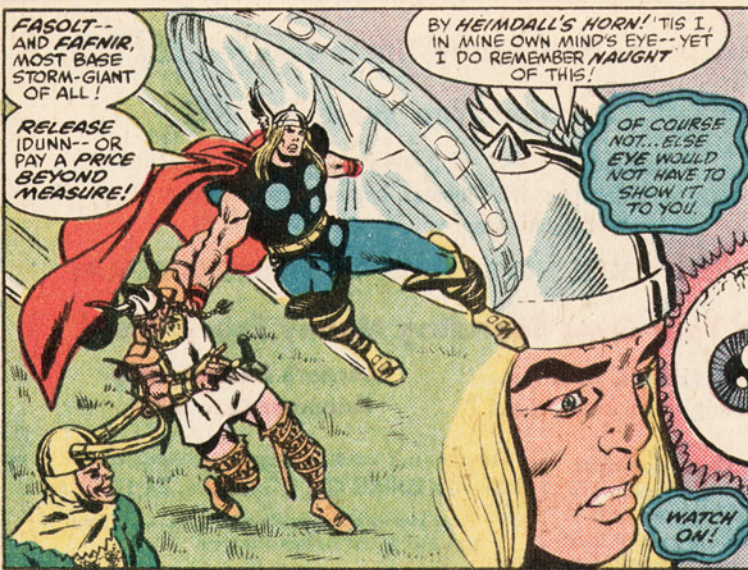
... WHERE IT GOES NOT UNHEEDED.



HARK THEE, THUNDER GOD! IDUNN CALLS!

AYE-- AND WITH SUCH STARK FEAR IN HER VOICE-- THAT I WOULD GO TO HER WERE SHE PILLORIED IN HEL ITSELF!

HOLD FAST, FREY! WE GO TO THY GOLD-TRESSED SISTER!



FASOLT-- AND FAFNIR, MOST BASE STORM-GIANT OF ALL!

RELEASE IDUNN-- OR PAY A PRICE BEYOND MEASURE!

BY HEIMDALL'S HORN! 'TIS I, IN MINE OWN MIND'S EYE-- YET I DO REMEMBER NAUGHT OF THIS!

OF COURSE NOT... ELSE EYE WOULD NOT HAVE TO SHOW IT TO YOU!

WATCH ON!



YOU'VE NO QUARREL WITH US, GOD OF THUNDER.

AYE! THOUGH YOU AND WE HAVE FOUGHT ERE NOW, WE WANT THIS DAY ONLY WHAT WE'VE EARNED... WHAT WE WERE PROMISED...

...THE GODDESS IDUNN...



...SHE OF THE GOLDEN APPLES AND THE FAIR HA--

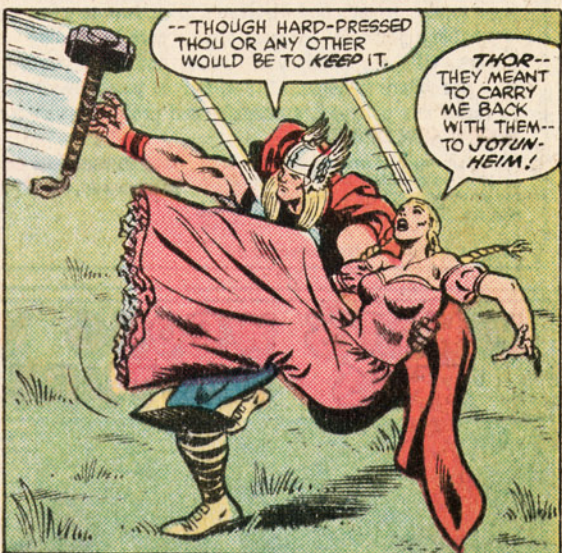
ARRRRHH!

OH--!

THRAKK!

I'LL PROMISE THEE MORE THAN A CLOAKFULL OF ENCHANTED APPLES, VILE FAFNIR.

I'LL VOUCHSAFE THEE MINE HAMMER MJOLNIR--



-- THOUGH HARD-PRESSED THOU OR ANY OTHER WOULD BE TO KEEP IT.

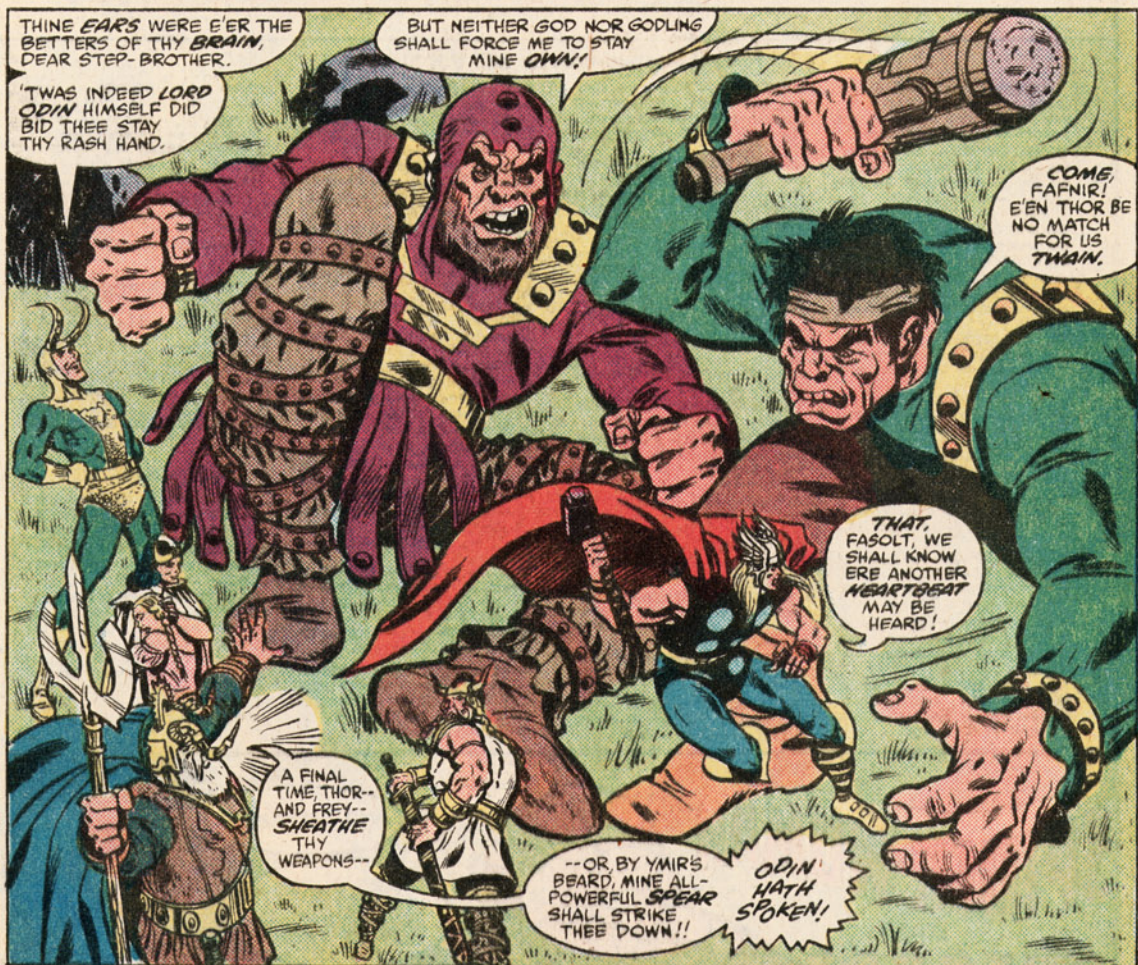
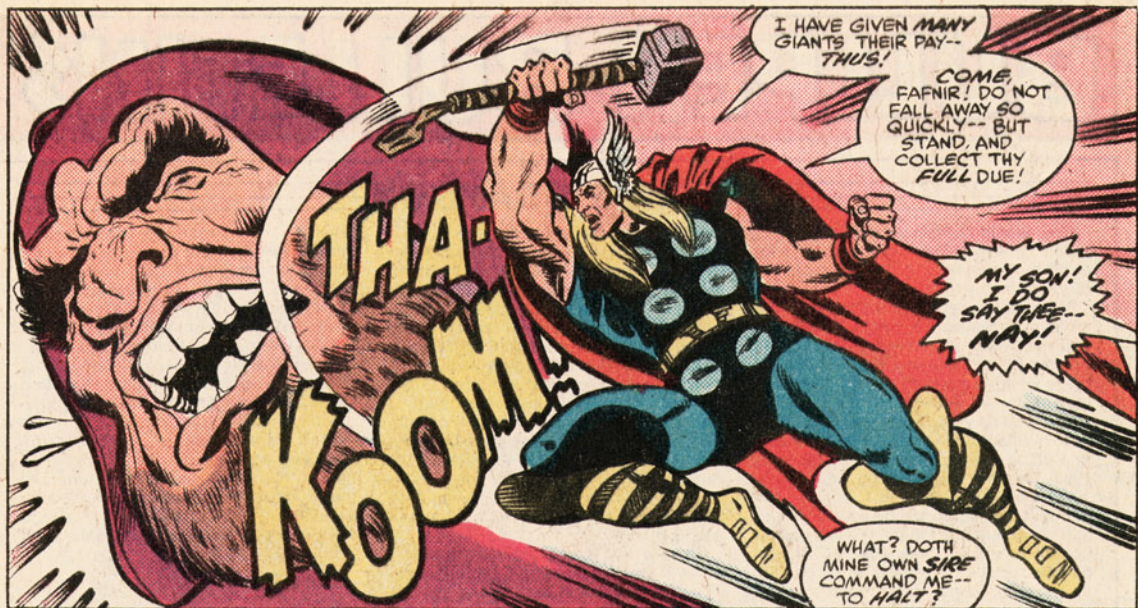
THOR-- THEY MEANT TO CARRY ME BACK WITH THEM-- TO JOTUNHEIM!



AND STILL WE SHALL-- WHEN WE'VE DONE WITH THIS STORM-TOSSING WHELP!

WE WANT ONLY OUR SWORN PAY-- NOTHING, MORE!

SLOMM!



IS THIS THE DREAD BATTLE OF ALL-FATHER AGAINST SON WHICH MUST END IN DEATH FOR THE GOD OF THUNDER?

DON'T MISS NEXT ISSUE'S THRILLER--

THE PRICE IS PAID!

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY NOTE: As mentioned in a footnote in this selfsame issue, much of the current THOR storyline has been influenced by the conception of a "god's cycle," utilizing the Zodiac and its procession across the heavens and tying it in with Asgard, Ragnarok, and various other factors yet to be revealed. Thus, we deemed it appropriate to have assistant editor Mark Gruenwald, who touched off these elements with an important article in his quality fanzine *Omniverse*, explain such things further, rather than merely attempting to paraphrase him. Of course, Roy and Keith hope to have a few things left up their sleeves to surprise even Mark, but to say that his original fanzine article was influential upon recent issue of THOR would be to understate the case. From here on, though, we'll let Mark tell it in his own words...

—Roy T.

This issue of THOR and last introduce a number of new concepts about Marvel mythology, chief among which is that Ragnarok — the Twilight of the Gods foretold in legend — is *not* a one-time-only, end-of-the-world event, but rather a cyclical occurrence denoting cosmic time.

Actually, this is a concept that has been hinted at before in the pages of THOR, as well as in the body of Norse mythology which is the source material upon which this series is based.

Hark back to the epic tale told by Stan Lee in THOR #200, "Beware If this be Ragnarok!" Here we are given a sweeping glimpse of what Ragnarok means to the Asgardians. The prophetic Volva gives an account of the inevitable doomsday ordained for Asgard, and concludes with these words: "Naught shall remain of the golden realm, save a fiery, flaming ember — a smoldering celestial cinder in the fabric of eternity. But time rolls on without beginning and with no end. The centuries turn to ages, the ages to eons, and the world shall cool, and new land shall rise from beneath the restless seas. And, as it ever was — and as ever it must be — new life shall come a'born and gods shall rise again."

From this we learn that Ragnarok is not the final end of all things, but rather the end of an age, from which the seed of a new age and new gods shall one day flourish.

If the Asgard we know is the predecessor for the next age of gods, might it too have a predecessor? Might the gods' cycle of life and death have already been in progress *before* the age of the Asgardians chronicled in the pages of THOR? In the just-cited words of Volva: "...as it ever was..."

One of the things that has perturbed mythology buffs among us since the first time Thor was revealed to be a true legendary god and not some mere approximation, is why the Marvel-Earth Thor did not more accurately resemble the Thor of Norse myth.

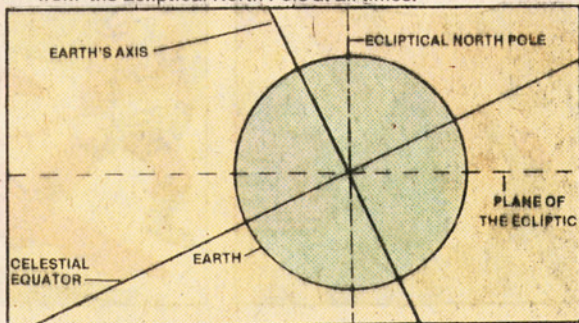
In Norse mythology, Thor had red hair and a beard rather than golden locks and a clean-shaven face. The dissimilarities did not end with Thor. In myth, Sif is described as having gold-spun tresses rather than raven-black hair. Mimir is described as a water-spirit into which Odin cast his eye to gain omniscience, while Marvel's Mimir is a fire-spirit into which Odin cast his eye to learn of Ragnarok's imminence. Further examples could be cited, but we trust you already get the point.

What with the revelation of a cyclical Ragnarok, we now know the reason for these discrepancies. There are *two* generations of gods: the Asgardians of the current age, and the Aesir of the previous age. It is the Aesir who are described in the accounts of Norse mythology on both Marvel-Earth and our own. This solution denies neither the Norse myths nor the Lee-Kirby myths, but instead assigns each its rightful place in the Marvel Universe.

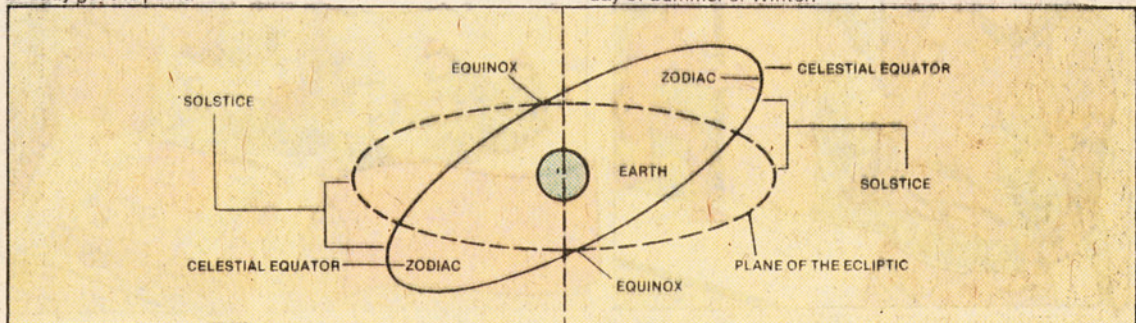
Now that you know some of the *why* behind the Godcycle Scenario, we will attempt to explain some of the *how*. To do this, we must enter the realm of astronomy.

Since the time of the ancients, it has been observed that the planetary body called Earth makes three major different kinds of motion in space: *rotation*, the spinning around the imaginary pole called the axis which takes 24 hours to complete one cycle; *revolution*, the orbiting of the sun which takes 365 1/4 days to complete; and *precession*, the gradual turning of the Earth's axis which takes 26,000 years. It is this last kind of motion that has to do with Cosmic Time, and relates to the cycle of Ragnarok.

In the first diagram below is a circle representing the Earth. The dotted horizontal line marked the *Plane of the Ecliptic* is an imaginary plane which encompasses the orbits of virtually all the planets of the Solar System. The dotted vertical line intersecting the Plane of the Ecliptic at right angles is marked the *Ecliptical North Pole*. The solid line tilted slightly away from the Ecliptical North Pole is the *Earth's Axis*, the imaginary pole around which the Earth rotates. It is tilted 23 1/4 degrees from the Ecliptical North Pole. The solid line that is at right angles to the Earth's Axis is the *Celestial Equator*, an imaginary plane that extends outward into space from the Earth's equator. The diagram illustrates that the Earth's axis is tilted 23 1/4 degrees from the Ecliptical North Pole at all times.



On page two of this issue's tale there is an illustration of the Celestial Equator divided into twelve equal areas, each corresponding to a constellation of stars as seen from Earth. These twelve constellations are called the *Zodiac*. In the second diagram below we see that the Ecliptic intersects the Celestial Equator at two points which are called the *Equinoxes*. The two points at which the circles are farthest apart are the *Solstices*. When the sun appears to rise in the constellation that is at the Equinox positions, we have the first day of Spring or Fall. When the sun appears to rise in the constellations of the Solstice, we have the first day of Summer or Winter.



The ancients noticed that the constellation that the sun appeared to rise in on the first day of Spring every year was very gradually moving. Over centuries of observations they learned that every 2160 years the sun will have moved 1/12 its way around the circle of the Zodiac, and hence would rise in a different constellation of the Zodiac.

Why? Because of the Earth's third type of movement, precession. With the Earth's axis gradually wobbling around in a circle 23 1/4 degrees from the North Celestial Pole, all the constellations of the Zodiac appeared to be moving, or precessing. The ancients named the age after the constellation the sun rose in on the first day of Spring. Presently we are in the waning Age of Pisces, moving into the Age of Aquarius. Each constellation has its turn at naming the age for 2160 years.

On Marvel-Earth, where the gods of myth are literally real, the precession of the Celestial Axis (the extension of Earth's Axis in both directions) affects the lives of the gods in a very real way. The destinies of the Asgardians are inextricably bound to the Celestial Axis which is manifested in Asgard by *Yggdrasil*, the World-Tree. Every 2160 years when the Celestial Axis has assumed a new orientation, the old age dies and a new one is born.


The transition between ages is Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods. Ragnarok is a regular, cyclical event that no man or god can forestall or hasten.


If, all this time, the date of Ragnarok has been immovably placed some 150 or so years in the future, why have the gods of Asgard on numerous occasions been concerned about its premature arrival (notably, in THOR #154-157, 184-188, 198, 249-250, and 274-278)? Don't they know when it is destined to occur, and that nothing short of moving the very heavens could hasten its arrival? As a matter of fact, as suggested this issue, they don't know; Odin, who we learn is the embodiment of the survivors of the last age, knows the true nature of Ragnarok, perhaps

—but if so, he is keeping the knowledge to himself for the foreseeable present. Why he does so — and why he once fashioned the awesome Odinsword as a temptation to those who would see Ragnarok fall before its appointed hour — are mysteries to be answered, Roy assures us, in the near future.

And so, the dawn of the Asgardians occurred around the first year A.D., as the Age of Aries gave way to the Ages of Pisces. The next Ragnarok will occur around 2160 A.D., at which time the Age of Pisces will have been supplanted by the Age of Aquarius. What new gods there may be in the Age of Aquarius cannot yet be told, but their destiny is written... in the stars.







For more detailed information about the gods' cycle of existence, see "From Ragnarok to Apokalips" by Mark Gruenwald in *Omniverse: The Journal of Fictional Reality*, issue 2, available for \$2.25 from Alternity Enterprise, 211 W. 88th St., Suite 3A, New York, N.Y. 10024. Tell 'em Marvel sent you.



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