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THE
MIGHTY

THOR



pollard



STAR LINE PRESENTS: THE MIGHTY THOR!

ON A WEIRD EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL WORLD, THE MIGHTY THOR BEHOLDS A LONG-FORGOTTEN VISION PLUCKED OUT OF HIS OWN MIND BY THE DISEMBODED EYE OF ODIN...

IT IS A VISION OF A PREVIOUS MORTAL LIFE HITHERTO UNKNOWN TO THE THUNDER GOD-- GRANTED HIM BY HIS FATHER ODIN, NEARLY A MILLENNIUM AGO.

IN THIS MORTAL INCARNATION, THOR WAS CALLED SIEGFRIED, AND IN HIS SHORT EARTHLY LIFE HE HAD ALREADY PROVEN HIMSELF WORTHY OF THE VALIANT SPIRIT DWELLING WITHIN HIM.

THE CLOTHING WORN BY SIEGFRIED RESEMBLED THE RAIMENT OF HIS TRUE SELF, THOR, BUT INSTEAD OF THE URU HAMMER, Mjolnir, Siegfried wielded the invincible sword, Needful. Instead of the Goddess Sif, Siegfried loved the former Valkyrie, Brunnhilda.

THOU HAST SHOWN ME WHY LORD ODIN STRIPPED YON VALKYRIE OF HER GODLY POWER AND BANISHED HER TO THE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE, AS PUNISHMENT FOR DEFYING HIS EDICTS... BUT I HAVE YET TO FATHOM WHY THE ALL-FATHER DID CAST ME INTO MORTAL FORM.

IF 'TWERE SIMPLY TO RESCUE BRUNNHILDA, COULD I NOT HAVE DONE THAT BETTER AS A GOD?

PATIENCE ODINSON! EYE WILL REVEAL ALL... IN DUE TIME...

I HAVE SCALED THE MOUNTAIN OF FLAME AND AWAKENED YOU FROM YOUR DEATH-TRANCE WITH THE NECTAR OF MY LIPS, FAIR MAIDEN--

--AND NOW THAT I HAVE WON YOUR LOVE, IT SHALL LAST LONGER THAN THIS MOUNTAIN, BURN BRIGHTER THAN THIS ENCIRCLING FIRE!

OH, YES, DARLING SIEGFRIED! YES!

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PASSIONS AND POTIONS

Based on the opera "GOTTERDAMMERUNG" by Richard Wagner as adapted by Roy Thomas

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MILADY, YOU TURN FROM ME. WHAT TROUBLES YOU?

THOUGH IT WOULD PLEASE ME TO KEEP YOU HERE BY MY SIDE IN MY LONELY EXILE, OUR LOVE WOULD BE THE POORER FOR IT.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



WHEN FIRST I BEHELD YOU, MY BELOVED, I GLIMPSED YOUR GREATNESS... THE GODLIKE GRANDSEUR SUBDUED WITHIN YOU --

-- EVEN AS MINE IS SUBDUED IN ME.



YOU MUST LEAVE ME, SIEGFRIED. GO FORTH AND FULFILL YOUR DESTINY, WHATEVER IT MAY BE.

THE LOVE THAT IS OUR SALVATION HAS THE POWER TO SAVE THE WORLD, AS WELL.



I HAVE A PARTING GIFT FOR YOU, MY DARLING.

WITH THE LAST VESTIGE OF MY GODLY POWER, I CAST ON YOU AN ENCHANTMENT OF INVULNERABILITY.



NO FOE SHALL EVER BE ABLE TO SMITE YOU IN BATTLE UNLESS YOU TURN YOUR BACK TO HIM.

THUS I PROTECT THE BREAST WHICH HOLDS THE HEART I LOVE.



FOR YOU, FAIR ONE, I ALSO HAVE A GIFT. TAKE THIS THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG WHICH I WON FROM THE DRAGON FAFNIR.



WEAR IT ALWAYS -- AS A SYMBOL OF THE UNDYING LOVE THAT BINDS US.

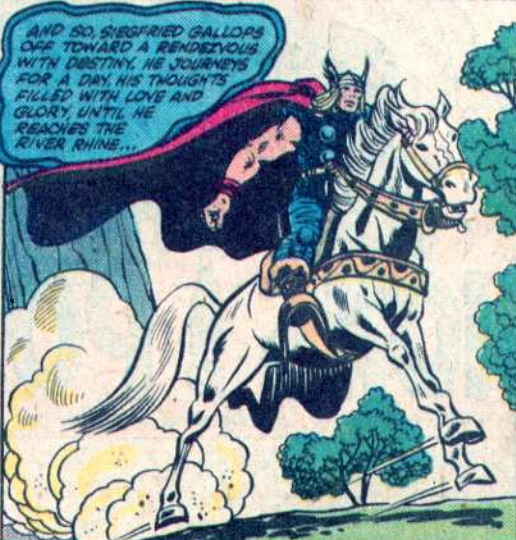
I SHALL, DEAR SIEGFRIED!



FARE-WELL, MY DEAREST, TILL MY RETURN!

GODSPEED, MY LOVE. BELOW IS MY ONCE-WINGED STEED GRANE.

SPEAK MY NAME TO HIM AND HE WILL BE YOURS.



AND SO, SIEGFRIED GALLOPS OFF TOWARD A RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY. HE JOURNEYS FOR A DAY, HIS THOUGHTS FILLED WITH LOVE AND GLORY, UNTIL HE REACHES THE RIVER RHINE...



...WHERE MILES DOWNSTREAM LIES THE STRONGHOLD OF THE GIBICWANG CLAIN, SOON TO BE SIEGFRIED'S DESTINATION.

IN THE OPEN COURTYARD AT THE CASTLE'S CENTER SITS THE CHIEF OF THE GIBICHINGS, LORD GUNTHER, AND HIS SISTER GUTRUNA, WHILE BOTH ARE GOOD AND NOBLE PERSONAGES, THEY ARE SOON TO BE CAUGHT IN A WEB OF EVIL SPUN BY THE DWARFISH VISITOR YOU SEE BEFORE THEM-- A WEB THAT WILL ALSO ENSNARE SIEGFRIED!



GOOD GUNTHER, I PRAY YOU GIVE AUDIENCE TO THE HUMBLE WORDS OF YOUR HALF-BROTHER HAGEN...
SPEAK, TREACHEROUS ONE.

YOU WRONG ME, SIRE. I SEEK TO MAKE AMENDS FOR THE ILL WIND WHICH HAS LONG BLOWN BETWEEN US.

I DESIRE BUT THE BEST FOR YOUR CLAN-- IS IT NOT ALSO THE CLAN OF MY MOTHER? BUT UNTIL TODAY I REALLY HAD NOTHING TO CONTRIBUTE. I'VE BEEN THINKING... THE FAME OF THE GIBICHINGS CAN SPREAD NO FURTHER UNTIL YOU AND GUTRUNA FIND MATES WORTHY OF YOUR STATION...

...AND I KNOW OF JUST SUCH MATES.

I'VE HEARD OF A MAIDEN LIKE NO OTHER-- AS BEAUTIFUL AS A GODDESS! BRUNNHILDA IS HER NAME. SHE DWELLS UPON THE FIRE MOUNTAIN.



THE FIRE MOUNTAIN, EH? AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE I CLAIM HER? I HAVE NOT THE MIGHT TO BRAVE THE FLAMES!



AND WHO MIGHT MY FUTURE HUSBAND BE?

THERE IS THIS MAN, A GREAT HERO, WHOSE NAME IS SIEGFRIED. HE IS BRAVE ENOUGH TO WIN BRUNNHILDA.



SURELY SUCH A MAN DOES NOT WANT FOR A CONSORT.

HOW MIGHT SUCH A MAN BE MADE TO WOO A MAIDEN IN MY STEAD?

I HAVE ACQUIRED A POTION WHOSE MEREST SIP WILL MAKE A MAN FORGET THOSE HE HAS LOVED... AND ENSLAVE HIM TO THE FIRST WOMAN HE BEHOLDS.



JUST ASK-- AND THE HERO SHALL BE YOURS.

HOW DO WE FIND THIS SIEGFRIED?



I'VE SEEN TO THAT, DEAR BROTHER. EVEN NOW THE CLARION SOUNDS HIS ARRIVAL.


A CASTLE! PERHAPS I SHALL FIND THERE A DEED WORTHY OF MY DARING!



COME, GRANE! LET US INQUIRE OF THE LANDLORD WHAT ADVENTURES MAY BE HENCE.



PERHAPS WE CAN ALSO ENTREAT OUR HOSTS FOR SOME REPAST, EH?



HOLD, STRANGER! NONE
MAY TRESPASS THE STRONG-
HOLD OF THE GIBICHUNGS
UNBIDDEN!

WHAT? I AM BESET
BY A COMPANY OF
MANNERLESS
BRIGANDS!



HAVE AT YOU, THEN,
BLACKGUARDS!

SOOFFE




'TWOULD SEEM YOU'VE NOT HEARD OF
HOSPITALITY TO WEARY TRAVELERS! IT IS
TIME THE LOT OF YOU WERE TAUGHT!



HALT, GOLDHAIR! THERE IS NO
NEED FOR FURTHER MAYHEM--

-- PARTICULARLY
SINCE YOU LEFT
NONE OF YOUR
OPPONENTS
STANDING!



AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE, LITTLE MAN?

HAGEN AT YOUR
SERVICE, FRIEND.

BLAME NOT THESE MEN
FOR THEIR BREACH OF
CONDUCT. THEY SIMPLY
CARRIED OUT THE ORDERS
OF MY BROTHER, LORD
GUNTHER-- TO TEST IF YOU
WERE INDEED THE TRUE
SIEGFRIED.

YOU HAVE
HEARD OF
ME?

THE VERY RHINE
SINGS OF YOUR HEROISM,
SIR. NOW COME WITH
ME, PLEASE.



AND SO...

GREETINGS, NOBLEMAN! YOU ARE LORD GUNTHER?

I, AM HE. YOU MUST FORGIVE MY UN-CEREMONIOUS TESTING OF YOUR METTLE, GOOD SIEGFRIED. ONE CANNOT BE TOO CAREFUL IN THESE TIMES.

IN RECOMPENSE FOR MY UNSEEMLY WELCOME, ALLOW ME TO OFFER YOU ANYTHING YOU DESIRE. MY KINGDOM AND ALL IN IT ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.



I AM TOUCHED BY YOUR GENEROSITY, SIRE. BUT IT IS NOT FOR WORLDLY THINGS I HAVE COME.

HAD I DESIRED WEALTH, I WOULD HAVE KEPT THE PLUNDER OF THE NIBELUNG CLAN, WHICH I DID RIGHTFULLY WIN BY SLAYING ITS USURPER FAFNIR.

IT IS ADVENTURE I SEEK, AND TO FIND AN EXPLOIT WORTHY OF ME, I INQUIRE OF YOU IF THERE IS ANY BOON YOU MIGHT CRAVE.



HOLD, SIEGFRIED! DID YOU SAY THAT YOU WON THE NIBELUNG HOARD-- AND TOOK YOURSELF NONE OF IT?

WHAT GOOD IS IDLE TREASURE TO A MAN OF ACTION? IT WOULD BUT HAMPER ME.

YOU TOOK *NOTHING* OF IT?



NAUGHT BUT THE HELMET CALLED *TARNHELM* WHICH I WEAR BENEATH MY OWN HEADDRESS... AND A RING OF GOLD.

A RING?

YES... BUT THAT I GAVE AWAY.



TRULY RICH IS A MAN WHO REQUIRES NOT THE OBJECTS OF WEALTH ABOUT HIM, LET US DRINK TO YOUR VALIANT EXPLOITS, SELFLESS SIEGFRIED, AND THEN SEE IF WE CAN'T DEVISE ANOTHER!

A TOAST, MILORD?



A TOAST... AYE! TO THE FAIREST OF THE FAIR, THE VESSEL OF MY LONGING, STEAD-FAST BRUN--



HER NAME AND IMAGE FLEE FROM ME LIKE PHANTOMS.



THE WORLD SPINS BEFORE THE HERO'S EYES-- AND WHEN HE OPENS THEM ONCE MORE...

...THEY ARE FILLED WITH THE SIGHT OF LADY GUTRUNA.



THE VERY KNOWLEDGE OF BRUNNHILDA GONE FROM HIS MIND, SIEGFRIED IS SEIZED WITH PASSION FOR THE MAIDEN BEFORE HIM...

MILADY-- YOU ARE THE VERY VISION OF LOVELINESS. I AM OVERCOME. PRAY TELL ME YOUR NAME.

GUTRUNA, MILORD.

GUTRUNA... HOW RADIANT A NAME.



BUT... FORGIVE ME. ONE AS FAVORED AS YOU MUST ALREADY BE SPOKEN FOR!

NO, MILORD--

--IT WOULD BE UNSEEMLY FOR ME TO MARRY BEFORE MY ELDER BROTHER DID.



NOBLE GUNTHER, WHY HAVE YOU NOT TAKEN A WIFE?



ALAS, THE WOMAN I WOULD WED IS A PRISONER... ON A MOUNTAIN OF FIRE.

"MOUNTAIN OF FIRE"... IN TRUTH, THAT HAS A FAMILIAR RING.

I DARE NOT RESCUE MY INTENDED, FOR I FEAR THE FIRE.



I FEAR NOTHING, GUNTHER. I WILL ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN FOR YOU--

--IF I MAY HAVE YOUR SISTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE.



AGREED, SIEGFRIED! LET'S SWEAR A BLOOD-OATH ON IT!

OPENING THEIR ARMS WITH A SLICE OF A DAGGER, THE ALLIES DRIP THEIR LIFE-BLOOD INTO A CUP OF WINE...



AND THEN...



BY PARTAKING OF THIS MIXTURE, WE SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO BE TRUE TO ONE ANOTHER UNTO DEATH!

AND IF EITHER OF US BETRAYS THE OTHER, THAT WHICH WE DRINK WILL GUSH FROM OUR BODIES TILL RESTITUTION BE MADE!



SO SAYING, SIEGFRIED MAKES PREPARATIONS TO LEAVE...

AND ONE THING BEFORE YOU GO, GOOD SIR, I HAVE HEARD THAT THE TARNHELM GIVES THE POWER TO ALTER ONE'S APPEARANCE AT WILL. THIS MAY BE OF USE TO YOU!



AYE, THAT IT WILL. THANK YOU FOR THIS NEWS.

I'M OFF MY FRIENDS! QUICK SHALL BE MY RETURN!



HA-HA! MY SCHEMES UNFOLD MASTERFULLY. THAT SIMPLE OAF SIEGFRIED WILL FETCH THE MAID WITH THE ALL-POWERFUL RHINEGOLD-- AND BRING HER HERE.



SO DOING, I WILL TRICK GUNTHER INTO HAVING SIEGFRIED KILLED. THEN THE RING OF POWER THAT MY SIRE ALBERICH LOST BEFORE I WAS BORN WILL BE RIPE FOR THE PLUCKING!



AND WITH THE RHINEGOLD RING TO TRANSFORM MY EVERY THOUGHT INTO REALITY, I SHALL RULE ALL GODS AND MEN!



IN THE REALM OF ODIN'S EYE...



HMMMM. THIS HAGEN HAS THE DEMANOR OF THE GOD OF MISCHIEF HIMSELF!

SHOW ON, ORB. I AM ANXIOUS TO GET TO THIS TALE'S END!

VERY WELL, IMPATIENT ONE. LET US TRAVEL AHEAD OF YOUR EARTHLY COUNTERPART TO HIS DESTINATION. THE VALKYRIE'S MOUNTAIN, WHERE BRUNNHILDA PATIENTLY AWAITS HER LOVED ONE'S EVENTUAL RETURN...

OH, SIEGFRIED... IF ONLY YOU COULD HAVE TAKEN ME ON YOUR QUEST FOR GLORY INSTEAD OF LEAVING ME HERE...

BUT I DARE NOT INVOKE ODIN'S ANGER BY MY DISOBEDIENCE AGAIN. I WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE ESCAPED WITH THE MERE STRIPPING OF MY IMMORTALITY FOR MY FORBIDDEN AID OF YOUR MOTHER!*

*AS SHOWN IN THOR #297 -- JIM.

AND, THEN, THROUGH A RIFPLE IN SPACE...

BRUNNHILDA, MY SISTER! HAIL!

WHO--?

VALTRAUTA, MY OLD COMRADE-IN-ARMS! BRING YOU GOOD NEWS? HAS ODIN LIFTED MY BANISHMENT TO THIS DESOLATE MOUNT?

I FEAR NOT, MY SISTER.

IT IS A GRAVE MATTER THAT MAKES ME RISK ODIN'S WRATH TO VISIT YOU HERE.

IT CONCERNS THIS RING YOU WEAR.

I HAVE HEARD ODIN SPEAK OF IT WHILE BROODING. IT IS ACCURSED BY AN ENEMY OF ASGARD.

IT WILL COME TO ANY WHO WEAR IT. IT MUST BE PURGED OF ITS EVIL BY--

NO, VALTRAUTA-- THERE IS NO CURSE ON THIS RING! IT WAS GIVEN ME BY THE MAN WHO HAS WON MY HEART-- AS A SYMBOL OF OUR BETROTHAL.

I HAVE GIVEN UP MY GODHOOD, IS THAT NOT ENOUGH?

I SHALL NOT GIVE UP THE RING!

THERE WOULD SEEM NO DISSUADING YOU, AND SINCE THE RING CANNOT BE REMOVED AGAINST ITS WEARER'S WILL-- I SHALL GO.



I ONLY HOPE BRUNNHILDA, THAT YOUR STUBBORNNESS HAS NOT DOOMED US ALL!

WITH VALTRAUTA'S DISAPPEARANCE, THE MYSTIC FLAMES THAT DANCE ABOUT THE MOUNTAINTOP SUDDENLY SURGE WITH RENEWED FURY...



...AS IF STOKED BY ODIN'S IRE.

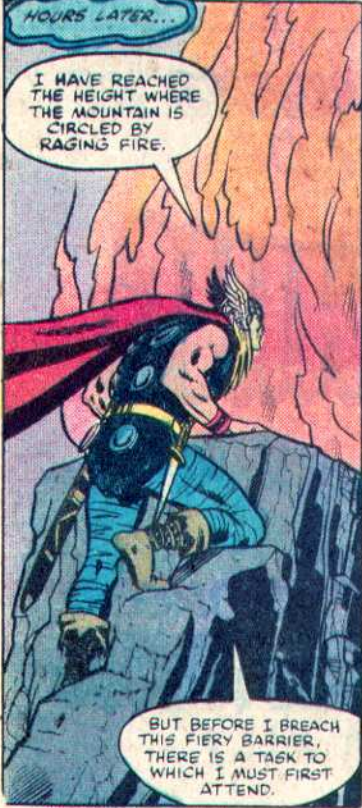
WHILE BELOW, THE ENSORCELLED SIEGFRIED BEGINS ONCE MORE THE TORTUOUS ASCENT TO THE MOUNTAIN'S SUMMIT.



BUT WHILE LAST TIME HE CLIMBED TO CLAIM HIS OWN LOVE, THIS TIME IT IS, IN THE SERVICE OF GUNTHER.

HOURS LATER...

I HAVE REACHED THE HEIGHT WHERE THE MOUNTAIN IS CIRCELED BY RAGING FIRE.



BUT BEFORE I BREACH THIS FIERY BARRIER, THERE IS A TASK TO WHICH I MUST FIRST ATTEND.

TOUCHING THE MAGIC TARNHELM HIDDEN BENEATH HIS OWN HELMET, SIEGFRIED DRAWS UPON ITS SHAPE-SHIFTING POWERS--



-- TO TRANSFORM HIS ASPECT TO THAT OF GUNTHER'S!

THE TRANSFORMATION COMPLETE, SIEGFRIED STORMS INTO THE CRACKLING FIRE...

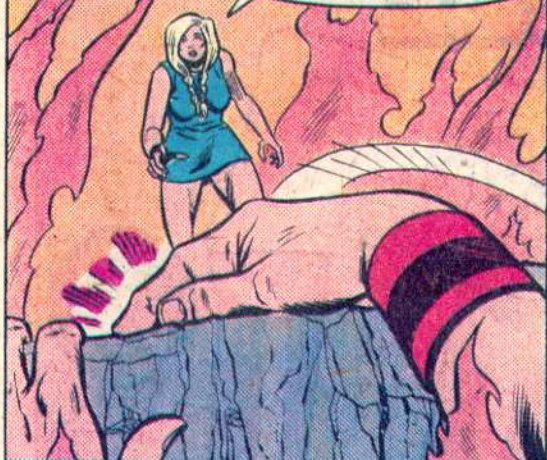


NOW WHEN THE MAIDEN OF THE ROCK BEHOLDS HER RESCUER, IT WILL BE GUNTHER SHE SEES!

AT LAST...

DARLING-- IS THAT YOU WHO DEFIES THE FLAMES? CAN YOUR QUEST BE OVER SO SOON?

NO, WOMAN! 'TIS I, GUNTHER OF THE GIBICRUNGS, WHO SEEKS YOU THIS DAY!



BUT HOW CAN THIS BE? I WAS TOLD THERE IS BUT ONE BOLD ENOUGH TO PASS THROUGH THE INFERNO UNSCATHED!



I AM HE, LOVELY ONE, AND I COME TO CLAIM YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE!

NO! I AM ALREADY SPOKEN FOR!

SEE THIS RING UPON MY FINGER? IT IS A SYMBOL OF--



THIS RING BELONGS TO ME! I DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU CAME BY IT-- BUT BY THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON, I SHALL HAVE IT BACK!

NO! YOU CAN'T!



AH, BUT I CAN, FAIR ONE. THE RING IS MINE!

NO DEMON AM I, SIMPLY A MAN OF MIGHT.

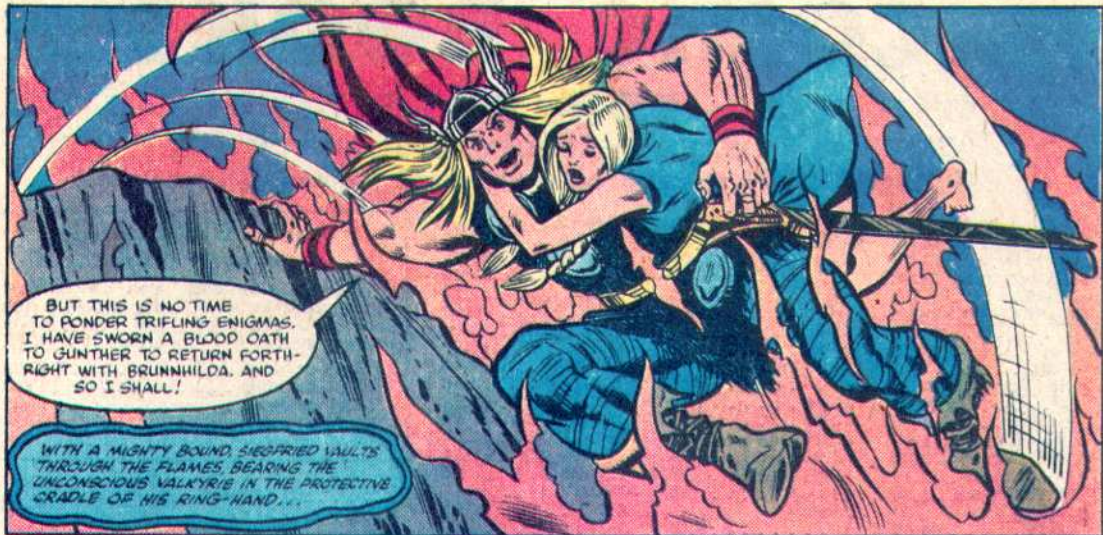
BUT-- ONLY HE WHO PLACED THE RING UPON MY FINGER HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE IT! WHAT MANNER OF DEMON ARE YOU TO DEFY ENCHANTMENTS AS IF THEY WERE IDLE MOUTHINGS?



THINKING ODIN HIMSELF HAD FORSAKEN HER, THE MORTAL VALKYRIE SWOONS...

... TO BE SWEEPED UP IN THE POWERFUL ARMS OF SIEGFRIED, WHOSE TRUE FORM TWINKLES INTO VIEW AS BRUNHILDA'S EYES CLOSE...

MAIDEN--? SHE'S FAINTED, STRANGE. BUT THERE IS SOMETHING OF THE FAMILIAR ABOUT HER... ABOUT ALL THIS!



BUT THIS IS NO TIME TO PONDER TRIFLING ENIGMAS. I HAVE SWORN A BLOOD OATH TO GUNTHER TO RETURN FORTH-RIGHT WITH BRUNNHILDA. AND SO I SHALL!

WITH A MIGHTY BOUND, SIEGFRIED VAULTS THROUGH THE FLAMES, BEARING THE UNCONSCIOUS VALKYRIE IN THE PROTECTIVE CRADLE OF HIS RING-HAND...



WHILE ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE RHINE NEAR THE CASTLE OF THE GIBUCHINGS, HAGEN SLUMBERS.



SLEEPING, HAGEN, MY SON?

ALBERICH! WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE?

AS IF IN A DREAM, HE IS STARTLED BY A STRANGE VISITATION...



YOUR SIRE BRINGS YOU GOOD TIDINGS, YOUR PLAN TO AVENGE MY DISGRACE GOES WELL.

SO POWERFUL WAS MY HATE THAT CURSED THE RHINEGOLD RING--



--THAT ODIN HIMSELF BELIEVES THAT THE DOWNFALL OF ASGARD IS AT HAND BECAUSE OF IT.



HE HAD HOPED THAT HIS GOD-SON SIEGFRIED MIGHT YET WIN THE DAY BY PURGING IT OF MY CURSE...

...BUT THANKS TO YOUR MACHINATIONS, THIS SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY. YOU HAVE DONE YOUR FATHER FRODO HAGEN.



I THANK YOU FOR THIS NEWS, FATHER. WHEN THE GODS PERISH, WE DWARVES SHALL INHERIT THE WORLD AND THE NAME OF ALBERICH SHALL BE ON EVERY TONGUE!

THE 'SPECTRAL' MAGE OF ALBERICH VANISHES--



...AND THE LONG SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT SOON FADE INTO DAWN...

HO, HAGEN! I HAVE RETURNED!

YOUR MISSION WAS A SUCCESS! I SEE. HOW WONDERFUL!

SOON, IN THE PALACE OF THE REAL GUNTHER...

AS YOU CAN SEE, GUNTHER, I HAVE MET MY SIDE OF THE BARGAIN.

SHE IS FAINT FROM THE STRAIN OF BEING RESCUED, I IMAGINE.

SPLENDID, SIEGFRIED, SPLENDID. BUT WHY IS SHE SLEEPING?

HANDMAIDENS, TAKE THE LADY BRUNNHILDA TO HER NEW QUARTERS AND PREPARE HER FOR TONIGHT'S WEDDING FEAST!

YES, MAJESTY.

PLEASE, SIEGFRIED, TRANSFORM BACK TO YOUR TRUE ASPECT.

CERTAINLY, MILADY. IT IS MERELY A MATTER OF LAYING MY HAND ON THE TARNHELM--

--AND WILLING MY OWN VISAGE TO REAPPEAR!

AND NOW, FAIR MAID, LET ME PARTAKE OF YOUR BEAUTY JUST A MOMENT BEFORE YOU MUST ATTEND TO YOUR PRENUPTIAL TASKS.

SWEET, SIEGFRIED, HOW YOUR NEARNESS MAKES MY MAIDEN'S HEART FLUTTER.

HOW EXCELLENTLY YOUR SCHEME HAS BORNE FRUIT, HAGEN. BRUNNHILDA IS A MOST COMELY GIRL--A FINER QUEEN NO MAN COULD ASK FOR.

MY SISTER SEEMS SMITTEN WITH SIEGFRIED AS WELL. YOU WILL BE RICHLY REWARDED FOR YOUR COUNSEL.

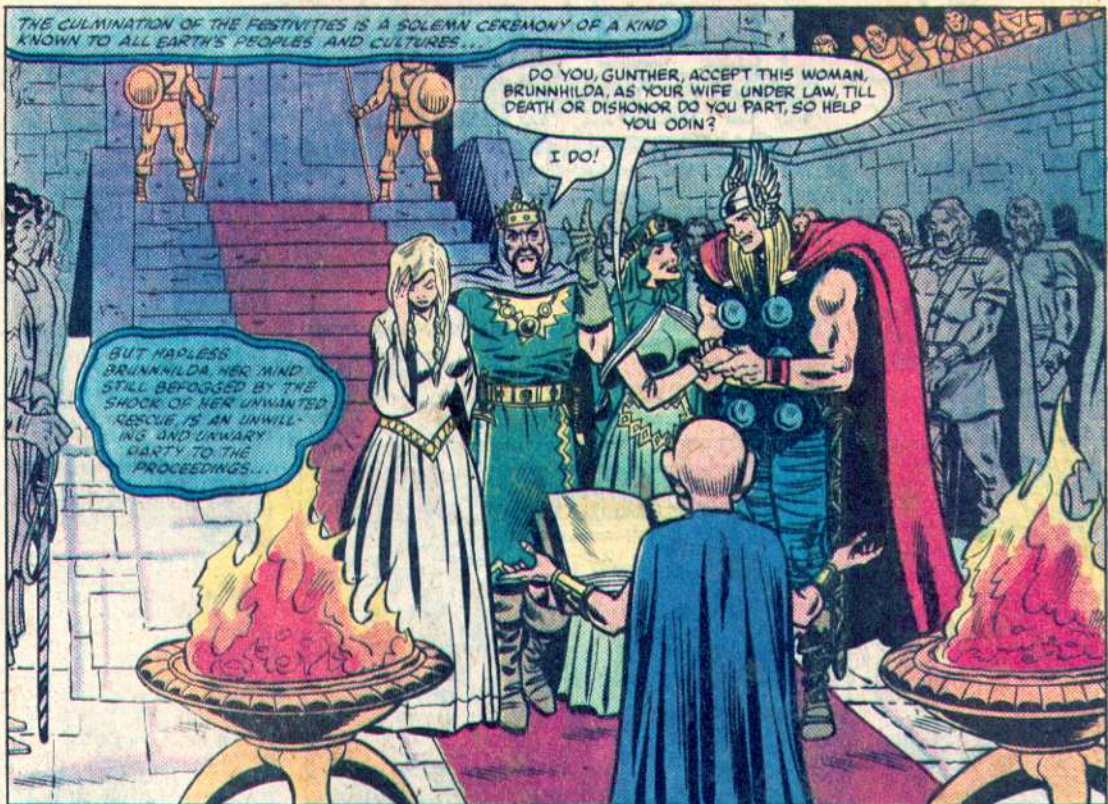
I KNOW, MILORD.

UNAWARES OF THE FULL MEANING OF HAGEN'S RETORT, GUNTHER SUMMONS ALL HIS KIN, THE ENTIRE GIBSINGHAM CLAN, FOR HIS WEDDING BANQUET...

THAT NIGHT FESTIVITIES LURCH INTO FULL SWING WITH A FEAST...

DO YOU SEE THE SLINT OF RECOGNITION ON YOUR FACE, FRIEND THOR? HAVE YOU NOT ATTENDED A NUMBER OF VIKING WEDDINGS IN YOUR YOUTH? THIS ONE IS LIKE UNTO THOSE WITH ONE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE! THIS WEDDING IS YOUR OWN.

THE CULMINATION OF THE FESTIVITIES IS A SOLEMN CEREMONY OF A KIND KNOWN TO ALL EARTH'S PEOPLES AND CULTURES...



DO YOU, GUNTHER, ACCEPT THIS WOMAN, BRUNNHILDA, AS YOUR WIFE UNDER LAW, TILL DEATH OR DISHONOR DO YOU PART, SO HELP YOU ODIN?

I DO!

BUT HAPLESS BRUNNHILDA, HER MIND STILL BEFOGLED BY THE SHOCK OF HER UNWANTED RESOLVE, IS AN UNWILLING AND UNWARY PARTY TO THE PROCEEDINGS...

AND DO YOU, BRUNNHILDA, TAKE THIS MAN, GUNTHER, TO BE YOUR LORD AND MASTER IN ALL THINGS, TILL DEATH DO YOU PART?

LIKE A CURTAIN SUDDENLY DRAWN, THE LIGHT OF MEMORY FILLS THE ONCE-VALKYRIE'S MIND...

IT IS SIEGFRIED!

A STUNNED SILENCE SWEETS THE WEDDING PARTY AND THROUGH THE GREAT HALL...

G-GUNTHER?
THAT'S NOT--
NOT WHO...

NO! YOU
ARE NOT MY
BETROTHED!

DEAREST, HOW
CAME I HERE?
WHAT IS YOUR
PART IN THIS
MOCKERY OF
OUR ETERNAL
VOW?



FINALLY, SIEGFRIED REGAINS HIS TONGUE...

WOMAN, YOUR WITS ARE MADDLED. I AM NOT YOUR BRIDE-GROOM NOR HAVE I EVER LAID EYES ON YOU WITH MATRIMONIAL INTENT.

SIEGFRIED--? IS THIS SOME--SOME TEST OF MY LOVE?

DESPERATELY SHE SEARCHES THE EYES OF HER BELOVED, TRYING TO DETERMINE IF HE IS AN IMPOSTER...OR WORSE, HER BETRAYER...

YOUR WORDS ARE NONSENSE, WOMAN. HOW COULD I TEST THAT WHICH NEVER WAS?

H-HE LIES! HE PLEDGED ME HIS LOVE--NAY, EVEN SHARED WITH ME HIS MANLY COMPANY FOR A NIGHT!

ODIN PRESERVE ME! I AM UNDONE! MY WEDDING IS SPOILED!

*BETWEEN LAST ISSUE AND THIS. --JIM.

WHAT CHICANERY IS THIS? GUNTHER, PAY NO HEED TO THIS LYING WENCH!

BY OUR OATH, I NEVER TOUCHED YOUR INTENDED BRIDE!

GUNTHER, LOOK-- THE RING! SIEGFRIED HAS THE RING THAT BRUNNHILDA WORE AS SYMBOL OF HER MAIDENHOOD!

BRUNNHILDA-- IS THAT YOUR RING SIEGFRIED WEARS?

YES...BUT IT WAS YOU WHO TOOK THE RING FROM ME, GUNTHER, NOT HIM. HOW DID HE GET IT, UNLESS--UNLESS SIEGFRIED TRADED ME FOR GUTRUNA-- WITH THE RING AS PART OF THE DOWRY!

THE RING WAS PART OF NO DEAL! IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SIEGFRIED HAD HIS WAY WITH YOU WHILE DISGUISED AS ME LAST NIGHT!

AMIDST THE CONFUSION CAUSED BY GUNTHER'S UNWARENESS OF SIEGFRIED AND BRUNNHILDA'S PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP, GUNTHER STRIVES TO SALVAGE SOME DIGNITY FROM THE SHAMBLES OF HIS WEDDING BY SUMMONING HIS MEN...

GUARDS! SLAY THE BASE BETRAYER SIEGFRIED!

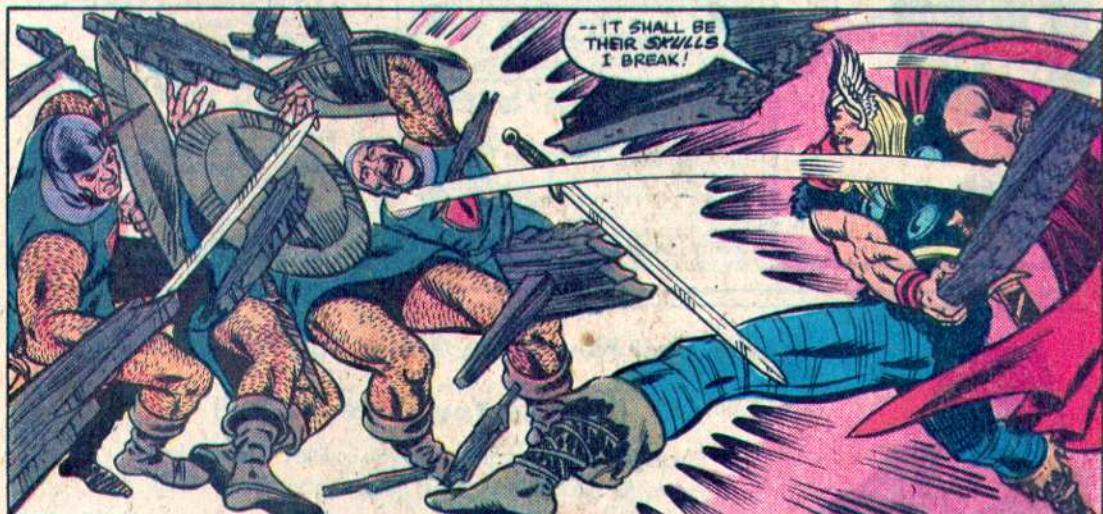
HE HAS VIOLATED OUR BLOOD OATH BY DEFILED MY BRIDE!



THIS IS THE STUFF OF MADNESS; GUNTHER. I HAVE NOT BROKEN MY OATH TO YOU!



I'M WARNING YOU BUT ONCE, IF YOUR VASSALS TAKE ANOTHER STEP TOWARD ME--



-- IT SHALL BE THEIR SKULLS I BREAK!



STILL MORE OF YOU JACKALS LEAP TO THE AID OF YOUR SENSELESS LIEGE? VERY WELL THEN, MY SWORD NEEDFUL WELCOMES ALL OF YOU!

HERE'S WHERE WE REPAY YOU FOR THE DRUBBING YOU GAVE US LAST MORN, SWINE!



I THINK NOT LOU-- FOR I AM THE BETTER OF YOU ALL!

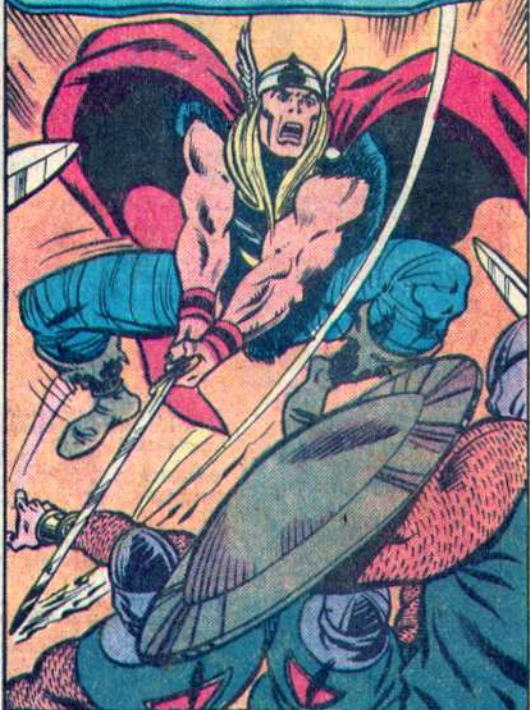
AND WHERE I COULD AFFORD TO SHOW MERCY WHEN THERE WAS BUT FOUR OF YOU-- WITH FORTY I CANNOT!

LIKE A RAGING STORM, THE RIGHTEOUS SIEGFRIED
RENDS HIS WAY THROUGH GUNTNER'S HORDES...



...HIS ENEMES'
SWORDS UNABLE
TO TOUCH HIM.

DOES IT MAKE YOUR HEART POUND, THUNDERER, TO SEE
YOUR MORTAL SELF CLEAVE THROUGH THE THROG OF
SWORDSMEN, EVEN AS YOU YOURSELF HAVE DONE WITH
YOUR HAMMER THROUGH GODS AND GIANTS?



OR DO YOU FEEL QUEASILY ABOUT
THIS POINTLESS SLAUGHTER SPANNED
BY MISUNDERSTANDING AND TREACHERY—
WAS ALL THE MORE UNFAIR BY THE
VALKYRIE'S ENCHANTMENT PROTECT-
ING YOU FROM INJURY?



"I LIKE THIS NOT,
EYE."

HE-HE'S ROUTING THEM ALL!
HAGEN, DO SOMETHING! STOP
THIS SENSELESS CARNAGE!

I FEAR I CAN-
NOT, MILADY. WHAT
HOPE HAS ONE AS
STUNTED AS I
AGAINST ONE
WHO CAN FELL
ARMIES?





THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE. MY GARRISONS ARE THE RHINELAND'S FINEST-- AND YET THEY FALL LIKE CHAFF BEFORE HIM! SIEGFRIED MUST BE CHARMED!

INDEED, SIR, HE IS IMPERVIOUS TO ALL HARM, PROVIDED HE NEVER TURNS HIS BACK TO A FOE!



IN BRUNNHILDA'S DEJECTION AT HER PRESUMED BETRAYAL, SHE HAS LET SLIP THE SOLE WEAKNESS OF HER ERSTWILE LOVER...

...BUT WHILE NO MAN BATTLING THIS DAY KNOWS SIEGFRIED'S FATAL FLAW, HAGEN HAS NOW LEARNED OF IT!



HEAR ME, GUNTHER-- CALL OFF YOUR MEN WHILE YOU STILL HAVE ONE TO SERVE YOU!



I REPEAT TO YOU: I HAVE NOT LIED TO YOU. I HAVE NOT COMPROMISED YOUR LYING BRIDE-TO-BE!



PLEASE, MY BROTHER, HOLD BACK YOUR MEN. IT IS CLEAR THEY CANNOT WIN. THIS SLAUGHTER IS AS MUCH ON YOUR HANDS AS SIEGFRIED'S!

YOU STILL PROFESS LOVE FOR THIS MAN WHO BROUGHT DISHONOR TO OUR HOUSE...?



DISHONOR GUNTHER? WAS IT HONORABLE THEN TO USE A MIND-POTION TO TRICK SIEGFRIED INTO WINNING YOUR BRIDE FOR YOU? HE ONLY SWORE THAT OATH AFTER YOU DRUGGED HIM!

IF I DID NOT WANT HIM SO MUCH, I'D ASK YOU TO FREE HIM FROM YOUR MARRIAGE PACT COMPLETELY!



YOU MAY BE RIGHT, MY SISTER. I WILL OFFER SIEGFRIED NEW TERMS...

...LEST WHEN HE HAS CUT DOWN MY MEN HE START TOWARD ME!

GUARDS!
CEASE YOUR ATTACK, SIEGFRIED. I WOULD PROPOSE A TRUCE!



SIEGFRIED-- I KNOW NOT THE TRUTH BEHIND YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH BRUNNHILDA. THAT IS SOMETHING I MUST YET LEARN.

BUT SINCE MY SISTER STILL WISHES YOU AS HUSBAND, I WISH PEACE BETWEEN US. TAKE MY SISTER WED HER, AND LEAVE MY KINGDOM!



I ACCEPT YOUR TERMS, GUNTHER-- FOR IT IS THE LADY GUTRUNA THAT IS MY SOLE INTEREST HERE.

COME, MILADY. WE HAVE PREPARATIONS TO MAKE.



I HAVE LOST SIEGFRIED FOREVER! THAT WITCH GUTRUNA MUST HAVE BEGUILDED HIM TO FORGET OUR LOVE ENTIRELY! A CURSE UPON THEM...!

HEAR THAT, HAGEN? SHE SPEAKS OF SIEGFRIED WITH LONGING AND REGRET. IS HE SO IRRESISTIBLE TO WOMEN, OR CAN THERE HAVE BEEN MORE BETWEEN THEM THAN I KNOW?

IT MATTERS NOT, SIRE...



...A SIP OF MY POTION AND HER HEART AND MIND WILL BELONG SOLELY TO YOU.

AS FOR SIEGFRIED-- WHILE HE LIVES HE IS A DANGER TO OUR CLAN. DESPITE YOUR SISTER'S PASSION, SIEGFRIED MUST DIE, AND THANKS TO YOUR BRIDE, WE KNOW JUST HOW THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED!

'TWOULD SEEM 'MIDST ALL THIS INTRIGUE, MY MORTAL SELF IS FATED TO COME TO AN IGNOBLE DEMISE.

THAT IS NOT ALL, THUNDER GOD. FOR SIEGFRIED'S DEATH MARKS THE BEGINNING OF ODIN'S GREATEST FAILURE--

--A FAILURE THAT BOTH DIMINISHES THE MIGHT OF ASGARD ITSELF AND FORCES ODIN TO BOW BEFORE THE STAR-SPANNING CELESTIALS!

SHOW ON THEN, EYE-- FOR E' EN AS WE SPEAK, THESE CELESTIALS HOLD THE EARTH'S FATE IN THEIR MIGHTY HANDS!

NEXT
THE END OF THE RING SAGA... A RETURN TO ASGARD... AND THE CLIMACTIC CLASH WITH--

THE CELESTIALS!

DON'T MISS THE 36-PAGE EPIC ANNIVERSARY IN THOR #300!



Dear Roy,

The whole myth-exploration theme in recent issues of THOR is fascinating! As a Marvel reader of some fifteen years, I've very much enjoyed how writers like Englehart, Gerber, and yourself, have taken long-standing conceptions of the Marvel Universe and expanded upon them. For that reason, the botched "Search for Captain America's Past" a couple years ago was a disappointment to me.

I don't think I'll be let down by the current THOR saga, however. A couple of things occur to me. Could All-Father Odin's now revealed origin — being the blending of four elder gods — possibly account for the maddening changes of mood that have always made him the most infuriatingly inconsistent character in comics? I always thought it was cosmic ornerness that made him treat his beloved son Thor with so little of the patience and tolerance he bestowed on blatantly malevolent Loki. Perhaps it was a touch of cosmic schizophrenia.

And, as to the secret identity of Thor's mother, might she be the forbidden, secret love of Odin's we caught him daydreaming about way back in JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #112?

Peter Hardy
330 Tenney Circle
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Very interesting speculations, Peter. As a matter of fact, since the first of which hadn't even occurred to us before you mentioned it, consider yourself No-Prized for providing us all a new insight into the Marvel Mythos. As for your second suggestion, you're going to learn the answer to that if you buy our very next issue, the double-size end-of-the-epic THOR #300 — wherein we will all meet for the first time Odin's long-lost love and Thor's mother!

Dear Roy,

After reading THOR #294, I just had to write. I've been a THOR fan for many years as well as being into Norse mythology. The discrepancies between the two versions have often bothered me. For instance, in the myths, Balder was the son of Odin and Frigga, making him more of a brother to Thor than Loki ever was. But thanks to your explanation of the previous Asgard, all of these matters are finally settled.

But now that you've finally answered my old questions, I have a couple of new ones. Since Odin has the memory of the destruction of the Old Asgard, why would he create Loki's father, knowing that Loki would one day bring about another Ragnarok? It seems like he was trying to seal his own destruction! Another thing... we know Thor's mother was an Earth woman (that's the only thing that would explain why Thor feels for Earth what he does). Then why was Odin so mad at Thor for falling in love with an Earth woman, when Odin himself had once done the same?

Anyway, I can't begin to tell you how great the current storyline is. You're only six issues away from THOR #300, and I just know you have something big planned for us.

Robin-Christopher Stone
4119 W. Tara #8
Las Vegas, NV 89102

You bet we do, R-C, 36 pages of heart-stopping heroics and ragnarokian revelations, on sale one short month from now! As for your questions, something tells us that Odin didn't exactly have free will in the matter of the creation of Loki's forebears. Whether it was the Norms (or Fates) or whatever the Power that set into motion the Asgardian God-cycle in the first place is a matter for further speculation. (Any takers?) As for Thor's mother, boy are you going to be surprised next issue if you think she's a mere Earth woman! More than that we're not telling.

Dear Roy,

I was glad to read THOR #s 293 and 294 because now some of the things that have always been bothering me about this mag have been resolved. I've never been one of those terribly concerned that the facts of the Marvel mythos did not fit exactly with the details of the Norse myths. Myths of the same event often vary in detail and are sometimes contradictory. After all, it is only natural that man, being a transient and imperfect being, would imperfectly remember his gods. The importance of a myth lay not in its details but in the underlying reality (or unreality) it presents, the lessons

it conveys, and the entertainment it provides. Many months ago, before the epic of the false Ragnarok began, I posed some questions about the gaps in the Marvel mythos that puzzled me. I was struck by the fact that, for all Odin's and Thor's talk about their father-son relationship, I could never recall reading or even hearing about Thor's mother. I was also puzzled by the way that all of the Asgardians called Odin the "All-Father" and what might lie behind that expression. Much has been explained in recent issues, but other answers are still forthcoming.

Here's something else for you to consider. At the end of #293, you fix the time of the earlier Ragnarok (a good way to symbolize the passing of the elder gods, by the way). Subsequent to this, the old Thor's hammer is thrown into the Rhine where it becomes the Rhinegold, and we see the start of the Nibelung cycle. Unfortunately, about fifty years before the events pictured at the end of #293, Caesar had conquered Gaul, and established the Rhine from the Alps to the sea as the Roman border. For the next several centuries there was considerable Roman activity along the Rhine. Thus the Rhine that the hammer fell into was not the legendary German Rhine, but the historical Roman Rhine. It seems to me you have a number of ways to explain this but I am curious about which one you'll use.

Drew Feldmann
(Address withheld by request)

The problem of the Rhine is no problem at all, Drew. After the hammer was transmogrified into the Rhinegold, it sat there in the historic Rhine until it became the German Rhine, guarded by the Rhinemaidens without recorded incident. The events of the Rhinegold cycle take place circa 1000 A.D. as will become very apparent when you see how it fits into the Celestials Saga next issue. (Yet another plug for THOR #300 — haven't we sold you yet that it's the comic of the year, if not the millennium?)

Dear Mighty Marvel Myth-Makers,

I must compliment you for the things you are doing in THOR. I loved Odin's origin and the way you explained how Ragnarok came about without harming the Asgard we know and love. One thing I didn't go for was the display of Gungnir's power. If Odin could re-create the gods from chessmen, couldn't he destroy them just as easily? Still, I liked the idea of the chessmen.

One last thing, when Alberich the Dwarf grabbed the Rhinegold on page 22, don't you think it was a little corny to have the caption, "He goes for the gold!"? Most of us have seen that commercial, you know.

Nicky DeStefano
1224 East 59th St.
Brooklyn, NY 11234

Well, gee, Nicky, all of our lines can't be literary allusions. We hope one reference to a beer commercial can be forgiven. As for the chessmen, we kind of liked the idea, too, especially since it was derived from actual Norse myth. (See, for instance, *Gods of the North* by Brian Branston, page 288.) As for the gods's dependency on Odin for their power, just wait till you see what Odin does in THOR #300. (That's another plug, but who's keeping track?)

And since the order of the day would appear to be questions, here's yet another interesting one...

Dear Roy,

Now that you've reopened the subject of the creation of Asgard and Earth, I have but one question. How does Eternity fit into the scheme of things? In DR. STRANGE #13, Eternity takes credit for the creation of mankind: "Over the eons I advanced them (Earth denizens) from one cell to two, to many, to plants, to creatures, to fish, to mammals, to primates, to man!" Well...?

Steven Chavez
6470 N. 54th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53223

Not to worry, Steven. Since Eternity is the spirit of the entire universe, "he" could take credit for any event that happens within his "organic" whole, since everything is a part of him. Savvy? (Congratulations are in order — I managed to go one whole answer without finding a way to mention THOR #300! Oops.)

Mark Gruenwald