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THE
MIGHTY

THOR

**FIRELORD'S
FINAL BATTLE!**



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!**

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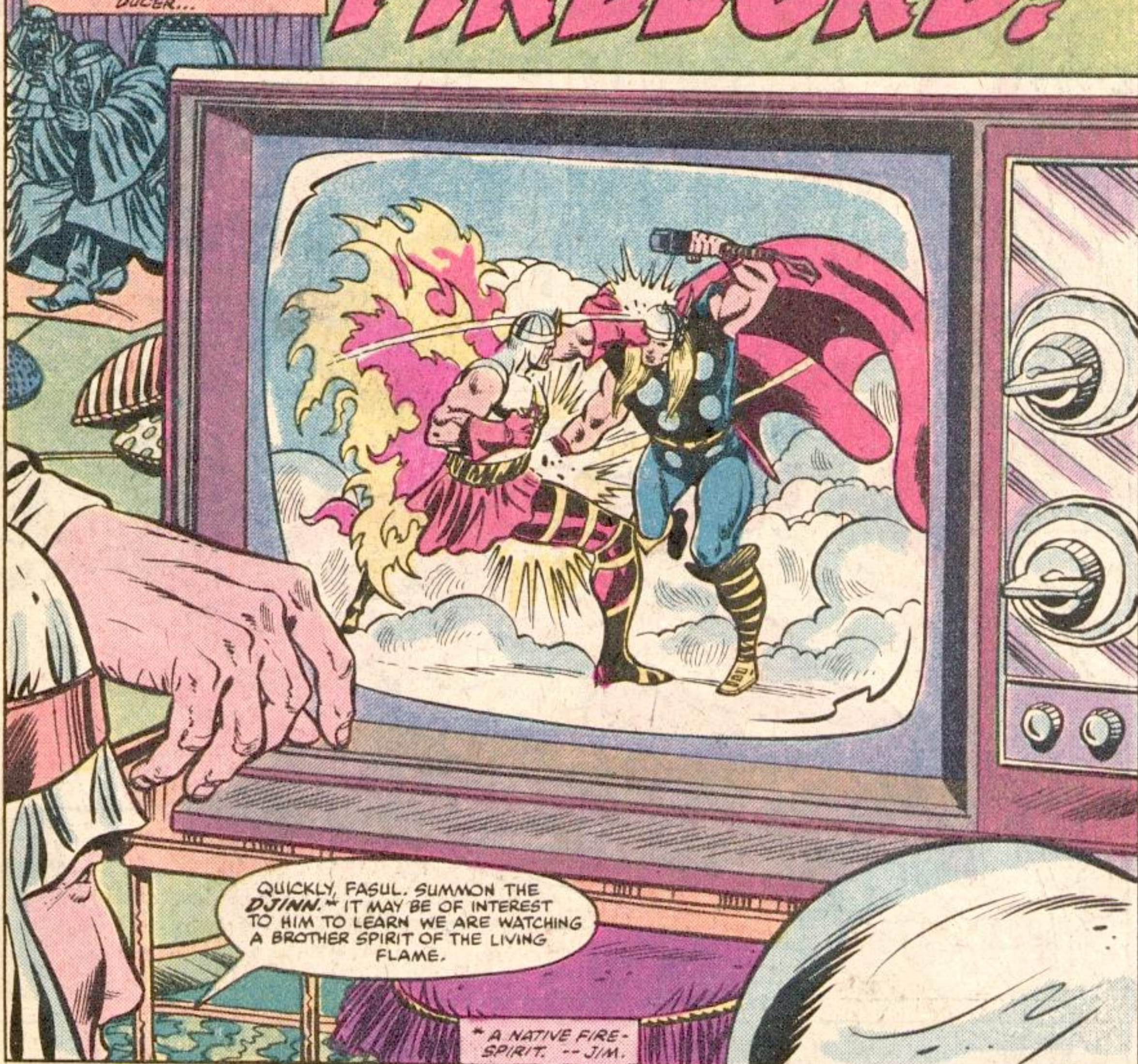
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ROUSSOS
COLORS

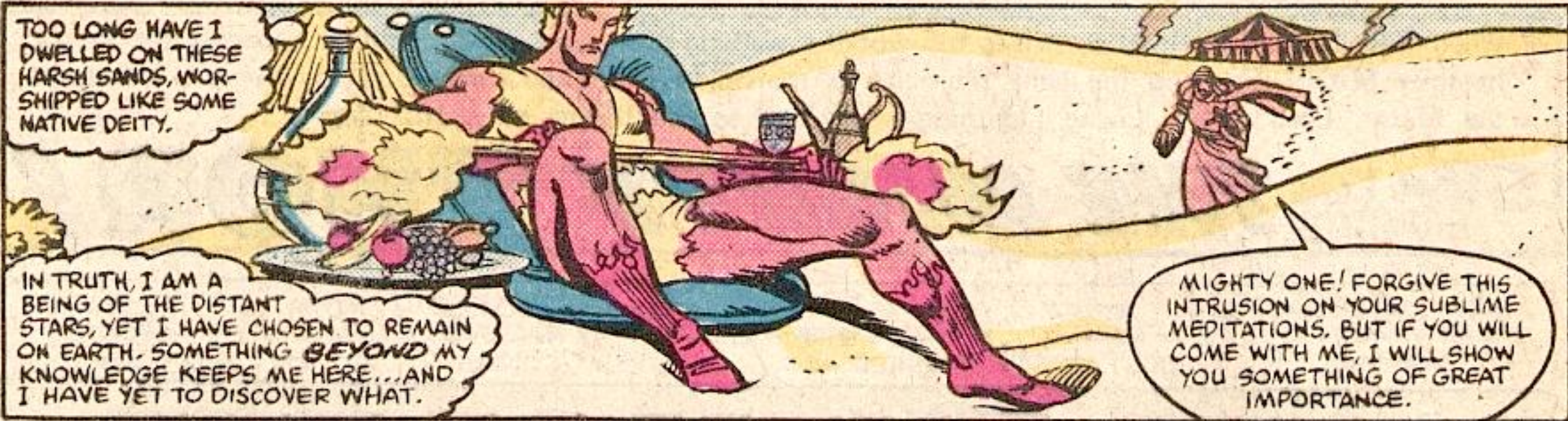
JIM
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SAUDI ARABIA: A LAND OF STARK CONTRASTS, WHERE EVEN A PRIMITIVE NOMADIC TRIBE MAY POSSESS A BATTERY-POWERED EXAMPLE OF THE WESTERN TECHNOLOGY WHICH HAS ENTERED THEIR SIMPLE LIVES SINCE THAT COUNTRY BECAME A MAJOR PETROLEUM PRODUCER...

FURY OF THE FIRELORD!

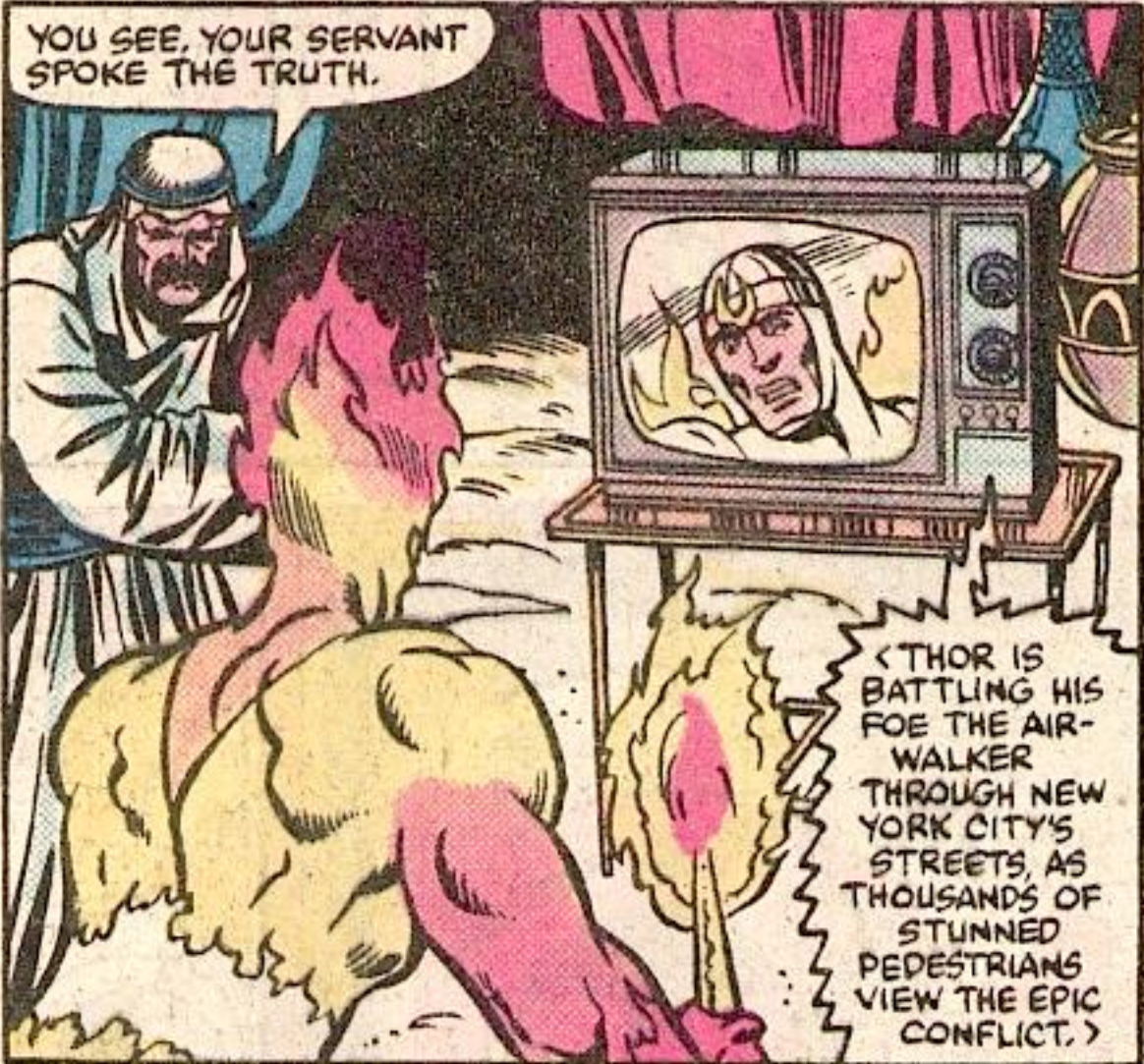




TOO LONG HAVE I DWELLED ON THESE HARSH SANDS, WORSHIPPED LIKE SOME NATIVE DEITY.

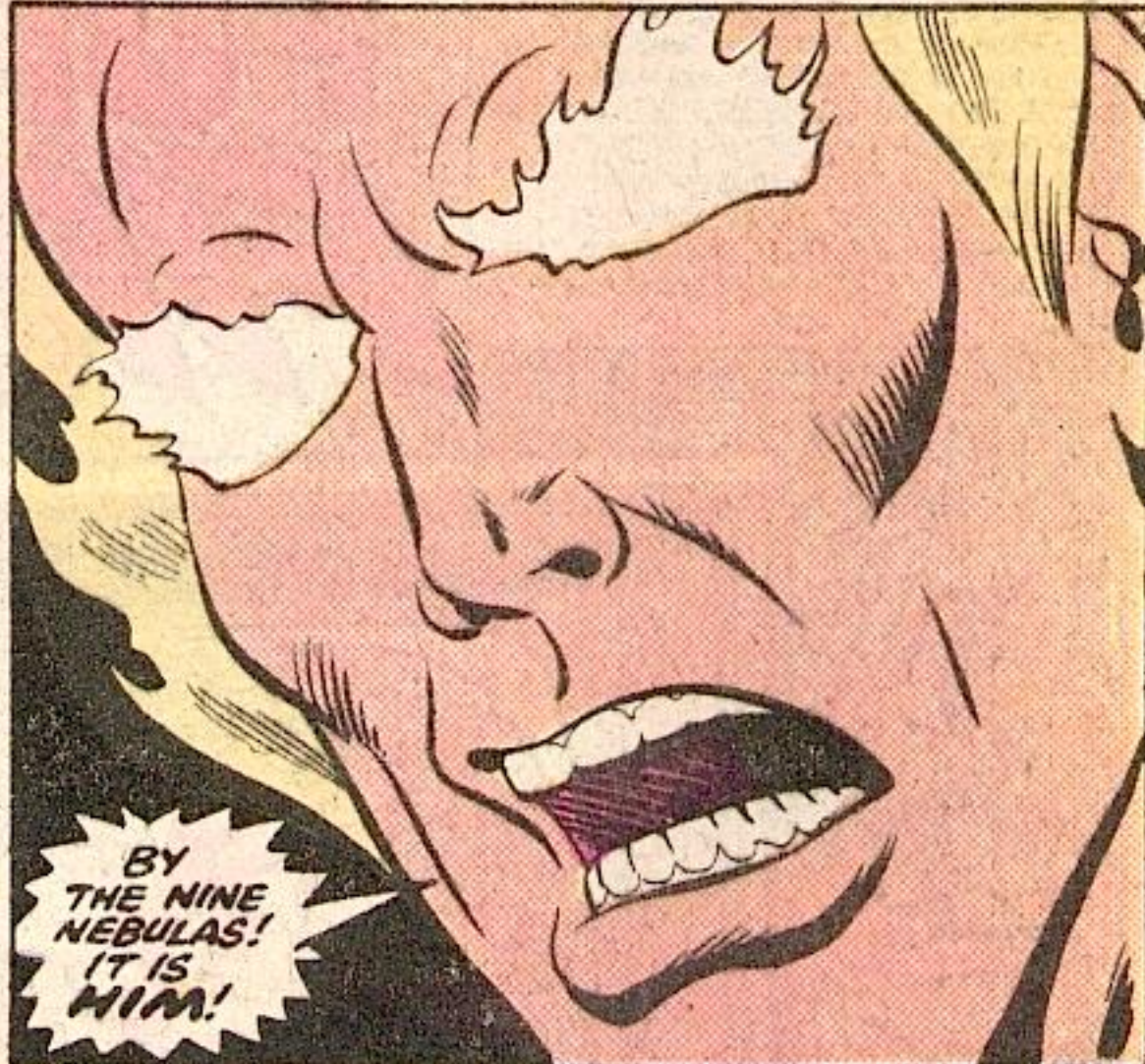
IN TRUTH, I AM A BEING OF THE DISTANT STARS, YET I HAVE CHOSEN TO REMAIN ON EARTH. SOMETHING BEYOND MY KNOWLEDGE KEEPS ME HERE... AND I HAVE YET TO DISCOVER WHAT.

MIGHTY ONE! FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION ON YOUR SUBLIME MEDITATIONS. BUT IF YOU WILL COME WITH ME, I WILL SHOW YOU SOMETHING OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.

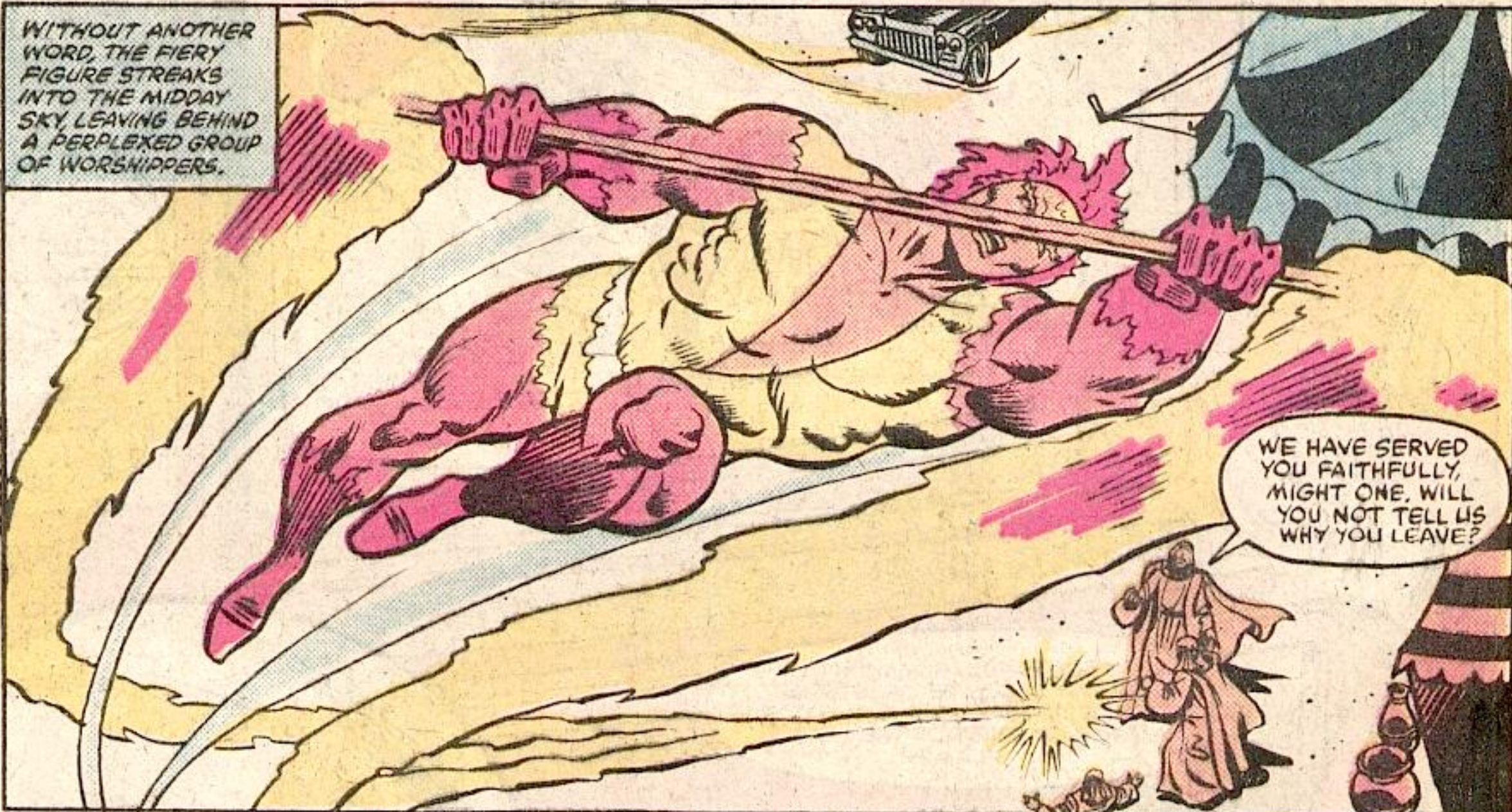


YOU SEE, YOUR SERVANT SPOKE THE TRUTH.

<THOR IS BATTLING HIS FOE THE AIR-WALKER THROUGH NEW YORK CITY'S STREETS, AS THOUSANDS OF STUNNED PEDESTRIANS VIEW THE EPIC CONFLICT.>



BY THE NINE NEBULAS! IT IS HIM!



WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, THE FIERY FIGURE STREAKS INTO THE MIDDAY SKY LEAVING BEHIND A PERPLEXED GROUP OF WORSHIPPERS.

WE HAVE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY, MIGHT ONE, WILL YOU NOT TELL US WHY YOU LEAVE?

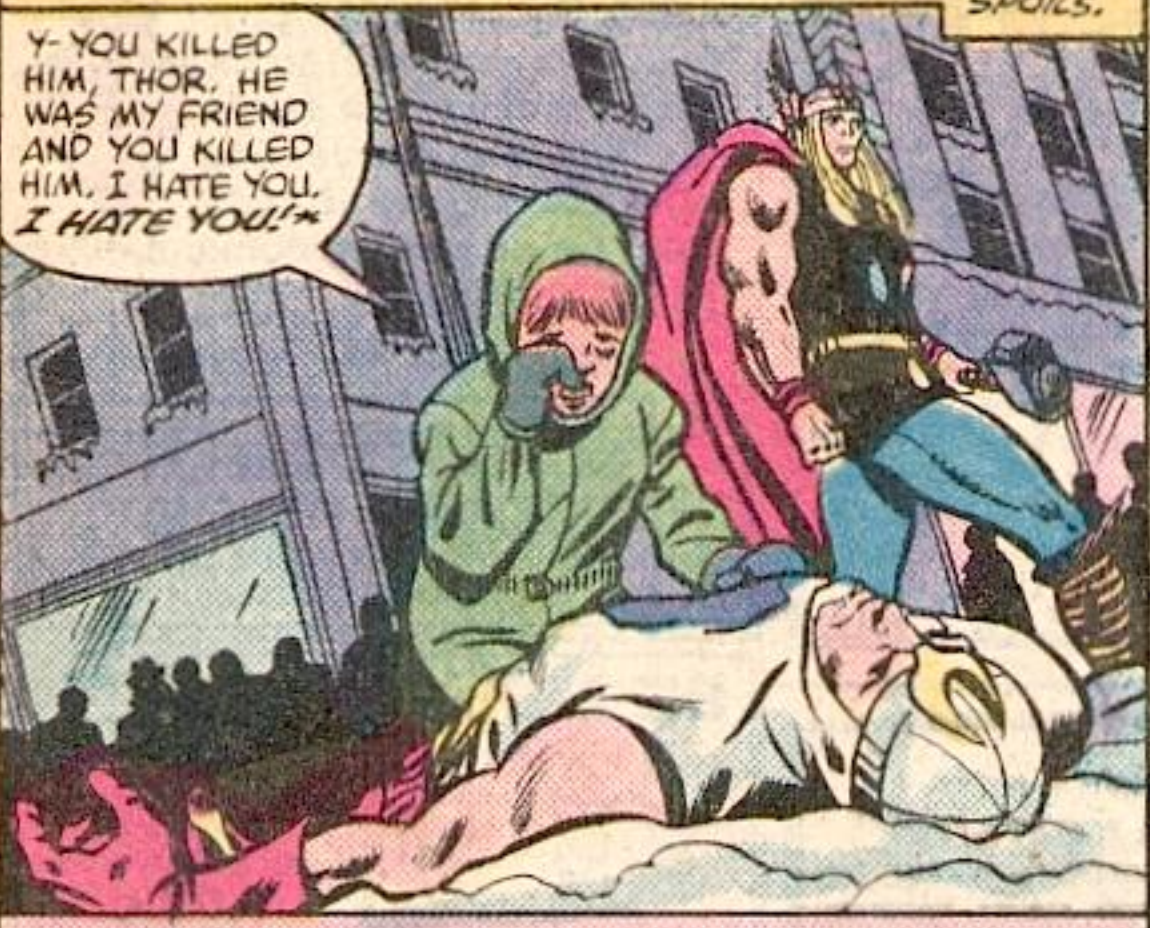


HE DID NOT SPEAK BEFORE HE LEFT. HAVE WE WORSHIPPED THIS GOD WELL ENOUGH, HARIB?

PERHAPS, FASIL, THAT IS OUR PROBLEM. WE HAVE WORSHIPPED THIS GOD TOO WELL... FAR TOO WELL.

DESPITE THE ALIEN'S BLINDING SPEED, THE STRUGGLE IN MANHATTAN IS OVER BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL, AND IN THIS INSTANCE, TO THE VICTORS WENT SOMETHING LESS THAN THE SPOILS.

Y- YOU KILLED HIM, THOR. HE WAS MY FRIEND AND YOU KILLED HIM. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU!*



*LAST ISSUE, THE AIR-WALKER WAS BEFRIENDED BY THE YOUNG BOY ON A FARM IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. -- J.S.

DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD, THOR. YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO. IN THIS LINE OF WORK, SOMEONE ALWAYS GETS HURT-- ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.



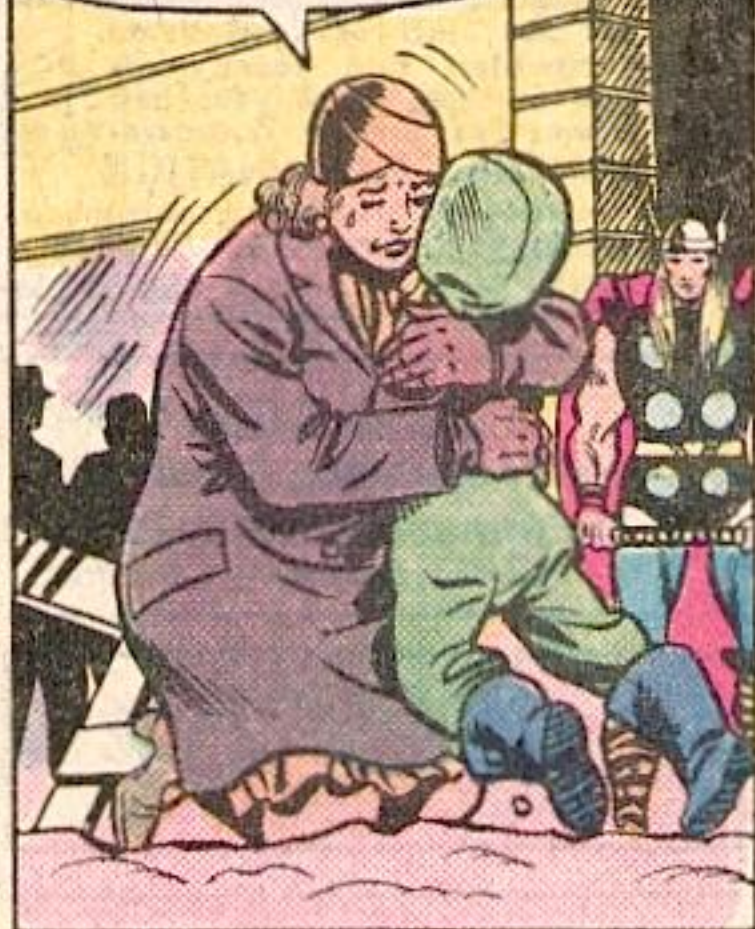
'TIS TRUE, OFFICER, BUT TO SUFFER THE ENMITY OF ONE SO YOUNG IS NEW TO ME. I LIKE IT NOT.

STAND BACK, LADY. THIS BARRIER'S HERE FOR A REASON.

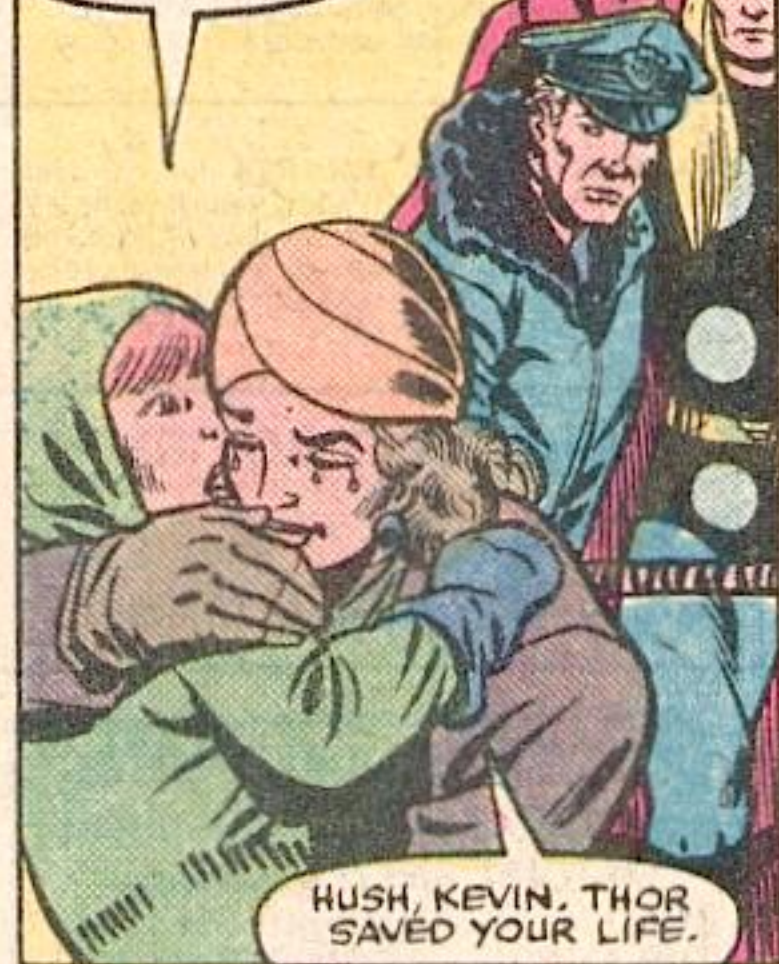


BUT THAT'S MY SON. PLEASE-- YOU MUST LET ME THROUGH.

OH, KEVIN--KEVIN! I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN. WHEN THAT HORRIBLE CREATURE CARRIED YOU AWAY INTO THE SKY-- OH, MY BABY!



DON'T WORRY, MOM. HE WASN'T GONNA HURT ME. THOR'S THE BAD GUY.



HUSH, KEVIN. THOR SAVED YOUR LIFE.

OKAY, THE MAYOR WANTS YOU TO TAKE TEMPORARY CHARGE OF THIS CHARACTER, THOR. CAN YOU HANDLE IT?



I SHALL REMOVE HIM IMMEDIATELY TO THE AVENGERS MANSION FOR EXAMINATION.



HEY, GOLDILOCKS. LOOKS LIKE THE HUMAN TORCH'S COMIN' IN FOR A VISIT. MAYBE THE FANTASTIC FOUR WANT A LOOK AT THIS BOZO, TOO.

BUT THE DRAMATIC FIGURE WHICH DROPS EARTHWARD IS MEMBER OF NO SUPER HERO GROUP... IS NOT EVEN OF THE HUMAN RACE. THOUGH HE IS KNOWN BY MANY NAMES ON MYRIAD WORLDS, THE ONE HE PRIZES MOST IS--



--THE FIRELORD!



GABRIEL! I HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE... YOU HAVE PERISHED AT THE HANDS OF THOR.

FIRELORD, MY FRIEND, 'TIS GOOD TO SEE THEE.



I HAVE NO WORDS OF GREETING FOR YOU, ASGARDIAN, FOR YOU HAVE SLAIN ONE I VALUED ABOVE ALL OTHERS.

REST EASY, FALLEN COMRADE. YOU SHALL BE AVENGED!



ONCE I CALLED YOU FRIEND, THUNDER GOD, BUT NO LONGER! WHATEVER BOND EXISTED BETWEEN US IS BROKEN! NOW YOU ARE THE ENEMY--



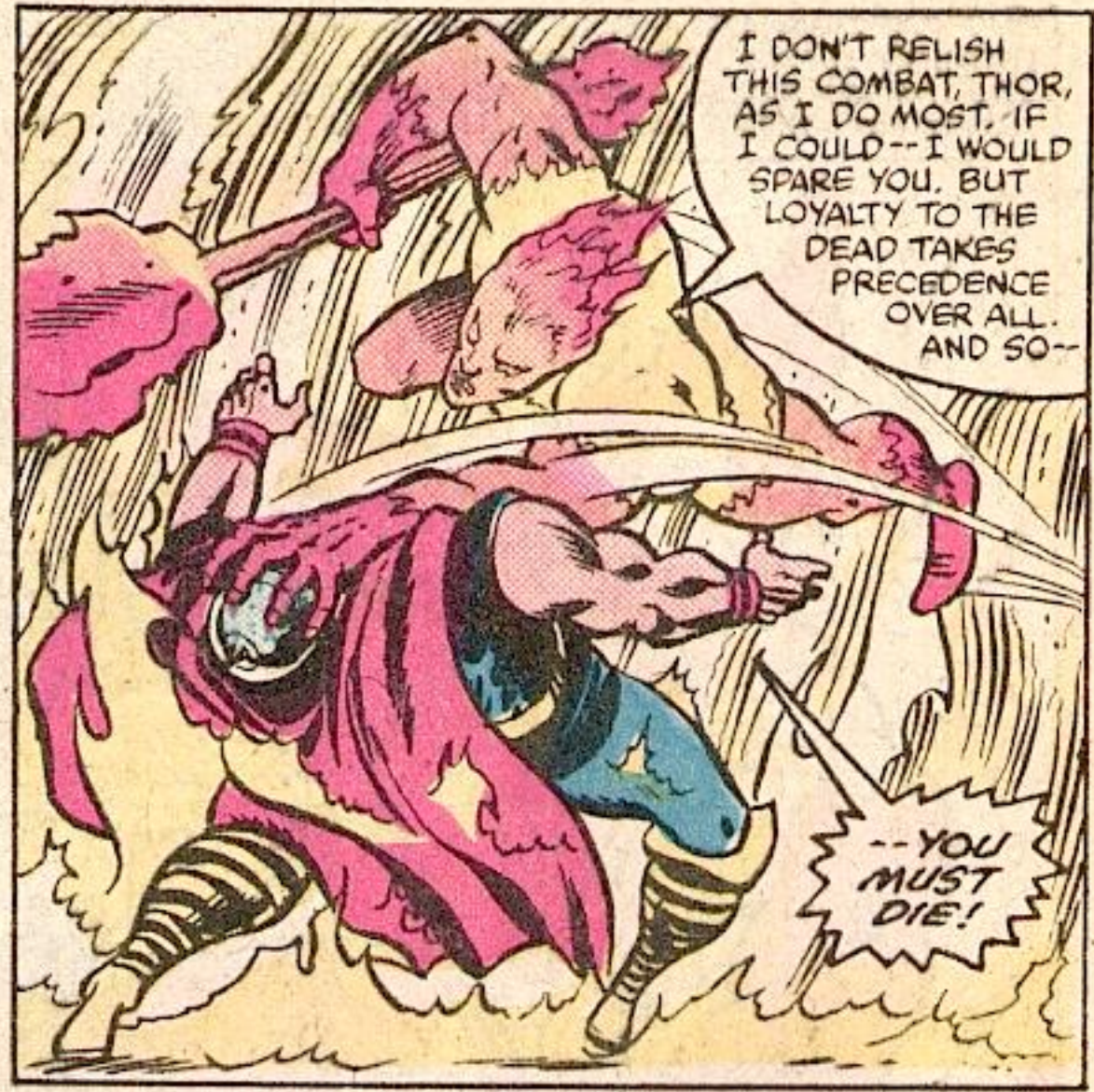
--AND YOU'LL PAY IN FULL FOR YOUR CRIME!

FWOOOSH!
FWOOOSH!



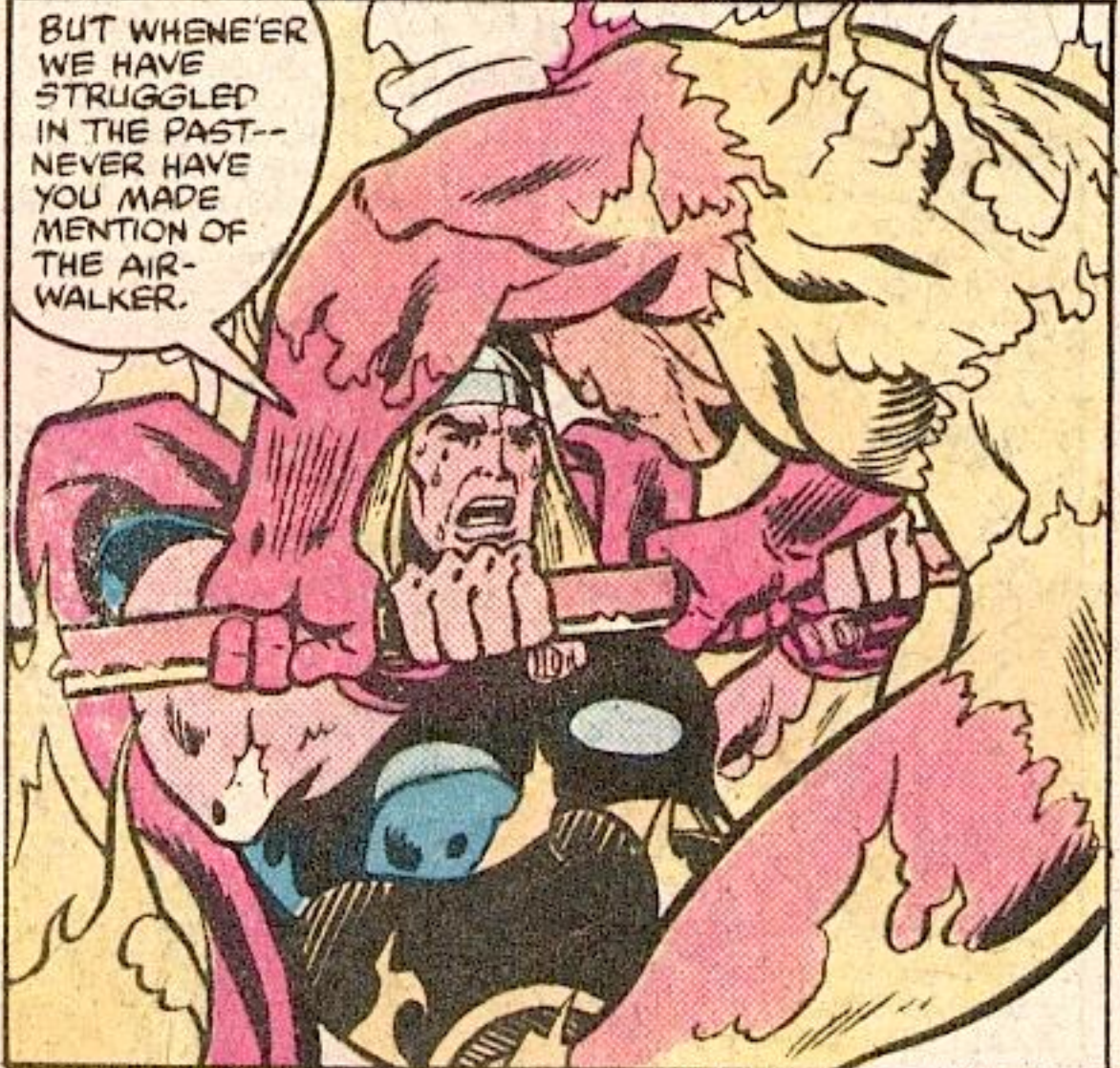
WHAT COULD HAVE OCCURRED TO THUS CHANGE FIRELORD? HE STRIKES AS IF HE REMEMBERS NOT THE ADVENTURES WE SHARED IN THE PAST.

*THOR FIRST ENCOUNTERED FIRELORD WHEN HE WAS HERALD TO THE WORLD-DEVOURING GALACTUS-- A GIANT WHO CONSUMES PLANETARY ENERGY TO SURVIVE. SINCE RELINQUISHING THAT ROLE, FIRELORD HAS REMAINED ON EARTH AND MET THOR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. -- J.S.

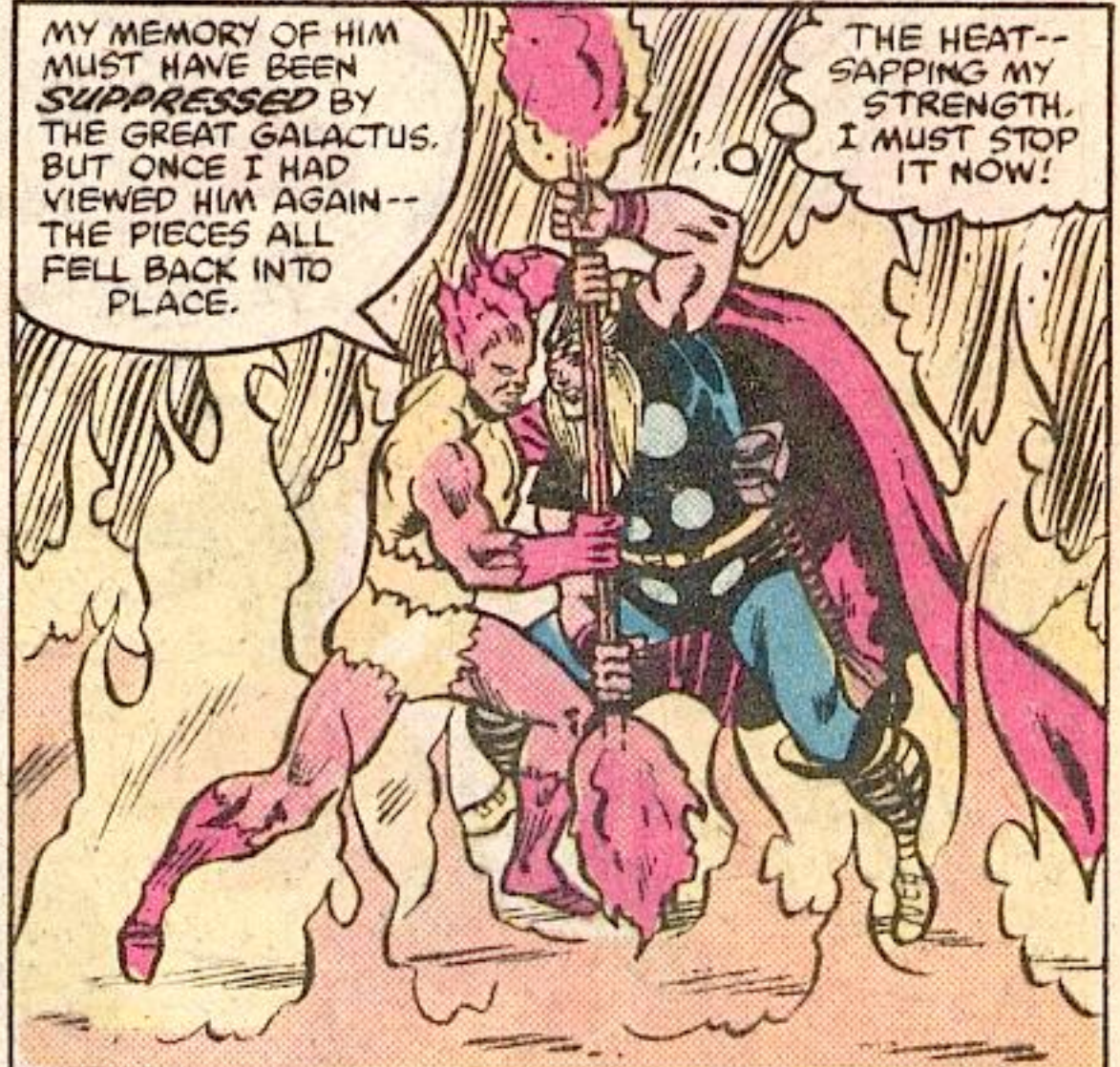


I DON'T RELISH THIS COMBAT, THOR, AS I DO MOST. IF I COULD-- I WOULD SPARE YOU. BUT LOYALTY TO THE DEAD TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ALL. AND SO--

-- YOU MUST DIE!

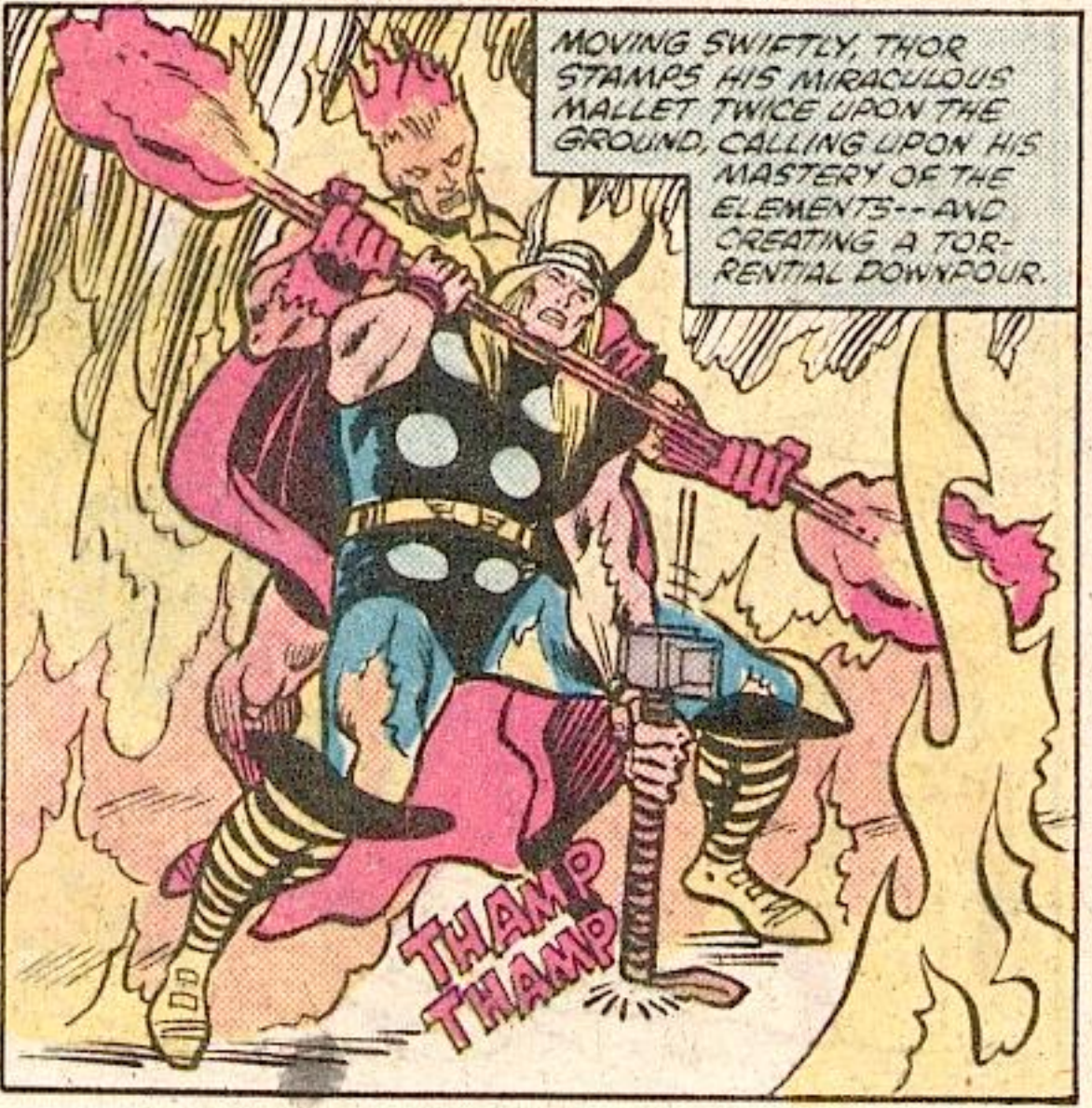


BUT WHENEVER WE HAVE STRUGGLED IN THE PAST-- NEVER HAVE YOU MADE MENTION OF THE AIR-WALKER.



MY MEMORY OF HIM MUST HAVE BEEN SUPPRESSED BY THE GREAT GALACTUS. BUT ONCE I HAD VIEWED HIM AGAIN-- THE PIECES ALL FELL BACK INTO PLACE.

THE HEAT-- SAPPING MY STRENGTH. I MUST STOP IT NOW!



MOVING SWIFTLY, THOR STAMPS HIS MIRACULOUS MALLET TWICE UPON THE GROUND, CALLING UPON HIS MASTERY OF THE ELEMENTS-- AND CREATING A TORNADAL DOWNPOUR.

THAMP THAMP



YOU'RE RESOURCEFUL, THOR. I APPLAUD THAT IN A FOE.

BUT MINE IS NOT THE PALTRY FLAMES BORN ON EARTH. MINE IS THE FIRE BIRTHED IN THE RAGING HEART OF A MILLION SUNS-- AGAINST WHICH YOU ARE HELPLESS.

ULLGH! BUT... WHAT PURPOSE WILL MY DEATH SERVE? BURRRGH!

IT WILL EASE MY CONSCIENCE... ASSUAGE THE GNAWING FRUSTRATION I HAVE INSIDE.

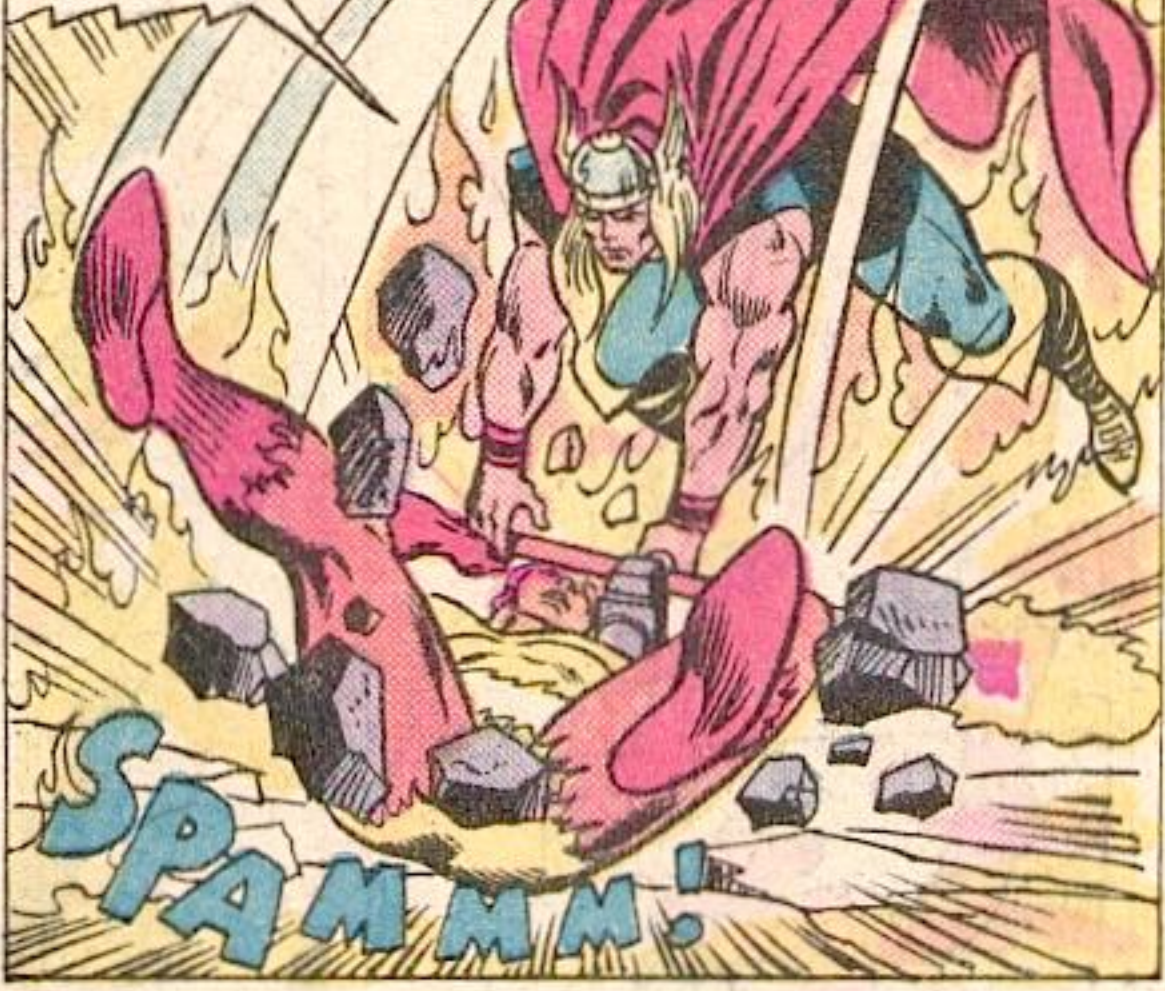


WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO KNOW YOUR LIFE IS SLIPPING FROM YOU, IMMORTAL? WHAT IS IT LIKE?



MY--LIFE IS STILL--MINE...

...AND ONE SUCH AS YOU SHALL NEVER CLAIM IT!

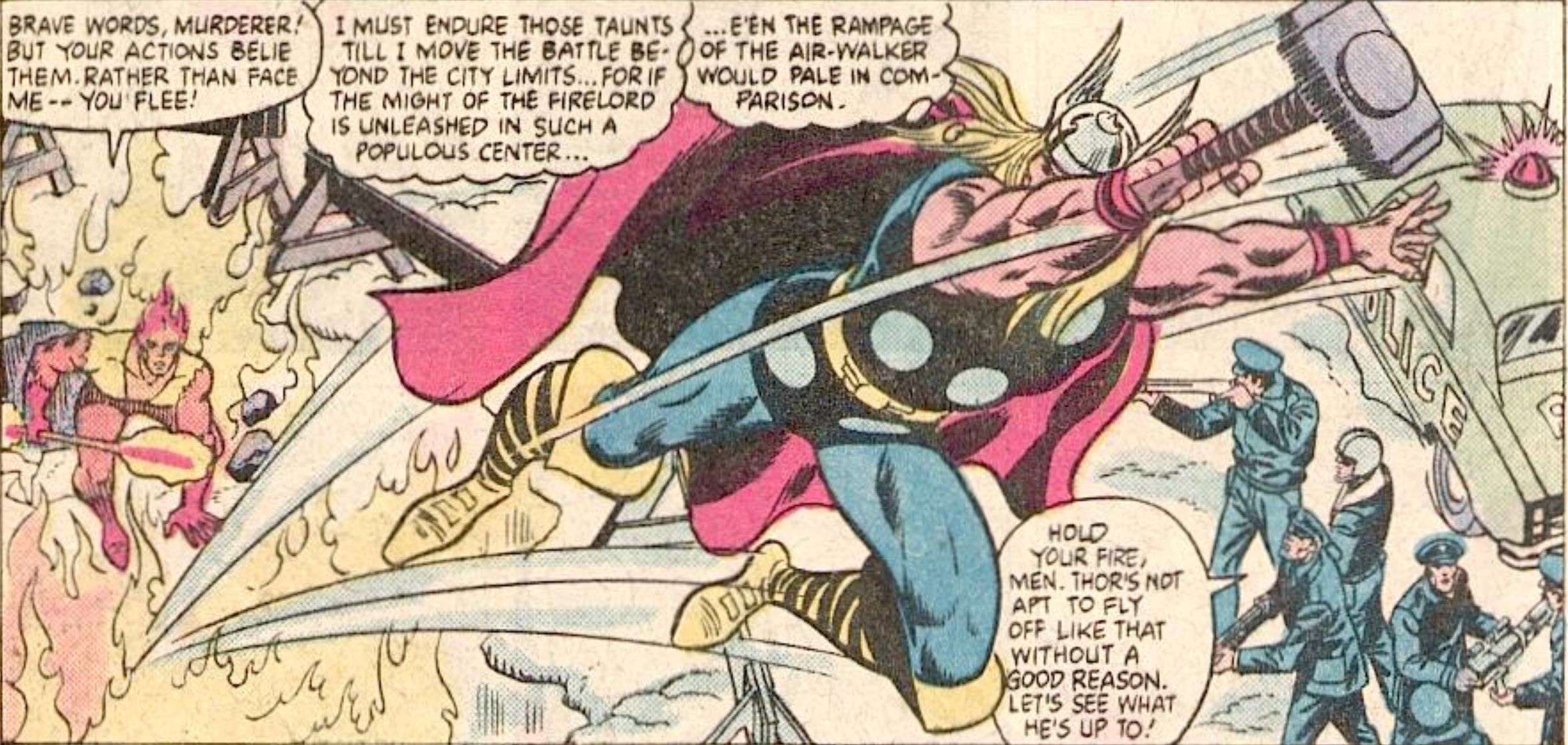


SPANNMM!

BRAVE WORDS, MURDERER! BUT YOUR ACTIONS BELIE THEM. RATHER THAN FACE ME-- YOU' FLEE!

I MUST ENDURE THOSE TAUNTS TILL I MOVE THE BATTLE BEYOND THE CITY LIMITS... FOR IF THE MIGHT OF THE FIRELORD IS UNLEASHED IN SUCH A POPULOUS CENTER...

...E'EN THE RAMPAGE OF THE AIR-WALKER WOULD PALE IN COMPARISON.

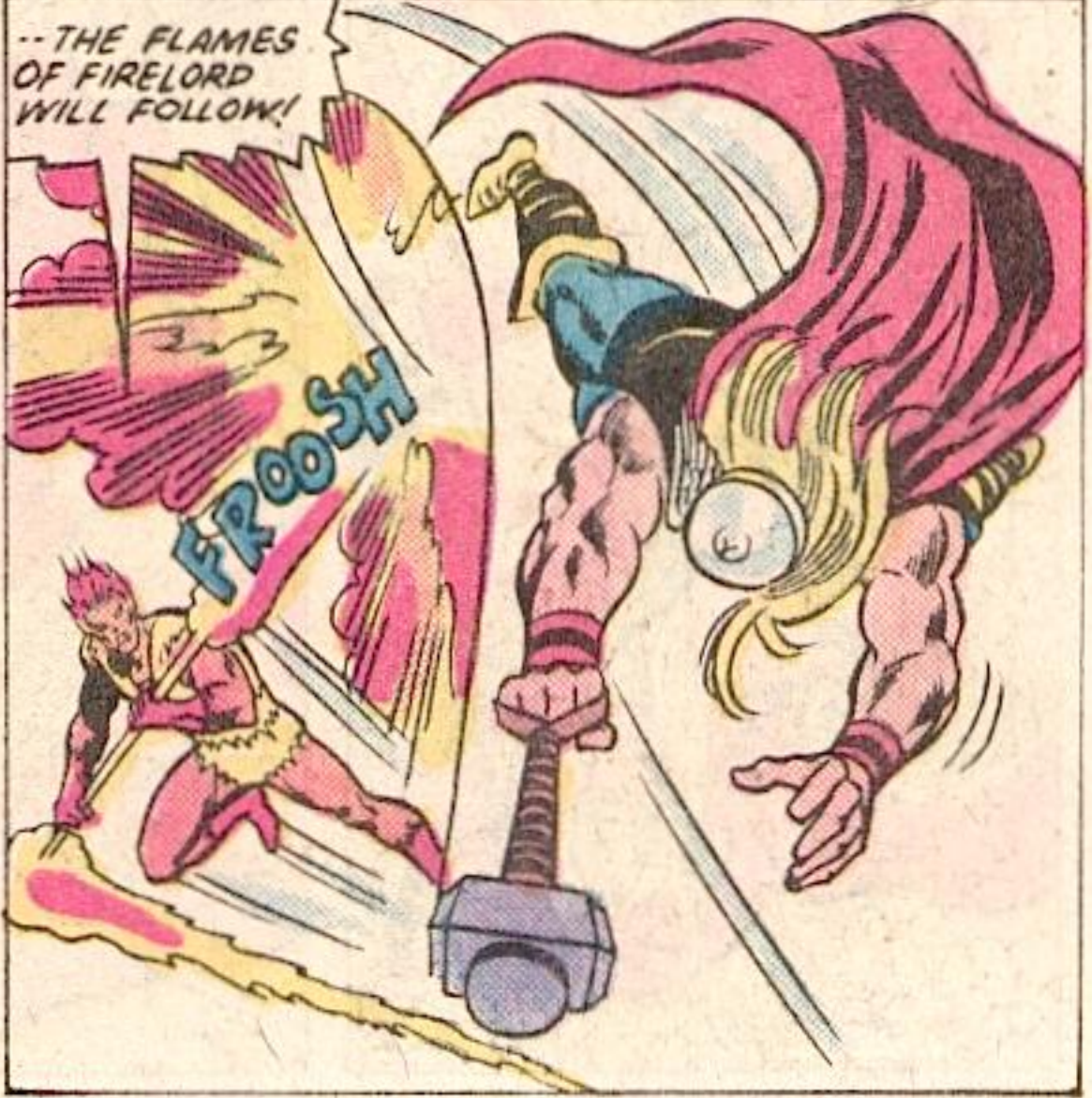


HOLD YOUR FIRE, MEN. THOR'S NOT APT TO FLY OFF LIKE THAT WITHOUT A GOOD REASON. LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT I, TOO, HAVE THE POWER OF FLIGHT... THAT NO MATTER WHERE YOUR COWARDLY ESCAPE ROUTE MAY LEAD--

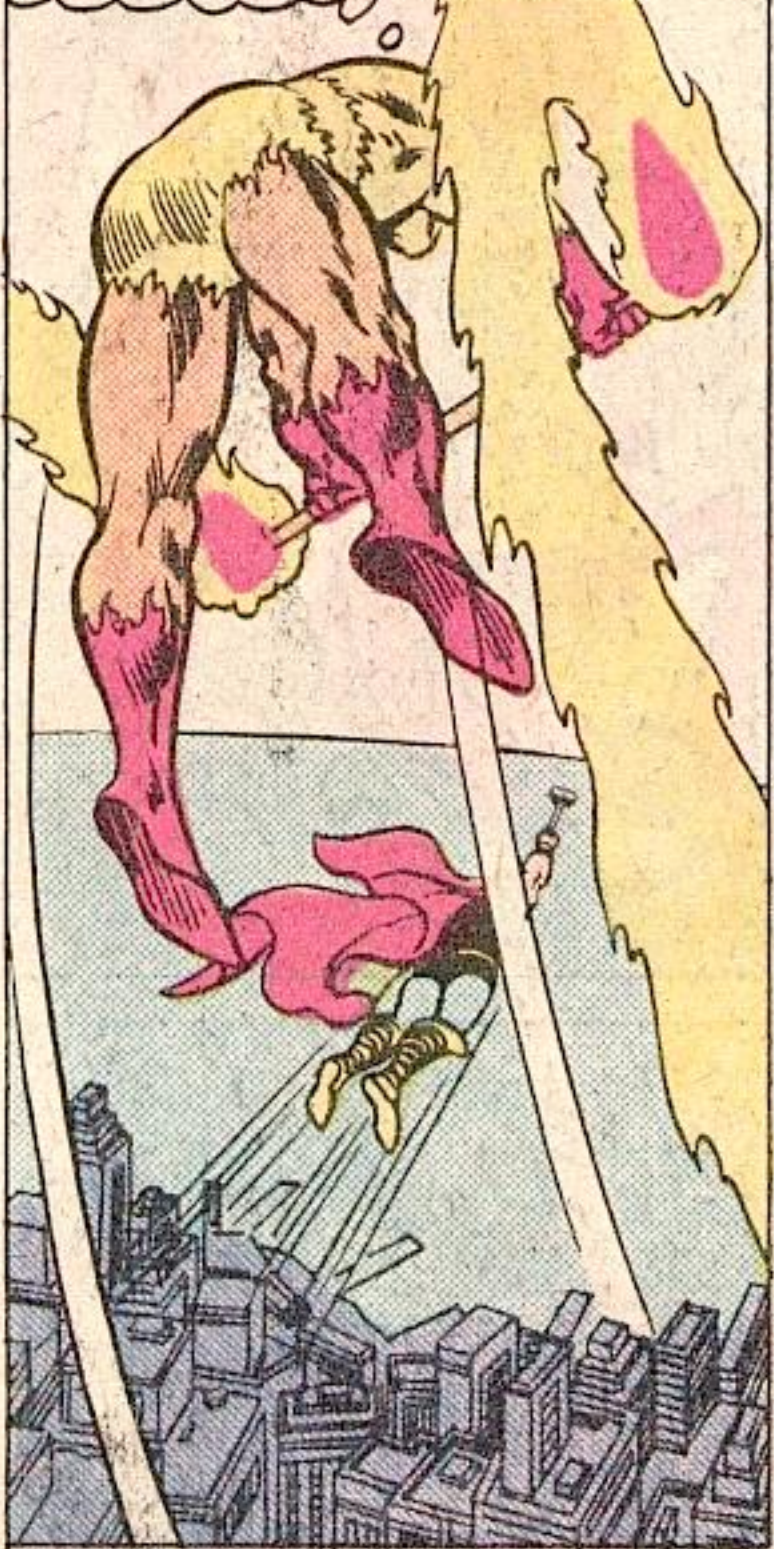


--THE FLAMES OF FIRELORD WILL FOLLOW!



FROOSH

THAT ASGARDIAN REMAINS AIRBORNE. HIS FORWARD MOMENTUM WAS TOO GREAT. BUT THERE IS YET ANOTHER TACTIC I MAY TRY.



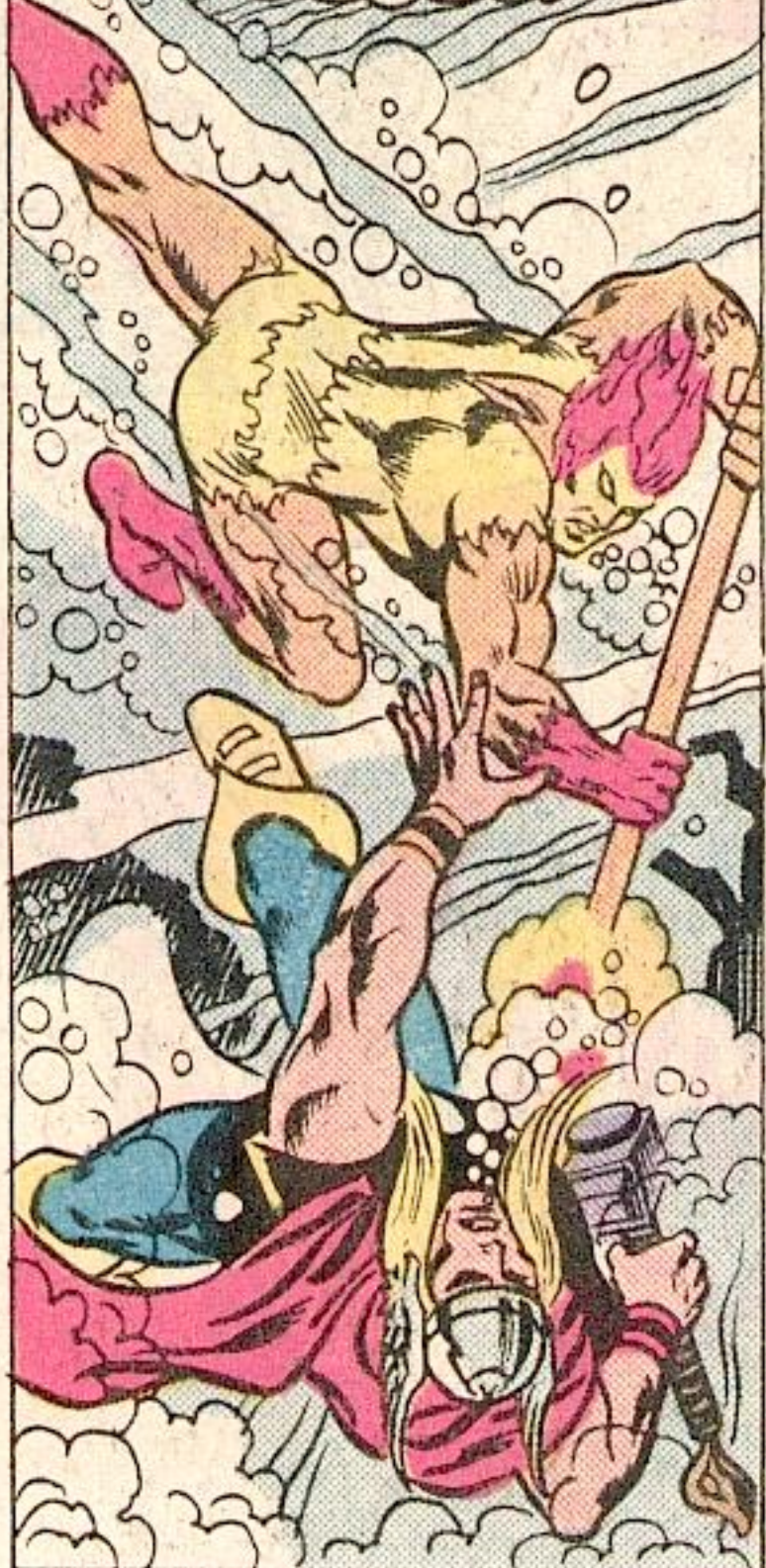
YOU ARE MINE, THOR! HOW COULD YOU HOPE TO FLEE FROM ONE WHO HAS OUTDISTANCED FLASHING COMETS-- TOYED WITH METEOR SWARMS.



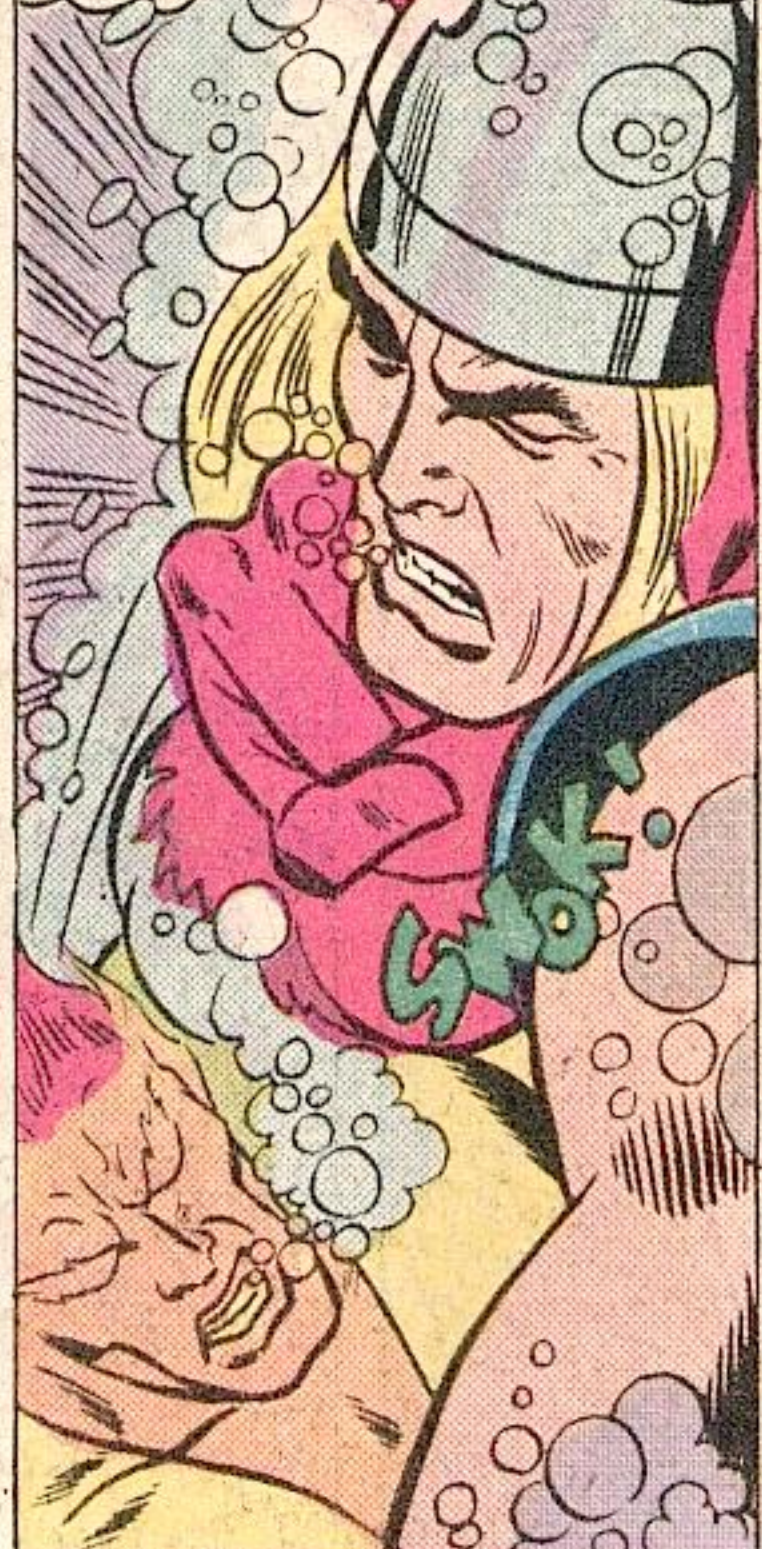
DOWN NOW, MURDERER. DOWN INTO THE WATERY DEPTHS THAT WILL BE YOUR GRAVE.



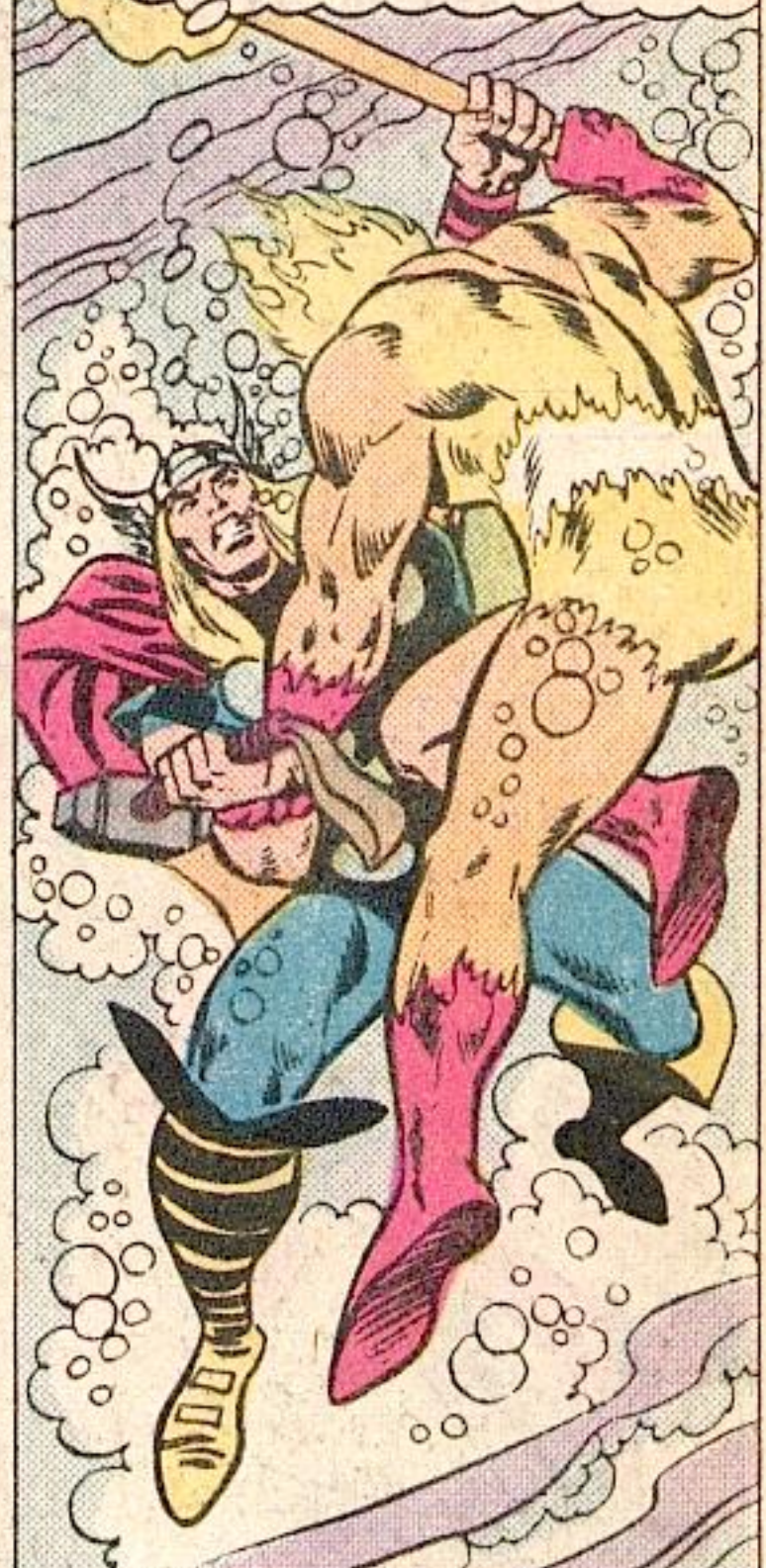
THE UNEXPECTED DESCENT HAS CAUGHT HIM OFFGUARD. HE'S DISORIENTED...

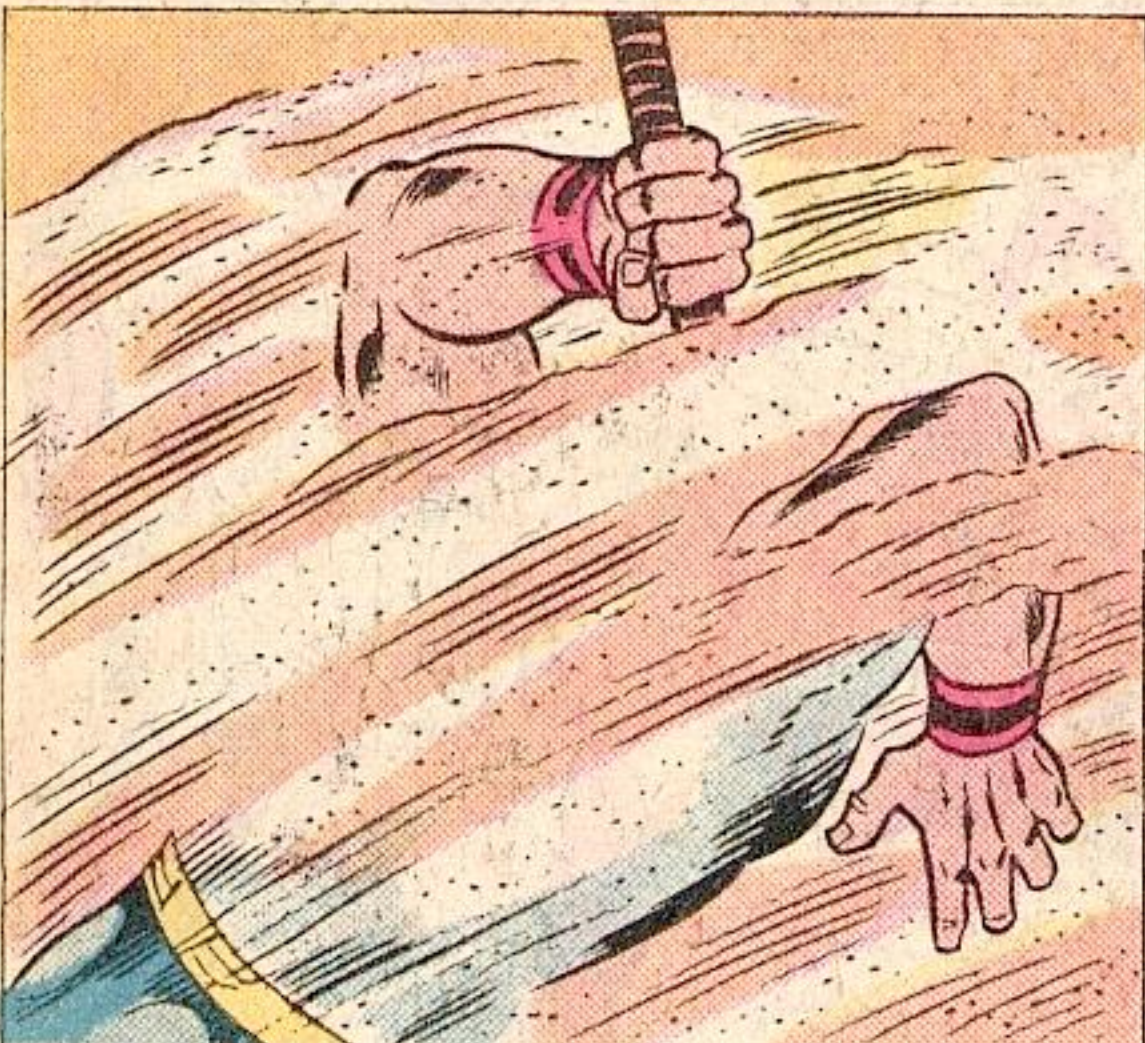
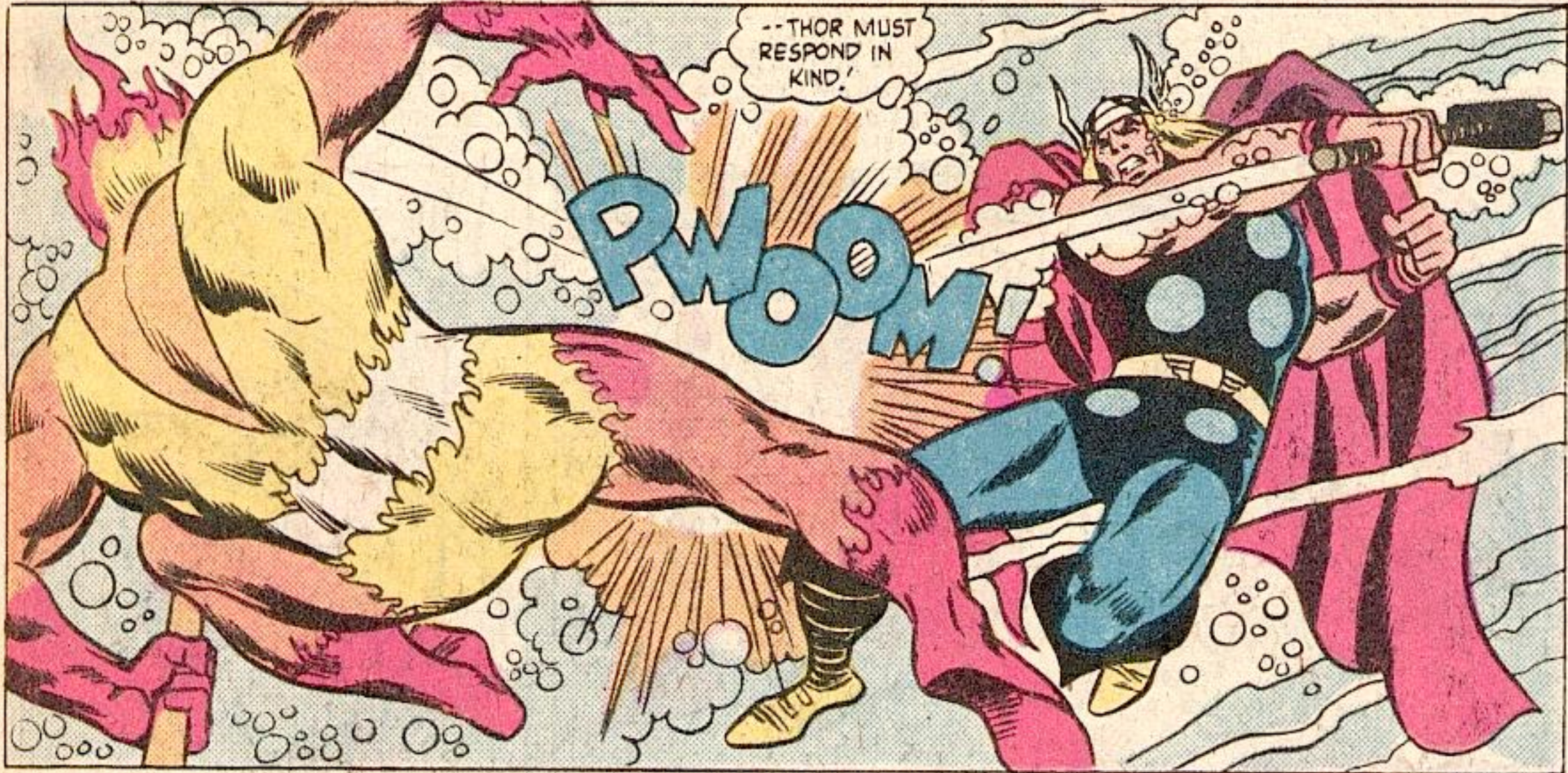


... LEAVING ME THE PERFECT CHANCE TO STRIKE!



ZOUNDS! STILL HE PASSES THE OFFENSE! TRULY IS THE FIERY ONE BERSERK! THERE BE NO CHOICE--





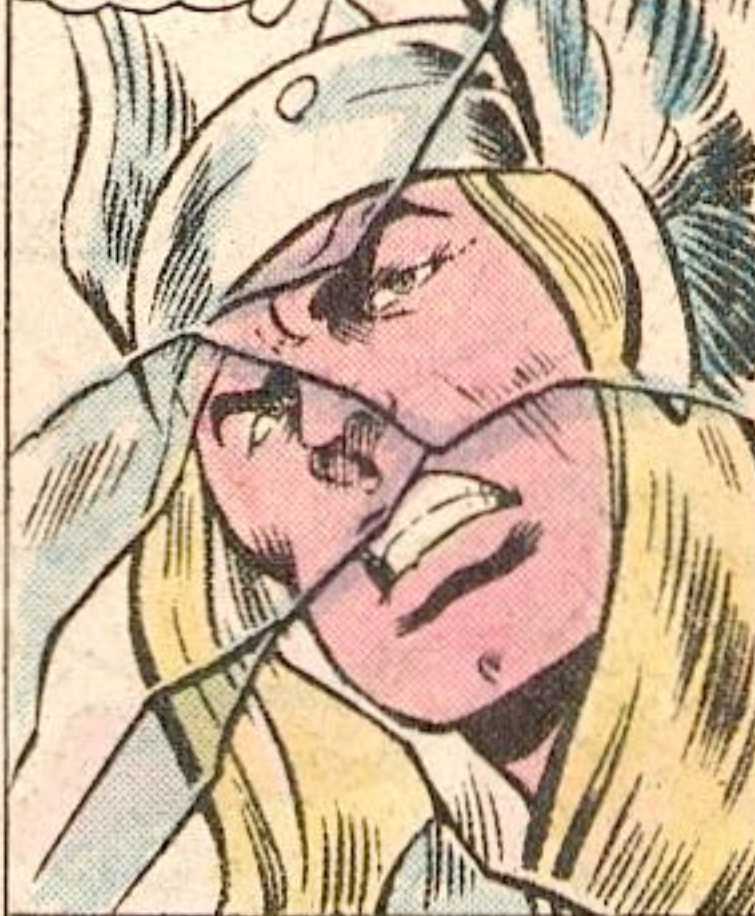
HEIMDALL'S EYES! WITH HIS FIRESTAFF HE HAS MELTED AND FUSED THE SAND PARTICLES, ENCASING ME IN A PRISON OF THICKEST GLASS.



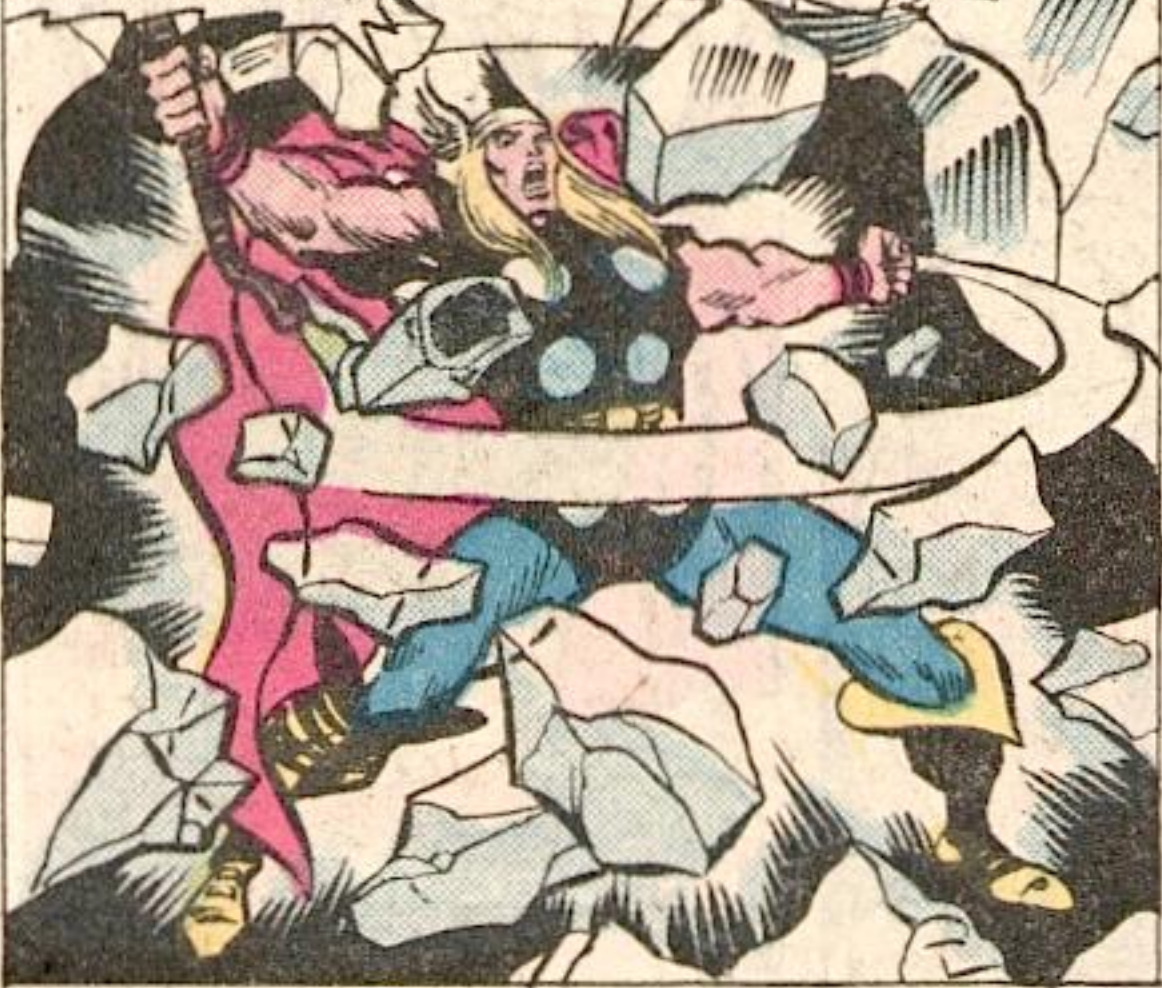
I DON'T EXPECT THAT TRANSPARENT SHELL TO HOLD YOU LONG, MURDERER... JUST TIME ENOUGH FOR THE SEARING FLAMES OF MY FIRESTAFF TO INCINERATE YOU WHERE YOU STAND IMMOBILE.



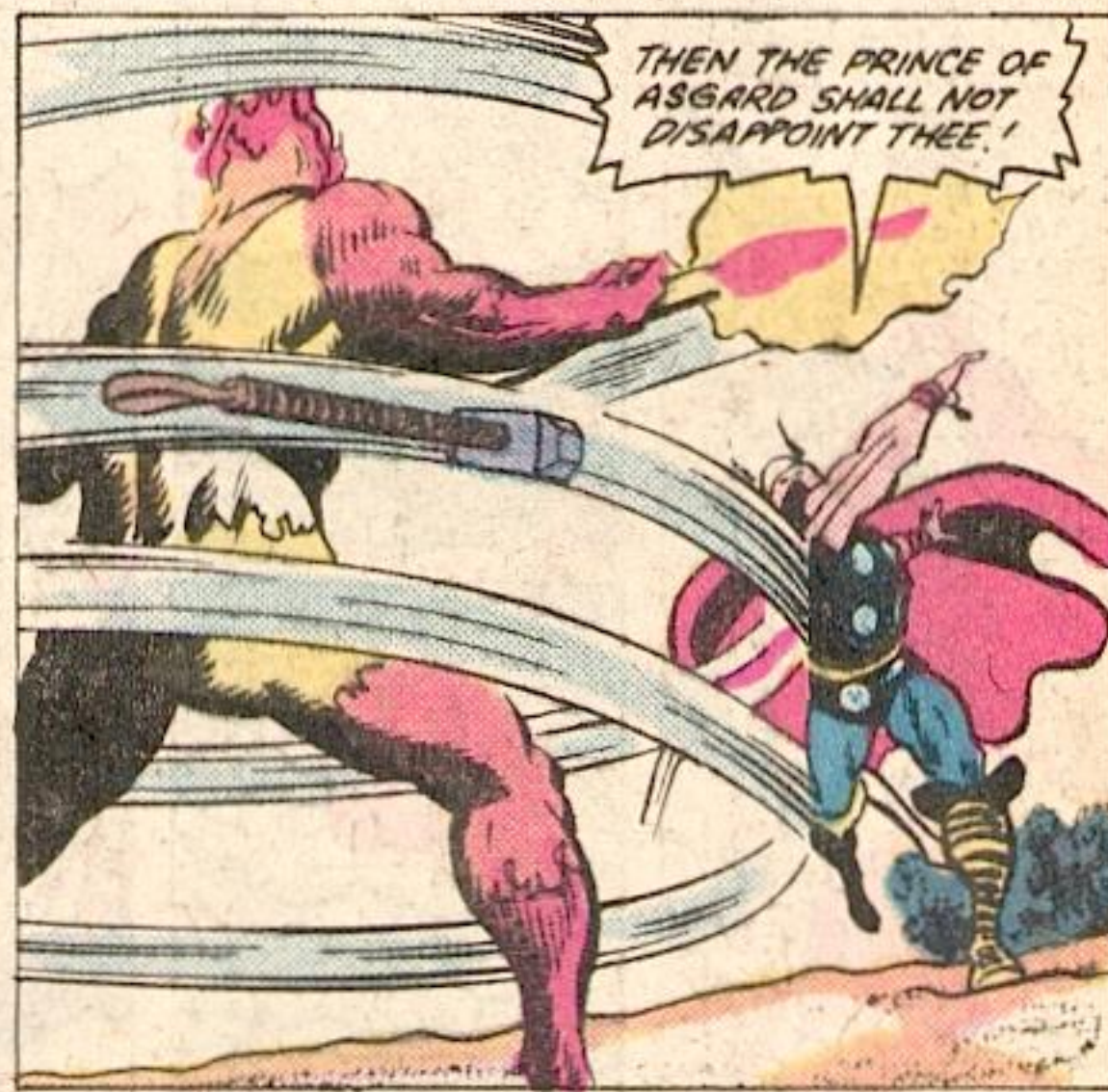
THRICE HAVE I BEEN CALLED MURDERER... I THE SON OF ALMIGHTY ODIN-- HEIR TO HIS GOLDEN THRONE. ENOW!



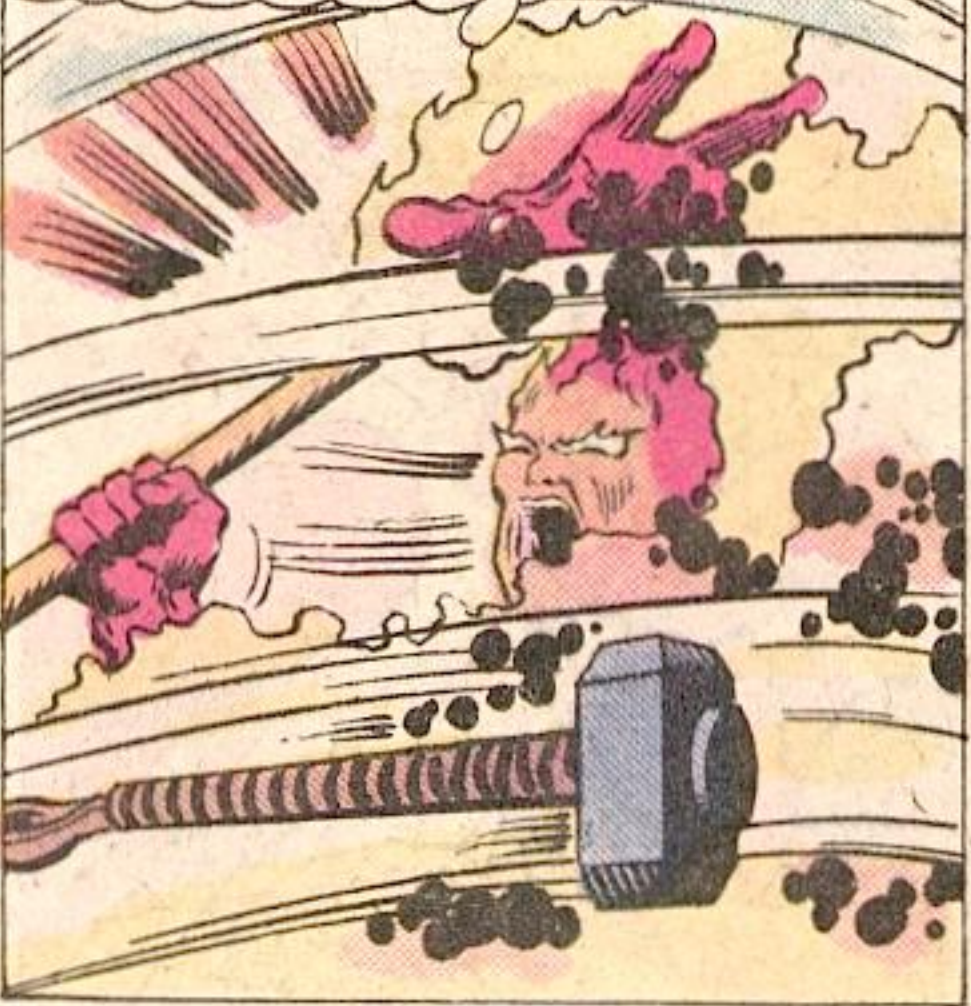
ENOW I SAY! I WEARY OF YOUR TAUNTS FIRELORD! IF 'TIS BATTLE YOU SEEK-- BATTLE YOU CRAVE--



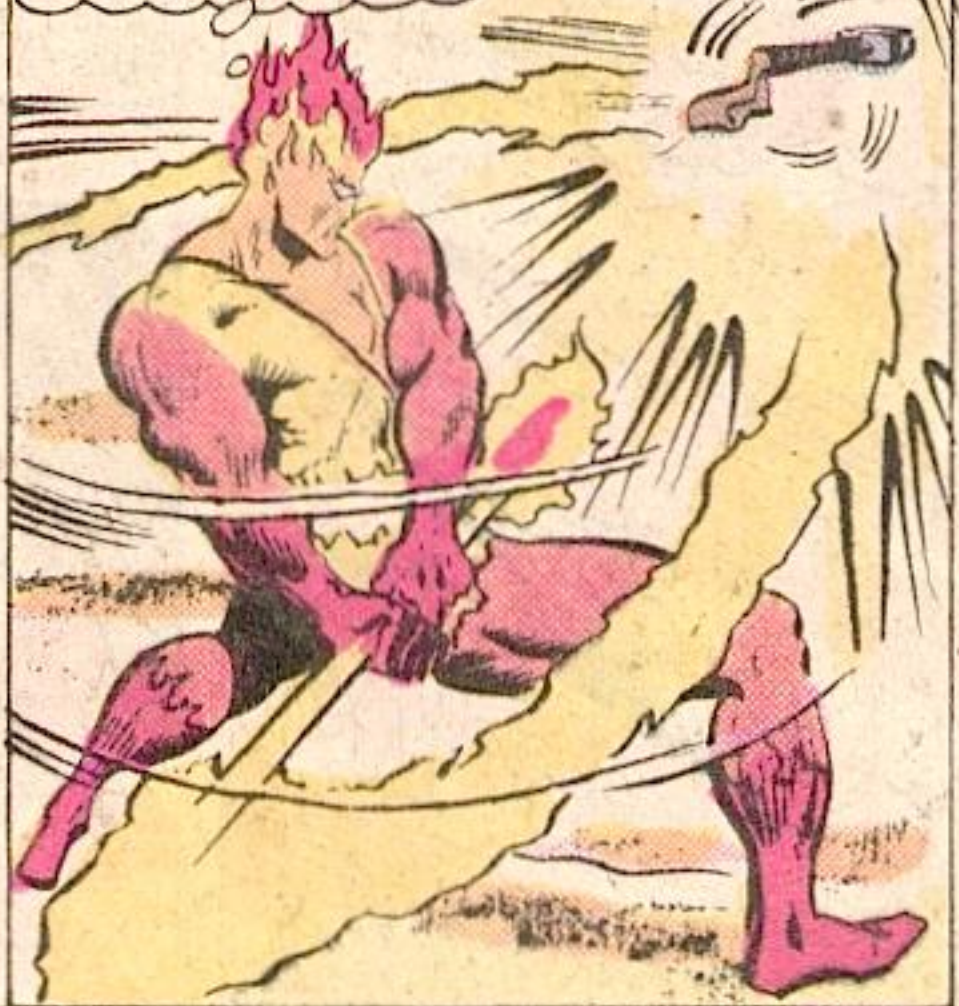
THEN THE PRINCE OF ASGARD SHALL NOT DISAPPOINT THEE!



HIS HAMMER-- IT SPINS MADLY ABOUT ME, CREATING A SWIRLING, POWER SAPPING VORTEX!



THE MALLET MUST BE INTERCEPTED IN ITS PATH BY THE MATCHLESS MIGHT OF MY FIRESTAFF!



HAVE AT THEE, VILLAIN!



I HAVE ENDURED MUCH FROM YOU, FIRELORD, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR ONCE FRIENDSHIP. BUT YOU HAVE O'ERSTEPPED THOSE BOUNDS--AND THAT SHALL BE TO THY EVER-LASTING REGRET!



THE ONLY REGRET I HAVE HATED ONE, IS THAT IT IS GABRIEL WHO LIES DEAD--NOT YOU!

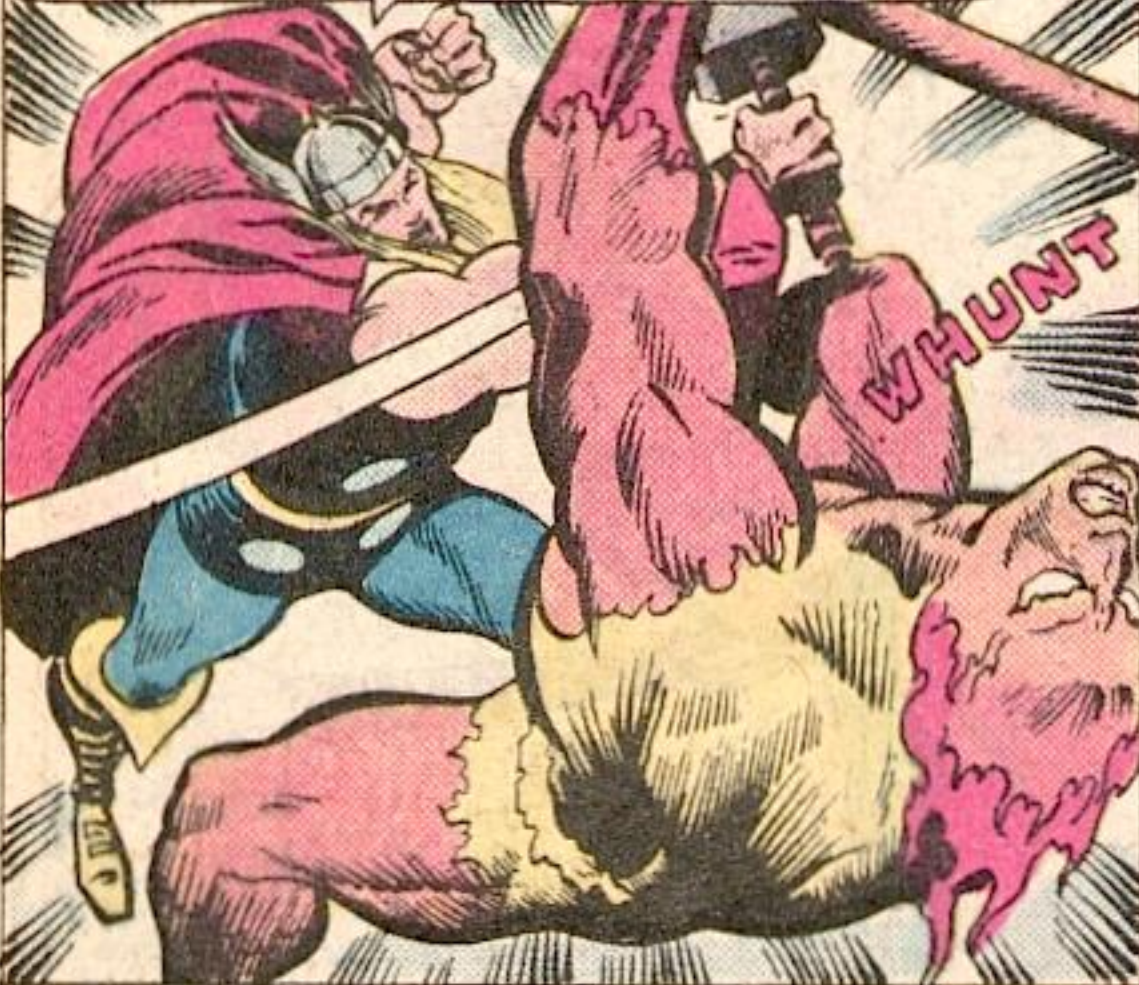
SPAX

THY WRATH IS MISPLACED. 'T WAS NO BEING OF FLESH AND BLOOD I DESTROYED, BUT A SOULLESS MACHINE... A MASS OF MERE CIRCUITS.



GABRIEL-- A MASS OF CIRCUITS-- A SOULLESS MACHINE?! LIES! ALL OF IT LIES!

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO CONVINCHE THEE? I DID BUT END THE RAMPAGE OF A ROBOT--WHO SPOKE OF THE RETURN OF THE MONSTROUS GALACTUS. I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE!



WHUNT

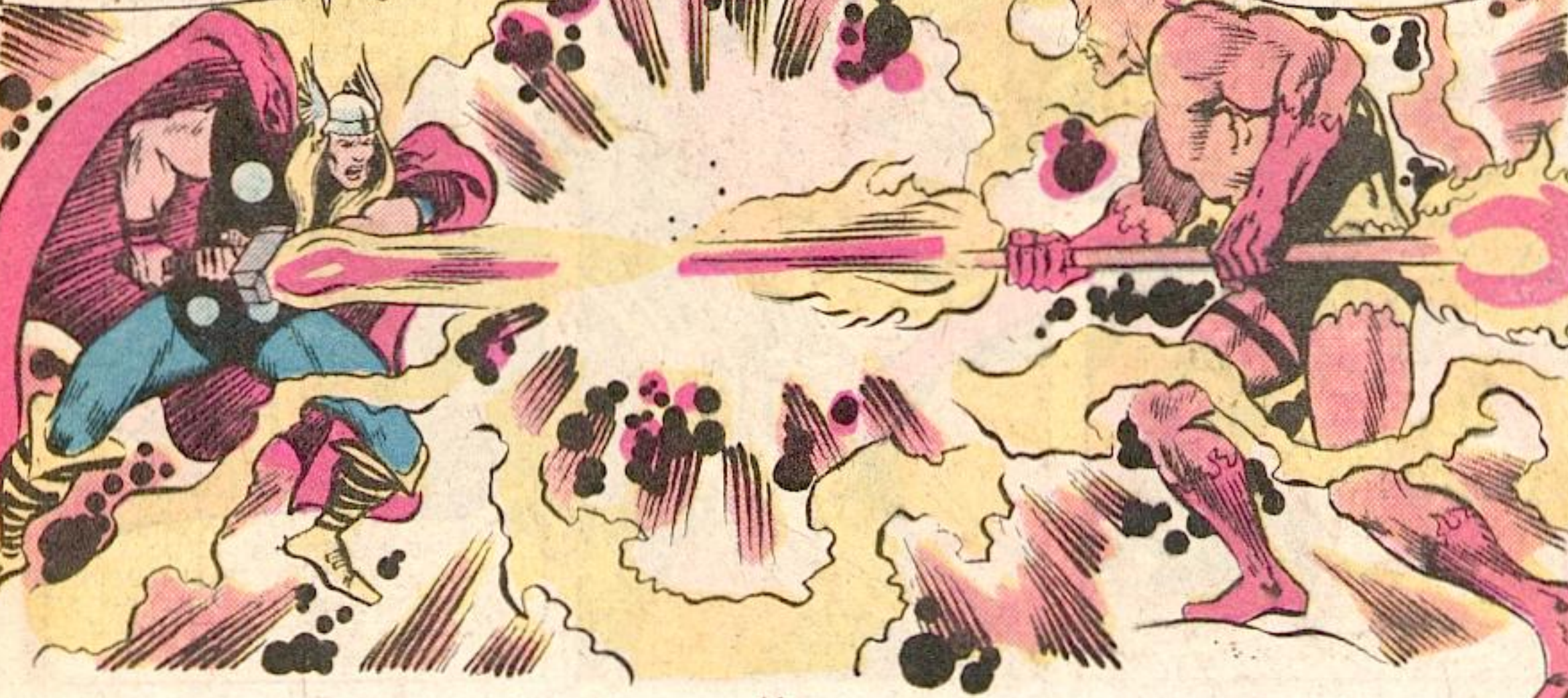
AS DO I, THUNDER GOD... AS DO I.

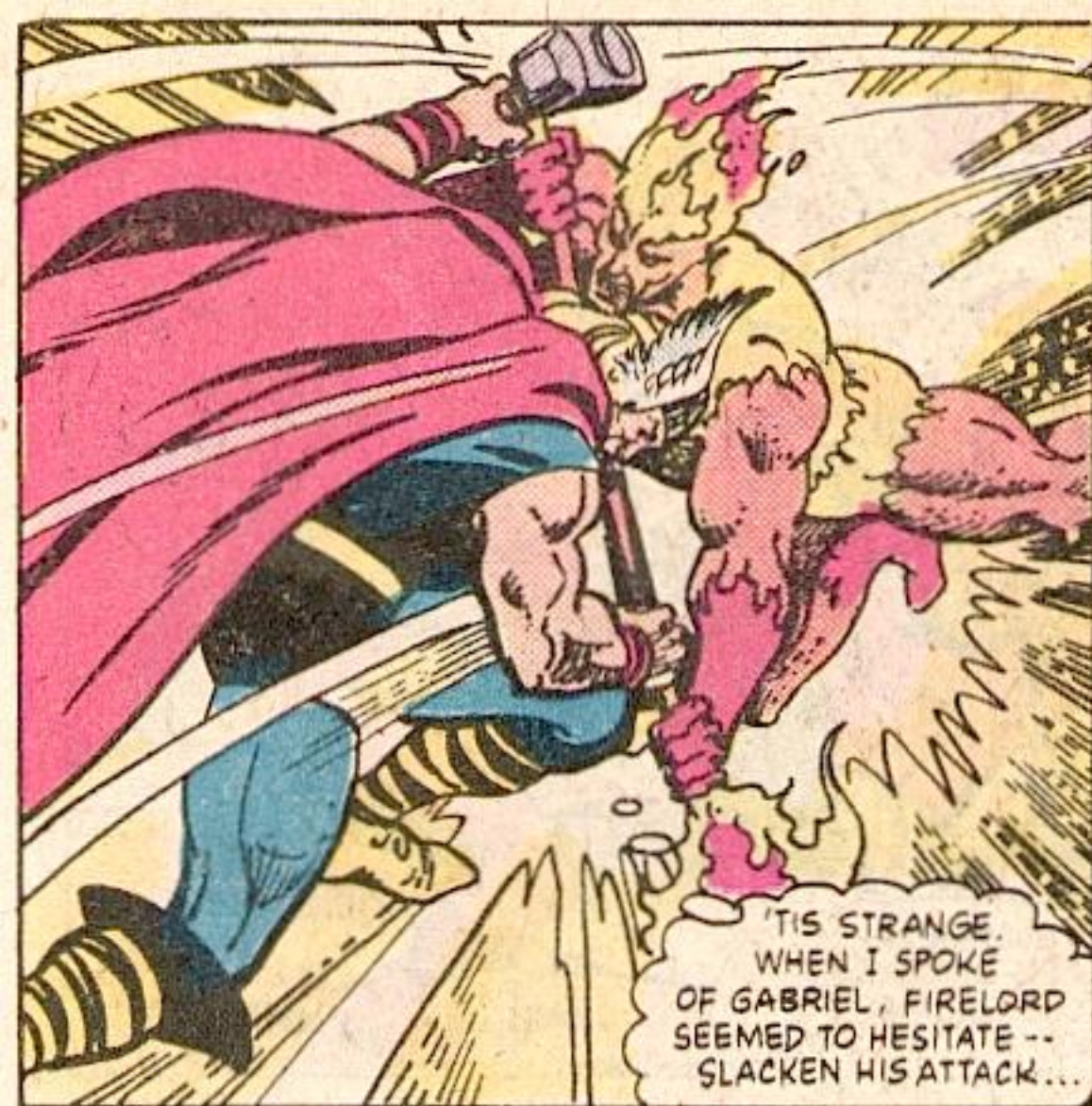


AND NOTHING YOU CAN SAY WILL CHANGE THAT!

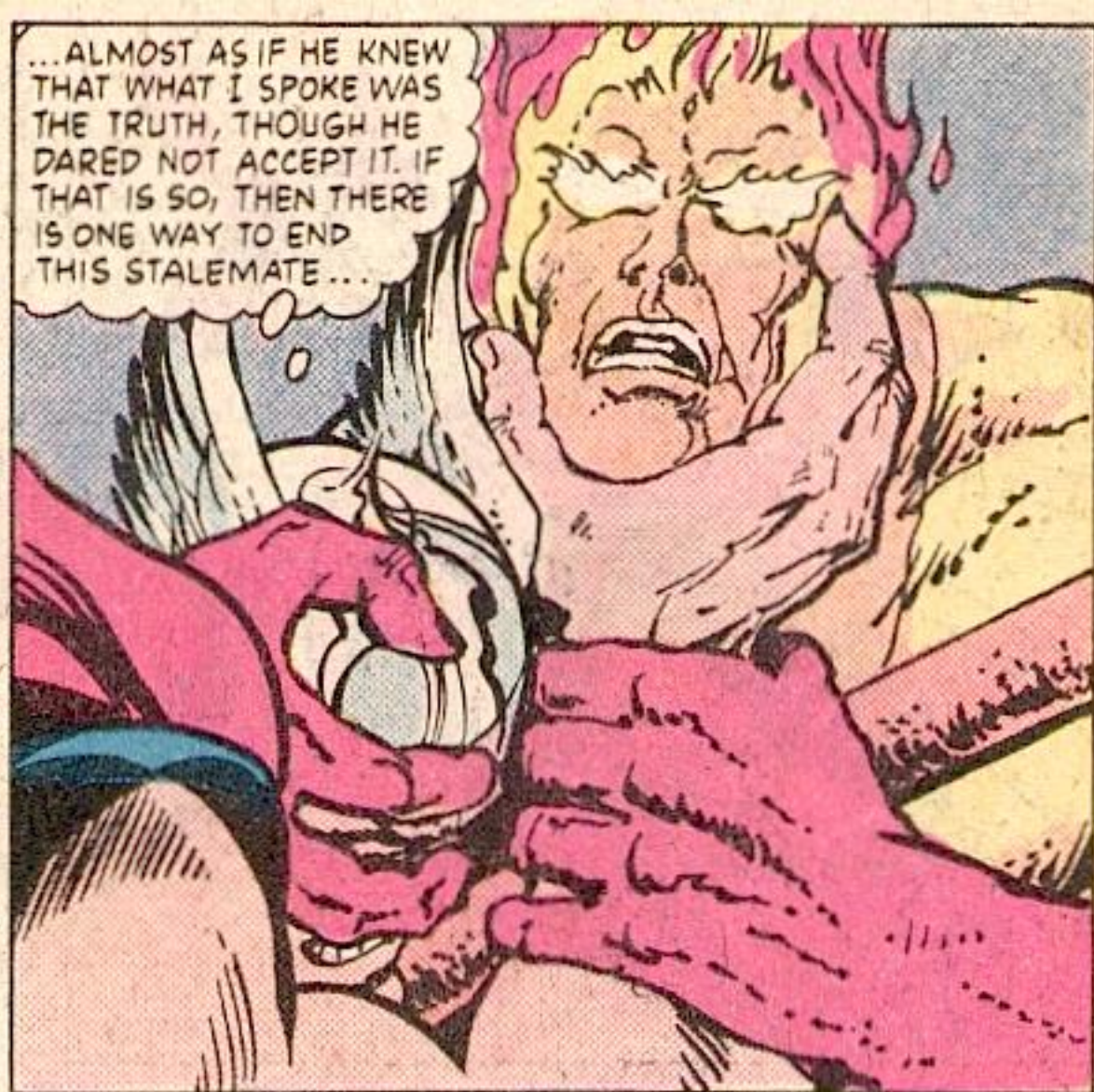
THEN WE FIGHT ON! THOUGH WHAT END THIS SENSELESS STRUGGLE SERVES REMAINS A MYSTERY EVEN YOU CANNOT EXPLAIN.

CAN IT BE ANY CLEARER? IT IS RETRIBUTION I SEEK! AND BEFORE THIS IS THROUGH-- I SHALL HAVE IT!





'TIS STRANGE, WHEN I SPOKE OF GABRIEL, FIRELORD SEEMED TO HESITATE -- SLACKEN HIS ATTACK...



...ALMOST AS IF HE KNEW THAT WHAT I SPOKE WAS THE TRUTH, THOUGH HE DARED NOT ACCEPT IT. IF THAT IS SO, THEN THERE IS ONE WAY TO END THIS STALEMATE...



...BUT 'T WILL BE A MIGHTY GAMBLE... ONE WHICH COULD MEAN MY DEATH IF I AM IN ERROR.



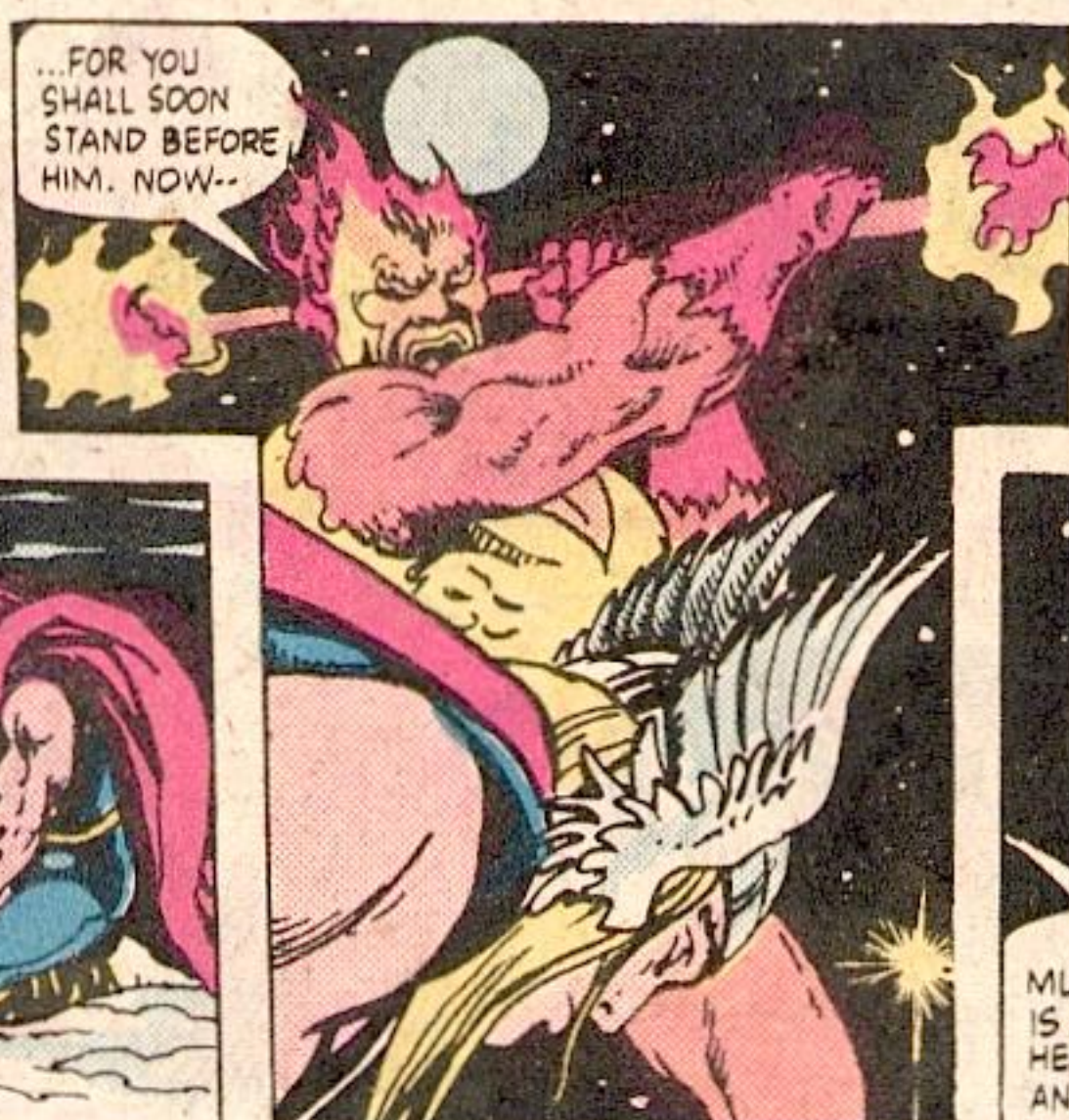
HEAR ME, FIRELORD. I WEARY OF THE CONFLICT. LET THERE BE AN END TO IT. NOW.

YOU SEEK TO TRICK ME!

NAY! I SIMPLY CANNOT REASON WITH THEE, NOR CAN I DEFEAT THEE. THUS, LET VENGEANCE BE THINE. SO BE IT!



PREPARE YOURSELF THEN, ASGARDIAN. PRAY TO WHAT-EVER DEITY AN IMMORTAL DOES...



...FOR YOU SHALL SOON STAND BEFORE HIM. NOW--



--NO, NO, I CANNOT. HOWEVER MUCH I MOURN THE SLAIN GABRIEL, I COULD NEVER PLAY EXECUTIONER WHEN I KNOW THAT YOU SPOKE TRUTHFULLY OF HIM.

I DID SUSPECT AS MUCH, MY FRIEND. THY TEMPERAMENT IS AS FIERY AS THY MANE. BUT THY HEART WERT EVER NOBLE AND FAIR... AND 'T WAS THERE I DID APPEAL.

YOUR FAITH BETRAYS ME, ASGARDIAN, AND IT SHALL NOT GO UNREWARDED. YOU ARE DESERVING OF AN ANSWER AS TO WHY I FOUGHT WITH YOU THIS DAY... WHY I ACTED LIKE ONE POSSESSED.

IN WHAT SEEMS LIKE AGES AGO, I WAS THE FIRST OFFICER ABOARD A *XANDARIAN* EXPLORER-SHIP, ASSIGNED TO PROBE THE FRINGES OF THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY... IT WAS A MISSION I RELISHED, FOR IT ALLOWED ME TO SERVE UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED *COMMANDER GABRIEL*... A MAN WHOSE FAR-FLUNG EXPLOITS HAD INSPIRED ME TO JOIN THE SPACE SERVICE.

"AND ONE DAY WE CAME UPON A MOST PECULIAR STARCRAFT.

FIRST OFFICER, I WANT A SENSOR SCAN OF THAT VESSEL.

RIGHT AWAY, CAPTAIN.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS AND PHILOSOPHY HAD SHAPED THE DIRECTION OF MY LIFE. I WANTED MOST TO PLEASE HIM-- TO SHARE THE LONELY BURDENS OF COMMAND. BECAME CLOSE IN THE PROCESS.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, *PYREUS*? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING THAT SIZE IN SEVEN YEARS IN DEEP SPACE.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT--

"BEFORE ANOTHER WORD PASSED MY LIPS, CAPTAIN GABRIEL VANISHED."

THE CAPTAIN! HE'S GONE!

"OUR INSTRUMENTS INDICATED A TELEPORTATION BEAM FROM THAT ENORMOUS SHIP HAD SNATCHED HIM FROM US.

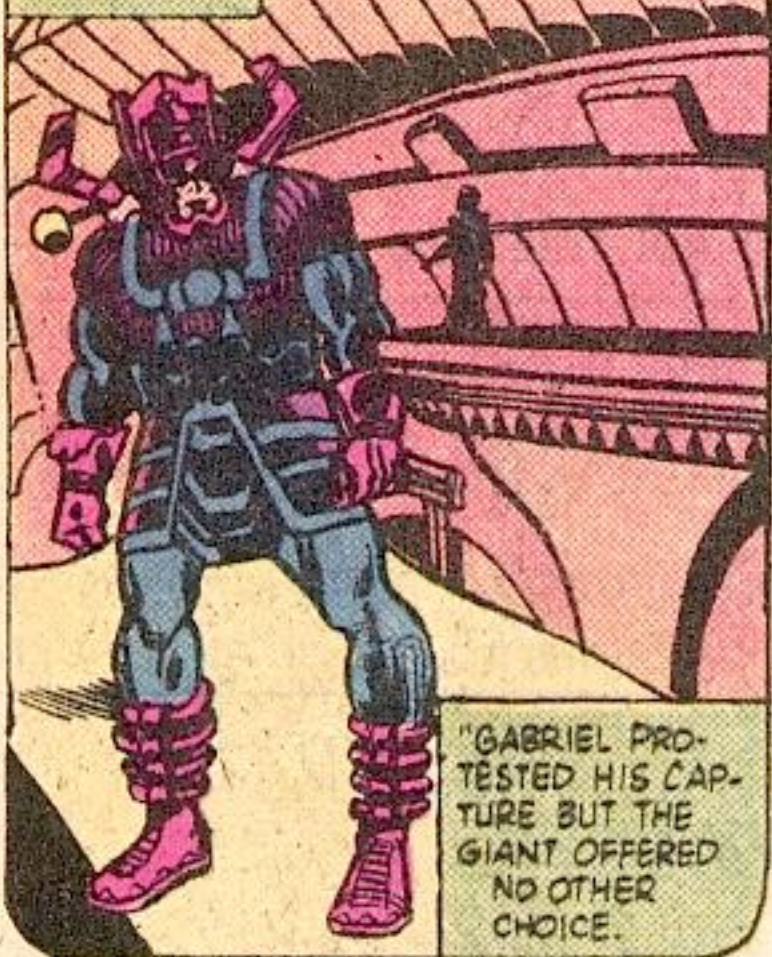
"AS RANKING OFFICER, I CALLED FOR BATTLE STATIONS AND ORDERED OUR APPROACH TO THE UNKNOWN VESSEL.

"AS WE DREW NEARER, THE TRULY IMMENSE PROPORTIONS OF THE SHIP BECAME EVIDENT. I OPENED A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION, AND RECEIVED NO RESPONSE.

"SUDDENLY, AS WE DREW WITHIN THE SHADOW OF THE MONSTROUS SPHERE, IT SLIPPED INTO HYPERSPACE BEFORE WE COULD FIRE A SINGLE WEAPON.

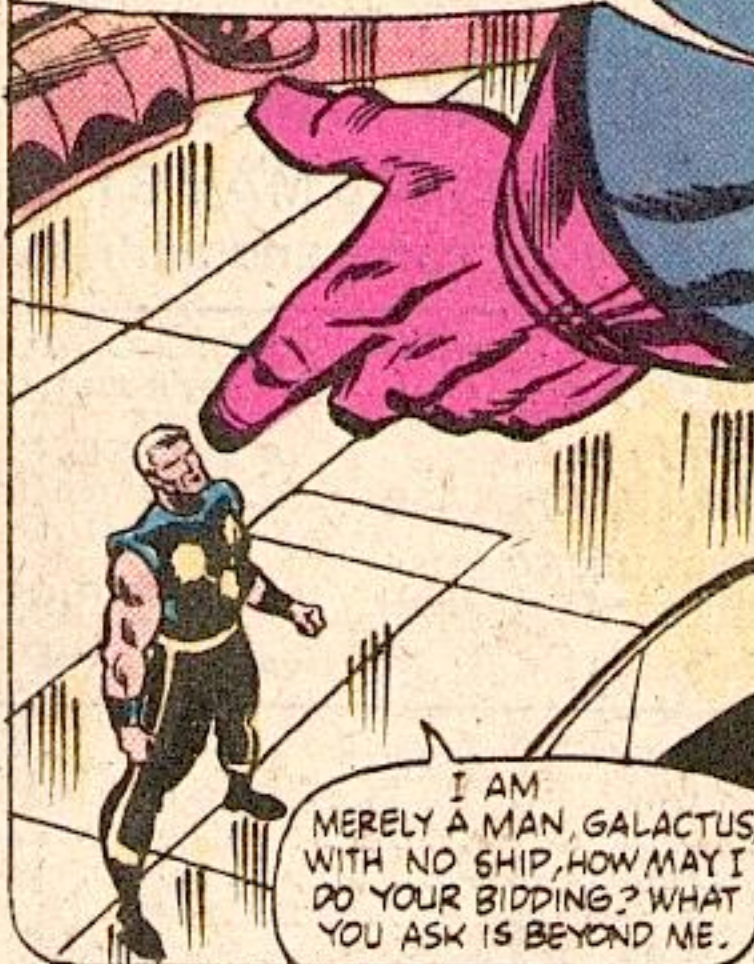
"I VOWED THEN WE WOULD PURSUE THAT VESSEL TO THE ENDS OF THE UNIVERSE TO RECLAIM OUR BELOVED COMMANDER... AND IN THE PROCESS I WOULD PROVE MYSELF TO HIM I MOST ADMIRER.

"LATER, I LEARNED THAT MY CAPTAIN HAD BEEN TAKEN BY THE PLANET-DESTROYER... GALACTUS. HE HAD NEED OF A HERALD TO SELECT WORLDS TO RAVAGE FOR SUSTENANCE.



"GABRIEL PROTESTED HIS CAPTURE BUT THE GIANT OFFERED NO OTHER CHOICE.

I DESIRE ONE WITH YOUR TALENTS-- YOUR WANDERLUST... WHO IS AT HOME IN DEEPEST SPACE. YOU ARE THAT ONE, CAPTAIN GABRIEL. YOU SHALL SERVE ME.



I AM MERELY A MAN, GALACTUS, WITH NO SHIP, HOW MAY I DO YOUR BIDDING? WHAT YOU ASK IS BEYOND ME.



SOON YOU WILL BE MORE THAN MORTAL... MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER CONCEIVE.

NOW, BY MY HAND, YOU SHALL BE--



--REBORN!

"IN THAT INSTANT, CAPTAIN GABRIEL, WAS NO MORE THE POWER COSMIC FLOWED THROUGH HIS BEING... AND HE BECAME-- THE AIR-WALKER."

"WORLDS UNCOUNTABLE DID HE SELECT FOR THE GARGANTUAN ONE TO FEAST UPON. AND THOUGH GABRIEL FELT GUILT OVER THOSE WHO PERISHED THAT GALACTUS MIGHT LIVE...



"... HE CAME TO KNOW THE TRAGEDY OF THIS COSMIC BEING WHO WAS SLAVE TO HIS ENDLESS APPETITE. THIS TOUCHED GABRIEL EVEN MORE DEEPLY.

"THEY SPOKE OFTEN AND AT LENGTH. GALACTUS SEEMED TO CRAVE HIS COMPANIONSHIP... SENSE A KINDRED SPIRIT WHO MARVELLED AT THE MYSTERIES OF CREATION AS MUCH AS HE.



"AND THEN ONE DAY, AS THE AIR-WALKER RETURNED TO HIS MASTER'S SHIP AFTER A SCOUTING MISSION...

"... HE WAS MURDERED BY THE ATTACKING OVIDS-- A RACE WHICH DARED FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE INVADING GALACTUS.



"BUT IN HIS WONDROUS WAY, GALACTUS SAW A SLIM CHANCE FOR THE AIR-WALKER'S SURVIVAL. AND SO TAKING THE SLAIN GABRIEL--

"... HE TRANSFERRED THE DWINDLING LIFE-SPARK INTO A PERFECT MECHANICAL REPLICA. AT LEAST PART OF WHAT GABRIEL WAS, WOULD LIVE AGAIN...



"AND THIS HELPED EASE THE GIANT'S PAIN AT THE LOSS OF HIS BELOVED HERALD."

"BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH. THUS THE AIR-WALKER ROBOT WAS DISPATCHED TO EARTH TO DEMAND THE RETURN OF HIS MASTER'S FORMER HERALD-- THE SILVER SURFER--



"--WHO WAS CONDEMNED TO THIS WORLD FOR HIS BETRAYAL OF GALACTUS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS GALACTUS SAW FIT TO RELEASE HIM.

"THE SURFER WAS RELUCTANT TO LEAVE, AND DESTROYED THE GABRIEL REPLICA IN COMBAT.*



* FANTASTIC FOUR #124. -- J.S.



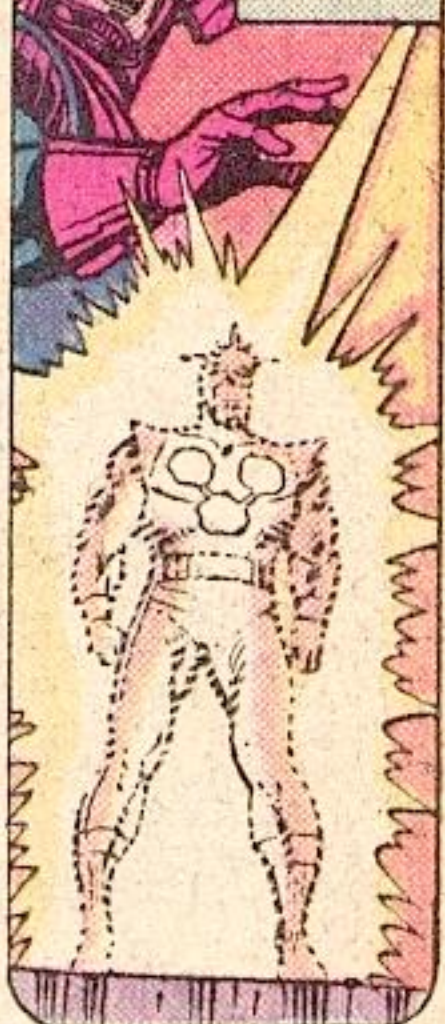
"GALACTUS LEFT EARTH WITHOUT RECLAIMING HIS LOST HERALD. FOR A TIME, HE SOUGHT SUSTENANCE ON HIS OWN, LEAVING THE DRIED HUSKS OF ONCE-VERDANT PLANETS IN HIS WAKE.

"AND ALL THE WHILE I PURSUED HIM AS THE NEW CAPTAIN OF A CERTAIN XANDARIAN STARSHIP...



"...WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT GALACTUS WHEN OUR SENSORS INDICATED AN OPENING IN HIS DEFENSIVE SCREENS--

"--I TELEPORTED ABOARD"



I AM CAPTAIN PYREUS OF THE XANDARIAN EMPIRE, WHO SERVED AS FIRST OFFICER UNDER COMMANDER GABRIEL-- UNTIL HE WAS ABDUCTED BY YOU-- PARASITE. NOW I DEMAND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM-- AND HIS IMMEDIATE RETURN, OR FACE THE MIGHT OF XANDAR.



GALACTUS IS IMPRESSED WITH YOUR DETERMINATION AND COURAGE IN SEEKING HIM OUT. GABRIEL MUST HAVE MEANT MUCH TO YOU... AS HE DID TO ME.

LET ME OFFER THIS... IF YOU WILL AGREE TO BE MY HERALD FOR A TIME, I SHALL REVEAL ALL THAT OCCURRED TO HIM SINCE HE BECAME MINE



FOR THE SAKE OF MY CAPTAIN-- AND FRIEND... I ACCEPT.

THEN LIKE HIM YOU SHALL BE BORN ANEW-- IN MY SERVICE, AS THE POWER COSMIC TRANSFORMS YOU! NOW AND FOREVERMORE SHALL YOU BE KNOWN AS--



--THE FIRELORD!

"GALACTUS KEPT HIS WORD, AND I LEARNED OF GABRIEL'S LIFE AS THE AIR WALKER... AND OF HIS DEATH, AS WELL.



"THEREAFTER, GALACTUS SENT ME TO EARTH-- WIPING THE WHEREABOUTS OF AIR-WALKER'S ROBOTIC REMAINS FROM MY MIND, THAT IT WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH MY MISSION.

"LATER, I REQUESTED MY OWN FREEDOM FROM SERVITUDE AND GALACTUS AGREED-- SO LONG AS A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT WAS FOUND.



"THIS YOU DID IN MY BEHALF, THOR."

TAKE THIS ASGARDIAN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE DESTROYER... A LIFELESS SHELL UNTIL ANIMATED BY YOUR AWESOME ENERGIES. WITH THIS BEING IN YOUR SERVICE, FIRELORD MAY BE FREED.



"AND I HAVE SINCE REMAINED ON EARTH. SENSING AN UNFULFILLED TASK THAT TIES ME TO THIS WORLD--YET NEVER FULLY COMPREHENDING WHAT OR WHY.



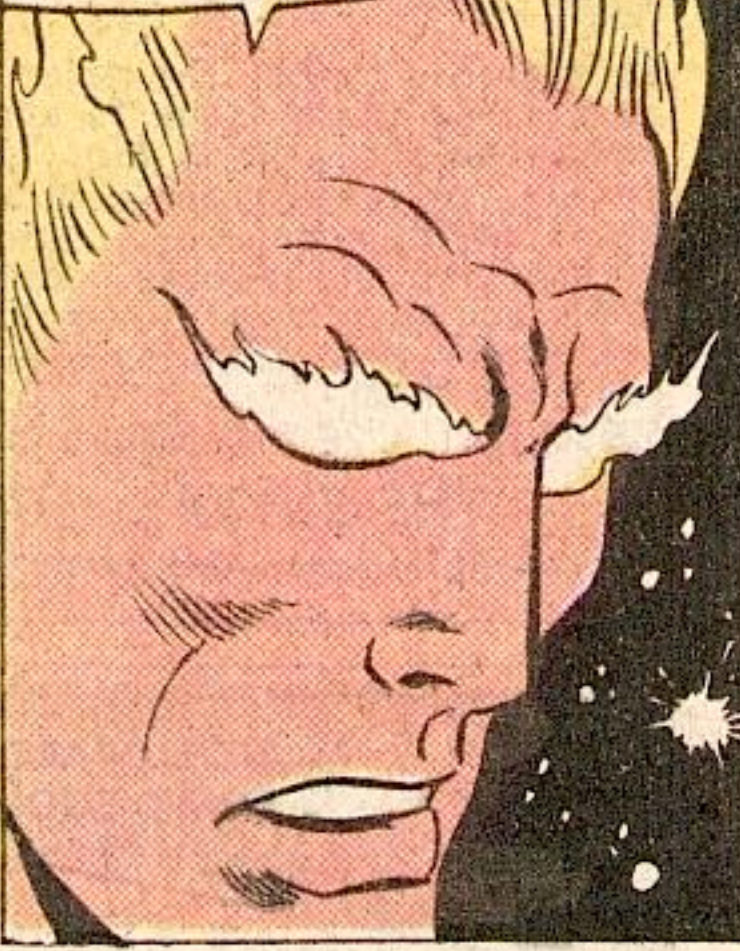
"NOW I KNOW WHAT THAT MISSION IS... TO RETURN GABRIEL TO THE PLACE THAT SPAWNED HIM.

HOURS AGO, I SAW YOU BATTLING AIR-WALKER ON TELEVISION, AND AT THAT INSTANT, MY STIFLED MEMORIES RETURNED FULLY. BUT BY THE TIME I HAD REACHED NEW YORK-- HE HAD BEEN DESTROYED AGAIN.

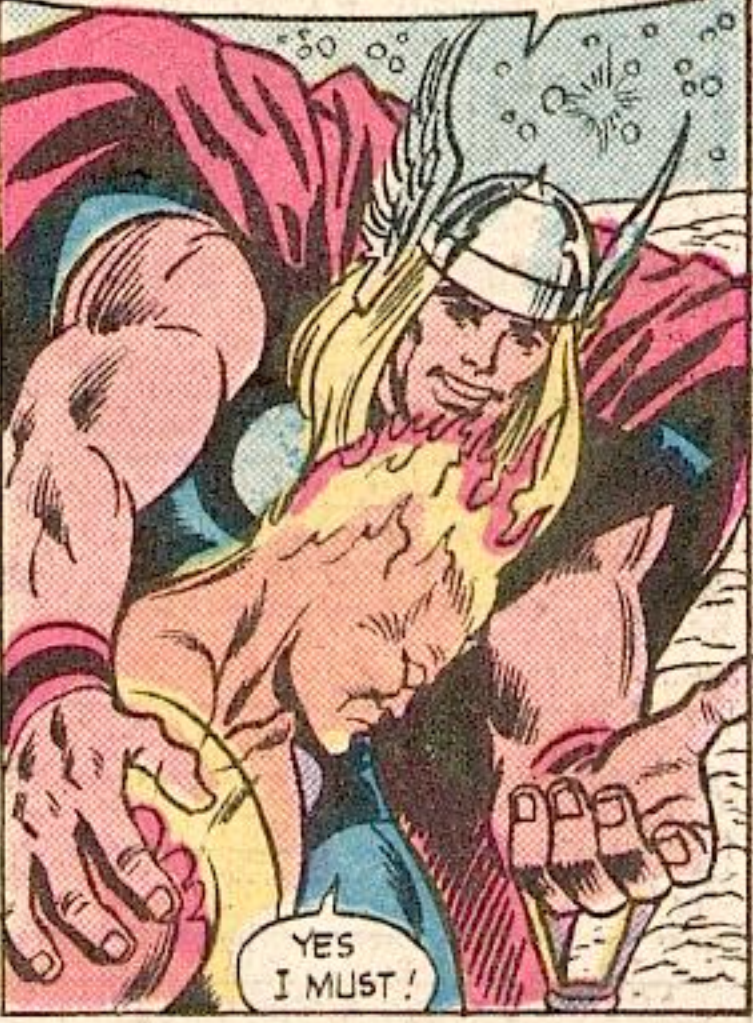
THOU HAS MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY OTHER WAY TO HALT HIM...



YOU NEED NOT APOLOGIZE, THOR. MY ATTACK ON YOU WAS UNPROVOKED. I SIMPLY FELT FRUSTRATION--THE NEED TO LASH OUT. CAN YOU FORGIVE ME?

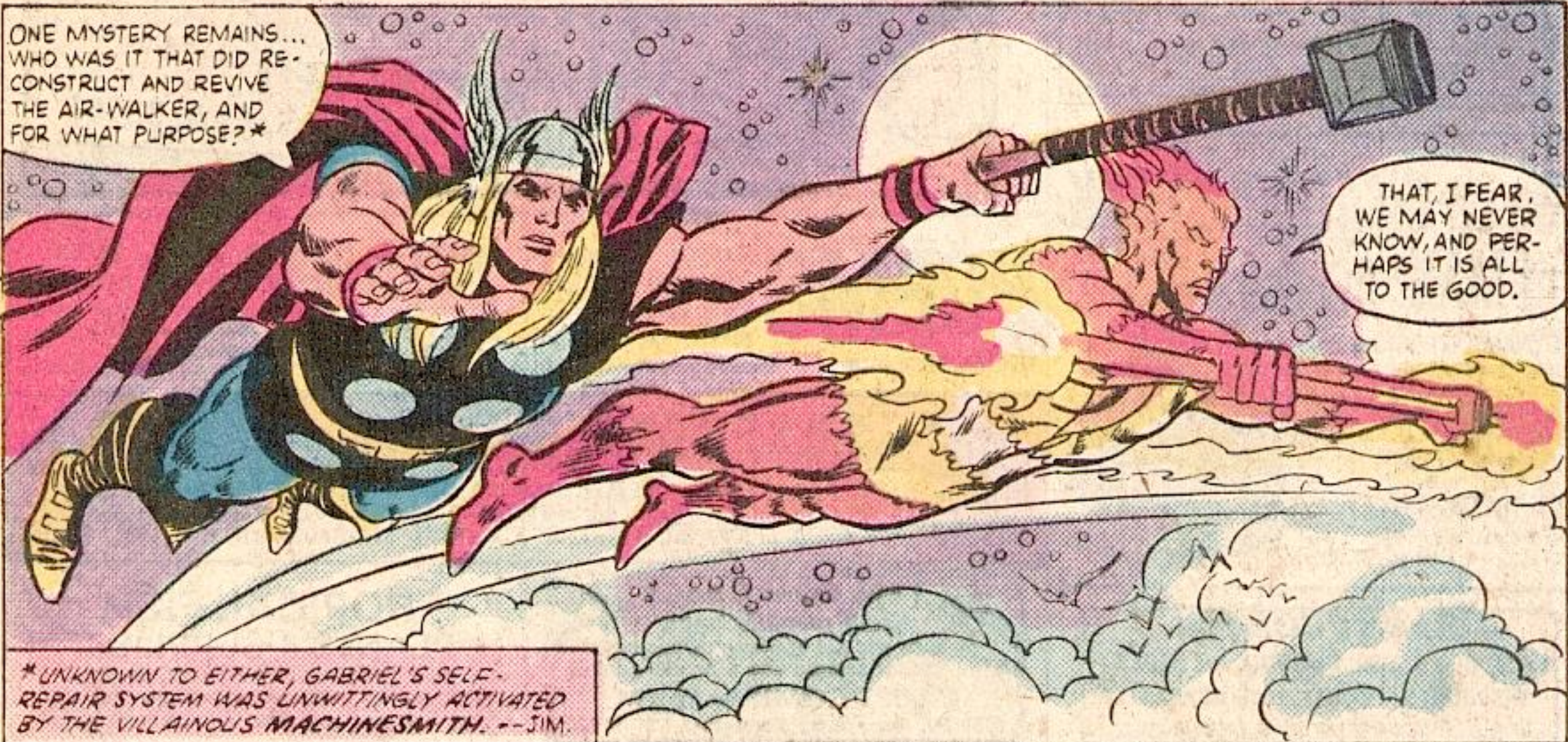


LET US SPEAK NO MORE OF IT. INSTEAD, WE SHALL RETURN TO THE CITY AND THERE YOU MAY ATTEND TO YOUR LONG-DELAYED TASK.



YES I MUST!

ONE MYSTERY REMAINS... WHO WAS IT THAT DID RE-CONSTRUCT AND REVIVE THE AIR-WALKER, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?*



THAT, I FEAR, WE MAY NEVER KNOW, AND PERHAPS IT IS ALL TO THE GOOD.

* UNKNOWN TO EITHER, GABRIEL'S SELF-REPAIR SYSTEM WAS UNWITTINGLY ACTIVATED BY THE VILLAINOUS MACHINESMITH. --JIM.



I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN AVOID MOVIN' THIS PILE'A JUNK WAITIN' FOR THOR TO COME BACK. TRAFFIC'S A MESS.



I AM BACK, OFFICERS, HERE TO RELIEVE THEE OF THE ROBOT AIR-WALKER.

FIRELORD WILL TAKE POSSESSION AT MY REQUEST.



BUT THIS GUY WAS TRYIN' TA FRY YER BUTT A LITTLE WHILE AGO! WHY SHOULD WE TRUST 'IM NOW?

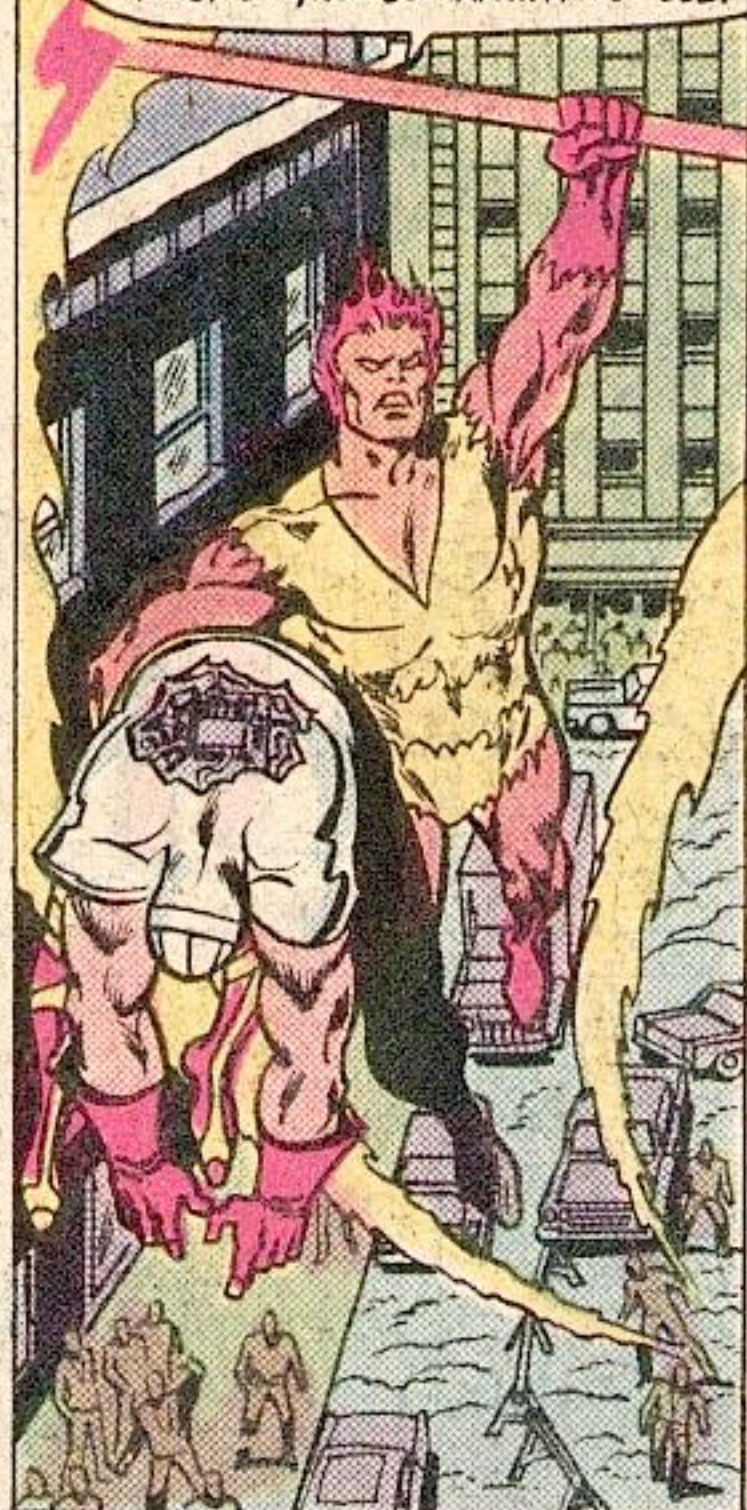
'T WAS A MISUNDERSTANDING. 'PON MY WORD AS AN AVENGER, WHAT WE DO IS RIGHT.

YOU WILL BE OFF NOW, EH? AND WITH YOU GOES THE FRIENDSHIP AND REGARD OF THOR. IT IS NOT LIGHTLY GIVEN...

OR RECEIVED. WHEN I AM ALONE IN THE FAR REACHES, SUCH A GIFT WILL SUSTAIN ME WHATEVER THE HARDSHIPS. MY THANKS.

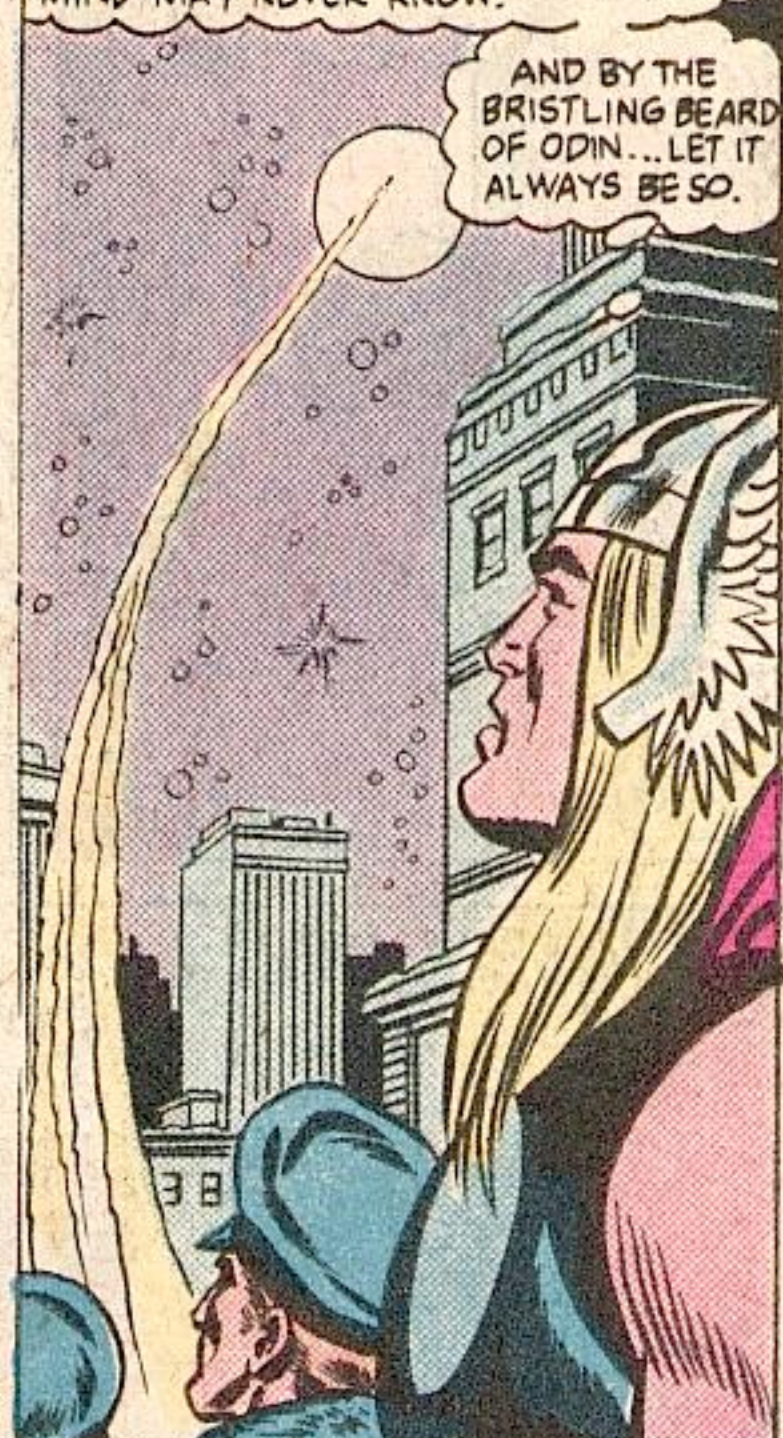


WE'LL MEET AGAIN WHEN MY HEART KNOWS LESS SADNESS--LESS PAIN. FAREWELL, NORSEMAN... FAREWELL.



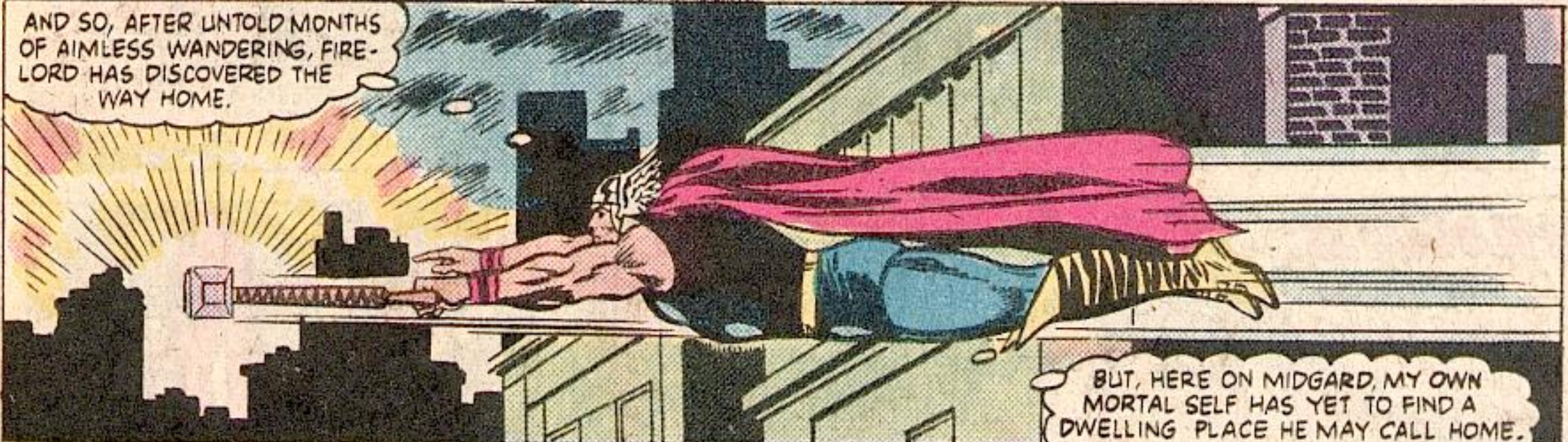
LOYALTY...HOW LIKE LOVE IN ITS POWER TO DRIVE BOTH MAN AND GOD. AT TIMES, E'EN LOGIC IS THE VICTIM. BUT 'TIS ALSO TRUE THAT THE HEART HAS REASONS THE MIND MAY NEVER KNOW.

AND BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN...LET IT ALWAYS BE SO.



EPILOGUE: THE WARM GLOW OF THE NEW SUN IRRADIATES THE SOOT-FILLED SKIES OF MANHATTAN, AS A WEARY THUNDER GOD MAKES HIS WAY TO HIS RENTED UPPER WESTSIDE HOTEL ADDRESS.

AND SO, AFTER UNTOLD MONTHS OF AIMLESS WANDERING, FIRE-LORD HAS DISCOVERED THE WAY HOME.



BUT, HERE ON MIDGARD, MY OWN MORTAL SELF HAS YET TO FIND A DWELLING PLACE HE MAY CALL HOME.



THERE IS TIME FOR THE BRIEFEST SLUMBER BEFORE ASSUMING MY DUTIES AT THE MEDICAL CLINIC.

HE ALIGHTS UPON THE SNOW-COVERED ROOFTOP AND PREPARES TO STRIKE SACRED MJOLNIR ONCE...



...BRINGING ABOUT THE MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION FROM SCION OF ASGARD--



--TO THE LAME MORTAL, DOCTOR DON BLAKE.

THOR MAY HAVE SAVED THE DAY, BUT I'M NO CLOSER TO GETTING MY OWN PLACE THAN BEFORE.



SEVERAL HOURS LATER, AT THE WEST-SIDE MEDICAL CLINIC...



HEY, DOC, MAY I SEE YOU A MOMENT.

I KNOW YOU'RE STILL LOOKING FOR AN APARTMENT, AND I HAPPENED TO SEE THIS RENOVATED BUILDING AT WEST 88th STREET. LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE RENTING.



DR. HERNANDEZ, THANK YOU. IF I HAVE TO SPEND ANOTHER NIGHT IN A HOTEL, I'LL GO CRAZY.



YEAH, MY PLEASURE.

LATER THAT DAY, THE LAME PHYSICIAN IS GIVEN A GUIDED TOUR...



SUCH A PLACE I GOT FOR YOU... A PENTHOUSE WAITING TO BE BORN. SOME FOINITURE--YOU'RE IN BUSINESS. FOUR HUNDRED A MONTH--I'M IN BUSINESS.



SOUNDS REASONABLE. THIS MAY BE JUST WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.

MAYBE I MIGHT INTEREST YOU IN SOMETHING THE SAME A FEW FLOORS BELOW? THIS IS A WALK-UP... YOU GOT A CANE... WHO NEEDS COMPLAINTS?



NO PROBLEM. I LIKE A VIEW.



MR. GREENSTEIN, I'LL TAKE IT.

EPILOGUE II AN ASTEROID NEAR THE KANDARIAN SYSTEM...

THOUGH YOUR REMAINS WILL LIE HERE UNDISTURBED...



...YOUR SPIRIT WILL EVER WANDER THE VAST REACHES YOU LOVED SO WELL.

MY DESTINY AS THE FIRELORD IS NOW FULFILLED. YOUR FIRST OFFICER HAS BROUGHT YOU HOME GABRIEL.



I SALUTE YOU FOR THE FINAL TIME.



AND AS YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED... I HAVE LEFT MORE THAN A MERE HEADSTONE TO MARK YOUR GRAVE BE AT PEACE, MY CAPTAIN.

NEXT WINGS IN THE NIGHT!

"...TILL DEATH DO US PART!"

RARELY HAVE THE DENIZENS OF THE DREADED NORNHELM KNOWN SUCH GLEE, AS THEY MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A WEDDING... A VERY SPECIAL WEDDING THAT WILL UNITE THEIR QUEEN, THE EVIL KARNILLA, WITH THE ASGARDIAN GOD OF LIGHT-- BALDER THE BRAVE!

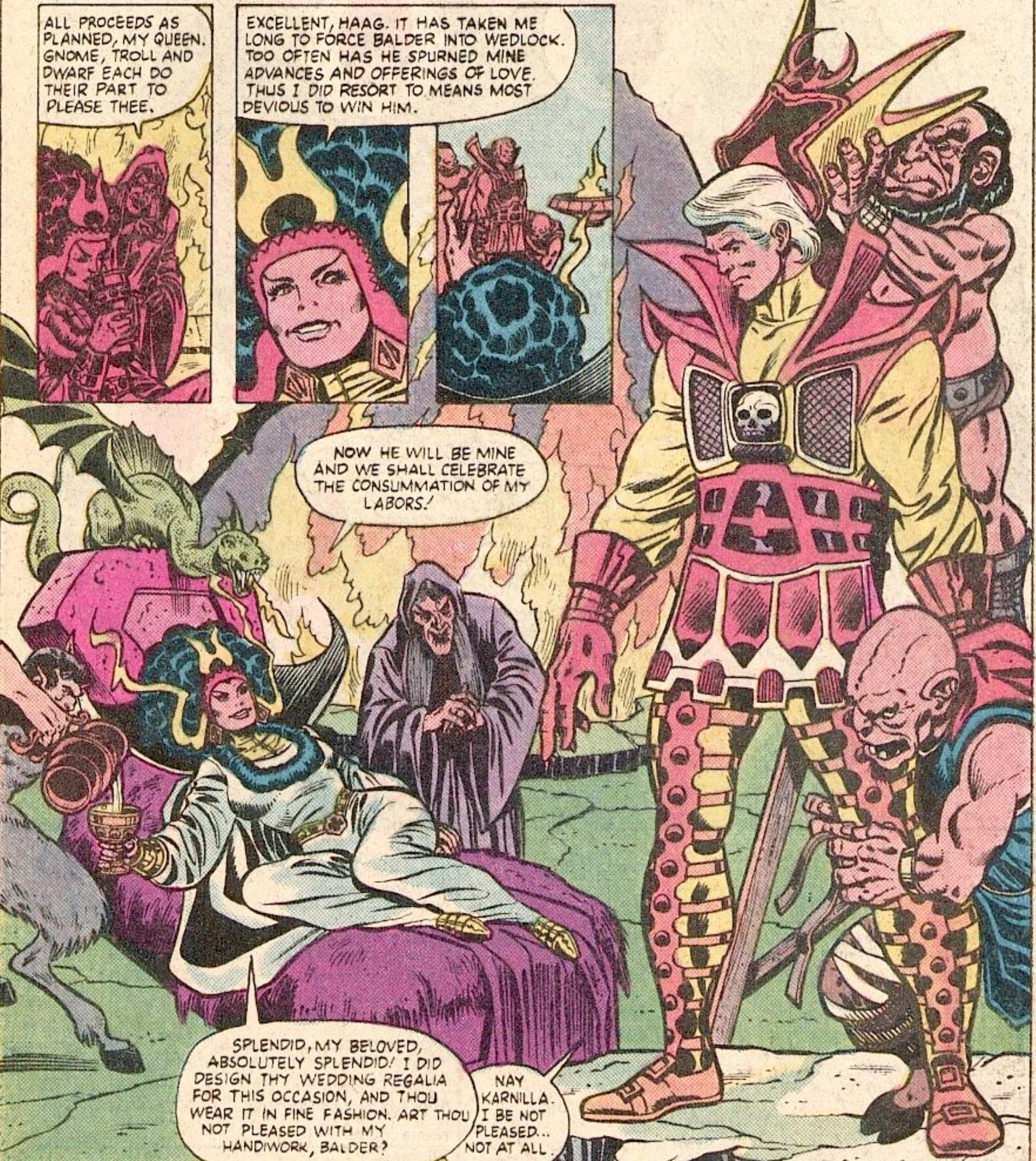
ALL PROCEEDS AS PLANNED, MY QUEEN. GNOME, TROLL AND DWARF EACH DO THEIR PART TO PLEASE THEE.

EXCELLENT, HAAG. IT HAS TAKEN ME LONG TO FORCE BALDER INTO WEDLOCK. TOO OFTEN HAS HE SPURNED MINE ADVANCES AND OFFERINGS OF LOVE. THUS I DID RESORT TO MEANS MOST DEVIOUS TO WIN HIM.

NOW HE WILL BE MINE AND WE SHALL CELEBRATE THE CONSUMMATION OF MY LABORS!

SPLENDID, MY BELOVED, ABSOLUTELY SPLENDID! I DID DESIGN THY WEDDING REGALIA FOR THIS OCCASION, AND THOU WEAR IT IN FINE FASHION. ART THOU NOT PLEASED WITH MY HANDIWORK, BALDER?

NAY KARNILLA. I BE NOT PLEASED... NOT AT ALL.



MARK GRUENWALD & RALPH MACCHIO • KEITH CHIC • MICHAEL GEORGE • JIM SALICRUP • JIM SHOOTER
 WRITERS • POLLARD & STONE • HIGGINS • ROUSSOS • EDITOR • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
 ARTISTS • LETTERER • COLORIST

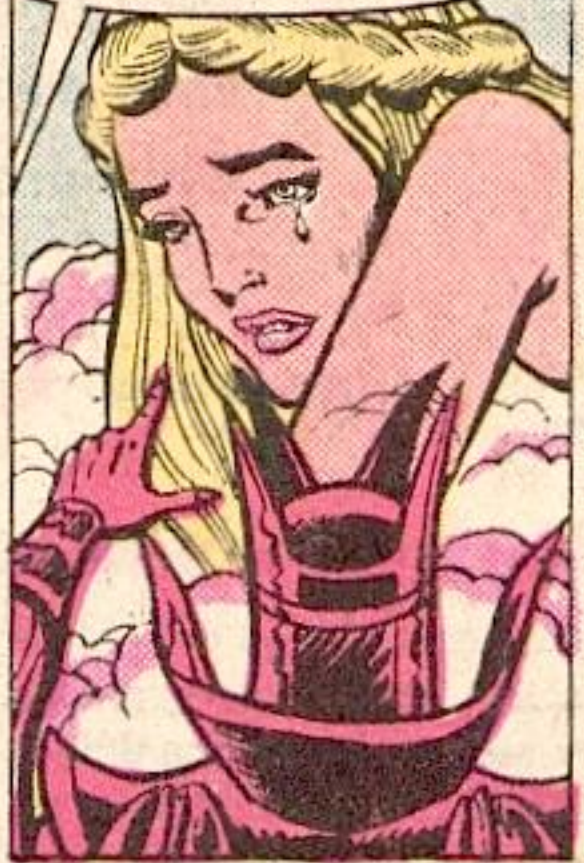
I SEE. PERHAPS THOU ART WORRIED THAT THY FORMER LOVER--NANA-- BE NOT SAFE IN ASGARD, EH?



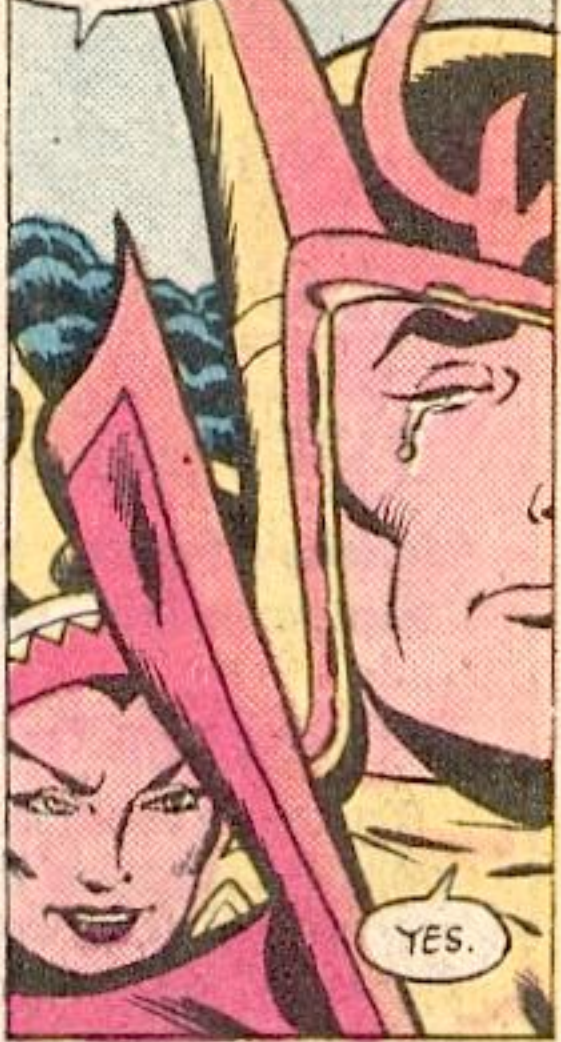
WITH THE SIMPLEST OF SPELLS, LET ME BANISH SUCH FEARS BRAVE ONE.



AHH, THERE SHE BE-- NO DOUBT MOURNING THY LOSS TO ME. STILL, SHE BE UNHARMED... SAFE AS WHEN YOU DID FIRST MEET HER AND FALL IN LOVE, MERE WEEKS AGO, AT AN ASGARDIAN MARKETPLACE.



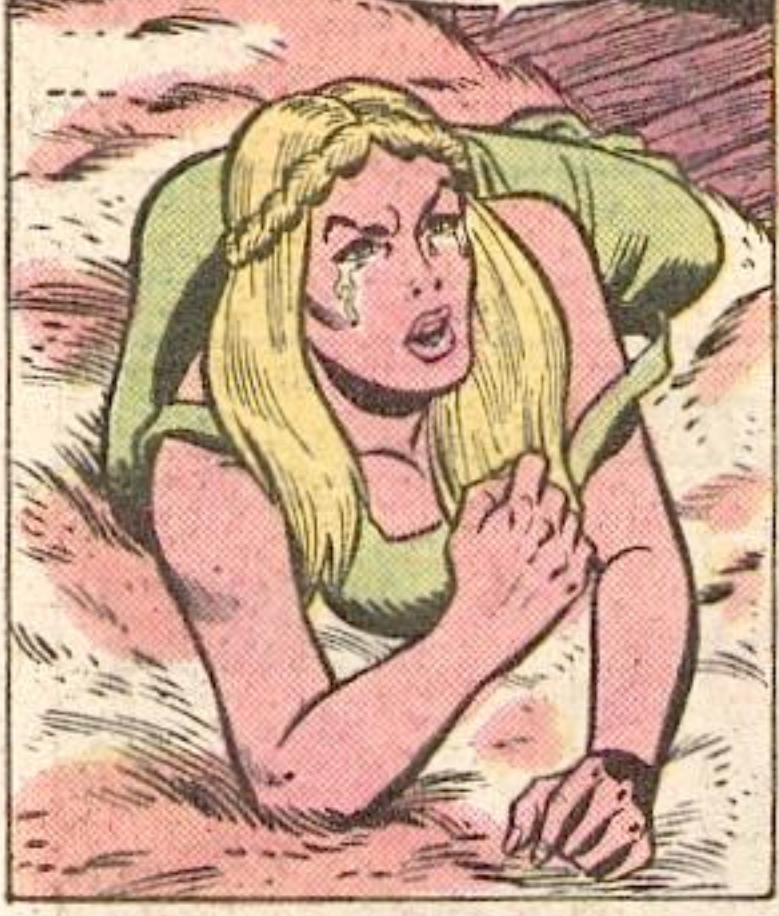
ART THOU SATISFIED?



YES.

AND IN THE ROOM OF THE WEEPING GIRL...

NAY... I'LL NOT SEE BALDER WEDDED TO THAT WITCH-- NEVER!



WHEN WE WERE ABDUCTED BY THE NORN QUEEN, SHE DID THREATEN TO SLAY ME UNLESS BALDER ACCEPTED HER MARRIAGE PROPOSAL. WHEN HE DID, I WAS RETURNED TO ASGARD... *



... HERE TO REMAIN WHILE THEY BE WED. BUT I SWEAR IT SHALL NOT BE SO!

*LAST ISSUE... J.S.

HERMOD, THOU MUST HELP ME. WHICH OF THE HORSES IN THE ROYAL STABLE BE MOST FLEET OF FOOT?



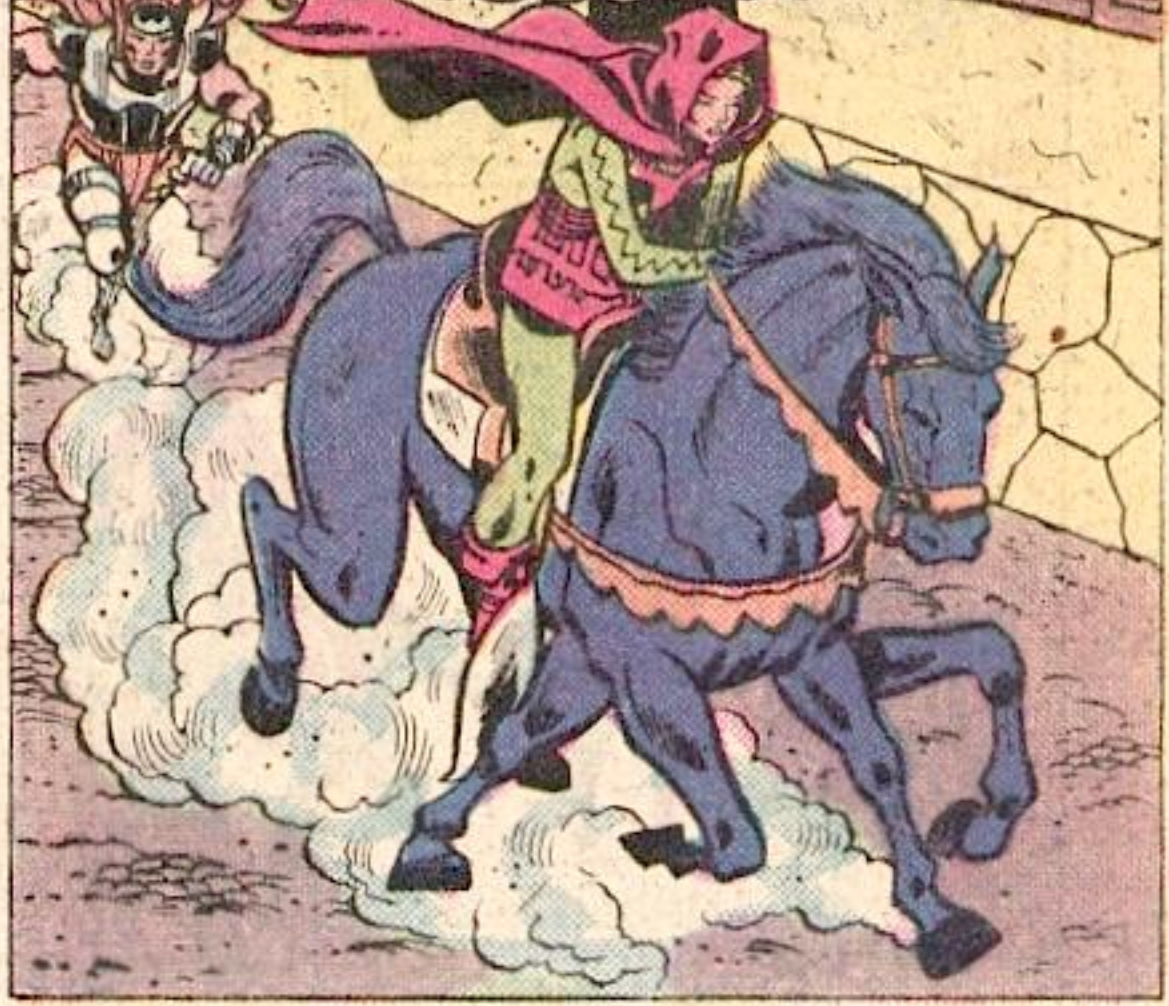
WHY, LORD ODIN'S OWN MOUNT-- EIGHT-HOOVED SLEIPNIR. WHY?

MY THANKS, HERMOD. NOW ASIDE-- I BE OFF.



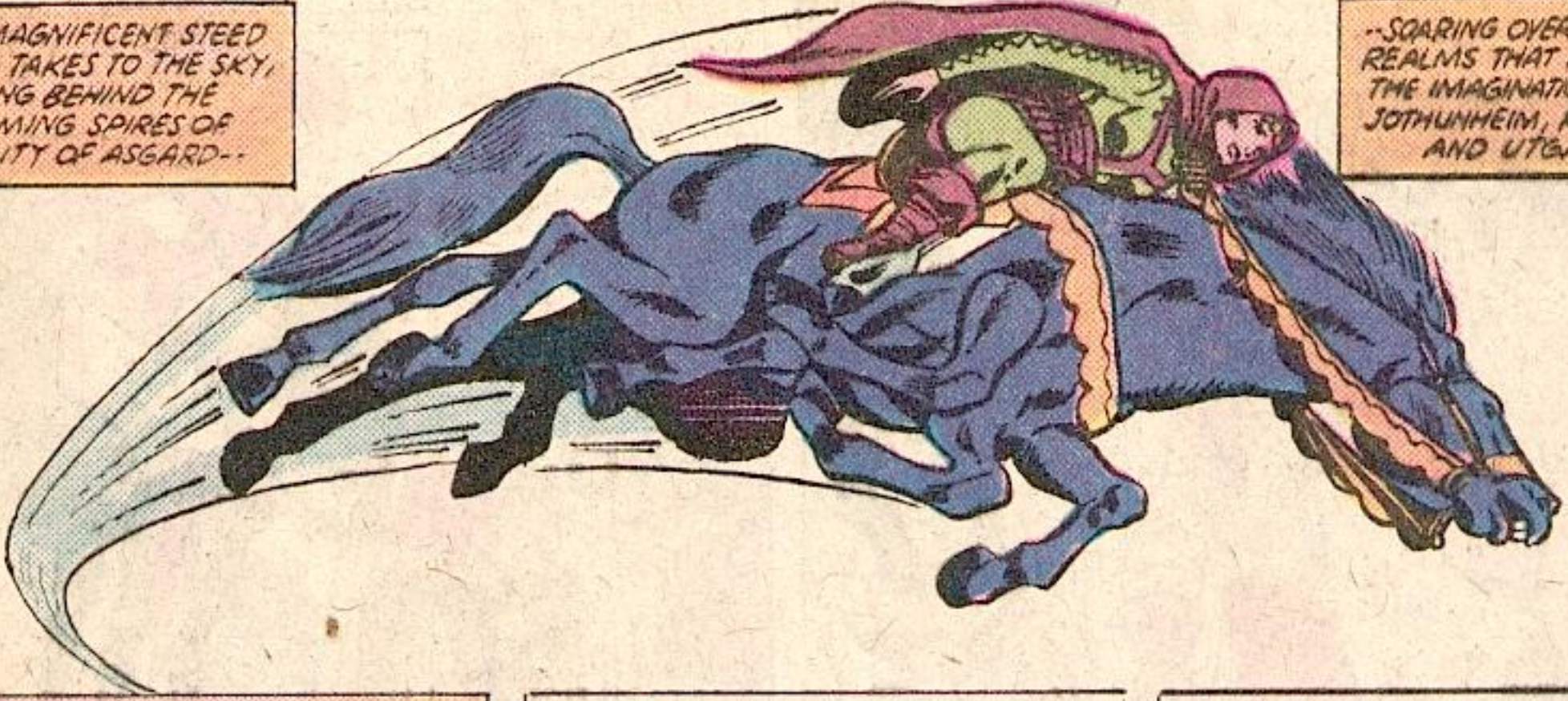
MILADY-- DON'T! THAT IS ODIN'S OWN-- PLEASE!

THOUGH I BE THE SWIFTEST OF ALL THE GODS, NOT E'EN I MAY O'ERTAKE SLEIPNIR.



THE MAGNIFICENT STEED SOON TAKES TO THE SKY, LEAVING BEHIND THE GLEAMING SPIRES OF THE CITY OF ASGARD--

--SOARING OVER LEGENDARY REALMS THAT HAVE FIRED THE IMAGINATIONS OF MEN... JOTHUNHEIM, RINGSJFORD AND UTEARD.



BUT THE HOODED RIDER SEEMS BLIND TO THE WONDERS THAT PASS BENEATH, SO INTENT IS SHE ON JOURNEY'S END.

AT LAST-- I COME IN SIGHT OF NORNHELM, DOMAIN OF THE ONE I MOST DESPISE.

SUCH AN AWESOME EDIFICE SHOULD BE EASY TO DISCERN AMIDST THIS BLEAK TERRAIN. I ONLY PRAY I AM IN TIME TO SET THINGS A'RIGHT.



NOW I MUST MAKE E'EN GREATER HASTE AND SEEK OUT KARNILLA'S CAVERN-CASTLE IN THE VERY CENTER OF THE NORN KINGDOM.



PERHAPS THE ANXIOUS NANNA WOULD PRESS HER STEED EVEN MORE FORCIBLY IF SHE COULD SEE THE STRANGE CEREMONY UNDERWAY AT THIS MOMENT, LESS THAN A MILE DISTANT...

PREPARE YE NOW TO BE JOINED AS ONE IN THE SIGHT OF ASSEMBLED NORNHELM.

WHY SO SILENT, MY BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL BRIDEGROOM? CAN IT BE THOU ART CONSIDERING NOT COMPLETING THE NUPTIALS--AND AFTER THY PLEDGE TO ME?

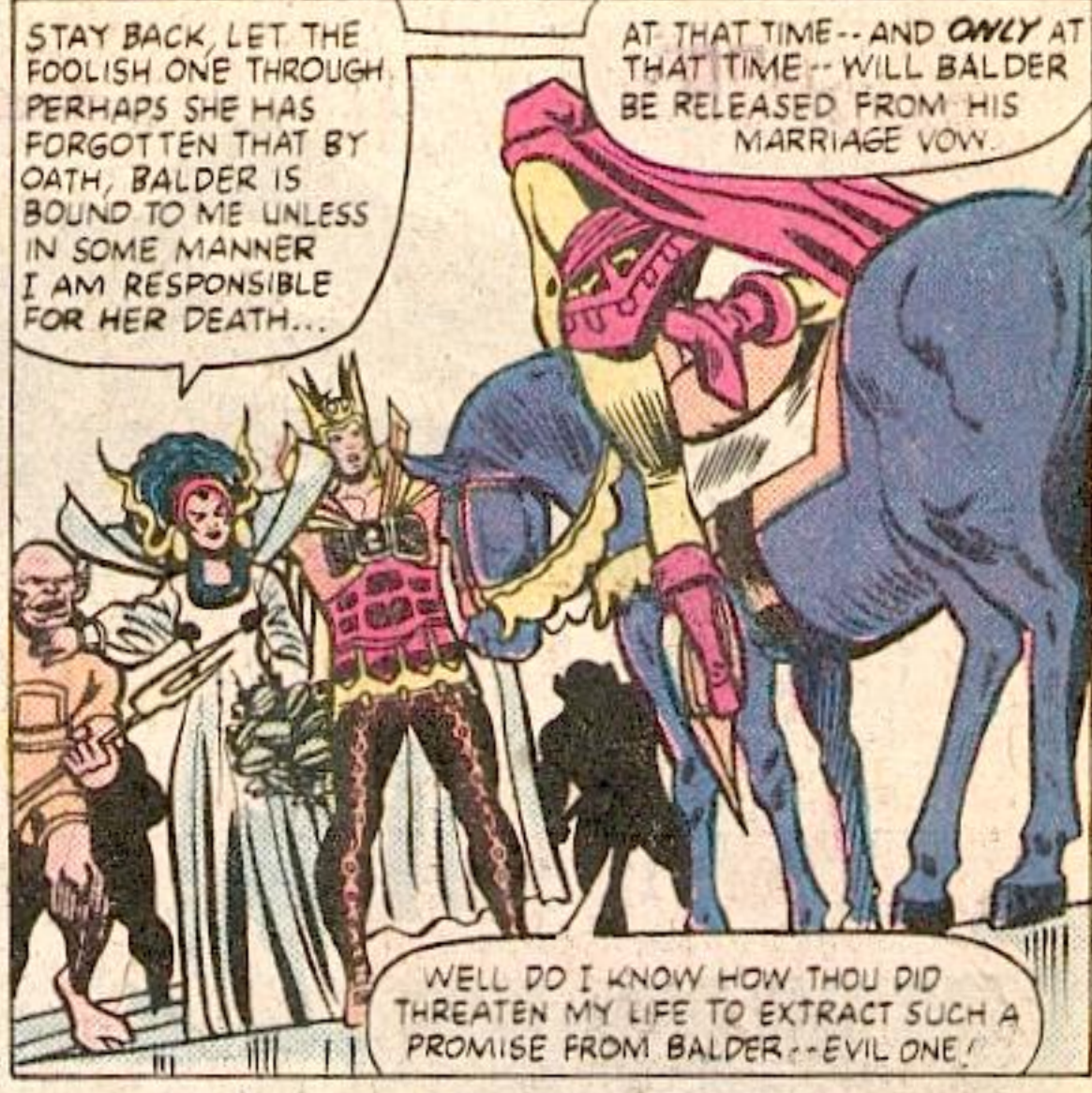


I AM AWARE OF MY PLEDGE, MILADY. AND I SHALL HONOR IT THOUGH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING CRIES OUT--



STOP! STOP THE CEREMONY!
I HAVE COME TO PUT AN END
TO THIS MADNESS.

NANNA?!



STAY BACK, LET THE
FOOLISH ONE THROUGH.
PERHAPS SHE HAS
FORGOTTEN THAT BY
OATH, BALDER IS
BOUND TO ME UNLESS
IN SOME MANNER
I AM RESPONSIBLE
FOR HER DEATH...

AT THAT TIME-- AND ONLY AT
THAT TIME-- WILL BALDER
BE RELEASED FROM HIS
MARRIAGE VOW.

WELL DO I KNOW HOW THOU DID
THREATEN MY LIFE TO EXTRACT SUCH A
PROMISE FROM BALDER--EVIL ONE!



BUT ONE THING THOU FAIL TO SPECIFY IN
THY HIDEOUS TERMS... WHETHER OR NOT
THOU MUST BE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE
FOR MY DEATH.

GO ON,
CHILD, THIS
MAY PROVE
AMUSING.



THOU SAID BALDER IS FREE
IF THROUGH ANY MEANS
THOU BRING ABOUT MY
DEMISE. AND SO YOU
SHALL...

...E'EN IF I
MUST SLAY MYSELF.

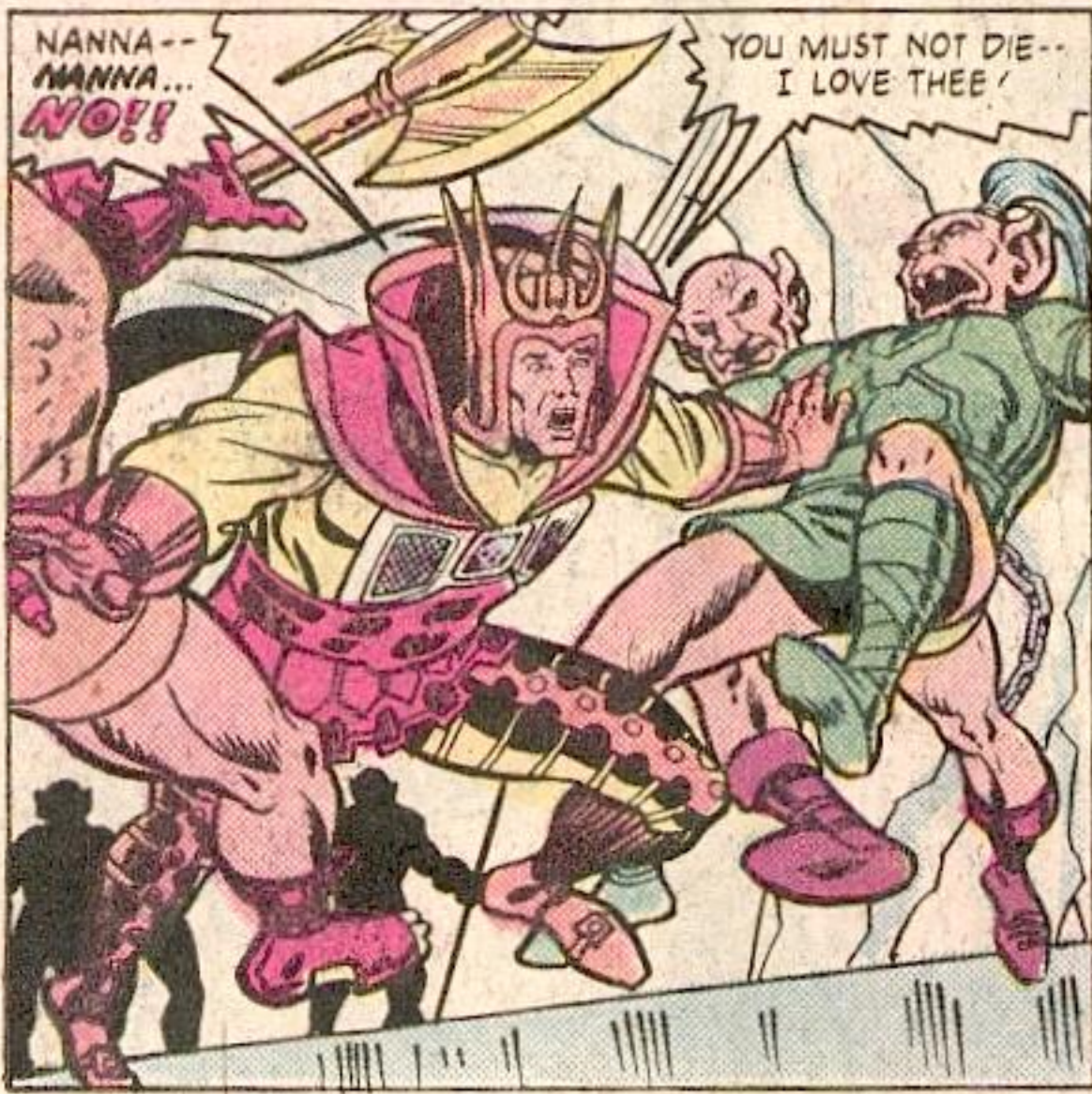


NO-- YOU FOOL! YOU
STUPID FOOL... WHAT
HAVE YOU DONE?!

UHHH...

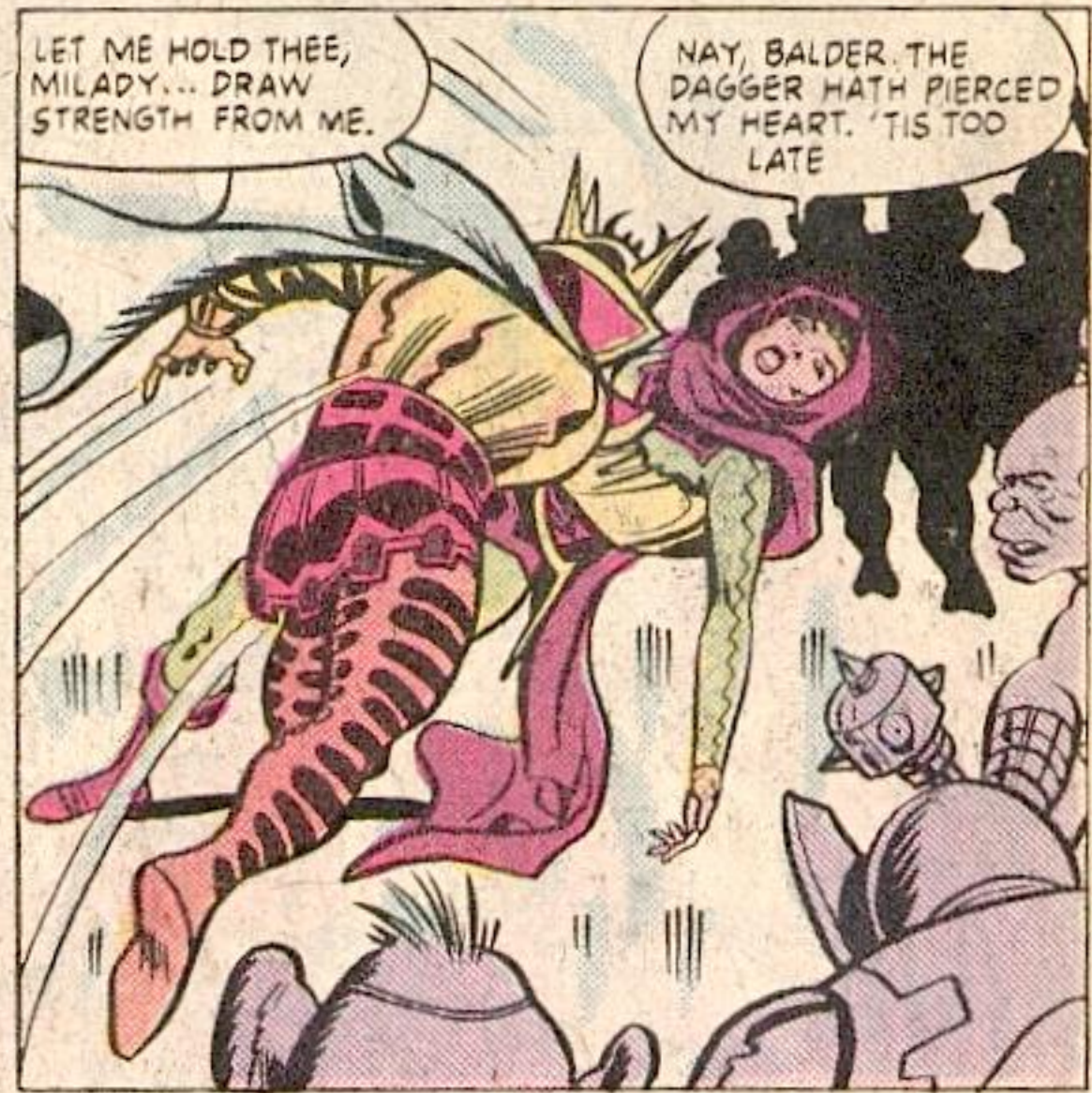


DONE... I HAVE PREVENTED
A MONSTROUS INJUSTICE--A
BLASPHEMY FROM COMING
TO PASS.



NANNA--
NANNA...
NO!!

YOU MUST NOT DIE--
I LOVE THEE!



LET ME HOLD THEE,
MILADY... DRAW
STRENGTH FROM ME.

NAY, BALDER. THE
DAGGER HATH PIERCED
MY HEART. 'TIS TOO
LATE



NANNA... GLADLY WOULD I HAVE REMAINED WED TO KARNILLA FOR ALL ETERNITY IF NEED BE ...IF THAT WOULD HAVE KEPT YOU SAFE, BELOVED.

I KNOW, MY LOVE... I KNOW. AND FOR THAT REASON DID I SACRIFICE MYSELF.

MOURN NOT FOR ME... I AM AT PEACE. AND REMEMBER ALWAYS... I LOVE THEE BALDER... I LOVE THEE...



SHE BE DEAD! DEAD!

AND THOUGH THOU DID NOT LIFT THY HAND TO SLAY HER-- STILL 'TIS THY DOING!

AND SO I BE FREE OF THEE AND THY CURSED OATH! NE'ER AGAIN DO I WISH TO GAZE 'PON THY HATED VISAGE!



I'LL NOT SET THEE LOOSE THAT EASILY, MY BRAVE ONE. I'LL...



... I SHALL BE IN MY CHAMBERS IF THOU SHOULD CHANGE THY MIND ABOUT REMAINING.



IF NOT, I EXPECT THEE AND THE WENCH TO BE GONE WHEN I RETURN LATER.



THE ASSEMBLAGE DISPERSES, LEAVING THE TWO LOVERS ALONE... ONE IN GRIEF... THE OTHER IN DEATH.

FOR HOURS THE SOUNDS OF SOBBING ECHO IN THE RECESSES OF THE GREAT CAVERN. AND THEN, WITH THE COMING OF DAWN, ALL IS SILENT AND STILL.

The End.