

MARVEL<sup>TM</sup>

the mighty

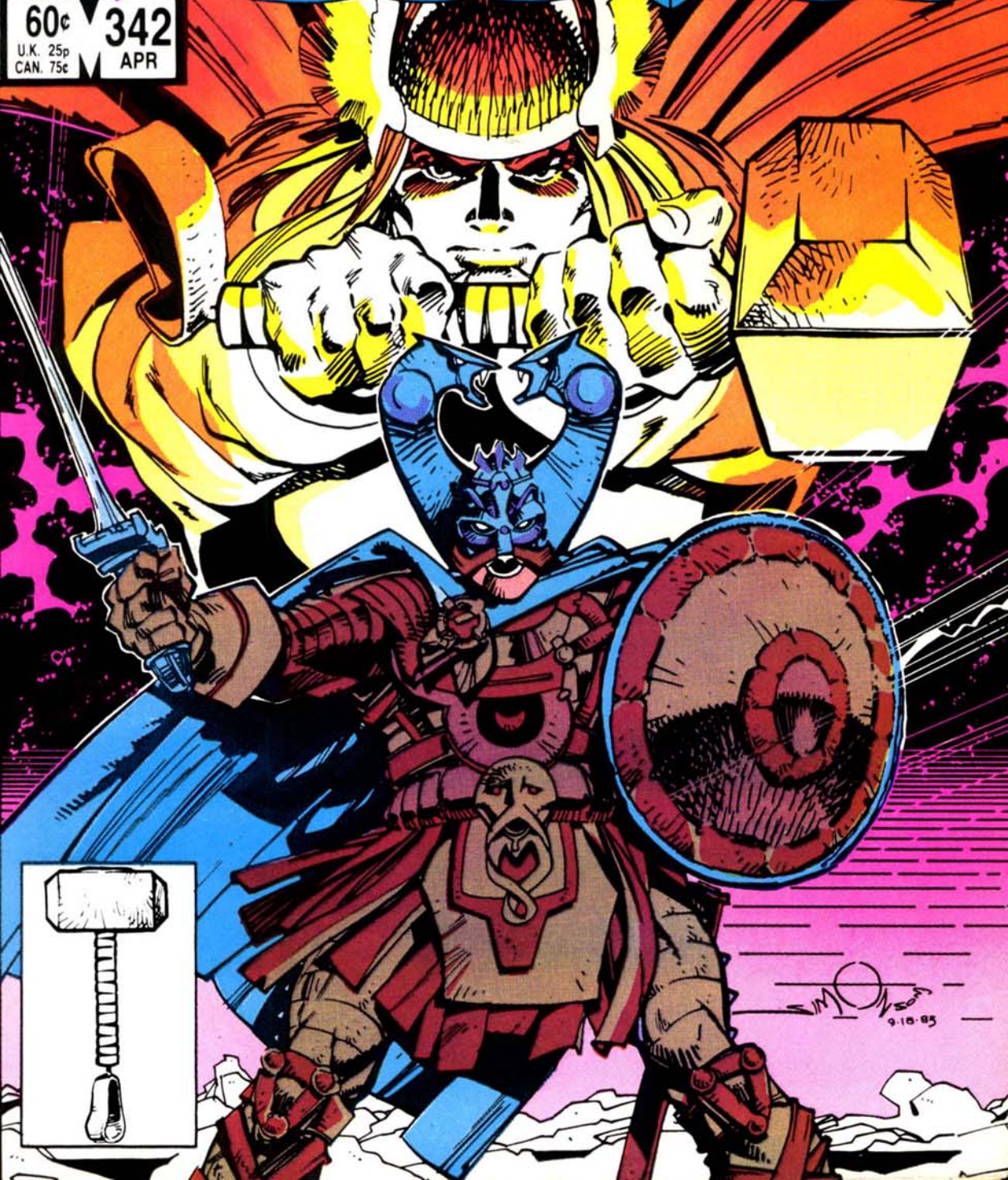
# THOR



© 1983 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

60c  
U.K. 25p  
CAN. 75c

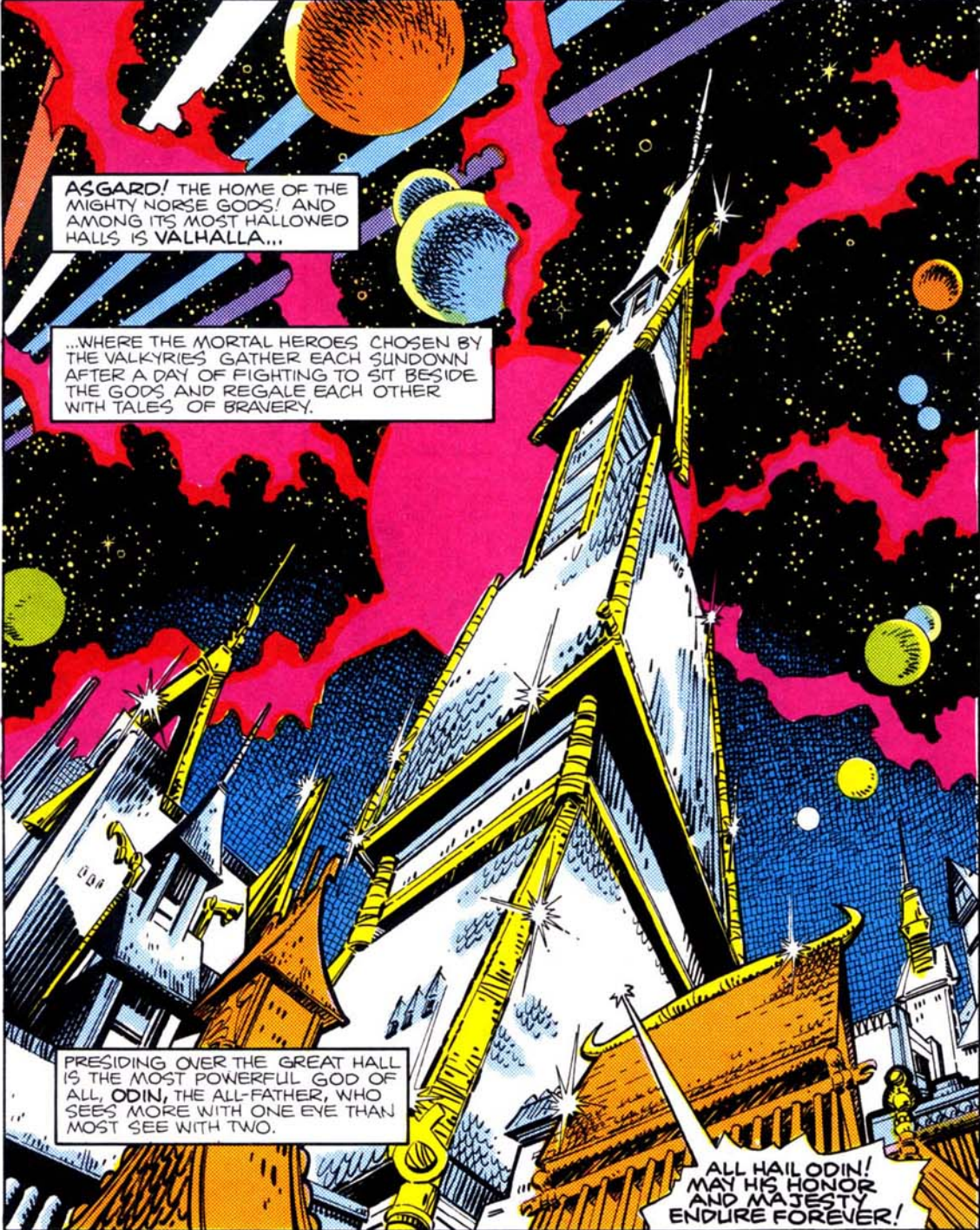
**342**  
APR



*Monson*  
9-18-83



# STAN LEE PRESENTS **the MIGHTY THOR**



ASGARD! THE HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS! AND AMONG ITS MOST HALLOWED HALLS IS VALHALLA...

...WHERE THE MORTAL HEROES CHOSEN BY THE VALKYRIES GATHER EACH SUNDOWN AFTER A DAY OF FIGHTING TO SIT BESIDE THE GODS AND REGALE EACH OTHER WITH TALES OF BRAVERY.

PRESIDING OVER THE GREAT HALL IS THE MOST POWERFUL GOD OF ALL, ODIN, THE ALL-FATHER, WHO SEES MORE WITH ONE EYE THAN MOST SEE WITH TWO.

ALL HAIL ODIN!  
MAY HIS HONOR  
AND MAJESTY  
ENDURE FOREVER!

PENCILS AND STORY: WALTER SIMONSON INKS: TERRY AUSTIN LETTERING: JOHN WORKMAN JR.  
COLORS: CHRISTIE SCHEELE EDITING: MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JIM SHOOTER

THOR • Vol. 1, No. 342, April, 1984. (ISSN 0274-533X) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Gailton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Second Class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Published monthly. Copyright © 1983 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 60¢ per copy in the U.S. and 75¢ in Canada. Subscription rate \$7.20 for 12 issues, Canada and Foreign, \$9.20. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. THOR (including all prominent characters featured in the issue) and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. Postmaster: Send address changes to Subscription Dept., Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.



ODIN SALUTES HIS HEROES! MAY YOUR WEAPONS BE EVER SHARP! YOUR VIGILANCE ETERNAL! NOW THE FEAST IS READY. LET US BE SEATED.



THE TIME IS NEARLY FULL, WOULD THAT MY SON, THOR, HAD NOT RETURNED TO MIDGARD.\* IF MY FORBODINGS ARE CORRECT, WE MAY SOON HAVE NEED OF HIS GREAT STRENGTH.



\*EARTH

WHAT WEIGHT OF TROUBLE FURROWS THE BROW OF NOBLE ODIN?

WE SHARE A DRINK EVERY EVENTIDE. PERHAPS OUR CUP TONIGHT WILL RELAX MY LORD.

THANK YOU, SAGA, BUT I THINK EVEN THE MEAD OF POETRY WOULD NOT SUFFICE TO BRING ME PLEASURE.



I SEE ACROSS THE HALL THE EMPTY CHAIR, HELD IN READINESS, LO THESE MANY YEARS, EVER WAITING FOR THE LAST HERO WHO WAS NEVER CHOSEN.

LONG HAVE WE WAITED IN VAIN TO CELEBRATE HIS ARRIVAL.



NOW THE WINDS TALK TO ME OF HIS COMING AND THE NUMBER OF THE HALL SHALL BE COMPLETE.

SHOULD WE NOT THEN REJOICE, MY LORD?

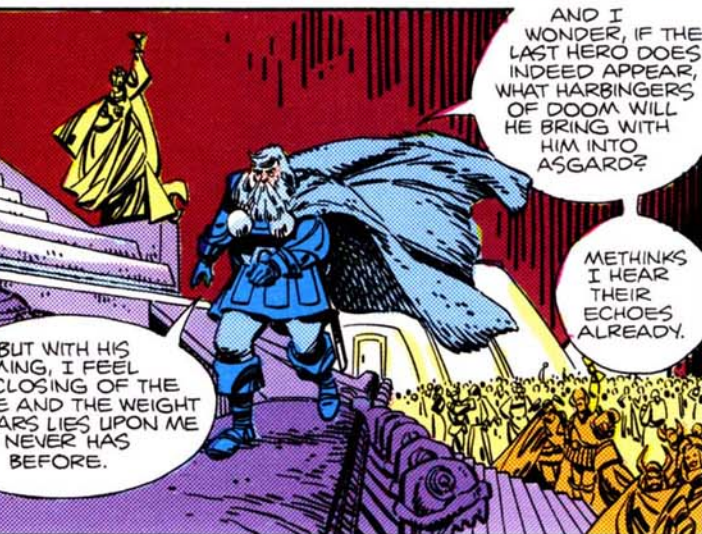
WE WILL, SAGA. ODIN MOST OF ALL.



BUT WITH HIS COMING, I FEEL THE CLOSING OF THE CIRCLE AND THE WEIGHT OF YEARS LIES UPON ME AS IT NEVER HAS BEFORE.

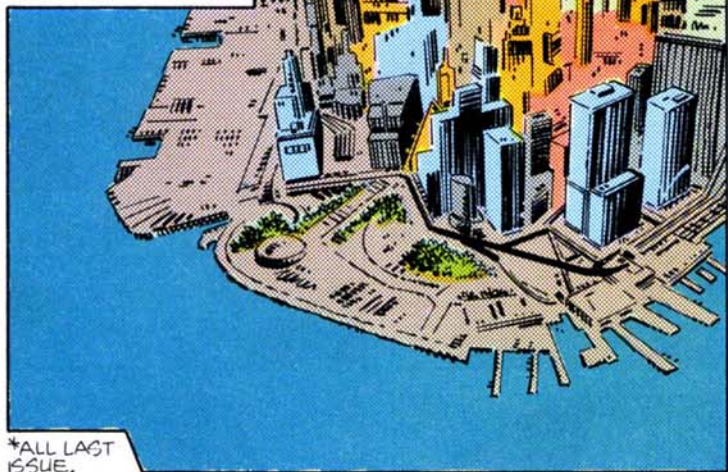
AND I WONDER, IF THE LAST HERO DOES INDEED APPEAR, WHAT HARBINGERS OF DOOM WILL HE BRING WITH HIM INTO ASGARD?

METHINKS I HEAR THEIR ECHOES ALREADY.





ELSEWHERE, ON MANHATTAN ISLAND, AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE DECIMATED BY THE DRAGON FAFNIR...



\*ALL LAST ISSUE.

WELL, I SURE HOPE THE BUILDER HAS INSURANCE THAT'LL COVER AGAINST DESTRUCTION BY DRAGONS. WADDA MESS.



WE WERE LUCKY THOR WAS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND SCARED HIM OFF.



I THOUGHT GOLDILOCKS WAS IN CHICAGO THESE DAYS.

PERHAPS HE IS REALLY A METS FAN AND RETURNED.

I DOUBT IT. GUYS LIKE HIM, THEY DON'T GET THE SAME WORRIES GUYS LIKE YOU 'N' ME DO. BESIDES, IT AIN'T BASEBALL SEASON!



HEY, MISTER! YOU WITH THE GLASSES!

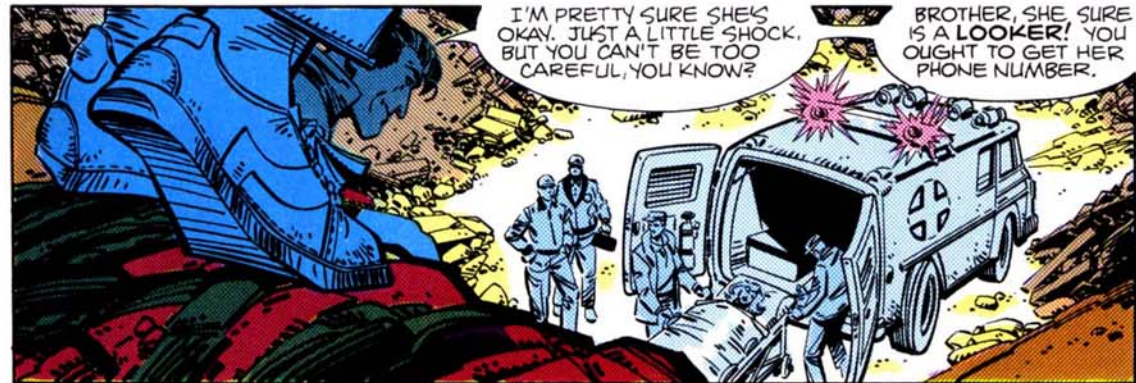
JARLSON. SIGURD JARLSON.



WHATEVER.

WE'RE ABOUT TO TAKE THAT GIRL OFF TO THE HOSPITAL.

SAYS SHE WANTS TO THANK YOU FOR SAVING HER LIFE.



I'M PRETTY SURE SHE'S OKAY. JUST A LITTLE SHOCK. BUT YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL, YOU KNOW?

BROTHER, SHE SURE IS A LOOKER! YOU OUGHT TO GET HER PHONE NUMBER.



HELLO, MISS. GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE OKAY.

COULD YOU... COME A LITTLE CLOSER.

I'M GLAD YOU WERE STILL HERE. YOU SAVED ME FROM THE DRAGON AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME.

SIGURD JARLSON, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT!

OH, I THINK THAT'S A WONDERFUL NAME. SO STRONG!

DO YOU LIVE IN THE CITY?

BROOKLYN, MISS. JUST MOVED IN LAST WEEK.

AS SOON AS I CAN, I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO THANK YOU PROPERLY FOR SAVING MY LIFE.

IF YOU'LL LET ME.

OH, AH, UH... UH, CERTAINLY.

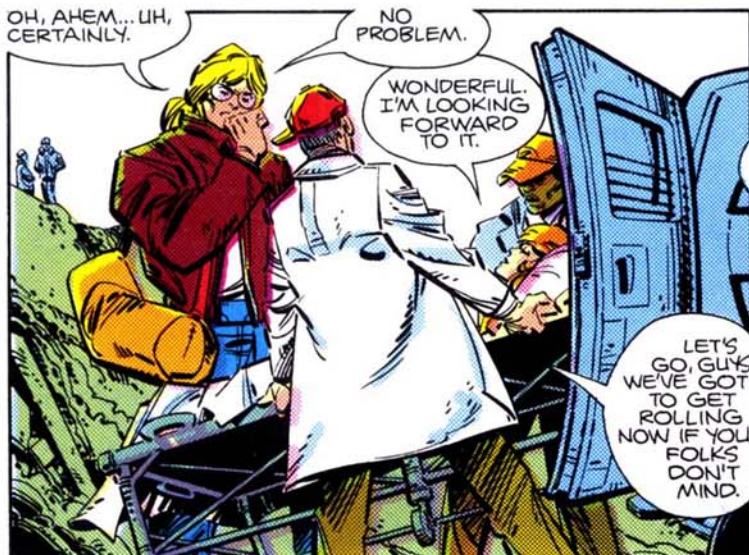
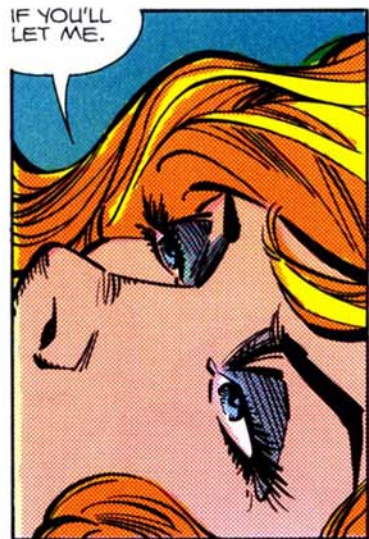
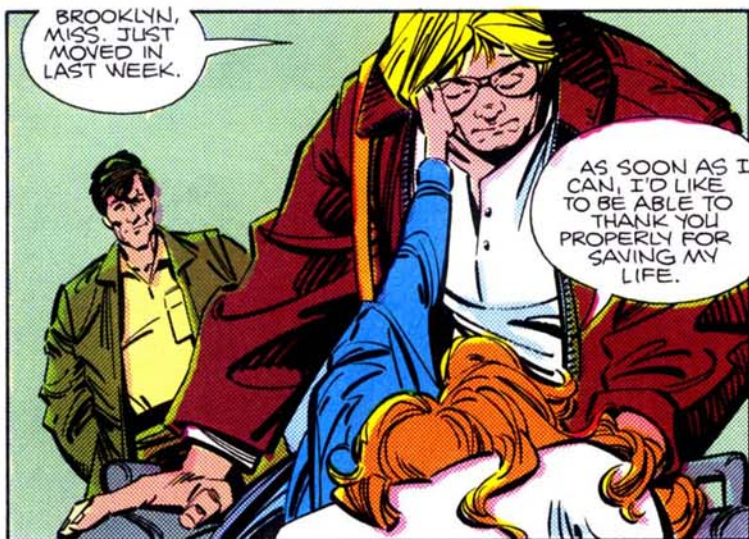
NO PROBLEM.

WONDERFUL. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

NO, NO, I DIDN'T, DID I?

YOU DOPE! YOU DIDN'T EVEN GET HER NAME!

LET'S GO, GUYS. WE'VE GOT TO GET ROLLING NOW IF YOU FOLKS DON'T MIND.





BUT ENOUGH OF THIS. AGAIN I HEAR MY NAME AS IF SOMEONE WERE CALLING TO ME FROM A GREAT DISTANCE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE VIKINGS\*...

...AS ONCE THOSE SEA-FARERS CALLED FOR MY BLESSINGS IN THE PAST.

\*WE HEARD IT LAST ISSUE, TOO.

'TIS TIME THIS MYSTERY WERE UNRAVELED!

I MUST GO, JERRY. I HAVE MUCH UNPACKING TO DO.

OKAY, SIG. REPORT IN MONDAY MORNING BRIGHT AND EARLY AND WE'LL GET STARTED CLEANING UP THIS MESS.

Y'KNOW, I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING.

NAAH!

AFTER WATCHING SIGURD SWING UP THAT CABLE TO SAVE THAT DAME FROM THE DRAGON, I WONDER IF HE COULD...D'YA SUPPOSE HE'S REALLY...

THIS PARKENED ALLEYWAY SHOULD SERVE MY PURPOSE.

I HAVE BUT TO REMOVE MY HAMMER, MJOLNIR, FROM MY KNAPSACK AND STRIKE IT UPON THE GROUND.

**SHRACKK!!**

...AND THE MIGHTY THOR LIVES AGAIN!

IN DAYS OF YORE, MY XLOWERS DID CALL MY ME AND EVEN IF I WERE ...JRLDS AWAY, I COULD HEAR THEM AND ANSWER IF IT PLEASED ME.

I THOUGHT SUCH DAYS WERE LONG FORGOTTEN, BUT THE VOICE THAT CALLS ME NOW SPEAKS WITH THE SAME PASSION, THE SAME BELIEF AS THOSE OF OLDEN TIMES.

SO I SHALL SEEK OUT THIS REMINDER OF THE PAST AND LEARN WHO CALLS ME FROM OUT OF A BYGONE AGE.





ELSEWHERE, BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW, A MASSIVE FIGURE STANDS BEFORE A MIGHTY ANVIL AND A HALF FINISHED SWORD...





MEANWHILE,  
ON EARTH...

ANTARCTICA! VAST CON-  
TINENT OF ICE AND SNOW!  
MY SEARCH HAS BROUGHT ME  
TO THE END OF THE WORLD!

SOMEWHERE  
BELOW LIES THE  
ANSWER TO THE  
MYSTERY OF THE  
VOICE.

THOUGH I NO  
LONGER HEAR IT, I  
SENSE THAT ITS OWNER  
IS HIDDEN SOMEWHERE  
BEYOND THESE MISTS...

...WHICH HIDE A  
MIGHTY RANGE OF  
MOUNTAINS  
LOOMING BEFORE  
ME LIKE THE  
FORTRESS  
OF THE  
FROST  
GIANTS!

PERHAPS THE  
ANSWER LIES  
WITHIN THIS  
ANCIENT  
VOLCANIC  
CALDERA.

THE AIR!  
IT GROWS WARMER  
WITH EVERY FOOT  
I DESCEND!

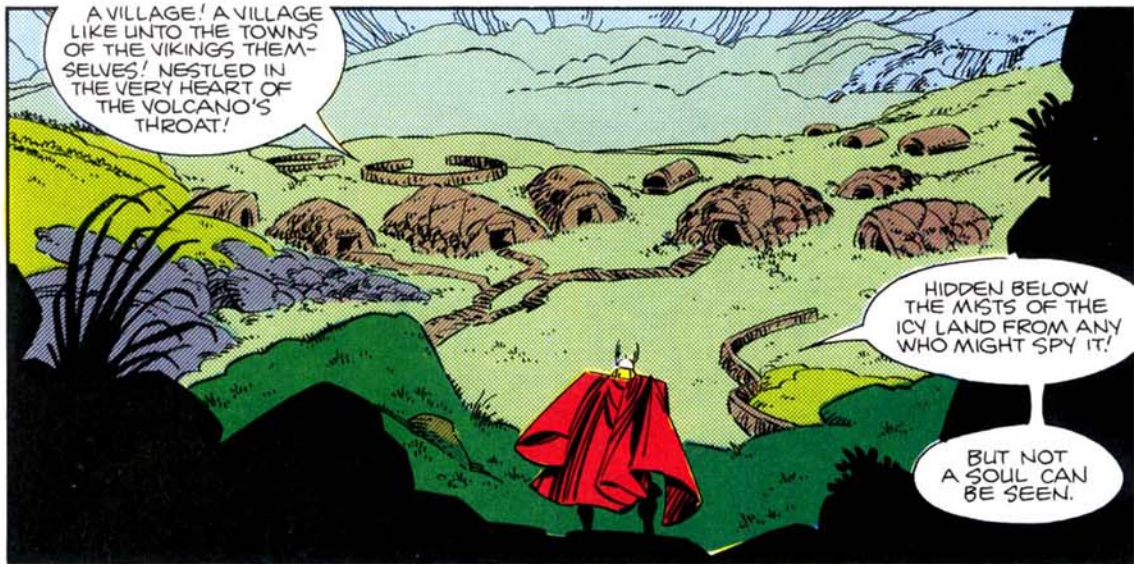
INCREDIBLE!  
THE VALLEY BELOW ME  
TEEMS WITH LIFE!

THE VOLCANO'S  
HEAT RADIATES FROM  
THE VERY GROUND TO  
FILL THIS CRATER WITH  
LIFE-GIVING  
WARMTH.

AND  
THOUGH THE  
AIR IS STILL  
COOL, I FEEL AS  
THOUGH I HAD  
ARRIVED IN  
SOME TEMPERATE  
CLIME A THOUSAND  
MILES FROM  
HERE!

BY  
THE  
SKULL  
OF  
YMIR!





A VILLAGE! A VILLAGE LIKE UNTO THE TOWNS OF THE VIKINGS THEMSELVES! NESTLED IN THE VERY HEART OF THE VOLCANO'S THROAT!

HIDDEN BELOW THE MISTS OF THE ICY LAND FROM ANY WHO MIGHT SPY IT!

BUT NOT A SOUL CAN BE SEEN.



STAND FORTH! ARE THERE ANY ABOUT TO WELCOME A DISTANT TRAVELER?



NAUGHT BUT SILENCE.

AND YET, THE VOICE CAME FROM HERE, I AM SURE OF IT!

STAND A MOMENT. WHAT FRIENDLY SCENT IS THIS?



A COOKING POT, NEARLY FULL OF STEW.

AND FRESH, THOUGH COOL.



UM, NOT BAD.

THIS IS NO DESERTED VILLAGE, NO MATTER HOW IT MIGHT APPEAR!

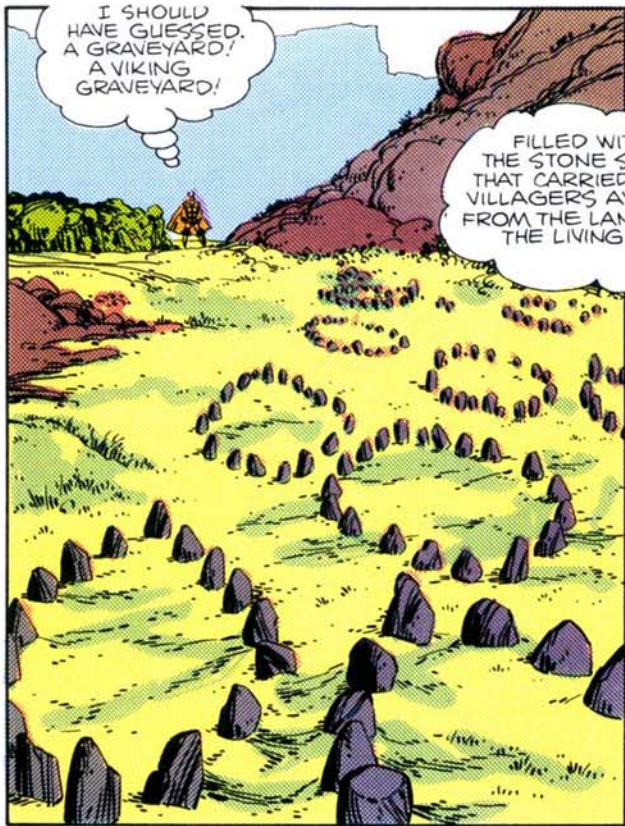


AND YET, NOW THAT I AM CLOSER, I DO SEE THAT SOME OF THE HUTS HAVE BEEN LONG ABANDONED.

PERHAPS BEYOND THIS WALL, I MAY DISCOVER SOME ANSWER TO THESE RIDDLES.

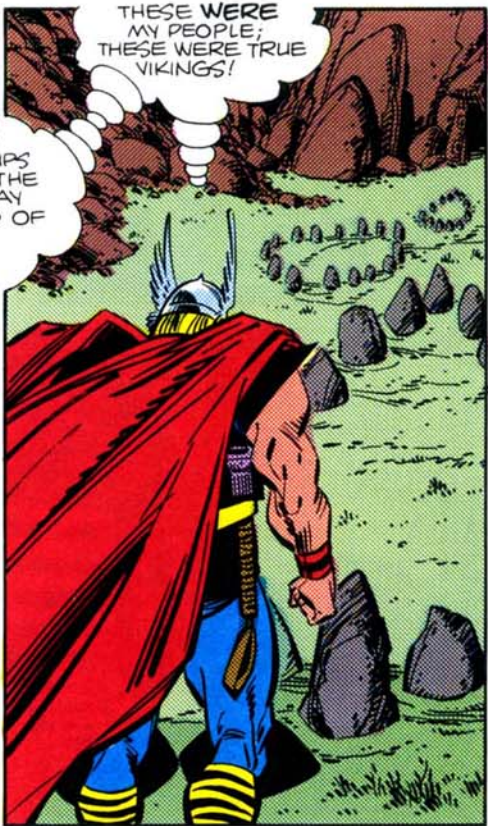
PERHAPS THE VILLAGERS HAVE FLED FROM THE STRANGER AND HIDDEN.





I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED. A GRAVEYARD! A VIKING GRAVEYARD!

FILLED WITH THE STONE SHIPS THAT CARRIED THE VILLAGERS AWAY FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING!



THESE WERE MY PEOPLE; THESE WERE TRUE VIKINGS!



BUT WHERE ARE THE VILLAGERS NOW? WHAT HAS BECOME OF THEM? AND WHERE IS THE OWNER OF THE VOICE THAT CALLED TO ME?



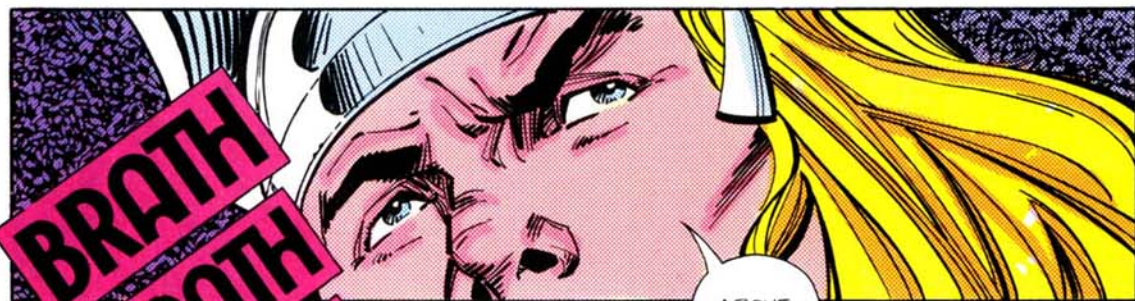
THE STONE SHIPS, ALL POINT IN THIS DIRECTION, AND BEFORE THEM LIES A DOORWAY IN THE CLIFF.

A BECKONING ENTRANCE TO ONE MORE MYSTERY, AND YET, THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING MAY WELL BE WITHIN YON BLACK THRESHOLD!





WH  
DR  
AM





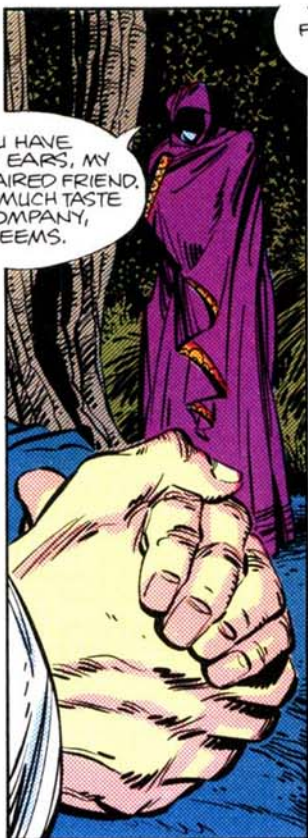
BUT WHILE THOR STANDS BENEATH A VERITABLE RAIN OF DEATH, WE FIND THE BRAVE BALDER, ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS FAR BEYOND THE WALLS OF ASGARD...



...OR PERHAPS, NOT SO ALONE.

COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS, WAY-FARER, AND REST BESIDE THE FIRE. THERE IS WARMTH ENOUGH HERE FOR TWO.

YOU HAVE SHARP EARS, MY WHITE-HAIRED FRIEND. BUT NOT MUCH TASTE FOR COMPANY, IT SEEMS.



YOU ARE FAR FROM ANYWHERE IN THESE WILDS.

PERHAPS MY PRESENCE IS AN UNWELCOME INTRUSION.



I HAVE SOUGHT SOLITUDE AND THE BEAUTY OF EMPTINESS. IT HAS ELUDED ME THIS FAR, EVEN HERE.



BUT I HAVE NOT FORSAKEN HOSPITALITY, AND PERHAPS I HAVE NOT LOST MY TASTE FOR COMPANY AS MUCH AS I HAD THOUGHT THESE LAST FEW WEEKS.

DO YOU SEEK COMPANIONSHIP NOW?

I CAN SCARCELY AVOID IT, IT SEEMS. I HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR MEN AT ARMS IN THE WOODS. WILL THEY CARRY ME OFF IF YOUR BEAUTY FAILS TO MOVE ME?



YOU WERE ALWAYS LOVELY, KARNILLA. BUT I NEVER FOUND BEAUTY AND EVIL SEDUCTIVE.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF EVIL, BALDER? YOU WHOM THE VERY GODS ENVY FOR YOUR GOODNESS.



I HAVE PLUMBED THE DEPTHS OF HEL AS EVEN LOKI HAS NOT, MY LADY.

I HAVE SEEN FIRSTHAND THE DEATH THAT I HAVE DEALT. AND IT DOGS MY FOOTSTEPS, EVEN HERE IN THE WILDERNESS.

LET IT GO, BALDER!

EVERY LIVING CREATURE IS A PLAYTHING OF THE FATES AND BOWS TO THE WILL OF TIME EVENTUALLY.

YOU CANNOT CARRY THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERY DEATH, FOR EVERY CRY OF MERCY.

THAT IS A LESSON I HAVE YET TO LEARN, MY QUEEN.

THEN MAY YOU LEARN IT SOON, BRAVE BALDER, BEFORE YOU TEAR YOURSELF APART.

I... I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED PROVISIONS. MY MEN HAVE LEFT A PLENTIFUL SUPPLY BEYOND THE ROCKS. BUT REMEMBER ME, SHOULD YOU NEED A FRIEND.

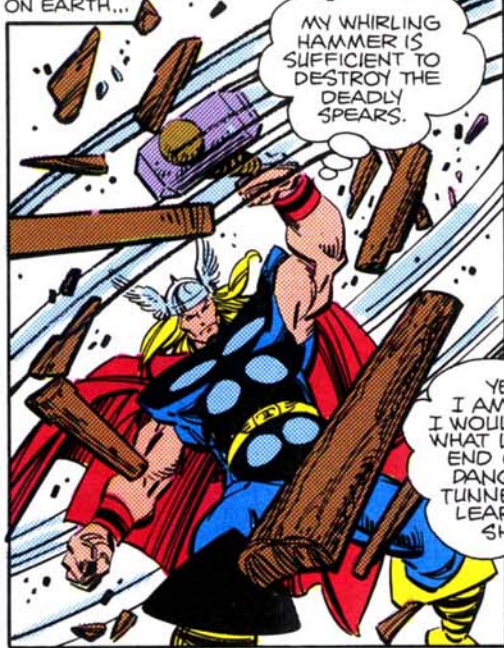
I'LL BE WAITING.

BUT SHOULD YOU TIRE OF THE OUTLAND AND NEED A DIFFERENT SANCTUARY, SEEK ME OUT. YOU'LL NOT BE DISTURBED, I PROMISE YOU.

AND BALDER SITS QUIETLY IN THE FLICKERING LIGHT, STARING IN THE DANCING FLAME...



MEANWHILE,  
ON EARTH...



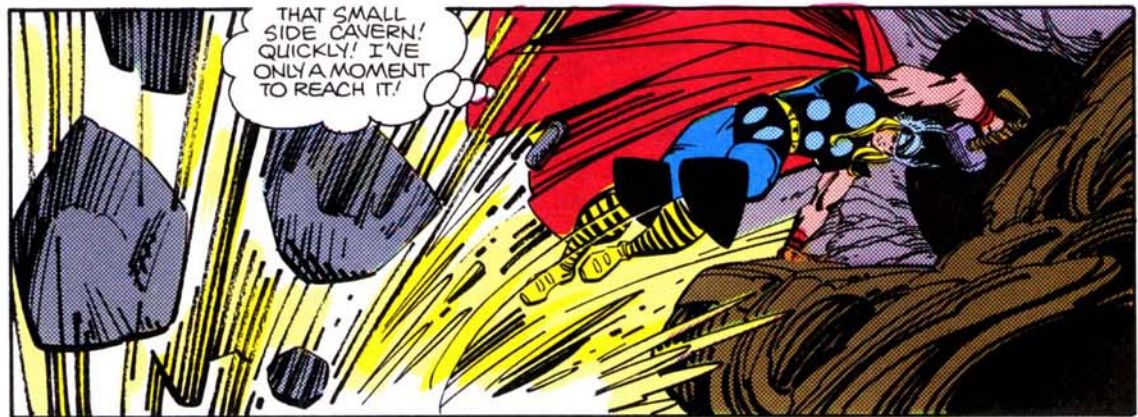
MY WHIRLING  
HAMMER IS  
SUFFICIENT TO  
DESTROY THE  
DEADLY  
SPEARS.

YET NOW  
I AM ANGRY!!  
I WOULD LEARN  
WHAT LIES AT THE  
END OF THIS  
DANGEROUS  
TUNNEL! AND  
LEARN IT I  
SHALL!

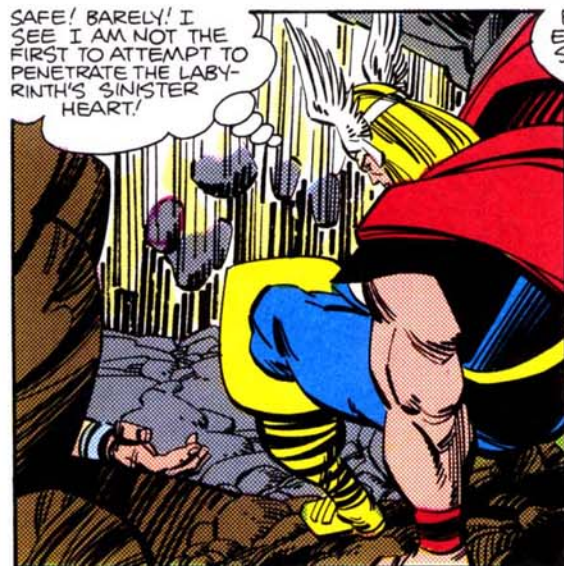
# RUMMBLE!



A DEADFALL!  
THERE ARE  
SOME WHO AP-  
ARENTLY  
WISH TO  
KEEP THE  
TUNNEL'S SECRET  
HIDDEN.



THAT SMALL  
SIDE CAVERN!  
QUICKLY! I'VE  
ONLY A MOMENT  
TO REACH IT!



SAFE! BARELY! I  
SEE I AM NOT THE  
FIRST TO ATTEMPT  
TO PENETRATE THE LABY-  
RINTH'S SINISTER  
HEART!

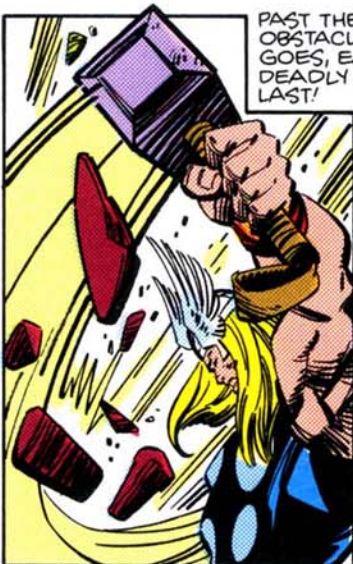
BUT BY THE BURNING  
EYE OF MY FATHER, I  
SHALL BE THE FIRST  
TO SUCCEED!

SO SWEARS  
THOR!





AND THE SON OF ODIN BEGINS TO MAKE GOOD HIS OATH!

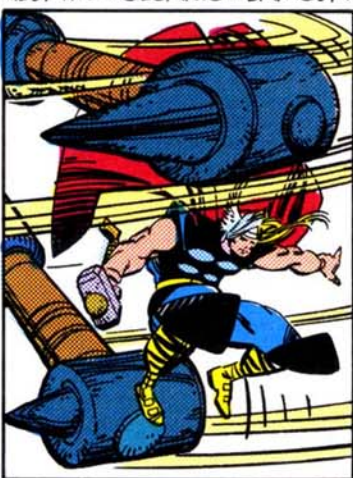


PAST THE DEADLY OBSTACLES HE GOES, EACH MORE DEADLY THAN THE LAST!



BUT NONE MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE MIGHTY THOR!

PAST THE NOXIOUS FUMES, THE FLAILS, THE VOLCANIC FLAMES, AND MORE UNTIL...



THESE BOULDERS SEALING THIS EXIT FROM THE LABYRINTH SHALL NOT STOP ME! ONE BLOW FROM MJOLNIR SHALL REDUCE THEM TO RUBBLE AND FREE THE PASSAGEWAY!

**BRAK THAUM!**



BUT WAIT! WHAT MOVES IN THE SHADOWS BEFORE ME, GROWING LARGER AND LARGER? SURELY MY EYES DECEIVE ME!



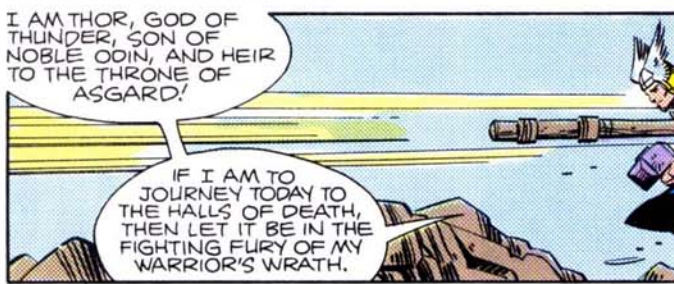


LOOK WELL, LITTLE GOD, UPON THE VISAGE OF DEATH!



NONE HAVE EVER VENTURED SO FAR INTO THE LABYRINTH OF TERROR. NONE HAVE PROVEN WORTHY TO DIE BY MY OWN SPEAR.

SPEAK YOUR NAME, LITTLE ONE, AND WELCOME ME!



I AM THOR, GOD OF THUNDER, SON OF NOBLE ODIN, AND HEIR TO THE THRONE OF ASGARD!

IF I AM TO JOURNEY TODAY TO THE HALLS OF DEATH, THEN LET IT BE IN THE FIGHTING FURY OF MY WARRIOR'S WRATH.



HAVE AT YOU, VILLAIN. WERE YOU HELA'S OWN KIN, YOU WOULD NOT FIND ME SIMPLE PREY.



WHA--! MY FOE'S HELMET! IT HAS COME LOOSE, FALLING AWAY TO REVEAL HIS FACE!



BY THE GODS... I CANNOT BELIEVE IT!



BUT AS THOR STARES  
IN AMAZEMENT AT  
HIS FALLEN FOE...

...LET US VISIT ANOTHER,  
DARKER CAVERN BENEATH THE  
STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY,  
WHERE WE FIND THE GREAT  
DRAGON, FAFNIR...

...NURSING  
HIS  
HATRED.

FOOL! YOU  
HAD HIM IN  
THE PALM OF  
YOUR CLAW!

NOW THAT I  
REFLECT UPON  
THE FIGHT WITH  
THOR, I SEE  
THAT THERE WAS  
NOTHING TO BE  
AFRAID OF!

THE SON OF  
ODIN WAS  
HELPLESS  
BEFORE ME!

MY  
POWER  
DWARFS HIS  
OWN!

THIS TIME  
I SHALL DESTROY  
THOR! AND I KNOW  
JUST HOW TO BRING  
HIM TO ME NOW!

**BRADABARAMM!**

MOMENTS LATER,  
SOMEWHERE AT  
THE EDGE OF  
THE SOUTH  
BRONX...

HEAR ME, YOU PUNY  
CREATURES! I AM FAFNIR,  
THE GREAT AND POWERFUL!  
AND I WILL DESTROY YOUR  
CITY UNTIL THE MIGHTY THOR  
IS BROUGHT BEFORE ME!

THAT I MAY  
TEAR HIM  
LIMB FROM  
LIMB!

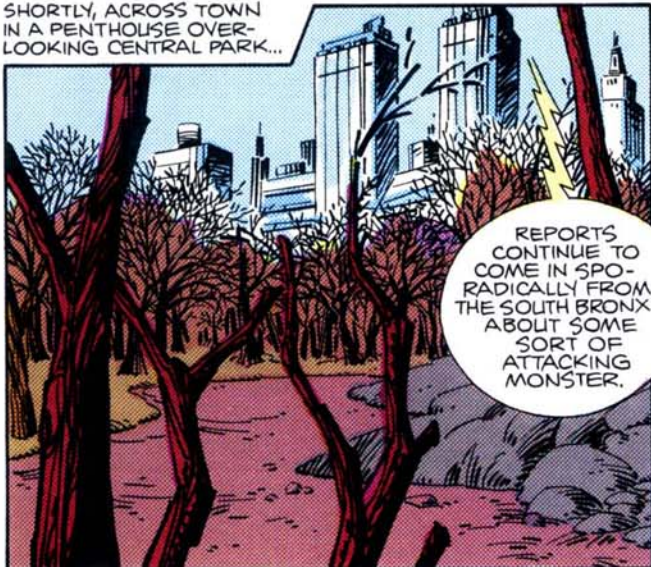
BRING  
ME  
THOR!

THERE'S  
NEVER A  
SUPER HERO  
AROUND WHEN  
YOU NEED  
ONE!

FOR PETE'S  
SAKE, WHERE  
THE HECK IS THOR  
ANYWAY?



SHORTLY, ACROSS TOWN  
IN A PENTHOUSE OVER-  
LOOKING CENTRAL PARK...



REPORTS  
CONTINUE TO  
COME IN SPO-  
RADICALLY FROM  
THE SOUTH BRONX  
ABOUT SOME  
SORT OF  
ATTACKING  
MONSTER.

THE HONORABLE SEN-  
ATOR HAS ANNOUNCED  
THAT THE CREATURE  
IS UNDOUBTEDLY A  
TOOL OF THE RUSSKIAN  
ALTHOUGH STATE DE-  
PARTMENT OFFICIALS  
ARE SKEPTICAL.

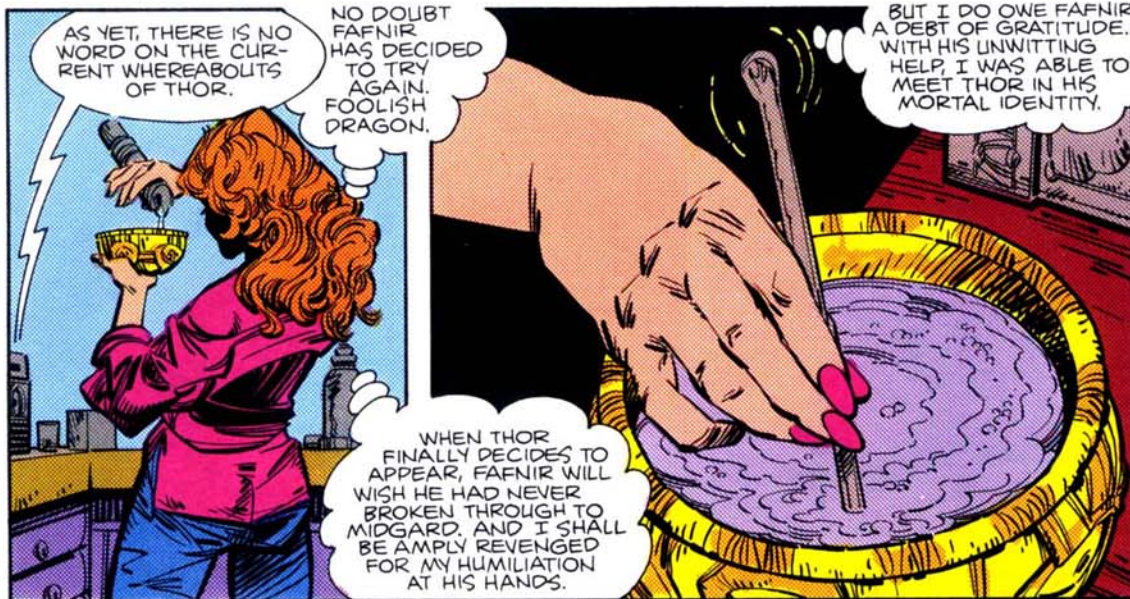
SO FAR,  
PALEON-  
TOLOGISTS  
HAVE  
FAILED TO  
IDENTIFY  
THE CRE-  
ATURE BUT  
ARE STILL  
TRYING.



AS YET, THERE IS NO  
WORD ON THE CUR-  
RENT WHEREABOUTS  
OF THOR.

NO DOUBT  
FAFNIR  
HAS DECIDED  
TO TRY  
AGAIN.  
FOOLISH  
DRAGON.

BUT I DO OWE FAFNIR  
A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.  
WITH HIS UNWITTING  
HELP, I WAS ABLE TO  
MEET THOR IN HIS  
MORTAL IDENTITY.



WHEN THOR  
FINALLY DECIDES TO  
APPEAR, FAFNIR WILL  
WISH HE HAD NEVER  
BROKEN THROUGH TO  
MIDGARD, AND I SHALL  
BE AMPLY REVENGED  
FOR MY HUMILIATION  
AT HIS HANDS.

NOW I SHALL BE  
ABLE TO SEE THOR  
UNDER QUIETER,  
MORE INTIMATE  
CIRCUMSTANCES...

...TO THANK  
HIM FOR  
RESCUING  
ME...

...AND WHEN  
I DO, A  
LITTLE OF THIS  
GOLDEN MEAD  
WILL INSURE  
THAT HE'LL  
NEVER THINK OF  
ANYONE ELSE  
AGAIN.





BUT UNAWARE OF THE VARIOUS DESIGNS UPON HIM, THE MIGHTY THOR STARES DOWN AT THE FIGURE BEFORE HIM...



AN OLD MAN!

...STUNNED TO DISCOVER THAT HIS ERSTWHILE FOE IS...



AT LAST, YOU HAVE COME!  
:GASP: NOW, MY LORD, DO NOT SPARE ME. FINISH THE JOB! :GASP:



NAY, I'LL NOT KILL AN ANCIENT, NO MATTER WHAT HE'S DONE.

BUT THE AIR IS FOUL AND STIFLING HERE WITHIN THE VOLCANO'S TUNNELS. LET ME CARRY YOU OUT OF THIS DEADLY PLACE.



THEN WE SHALL DISCOVER THE NATURE OF THIS BOLD WARRIOR WHO WOULD CHALLENGE THE GODS!

WHRIPPAUM!



AT LAST WE'VE REACHED CLEAN AIR.



AS I THOUGHT, THE GREAT STATURE OF THE WARRIOR WAS MAINLY THE BULK OF THE ARMOR ITSELF.



NOW LET ME GENTLY REMOVE THE ARMOR THAT WEIGHS HIM DOWN.

THOUGH IN HIS YOUTH, THIS ANCIENT WAS NO DOUBT A LARGE AND DOUGHTY FIGHTER IN HIS OWN RIGHT.

BUT TIME AND AGE HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL AS WITH ALL MORTALS.

YOU HAVE LET ME LIVE, LORD THOR. DESERVEDLY SO, I EXPECT.



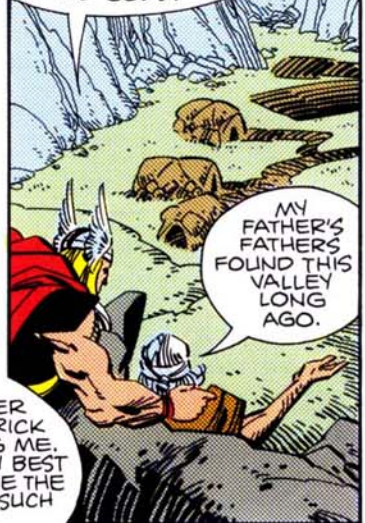
WHO ARE YOU, GRAND-FATHER?

EILIF THE LOST.



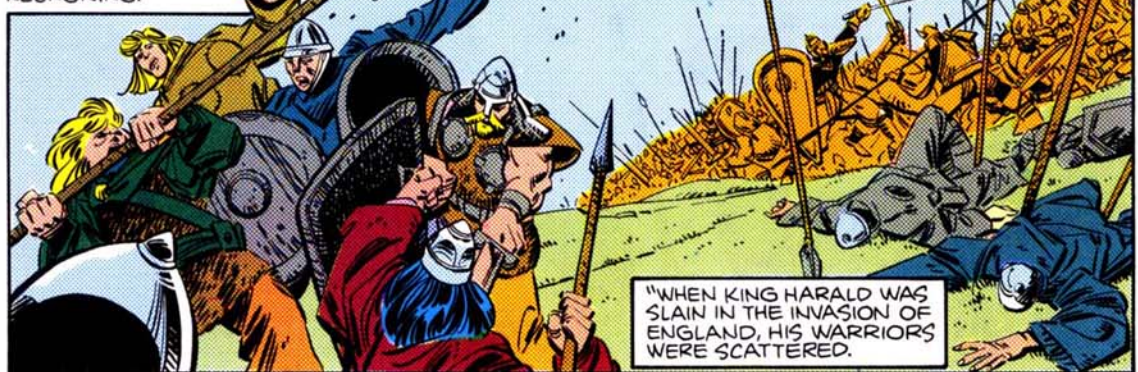
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE TRIED TO TRICK YOU INTO KILLING ME, THE GODS KNOW BEST AND IF I MUST DIE THE STRAW DEATH, SUCH IS MY FATE.

HOW CAME YOU HERE, GRANDFATHER, TO THIS PLACE FORGOTTEN EVEN BY THE GODS?



MY FATHER'S FATHERS FOUND THIS VALLEY LONG AGO.

"IT WAS AFTER THE DEFEAT OF KING HARALD HARDRAADA IN THE YEAR 1066 BY CHRISTIAN RECKONING.



"WHEN KING HARALD WAS SLAIN IN THE INVASION OF ENGLAND, HIS WARRIORS WERE SCATTERED.



"SOME TOOK THEIR FAMILIES AND FLED FAR ALONG THE SOUTHERN COASTS, RAIDING WHERE THEY COULD, LIVING OFF THE LAND.

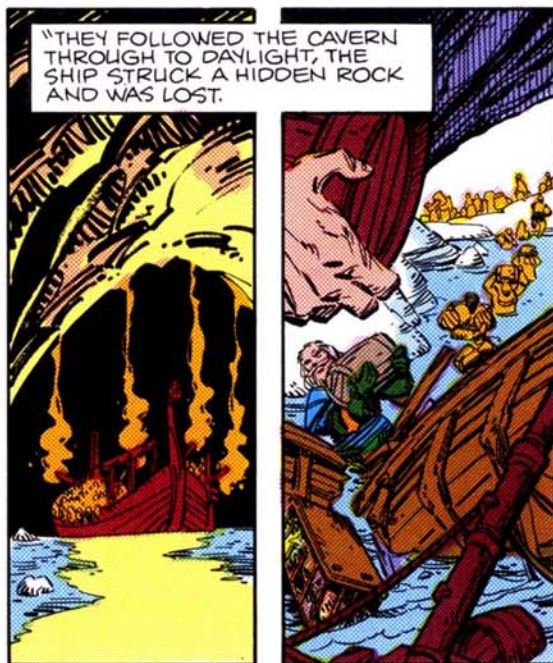


"THEY SAY THERE WERE SEVEN DRAGON SHIPS BUT THAT STORMS AND FIGHTING CUT THEM DOWN...

"...UNTIL ONE SHIP WAS DRIVEN BY MONSTROUS WAVES TO A LAND OF PERPETUAL ICE, UNKNOWN TO THEM.



"THEY TOOK REFUGE IN A LARGE FJORD AND FOUND THAT IT DID NOT END BUT BECAME A CAVERN OUT OF WHICH FLOWED WARM WATER.



"THEY FOLLOWED THE CAVERN THROUGH TO DAYLIGHT, THE SHIP STRUCK A HIDDEN ROCK AND WAS LOST.



"THE SURVIVORS, MEN AND WOMEN, SALVAGED WHAT THEY COULD AND FOUND THAT THEY HAD EMERGED IN A LARGE VALLEY SURROUNDED BY IMPASSIBLE WALLS.



"AND THERE THEY STAYED AS DID THEIR CHILDREN. NOW I, WHO WAS THE LAST CHIEFTAIN, AM ALSO THE LAST SURVIVOR.

"AND MY DAYS ARE NUMBERED."





THE LABYRINTH?

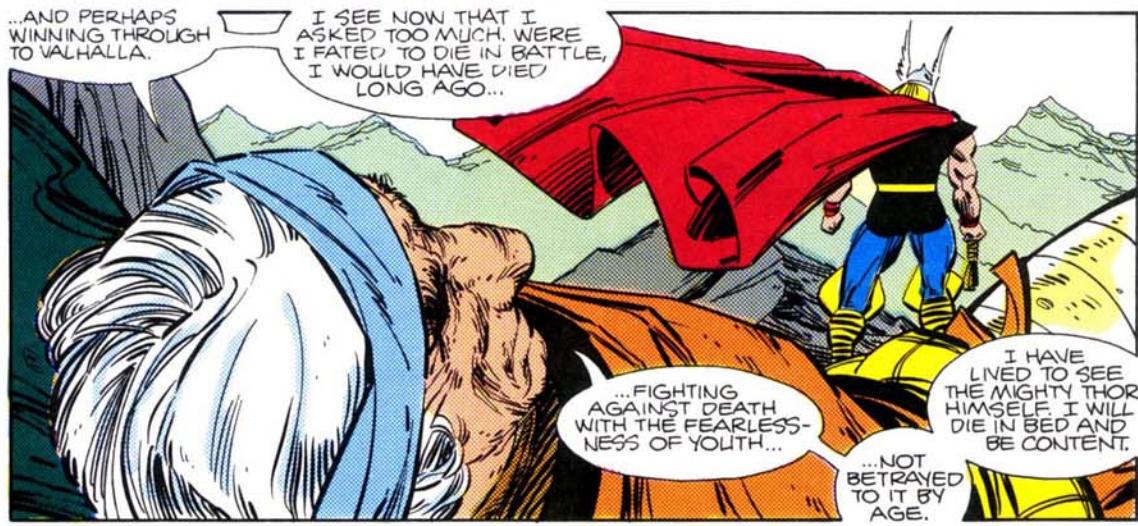
PART OF THE ORIGINAL SERIES OF CAVERNS THAT LED MY ANCESTORS HERE.

WE HAD NO FOES SO WE CREATED OUR OWN. WE BUILT THE MAZE TO TEST OUR PROWESS. TO BECOME WARRIORS.

IN THE END, I HOPED TO USE THE LABYRINTH TO TRAP A GOD!

FOR THE TEMPER OF THOR IS LEGENDARY AND I THOUGHT THAT IF I COULD PROVOKE HIM AND SO DIE IN BATTLE...

...AVOIDING THE "STRAW DEATH" IN BED THAT SENDS MEN DOWN TO HEL...



...AND PERHAPS WINNING THROUGH TO VALHALLA.

I SEE NOW THAT I ASKED TOO MUCH. WERE I FATED TO DIE IN BATTLE, I WOULD HAVE DIED LONG AGO...

...FIGHTING AGAINST DEATH WITH THE FEARLESSNESS OF YOUTH...

I HAVE LIVED TO SEE THE MIGHTY THOR HIMSELF. I WILL DIE IN BED AND BE CONTENT.

...NOT BETRAYED TO IT BY AGE.



NO, GRANDFATHER! YOU SHALL NOT! DO YOU STILL THINK THAT YOUR FATE RESTS WITHIN YOURSELF?

THAT I HAVE COME ALL THIS WAY TO DISCOVER A DOTARD SEEKING VALHALLA THROUGH DECEPTION?

YOU HAVE CALLED UPON THE GODS OF THE ICY NORTH AND THEY HAVE ANSWERED YOU!

NOW, YOUR LIFE... IS MINE!

**NEXT: IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE...** THOR! EILIF! LORELEI! FAFNIR! ODIN! DOOM! RAVENS? AND EVERYTHING ELSE WE CAN FIT INTO A SINGLE ISSUE! (OF COURSE, IT WILL ALL BE VERY, VERY TINY.)