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the mighty THOR

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STAND
ASIDE, THOR!
FOR I AM
DEATH...

...AND
ODIN'S
SOUL IS
MINE!

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STAN LEE PRESENTS **the MIGHTY THOR**

ASGARD, HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS!

ONLY A MOMENT AGO, ODIN, FATHER OF THE GODS, AND SURTUR OF MUSPELHEIM, THE GREAT DEMON WHO THREATENED THE UNIVERSE WITH DESTRUCTION, LOCKED IN DEADLY EMBRACE...

...FELL TOGETHER INTO A FIERY CREVASSE...

...AND VANISHED AS THE GAPING CRACK IN THE EARTH SLAMMED SHUT BEHIND THEM...

...LEAVING THOR AND LOKI ALONE IN THE WRECKAGE OF THE GOLDEN REALM.

FATHER!!

PICKIN' UP THE PIECES

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SOMETIMES, THOR, I DESPAIR OF YOU. IS THIS HOW YOU RE-PAY YOUR DEBTS OF GRATITUDE?

WITHOUT MY HELP, NEITHER YOU NOR ODIN COULD HAVE PREVENTED SURTUR FROM DESTROYING EVERYTHING.

UGGH!

AS FOR OUR FATHER, I THINK HE IS NOT DEAD FOR HIS POWER WOULD HAVE PASSED TO US AS HIS BROTHERS' PASSED TO HIM?!

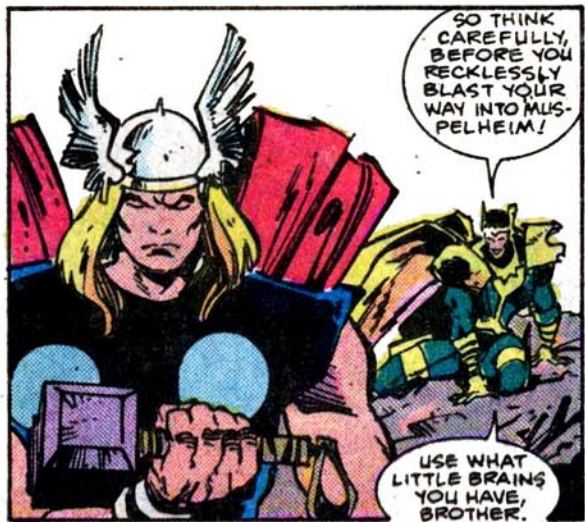
THOR # 349

IF INDEED ODIN AND SURTUR RETURNED TO MUSPELHEIM, THEN ONLY ODIN'S POWER PREVENTS SURTUR FROM BREAKING INTO THE NINE WORLDS AGAIN!

SHOULD YOU REOPEN THE GATEWAY TO THAT DEADLY REALM, YOU MAY EVEN RELEASE THE DEMON...



...AND THEREBY UNDO ALL THAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED!



SO THINK CAREFULLY, BEFORE YOU RECKLESSLY BLAST YOUR WAY INTO MUSPELHEIM!

USE WHAT LITTLE BRAINS YOU HAVE, BROTHER.



IT TAKES NO BRAINS, LOKI, TO SEE WHERE YOUR THOUGHTS ARE ALREADY TURNING.

EVEN YOU MUST HAVE REALIZED THAT SURTUR MEANT DESTRUCTION FOR US ALL...



...AND WHO WOULD RULE A SMOKING RUIN?

YET THERE IS TRUTH IN WHAT YOU SAY FOR ONCE. I DO OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.

AND THE ODIN-POWER HAS NOT RETURNED TO ASGARD.

BUT KNOW THIS, BROTHER, AS YOU PLOT BEHIND YOUR EYES!



I SHALL BE WATCHING YOU.

THEN I HOPE TO MAKE INTERESTING VIEWING!

OF THAT, MY BROTHER, I HAVE NO DOUBT.

MEANWHILE, ABOVE THE SAHARA DESERT ON EARTH...

FORWARD,
MY CREATURES!
KARNILLA,
THE NORN QUEEN
COMMANDS!

THE REMNANTS OF
SURTUR'S FORCES ARE
SCATTERED NOW THAT WE
HAVE DESTROYED THEIR
DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY
TO MUSPELHEIM!

CAUGHT BETWEEN OUR
FORCES ABOVE AND THE
ASGARDIANS BELOW, THE
DEMONS SHALL BE DESTROYED
COMPLETELY!

WHILE ON THE GROUND...

HOLD FAST, WARRIORS!
THOUGH THEY ARE NOW
OUTNUMBERED A
HUNDRED TO ONE,
STILL THE SONS OF
MUSPELL FIGHT
VALIANTLY!

THEY DO
NOT THINK OF
SURRENDER BUT
ATTACK MORE
FIERCELY THAN
EVER!

SUDDENLY---

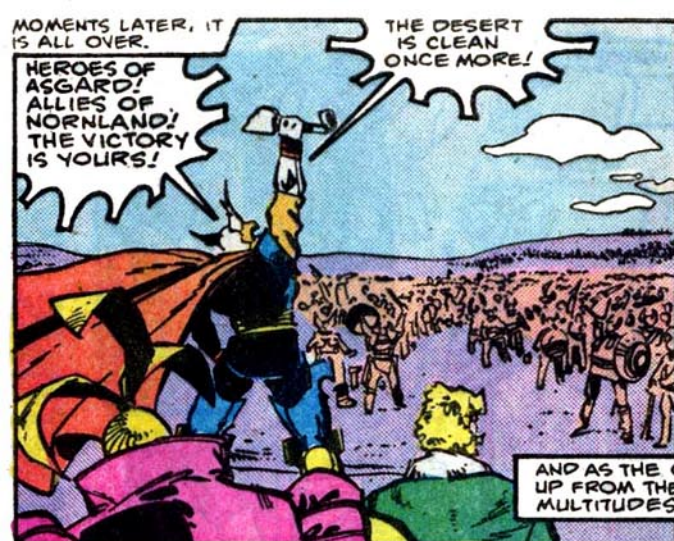
BILL, LOOK!
OUR FOEMEN!

THE DEMONS ARE
SMOKING AS THOUGH
THEY ARE BEING
CONSUMED BY THEIR
OWN FLAMES!

THE GATEWAY,
FANDRAL! WITHOUT
IT, THE DEMONS
HAVE LOST THEIR
CONNECTION TO
THEIR ENERGY
SOURCE!

THEIR
BODIES
ARE DEVOURING
THEM-
SELVES!

RRROOAAAARRR!!
WE
HAVE
WON!!



MOMENTS LATER, IT IS ALL OVER.

HEROES OF ASGARD! ALLIES OF NORNLAND! THE VICTORY IS YOURS!

THE DESERT IS CLEAN ONCE MORE!

AND AS THE CHEERS GO UP FROM THE ASSEMBLED MULTITUDES...



BALDER, MY FRIEND! YOU AND THE NORN QUEEN ARRIVED AT A MOST PROPITIOUS MOMENT!

GLAD WE WERE TO SEE YOU AND THE HOSTS OF NORNLAND CAME TO OUR AID IN THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

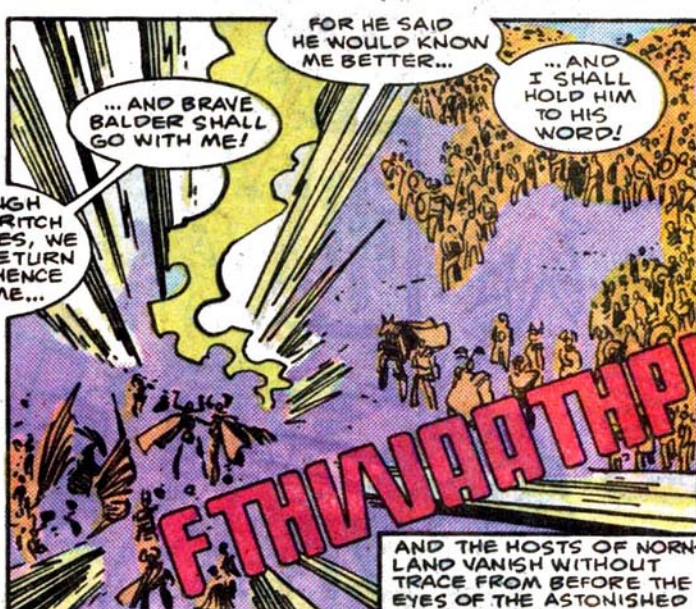


AND THAT, FANDRAL IS ALL YOU SHALL SEE OF HIM.

LITTLE DESIRE HAVE I TO REMAIN ON MIDGARD* NOW THAT THE BATTLE IS WON.

THROUGH MY ELDRITCH SORCERIES, WE SHALL RETURN FROM WHENCE WE CAME...

*EARTH.



FOR HE SAID HE WOULD KNOW ME BETTER...

... AND BRAVE BALDER SHALL GO WITH ME!

... AND I SHALL HOLD HIM TO HIS WORD!

ETHVIAATH!

AND THE HOSTS OF NORNLAND VANISH WITHOUT TRACE FROM BEFORE THE EYES OF THE ASTONISHED ASGARDIANS.



VOLSTAGG, DID YOU SEE? UNBELIEVABLE! THAT BALDER SHOULD PERMIT HIMSELF TO BE CARRIED OFF BY THAT... THAT CREATURE!

I DON'T KNOW, FANDRAL. YOU SHOULD BE SO LUCKY AS TO HAVE SUCH A NICE WARM PLACE TO GO HOME TO.



MY FRIENDS, I CAN WAIT NO LONGER!

NOW THAT THE BATTLE IS OVER, I MUST RETURN WITH ALL HASTE TO NEW YORK CITY TO LEARN IF THE LADY SIF IS STILL ALIVE!

THEN YOU HAD BEST TAKE US WITH YOU, BILL.

FOR IF SHE IS ALIVE, HOGUN MAY BE NEEDED.

THE SILENT WARRIOR, SO DEADLY IN COMBAT, DO THY CARRY THE ELIXIR OF RECOVERY.

NEW YORK CITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DEMON INVASIONS!!!

INCREDIBLE HOW THE DEMONS' BODIES SUDDENLY VANISHED, SIR!

SURE MADE FINDING THE WOUNDED EASIER!

BUT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ONE. SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE RESPONDING TO ANYTHING WE DO.

I THINK WE'RE LOSING HER, COLONEL SAULEDA.

THOR #350.



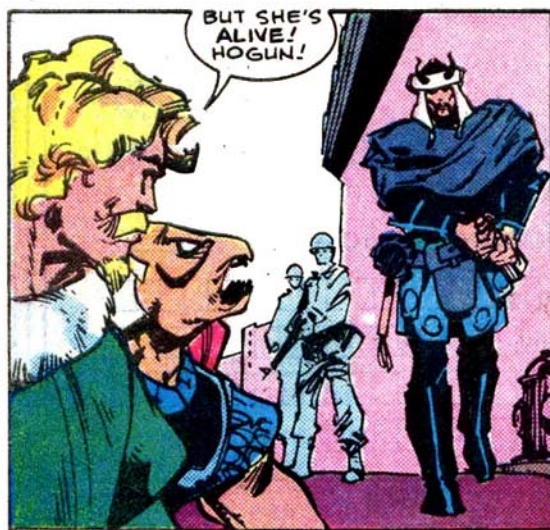
SIR, LOOK! IT'S BETA RAY BILL!

BILL, BELOW US! 'TIS--



SIF!

EASY, SIR. SHE'S BADLY HURT!



BUT SHE'S ALIVE! HOGUN!



FEAR NOT, BILL. WE HAVE COME IN TIME!

BUT EVEN AS HOGUN ADMINISTERS THE ELIXIR OF RECOVERY TO THE PALE FIGURE IN HIS ARMS...

...IN ASGARD...



THOUGH THE RAINBOW BRIDGE IS SHATTERED PERHAPS BEYOND REPAIR...

...ITS GUARDIAN GAVE HIS FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION TO MY FATHER.



AND SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE RUBBLE, I LEFT THE VALIANT HEIMDALL SORELY HURT.

TH... THOR! WHAT HAS HAPPENED? WHERE IS...

ODIN... IS GONE, WATCHER OF THE WORLDS.

AND HE HAS LEFT US BEHIND TO MOURN FOR HIM.



ODIN GONE? AND WE ARE STILL ALIVE?

OH, MY LIEGE, WOULD THAT I HAD DIED FOR THEE!



DID YA HEAR THAT? ODIN'S GONE!

BUT THOR? HOW?

HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF THAT THE NINE WORLDS MIGHT LIVE.

TIME FOR THE FROST GIANTS TO GATHER AND ATTACK ASGARD TOGETHER!



AND HE KNEW ALL ALONG THAT IT WOULD COME TO THIS! OH, FATHER, FOR THAT ALONE I MAY NEVER FORGIVE THEE!

SSSSH. YA WANT HE SHOULD HEAR US?



BUT HOLD!

WHAT LIGHT BREAKS BEFORE OUR EYES?



SSSSSSSSSK!



HELA! THE GODDESS OF DEATH HAS COME TO ASGARD!

THEN SHE'S COME FOR ME! I SHALL NOT LONG BE SEPARATED FROM MY LIEGE!



MAYHAP, HELA, 'TIS BECAUSE HE STILL LIVES, SOMEWHERE BEYOND YOUR TOUCH!

THEN MAYHAP, THOR, I SHOULD TOUCH YOU INSTEAD AND CARRY YOU DOWN TO HEL AT LAST!



SAVE THY STRENGTH, HEIMDALL, I DO NOT SEEK THY PALTRY LIFE.

I HAVE FELT A DISTURBANCE IN THE WORLDS LIKE NO OTHER! SURELY ONLY ODIN'S DEATH COULD HAVE CAUSED IT.



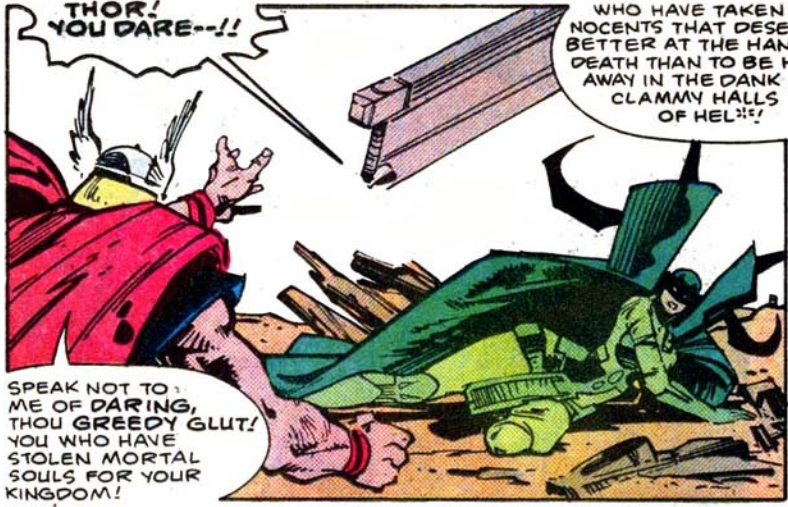
AND YET, I DO NOT SEE HIS BODY BEFORE ME.

I DO NOT FEEL HIS SPIRIT! AND I WANT IT!



NEVER, QUEEN OF THE DEAD!!!

WAAAAA!



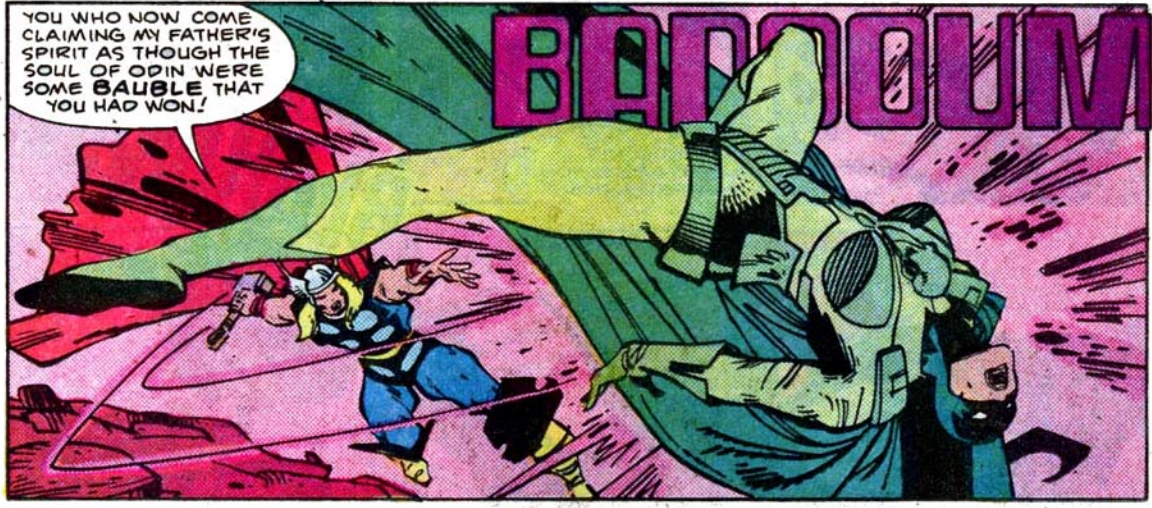
THOR!
YOU DARE--!!

WHO HAVE TAKEN IN-
NOCENTS THAT DESERVED
DEATH THAN TO BE HIDDEN
AWAY IN THE DANK AND
CLAMMY HALLS
OF HEL?!!

SPEAK NOT TO
ME OF DARING,
THOU GREEDY GLUT!
YOU WHO HAVE
STOLEN MORTAL
SOULS FOR YOUR
KINGDOM!



!! THE FULL STORY WAS IN
ISSUES # 345-348!



YOU WHO NOW COME
CLAIMING MY FATHER'S
SPIRIT AS THOUGH THE
SOUL OF ODIN WERE
SOME BAUBLE THAT
YOU HAD WON!

BADOOM!



MY FATHER
MAY LIVE
OR HE
MAY NOT!

BUT
HIS SOUL
SHALL
NEVER
BE
THINE!



PERHAPS NOT,
THOR, BUT YOURS SHALL
BE WITH JUST A
TOUCH!



TOO SLOW,
DEATH
GODDESS!

FOR MINE IS THE SWIFTESS OF THE VERY LIGHTNING ITSELF!



AND THE FURY OF THE ELEMENTS IS AS NOTHING TO THE FURY OF THOR THIS DAY!



NEVER BEFORE HATH THE THUNDER GOD BEEN SO LIKE A RAGING JUGGERNAUT!

HIS SPEED, HIS ANGER, ARE BEYOND COMPREHENSION!

I CANNOT STOP HIM! I CANNOT TOUCH HIM!

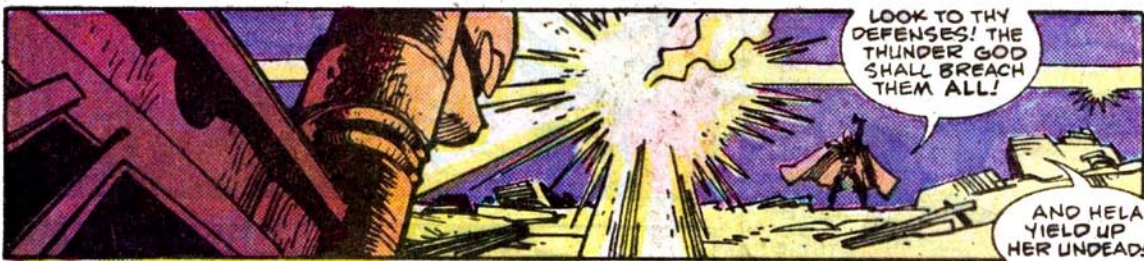


FLEE, DEATH! FLEE AND LICK THY WOUNDS, YOU WHO ARE NOT FIT TO UTTER MY FATHER'S NAME!



AND KNOW THAT THOR SHALL NOT BE FAR BEHIND!

FOR I HAVE SWORN A SOLEMN OATH TO AID THOSE POOR SOULS WHO HAVE BEEN ENTICED INTO DEATH'S UN-RELENTING GRASP!



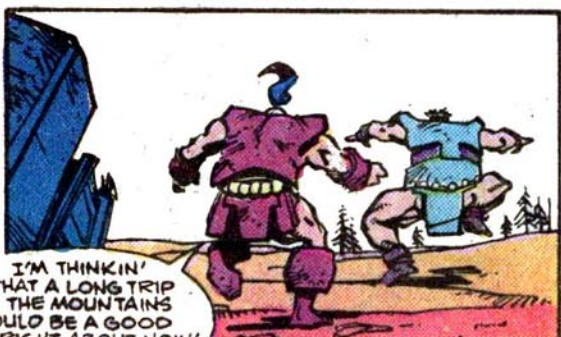
LOOK TO THY DEFENSES! THE THUNDER GOD SHALL BREACH THEM ALL!

AND HELA YIELD UP HER UNDEAD!



OOEZ.

YOU THINKIN' WHAT I'M THINKIN'!



I'M THINKIN' THAT A LONG TRIP TO THE MOUNTAINS WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA RIGHT ABOUT NOW!



SOMETIME LATER, AT THE EDGE OF THE BROKEN RAINBOW BRIDGE, THE THUNDER GOD STANDS LOST IN THOUGHT...

HEIMDAL WISHED TO BE ALONE IN HIS GRIEF AND I TOO CAN SCARCELY BEAR ANOTHER'S COMPANY.

OH, MY FATHER, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITHOUT YOU?

WHEREVER I TURN, I AM REMINDED OF THIS LOSS.



ALREADY THE COSMIC STORMS BEGIN TO NIBBLE AT THE EDGES OF ASGARD.

WITHOUT THE BRIDGE, ASGARD'S CONNECTION TO MIDGARD WILL GROW MORE TENUOUS WITH EVERY PASSING DAY.



UNTIL EVENTUALLY, PASSAGE TO THE REALM OF MORTALS MAY BECOME IMPOSSIBLE.

THAT LIGHT! HAS HELD DARED TO--!



BUT NO! THE FORM I SEE TAKING SHAPE BEFORE ME CAN BELONG TO NONE OTHER THAN...

SIF!

THOR!



OH, THOR! I WAS SO WORRIED! I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT... THE BRIDGE WAS GONE!

DESPITE MY POWERS TO BY-PASS SPACE AND TIME, I BARELY REACHED ASGARD.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE GOLDEN REALM?

*A TIP OF THE HAMMER TO THOSE WHO REMEMBER THE LAST TIME THESE POWERS WERE USED!



THOR, WHERE IS THY FATHER?

GONE, MILADY.

ODIN GONE!!
BUT...
WHERE?

LOKI THINKS THAT HE AND
SURTUR NOW CONTEND END-
LESSLY IN MUSPELHEIM...



...WHILE
HELA THINKS
HIM DEAD
AND SEEKS
HIS SOUL.

ALL I KNOW
IS THAT MY FATHER
IS GONE AND ALL
MY POWER COULD
NOT SAVE HIM.

THOR, MY HEART,
WHEREVER HE IS, YOUR
FATHER KNOWS HIS SON
FOUGHT UNAFRAID WITH
THE COURAGE AND GAL-
LANTRY AS BEFITS THE
GOD OF THUNDER.

AS HE
WOULD
HAVE
WISHED
YOU TO.



AND THE CONTINUED
EXISTENCE OF THE NINE
WORLDS IS THE TRUE
MEASURE OF THAT
ENDEAVOR.



SIF,
I HAVE
FAILED
HIM.



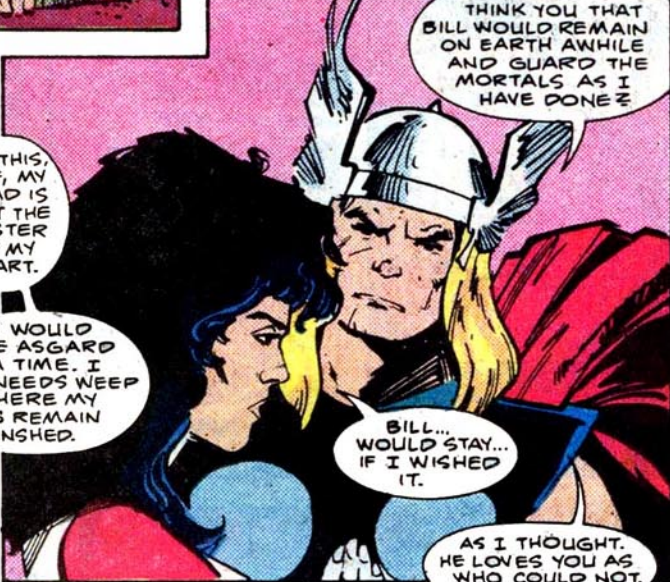
NO MATTER
WHAT THE
COST, SURTUR
HAS FAILED!

DO NOT
PUNISH
THYSELF
FOR DEEDS
NO MAN OR
GOD COULD
DO.

IN THIS,
SIF, MY
HEAD IS
NOT THE
MASTER
OF MY
HEART.

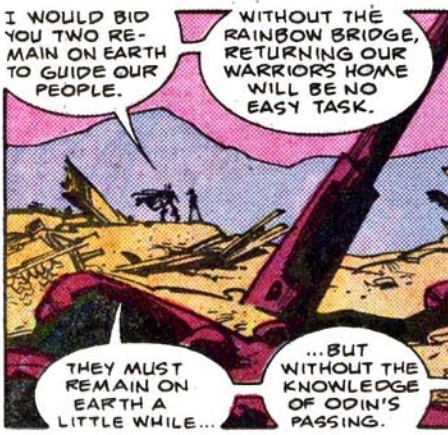
I WOULD
LEAVE ASGARD
FOR A TIME. I
MUST NEEDS
WEEP AND
HERE MY
TEARS REMAIN
UNSHED.

THINK YOU THAT
BILL WOULD REMAIN
ON EARTH AWHILE
AND GUARD THE
MORTALS AS I
HAVE DONE?



BILL...
WOULD STAY...
IF I WISHED
IT.

AS I THOUGHT,
HE LOVES YOU AS
WHO COULD NOT.



I WOULD BID
YOU TWO RE-
MAIN ON EARTH
TO GUIDE OUR
PEOPLE.

WITHOUT THE
RAINBOW BRIDGE,
RETURNING OUR
WARRIORS HOME
WILL BE NO
EASY TASK.

THEY MUST
REMAIN ON
EARTH A
LITTLE WHILE...

...BUT
WITHOUT THE
KNOWLEDGE
OF ODIN'S
PASSING.

YET THIS VICTORY
TODAY HAS TAUGHT ME
SOMETHING OF THE SOR-
ROWS OF MORTALS WHO
MUST ENDURE SUCH LOSS-
ES THROUGHOUT THEIR
LIVES.

THEREFORE,
THERE IS A FAVOR
I WOULD HAVE YOU
ASK OF FANDRAL
FOR ME UPON
YOUR RETURN.

FOR IN THEIR
AWESOME GRIEF,
THEY MIGHT DO
MORE DAMAGE
THAN SURTUR'S
LEGIONS.



BUT WHILE THOR SPEAKS WITH SIF, IN THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS OF ASGARD...

...A PARTY OF CHILDREN LED BY THE GODDESS FRIGGA HAVE ARRIVED AT THEIR DESTINATION...

...A HIDDEN HOSTEL, NESTLED AMONG THE SNOWY PEAKS.

ALL RIGHT, MY DARLINGS. AS SOON AS EVERY ONE IS UNPACKED AND HAS FOUND THEIR FAVORITE CORNER, YOU ARE ALL TO GO TO BED.

IT'S BEEN A VERY TIRING JOURNEY AND WE NEED OUR REST.

ARE YOU GOING TO TELL US A BED-TIME STORY, MOTHER FRIGGA?

VOLSTAGG ALWAYS TELLS US STORIES.

THEN WHEN HE COMES FOR A VISIT, HE CAN TELL YOU A STORY.

BUT I AM MUCH TOO TIRED TO INDULGE ANY OF YOU TONIGHT.

WE'LL HAVE A STORY IN THE MORNING.

I'LL COME TO BED SHORTLY.

NOW CLOSE YOUR EYES AND GO TO SLEEP.



YOU WERE RIGHT, GUNNHILD. SHE... SHE'S CRYING.

DON'T CRY, FRIGGA.

FATHER ODIN'S GONE, ISN'T HE? WE KNEW IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.

THAT'S WHY HE SENT US AWAY. SO WE COULD WATCH AFTER YOU.

WE'RE SURE FATHER ODIN WILL COME BACK.

WON'T HE?

BUT HE'LL COME BACK. HE WOULDN'T GO OFF AND LEAVE YOU ALONE.



CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN, HAS SEEN MARATHONS, VOLLEYBALL GAMES, AND ROLLER SKATERS...

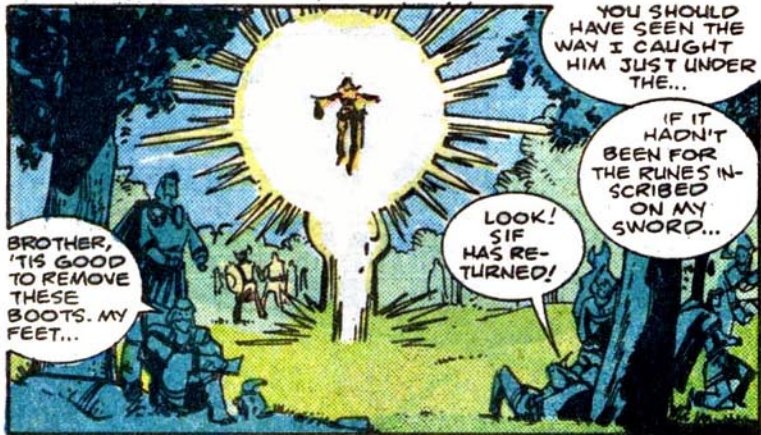
... BUT NEVER BEFORE HAS IT BEEN THE SITE OF AN ARMORED HOST OF ASGARDIANS AS THEY BEGIN TO UNWIND AFTER A HARD DAY'S BATTLE.

BROTHER, 'TIS GOOD TO REMOVE THESE BOOTS. MY FEET...

LOOK! SIF HAS RETURNED!

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE WAY I CAUGHT HIM JUST UNDER THE...

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THE RUNES INSCRIBED ON MY SWORD...



HOW FARES ASGARD, MILADY?

THE REALM ETERNAL STILL STANDS, BILL. SURTUR HAS INDEED BEEN DEFEATED.

AND YOU? THOUGH I HAVE BEEN GONE BUT A FEW HOURS, YOU LOOK STRANGELY TIRED.

I ASSISTED THE AVENGERS IN A SKIRMISH WITH SOME CREATURES KNOWN AS DIRE WRAITHS. IT WAS NOTHING.



AND YOUR OWN PEOPLE?

*FULL DETAILS IN ROM #65!

MY INTERNAL MONITORS HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH MY SHIP VIA SUBSPACE TRANSMISSION. ALL SEEMS WELL.

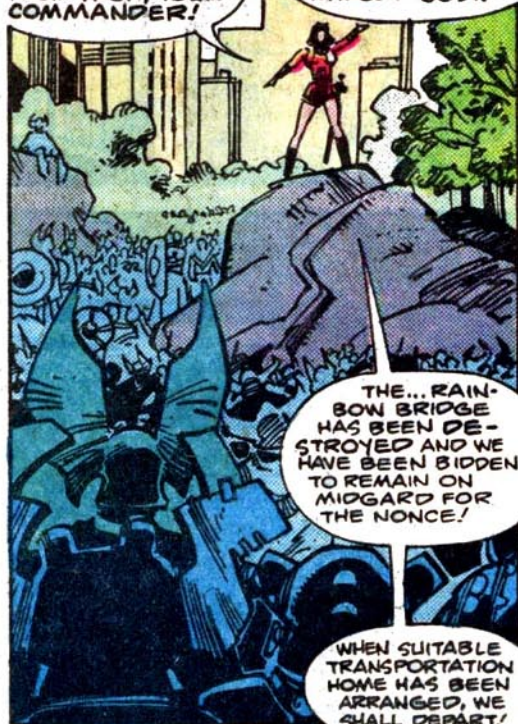
THEN YOU WOULD NOT MIND STAYING ON EARTH FOR A TIME?

BUT WHY? THE DANGER IS OVER.

I AM ABOUT TO EXPLAIN.

HEROES OF ASGARD! I BRING A MESSAGE FROM THOR, YOUR COMMANDER!

THOUGH WE HAVE WON THE BATTLE, IT HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT COST!



THE... RAINBOW BRIDGE HAS BEEN DESTROYED AND WE HAVE BEEN BIDDEN TO REMAIN ON MIDGARD FOR THE NONCE!

WHEN SUITABLE TRANSPORTATION HOME HAS BEEN ARRANGED, WE SHALL DEPART!

IN THE MEANTIME, LET US RELAX AMONGST THE MORTALS AND BEHAVE AS GOOD GUESTS AMONG THEIR HOSTS.

CURIOUS THAT ODIN HIMSELF CAME NOT TO GREET SUCH VALORIOUS HEROES.

NONSENSE, VOLSTAGG! 'TIS TIME TO PARTY!

PARTY, FANDRAL?

AN INTERESTING CUSTOM, HOGUN. YOU MUST LET VOLSTAGG AND ME TEACH IT TO YOU SOMETIME.

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BILL. MY MEN AND I ARE HEADING HOME NOW THAT THE EXCITEMENT IS OVER...

...BUT I EXPECT MAYOR KOCH CAN BE PERSUADED TO ALLOW YOUR BOYS TO BIVOUAC HERE IN THE PARK UNTIL YOU CAN GET THEM HOME.

WHAT ABOUT YOU TWO?

I THINK, COLONEL SAULEDA, THAT I SHALL NEED TO MAKE MYSELF A LITTLE MORE INCONSPICUOUS DURING OUR STAY HERE.

UM. I DON'T KNOW IF "INCONSPICUOUS" IS QUITE THE RIGHT WORD, BILL, BUT "LESS CONSPICUOUS" MIGHT COVER IT.

MILADY, WOULD YOU CARE TO ASSIST ME IN FINDING SOME?

CERTAINLY, BILL. JUST LET ME SPEAK WITH FANDRAL FIRST, AND WE SHALL BE ON OUR WAY.



...AND THANKS TO THE ENCHANTMENT OF ODIN WITHIN MY HAMMER...

FOOF!



MAYBE SOME DIFFERENT CLOTHES WOULD HELP.



AND SO, A FEW MINUTES LATER, PAST GRAND ARMY PLAZA AT FIFTH AVENUE AND 59TH STREET WALK AN IMMORTAL WARRIOR WOMAN AND AN ALIEN WARRIOR CONSTRUCT...



...AND NEW YORK BEING WHAT IT IS, ALMOST NOBODY NOTICES.

MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY, A SMALL NUMBER OF MEN GATHER SILENTLY BEFORE A CLOSED-CIRCUIT MONITOR...

...AND LISTEN AS THE HARSH VOICE ISSUING FROM THE SPEAKERS TELLS THEM WHAT TO DO.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS PERFECT.

THE CITY IS STILL RECOVERING FROM THE SHOCKS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS.

NOW IS THE TIME TO STRIKE!



BUT WE SHALL WAIT A LITTLE LONGER TO LEARN THE MEANING OF THIS SECRET GATHERING...

...FOR ELSEWHERE, IN A PENTHOUSE OVERLOOKING CENTRAL PARK...

I CANNOT BELIEVE IT! THE WOODS ARE CRAWLING WITH ASGARDIANS AND STILL THOR HAS NOT RETURNED TO ME.

SURELY HE COULD NOT HAVE SHAKEN OFF THE EFFECTS OF THE ENCHANTED GOLDEN MEAD?

HE SHOULD BE BURNING WITH DESIRE FOR ME!

WHA--? THAT LIGHT! MY SISTER, THE ENCHANTRESS, MUST BE COMING BACK!

WELL, THIS TIME, SHE'LL GET THE RECEPTION SHE DESERVES!

WHY, LORELEI, MY DEAR. WHAT A GREETING FOR AN OLD FRIEND!

LOKI! I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMORA.

OH?

SHE KNOWS ABOUT THOR AND ME. AND SAYS SHE'S GOING TO PUT A STOP TO IT.

DOES SHE NOW? WELL, YOU JUST LEAVE HER TO ME. THE STAKES ARE FAR TOO HIGH TO ALLOW THE ENCHANTRESS TO INTERFERE NOW.

LOKI, I WANT TO GO HOME! IT IS DULL HERE!

SOMEHOW, MY HOLD ON THOR SEEMS TO HAVE WEAKENED. HE HASN'T COME BACK TO ME.

MY DEAR, IF THIS ADULTERATED MEAD KEPT HIM WITH YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE...

...MY STEP-BROTHER'S WILL IS FAR LESS THAN I SUSPECTED.

EXCELLENT.

WHY, WITH MY HELP, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONVINCE HIM OF JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.

WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

I THINK THE TWO OF YOU SHOULD BEGIN DISCUSSING THE NEXT RULER OF ASGARD.

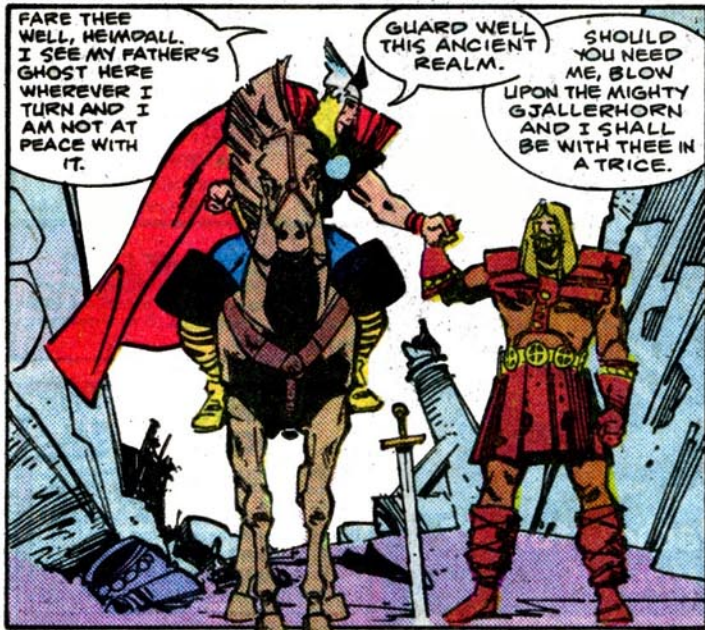
WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, IS WHY I'VE COME. THOR IS EVEN NOW IN THE GOLDEN REALM, WOUNDED AND HEARTSICK.

POOR BOY. HE NEEDS TENDING AND YOU WOULD MAKE A CHARMING NURSE.

I AM CERTAIN YOU HAVE A MOST IRRESISTIBLE BEDSIDE MANNER.

AND WITHOUT A SOUND, LOKI AND LORELEI VANISH SOFTLY AND SILENTLY AWAY...

... TO ASGARD WHERE AT THE RUINED GATES OF THE CITY...



FARE THEE WELL, HEIMDALL. I SEE MY FATHER'S GHOST HERE WHEREVER I TURN AND I AM NOT AT PEACE WITH IT.

GUARD WELL THIS ANCIENT REALM.

SHOULD YOU NEED ME, BLOW UPON THE MIGHTY GJALLERHORN AND I SHALL BE WITH THEE IN A TRICE.



FARE YOU WELL, MIGHTY THOR. I SHALL PRAY FOR YOUR SWIFT RETURN.

MAY YOU FIND THE PEACE YOU SEEK.

AND SO, WITH THE PASSING OF DAYS, THOR FINDS HIMSELF DEEPER AND DEEPER IN THE MOUNTAINOUS WILDERNESS EAST OF ASGARD...

... WHERE THE SILENCE LIES UNBROKEN SAVE FOR THE SOUND OF HIS HORSE'S MUFFLED HOOFBEATS...



MY NOBLE STEED, PERHAPS WE SHOULD MAKE CAMP FOR THE NIGHT.

I FEEL AS WEARY AS EVER I HAVE FELT AND NO NEARER--

... UNTIL ONE DUSK, AS THE LIGHT DIES AROUND HIM...

HOLD! WHAT ARE THESE FOOTPRINTS IN THIS FORSAKEN REGION?



YET I WOULD HAVE SWORN THE SNOW WAS VIRGIN ONLY A MOMENT AGO.

COME, MY FRIEND. LET US FOLLOW ON A LITTLE WHILE WE CAN AND SEE IF WE CAN DISCOVER WHAT OTHER TRAVELER VENTURES SO FAR FROM HOME.

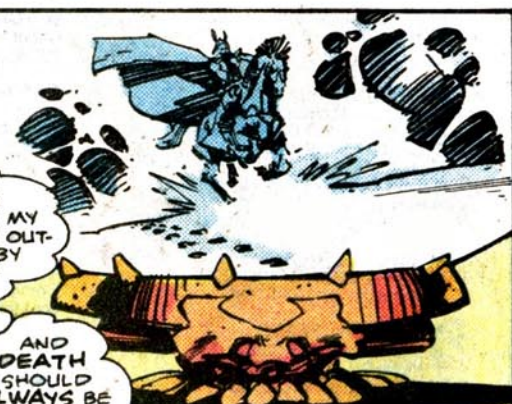
BUT UNKNOWN TO THOR, A PAIR OF MALEVOLENT EYES HAVE BEEN WATCHING HIS EVERY MOVE AND NOW, THEY NARROW IN ANTICIPATION.



THE RAGE OF THOR IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

SHOULD HE IN TRUTH INVADE MY KINGDOM, THE OUTCOME WOULD BY NO MEANS BE CERTAIN.

AND DEATH SHOULD ALWAYS BE CERTAIN.



"THOUGH THE DISTANCE IS GREAT,
STILL THE GLANCE OF HELA IS
ENOUGH TO AGE THE VERY ROCKS
AND BONES OF THE MOUNTAINS
UNTIL THEY CRUMBLE TO DUST BE-
NEATH THE SNOW AND BEGIN..."

KKKRAKKKRAKKK!

AN
AVALANCHE!

ON, BIG
FELLOW!
GALLOP
AS THE
WIND!

I SHALL
NOT
ABANDON
YOU TO THE
MOUNTAIN'S
DEADLY
GRIP.

WITH MY HAMMER
I SHALL WARD
OFF THE THUNDERING
PURSUIT UNTIL
WE HAVE OUTRACED
THE DOOM THAT
SEEKS TO SLAY
US BOTH!

NO
ODINSON!

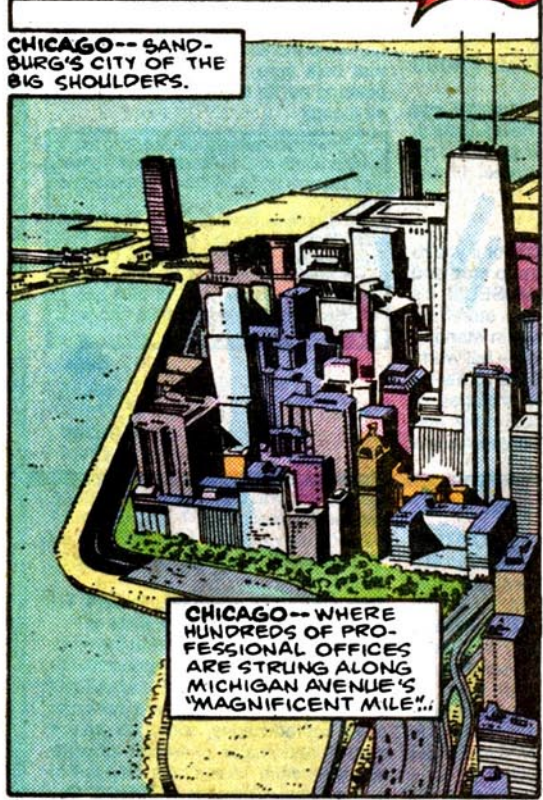
THOUGH
I CANNOT
SLAY YOU
DIRECTLY
AT THIS
REMOVE,
YOUR
STEED
IS QUITE
ANOTHER
MATTER!

THE
TOUCH
OF HELA
IS LONG
ENOUGH
FOR THAT!



tales of Midgard

home of the amazing human race



CHICAGO-- SAND-BURG'S CITY OF THE BIG SHOULDERS.

CHICAGO-- WHERE HUNDREDS OF PROFESSIONAL OFFICES ARE STRUNG ALONG MICHIGAN AVENUE'S "MAGNIFICENT MILE"...



OFFICES BELONGING TO MEN OF HIGH STANDING AND HIGHER INCOMES...

...ALTHOUGH IN ONE PARTICULAR OFFICE, THE INCOME IS ALL BUT GONE AND THE STANDING CERTAINLY IN DOUBT...

IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE WE HEARD FROM HIM, SHAWNA.



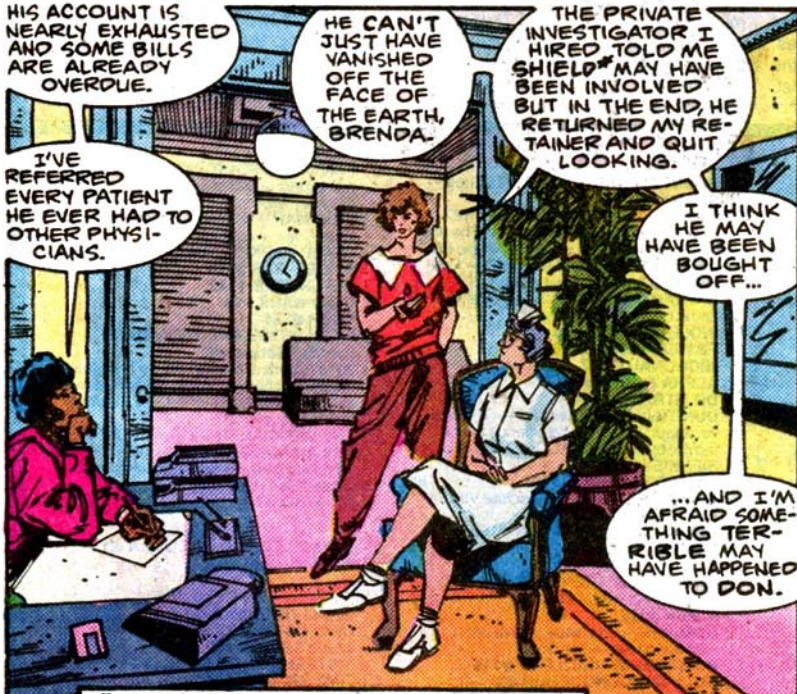
HIS ACCOUNT IS NEARLY EXHAUSTED AND SOME BILLS ARE ALREADY OVERDUE.

HE CAN'T JUST HAVE VANISHED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH, BRENDA.

THE PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR I HIRED TOLD ME SHIELD* MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED BUT IN THE END, HE RETURNED MY RETAINER AND QUIT LOOKING.

I'VE REFERRED EVERY PATIENT HE EVER HAD TO OTHER PHYSICIANS.

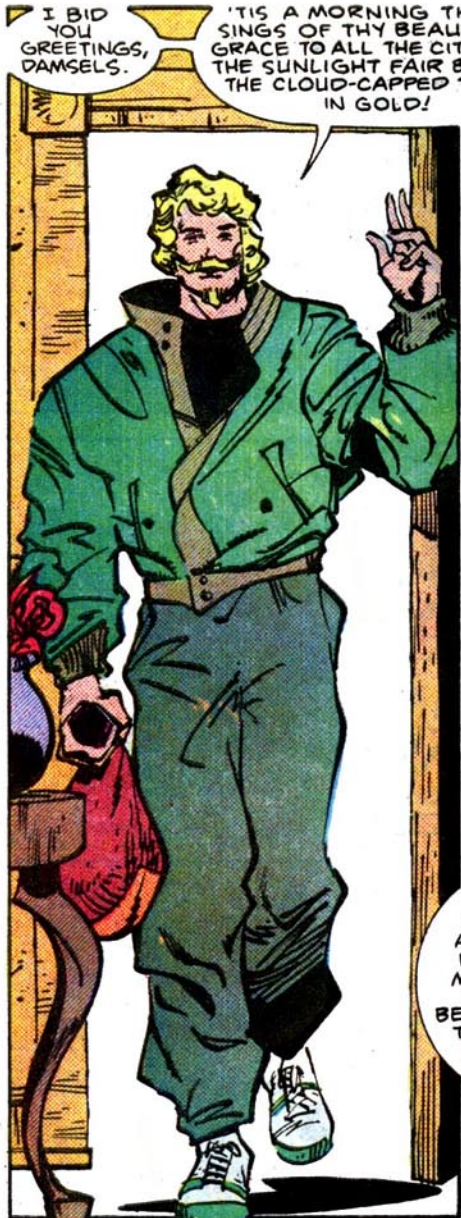
I THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN BOUGHT OFF...



...AND I'M AFRAID SOMETHING TERRIBLE MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO DON.



* SUPREME HQ INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION!



I BID YOU GREETINGS, DAMSELS.

'TIS A MORNING THAT SINGS OF THY BEAUTY AND GRACE TO ALL THE CITY. WHY, THE SUNLIGHT FAIR BATHES THE CLOUD-CAPPED TOWERS IN GOLD!



UH... I-- I'M AFRAID THAT DR. BLAKE KN'T HERE AT THE MOMENT.

YOU-- YOU DO?



AND WELL I KNOW IT, MILADY.



YOU MUST BE MRS. BARCLAY, SURELY.

AND THESE SURPASSINGLY LOVELY LADIES CAN ONLY BE SHAWNA LYNDE AND NURSE STEVENS.

'TIS A GREAT PLEASURE AND HONOR FOR ME TO MEET THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SO CLOSE TO DONALD BLAKE IN HIS DAY.



DO... DO YOU KNOW DON?

FEW KNOW HIM BETTER, MILADY.

AND 'TIS ON HIS BUSINESS THAT I HAVE COME TO SEE THEE.

WHERE IS HE? OH, WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM!



FEAR NOT, SHAWNA.

HIS GOVERNMENT HATH NEED OF HIM, AND HE HATH ANSWERED ITS CALL.

I KNEW SHIELD WAS INVOLVED!

BUT THE WORK HE HATH UNDERTAKEN IS LENGTHY AND DANGEROUS.



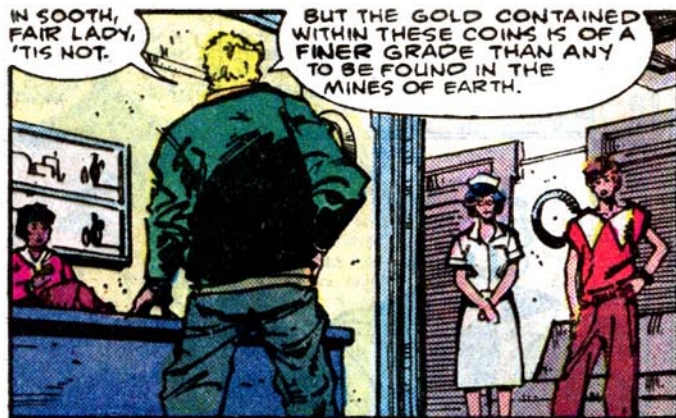
HE MAY NEVER RETURN.

STILL HE HATH NOT FORGOTTEN THEE AND I HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO GREET THEE IN HIS NAME AND BRING YOU THIS.

HIS PHRASE, I BELIEVE, WAS "SEVERANCE PAY."

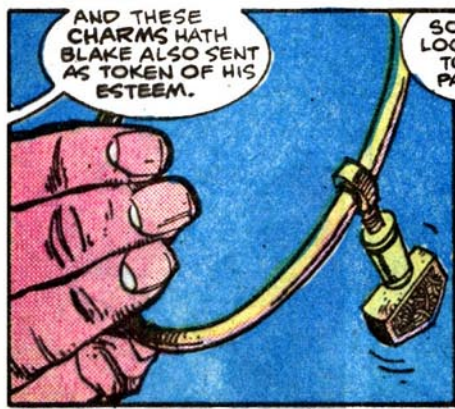


WAIT A MINUTE. THIS ISN'T AMERICAN CURRENCY.



IN SOOTH, FAIR LADY, 'TIS NOT.

BUT THE GOLD CONTAINED WITHIN THESE COINS IS OF A FINER GRADE THAN ANY TO BE FOUND IN THE MINES OF EARTH.



AND THESE CHARMS HATH BLAKE ALSO SENT AS TOKEN OF HIS ESTEEM.

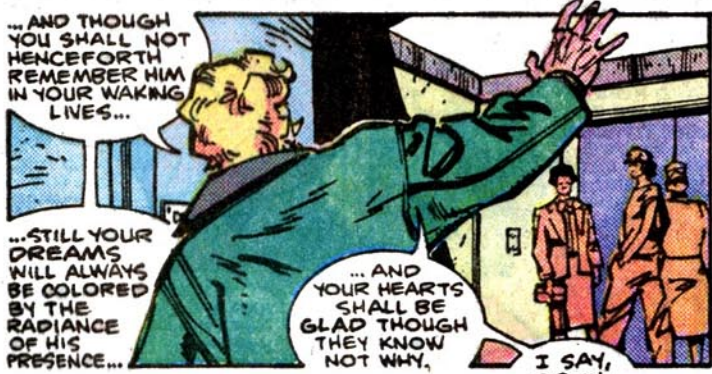
SO COME. LOOK NOT TO THE PAST...

...BUT AHEAD TO THE FUTURE.



YOUR SERVICE TO DR. BLAKE IS AT AN END.

YOU HAVE KNOWN ONE OF THE NOBLEST BEINGS TO WALK THE VALES OF MIDGARD...



...AND THOUGH YOU SHALL NOT HENCEFORTH REMEMBER HIM IN YOUR WAKING LIVES...

...STILL YOUR DREAMS WILL ALWAYS BE COLORED BY THE RADIANCE OF HIS PRESENCE...

...AND YOUR HEARTS SHALL BE GLAD THOUGH THEY KNOW NOT WHY,

I SAY, GO IN PEACE.



AND SO, 'TIS DONE. IN MOMENTS, THEY WILL HAVE FORGOTTEN ALL THEY KNEW OF DONALD BLAKE.

AND BE NONE THE WORSE FOR IT.



BUT I THINK I SHOULD CARRY THIS PLACARD WITH ME.

THOR MIGHT WELL DELIGHT IN A SOUVENIR OF THE TIME HE SPENT AS A MORTAL AMONGST SUCH BEAUTY.

RIPPI!

Next: THE ICY HEARTS

IN WHICH WE MEET A GENTLEMAN FROM LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY.