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THE MIGHTY THOR



The SWORD of SIEGFRIED!

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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THE SWORD OF SIEGFRIED!

CONTINUING THE STORY OF THE MORTAL THOR!

EYE HAVE KEPT MY WORD TO YOU, HAVE EYE NOT THUNDER GOD?

YOU HAVE SEEN THE WHY AND WHEREFORE OF YOUR OWN FATHER'S SLAYING YOU--EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A MILLENNIUM AGO, AND YOU WERE IN A MORTAL INCARNATION.

NOW, EYE CAN GO MY WAY IN PEACE, AND...

NAY, EYE OF ODIN!

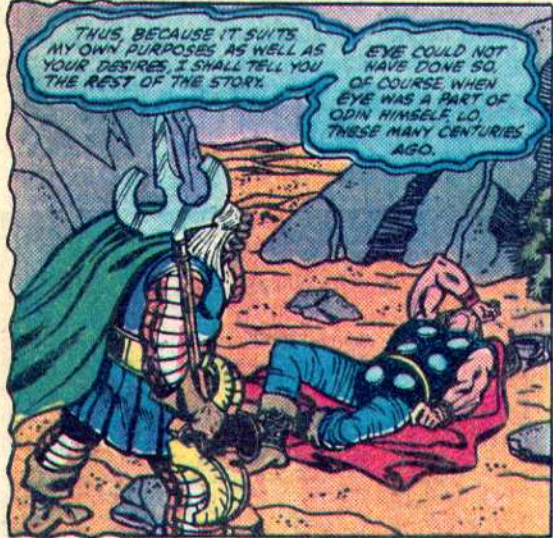
THOU HAST SHOWN ME BUT HALF THE STORY--VERILY, I CAN SENSE THAT THERE BE MORE TO TELL.

EYE CANNOT DENY IT--FOR, WHEN VENGEFUL HUNTING DID SLAY YOU--

--IT WAS THE ALL-FATHER'S HAND AND SACRED SPEAR BEHIND THE BLOW!

*LAST ISSUE, --ROY

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THUS, BECAUSE IT SUITS MY OWN PURPOSES AS WELL AS YOUR DESIRES, I SHALL TELL YOU THE REST OF THE STORY.

EYE COULD NOT HAVE DONE SO, OF COURSE WHEN EYE WAS A PART OF ODIN HIMSELF LO, THESE MANY CENTURIES AGO.



SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT, ON THIS LONG-PAST NIGHT... ODIN WEEPS...

AND EYE WAS THE REDDENED ORB FROM WHICH DID FLOW THE FREE-EST TEARS!



YET, WHEN THE WEeping IS DONE, YOUR SIRE'S RAGE IS NOT.

AS HE STREAKS HOMEWARD, HE CRIES ALOUD THE POEM OF VENGEANCE HE HAS ALREADY SWORN!

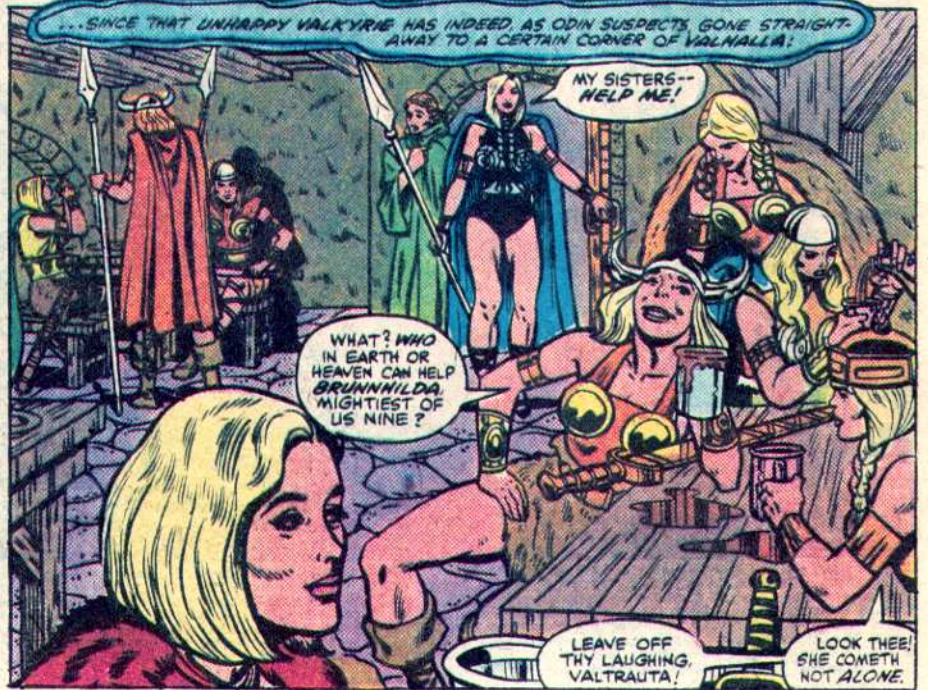
BRUNNHILDA HATH DEFIED ME-- AYE, AND IN SO DOING, HATH MADE IT MINE OWN HAND THAT DID SLAY MY MORTAL SON.

VERILY, BEYOND ALL IMAGINING SHALL BE HER PUNISHMENT--



-- WHEN I HAVE O'ERTAKEN HER!

WHICH, OF COURSE, IS NOT DIFFICULT TO DO...



... SINCE THAT UNHAPPY VALKYRIE HAS INDEED, AS ODIN SUSPECTS, GONE STRAIGHT AWAY TO A CERTAIN CORNER OF VALHALLA!

MY SISTERS-- HELP ME!

WHAT? WHO IN EARTH OR HEAVEN CAN HELP BRUNNHILDA, MIGHTIEST OF US NINE?

LEAVE OFF THY LAUGHING, VALTRAUTA!

LOOK THEE! SHE COMETH NOT ALONE.

BY ODIN'S FAR-GATHERING RAVENS! BRUNNHILDA HATH BROUGHT A MORTAL WENCH INTO OUR MIDST!

SISTERS, THIS BE SIEGLINDA, BRIDE OF THE HERO SIEGMUND, WHOM ODIN WISHED SLAIN FOR HIS WIFE'S SAKE.

AGAINST ODIN'S WISHES, I SHIELDED SIEGMUND INSTEAD-- TILL THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF DID CAUSE HIM TO BE STRUCK DOWN.

NOW, I HAVE FLOWN HERE SO THAT SIEGMUND'S BRIDE-WIDOW WILL NOT FEEL THAT DIVINE WRATH.

WHAT? FOOLISH VALKYRIE-- WILT THOU BRING ODIN'S ANGER DOWN UPON US ALL WITH THY MADNESS?

ALREADY, I CAN SENSE HIS BURNING PRESENCE DRAWING NEAR FROM WRETCHED MIDGARD.

SEND HER BACK TO HIM-- QUICKLY!!

* MIDGARD= EARTH. --R.T.

THEY ARE RIGHT, BRUNNHILDA; LET ME GO TO BE WITH MY BELOVED SIEGMUND!

WHAT REASON HAVE I FOR LIVING NOW?

THE BEST OF ANY WOMAN!

'TIS LOVE EEN MORE THAN LIFE, THOU MUST CHERISH FROM THIS DAY FORTH.

THOU ART WITH CHILD, SIEGLINDA...

SIEGMUND'S CHILD!

SIEGM--?

THEN LIVE, SIEGLINDA! AYE, LIVE!

BUT, WHERE CAN I FLY--

--IF VALHALLA IS NOT SAFE FROM ODIN'S WRATH?

I KNOW OF SUCH A PLACE, MORTAL.

HILDEGARD! IN SOOTH, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!

THOUGH I WAS, TILL THIS NIGHT, ODIN'S FAVORITE-- 'TIS THOU WHO'EER HAST TRAVELED MOST WIDELY.

WHERE A SINGLE NORTHMAN STRAYS, THERE RIDES HILDEGARD.

I KNOW OF A GREAT FOREST, TRAVERSED BY FEW--

FOR, 'TIS THERE THE FABLED HIBELUNG GOLD-HOARD WAS BROUGHT BY FAHNR.

FAHNR-- THAT FOUL STORM GIANT WHO'D MURDER ONE OF HIS OWN KIND?

AYE, THOUGH HE'S SINCE TURNED INTO DRAGON FORM INSTEAD. FOR REASONS HE ALONE DOTH KNOW.



THOU WOULDST TAKE HER-- TO THE GREAT FOREST?!

'TIS A STRANGE PLACE TO TAKE A HELPLESS, HAPLESS BRIDE.

AND YET, SHE'LL BE SAFE THERE IF ANYWHERE FROM ODIN'S WRATH-- FOR, THE ALL-FATHER DOTH AVOID THOSE WOODS, AS IF THEY WERE VENOMOUS.

BECAUSE HE FEARS THE RING OF POWER FORGED BY THE GNOME ALBERICH, AYE!

BUT, HOW DOST THOU KNOW THE LORD OF ASGARD WILL NOT PURSUE HER, E'EN THERE?

I DO NOT-- BUT WHAT OTHER CHANCE HATH SHE?



WHATE'ER THOU DOST PLAN TO DO, 'TIS BEST 'TWERE DONE SWIFTEL, BRUNNHILDA.

AYE, E'EN NOW, I DO HEAR ODIN DRAW NIGH.

BE NOT FOOLISH, MY SISTERS! BRUNNHILDA HATH NO INTENT TO FLEE HERSELF.

'TIS FOR THE MORTAL ALONE SHE FEARS, DO YE NOT SEE?

TRUE, HILDEGARD-- OR ELSE ODIN WOULD O'ERTAKE US EASILY, AND MY PREVIOUS ACTIONS BE ALL FOR NAUGHT.

'TIS SIEGLINDA I SEND, AND SHE ALONE-- BUT NOT WITHOUT THIS!



VALKYRIE-- WHAT--?



THE PIECES OF SIEGMUND'S SWORD, WHICH WAS CALLED "NEEDFUL"!

'T WAS BOTH FORGED BY ODIN, AND SHATTERED BY HIM--



YET, HE WHO SWINGS THIS SWORD WHEN 'TIS FORGED ANEW SHALL BE NAMED SIEGFRIED THE VICTOR--

--AND BE E'EN THE BETTER OF HIS SIRE!

MY THANKS, DEAR SHIELD-MAID.



NOW GO-- FOR THY FATE BE YET IN THE MAKING--



-- AND MINE BE NIGH AT HAND!

BRUNNHILDA! STAY!



THEN, SUDDENLY, LORD ODIN IS AMONG THE VALKYRIES WHOM HE DID CREATE TO GATHER WARRIOR-SOULS AGAINST THE FINAL DAY OF RECKONING--THE HOUR CALLED RAGNAROK...

WHERE IS BRUNNHILDA?

WHERE BE SHE WHO DARED SET ASIDE THE COMMAND OF ODIN AS IF THERE A CHILD'S PLEADING?

THOU SEEMST ANGRY BEYOND MEASURE, ALL-FATHER.

WHAT HAVE THY SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS DONE TO WEX THEE?



SPORT NOT WITH ME, VIKENS!

I KNOW THE CRIMINAL DOTH HIDE FROM ME.

DO NOT ABET HER CRIME, FOR YOUR OWN SAKES!



SHE CAME HERE AFRAID, FATHER-- AND REPENTANT, I'M CERTAIN!

TETHER THINE ANGER, WE BEG THEE--!

WHAT? AM I SERVED BY WOMANISH WEAKLINGS, AFTER ALL?



STAND ASIDE, YE SHIELD-MAIDENS!

SHE WAS THE DEAREST TO ME OF YE ALL-- BUT SHE'LL NOT ESCAPE MY RIGHTFUL WRATH!

DISPERSE, I COMMAND YE ALL!

AS THOU CANST PLAINLY SEE, ALL-FATHER... HERE I STAND.

I CAN DO NAUGHT ELSE.



PUNISH ME, THEN, IF THOU MUST!

AH, BRUNNHILDA-- THOU AND THY SISTERS BE MY WILL-- MY SPIRIT.

THOU HAST PUNISHED, THEN, THYSELF.



BUT-- WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH ME? FOR, I KNOW THAT SURELY I SHALL NE'ER AGAIN RIDE FORTH FROM VALHALLA TO GATHER HEROES FOR THY TWILIGHT ARMY.

THOU DOST SENSE A'RIGHT.

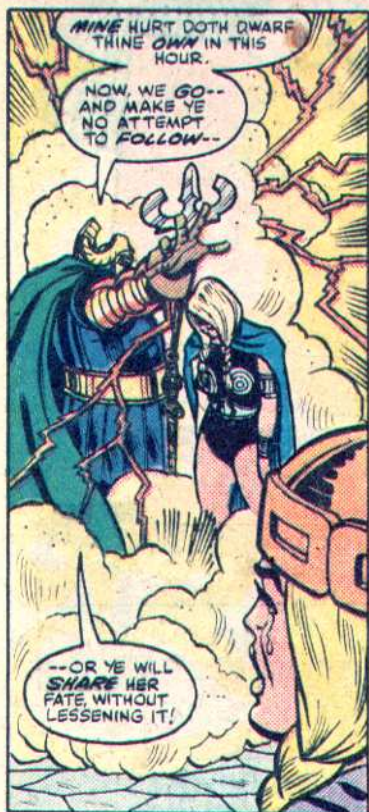
FROM THIS TIME FORTH, THOU ART CUT OFF FORE'ER FROM VALHALLA AND FROM ASGARD.

WHAT? MUST THOU TAKE ALL THINGS THAT ONCE THOU DIDST GIVE?



PLEASE, MIGHTY ODIN-- CALL OFF THAT CURSE, AS VILE TO US AS ALBERICH'S WAS TO THEE!

SPEAK NOT TO PUT DECREES IN ODIN'S MOUTH, VALKYRIE!



MINE HURT DOTH DWARF THINE OWN IN THIS HOUR.

NOW, WE GO-- AND MAKE YE NO ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW--

--OR YE WILL SHARE HER FATE, WITHOUT LESSENING IT!



THEY ARE-- GONE!

AYE, THOUGH HER ARMOR HERE REMAINS-- LIKEWISE, HER WEAPONS!

TRULY, WHERE'ER SHE BE-- SHE BE VALKYRIE NO MORE!



WHILE ON A MOUNTAINTOP ON THE SPINNING MUDBALL EARTH...

IS IT TRULY SO SHAMEFUL, LORD ODIN, WHAT I HAVE DONE?

THOU DIDST DEFY MY COMMAND!

AND BECAUSE THOU DIDST, I WAS FORCED MYSELF TO SLAY SIEGMUND-- THOUGH HE DID PARTAKE OF THE ESSENCE OF MINE OWN BLOODSON THOR!

BUT NEITHER HE NOR SIEGLINDA DID KNOW THAT! THEY--

NO MORE SHALT THOU BE VALKYRIE, BUT ONLY A MORTAL WOMAN, SUCH AS THOU DIDST SHIELD FROM ME!



SILENCE!

HEAR NOW MY SENTENCE UPON THEE!

A MAN SHALL FIND THEE HERE, BECOME THINE HUSBAND-- THY NEW LORD AND MASTER--

--AND THOU WILT SIT BY HIS HEARTH, SPINNING, WHILE THINE HAIR TURNS GRAY!

NOOO!!



THOU DOST FEAR TO AGE?

NOT TO AGE... NOT EEN TO DIE...

BUT LET ME NOT, I PRAY THEE, SURVIVE TO WED JUST ANY MAN WHO HAPPENS UPON ME!

THEN LET NO BASE MAN COME BY, I BEG OF THEE--

-- BUT ONLY A MAN OF WORTH!

HAVE I NOT EARNED THAT MUCH AT LEAST?

RISE, NIGH-GODDESS THAT SOON WILL BE A WOMAN!

THY FINAL REQUEST OF ODIN SHALL BE MET!

THE VERY FIRST TO SEE THEE!

AYE... THOU HAST.

THEN-- I DO ACCEPT MY FATE!



FARE THEE WELL, HAPLESS ONE.

... AND SHE SINKS UNCONSCIOUS IN HIS STRONG ARMS.

AH, BRUNNHILDA... BRUNNHILDA!

I SLEW NOT MINE OWN SON WITH GREATER REGRET THAN I HAVE DONE THIS THING UNTO THEE.

THEN, WITH A KISS UPON EACH EYEBROW, THE RULER OF ASSARD KISSES HER GODHOOD AWAY...

I BUT WISH I COULD BRING FORGETFUL OBLIVION TO MYSELF AS EASILY AS TO THEE.

NEXT, HE LOOKS DOWN UPON HER WITH A SORROW WHICH EYE CAN STILL FEEL ALL THESE MANY YEARS LATER...

... AND HE STRIKES HIS SACRED SPEAR GUNGNIR THREE TIMES AGAINST THE TOWERING ROCK!

LOKI! HEAR ME, MASTER OF MISCHIEF... AND GOD OF FIRE!

RING THIS ROCK WITH FLAMES-- AND LET THEM BE SUCH AS NEVER BEFORE DID SEAR EITHER EARTH OR HEAVEN!

NOR SHALL HE WHO HATH FEAR OF ODIN'S SPEAR-POINT E'ER STEP THROUGH THIS FIRE--

... BUT ONLY THE BRAVEST OF MEN, SUCH AS ODIN DOTH NEED, E'EN MORE THAN, DOTH BRUNNHILDA!

THEN, HE IS GONE...

INTRIGUING, EYE! BUT WHAT HATH THIS TO DO WITH THOR--

--OR WITH THAT WHICH HE WOULD KNOW?

YOU ARE IMPATIENT, STILL THUNDERER...

... BUT SEE NOW SIEGLINDA, LYING WHERE SHE HAS FALLEN UPON MIDDGARD, AND PROMPTLY DISCOVERED!

HO, WHAT'S THIS WHICH MIME SEES?

A MAIDEN-- HERE!?

HELP ME, KIND SIR... PLEASE...

MIME TOOK HER TO HIS HUT NEARBY, AND CARED FOR HER...

AND IN TIME, HE DELIVERED HER OF A SON... THOUGH HE COULD NOT SAVE HER LIFE.

SIEGFRIED! SHE TOLD ME TO CALL YOU... SIEGFRIED!

OH, SIEGMUND... SIEGMUND...!

THUS, THIS LITTLE MAN REARED THE HEALTHY BLOND SON OF SIEGMUND AND SIEGLINDA...

...WHO GREW STRAIGHT AND TALL AND STRONG...



...AS ANY FOOL OR THUNDER GOD CAN PLAINLY SEE!

BEHOLD SIEGFRIED-- SON OF SIEGMUND-- AND SHANDSON, THOUGH HE KNOWS IT NOT, OF ODIN HIMSELF!

BUT-- 'TIS MYSELF I DO BEHOLD THERE, WITH THE GNOME-LING MIME!

CAN I BE BOTH ODIN'S SON-- AND GRAND-CHILD?

IT IS NOT YOU, THOR-- NOT PRECISELY--!



IT IS, RATHER, YOUR ESSENCE-- DISTILLED INTO MORTAL FORM FOR REASONS YOU WILL SOON LEARN.

THAT, THEN, IS WHY I SAW NOT MYSELF, AS A YOUNGER GOD-LING IN EARLIER VISIONS?

PARTLY, YES... BUT NOW, WATCH ON...



... AS THE DWARF WHO RAISED YOU-- OR RATHER RAISED SIEGFRIED, WHOM SOME CALL SIGMUND-- TOOLS AT HIS ANVIL.

WHAT WEAR-- SOME MEANINGLESS DAUGHTER?

I FORGE SWORDS FOR HIM-- AND THAT VILE BOY IS FOREVER SNAPPING THEM IN TWO! I SHOULD--

KLANK KLANK

HO! WHAT NOISE IS THAT OUTSIDE?



THE SOUND IS NOT OUTSIDE MUCH LONGER...

FRANK!

GROWRRR

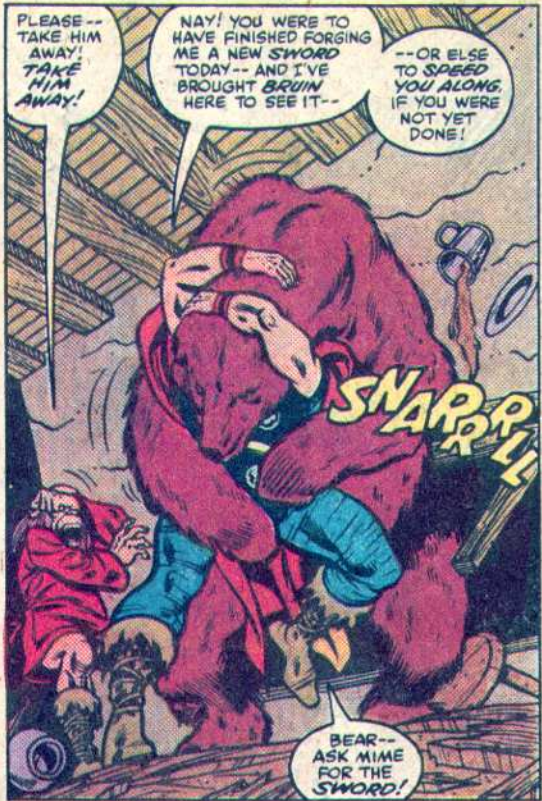
yyh!!!!



WHY DO YOU SHRIEK SO, OLD MIME--

--WHEN I'VE BROUGHT YOU SUCH A PRETTY PLAYMATE?

GRP GRP



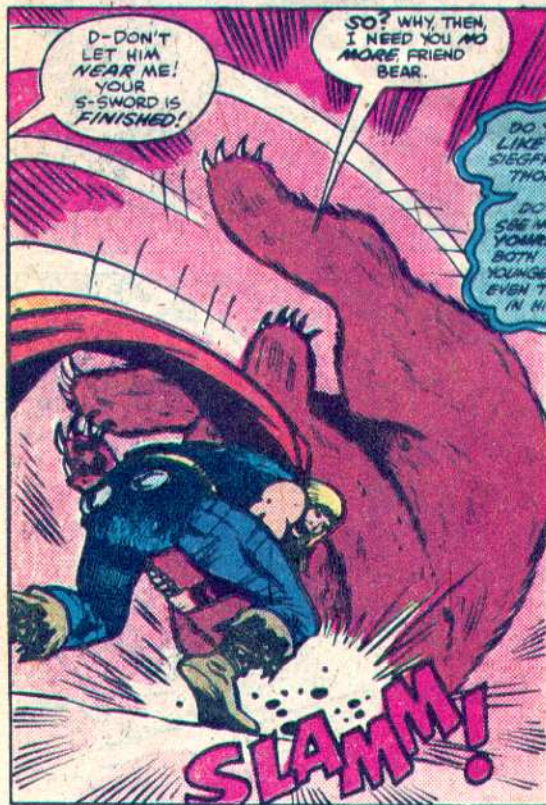
PLEASE-- TAKE HIM AWAY! TAKE HIM AWAY!

NAH! YOU WERE TO HAVE FINISHED FORGING ME A NEW SWORD TODAY-- AND I'VE BROUGHT BRUIN HERE TO SEE IT--

--OR ELSE TO SPEED YOU ALONG, IF YOU WERE NOT YET DONE!

SNARL

BEAR-- ASK MIME FOR THE SWORD!



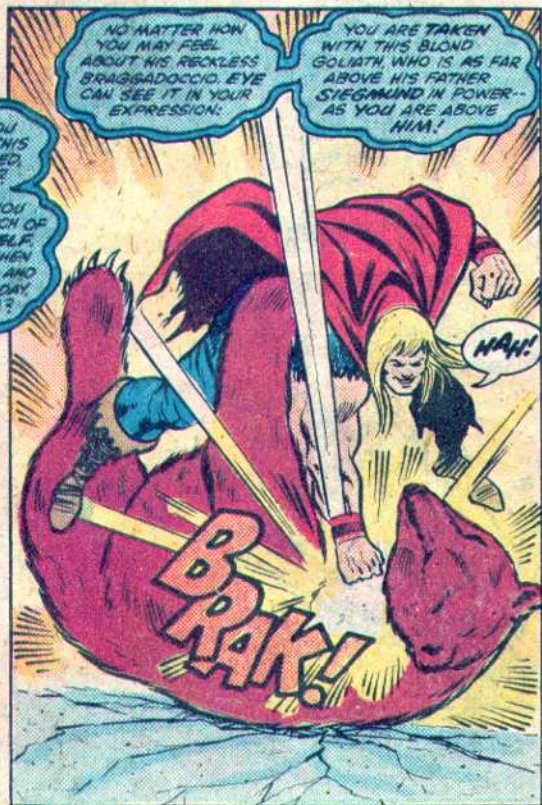
D-DON'T LET HIM NEAR ME! YOUR S-SWORD IS FINISHED!

SO? WHY THEN, I NEED YOU NO MORE FRIEND BEAR.

DO YOU LIKE THIS SIEGFRIED, THOR?

DO YOU SEE MUCH OF YOURSELF, BOTH WHEN YOUNGER AND EVEN TODAY, IN HIM?

SLAMM!

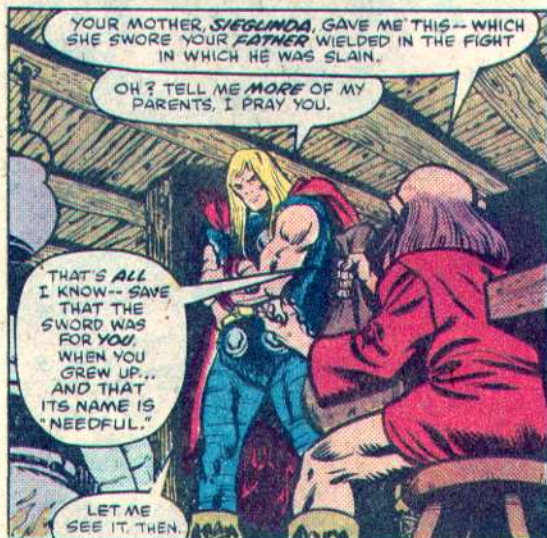


NO MATTER HOW YOU MAY FEEL ABOUT HIS RECKLESS BRAGGADOCIO, I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EXPRESSION!

YOU ARE TAKEN WITH THIS BLOND GOLIATH WHO IS AS FAR ABOVE HIS FATHER SIEGMUND IN POWER-- AS YOU ARE ABOVE HIM!

HAH!

BRAK!





THEN DO SO, MIM-- AND QUICKLY, TOO!

THEN, I'LL SWING MY **RIGHTFUL SWORD**-- WHICH YOU HAVE OBVIOUSLY KEPT FROM ME ALL THESE YEARS!

ONLY UNTIL YOU WERE **OLD ENOUGH**-- I **SWEAR IT!**



FORGE IT **SWIFTLY!** IT MUST BE DONE **TODAY!**

YES, I'LL DO IT.

BUT, **WHY** MUST IT BE DONE TODAY, WITHOUT FAIL?



BECAUSE I HAVE DECIDED TO **LEAVE** THIS HOVEL FOREVER, NEVER TO RETURN!

THE **GNOMELING** BLANCHES AT THESE WORDS...



HOW THEN SHALL HE LEAD HIS BRASH GODSON TO **FAFNIR'S LAIR**-- AND GAIN FOR HIMSELF THE **TREASURE OF THE NIBELUNGS**?

FOR, KNOW YOU, THOR, THAT THIS **MIME** HIMSELF IS OF THE **NIBELUNG CLAN**-- DESCENDED FROM VILE **ALBERICH** HIMSELF!

IT IS **DONE**, DEAR **SIEGFRIED!**



THIS **HAMMER** WILL TAKE CARE OF-- **A'EE!**

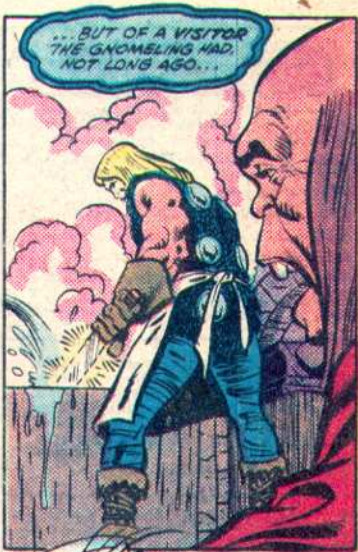
YOU'VE **SHATTERED** THE SWORD ANEW!

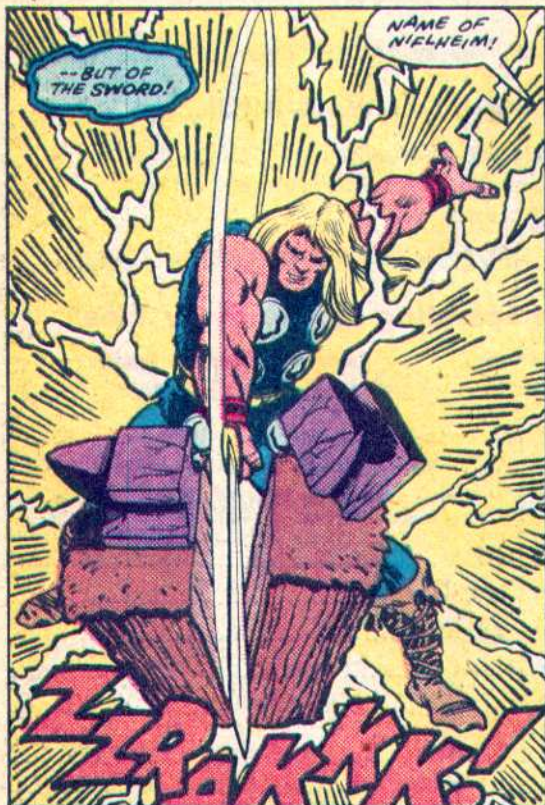
KLANK!



I SEE NOW THAT A **DUNDERHEAD** LIKE YOU CANNOT BE TRUSTED WITH A **SWORD** THAT **GREAT WARRIORS** AND **GODS** HAVE WIELDED.

AS **ODIN** IS MY WITNESS-- I'LL FORGE THIS SWORD **MYSELF!**





-- BUT OF THE SWORD!

NAME OF NIELHEIM!

ZRAKKK!



NOW DO YOU SEE, OLD MIME, HOW MY FATHER'S BLADE-- MY BLADE NOW-- CAN CLEAVE?

OH, Y-YES, GOOD SIEGFRIED, YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED NOW TO GO OFF AND BE A MAN-- A WARRIOR.

EVERYTHING, BUT THE ONE THING I NEGLECTED TO TEACH YOU ERE NOW, WITHOUT WHICH ALL THE REST IS USELESS.

OH? AND WHAT'S THAT?



IT'S FEAR, LAD! WITHOUT FEAR, YOU'LL NEVER BE A MIGHTY WARRIOR.

WHAT IS THIS "FEAR"? I DO NOT KNOW THE WORD.

I DID NOT THINK SO.



I CANNOT EXPLAIN IT, BUT THERE IS ONE I KNOW WHO COULD TEACH YOU-- THE DRAGON FAFNIR.

HIS HATE-CAVERN, AS IT'S CALLED, IS DUE EAST OF HERE.

HE COULD TEACH YOU FEAR, THAT'S FOR SURE!



THEN I'LL GREET THIS FAFNIR FIRST-- THEN GO OUT INTO THE WORLD.

COME LITTLE MAN!

A-AYE, BUT FIRST LET ME PREPARE FOOD AND DRINK FOR THE JOURNEY!



GRUDGINGLY, YOU-- OR RATHER, SIEGFRIED-- ACQUIESCES AND SOON...

HURRY, MIME! I'VE NO TIME TO WASTE.

NOR DO I, DEAR LAD.

I WOULD SEE YOU TAUGHT THE MEANING OF FEAR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE-- BY FAFNIR!



MEANWHILE UNKNOWN EVEN TO PLOTTING NINE, HIS FATHER ALBERICH RESTS NEAR FAFNIR'S CAVE...

WHEN WILL THE FATEFUL DAY ARRIVE ALBERICH?

HOW SHOULD I KNOW, GIANT?

I BUT WATCH AND WAIT, AS I'VE HIRED YOU TO DO WITH ME.



OVER THE YEARS, I MAY HAVE CHANGED MY VERY SHAPE... BUT I DO NOT KNOW THE FUTURE.

WHO'S THAT?

A WANDERER ONLY, SIRE.

I KNOW ONLY THAT I WILL HAVE THE RING WHICH FAFNIR POSSESSES, AND THAT--

NAY, FOOL-- FAR MORE THAN SOME MERE HUMAN TRAVELER...



IT'S ODIN HIMSELF-- STILL LORD OF ASGARD, HOWEVER HUMBLE HIS DISGUISE!

HOW DARE YOU COME HERE SKULKING ABOUT AFTER MY RING!

THY RING NO LONGER, GNOMELING-- SINCE IT HATH BEEN LONG IN FAFNIR'S SCALY GRASP.

IT DOTH BELONG NOW TO HIM WHO MAY TAKE IT-- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.



BUT, HOW FELL YOU INTO THE COMPANY OF SUCH LOATHESOME GIANTS AND TROLLS, SUCH AS HELA HATH DOMAIN OVER?

AYE, THEY'RE PART OF HELA'S HORDE. SURE ENOUGH--

--AND ONE DAY, WE SHALL TRAMPLE DOWN THE HIGH WALLS OF ASGARD ITSELF--



--ON THE DAY OF RAGNAROK, WHICH-- AAIEEE!

BEWARE VILE ONE! THOU HAST NOT THE MAGIC RING NOW.

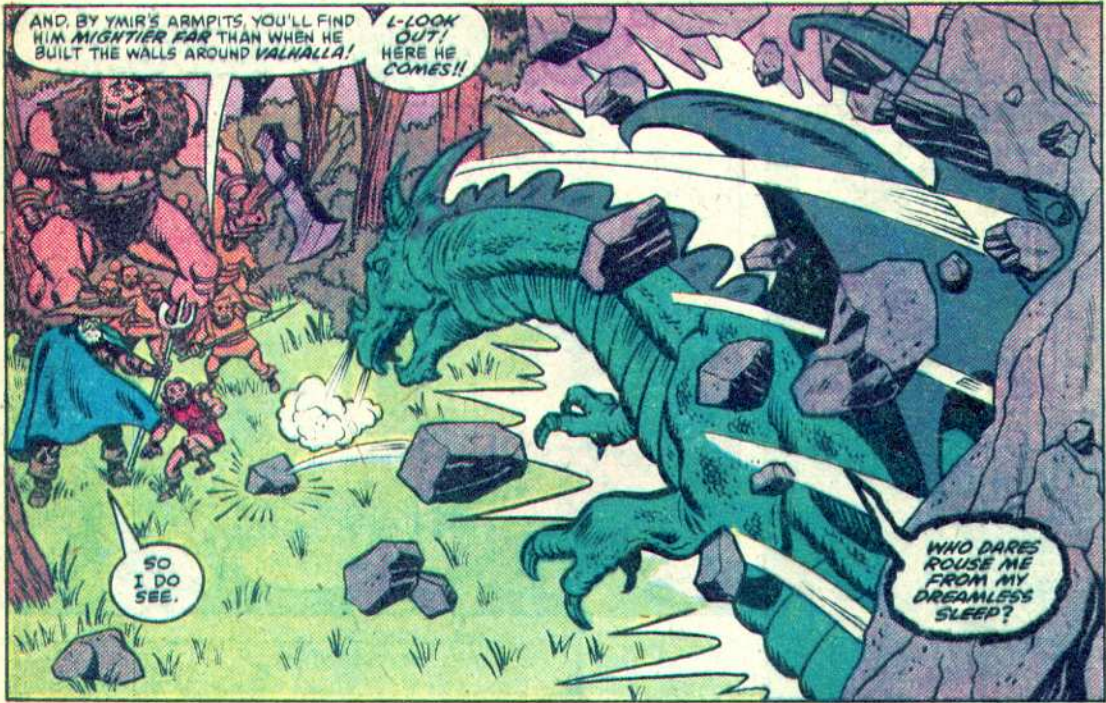
I BE COME BUT TO WATCH THEE LOSE IT AGAIN.



NAY, NEVER, ONCE I'VE-- EH? NOW SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

YOU'VE AWAKENED FAFNIR-- THAT STORM-GIANT WHO, BY THE POWER OF THE RING AND TARNHELM, IS BECOME A FEARSOME DRAGON--

RRUMMBLLL



AND, BY YMIR'S ARMPITS, YOU'LL FIND HIM MIGHTIER FAR THAN WHEN HE BUILT THE WALLS AROUND VALHALLA!

L-LOOK OUT! HERE HE COMES!!

SO I DO SEE.

WHO DARES ROUSE ME FROM MY DREAMLESS SLEEP?



I AM YOUR FRIEND, FAFNIR-- COME TO WARN YOU THAT SOMEONE COMES TO STEAL YOUR GOLDEN HOARD.

IT WOULD NOT BE YOU, BY ANY CHANCE?

YAY I AM YOUR FRIEND!

GIVE ME ONLY THE RING WHICH IS THE TINIEST PART OF YOUR TREASURE, AND YOU'LL BE SAFE FROM--



NOW GO--AND LET ME SLUMBER AGAIN!

THE RING IS MINE!

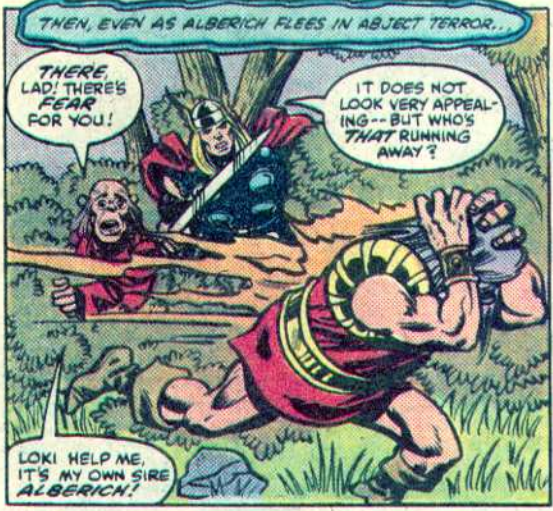
YYAAAA!



FOOLISH ALBERICH! THOU DOST THINK ME THY FOE, BUT ONE COMES WHOM I HAVE NEVER HELPED, NOR EVER SHALL.

'TIS HE THOU MUST RECKON WITH, NOT THE LORD OF ASGARD AND VALHALLA!

FLEE, FRIENDS! BACK TO HELA!

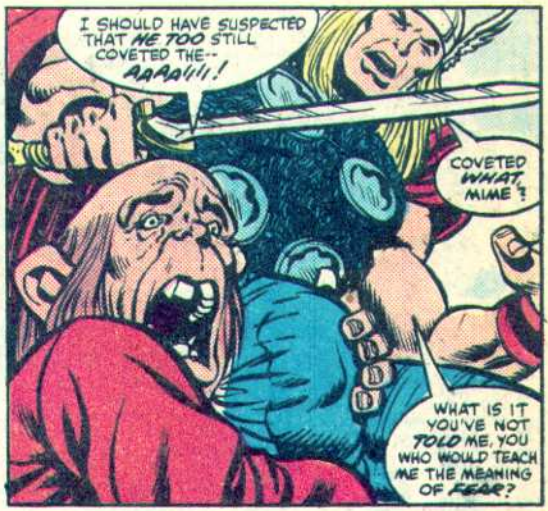


THEN, EVEN AS ALBERICH FLEES IN ABJECT TERROR...

THERE, LAD! THERE'S FEAR FOR YOU!

IT DOES NOT LOOK VERY APPEALING-- BUT WHO'S THAT RUNNING AWAY?

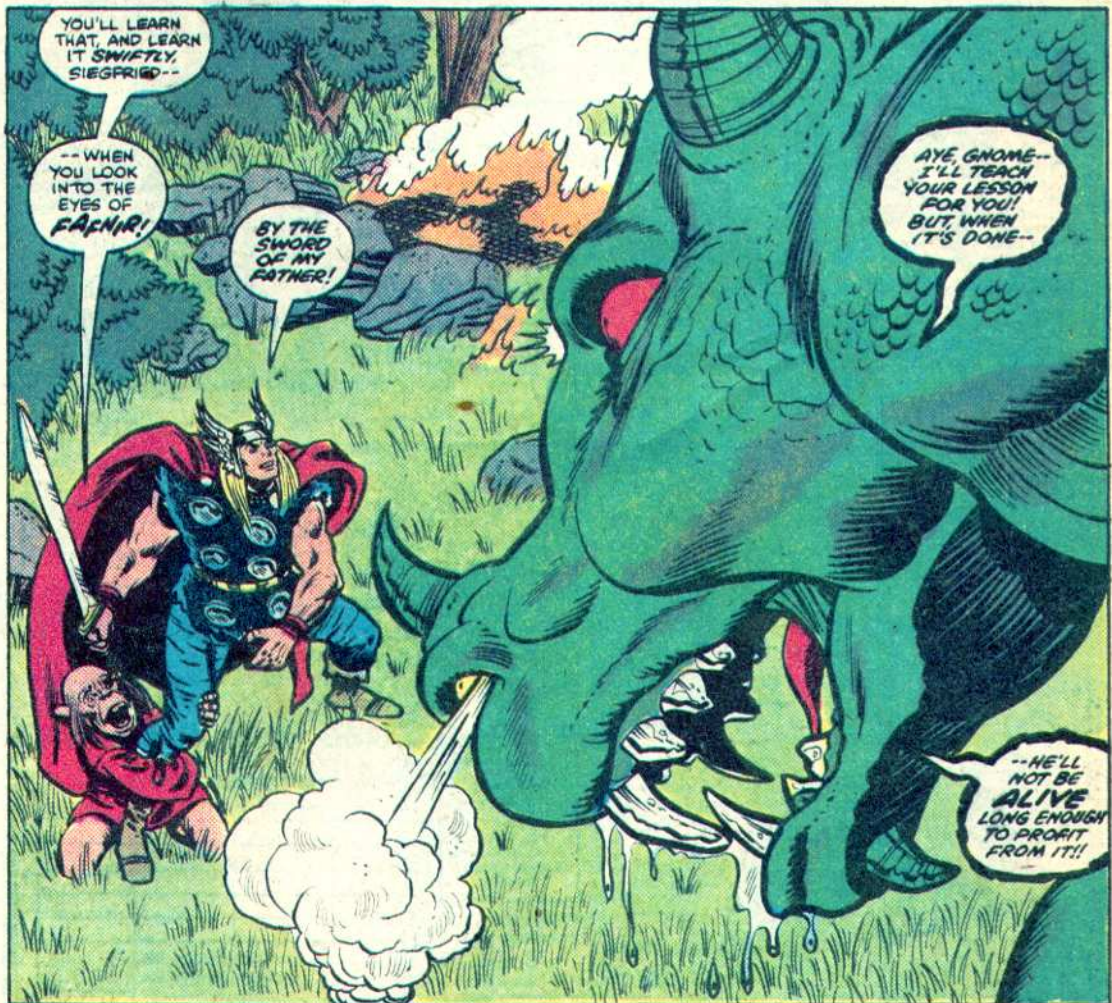
LOKI HELP ME, IT'S MY OWN SIRE ALBERICH!



I SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED THAT ME TOO STILL COVETED THE-- AAAA!!!

COVETED WHAT, MIMÉ?

WHAT IS IT YOU'VE NOT TOLD ME, YOU WHO WOULD TEACH ME THE MEANING OF FEAR?



YOU'LL LEARN THAT, AND LEARN IT SWIFTLY, SIEGFRIED--

-- WHEN YOU LOOK INTO THE EYES OF FAFNIR!

BY THE SWORD OF MY FATHER!

AYE, GNOME-- I'LL TEACH YOUR LESSON FOR YOU! BUT, WHEN IT'S DONE--

-- HE'LL NOT BE ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO PROFIT FROM IT!

NEXT ISSUE: DEATH TO THE DRAGON-SLAYER!

SPECIAL AND SORROWFUL NOTE FROM ROY THOMAS:

It's with considerable sadness that I have decided that THOR #297 must be my last, at least for the immediate present. I had hoped to be able to write and edit the magazine through at least #300, making it a real three hundredth issue by employing the logo JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY WITH THOR, thus utilizing both titles which the mag has had in its more than two-decade run.

But alas, I came to see it was not to be. Despite my love for mythology in general and Marvel's Asgardian thunder god in particular, I've found that chronicling the adventures of Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian in three regular titles, plus special stories of Red Sonja and REH's other heroes is really all I can find time for right now, without letting the quality suffer in my own eyes. Those magazines, plus the "Conan" newspaper comic-strip and upcoming "Almuric" and "Eric" features for EPIC, will have to comprise the whole of my comicbook work for the foreseeable future.

Don't think I'm ready, willing, or able to leave THOR in the lurch, though.

First off, I'd already plotted both #298 and #299 with artist Keith Pollard before I made my decision — and the basic storyline of even #300 and (perhaps) slightly beyond is already inherent in those issues. Thus, I'll be around for that gala 300th issue, even if only as a cheerleader.

The scripting reins for the nonce are being turned over, with both my blessing and active cooperation, to a couple of names which will be familiar to everybody who's read THOR for more than a year — namely, to Mark Gruenwald and Ralph Macchio. In fact, if they couldn't have scripted these next few issues, I'd probably have stuck around out of sheer desperation.

After all, not only did Mark and Ralph fill in with what I consider an excellent two-partner some months back when I ran afoul of deadline problems — but both of them have contributed materially to the storyline of the past year or so, with their research and suggestions. I've acknowledged my debt to them a time or two before, but this is my last chance and by Odin I'll do so again!

So, in many ways, it's still the same team — just with the emphases switched around a bit — that'll be winding up the Celestials/Eternals/Olympus/Asgard/Wagnerian storyline which both the readers and I call "The Celestials Saga."

Rest assured — like it or don't, the ending would be just about the same whether I scripted those last few issues or not!

Here also, ere I depart, I'd like to thank Marveldom Assembled for its encouragement and support during this (we like to think) important series of tales. Thanks to John Buscema, Keith Pollard, Chic Stone, and Tom Palmer — not to mention Wayne Boring in a super-special performance — for the beautiful artwork they've given me to play with. And thanks to editor-in-chief Jim Shooter for letting me mess around with THOR in the first place.

I'll miss it. I really will.

—R.T.

Dear Roy,

I've really got to congratulate you on what you've done with the Celestials/Eternals storyline. At first I was skeptical. The Eternals, although powerful; were not in the same league as Thor. I didn't think the Celestials were, either.

Perhaps that is my main remaining objection. You have shaken up the hierarchical tree of power in the Marvel Universe. The Eternals should never have been able to give the gods of Olympus a fight. I would also object to the idea of Odin bending his knee to the Celestials, but I think there's a plan behind that.

Odin's past record shows that he never really uses any of his powers to create or change things significantly. The best example of that is the time he caused Ego-Prime to evolve three humans into the so-called "Young Gods." I believe he is trying to "con" the Celestials into doing something for him, and the battle between himself and Thor is some kind of show (that only he knows about) for the Celestials.

Another interesting point that is extended further in issue #291 is the parallels and relationship between Odin and Zeus. Are they of the same race? Are they "brothers"? Are they different incarnations of the same being? (Zeus is a younger Odin?) The latter is hinted at in the current THOR ANNUAL, when Zeus is shown able to stop Mjolnir, something only Odin and Thor can do (we'll just write off El Toro Rojo's ability to deflect Mjolnir as total nonsense). This is something I hope you'll develop.

I'm also glad you finally reintroduced the Young Gods. That ties together some of the loose ends that have been hanging around since the issues numbered in the early 200's. Perhaps you'll also find a way to answer the questions raised in Thor's encounter with the Druid (#207). Especially when Thor mentioned Odin's name and the Druid said something like, "Woden is dead!" In Norse mythology Woden is another name for Odin. But who is this Woden? Another incarnation of Odin?

One final interesting but irrelevant observation. The Celestials' philosophy is diametrically opposed to that of the race of Watchers. The Celestials not only interact with lesser beings, but they more or less determine those beings' fate. The Watchers will not interfere at any cost. Perhaps a confrontation between the two races over their respective principles would make a good WHAT IF.

Danny Chen
Berkeley, CA 94704

We really don't think so, Danny. If such an encounter ever occurs, it ought to happen in our universe — which would generally put it out of WHAT IF territory.

Incidentally, your letter raised several points which were also mentioned to Ye Editor by associate editor Mark Gruenwald some weeks back — especially the "Woden is dead" like spoken by the Super-Druid. The way we see it now, though, it seems likely that the Druid was referring to the Woden/Odin/Wotan of true Norse myth, who (as you saw a couple of issues back) was destroyed in the Ragnarok of some 2000 years ago. Apparently the Druid came to Earth around that time and was aware of that Odin's fate.

We must admit, though, we think you're selling both the Eternals and most particularly the Celestials short when you don't think they have power enough to at least give the Asgardians and/or the gods of Olympus a good tussle. But you're dead on target when you suspect that there's more to Odin's knee-bending in 1000 A.D. than Thor yet knows. Stick around a few more issues, and we think you'll begin to see the answers to several of the questions you've asked above.

Dear Roy,

Oh, would that there were a prize, Nobel or Pulitzer, for literary achievement in the comic art form! That prize would surely be thine! Ye have totally enthralled this mortal with a multi-faceted tale blending gods and Eternals in a brilliantly woven tapestry of epic proportion.

The current Thor saga builds with each issue. Even the artists involved seem to be reaching heights of performance they've never before attained. The cover illustration by Keith Pollard and Bob Layton for THOR #292 is superb. The strength and menace of the All-Father are powerfully enhanced by his being at the apex of the triangular-thrust design echoed by his spear, Gungnir, at the throat of Thor. The whole is marred only by the omnipresent word balloon, whose message might have been better conveyed in a caption across the bottom. Overall, this issue is a very impressive chapter in a storyline sure to become a classic.

Thank you for taking me away from the day-to-day stresses of the business world and encouraging my thoughts and emotions to experience a part of the Marvel Universe portrayed with such skill. Thank you for such consistently high quality of concept realization, involving me in your world enough to evoke the need to write and tell you how much I've enjoyed and appreciated your efforts in two consecutive issues!

Rich Calgie
Plainview, NY 11803

High praise indeed, Rich. And if we take you away, even for a very short time, from the strains and stresses of this world into the panorama of power and pageantry which is awesome Asgard, it's all been worth while.

— Roy Thomas.