

MARVEL



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FEB

the mighty THOR



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STAN LEE
PRESENTS: **the MIGHTY THOR**

THOUGH HEL SHOULD BAR THE WAY!

THOR, SIF, AND BETA RAY BILL HAVE LEFT ASGARD FAR BEHIND AS THEY RIDE THE TIDES OF SPACE SEARCHING FOR BILL'S PEOPLE AND THE DEMONS WHO PURSUE THEM.

THE JOURNEY HAS BEEN LONG AND HAZARDOUS BUT AT LAST, THE FLEET OF STARSHIPS LIES LIKE A GREAT RIVER BELOW THEM...

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AND THE DEMONS ARE CLOSE AT HAND!

I SEE THEM! THEY
HAVE CAUGHT THE
LAST SHIP IN LINE!

MY
PEOPLE!
LOCKED IN COLD-
SLEEP AS THEY WERE,
THEY HAD NO CHANCE
AGAINST THOSE
CREATURES!

WE
ARE
TOO
LATE!

TO SAVE
THIS ONE
SHIP...

WHAM!
WHAM!
WHAM!

... BUT WE WILL
AVENGE THEM AS
ONLY THE MIGHTIEST
WARRIORS OF
ASGARD CAN!

OUR
HAMMERS
SHALL STRIKE
WITHOUT
MERCY!

LADY
SIF!

RIDE ON! RIDE ON!
ODIN SAID THAT ONLY
BY DESTROYING THE
SOURCE OF THESE
DEMONS CAN WE
WIN THE BATTLE!



I WILL REMAIN HERE AND PROTECT
THE FLEET UNTIL YOU CAN REACH
THE DEMON'S CRADLE AND
SHATTER IT!



BUT,
SIF...

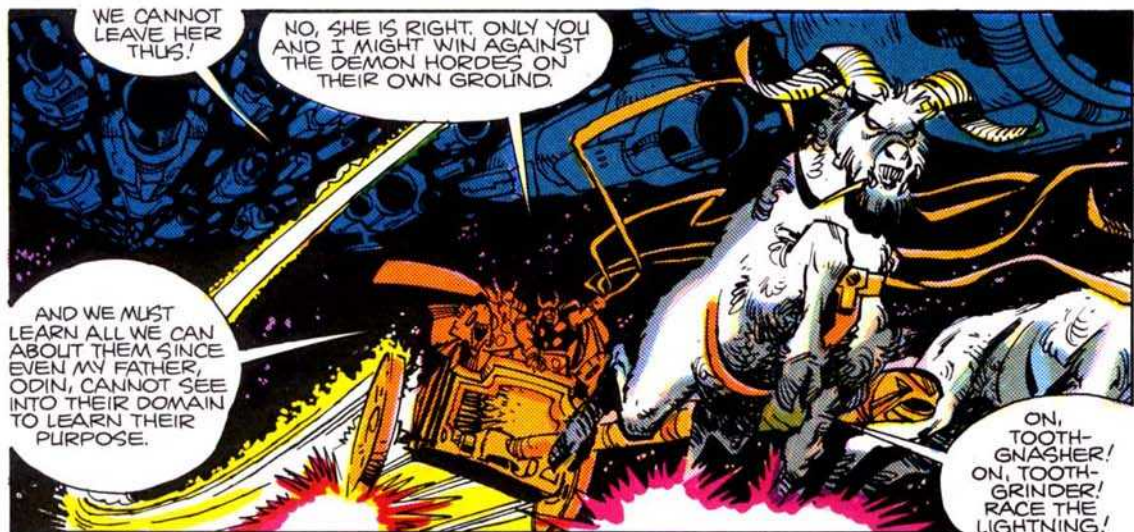
RIDE ON! DO NOT WASTE
WHAT LITTLE TIME WE HAVE!
FOLLOW THE DEMON'S HOME
AND DO WHAT MUST BE
DONE!



PRO-
TECTING
BILL'S
PEOPLE
IS MY
DUTY!

WE CANNOT
LEAVE HER
THUS!

NO, SHE IS RIGHT. ONLY YOU
AND I MIGHT WIN AGAINST
THE DEMON HORDES ON
THEIR OWN GROUND.



AND WE MUST
LEARN ALL WE CAN
ABOUT THEM SINCE
EVEN MY FATHER,
ODIN, CANNOT SEE
INTO THEIR DOMAIN
TO LEARN THEIR
PURPOSE.

ON,
TOOTH-
GNASHER!
ON, TOOTH-
GRINDER!
RACE THE
LIGHTNING!

SO THOR AND BILL THUNDER PAST THE STARS, TRACKING THE DEMON WAVE THAT SEEMS TO FLOW
ENDLESSLY PAST THEM...

...MOVING AT SUCH GREAT
SPEED THAT THEY ARE
INVISIBLE TO EVERY
DEMONIC EYE...

...UNTIL AT LAST THEY REACH THE CORE OF THE GALAXY THAT ONCE HOUSED THE CIVILIZATION OF BILL'S PEOPLE.

BY THE
BRISTLING
BEARD OF
ODIN!

MY HOME!
MY HOME!
WHAT HAVE
THEY DONE
TO YOU?

FOR BEFORE THEM LIE NOT THE RADIANT STARS OF AN ANCIENT AND WISE RACE...

... BUT A GLOWING PORTAL,
PULSING WITH EVIL, OUT OF
WHICH STREAMS A NUMBER-
LESS HORDE OF DEMONS
INTO THE UNIVERSE OF MEN!

WOE THAT THE
VERY STARS WHICH
GAVE ME LIFE SHOULD
BE HARNESSSED NOW
TO CREATE
SUCH EVIL!



THOR! THE DEMONS HAVE SEEN US! WE MUST HASTEN TO THE PORTAL!



TOO LATE! BUT THOUGH THEY SWARM ABOUT US IN COUNTLESS DROVES, STILL WE SHALL PROVE THEIR MASTERS!



BACK, YOU CREATURES OF THE NAMELESS VOID!
BACK! NO POWER IN THE UNIVERSE SHALL PREVENT US FROM ENTERING THE PORTAL AND DESTROYING IT!

MEANWHILE, BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW, A MIGHTY FIGURE, SURROUNDED BY A SHADOW HOST, SWINGS AGAIN HIS MALLET HIGH ABOVE THE GLOWING ANVIL...



...AND THE ECHOES OF HIS BLOW RING ACROSS THE COSMOS.

DOOM!

IN THE DEEPS OF THE EARTH, THE MONSTERS ARE WAKING.



WHILE FAR AWAY, IN THE GREAT FLEET...

NO DEMON HAS YET GOTTEN PAST ME, BUT THEIR NUMBERS INCREASE WITH EVERY SECOND.

AND NOW THEY HAVE BEGUN TO MASS TOGETHER FOR THEIR FINAL ATTACK!



VERY WELL! IF TODAY I MUST JOURNEY TO THE HALLS OF HELA, I SHALL NOT TRAVEL ALONE!



COME, DEMONS! WHO WILL BE THE FIRST TO TASTE THIS SWEET STEEL?

BADD OOM! BADD OOM!



WHA--!



THAT
SHIP! IT
MUST BE
BILL'S
SKUTTLE-
BUTT!

INDEED I AM, MILADY.
REPAIRED AND RETURNED
TO DUTY. JUST IN TIME
IT WOULD SEEM.

AND THOUGH
I DO NOT RECOG-
NIZE YOU, YOU
MUST BE A FRIEND
OF MY MASTER TO
FIGHT HIS
BATTLES.

LEAP ABOARD
AND WE SHALL
FIGHT TOGETHER.




WELL,
SAID. I AM
SIF, WARRIOR
MAID OF
ASGARD.

BILL AND
HIS COMPAN-
ION—THOR— HAVE
JOURNEYED OFF TO
FIND THE SOURCE OF
THESE DEMONS AND
DESTROY IT.

IN THE
MEANTIME, I
REMAIN BEHIND
TO GUARD THE
FLEET AND ITS
PRECIOUS
CARGO.

THEN LET US BE-
GIN. THESE CREA-
TURES SEEM SINGLE-
MINDEDLY DETERMINED
TO DESTROY US.



PERHAPS WE
CAN LEAD
THEM AWAY
FROM THE FLEET
FOR A TIME AND
GIVE BILL AND
HIS COMPANION
A CHANCE TO
FINISH
THEIR
JOB!

BUT AS THE DEMONS TURN FROM THE FLEET IN HOT PURSUIT, LET US TURN TO THE GARDENS OF ASGARD TO LISTEN TO VALOROUS VOLSTAGG CONCLUDE HIS CHILLING TALE OF THE DEATH OF BALDER...



SO, MY YOUNG FRIEND, NOBLE BALDER WENT DOWN TO NIFFLEHEIM, HELAS DARK DOMAIN.

HE FOUND THAT THE LEGENDS OF THE AFTER-LIFE WERE TRUE.

BEFORE HIM, DANK AND CHEERLESS, LAY THE CORPSE STRAND, THE HALLS OF THE TORTURED...



...AND THE DRAGON, NID-HOGG, THE EATER OF THE DEAD...

...CONSUMING THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FLED IN TERROR DEEP INTO NIFFLEHEIM PAST THE GREAT WOLF GARM.



WHEN HE LOOKED UPON THE DEAD, HE WAS FILLED WITH HORROR...

...FOR THERE BEFORE HIM WERE THE VERY WARRIORS WHOM HE HIMSELF HAD SLAIN AND SENT TO NIFFLEHEIM IN BATTLES PAST!



THESE WERE THE FRUITS OF HIS MANY VICTORIES!

AND THERE WAS WORSE, MUCH OF WHICH BALDER FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE TO RELATE, EVEN TO ME.

FOR ALL HIS PROWESS IN BATTLE, YOUNG AGNAR, BALDER IS A GENTLE SOUL, A POET IN A WARRIOR'S BODY.

NOT LIKE THOR OR MYSELF WHO LIVE ONLY FOR THE SOUND OF CLASHING BLADES AND SMOKING BATTLEFIELDS.

SURELY IF SOME HARM CAME NOW TO BALDER AND YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE, WHY I MIGHT EVEN FIND IT IN MY HEART, SO MUCH LARGER THAN THAT OF ORDINARY MEN, TO FORGIVE YOU.

LET ME DUST YOU OFF.

OF COURSE I HAVE—UMMPH—GROWN SO—UGGH—LARGE THAT NO ORDINARY FOE IS WORTHY OF MY GREAT ABILITIES.

GROAN.

Paf Paf

OWOWOW.

WHY, EVEN THOR OR FANDRAL THE DASHING MIGHT FORGIVE YOU BECAUSE THEY WERE ONCE YOUNG AND DARING THEMSELVES.

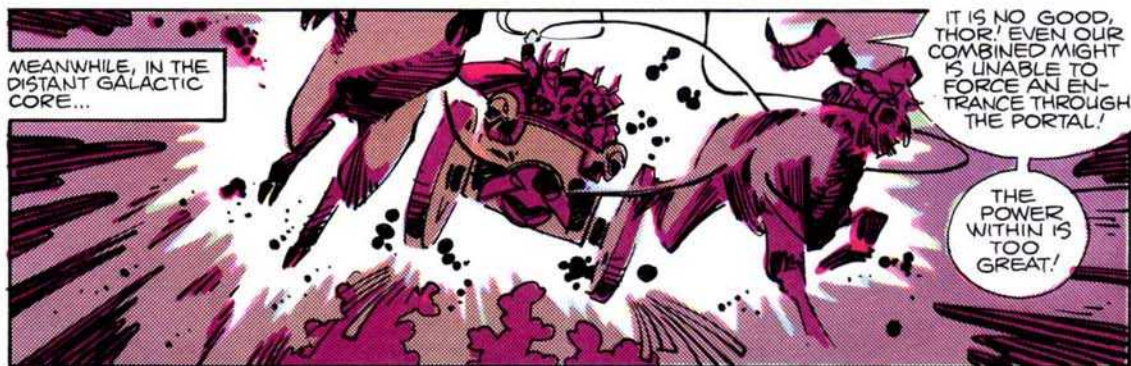
POMPOUS OLD WINDBAG!

BUT HOGUN THE GRIM?

URK!

HOGUN WAS NEVER YOUNG. HE WOULD NEVER FORGET...

...OR FORGIVE!



MEANWHILE, IN THE
DISTANT GALACTIC
CORE...

IT IS NO GOOD,
THOR! EVEN OUR
COMBINED MIGHT
IS UNABLE TO
FORCE AN EN-
TRANCE THROUGH
THE PORTAL!

THE
POWER
WITHIN IS
TOO GREAT!



AND THE
HEAT IS MORE
THAN EVEN I
CAN BEAR!

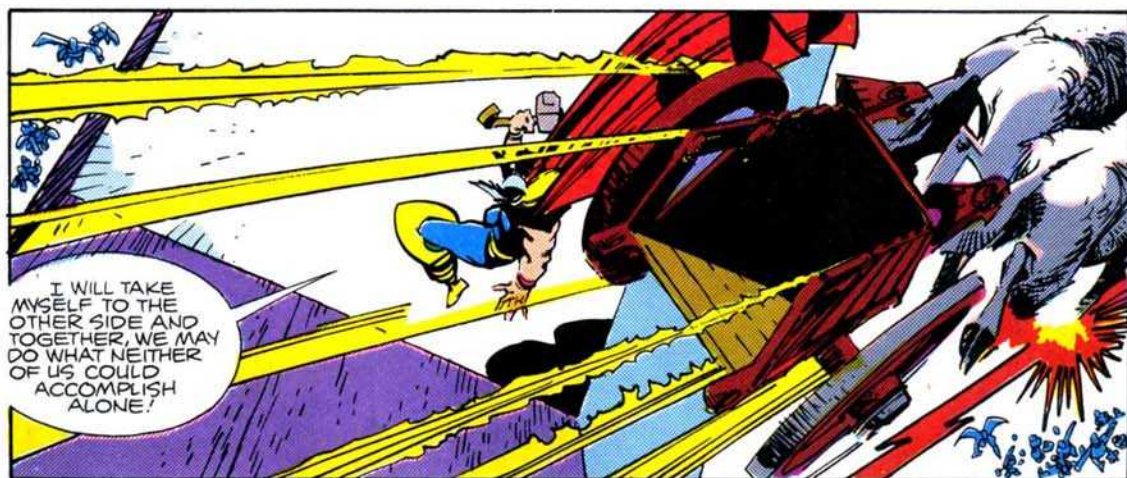
YOU ARE
RIGHT,
FRIEND
BILL!

I NEVER
THOUGHT SUCH
POWER EXISTED
BEYOND THE
HALLS OF
ODIN IN
ASGARD!

YET THOUGH WE CANNOT ENTER,
WE MAY STILL BE ABLE TO CLOSE
THE PORTAL FOREVER TO THE
DEMON HORDE AND SAVE YOUR
PEOPLE!



STAND
BEHIND THE
PORTAL HERE
AND AWAIT MY
CALL.



I WILL TAKE
MYSELF TO THE
OTHER SIDE AND
TOGETHER, WE MAY
DO WHAT NEITHER
OF US COULD
ACCOMPLISH
ALONE!



MEANWHILE,
ABOARD THE
SKUTTLEBUTT...

THEIR NUMBERS
ONLY INCREASE!
FOR EVERY DEMON
WE SLAY, A DOZEN
MORE ATTACK!

THEN
I HAVE NO
CHOICE, SIF!
I MUST
PROTECT MY
CHARGES!

WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN?

SELF-
DESTRUCTION! AS
THE DEMONS OVER-
WHELM US, I SHALL
DESTROY MYSELF AND
THIS ENTIRE SECTOR
OF SPACE, TAKING
THOUSANDS OF
DEMONS WITH ME.

DO YOU
WISH TO
ESCAPE?

FIVE!

FOUR!

THREE!

TWO!

COUNT-
DOWN
BEGUN!

O--!

I COULD NOT
DESERT SUCH A
FRIEND. BUT WE
SHALL GIVE THEM
SOMETHING THEY'LL
NEVER FORGET!

HERE
THEY
COME!

SKUTTLEBUTT!
WAIT!

THE
DEMONS!
THEY'RE
DISAPPEARING!



THEY'RE GONE!

BILL... AND THOR... MUST HAVE DESTROYED... THE DEMONS' SOURCE...



...WE'VE WON...



SIF?

I'LL BE ALLRIGHT, SKUTTLEBUTT. I'M JUST... SO TIRED. BUT BILL... AND THOR?

STILL ALIVE, MY SENSORS TELL ME. AND RETURNING HERE.



BUT THERE IS MORE TO YOUR STORY THAN A SIMPLE FRIENDSHIP WITH BILL. THE OFFERING OF ONE'S LIFE FOR ANOTHER IS NO SMALL GIFT, AS I WELL KNOW.

LET US TALK AS WE RETURN TO THE FLEET TO WAIT. I, TOO, WOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT YOU ...AND BILL.

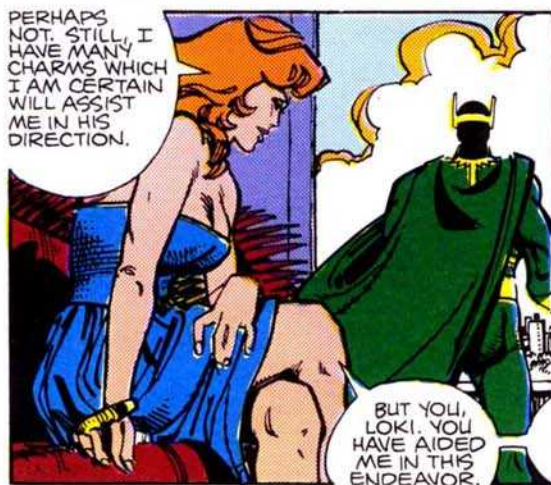
AT THAT MOMENT, IN A PENTHOUSE OVERLOOKING CENTRAL PARK IN NEW YORK CITY...



YOU NEEDN'T WORRY. I AM NOT UNSKILLED IN GETTING WHAT I WANT.

I DARE SAY, BUT HAVE A CARE, LORELEI.

THOR IS NO ORDINARY BUMPKIN TO SWOON AT YOUR FEET.



PERHAPS NOT. STILL, I HAVE MANY CHARMS WHICH I AM CERTAIN WILL ASSIST ME IN HIS DIRECTION.

BUT YOU, LOKI. YOU HAVE AIDED ME IN THIS ENDEAVOR.



IT WILL AMUSE ME, LADY.

IT WILL AMUSE ME GREATLY.

WHAT REWARD DO YOU LOOK TO RECEIVE OUT OF THIS GAME?

THE NIGHT DRAWS ITS VEIL ACROSS NEW YORK CITY, BUT IN THE MORNING LIGHT OF ASGARD, WE FIND THE STALWART WATCHMAN OF THE GODS...



STAND AND IDENTIFY YOURSELVES IF YOU SEEK TO CROSS THE RAINBOW BRIDGE INTO THE GOLDEN REALM!

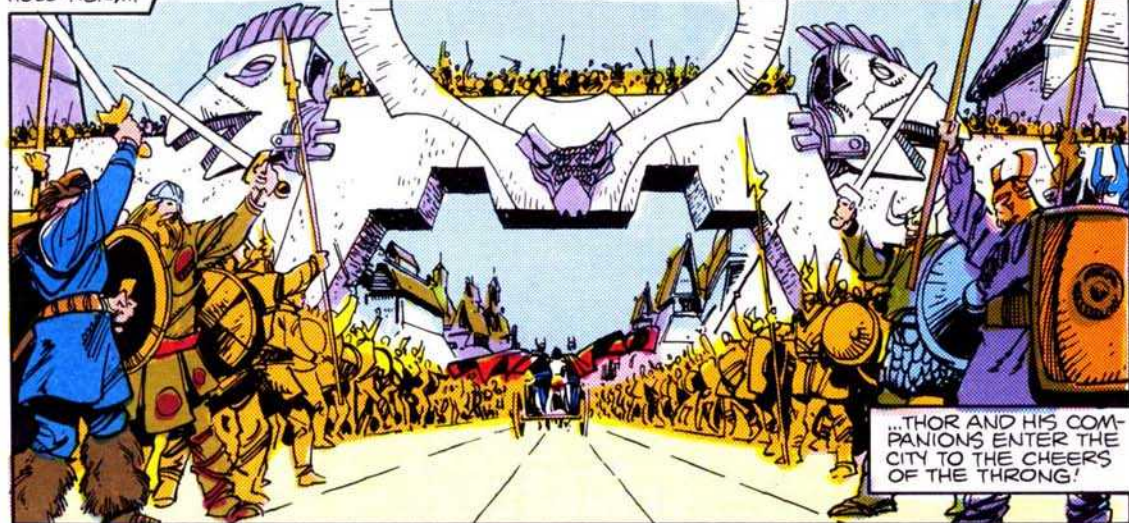


THE LADY SIF, BETA RAY BILL, SKUTTLEBUTT, AND I BRING NEWS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR FOES!

WELL MET, MIGHTY THOR! LORD ODIN HAS PROCLAIMED YOUR TRIUMPH ACROSS THE LAND.

EVEN NOW, THE FEAST IS MADE READY. I GIVE YOU LEAVE TO ENTER.

WHILE SKUTTLEBUTT REMAINS OUTSIDE (FOR THERE ARE NO HALLS IN ASGARD LARGE ENOUGH TO HOLD HER)...



...THOR AND HIS COMPANIONS ENTER THE CITY TO THE CHEERS OF THE THRONG!

STILL, EVEN HEROES NEED BATHS
AND AS OUR COMRADES CHANGE
INTO FRESH CLOTHING TO PREPARE
FOR THE FEAST...



YOU ARE STRANGELY
SILENT, FRIEND BILL.
I HOPE YOU DO NOT
FEEL THAT I HOLD A
GRUDGE AGAINST
YOU FOR YOUR
VICTORY EARLIER
AGAINST ME.*

AND AS
FOR
YOUR
PEOPLE,
WE DID
WIN, YOU
KNOW.

FEAR NOT, MY
FRIEND. YOUR
FRIENDSHIP IS
BEYOND RE-
PROACH. AS
IS OUR
VICTORY.

BUT I MUST
SHORTLY
RETURN TO
GUIDE MY
PEOPLE TO
A NEW HOME
AND THOUGH
I CAN HARDLY
BELIEVE IT, I
AM LOATH TO
LEAVE
ASGARD...

...AND
ALL THAT
I HAVE
FOUND
HERE.

*THOR 338-NO POINTS IF YOU MISSED IT.



THE UNCOMPROMISING
ACCEPTANCE I HAVE
HAD WHEN EVEN MY OWN
PEOPLE CAN SCARCELY
LOOK AT ME, THE JOY OF
COMRADESHIP, EVEN THE
TOUCH OF A
WOMAN'S
HAND...

BUT
I SAY
TOO
MUCH.

I AM
WHAT I
AM AND
CANNOT
CHANGE
IT.

I SHALL
SEE YOU AT
DINNER.

ELSEWHERE...



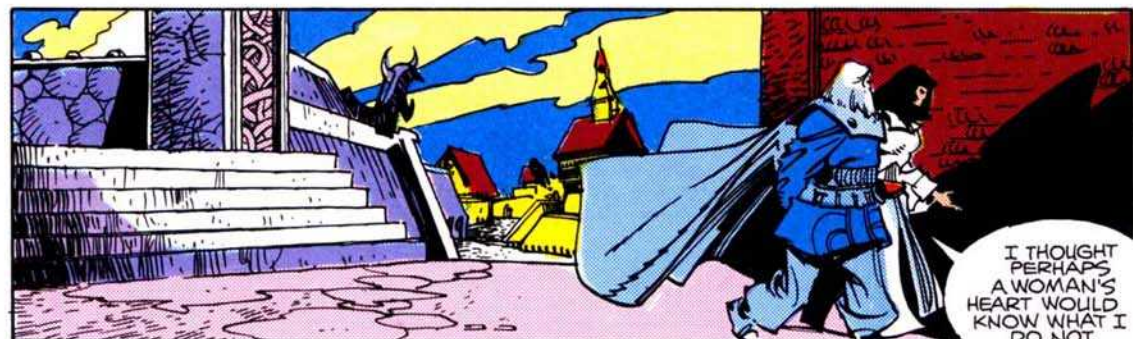
YOU
SENT
FOR ME,
MY
LORD.

THANK YOU
FOR COMING
SO QUICKLY,
SIF.

I WOULD
LIKE A FEW
WORDS WITH
YOU... ABOUT
BILL.

I KNOW MORE THAN YOU
MIGHT THINK, LADY, ABOUT
YOUR FEELINGS FOR HIM. I,
TOO, FIND HIM A MATCH
FOR MY OWN SON IN
MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

BUT THERE
IS IN BILL
A CORE OF
MELANCHOLY
THAT EVEN
I CANNOT
FATHOM.



I THOUGHT
PERHAPS
A WOMAN'S
HEART WOULD
KNOW WHAT I
DO NOT.

MY HEART WOULD KNOW NO MORE THAN YOU, LORD ODIN, WERE IT NOT FOR SKUTTEBLUTT. FOR BILL'S SHIP AND I HAVE HAD A LONG TALK AND SHARED MANY SECRETS.

SHE HAS BEEN WITH HIM ON THEIR ODYSSEY AND KNOWS HIM BETTER THAN ANYONE. SHE KNOWS WHAT HE DID NOT TELL US HIMSELF.

FOR THOUGH HIS STORY WAS TRUE, IT WAS INCOMPLETE!

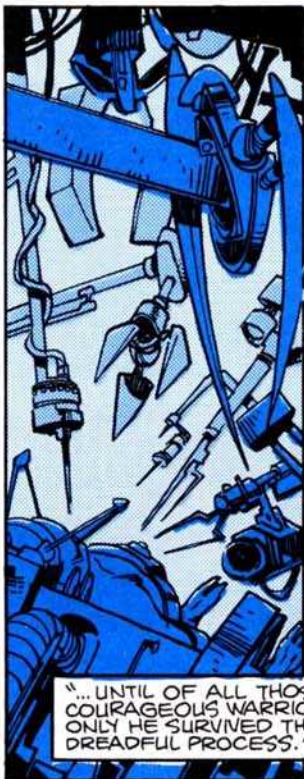
"WHEN HE WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE GUARDIAN OF HIS PEOPLE, HE NEGLECTED TO TELL US OF THE GREAT GAMES THAT WERE HELD TO PICK THE MIGHTIEST CHAMPION."



"HOW HE WON OVER THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN GRUELING TESTS OF POWER AND ENDURANCE."

"HOW, FROM AMONG THE PHYSICALLY ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATES, THE BEST WERE CHOSEN IN A SERIES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATIONS..."

"OR HOW THE CREATION OF BETA RAY BILL WAS ACCOMPLISHED WITH PAIN BEYOND IMAGINING..."



"...UNTIL OF ALL THOSE COURAGEOUS WARRIORS, ONLY HE SURVIVED THE DREADFUL PROCESS."

AND THE CHANGE WAS IRREVERSIBLE. HE WILL ALWAYS BE WHAT HE HAS BECOME.

WORST OF ALL, HIS OWN PEOPLE COULD HARDLY BEAR THE SIGHT OF HIM ONCE HE HAD BEEN FINISHED. YET HE WOULD DO IT ALL AGAIN IF NECESSARY.



OH, ALL-FATHER, HOW DO MORTALS ENDURE IT?

BE AT PEACE, SIF. LET US SEE WHAT WE CAN DO.



"THAT LEFT MOST OF THEM DEAD OR INSANE!"

THAT EVENING, AFTER
THE FEASTING IS
NEARLY THROUGH...

LET ALL NOW
BE SILENT!
LORD ODIN WOULD
ADDRESS THE
HEROES!

MY CHILDREN, WE
STAND NOW TO HONOR
THESE TWO WHO HAVE
GONE TO THE ENDS
OF THE UNIVERSE
AND RETURNED
VICTORIOUS.

WHAT CAN WE GIVE SUCH
WARRIORS THAT THEY DO
NOT ALREADY POSSESS?

VERY LITTLE FOR
THE TRUE WAR-
RIOR CARRIES
WITHIN HIMSELF
ALL THAT IS
NECESSARY.

YET MY HEART TELLS
ME THAT WE MAY STAND
HERE TOGETHER FOR
THE LAST TIME AND
SOME TOKEN, TO REMIND
A DISTANT TRAVELER OF
HIS FRIENDS, SEEMS
APPROPRIATE.

STEP FORWARD AND
RAISE YOUR HAMMERS
THAT I MAY BESTOW UPON
YOU EACH A GIFT THAT
I HOPE WILL BE
WORTHY OF YOU.



AND SUDDENLY, THERE IS A DEAD
SILENCE WITHIN THE HALL...



UNTIL AT
LAST...



I... I AM
MYSELF
AGAIN!

I AM
MYSELF
AGAIN!

AND
STORM
BREAKER
HAS
BECOME
A...A
CANE!

AS I SAID, AN ENCHANT-
MENT THAT HAD OUTLIVED
ITS PURPOSE. NOW, WHEN-
EVER YOU NEED TO, STRIKE
THE CANE UPON THE
GROUND AND BETA
RAY THOR WILL LIVE
AGAIN.

MY
LORD...

MY
LORD...

STAND
UP, NOBLE
WARRIOR.
YOU HAVE
EARNED THE
RIGHT.



WHAT SAY
YOU, BILL, TO
A JOUST
NOW, EH?

BUT WAIT, IF
ODIN'S ENCHANT-
MENT NOW RESTS
WITHIN STORM
BREAKER, WHAT
OF MJOLNIR?



WHAT OF
DONALD
BLAKE?

HEAR ME, HOSTS OF ASGARD!

PRaise THESE HEROES, BILL, WHO HAS BECOME THE SECOND SON I NEVER HAD!

AND THOR, WHO IS NOW AND FOREVER, INDIVISIBLY, THE FIRST SON OF ODIN, THE GOD OF THUNDER AND HEIR TO THE THRONE OF ASGARD!

THE CHEERING LASTS A LONG, LONG TIME.

BUT THOUGH THE FEAST RENEWS ITSELF AND LASTS BEYOND THE COCK'S CROW, AT LENGTH THE THRONGS DISPERSE AND GOODBYES ARE SAID.

I MUST GO, THOR! AS A WARRIOR MAIDEN, I HAVE BECOME BLUNT AND DULLED. I HAVE EVEN BELIEVED THINGS THAT I AM SURE NOW WERE BUT BETRAYALS OF MY EYES.

ON BILL'S QUEST, I MAY REGAIN MY TEMPER AS I NEVER COULD ON MIDGARD.*

DO NOT FORGET ME.

LADY, SOONER COULD I FORGET MY OWN NAME.

*EARTH

MAY YOU AND YOURS BE GRANTED SAFE HAVEN, BILL.

STAND TOGETHER AND I WILL SEND YOU TO YOUR SHIP THAT WAITS BEYOND THE RAINBOW BRIDGE.

FARE THEE, WELL!

AND NOW, MY SON. TO BED. IT HAS BEEN A LONG DAY.

FATHER, BEFORE WE RETIRE, I MUST KNOW SOMETHING. DID YOU SEND US TO SKARTHIM KNOWING BILL WOULD BEAT ME?

AND COULD I HAVE BEATEN HIM ELSEWHERE?

THOR, HUMILITY IS A LESSON EVEN GODS CAN LEARN. SUCH WAS THE MEANING OF MJOLNIR'S SPELL WROUGHT LONG AGO.

THOUGH THY HAMMER STILL RETAINS SOME LITTLE ENCHANTMENT, YOU WILL CARRY THE MEMORY OF YOUR COMBAT WITH BILL FOREVER. WE MAY ALL PROFIT FROM THAT, NO?

AS FOR ANOTHER FIGHT WITH BILL...

...NOT EVEN THE ALL-WISE KNOWS EVERYTHING, MY SON.

AS NIGHT FALLS IN ASGARD, SO TOO IT BLANKETS EARTH BUT THE LARGE TANKER ASTRAGLIA, OFF CAPE COD AND BOUND FOR THE ST. LAWRENCE MOVES STEADILY ON UNDER THE STARRY SKY...



CALM NIGHT TONIGHT, EH, SKIPPER?

JUST A MILK RUN. DO YOU FEEL A SWELL?

NOT LIKELY ON A SHIP THIS SIZE. MAYBE YOU--

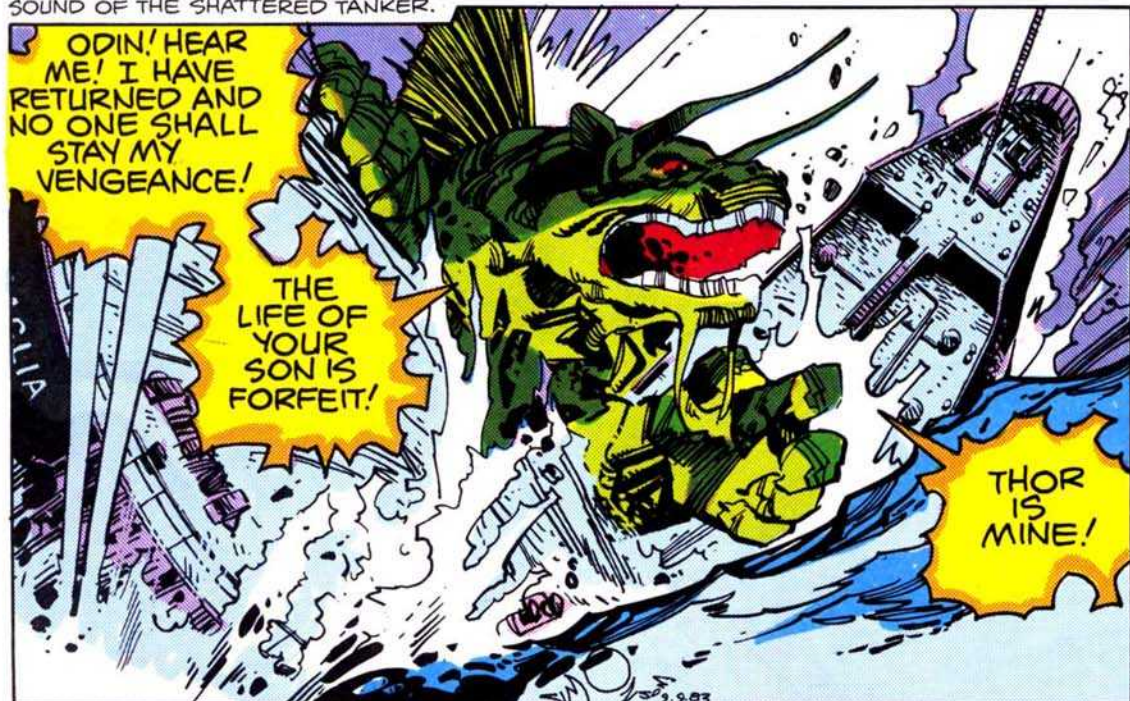


GOOD LORD! LOOK OUT, HANSON! LOOK OUT!

THE SKIPPER'S WARNING IS FUTILE AND THE ASTRAGLIA SHUDDERS AS SHE BEGINS TO BREAK APART UNDER A FURIOUS ASSAULT...



...BUT ONLY THE EARS OF THE DYING SEAMEN HEAR THE ROARING CRY THAT ECHOES ABOVE THE SOUND OF THE SHATTERED TANKER.



ODIN! HEAR ME! I HAVE RETURNED AND NO ONE SHALL STAY MY VENGEANCE!

THE LIFE OF YOUR SON IS FORFEIT!

THOR IS MINE!

NEXT ISSUE: **THE PAST IS A BUCKET OF ASHES!** STICK AROUND, FOLKS! THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET WORSE AGAIN!