

THE MIGHTY THOR!

"THE POWER OF PLUTO!"

AT LAST, MIGHTY THOR HAS REDEEMED HIMSELF IN THE EYES OF HIS ROYAL FATHER, ODIN, BY DEFEATING THE EVIL SEIDRING! BUT, EVEN A GOD CAN BE INJURED BY BOLTS OF FUNDAMENTAL ENERGY SUCH AS THOSE WHICH THE DESPERATE TRAITOR HAS HURLED AT THE IMMORTAL AVENGER--!

CHAPTER
IV

LET SILENCE REIGN! THE GOD OF THUNDER DOTH TAKE HIS REST!! BY ORDER OF IMPERIAL ODIN!

"HE SLEEPS!" 'TIS GOOD! SOON, THE STRENGTH WHICH IS HIS BIRTHRIGHT SHALL RETURN TO YON NOBLE BODY!

CONCEIVED IN GRANDEUR AND PRODUCED IN GLORY, BY:

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JACK KIRBY, PENCILLER
VINCE COLLETTA, INKER
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VERILY, WE HAVE SPOKEN!

LATER, THE MOST REGAL PRESENCE IN ALL THE CELESTIAL REALM ENTERS THE HEAVILY-GUARDED CHAMBER...

HOW FARES THE SON OF MY HEART, PHYSICIAN?

HE HATH TOTTERED AT THE BRINK OF THE ETERNAL SLEEP, MY LORD ODIN...

... BUT, THE GLOWING STRENGTH OF HIS LIMBS, COUPLED WITH THE MATCHLESS COURAGE OF HIS SPIRIT, SHALL SURELY RESTORE THY PRINCELY OFFSPRING TO THY BOSOM, SIRE!



IN A FIT OF ROYAL RAGE, WHICH I SHALL REGRET TILL THE END OF TIME, I DID DEPRIVE HIM OF HALF HIS GODLY POWER!

O, MOST RASH AND SHAMEFUL DEED! UPON THE OPENING OF HIS EYES, THAT POWER SHALL BE RESTORED-- AS SURELY AS THE HEAVENS ENDURE!



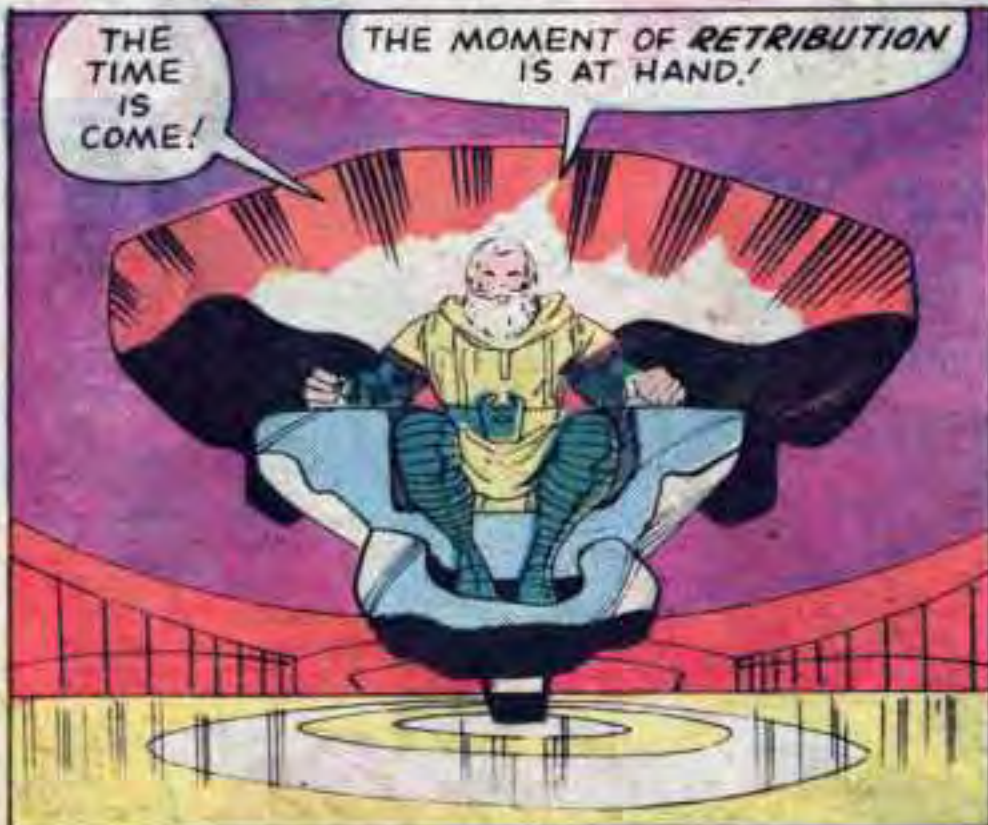
BUT NOW, I MUST GET ME HENCE TO THE UNSPEAKABLE VILLAIN WHO HATH COMMITTED SO FOUL AN ACT OF TREASON UPON THE GOLDEN REALM!

ONWARD-- TO THE JUDGMENT SEAT!



THE TIME IS COME!

THE MOMENT OF RETRIBUTION IS AT HAND!



BRING THEN FORTH THE TRAITOR-- SEIDRING!

NO! NO! MERCY! MERCY! I DARE NOT FACE THE WRATH OF ODIN!





MERCY, OMNIPOTENT LORD! MERCY UPON ONE WHO WAS MADDENED BY LUST FOR POWER!

THINE ABJECT WHIMPERING PROFANES MY VERY EARS!



THOU, WHOSE HEART BE COLDER THAN THE WINDS OF SPACE--WHOSE AMBITION BE DEADLIER THAN A SERPENT'S STING--THOU DARE SPEAKEST TO ME OF MERCY??!

FOR POWER DIDST THOU LUST--AND POWER SHALT THOU RECEIVE! THIS THEN BE THY SENTENCE--



THOU SHALT HAVE A KINGDOM OF THINE OWN--A KINGDOM TO RULE FOR ALL THE DAYS THOU SHALT LIVE...

I GRANT THEE THE POWER--FOREVER!



I HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED--TO ANOTHER PART OF THE UNIVERSE --BEYOND THE GOLDEN VALE OF ASGARD!

THERE-- OVER THE HORIZON-- LIVING FORMS-- COMING CLOSER-- CLOSER--



BEHOLD! THE PROPHECIES HAVE COME TRUE!

AT LAST! A KING HAS BEEN SENT TO US!

ROCK TROLLS! THE UGLIEST-- MOST BESTIAL CREATURES OF ALL! EVEN DEATH IS PREFERABLE TO THE COMPANY OF SUCH AS THESE!

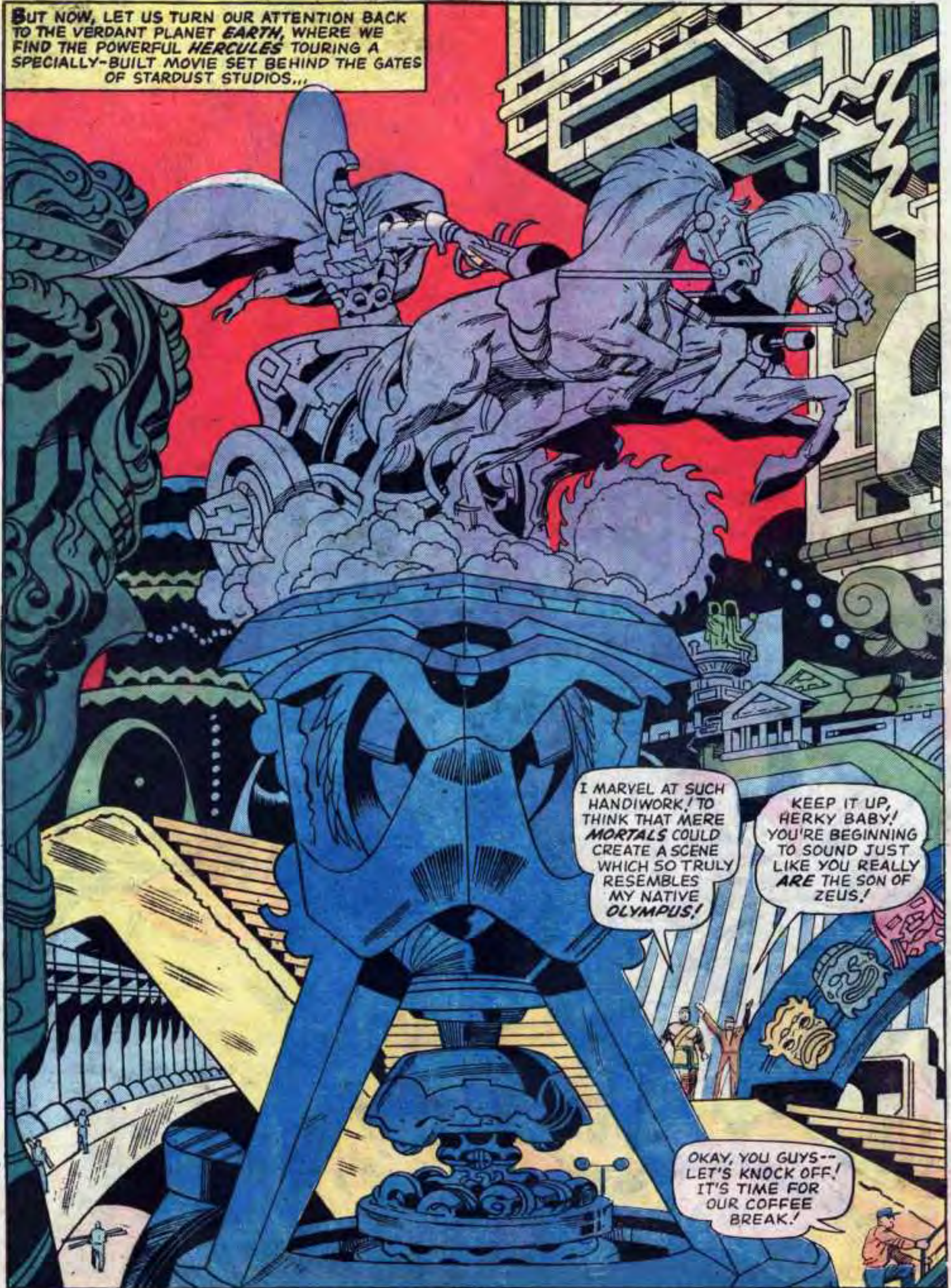
WE SHALL NEVER LET HIM GO!

THIS THEN IS MY FATE-- TO RULE THESE MONSTROUS BEINGS-- ON THIS BARREN, FORSAKEN WORLD--FOREVER!

WE INTERRUPT THIS EPIC ADVENTURE TO BRING YOU A PEERLESS PIN-UP OF EVERYONE'S ASSGARDIAN FAMILY, CAPTURED FOR POSTERITY BY BIG JOHN BUSCENA HIMSELF. 'NUFF SAID!



BUT NOW, LET US TURN OUR ATTENTION BACK TO THE VERDANT PLANET *EARTH*, WHERE WE FIND THE POWERFUL *HERCULES* TOURING A SPECIALLY-BUILT MOVIE SET BEHIND THE GATES OF STARDUST STUDIOS...



I MARVEL AT SUCH HANDIWORK! TO THINK THAT MERE MORTALS COULD CREATE A SCENE WHICH SO TRULY RESEMBLES MY NATIVE OLYMPUS!

KEEP IT UP, HERKY BABY! YOU'RE BEGINNING TO SOUND JUST LIKE YOU REALLY ARE THE SON OF ZEUS!

OKAY, YOU GUYS-- LET'S KNOCK OFF! IT'S TIME FOR OUR COFFEE BREAK!

TO THINK THAT I-- THE HERO OF HEROES-- SHALL SPEND MY TIME IN *PLAY-ACTING* FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF MORTALS! WHAT A MONUMENTAL *JEST!* HOW THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES SHALL ROCK WITH LAUGHTER!

OKAY, HERK-- DON'T LET'S *OVER-DO* THE OLYMPUS BIT, HUH? WE'VE GOT *COMPANY* NOW!

HERE COMES YOUR *LEADING LADY!* MAN, TAKE A SQUINT AT THAT GET-UP!



MY CONGRATULATIONS, FAIR ONE! VERILY, THOU DOEST LOOK LIKE A TRUE QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS!

THAT'S THE NAME OF THE GAME, BIG BOY!



YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY HARD TO TAKE EITHER, TALL, DARK, AND DELICIOUS!

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY FOUND YOU, BUT IT MUST HAVE BEEN A GREAT SPOT FOR PROSPECTING!



OKAY, HERK-- THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR SWEET-TALK LATER! RIGHT NOW, I'VE GOT TO TAKE YOU TO MEET THE PRODUCER!

NONE TAKE HERCULES! THE SON OF ZEUS WALKS WHERE HE CHOOSES!

SURE, PAL-- SURE! IF YOU WANNA LIVE THE ROLE, THAT'S YOUR BIZ!



BUT YOU BETTER PLAY IT COOL WITH THE TOP BRASS! RUB 'EM THE WRONG WAY, AND THEY'LL TURN YOU IN FOR STEVE REEVES!

I BEGIN TO WEARY OF THY PRATTLE! WHAT IS THIS THAT DOTHS, APPROACH ME?

I DUNNO! NEVER SAW IT BEFORE!





THIS IS YOUR SCREEN TEST, HERCULES! DEFEND YOURSELF!

I-I'D BETTER GO AND RE-READ THE CONTRACT!

THROPP!



YOUR OPPONENT IS MERELY A MECHANICAL DEVICE, CREATED BY OUR STUDIO TECHNICIANS, TO SEE HOW YOU PHOTOGRAPH IN A FIGHT SCENE!

THOU SHALT GET MORE THAN THOU BARGAINED FOR!

I'LL REND IT ASUNDER WITH BUT A SINGLE BLOW--!



NO! WE HAVE SEEN ENOUGH! THE TEST IS OVER!

A SUDDEN WALL OF LIVING FLAME! TRULY, THY TECHNICIANS ARE MASTERS OF THEIR ART!



INDEED! YOUR ROBOT FOE WAS FAR TOO EXPENSIVE FOR US TO ALLOW YOU TO DAMAGE IT!

YOU ARE ALL I HAVE HEARD YOU ARE! THE ROLE IS YOURS!



I SHALL MAKE YOU THE GREATEST STAR OF ALL TIME! YOUR NAME WILL BECOME A HOUSEHOLD WORD!

KNOW YOU NOT THAT THE NAME HERCULES HATH BEEN HAILED FOR AGES THRUOUT THE KNOWN UNIVERSE?!!





MY LORD BALDER!
THOU MUST PROTECT
OUR NOBLE PASSENGER
TILL THE DANGER BE
PAST!

FEAR
THEE NOT,
PILOT!
I STAND
FOR
THOR!

KRASHH!

RRRRRRR



BACK, THOU BLACK-HEARTED
DEMON FROM THE ICY DEPTHS!
NO HARM SHALL COME TO THE
GOD OF THUNDER WHILST
BALDER STILL LIVES!

RRRAK!

LOYAL
FRIEND--
SAVE
THYSELF!



THOUGH MY STRENGTH DOETH NOT
MATCH THE FULL EXTENT OF
THINE, MIGHTY ONE-- STILL IS
BALDER A WARRIOR
BORN!

YOU DID IT!
YOU HURLED
HIM FROM THE
SHIP WITH
ONE FELL
SWOOP!



NOW, PILOT--
BEGONE! WE
HAVE HERE
TARRIED
LONG ENOW!



THOU ART STILL TOO WEAK FOR
SPORT SUCH AS THIS, VALIANT
THOR!

TRUE, FAITHFUL
FRIEND! BUT, MY
STRENGTH RETURNS
WITH EACH PASSING
MOMENT--!

SOON, BALDER-- SOON
SHALL I BE GOD OF
THUNDER IN FACT AS
WELL AS NAME! AND THEN
--LET HERCULES BEWARE!



AND, EVEN AS A VENGEFUL THOR MENTIONS THE OLYMPIAN STRONGMAN...

I TRUST YOU ARE AMUSED BY THE ENTERTAINMENT I HAVE PROVIDED FOR YOU, HERCULES!

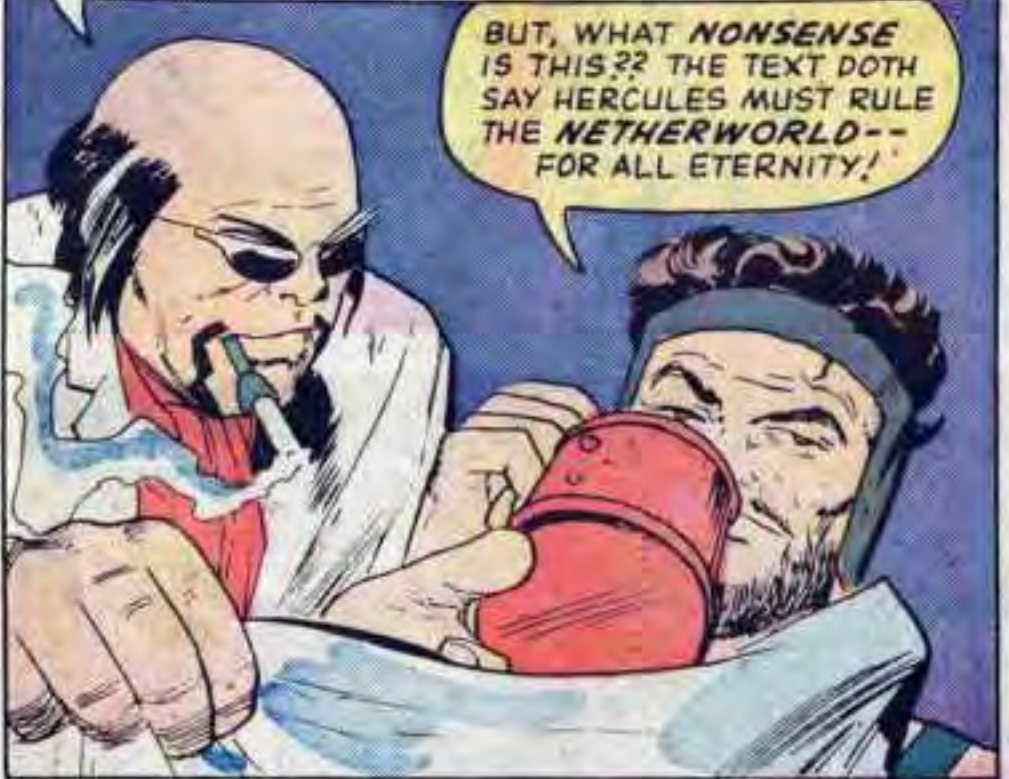
THIS IS A MINOR TABLEAU FROM ONE OF THE AMAZONIAN BATTLE SCENES WHICH OUR EPIC SHALL FEATURE!

AHHH! SUCH ZEST! SUCH SPIRIT! SUCH VIGOR! YONDER BEAUTY DOES THE IMMORTAL WARRIOR QUEEN PROUD INDEED!

KLANNING

NOW PARRY! NOW THRUST! HAH-- HAVE AT YOU!

OH, BEFORE WE FORGET--IF YOU WILL JUST SIGN THIS CONTRACT--! A MERE FORMALITY, OF COURSE!--AN ANNOYING TRIFLE TO BE QUICKLY DISPOSED OF!



BUT, WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS?? THE TEXT DOETH SAY HERCULES MUST RULE THE NETHERWORLD-- FOR ALL ETERNITY!

OH, DID I NOT TELL YOU? IT IS MERELY THE THEME OF OUR PICTURE! SURELY THE POWERFUL HERCULES IS NOT AFRAID TO SIGN?



ACCORDING TO THE PLOT OF THE MOVIE, YOU CONQUER THE ENTIRE NETHERWORLD---BY DEFEATING PLUTO IN BATTLE! AND I REMAIN AT YOUR SIDE ALL THE TIME!

HMMM! THAT THOUGHT DOETH PLEASE ME GREATLY!



ENOUGH TALK, THEN! HEREWITH, THE THUMB-PRINT OF HERCULES! THE PACT IS SEALED!



I'VE WON! AFTER ALL THESE AGES--YOU SIGNED IT WILLINGLY!

AN OLYMPIAN CONTRACT-- WHICH CAN NEVER BE CANCELLED! I'M FREE--AT LAST, I'M FREE!

THY VOICE-- THY DEMEANOR-- THEY HAVE CHANGED!

HERE! LET ME REMOVE THESE WORTHLESS GLASSES! NOW LOOK, HERCULES-- LOOK INTO MY EYES! LOOK DEEP--DEEP-- AND TELL WHAT YOU BEHOLD!

YOU! IT CAN BE NO OTHER! 'TIS PLUTO-- LORD OF THE NETHER-WORLD!

AND, WHAT OF ME, MAN OF OLYMPUS?

HYPPOLITA-- QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS! THEN, THIS BE NOT PLAY-ACTING!

NO, HERCULES-- I AM HYPPOLITA-- I AM THE ONE YOU SPURNED THOSE LONG YEARS AGO-- THE ONE WHO SWORE SHE'D HAVE HER REVENGE UPON THEE!

YOU ARE UNDONE, HERCULES-- DOOMED TO RULE THE ACCURSED NETHERWORLD-- FOREVER!



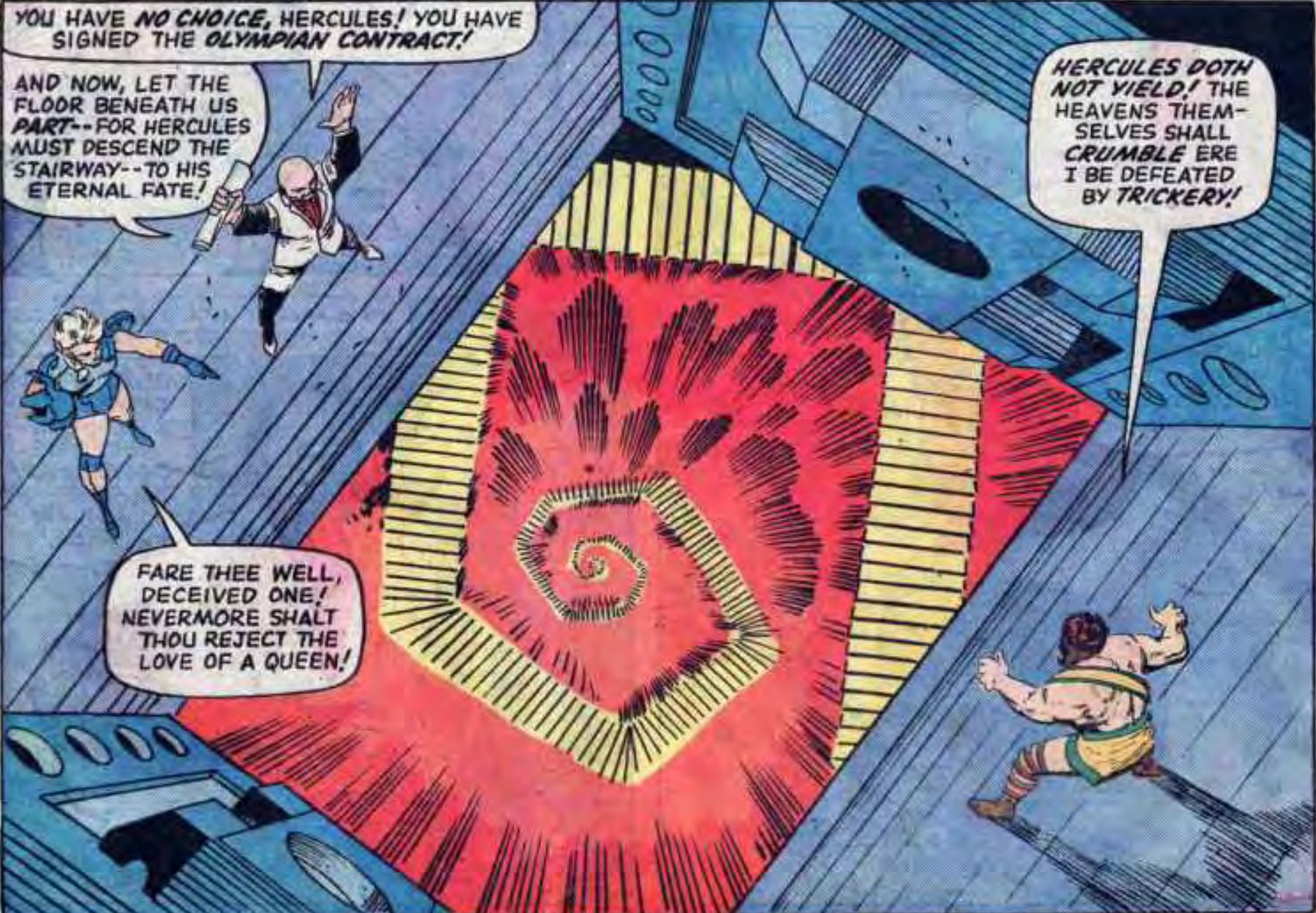
NAY! NOT I! NOT THE SON OF ZEUS!

YOU HAVE NO CHOICE, HERCULES! YOU HAVE SIGNED THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT!

AND NOW, LET THE FLOOR BENEATH US PART-- FOR HERCULES MUST DESCEND THE STAIRWAY-- TO HIS ETERNAL FATE!

HERCULES DO TH NOT YIELD! THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES SHALL CRUMBLE ERE I BE DEFEATED BY TRICKERY!

FARE THEE WELL, DECEIVED ONE! NEVERMORE SHALT THOU REJECT THE LOVE OF A QUEEN!





IT MATTERS NOT *HOW* YOU ARE DEFEATED--JUST SO LONG AS THE CONTRACT IS *SIGNED!* YOUR FATE IS *SEALED!*

AND, TO *ENFORCE* YOUR SENTENCE, I NOW RELEASE TWO *MORE* TITAN WARRIORS!

BUT, YOU SHALL FIND, TO YOUR ETERNAL REGRET, THAT THEY ARE *NOT* MERE MECHANICAL CREATURES!! THIS TIME, THEY *LIVE!*

TO THE ABYSMAL DEPTHS WITH HIM!!

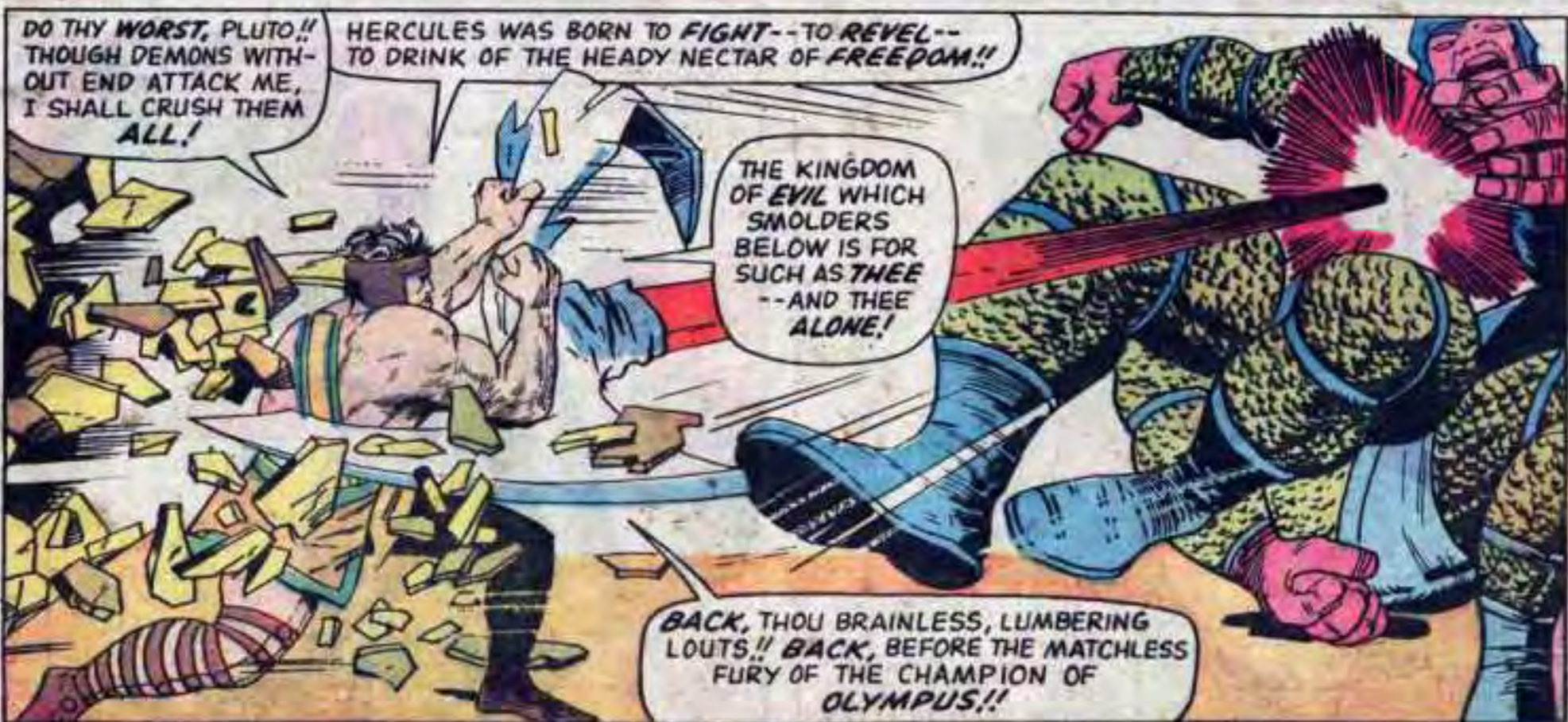
NEVER! HERCULES BATTLES TILL THE *END!!*



BE THOU TITAN OR TROLL--BE THOU DEMON OR GHOUL--THE SON OF ZEUS YIELDS TO *NONE!!*



WHAT?!! A MERE WEAPON--HURLED AGAINST THE PRINCE OF POWER?!!



DO THY *WORST*, PLUTO!! THOUGH DEMONS WITHOUT END ATTACK ME, I SHALL CRUSH THEM *ALL!*

HERCULES WAS BORN TO *FIGHT*--TO *REVEL*--TO DRINK OF THE HEADY NECTAR OF *FREEDOM!!*

THE KINGDOM OF *EVIL* WHICH *SMOLDERS* BELOW IS FOR SUCH AS *THEE* --AND *THEE* ALONE!

BACK, THOU BRAINLESS, LUMBERING LOOTS!! *BACK*, BEFORE THE MATCHLESS FURY OF THE CHAMPION OF *OLYMPUS!!*

MEANWHILE, IN GLITTERING ASGARD, MIGHTY THOR JOUSTS LIKE A MASTER, AS HIS STRENGTH RETURNS WITH EVER-INCREASING SPEED--

HAVE AT THEE, VALIANT VOLSTAGG!! LOOK TO THY DEFENSES!

SURELY THOU SPEAKEST IN JEST, THUNDER GOD!

VOLSTAGG IS A ROCK --A MOUNTAIN --WHICH NONE CAN TOPPLE!



THEN TRULY, A MIRACLE IS NOW UPON US--!

THOR HATH MOVED A MOUNTAIN!



O INFAMOUS MOMENT! WHO WILL E'ER BELIEVE SO IMPOSSIBLE AN EVENT??! WHO WILL-- GLUGGG!

MOMENTS LATER, THE MOST REGAL IMMORTAL OF ALL ENTERS THE GREAT JOUSTING AREA...!

MY HEART REJOICES--FOR THE GOD OF THUNDER HATH RECOVERED FULLY HIS MATCHLESS POWER!

MOST HONORED FATHER--

--THY SON CRAVES A BOON!

THOU HAST BUT TO ASK--!



NOBLE SIRE, GRANT ME LEAVE TO RETURN TO EARTH!! FOR, NEVER SHALL MINE HONOR BE RETORED--NEVER SHALL MINE HEART KNOW TRANQUILITY--UNTIL I HAVE REDEEMED MYSELF--IN BATTLE WITH THE SON OF ZEUS!!



FULL WELL DO I KNOW THE ANGER THAT RAGES IN THY SOUL! I DO GRANT THEE LEAVE! SO BE IT!



AND KNOW THOU ALWAYS--WHERE E'ER THE THUNDER-GOD GOEST, THE BLESSING OF ODIN SHALL FOLLOW!

IF YOUR MORTAL EYES WERE TO SCAN THE HEAVENS AT THIS MOMENT, YOU WOULD THINK YOU WERE VIEWING A FIERY COMET, BLAZING A TRAIL TOWARDS EARTH--



--BUT, THE TRUE ASGARDIAN WOULD KNOW IT IS THOR, TRAVELLING AS ONLY AN IMMORTAL CAN!

GUIDED BY HIS ENCHANTED URU MALLET, THE MIGHTY AVENGER IS UNERRINGLY BROUGHT TO THE VERY SPOT WHERE WE LAST LEFT HERCULES--!

A SHAMBLES, HERE IN THE CINEMA CAPITAL OF THE WORLD!

HAS THE OLYMPIAN TITAN SO SOON BECOME A RAMPAGING DESTROYER?? OR, IS OTHER SAVAGERY AFOOT?



A CREATURE FROM THE DOMAIN WHICH BLAZES BELOW--DEFEATED IN BATTLE!

THERE IS MORE TO THIS THAN FIRST MEETS THE EYE! THERE IS DEMONIC DANGER ALL ABOUT ME!



THEN, AT LAST--DRAWN BY THE DEAFENING SOUND OF COMBAT, THE GOD OF THUNDER STRIDES UNHESITATINGLY FORWARD, UNTIL HE SEES--

BESTIAL DENIZENS OF THE NETHERWORLD--ATTACKING THE LONE HERCULES!!

WHATE'ER THE PROVOCATION, MY BLOOD VERILY BOILS IN LOATHING AT SO UNEQUAL A TABLEAU!



BASEST OF VILLAINS!! THOUGH THY NUMBERS BE LIMITLESS, MY MACE SHALL CRUSH EACH OF THEE IN TURN!



NO LONGER NEED HERCULES BATTLE ALONE!!

THOSE WHO ATTACK IN COWARDLY NUMBER SHALL ALSO FACE THE FURY OF THE THUNDERING HAMMER OF THOR!

THE THUNDER GOD!! STAY BACK, ASGARDIAN!! THOU HAST NOT THE MIGHT TO DEAL WITH SUCH AS THESE!!



NEVERMORE SHALT THOU UTTER SUCH STINGING WORDS, OLYMPIAN!

BEHOLD, RASH BRAGGART-- BEHOLD THE TRUE POWER OF THE SON OF ODIN!!



THY STRENGTH-- THY VALOR-- THEY ARE WORTHY OF HERCULES, HIMSELF!!

WHY DIDST THOU NOT BATTLE IN SUCH MANNER WHEN LAST WE FOUGHT??

TIME ENOW FOR TALK AFTER OUR TASK HERE BE DONE!



LET US END THIS CHARADE WITH GREATEST SPEED-- FOR THERE IS A GREATER SCORE TO BE SETTLED BETWEEN OURSELVES!

BY MY BEARD, I UNDERSTAND THEE NOT, THUNDER GOD!!

BUT, IT SHALL BE EVEN AS THOU SAYEST!



AND, AS THE CYCLONIC BATTLE CONTINUES TO RAGE, UNABATED--

OUR WARRIORS FALL BACK!!

LET THE STINGING SWORD OF HYPPOLITA BE ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER!

NO! STAND ASIDE! THE NEWLY-ARRIVED GOD OF THUNDER IS A FORCE I HAD NOT CONJURED WITH!

THROK!



THE FINAL VICTORY **MUST** BE MINE!! HERCULES HAS INDEED AFFIXED HIS MARK TO AN **OLYMPIAN CONTRACT!**

THEREFORE, WE SHALL TAKE OUR CASE TO THE ONE BEING WHO CAN **FORCE** THE PRINCE OF POWER TO OBEY!

BE THEN PREPARED, AMAZON QUEEN--!



WE NOW EMBARK UPON THE GREATEST JOURNEY OF ALL--WE GO TO FABLED **OLYMPUS**--TO CONFRONT THE AWESOME **ZEUS**, HIMSELF!



LET THE IMMORTAL PRINCES FIGHT ON-- THEIR CAUSE IS DOOMED TO **FAIL!**

WITH ALL THE DARK POWER OF THE **NETHERWORLD** AT MY DISPOSAL, THE VICTOR CAN BE NONE BUT-- **PLUTO!**

AND NOW, LET US **BEGONE**--!!



DIDST THOU **OBSERVE**, ASGARDIAN?? THE EVIL ONE AND HIS HANDMAIDEN HAVE **VANISHED!**

THE TRIUMPH IS **MINE!**

NOT UNTIL THOU HAST DEALT WITH **ME**, BLUSTERING ONE!

BUT FIRST--**CATCH** THOU THIS PILLAR AS IT FALLS!!

FTO OMI



UPON MY COMMAND--
HURL IT--
AND THOU
SHALT
SEE--!



AAHHH!!
I DO BEGIN
TO PERCEIVE
THE METHOD
TO THY
SEEING
MADNESS!

NOW!! WITH ALL
THY MUCH-VAUNTED
MIGHT!



THE CREATURES OF THE NETHERWORLD ARE GONE!
WE STAND ALONE!
WITHOUT PLUTO TO LEAD THEM,
THEY COULD DO NAUGHT BUT
RETURN TO THE DEPTHS AT
THEIR FIRST SETBACK!

BUT--THERE CAN
BE ONLY ONE PLACE
THE EVIL ONE
HATH GONE TO--!



HE HATH TAKEN THE CONTRACT TO
MY LORD ZEUS-- TO COMPEL ME TO
REPLACE HIM AS RULER OF THE
STYGIAN DEPTHS-- FOREVER!

WHAT?? THOU WERT FOOL-
HARDY ENOW TO SIGN AN OLYMPIAN
CONTRACT-- WITH PLUTO??

AY! THE WILY ONE
PRACTICED THE
GROSSEST
DECEPTION
UPON ME!



THE PRINCE OF
POWER-- DOOMED
TO SPEND
ETERNITY AS RULER
OF-- AND PRISONER
IN-- THE ACCURSED
NETHERWORLD!

IT IS ALMOST
BEYOND BELIEF!



THIS THEN IS NO TIME FOR US TO
WAGE FINAL BATTLE! THOU HAST A FAR
MORE TERRIBLE FATE TO FACE!

THE THUNDER GOD
DEPARTS! SHALL I
EVER KNOW HIS
LIKE AGAIN?!

THE MIGHTY THOR!

**THE VERDICT OF
ZEUS!**

NO MATTER HOW SOPHISTICATED NEW YORKERS MAY BE, WHEN THE NOBLE FIGURE OF THE GOD OF THUNDER HURTTLES DOWN FROM THE SKIES ABOVE, YOU CAN BE SOMEWHAT CERTAIN HE'LL RECEIVE MORE THAN A PASSING GLANCE--!

IT'S MIGHTY THOR! IF ONLY I HAD MY CAMERA!!

CHAPTER
V

HARKEN, YE!

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YEA, VERILY!

ONCE OVER THEIR INITIAL FEELING OF AWE AND ASTONISHMENT, THE PASSERSBY SOON MUSTER UP ENOUGH NERVE TO CROWD AROUND THE COSTUMED IMMORTAL, PLYING HIM WITH ENDLESS QUERIES--

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF TALK ABOUT YOU RUNNIN' INTO HERCULES ON THE COAST, THOR! THEY SAY YOU BEAT 'IM TO A FARE-THEE-WELL THIS TIME!

NONE CAN BEST THE PRINCE OF POWER THUS EASILY!

YET, YOU MAY SAY I ACQUITTED MYSELF WITH HONOR!

WHAT HAPPENED TO HERCULES? WHERE IS HE NOW?

WHY'D YOU LET HIM GET AWAY?

IS IT TRUE??



I FEAR IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT HERCULES HAS TRULY "GOTTEN AWAY!"

BUT, IT IS BEST THAT THESE MORTALS DO NOT LEARN THAT PLUTO HAS TRICKED THE PROUD OLYMPIAN INTO REPLACING HIM AS CUSTODIAN OF THE DREAD NETHERWORLD --FOREVER!*

BUT, IF HE DIDN'T ESCAPE, THEN WHERE IS HE?

WHY'D YOU RETURN TO NEW YORK? IS THERE TROUBLE BREWING?

WADDAYA KNOW?! IT'S THE THUNDER GOD, HIMSELF!

WHAT ABOUT THE AVENGERS? WHEN ARE YOU GONNA REJOIN THEM? EVERYONE'S BEEN ASKING--!

HEY! LET'S SEE YA DO SOME TRICKS WITH THAT JAZZY HAMMER OF YOURS, HUH? C'MON, SHOW US WHATCHA CAN DO!

BACK, ALL OF YOU! STAND YE BACK! THE ENDLESS PRATTLE OF THY VOICES PROVES WEARISOME TO MINE EARS!

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS? WE'VE GOT A RIGHT TO SAY WHAT WE WANT!



*ANOTHER SNEAKY, SUGAR-COATED SUBLIMINAL SUMMARY! -- SLY STAN.



WAIT, THOR! I WANT YOUR AUTOGRAPH FOR MY KIDS!

QUICK! TEAR OFF A PIECE OF HIS CAPE-- FOR A MEMENTO!

YOU CAN USE SOME HELP, FELLA! C'MON, HOP INTO MY HACK!

ONE LOCK OF HIS HAIR! THAT'S ALL I WANT-- JUST ONE!

THE GOD OF THUNDER-- IN A PUBLIC CONVEYANCE??

BUT THEN-- WHY NOT?

WHERE TO, PAL? YOU NAME IT-- I'LL GETCHA THERE!

MY DESTINATION IS THE TOWN TOWERS, ON EAST 75TH STREET!

SURE! I KNOW THE PLACE!

SIT BACK 'N RELAX, CURLY! I'LL HAVE YA THERE IN NO TIME!



YOU GOTTA EXCUSE THEM RUBBER-NECKS, MISTER! THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT YOU IMMORTALS CAN GET SICK OF CROWDS JUST LIKE ANY ORDINARY JOE!



THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU AINT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN A GUY LIKE ME--!

YOU CARRY A NUTTY HAMMER AND WEAR THEM WINGS ON YER HAT, WHILE I DRIVE ME A HACK AND WEAR A BUTTON IN MY CAP!



BUT, I'LL BETCHA YOU WORRY ABOUT DAMES, 'N POLITICS, 'N THE WORLD SERIES JUST LIKE ME 'N EVERYBODY ELSE!

YOU ARE QUITE A PHILOSOPHER, MY FRIEND!

SURE! WHAT CABBIE AINT? BUT, I BEEN AROUND, TOO! I CAUGHT ME A BULLET AT ANZIO, IN THE BIG WAR!



THEN YOU TOO HAVE DONE YOUR SHARE FOR FREEDOM!

YEAH, JUST LIKE YOU! I READ PLENTY ABOUT YOU, PAL!

IN SPITE OF THEM CRAZY GOLDEN CURLS, YOU'RE AN A-1 JOE IN MY BOOK!

I HAVE RECEIVED PLAUDITS AND ACCOLADES FROM THE HIGHEST AND MIGHTIEST OF MEN AND IMMORTALS--YET, THE WORDS YOU HAVE SPOKEN SHALL GLADDEN MY HEART FOR AS LONG AS MEMORY ENDURES!

IF THAT MEANS WHAT I THINK IT DOES, I'M MUCH OBLIGED, MISTER!



NOW, HERE WE ARE--THE TOWN TOWERS, JUST LIKE YA SAID!

IT'S DULL-- BUT IT'S A LIVING!

HO HUM-- ANOTHER CAB DOOR TO OPEN -- ANOTHER PALTRY TIP!

GOOD HEAVENS!! IT--IT'S THE GOD OF THUNDER!! WHAT DOES ONE DO IN HIS PRESENCE? BOW? TIP ONE'S HAT?



HOW SHALL I CORRECTLY ADDRESS HIM?

ACCEPT MY THANKS FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

SURE, CURLY! I'LL SEE YA AROUND, HEAR?

BE SURE TO KEEP YER NOSE CLEAN, PAL!

YOU--YOU SPOKE TO HIM AS THOUGH HE'S JUST AN ORDINARY FARE!

WHY NOT? HE'S A REAL SWINGER, THAT GUY! HIM 'N ME'S BUDDIES! HE TAKES MY HACK WHENEVER HIS HAMMER'S ON THE BLINK!



BUT AN ORDINARY FARE HE AINT! HE CLEAN FORGOT ABOUT PAYIN' ME!

MOMENTS LATER-- A COSTUME PARTY-- ON THIS FLOOR-- AND I WASN'T INVITED!!



I HOPE I SHALL FIND JANE FOSTER AT HOME! IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I SPEAK WITH HER!

BUT, RIGHT NOW, IT'S MORE IMPORTANT FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO FAR-OFF OLYMPUS! READY? THEN, LET'S GO--!

OLYMPUS-- WHERE REIGNS THE SPIRITED **ZEUS**, FATHER OF **HERCULES**, SUPREME SOVEREIGN OF ALL HE SURVEYS--!

AHHH, MY LORD **ZEUS**, HOW MERRY IS THY CELEBRATION! WHERE, BUT IN ETERNAL **OLYMPUS**, CAN SUCH REVELS CONTINUE WITHOUT END?!!

IN TRUTH, MY MERRY **DIONYSIUS**, WHEN THERE ARE NO **BATTLES** LEFT TO FIGHT--NO **ENEMIES** TO OVERCOME-- THEN 'TIS TIME TO PARTAKE OF **FROLIC** AND OF **GAMBOLS** IN THIS HALCYON CLIME!

BUT **SOFT!** I FEEL THE PRESENCE OF **EVIL** APPROACHING! THE **SUBTLE SCENT OF MENACE** PERVADES THE VERY AIR WE BREATHE!



WE WISH YOU COULD HEAR THE JOYOUS MUSIC WHICH FILLS THE HALLOWED AIR OF **OLYMPUS**-- BUT, ALAS, MORTAL-- SUCH GODLIKE MELODIES ARE NOT FOR SUCH AS THEE! AND SO-- ON WITH OUR **TITANIC TALE**--

SUDDENLY, THE REVELS CEASE, IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE HEARTBEAT--AS THE GRIM, FOREBODING FIGURE OF PLUTO, PRINCE OF DARKNESS, MYSTICALLY TAKES SHAPE--IN FULL REGALIA AS EX-MONARCH OF THE NETHERWORLD--!



LET ALL ATTEND MY WORDS!!

NO LONGER NEED PLUTO REMAIN IN THE STYGIAN DEPTHS!

HARKEN, O ZEUS! I DO CLAIM MY RIGHTFUL PLACE, IN THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS--HERE, ON MOUNT OLYMPUS!



SILENCE, THOU PRINCE OF DECEIT! HAST THOU FORGOTTEN THY SENTENCE?? NOT YET HAVE I SEEN FIT TO SET THEE FREE!



'TIS YOU WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN, MY LORD! THERE WAS ONE CONDITION IN THE CONTRACT--

IF I COULD FIND AN IMMORTAL WHO WOULD CONSENT TO REPLACE ME IN THE NETHERWORLD, I WOULD THEN BE FREED!

AT LAST--I HAVE FOUND SUCH A ONE!



IF ANY HAVE BEEN WITLESS ENOW TO SIGN THY CONTRACT, IT WAS BECAUSE THOU RESORTED TO BASE TRICKERY! BUT, NO MATTER!

WHAT'S DONE, 'TIS DONE!

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THY HAPLESS VICTIM??

'TIS A NAME THOU KNOWEST FULL WELL, SIRE!

HE WHO HATH CARELESSLY SIGNED THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT IS NONE OTHER THAN THINE OWN SON--HERCULES!!

BUT, EVEN AS THE THUNDERSTRUCK ZEUS RECOILS IN STUNNED SURPRISE, THE LONELY FIGURE OF THE PRINCE OF POWER SCALES THE MASSIVE PEAK OF MOUNT OLYMPUS-- COMPLETING A CLIMB WHICH VERILY DEFIES MERE HUMAN COMPREHENSION--!

I MUST REACH THE THRONE OF ZEUS! ONLY HE CAN FREE ME FROM THE DIRE TERMS OF THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT TO WHICH I SO BLINDLY AFFIXED MY MARK!

I, WHO AM HERCULES-- WHO AM POWER INCARNATE --WHO HAVE BESTED EVERY FOE--MET EVERY DANGER--SURMOUNTED EVERY OBSTACLE --I CANNOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF AN ETERNITY, SPENT IN THE SHADY DESOLATION OF THE NETHERWORLD!

AHH-- THE SUMMIT AT LAST! NOW TO-- STAY! WHAT IS THIS?!!

STAND THOU ASIDE, MONSTROUS MARAUDER! HERCULES SO COMMANDS!

A YELLOW-CRESTED TITAN!! FIERCEST AND MOST POWERFUL OF ALL THE SAVAGE BREED!

BUT, THE DIM-WITTED, RAMPAGING CREATURE IS TOO CONSUMED WITH SAVAGERY, WITH UNREASONING HATRED, TO DO AUGHT BUT STRIKE OUT--

KHOOOM!

I AM ON A MISSION MOST URGENT! GLADLY WOULD I HAVE LET THEE GO THY WAY, SINCE THOU ART OF NO IMPORT TO ME!

BUT NOW, THOU HAST AROUSED THE FLAMING ANGER OF HERCULES!!!

LET THE NETHERWORLD WAIT! LET THE PLANETS BE STILLED! NOTHING SHALL SAVE THEE NOW!



KRAK!



SKAKK!



BAM!

SLOWLY, THE OLYMPIAN IMMORTAL TURNS FROM HIS FALLEN FOE, AND, WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, CONTINUES ON HIS WAY! SO REPLETE WITH VICTORY IS HIS PAST, THAT ONE ADDITIONAL TRIUMPH IS OF VIRTUALLY NO CONSEQUENCE--TO HERCULES!

NOW, TO SEEK AUDIENCE WITH HONORED ZEUS!

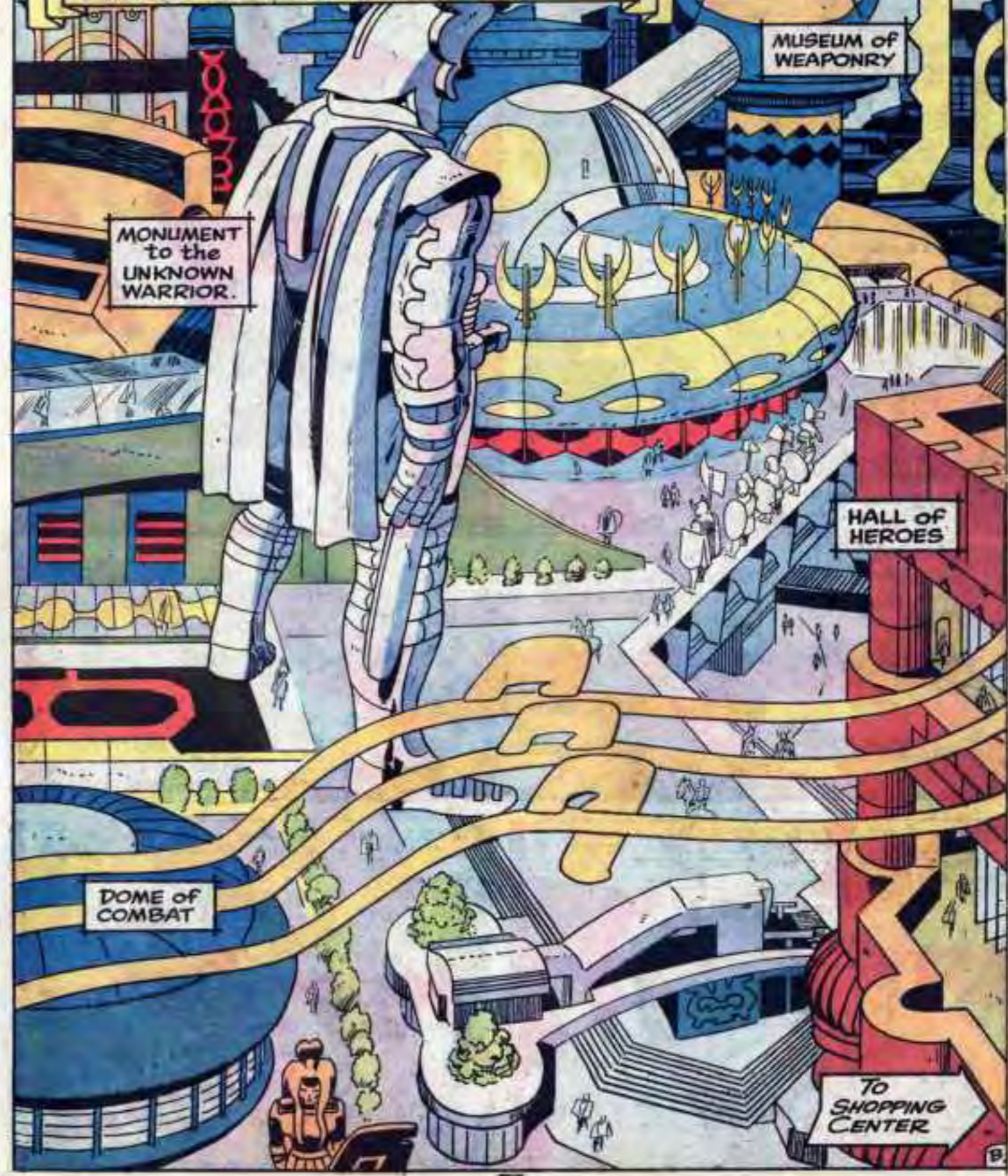


A THOR BONUS FEATURE

MONTH AFTER MONTH WE HAVE SHOWN YOU SCENES OF ODIN'S IMPERIAL PALACE ... THE FABLED RAINBOW BRIDGE ... THE DEADLY LANDS OF THE TROLLS ... THE STORM GIANTS ... AND SO FORTH! BUT NOW, TO CELEBRATE OUR FIRST GREAT THOR ANNUAL, WE PRESENT A SIMPLE, ORDINARY, TYPICAL ASGARD STREET SCENE, AS THE AVERAGE ASGARDIAN SEES IT, DAY AFTER DAY! ...!



SPECIAL NOTE FROM STAN and JACK...
 WE SUGGEST THAT YOU CAREFULLY SAVE THIS IMMORTAL'S-EYE VIEW OF ODIN'S REALM, FOR YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU MIGHT VISIT THE GOLDEN CITY, AND THIS ACCURATE, TRUE-TO-SCALE, PANORAMIC PICTO-MAP IS SURE TO PROVE MOST HELPFUL IN LOCATING POINTS OF INTEREST!
P.S. BE SURE TO BRING YOUR CAMERA!



A SHORT TIME LATER, HIS DESTINATION REACHED, HERCULES ENTERS THE GLEAMING CASTLE--



"TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE! THOUGH I AM SEEN BY ALL, NONE THERE ARE WHO APPROACH ME!

THEN, SUDDENLY--



ADVANCE NO FURTHER, TRAGIC OFFSPRING! THERE CAN BE NO SANCTUARY FOR THEE IN OLYMPUS!

THE VOICE OF MY FATHER! THEN--HE ALREADY KNOWS!

IS MY PLEA TO BE THUS DENIED--ERE I AM ALLOWED TO PRESENT IT?



MY SON--I KNOW THOU HAST BEEN GROSSLY DECEIVED! YET, THOU DIDST SIGN THE COMPACT--AND, MORE PRECIOUS TO THY FATHER THAN LIFE ITSELF IS--HONOR!

THOU MUST BE TRUE TO THY DEED! THOUGH THOU BE FAVORED ABOVE ALL IN MINE EYES, I DO BANISH THEE TO THE NETHERWORLD!



HEAR ME, MY FATHER! A CHANCE IS ALL I CRAVE! THE CHANCE TO FIGHT FOR MY FREEDOM!

I BEG NO FAVOR--I ASK NO PITY! BUT, I AM HERCULES!! I KNOW NOT HOW TO YIELD!

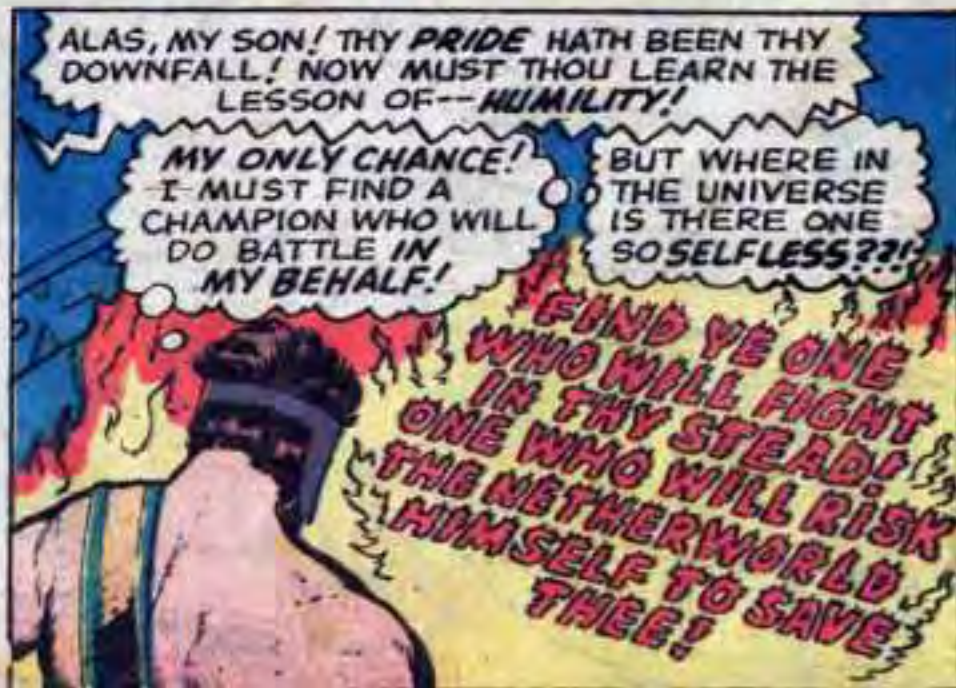


ALAS, MY SON! THY PRIDE HATH BEEN THY DOWNFALL! NOW MUST THOU LEARN THE LESSON OF--HUMILITY!

MY ONLY CHANCE! I MUST FIND A CHAMPION WHO WILL DO BATTLE IN MY BEHALF!

BUT WHERE IN THE UNIVERSE IS THERE ONE SO SELFLESS??!

FIND YE ONE WHO WILL FIGHT IN THY STEAD! ONE WHO WILL RISK THE NETHERWORLD HIMSELF TO SAVE THEE!



THE ANSWER, PERHAPS, TO HERCULES' QUERY IS ABOUT TO DEPART EARTH, HAVING SAID HIS GOOD-BYES TO THE LOVELY JANE FOSTER...

NOW TO RETURN TO THE GOLDEN REALM...

...PERHAPS FOR THE FINAL TIME!



CREATING A SPACE/TIME-DISTORTING VORTEX, THE IMMORTAL AVENGER REACHES THE FABLED RAINBOW BRIDGE TO ASGARD JUST IN TIME TO SEE--

BRAVE BALDER-- ABOUT TO SET FORTH UPON SOME MISSION! I MUST GREET THE MOST FAITHFUL OF ALL WHO SERVE THE THRONE!

MIGHTY THOR!! YOU HAVE SAVED ME FROM MY INTENDED JOURNEY!



GIVE WORDS TO THY THOUGHT, LOYAL ONE! OF WHAT NATURE WAS THY MISSION?

I AM UNDER DIRECT ORDERS OF NOBLE ODIN HIMSELF! HE COMMANDED ME TO LOCATE YOU!

FOR WHAT PURPOSE, VALIANT FRIEND?

HE MUST TELL YOU THAT HIMSELF!

SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT HE IS SORELY DISTURBED! I AM ORDERED TO BRING YOU TO HIM AT ONCE!





BUT WHY, BRAVE BALDER? WHAT CAN BE AMISS?

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THUS SOON? 'TIS THE LONG-AWAITED DAY OF THE THREE WORLDS!

THE DAY OF MOMENTOUS DECISION FOR THE GOD OF THUNDER--AS PREDICTED IN THE BOOK OF ENCHANTERS!

ALAS--THAT IT SHOULD FALL AT SUCH A TIME!



GOOD MY LORD--THOU HAST SUMMONED ME!

COME FORTH, SON OF MY HEART! 'TIS TIME FOR ME TO SEND THEE THRU THE DOORWAY TO ALL THE WORLDS!

THOUGH I BE SORELY TROUBLED AT THE FATE THAT MAY BEFALL THEE --IT MUST BE DONE!



'TIS THY DUTY TO WAIT IN LIMBO, MY SON!

FOR, ON THIS FATEFUL DAY, THE WHISPERING WIND SHALL CALL THEE--

--AND, THOU MUST FULFILL THY DESTINY BY FOLLOWING WHERE'ER IT MAY LEAD! SO HATH IT BEEN WRITTEN!



THE PROPHECIES HAVE SAID: IN THREE WORLDS SHALL THE GOD OF THUNDER STAKE ALL--ON BEHALF OF ANOTHER!

BUT, MOST NOBLE FATHER, I HAVE COME TO THEE FOR YET ANOTHER PURPOSE--TO DISCUSS A MOST MOMENTOUS DECISION--

BE THOU SILENT! AFTER THE DAY OF THE THREE WORLDS SHALL HAVE PASSED, ONLY THEN SHALL WE DISCOURSE OF LESSER MATTERS!



NOW, MIGHTIEST OF THE MIGHTY--NOBLEST OF THE NOBLE--PREPARE THYSELF!!

I SEND THEE TO LIMBO! THERE, WHAT IS TO BE--SHALL BE!

I MUST BE TRUE TO MY DESTINY! FIRST, MY DUTY SHALL BE DONE! AND THEN--MY MOMENT OF GREATEST DECISION!

THEN, FASTER THAN THE FLICKER OF AN ASGARDIAN EYE, THE MOST HEROIC IMMORTAL OF ALL FINDS HIMSELF IN THE DOMAIN OF DESOLATION--THE EVER-CHANGING, EVER-ETERNAL SHADOWY REALM OF NOWHERE--THE LEGENDARY LAND OF LIMBO--



HERE MUST I REMAIN, TILL THE WINDS OF THE WORLD SUMMON ME--TO DO BATTLE FOR ANOTHER!

I KNOW NOT OF THE PERILS THAT AWAIT ME, BUT THIS DO I VOW--THE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL FACE THEM--AS BEFITS THE SON OF IMPERIAL ODIN!

THUS DO WE LEAVE MIGHTY THOR, ENGULFED BY EMPTINESS--AS ONCE AGAIN WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE PRINCE OF POWER, IN FABLED OLYMPUS--

ARES! I CRAVE A BOON! BECAUSE I SIGNED AN OLYMPIAN CONTRACT, MY ARM MAY NO MORE BE LIFTED IN BATTLE!



I MUST FIND ONE WILLING TO RISK ALL IN ORDER TO FIGHT--TO DARE--FOR THE CAUSE OF HERCULES!

THEN THOU MUST SEEK HIM ELSEWHERE, SON OF ZEUS!



LONG HAVE I DESPISED THY BLUSTERING MANNER--THY VAIN CONCEIT--THY OVER-POWERING STRENGTH--STRENGTH WHICH, BY RIGHTS, SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE!

NOW, STAND THOU ASIDE! I MUST EVER PRACTICE HURLING MY FATEFUL JAVELINS!

THEN--THOU DO THOU REFUSE ME?!!

AY! LOOK NOT TO ARES FOR SUCCOR!



GOD OF WAR THOU ART CALLED! WHERE THEN IS THY WARLIKE SPIRIT? WHERE THEN THY LUST FOR COMBAT??

UNHAND ME, DOOMED ONE! EVEN ARES IS NOT WITLESS ENOUGH TO DO BATTLE WITH MIGHTY PLUTO--AND HIS DEADLY LEGIONS!



NEVER SHALL I FORGET HOW THOU HAST TURNED THY BACK UPON THY FELLOW OLYMPIAN...BASE, BLACK-HEARTED COWARD!

REMEMBER THEN, HERCULES--AS THOU SPENDEST ETERNITY IN THE NETHERWORLD!



WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD--WITH GRIM, BURNING DESPERATION GNAWING AT HIS HEART, THE PRINCE OF POWER SWIFTLY TURNS AWAY!

ONLY SECONDS OF FREEDOM ARE LEFT TO ME!

I MUST FIND A CHAMPION TO STRIKE FOR HERCULES--OR ALL IS LOST--FOREVER!



IN THE DISTANCE-- 'TIS HERMES-- MOUNTED UPON HIS FLYING CHARIOT!

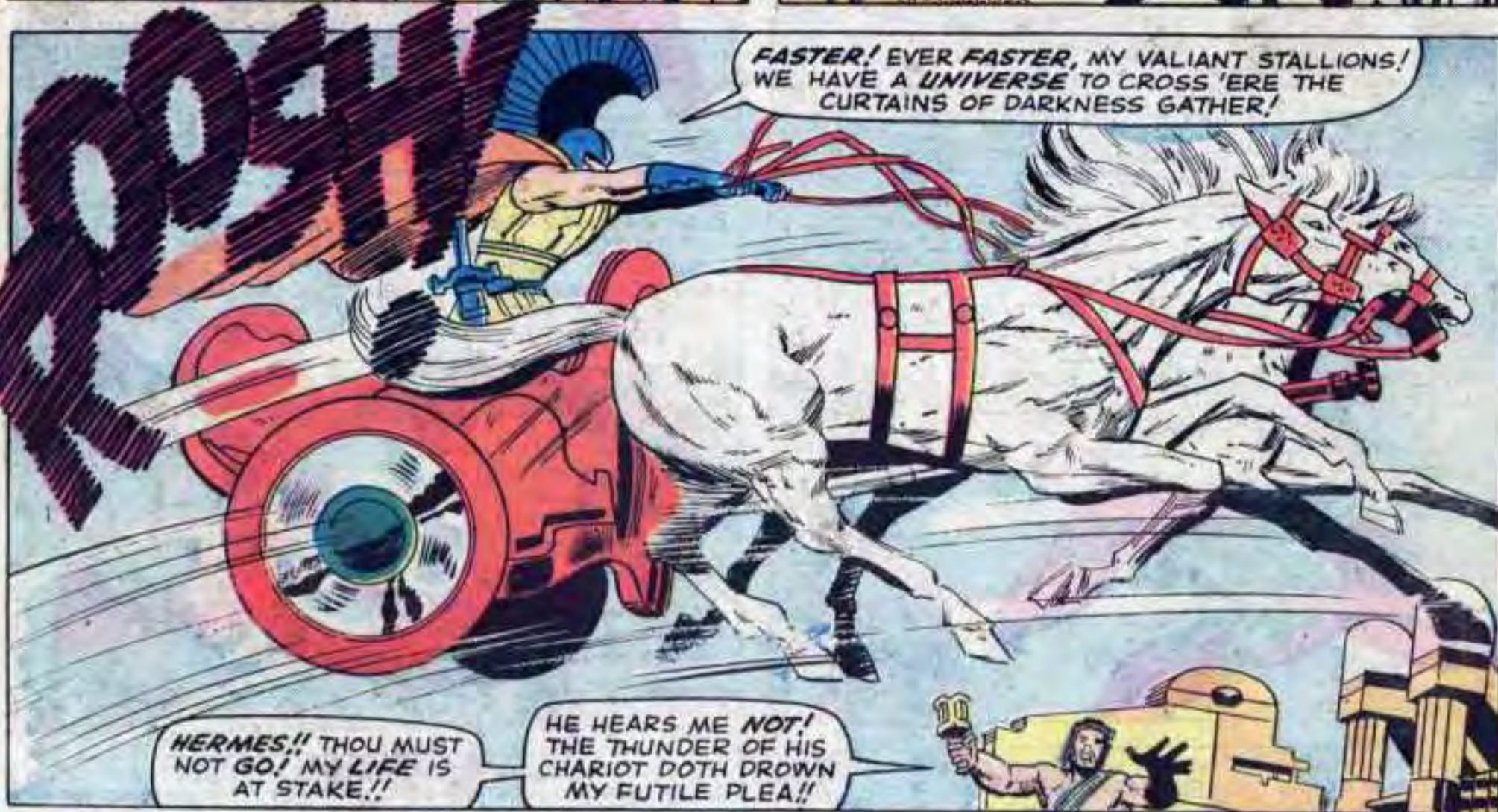
HERMES-- WHO KNOWS NOT THE MEANING OF FEAR! HERMES, WHOSE SPEED IS ALMOST THE EQUAL OF MY OWN STRENGTH!



HE PREPARES TO EMBARK UPON A NEW QUEST!! I MUST REACH HIM 'ERE HE DEPARTS!

UP, MY PEERLESS STEEDS! GET THEE TO FLIGHT!

HERMES!! STAY THY FLIGHT!! 'TIS HERCULES WHO CALLS!!



FASTER! EVER FASTER, MY VALIANT STALLIONS! WE HAVE A UNIVERSE TO CROSS 'ERE THE CURTAINS OF DARKNESS GATHER!

HERMES!! THOU MUST NOT GO! MY LIFE IS AT STAKE!!

HE HEARS ME NOT! THE THUNDER OF HIS CHARIOT DOTH DROWN MY FUTILE PLEA!!



BUT HARK-- THE SANDS OF TIME HAVE RUN OUT! IN TRUTH, THE SON OF ZEUS IS SURELY UNDONE!

NONE THERE ARE WHO CAN SAVE HERCULES NOW!



HOW DARK GROW THE SKIES ABOVE ME! HOW HEAVY LADEN WITH DREAD IS THE AIR I BREATHE!

MY TIME IS COME! THE NETHERWORLD CALLS OUT TO ME!

AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME-- SINCE THE DAWN OF CONSCIOUSNESS-- HERCULES KNOWS AT LAST-- THE MEANING OF --FEAR!

AND THEN, A VOICE RINGS OUT! A VOICE TOTALLY LACKING IN PITY, IN WARMTH, IN ANY SEMBLANCE OF HUMAN EMOTION OR FEELING-- THE VOICE OF **PLUTO**, THE INEXORABLE!

PREPARE THYSELF, HERCULES! THOU HAST SIGNED THE **OLYMPIAN CONTRACT**-- NOW MUST THOU PAY THE PRICE!



EVEN AS I SPEAK, MY LEGIONS APPROACH FROM THE LAND BELOW -- TO TAKE THEE TO THY FATE!



AFTER ALL THESE AGES, I AM FREED AT LAST-- WHILE THOU SHALL SERVE IN MY PLACE-- TILL TIME ITSELF DOTHS VANISH!

ARISE, DENIZENS OF THE ABYSMAL DEPTHS-- ARISE, AND CLAIM THY NEW KING!



A HUNDRED **SPEARS**?!! LEVELLED AGAINST **HERCULES**?!! LEVELLED AGAINST ONE WHO HATH THE POWER TO TURN ASIDE A **THOUSAND** TIMES A HUNDRED?!!

BUT, THY STRENGTH IS **USELESS** NOW! SINCE SIGNING THE PARCHMENT, THOU ART FORBIDDEN TO STRIKE A **SINGLE BLOW**!



ONLY ANOTHER MAY DO BATTLE IN THY BEHALF! BUT, **NONE** WOULD BE SO FOOLHARDY! PREPARE THYSELF THEN-- TO **YIELD**--!

NAY! SOMEWHERE-- SOMEWHERE IN THE VAST, LIMITLESS UNIVERSE THERE MUST MUST BE **ONE**-- ONE WHO WILL HEED MY CALL--!!!



AND, IN THE LAND OF **LIMBO**-- ONE THERE IS WHO HEARS THE DESPERATE CRY WHICH IS CARRIED BY THE ENCHANTED WINDS--!

IT CANNOT BE-- IT **MUST NOT** BE-- THAT THE **PRINCE OF POWER**-- THAT **HERCULES**-- WHO HATH NEVER BEEN DEFEATED IN BATTLE-- SHALL BE TAKEN WITHOUT AN ARM UPRaised-- WITHOUT A BLOW BEING STRUCK--!



HERCULES!! THEN IT MUST BE **HE** FOR WHOM I AM FATED TO DO BATTLE!

SURELY THERE IS NONE MORE **WORTHY**-- NONE MORE **DESERVING**-- THAN THE SON OF **ZEUS**!



IF THE POWER OF THE **THUNDER GOD** CAN AID THE **OLYMPIAN**-- THEN SO BE IT!

WITH A DEAFENING ROAR THE WINDS SUDDENLY CEASE THEIR SWIRLING, AND--WHEN THE MISTS HAVE CLEARED, THE IMMORTAL AVENGER FINDS HIMSELF IN--

OLYMPUS!! THE REALM OF REGAL ZEUS!



IT IS HERE THEN THAT MY DESTINY AWAITS ME!

AHEAD OF ME--THE HUBBUB OF VOICES-- AND ONE MORE POWERFUL, MORE DESPERATE THAN ANY OTHER--THE VOICE OF HERCULES!

HERCULES--HE WHO HAD BEEN MY FOE--HE, FOR WHOM I AM NOW PREPARED TO RISK ALL ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE--AGAINST UNKNOWN ODDS!



SEIZE HIM! FEAR NOT HIS STRENGTH--HE IS FORBIDDEN TO EMPLOY IT SO LONG AS I HOLD THIS CONTRACT!



ALL HAIL THE NEW LORD OF THE NETHERWORLD! PLUTO IS THUS FREED--WHILST HERCULES SHALL SERVE IN HIS STEAD--FOREVER!

LET ME THEN BE TAKEN! OF WHAT USE IS IT TO REMAIN IN A WORLD WHERE NONE WILL STAND UP FOR ANOTHER WHO HATH BEEN UNJUSTLY USED?



THE TIME OF VALOR IS PAST! THE AGE OF THE WARRIOR IS DEAD! LET HERCULES THEN PERISH WITH THEM!

HAH! IT IS THINE OWN ACCURSED POWER WHICH HAS PROVEN TO BE THINE UNDOING! ONLY ENEMIES HAST THOU MADE IN BATTLE--NEVER FRIENDS!



I SAY THEE NAY, EMPEROR OF EVIL! ONE THERE IS WHO SHALL FIGHT FOR THE PRINCE OF POWER!

LET THY WARRIORS GATHER! LET THY OWN AWESOME FORCES BE ASSEMBLED! AGAINST THEM ALL, I SHALL PREVAIL!



IMPOSSIBLE!! NONE THERE ARE WHO WOULD DARE--!!

NONE--SAVE A WARRIOR BORN!

THE GOD OF THUNDER DARES!!



THE MIGHTY THOR!

"THUNDER IN THE NETHERWORLD!"

PLUTO! LET THY WARRIORS GATHER! LET THINE OWN AWESOME POWERS BE ASSEMBLED! THOR, SON OF ODIN, ACCEPTS THY CHALLENGE!

THE GOD OF THUNDER SHALL BATTLE TO SAVE HERCULES!

CONSIDER WELL, MIGHTY ONE! IF THOU SHOULDST FIND DEFEAT AT THE HANDS OF MY SUBJECTS, THEN THOR MUST TAKE THE PLACE OF HERCULES AS RULER OF THE DREADED NETHERWORLD-- FOR ALL ETERNITY!

CHAPTER VI

LET US PROCLAIM A PROUD PAEAN OF PRAISE FOR MARVEL'S MOST PROLIFIC PURVEYORS OF PEERLESS PAGEANTRY--

STAN
THE MAN
LEE,
WRITER

JACK
KING
KIRBY,
ARTIST

VINCE
THE PRINCE
COLLETTA,
DELINEATOR

ARTIE
PUSSYCAT
SIMEK,
LETTERER



IT IS SAID THAT THOU ART *ENEMY* OF HERCULES! WHAT CAUSES THEE, THEN, TO RISK THY LIFE AND LIBERTY FOR THE ARROGANT OLYMPIAN?

THOUGH THE *SON OF ZEUS* HATH DONE BATTLE WITH ME IN THE PAST, HE HATH ACQUITTED HIMSELF AS AN IMMORTAL *SHOULD!*

THE POWER OF HIS ARM DOTH MATCH THE VALOR IN HIS HEART! THOU DIDST NOT DEFEAT HIM IN FAIR COMBAT!

I KNOW NOT WHAT *MADNESS* IS UPON THEE--BUT THE DIE IS CAST!

IT IS NOT *FIT* THAT ONE SO VALIANT BE DOOMED--WITH NONE TO BE HIS *CHAMPION!*



MYSTIC FINGERS OF *FLAME*--RISING ALL ABOUT ME! THUS DOES EVIL *PLUTO* SEAL HIS COMPACT!

THE *PRINCE OF POWER* IS ALREADY TRAPPED WITHIN THE SMOULDERING NETHERWORLD!

AND NOW I SHALL SEND THEE TO JOIN HIM!



THOUGH *HE* IS FORBIDDEN TO DO BATTLE FOR HIS FREEDOM, *THOR* MUST FIGHT EVERY INCH OF THE WAY--

NEVER HAS A CAUSE BEEN MORE *HOPELESS!* NEVER HAS MAN OR IMMORTAL FACED SUCH AWESOME *ODDS!*



AND NOW--*AWAY WITH THEE!*

THE ENTRANCE TO MY REALM LIES THERE--AT THY FEET! ONE STEP FURTHER, AND THOU SHALT ENTER THE PORTALS OF BLAZING ENERGY--TO RETURN *NEVERMORE!*

ENTER, I *SHALL!* AND RETURN I SHALL!! THUS SPEAKS THE *THUNDER GOD!*

REMEMBER, SON OF ODIN--
WHATEVER FATE BEFALLS
THEE--THOU HAST BROUGHT
IT UPON THINE OWN HEAD!



LET THAT BE THE LAST
THOUGHT THOU SHALT
CARRY WITH THEE--
INTO ABYSMAL DEFEAT!



SLOWLY, SAVAGELY, THE
UNSEEN ELEMENTS OF
INFINITY ALTER THEIR
ENDLESS PATTERN--AND
THEN, WITHOUT WARNING
--THE MISTS CLEAR--
AND THOR BEHOLDS--

THE ETERNAL
NETHERWORLD--
THE MOST DREADED
REALM OF ALL!

'TIS HERE I SHALL
GAIN FOR HERCULES
HIS FREEDOM--OR
LOSE MINE OWN
--TILL THE END OF
TIME!



AND THEN, UTTERLY WITHOUT WARNING--

STAND FAST, INTERLOPER!
I BE CERBERUS, GUARDIAN
OF THE DEPTHS!!

NO FURTHER SHALT THOU
GO--UNLESS IT BE ON THY
KNEES, IN ABJECT SUBMIS-
SION AND SURRENDER!

THE CRAVEN
CERBERUS--
WHOSE NAME
IS SPOKEN IN
WHISPERS
THRUOUT THE
UNIVERSE!

ALL WHO
DWELL BELOW
MUST CRINGE
IN FEAR
BEFORE MY
MIGHT!



THE GOD OF
THUNDER DEFERS
TO NONE!

THEN
THE GOD
OF
THUNDER
DIES!



NOT SO, THOU
MURDEROUS
ABHORRENCE!
'TIS AN
ASGARDIAN
WHO FACES
THEE!

CLANG!



THEN LET IT BE AN ASGARDIAN
WHO FALLS BENEATH MY HELMET'S
RAY OF DESTRUCTION!



THE SPEED OF THOR
DOETH MAKE A MOCKERY
OF THEE AND THY
WEAPON!

AND NOW--PREPARE TO
FEEL THE THUNDER OF
MINE OWN HAMMER!





THINE EMPTY THREATS ARE LIKE UNTO THINE OWN *SIZE*, CERBERUS--

--TRULY AWESOME TO BEHOLD--YET, AS *ODIN* IS MY JUDGE, THEY BE WITHOUT SHADOW OR SUBSTANCE!



READY THYSELF THEN--

--WITH FOE SUCH AS *THEE*, THE HAND OF *THOR* SHALL NOT BE STAYED IN THE NAME OF MERCY--!



BUT, WE HAVE TARRIED LONG ENOUGH WITH THE GOD OF THUNDER! WE MUST RETURN AGAIN TO THE HEART OF THE *NETHERWORLD*--WHERE WE FIND--



I'LL NEVER REMAIN CAPTIVE HERE! *MERCULES* WILL FIGHT HIS WAY TO FREEDOM, AS I HAVE EVER DONE THRUOUT THE AGES!

LUCKY IT IS THAT THE PRINCE OF POWER HAS BEEN WEAKENED--

NOT SO THIS TIME, SON OF ZEUS! BY SIGNING THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT, YOUR OWN *STRENGTH* HAS BEEN ALL BUT SAPPED AWAY!

FOR, EVEN SO, OUR OWN ASSEMBLED *MIGHT* CANNOT FULLY SUBDUE HIM!



CEASE THY STRUGGLES, HERCULES!

ONCE THIS CROWN DOETH SIT UPON THY HEAD, THIS WORLD BECOMES THY DOMAIN-- AND PRISON AS WELL-- UNTIL TIME ITSELF SHALL EXIST NO MORE!

PLACE IT UPON HIM! THE LAW OF OLYMPUS FORBIDS THAT HE RESIST!



NAY! NAY! I AM A WARRIOR BORN! IF I MUST KNOW DEFEAT, LET IT BE IN BATTLE! LET IT BE AT THE HANDS OF A MORE POWERFUL FOE!

BUT NOT THIS! BY THE TOWERING SPIRES OF ETERNAL OLYMPUS-- NOT THIS!

THE PRINCE OF POWER CANNOT RULE THE DREGS OF THE UNIVERSE!! HATH REASON FLED?? HATH JUSTICE PERISHED??



BUT THEN, A BOOMING COMMAND THUNDERS THRU THE GREAT CHAMBER--

STAND AWAY, SCIONS OF EVIL! THE SON OF ZEUS IS NOT YET THINE!

NOT SO LONG AS THE HAMMER OF THOR CAN STRIKE IN HIS BEHALF!



THE GOD OF THUNDER!! THEN, ONE THERE IS WILLING TO RISK ALL FOR HERCULES!

ONCE, I CALLED THEE ENEMY! NOW, UPON TRUER FRIEND MINE EYES HAVE NEVER FEASTED!

BUT, BEFORE THE POWERFUL OLYMPIAN CAN ADVANCE ANOTHER STEP, HE IS STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS BY THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE PACT HE HAS SIGNED!



DESIST, HERCULES! IT IS FORBIDDEN THAT THOU LIFT THY HAND IN BATTLE! ONLY ANOTHER MAY DO SO FOR THEE!

MIGHTY THOR--THOUGH I HAVE POWER ENOW TO SHAKE THE UNIVERSE--'TIS THEE WHO MUST STRIKE IN MY BEHALF!



I PRAY THAT THINE ARM BE STRONG, AND THINE EYE BE TRUE! KNOW YOU THAT HERCULES COULD WISH NO NOBLER CHAMPION!

MY HEART GRIEVES TO SEE PROUD HERCULES THUS STRIPPED OF HIS AWESOME POWER!



NONE CAN KNOW AS WELL AS I WHAT THE LOSS OF STRENGTH CAN MEAN TO A WARRIOR BORN!

SO! ALL THE HORDES OF PLUTO OPPOSE ME IN A BODY! THIS THEN IS THE TEST SUPREME!



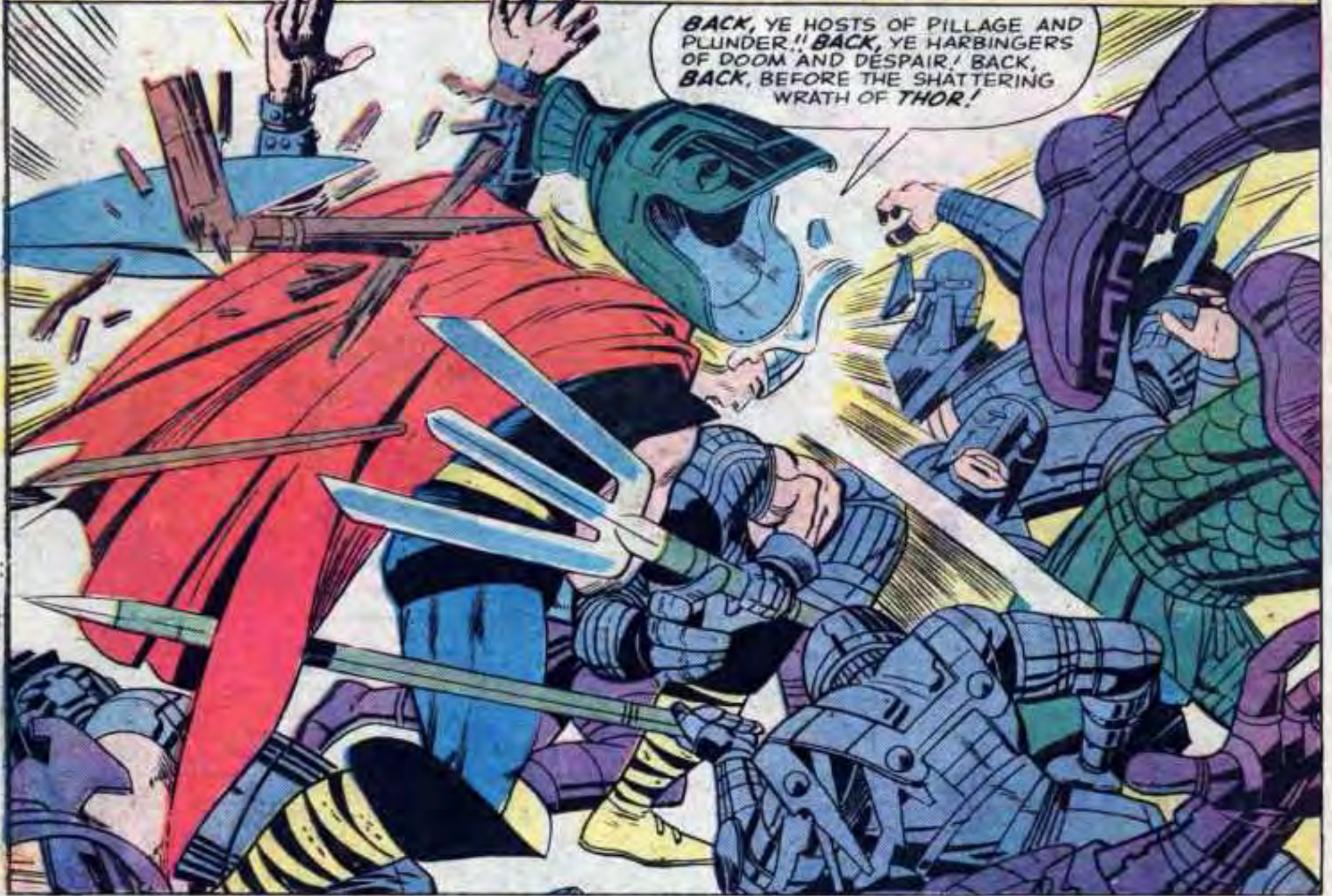
BY THE BRISTLING BEARD OF ODIN-- I SHALL NOT FAIL!



HAVE AT THEE, THEN! TO ARMS, ONE AND ALL! THE GOD OF THUNDER STRIKES--!



WE'D LIKE TO LETTER A LOT OF NEW **SOUND EFFECTS** IN THIS FRANKLY FABULOUS PANEL--HONEST! BUT, JUST BETWEEN US, WE CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE ONE THAT COULD DO JUSTICE TO THE IMPACT, THE FURY, THE SHEER CATAclysmic **POWER** OF THOR'S ATTACK--!



BACK, YE HOSTS OF PILLAGE AND PLUNDER!! BACK, YE HARBINGERS OF DOOM AND DESPAIR! BACK, BACK, BEFORE THE SHATTERING WRATH OF THOR!



AND THEN, AT LAST--

THEY **SCATTER**-- LIKE SEEDS OF GRAIN BEFORE THE WINDS OF MARCH!

AND YET, IN THEIR MANNER, I DO NOT SENSE DEFEAT!

THEY DO BUT LEAVE THE FIELD OF BATTLE TO THE NEXT FORCE THAT I MUST OPPOSE!

AND, IN TRUTH, I DO BEHOLD IT NOW--!



THERE STANDS THE GOD OF THUNDER! GUNNER, UNLEASH THY BLAST! LET THE ASGARDIAN PERISH!

BREATHES NOT THE IMMORTAL WHO CAN WITHSTAND A COSMIC CANNON SHELL! THE BATTLE IS OURS! PLUTO DOTR TRIUMPH!

BUT, BEFORE THE FATAL BLAST CAN STRIKE ITS IMMORTAL TARGET, THE MIGHTY THOR MOVES AS ONLY A THUNDER GOD CAN-- SEIZING AN ARMFUL OF HAPLESS FOES AND USING THEM AS ARMORED SHIELDS AGAINST THE DEADLY CANNON--!

THE SON OF ODIN IS NO WHIMPERING TARGET, TO BE STRUCK AT WILL BY SUCH AS THEE!

AND NOW, I MUST STRIKE BACK FORTHWITH, ERE ANOTHER VOLLEY CAN BE FIRED!

THE SHELL HATH STRUCK OUR OWN WARRIORS! THE COSMIC SLEEP SHALL ENFOLD THEM FOR A CENTURY!



ASGARD FOREVER!!



STRIKING THE AWESOME CANNON DEAD CENTER, THE HAMMER OF THOR RENDS IT IN TWAIN, AS THE MADLY-SPINNING IRON WHEELS INEXORABLY HURTLE THRU THE WALLS THEMSELVES--

ANOTHER CHALLENGE HATH BEEN MET! BUT, THE DEADLY PITFALLS OF THE NETHERWORLD ARE VERILY WITHOUT LIMIT!

EVEN NOW, THE MINIONS OF PLUTO CONTRIVE TO CRUSH ME WITH SOME NEW DEVICE!



AND, THE PROPHETIC MUSINGS OF THOR BEAR FRUIT
A SPLIT-SECOND LATER--

THE WEAPONS OF THE NETHERWORLD
ARE WELL-NIGH
INEXHAUSTIBLE,
THUNDER GOD--

--AS YOU
SHALL
FORTHWITH
SEE!

THE
LEVER HE
PUSHES!
WHAT
DREAD
DANGER
DOETH THAT
PORTEND?



THE FLOOR
BENEATH MY FEET
HATH DROPPED
AWAY! A GLASS-
LIKE CAGE NOW
SURROUNDS ME!

I AM BEING
SWIFTLY,
SILENTLY
LOWERED--
BUT-- TO
WHENCE--?

PREPARE TO BE
RENDERED
HELPLESS,
DOOMED ONE--
FOR THOU ART
FINALLY
TRAPPED--
WITHIN A
SHATTERPROOF
TURBULENCE
CHAMBER!



PLUTO'S
TURBULENCE
TRAP!!
ARTIFICIAL
WIND
PRESSURE
DESIGNED TO
SLAY ANYTHING
THAT LIVES!

BUT EVEN AS THE SON OF ODIN IS BUFF-
FETED BY THE TERRIBLE WINDS...



A STRANGE, ICY
SENSATION
SEEMS TO CLUTCH
AT MY HEART--
AS THOUGH ONE
WHOM I LOVE
IS IN DIRE
DANGER!

THUS IT IS THAT THOR DOES NOT RISE TO HIS FEET
WHEN THE TURBULENCE ENDS--FOR HIS BRAIN STILL
IS SEETHING--



CAN IT BE JANE?
CAN SOME NEW,
DEADLY PERIL
BE MENACING
HER ON THE
SURFACE OF
EARTH?

OR, IS IT MY FATHER? DOETH
THE ETERNAL RAINBOW BRIDGE
TREMBLE ONCE AGAIN BENEATH
AN INVADER'S BOOT?!!

WAY! I MUST BANISH SUCH THOUGHTS FROM MY
BRAIN! THERE IS BATTLE STILL TO BE WON, HERE IN
THE KINGDOM
OF PLUTO--!

THE THUNDER GOD
LIES MOTIONLESS!

HE HATH
BEEN
OVER-
COME!

SEIZE HIM!
THE VICTORY
IS OURS!



BUT, BEFORE ANOTHER MOVE CAN BE MADE--



HE LIVES! THOR
STILL LIVES!

HIS HAMMER
HATH FREED
HIM WITH BUT
ONE BLOW!



BEHOLD HIS FIGHTING STANCE-- HIS BLAZING EYES-- THE WAY HIS LIMBS DO STRAIN, AS THOUGH ANXIOUS TO HURL THEMSELVES INTO BATTLE!

LOOK TO THY DEFENSES, EVIL ONES--!

NEVER HATH THE NETHERWORLD KNOWN HIS LIKE!



IN THE NAME OF IMPERIAL ASGARD-- BY THE GRACE OF OMNIPOTENT ODIN--

NOW STRIKES THOR!!



ARMS ALONE CANNOT STOP THE GOLDEN-HAIRED IMMORTAL! LET THE CRUSHER APPEAR!!

NOTHING CAN BREAK THE CRUSHER'S GRIP!!

HOLD THY TONGUE, INSOLENT ONE! THOU KNOWEST NOT THE POWER WHICH IS MINE!



WITH THOSE WORDS, THE FIGHTING-MAD ASGARDIAN HURLS THE SO-CALLED CRUSHER FROM HIM AS A MIGHTY STALLION WOULD THROW AN UNWARY RIDER--!

BEGONE, THOU GROTESQUE CARICATURE OF A WARRIOR!

BUT, NO SOONER HAS THE CRUSHER BEEN DISPATCHED, THAN...

ARCHERS! FIRE AT WILL!

ARROWS!! STILL THEY DARE TO TEST MY METTLE!!

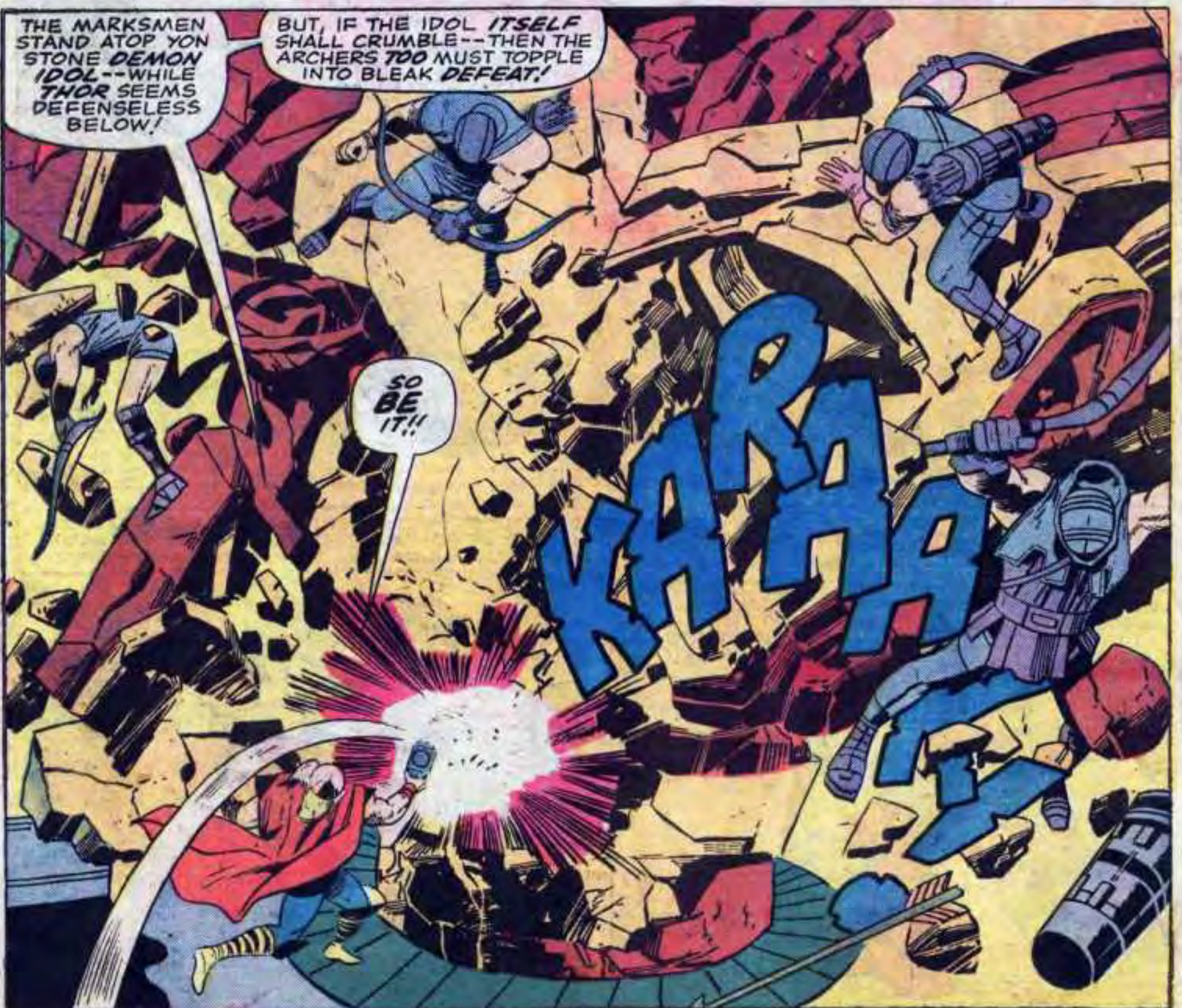


THE MARKSMEN STAND ATOP YON STONE DEMON IDOL--WHILE THOR SEEMS DEFENSELESS BELOW!

BUT, IF THE IDOL ITSELF SHALL CRUMBLE--THEN THE ARCHERS TOO MUST TOPPLE INTO BLEAK DEFEAT!

SO BE IT!!

KARRAARR



YET, STILL THE RUTHLESS,
SEEMINGLY UNENDING
ATTACK CONTINUES--

NOW I AM CONFRONTED
BY AN ARMY OF FLAME-
THROWERS!! BUT,
MY SWIRLING HAMMER
SHALL DISPEL THEIR
FIERY BLASTS!



DO THY
WORST,
CREATURES OF
THE DARK!! THY
REALM ITSELF
SHALL CRUMBLE
ERE THE GOD
OF THUNDER
TASTES
DEFEAT!

SUDDENLY,
A NEW
VOICE
RINGS
OUT--

ENOUGH! LET
THE COMBAT
CEASE!!

PLUTO!



WITHIN A MATTER OF
MINUTES, YOU HAVE TORN
DOWN WHAT IT HAS TAKEN
ME AGES TO CREATE!

I CAN WITNESS NO
FURTHER DESTRUCTION
TO THE REALM. I HAVE
RULED SINCE THE
DAWN OF TIME!



MY SUBJECTS WOULD
FIGHT TO THE END IF
I WISH IT-- BUT YOUR
POWER IS TOO GREAT!
IT WOULD AVAIL ME
NOTHING!

THY PLACE IS HERE,
PLUTO! THOU WOULDST
NOT HAVE FOUND
CONTENTMENT IN THE
WORLD ABOVE!

I SHALL FREE THEE OF THY FATE, OLYMPIAN!

THEN-- MIGHTY THOR
HAS TRIUMPHED?!!

AY! THE ORDEAL
IS ENDED!



YOU ARE RIGHT,
THUNDER GOD!
I KNOW THAT NOW!





BEHOLD! WITH MY OWN HANDS, I TEAR THE OLYMPIAN CONTRACT! PLUTO SHALL REMAIN LORD OF THE NETHERWORLD!

GOD OF THUNDER--ONCE I CALLED THEE UNWORTHY TO BATTLE HERCULES! TRULY, THE MADNESS MUST HAVE BEEN UPON MY BROW!

'TIS OF NO FURTHER CONSEQUENCE!



BUT NOW--I AM FREE! FREE!

ALREADY, I FEEL THE INVISIBLE BONDS OF ZEUS SLIP FROM MY LIMBS!

MY STRENGTH IS RETURNED TO ME!

KRAK!

THROK!

HERCULES IS PRINCE OF POWER ONCE MORE!



HAVE A CARE, OLYMPIAN--LEST YOU AGAIN INCUR THE WRATH OF PLUTO BY CAUSING CARNAGE IN HIS REALM!

UNHAND ME, THUNDER GOD! NONE TELL HERCULES--NO!

YOUR PARDON, THOR! IN TRUTH, I DID FORGET MY MONUMENTAL DEBT TO THEE!



BUT, WHAT OF HIM WHO DECEIVED ME?? IS THE EVIL PLUTO NOT TO FEEL THE TERRIBLE VENGEANCE OF HERCULES?

HAVE A CARE, SON OF ZEUS! IN THE NETHERWORLD, 'TIS MY POWER WHICH IS SUPREME!

LET THERE BE NO FURTHER BATTLE! ONLY THE WEAKLING SEEKS TO PROVE HIS STRENGTH AT EVERY TURN!



THY WORDS HAVE WISDOM, THOR--EVEN AS THY LIMBS HAVE POWER ENOW TO MAKE HERCULES PAUSE!

HENCEFORTH, I CALL THEE FRIEND!

AND I THEE!



WHAT RIOTOUS REVELS WE SHALL ENJOY TOGETHER! WHAT BATTLES WE SHALL SHARE, AT EACH OTHER'S SIDE!

ALAS, OLYMPIAN--REVELS ARE NOT FOR SUCH AS ME--

AND, MY HAMMER SWINGS ONLY FOR JUSTICE--NEVER FOR THE THRILL OF BATTLE ALONE!



BUT, WHAT GOOD THEN TO BE A GOD?

THY CARELESS QUERY, HERCULES, IS FAR MORE PROFOUND THAN THOU SUSPECT!

And the God of Thunder still seeks the enigmatic answer to the Prince of Power's question each and every month in his own magnificent mag. Be there, Marvelite--and may your hammer never tarnish!