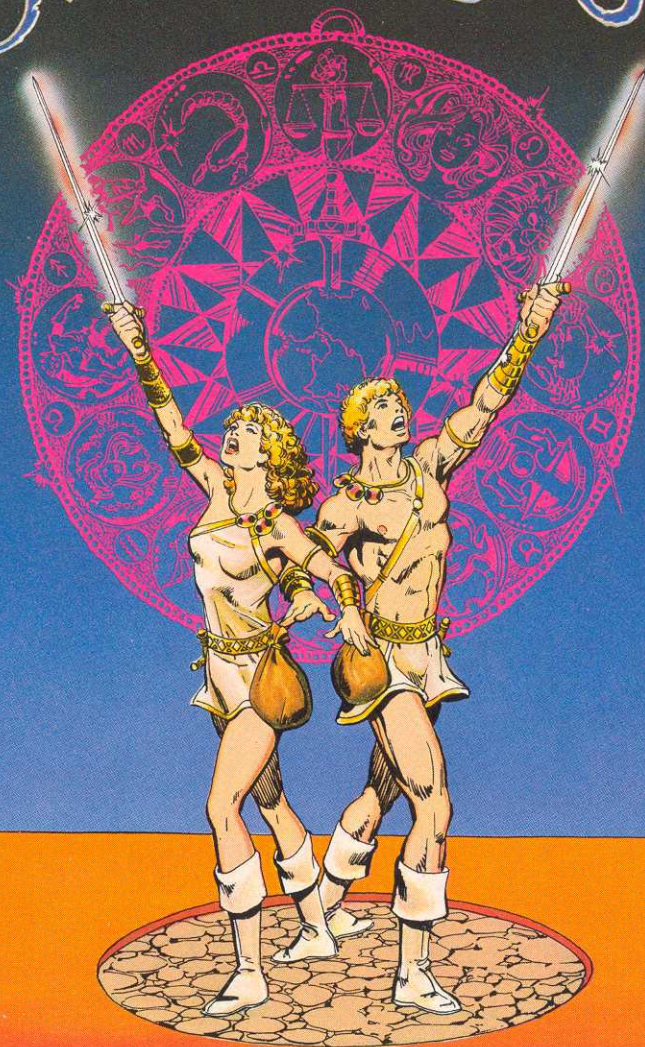




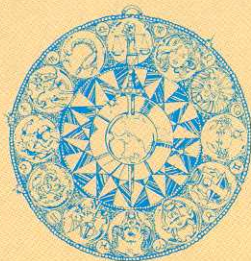
Swordquest

1



EARTHWORLD™

Come questing with bold siblings twain,
Prime thieves of ravaged Earth;
Next journey to the Fireworld,
Land of volcanoes' birth.
Waves without number—Water's realm—
But 'ware of evils there;
Last, ride the Air's winds heaven-high
To claim a prize most rare.



CREATED AND WRITTEN BY:
Roy Thomas & Gerry Conway
VISUAL CONCEPTS AND ART:
George Perez & Dick Giordano

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Neal Pozner
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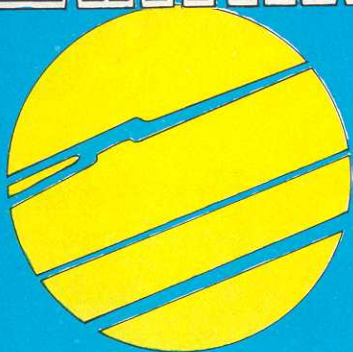
TM

*The ultimate
Search for
the ultimate
treasure!*



BOOK ONE

EARTHWORLD!



BUT THERE IS LIFE AMONG THE ROOFTOPS OF THESE HUDDLED BUILDINGS...

...LIFE WHICH MOVES AS SILENTLY AS THE SHADOWS THEMSELVES.

OR NEARLY 60...

SKATCHE



TARRA-?



MEN CALL IT *DARKSPIRE CASTLE*, THEY WHO DARE SPEAK OF IT AT ALL.

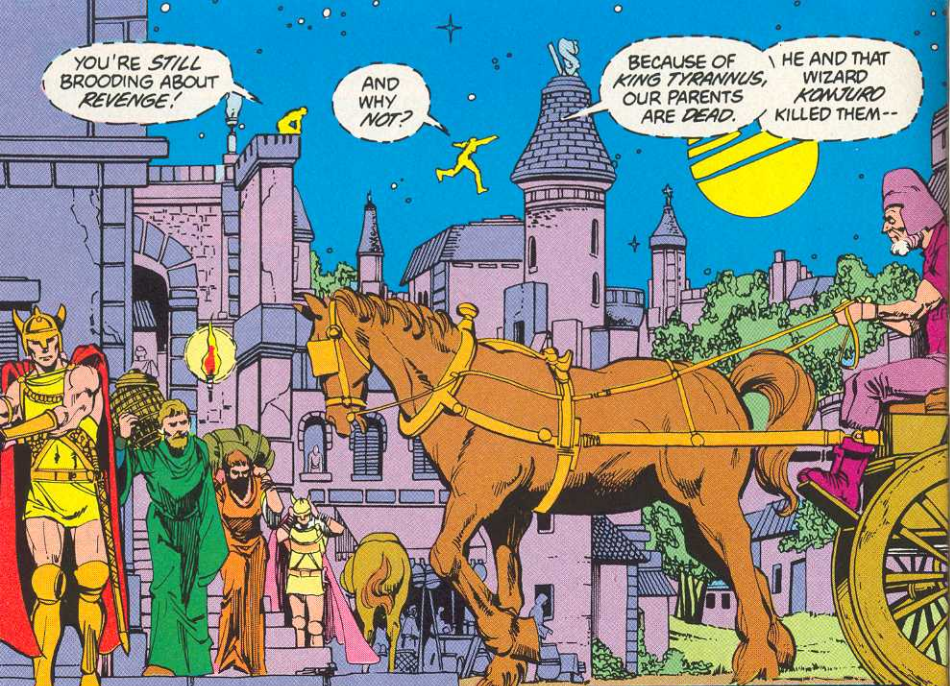
LIKE A GREAT BLACK SPIDER IT BROODS ATOP *MOUNT MANDRAGOR*, HIGH ABOVE THE MEDIEVAL CITY WHOSE LESSER BUILDINGS DOT THE THREE SEAWARD SIDES OF THE MASSIVE PEAK.

WHO ELSE, DEAR BROTHER?

I FOLLOWED YOU AFTER YOU SLIPPED OUT OF OUR ROOM.

I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED YOU'D COME HERE.

A THIEF HAS TO STEAL TO EAT, TARRA. BUT EATING ISN'T ALL YOU'VE GOT ON YOUR MIND, IS IT, TARR?



YOU'RE STILL BROODING ABOUT REVENGE!

AND WHY NOT?

BECAUSE OF KING TYRANNUS, OUR PARENTS ARE DEAD.

HE AND THAT WIZARD KONJURO KILLED THEM--

--AS SURELY AS IF THEY'D DONE THE DEED THEMSELVES!

GOOD THIEVES DON'T BEAR GRUDGES, TORR!

AS FOR TYRANNUS, HIS CASTLE IS A FORTRESS-- NOT EVEN AN EXPERIENCED THIEF WOULD TRY TO STEAL INSIDE DARKSPIRE!

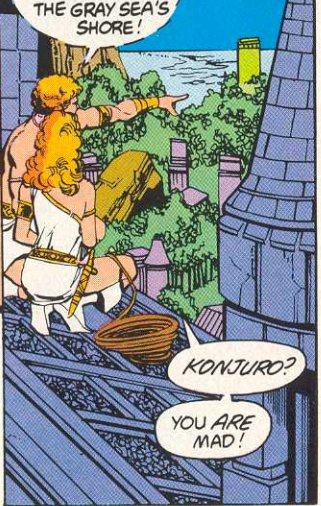
NOT WHEN THE SORCERER KONJURO'S KEEP STANDS UNGUARD ON THE GRAY SEA'S SHORE!



NOR DO THEY LEAP WHEN THEY CAN WALK!

I'VE GOT MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOU THINK, SISTER--

--AND I'M NOT PLANNING TO STEAL FROM TYRANNUS.



KONJURO?

YOU ARE MAD!

FOR AN INSTANT, THEIR EYES LOCK ON THAT LONELY TOWER...

... AND IT'S AS IF AN UNSUSPECTED DAM WERE OPENED IN THEIR HEARTS, FLOODING THEM WITH EMOTION, AS THEY RECALL THE STORY OF THEIR ORPHANING...

THEIR FATHER WAS A MIGHTY WARRIOR NAMED TARR, A FAITHFUL MARSHAL OF OLD KING REULLO'S ARMY...

... AND PROUD AS HE WAS OF HIS MANY VICTORIES ON THE BATTLEFIELD, HIS PROUDEST MOMENT CAME ON THE DAWN OF THE LAST DAY OF HIS FINAL CAMPAIGN...

TWO SONS, MY LADY?

YOU'VE GIVEN ME TWO SONS TO CARRY FORTH MY NAME?

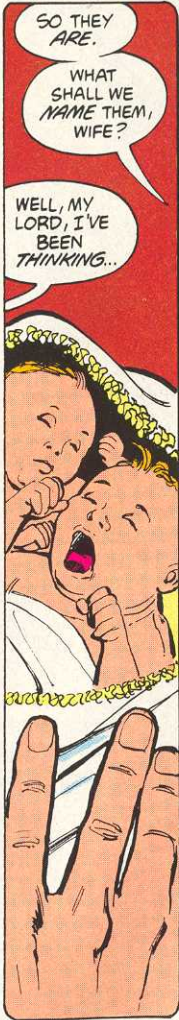
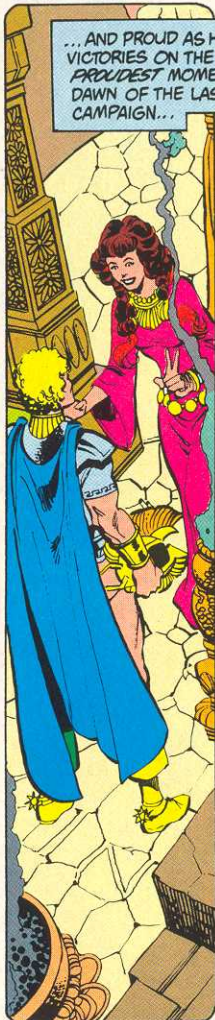
BETTER THAN THAT, MY LORD.

SO THEY ARE.

WHAT SHALL WE NAME THEM, WIFE?

WELL, MY LORD, I'VE BEEN THINKING...

A SON AND A DAUGHTER, AS ALIKE AS TWO FLOWERS FROM THE SAME CUTTING!



NOT LONG AFTER THE TWINS' BIRTH, THE OLD KING, REULLO, SICKENED AND DIED...

...AND SOME WOULD INSIST IT WAS NO NATURAL DEATH WHICH CLAIMED THAT BELOVED LIEGE.



BEFORE THE TURNING OF THE NEW MOON, LORD TARR AND HIS WIFE, LADY WYLA, WERE SUMMONED TO AN AUDIENCE WITH THE NEW KING, REULLO'S DARK-BROWED SON, TYRANNUS.

THEY WENT HAPPILY, BELIEVING THEIR NEWBORNS WERE TO RECEIVE THE KING'S BLESSING.

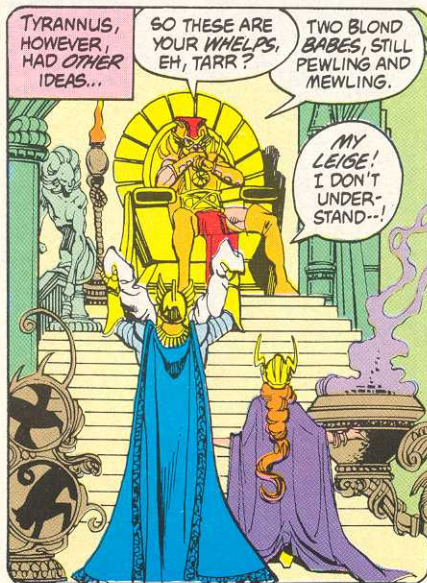


TYRANNUS, HOWEVER, HAD OTHER IDEAS...

SO THESE ARE YOUR WHELPS, EH, TARR?

TWO BLOND BABES, STILL PEWBLING AND MEWLING.

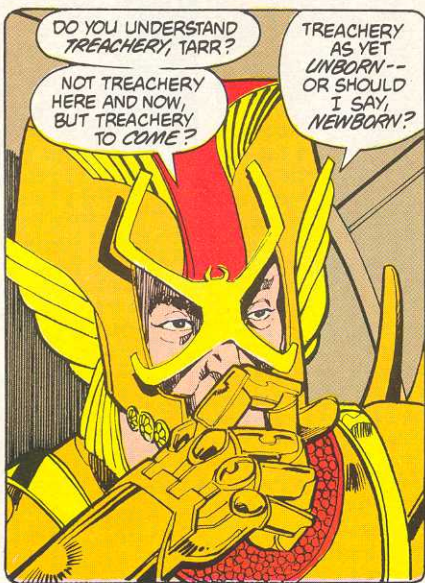
MY LEIGE! I DON'T UNDERSTAND--!



DO YOU UNDERSTAND TREACHERY, TARR?

NOT TREACHERY HERE AND NOW, BUT TREACHERY TO COME?

TREACHERY AS YET UNBORN-- OR SHOULD I SAY, NEWBORN?



LAST NIGHT, I RECEIVED
A WARNING, A PROPHECY,
IF YOU WILL, FROM A MAN
STEEPED IN THE WISDOM
OF DARK MAGIC!

HIS WORDS:

"BEWARE THE CHILDREN
WITH HAIR OF GOLD--
TWO THEY ARE, BORN THE
SON AND DAUGHTER OF
A NOBLE WARRIOR!"

"WHEN THOU ART OLD
AND FEEBLE, THEY
SHALL CLAIM THY
THRONE, WITH A
SWORD SHINING
BRIGHTLY AS
SUMMER'S SUN!"

WHAT
WOULD YOU
CALL THIS,
TARR--

--IF NOT
TREACHERY
MOST FOUL!

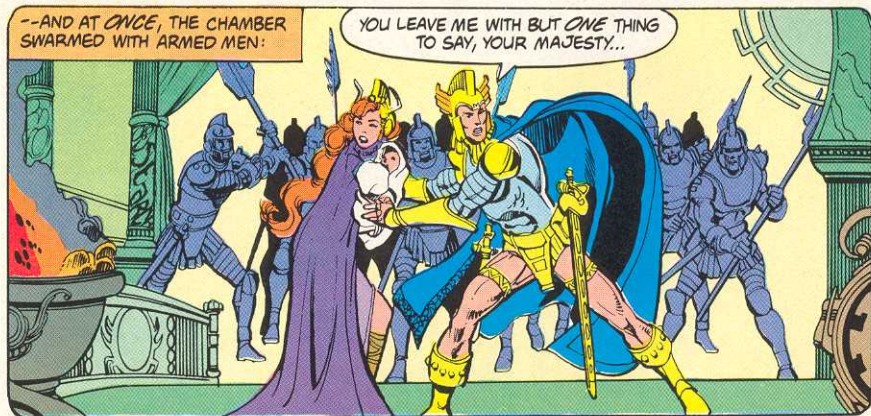
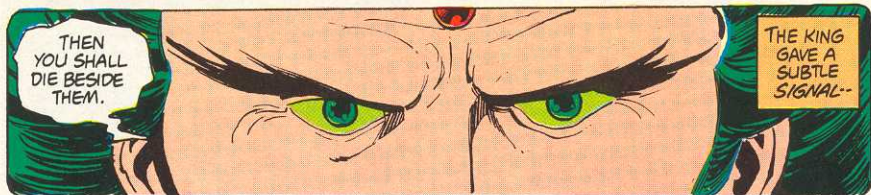
YOUR MAJESTY
CANNOT BE
SERIOUS!

WHO
SPEAKS
THUS?

LET HIM
SHOW HIMSELF,
IF HE DARE!

SUCH PROPHECY
IS MADNESS!





DEATH TO
"TYRANNUS!"

DEATH TO
THE KING!

HE
ALMOST
REACHED
THE
THRONE.

ALMOST,
BUT NOT
QUITE!

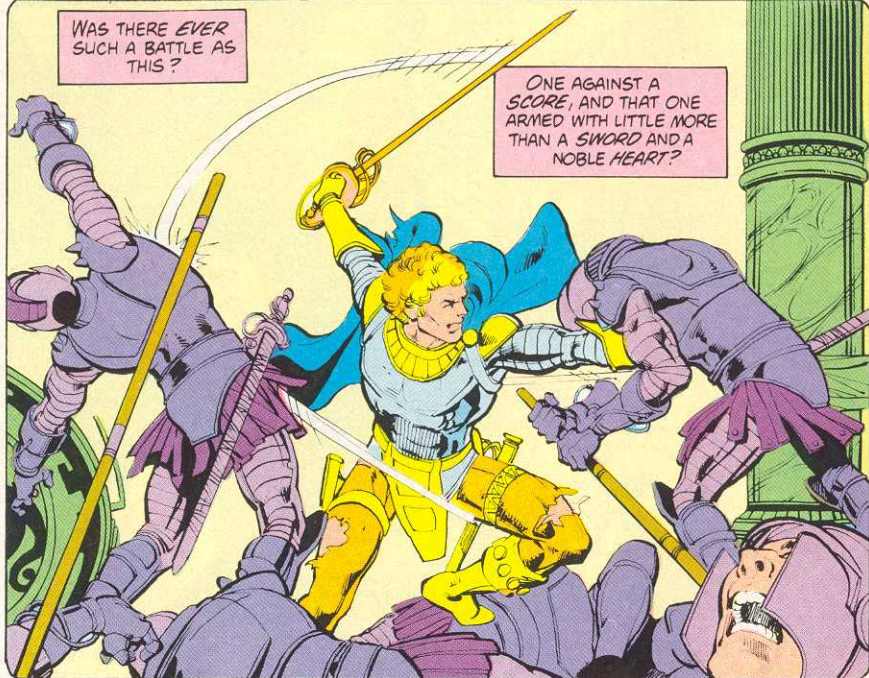
RUN,
WYLA!

FOR THE
LOVE OF OUR
CHILDREN--

--"RUN!"

WAS THERE EVER SUCH A BATTLE AS THIS?

ONE AGAINST A SCORE, AND THAT ONE ARMED WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A SWORD AND A NOBLE HEART?



WIZARD, DO SOMETHING!

OF ALL MY GUARDS, ONLY THESE COULD I TRUST WITH SUCH A DEED!

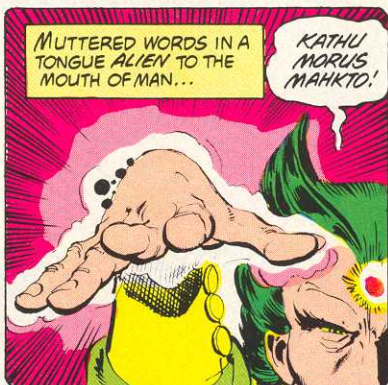
IF HE GETS PAST THEM--



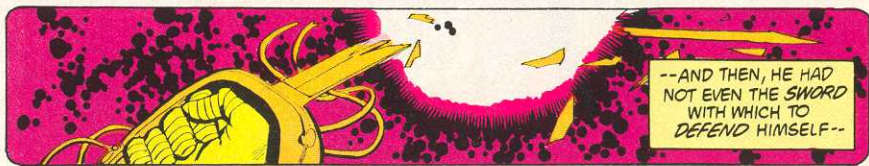
HE SHALL NOT.

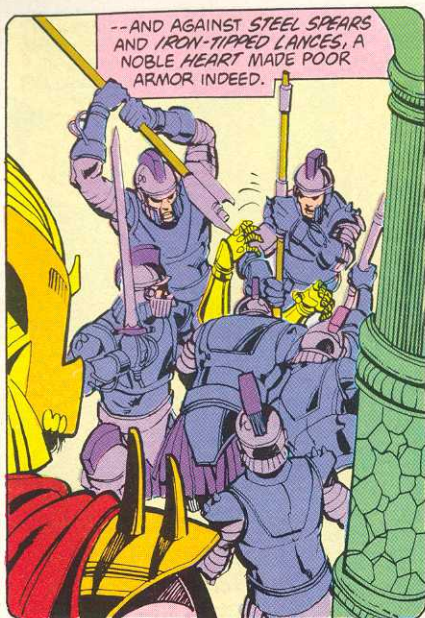
MUTTERED WORDS IN A TONGUE ALIEN TO THE MOUTH OF MAN...

KATHU MORUS MAHKTO!



--AND THEN, HE HAD NOT EVEN THE SWORD WITH WHICH TO DEFEND HIMSELF--





--AND AGAINST STEEL SPEARS AND IRON-TIPPED LANCES, A NOBLE HEART MADE POOR ARMOR INDEED.

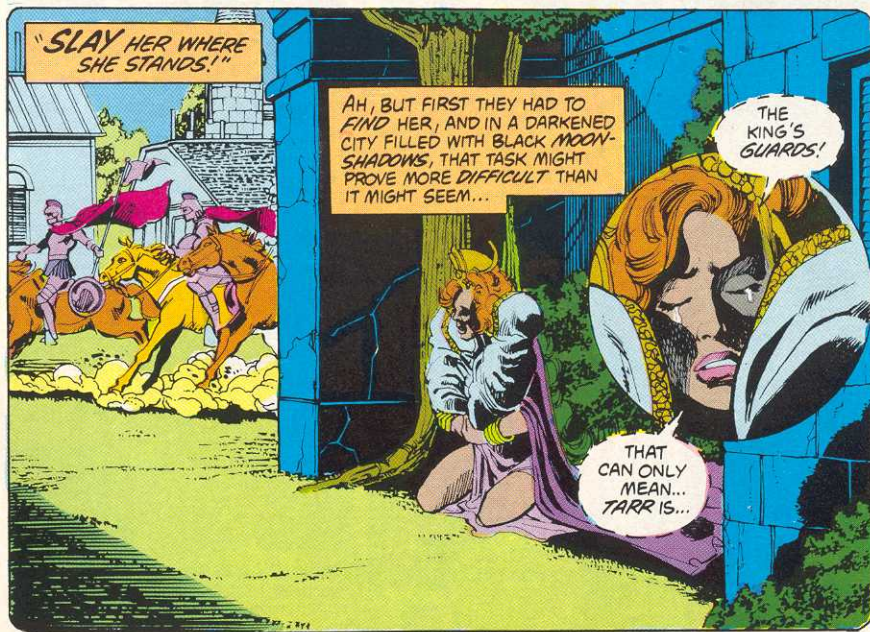


BEFORE YOU BEGIN GLOATING, YOUR MAJESTY, MIGHT I REMIND YOU... MOTHER AND CHILDREN YET LIVE.



A TEMPORARY CONDITION, AT WORST. YOU MEN-- FIND THE MOTHER AND BRING THE CHILDREN TO ME. AND THE MOTHER--?

WHAT DO YOU THINK, FOOL?



"SLAY HER WHERE SHE STANDS!"

AH, BUT FIRST THEY HAD TO FIND HER, AND IN A DARKENED CITY FILLED WITH BLACK MOON-SHADOWS, THAT TASK MIGHT PROVE MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT MIGHT SEEM...

THE KING'S GUARDS!

THAT CAN ONLY MEAN... TARR IS...

SHE CHOKED BACK A SOB; THIS WAS NO TIME FOR TEARS.

AS THE CHATTER OF HORSEHOOVES BEAT A HUNTER'S MARCH ON THE COBBLES OF THE CITY, GROWING FAINT AND LOUD BY TURNS, SHE LET MEMORY GUIDE HER TO A SMALL HOUSE JUST INSIDE THE CITY'S WALLS...



FREEMAN GARTH, YOU WERE ONCE MY HUSBAND'S FAITHFUL SCOUT.

ARE YOU FAITHFUL STILL?

EH? 'PON MY SOUL, IT'S LADY WYLA!

YOU SHOULDN'T BE SEEN HERE, MILADY, NOT IN THE HOUSE OF A THIEF!

LET HER IN, GARTH-- CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S TERRIFIED?

IT'S YOU WHO SHOULDN'T BE SEEN WITH ME, FREEMAN. LISTEN...

WORDS TUMBLED OUT, AND NOW THE TEARS COULD NOT BE HELD BACK...

MILORD TARR KILLED?

STAY, MILADY, AND I'LL GET MY DAGGER--

I DON'T THINK SHE CAME HERE SEEKING THAT KIND OF HELP, HUSBAND.



IT'S THE CHILDREN... ISN'T IT, MILADY?

YES...

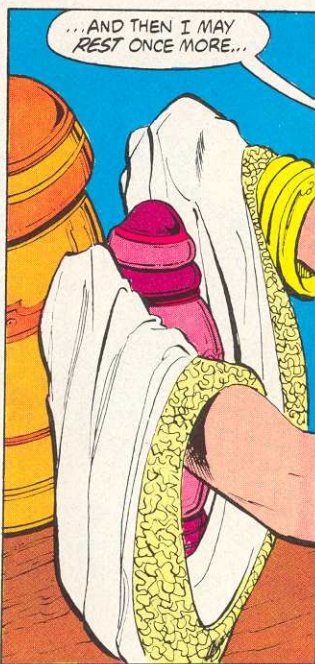
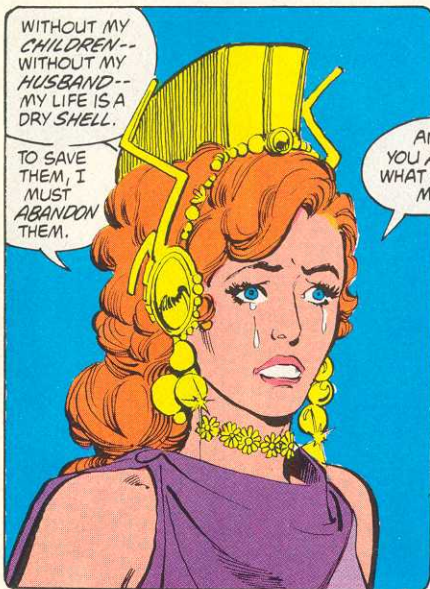
...WITH ME, THEY ARE MARKED FOR DEATH.

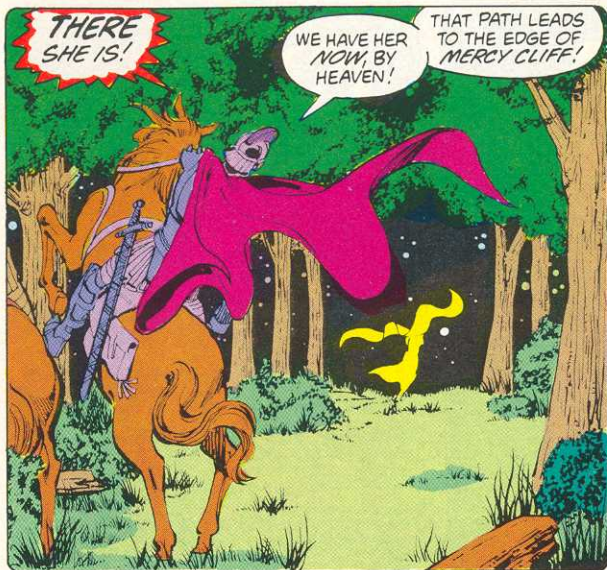
BUT IN YOUR HOUSE, RAISED AS YOUR SON AND DAUGHTER...

AYE, IT'S WORTH A TRY.



WE ALWAYS WANTED YOUNG 'UNS... BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, MILADY?





THERE SHE IS!

WE HAVE HER NOW, BY HEAVEN!

THAT PATH LEADS TO THE EDGE OF MERCY CLIFF!

"THERE'S NO WAY DOWN... NO WAY TO CUT BACK ON HER TRAIL!"

"SHE CANNOT ESCAPE US!"



BUT, THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO ESCAPE DESPOTIC OPPRESSION, AS THE CAPTAIN OF TYRANNUS' PALACE GUARD SOON DISCOVERED TO HIS UNBELIEVING HORROR...

NAY, IT CANNOT BE!



... ONE ESCAPE, FOR THOSE WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO...



MOTHER AND CHILDREN WERE REPORTED DEAD, THEIR BODIES CLAIMED BY A GREEDY SEA.

SAFE, PROTECTED BY ANONYMITY THE TWINS GREW AND LEARNED; AND BY A TWISTING OF FATE, BECAME THIEVES TO SURVIVE, WHEN THEIR FOSTER-PARENTS DIED...



NOW
MEMORY
FADES...

...AND THEY TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS, SUCH AS THE SCALING OF THE WIZARD'S "IMPREGNABLE" TOWER...



AN OPENING IN THE TOWER'S CROWN LEADS DOWN INTO A DARKNESS MADE LIGHTER BY A FAINT GLIMMERING...

PSST, TORR!
CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING?

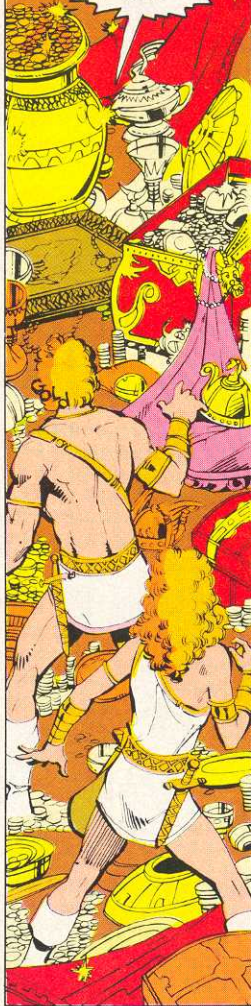


BRACE YOURSELF, SISTER...

...IT'S A TREASURE HOUSE!

THAT DARK WIZARD MUST HAVE COLLECTED A FORTUNE FROM THE KING FOR HIS COUNSELING ALL THESE YEARS!

WE'RE RICH!



WHY, THERE'S GOLD ENOUGH HERE TO BUY US A KINGDOM OF OUR OWN, IF WE WANTED...





TOO MUCH OF THAT YELLOW METAL CAN WEIGH A THIEF DOWN, TORR.

ME, I PREFER A MORE PORTABLE TREASURE.

THIS STRANGE JEWEL, FOR INSTANCE. I WAGER IT'S WORTH MORE THAN ALL THE GOLDEN GOBLETS IN THE WORLD--



YOU ARE RIGHT, CHILD.

ITS WORTH IS FAR GREATER THAN YOUR PITIFUL MORTAL MIND MAY FATHOM.

REPLACE IT AT ONCE, AND I PROMISE YOU AN EASY DEATH.

THE WIZARD!

TO THE ROPE, TORR -- HURRY!



"TORR"?

BY THE SEVEN HELLS, IS IT POSSIBLE?

THEY YET LIVE!



AYE, BUT NOT FOR LONG...

WHY DON'T WE KILL HIM?

WHY ARE WE FLEEING?

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY, LOOK UP--

-- BUT DON'T STOP RUNNING!

IT LOOMS OUT OF THE STARRY SKY, AT FIRST SO DISTANT IT SEEMS NO LARGER THAN A SMALL BIRD...

... BUT AS IT RAPIDLY CLOSES IN, ITS TRUE SIZE BECOMES APPARENT...

RRRR



... AND TORR NO LONGER QUESTIONS THE WISDOM OF FLIGHT!

RAARR



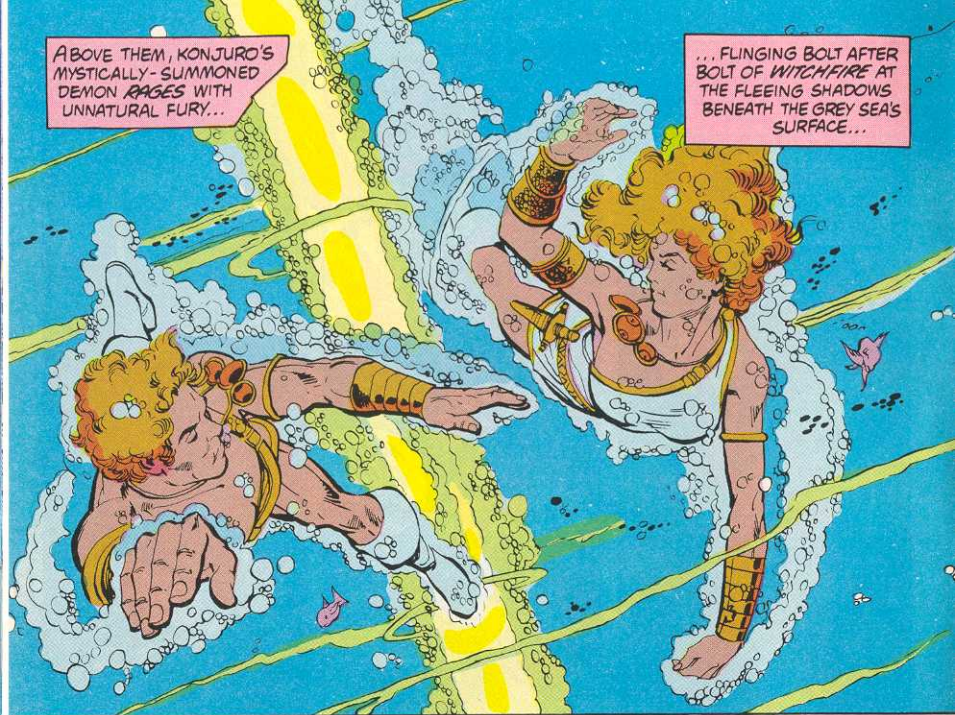
MERCY CLIFF UP AHEAD--

JUMP!



ABOVE THEM, KONJURO'S
MYSTICALLY-SUMMONED
DEMON RAGES WITH
UNNATURAL FURY...

... FLINGING BOLT AFTER
BOLT OF WITCHFIRE AT
THE FLEEING SHADOWS
BENEATH THE GREY SEA'S
SURFACE...



BUT, THE TROUBLE
WITH CHASING
SHADOWS--

-- IS THAT YOUR
TRUE TARGETS
OFTEN SLIP AWAY...

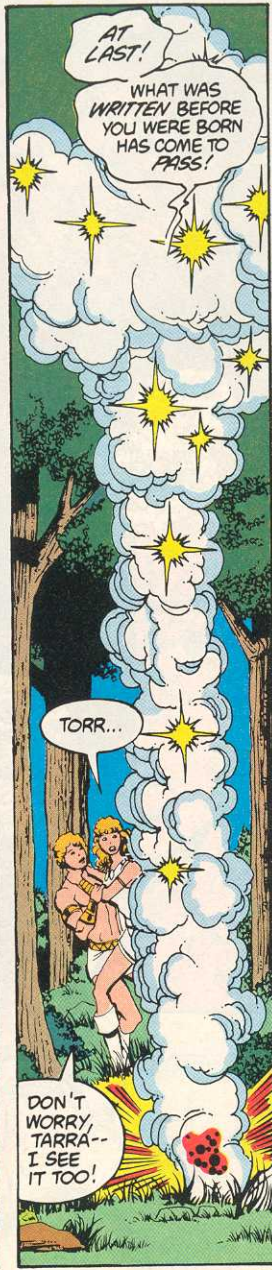
!GASP!... FEEL
LIKE MY BRAIN'S
ABOUT TO
BURST...!

ARE YOU
ALL
RIGHT?

I'LL
LIVE.

KONJURO'S
DEMON...?





W-WHO
ARE
YOU?
WHAT
ARE YOU
GOING TO DO
TO US?

ONCE, WE HAD
HUMAN NAMES,
EVEN AS YOU.

BUT THAT WAS
BEFORE OUR
TRANSFIGURATION
TO A HIGHER
STAGE OF SENTIENT
LIFE.

YOU MAY CALL US
MENTORR AND MENTARRA,
AS DID KING RUELLO WHEN
WE WERE HIS MOST
RESPECTED COUNSELORS--
DECADES PAST, BEFORE
THE BLACK WIZARD KOWJURO
DID IMPRISON US IN YONDER
SHATTERED JEWEL!

BUT IT IS
NOT OF THIS
WE WISH TO
SPEAK...

RATHER, WE WOULD
TELL YOU OF YOUR DESTINY--
A DESTINY THAT WILL TAKE
YOU ACROSS FOUR
WORLDS.!



REVENGE!

YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT
REVENGE AGAINST
TYRANNUS
AND THE
WIZARD!

SURMOUNTING
THESE CHALLENGES
WILL MAKE YOU
STRONGER, WISER,
MORE COURAGEOUS--

--AND IN THE
END, WILL GIVE
YOU YOUR
HEART'S
DESIRE!

A WORLD OF
EARTH SPIRITS...
A WORLD OF FIRE...
A WORLD OF WATER
SPRITES... AND
LAST, A WORLD OF
AIR!

ON EACH WORLD,
YOU WILL ENCOUNTER
A CHALLENGE--
PERHAPS MORE
THAN ONE!

THESE
ARE *YOUR*
WORDS,
NOT OURS.

TO ACHIEVE
YOUR GOAL,
YOU MUST BE
WILLING TO
LEARN WHAT
EACH WORLD CAN
TEACH YOU.

YOU MUST HAVE
OPEN MINDS,
AND YES, *OPEN*
HEARTS AS WELL.

YOU MUST PUT
ASIDE YOUR ANGER
AND YOUR HATE.

YOU MUST LEARN
TO *THINK* BEFORE
ACTING.

YOU MUST LEARN
TO *JUDGE* BEFORE
RESPONDING.

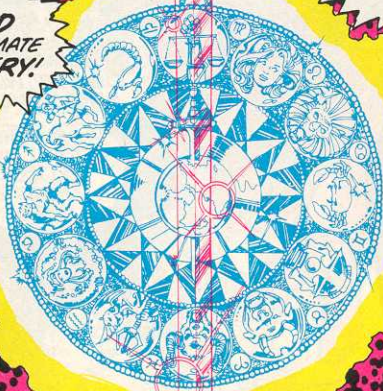
REMEMBER THIS--
THE MOST *DIRECT*
ROUTE IS NOT
NECESSARILY THE
CORRECT ONE.

THE
GREATEST
WARRIOR
IS NOT
ALWAYS THE
STRONGEST.

NOW
OBSERVE THE
PRIZE THAT
AWAITS YOU--

--THE
**SWORD
OF ULTIMATE
SORCERY!**

THE
**TALISMAN
OF THE PENULTIMATE
TRUTH!**



THUNDER ROCKS THE QUIET GLADE, AND WHEN IT PASSES, AND THE SMOKE LIFTS TWISTING INTO THE TWILIGHT SKY...

A PIT!

THIS WASN'T HERE A MOMENT AGO!

IT LOOKS DEEP ENOUGH TO REACH THE VERY HEART OF THE WORLD!

WISE WORDS, TORR, AND TRUER THAN YOU KNOW.

DESCEND, AND YOU WILL ENTER THE FIRST OF THE FOUR WORLDS YOU MUST CONQUER... EARTHWORLD!

OBSERVE... LEARN... AND TRIUMPH!

THEY'RE FADING AWAY!

LET THEM.

THEY'VE TOLD US ALL WE NEED TO KNOW.

HAVE THEY?

I WISH I WAS AS SURE AS YOU ARE, TORR.

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

WELL, FOR
ONE THING--
THAT!

THE SHAFT ENDS
OVER SOME KIND OF
CIRCULAR DOME--WITH
TWELVE CHAMBERS
AROUND THE OUTSIDE
RING!

THE SWORD
OF ULTIMATE
SORCERY MUST BE
IN ONE OF THOSE
CHAMBERS--THAT'S
OBVIOUS!

FINDING
IT IS JUST A
PROCESS OF
ELIMINATION!

CHILD'S
PLAY!

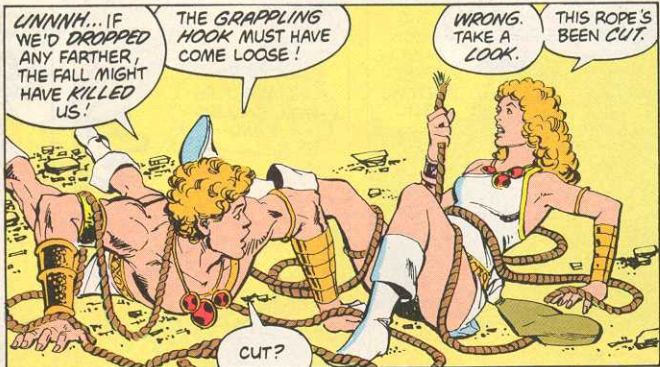
THANK YOU SO,
YELLOW-HAIRED
WHELP?

HERMINUS THE
THIEF HAS BEEN
TRYING TO FIND THAT
SWORD FOR ALMOST
TWELVE MOONS!

I'VE INVESTED TOO
MUCH TIME AND
PAIN IN THE SEARCH
TO WELCOME A PAIR
OF RIVALS!

EVEN SUCH
A PAIR OF FOOLS
AS YOU!

SNIK!



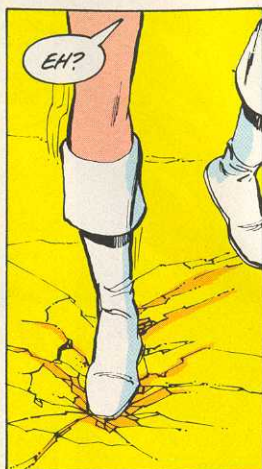


THERE'S THE REST OF THE ROPE.

THE HOOK MUST'VE SLIPPED WHEN WE FELL.



I MIGHT AS WELL COLLECT IT AND--

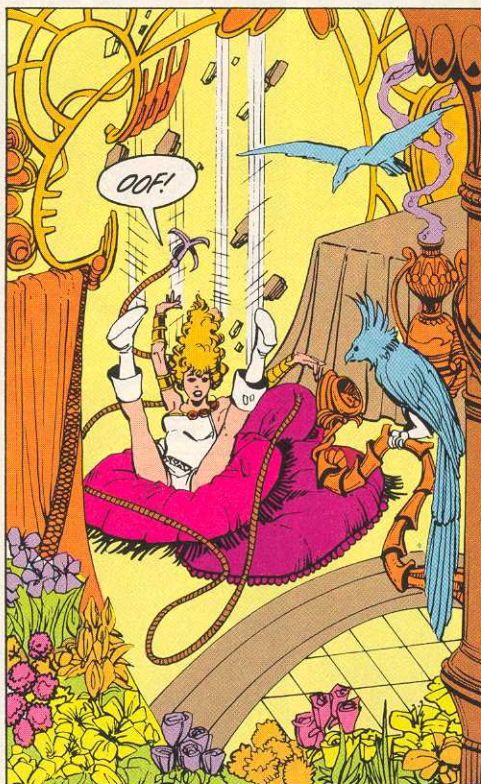


EH?



HOUNDS OF DARKSPIRE!

THE ROOF'S GIVING WAY! I'M--



OOF!



THAT WAS STUPID.

ALL THAT TALK ABOUT BEING CAREFUL AND THE FIRST THING I DO IS FALL THROUGH A ROOF!

DO NOT CHIDE YOURSELF, CHILD.

HUH?

ONLY THROUGH A CHAMBER
BELONGING TO AN *EARTH SIGN*
MAY YOU ENTER THIS MYSTIC
REALM OF OURS--*YOUR ENTRY*
WAS SIMPLY MORE *DRAMATIC*
THAN MOST.

BUT, I SEE THAT I
HAVE *STARTLED* YOU...
AND THIS *SHAMES*
ME.

ORDINARILY, I
AM *MOST DEMURE*,
I *ASSURE* YOU.

PLEASE, BE AT *EASE*...
RELAX, AND LET THE
SOOTHING MUSIC OF
MY CHAMBER BE A BALM
FOR YOUR *WEARY SOUL*.

I AM *VIRGO*.
PLEASE CONSIDER
YOURSELF MY
GUEST.



**YOU DON'T KNOW?
AH, THEN YOU'RE
IGNORANT AS WELL
AS PRESUMPTUOUS!**

**YOU'VE ENTERED
THE EARTH-SIGN
CHAMBER, BOY!**

**TWO DOORS LEAD
FROM THIS CHAMBER TO
THOSE ON EITHER SIDE,
BUT THOSE DOORS ARE
LOCKED AND I HAVE
THE ONLY KEY!**

**AND
WHO
AM I?**

**I AM
TAURUS,
THE BULL--
AND YOU
ARE MY
PRISONER!**





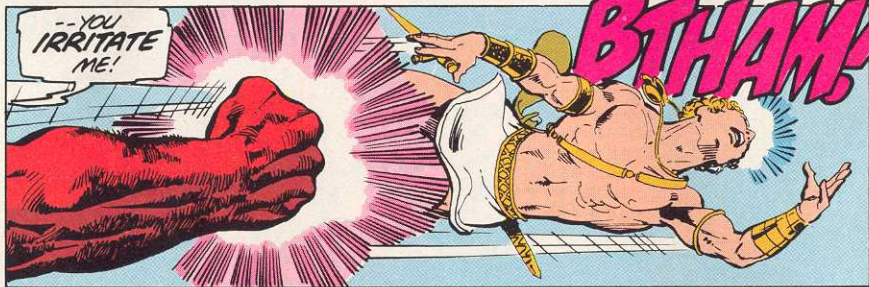
AND I AM **TARR**,
SON OF **TARR**, THE
GREATEST WARRIOR
WHO EVER LIVED!

YOU DON'T
FRIGHTEN ME,
TAURUS!

NOT
WHILE I
HAVE
THIS!



BOY--



-- YOU
IRRITATE
ME!

BTHAM!



M-MY
DAGGER
WENT IN TO
THE HILT...

... BUT
YOU'RE NOT
EVEN
BLEEDING!



WHAT DID YOU
EXPECT?

I AM A
LIVING **INCARNATION**
OF **ZODIACAL**
MISTICISM!

YOUR
METAL
CANNOT
HARM
ME--



--BUT I CAN HARM YOU!

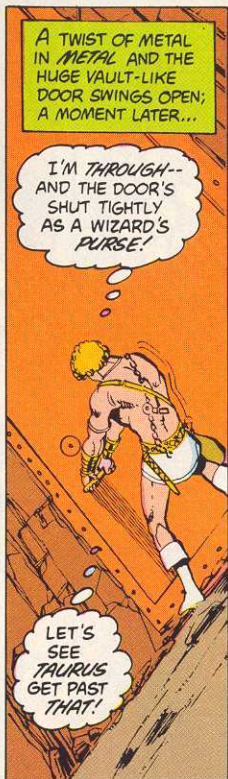
WHAT--?

THE KEY! CURSE YOU, YOU'VE STOLEN THE KEY!



HIS CHARGE IS CARRYING HIM CLEAR ACROSS THE CHAMBER!

HAVE TO UNLOCK THIS DOOR BEFORE HE CAN TURN ABOUT--!



A TWIST OF METAL IN METAL AND THE HUGE VAULT-LIKE DOOR SWINGS OPEN; A MOMENT LATER...

I'M THROUGH-- AND THE DOOR'S SHUT TIGHTLY AS A WIZARD'S PURSE!

LET'S SEE TAURUS GET PAST THAT!



STRANGE CORRIDOR...IT SEEMS TO BE MOVING PAST FASTER THAN I'M RUNNING!

ANOTHER DOOR UP AHEAD...

WILL I FIND THE SWORD IN THERE?



THE ONLY THING YOU'LL FIND IN THERE, YOU YOUNG CUTPURSE...

...IS A SPEEDY DEATH!

IN THE CHAMBER
OF VIRGO...

SO... YOU SEEK
THE SWORD
OF ULTIMATE
SORCERY.

IT WAS WRITTEN THAT
ONE DAY YOU WOULD
COME-- YOU AND A
FAIR-HAIRED BOY,
WHO TOGETHER
WOULD FORGE A
GREAT DESTINY.

GODS...

BUT YOU WILL
NEED HELP-- A WAY
TO TRAVEL BETWEEN
THE ZODIACAL
CHAMBERS--

-- AND YOU
WILL FIND IT THERE,
IN THE STAR
OF PASSAGE!

IT'S
BEAUTIFUL.

BUT HOW
CAN I GET IT
OUT OF THAT
GLOBE?

PERHAPS
BREAK THE
GLASS
WITH MY
DAGGER--?

SOME
SIXTH
SENSE
FREEZES
HER HAND,
AS SHE
HEARS A
STRANGE
RUSTLE
BEHIND
HER--

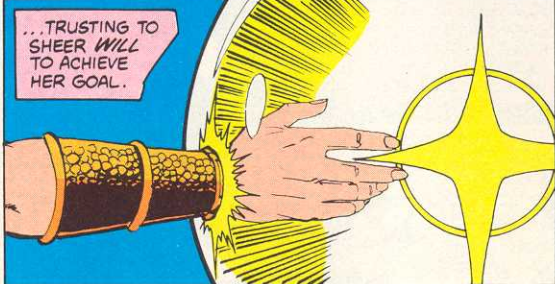
-- LIKE THE LEATHERY
WHISPER OF INHUMAN
WINGS...



HOT
BREATH
WARMS
HER
NECK.

PART OF HER
SCREAMS A
WARNING--
"USE THE
DAGGER!
DEFEND
YOURSELF!"


BUT A GENTLER
ASPECT OF HER
SOUL REBELS, AND
THRUSTS BLADE
BACK INTO SHEATH...



...TRUSTING TO
SHEER WILL
TO ACHIEVE
HER GOAL.



GOOD.



YOU'VE PASSED
THE FIRST
TEST.

VIRGO! BUT I
THOUGHT YOU'D
BECOME SOME KIND
OF--OF MONSTER!

WAS THAT AN
ILLUSION?

NO, CHILD. I SIMPLY RESPONDED
TO POTENTIAL VIOLENCE.

HAD YOU PERSISTED, I MIGHT
HAVE KILLED
YOU--OR YOU
MIGHT HAVE
KILLED ME.

SUCH
REACTIONS
ARE BEYOND
MY CONTROL.

BUT I AM
PLEASED THE
CONFRONTATION
WAS AVOIDED.



NOW LET
THE STAR
TAKE YOU
WHERE IT
WILL...

...AND
MAY THE
LORDS OF
THE
ZODIAC
KEEP YOU
SAFE!

A MOMENT OF BLINDING LIGHT AND, WHEN IT FADES, TARRA FINDS HERSELF IN A SWEET-SMELLING GARDEN...

... LISTENING TO THE MUSIC OF A VERY STRANGE PIPER INDEED.

AH, A VISITOR.
HOW DELIGHTFUL.

COME
PLAY WITH
CAPRICORN,
MY DEAR.

PLAY
WITH ME--

--OR
DIE!

SNORT-SNORT

--FIND
HIM...

NO THANKS,
GOAT.

I'M
LOOKING
FOR MY
BROTHER, AND
I CAN'T STOP
TO PLAY
UNTIL I--



TORR BLINKS TWICE, AND SHAKES HIS HEAD AS IF TO CLEAR IT, NOT QUITE SURE IF HE'S LOST HIS MIND.

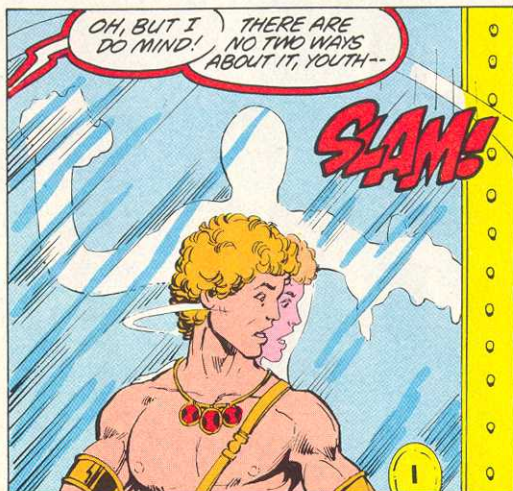
THE *CORRIDOR* FROM THE CHAMBER OF TAURUS LED HIM TO ANOTHER LOCKED DOOR, WHICH OPENED AT A TOUCH OF HIS KEY; HE STEPPED THROUGH...

...INTO A SCENE OF SHEER NIGHTMARE.

WHO ENTERS THE MIRRORED HALL OF GEMINI?

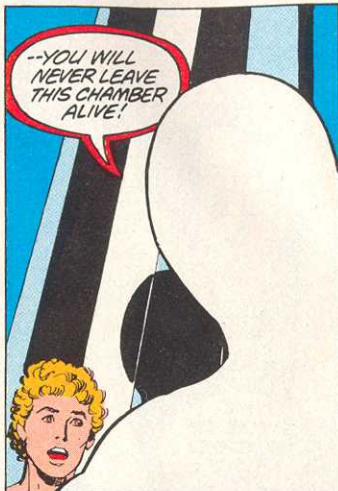
IDENTIFY YOURSELF, AND PERHAPS I SHALL LET YOU LIVE!

I THINK I'LL JUST TAKE MY CHANCES WITH TAURUS, IF YOU DON'T MIND--



OH, BUT I DO MIND! THERE ARE NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT, YOUTH--

SLAM!



--YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE THIS CHAMBER ALIVE!



THERE IS A FLICKER OF SHADOW IN THE MIRROR BEHIND THE BIZARRE WHITE CREATURE, BUT TORR HAS ONLY A GLIMPSE OF IT BEFORE GEMINI ATTACKS--

IF I'VE LEARNED ONE THING ABOUT THIS MAD LAND--

--IT'S THAT EVERY CHAMBER IN IT HAS TWO DOORS!



YOU MAY HAVE SEALED ONE--

CRASH!

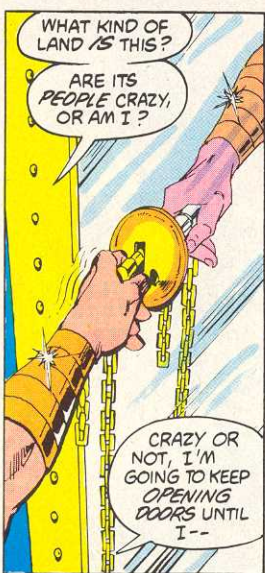
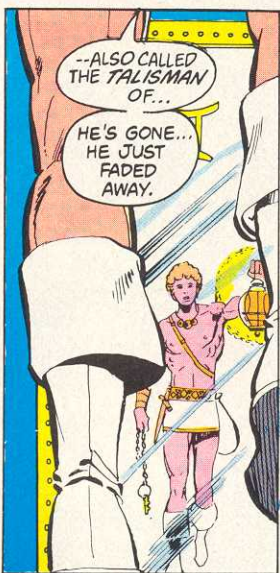
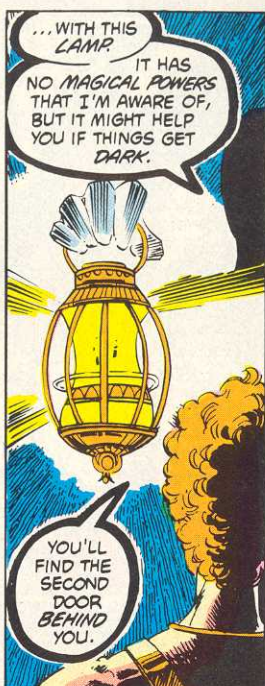


--BUT IF I CAN JUST REACH THE OTHER--

EH?

FORGIVE ME. I'M AFRAID I MUST HAVE MADE A TERRIBLE FIRST IMPRESSION.

HE ALWAYS DOES, YOU KNOW.

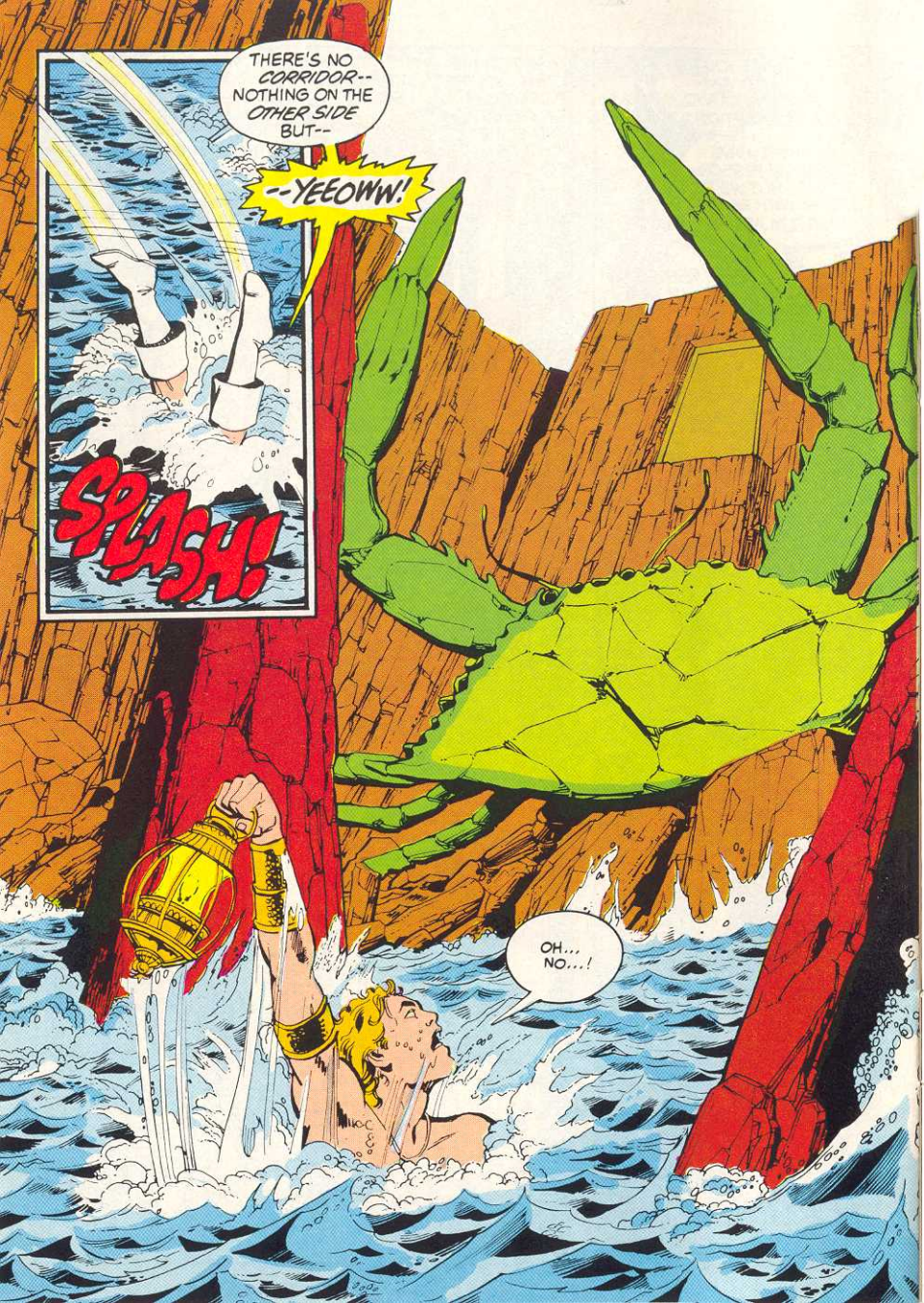


THERE'S NO
CORRIDOR--
NOTHING ON THE
OTHER SIDE
BUT--

--YEEOWW!

SPLASH!

OH...
NO...!



ELSEWHERE...

SO AMUSING, HE OFFERED ME SOME ADVICE AND HELP WHEN HE REALIZED WHO I WAS--

--TELLING ME TO TAKE THIS CORRIDOR TO THE CHAMBER ON HIS LEFT, WHERE HE SAID TORR WOULD BE WAITING FOR ME!

TORR!
IT'S
TARRA!

I'VE GOT
A SURPRISE
FOR YOU--

WHAT AN
ODD CREATURE
TAURUS IS...
APPARENTLY,
TORR BESTED
HIM, AND
TAURUS
FOUND THAT
AMUSING!

IS THAT
SO, LITTLE
GIRL?

AND ARIES
HAS A
SURPRISE
FOR YOU,
TOO!

THE MINOTAUR
LIED!

HAVE TO GET OUT
OF HERE-- BEFORE
ARIES CAN REACH
ME TO--

ULP!

IN HER HAND, THE
STAR GLOWS, AS
IF SENSING HER DISTRESS,
AND BETWEEN ONE
BREATH AND THE NEXT--

-- SHE FINDS HERSELF TRANSPORTED, OUT OF THE FIRE AND INTO THE FURNACE...

GODS OF MY MOTHER!

HERMINUS, WHO IS THIS BOLD INTRUDER?

IS IT ONE OF THE THIEVES YOU WARNED ME ABOUT?

AYE, BRAVE SAGITTARIUS-- THE VIXEN CALLED TARRA!

SEE? SHE'S STOLEN THE STAR OF PASSAGE FROM SWEET VIRGO!

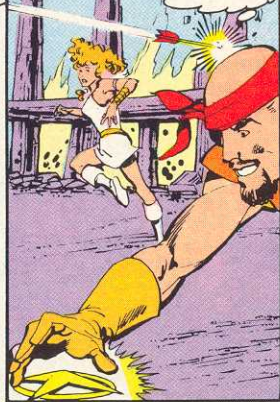
BE SWIFT, BEFORE SHE CAN VANISH AGAIN--!



OHH!!

GOOD SHOOTING, BRAVE WARRIOR!

HA! SHE DROPPED THE STAR!



NOW'S MY CHANCE, WHILE THAT THICK-SKULLED CENTAUR KEEPS HER PINNED DOWN--!



THE STAR!

NO!

AND, ELSEWHERE...

I MUST ADMIT, GOOD FRIEND CRAB-- YOU GAVE ME QUITE A FRIGHT BACK THERE!

NOT MY INTENTION.

AM PEACEFUL, IF NOT ATTACKED.

THOUGH NOT ALWAYS TRUE, IF STAR-SIGNS ARE AWRY.

GO AND BE WELL, YOUNG WARRIOR... AND KNOW YOU HAVE FRIEND IN CANCER.

I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND.

WAR-CRAFT MAY BE USELESS IN THIS LAND, WHERE FOES CAN BECOME FRIENDS AND FRIENDS CAN TURN INTO FOES!

I BETTER WARN TARRA!

IF I CAN FIND HER!

YET ANOTHER DOOR OPENS TO THE MAGIC KEY'S TOUCH, BUT WHEN TORR STEPS THROUGH INTO THE CHAMBER BEYOND--

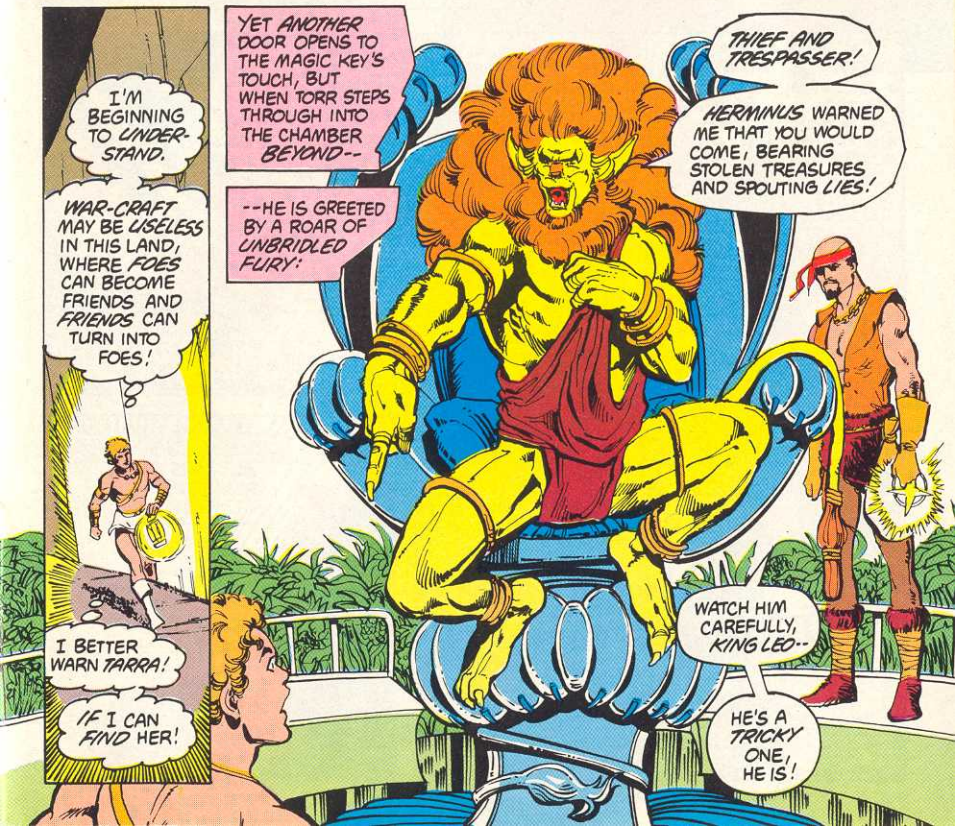
--HE IS GREETED BY A ROAR OF UNBRIDLED FURY!

THIEF AND TRESPASSER!

HERMINUS WARNED ME THAT YOU WOULD COME, BEARING STOLEN TREASURES AND SPOUTING LIES!

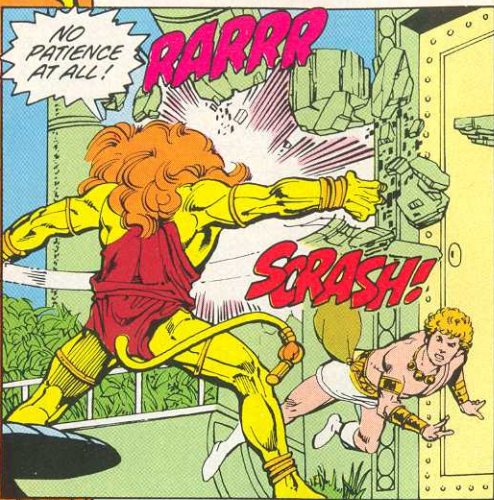
WATCH HIM CAREFULLY, KING LEO--

HE'S A TRICKY ONE, HE IS!





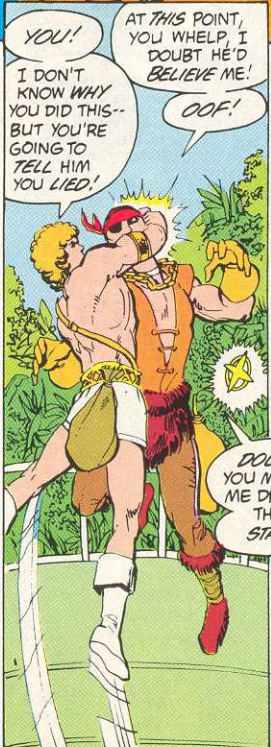
I HAVE NO PATIENCE WITH TRICKSTERS, HERMINUS!



NO PATIENCE AT ALL!

RARRR

SCRASH!



YOU!

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU DID THIS-- BUT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL HIM YOU LIED!

AT THIS POINT, YOU WHELP, I DOUBT HE'D BELIEVE ME!

OOF!



THAT THING MUST BE IMPORTANT IF YOU--

UH-- OH!

ROARR

DOLT! YOU MADE ME DROP THE STAR--!



TWO HANDS REACH, BUT ONE REACHES FASTER--



--AND IN A FLASH OF BLINDING LIGHT, BOTH THIEVES ARE--

GONE!

HALF A BREATH
LATER...

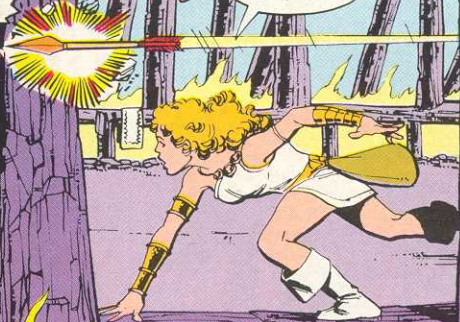
TARRA!

TWCHUNK

TORR, GET
AWAY!
SAGITTARIUS
WON'T LISTEN
TO REASON!

HE THINKS
WE'RE
BANDITS!

I'M
FINDING
YOUR
RANGE,
WENCH!



TARRA'S GETTING
WINDED-- SHE CAN'T
KEEP DODGING AND, AS
LONG AS THAT ARMED
CENTAUR IS BETWEEN US,
I CAN'T REACH HER TO
HELP!

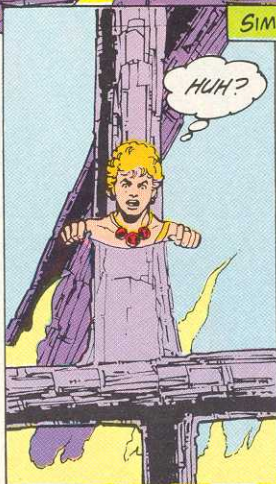
WAIT-- MAYBE I CAN
BLIND HIM BY TOSSING
THIS CLOAK
OVER HIS--



SIMULTANEOUSLY...

NO SIGN OF
TORR-- HE
MUST HAVE
ESCAPED!

HUH?



AT LEAST ONE
OF US WILL
SURVIVE!



THIS
IS IT...

... GODS HELP
ME, I CAN'T RUN
ANY FURTHER!



NOW
I HAVE
YOU!



YES, BUT CAN YOU KEEP HER?

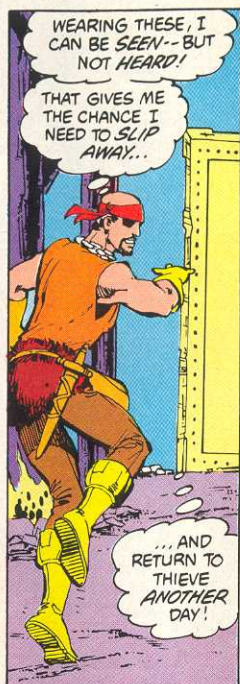
NA-A-YYY!

SOMEONE'S MOUNTED ME-- SOMEONE I CANNOT SEE!



SO... THE LUCKY BRAT FOUND THE CLOAK OF INVISIBILITY!

I'VE FOUND SOMETHING JUST AS USEFUL-- THE SHOES OF STEALTH!



WEARING THESE, I CAN BE SEEN-- BUT NOT HEARD!

THAT GIVES ME THE CHANCE I NEED TO SLIP AWAY...

... AND RETURN TO THIEVE ANOTHER DAY!



SEEN OR UNSEEN, MY ATTACKER HAS WEIGHT-- AND WHAT HAS WEIGHT CAN BE THROWN!

BROTHER...?

NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, TARRA!

YOU'RE NEAR ENOUGH NOW!



QUICK, GRAB THE STAR, AND LET'S GET--



--OUT
OF HERE?

SOMETHING HAPPENED
WHEN WE TOUCHED
THE STAR TOGETHER!

THIS ISN'T ONE
OF THE ZODIACAL
CHAMBERS!

TORR,
LOOK UP
THERE!

WE'VE MADE
IT TO THE CENTRAL
CHAMBER!

THAT'S IT--
THAT'S WHAT
WE'VE BEEN
SEEKING--

--THE SWORD
OF ULTIMATE
SORCERY!

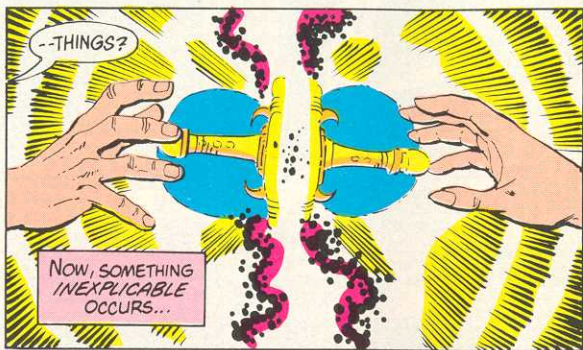
AWE TAKES THEIR BREATHS AWAY.

AS IF FORGED IN THE FIRES OF THE SUN, THE SWORD GLOWS WITH UNEARTHLY GLORY, SENDING A LANCE OF PURE ENERGY DOWN TO THE MARBLE BENEATH ITS POINT.

THAT ZODIAC DISC! WE SAW IT BEFORE, WHEN OUR MENTORS SHOWED US THE SWORD!

TOR-- I JUST REALIZED--

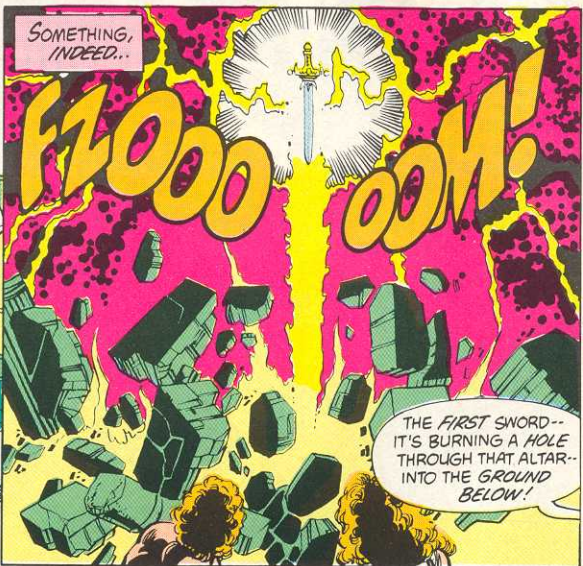
--WHAT IF THE SWORD AND THE TALISMAN OF WHICH THEY SPOKE ARE TWO SEPARATE--

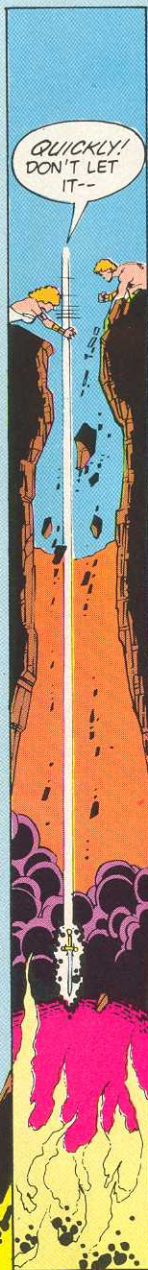


WHERE THERE WAS ONE BLADE, THERE NOW ARE THREE; THE ORIGINAL... AND TWO OTHERS.

THE METAL FEELS WARM TO THEIR TOUCH... WARM, AND SOMEHOW ALIVE.

TORR, SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!





QUICKLY!
DON'T LET
IT--



--FALL!

OH, TORR--
WE'VE
LOST IT!



YOU CANNOT
LOSE THAT
WHICH YOU
NEVER
POSSESSED,
CHILD.

SWORDS
YOU NOW
HAVE--

--BUT THE
TRUE SWORD
WAS NOT
YET YOURS.

WHAT HAVE
YOU LEARNED
IN THIS
WORLD?

THAT BATTLES
AREN'T ALWAYS
WON BY
VIOLENCE!



THEN YOU
HAVE
LEARNED
WELL, AND
HAVE BECOME
WISE
SEEKERS
AS WELL AS
SKILLFUL
THIEVES.

BELOW LIES
THE SECOND
WORLD YOU
MUST FACE,
AS YOU
CLAIM YOUR
DESTINY.



IT TOO
WILL
CHALLENGE
YOUR WITS,
AND YOUR
SKILL.

WILL YOU
MEET
THAT
CHALLENGE?

WE'VE
COME
THIS FAR,
MENTORR!

BY THE
GODS, WE
WON'T
STOP NOW!

AND NEITHER
WILL MERMINUS,
FOOL--

--EVEN IF IT
MEANS FOLLOWING
TO THE VERY
GATES OF HADES!

AND SO IT ENDS,
WITH ANOTHER
BEGINNING.

TORR, YOU MAY
THINK I'M MAD,
UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES,
BUT A CHILL
JUST RAN DOWN
MY SPINE--

--AS IF,
SOMEHOW,
SOMEWHERE,
WE WERE BEING
WATCHED!

IN HIS
CASTLE
KEEP, THE
WIZARD
KONJURO
SMILES.

IT IS A
SMILE
WITHOUT
HUMOR...

...A SMILE LIKE
THE GRIN OF
DEATH!

TO BE CONTINUED -- IN **SWORDQUEST** -- BOOK TWO: **FIREWORLD!**

C019251



ATARI