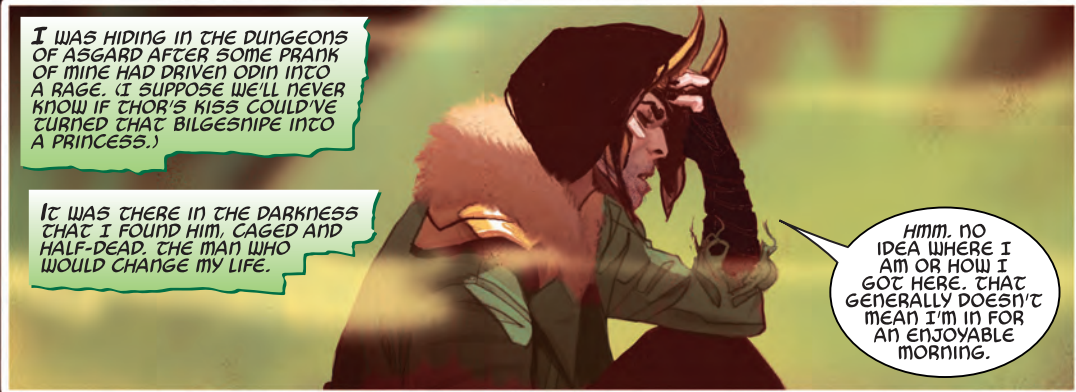




I CAN'T SAY I RECALL BEING BORN, BUT WELL DO I REMEMBER THE DAY I FIRST BEGAN TO LIVE.

UUUGH.



I WAS HIDING IN THE DUNGEONS OF ASGARD AFTER SOME PRANK OF MINE HAD DRIVEN ODIN INTO A RAGE. (I SUPPOSE WE'LL NEVER KNOW IF THOR'S KISS COULD'VE TURNED THAT BILGESNIPE INTO A PRINCESS.)

IT WAS THERE IN THE DARKNESS THAT I FOUND HIM, CAGED AND HALF-DEAD. THE MAN WHO WOULD CHANGE MY LIFE.

HMM. NO IDEA WHERE I AM OR HOW I GOT HERE. THAT GENERALLY DOESN'T MEAN I'M IN FOR AN ENJOYABLE MORNING.



A WIZARD NAMED ELDRED. THE MAN WHO TAUGHT ME MAGIC.

THE FIRST MAN I EVER KILLED.

SURTUR'S BONES. I HOPE I DIDN'T DO THIS.

YOU DIDN'T.



I DID.

OH BLOODY HEL.

ELDRED HAD BEEN LOCKED IN THE DUNGEON FOR SO LONG THAT EVEN HE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT OFFENSE HE'D ONCE GIVEN THE ALL-FATHER TO WARRANT HIS JAILING.



ALL HE COULD REMEMBER... WERE HIS MAGIC TRICKS.

THIS MORNING'S EVEN WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. WHAT DO YOU WANT, YOU CHEAP VIKING CONJURER?

HEH, YOU DON'T MUCH LIKE BEING CONFRONTED WITH WHO YOU REALLY ARE, DO YOU, LOKI?

BUT HOW DO YOU THINK I FEEL, HAVING TO SEE MYSELF LOOKING SO VERY OLD AND CLEAN AND...BOUGIE?



ELDRED WOULD SHOW ME ONE TRICK FOR EVERY LOAF OF BREAD OR CUP OF SOUP I COULD SMUGGLE FROM THE KITCHEN.

BOUGIE I LIKE, BUT CAREFUL WHO YOU CALL OLD, BOY. I KNOW SPELLS YOU WON'T LEARN FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.

AND I KNOW PLENTY YOU'VE NO DOUBT FORGOTTEN, LIKE THE ONES THAT MAKE DARK ELVES GO TO WAR.

I WAS JUST A BOY...BUT ALREADY DEVIOUS ENOUGH TO KNOW NOT TO FILL ELDRED'S BELLY TOO FULL, LEST HE REGAIN ALL HIS STRENGTH AND MAKE HIS ESCAPE.

YOU CREATED THIS WAR?

AYE, NOT BAD FOR AN AFTERNOON'S WORK, EH? IT'S CERTAINLY DONE THE JOB IT WAS MEANT TO DO.

WHICH WAS WHAT EXACTLY? NEEDLESSLY SLAUGHTER THOUSANDS?

BECAUSE WITHOUT ELDRED, THERE WOULD'VE BEEN NO MORE MAGIC TRICKS.

AND WITHOUT MAGIC IN MY LIFE...THAT LIFE WOULD'VE ENDED A LONG TIME AGO.

MAKE ME SMILE. HA!



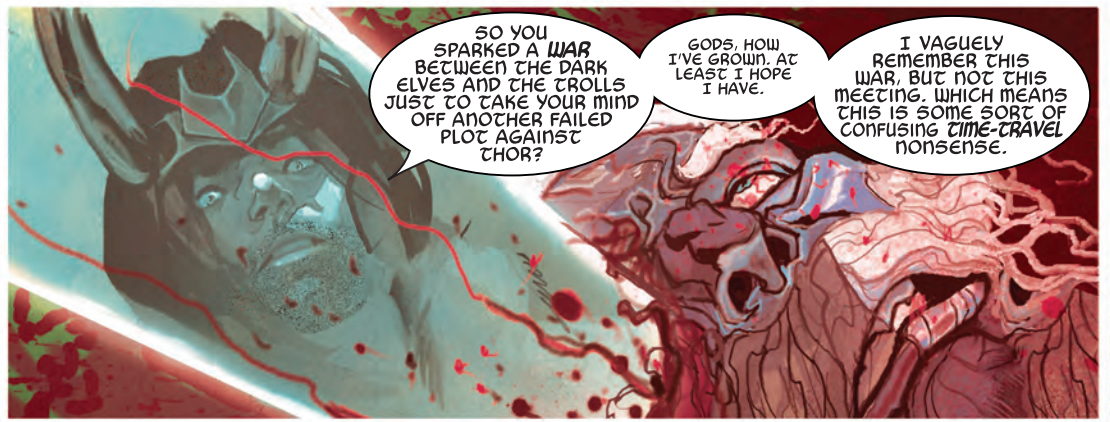
YOU'RE EVEN MORE OF A BASTARD THAN I REMEMBER.

LET ME GUESS, THOR PROBLEMS GOT YOU DOWN?

ERRGH. IT WAS A GENIUS PLAN. IT SHOULD'VE LEFT MY ARROGANT BROTHER FINALLY HUMBLLED AND NEVER WANTING TO SEE HIS BELOVED MIDGARD AGAIN.

DAMN THAT ERIKA THE RED AND HER FEMININE VIKING WILES.*

*BACK IN ISSUE #7!
--WIL



SO YOU SPARKED A WAR BETWEEN THE DARK ELVES AND THE TROLLS JUST TO TAKE YOUR MIND OFF ANOTHER FAILED PLOT AGAINST THOR?

GODS, HOW I'VE GROWN, AT LEAST I HOPE I HAVE.

I VAGUELY REMEMBER THIS WAR, BUT NOT THIS MEETING, WHICH MEANS THIS IS SOME SORT OF CONFUSING TIME-TRAVEL NONSENSE.



BUT WHY CAN'T I REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO TRAVEL HERE? OR WHAT I WAS DOING IN MY OWN TIME BEFORE I--

LOOK OUT--



--CORPSE BURNER AT WORK HERE.