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"DOES IT? HAVE YOU SO CORRUPTED YOUR AMAZON PRINCIPLES THAT YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE LAST NIGHT'S MASSACRE WAS JUSTIFIED?"

"MAY THE GODS FORGIVE ME FOR NOT GETTING TO SYENE KESH SOONER. IF I HAD--PERHAPS MORE LIVES WOULD HAVE BEEN SPARED."



"THE CHEETAH WAS ONLY ONE WOMAN. SHE HAS THE THIEF YOU WERE AFTER."

"WHY DID SO MANY INNOCENTS HAVE TO DIE?"

"PERHAPS, SISTER--BUT FOR THOSE AMAZON WARRIORS YOU DID SAVE, WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL."

"I HAVE NEVER SEEN HEALING ABILITIES SUCH AS YOURS."

"AMAZON WARRIOR? WHAT I WITNESSED LAST NIGHT WERE NOT THE ACTS OF SOLDIERS--?"

"THEY WERE THE ACTS OF BUTCHERS."

"SPARE ME YOUR APPRECIATION. I TRIED TO SAVE EVERYONE I COULD--AMAZON OR NOT."

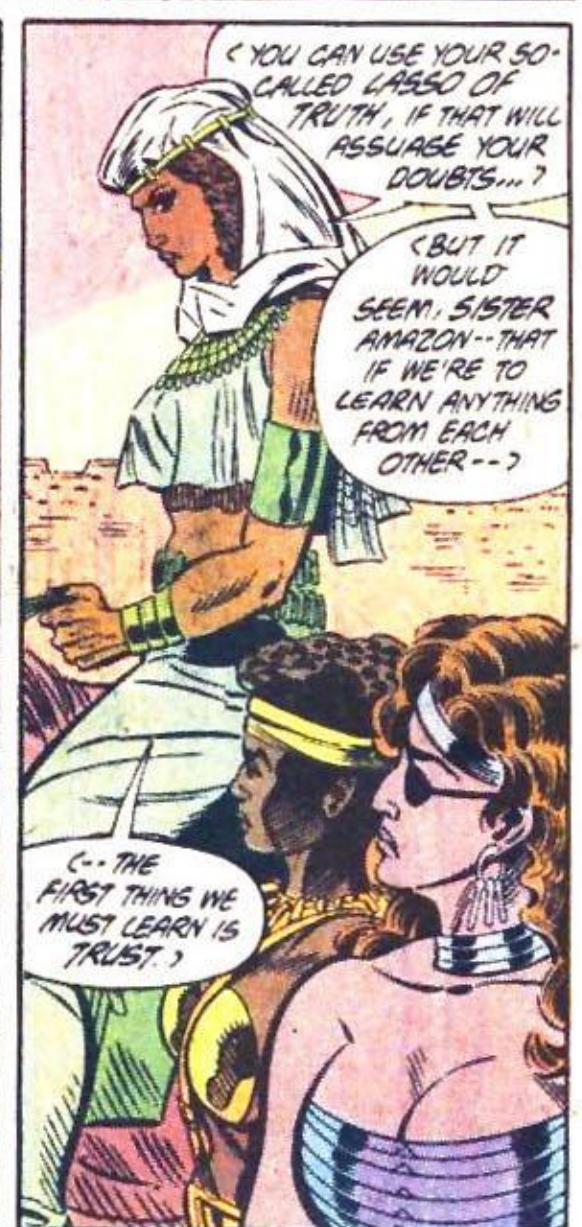
"BUT--THE DAMAGE WAS TOO GREAT. YOU'D ALL SEEN TO THAT."

"I REMEMBER... PRAYING TO LORD HERMES... TRYING TO LINK WITH HIM..."

"MY SUPPLY OF MEDICINAL HERBS AND SALVES WERE INADEQUATE. I NEEDED THE HELP ONLY A GOD COULD GIVE."

"BUT THE STRAIN OF THESE LAST HORRIBLE, DRUGGED-OUT WEEKS HAD FINALLY TAKEN THEIR TOLL ON ME..."





A SMALL SHOP ABOUT FIVE KILOMETERS FROM THE RAVERED TOWN OF SYENE KESH.

“DEAR ALLAH-- WHY? WHY?...”



“HE WAS JUST A POOR SHOPKEEPER! WHY DID THEY HAVE TO KILL HIM?...”



“COME ON, MRS. TASIM-- NOT THE SAME “SHE-DEMONS” YOUR FELLOW FELLAH IN CLAIM SWOOPED IN-- OUT OF NOWHERE-- AND ATTACKED THE VILLAGE...?”

“TAKE IT EASY, AHMED. INVADING MARAUDERS ARE NOT COMMON TO THIS PART OF THE DESERT.”

“TO POOR, FRIGHTENED, SIMPLE PEASANTS, SUCH BARBARIANS COULD VERY WELL LOOK LIKE DEMONS.”



“YES, SIR-- BUT WOMEN? CAPTAIN, I THINK YOU SHOULD LOOK AT THIS. I FOUND IT NEAR THE TELEPHONE.”

“IT'S A TORN PHOTOGRAPH, SIR.”



“HMM. I DON'T KNOW WHO THE OLD LADY IS, BUT I RECOGNIZE THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL NEXT TO HER.”

“A PRINCESS OF SOME SORT. THEY CALL HER-- “WONDER WOMAN.””



“WAIT A MINUTE. DID YOU SAY-- “CHEETAH-WOMAN”??”

“WHAT THE HELL IS A “CHEETAH-WOMAN”??”



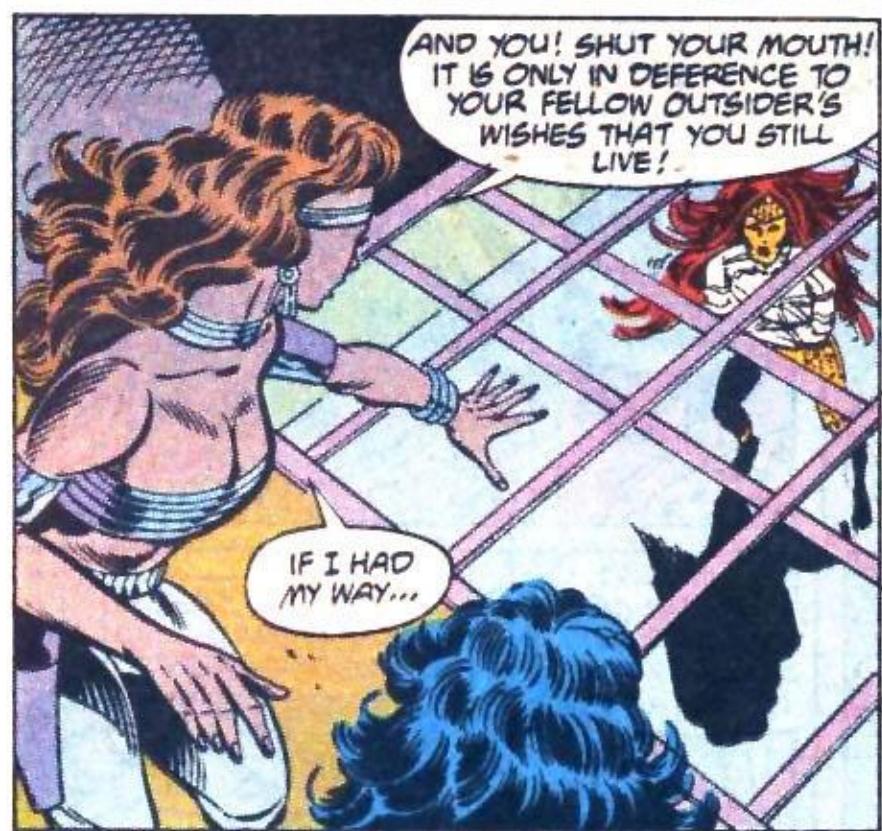
“IT'S HER! THE ONE IN THE AMERICAN FLAG!”

“SHE WAS THE ONE WHO ENDED THE BLOODSHED... THE ONE WHO DEFEATED THE CHEETAH-WOMAN!”

“SHE TRIED TO HELP US... BUT THEN SHE FELL-- AND THEY TOOK HER AWAY...”

“HMM. THESE NUMBERS SCRABLED ON THE CORNER-- WHAT DO...??”





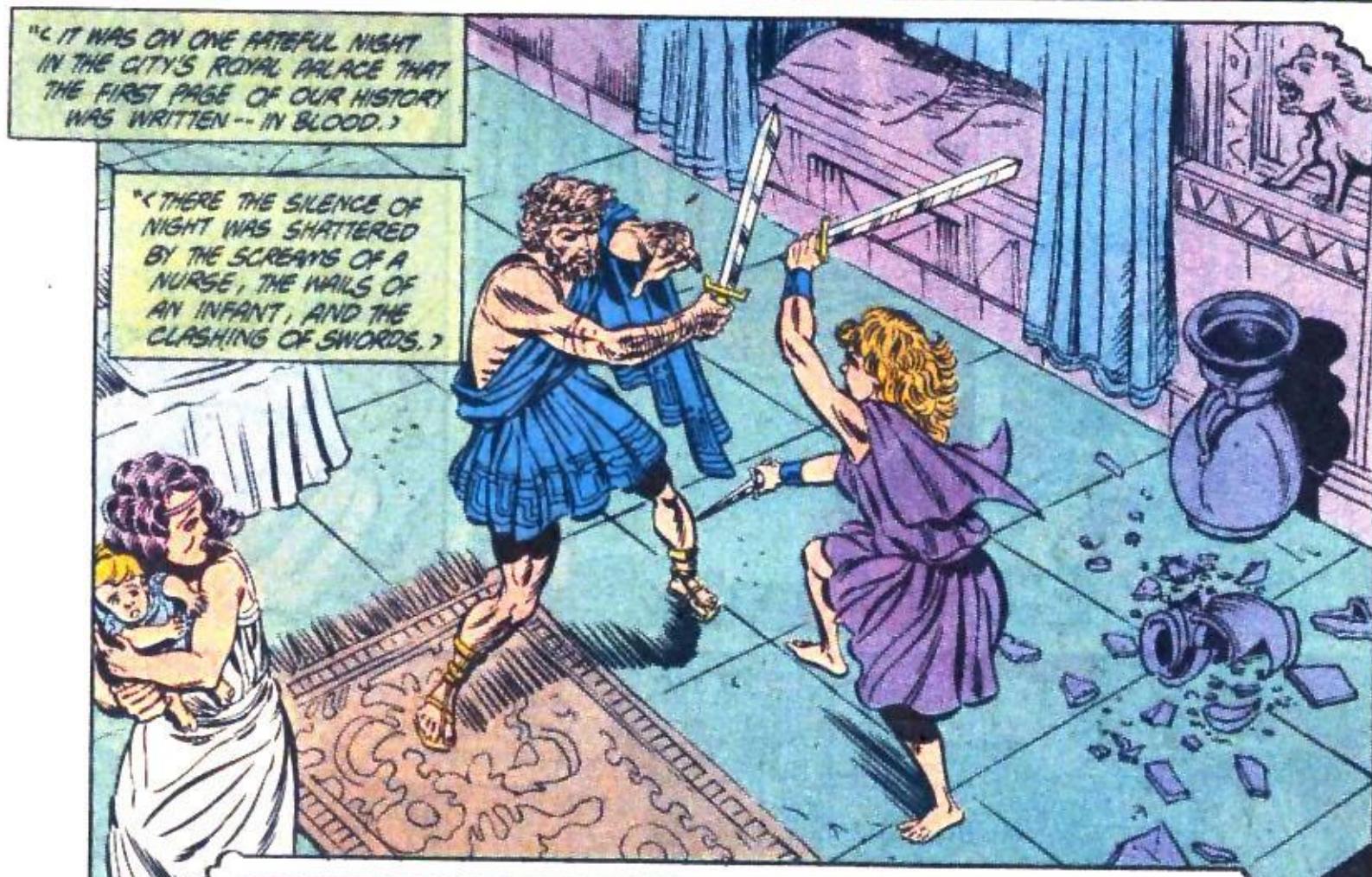
















"AND HE DID. MELANIPPIUS HATED PHTHIA--AS HE HATED ALL AMAZONS. THIS WAS THE CHANCE HE HAD BEEN WAITING FOR."

"PHTHIA WAS THROWN INTO THE DARKEST, FOULEST, MOST PESTILENT DUNGEON BENEATH THE CITY, WHERE THE INDIGNITIES AND TORTURES SHE ENDURED I SHALL NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO DETAIL FOR YOU."



"IT BECAME CLEAR EVEN TO A BARBARIAN LIKE MELANIPPIUS THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO SILENCE AN AMAZON...?"

"EXECUTE HER, MY FATHER. IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO HANDLE A RABID DOG."

"THEN SHE CONFESSED?"



"NO. ANTOPE WAS LIKE A MOTHER TO PHTHIA-- SINCE THE DAY PHTHIA'S REAL MOTHER DIED..."

"YES, FATHER-- AND PHTHIA ALWAYS BLAMED MEN FOR HYPSIPELE'S DEATH. SHE BLAMES MEN FOR EVERYTHING-- EVEN HER OWN SINS."



"EVER SINCE I WEDDED THEIR QUEEN, THE AMAZONS HAVE BEEN OUR STALINCHEST ALLIES IN BATTLE. I CANNOT JEOPARDIZE THAT."

"HER DEATH WILL BE DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN-- IF I AM TO EXECUTE ONE OF THEIR OWN FOR THE CRIME, BY ZEUS, I'M GOING TO NEED MORE THAN YOUR ASSURANCE OF HER GUILT."

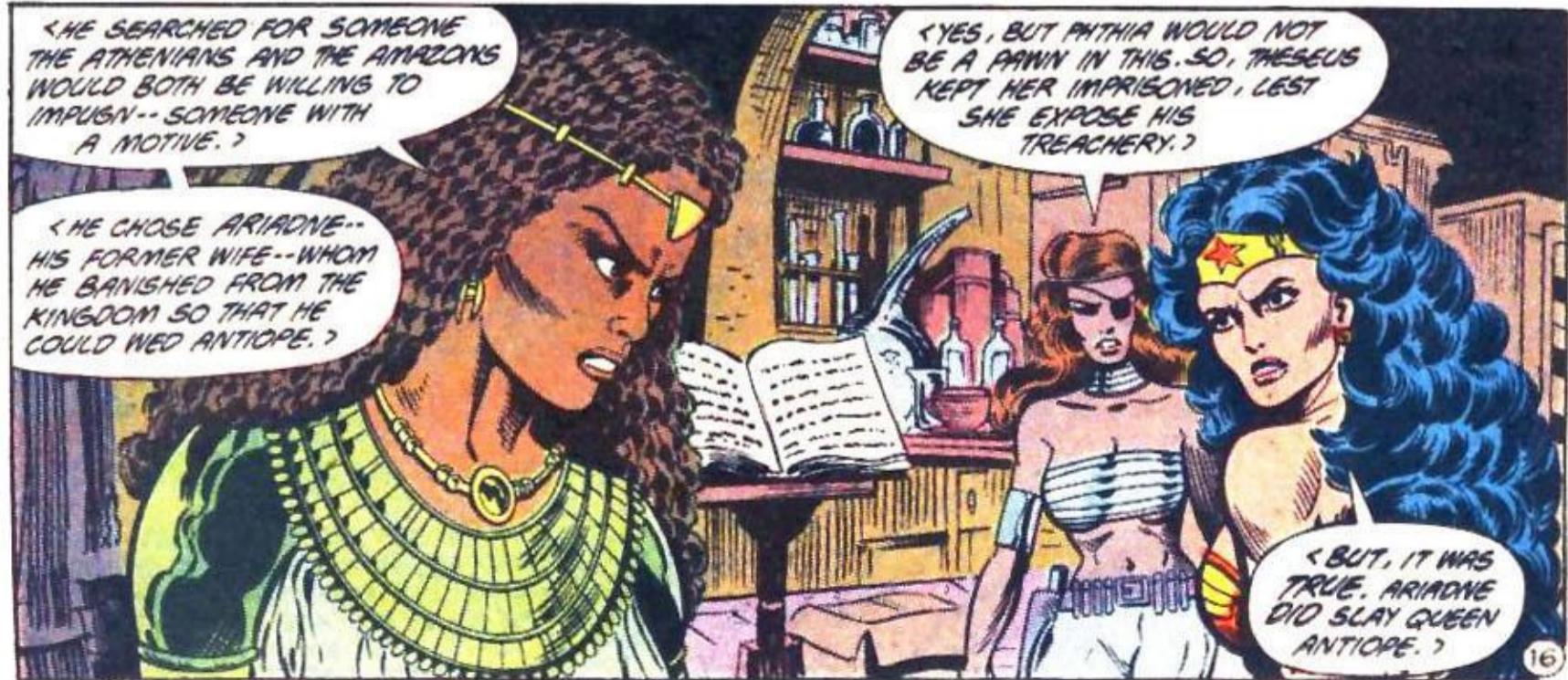


"PHTHIA'S SCREAMS ECHOED FROM THE FETID, CRASSY WALLS. CRIES OF ANGER-- VENGEANCE--HATE-->

"EVERYTHING-- BUT SURRENDER."

"HE SEARCHED FOR SOMEONE THE ATHENIANS AND THE AMAZONS WOULD BOTH BE WILLING TO IMPUGN-- SOMEONE WITH A MOTIVE."

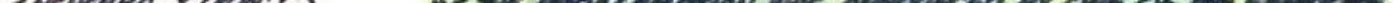
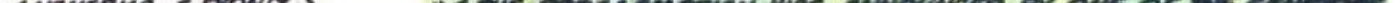
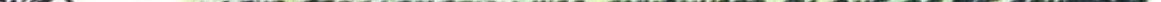
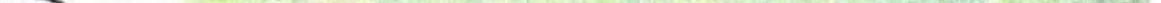
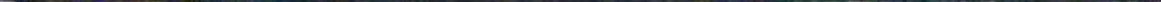
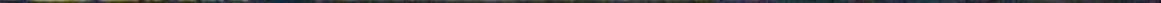
"HE CHOSE ARIADNE-- HIS FORMER WIFE--WHOM HE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM SO THAT HE COULD WED ANTOPE."



"YES, BUT PHTHIA WOULD NOT BE A PAWN IN THIS. SO, THESEUS KEPT HER IMPRISONED, LEST SHE EXPOSE HIS TREACHERY."

"KING THESEUS WAS A MASTER OF DECEIT AS WELL AS MURDER."

"BUT, IT WAS TRUE. ARIADNE DID SLAY QUEEN ANTOPE."



"THAT NIGHT WAS TO HAVE BEEN PHTHIA'S LAST. SHE HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED DEAD. ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS TO MAKE IT TRUE."

"SHE WAS THE LAST LOOSE THREAD THAT HAD TO BE CUT."



"THE AMAZONS COULD TOLERATE BEING CONSIDERED WILD ANIMALS...?"

"THEY WOULD NOT TOLERATE BEING CONSIDERED FOOLS."

"PHTHIA ONLY REGRETTED THAT IT WAS NOT MELANIPPUS WHO STOOD GUARD THAT NIGHT."



"WE KNEW, FROM THAT NIGHT FORWARD, THERE WOULD NEVER BE PEACE BETWEEN AMAZON AND MAN."

"EVEN IF ARIADNE HAD KILLED ANTOPE-- WHY DID PHTHIA HAVE TO BE PUNISHED?"

"ARIADNE COULD HAVE PROFESSED EITHER HER OWN INNOCENCE OR PHTHIA'S."

"SHE DID NEITHER."

"AND FOR THAT, SHE SHARED THESEUS' GUILT."

"MAN WOULD PAY ETERNALLY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO THE AMAZON RACE."



"BUT FIRST, THE AMAZONS HAD TO RECLAIM WHAT WAS RIGHTFULLY THEIRS-- FROM WITHIN THE TOMB OF ANTOPE."

"FOR CENTURIES HER NAME HAS SIGNIFIED 'EVIL INTRUDER' OR 'ONE WHO MUST NOT BE TRUSTED.'"

"LIKE ME."

"YES, ARIADNE. LIKE YOU."

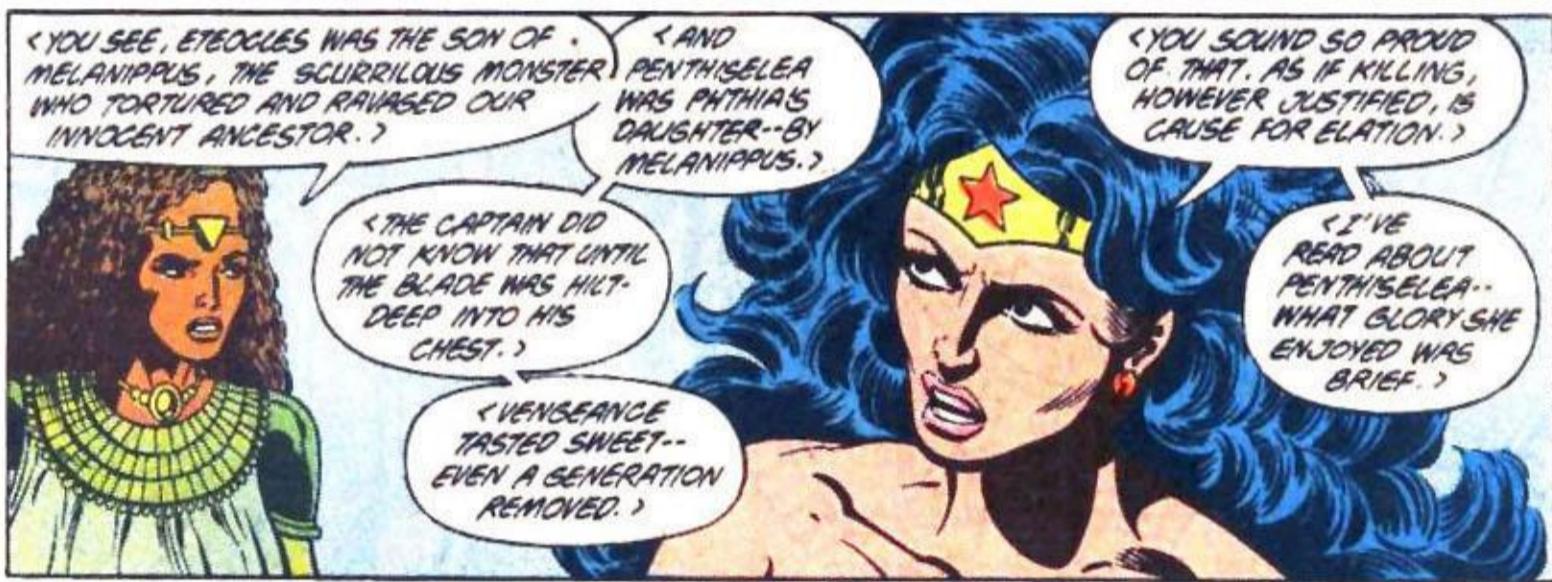


"HEAR ME, O GODS OF OLYMPUS! TWICE HAVE WE LAID OUR TRUST BEFORE MAN, AND TWICE HAVE WE ANGUISHED FOR IT."

"WE KNOW NOW THAT ONLY THROUGH MAN'S CONQUEST CAN THERE BE AMAZON SURVIVAL. AND THOUGH BOTH OUR QUEENS BE DEAD--WE WILL SURVIVE!"

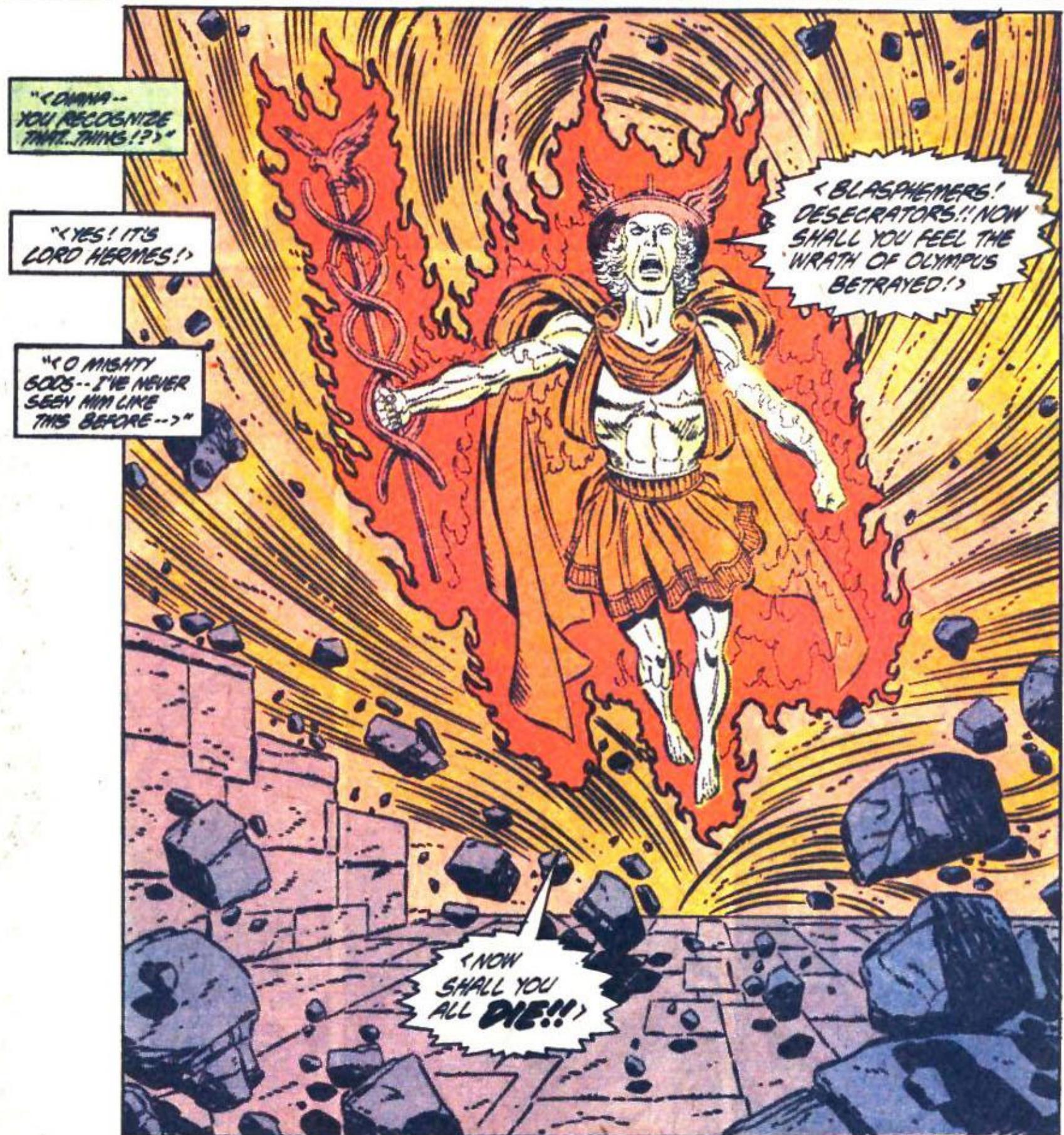
"I RECLAIM GAERA'S GIRDLE IN THE NAME OF THE SISTERHOOD! AND BY ITS POWER, WE SHALL CONQUER!"











**NEXT
ISSUE: THE TOURNAMENT OF THE CROWN**