



Title : Wonder Woman V2

Issue : 30

Publisher : DC

Pages : 23

Scanner : >10x10x10

Channel : #OCD on Newnet

Forum : <http://ocd.conforums.com>

Released : February 17, 2003

#1030



PEREZ, MARRINAN & BLYBERG

29

APR 89

US \$1.00

CAN \$1.25

UK 50p

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
 AUTHORITY

WONDER WOMAN®

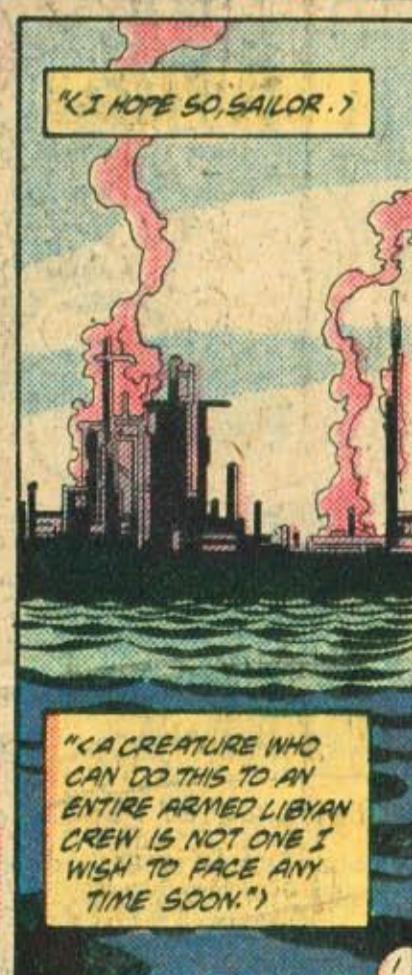
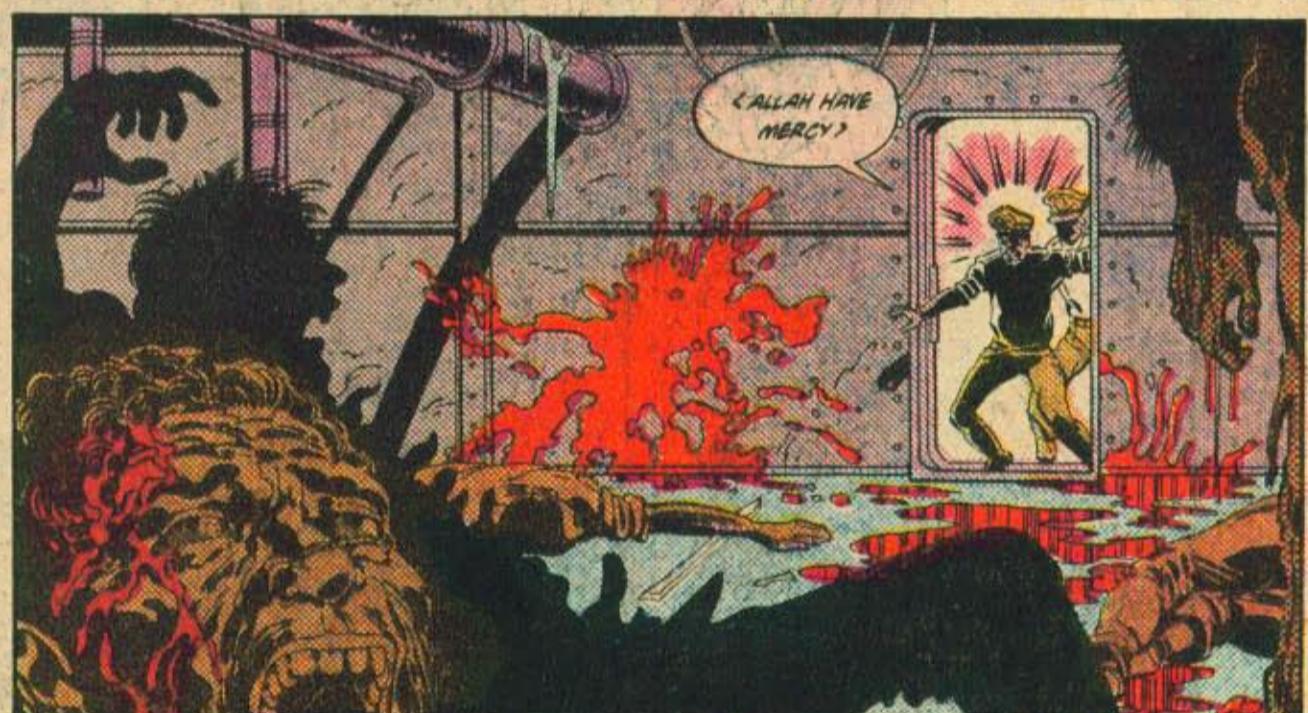


THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA,
SOMEWHERE NEAR
ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT.

(THERE, CAPTAIN.
THAT IS THE VESSEL
WE TRACKED ON
THE RADAR.)



*TRANSLATED FROM
EGYPTIAN--KAREN



NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND, IN THE MAGNIFICENT MANSION OF DR. BARBARA ANN MINERVA, WHERE THE SEARCH FOR HESTIA'S MYSTIC LARIAT HAS COME TO A TRAGIC HALT.

SPRAINED HELPLESSLY ON THE MANSION FLOOR IS DIANA, PRINCESS OF THE AMAZON NATION OF THEMISIRA, HER BODY RIGID FROM THE EFFECTS OF A POISONOUS HERB MIXED IN HER TEA, BREWED BY THE TINY MAN WHO NOW STANDS ABOVE HER.

"CHUMA. HE WHO WAS ONCE A HIGH PRIEST. HE WHO FOREVER HAS AND FOREVER WILL BE SERVANT TO THE CHEETAH."

"DE TEA BE WORKING VERY FAST NOW, SO I WILL HURRY DE STORY."

"DE MADAM WANTED YOU TO BE KNOWING EVERYTHING... NOW, WHERE WAS I? OH, YES..."

WONDER WOMAN
Created by
William Moulton Marston

BLOODVINE

"DE GREAT TEMPLE OF URKHARTASA, WHICH HAD STOOD FOR CENTURIES BEFORE MEMORY, NOW BE IN RUINS, DESCERATED BY DE GRENADES OF THE ATTACKING BARBARIANS FROM BOATENSA."

"ALDOUGH MY SHOULDER BURNED WID FIRE, I DID NOT FEEL DAT PAIN. I DID NOT DINK ABOUT IT."

"ALL I COULD DINK ABOUT WAS DE BROKEN BODY OF MY CAT-GOD, SHE WHO I FAILED."

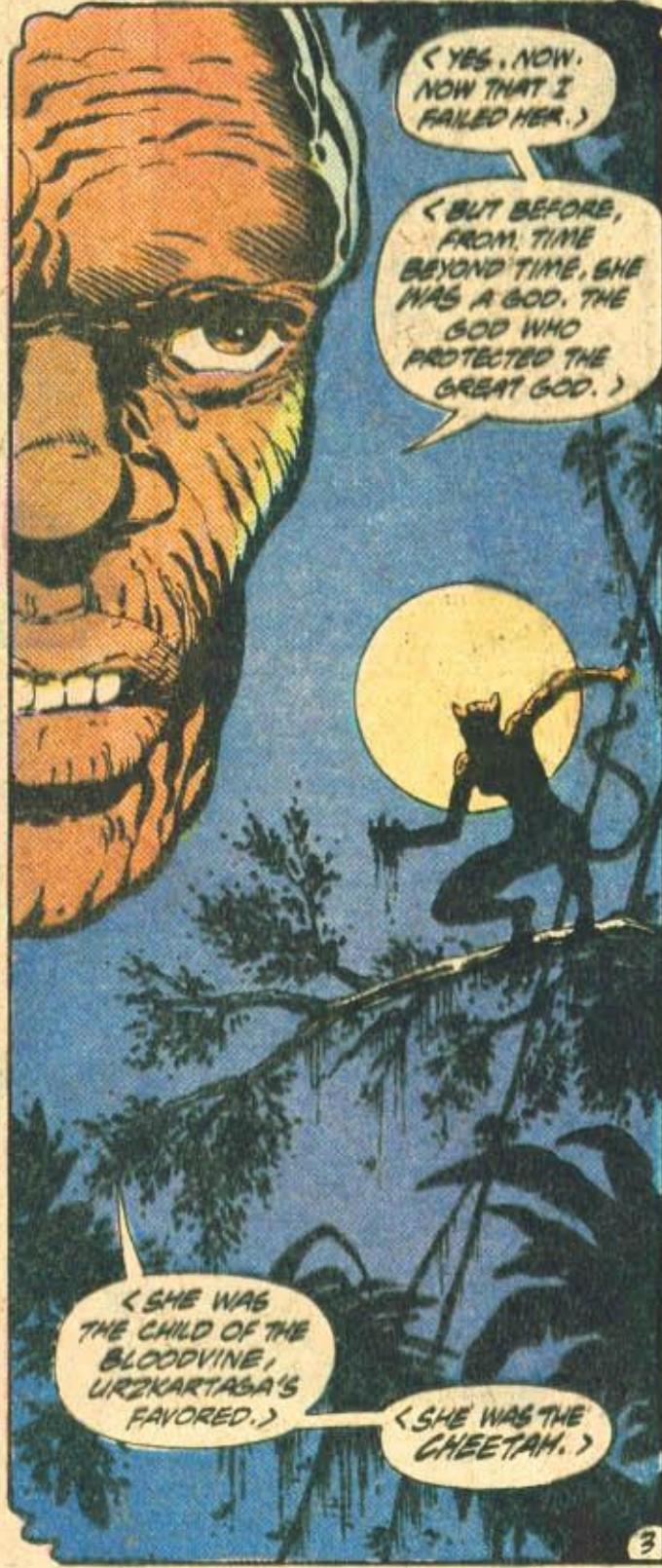
"WHEN I LOOKED UP TO SEE MADAM MINERVA POINTING HER GUN AT ME, DREATENING ME IN MY OWN TONGUE, IT MADE ME FEEL ALMOST... RELIEVED."

"ALL RIGHT, YOU TREACHEROUS LITTLE WEASEL. JUST GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T SPLATTER YOUR BRAINS ALL OVER THIS TEMPLE!"

WRITTEN BY GEORGE PÉREZ • PENCILLED BY CHRIS MARRINAN • INKED BY WILL BLYBERG

LETTERED BY AGUSTIN MAS • COLORED BY CARL GAFFORD • ASST. EDITOR ART YOUNG • EDITOR KAREN BERGER

WONDER WOMAN 29 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 566 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WONDER WOMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate \$9.00, Canada \$11.00 (U.S. funds), all other foreign \$19.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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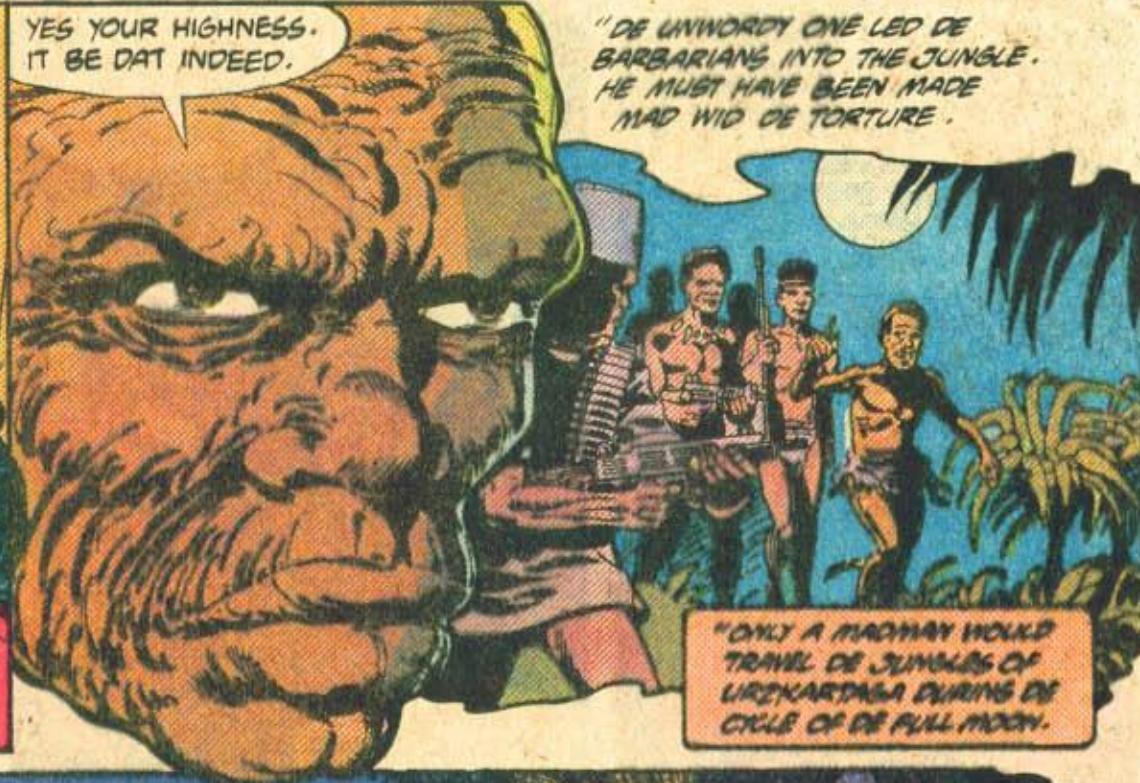




"HIS FAID BE WEAK, AND HIS
SPIRIT CRUMBLED BENAD DE
PURSING OF DE FLESH."



YES YOUR HIGHNESS.
IT BE DAT INDEED.



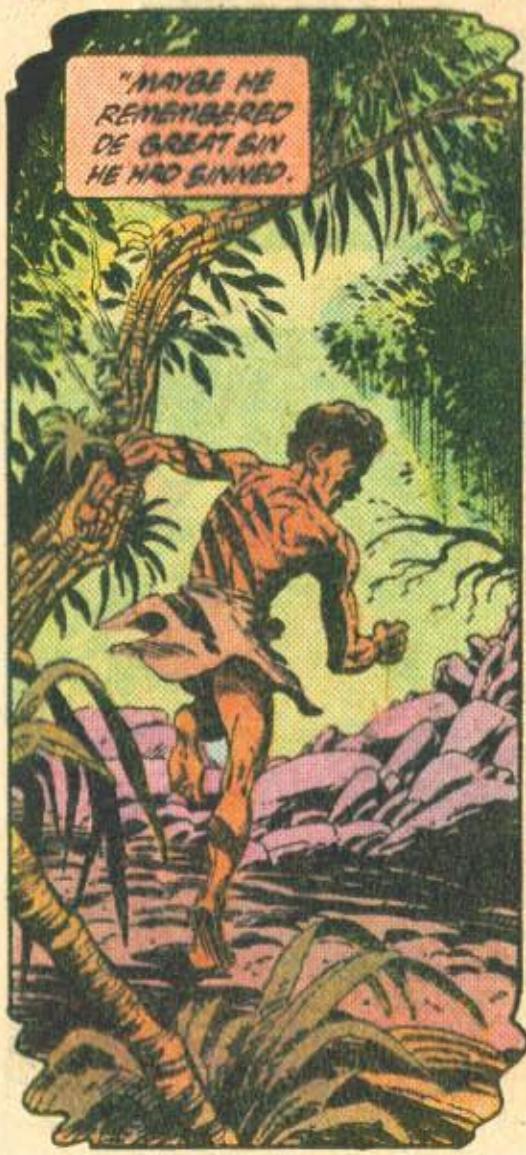
"DE UNWORDY ONE LED DE
BARBARIANS INTO THE JUNGLE.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN MADE
MAD WID DE TORTURE.



"ON ALL CODER NIGHTS,
OUR WARRIORS GUARDED DE
TERRITORY. BUT ON DE NIGHTS
OF DE SILVER CIRCLE...

"MAYBE DE UNWORDY
ONE REMEMBERED
FINALLY, WHEN DE
NIGHT CAME.

"MAYBE HE
REMEMBERED
DE GREAT SIN
HE HAD SINNED.



"MAYBE HE
HAD DE TIME
TO REPENT.



"I GUESS WE BE
NEVER KNOWING
FOR SURE."



"A FEISUME!
WE'VE FOUND THE
CULTIST SWINE!"

"HE'S BEEN
MAULED TO DEATH!
THE CAT-GOD!
SHE MUST'VE..."

"A FEISUME!
LET'S GO BACK!
THE CURSE...THE
LEGENDS..."

"SHUT UP, MOSACH! IT WAS A JUNGLE
CAT, NOTHING MORE." "I'VE
KILLED MANY SUCH
BEASTS IN
MY TIME..."

"...AND MY
TROPHY ROOM HAS
ROOM FOR ONE
MORE CAT'S
HEAD."

"GHHH.
LISTEN..."

"WHEN DE CHEETAH RETURNED TO URZKARTAGA,
SHE BE SATISFIED. HER TEED AND CLAWS BE CRIMSON
UNDER DE LIGHT OF DE BLOOD MOON."

"DE LIFE OF
DE VINE MAD
BEEN REBORN.

"ONLY LATER DID IT BECOME
CLEAR DAT NOT ALL DE INADELS
BE SACRIFICED DAT NIGHT."



"AT LEAST TWO ESCAPED
DE JUDGMENT OF DE
CAT-GOD."

"DE SAME TWO WHO LED DE
RAID DAT TERRIBLE NIGHT...
WHEN DE CHEETAH DIED."

BUT LATER, OUR FOLLOWERS LEARNED ABOUT DE DEATH OF DE UNWORDY ONE.

IN ALL DE CENTURIES, DE CHEETAH HAD NEVER KILLED ONE OF HER OWN FOLLOWERS.

(THEY BEGAN KILLING THE PRIESTS, FEEDING THEM TO THE GREAT CAT. THEY CORRUPTED THE SACRAMENT.)

(WE TRIED TO WARN THEM THAT THE MARK OF THE CULT FORBIDS US TO SERVE OURSELVES TO THE CHEETAH. THE UNWORTHY ONE HAD MERELY BEEN KILLED, NOT DEVOURIED.)

(BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN.)

(I PERFORMED THE RITUALS UNDER PAIN OF DEATH AND WATCHED AS MY BELOVED CHEETAH GREW WEAKER AND WEAKER WITH EVERY REPAST.)

DESPITE WE PRIESTS' WORDS DAT HE BE TRAITOR, DE ODDER CULTISTS BELIEVED IT TO BE A BAD OMEN. A SIGN, OF URZKARTAGA'S DISFAVOR.

MY PEOPLE PANICKED... BEYOND REASON.

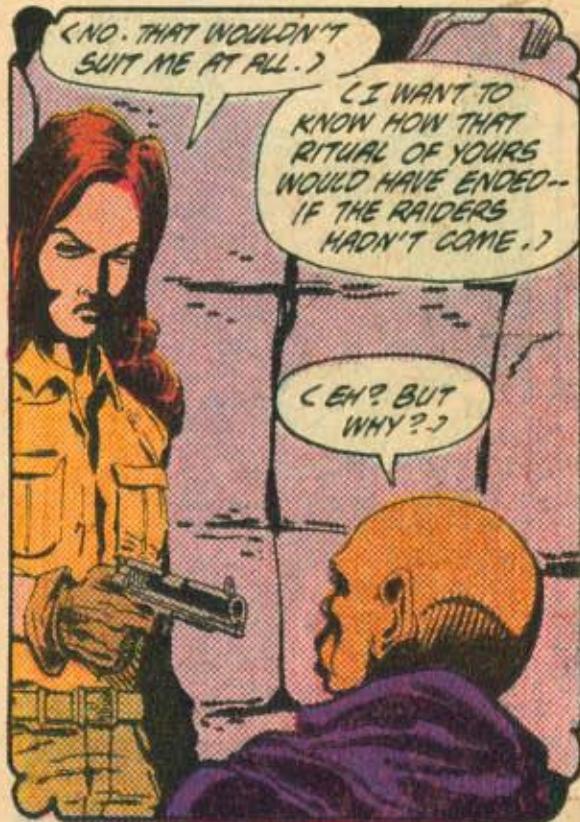
(FINALLY, I WAS THE ONLY PRIEST LEFT. AT LEAST ONE WAS NEEDED TO PERFORM THE BLOOD SACRAMENT.)

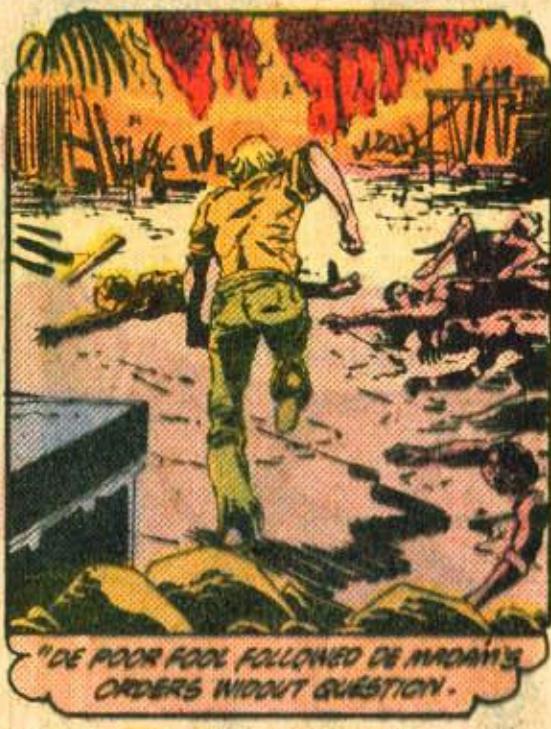
(THE FOLLOWERS BEGAN TO SEE WHAT THEIR BLIND PANIC HAD DONE.)

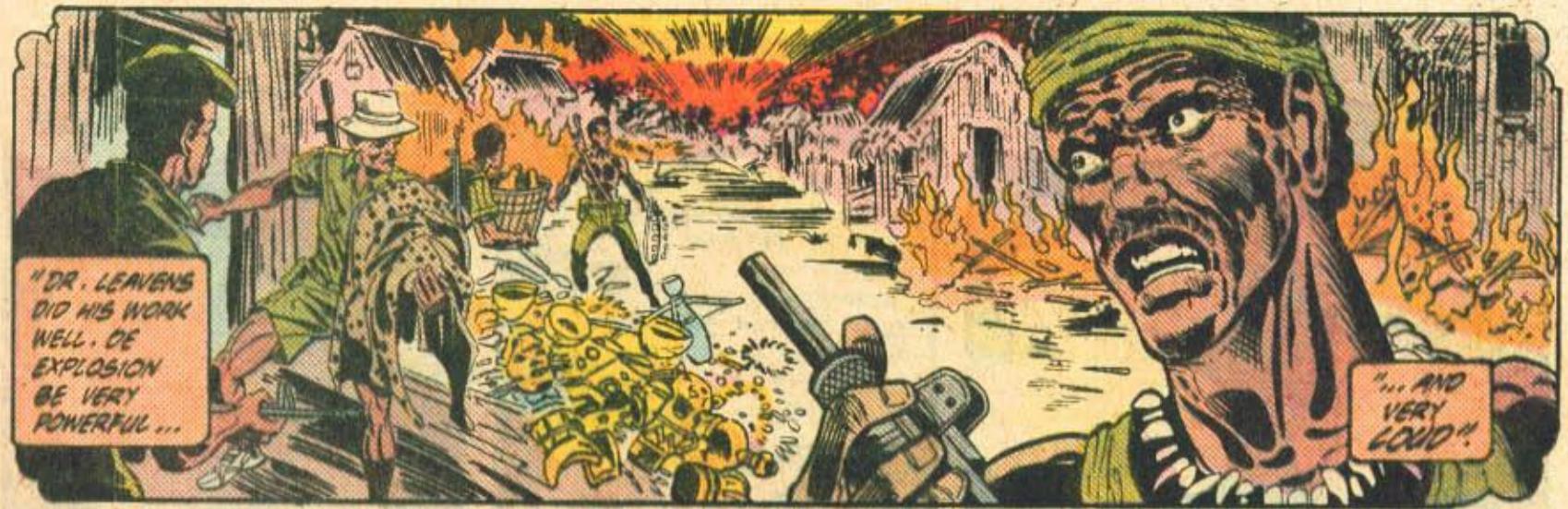
(I PRAYED FOR A MIRACLE.)

(THAT'S WHEN I LEARNED OF YOUR EXPEDITION.)









ALL RIGHT.
IT'S DONE!

WELL THEN, CHUMA,
YOU HAVE YOUR
SACRIFICE. LET'S
GET ON WITH IT.

IT'S NOT QUITE
SO SIMPLE,
MADAM..?

THE BLOOD OF
THE KILL MUST BE
SHARED BY THE
BETROTHED..?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT??

TO CONSUMMATE
THE INITIAL MARRIAGE
BETWEEN THE NEW
CHEETAH AND
URQKARTAGA, YOU
MUST PARTAKE OF
THE SACRIFICIAL
BLOOD WHILE IT
STILL BURNS..?

SO THAT IT
MAY BREW WITHIN
YOU AND BECOME
PART OF YOU..?

THEN, AND
ONLY THEN, CAN IT BE WORTHY
ENOUGH TO BE CONSUMED BY
THE HUNGERING PLANT GOD..?

YOU'RE TELLING
ME I HAVE TO
DRINK LEAVENS'
BLOOD!??

BUT THAT
OLD WOMAN--
THE ORIGINAL
CHEETAH--SHE
DIDN'T...

HER INITIATION
WAS MANY YEARS
AGO, MADAM. AND
IT WAS THE SAME..?

THE
BARBARIANS
DRAW NEARER..?

THE
DECISION
IS YOURS..?

DE MADAM BENT OVER
DE SACRIFICE AND DUG
HER FINGERS DEEP
INTO DE WOUNDS
AND PULLED DE
SKIN APART.

SHE
SCOOPED DEEP
INTO DE BODY,
ALMOST TO HER
ELBOWS..!

"... AND FEASTED
ON DE RICH,
HOT BLOOD."

"BACK IN DE TEMPLE, HER BODY
BE MADE BARE IN PREPARATION
FOR DE SACRAMENT.



"AFTER
CONSUMING
A BREW TO
DULL HER PAIN,
SHE BE READY.

"IN MY HEAD DERE BE DE
SOUNDS I DOUTHT I
WOULD NEVER HEAR AGAIN.



"DE SOUNDS
OF DE DRUMS.



"I STIRRED DE
WORDY BLOOD OF
DE SACRIFICE AND
PRAYED DE ANCIENT
PRAYERS.



"DEN OFFERED IT
TO DE GREAT GOD.

"URZKARTAGA
ACCEPTED HIS
BRIDE.

"NOW CAME
DE RETURNING
OF DE GIFT.

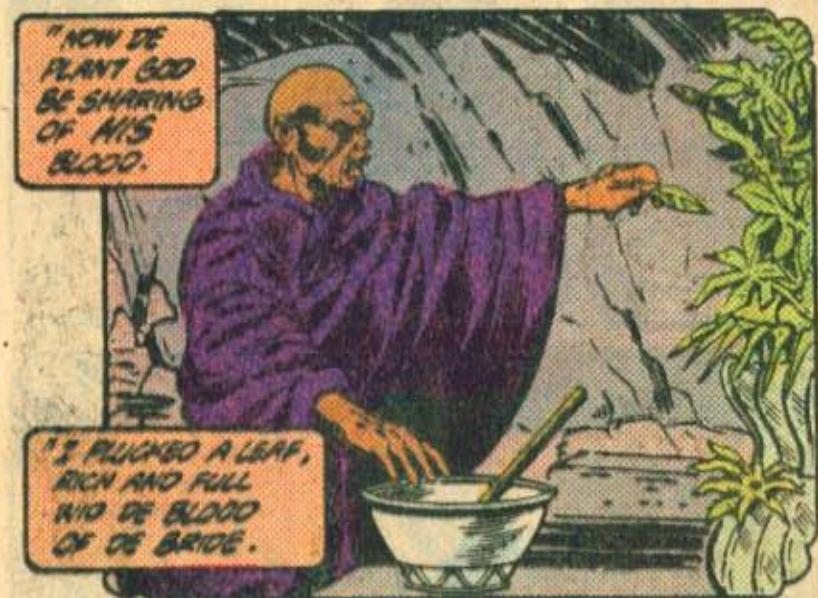
"I DRESSED DE
MADAM IN DE SKIN
OF DE CAT-GOD
AND PAINTED DE
SACRED DESIGNS
ON HER FACE.



"I COULD HEAR DE
BARBARIANS
GETTING CLOSER.



"BUT MY HANDS BE
STEADY. I COULD
NOT FAIL AGAIN.





"DAT NIGHT, DE CHEETAH
FEASTED UNTIL HER BELLY
BE BLOATED. DIS TIME,
DERE WERE NO SURVIVORS,
NO ONE TO TELL DE TALE.

"AFTER SETTING DE
TORCH TO DE TEMPLE
CITY, DE MADAM AND
I CARRIED DE GREAT
PLANT-GOD BACK TO
ENGLAND. DAT NIGHT
OF SLAUGHTER
SUSTAINED URZKARTAGA,
AND DE CHEETAH, FOR
MANY MOONS.

"WHEN DE DAWN CAME, DE
MADAM BE LIKE A DRUNKEN
WOMAN. DE WINE OF POWER
INTOXICATED HER. SHE
BE ADDICTED.

"YOU SEE, DE
ORIGINAL CEREMONY
BE CALLING FOR
URZKARTAGA'S
BRIDE TO BE A
VIRGIN.

"DE MADAM BE SINGLE.
I DID NOT KNOW.

"BUT DERE BE
ONE TRAGIC FLAW,
ONE DAT I BE NOT
PREPARED FOR.

"WHAT DE
MADAM
CALLED 'SIDE
EFFECTS.'

"URZKARTAGA BE A VERY
JEALOUS AND SPITEFUL GOD.

"BETWEEN DE
CYCLES OF DE
FULL MOONS, DE
MADAM'S BODY STARTED TO
DETERIORATE. IT BECAME
WEAK, BRITTLE.

"ONLY AS
DE CHEETAH
COULD SHE
BE STRONG.

"DE INITIAL POTION EVENTUALLY RAN OUT,
BUT DE CHEETAH NEEDED IT TO SURVIVE.
AND DE PLANT-GOD NEEDED DE CHEETAH."

IT BE A MARRIAGE
WHERE DIVORCE BE
MEANING DEATH TO
BOTH MATES.

HUNTING DOWN DE
SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS, TO
KEEP DE PLANT--AND HER--
ALIVE, BECAME DE CENTER
OF DE MADAM'S WORLD...
UNTIL DE
MAGIC LASSO--
A NEW TREASURE
DAT SHE HAD
TO POSSESS.

BUT WHEN SHE
FINALLY WON IT,
SOMETHING
STRANGE
HAPPENED.

"DE MADAM
RESEARCHED IT FOR
MANY NIGHTS, WID
AN OBSESSION DAT
RIVALLED DE HUNGER
OF DE PLANT.

EVEN
I BE
BAFFLED
BY IT.

"IT BE AS IF DE ROPE
BE CONTROLLING
HER NOW.

"SENDING MY
MINERVA AWAY."

WHEN SHE HEARD YOU BE COMING, SHE ORDERED ME TO STOP YOU, AND LET YOU NOT DIE IGNORANT.

NOW I BE FINISHED. DE MADAM WILL NEED ME TO CARE FOR DE PLANT.

THEN THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE GOING NOW?

YES, I BE...

YOU SPOKE! BUT DE DRUG SHOULD BE PARALYZING YOUR VOICE LONG AGO!

YOU TRICKED ME!

THAT'S RIGHT, MR. CHUMA. AND NOW, THE CHARADE IS OVER!

NO! DE TEA! HOW!?

AN OLD AMAZON TRADITION, MR. CHUMA.

EVER SINCE MY MOTHER AND SISTERS WERE DRUGGED AND ENSLAVED CENTURIES AGO, THE AMAZONS WORKED TO MASTER THE ART OF HERBOLOGY.

BY THE TIME I WAS BORN, THE PRACTICE HAD EVOLVED INTO A MERE SYMBOLIC FORMALITY.

NOW, MR. CHUMA, WHERE IS DR. MINERVA?

THEY LEARNED TO IDENTIFY MOST TOXIC HERBS BY SIMPLY SMELLING, EVEN THROUGH THE MOST OVERPOWERING BREW.

NO! I BE TELLING YOU NODINS! LET ME GO!

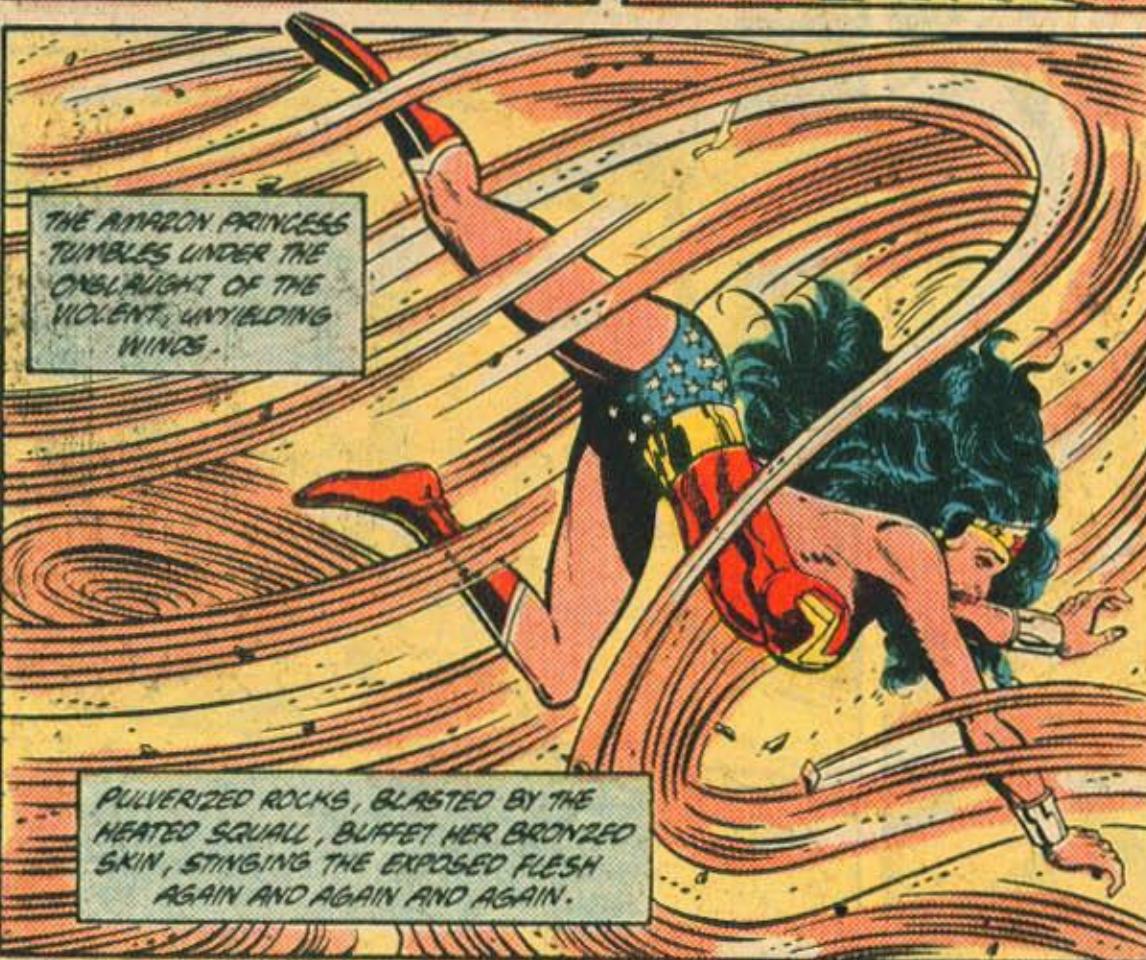
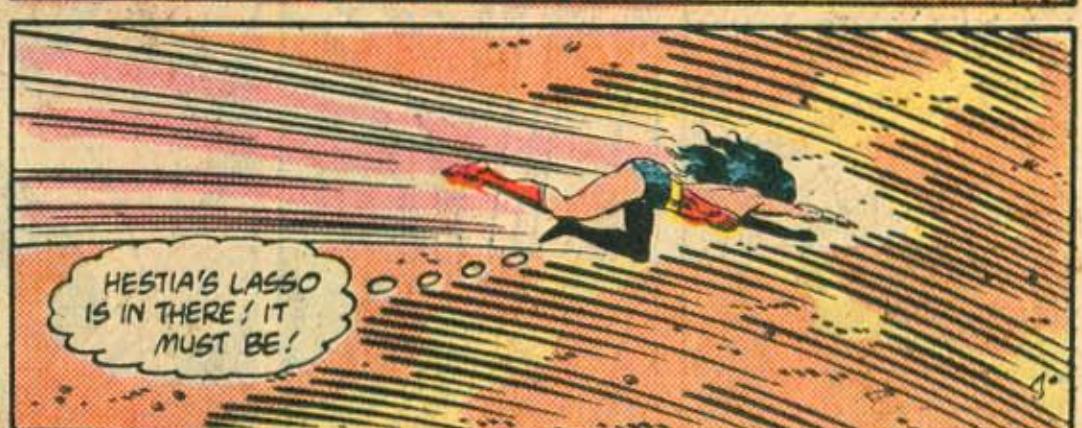
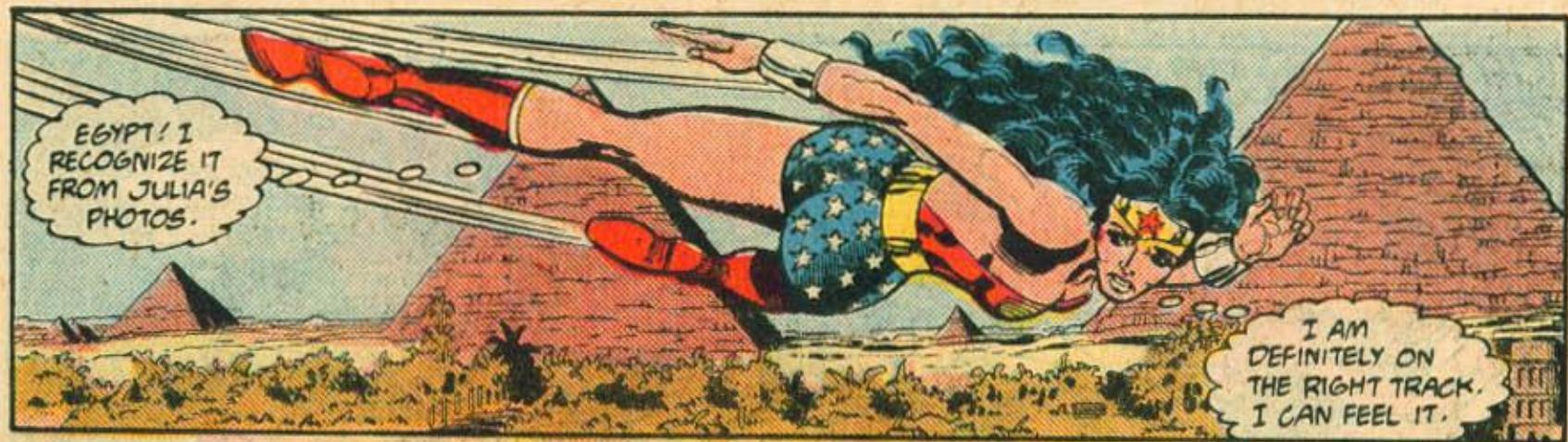
MAYBE THIS TRAVEL BAG WILL TELL ME, THEN.

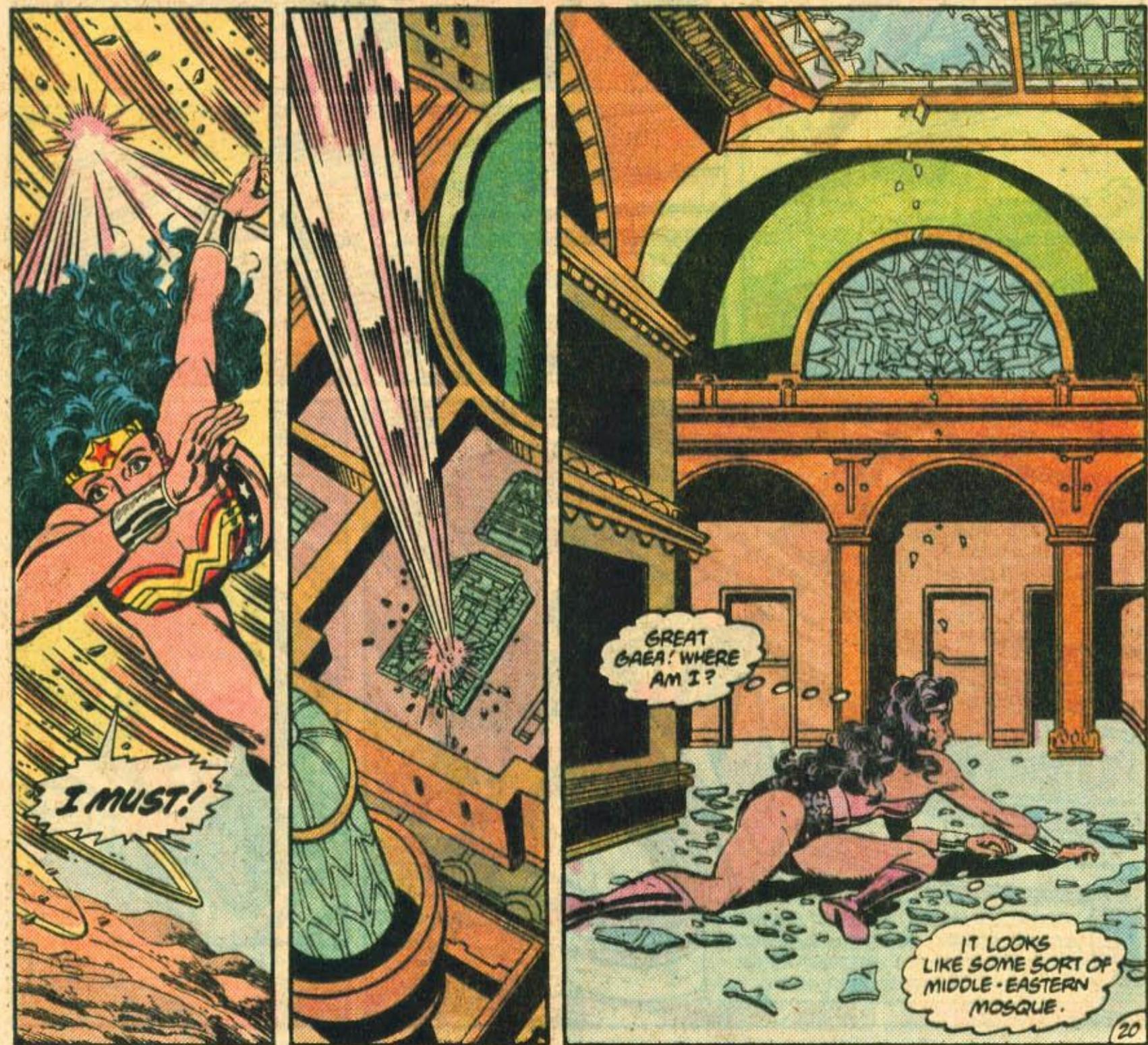
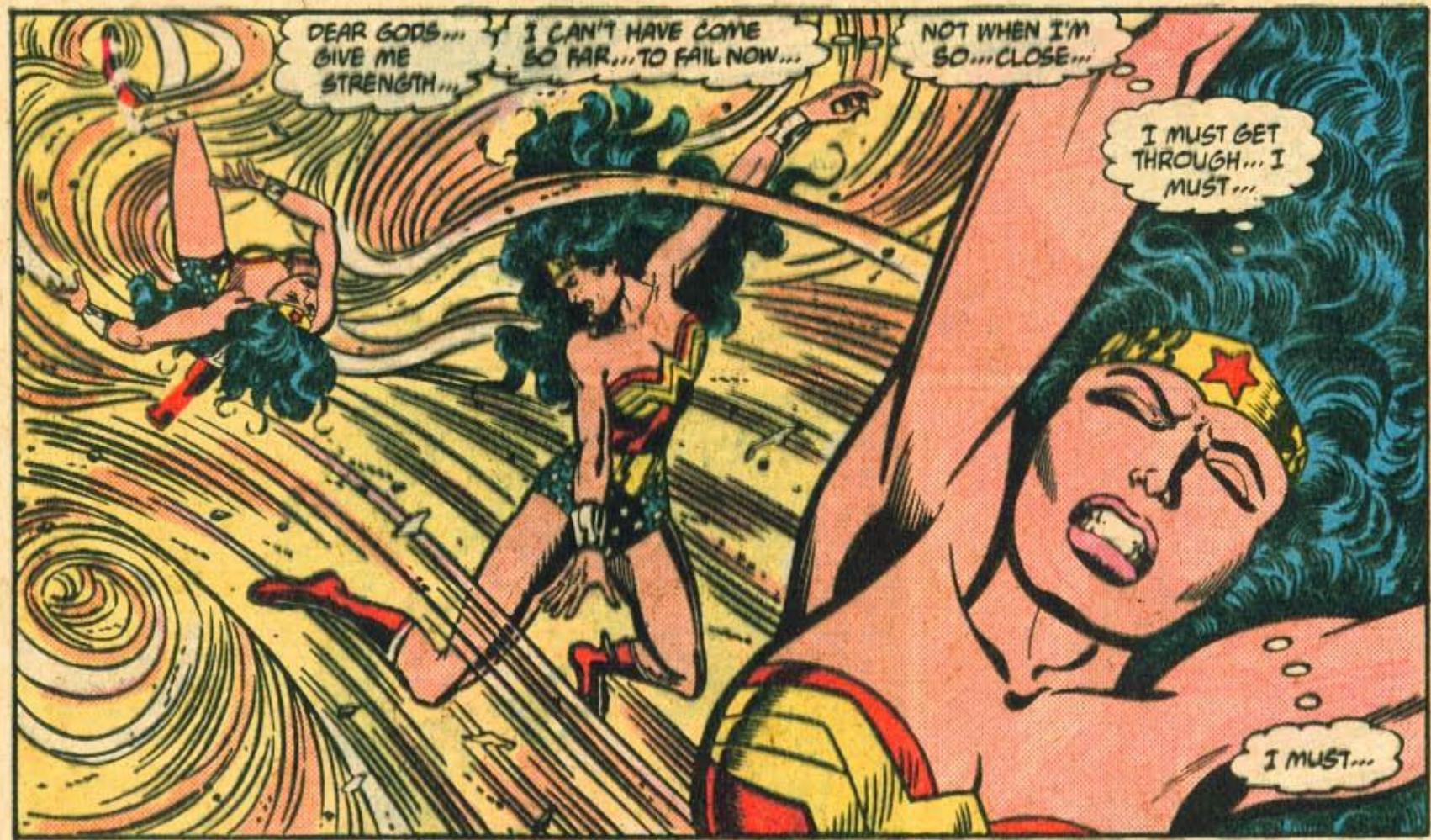
"NO, GIVE IT BACK. YOU BARBARIAN WITCH! GIVE IT..."

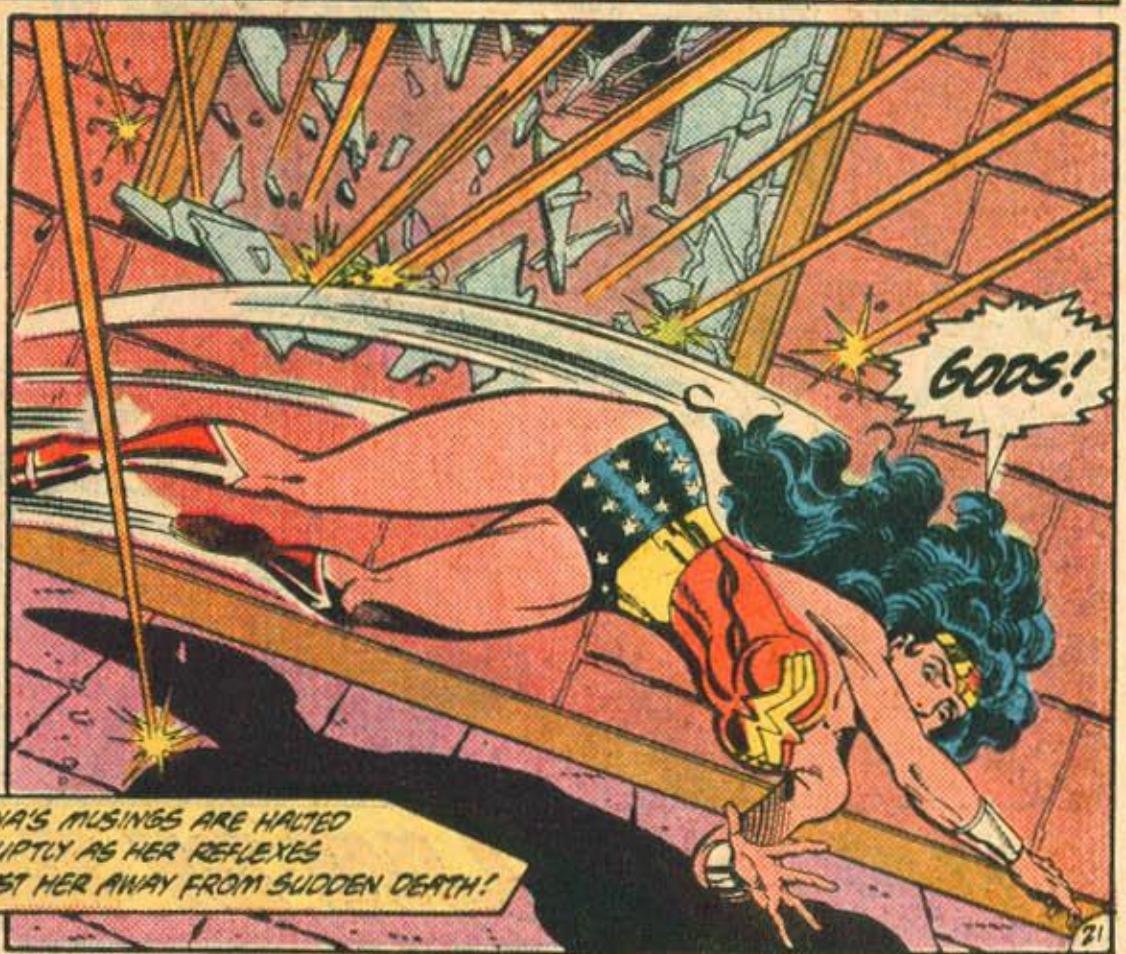
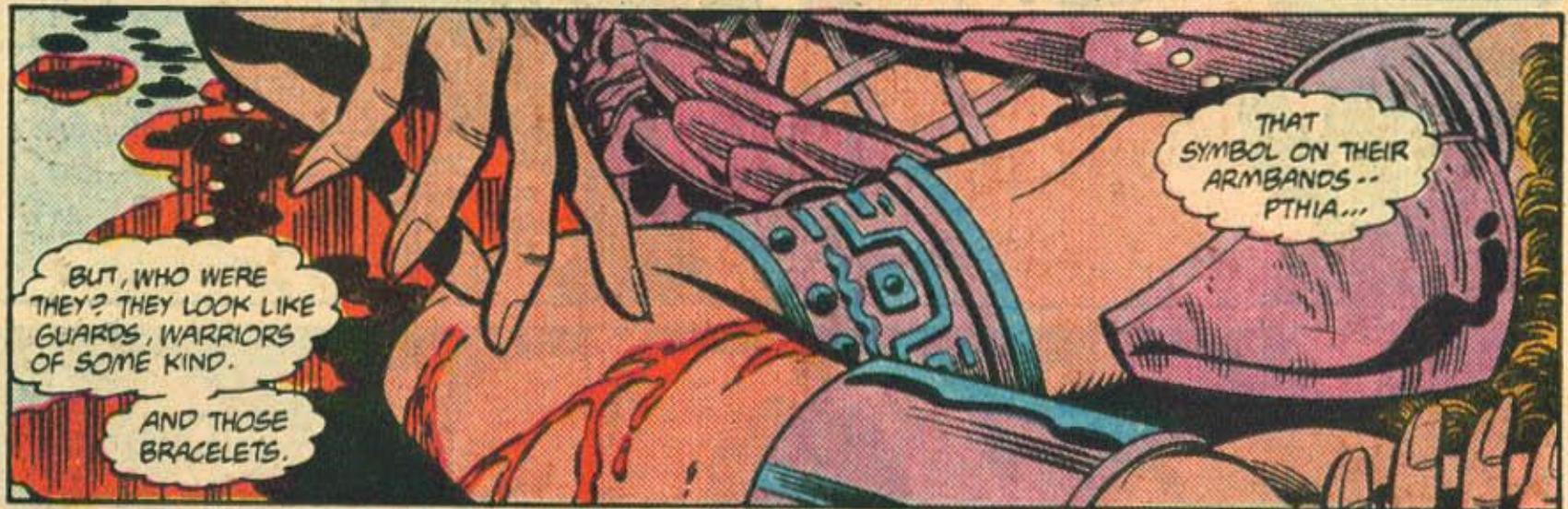
WHAT'S THIS? AN AIRLINE TICKET...

...TO EGYPT.











NEXT ISSUE: **TO LIVE BY THE SWORD**