



MARVEL
COMICS

BATMAN/PUNISHER

O'NEIL • KITSON • PASCOE



DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
ROSS ANDRU
HIS ART AND STORYTELLING GRACED
MANY BATMAN STORIES,
THE FIRST PUNISHER STORIES,
AND THE FIRST DC-MARVEL CROSSOVER

BATMAN/PUNISHER: LAKE OF FIRE.

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BATMAN PUNISHER

L A K E O F F I R E

DENNIS O'NEIL
W R I T E R

BARRY KITSON
& JAMES PASCOE
A R T I S T S

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
C O L O R I S T

DIGITAL CHAMELEON
S E P A R A T I O N S

KEN BRUZENAK
L E T T E R E R

C O V E R B Y
KITSON & PASCOE

HIDES AND SCREAMS AND
ROARS...AN UNENDING
CACOPHONY OF PAIN THAT
ECHOS OFF THE STONE
WALLS FOR ALL OF
ETERNITY...

NO THE STINK OF
FLESH THAT BURNS
IN THE RIVER OF
FLAME-BURSTS, BUT
IS NEVER CONSUMED.

HERE IS A
PLACE OF
TORMENT.

THESE ARE THE CROWED,
THESE ARE THE CANNED,
THESE ARE THE SOLES,
WHOSE PRIDE AND ARROGANCE
AND DISOBEDIENCE ENRAGED
THEM THE PUNISHMENT WHICH
WILL CONTINUE LONG AFTER THE
SUN IS ASHES.

SEE THEM, HEAR THEM,
WITNESS THEIR FATE
BUT DO NOT MITY THEM,
FOR THEY DESERVE
THEIR AGONY.

AND THIS IS THE SOURCE OF THE FIERY RIVER, THE JUST AND REMORSELESS RETRIBUTION THE WRETCHED SUFFER-A BLAZING SWORD CLUTCHED IN THE FISTS OF THE HOLIEST OF HEAVEN'S CHOSEN, THE VENERABLE SAINT DUMAS.



HE WAITS, HE WATCHES, HE KNOWS AND HE JUDGES.

HE PEERS INTO THE DEPTHS OF YOUR BEING AND HE NAMES YOU.

HE CALLS YOU FOOL.

HE CALLS YOU HERETIC.

HE CALLS YOU SINNER...



HE TURNS TO THE THRUMMING COMPUTERS, THEY HAVE INTERCEPTED AND DECODED A MESSAGE FROM THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.

SOMEONE STOLE A FORMULA FOR ROCKET FUEL FROM THE PENTAGON. THE F.B.I. THINKS A MAN NAMED CASS RIMER DID IT, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND HIM.

I DO.

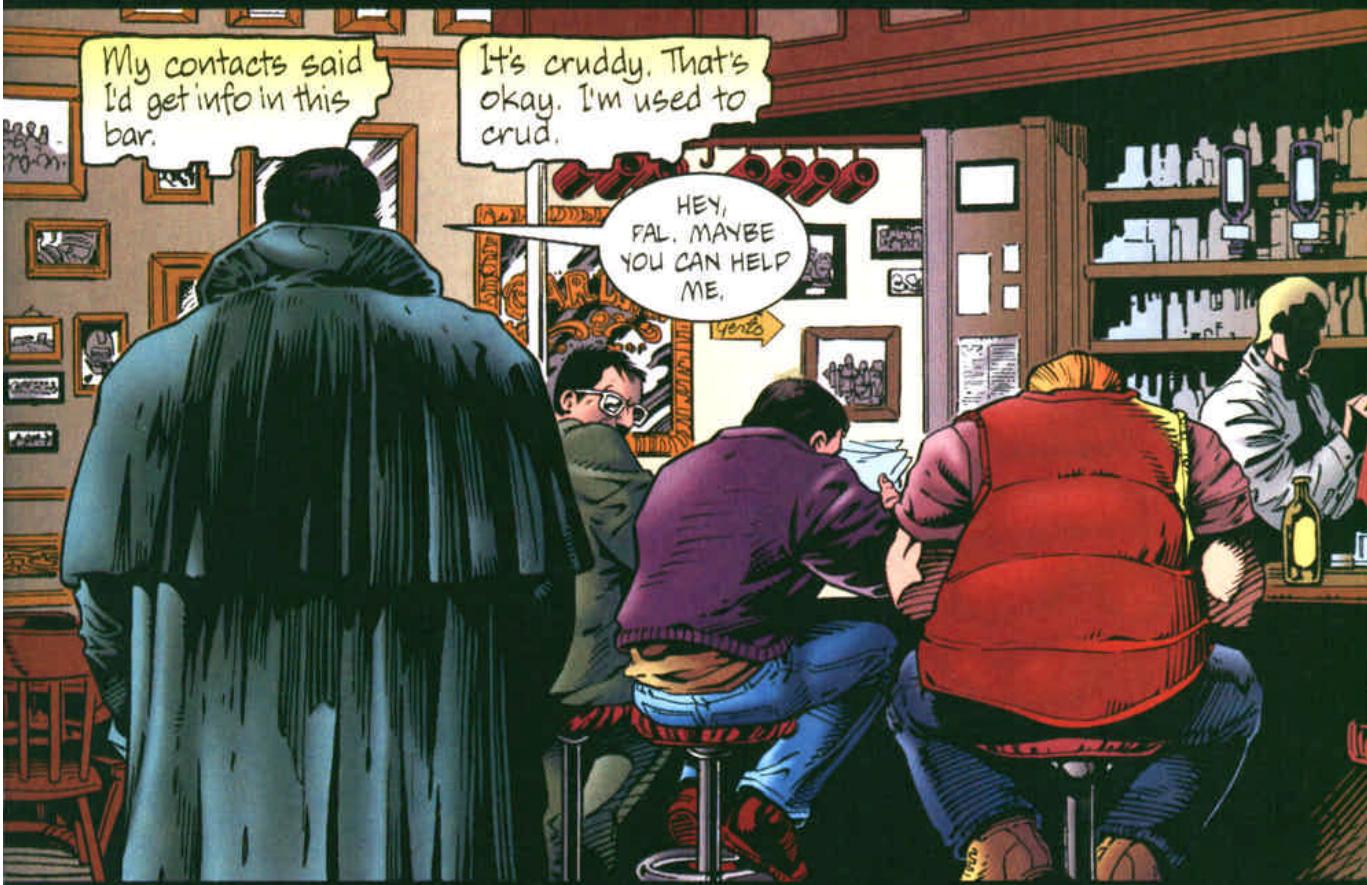
BRUCE WAYNE'S DATABASE TELLS ME THAT RIMER HAS TIES TO A LOCAL CRIMINAL--TONY BRESSI.

IT IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT HE HAS BEEN GRATEFUL FOR THE WORK OF WAYNE, THE ORIGINAL BATMAN.

I CAN FIND BRESSI.

BATMAN CAN FIND HIM AND RIMER. I CAN BE BETTER THAN WAYNE EVER WAS!

THAT WILL PLEASE ST. DUMAS. I KNOW IT WILL.





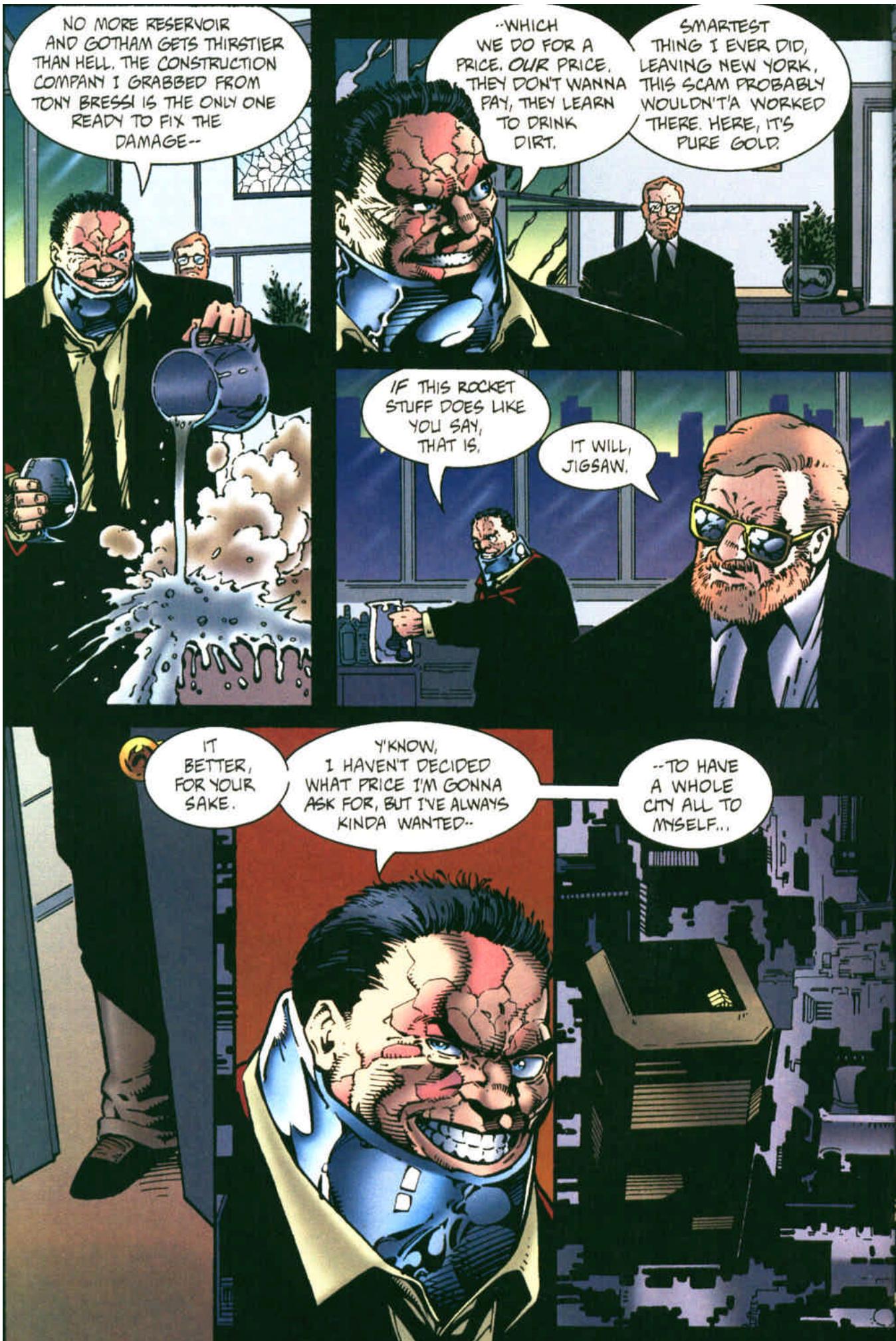






ACTUALLY, IT
SEPARATES THE OXYGEN
MOLECULES FROM THE HYDROGEN
MOLECULES AND IGNITES THE
OXYGEN, BUT THE EFFECT
IS--









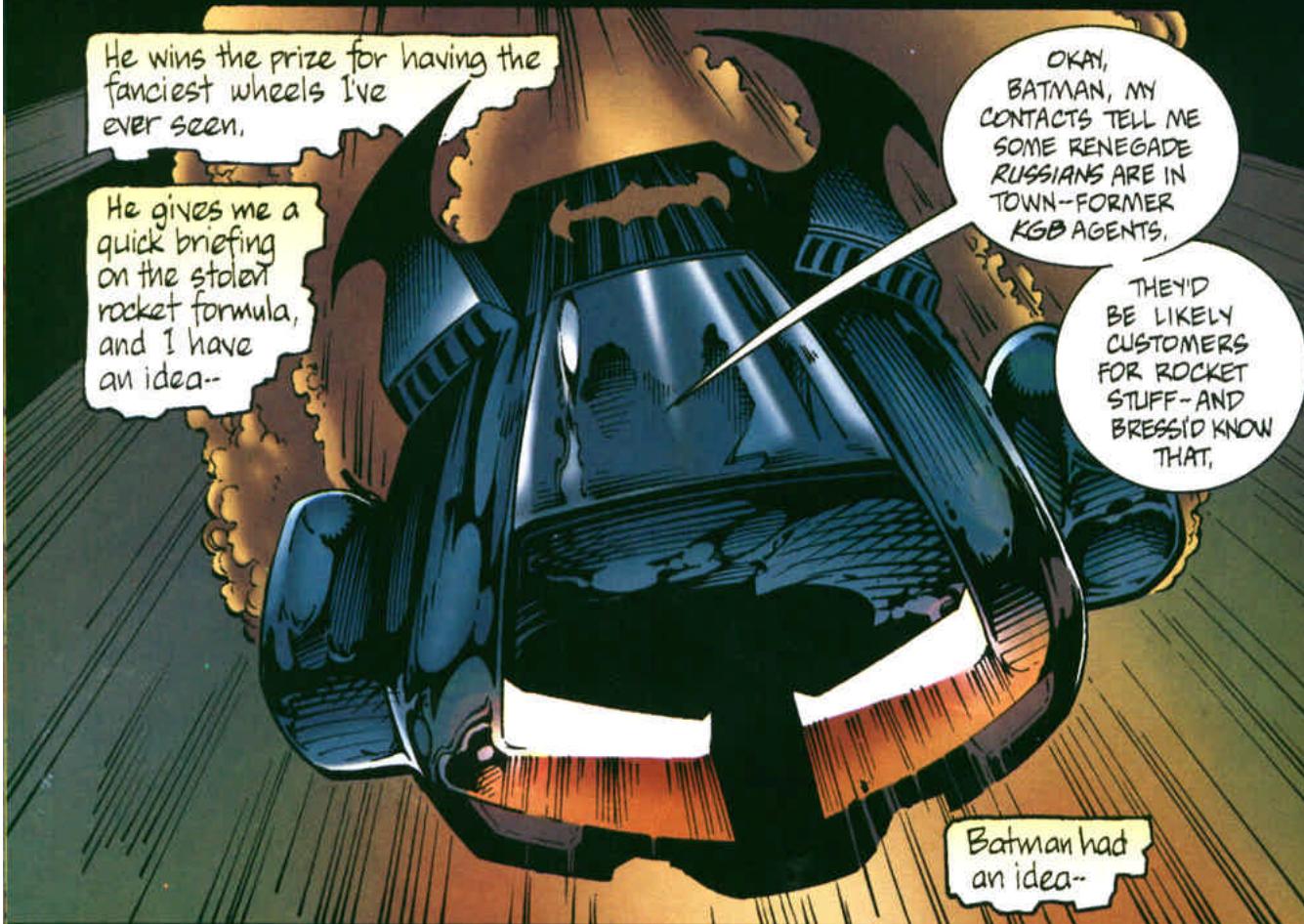
























HE DOES NOT REALLY SEE THE DARK STREETS THAT BLUR PAST THE CAR.

HIS FRUSTRATION IS AN AGONY--

NO HELP FROM THE SAINT, NO HELP FROM ANYONE.

IF ONLY THE PUNISHER HADN'T ESCAPED--

NO!

I DON'T NEED HIM.

WAYNE WOULD HAVE FOUND A WAY...

...HE'D USE THE COMPUTERS.

COMPUTER ON LINE

I CAN LINK UP WITH THE MACHINES IN THE CAVE.

SEARCH THE DATA BASE FOR INFORMATION ON BRESSI.

THIS MIGHT BE SOMETHING...BRESSI'S CONSTRUCTION COMPANY BUILT A SKYSCRAPER--THE KOCHMAN BUILDING.

JIGSAW TOOK OVER BRESSI'S OPERATIONS... HE MIGHT BE THERE.

THE BUILDING IS NEARBY. IT TAKES HIM LESS THAN TWO MINUTES--

--TO ARRIVE AT A STEEL-
AND GLASS TOWER IN
THE HEART OF THE CITY.

THE MIDNIGHT STREETS AROUND
IT ARE EMPTY, EXCEPT FOR A SINGLE
LUXURY AUTOMOBILE. THAT MAY MEAN
NOTHING--OR IT MAY MEAN SOMEONE'S
INSIDE THE BUILDING.

THERE'S A LIGHT IN
A HIGH WINDOW
ON THE TOP FLOOR.

THE LOCK ON THE
ENTRANCE IS EASILY
BROKEN AND-

EVERYTHING IS SHADOW AND
SILENCE EXCEPT FOR A
MURMUR OF VOICES COMING
FROM A DOOR AT THE END
OF THE CORRIDOR.

--THE SELF-SERVICE
ELEVATOR IS
OPERATING.

TWO MEN
TALKING!

-ALMOST TIME,
RIMER?

BY NOW
THEY'VE ALREADY
STARTED DIVERTING
WATER TOWARD
THE NEW
RESERVOIR.

THE ROCKET FUEL
AND PRIMER
EXPLOSIVE ARE SET.
AT CONTACT, THE
WHOLE SYSTEM
WILL BURST
INTO FLAMES.

BOTH
RESERVOIRS WILL
BE SMOLDERING
SLAG HEAPS,
AND--

MY CONSTRUCTION
COMPANY WILL BE THE
ONLY ONE IN TOWN
READY TO REBUILD
'EM.

NICE. I'LL BE
ABLE TO NAME
MY OWN PRICE,
AND IT WON'T BE
A BARGAIN. I'LL
OWN THIS Lousy
TOWN.





THREE ARE STREAKS OF GRAY IN THE BLACK OF THE EASTERN SKY. DAWN IS COMING.

THE TRIP TAKES HIM NINE MINUTES --

--AND WHEN HE REACHES THE RESERVOIR HE REALIZES THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHERE IN THE MASSIVE CONDUIT THE DEADLY ROCKET FUEL HAS BEEN HIDDEN.

HE HAS THIRTY SECONDS TO PREVENT A CATASTROPHE.

GOTHAM CITY CONDUIT

THE CRANE...! PERHAPS HE CAN SEE SOMETHING FROM THERE!

FEAR STABS AT THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH. THE RUMBLE GROWS LOUDER.

BECOMES A ROAR.

HE HEARS A DISTANT RUMBLE. THE ROARING WATERS FROM THE OLD RESERVOIR.



THEN, BATMAN LEARNS THE LOCATION OF THE HIDDEN ROCKET FUEL AS THE WATER SUDDENLY--



--ERUPTS INTO FLAME WHEN THE PRIMER EXPLODES!

FLAME THAT WILL RACE UNCHECKED THROUGH THE CITY'S UNDERGROUND SYSTEM OF PIPES--



-EXCEPT THE CONCRETE WALL OF THE CONDUIT SHATTERS, AND--



-THE FIERY LIQUID SPILLS HARMLESSLY INTO THE STREET.



HIGH ABOVE, BATMAN RADIOS A CALL TO SHUT DOWN THE SYSTEM. THEN--



--HE RELAXES.









This is getting me nowhere.



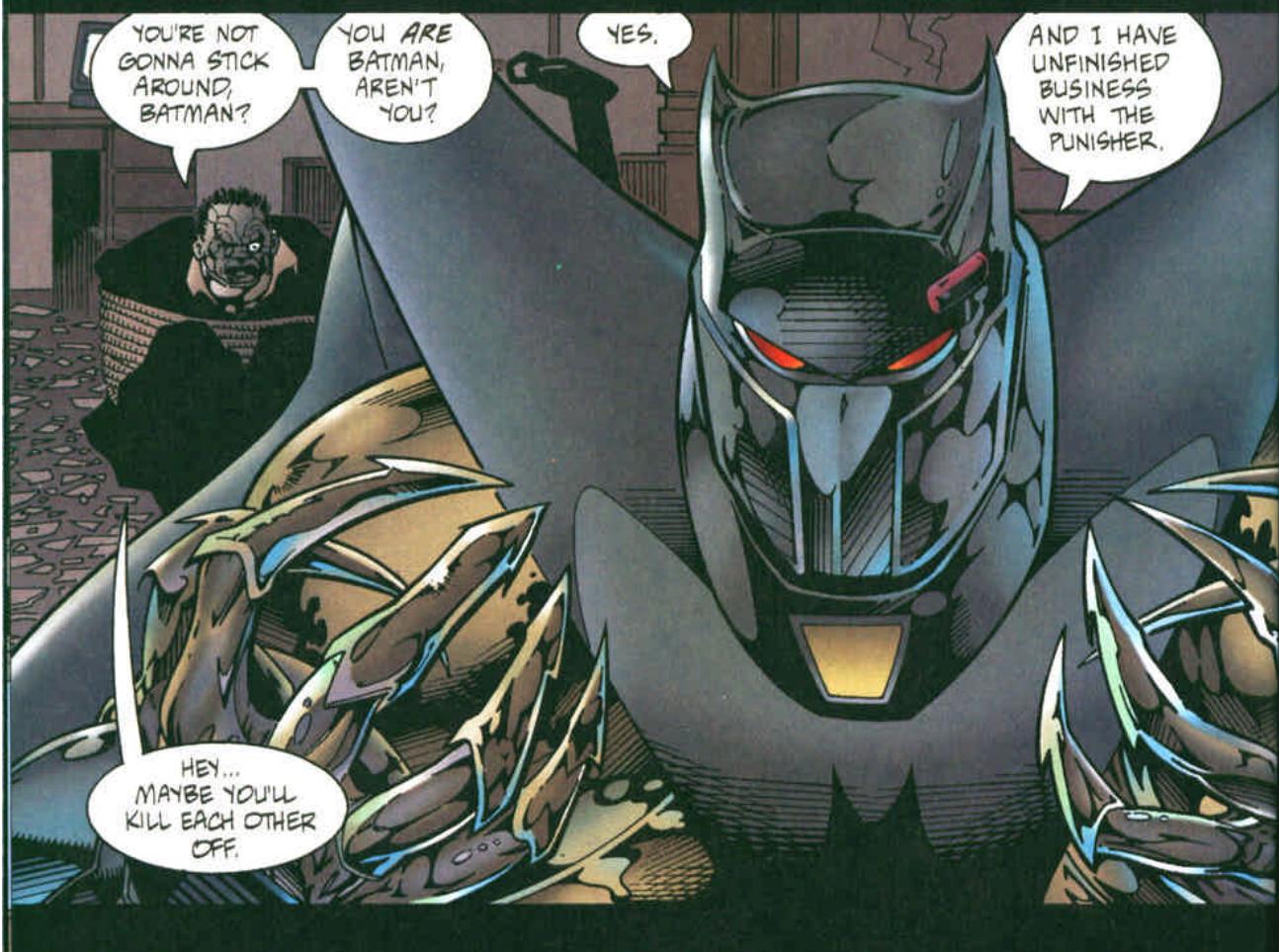
It takes all I've got, but I get my back and shoulders under him--



I see what he
wants to do.

I wonder if
he can possibly
make it.





MASKED
MEN ARE ALL
ALIKE...

... ALWAYS
TYING A MAN
UP...

WHY'D HE HAVE
TO MAKE IT SO
TIGHT?

HE
LIKES YOU...
KNOT!

AWWW...
HE WAS JUST
HANDING YOU A LINE,
JIGGY-POO.

THAT
SUPPOSED
TO BE
FUNNY?

Y'KNOW, IT
MUST BE TERRIBLE
NOT TO HAVE
A SENSE OF
HUMOR.

I BET YOU
HAVE TROUBLE
GETTING
DATES.

I BET YOU
EVEN HAVE
TROUBLE GETTING
FIGS.

NEXT
TIME I GO INTO
BUSINESS WITH A
NEW YORK CITY THUG,
I'LL PICK ONE WHO
CAN LAUGH AT
HIMSELF.



DITCHING
ME AT THE
BATHHOUSE WASN'T
NICE, OR SMART,
OR EVEN
USEFUL.

I'M STILL
TAKING YOU
IN.
NOW.

YOU
SAVED MY
LIFE, I WAS
HOPING IT WOULDN'T
COME TO A
PUNCH-UP
BETWEEN US-

FINE.
SURRENDER
AND IT
WON'T.

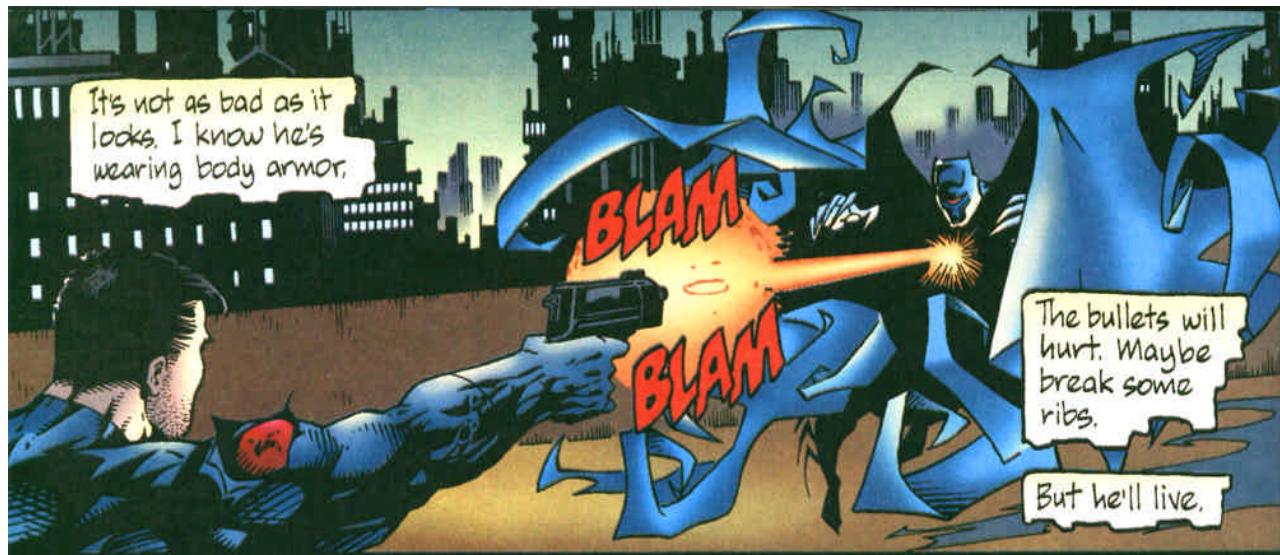
NOT
IN THE
PROGRAM.

YOU'LL
KEEP
GETTING
IN MY WAY
UNLESS I-

...DROP
YOU!











AFTER A WHILE, HE IS ABLE TO FILL HIS TORTURED LUNGS WITH THE COOL NIGHT AIR.

ST. DUMAS...
I FAILED.

BUT I TRIED.
I DID MY BEST.

YOU
UNDERSTAND
THAT, DON'T YOU?
THAT I DID MY
BEST?

ANSWER
ME, BLESSED
DUMAS--
PLEASE.

FORGIVE
ME!

IS THAT
TOO MUCH TO
ASK?

I GUESS
IT IS.



AND IN THESE LONG, TERRIBLE
MOMENTS, HE KNOWS THAT
A PLACE OF TORMENT DOES
NOT HAVE TO BE A LAKE OF
FIRE.

IT CAN BE A CITY THAT
IS LONELY, AND FILLED
WITH FAILURE.

NOR MUST THE DAMNED
ALWAYS SHRIEK AND
MOAN.

SOMETIMES, THEY
SUFFER IN
SILENCE.

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