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BY
JOHN
BYRNE

WONDER WOMAN®

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THE SUMMER SKY IS HEAVY
OVER GATEWAY CITY.

THE AIR CARRIES THE SUBTLE SCENT OF
IMPENDING RAIN, THE BREEZES IN THE
DEPTHES OF THESE MANMADE CANYONS
ARE COLDER THAN THE SEASON CALLS FOR.

A POET MIGHT SAY THE
CITY IS POISED, ALMOST
FROZEN, AS THOUGH
AWAITING TERRIBLE NEWS
FROM GREAT BATTLES
FOUGHT FAR, FAR AWAY.

THOSE MORE IN THE KNOW,
HOWEVER, WOULD SAY THAT
THE NEVER-ENDING BATTLE
IS ALL AROUND, ON EVERY
STREET, IN EVERY BUILDING.

AND HERE, AT THE
GATEWAY MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL MOST
PARTICULARLY.

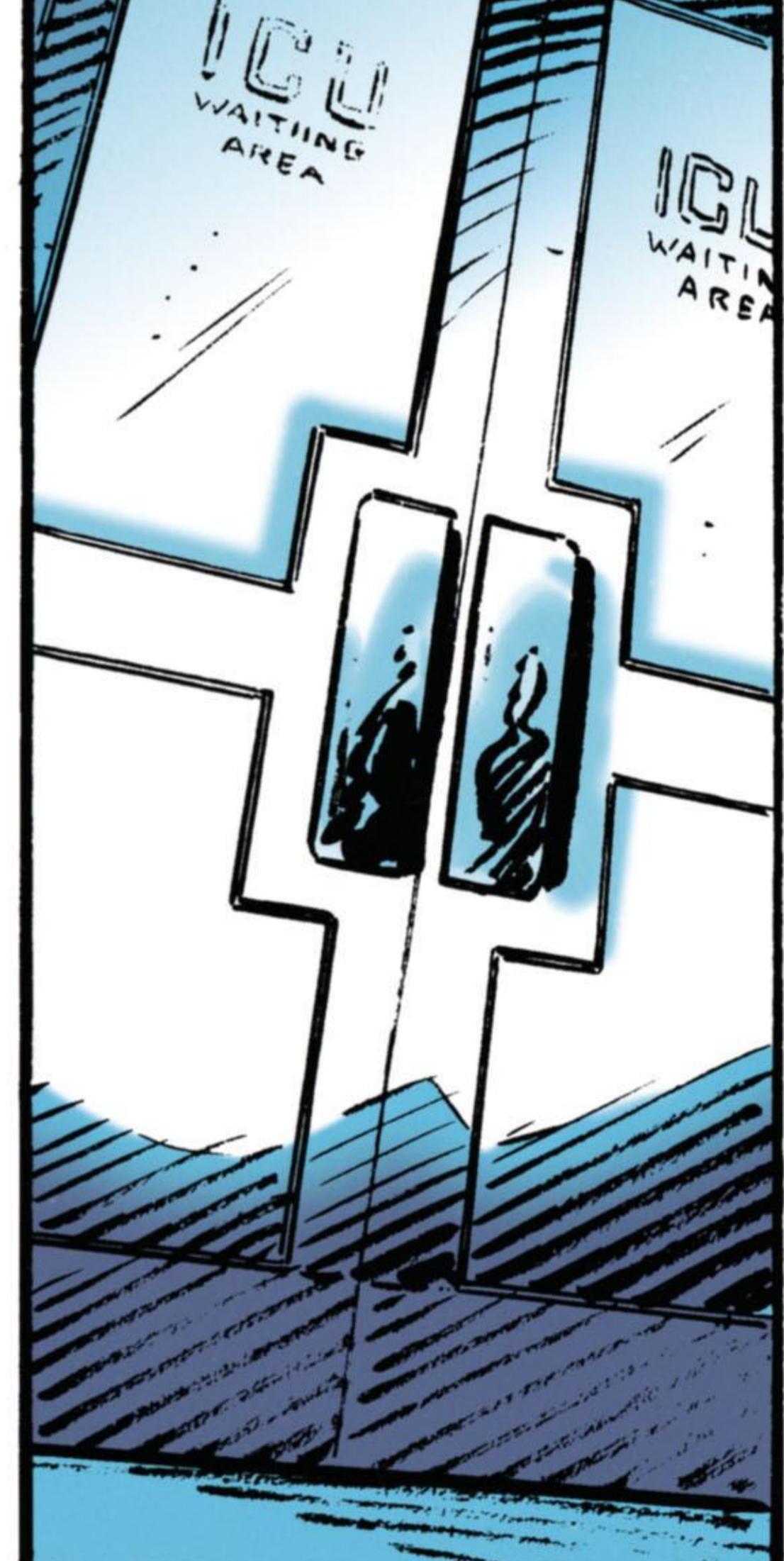
HERE HEARTS AND MINDS
ARE WEARY WITH THE
CONSTANCY OF THEIR WAR
WITH PAIN, DISEASE AND
HUMAN SUFFERING.

HERE IT TAKES SOMETHING
TRULY EXTRAORDINARY TO
CAUSE EYES TO WIDEN, TO
CAUSE MEN AND WOMAN TO
HALT IN THE MECHANICAL
REPETITIONS OF THEIR
DAILY ROUTINES.

BUT TODAY EYES ARE WIDE
INDEED, AND TODAY HEARTS
BEAT FASTER...

...AS THE HOSPITAL
GRAPEVINE FLASHES THE
WORD TO EVERY CORNER
OF THE SPRAWLING
STRUCTURE.

BOOM!



DEATH WATCH

A LEGEND WALKS THESE HALLS.

SUPERMAN!!

A LEGEND WITH A GRIM PURPOSE.

WHERE IS SHE? WHERE IS WONDER WOMAN?



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THIS WAY, SUPERMAN. DIANA
IS IN A PRIVATE WARD IN THE
INTENSIVE CARE UNIT.

IT'S REALLY
HIM! IT'S REALLY
SUPERMAN!

CASSIE, HUSH! THIS IS NO
TIME FOR YOUR...
ENTHUSIASM!

IN HERE, SUPERMAN.

SUPERMAN...?

HOW COULD I DO
OTHERWISE, YOUR
MAJESTY?
DOCTOR? WHAT'S
THE PROGNOSIS?

YOU CAME! MY
ETERNAL GRATITUDE
IS YOURS, SUPERMAN.

I... DON'T KNOW, SUPERMAN.
I'VE TREATED A LOT OF
HUMANITY'S AILMENTS IN
MY FIFTEEN YEARS WITH
THIS HOSPITAL...

"...BUT I'VE NEVER HAD TO TREAT SOMEONE WHOSE SOUL HAS BEEN... INCINERATED!!"

NERON
?!?

I THOUGHT WE'D SEEN THE LAST OF HIM!

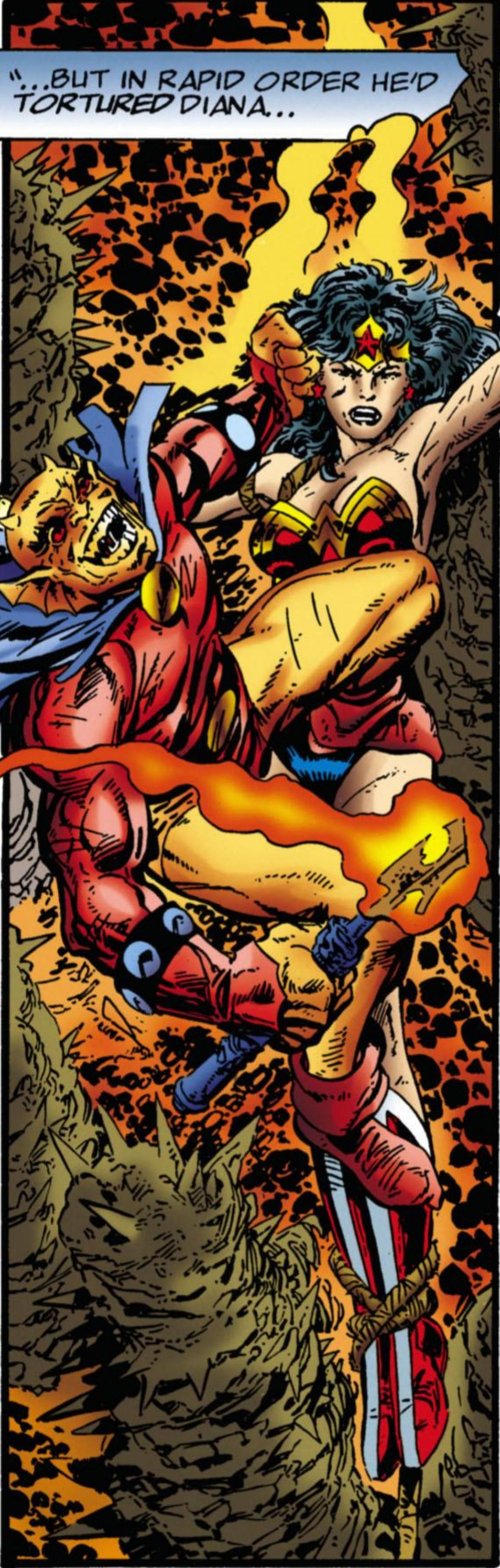
THEN YOU SHOW A NAIVETE UNEXPECTED IN ONE OF YOUR STATURE, MAN OF STEEL.

THE LIKES OF NERON CAN NEVER TRULY BE DESTROYED...

...THOUGH ARTEMIS HERE DID MANAGE TO HURT HIM!

BY VARIOUS MEANS WE'D ALL FOUND OURSELVES TRANSPORTED TO NERON'S REALM--CALL IT HELL FOR EASE OF REFERENCE.

"I'M NOT SURE WHAT HIS OVERALL SCHEME WAS, OTHER THAN PURE EVIL FOR ITS OWN SAKE..."



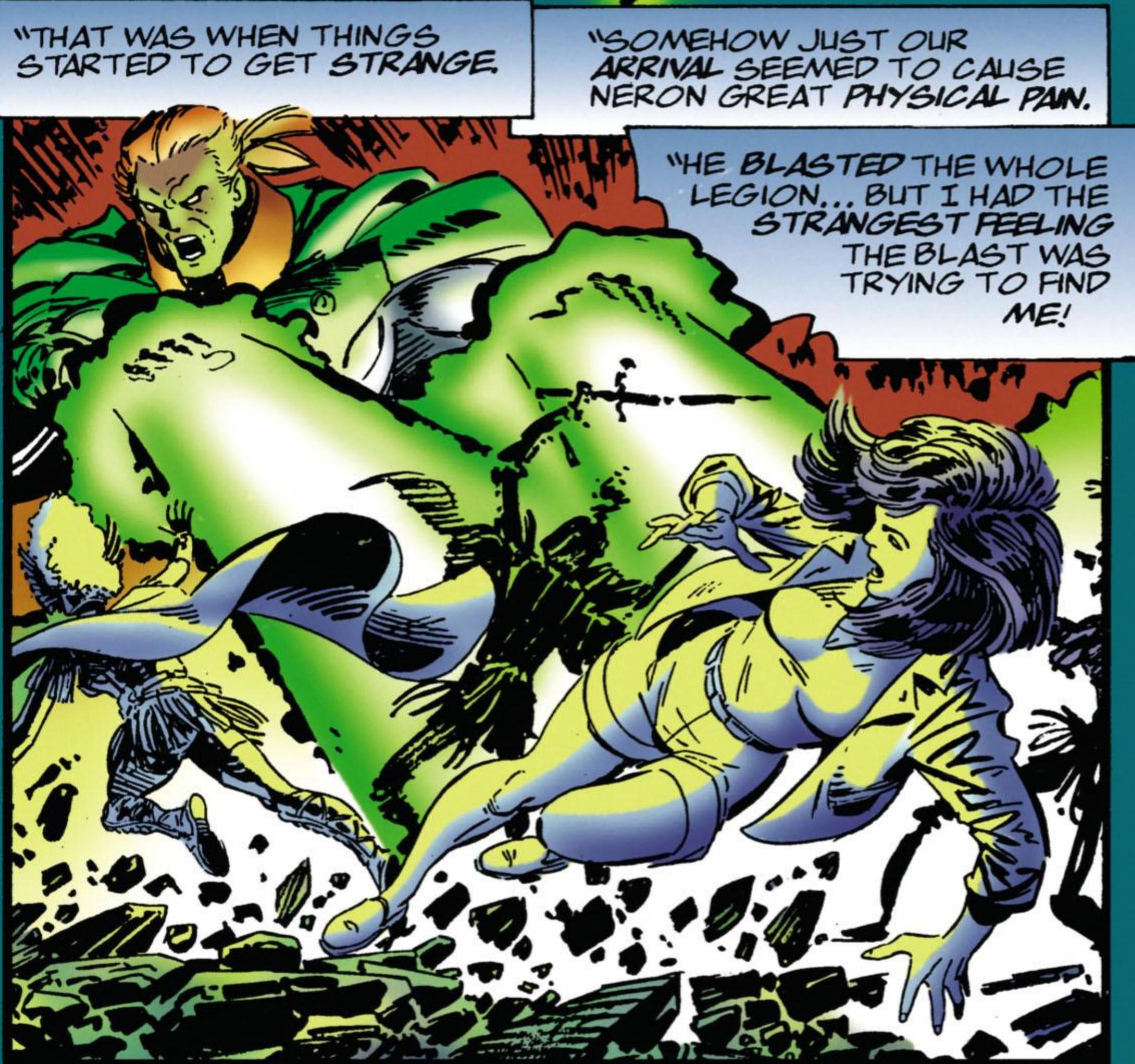
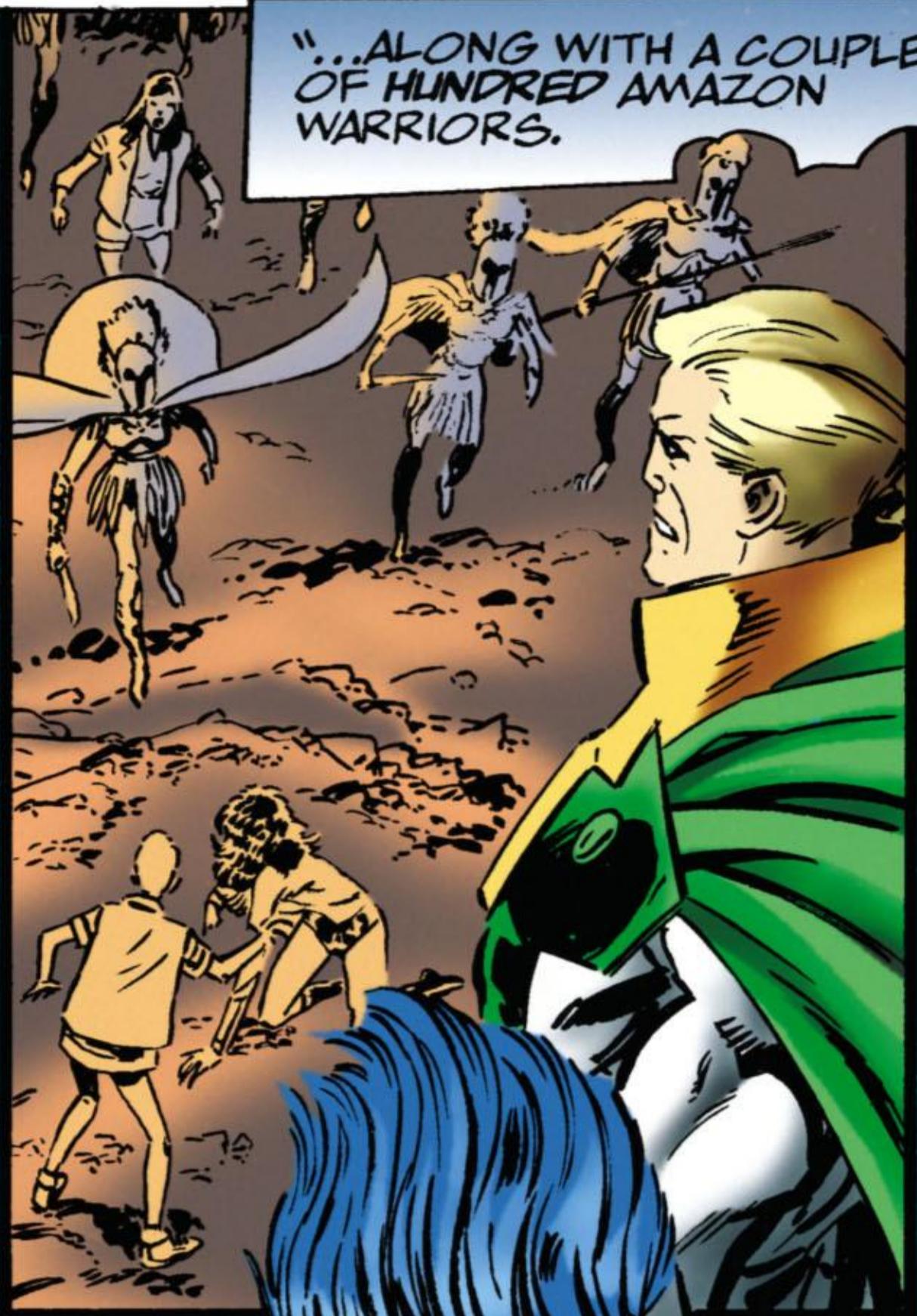
"IT WAS JUST AS HE WAS THREATENING TO GET REALLY NASTY THAT QUEEN HIPPOLYTA AND I ARRIVED..."

"...ALONG WITH A COUPLE OF HUNDRED AMAZON WARRIORS."

"THAT WAS WHEN THINGS STARTED TO GET STRANGE."

"SOMEHOW JUST OUR ARRIVAL SEEMED TO CAUSE NERON GREAT PHYSICAL PAIN."

"HE BLASTED THE WHOLE LEGION... BUT I HAD THE STRANGEST FEELING THE BLAST WAS TRYING TO FIND ME!"



YOU, DONNA? WHY?

DON'T KNOW, SUPERMAN. I DON'T HAVE ANY POWERS ANYMORE. THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO HURT NERON...

YET, I TOO SEEMED TO SENSE YOU WERE THE FOCUS OF HIS ATTACK ON THE AMAZONS, DONNA TROY.

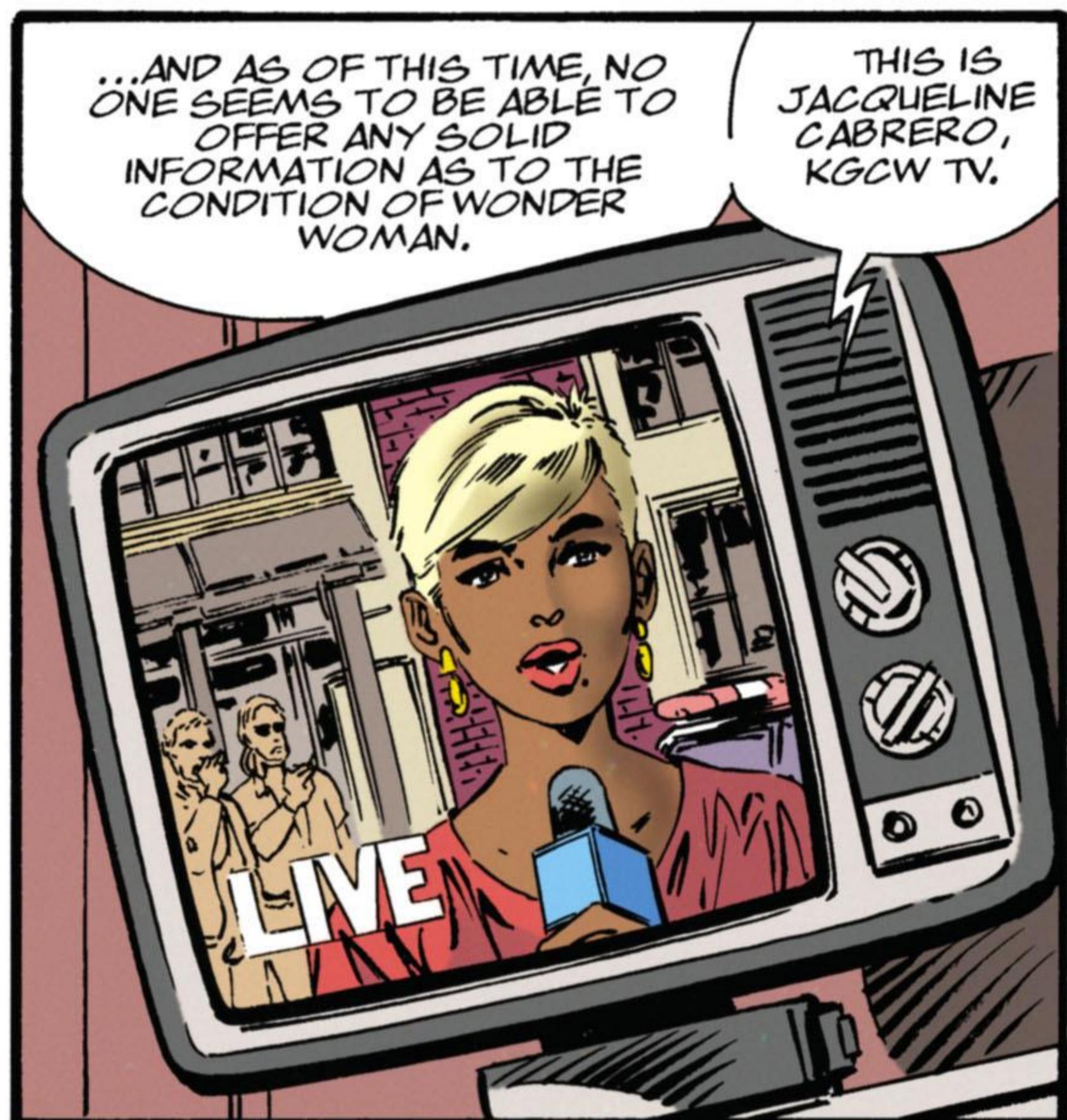
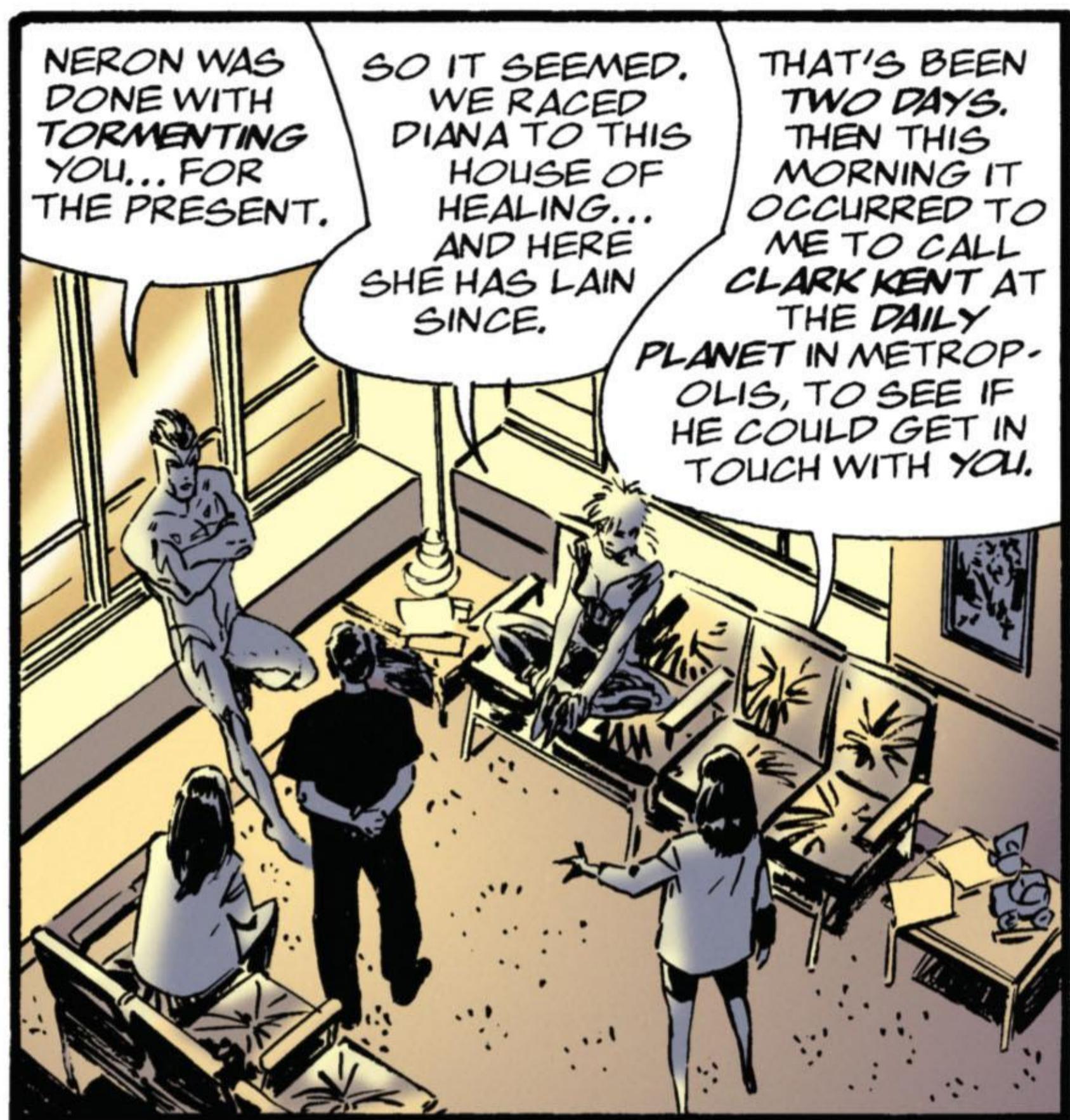


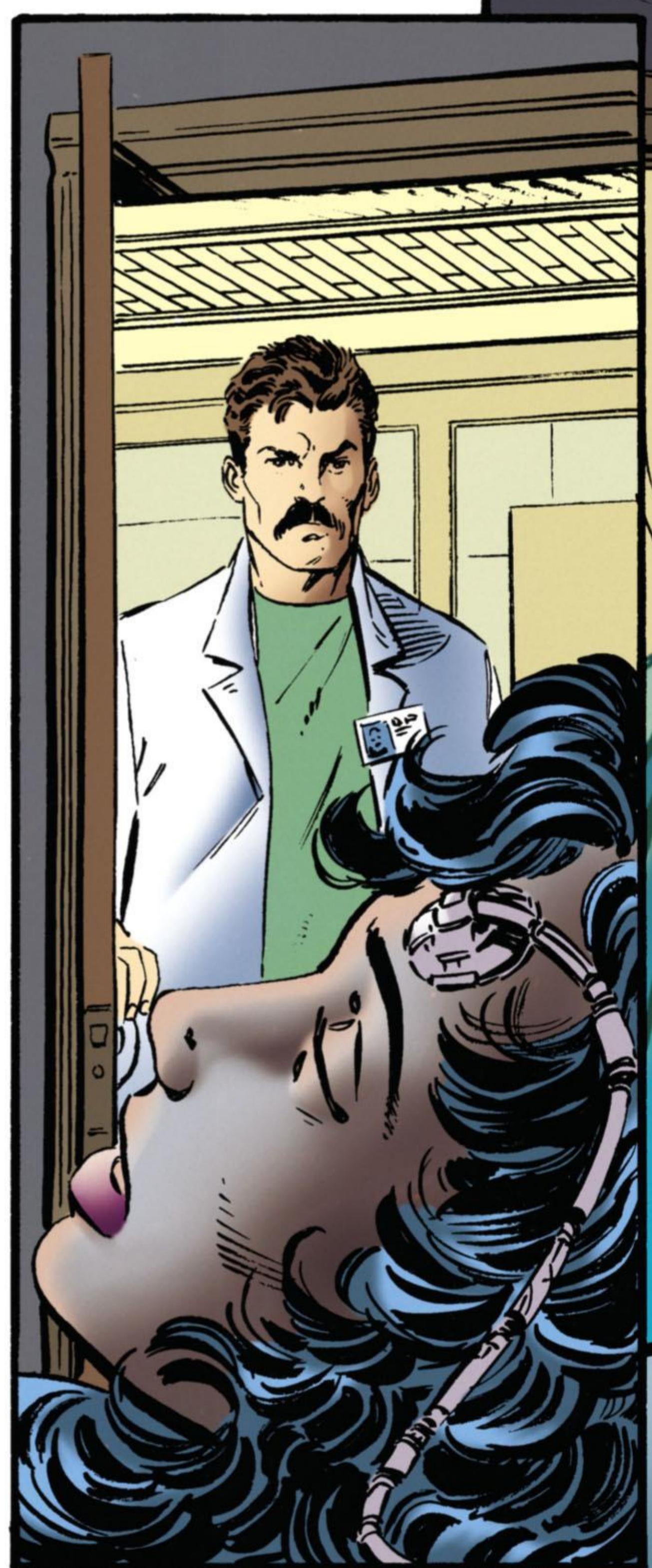
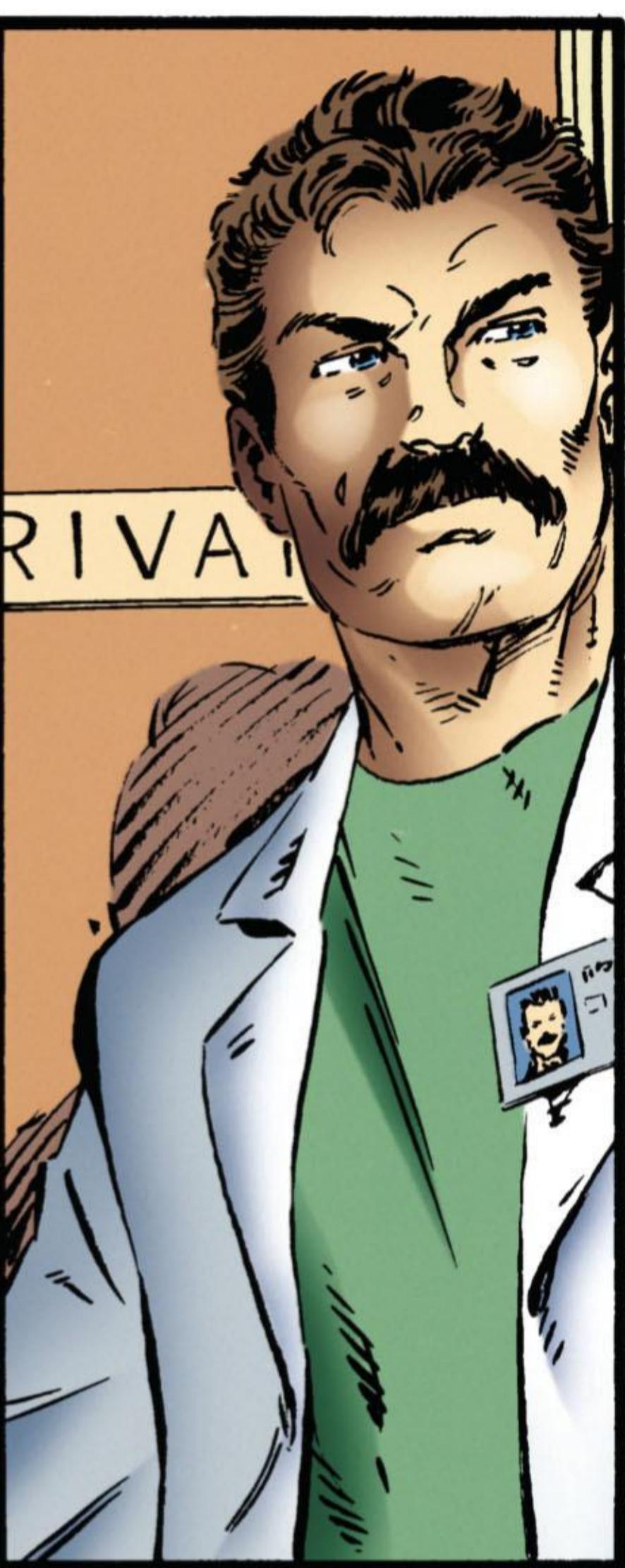
"...I WAS ABLE TO DELIVER A CRIPPLING BLOW."

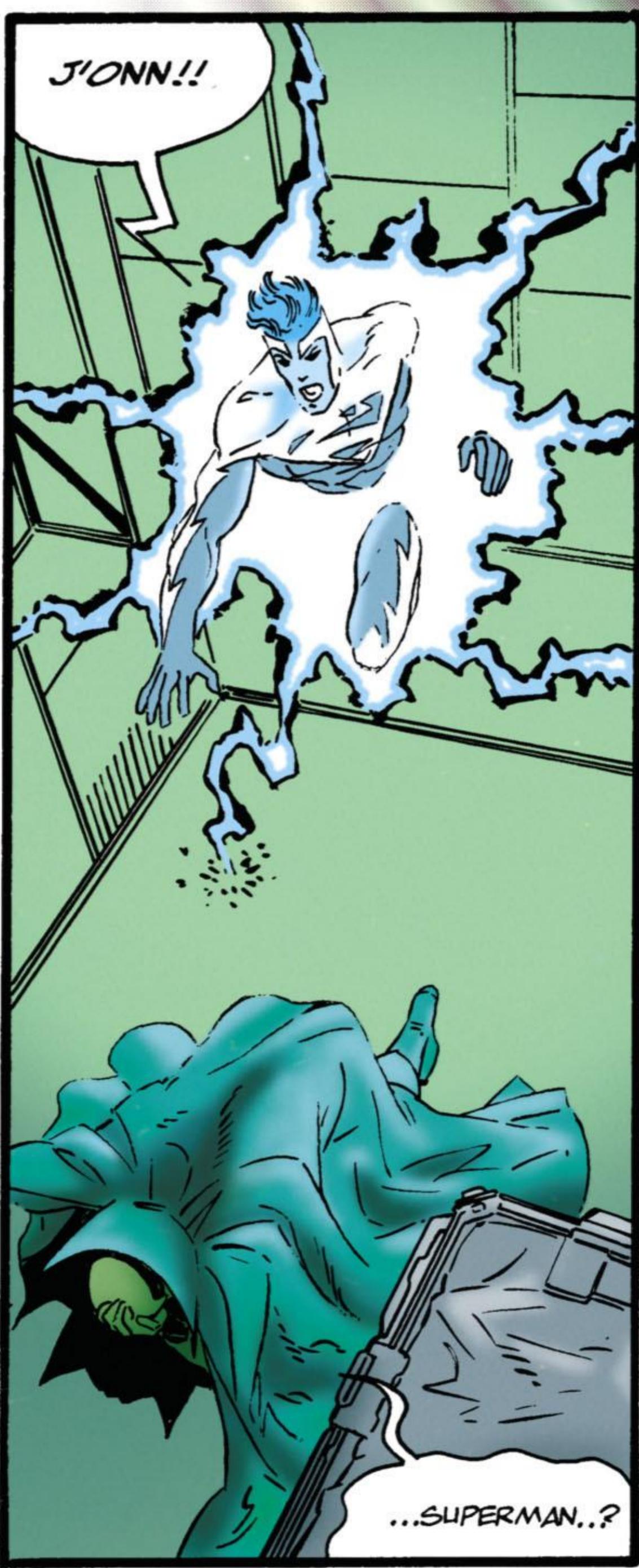
"SILVER, AS I AM SURE YOU KNOW, IS ANATHEMA TO ALL THINGS SATANIC."

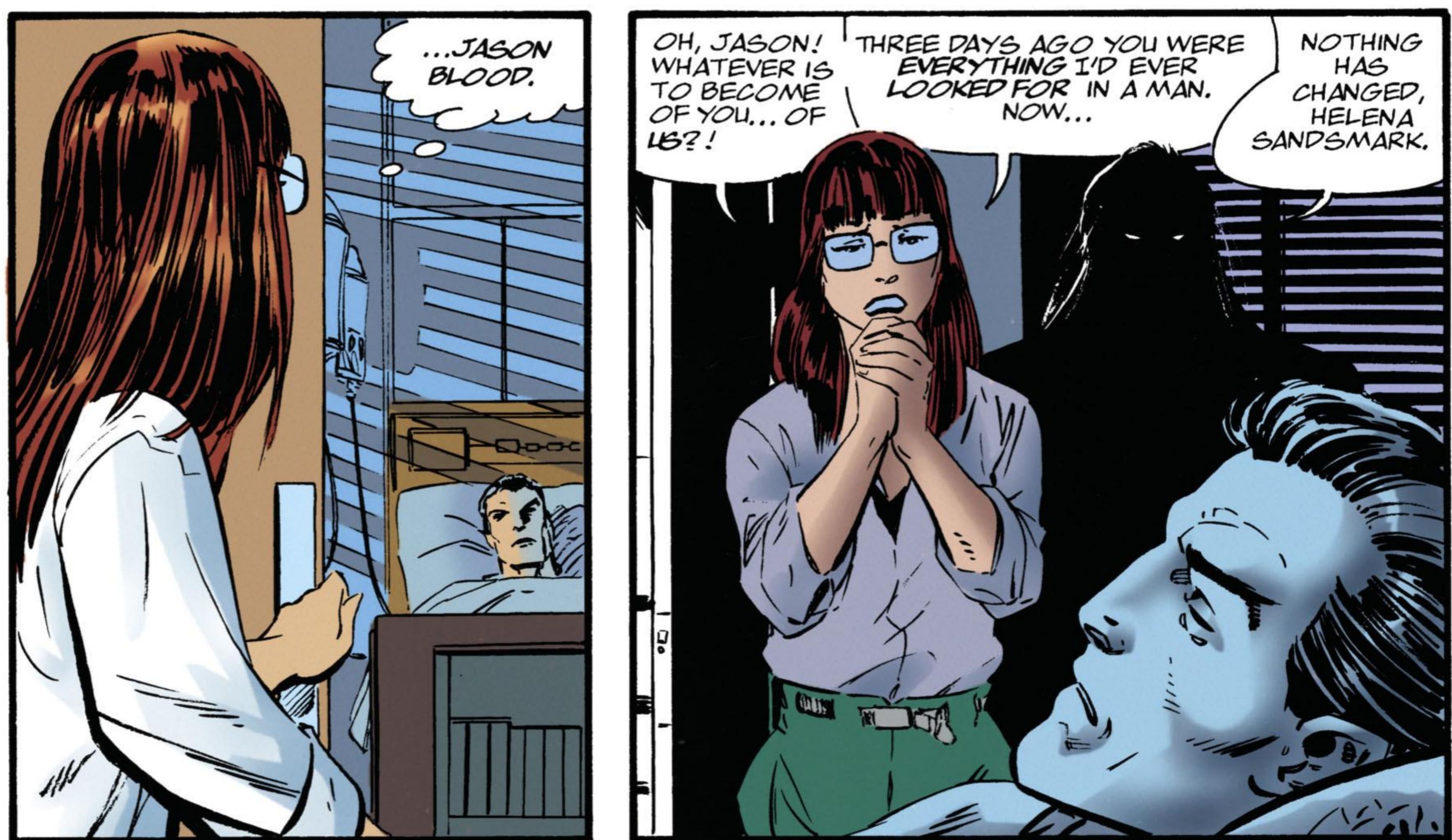




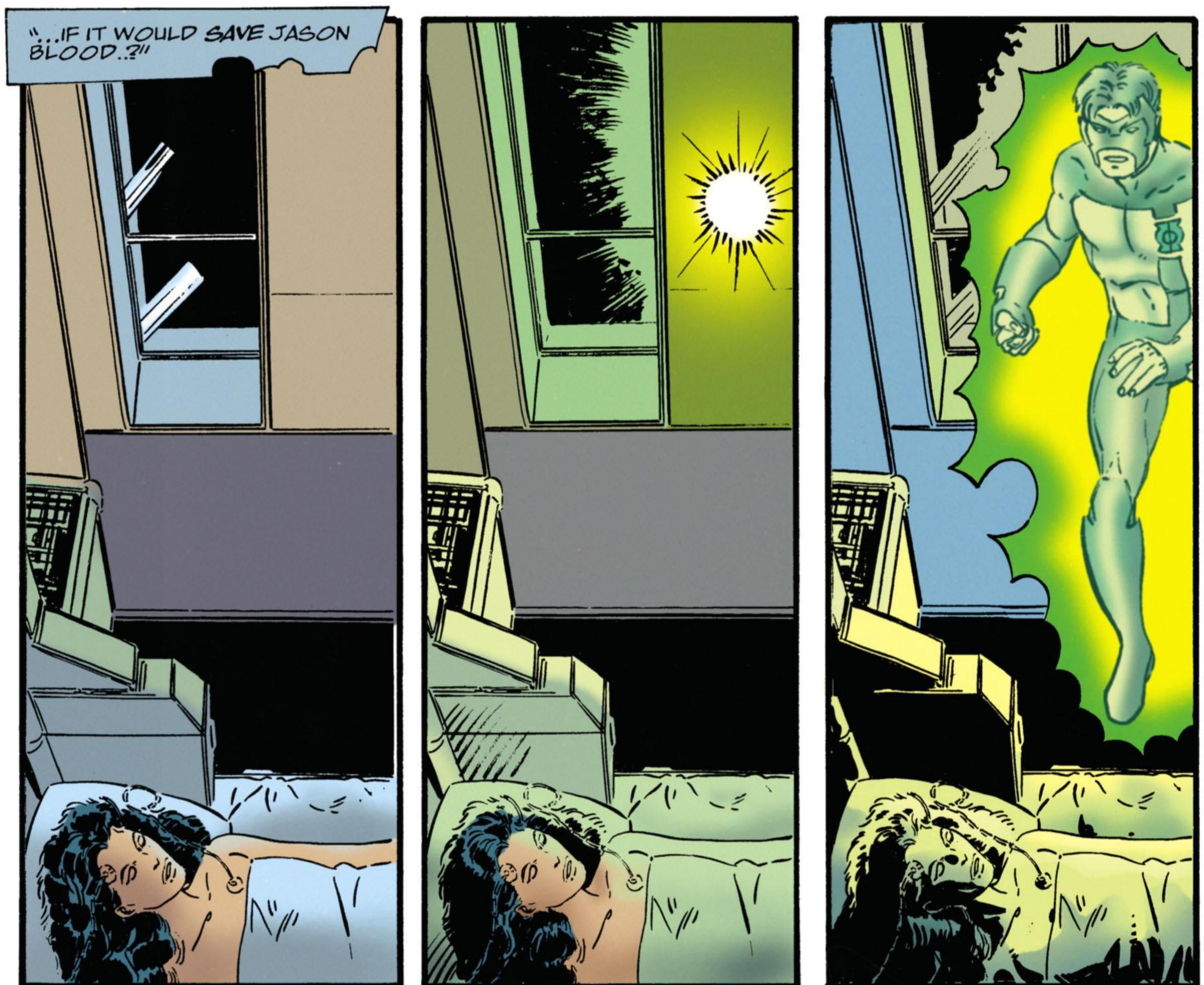
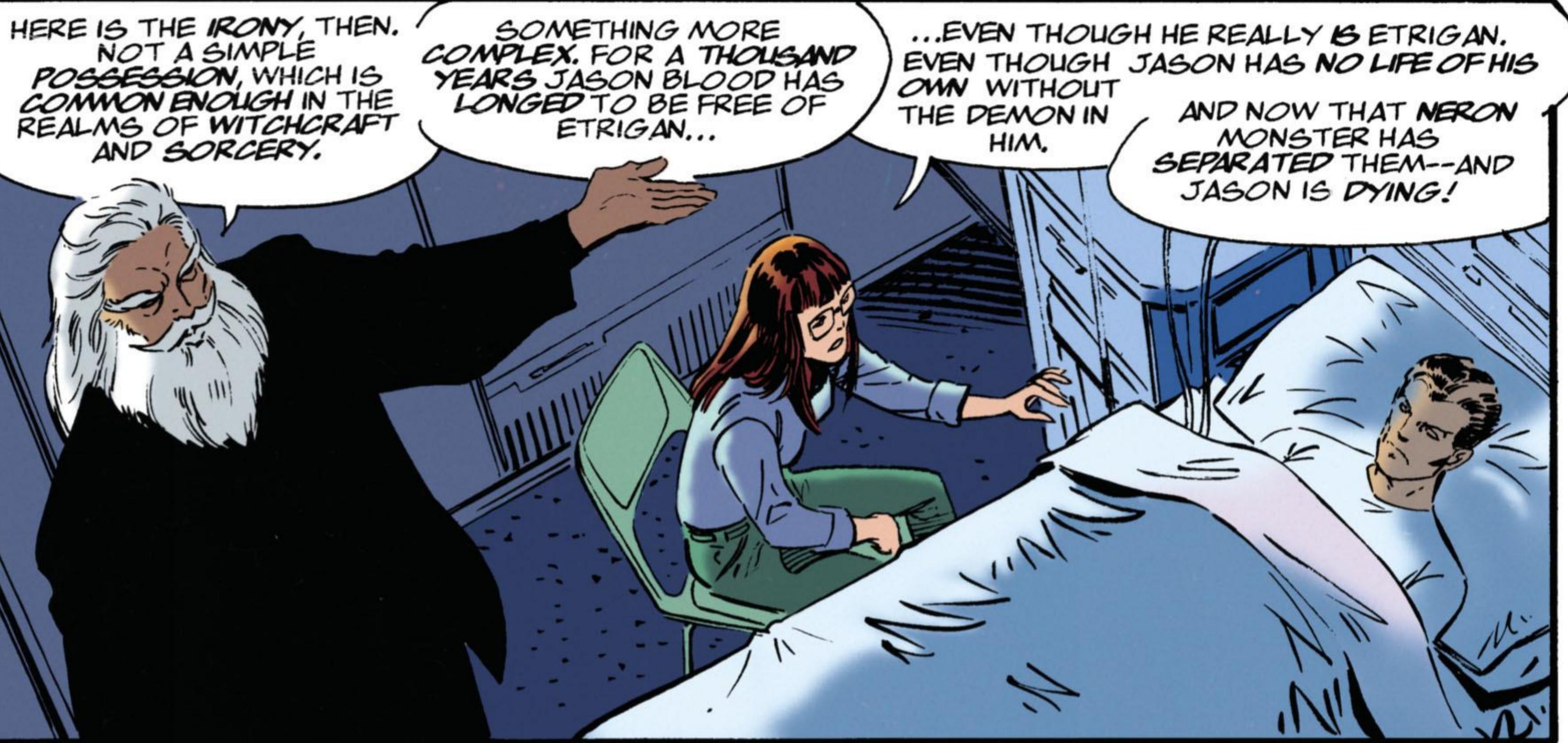














THIS RING OF MINE CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT IT TO, BUT I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT I WANT IT TO DO. AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU NEED, PRINCESS.

GUESS I'VE LET YOU DOWN. MAYBE NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME, EITHER.

IT'S JUST--I ALWAYS FEEL SO INTIMIDATED AROUND YOU. DID YOU KNOW THAT?

PROBABLY NOT. YOU'RE WONDER WOMAN. THE IDEA OF BEING INTIMIDATED BY ANYTHING NEVER OCCURS TO YOU.

I KNOW I'VE SOMETIMES BEEN A REAL DORK AROUND YOU, DIANA. SHOWING OFF, SAYING THINGS I MAYBE SHOULDN'T HAVE.

I GUESS THAT'S 'CAUSE I'M NEW AT THIS SUPER-HERO GIG, AND, EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AROUND ALL THAT LONG YOURSELF, PEOPLE STILL SAY YOUR NAME WITH THE SAME KIND OF REVERENCE AND AWE I HEAR WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT SUPERMAN.

I INHERITED A TARNISHED REPUTATION, DIANA. PEOPLE AREN'T SO SURE THEY TRUST A GREEN LANTERN ANYMORE, AFTER ALL THAT HAPPENED.

SO, WHEN I FIND MYSELF STANDING NEXT TO YOU, I SORT OF HAVE TO PUFF MYSELF UP SO I FEEL LIKE I BELONG THERE.

SOMETIMES I'VE DONE THAT BY MAKING YOU A TARGET. CRACKS ABOUT YOUR FIGURE, SCHOOLBOY STUFF.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, DIANA, BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW I'M SORRY. AND... AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW SOMETHING ELSE.



"IF YOU WERE TO DIE... I'M NOT SURE I COULD DEAL WITH THAT..."

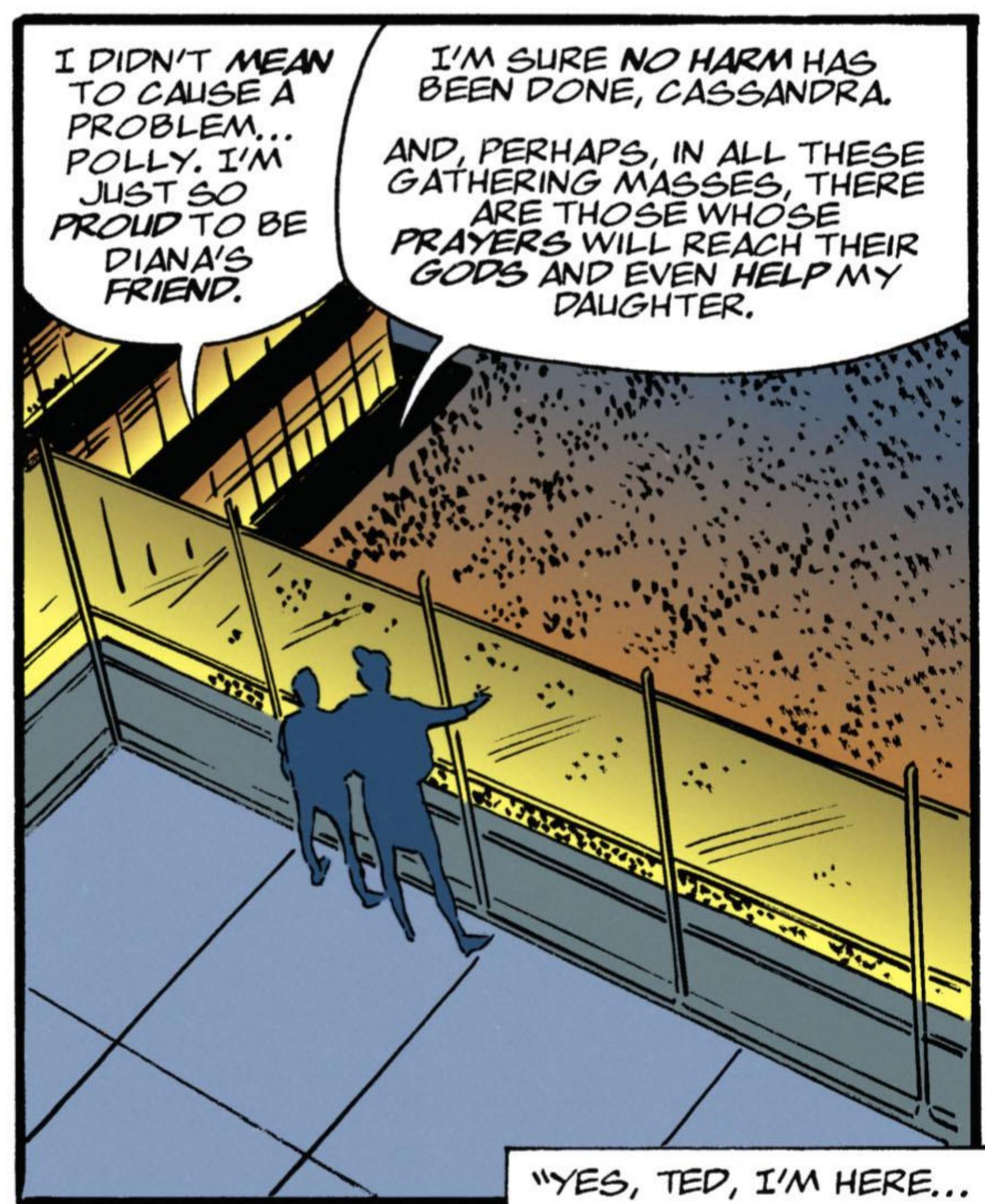
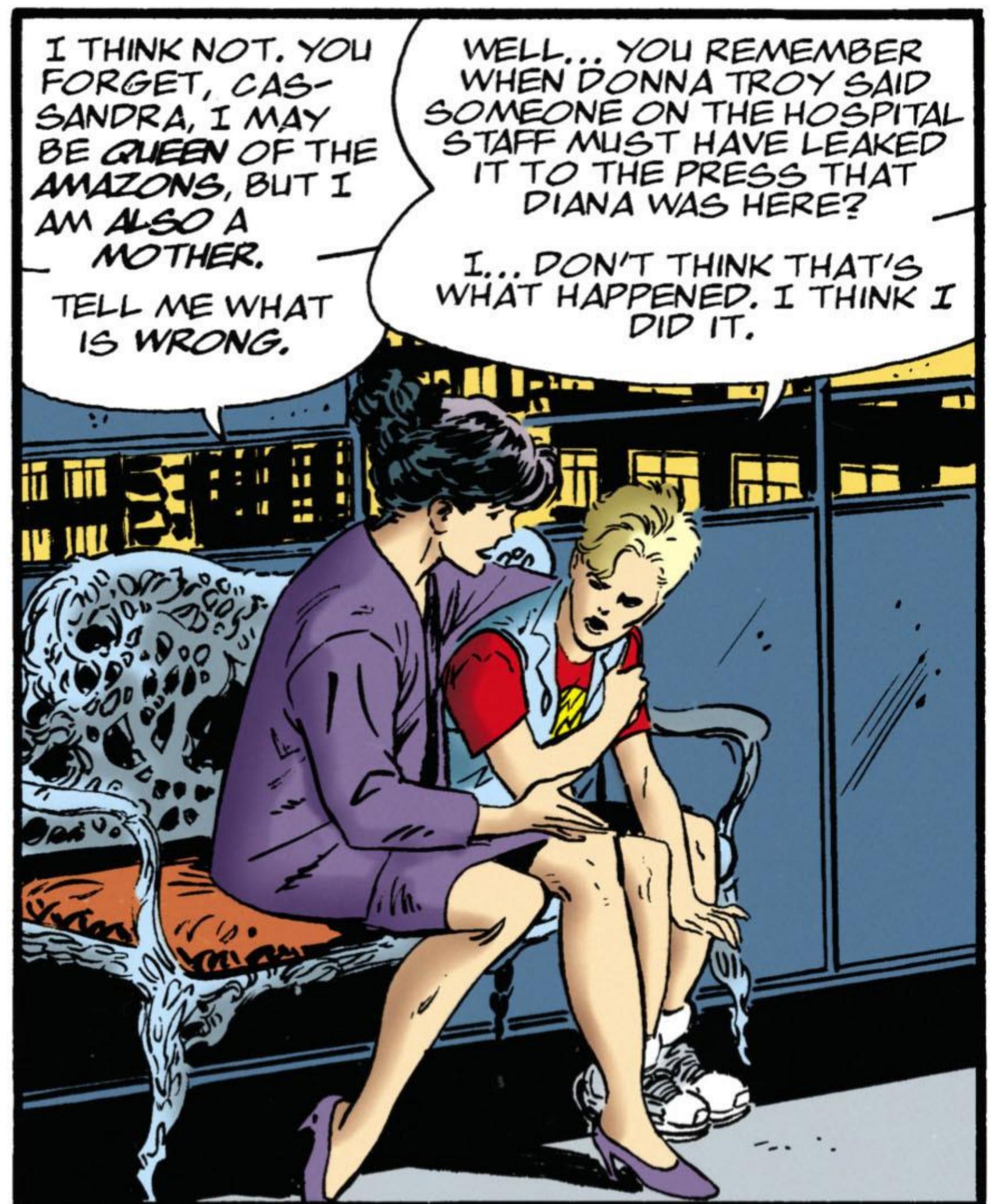
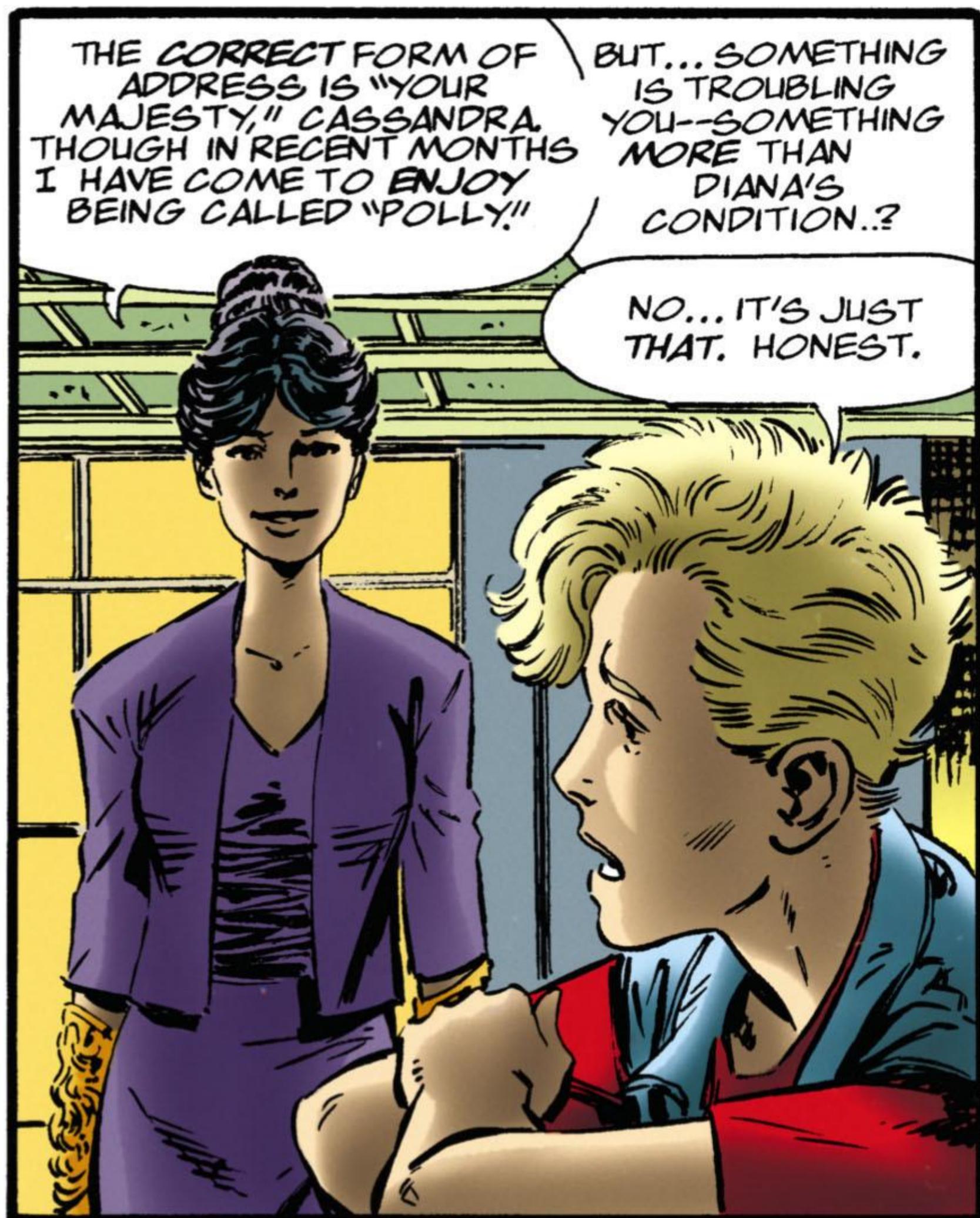
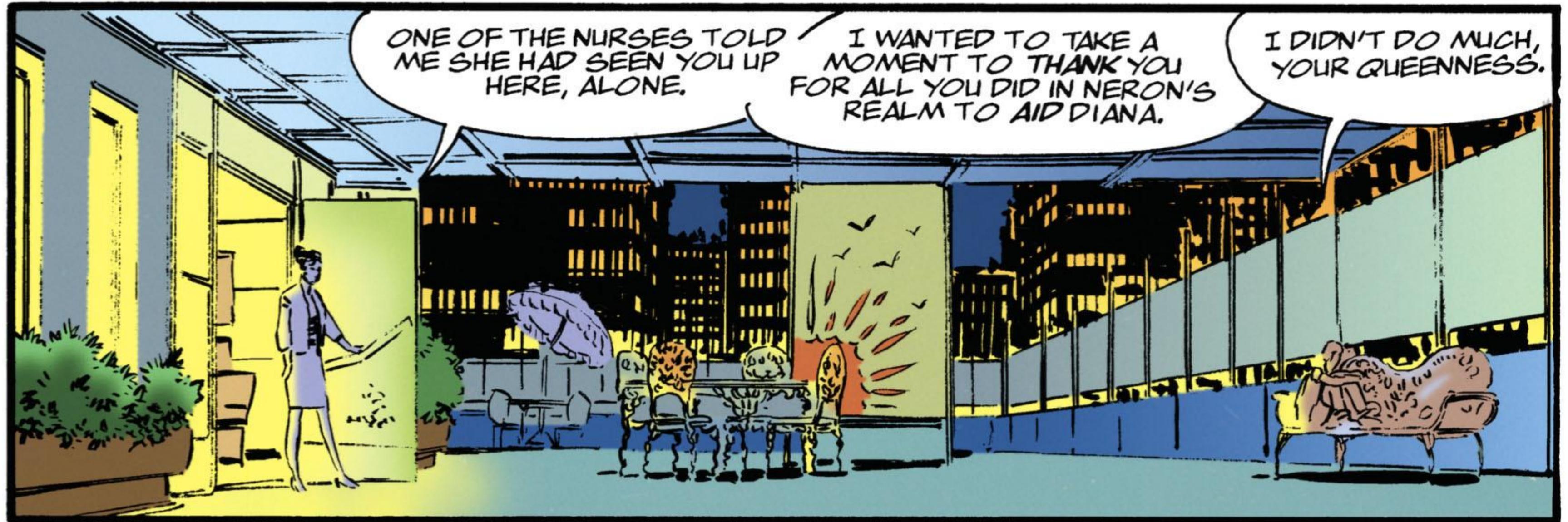
NOT SURE WHAT SUPERMAN AND J'ONN J'ONZZ HAVE PLANNED.

IT'S BEEN OVER AN HOUR SINCE J'ONN COMPLETED HIS SECOND MINDMELD WITH DIANA, AND HE AND SUPERMAN HAVE SPENT MOST OF THAT TIME CONFERRING WITH DOCTOR CHIN.

DON'T KNOW WHAT GOOD IT WILL DO, BUT I HAVE TO LOOK IN ON DIANA AGAIN, IF ONLY...

...DONNA...!





AND THE CROWD CONTINUES TO GROW HERE, OUTSIDE GATEWAY MEMORIAL.

POLICE SOURCES ESTIMATE SOME FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE THRONGED TO THIS SPOT...

...SOME MERE CURIOSITY SEEKERS, BUT SOME GENUINELY CONCERNED FOR THE WELFARE OF WONDER WOMAN.



"I SPOKE TO ONE SUCH WELL-WISHER ONLY MOMENTS AGO. A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED COLLETTE."

SEE, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN... I GUESS YOU'D SAY A FAN OF WONDER WOMAN. AND WHEN I HEARD ON THE RADIO THAT SHE WAS HERE, I HAD TO COME, YOU KNOW?

I HAD TO BE HERE, TO LET HER KNOW I CARE--TO LET HER KNOW WE ALL CARE. WE ALL HOPE AND PRAY THAT SHE'LL RECOVER...

A SENTIMENT REPEATED OFTEN THROUGH THIS TENSE, WATCHFUL CROWD.

IT'S ONLY A FEW MONTHS SINCE WONDER WOMAN CAME TO GATEWAY, BUT THE CITY HAS EMBRACED HER. THE CITY CARES.

JACQUELINE CABRERO, CHANNEL SEVEN NEWS...



"...WHERE THE DEATHWATCH FOR WONDER WOMAN CONTINUES..."

MIKE..?

GCPD

RABBI WILKOF SKY..?



ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MIKE? WHEN I HEARD ABOUT WONDER WOMAN, I REMEMBERED WHAT YOU'D TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS FOR HER.

I'M... OKAY, RABBI. YOU DIDN'T NEED TO COME DOWN HERE JUST FOR ME.

I DIDN'T. THIS HOSPITAL IS ON MY REGULAR "ROUNDS." BUT I DID SEEK YOU OUT, BECAUSE YOU'RE AN OLD FRIEND. I'LL ADMIT I'M SURPRISED TO FIND YOU HERE, IN THE CHAPEL.

WELL, IT IS NON-DENOMINATIONAL. BUT... YEAH, I GUESS I HAVEN'T HAD A WHOLE LOT OF USE FOR RELIGION IN MY LIFE, RABBI. I'VE LEFT THAT TO MY MOM AND MY SISTER.



THING IS... EVEN THO' I'VE NEVER REALLY WORKED AT IT, I GUESS I'VE ALWAYS SORT OF KNOWN THERE WAS SOMETHING OUT THERE BIGGER THAN ALL OF US. CALL IT GOD IF THAT WORKS FOR YOU. CALL IT THE BIG KAHUNA. THE NAME DOESN'T MATTER.

ONLY... ONLY LATELY, I SEEM TO HAVE A LOT MORE TROUBLE WITH THAT IDEA THAN I EVER USED TO. IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, MAYBE WEEKS...

WELL, IT JUST SEEMS LIKE STUFF LIKE THAT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE. ALMOST LIKE NOTHING MATTERS ANYMORE.

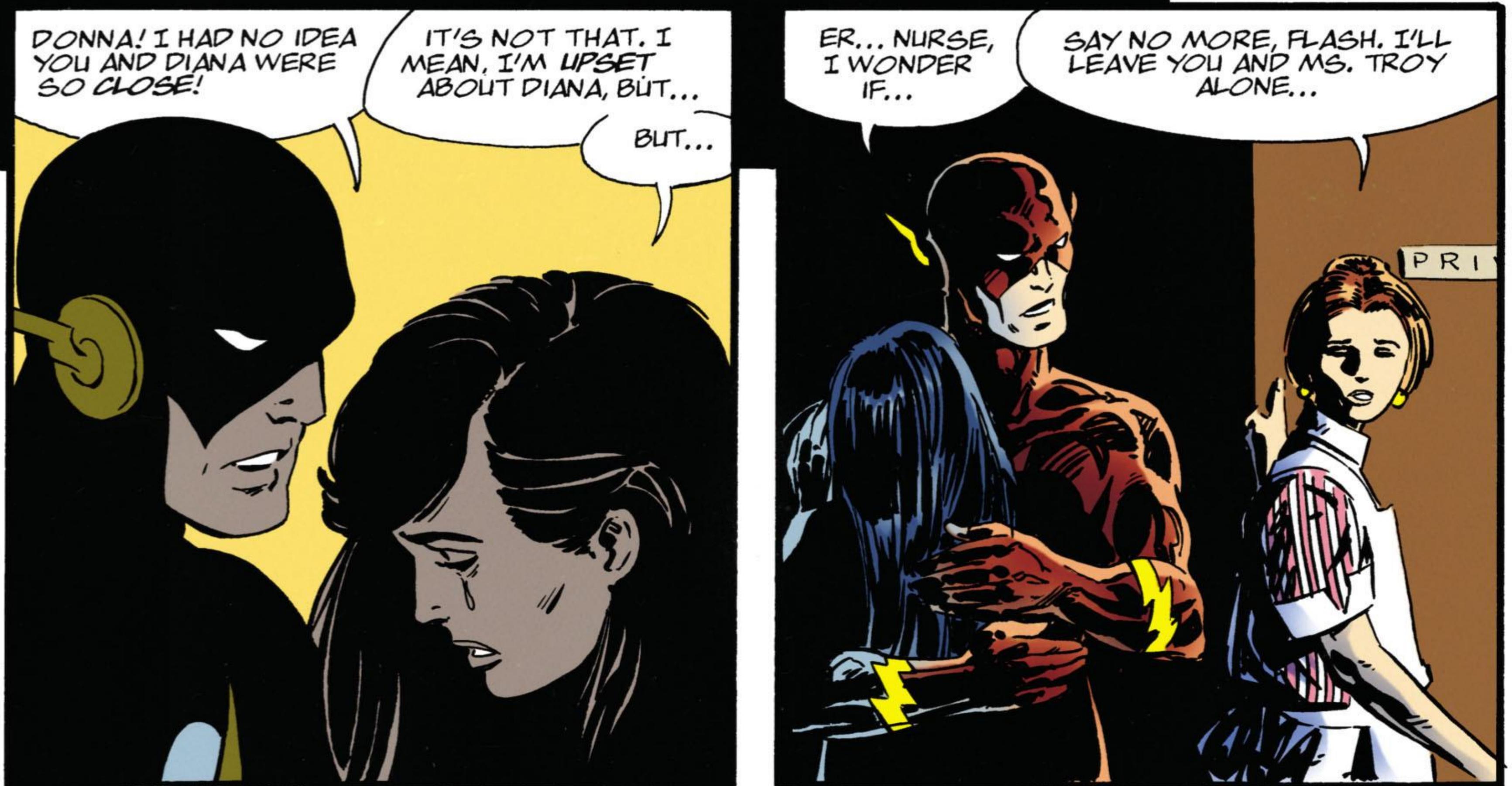
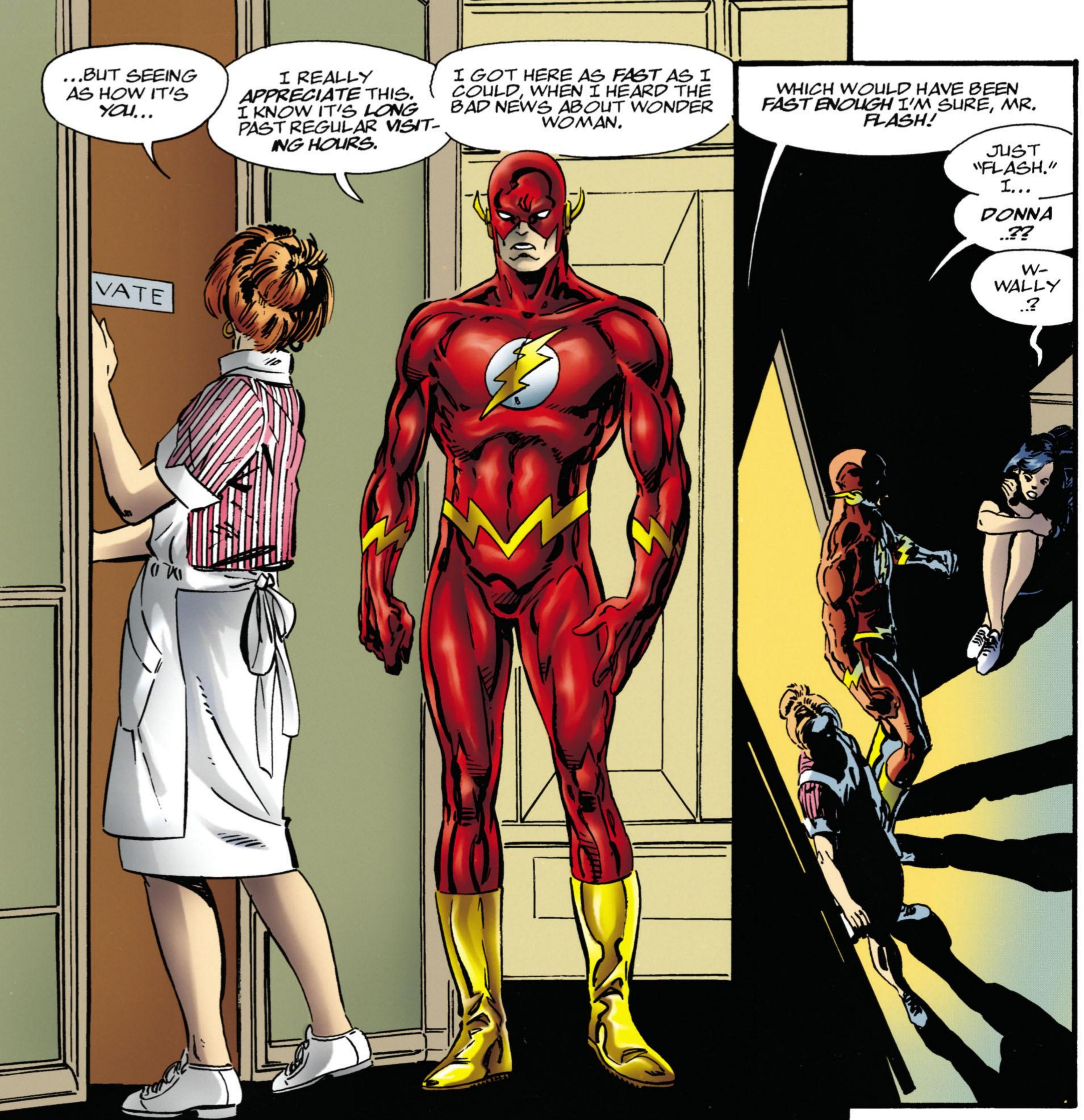
I UNDERSTAND. A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TELLING ME THE SAME THING, MIKE.

THEY SAY IT FEELS AS THOUGH THERE'S A BIG HOLE WHERE THEIR SOUL USED TO BE. AND, LIKE YOU, MANY OF THEM SAY THEY'VE NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF THEMSELVES AS HAVING SOULS BEFORE.

YEAH. IT'S JUST THIS FEELING THAT EVERYTHING... EVERYTHING IS SO... POINTLESS...



"WELL, THIS IS AGAINST HOSPITAL REGULATIONS..."



NOW... TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG, DONNA. IF THERE'S ANYTHING AT ALL I CAN DO TO HELP, YOU KNOW...

I KNOW I CAN DEPEND ON YOU. I KNOW I CAN DEPEND ON ALL MY FRIENDS.
BUT THAT'S THE PROBLEM, WALLY. BEING MY FRIEND SEEMS TO HAVE LETHAL CONSEQUENCES!



I'VE BEEN RUNNING ON PURE ADRENALIN FOR THE LAST FEW DAYS, WALLY. EVER SINCE I CAME TO GATEWAY CITY.

I'VE BEEN DOING ANYTHING I COULD TO KEEP FROM THINKING ABOUT THE WAY MY WHOLE LIFE SEEMS TO BE FALLING APART AROUND ME.

C'MON... LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT DOCTORS AND NURSES BARGING IN ON US.

YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT, AND WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS, DONNA...



"...I PROMISE WE'LL FIND A WAY TO FIX EVERYTHING..."





AND I'LL SAY RIGHT NOW THAT IT IS A USE OF OUR VARIOUS POWERS THAT'S LIKE NOTHING ANY OF US HAVE EVER ATTEMPTED BEFORE.

ESPECIALLY ME, SINCE I'M STILL IN THE PROCESS OF DISCOVERING WHAT MY POWERS CAN DO!

"THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE WORKED OUT."



DR. CHIN IS CONVINCED THAT DIANA IS COMPLETELY UNRESPONSIVE TO THERAPY BECAUSE HER MIND HAS SHUT ITSELF DOWN, ESCAPED, IF YOU WILL, FROM THE TERRIBLE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TRAUMA SHE SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF NERON.

THEREFORE, BEFORE ANY EFFECTIVE RECOVERY PROGRAM CAN COMMENCE, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE REACH DIANA'S MIND. DR. CHIN IS AFRAID SHE WILL REMAIN IN THIS COMATOSE CONDITION FOREVER UNLESS WE DO THIS.

HOWEVER, SINCE J'ONN J'ONZZ WAS UNABLE TO USE HIS MARTIAN TELEPATHY TO PENETRATE THE BARRIERS AROUND HER CONSCIOUS MIND THAT DIANA HAS CREATED...

...WE HAVE COME UP WITH WHAT IS, ADMITTEDLY, A DANGEROUS SCHEME, BUT ONE DR. CHIN THINKS IS DIANA'S ONLY HOPE.



J'ONN IS NOW GOING TO USE HIS SHAPE-CHANGING ABILITY TO "MORPH" HIMSELF INTO AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF DIANA—RIGHT DOWN TO THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.

THEN, USING HIS ABILITY TO BECOME INTANGIBLE, J'ONN WILL SLIP INSIDE DIANA...

...AND ALIGN HIMSELF PRECISELY TO HER EVERY CELL!

THAT DONE, J'ONN WILL SERVE AS A CONDUIT TO CONVERT A MASSIVE JOLT OF MY ELECTROMAGNETIC POWER TO PSYCHIC ENERGY, AND CHANNEL IT THROUGH DIANA'S ENTIRE BODY.

GET READY, EVERYONE. I'M GOING TO APPLY THE CHARGE...

