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WHAT YOU DO NOT YET KNOW, CONTINUED...

"We were so PROUD that night.

"We thought our hearts would BURST.

"She could have chosen the most graceful, the most learned, the most skilled at diplomacy.

"She instead chose US.

"Unlovely, perhaps. Indelicate, most CERTAINLY.

"But fierce to the BONE and blessed with loyalty deeper and hotter than any pit of HADES, each to a woman.

"Like points of the compass were we.

"MYRTO.

"CHARIS.

"PHILOMELA."

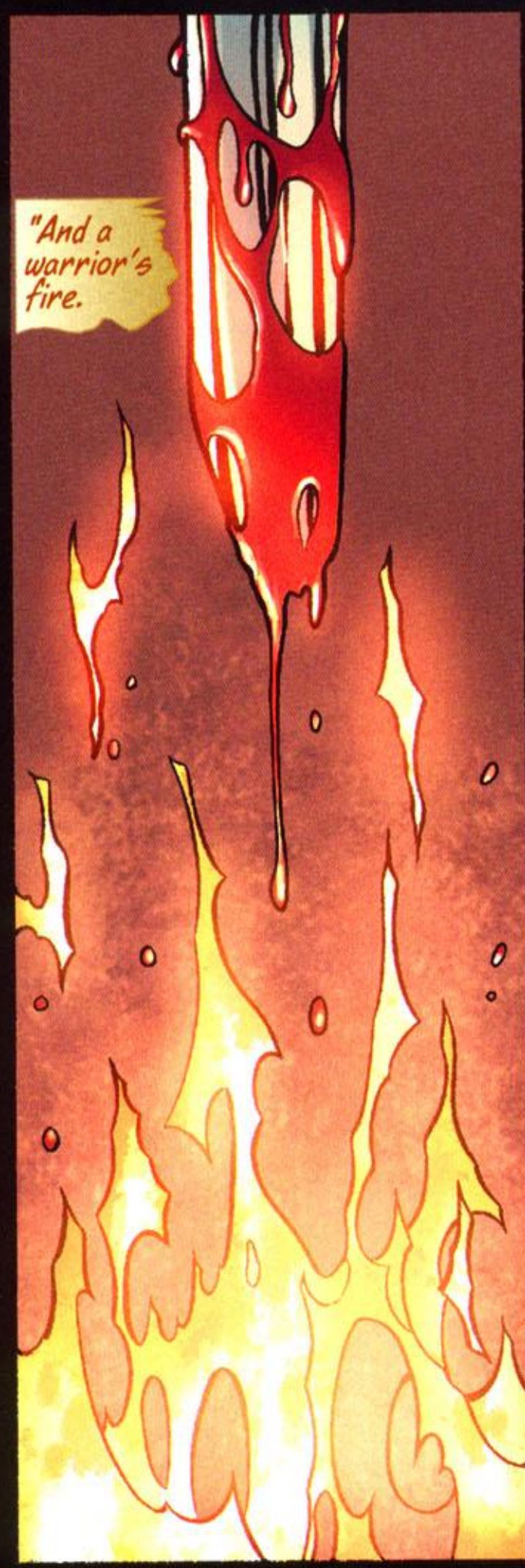
ATHENA BLESS YOU FOREVER FOR THIS, MY QUEEN.

COME, ALKYONE. IS THIS A FIT POSITION--

"And finally, my unworthy self."

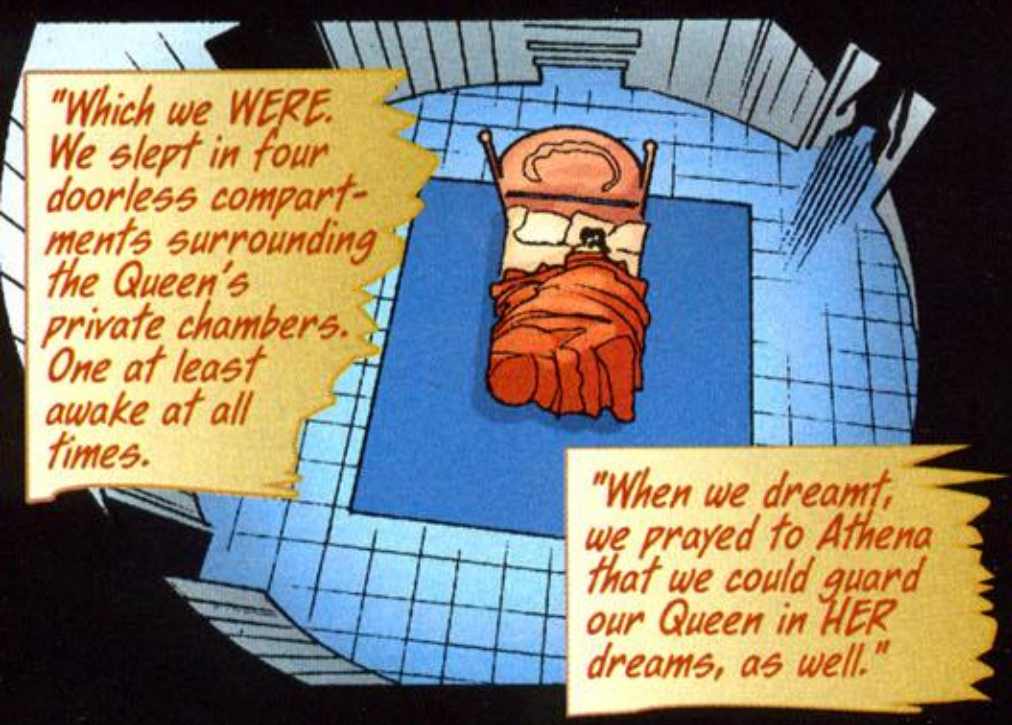
--FOR THE CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S ROYAL GUARD?
"Of all the Amazons, all the worthy, the learned, the brave, the wise, and the storied--
"--she chose the four of us.
"We thought our hearts would BURST.
"No one knew why, after centuries of self-reliance, Hippolyta felt she should need a personal guard, or what, specifically, we were to protect her FROM.
"But we loved her.
"And woe betide any woman, beast or demon who wished her ILL.
"Like eager DOGS, we took our responsibilities well beyond the level that was asked of us."
SO IT'S AGREED, THEN.
ALL OF US, EVERY ONE, WILL DIE BEFORE AN ENEMY TOUCHES A LOCK OF THE QUEEN'S HAIR. THAT IS OUR SACRED TRUST.
AGREED.
FOUR POINTS OF THE COMPASS ARE WE, AT ALL TIMES, SURROUNDING HER, BE WE BLIND, LAME, INJURED OR DYING. IN THE DARKEST NIGHT SHALL WE FIND OUR PLACE IN THE CIRCLE.
WE TRADE UNPREDICTABILITY FOR A SURE-FOOTED POSITION IN EVEN THE WORST OF CONDITIONS.
AGREED.

"So we made a vow of woman's blood.

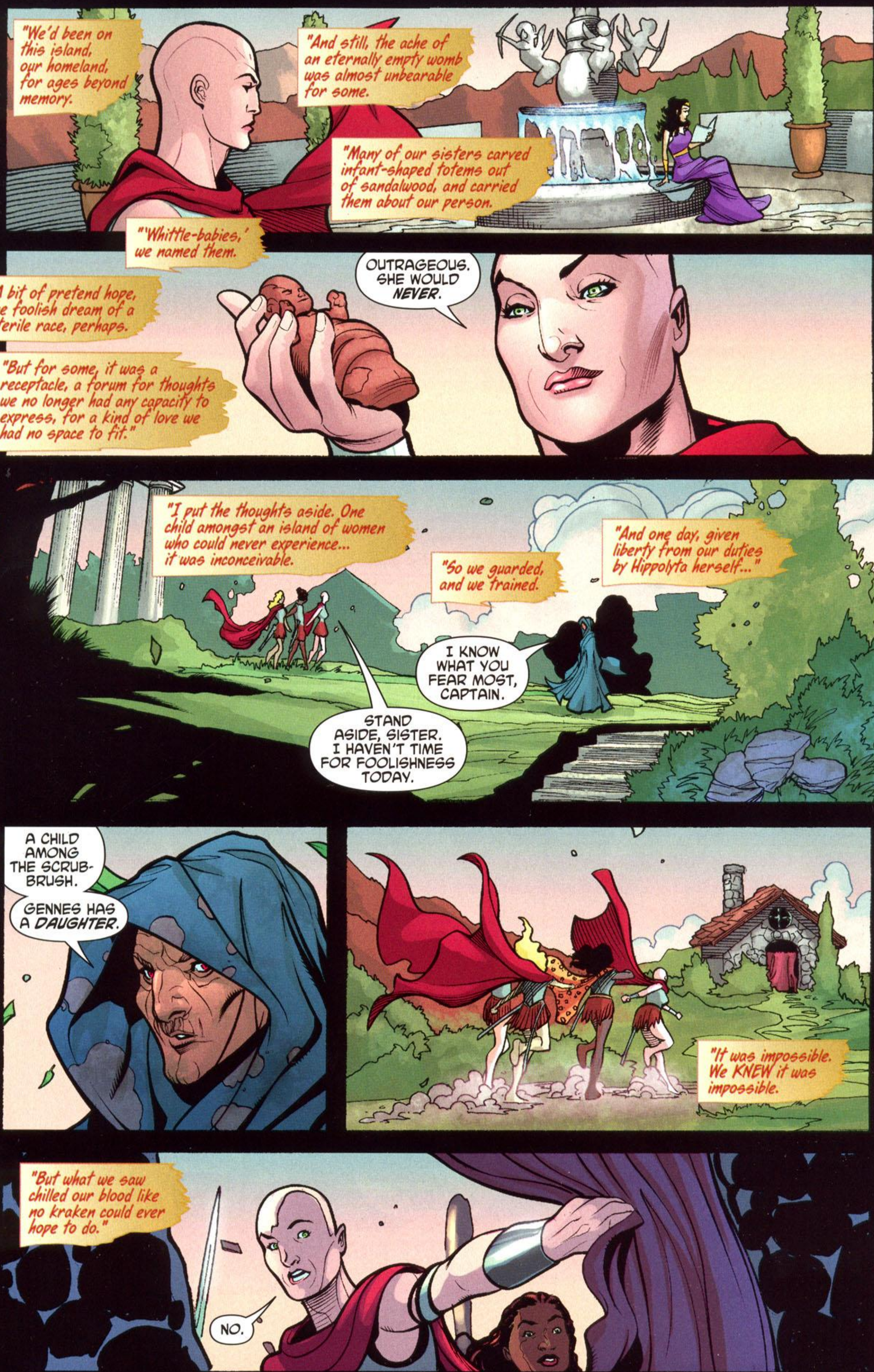

"And a warrior's fire.

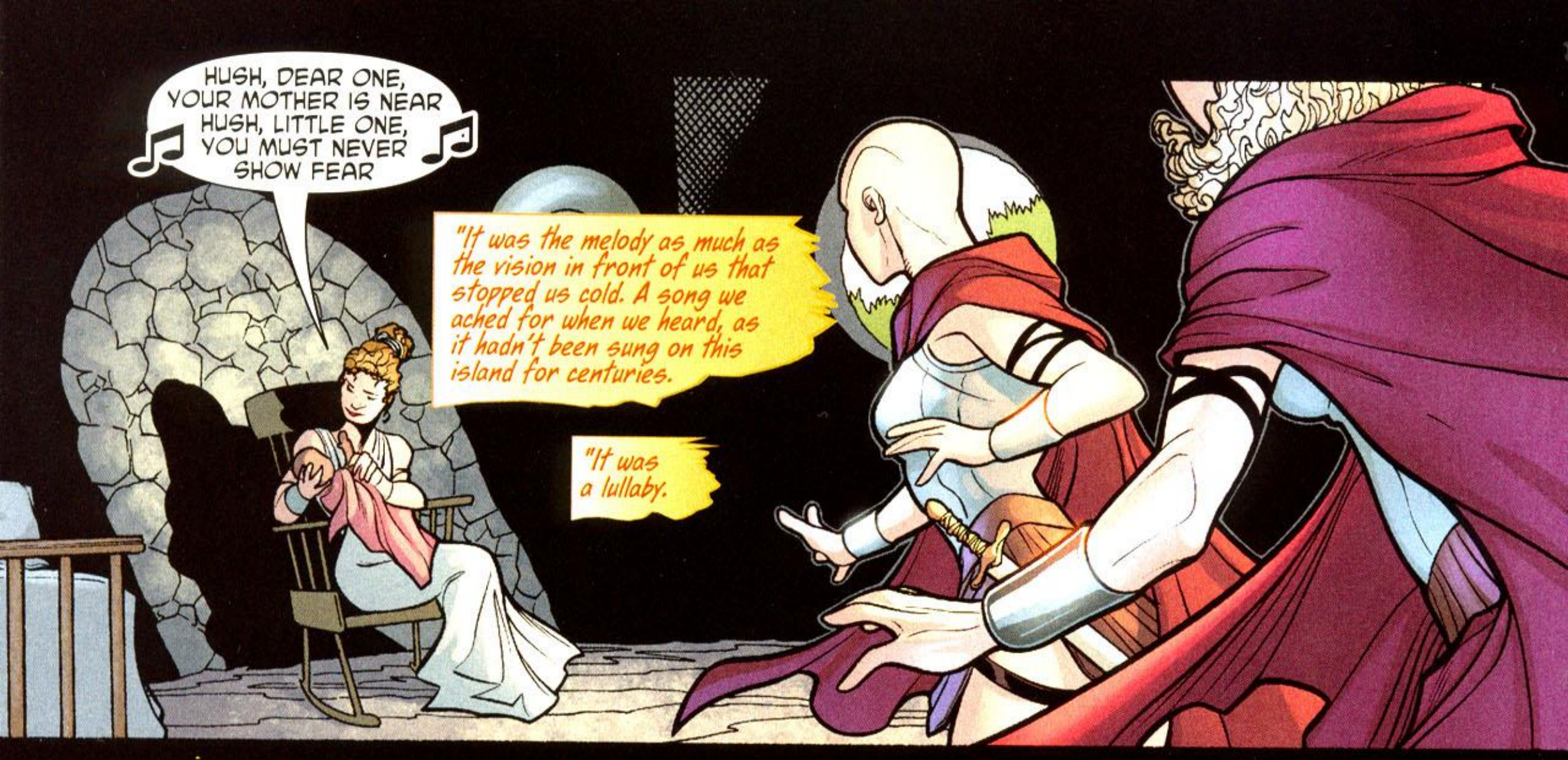
"And danced a dance the likes of which my tongue cannot explain to any who did not witness it.
"Oh, we were not without our detractors.

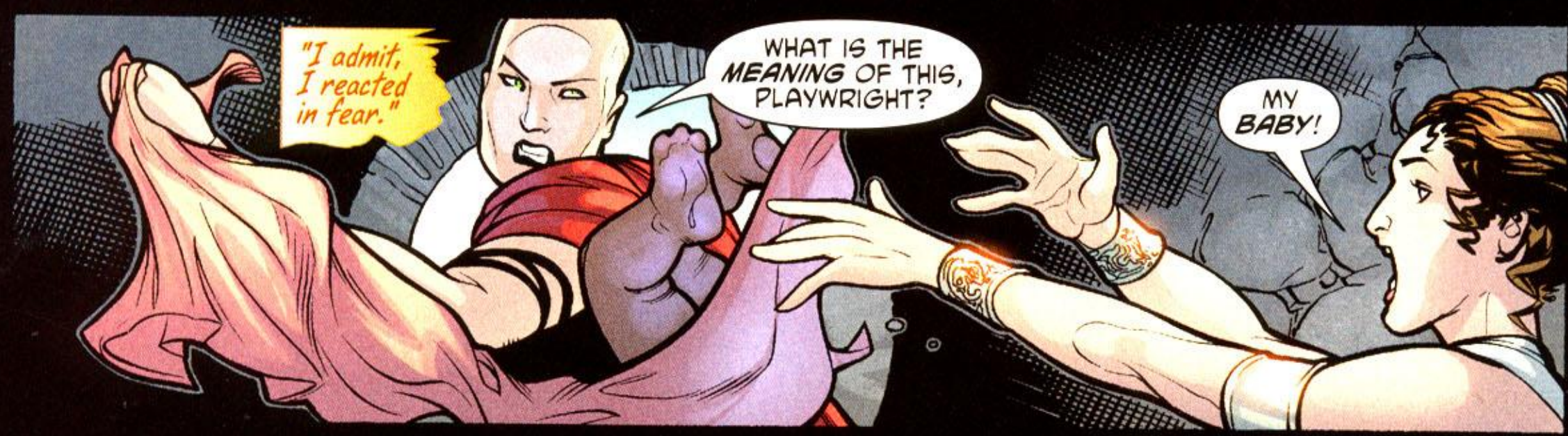
"The captain of the GENERAL guard, Phillipus--
"--she warned the Queen that we were overzealous and brutal-minded.

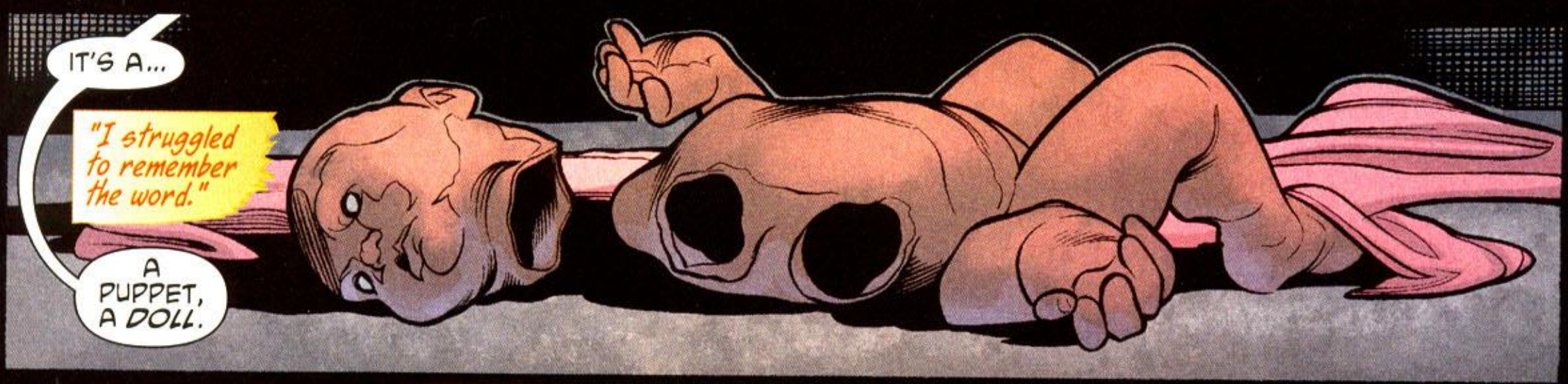

"Which we WERE. We slept in four doorless compartments surrounding the Queen's private chambers. One at least awake at all times.
"When we dreamt, we prayed to Athena that we could guard our Queen in HER dreams, as well."

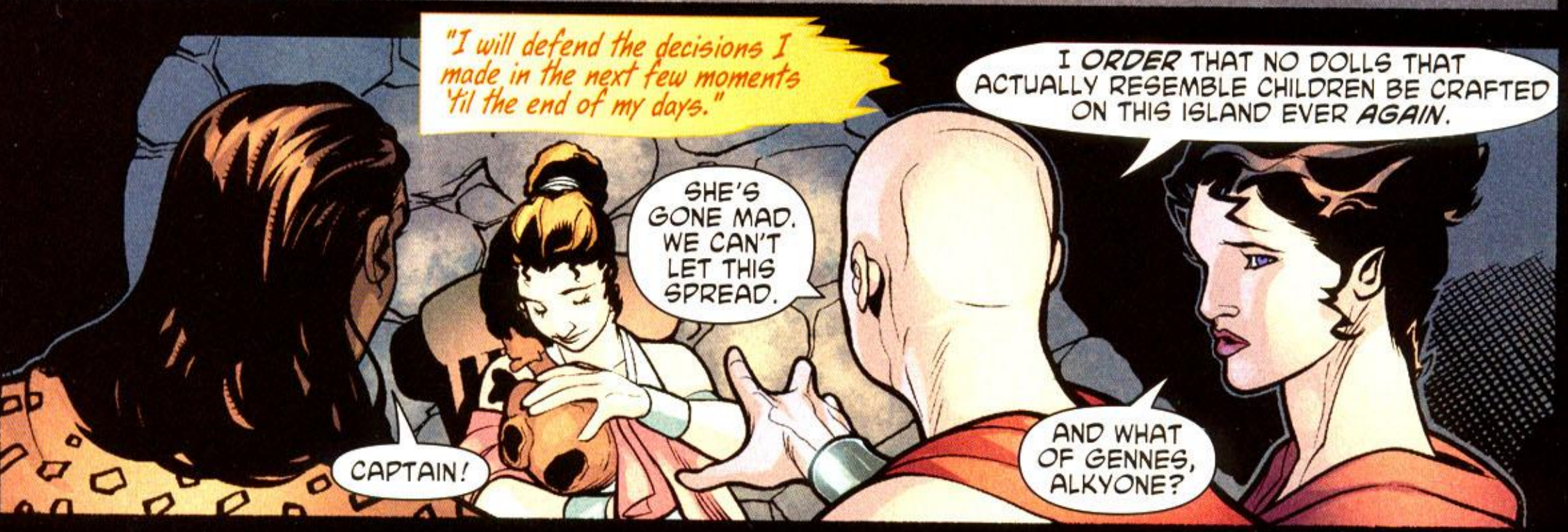
ALKYONE, THEY SAY THAT THE QUEEN, THAT SHE'S PLEADED WITH THE GODS...
SHE'S ASKING FOR A CHILD, CAPTAIN!
OUTRAGEOUS. IMPOSSIBLE!
SHE, THE QUEEN... SHE WOULD NEVER BE SO...
IT WOULD DESTROY US!


"We'd been on this island, our homeland, for ages beyond memory.
"And still, the ache of an eternally empty womb was almost unbearable for some.
"Many of our sisters carved infant-shaped totems out of sandalwood, and carried them about our person.
"'Whittle-babies,' we named them.
"A bit of pretend hope, the foolish dream of a sterile race, perhaps.
"But for some, it was a receptacle, a forum for thoughts we no longer had any capacity to express, for a kind of love we had no space to fit."
OUTRAGEOUS. SHE WOULD NEVER.
"I put the thoughts aside. One child amongst an island of women who could never experience... it was inconceivable.
"So we guarded, and we trained.
"And one day, given liberty from our duties by Hippolyta herself..."
I KNOW WHAT YOU FEAR MOST, CAPTAIN.
STAND ASIDE, SISTER. I HAVEN'T TIME FOR FOOLISHNESS TODAY.
A CHILD AMONG THE SCRUB-BRUSH.
GENNES HAS A DAUGHTER.
"It was impossible. We KNEW it was impossible.
"But what we saw chilled our blood like no kraken could ever hope to do."
NO.

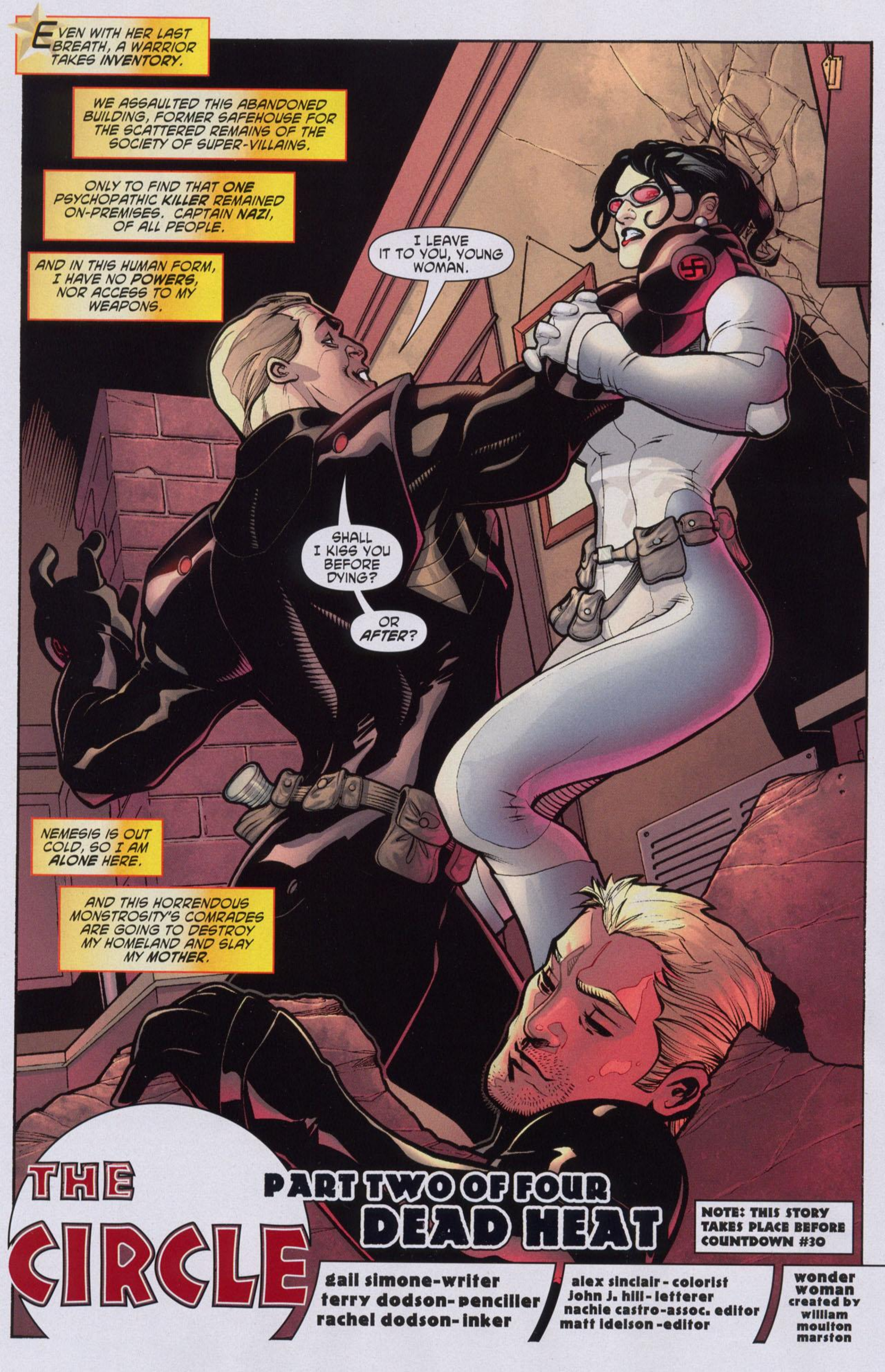

HUSH, DEAR ONE, YOUR MOTHER IS NEAR HUSH, LITTLE ONE, YOU MUST NEVER SHOW FEAR
"It was the melody as much as the vision in front of us that stopped us cold. A song we ached for when we heard, as it hadn't been sung on this island for centuries.
"It was a lullaby.


"I admit, I reacted in fear."
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, PLAYWRIGHT?
MY BABY!

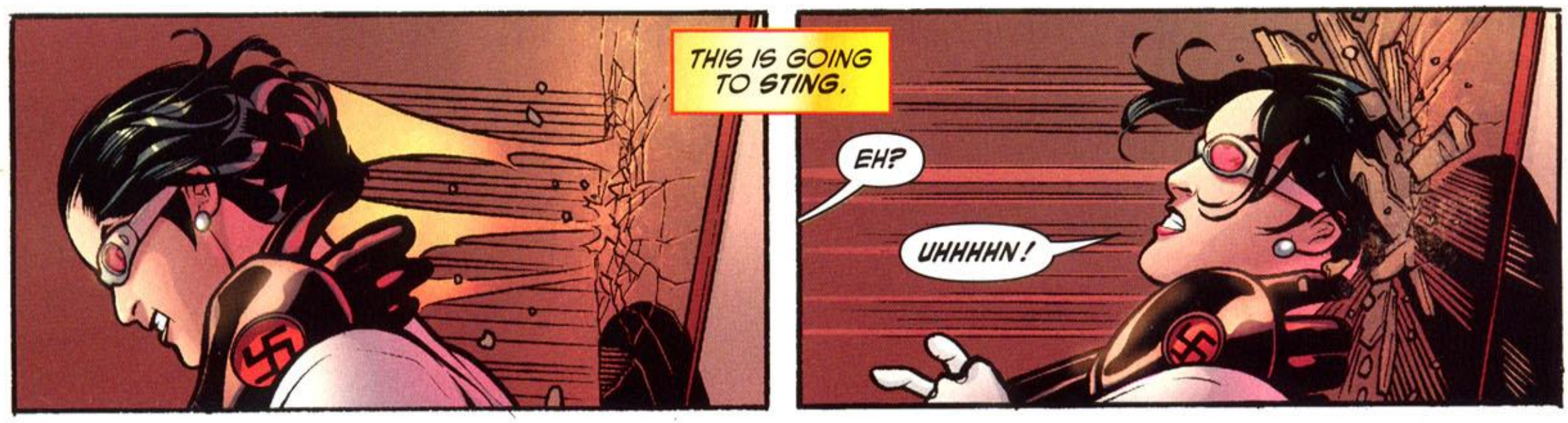

IT'S A...
"I struggled to remember the word."
A PUPPET, A DOLL.


"I will defend the decisions I made in the next few moments 'til the end of my days."
I ORDER THAT NO DOLLS THAT ACTUALLY RESEMBLE CHILDREN BE CRAFTED ON THIS ISLAND EVER AGAIN.
SHE'S GONE MAD. WE CAN'T LET THIS SPREAD.
CAPTAIN!
AND WHAT OF GENNES, ALKYONE?

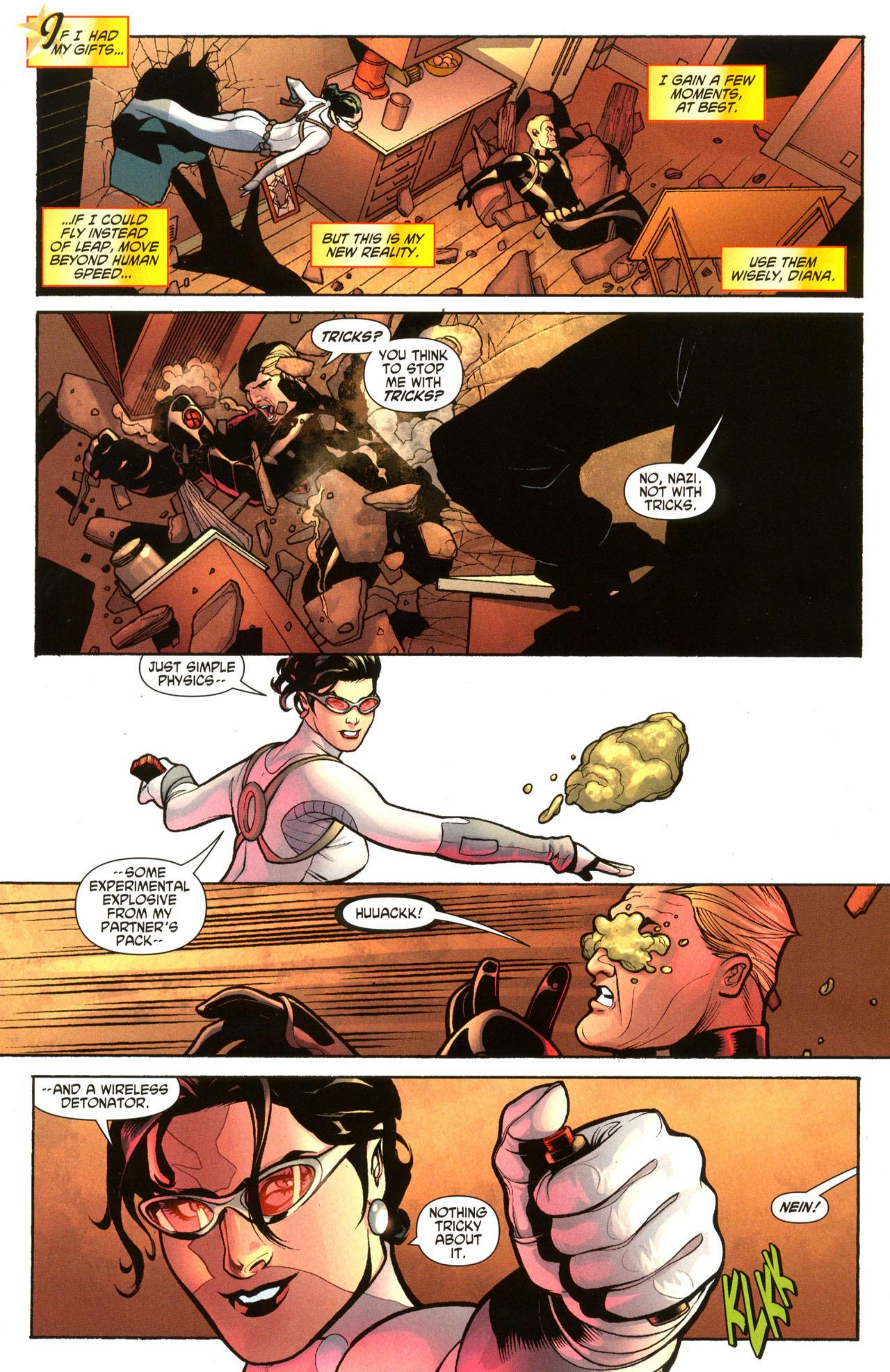
...
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, AND MAY ATHENA FORGIVE ME--
--KILL HER.


EVEN WITH HER LAST BREATH, A WARRIOR TAKES INVENTORY.
WE ASSAULTED THIS ABANDONED BUILDING, FORMER SAFEHOUSE FOR THE SCATTERED REMAINS OF THE SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS.
ONLY TO FIND THAT ONE PSYCHOPATHIC KILLER REMAINED ON-PREMISES. CAPTAIN NAZI, OF ALL PEOPLE.
AND IN THIS HUMAN FORM, I HAVE NO POWERS, NOR ACCESS TO MY WEAPONS.
I LEAVE IT TO YOU, YOUNG WOMAN.
SHALL I KISS YOU BEFORE DYING?
OR AFTER?
NEMESIS IS OUT COLD, SO I AM ALONE HERE.
AND THIS HORRENDOUS MONSTROSITY'S COMRADES ARE GOING TO DESTROY MY HOMELAND AND SLAY MY MOTHER.
THE CIRCLE
PART TWO OF FOUR
DEAD HEAT
NOTE: THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE COUNTDOWN #30
gail simone-writer
terry dodson-penciller
rachel dodson-inker
alex sinclair-colorist
john j. hill-letterer
nachie castro-assoc. editor
matt idelson-editor
wonder woman created by william moulton marston

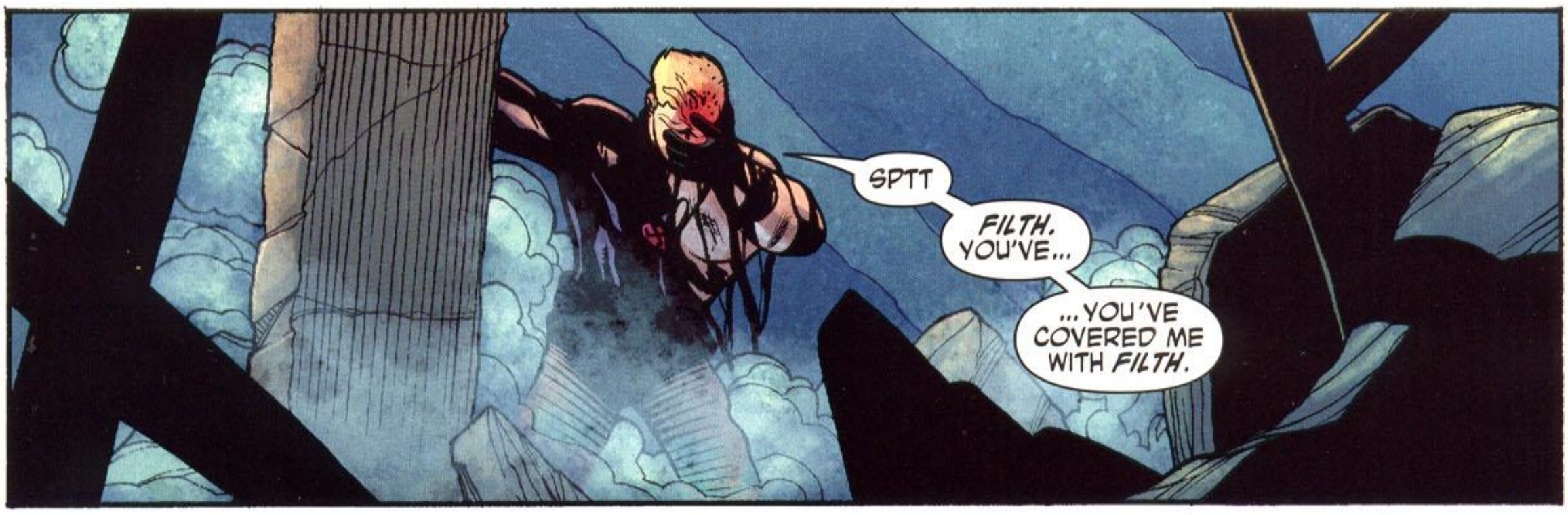
POOR, LOVELY CREATURE.
I WISH I COULD PROMISE THAT I WOULD BE GENTLE.
UCCRRRH...
THE DRYWALL BEHIND ME... IT'S OLD. AND NAZI DOESN'T KNOW HIS OWN LEVERAGE AND STRENGTH.


THIS IS GOING TO STING.
EH?
UHHHHN!

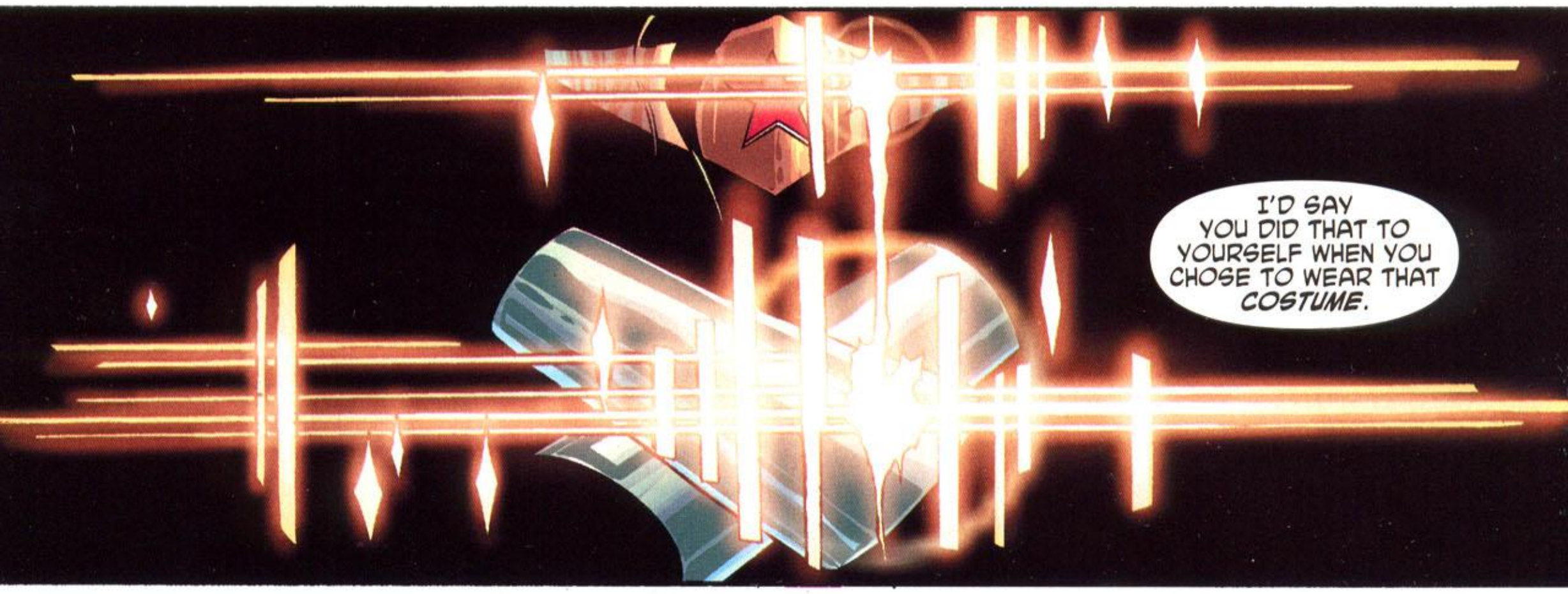
BATTLE.
LIFE OR DEATH. ATHENA HELP ME--
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU--
--BUT A PART OF ME WILL ALWAYS CHERISH IT.


IF I HAD MY GIFTS...
...IF I COULD FLY INSTEAD OF LEAP, MOVE BEYOND HUMAN SPEED...
BUT THIS IS MY NEW REALITY.
I GAIN A FEW MOMENTS, AT BEST.
USE THEM WISELY, DIANA.
TRICKS?
YOU THINK TO STOP ME WITH TRICKS?
NO, NAZI. NOT WITH TRICKS.
JUST SIMPLE PHYSICS--
--SOME EXPERIMENTAL EXPLOSIVE FROM MY PARTNER'S PACK--
HUUACKK!
--AND A WIRELESS DETONATOR.
NOTHING TRICKY ABOUT IT.
NEIN!
KLKK

PHWOOOMMPPH
B-DAY WOMAN, REPEAT, B-DAY WOMAN, WE HAVE AN EXPLOSION OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN. DO YOU REQUEST SUPPORT?
THAT'S NEGATIVE, DIRECTOR. DO NOT ENTER THE BUILDING. DO NOT ENTER THE BUILDING!


SPTT
FILTH. YOU'VE...
...YOU'VE COVERED ME WITH FILTH.

NO, CAPTAIN.


I'D SAY YOU DID THAT TO YOURSELF WHEN YOU CHOSE TO WEAR THAT COSTUME.

HELLO, NAZI.

UH...?

THEMYSCIRA
WE START ANEW HERE, BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
THIS ABANDONED ISLAND SHALL BE OUR NEW FATHERLAND.
SEARCH EVERY *INCH*. SAVE THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND WEAPONRY.
BURN EVERYTHING ELSE TO THE *GROUND*.
NO.
NO MORE *CONQUERORS* HERE.

I HAVE NOT BEEN MYSELF.
THE GODS HAVE RIGHTLY PUNISHED ME WITH ISOLATION FOR MY MISTAKES, FOR THE INNOCENTS KILLED AND WOUNDED BY MY ACTIONS. BUT TONIGHT--
--THAT DEBT SHALL BE PAID WITH AMAZON BLOOD.

UHHH...

WHAT...
AHH.

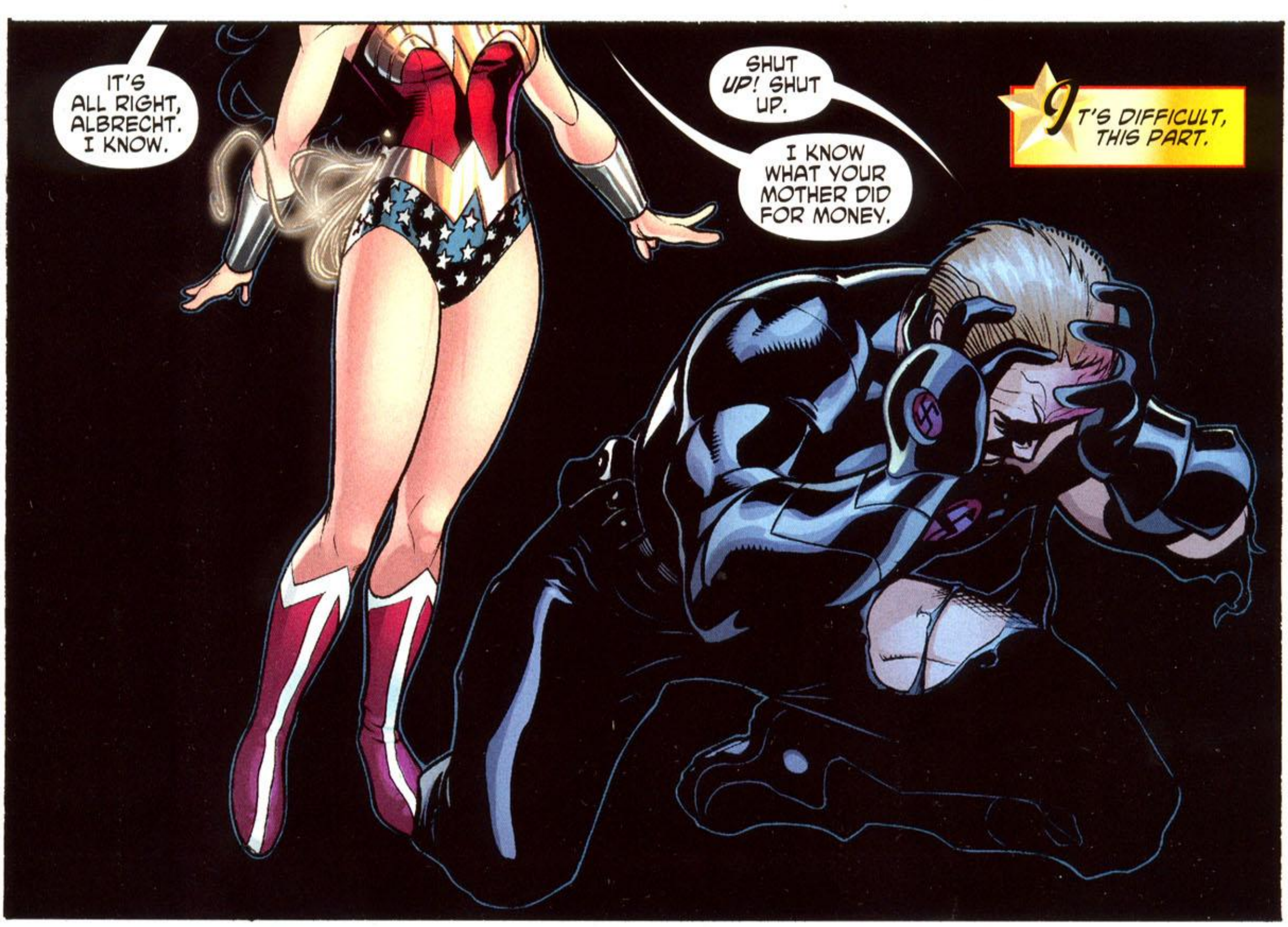
MEIN GOTT.
WHERE IS THIS PLACE?

DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE IT, CAPTAIN?
OR SHALL I CALL YOU ALBRECHT?
SHOW YOURSELF! COWARD!
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

DO YOU NOT RECOGNIZE IT?
IT'S YOUR SOUL, ALBRECHT KRIEGER.

YOU ARE IN MY LASSO, NAZI.
AND IN THIS PLACE, ONLY THE TRUTH SURVIVES.
NOOOOOOOO!

MY MOTHER. THE INVASION OF THEMYSCIRA.
TELL ME EVERYTHING.
I...
I WON'T. I WON'T!


IT'S ALL RIGHT, ALBRECHT. I KNOW.
SHUT UP! SHUT UP.
I KNOW WHAT YOUR MOTHER DID FOR MONEY.
IT'S DIFFICULT, THIS PART.

I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL SYMPATHY. EVEN FOR HIM.

I KNOW YOUR FATHER WAS HER PIMP. HE KILLED HER OVER A SACK OF STOLEN GROCERIES.

AND I KNOW HE BEAT YOU AND YOUR BROTHER WOLF EVERY DAY OF YOUR YOUNG LIVES.

EVEN FOR HIM.

YOU CAN... YOU CAN SEE RIGHT INSIDE ME.

MERCY. MERCY.

STOP THIS. IT'S... NOT GODLY.

NOT BY *YOUR* DEFINITION OF THAT WORD, NO.

BUT THERE IS NO EVIL HERE BUT THAT WHICH YOU BRING IN YOURSELF.

TELL ME EVERYTHING, ALBRECHT.

AND HE DOES. HE TELLS OF HIS SHADOWY SOCIETY CONTACT, AND THEIR INTELLIGENCE REGARDING THE NOW DEFENSELESS THEMYSCIRA. HOW THEY'D GIVEN HIS POWERS TO NEARLY A HUNDRED YOUNG AND MOTIVATED VOLUNTEERS.

AND OF THEIR PLAN TO WIPE MY CULTURE CLEAN.

HE CAN'T HELP HIMSELF.

AND EVEN FOR HIM, I FOLLOW THE AMAZON CODE WHEN FACING A VANQUISHED FOE: PUNISHMENT FOR THE ADULT...

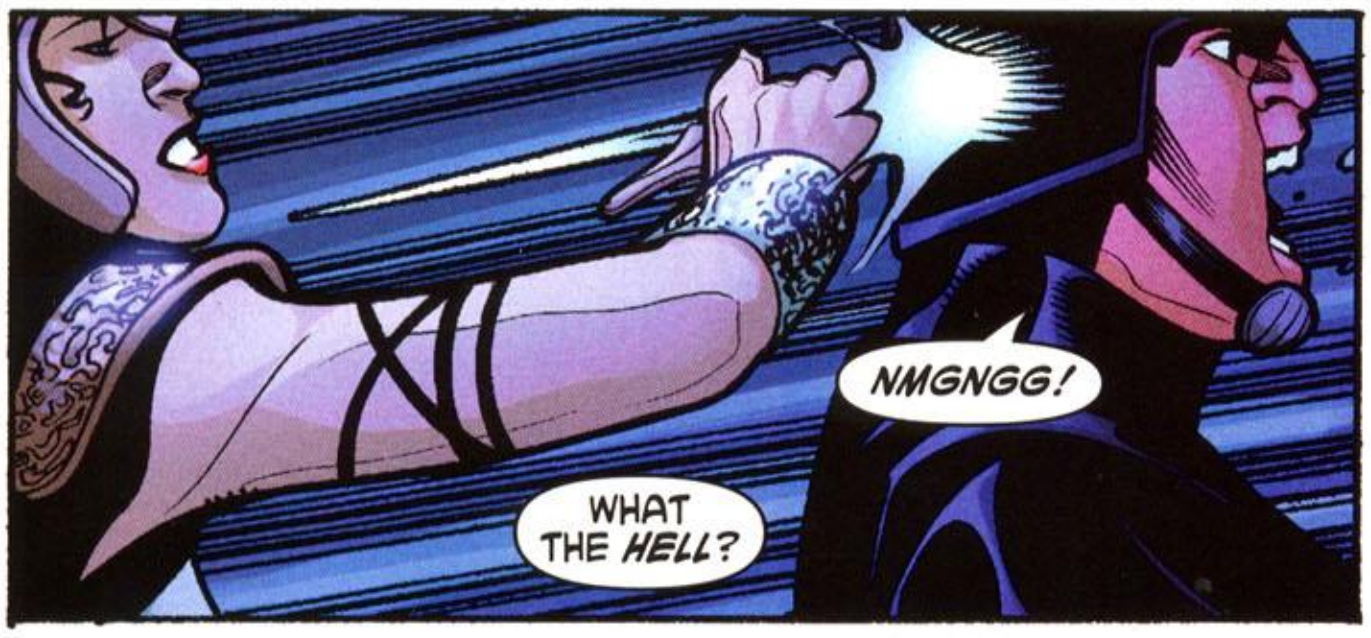
...EMPATHY FOR THE CHILD.

EVEN FOR HIM.

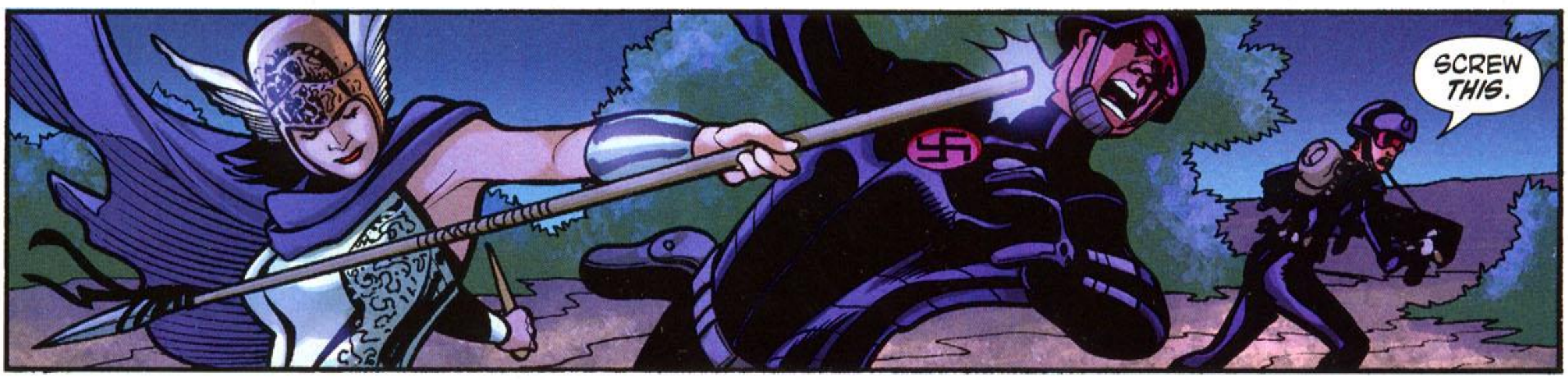
AND LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER, TOM'S AT THE MED CENTER WITH A MILD CONCUSSION, AND I'M AT...
...WELL, THE PLACE I CALL HOME, ANYWAY.
THEY WON'T GET ANYTHING OUT OF KRIEGER. HE'S DONE TALKING FOR A WHILE, I SUSPECT.
...AFTER MY MOTHER, TOLIFHAR. A HUNDRED DEMONS JUST LIKE HIM.
HMMPH. I SEE. AND WHEN DO WE GO AND GET HER?
NO, CHIEF OF APES. I CAN'T ASK YOU TO...
YOUR MAJESTY, THAT IS ENTIRELY THE POINT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK.
...
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND. I MEAN IT.
BUT I'M NOT EVEN SURE I'LL BE ABLE TO GET THERE. ATHENA HAS CORDONED OFF THE ENTIRE ISLAND TO ALL AMAZONS AS A PENALTY FOR THE WAR THEY WAGED.
SO, IT IS HOPELESS?
NO.
I'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER RIDE.

HEY, BLUE POINT, WE'VE COME ACROSS SOME SORT OF BIZARRE, I DON'T KNOW, *STABLE* OR SOMESUCH. YOU GOTTA *SEE* THIS. I MEAN, *UNICORNS* AND SOME KIND OF *DRAGON* THING IN HERE...
SQUAD LEADER SAYS KILL EVERY LIVING THING, RED POINT. NUKE IT.
COPY THAT, BLUE POINT. ANY SIGN OF THE QUEEN?
NEGATIVE.

MY GUESS IS SHE SAW US COMING AND HIGHTAILED IT FOR SOME *OTHER* DAMN FAIRYLAND.
HAHAHA! PROLLY JUST *RIGHT*, BLUE POINT.


NMGNGG!
WHAT THE *HELL*?

LOOK *OUT*!


SCREW *THIS*.

OH.

BLUE POINT? DO YOU COPY, BLUE POINT?

JEEZ, KILLING *PEOPLE*, I'M UP FOR THAT BUSINESS, BUT...
I KNOW. HATE TO KILL DUMB ANIMALS LIKE THIS.
YOU GOT ENOUGH GRENADES?

KLAANG

WHAT WAS *THAT*?
HEY, I HEARD A PEN DOOR OPEN!
FORMATION, DAMMIT! WE'RE NOT *ALONE*.
OH.
OH, NO.

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

GOOD LORD!

BUDDA BUDDA

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

ATHENA, I BEG YOU, FOR MY TRIBE, THE WOMEN WHO WORSHIPPED YOU FOR THIRTY-TWO CENTURIES--

--GRANT ME THE WISDOM TO AVOID FURTHER BLOODSHED.

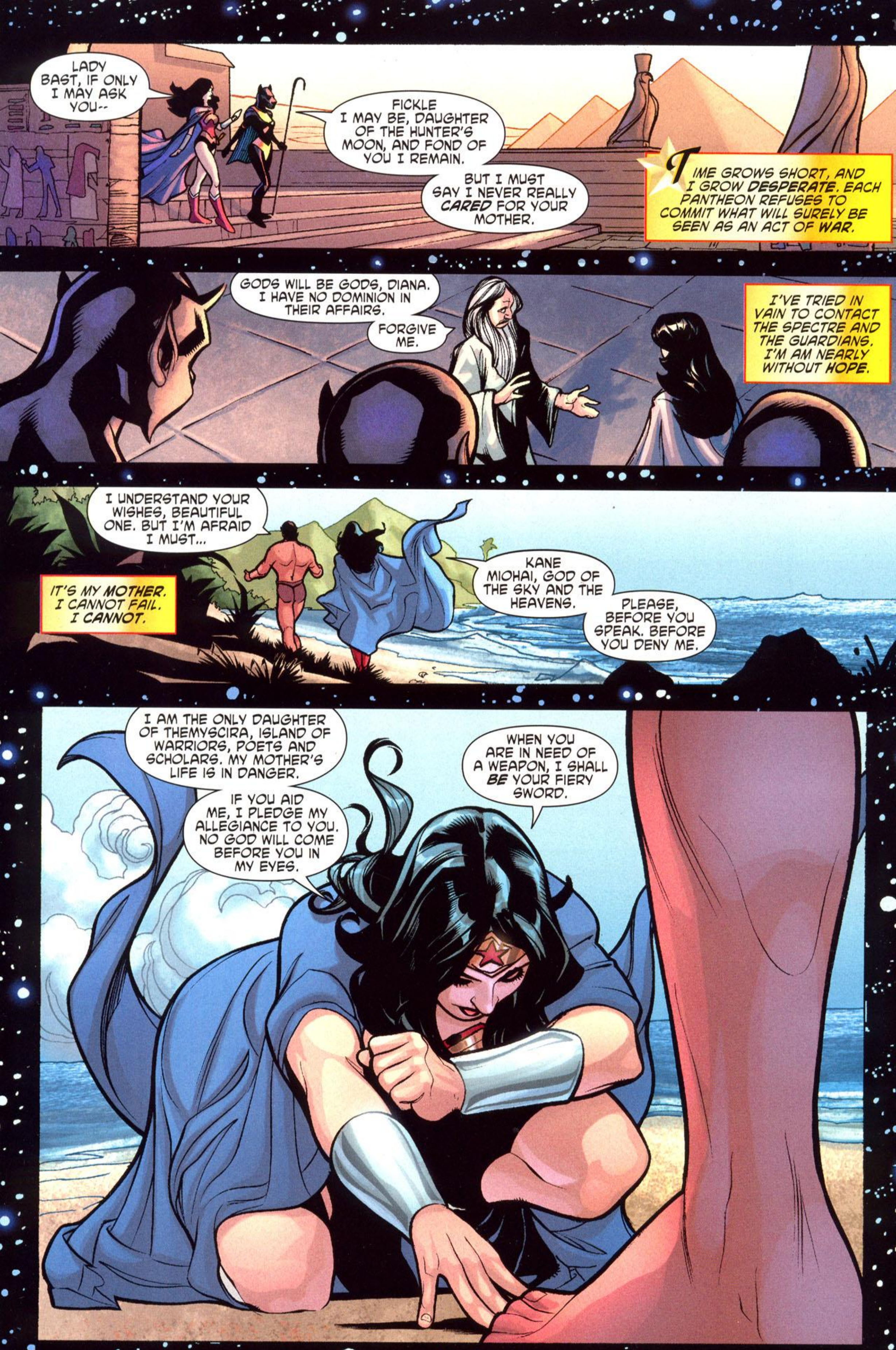
GRANT ME THE GRACE TO FORGIVE MY ENEMIES. BUT FAILING THAT, GODDESS...

HEY. *STOP*, STOP RIGHT *NOW*!

I'LL *SHOOT*!

...AT LEAST GRANT ME THE GIFT OF GOOD *AIM*.

"FOR TONIGHT, A DEBT IS PAID IN AMAZON BLOOD."
MIGHTY WODINAZ, I BESEECH THEE...
CALL ME ODIN, CHILD.
ASGARD
I HAVE NO DAUGHTER, DIANA.
NOR I A FATHER, LORD.
I WISH I COULD BUT AID YOU.
I SHALL NOT GO AGAINST ATHENA'S WILL, BRAVE ONE.
I'M SORRY.
THE CELESTIAL HOUSE OF THUNDER
I BEG OF THEE, RAIJIN, THUNDER GOD...
THE LAST TIME I FOUGHT OTHER GODS, IMPERTINENT ONE, I WAS NEARLY DESTROYED.
I HAVE BUT ONE MOTHER, LORD.
THEN YOU HAD BEST BE GLAD OF YOUR MANY SISTERS.
BEGONE!


LADY BAST, IF ONLY I MAY ASK YOU--
FICKLE I MAY BE, DAUGHTER OF THE HUNTER'S MOON, AND FOND OF YOU I REMAIN.
BUT I MUST SAY I NEVER REALLY CARED FOR YOUR MOTHER.
TIME GROWS SHORT, AND I GROW DESPERATE. EACH PANTHEON REFUSES TO COMMIT WHAT WILL SURELY BE SEEN AS AN ACT OF WAR.
GODS WILL BE GODS, DIANA. I HAVE NO DOMINION IN THEIR AFFAIRS.
FORGIVE ME.
I'VE TRIED IN VAIN TO CONTACT THE SPECTRE AND THE GUARDIANS. I'M AM NEARLY WITHOUT HOPE.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR WISHES, BEAUTIFUL ONE. BUT I'M AFRAID I MUST...
IT'S MY MOTHER. I CANNOT FAIL. I CANNOT.
KANE MIOHAI, GOD OF THE SKY AND THE HEAVENS.
PLEASE, BEFORE YOU SPEAK. BEFORE YOU DENY ME.
I AM THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF THEMYSCIRA, ISLAND OF WARRIORS, POETS AND SCHOLARS. MY MOTHER'S LIFE IS IN DANGER.
IF YOU AID ME, I PLEDGE MY ALLEGIANCE TO YOU. NO GOD WILL COME BEFORE YOU IN MY EYES.
WHEN YOU ARE IN NEED OF A WEAPON, I SHALL BE YOUR FIERY SWORD.

I GIVE MY LIFE TO YOU, OF MY OWN FREE WILL, IF IT SHALL HELP SAVE MY TRIBE AND MY MOTHER. I GIVE MY *WORD* AS AN *AMAZON*. YOU ARE MY LAST AND ONLY HOPE.
...
WELL!

IF YOU ARE TO BE MY CHAMPION, THEN IT'S ONLY FAIR YOU WEAR MY STANDARD IN BATTLE, DON'T YOU THINK?

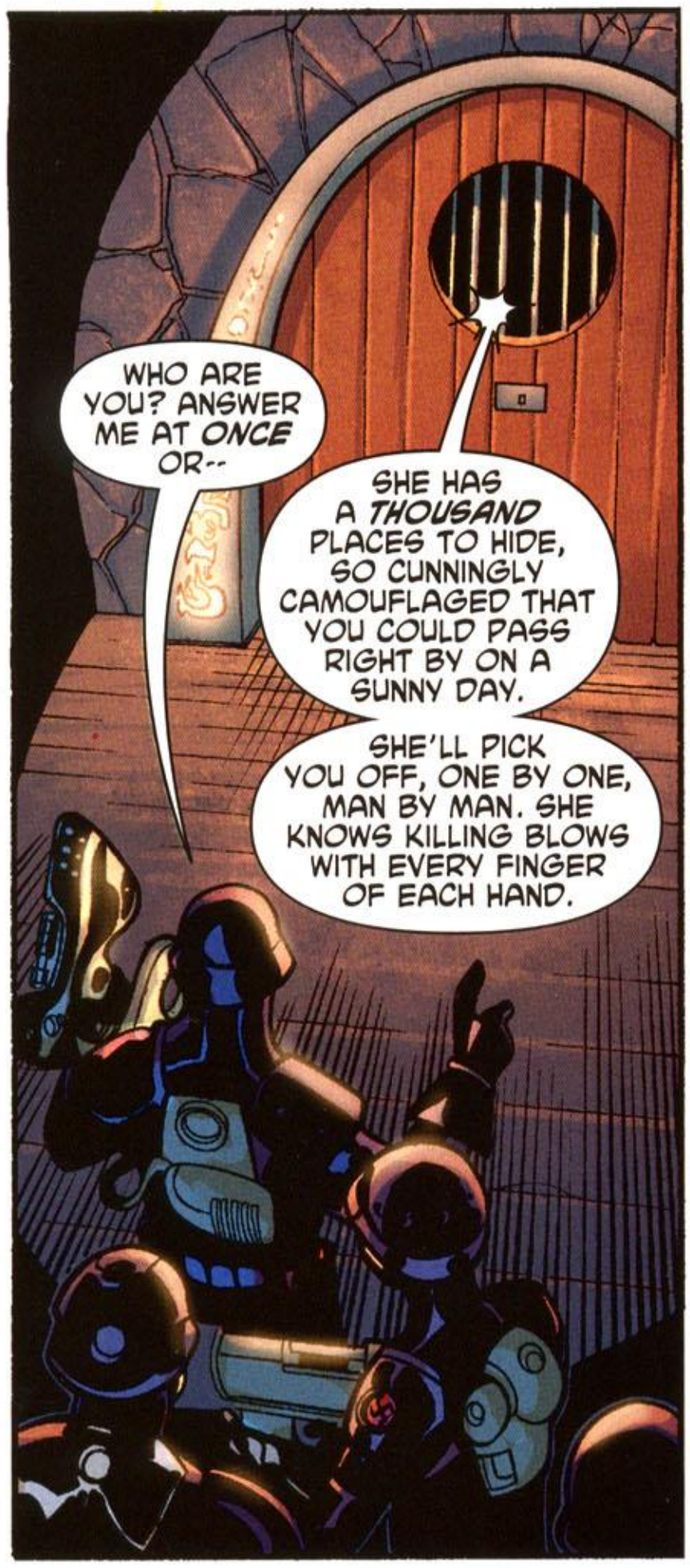
THANK YOU, LORD. THANK YOU.
HUSH. YOU REMIND ME OF WHAT A DAUGHTER'S LOVE MEANS.
COME. I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU.

THIS SHELL WILL GROW INTO A VESSEL WHICH WILL TAKE YOU ANYWHERE YOU NEED TO GO. ANYWHERE.
KEEP FAITH. TRUST TO LOVE. FIGHT WITH HONOR. BUT FIGHT TO WIN.
"TRUST TO LOVE." YES.

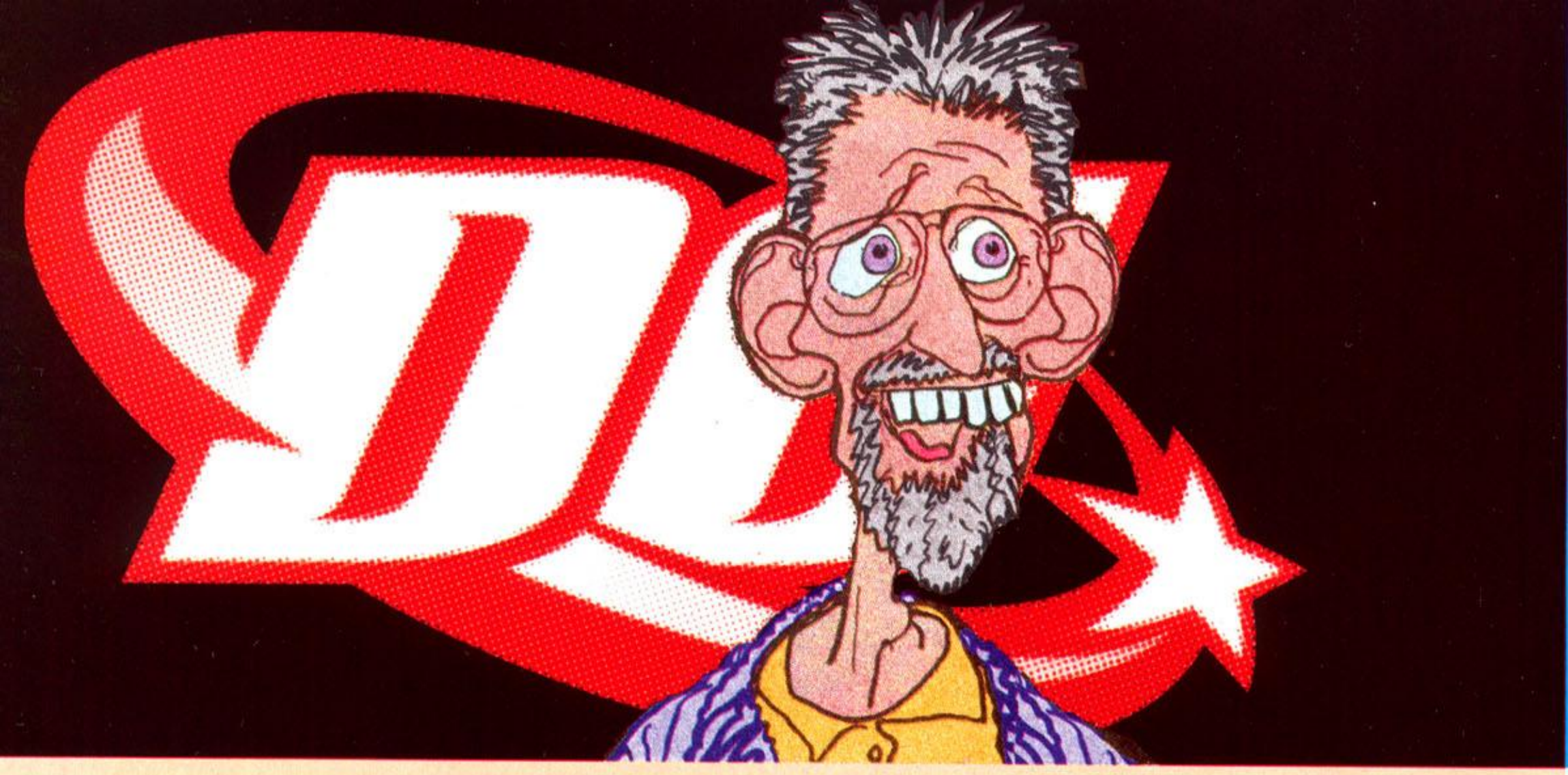
ARE YOU READY, AMAZON?
...
NO, MY LORD.

THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO PICK UP AT *HOME*, FIRST.

SQUAD LEADER! COME *QUICKLY.*



NEXT: THE WELLSPRING OF ALL VENGEANCE



Over the last few years exclusive contracts have been an important part of the way we do business, so much so that it seems not even a week can go by without us or our competition announcing the next big signing. I've mentioned new contracts in these columns before, but the time has come for me to dedicate one column to the one signing that never seemed possible.

This was the one exclusive I never thought would happen, not because I didn't think the person was worthy – quite the opposite – I didn't think one company could *contain* all his talent. Of course I am talking about the incomparable **Keith Giffen**.

Keith was the first creator I met when I joined DC Comics. In my new position as Vice President-Editorial, it was my job to seek out the top talent and introduce myself. Naturally, with Keith, he found me first. Never forgot how he leaned in my door and said with the greatest sense of urgency and sincerity, "Run now, don't even pack, just get the hell out while you can."

Didn't listen to him that day, but that's fine; he rarely listens to me now.

Keith comes at you in waves, constantly pitching new ideas, challenging you with daring new stories and always looking to break every rule in the book. Why push the envelope when you can shred it? And if you thought killing his "favorite characters" would slow him down (and lord knows we tried) or upset him, big mistake. He'd say, "Good, I was tired of them anyway" and come at you with ten new ones.

I'd like to say that we offered Keith the exclusive to protect the other companies from his excessive crankiness and crabbing, but that wouldn't be 100% true (although he really is excessively cranky and crabby). Keith is someone I have always wanted under contract, but we could never keep him busy enough, until now.

So in the upcoming months Keith will continue to juggle the many worlds of the Multiverse in COUNTDOWN TO FINAL CRISIS; handle breakdowns for THE WAR THAT TIME FORGOT; create the ultimate WildStorm/ DCU crossover; set up a war for control of Hell (firsthand experience, I imagine); and because Jann Jones kept bugging, make a return trip to one of his most popular characters.

Who knows, maybe in his spare time he could take a swing at our favorite blue and red heroes. In Keith's world, that's a done deal.

To be continued... DD

DC NATION

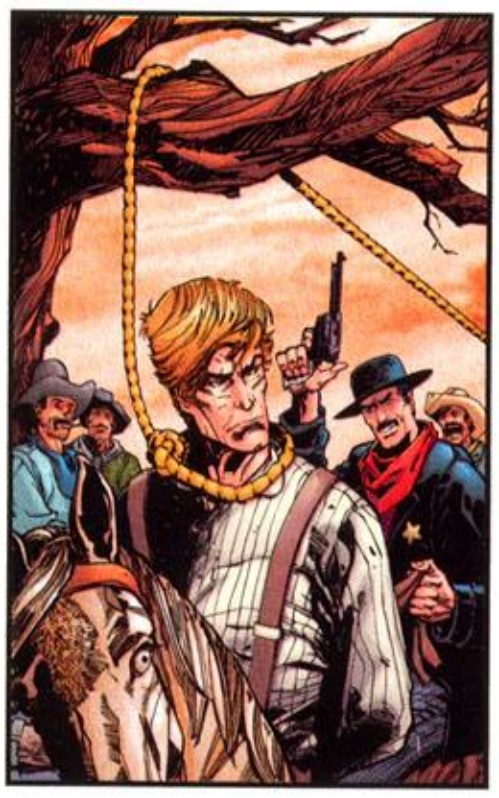
For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at dccomics.com

Next in...

WONDER WOMAN #16

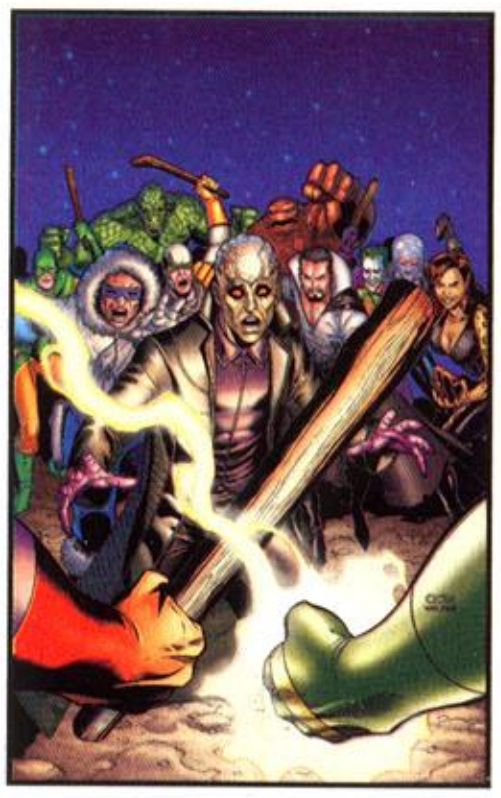
MORE about Diana's birth! MORE fighting against Captain Nazi(s)! MORE secrets of Paradise Island! MORE!

THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK



BAT LASH #1

CAPTAIN CARROT #3



SALVATION RUN #2

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