



PULP HEROES

#6

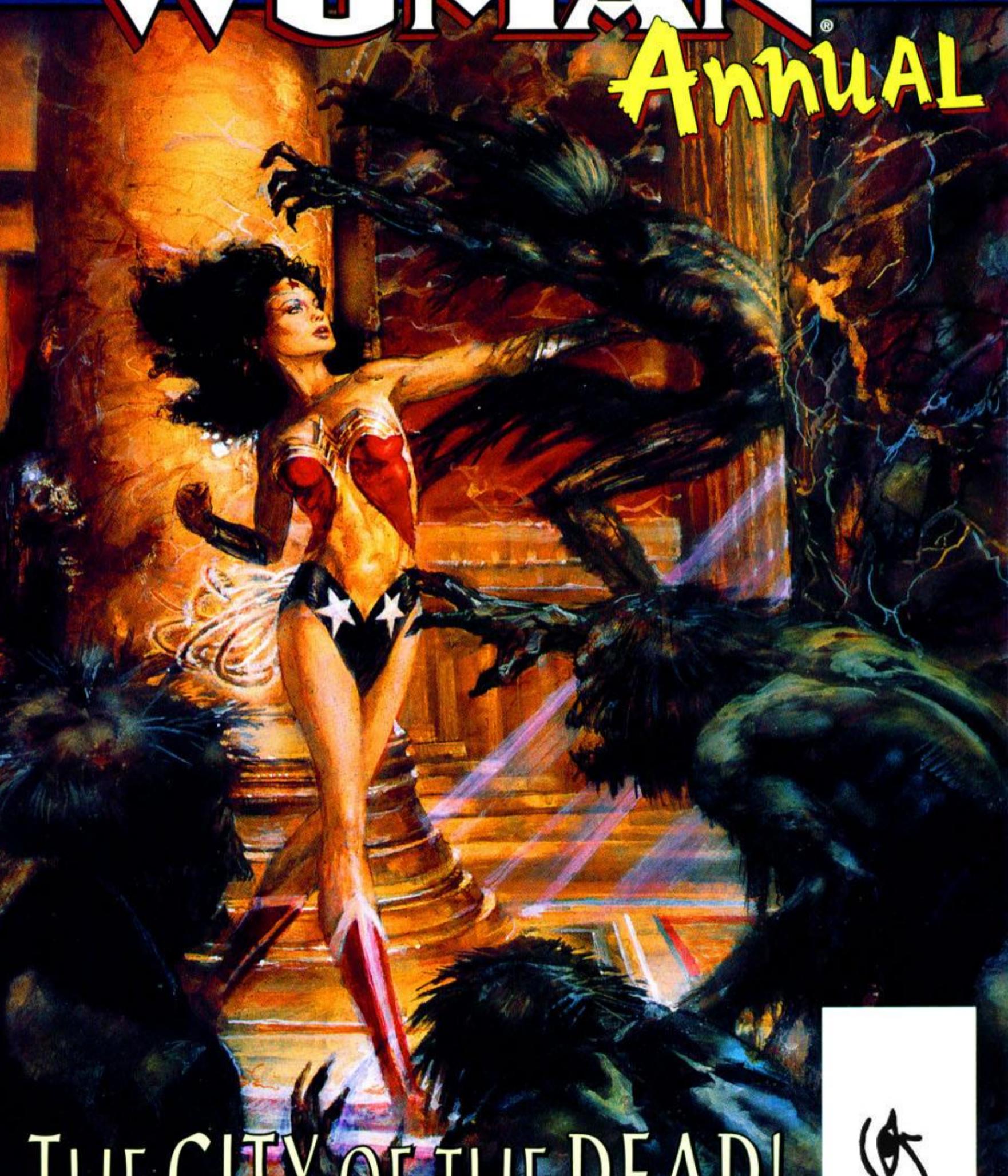
WONDER WOMAN

1997

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T A L E S O F T H E U N E X P E C T E D

Annual



THE CITY OF THE DEAD!

by JOHN BYRNE & TOM PALMER

PLUS: 2nd FEATURE by J. WEIS, E. BENES & B. KAALBERG



NECROPOLE

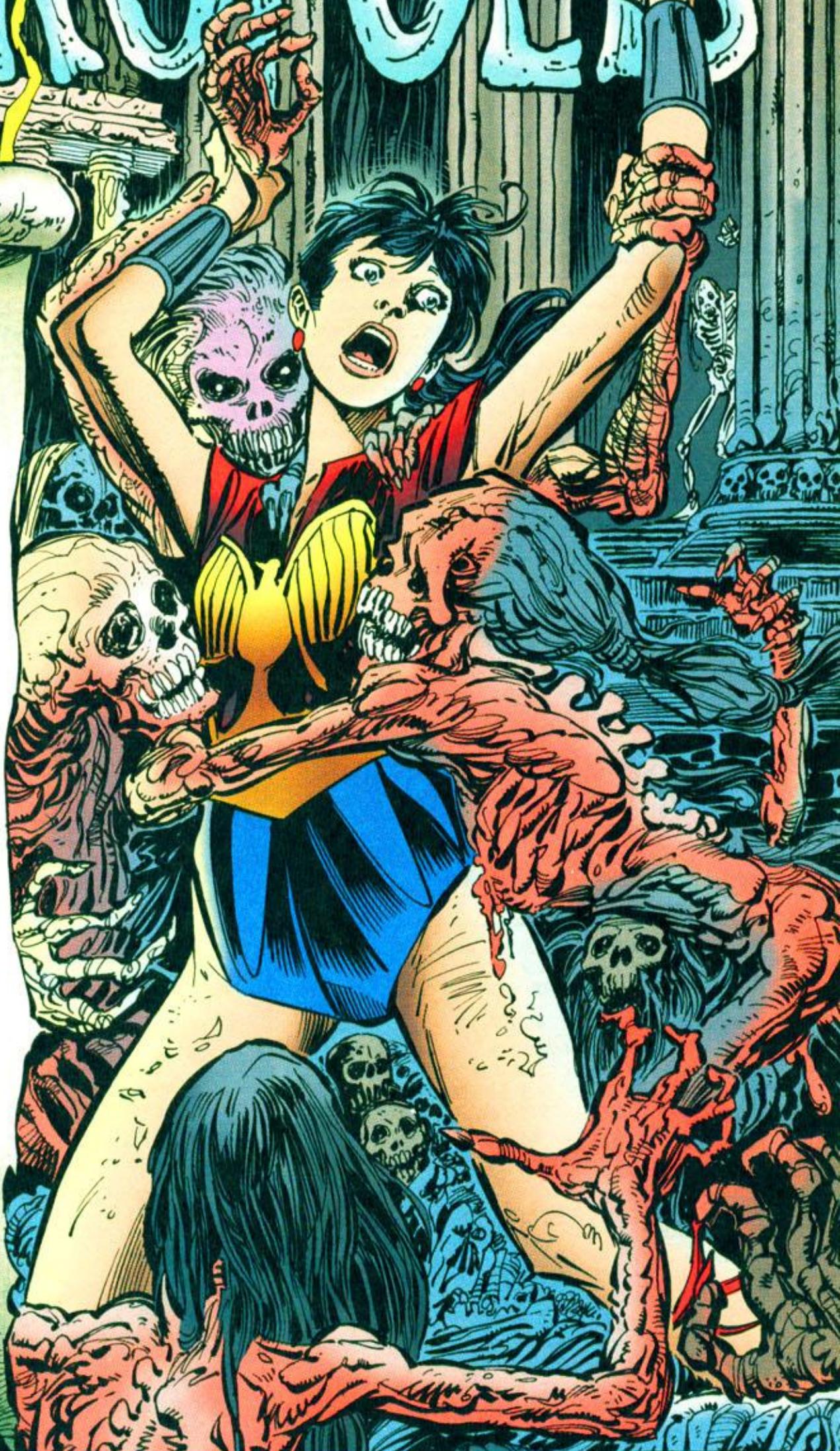


ALL THE LEGENDS THAT HAUNT THE DREAMING MINDS OF MAN OR WOMAN, MOST FEARED AND FEARFUL ARE THOSE OF THE WALKING DEAD, THE RESTLESS SOULS WHO WANDER THE ETERNAL NIGHT, FOREVER DENIED THE PEACE OF THE GRAVE, FOREVER CUT OFF FROM THE QUIETITUDE THAT IS THE NATURAL REWARD OF A LIFE FULLY LIVED.

THE FACES OF THESE RESTIVE SPIRITS TAKE MANY FORMS, THE NAMES WE GIVEN THEM PLENTIFUL. THEY ARE VAMPIRES, ZOMBIES, ZUZEMBIES. THE VERY MENTION OF THEIR NAMES IS ENOUGH TO CONJURE FORTH THE SMELL OF THE GRAVE, THE STENCH OF CORRUPTED FLESH AS IT HANGS UPON DRY BONE.

WE SEE THE SHADOWS OF THEIR EMPTY EYES, THE GLINT OF MOONLIGHT ON TEETH DRAWN LONG BY THE SHRIVELING OF FLESH. WE HEAR THE SCRAPE OF AWKWARD FOOTSTEPS, BONE ON STONE, MOLDY LEATHER, ROTTED CLOTH DRAGGING BEHIND AS THE ONCE-LIVING SHAMBLE THROUGH THE DARKNESS.

WHERE THEY DWELL IS BEYOND THE PALE, BEYOND THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIVING. IT IS NO PLACE FOR WARM, VITAL FLESH, NO PLACE ESPECIALLY FOR A YOUNG GIRL WHOSE UPBRINGING AND WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE HAVE ILL-PREPARED HER FOR THE HARSH REALITIES OF DEATH.

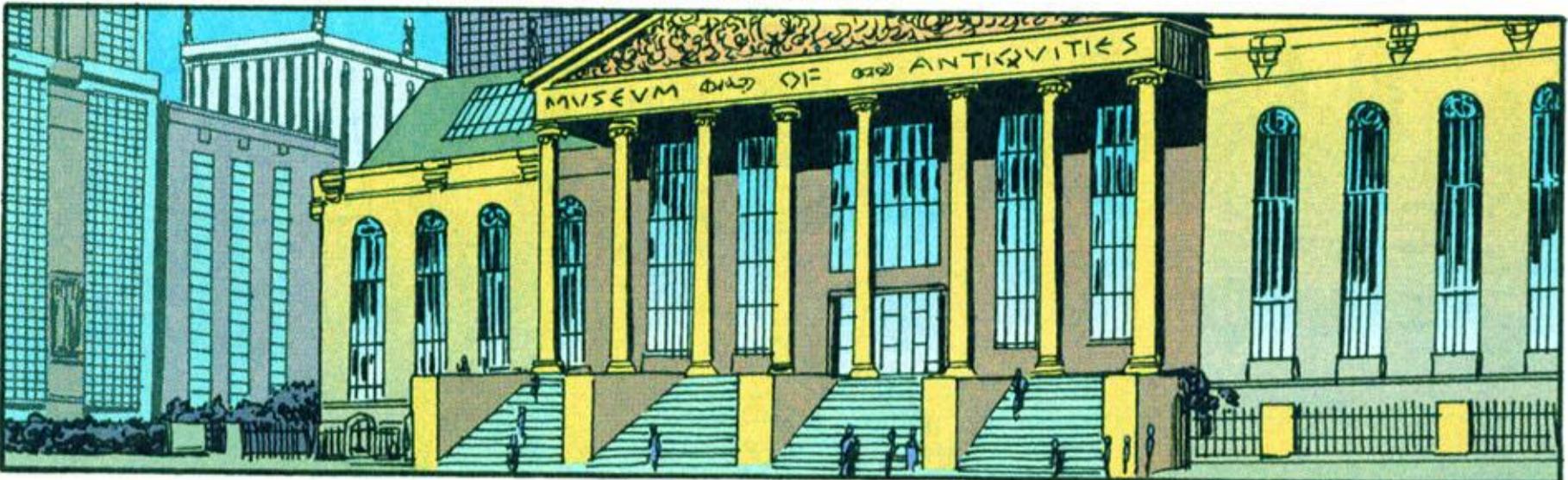


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OUR TALE IS TOLD IN TWO PLACES, IN TWO SEPARATE TIMES, TWO SLICES OF THE LIFE OF THE ONE KNOWN WIDELY AS WONDER WOMAN. FOR THE MAIN PART WE WILL LOOK TO THE PAST, TO DAYS BEFORE PRINCESS DIANA KNEW THERE WAS ANYTHING MORE TO THE WORLD THAN THE GREEN AND PLEASANT HILLS OF HER NATIVE THEMYSCIRA. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, WE WILL LOOK HERE, TO THE GATEWAY CITY MUSEUM OF CULTURAL ANTIQUITIES...



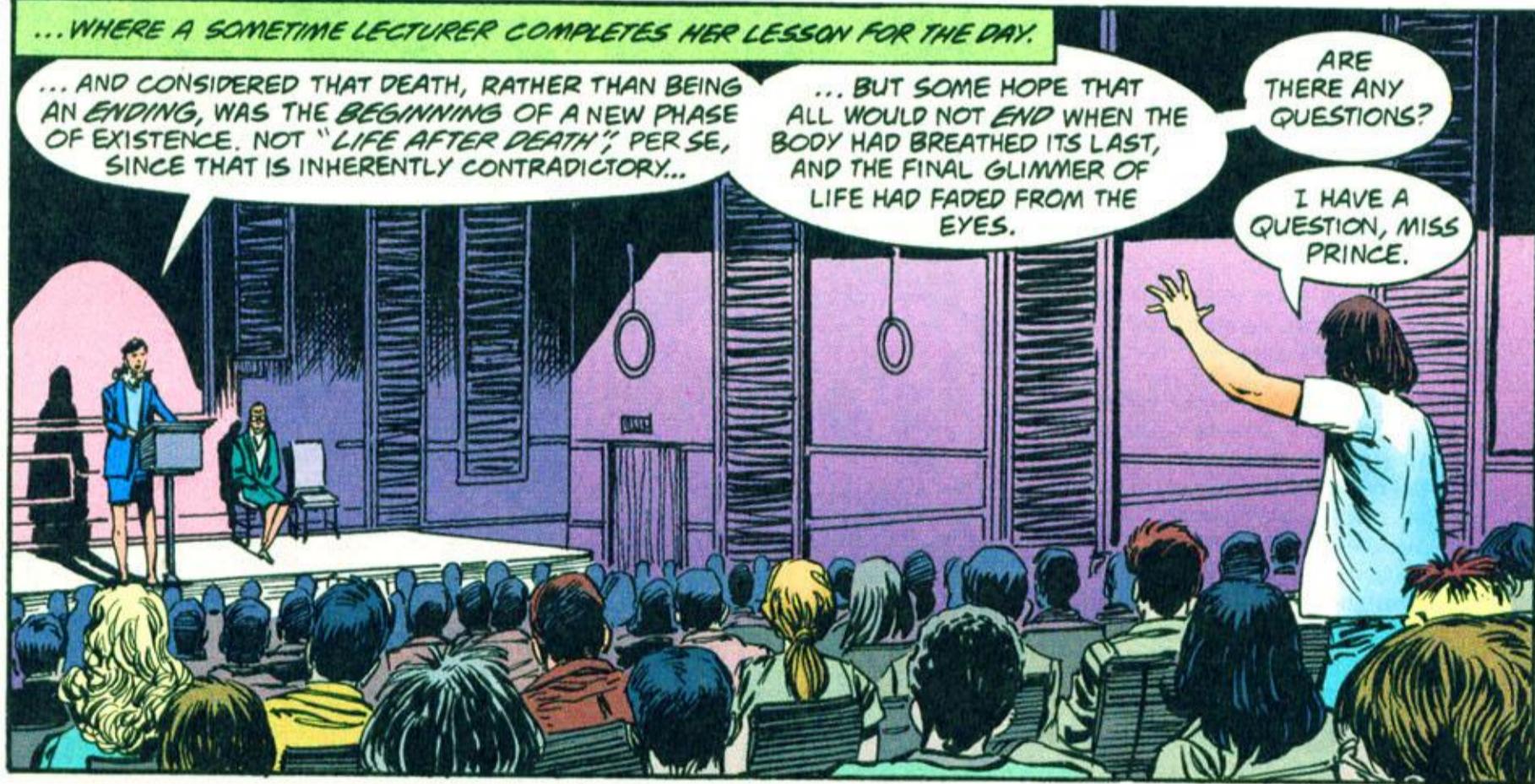
...WHERE A SOMETIME LECTURER COMPLETES HER LESSON FOR THE DAY.

...AND CONSIDERED THAT DEATH, RATHER THAN BEING AN ENDING, WAS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PHASE OF EXISTENCE. NOT "LIFE AFTER DEATH", PER SE, SINCE THAT IS INHERENTLY CONTRADICTORY...

...BUT SOME HOPE THAT ALL WOULD NOT END WHEN THE BODY HAD BREATHED ITS LAST, AND THE FINAL GLIMMER OF LIFE HAD FADED FROM THE EYES.

ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?

I HAVE A QUESTION, MISS PRINCE.

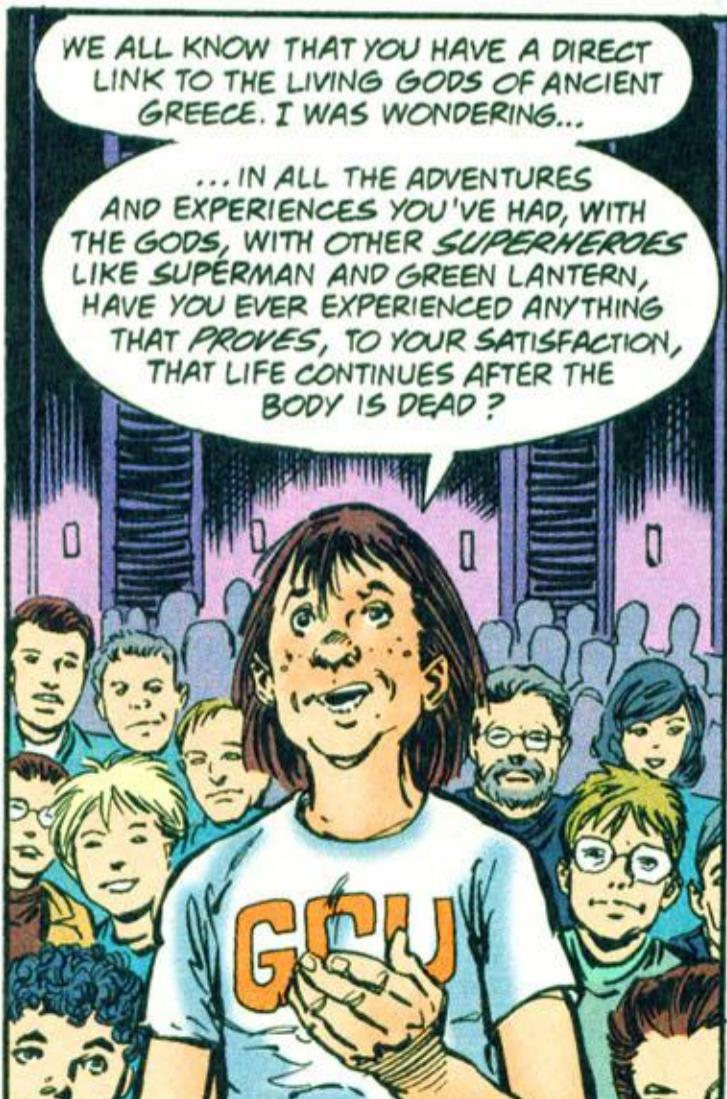


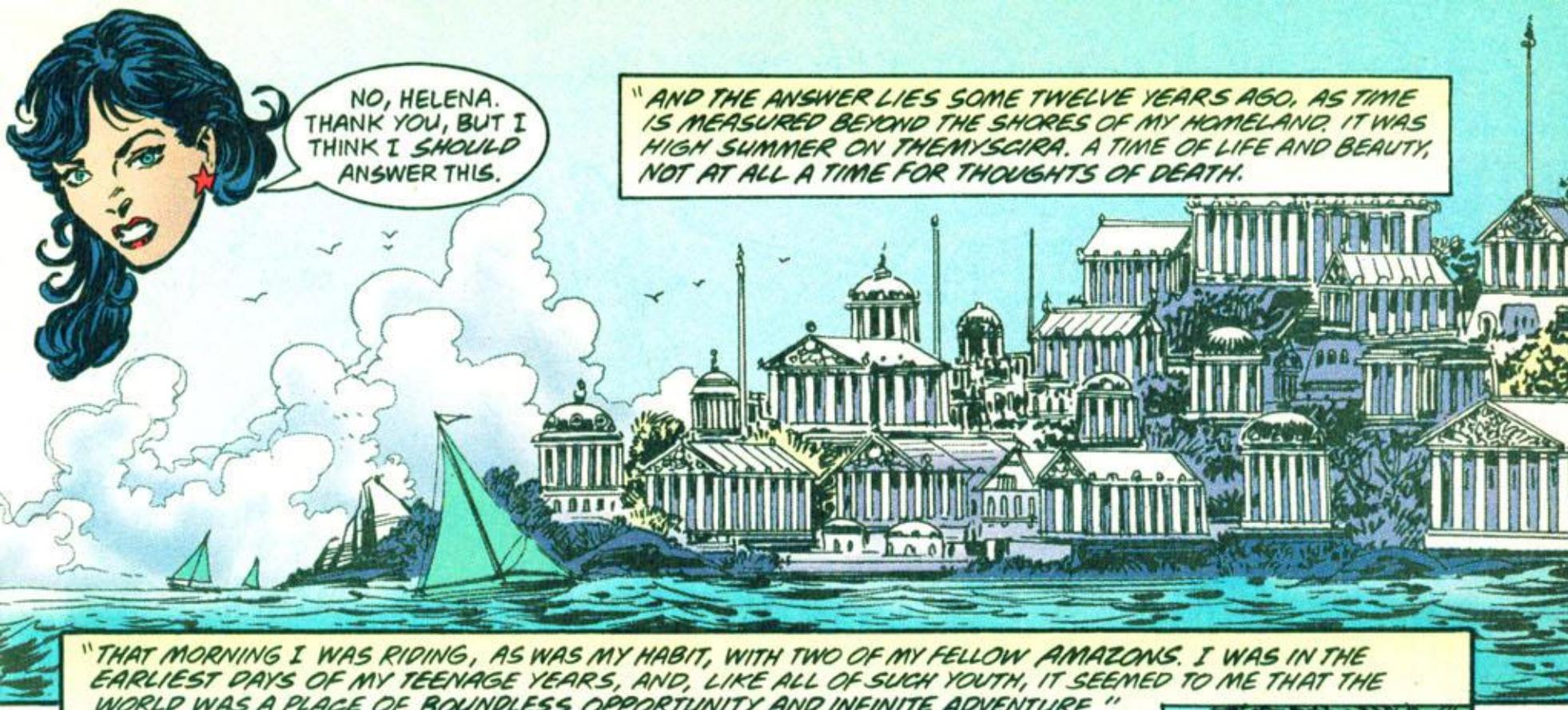
WE ALL KNOW THAT YOU HAVE A DIRECT LINK TO THE LIVING GODS OF ANCIENT GREECE. I WAS WONDERING...

...IN ALL THE ADVENTURES AND EXPERIENCES YOU'VE HAD, WITH THE GODS, WITH OTHER SUPERHEROES LIKE SUPERMAN AND GREEN LANTERN, HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED ANYTHING THAT PROVES, TO YOUR SATISFACTION, THAT LIFE CONTINUES AFTER THE BODY IS DEAD?

YOU ASK THAT QUESTION SO EASILY. I WONDER IF YOU REALIZE THE TRUE COMPLEXITY OF WHAT YOU ASK?

IF YOU'D RATHER NOT ANSWER, DIANA, WE'RE ALMOST AT THE END OF OUR TIME FOR TODAY'S LECTURE ANYWAY...





"THAT MORNING I WAS RIDING, AS WAS MY HABIT, WITH TWO OF MY FELLOW AMAZONS. I WAS IN THE EARLIEST DAYS OF MY TEENAGE YEARS, AND, LIKE ALL OF SUCH YOUTH, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THE WORLD WAS A PLACE OF BOUNDLESS OPPORTUNITY AND INFINITE ADVENTURE."



"PLUS I HAD CERTAIN FACTORS ON MY SIDE WHICH WERE NOT AT THE COMMAND OF THE OTHER AMAZONS."

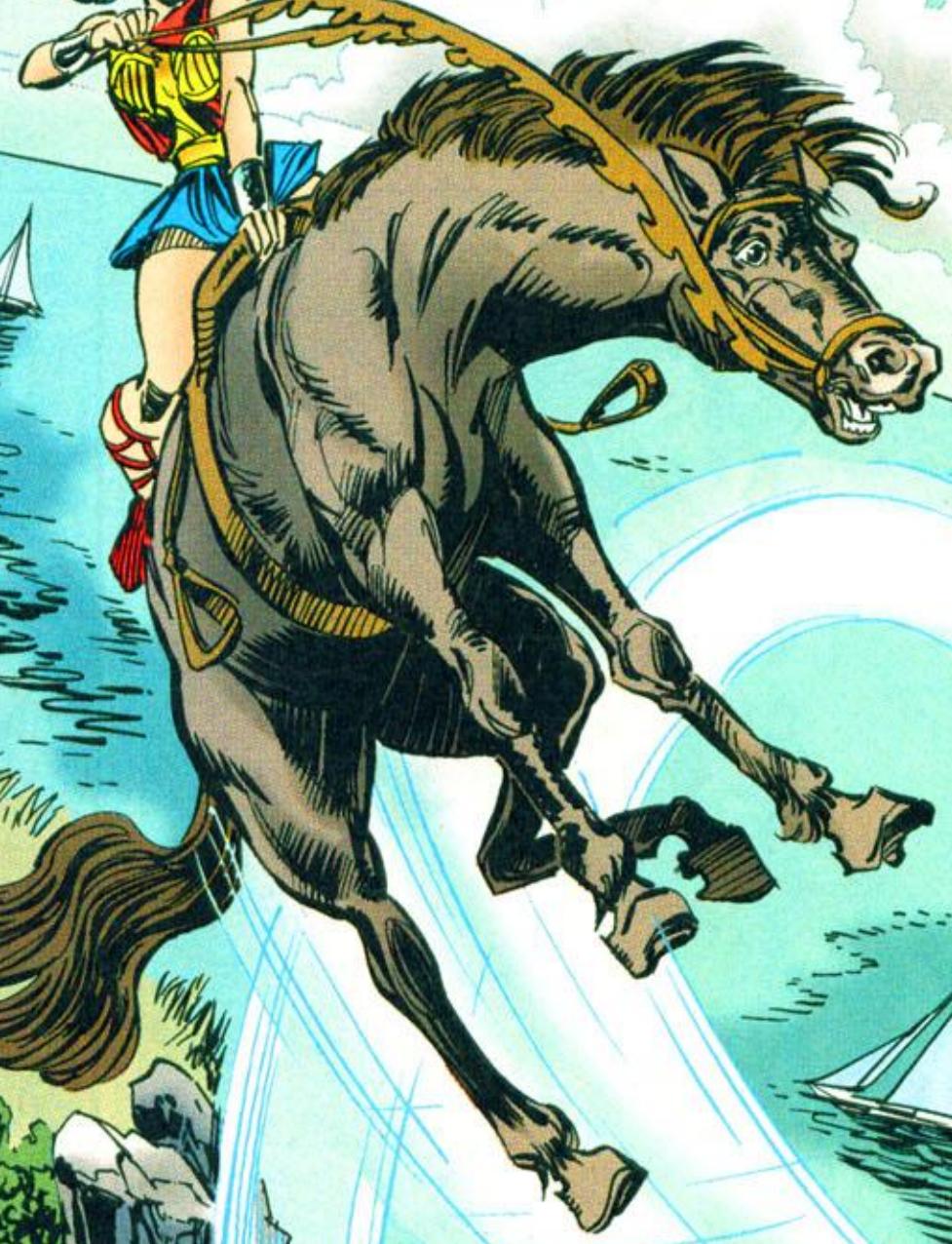
DON'T BE SILLY! THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN HURT ME!

WATCH!



I HAVE THE GIFTS OF THE GODS. THERE'S NOTHING I CANNOT DO!

PRINCESS!!



"THE WORDS OF MY COMPANIONS SEEMED OVER-
CAUTIOUS TO ME, BUT THEY WERE RIGHT!"





"BUT I WAS TOO FAR AWAY WHEN I STARTED, AND THE UNBREAKABLE PULL OF GRAVITY WORKED ITS WILL MORE SWIFTLY THAN I COULD MINE."

ARIADNE!!



... ARIADNE... WAKE UP...

"SHE MADE NO SOUND, MADE NO MOVE TO REACH FOR MY EXTENDED HAND."

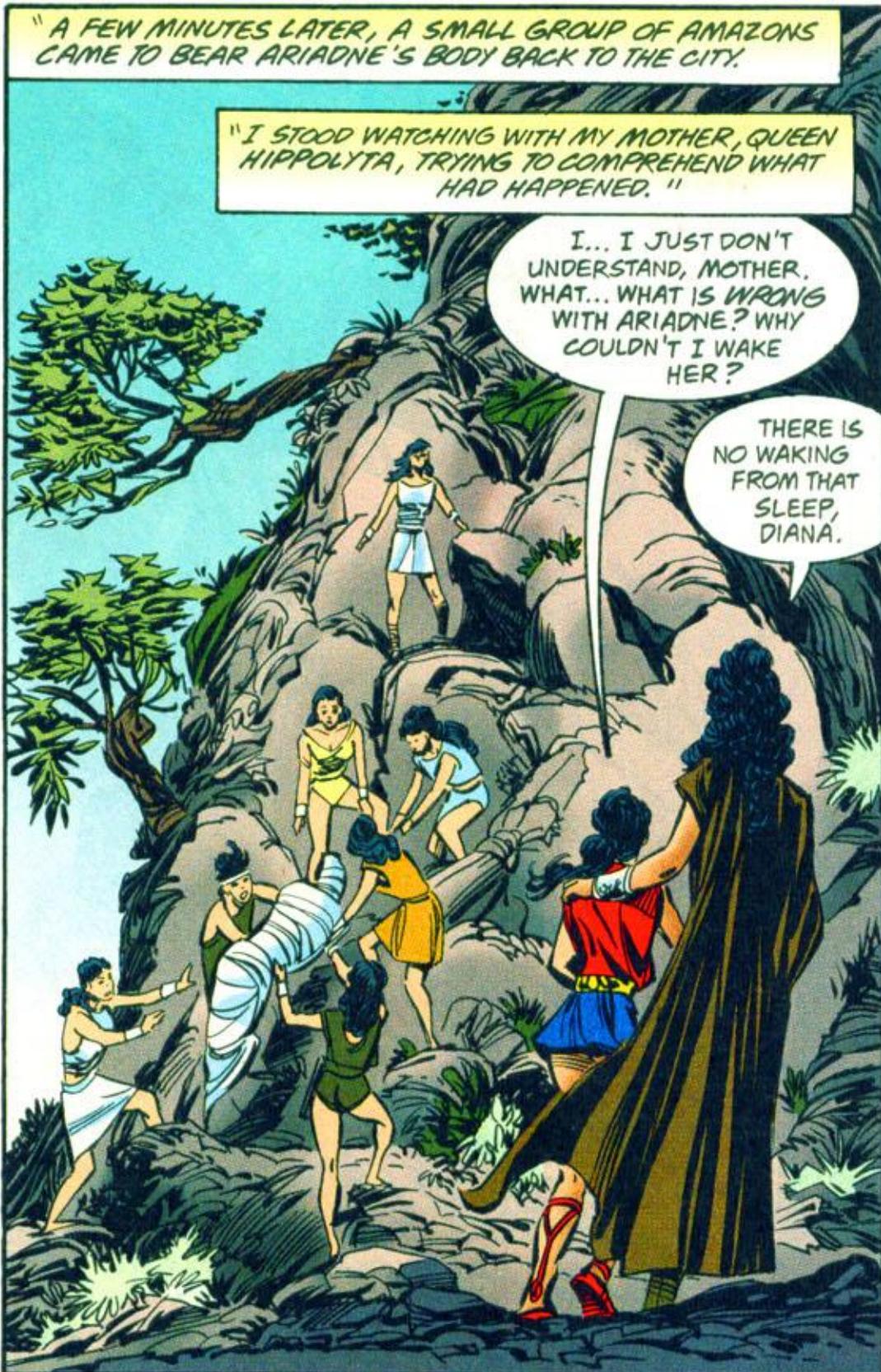
"SHE LAY BROKEN ON THE ROCKS, LIMBS BENT AT STRANGE, WRONG ANGLES, EYES OPEN BUT UNSEEING, STARING INTO THE HIGH SUMMER SUN WITHOUT BLINKING."

"A FEW MINUTES LATER, A SMALL GROUP OF AMAZONS CAME TO BEAR ARIADNE'S BODY BACK TO THE CITY."

"I STOOD WATCHING WITH MY MOTHER, QUEEN HIPPOLYTA, TRYING TO COMPREHEND WHAT HAD HAPPENED."

I... I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND, MOTHER. WHAT... WHAT IS WRONG WITH ARIADNE? WHY COULDN'T I WAKE HER?

THERE IS NO WAKING FROM THAT SLEEP, DIANA.



SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED THIS DAY WHICH HAD NOT BEEN SEEN ON THEMYSCIRA IN HUNDREDS OF YEARS.

BUT... YOU MEAN... MOTHER, YOU MEAN PEOPLE CAN DIE, TOO? LIKE BIRDS, OR FISH OR FLOWERS?

AN AMAZON HAS DIED!

HOW CAN THAT BE?



"YES, DIFFICULT AS IT MAY BE FOR MANY IN THIS ROOM TO UNDERSTAND, THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD EXPERIENCED THE DEATH OF A HUMAN BEING."

"THOUGH I UNDERSTOOD DEATH TO BE PART OF GAEA'S GREAT SCHEME, AS NATURAL AND ORDERED AS THE CHANGE OF THE SEASONS..."

"... I THOUGHT WE WERE ALL IMMORTAL, WE AMAZONS! I THOUGHT WE WERE MADE BY THE GODDESSES TO LIVE FOREVER!"

IT IS TRUE WE HAVE BEEN GRANTED LIVES FAR BEYOND THE MEASURE OF MORTALS, DIANA. BUT YET WE ARE VULNERABLE TO THE GREATER PATTERN OF THE WORLD.

WE CAN BE INJURED, AND LIKE POOR, FALLEN ARIADNE, WE CAN DIE.

OUR SISTER'S BODY HAS BEEN PREPARED, MAJESTY.

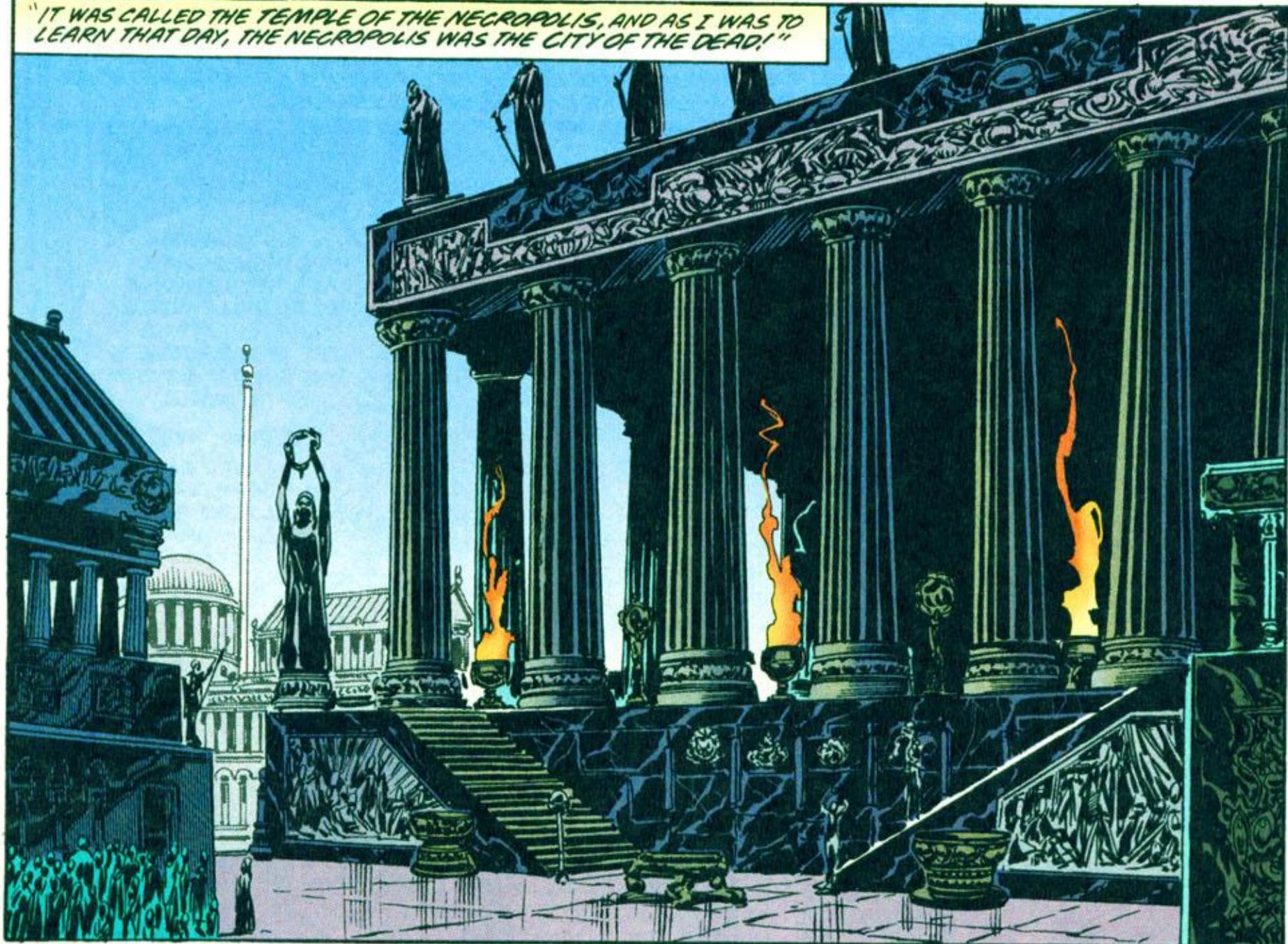
IT IS TIME TO SEND HER ON HER WAY.

THEN LET THE CEREMONIES BEGIN.

"AND SO BEGAN THE FUNERAL RITUAL, SOMETHING UNSEEN ON THEMYSCIRA IN MANY, MANY CENTURIES."

"AS MY SISTERS WAILED THEIR GRIEF TO THE DARKENING SKIES, ARIADNE, DRESSED IN HER FULL WARRIOR GARB, WAS BORNE THROUGH THE STREETS TO A PART OF THE CITY I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE."

"IT WAS CALLED THE TEMPLE OF THE NECROPOLIS, AND AS I WAS TO LEARN THAT DAY, THE NECROPOLIS WAS THE CITY OF THE DEAD!"



I HAVE HEARD THE MOURNING SONGS, AND THE BEATING OF THE FUNERAL DRUMS. WHO OF OUR SISTERS HAS BEEN TAKEN?

ARIADNE, OF THE BLUE GUARD, SISTER. WE ASK THAT SHE BE GIVEN PASSAGE TO THE RIVER.

SHE IS PROPERLY DRESSED AND ARRANGED. HAS THE BODY BEEN CLEANSED AND ANOINTED WITH THE SACRED HERBS?

THEN LET HER PASSAGE BE DELAYED NO LONGER.

MOTHER... WHO IS THAT WOMAN? HER MASK HIDES HER FACE AND MUFFLES HER VOICE...

AFTER THE WAYS OF OUR ANCESTORS, THIS HAS BEEN DONE.

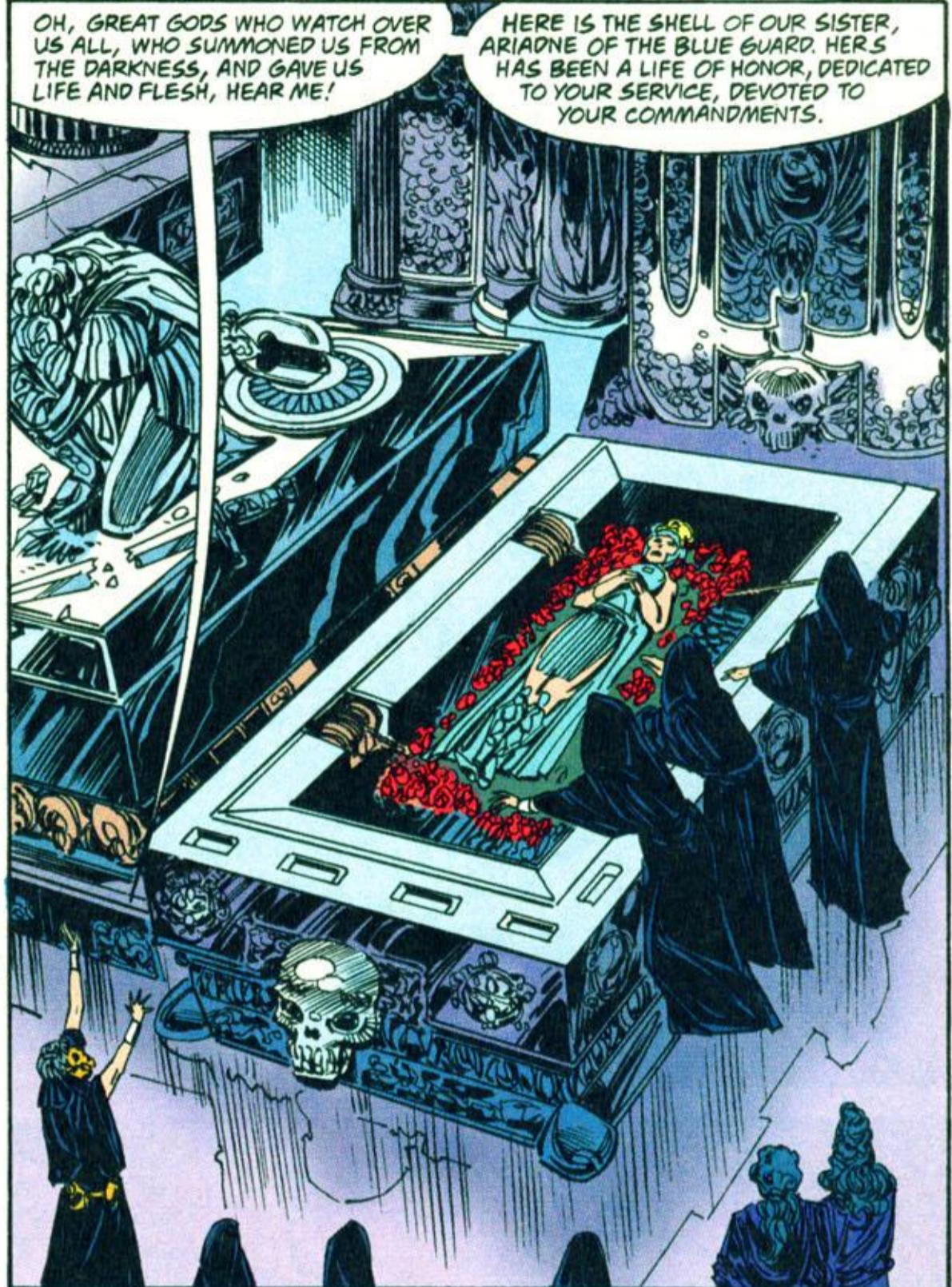
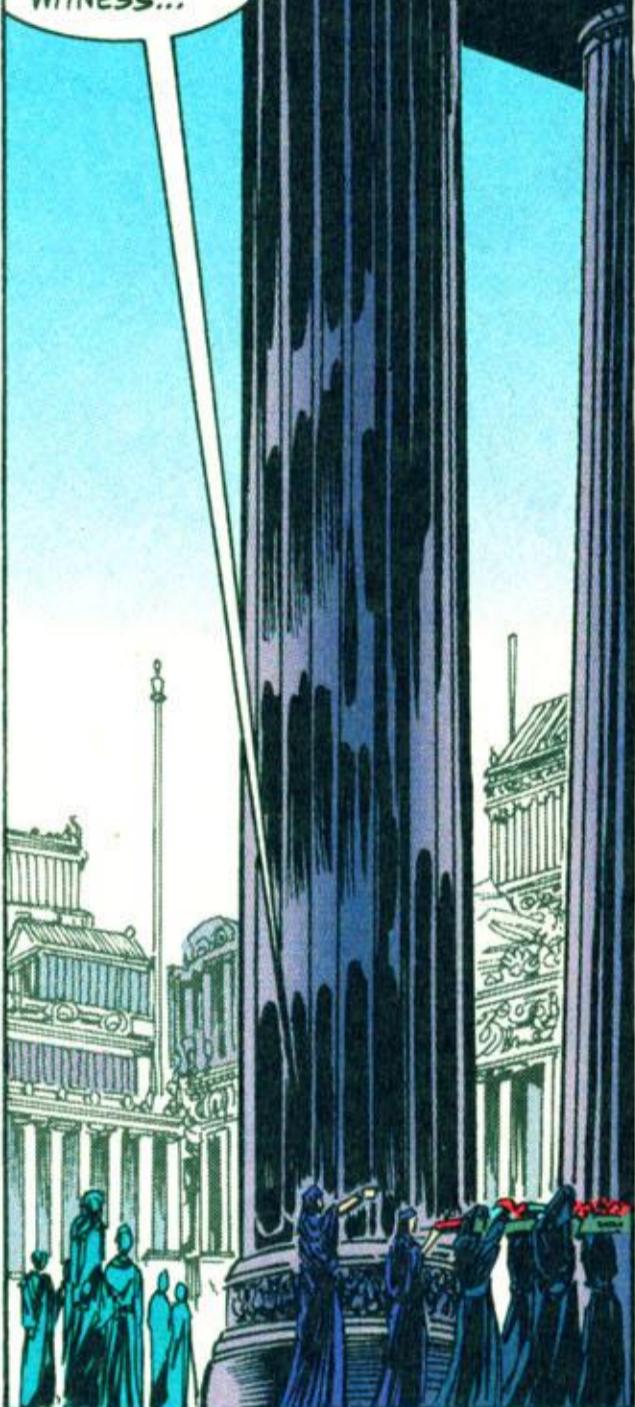
IT IS NOT PROPER TO ASK SUCH THINGS, DIANA. THE PRIESTESS OF THIS TEMPLE IS CHOSEN AT RANDOM FROM AMONG OUR NUMBER, AND BEARS HER SOLITARY BURDEN FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS.

NOW, ATTEND,
DIANA, AND PRAY
THIS CEREMONY IS
SOMETHING YOU
WILL NEVER
AGAIN NEED
WITNESS...

LET OUR
FALLEN
SISTER BE SET
UPON THE
ALTAR.

OH, GREAT GODS WHO WATCH OVER
US ALL, WHO SUMMONED US FROM
THE DARKNESS, AND GAVE US
LIFE AND FLESH, HEAR ME!

HERE IS THE SHELL OF OUR SISTER,
ARIADNE OF THE BLUE GUARD. HER'S
HAS BEEN A LIFE OF HONOR, DEDICATED
TO YOUR SERVICE, DEVOTED TO
YOUR COMMANDMENTS.



WHO BEARS THE
PAYMENT FOR THE
FERRY MAN?

I...I
DO.

MY MOTHER HAS
INSTRUCTED ME TO
BRING A GOLD
COIN...

HAS SHE INSTRUCTED
YOU ALSO ON WHAT
MUST BE DONE?

PLACE THE COIN
UNDER THE TONGUE OF
OUR FALLEN SISTER.



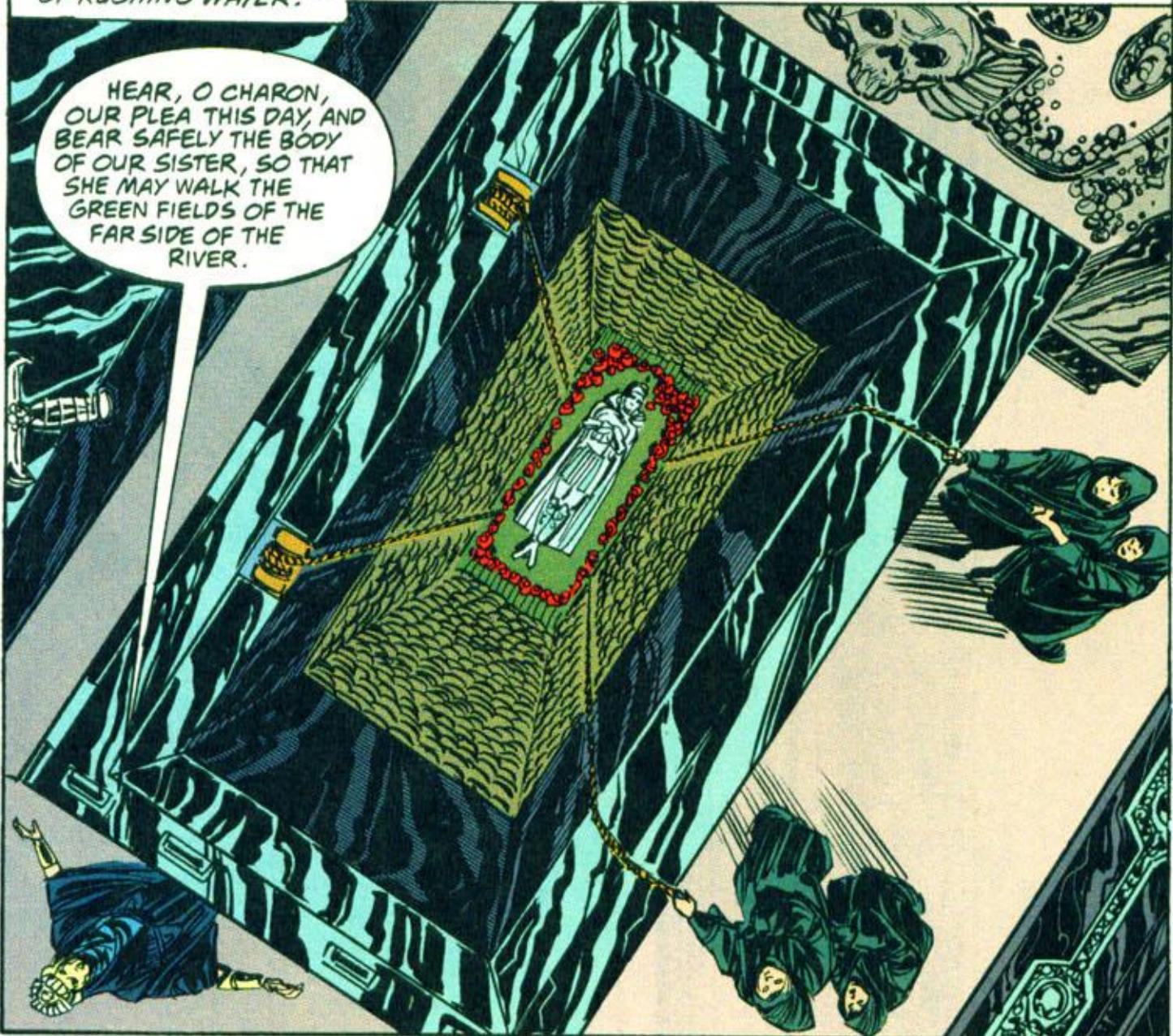
"MY MOTHER HAD EXPLAINED THIS RITUAL TO ME. THE GOLD COIN WAS A SYMBOLIC GESTURE, A PAYMENT TO CHARON, THE DARK BOATMAN WHO FERRIED THE SOULS OF THE DEPARTED TO THEIR NEW LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER STYX."

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN MY YOUNG LIFE THAT I FELT THE PANGS OF GUILT. ARIADNE WAS DEAD, THE FIRST AMAZON TO DIE IN UNCOUNTED CENTURIES, AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO AVOID THE FACT THAT HER DEATH WAS MY FAULT.

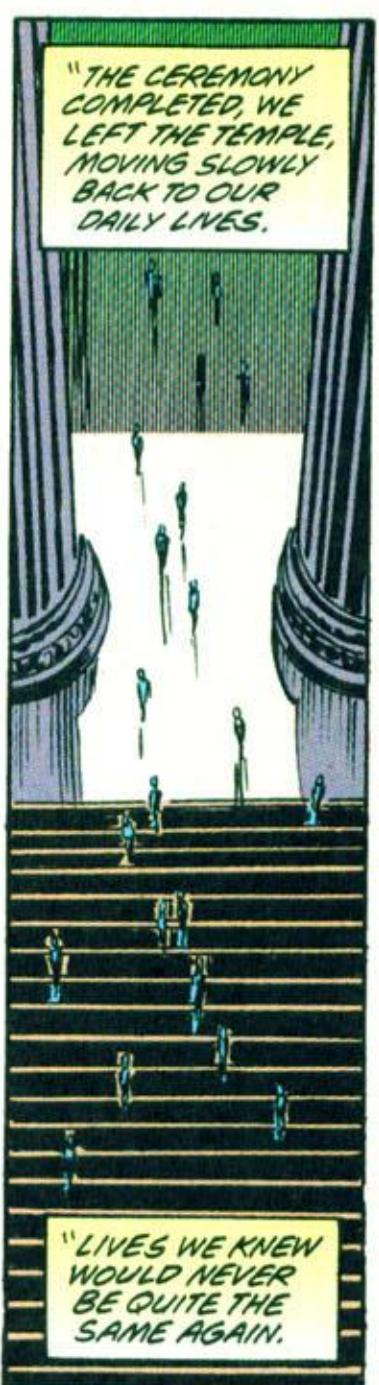
IT WAS A HARD LESSON IN CONSEQUENCES, AND ONE THAT WAS TO STAY WITH ME FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. BUT THEN, ON THEMYSIRA, I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING THE LESSON WAS BARELY BEGUN.

"I WATCHED AS FOUR OF MY SISTERS LOWERED THE BODY OF MY FRIEND. I FELT CHILL AIR RISE FROM THE HOLLOW OF THE ALTAR, AND HEARD, I THOUGHT, THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF RUSHING WATER."

HEAR, O CHARON, OUR PLEA THIS DAY, AND BEAR SAFELY THE BODY OF OUR SISTER, SO THAT SHE MAY WALK THE GREEN FIELDS OF THE FAR SIDE OF THE RIVER.



"THE CEREMONY COMPLETED, WE LEFT THE TEMPLE, MOVING SLOWLY BACK TO OUR DAILY LIVES.



"THAT NIGHT I LAY IN TROUBLED SLEEP,
THE GENTLER GIFTS OF MORPHEUS
SEEMING FAR REMOVED FROM MY
BODY AND MY MIND."

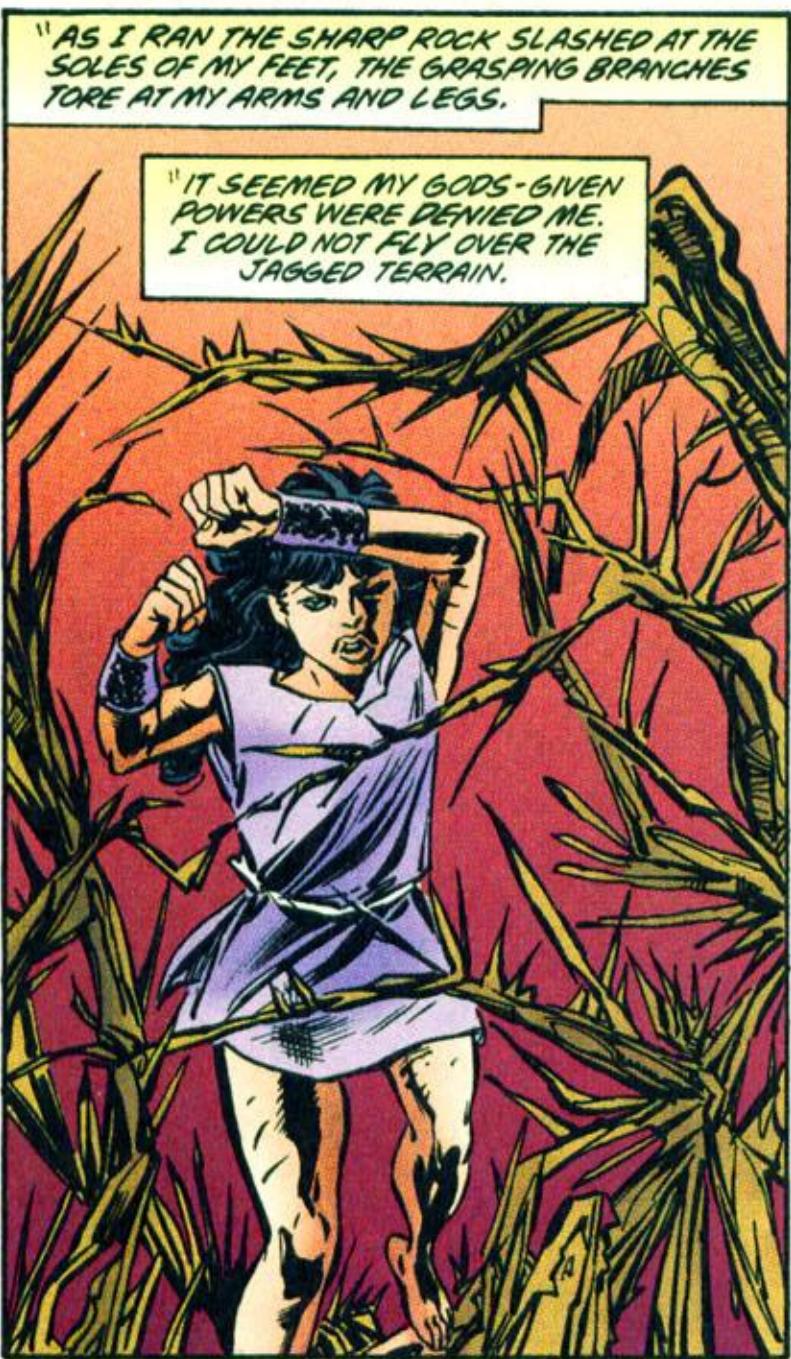


... ARIADNE...
NO...
ARIADNE...



"I HAD HAD NIGHTMARES
BEFORE. WHAT CHILD
HAS NOT?"

"BUT THERE WAS IN THIS STRANGENESS
A FEELING OF REALITY THAT SEEMED
TO TRANSCEND A NORMAL DREAM."



"AS I RAN THE SHARP ROCK SLASHED AT THE
SOLES OF MY FEET, THE GRASPING BRANCHES
TORE AT MY ARMS AND LEGS."

"IT SEEMED MY GODS-GIVEN
POWERS WERE DENIED ME.
I COULD NOT FLY OVER THE
JAGGED TERRAIN."



"AND ALL THE WHILE, AS I
RAN, I SEEMED TO HEAR
THE VOICE OF MY LOST
FRIEND CALLING OUT TO ME."

"A VOICE FULL OF
ANGUISH AND PAIN,
AS IF THAT OF A SOUL
IN TORMENT."

D-I-A-A-A-N-N-A-A-A...! DIANA, H-E-E-L-P
M-E-E-E-E...!

ARIADNE!
ARIADNE,
WHERE ARE
YOU?!"

"AS IS EVER THE WAY WITH DREAMS, THE LANDSCAPE SHIFTED AROUND ME..."

"FLOWING AND CHANGING, BUT ALWAYS GROWING MORE CROWDED, CLOSING IN ON ME."

PL-E-A-S-E,
DII-AA-AA-NN-AAA...
DON'T LE-E-E-E-AY-E
ME H-E-E-E-E-R-R-R-E!

ARIADNE!
I CAN'T SEE
YOU! WHERE
ARE YOU??

"DOWN THROUGH THE ALTERING WORLD I RAN, AS THE BLACK TREES MELTED AND REFORMED..."

"... BECOMING IN THE END NOT TREES AT ALL, BUT LOFTY COLUMNS SEEMINGLY FASHIONED FROM HUMAN BONES!"

ARIADNE!
ARIADNE, DON'T
STOP CALLING! I
CAN'T FIND YOU IF
YOU'RE SILENT!

"BUT I DID NOT HEAR ARIADNE'S VOICE AGAIN IN THAT DREAM.

"INSTEAD, I FELT THE AIR GROW FREEZING COLD, AS THE DARKNESS ITSELF SEEMED TO COME ALIVE AROUND ME.

"OR, PERHAPS 'ALIVE' IS NOT THE PROPER WORD..."

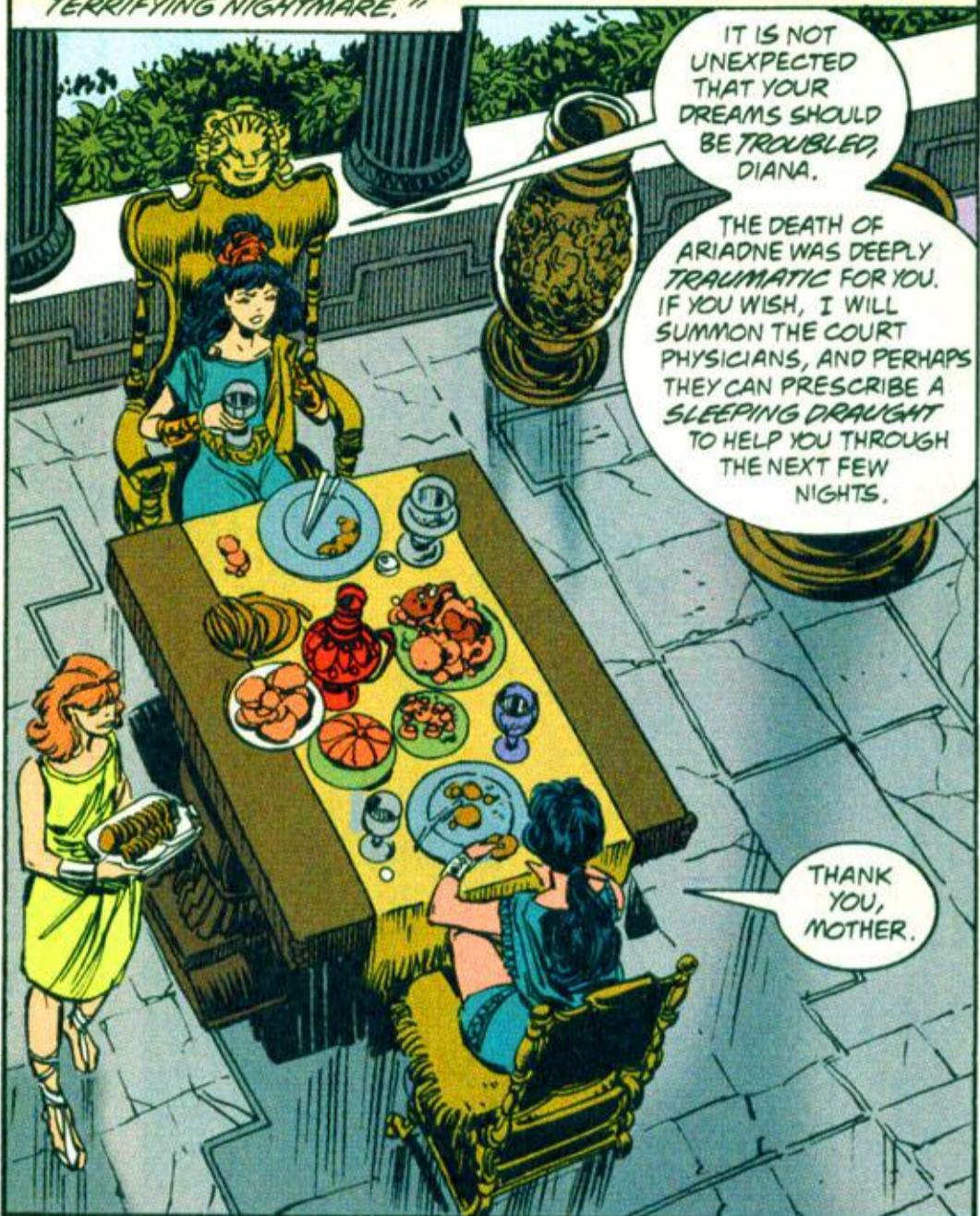
NO! NO! GET AWAY FROM ME!!!



NO-OOOHHH!!!



"WITH THE COMING OF THE MORNING, I TOLD MY MOTHER OF MY TERRIFYING NIGHTMARE."



"BUT THE POTIONS OF THE AMAZON DOCTORS DID LITTLE TO EASE MY SLUMBERS."

"THAT NIGHT THE DREAM CAME ONCE MORE, FILLED AGAIN WITH THE PLAINTIVE CRIES OF MY DEAD FRIEND."



"THE NEXT NIGHT WAS THE SAME."



"AND THE NEXT."



"ON THE FIFTH NIGHT I DID NOT WAIT FOR THE DREAMS TO COME."

"I SLIPPED FROM MY ROOM IN THE PALACE AND WENT DOWN INTO THE SHADDED STREETS OF THEMYSCIRA."

"NO ONE WAS ABOARD AT THAT MIDNIGHT HOUR."

"I MADE MY WAY UNCHALLENGED TO THE DARK TEMPLE WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE HAD BEEN UNKNOWN TO ME LESS THAN A WEEK BEFORE."

"AS WITH THE STREETS BEYOND ITS WALLS, THE TEMPLE WAS DARK AND SILENT, DESERTED."

"THE ROLLERS WHICH HAD ALLOWED SIX STRONG AMAZONS TO MOVE THE GREAT MONUMENT ATOP THE ALTAR HAD BEEN TAKEN AWAY AND STORED AGAINST FUTURE NEED."

"MY HEART THREATENED TO LEAP UP MY THROAT AS I LET MYSELF DRIFT SLOWLY DOWN INTO THE STYGIAN DARKNESS."

"BUT FOR ONE WHO EVEN THEN POSSESSED THE STRENGTH OF THE EARTH HERSELF, THIS PROVED NO OBSTACLE."

"I FELT THE WHOLE WORLD SEEING TO TURN ON ITS SIDE, AS THOUGH THE PASSAGE THROUGH WHICH I MOVED TRAVELED NOT THROUGH NORMAL SPACE AS I UNDERSTOOD IT."

"AT FIRST I PUT THIS DOWN TO THE FEAR I WAS STRUGGLING SO MIGHTILY TO SUPPRESS.

"UNTIL..."



"I DO NOT KNOW WHAT CAUSED ME TO FALL. ONLY THAT I SEEMED SUDDENLY BEREFT OF HERMES' GIFT OF FLIGHT.

"I FELL FURTHER THAN I COULD MEASURE, AND LANDED HARD IN WATER COLDER THAN THE COLDEST ICE."

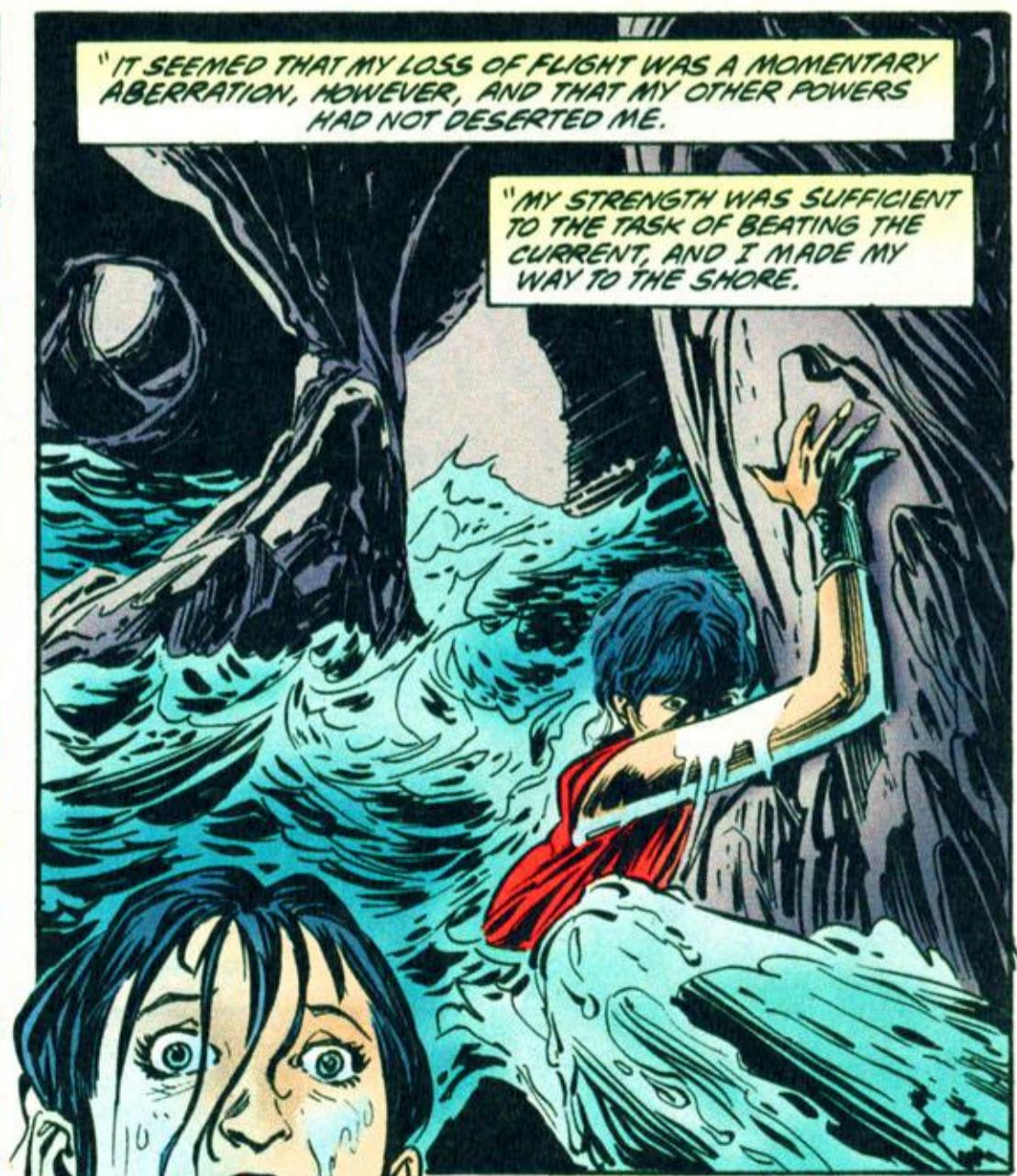


"THE COMBINATION OF COLD AND THE FEROCIOUS CURRENT STUNNED ME FOR A MOMENT. I WAS SWEEP ALONG LIKE SO MUCH FLOTSAM.



"IT SEEMED THAT MY LOSS OF FLIGHT WAS A MOMENTARY ABERRATION, HOWEVER, AND THAT MY OTHER POWERS HAD NOT DESERTED ME.

"MY STRENGTH WAS SUFFICIENT TO THE TASK OF BEATING THE CURRENT, AND I MADE MY WAY TO THE SHORE.



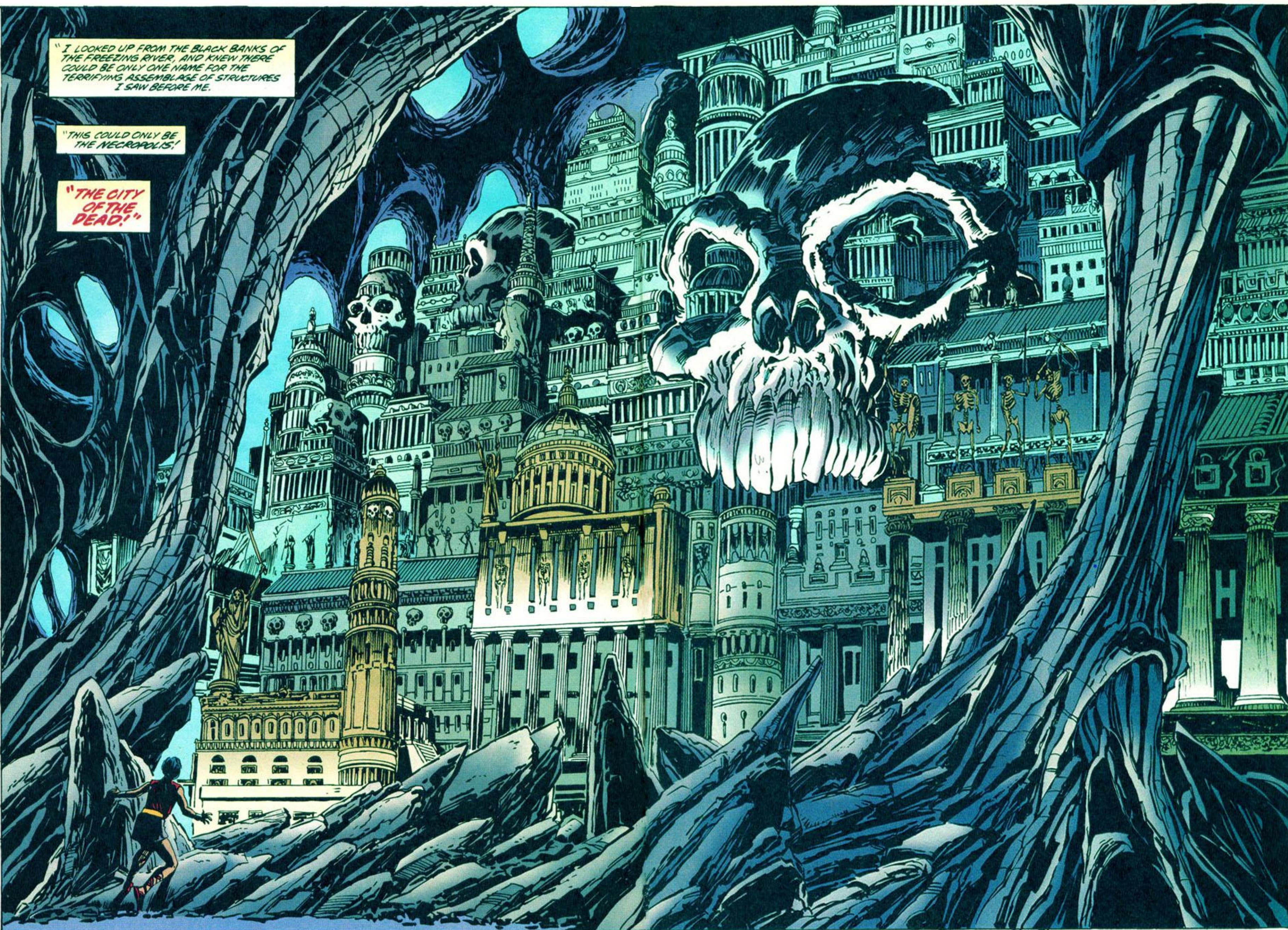
"THERE I WAS TO REALIZE WHATEVER THE NIGHT HELD IN STORE FOR ME..."

"... IT HAD BARELY BEGIN!"

"I LOOKED UP FROM THE BLACK BANKS OF THE FREEZING RIVER, AND KNEW THERE COULD BE ONLY ONE NAME FOR THE TERRIFYING ASSEMBLAGE OF STRUCTURES I SAW BEFORE ME."

"THIS COULD ONLY BE THE NECROPOLIS!"

"THE CITY OF THE DEAD!"



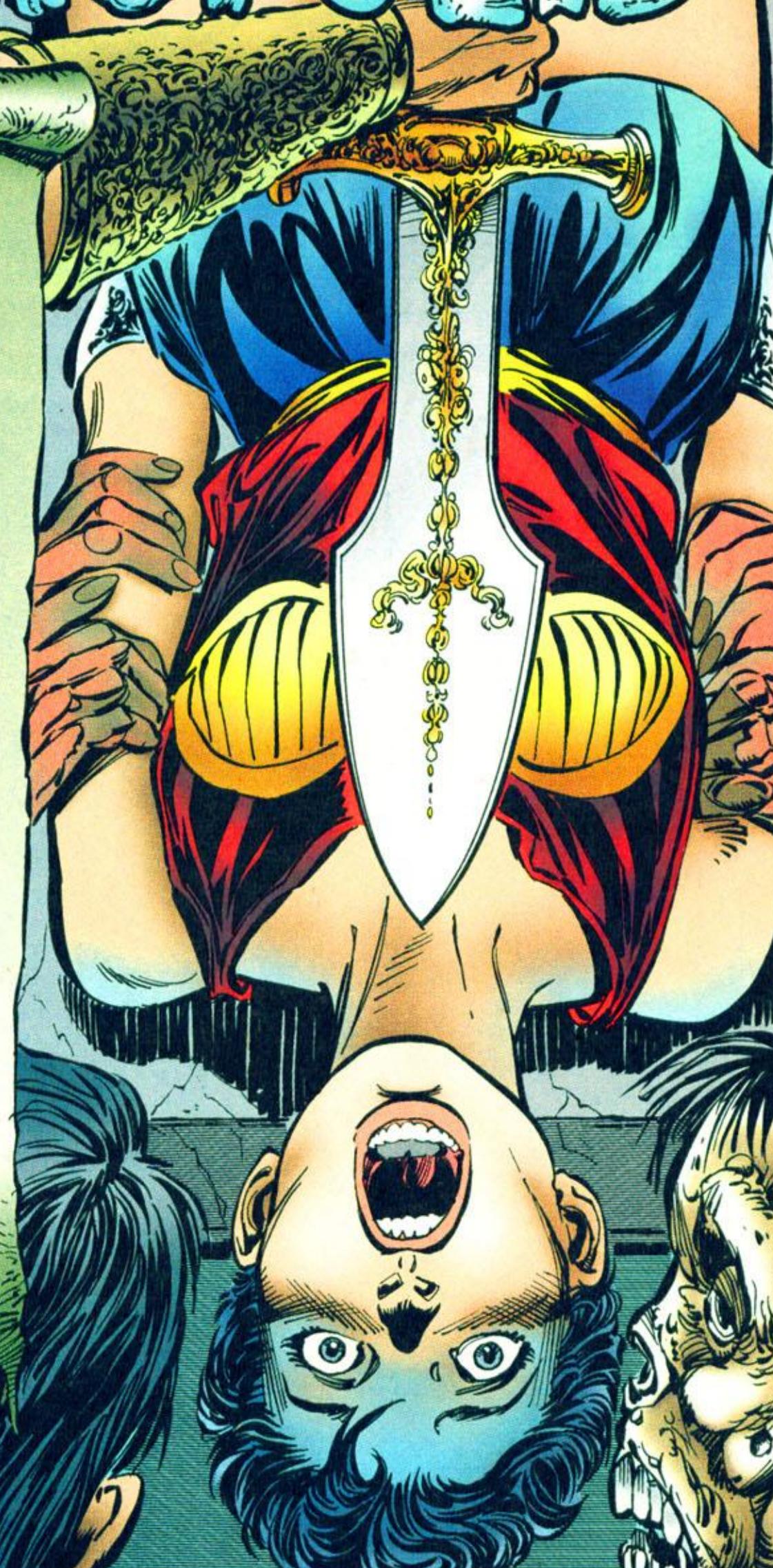
NECROPOLIS

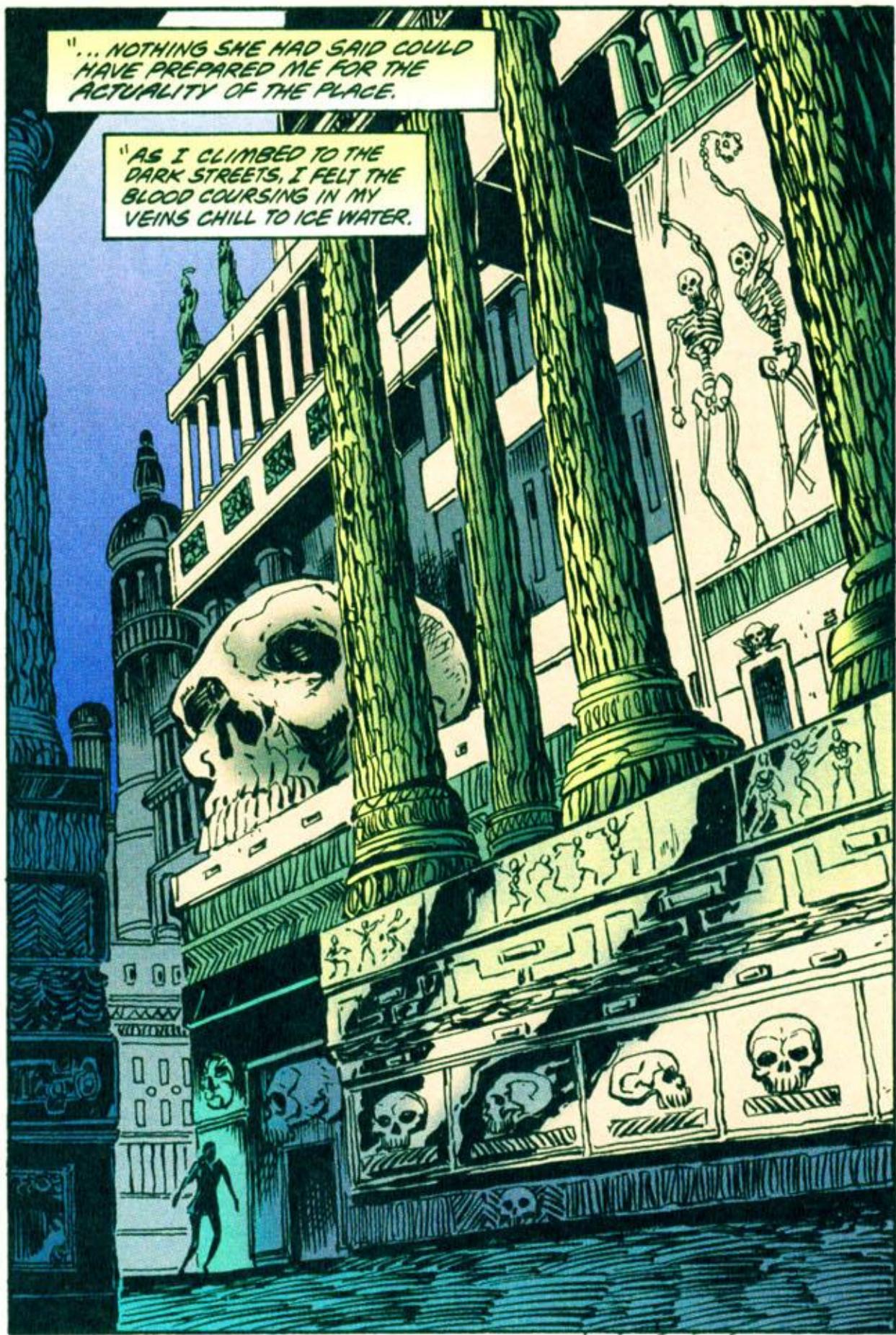


CHAPTER 2
"FROM WHICH NO TRAVELER RETURNS..."
CHILL WINDS WHISPER IN DARK PASSAGeways, SPEAKING IN VOICES THAT CALL OUT FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE. IN DISTANT CORNERS PELLETS OF ICE WATER DRIP FROM BLACK STONES, SHATTERING INTO A SILVER SPRAY WHEN THEY STRIKE THE GROUND. THE STENCH OF DEATH RIDES THE AIR, THICK AND HEAVY, DRY AS ANCIENT TOMBS, SICKLY SWEET, FILLING THE LUNGS AND MAKING THE THROAT CLOSE EVEN AS THE STOMACH CHURNS.

IN THIS PLACE OF DEATH ALL SOUNDS ARE MUTED, ALL MOVEMENTS SLOW AND MEASURED. FEET SHUFFLE ON MARBLE FLOORS. RIBBONS OF ROTTEN CLOTH TRAIL BEHIND, DRAGGING FROM THE RAGGED CUFFS OF TROUSERS, THE SHREDDED HEMS OF DRESSES WORN ONCE IN BRIGHT SUNLIGHT, ARE NOW PALE AND FADED, SHADOWS IN THE GREATER SHADOW.

A MISSION OF LOVE HAS BROUGHT AN AMAZON PRINCESS TO THIS HATEFUL, HIDDEN PLACE. HERE, WHERE DEATH RULES AND ALL THAT LIVES MUST BE CONSUMED, SHE WILL LEARN HARSH LESSONS AND FACE FOR THE FIRST TIME THE GREATER SECRETS OF HER OWN MORTALITY.



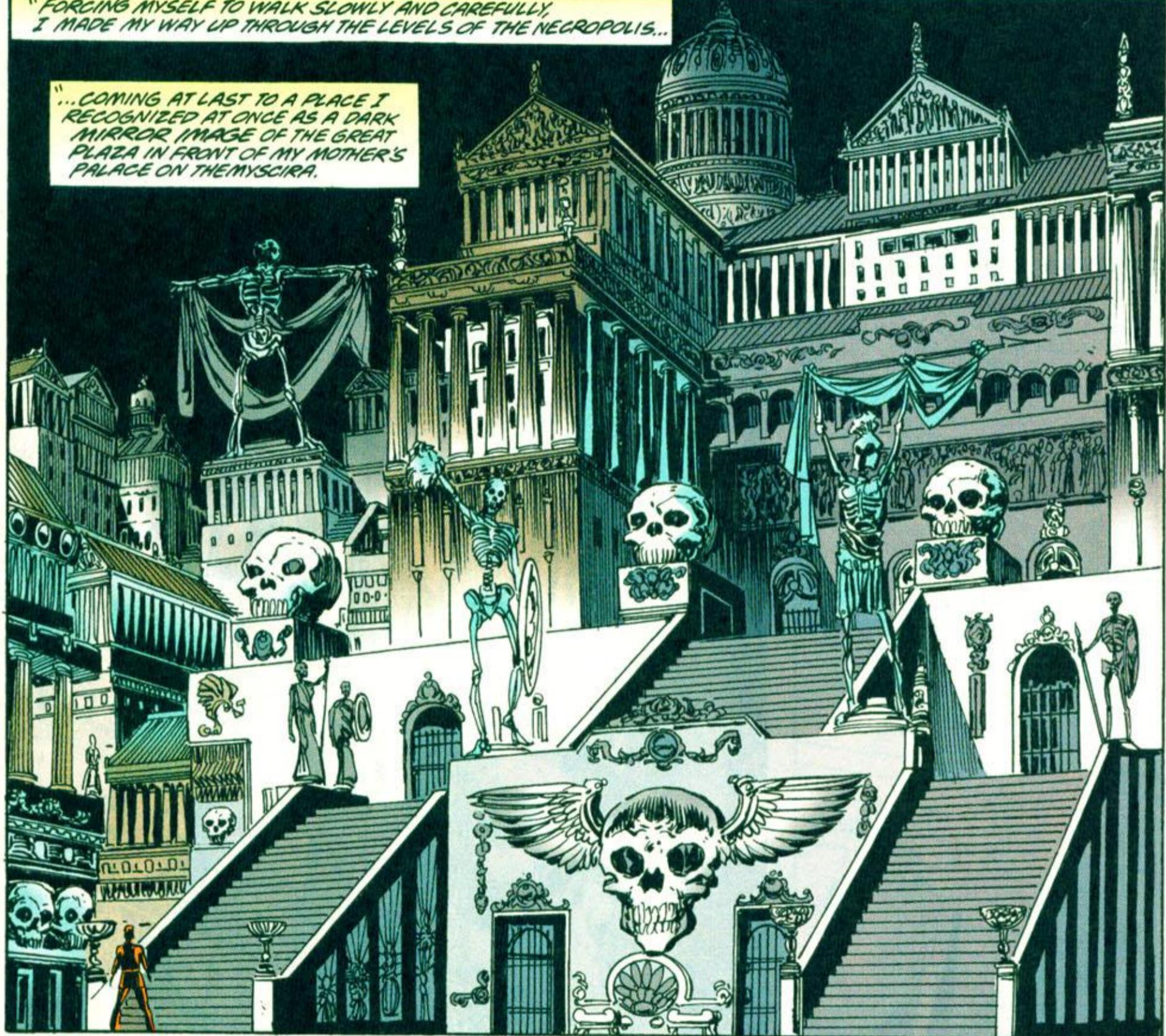


"I FELT MY EVERY NERVE ENDING TINGLE, EVERY INCH OF MY EXPOSED FLESH SUDDENLY SEEING TO TIGHTEN, AS THOUGH IN ANTICIPATION OF THE TOUCH OF A COLD, DEAD HAND.

"I FOUGHT THE URGE TO RUN, TO FLY, AS I SENSED CAVERNOUS EYES TURNED IN MY DIRECTION FROM THE SHADOWS.

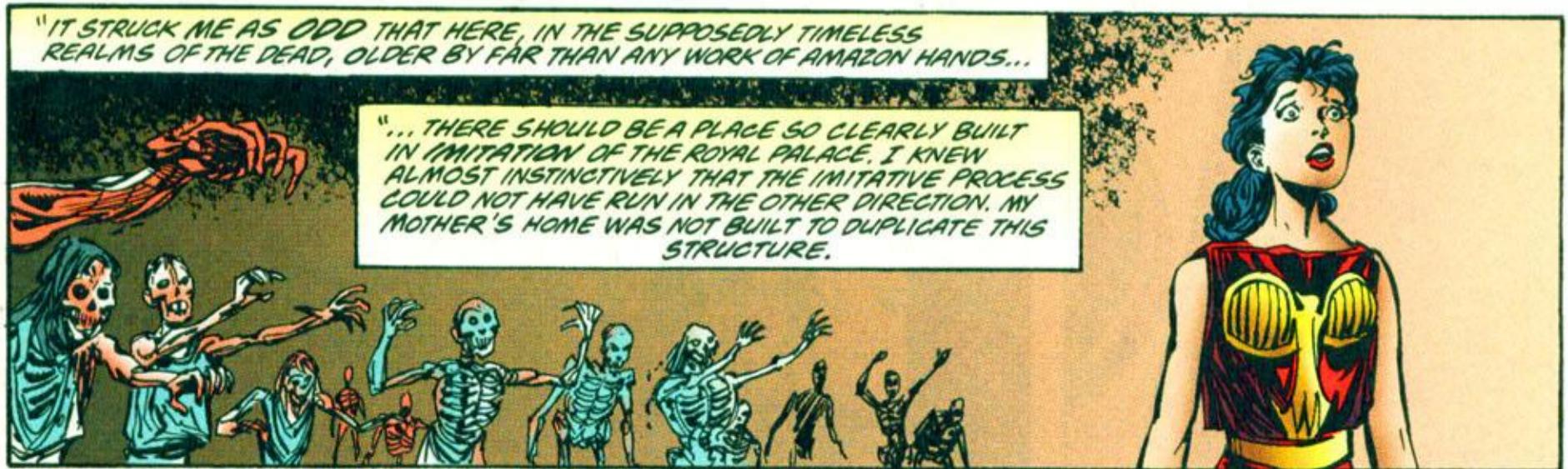
"FORCING MYSELF TO WALK SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY, I MADE MY WAY UP THROUGH THE LEVELS OF THE NECROPOLIS...

"...COMING AT LAST TO A PLACE I RECOGNIZED AT ONCE AS A DARK MIRROR IMAGE OF THE GREAT PLAZA IN FRONT OF MY MOTHER'S PALACE ON THEMISCIRA.



"IT STRUCK ME AS ODD THAT HERE, IN THE SUPPOSEDLY TIMELESS REALMS OF THE DEAD, OLDER BY FAR THAN ANY WORK OF AMAZON HANDS...

"...THERE SHOULD BE A PLACE SO CLEARLY BUILT IN IMITATION OF THE ROYAL PALACE. I KNEW ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY THAT THE IMITATIVE PROCESS COULD NOT HAVE RUN IN THE OTHER DIRECTION. MY MOTHER'S HOME WAS NOT BUILT TO DUPLICATE THIS STRUCTURE.



"I WAS AFFORDED NO TIME TO CONTEMPLATE THIS MYSTERY, HOWEVER."

"WITHOUT WARNING I WAS SET UPON BY A FORCE BORN OUT OF MY DARKEST NIGHT-MARES."

"NO!!"

"THE WALKING CORPSES SHATTERED UNDER MY BLOWS. THE STENCH OF PUTREFACTION THREATENED TO OVERWHELM ME."

"OF COURSE, I FOUGHT BACK..."

"AND THEN... A VOICE CRACKED WIDE THE SILENCE OF THAT PLACE..."

ENOUGH!!

"...BUT THE RESULT WAS ALMOST WORSE THAN THE ASSAULT."

"I RECOGNIZED AT ONCE THAT VOICE, MADE HOLLOW AND INHUMAN BY THE MASK ENCASING THE SPEAKER'S HEAD."

PRIESTESS!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE??

A QUESTION I MIGHT BETTER PUT TO YOU, PRINCESS. THIS IS A PLACE OF THE DEAD, NOT THE YOUNG AND QUICK.

THEN I REPEAT MY QUESTION, PRIESTESS. IF THIS IS A PLACE OF THE DEAD, AS YOU SAY, WHY ARE YOU HERE? YOUR HOME IS IN THE TEMPLE.

IS IT? MY "HOME", PRINCESS, IS WITH MY SUBJECTS. I RULE HERE, AS YOUR MOTHER RULES ON THEMYSIRA.

AND IF THIS IS A PLACE OF THE DEAD, IS THAT NOT ALSO FITTING, SINCE I AM AS DEAD AS MY SUBJECTS?

WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU ARE NOT DEAD!

NO? PERHAPS NOT, IN A LITERAL SENSE.

BUT IN EVERY OTHER WAY I AM AS DEAD AS ONE CAN BE. ALONE, ABANDONED BY MY FELLOW AMAZONS, LEFT TO THE COMPANY OF CORPSES FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!



ABANDONED? BUT... BUT MY MOTHER TOLD ME IT WAS AN HONOR TO BE CHOSEN AS THE PRIESTESS OF THE NECROPOLIS! AN HONOR TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO SERVE YOUR SISTERS IN THEIR LAST NEEDS ON EARTH.

AN HONOR! HA! TO BE THE PRIESTESS OF DEATH IN A LAND OF IMMORTALS? WHERE IS THE HONOR IN THAT? WHERE IS THE POWER?

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT HAS BEEN SINCE ANYONE HAS COME TO MY TEMPLE, BEFORE THE DEATH OF ARIADNE OF THE BLUE GUARD? FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF CONELINESS, PRINCESS. FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF ABANDONMENT!

THEN ONE DAY I DISCOVERED A WAY TO AVENGE MYSELF FOR THIS TREATMENT.

A WAY TO SEIZE UNTO MYSELF THE POWER THAT WAS RIGHTFULLY MINE!



"AND ONE DAY, IN ONE OF THOSE SCROLLS, I DISCOVERED A HIDDEN SECRET.

"THE PAPER OF THE SCROLL WAS COMPOSED OF MANY SHEETS COMPRESSED TOGETHER. PEELING THEM APART I FOUND WRITINGS EVEN OLDER THAN THE ANCIENT TEXT OF THE SCROLL ITSELF."



SCROLLS
MATERIALS
GOLD
CLOTHES
PAPER
INK
FEATHERS
LEAVES
BONES
SKULLS
CERAMIC
GLASS
METAL
WOOD
LEATHER
FABRIC
COTTON
WOOL
SILK
HORN
IBIS FEATHERS
SCORPION
SPIDER
WORM
LIZARD
SNAKE
FROG
TURTLE
CRAB
SCORPION
SPIDER
WORM
LIZARD
SNAKE
FROG
TURTLE
CRAB



"I FILLED MY ENDLESS IDLE HOURS BY PORING OVER THE ANCIENT SCROLLS OF MY OFFICE. MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF WORDS, ALL WRITTEN ON THE SAME SUBJECT..."

"DEATH!"



"PREPARING AN ALTAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DESCRIPTION IN THE SECRET WRITINGS, I SET ABOUT A RITUAL OLDER THAN THE MEMORY OF ANY AMAZON."

"THE SUMMONING NOT OF A DEPARTED SPIRIT, BUT THE ACTUAL, PHYSICAL BODY OF ONE NEWLY DEAD!"

"THE HIDDEN WORDS TOLD ME THE DEPARTURE OF THE SOUL AT DEATH WAS NOT AN IMMEDIATE THING."

"THE SPIRIT WAS NOT FREE TO LEAVE THE BODY UNTIL THE CEREMONIES ATTENDANT TO ITS DEATH HAD BEEN COMPLETED."

"IT MATTERED NOT HOW FAR FROM THEMYSIRA THAT BODY MIGHT HAVE COME TO ITS DEATH. IT MATTERED NOT HOW THE BODY WAS TREATED IN DEATH."

"IF IT WAS NOT CREMATED, IT COULD BE BROUGHT TO ME, AND IT COULD BE ENSLAVED!"

"AND AS LONG AS THE SPIRIT REMAINED WITHIN THE BODY, THAT BODY COULD BE SUMMONED BY ONE WHO KNEW THE WAY!"

"IN A VERY SHORT TIME I HAD A WHOLE ARMY OF THE DEAD TO DO MY BIDDING!"

"AND I KNEW EXACTLY THE TASK FOR MY GROWING LEGIONS."

"THE SELFSAME ENCHANTMENT WHICH LET ME BRING THEM ACROSS THE WORLD ALLOWED ME TO OPEN A PASSAGE TO THE UNDERWORLD."

"THERE I SET THEM TO THE TASK OF BUILDING MY NECROPOLIS."



COULD IT BE, PERHAPS, THAT YOU FIND
YOUR MUCH VAUNTED STRENGTH
DESERTING YOU?

COULD IT BE YOUR LIMBS GROW SOFT,
REFUSING TO OBEY YOUR LEAST
COMMAND?

FROM THE MOMENT
YOU ENTERED MY
NECROPOLIS, PRINCESS,
YOU HAVE BEEN
BREATHING THE VAPORS
CREATED BY THE FIRES
IN THESE BASKETS.

THOSE VAPORS HAVE INSINUATED
THEMSELVES INTO EVERY CELL OF
YOUR BODY. NONE OF YOUR
GODS-GIVEN POWERS WILL
SERVE YOU NOW.

AND WHEN THOSE POWERS
ARE RESTORED, IT WILL BE BECAUSE
YOU NOW SERVE ME.

IT WILL
BE BECAUSE
YOU ARE
DEAD.



DIANA... AM I UNDERSTANDING
YOU CORRECTLY? ARE YOU TELLING
US THIS PRIESTESS WOMAN WAS
SOMEHOW MAGICALLY TRANS-
PORTING CORPSES FROM
ALL OVER THE GLOBE...

... AND THAT THE
SOULS OF THOSE
PEOPLE WERE STILL
TRAPPED IN THOSE
BODIES, EVEN AS
THEY DECAYED?!

YES. THAT IS
WHAT THE PRIESTESS
OF THE NECROPOLIS
GAVE ME TO UNDER-
STAND.

BUT... BUT THIS WOULD HAVE
BEEN, WHAT? TEN YEARS
AGO? TWELVE?

MY MOTHER DIED TEN
YEARS AGO. ARE YOU
SAYING SHE WOULD HAVE
BEEN TAKEN TO THIS PLACE?
ARE YOU SAYING SHE WAS
MADE A SLAVE AS HER
BODY ROTTED AWAY
AROUND HER?

I AM SORRY, HELENA. I
CANNOT ANSWER THAT
QUESTION YES OR NO.

THE PRIESTESS STOLE
BODIES FROM ALL OVER
THE WORLD FOR NEARLY
FOUR CENTURIES.
SOME OF THE WALKING
DEAD I SAW IN NECROPOLIS
WERE NEWLY DEPARTED,
SOME HAD BEEN THERE
FOR AS LONG THE MAD
SCHEME HAD BEEN
AT WORK.



PERHAPS I SHOULD FINISH MY
TALE, NOW. IN ITS CONCLUSION YOU
MAY FIND SOME SMALL PORTION
OF COMFORT.

"THEY BORE ME UP THROUGH THE NECROPOLIS TO THE HIGHEST TEMPLE. THERE THEY LAID ME DOWN UPON A SLAB OF MARBLE COLDER THAN THE ICE OF DEEPEST WINTER."

"ALL THE WHILE I STRUGGLED TO REGAIN CONTROL OF MY LIMBS, MY POWERS, BUT I WAS DENIED THEM."

AND NOW, PRINCESS, SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR THIS CEREMONY.

YOU CAME TO THIS PLACE SEEKING YOUR FRIEND, ARIADNE OF THE BLUE GUARD.

HOW APPROPRIATE, THEN, THAT IT SHOULD BE ARIADNE WHO USHERS YOU ACROSS THE THRESHOLD INTO YOUR NEW EXISTENCE.

DO NOT DISTRESS YOURSELF, PRINCESS. ARIADNE IS A SKILLED WARRIOR, AND ALL HER MARTIAL TALENTS REMAIN.

STRIKE CLEAN AND SWIFT, ARIADNE! LET PRINCESS DIANA JOIN YOUR RANKS WITH NO MORE PAIN THAN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

ARIADNE! NO! DON'T DO IT!



"SINCE WE AMAZONS LIVED NEARLY AS EQUALS, THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A TIME WHEN I HAD FELT THE NEED TO USE THE POWER MY POSITION GAVE ME..."

"BUT STILL, ARIADNE WAS A SOLDIER OF THE BLUE GUARD, AND AS SUCH SHE HAD BEEN TRAINED ALL HER LONG LIFE TO PROTECT THE ROYAL HOUSE OF THEMISCIRA."

NO! I WON'T BE-LIEVE IT! ARIADNE IS MY FRIEND, AND SHE IS MORE THAN MY FRIEND! SHE IS MY LOYAL SUBJECT!

ARIADNE, AS A PRINCESS OF THEMISCIRA I COMMAND YOU TO LAY DOWN YOUR SWORD!

"ARIADNE STAGGERED BACK A SINGLE STEP. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS STILL NOTHING TO BE READ IN HER FEATURES, I COULD TELL A BATTLE WAS UNFOLDING INSIDE HER HEART AND MIND.

"ANCIENT LOYALTIES WERE AT WAR WITH THE COMMANDS OF THE PRIESTESS OF THE NECROPOLIS."



NO! STAY BACK! YOU CANNOT TURN ON ME! YOU DO NOT EXIST, BUT FOR ME! KILL ME AND THE VERY ENCHANTMENT THAT HOLDS THIS CITY TOGETHER WILL BE BROKEN!

AND... WHY... DO... YOU... THINK... SUCH... A... THING... WOULD... BE... UNDESIRABLE... PRIESTESS...?





"SINCE I WAS NOT THERE TO SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES, I CANNOT SAY PRECISELY WHAT HAPPENED NEXT."

"BUT I THINK IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THE MADNESS WHICH HAD CONSUMED MY SISTER AMAZON WOULD HAVE DRIVEN HER TO MAKE ONE LAST ATTEMPT TO SAVE HER MAD SCHEME."



"NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW WHAT THAT LAST ATTEMPT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

"ONLY THAT IT FAILED."



"THE EFFECT WAS IMMEDIATE."

ARIADNE!

...PRINCESS...
YOU...MUST...GO...
ON...WITHOUT...
ME...



ARIADNE! NO! YOU
MUST COME WITH ME!
THE PHYSICIANS ON
THE MYSCIRA...

CAN...DO...
NOTHING...FOR...
ME...NOW...

GO!
HURRY!



"MY FRIEND FELL AT MY FEET, THE SORCERY THAT GAVE HER BODY MOVEMENT AND A TWISTED MOCKERY OF LIFE GONE."

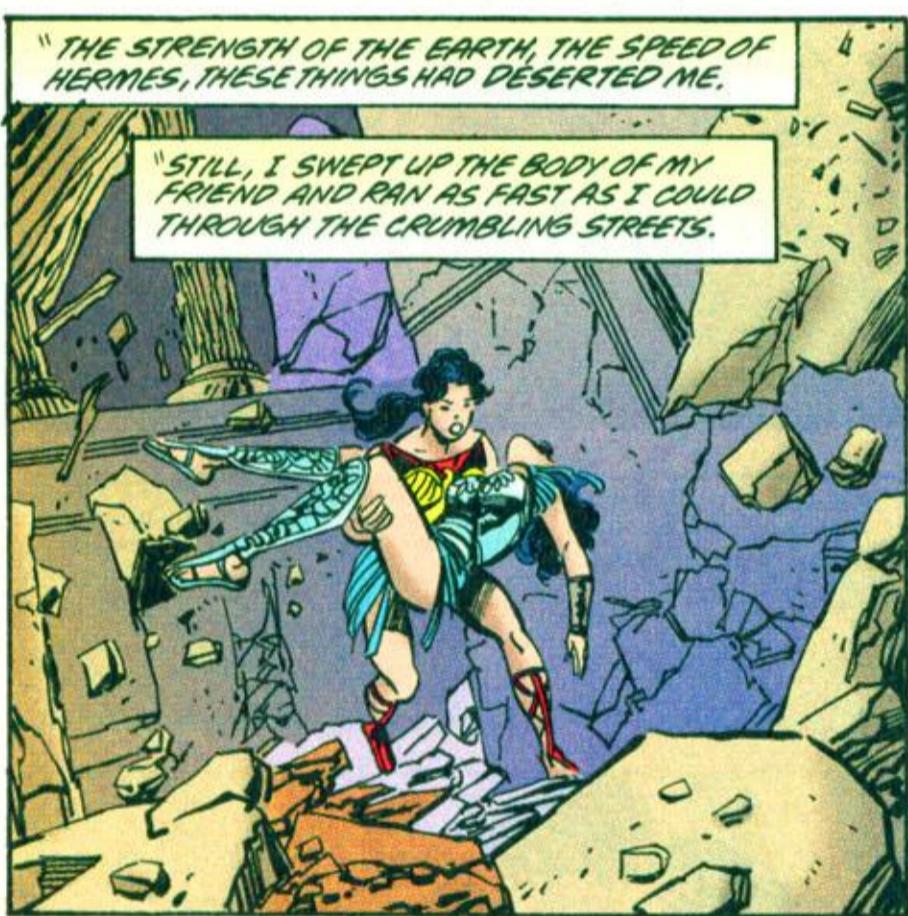


"AND WITH IT, AS THE PRIESTESS HAD SAID, WENT THE MAGIC THAT HELD THE NECROPOLIS TOGETHER IN THIS SHIFTING NETHERWORLD."



"THE STRENGTH OF THE EARTH, THE SPEED OF HERMES, THESE THINGS HAD DESERTED ME."

"STILL, I SWEPT UP THE BODY OF MY FRIEND AND RAN AS FAST AS I COULD THROUGH THE CRUMBLING STREETS."



"BUT ARIADNE WAS A LITERAL DEAD WEIGHT, AND ON TOP OF THAT, HER BODY WORE THE HEAVY ARMOR OF A WARRIOR OF THEMYSIRA."

"I STAGGERED."



"I FELL..."





ALL THE
TIME THE GODS
GRANT IMMOR-
TALS...

"I COULD SEE MY MOTHER
DID NOT UNDERSTAND."

THERE WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME TO EXPLAIN TO HER. TOO MUCH MY LIMITED EXPERIENCE WOULD NOT ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN, NOT FOR A LONG TIME.

BUT WHEN THE TALE WAS FINALLY TOLD, THE AMAZONS DECIDED TO CLOSE DOWN FOREVER THE TEMPLE OF THE NECROPOLIS. NONE OF OUR SISTERS WOULD EVER AGAIN BE ASKED TO BEAR THE THOUSAND-YEAR BURDEN THAT HAD DRIVEN THE PRIESTESS MAD.

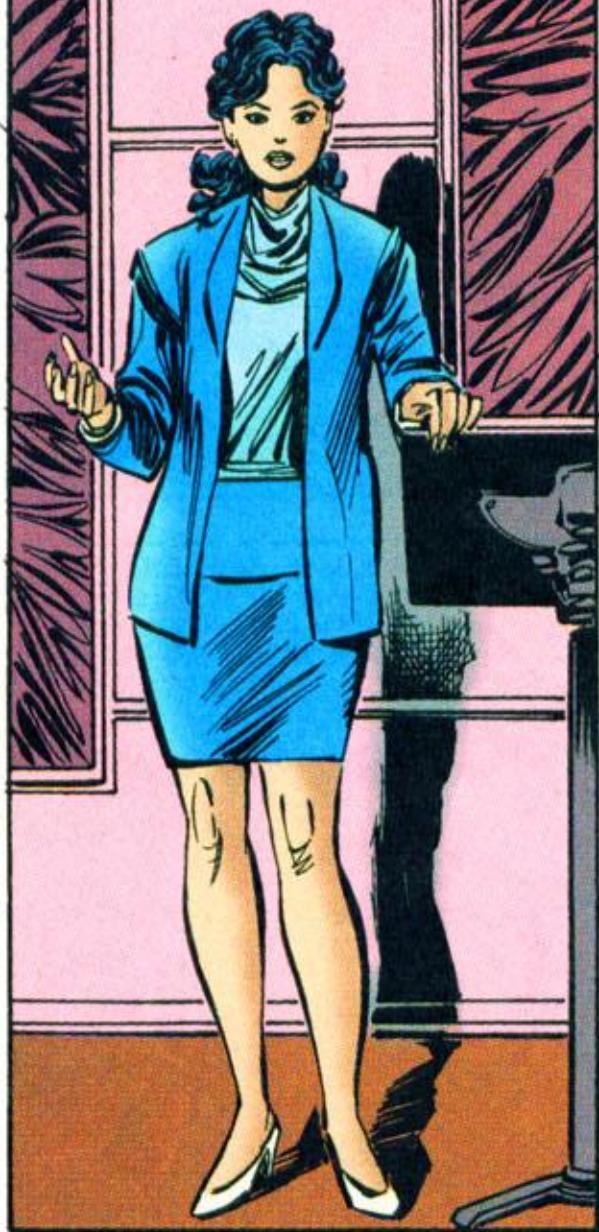
FROM THEN ON, WE ADOPTED CREMATION AS THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH AMAZONS WOULD BE SENT ON TO THE NEXT WORLD. NEVER AGAIN WOULD WE RISK ONE OF OUR OWN BECOMING A SLAVE TO SUCH TERRIBLE SORCERY.

THEN... IT WAS ALL REAL, DIANA? FOR A MOMENT THERE, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE SAYING IT WAS SOME KIND OF... DREAM. A NIGHTMARE.

IT WAS A NIGHTMARE, HELENA. BUT ONE BORN IN A FEVERED BRAIN NOT MY OWN.

I HAD SEEN THE MOST HORRIFYING FACE OF DEATH, I HAD SEEN A FRIEND DIE, THE FIRST TIME I HAD EXPERIENCED SUCH A THING FIRST HAND.

AND I WAS LEFT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF INDESCRIBABLE SUFFERING BY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHOSE TIME FOR SUCH THINGS SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOREVER PASSED.





FROM HELL SHE CAME

THOUGH SHE HAD DWELLED IN HADES HERSELF, AND HAD, THEREFORE, LEARNED MANY OF THE BEHAVIORS REQUIRED TO PERSEVERE THERE, SHE WAS UNPREPARED FOR THE HELL-STENCH OF THE DEMON'S BREATH.

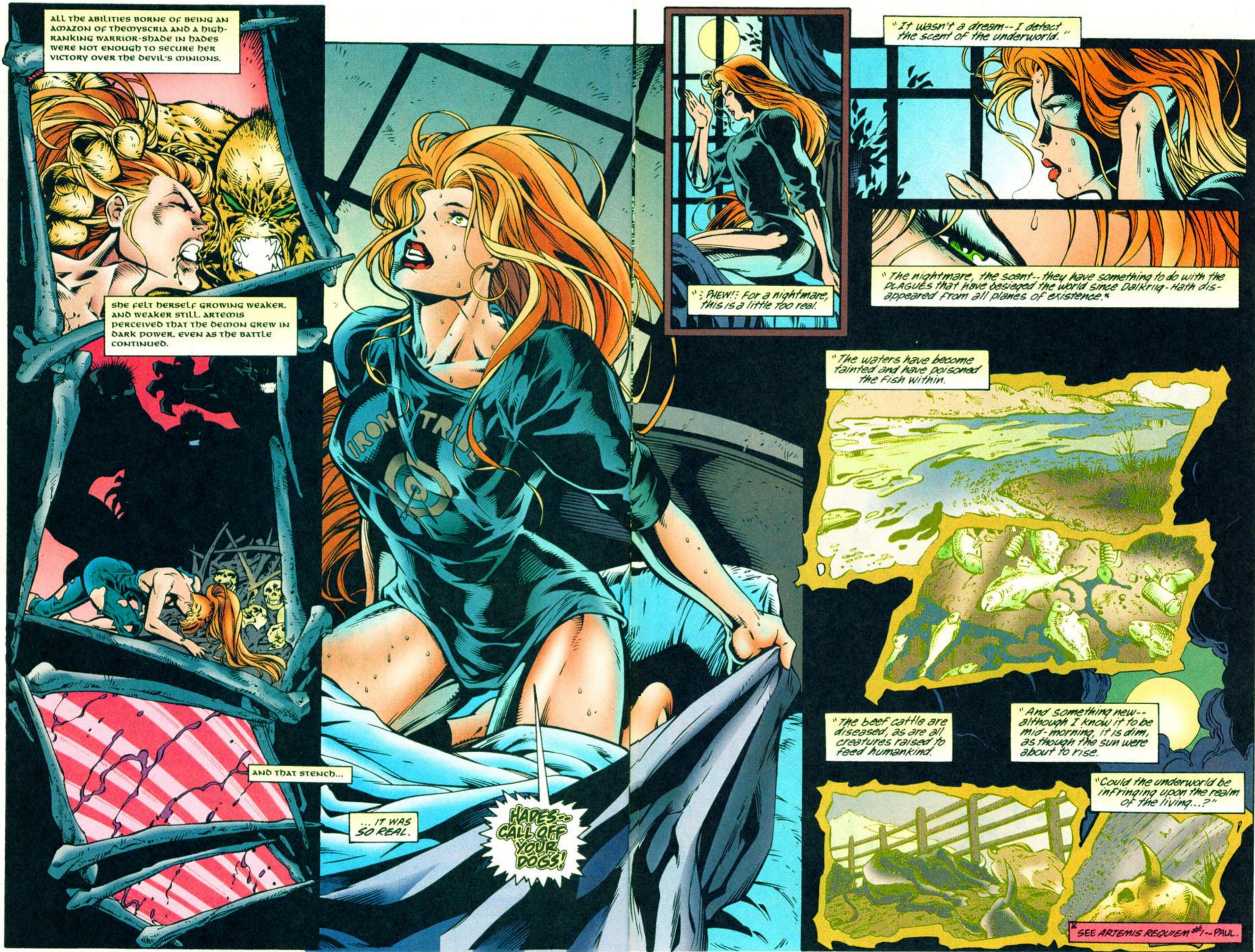
ARTEMIS, ONE-TIME WONDER WOMAN, IS A SURVIVOR. IN HADES SHE HAD EARNED A PLACE OF NO SMALL STATUS FOR HERSELF-- CONCUBINE OF THE THIRTEENTH PRINCE, DALKRIG-HATH.

A GREAT DEAL OF CUNNING AND COURAGE WERE REQUIRED ON HER PART TO ACHIEVE THIS SOCIAL CLIMB OF SORTS IN THE SHORT TIME SHE WAS IN THE UNDERWORLD. SOME MIGHT ALSO SAY ARTEMIS MADE CERTAIN... COMPROMISES.

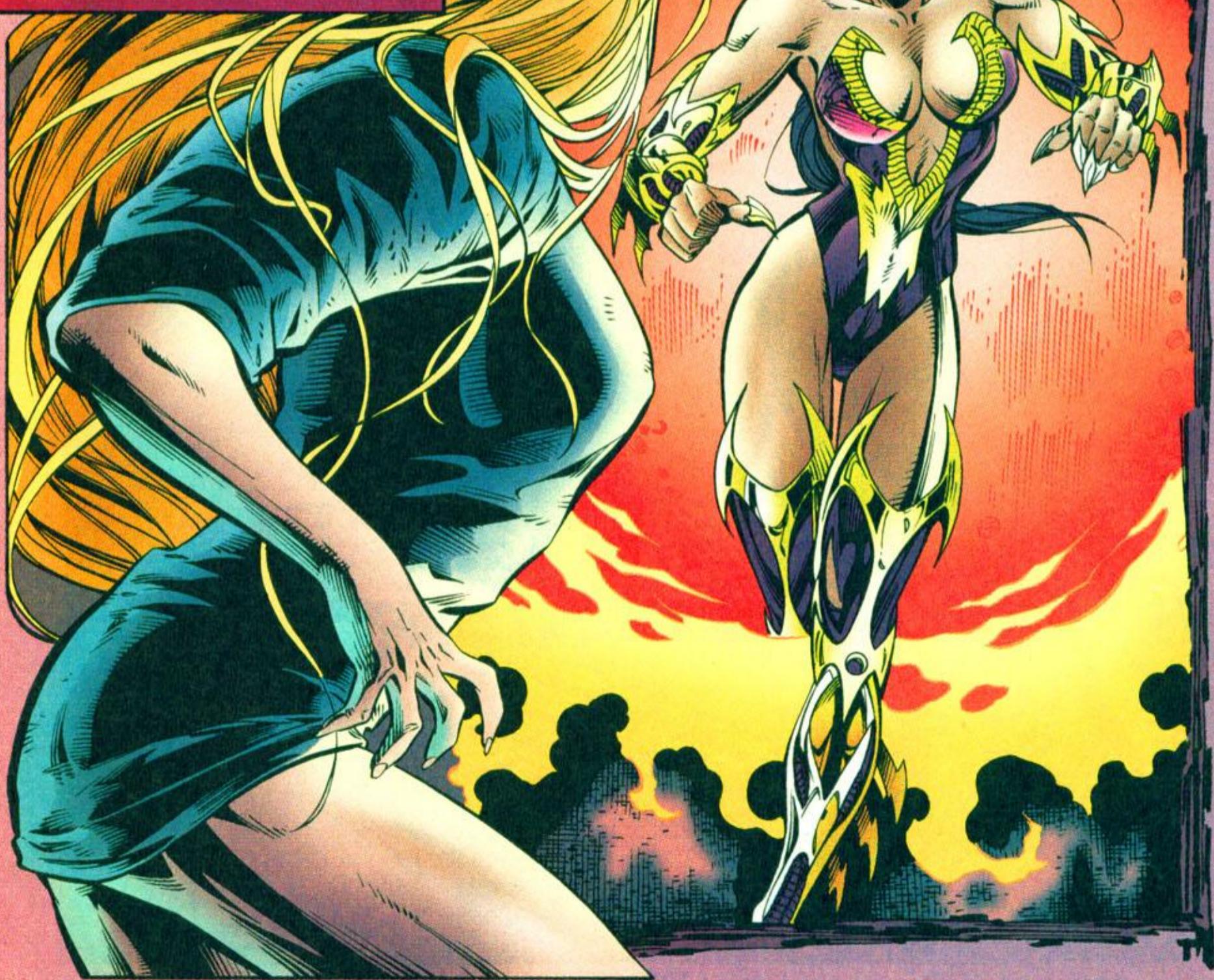
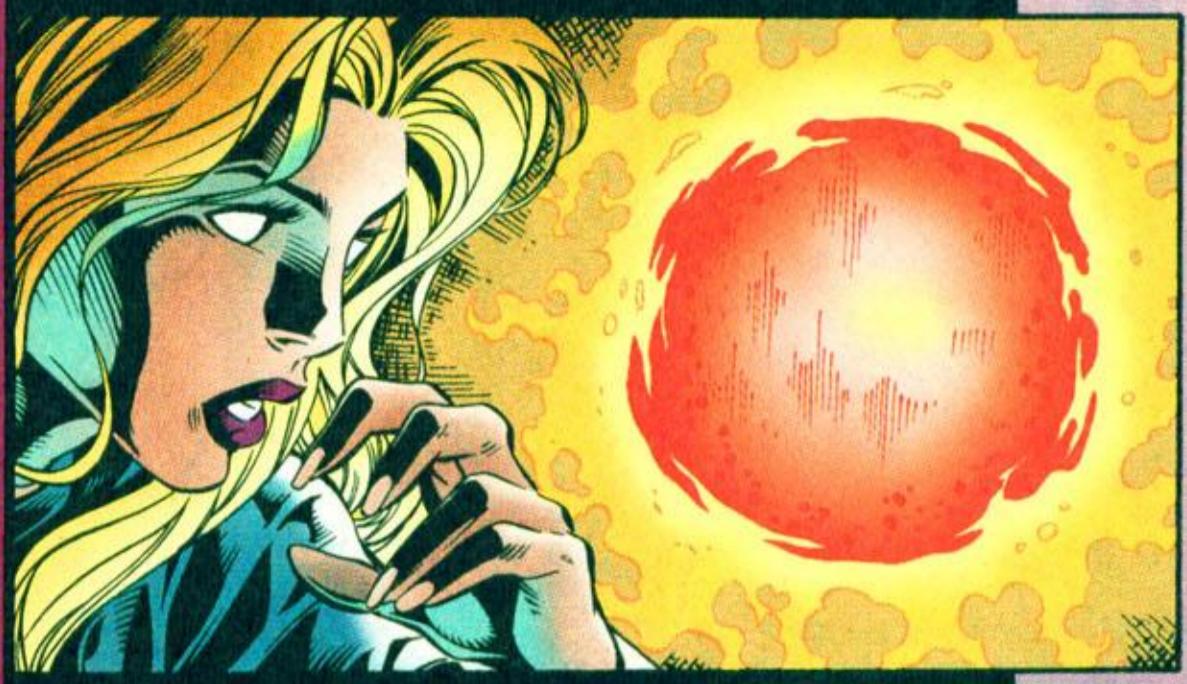
AT ANY RATE, SHE HAD HONED HER OLFACTORY SKILLS ENOUGH TO SMELL A DEMON OF HADES A MILE AWAY. AT THIS CLOSE PROXIMITY, IT FOLLOWED THAT IT WAS SOMEWHAT OF A TORTUOUS THING ON HER SENSES.

THE DEAD RANKNESS OF THREE DEMONS FILLED HER MOUTH AND NOSE; IT WAS HOT AND DAMP ON HER NECK. ARTEMIS' OWN ANGER AND FEAR CAUSED A FETOR THAT RIValed THE DEMON-STENCH.

JOAN WEIS story • ED BENES pencils • BARBARA RAALBERG inks • JOHN COSTANZA lettering • IAN LAUGHLIN coloring



"Let it come. It will separate the strong from the weak, the quick from the dead."



BELYLIOTH, IT'S A RISK FOR YOU TO COME HERE. YOU SHOULD BE WORKING TO SECURE THE FEAR AND OBEDIENCE OF YOUR SUBJECTS.

I HAVE NO SUBJECTS, ARTEMIS. LORD HADES REJECTED MY CLAIM TO THE PRINCEDOM.

CERTAINLY YOU'VE NOTICED THE IMBALANCE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE UNDERWORLD.

IT IS BECAUSE ONLY TWELVE PRINCES RULE WHERE THERE SHOULD BE THIRTEEN.

IT CREATED A DISRUPTION THAT IS WEAKENING THE PORTALS.

YES, I NOTICED...

I KNOW I'M GOING TO REGRET ASKING, BUT WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO TO ME?

THEY WERE EXPECTED TO RULE TILL TIME'S END. NOW HADES MUST CHOOSE CAREFULLY HATH'S REPLACEMENT TO RULE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

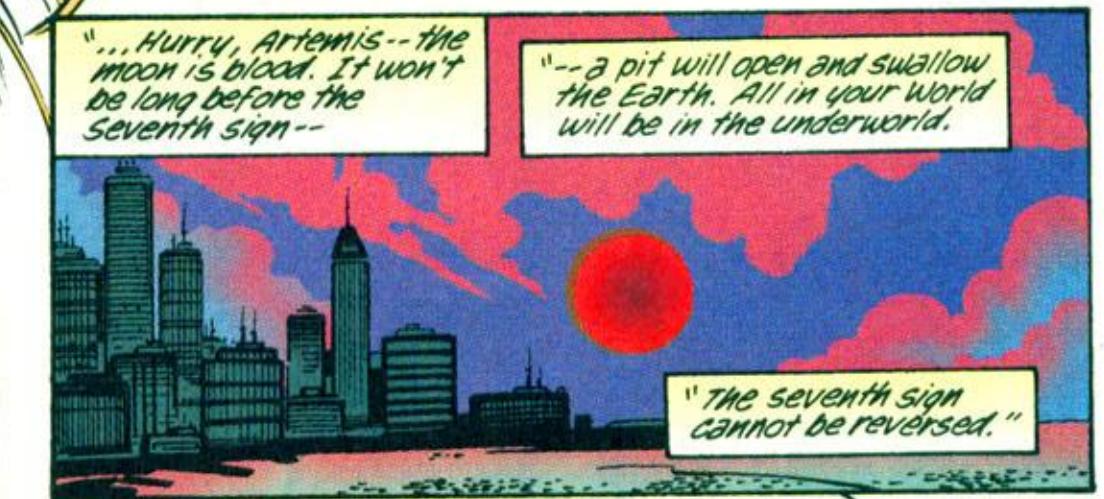
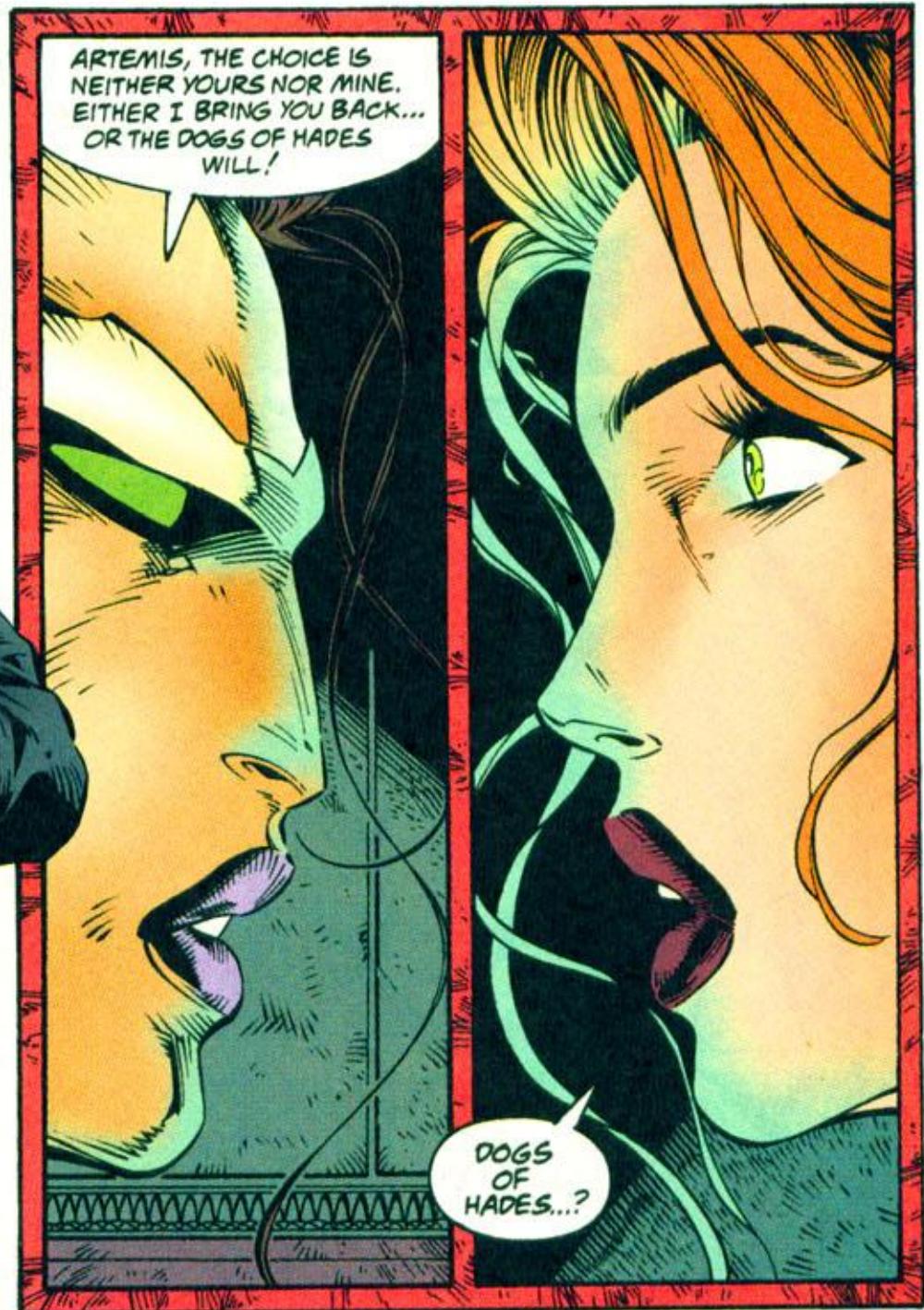
AND WHO IS THIS REPLACEMENT?

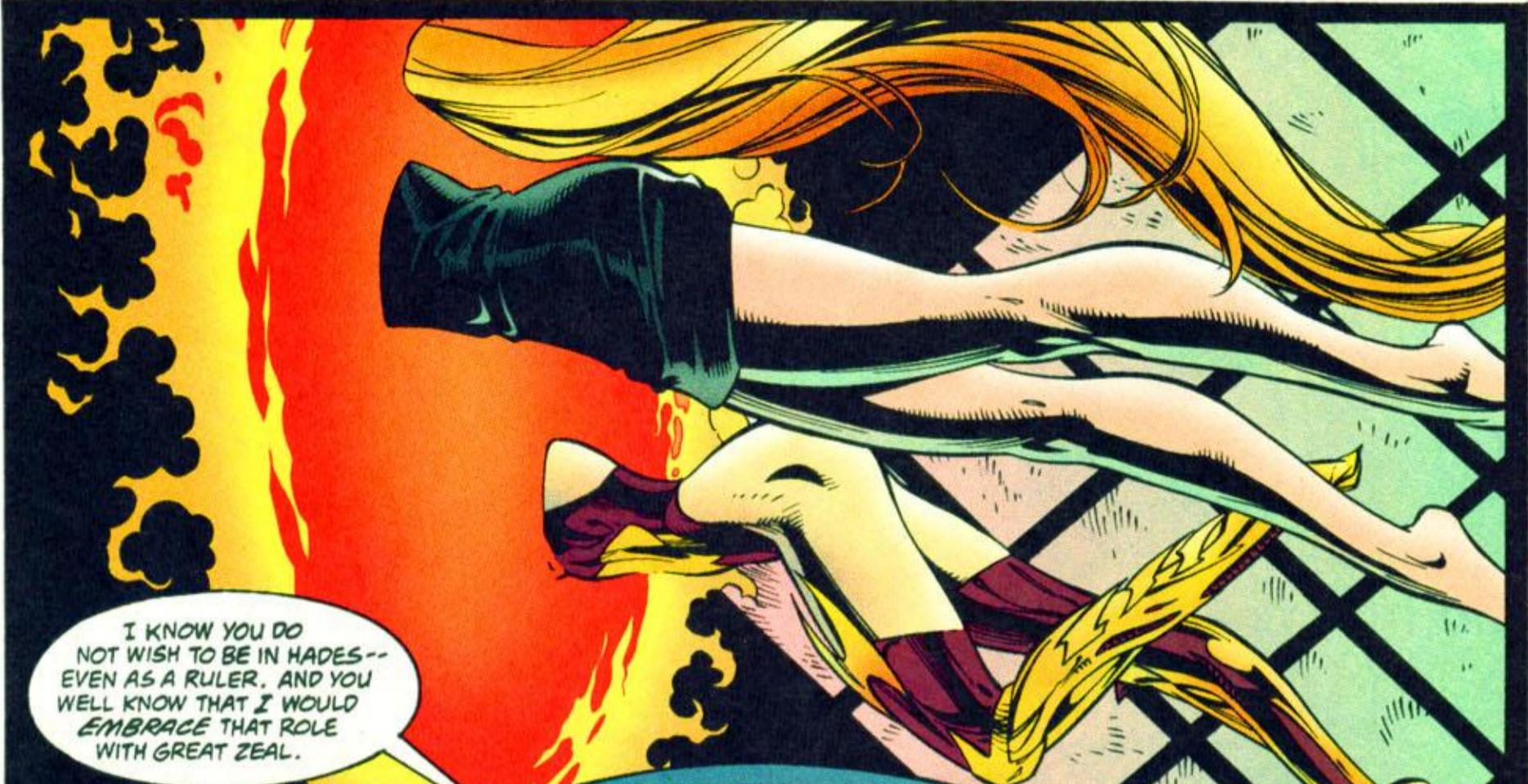
THE LORD HADES CONSIDERED THE DILEMMA OF THE THIRTEENTH PRINCEDOM CAREFULLY. NEVER BEFORE HAS ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED-- THE PRINCES HAVE RULED UNDER HADES SINCE TIME BEGAN.

HADES CONSULTED WITH THE REMAINING TWELVE, AND AFTER MUCH THOUGHT, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE WIFE OF DALKRIIG-HATH IS THE RIGHTFUL SUCCESSOR.

ME?!

I WAS SENT TO... RETRIEVE YOU.





I KNOW YOU DO
NOT WISH TO BE IN HADES--
EVEN AS A RULER. AND YOU
WELL KNOW THAT I WOULD
EMBRACE THAT ROLE
WITH GREAT ZEAL.

OUTWARDLY, I
WOULD RULE AS DALKRIIG -
HATH BEFORE ME. HOWEVER,
THE COVERT REBELLION WILL
CONTINUE AND THRIVE
UNDER MY RULE.

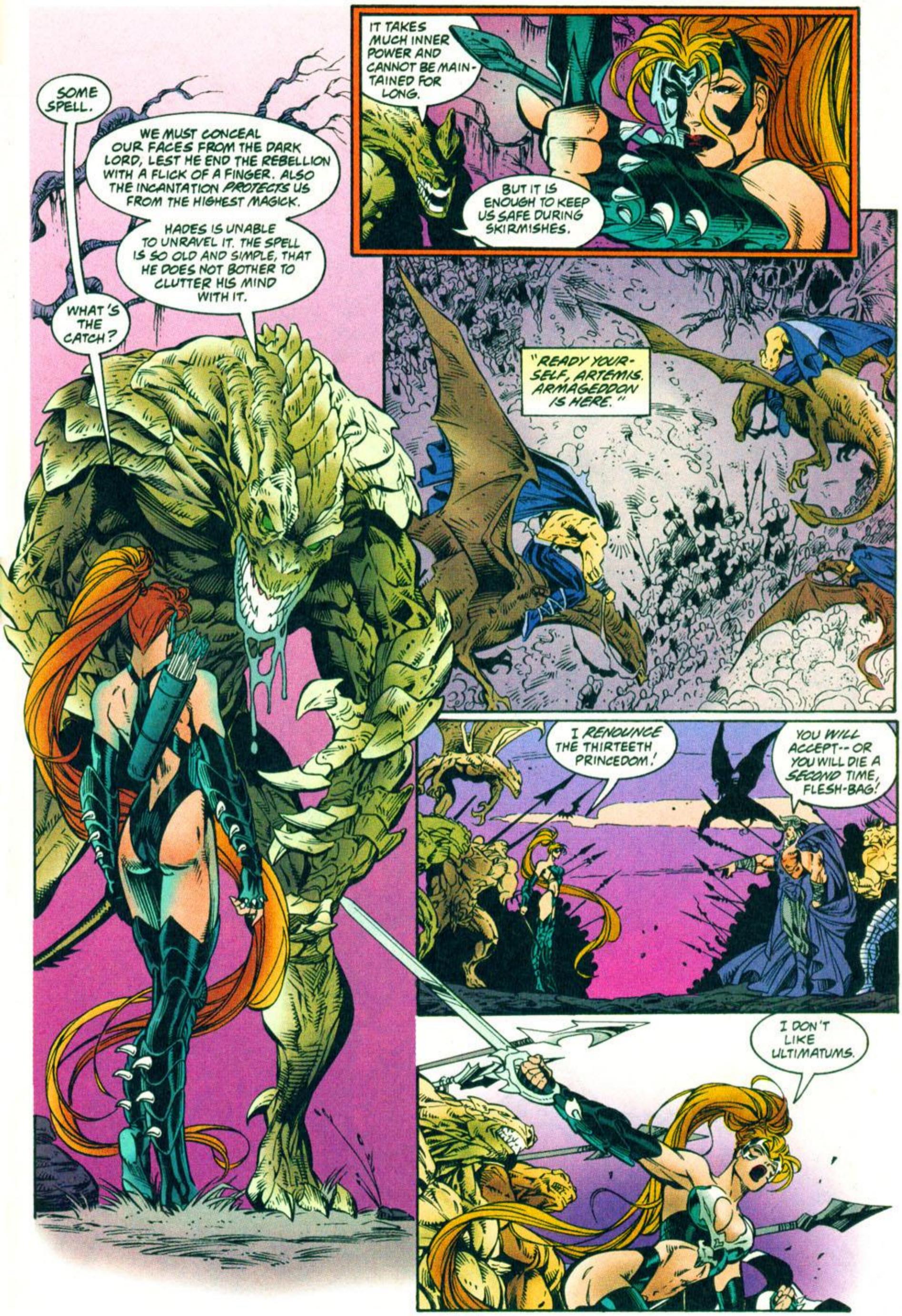
TO RENEW MY
CLAIM, I NEED THE
HELP OF THE RIGHTFUL
RULER--WHO IS
ALSO A SKILLED
WARRIOR.

WHY
CAN'T I JUST
APPOINT YOU MY
SUCCESSOR.

BECAUSE THERE ARE
NO SUCCESSORS IN HADES, ARTEMIS.
THE PRINCES WERE INTENDED TO RULE
FOR ALL TIME. LORD HADES WILL
GO THROUGH THIS BUT ONCE.

I MUST FIGHT
FOR THE THRONE. IT IS
THE ONLY WAY FOR
EACH OF US TO
ACHIEVE VICTORY.





SO BEGAN THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE FIRMAMENTS, BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, GOOD AND EVIL.

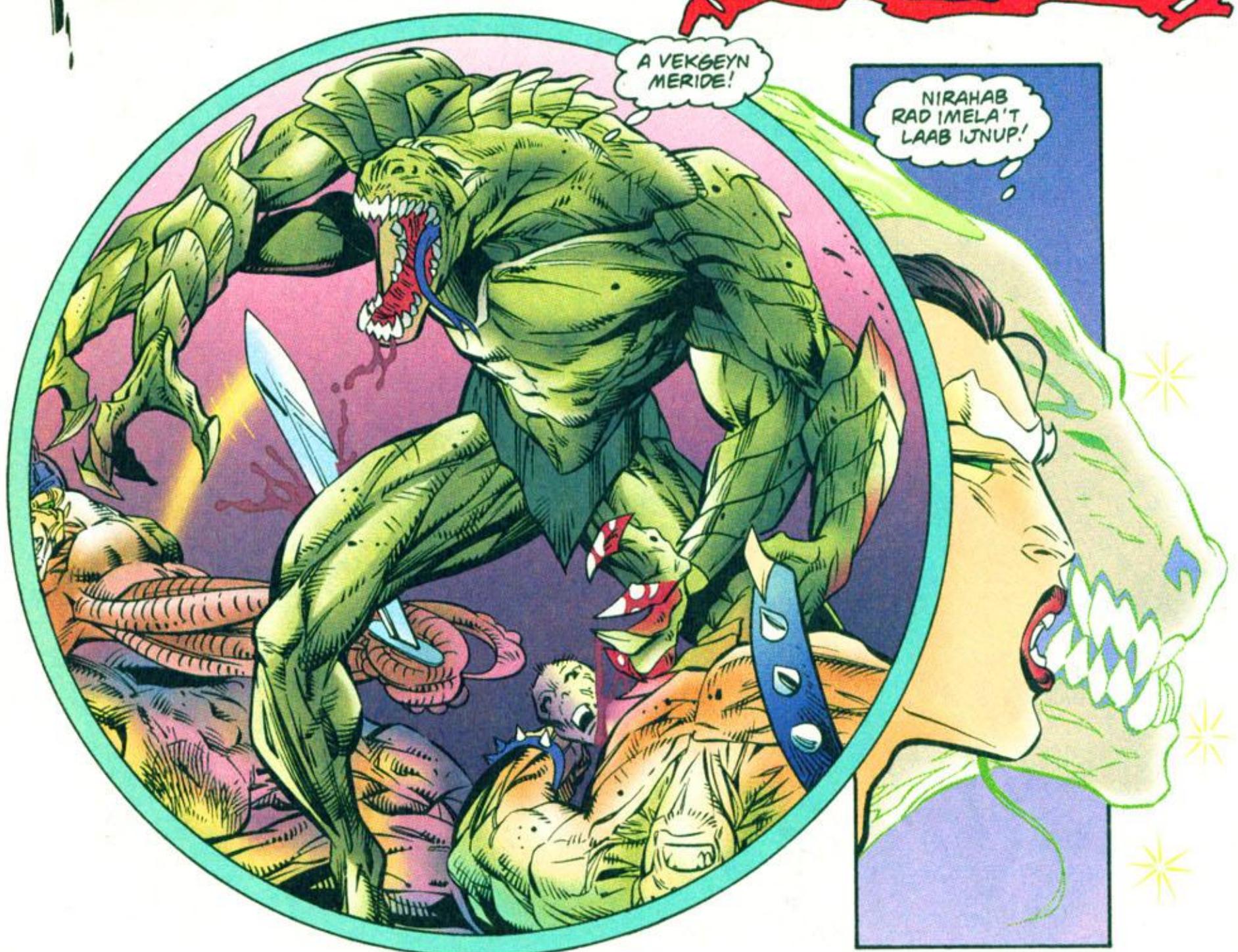
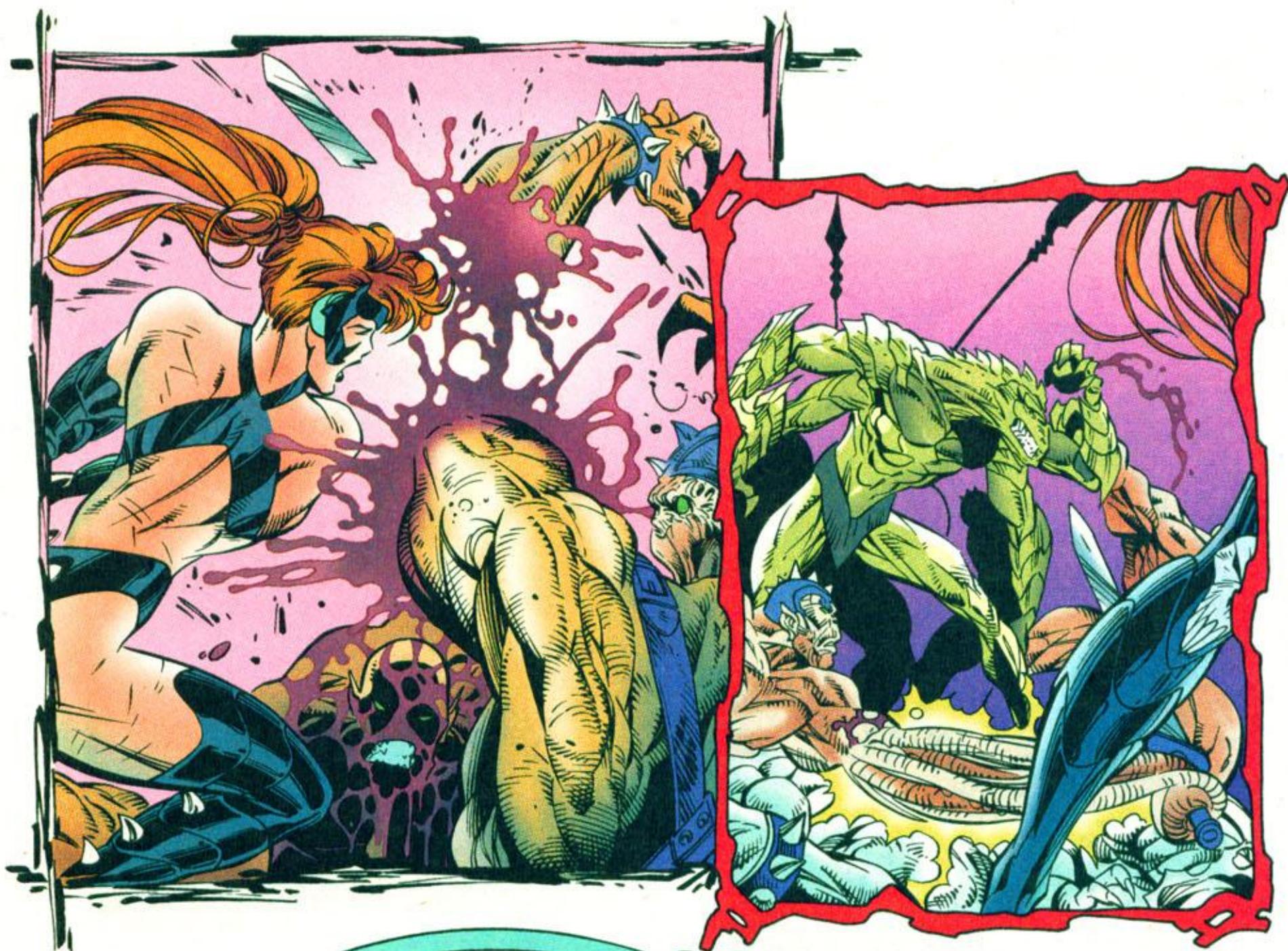
OVER THE EONS, A FEW GOOD SOULS HAVE BEEN DOOMED TO AN ETERNITY IN HADES. ONE BY ONE THEY FOUND EACH OTHER UNTIL THEIR NUMBERS GREW INTO A GREAT ARMY.

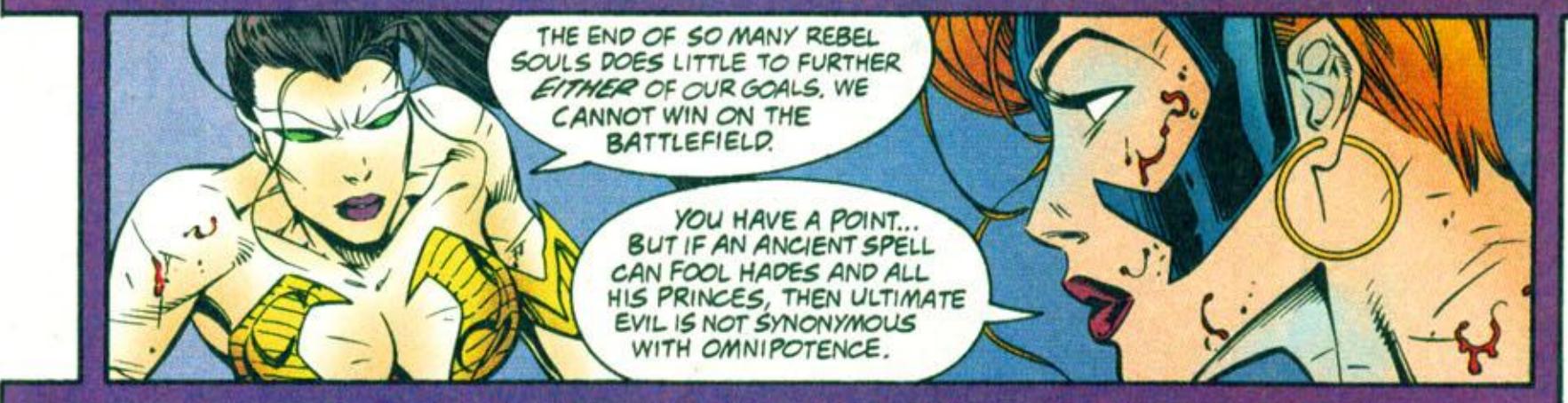
ONE AMONG THEM SHOWED THAT SHE WAS NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT THE EVILS OF THE UNIVERSE. THEY RALLIED AROUND HER AND THUS THE REBELLION OF HADES WAS BORN.

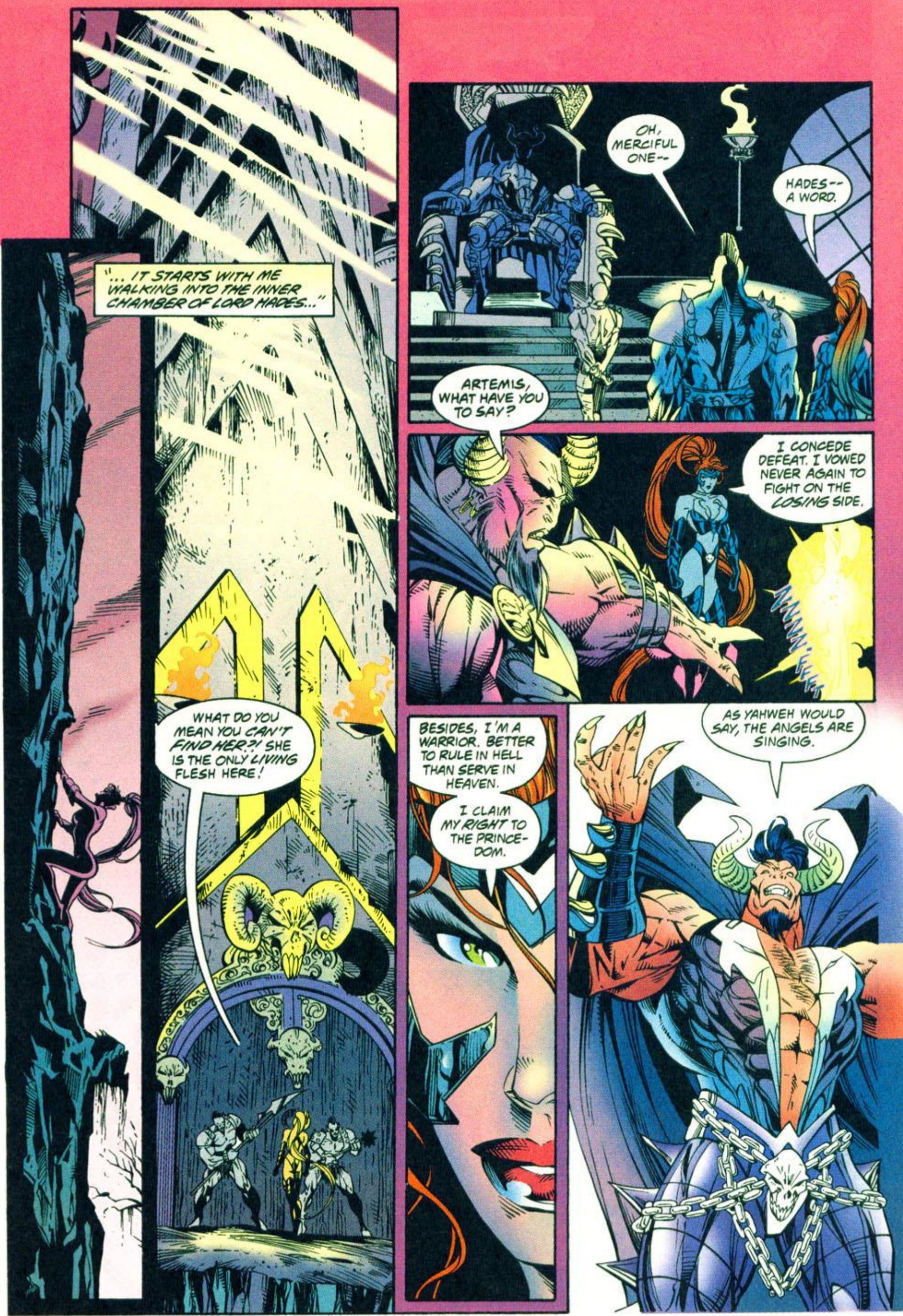
THE MILLENNIA OF SKIRMISHES AND AMBUSHES AND SUBTERFUGE ALL CULMINATE HERE, TODAY, IN THIS GREAT BATTLE...

...AND EVEN ARTEMIS, THE LEGENDARY WARRIOR, CAN DO NOTHING TO TIP THE BALANCE TOWARD THE SIDE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE SPELL THAT CONCEALS THE IDENTITIES OF THE REBELS, THE SPELL THAT EVEN LORD HADES HIMSELF CANNOT COUNTER, IS WEAKENING THE REVOLUTIONARIES SUCH THAT DEFEAT IS IMMINENT.







WE SHALL
MAKE IT
SO.

AS THE REBEL GENERAL
BELYLIOTH WARNED, AFTER
THE SPELL IS CAST, THERE
IS NO ESCAPE. PRINCES
WERE MEANT TO RULE FOR
ALL TIME.

ONCE ANOINTED PRINCESS OF THE
THIRTEENTH CHAIR, ARTEMIS WILL
RULE THIS DANK CORNER OF THE
UNDERWORLD UNTIL JUDG-
MENT DAY.

FOR THIS INCANTATION
HAS NO COUNTER
SPELL.

ACH IL PYC
DABAARA TUN!

DEV CHE'
MAGHTOK!

IT IS DONE!
ARTEMIS--YOU
ARE THE
THIRTEENTH!

BECAUSE THE SIGNS BEGAN
BEFORE THEIR TIME, THEY
REVERSED THEMSELVES,
AS PROPHESIED. THE
UNIVERSE IS AS IT WAS...

...BECAUSE THE
BALANCE IS
RESTORED.

ARTEMIS,
WHAT IS YOUR
FIRST COMMAND
AS PRINCESS?

NIRAHAB
RAD IMELA 'T
LAAB
IJNUP!

BELYLIOTH! YOU INDOLENT TRAITOR! FOR YOUR TREACHERY I SHALL REMOVE YOU FROM THIS PLANE--

NO! INSTEAD I SHALL SPEND ETERNITY MAKING YOU SUFFER!

AND AS FOR YOU, ARTEMIS-- I SHALL HAVE MY REVENGE UPON YOU AS WELL--



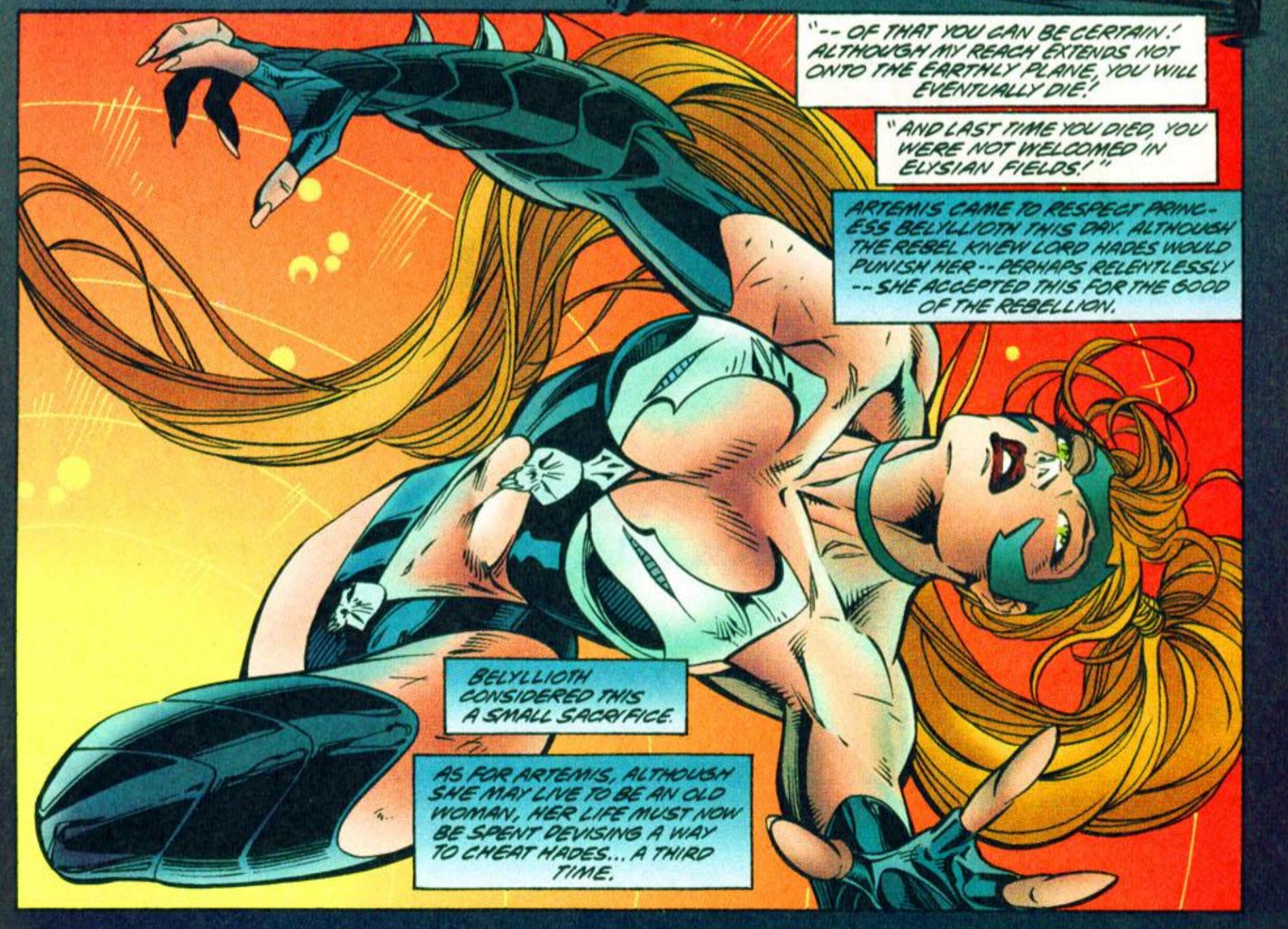
-- OF THAT YOU CAN BE CERTAIN! ALTHOUGH MY REACH EXTENDS NOT ONTO THE EARTHLY PLANE, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY DIE!

AND LAST TIME YOU DIED, YOU WERE NOT WELCOMED IN ELYSIAN FIELDS!"

ARTEMIS CAME TO RESPECT PRINCESS BELYLIOTH THIS DAY. ALTHOUGH THE REBEL KNEW LORD HADES WOULD PUNISH HER-- PERHAPS RELENTLESSLY-- SHE ACCEPTED THIS FOR THE GOOD OF THE REBELLION.

BELYLIOTH
CONSIDERED THIS
A SMALL SACRIFICE.

AS FOR ARTEMIS, ALTHOUGH SHE MAY LIVE TO BE AN OLD WOMAN, HER LIFE MUST NOW BE SPENT DEVISING A WAY TO CHEAT HADES... A THIRD TIME.





Hope you just enjoyed this year's **WONDER WOMAN ANNUAL**. Every year we put out Annuals and every year readers write in with comments or questions. Normally no one other than the editors and sometimes the creative teams themselves get to see these letters. This is a shame, because very often Annuals will feature work on a character by a different art team...or even a different writer. Or they offer new takes on old characters...or old takes on new characters. In short, Annuals are just as important as the regular monthly titles (if not more so, since they only come out once a year). Last year, in addition to the Annual, we also put out a Special teaming up **WONDER WOMAN** with your favorite Lady Speedster and mine: Jesse Quick.

Well, this year we thought ahead and saved the mail on these projects, knowing full well that the 1997 Annual would be the perfect forum to share them with everyone. So, without further ado...

Dear Paul,

I don't know if you guys are going to be doing a special letter column to talk about this year's Annual or not, but I just wanted to write and let you know what I thought of **WONDER WOMAN ANNUAL #5**.

First of all, I would like to say that I have been really enjoying the *Legends of the Dead Earth* Annuals. This year's **WONDER WOMAN ANNUAL** was certainly no exception. Whoever it was that came up with the idea of teaming up two of the most influential X-Men creators on a project is a genius! I can't think of two creators more suited to a project like this. Once more, John Byrne and Dave Cockrum prove that their chops are still smooth. Between Byrne's sense of grandeur, pacing, and character in his cosmic operas (check out his **NEW GODS** stuff!) and of course Dave Cockrum's awesome spacy design sense... I mean, this is the guy who created the Shi'ar, the Imperial Guard (and the new X-Men, of course). Norm Breyfogle's inks bring a modern slickness to Dave Cockrum's pencils that I haven't seen in a while and... frankly, I welcome it. Cockrum's strengths were always in his design sense and character concepts. With Breyfogle over him, you get all the good and the added benefit of a line like Breyfogle's.

A gripping yarn with fantastic cover—what more can we ask for?

Marvel doesn't even put out Annuals anymore, it seems, and DC's are better than ever! Way to go.

ELLIOT ALLEN
TOLUCA LAKE, CA

Thanks for the good words, Elliot. Glad you liked the *Legends of the Dead Earth* Annual. Hope you got a chance to check this one out. Drop us a line; let us know what you think.



Dear Amagrams,

I thought I should include a separate letter to talk about the 1996 **WONDER**

WOMAN Annual.

So far, I've been enjoying the various *Dead Earth* stories. This one was outstanding, though. I'm always glad when the regular team on a monthly comic does the Annuals. Although he didn't draw it, I'm very glad that John Byrne wrote it. It was reassuring to see his writing style tie this to the regular ongoing **WONDER WOMAN** books.

Dave Cockrum and Norm Breyfogle were also inspired choices. Dave Cockrum has quite a background when it comes to drawing exciting outer space adventures, and Norm Breyfogle, a DC stalwart as long as I've been reading (six years and counting) added his brush to the mix, bringing out all of Cockrum's strengths.

The opening double-page spread reminded me of the opening of *Star Wars*, just the sheer size of the ship! I'm usually not one for pinup shots and such, but this issue had several fantastic one-page pinups. The shot on page 19 of Alyxa on the Catwalk is breathtaking, as is the Ratbat Wonder Woman. If DC does a *Legends of the Dead Earth* poster, I hope this character is shown prominently (try to get Dave Cockrum to draw it).

Like most people I like twists, and this comic definitely had a great twist. You guys did a great job of keeping us in the dark. I think the cover is partially responsible for that. The cover belongs in the hallowed halls of great DC covers. It reminds me of a lot of DC covers from the late sixties and early seventies. That is a compliment coming from me, because while I think stories in comics have generally improved, I think covers generally stink now and used to be much better. Now they're all pinups and poses and fight shots and butt shots.

Thanks again, and I look forward to 1997's Annual.

STEVEN PIERSON
KANSAS CITY, MO

While I agree with you, Steven, that there is a preponderance of pinup/fight-type covers in the industry, there are also a lot of really wonderful covers out there. There are wonderful painted covers now that didn't exist twenty years ago. There are exciting special effects and non-standard colors used to jazz up covers. And the design elements started by Jim Steranko in the late sixties have been incorporated so that many well-designed comic-book covers can certainly stand proudly next to CD covers, book jackets, and even fine art posters!



Dear Paul and Jason,

As a big Wonder Woman fan, I just want to tell you the **WONDER WOMAN** Special was great! As an even bigger Jesse Quick fan, I also want to tell you that the **WONDER WOMAN** Special was great!

What a great team-up! I hope that this is just a tease for when Jesse Quick gets her own book (please, please, please). And

Christopher Priest should write it! He writes both Diana and Jesse extraordinarily well. Also his writing style is very cinematic. I love the way he started the story mid-action, drawing us in immediately. I also liked the way aspects in Jesse's life reflected the recent Jesse Quick SHOWCASE story.

We rarely get to see Diana exercising the Speed of Hermes (I guess that's her version of Superman's Super Ventriloquism powers). The scene where she and Jesse are running together and Jesse figures out who she is is great! There are many great panels in this book. My favorite is probably the majestic shot of Jesse charging on page 29, or the Wonder Woman pinup on page 18. Mike Collins and Tom Palmer fit together like white on rice. Tom Palmer's use of textures and line weights definitely proves that he is the best inker in the business. I went through this book panel by panel after I finished reading it, just checking out the art!

I also want to commend you for telling this story because I think before this we hadn't really gotten to see how the death of her father really affected Jesse. They have been very busy over in the FLASH books and would probably have gotten around to it sooner than later, but this was perhaps an even better venue. We got to see Jesse acting with a major super-hero (Wonder Woman is one of the Big Three...) outside of the FLASH books, demonstrating that she is a viable hero in the DC Universe. Hope to see more of Jesse in the future!

LAURIE HIRSCHFELDER
HOUSTON, TX

While there are no plans in the works for a regular Jesse Quick miniseries, you can be sure that she will continue to pop up in the FLASH books from time to time. I'm sure you caught Jesse's masterful turn in IMPULSE #22, as well as her cameo in #26. Be sure to check out the upcoming SPEED FORCE Special this fall where the Sultaness of Speed will strike again... this time courtesy of former Wonder Woman and Flash scribe William Messner-Loebs!



Dear WONDER WOMAN,

I just got back from my comic shop loaded down with some unexpected goodies. First and foremost is the WONDER WOMAN PLUS JESSE

QUICK special. I couldn't be more excited: two of my favorite heroes teaming up against super-fast ninjas! What a great concept.

As a longtime reader of both WONDER WOMAN and THE FLASH, I was very pleased by the way this story spun both out of the *Dead Heat* storylines and the WONDER WOMAN mythos.

This team-up was very appropriate because both Diana and Jesse have legacies that they clearly have issues with. Jesse is the daughter of two Golden Age heroes, one who gave his life in the service of his superheroism, the other who has a decidedly different philosophy. Diana must come to terms with the issues between her and her own mother (although where Hippolyta is, only John Byrne knows). Diana is now the daughter of two worlds: the mythological isle of wonder Themyscira and the grittier "Man's World" that we know so well. Just as Jesse's allegiances are tugged in different directions by her parents' values, Diana too must face these opposing viewpoints.

Christopher Priest, who I remember did a neat turn on WONDER WOMAN for a few issues before Mr. Deodato came along and turned the world on its ear, did a fine job with both the story and the characterization. Mr. Collins and Mr. Palmer did a sublime job with the art, particularly with Jesse. Imagine what Mr. Palmer's inks would look like over Mr. Byrne's pencils.

Looking forward to next year's team-ups and Annuals!

DJ NARWOOD
GREENWICH, CT

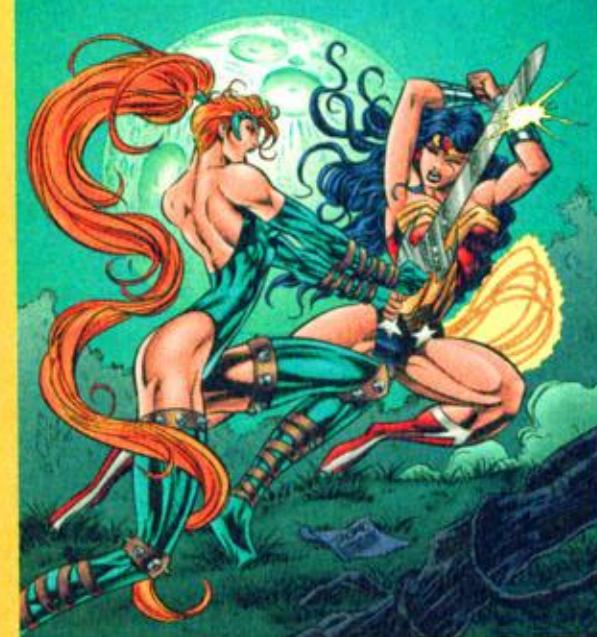
Well, DJ...obviously this year we can do much more than "imagine what Mr. Palmer's inks would look like over Mr. Byrne's pencils." From your lips to our ears. So whattaya think? We're just thrilled here in the WONDER WOMAN office. You get points for remembering that Priest wrote those two far-out issues of WONDER WOMAN (#87 and #88 to be exact). Also you might want to check out the Jesse Quick story that Christopher Priest wrote that appeared in SHOWCASE '96 #12.

You make some very salient comparisons between Diana and Jesse and their relationships with their respective mothers. Check out upcoming issues of WONDER WOMAN to see many of these issues come to a head.

Well, that's all for now. Join John Byrne each month as he pilots the WONDER WOMAN ship through the Seven Seas of Comics!



WONDER WOMAN #123



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