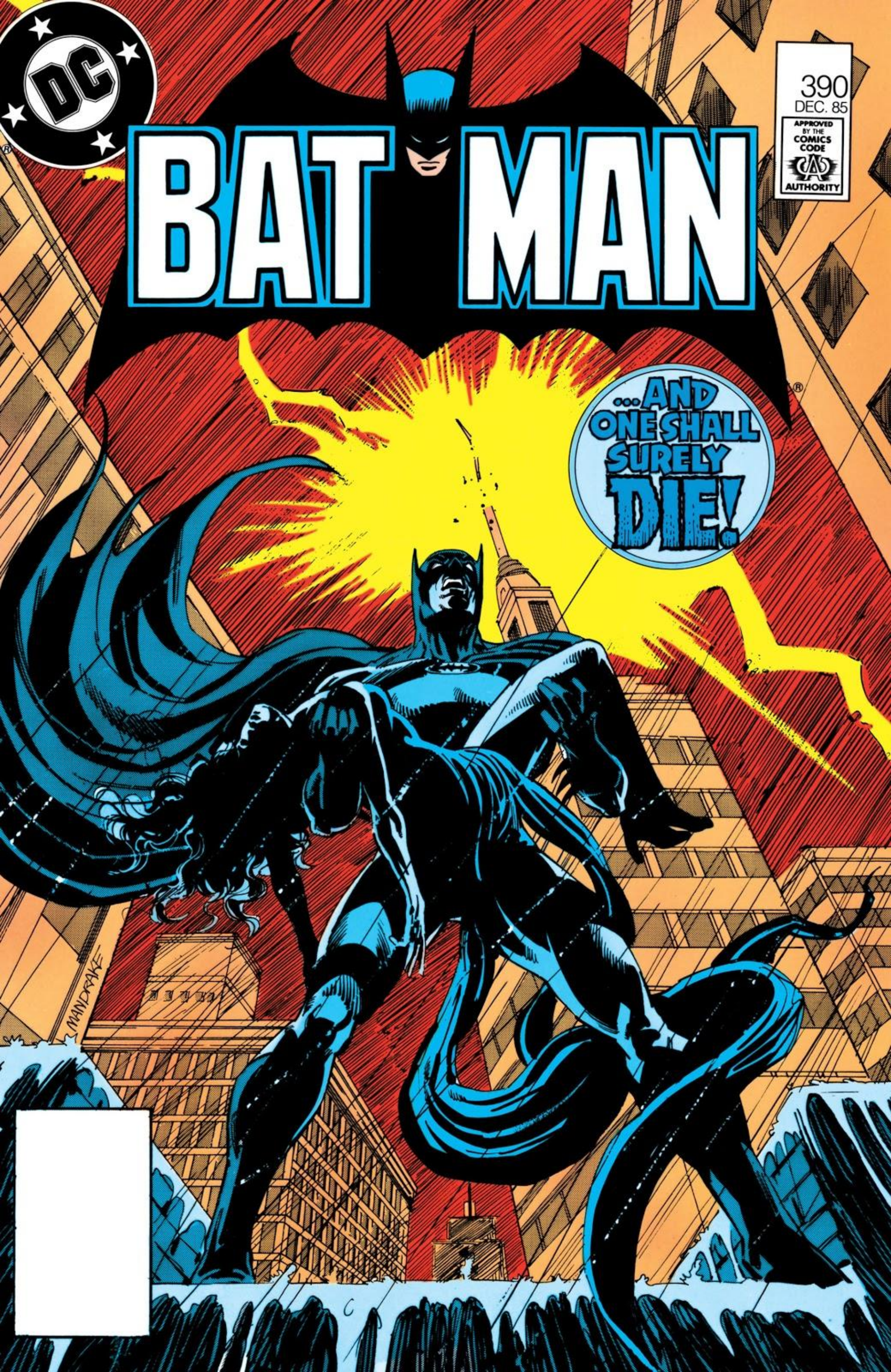
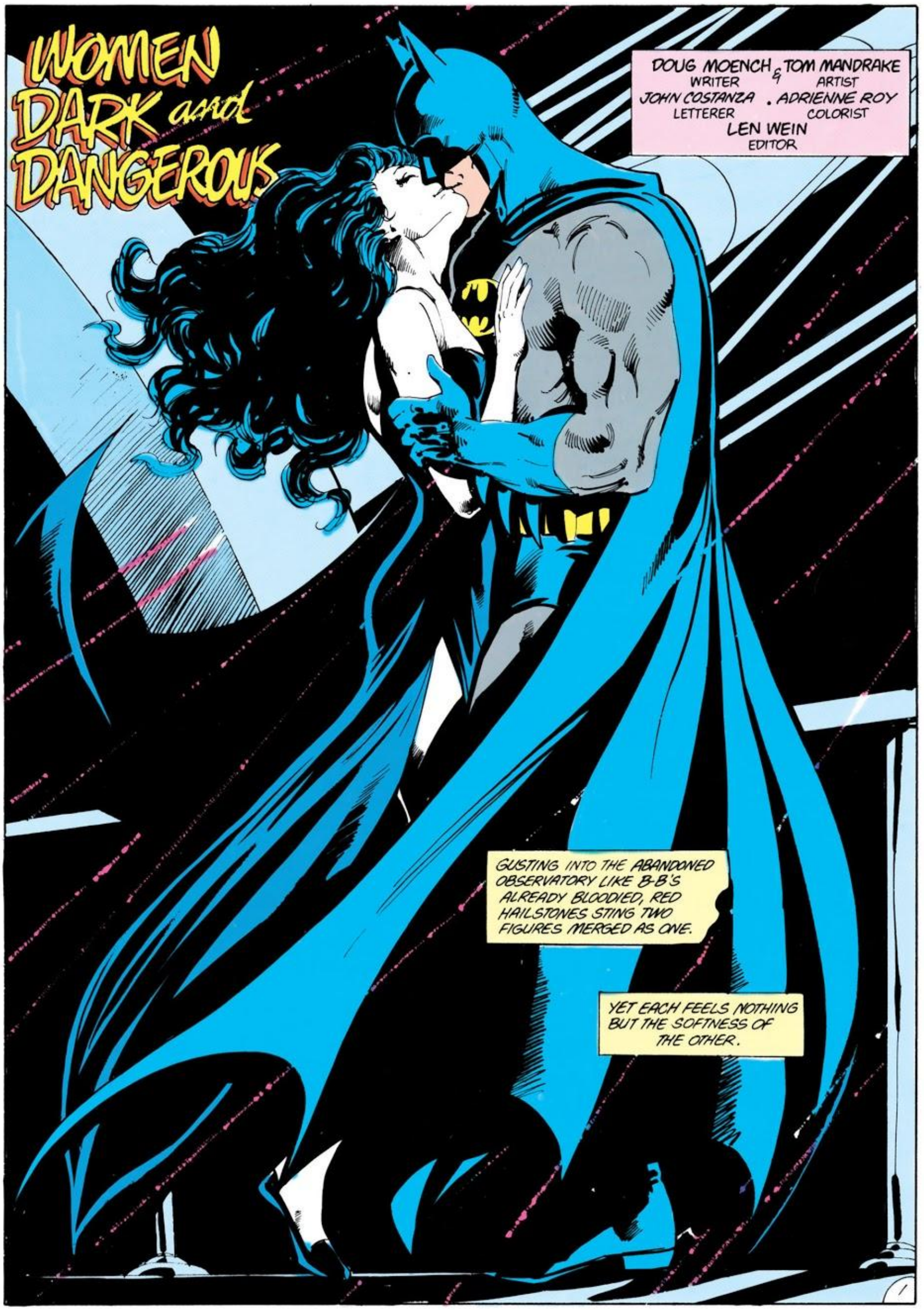
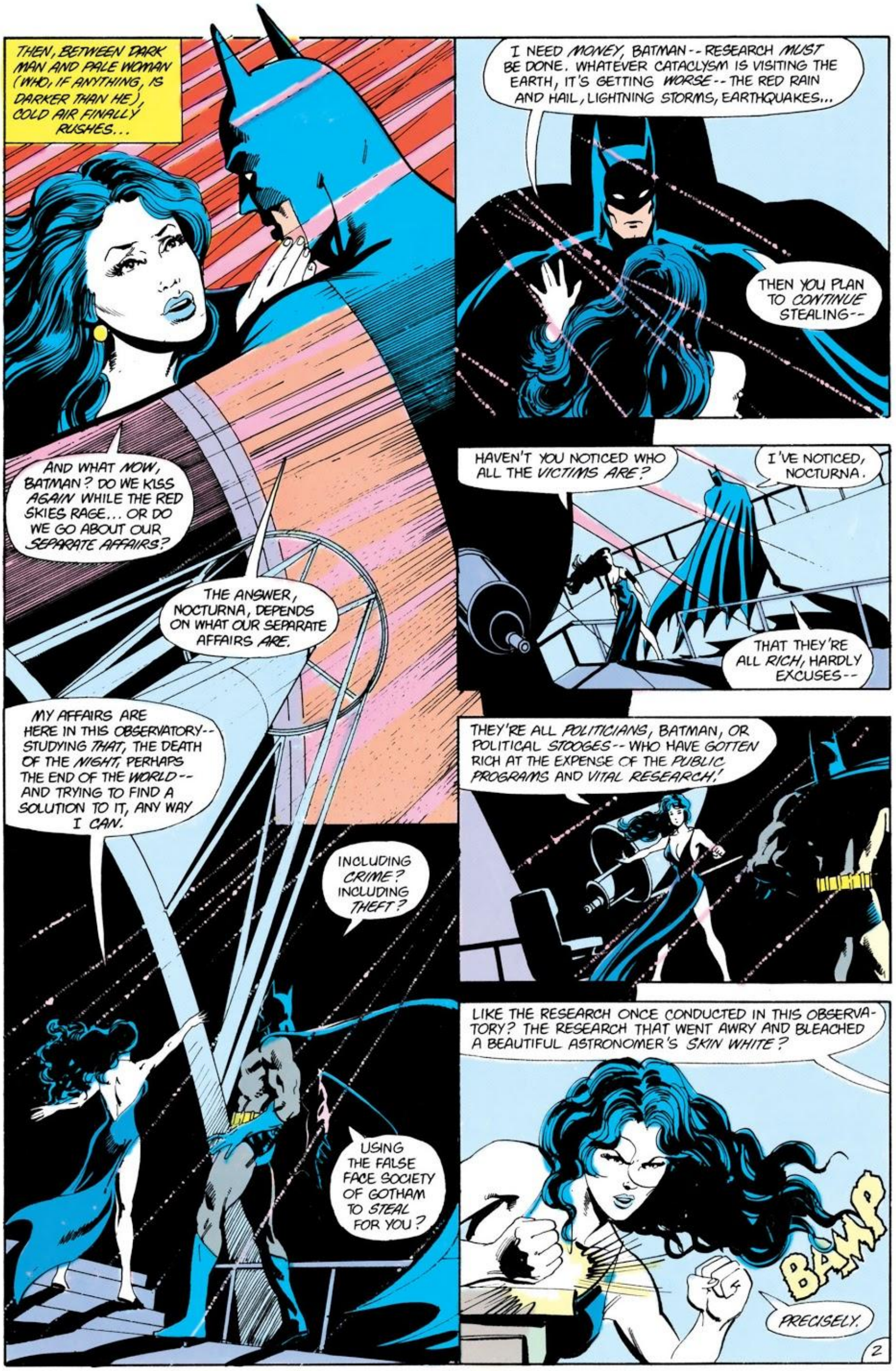
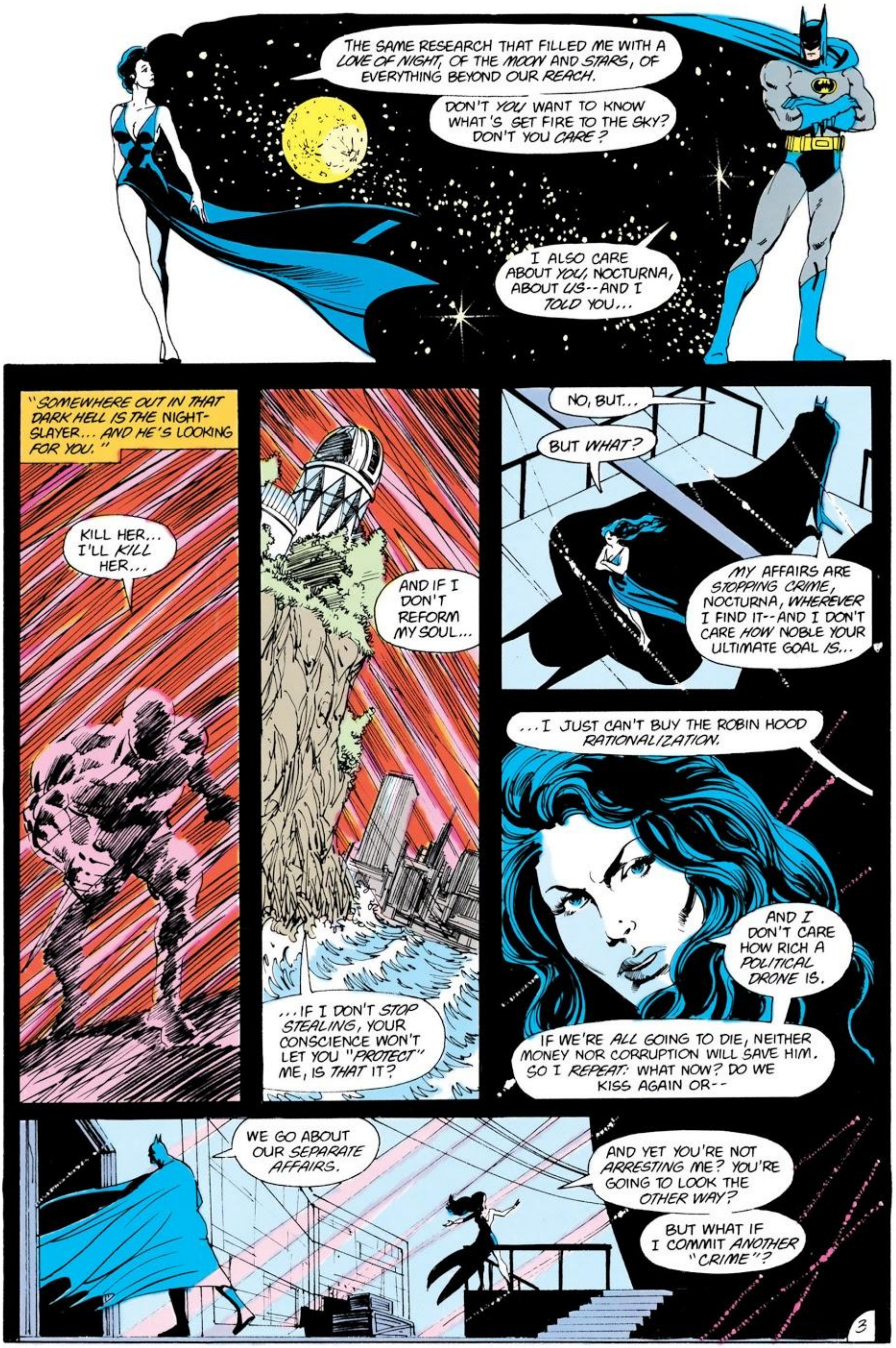
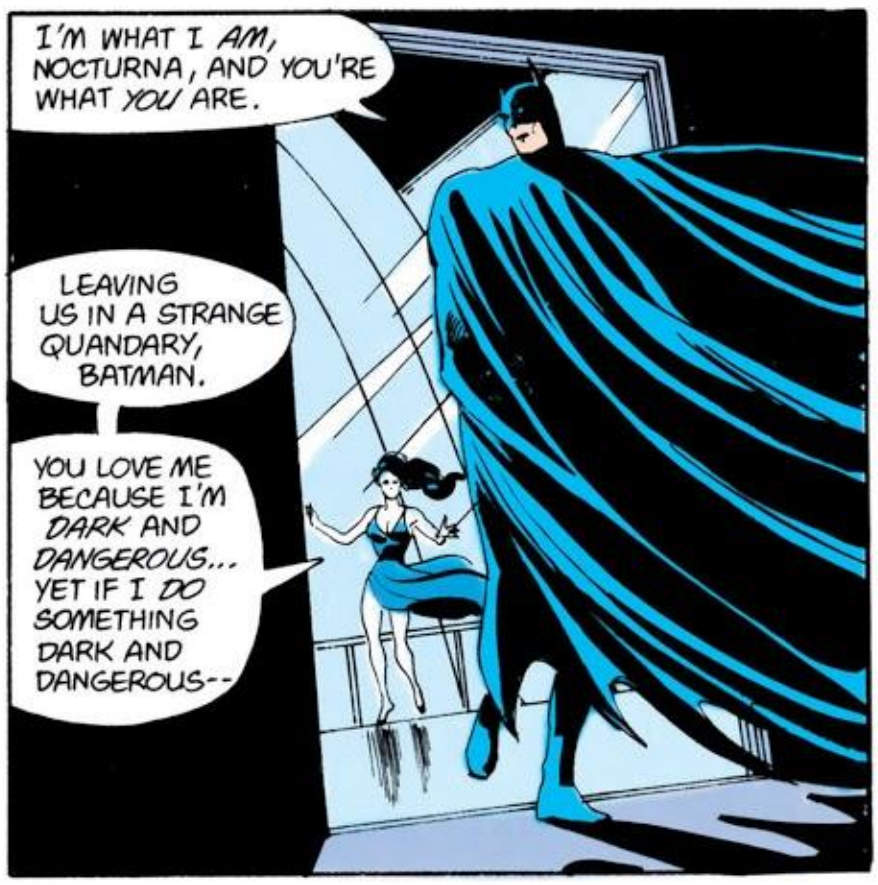

DC
BAT MAN
390
DEC. 85
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
...AND ONE SHALL SURELY DIE!
MANDRAKE

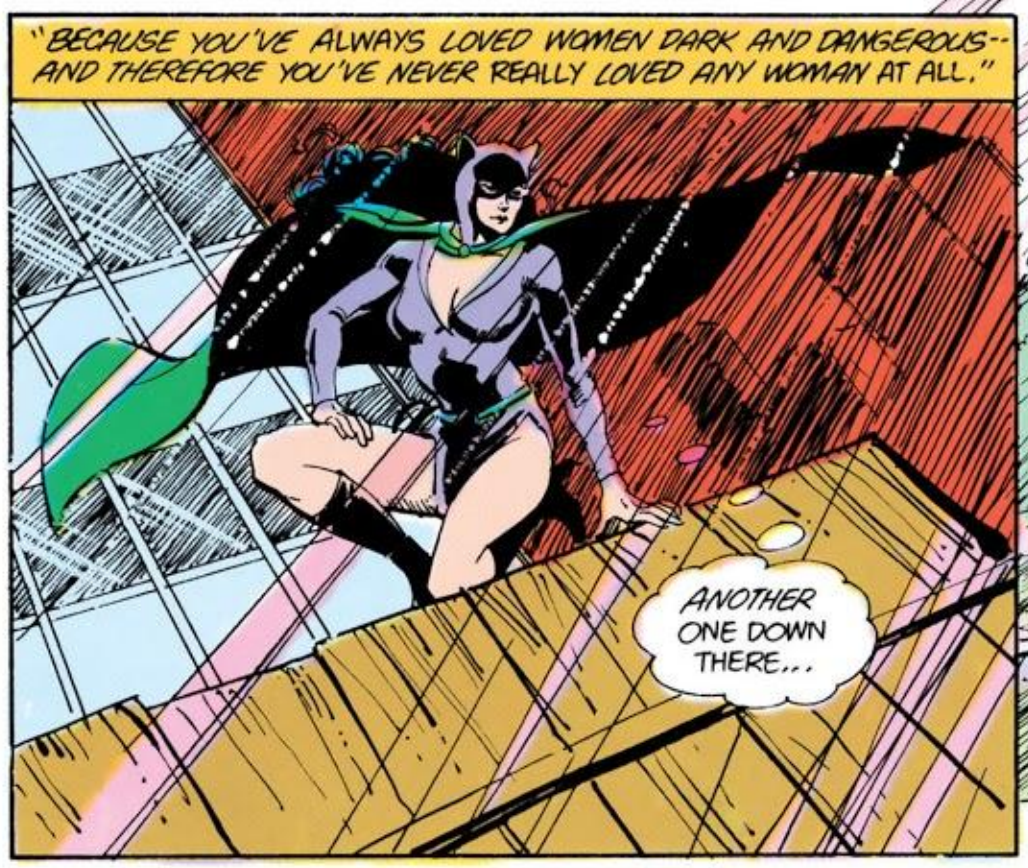

WOMEN DARK and DANGEROUS
DOUG MOENCH & TOM MANDRAKE
WRITER ARTIST
JOHN COSTANZA . ADRIENNE ROY
LETTERER COLORIST
LEN WEIN
EDITOR
GUSTING INTO THE ABANDONED OBSERVATORY LIKE B-B'S ALREADY BLOODIED, RED HAILSTONES STING TWO FIGURES MERGED AS ONE.
YET EACH FEELS NOTHING BUT THE SOFTNESS OF THE OTHER.

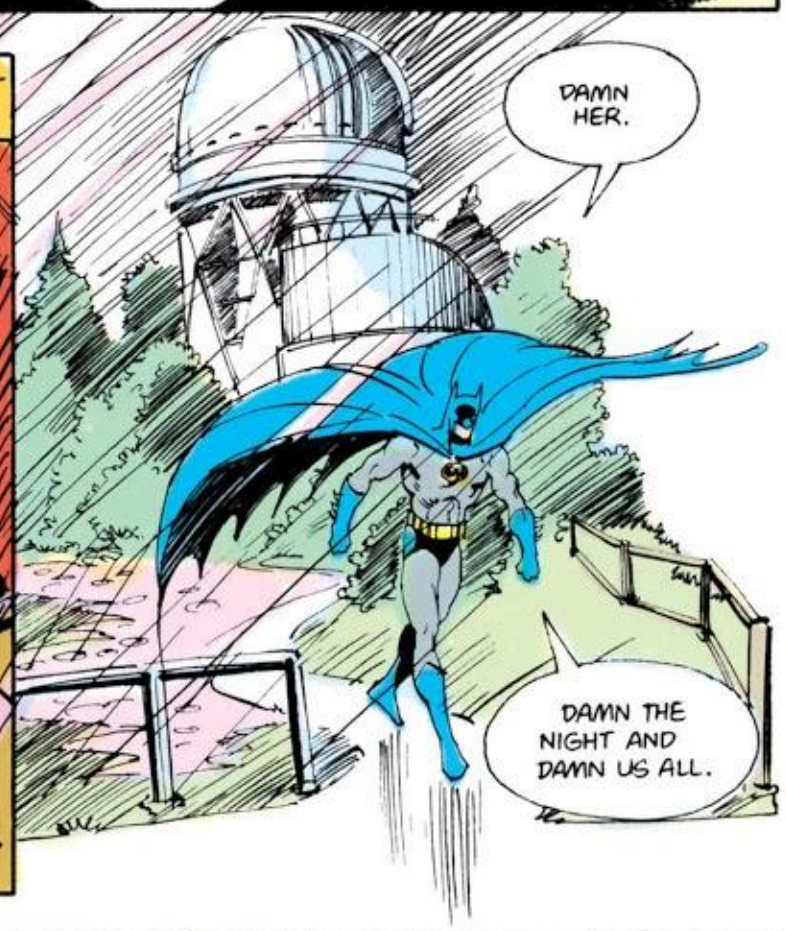

THEN, BETWEEN DARK MAN AND PALE WOMAN (WHO, IF ANYTHING, IS DARKER THAN HE), COLD AIR FINALLY RUSHES...
AND WHAT NOW, BATMAN? DO WE KISS AGAIN WHILE THE RED SKIES RAGE... OR DO WE GO ABOUT OUR SEPARATE AFFAIRS?
THE ANSWER, NOCTURNA, DEPENDS ON WHAT OUR SEPARATE AFFAIRS ARE.
MY AFFAIRS ARE HERE IN THIS OBSERVATORY-- STUDYING THAT, THE DEATH OF THE NIGHT, PERHAPS THE END OF THE WORLD-- AND TRYING TO FIND A SOLUTION TO IT, ANY WAY I CAN.
INCLUDING CRIME? INCLUDING THEFT?
USING THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF GOTHAM TO STEAL FOR YOU?
I NEED MONEY, BATMAN-- RESEARCH MUST BE DONE. WHATEVER CATACLYSM IS VISITING THE EARTH, IT'S GETTING WORSE-- THE RED RAIN AND HAIL, LIGHTNING STORMS, EARTHQUAKES...
THEN YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE STEALING--
HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED WHO ALL THE VICTIMS ARE?
I'VE NOTICED, NOCTURNA.
THAT THEY'RE ALL RICH, HARDLY EXCUSES--
THEY'RE ALL POLITICIANS, BATMAN, OR POLITICAL STOOGES-- WHO HAVE GOTTEN RICH AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND VITAL RESEARCH!
LIKE THE RESEARCH ONCE CONDUCTED IN THIS OBSERVATORY? THE RESEARCH THAT WENT AWRY AND BLEACHED A BEAUTIFUL ASTRONOMER'S SKIN WHITE?
BAMP
PRECISELY.


THE SAME RESEARCH THAT FILLED ME WITH A LOVE OF NIGHT, OF THE MOON AND STARS, OF EVERYTHING BEYOND OUR REACH.
DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S SET FIRE TO THE SKY? DON'T YOU CARE?
I ALSO CARE ABOUT YOU, NOCTURNA, ABOUT US--AND I TOLD YOU...
"SOMEWHERE OUT IN THAT DARK HELL IS THE NIGHT-SLAYER... AND HE'S LOOKING FOR YOU."
KILL HER... I'LL KILL HER...
AND IF I DON'T REFORM MY SOUL...
...IF I DON'T STOP STEALING, YOUR CONSCIENCE WON'T LET YOU "PROTECT" ME, IS THAT IT?
NO, BUT...
BUT WHAT?
MY AFFAIRS ARE STOPPING CRIME, NOCTURNA, WHEREVER I FIND IT--AND I DON'T CARE HOW NOBLE YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS...
...I JUST CAN'T BUY THE ROBIN HOOD RATIONALIZATION.
AND I DON'T CARE HOW RICH A POLITICAL DRONE IS.
IF WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE, NEITHER MONEY NOR CORRUPTION WILL SAVE HIM. SO I REPEAT: WHAT NOW? DO WE KISS AGAIN OR--
WE GO ABOUT OUR SEPARATE AFFAIRS.
AND YET YOU'RE NOT ARRESTING ME? YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY?
BUT WHAT IF I COMMIT ANOTHER "CRIME"?


I'M WHAT I AM, NOCTURNA, AND YOU'RE WHAT YOU ARE.
LEAVING US IN A STRANGE QUANDARY, BATMAN.
YOU LOVE ME BECAUSE I'M DARK AND DANGEROUS... YET IF I DO SOMETHING DARK AND DANGEROUS--

HOW DO YOU KNO--
--YOU CAN'T LOVE ME.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?


"BECAUSE YOU'VE ALWAYS LOVED WOMEN DARK AND DANGEROUS-- AND THEREFORE YOU'VE NEVER REALLY LOVED ANY WOMAN AT ALL."
ANOTHER ONE DOWN THERE...


DAMN HER.
DAMN THE NIGHT AND DAMN US ALL.

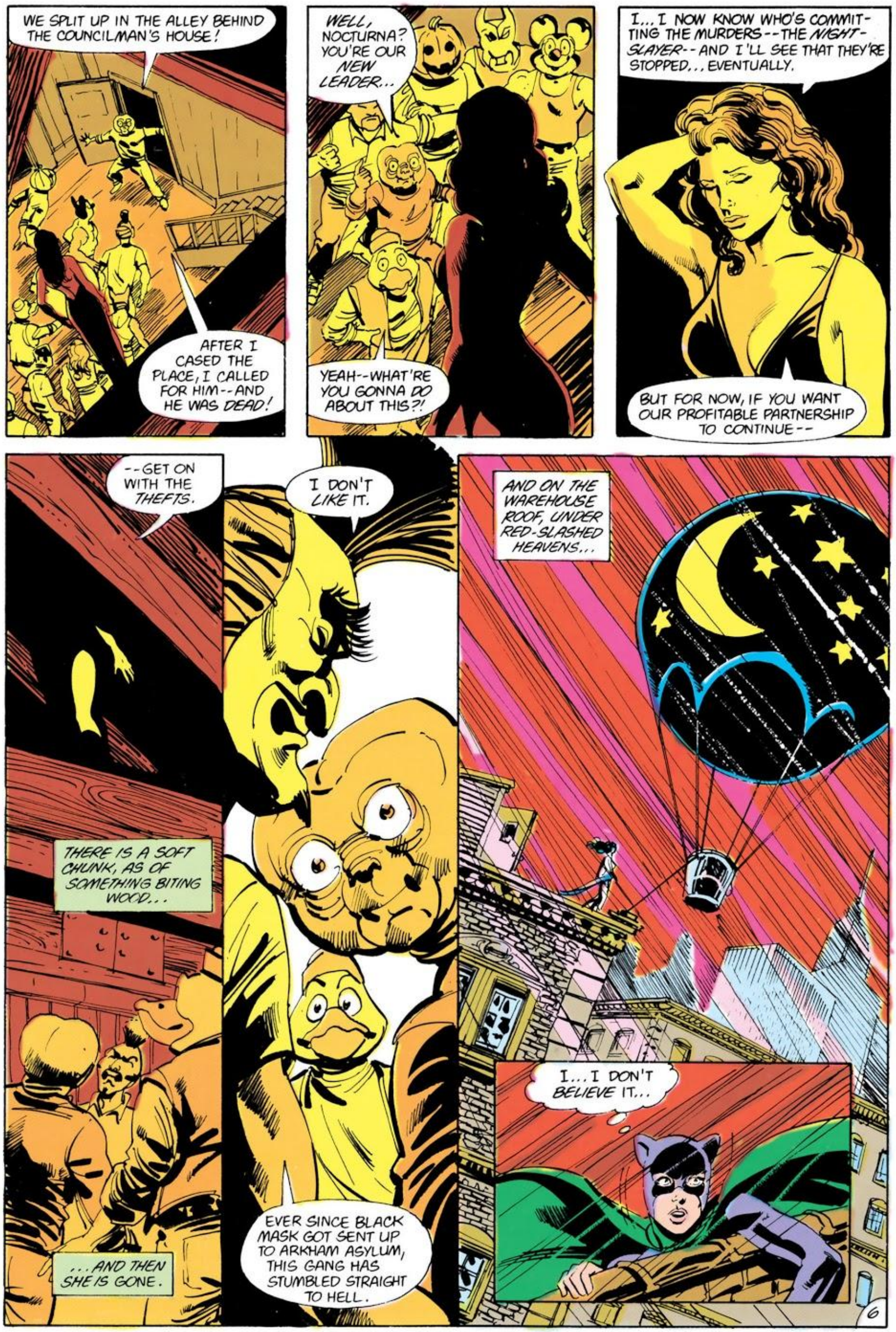
JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHERS-- KILLED BY THE SAME STILETTO-- HIS MASK "CRUCIFIED" ABOVE HIM--BRUTAL AND GHASTLY AND--
FRANKIE--?

YOU BACK HERE, FRANKIE?

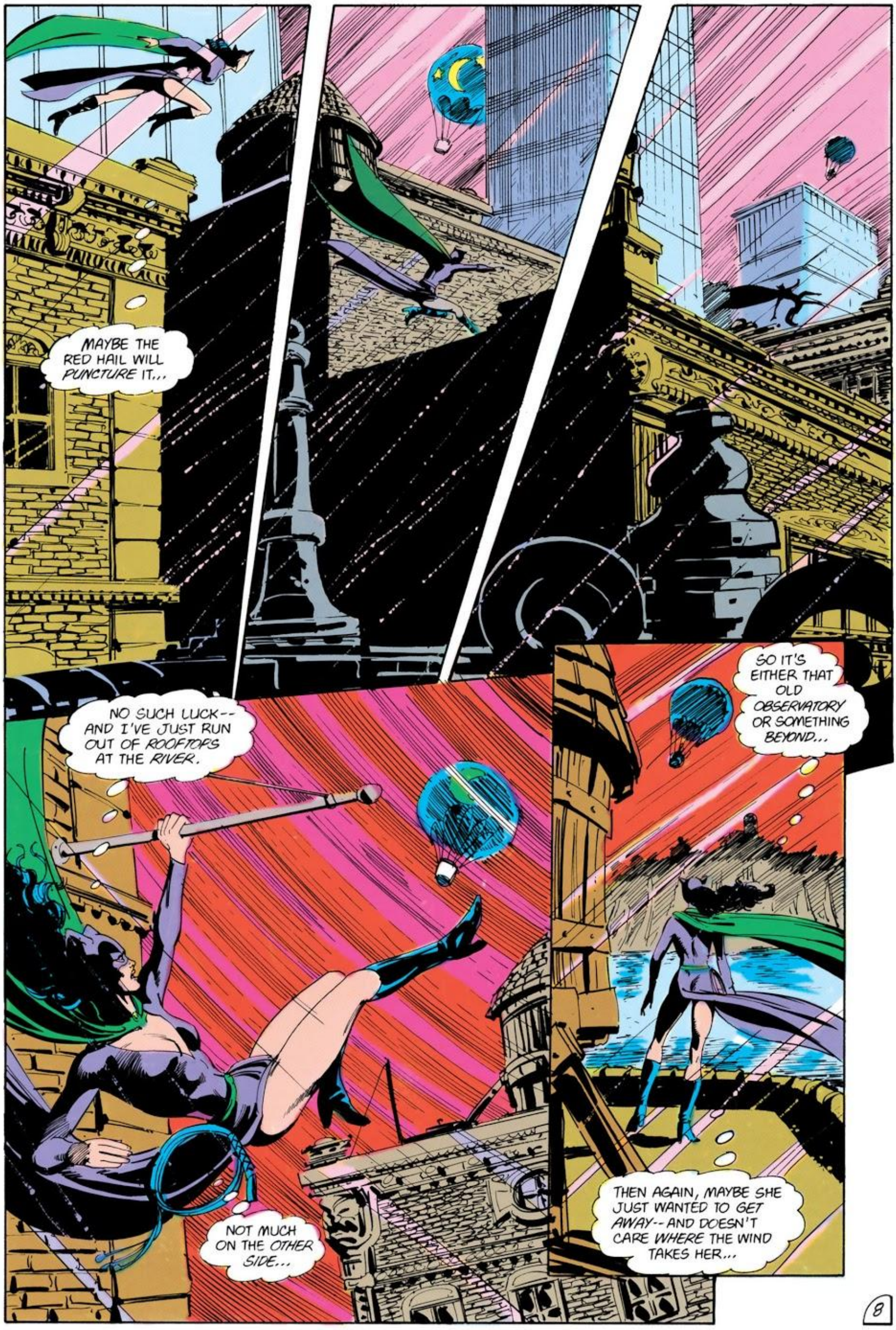
F-F-FRANKIE...!
OH, NO...
NOOOOOO
AND SINCE THE POLICE WILL NO DOUBT PIN THESE MURDERS ON ME--
--I'VE GOT TO SOLVE THEM MYSELF.
AND THIS IS MY FIRST BREAK SO FAR-- A MEMBER OF THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY WHO'S STILL ALIVE.
AND SO, MORE SILENT THAN A PANTHER'S SHADOW, SHE FOLLOWS THE PANICKED MASK THROUGH YET ANOTHER BLEEDING NIGHT...
...UNTIL--
THAT RAMSHACKLE WAREHOUSE-- IT MUST BE THEIR HIDEOUT.

--AND BEFORE I TAKE MY CUT FROM THE LAST SERIES OF THEFTS, I WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'VE DONE WELL...
...ALMOST AS WELL AS ROBIN HOOD'S BAND OF MERRY MEN.

AMONG YOUR NEXT VICTIMS WILL BE THE WATER COMMISSIONER'S NEPHEW AND--
FRANKIE! HE'S DEAD-- JUST LIKE THE OTHERS!

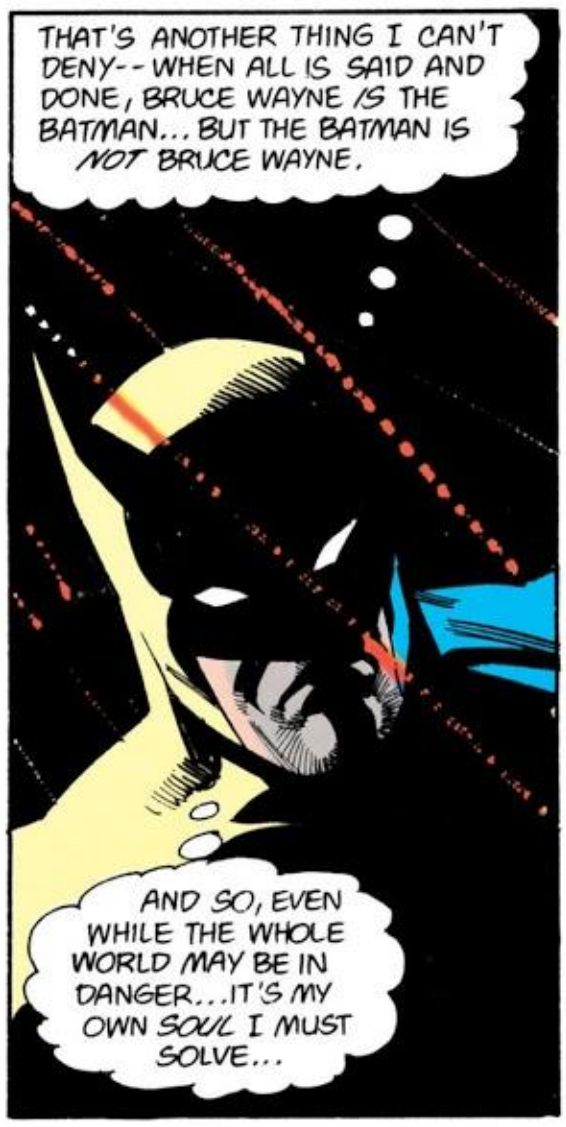

WE SPLIT UP IN THE ALLEY BEHIND THE COUNCILMAN'S HOUSE!
AFTER I CASED THE PLACE, I CALLED FOR HIM--AND HE WAS DEAD!
WELL, NOCTURNA? YOU'RE OUR NEW LEADER...
YEAH--WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT THIS?!
I... I NOW KNOW WHO'S COMMITTING THE MURDERS--THE NIGHT-SLAYER--AND I'LL SEE THAT THEY'RE STOPPED... EVENTUALLY.
BUT FOR NOW, IF YOU WANT OUR PROFITABLE PARTNERSHIP TO CONTINUE--
--GET ON WITH THE THEFTS.
THERE IS A SOFT CHUNK, AS OF SOMETHING BITING WOOD...
...AND THEN SHE IS GONE.
I DON'T LIKE IT.
EVER SINCE BLACK MASK GOT SENT UP TO ARKHAM ASYLUM, THIS GANG HAS STUMBLED STRAIGHT TO HELL.
AND ON THE WAREHOUSE ROOF, UNDER RED-SLASHED HEAVENS...
I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT...

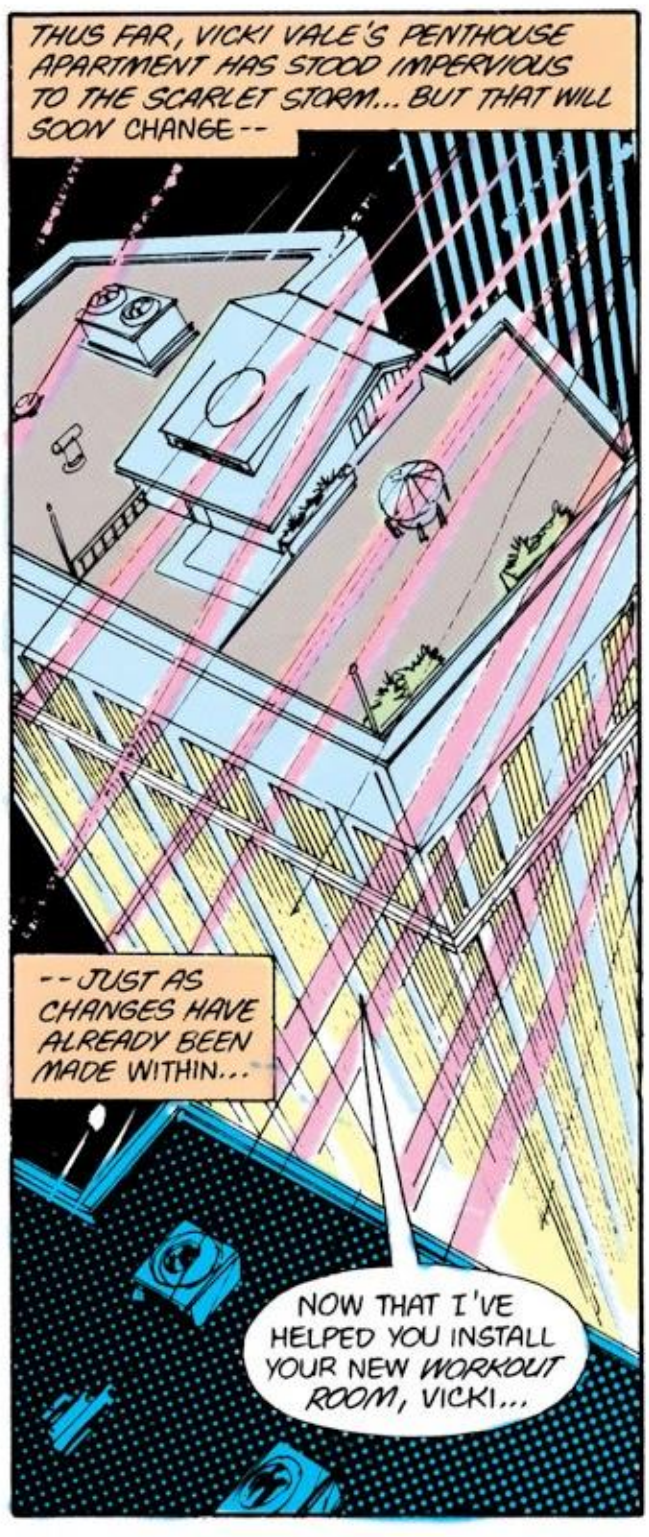
...AND SINCE I CERTAINLY CAN'T OUTRUN IT--
UHN!
NO CHOICE NOW-- GOT TO OUTRUN IT... BUT THE WIND'S SO STRONG...
...BLOWING IT SO FAST...


MAYBE THE RED HAIL WILL PUNCTURE IT...
NO SUCH LUCK-- AND I'VE JUST RUN OUT OF ROOFTOPS AT THE RIVER.
NOT MUCH ON THE OTHER SIDE...
SO IT'S EITHER THAT OLD OBSERVATORY OR SOMETHING BEYOND...
THEN AGAIN, MAYBE SHE JUST WANTED TO GET AWAY-- AND DOESN'T CARE WHERE THE WIND TAKES HER...

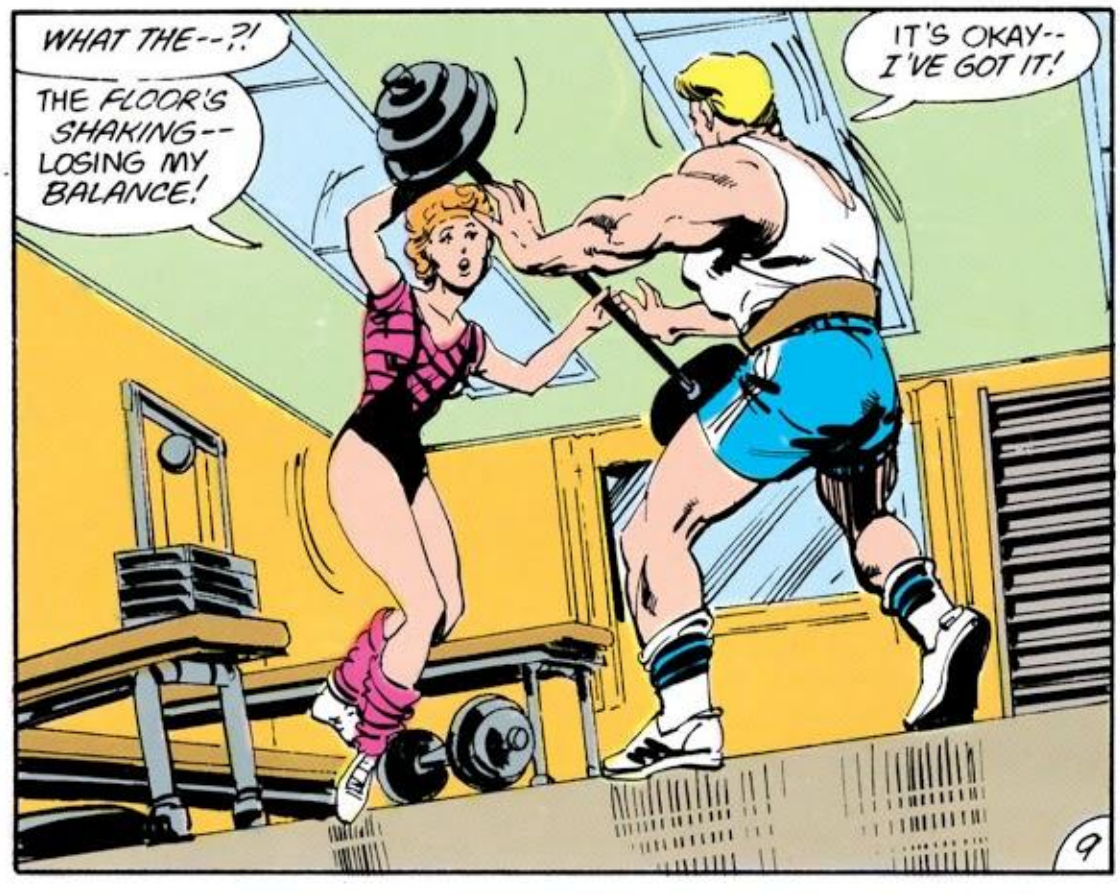
NO USE DENYING IT-- NOCTURNA'S WORDS STUNG.
BECAUSE THEY WERE TRUE? AM I BLIND TO ANY WOMAN WHO'S LESS THAN DANGEROUS?

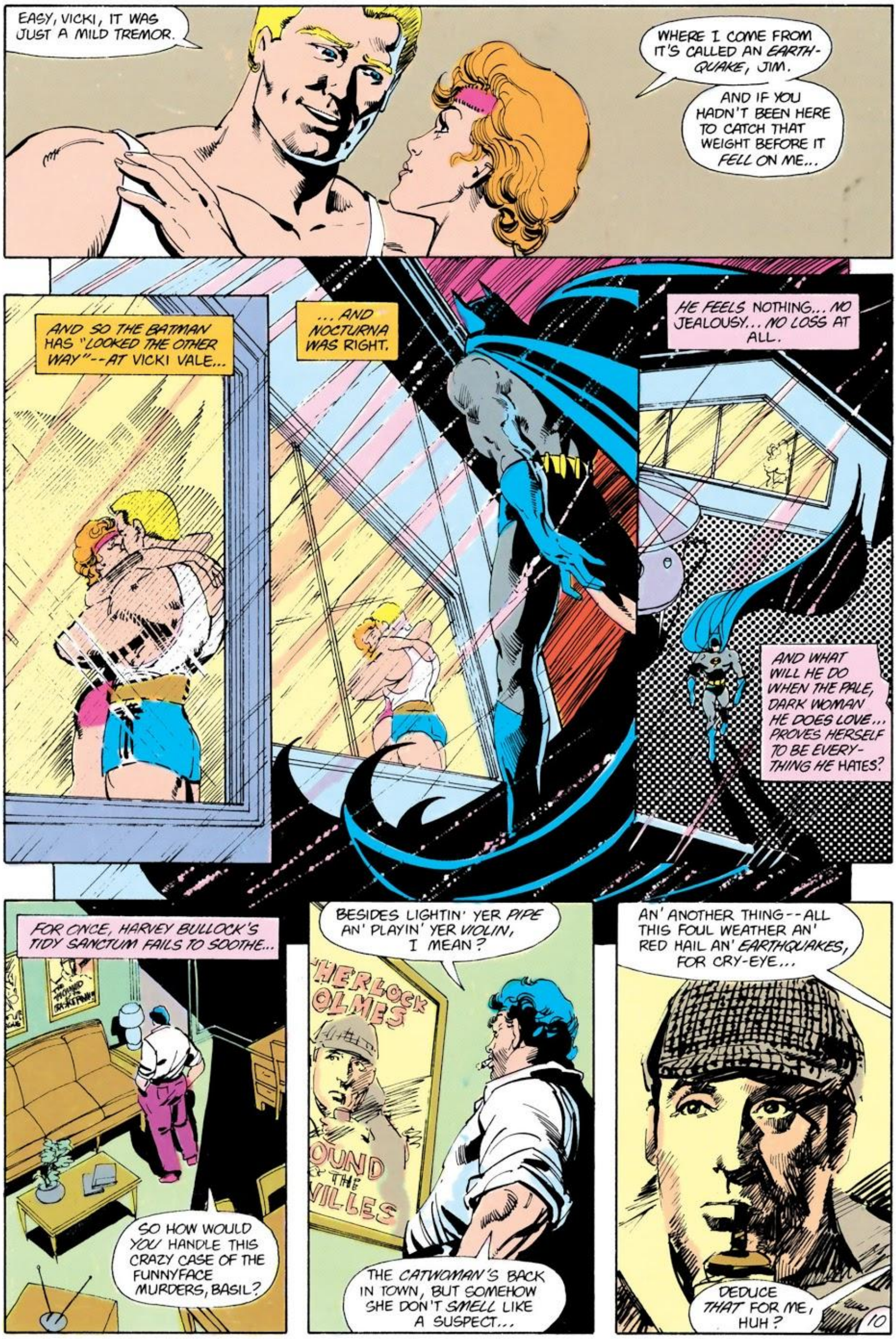
BRUCE WAYNE HAS FEELINGS FOR NORMAL WOMEN--FOR VICKI VALE AND JULIA...
AND YET, AS SOON AS I ASSUME THIS CLOAK AND COWL...


THAT'S ANOTHER THING I CAN'T DENY--WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, BRUCE WAYNE IS THE BATMAN... BUT THE BATMAN IS NOT BRUCE WAYNE.
AND SO, EVEN WHILE THE WHOLE WORLD MAY BE IN DANGER...IT'S MY OWN SOUL I MUST SOLVE...


THUS FAR, VICKI VALE'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT HAS STOOD IMPERVIOUS TO THE SCARLET STORM... BUT THAT WILL SOON CHANGE--
--JUST AS CHANGES HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE WITHIN...
NOW THAT I'VE HELPED YOU INSTALL YOUR NEW WORKOUT ROOM, VICKI...

...IT'S TIME TO BAPTIZE IT-- IN SWEAT.
YOU'RE A HARD TASKMASTER, JIM TRAYNOR, AND IF YOU WEREN'T SUCH A HUNK--


WHAT THE--?!
THE FLOOR'S SHAKING-- LOSING MY BALANCE!
IT'S OKAY-- I'VE GOT IT!


EASY, VICKI, IT WAS JUST A MILD TREMOR.
WHERE I COME FROM IT'S CALLED AN EARTH-QUAKE, JIM.
AND IF YOU HADN'T BEEN HERE TO CATCH THAT WEIGHT BEFORE IT FELL ON ME...
AND SO THE BATMAN HAS "LOOKED THE OTHER WAY"--AT VICKI VALE...
... AND NOCTURNA WAS RIGHT.
HE FEELS NOTHING... NO JEALOUSY... NO LOSS AT ALL.
AND WHAT WILL HE DO WHEN THE PALE, DARK WOMAN HE DOES LOVE... PROVES HERSELF TO BE EVERY-THING HE HATES?
FOR ONCE, HARVEY BULLOCK'S TIDY SANCTUM FAILS TO SOOTHE...
SO HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE THIS CRAZY CASE OF THE FUNNYFACE MURDERS, BASIL?
BESIDES LIGHTIN' YER PIPE AN' PLAYIN' YER VIOLIN, I MEAN?
THE CATWOMAN'S BACK IN TOWN, BUT SOMEHOW SHE DON'T SMELL LIKE A SUSPECT...
AN' ANOTHER THING--ALL THIS FOUL WEATHER AN' RED HAIL AN' EARTHQUAKES, FOR CRY-EYE...
DEDUCE THAT FOR ME, HUH?

TOK
TOK
TOK
AND THUS IS THE SANCTUM'S PRIVACY INVADED...
TIME AGAIN TO BECOME THE GRUFF, CLUMSY COP.

LOSE YOUR MARBLES, BULLOCK? THERE'S A LOT OF RED ONES BOUNCIN' AROUND RIGHT OUTSIDE...
WELL, WELL, WHAT BRINGS THE BOY WONDER TO THE WRONG SIDE O' THE TRACKS?
JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW YOUR OTHER HALF LIVES...

IN FANTASIES, LOOKS LIKE.
PLIP
CAREFUL-- SINCE IT'S FROM YOUR BRAIN, IT'S BOUND TO MELT.

SO THE WHOLE BULL-IN-A-CHINA-SHOP ROUTINE IS NOTHING BUT YOUR IDEA OF A SILVER SCREEN COP?
MAYBE... OR MAYBE THAT'S THE WAY I REALLY AM--

--AND I'M JUST MORE CAREFUL AT HOME WHERE IT'S QUIET--UNTIL JOKERS LIKE YOU BANG ON MY DOOR.
BUT EVEN IF IT IS AN ACT, KID, IT'S ONE I CAN'T CONTROL-- AND IT DOES COME IN HANDY AT TIMES.
NOW WHADDAYA WANT? I'M LATE FOR A DOUBLE FEATURE AT THE REGENCY.

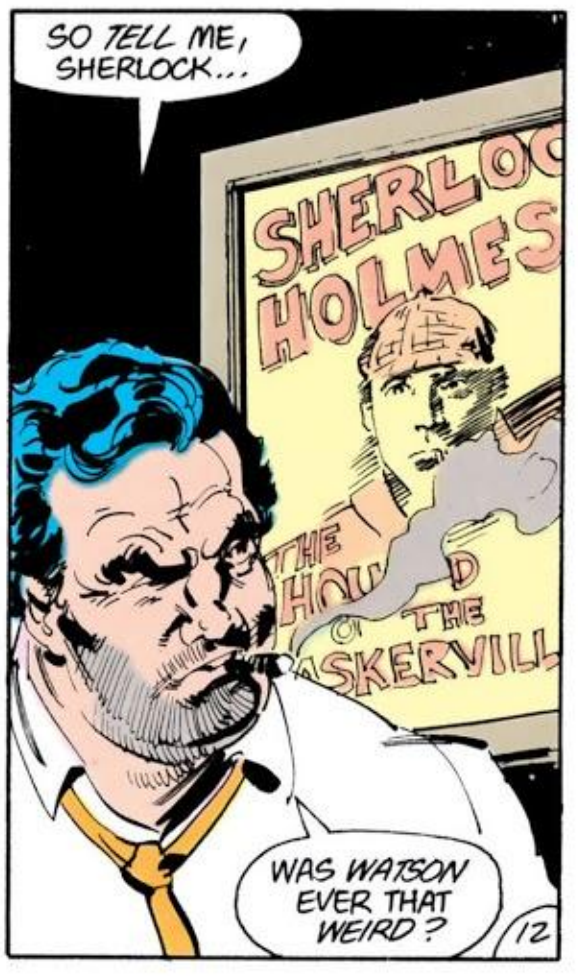
JUST WANTED TO DROP OFF A TIP, BULLOCK, ABOUT THE MURDERS OF THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY--IT AIN'T NOCTURNA AND IT AIN'T THE CATWOMAN EITHER.
IT'S NIGHT-SLAYER.
AIN'T THIS A KICK--THE BATMAN AN' HIS PINT-SIZED SIDEKICK FINALLY BOP INTO A GEEK THEY CAN'T HANDLE ON THEIR OWN?

NIGHT-SLAYER WANTS TO KILL NOCTURNA, BULLOCK.

I SEE. AND YOU DON'T WANNA TAKE ANY CHANCES --YOU WANT ALL THE HELP YOU CAN GET...
...CUZ OF THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT NOCTURNA.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT, YEAH.

CUZ MAYBE NOCTURNA'S REALLY... YOUR MOTHER?
AND MAYBE SHE'S NOT... BUT EVEN IF SHE IS...
...IT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T CONTROL...

...AND SHE DOES COME IN HANDY AT TIMES.


SO TELL ME, SHERLOCK...
WAS WATSON EVER THAT WEIRD?

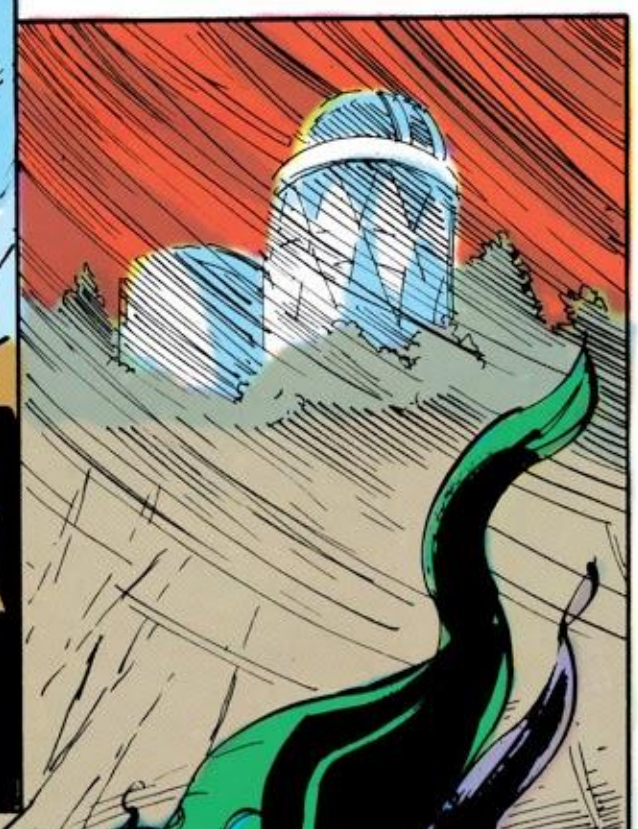
WAYNE MANOR:
I'M NOT AFRAID THERE'S ANOTHER WOMAN, FATHER.
I KNOW HE'S NOT WITH VICKI--SHE'S GOT SOMEONE NEW, THAT MUSCLEMAN... AND BESIDES, JEALOUSY ISN'T THE ISSUE.

HE'S NEVER HERE AT NIGHT WHEN I VISIT, YET WHEN I DO SEE HIM, HE SEEMS TO LIKE ME, BUT...
JULIA...

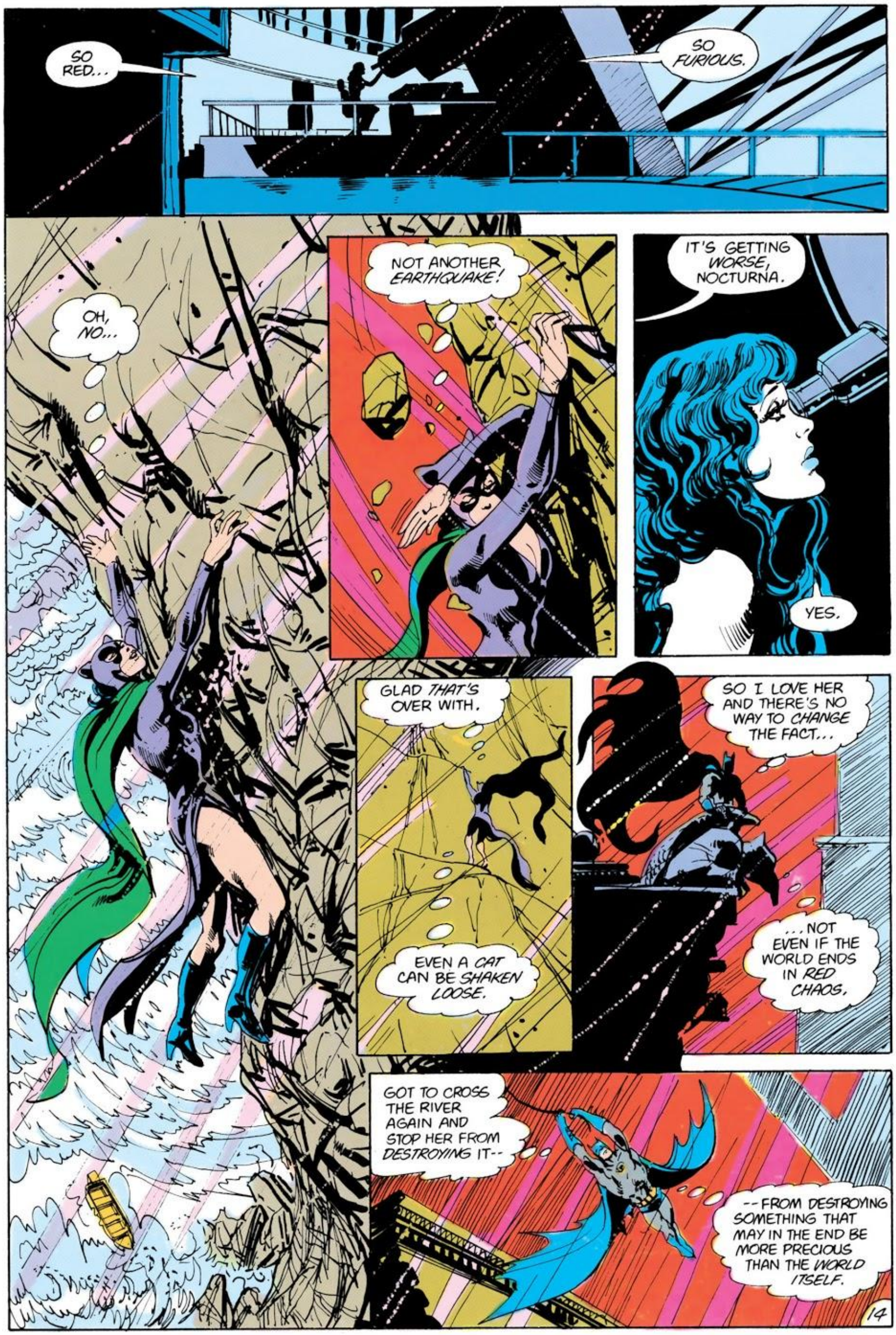
NO, FATHER--THERE'S SOMETHING VAGUE AND MYSTERIOUS ABOUT HIM, SOMETHING I'LL NEVER KNOW, NEVER GET CLOSE TO...
LET'S FACE IT--WE'RE BOTH WASTING OUR TIME.

BRUCE WAYNE DOESN'T LOVE ME, AND I'M BEGINNING TO THINK HE NEVER WILL.

SPLOSH



AFTER THAT EPIC CROSSING OF A RAGING RIVER READY TO FLOOD, LET'S HOPE IT'S NOTHING BEYOND THIS OBSERVATORY...
AND AS FOR HER DESTINATION BEING THE WHIM OF THIS WIND, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT.


SO RED...
SO FURIOUS.
OH, NO...
NOT ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE!
IT'S GETTING WORSE, NOCTURNA.
YES.
GLAD THAT'S OVER WITH.
EVEN A CAT CAN BE SHAKEN LOOSE.
SO I LOVE HER AND THERE'S NO WAY TO CHANGE THE FACT...
...NOT EVEN IF THE WORLD ENDS IN RED CHAOS.
GOT TO CROSS THE RIVER AGAIN AND STOP HER FROM DESTROYING IT--
--FROM DESTROYING SOMETHING THAT MAY IN THE END BE MORE PRECIOUS THAN THE WORLD ITSELF.

WHEW!
SURE DIDN'T LOOK THIS HIGH FROM THE BOTTOM.

AHA!
BUT IT WAS WORTH IT AFTER ALL...

NO NEED FOR SUCH STEALTHY PADDING, CATWOMAN.
I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
WH--?

BACK OFF, CATWOMAN!
SHE'S NOT THE ONE YOU WANT.
ROBIN--?!
IF YOU DON'T MIND, I HAVE WORK I MUST CONTINUE.

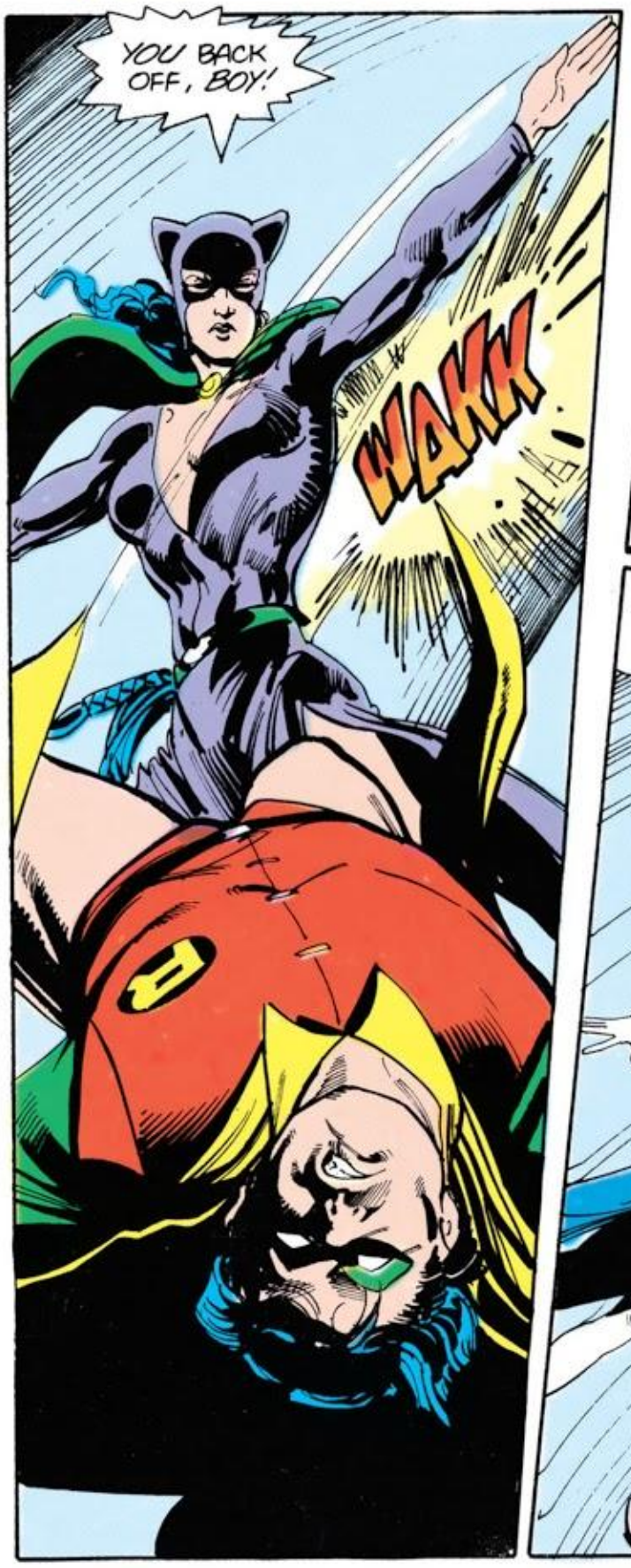
I NEVER SAID SHE WAS THE ONE I WANTED, ROBIN, BUT SHE IS THE KEY TO THIS WHOLE MESS... AND WHEN THE POLICE TRY TO LOCK ME UP, I'LL NEED A KEY.
OVER MY TORN CAPE, LADY!

IT'S NIGHT-SLAYER YOU WANT, NOT HER.
NIGHT-SLAYER... AND HE'S KILLING ALL THOSE MASKED THUGS...TO GET AT HER?
EXACTLY.

THEN I'M SORRY, BUT I DO WANT HER-- BECAUSE SHE'S THE ONLY THING THAT'LL STOP HIM FROM KILLING MORE.
YOU'RE NOT USING HER AS BAIT, CATWOMAN.
I WON'T LET YOU.

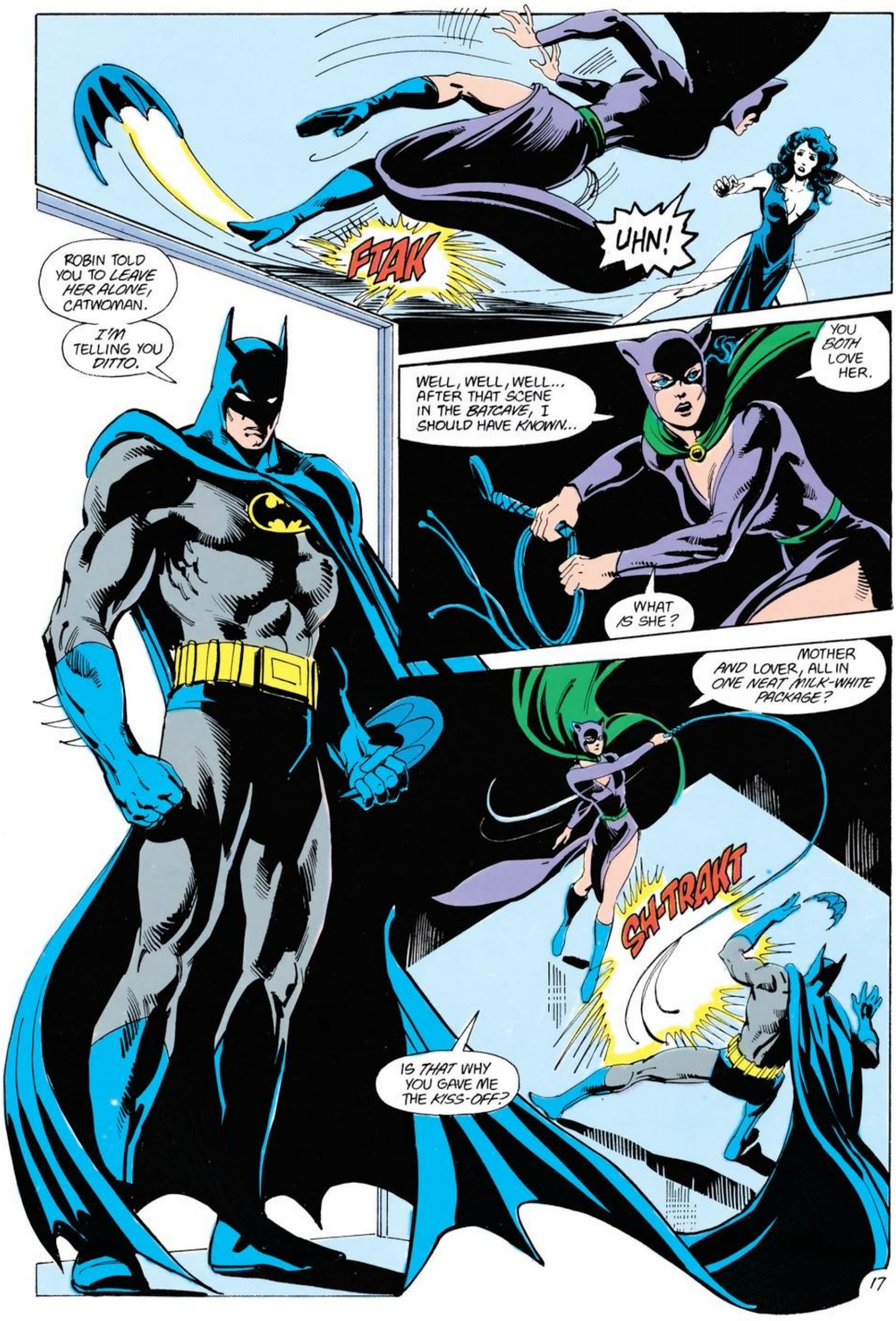
IT'S MY LIFE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, ROBIN--MY NAME.
IN THE EYES OF THE POLICE, ONCE A CROOK, ALWAYS A CROOK. THEY DON'T CARE THAT I'VE CHANGED.

ALL THEY KNOW IS THAT MURDERS WERE COMMITTED SHORTLY AFTER I RETURNED TO GOTHAM.
I WARNED YOU TO BACK OFF, LADY, AND I--


YOU BACK OFF, BOY!
WAKK

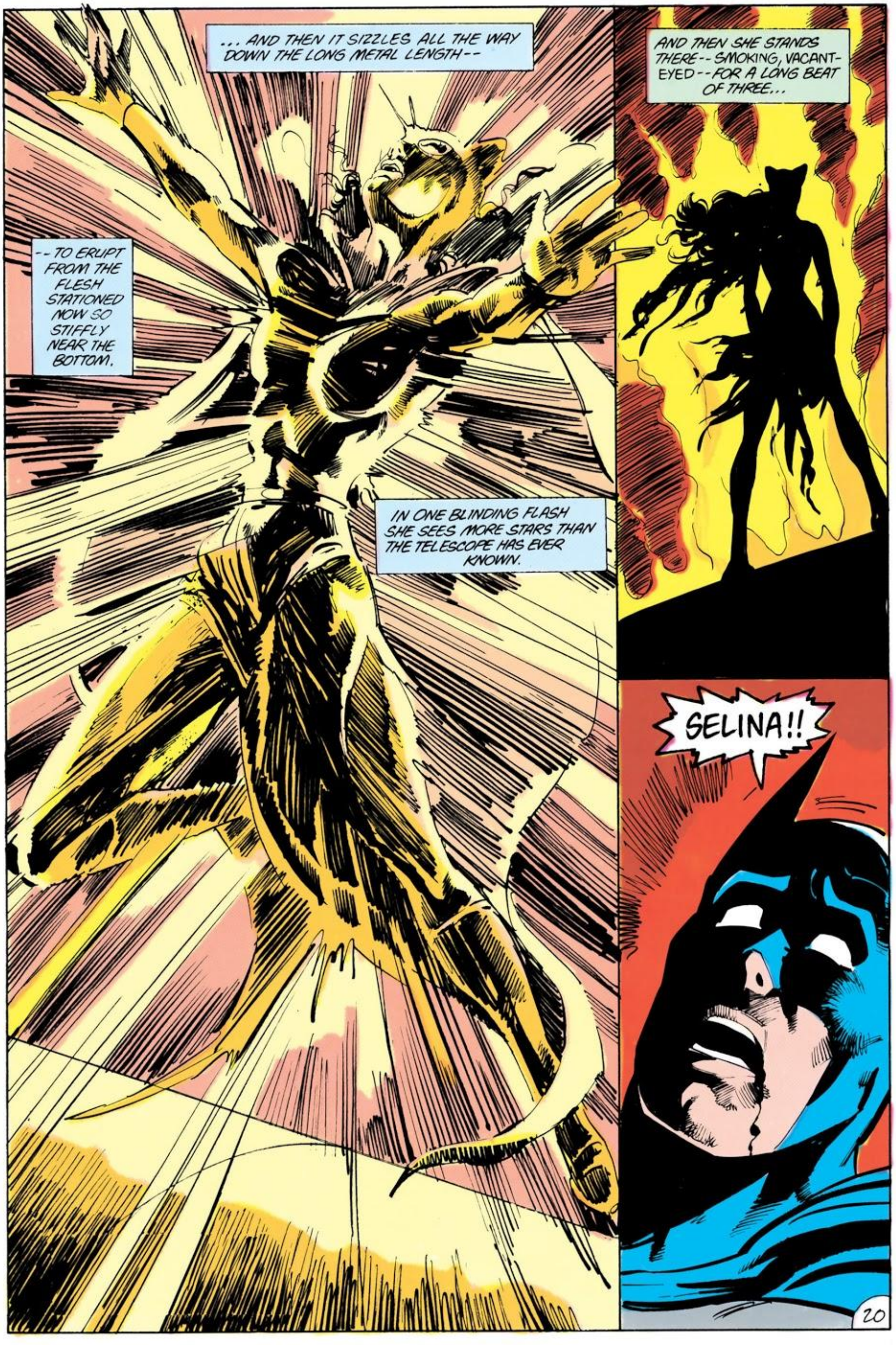
ROBIN!!
YOU DARE STRIKE HIM, CATWOMAN?!
PALEFACE-HONEY...

...I DARE A LOT MORE THAN THAT!
OHHH...


FTAK
UHN!
ROBIN TOLD YOU TO LEAVE HER ALONE, CATWOMAN.
I'M TELLING YOU DITTO.
WELL, WELL, WELL... AFTER THAT SCENE IN THE BATCAVE, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN...
YOU BOTH LOVE HER.
WHAT IS SHE?
MOTHER AND LOVER, ALL IN ONE NEAT MILK-WHITE PACKAGE?
SH-TRAKT
IS THAT WHY YOU GAVE ME THE KISS-OFF?

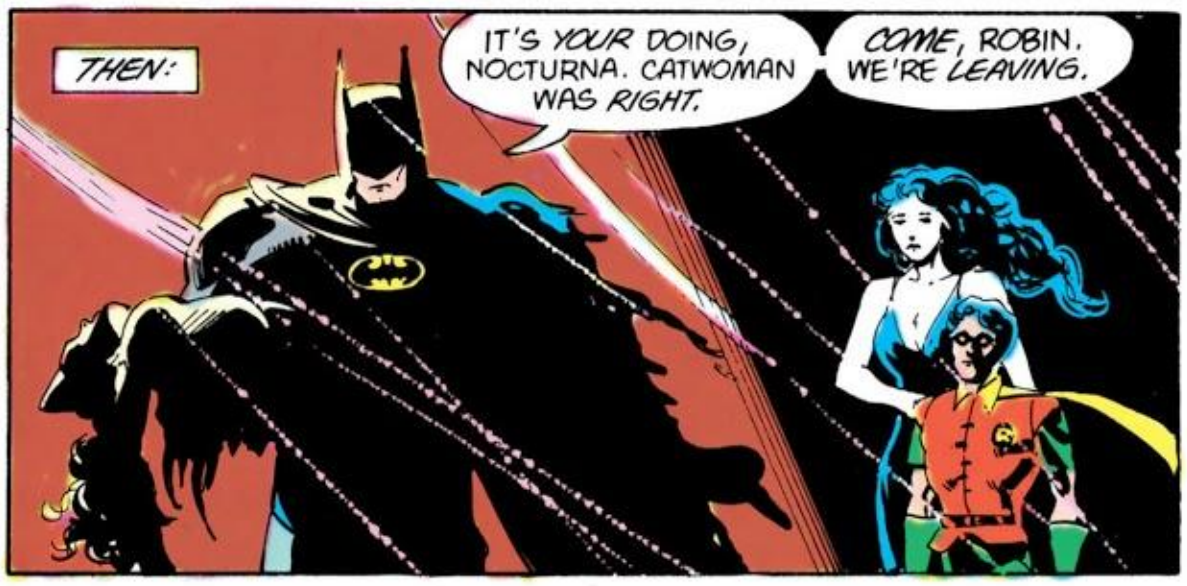
BECAUSE I COULD NEVER OFFER THE MOTHER PART OF IT?
STOP IT, CATWOMAN!
ROBIN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
DON'T BE INSANE, SELINA!
HWOKK
NOW I'M INSANE, AM I?
BECAUSE MY FREEDOM IS GETTING IN THE WAY OF YOUR ROMANCE?
PLEASE, CATWOMAN-- DON'T LET IT COME TO THIS!
WAPP
WE ONCE LOVED EACH OTHER!

LOVE, BATMAN?!
WE WERE TWO ANIMALS IN THE NIGHT--NOTHING MORE!
NEVER ANYTHING MORE!!
SHRIIIPT
NO, SELINA--THAT'S NOT TRUE AND YOU KNOW IT!
THERE WAS MORE--A LOT MORE--AND FOR ITS SAKE, I'M BEGGING YOU TO STOP!
FORGET ABOUT OUR LOVE, BATMAN! IT'S OVER--FINISHED!
BUT AS LONG AS THAT WOMAN IS THE BEST CHANCE FOR CLEARING MY NAME AND STOPPING A MURDERER, I'M TAKING HER!
AND NO ONE'S GOING TO STOP ME! NOT EVEN YOU, BATMAN, NOT EVEN--
SHRAAK
BUT SOMETHING DOES STOP HER: RED, RAW LIGHTNING.
IT HITS THE TOP OF THE TELESCOPE AN INSTANT BEFORE ITS OWN TERRIBLE SOUND...


... AND THEN IT SIZZLES ALL THE WAY DOWN THE LONG METAL LENGTH--
--TO ERUPT FROM THE FLESH STATIONED NOW SO STIFFLY NEAR THE BOTTOM.
IN ONE BLINDING FLASH SHE SEES MORE STARS THAN THE TELESCOPE HAS EVER KNOWN.
AND THEN SHE STANDS THERE--SMOKING, VACANT-EYED--FOR A LONG BEAT OF THREE...
SELINA!!

...BEFORE PLUMMETING, HER FLESH AND COSTUME BLACKENED, HER NAME AND CONSCIENCE CLEAR.

OH...MY... GOD...
C-CATWOMAN...
THE BATMAN IS SILENT AND UNMOVING FOR A FULL MINUTE AFTER CATCHING THE BODY.


THEN:
IT'S YOUR DOING, NOCTURNA. CATWOMAN WAS RIGHT.
COME, ROBIN. WE'RE LEAVING.

HE... HE DIDN'T MEAN IT, NOCTURNA. HE'S JUST--
I KNOW, ROBIN. BUT GO WITH HIM-- HE NEEDS YOU.

WAIT UP, BATMAN!
MAYBE SHE'S NOT--

BBBRUMMMMMM
ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE! A BIG ONE!!

WHY DID HE NOT REALIZE HOW MUCH HE CARED FOR CATWOMAN, FOR SELINA KYLE? HOW COULD HE FORGET HER SO QUICKLY?

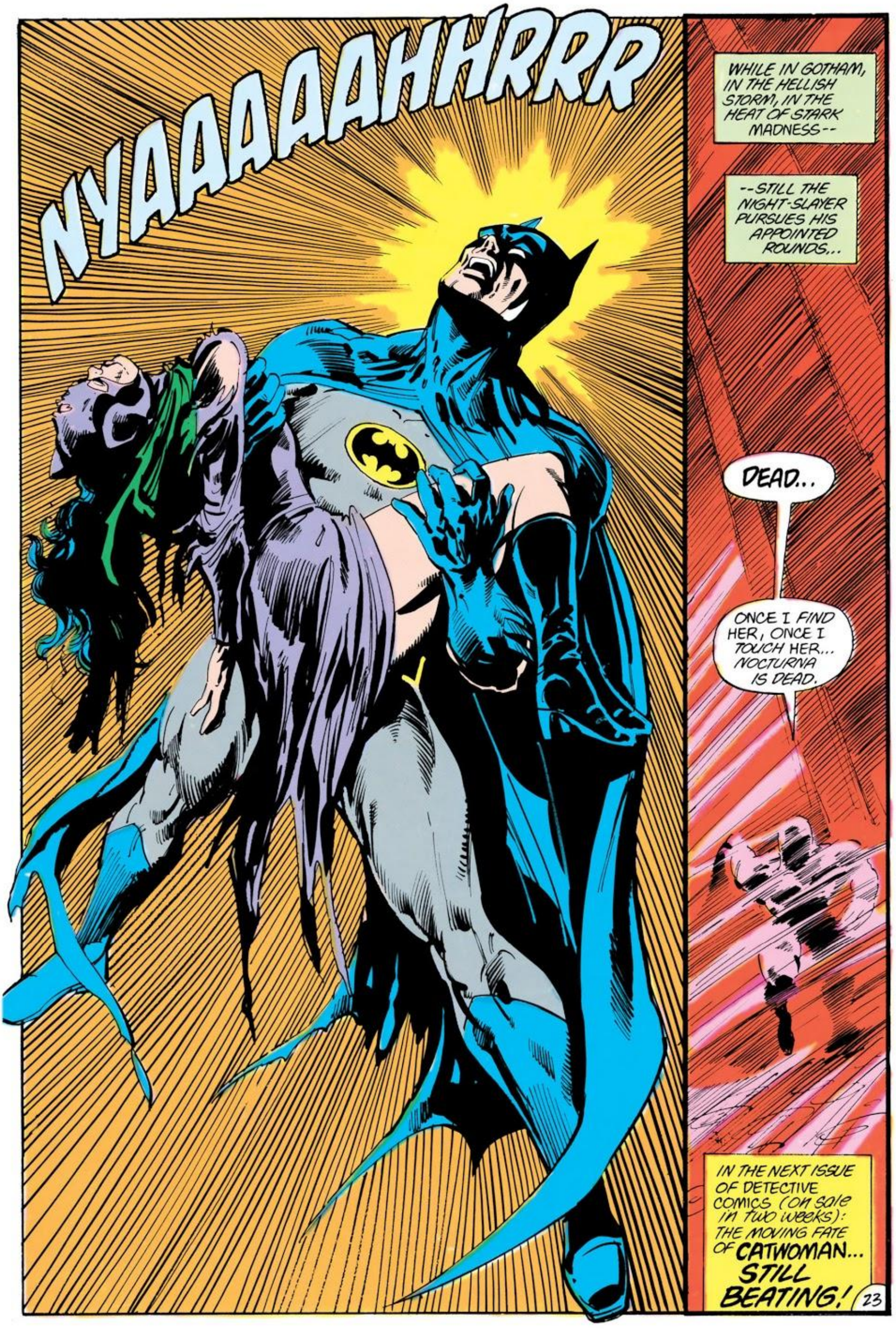
IS IT BECAUSE... SHE CHANGED?

BECAUSE SHE WAS NO LONGER DARK AND DANGEROUS?

BECAUSE, GOD HELP HIM... SHE REFORMED?

BECAUSE SHE ACTUALLY DID WHAT HE HAS TRIED TO CONVINCE NOCTURNA TO DO?

NO...OH, GOD, NO...


NYAAAAAHHRRR
WHILE IN GOTHAM, IN THE HELLISH STORM, IN THE HEAT OF STARK MADNESS--
--STILL THE NIGHT-SLAYER PURSUES HIS APPOINTED ROUNDS...
DEAD...
ONCE I FIND HER, ONCE I TOUCH HER... NOCTURNA IS DEAD.
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE COMICS (ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS): THE MOVING FATE OF CATWOMAN... STILL BEATING!

OK C.O.M.P.U.T.O.
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