



KNIGHTSEND
PART ONE



BATMAN
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BY THE
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BATMAN®



HONORABLE
KELLEY
JONES AND
MOST HIGH
JOHN BEATTY

MOENCH
MANLEY
GIORDANO

**KnightsEnd
Part 1**

SPIRIT of the BAT

YOUR SCENT, SWEET JASMINE-- YOUR EYES, COLD STONE. YOU ARE LADY SHIVA... WHOSE LIFE IS LIVED ONLY FOR VIOLENCE.

MY LIFE IS LIVED FOR SKILL.

YOU SLEEP LITTLE, AND YOU WAKE UP CRAVING BLOOD.

I CRAVE CHALLENGE.

YOU ARE A VAMPIRE, PERVERTING A GIFT WHICH COULD MAKE YOU IMMORTAL.

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BATMAN created by Bob Kane

I CARE NOTHING
FOR WHAT HAPPENS
OR HOW I AM
REMEMBERED AFTER
DEATH.

THERE ARE SEVEN
MASTERS WHO WERE
ONCE PUPILS.

SHOULD
MY ATTENDANT
WITNESS MY
DEFEAT, SHE WILL
GO TO THE
SEVEN.

TO
PROVE MYSELF
THE BEST IN
LIFE--THAT IS
MY PASSION.

AND
YOU HAVE
CHOSEN ME
AS THE
NEXT
PROOF.

THE
TEST
ITSELF
IS NOT
ENOUGH?

I
WANT A
WITNESS

ONE
BY ONE, THEY
WILL COME
AFTER YOU--FOR
VENGEANCE.

CALL YOUR
ATTENDANT.

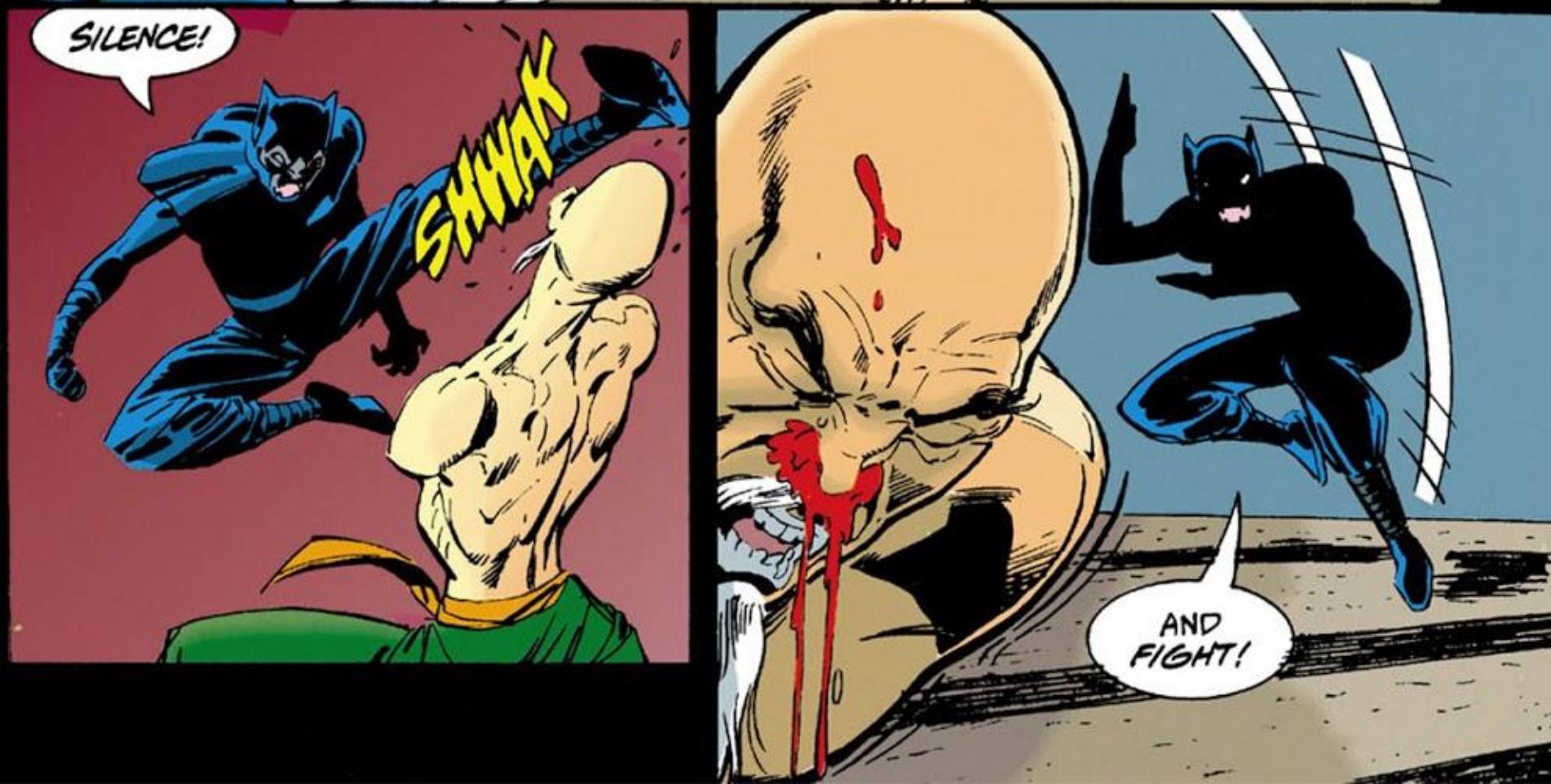
THEN
YOU CRAVE
EIGHT PROOFS...AND
YET, WHAT PURPOSE
CAN BE SERVED BY THE
SEVEN FOLLOWING ME--
WHEN ALL SEVEN
LEARNED AT
MY FEET?

CALL
HER.

SONG
LI!

KLAP











FOR ME IT ALL STARTED
WEEKS AGO...

ONLY MILES FROM
GOTHAM, BUT IT
MIGHT AS WELL BE
CHINA.

UNTIL I FOUND HER
THROUGH THE COMPUTER
LAST NIGHT, I NEVER
SUSPECTED SHIVA HAD
THIS PLACE...

I WAS AFRAID I MIGHT
HAVE TO GO TO THE REAL
CHINA...OR JAPAN...OR INDIA...

WHAT'S KEEPING HER?
SHE'S LATE...

...AND SHE SAID MY
FIELD TRAINING WOULD
BEGIN TONIGHT.

MAYBE I WAS
WRONG TO COME
TO HER.

SHE'S RUTHLESS...AND
SHE KILLS WITHOUT
REMORSE...SHE MAY
WELL BE THE BEST
FIGHTER ALIVE, MASTER
OF AT LEAST A DOZEN
FORMS AND WEAPONS...

AFTER ALL, WHAT DO I
REALLY KNOW ABOUT
LADY SHIVA?

...AND HONOR IS
SACRED TO HER.

A PARADOX--BUT GIVEN THE LAST, COMING HERE SEEMED A GOOD CHOICE.

BESIDES, WHO ELSE COULD I GO TO? WHO ELSE COULD PREPARE ME...

...FOR HELL?

SHIVA.

YOU...
BUT NOT IN YOUR TRUE GUISE...

IT IS NO LONGER MINE. IT HAS BEEN USURPED... ALTERED...

PERVERTED.

AND NOW YOU WANT IT BACK.

I WANT TO REDEEM IT.

BUT YOU ARE NOT READY.

TRAIN ME, SHIVA--TEST ME.

WHY SHOULD I?

FOR THE ONLY REASON YOU DO ANYTHING,

IT MIGHT PROVE... INTERESTING.

AS YOU STAND, YOU ARE NOT WORTHY OF ME,

NOT NOW...NOT YET...BUT ONCE I WAS.

BRING ME BACK.

AND SO BEGAN WEEKS OF PAIN, ALWAYS FLOWING ONE WAY--FROM HER TO ME.

SHE HURT ME AGAIN AND AGAIN, NEVER UTTERING A SINGLE WORD.

SHIVA DELIVERED IT IN A DOZEN FORMS AND A HUNDRED TECHNIQUES, SOME BAFFLING, ALL SILENT.

WHEN NECESSARY, SHE HEALED ME, TOO, IN THE SAME SILENCE.

TWO WEEKS INTO IT, I COULD FINALLY SEE THE BLOWS COMING, AND THEN EVEN SENSE THEM.

THE RESULT, HOWEVER, WAS ONLY MILDLY BLUNTED.

BUT THEN, JUST YESTERDAY, SOMETHING SNAPPED WITHIN ME...

...AND FROM IT, SOMETHING FLOWED OUTWARD...

...SPEED...

...STRENGTH...

...AND PRECISION, ALL PERFECTLY CENTERED.



IT WAS SHIVA'S FIRST AND ONLY PAIN--THE MOMENT IN WHICH I REGAINED MY CAPACITY FOR VIOLENCE.

AND IN THE WAKE OF THAT MOMENT, HOLDING THE PAIN TO HER HEART AS IF IT WERE SOMETHING PRECIOUS, SHE FINALLY SPOKE--IN SAVAGE JOY.

EXCELLENT.

YOU ARE NOW READY TO LEARN.



YOU REMEMBERED WHAT YOU ALREADY KNEW-- EARNING THE RIGHT TO MOVE ON.

IT IS CALLED THE LEOPARD BLOW, AND ITS MASTERY CAUSES DEATH WITH A SINGLE STRIKE

THEN IT IS A LESSON, LADY SHIVA...

...WHICH IS BEST NOT TAUGHT.



YOU WERE NEVER WORTHY OF ME. YOU REFUSE TO KILL.



ALWAYS... AND THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE.

THEN COMING TO ME WAS AN INSULT.

WERE YOU WORTHY OF MY EFFORT, I WOULD KILL YOU.

YES.



PERHAPS I CAN DEVISE... ANOTHER WAY.

WAIT.

MANY WAYS.

MEET ME BACK HERE IN TWO NIGHTS.



SO HERE I AM.
AND WHATEVER SHE
PLANNED TO DEVISE,
SHE SAID IT WOULD
BEGIN TONIGHT...
SO WHERE IS--

HERE.

AS SILENT AS A
SLEEPING BREATH...

...BUT I
SHOULD HAVE
SENSED
HER.

I'VE LOST
EVERY EDGE.

TAKE
IT.

THE... MASK OF
TENGU... SYMBOLIC
OF THE BAT
SPIRIT...

IF YOU
ARE NOT YET
READY TO WEAR
YOUR TRUE
MASK... THEN AT
LEAST ASSUME
YOUR TOTEM.

AND THE
FIELD
TRAINING?

...WHEN
YOU
DON THE
MASK...

WITH
ACCEPTANCE
OF THE MASK,
IT BEGINS
TOMORROW
NIGHT...

...AT THIS
ADDRESS.

YOUR
MASTER
IS
DEAD...

...HIS
HEART PIERCED
BY HIS OWN
BREAKING
RIBS.

WHO?

THE
ASSASSIN
WOKE A MASK-
OF THE
BAT-SPIRIT
TENGU.

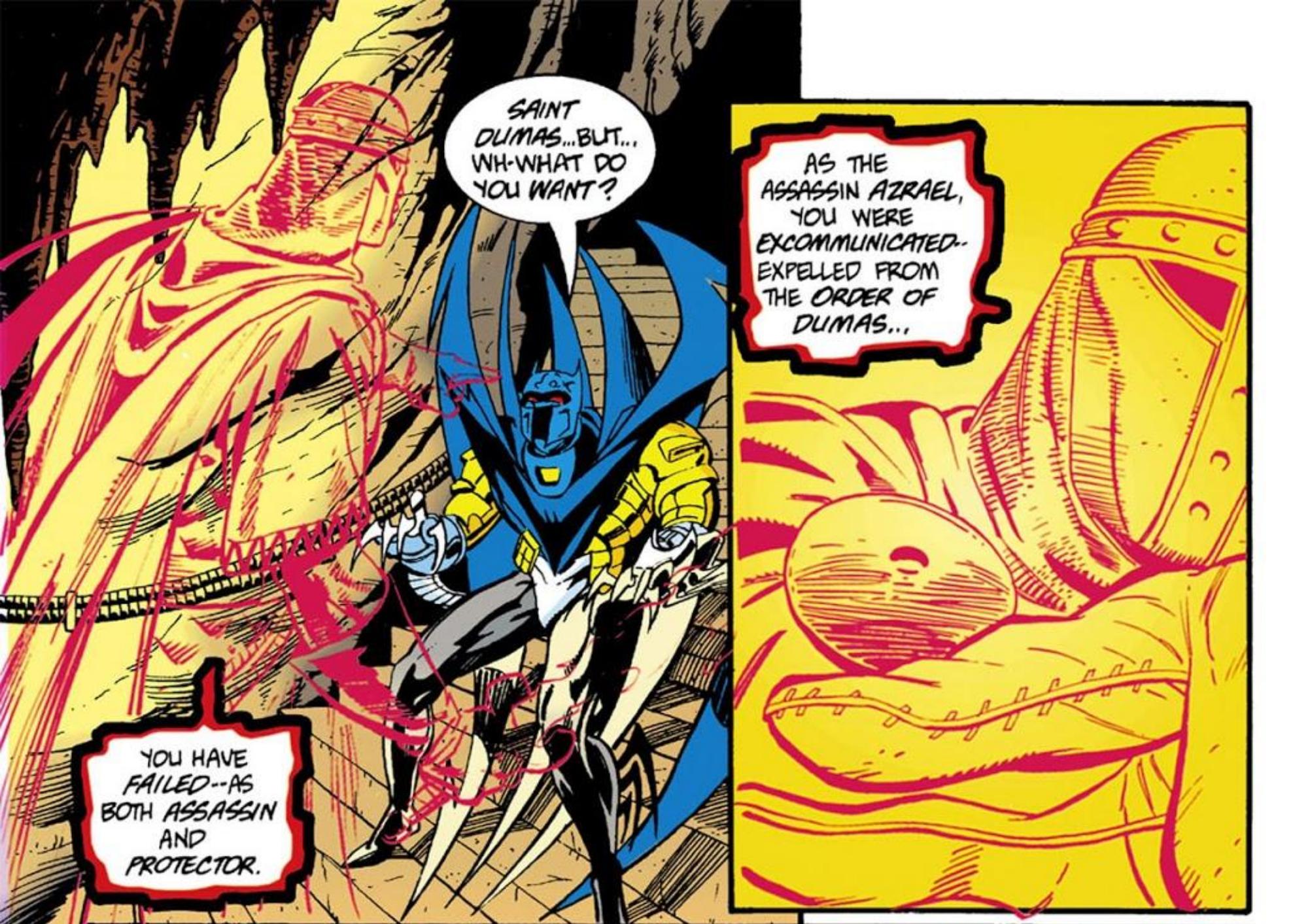
THEN THE MASK
WILL BE SHATTERED...
AND OUR MASTER
AVENGED.

GUN-RUNNING
SCUM.

JEAN PAUL VALLEY-
YOU HAVE PROFANED
TWO MASKS!

THEY'RE
DEAD.

EH?



YOU HAVE FAILED--AS BOTH ASSASSIN AND PROTECTOR.

SAINt DUMAS...BUT... WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?

AS THE ASSASSIN AZRAEL, YOU WERE EXCOMMUNICATED--EXPelled FROM THE ORDER OF DUMAS...



YOU TRIED TO FLEE INTO YOUR NEW IDENTITY OF PROTECTOR--THOUGHT YOU COULD HIDE BEHIND A NEW MASK...

-BUT NOW YOU FAIL IN THIS, TOO!



NEITHER ASSASSIN NOR PROTECTOR, YOU ARE NOTHING!

N-NO...

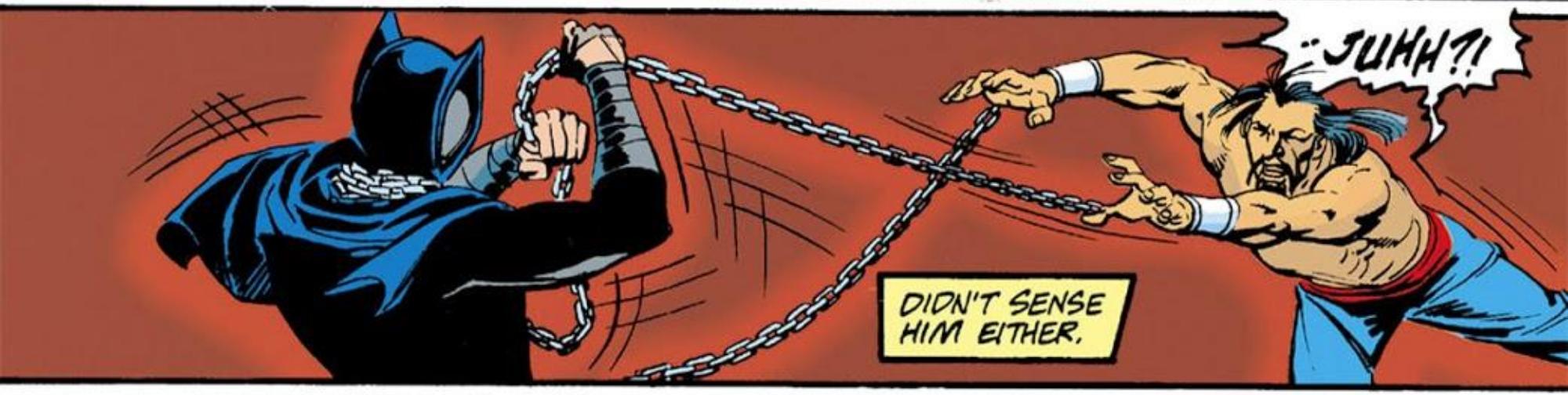
C-CAN'T FAIL...

GUN RUNNERS... GOT TO PROTECT GOTHAM...

LIKE I DID FROM MEKROS... AND JIGSAW... AND ABATTOIR!

GOT TO... CRUSH... GUN RUNNERS.





NO SPEED
OR GRACE.

SHRNK RNK RNK RNK

MY BODY KNOWS
WHAT TO DO, BUT
IT'S FORGOTTEN HOW.

MY BACK IS HEALED,
BUT THE MUSCLES
ARE SOFT AND
LAZY.

WHEW

MY PHYSICAL
MEMORY IS
SHOT.

HE'S GOOD--STRONG,
FAST, DEFT WITH
HIS CHAINS...

I'VE LOST FAR MORE
THAN I REALIZED...
BASIC SKILLS,
AUTOMATIC
REFLEXES...

...BUT NOT GOOD
ENOUGH TO MAKE
ME STRUGGLE THIS
LONG AND HARD.

SWOOFF





...AND TO PREVAIL,
EVEN POORLY...

BUT AT LEAST
TO PREVAIL.

CHUD

SHOK

HE ACCUSED ME OF
KILLING HIS SENSEI...
AND SHIVA SAID
THERE WOULD BE
MANY TESTS.

MANY DISCIPLES,
ALL SEEKING
VENGEANCE FOR
THEIR SLAIN
MASTER...

ACROSS THE
RIVER—
THREE MILES
SOUTH OF THE
BRIDGE—
IN THE WOODS

LET THEM
COME.

I NEED THE WORK.

YOU KILLED
TO CONTRIVE
THE FIRST TEST,
SHIVA.

YES--AND YOUR
PRIDE IN PASSING
IT IS FOLLY FOR
TWO REASONS.

AND IT TOOK
EVERYTHING I
HAD TO OVER-
COME HIM.

AT LEAST I
STILL STAND, READY
FOR THE NEXT...BUT
THE SECOND
REASON?

AS WEAK
AS THIS ONE IS,
HE STILL LIVES, HIS
SEETHING
VENGEANCE MERELY
COMPOUNDED.

LET IT SEETHE-
I'VE BEATEN
HIM.

FOR YOUR SKILL
TO ATTAIN FULL FORM,
YOU MUST BE WILLING
TO KILL-EFFICIENTLY
AND WITHOUT
HESITATION.

THAT
IS THE NATURE
OF MY ULTIMATE
TEST--MY TRUE
OPPONENT--AND
EVERYTHING I'M
PLEDGED TO
STOP.

THEN TO
STOP IT, YOU
MUST BECOME
IT.

NO. BY ASSUMING
THE MASK AND MANTLE
OF THE BAT, I CHOSE TO
OPPOSE DARKNESS WITH
DARKNESS AND TO FIGHT
FIRE WITH FIRE...BUT ONLY
TO A POINT.

THEN YOU
WILL NEVER
PASS THE
REMAINING
TESTS.

I WILL
NOT BECOME
MY ENEMY--AND
I WILL NOT BE
BURNED.

THAT,
LADY SHIVA,
REMAINS TO BE
SEEN.

FOOL...

ONLY
HE WHO
TRANSCENDS
DEATH THROUGH
KILLING IS
PROVEN
WORTHY...

...OF
FACING
ME.

--AND SINCE
YOUR LAST ACT
IN THIS WORLD
WAS FAILURE...

...YOU CAN
PASS INTO THE
NEXT WORLD-

AND YOU--
YOU MERELY
SICKEN
ME.

YOU
WERE NOT EVEN
GOOD ENOUGH
TO FORCE YOUR
OWN END--

SHE'S RIGHT-I DID
FAIL THE FIRST TEST.

BUT MY FAILURE WAS
IN THE POOR AND PROLONGED
STRUGGLE TO STAY ALIVE--

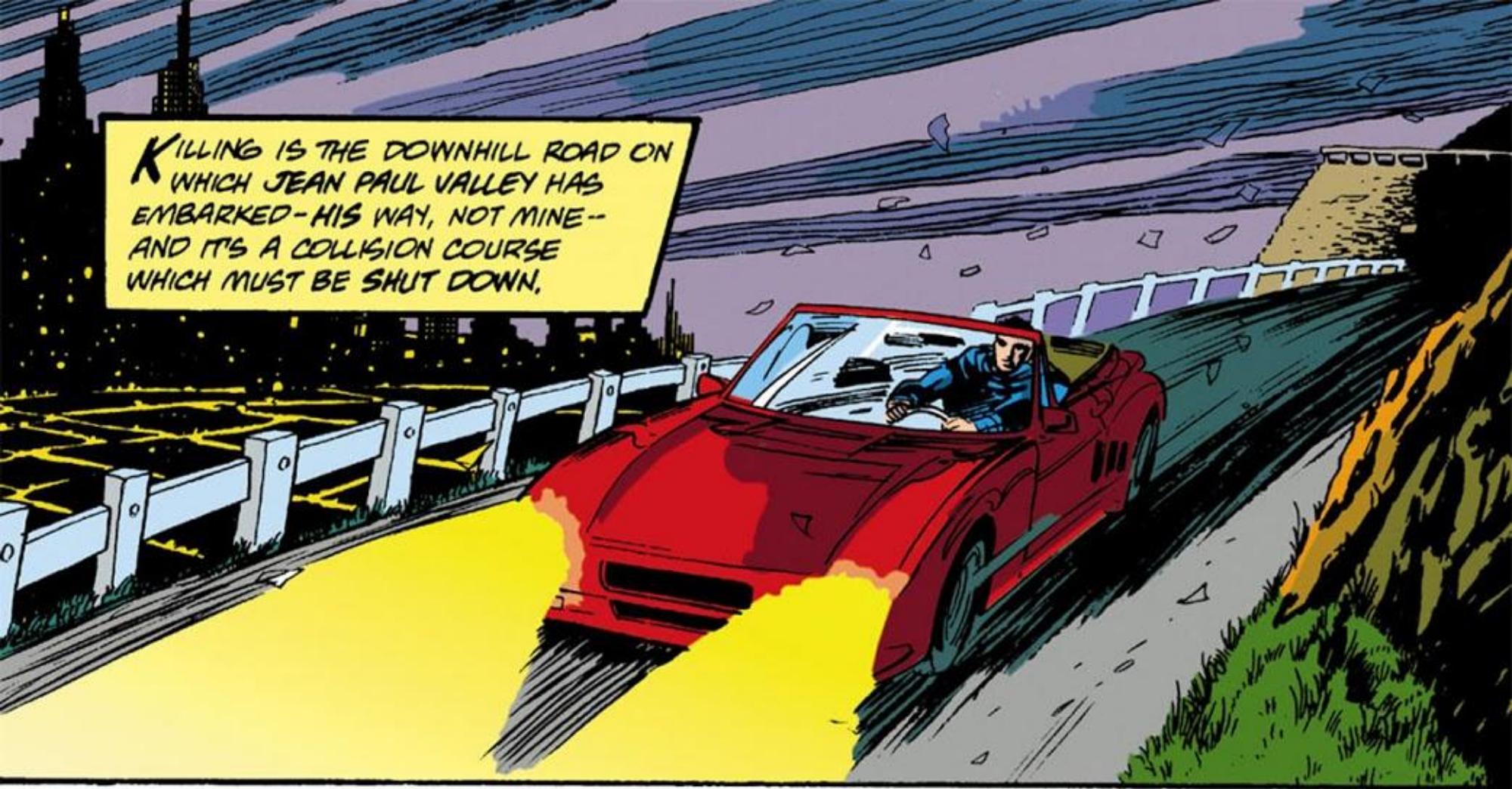
-NOT IN MY
REFUSAL TO
COMMIT
MURDER.

AUGH!

-IN
BONDAGE
AND
SHAME!



KILLING IS THE DOWNHILL ROAD ON WHICH JEAN PAUL VALLEY HAS EMBARKED - HIS WAY, NOT MINE - AND IT'S A COLLISION COURSE WHICH MUST BE SHUT DOWN.



THE NEW BATMAN--THE MAN I CHOSE--IS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL...



...MAYBE EVEN MAD.

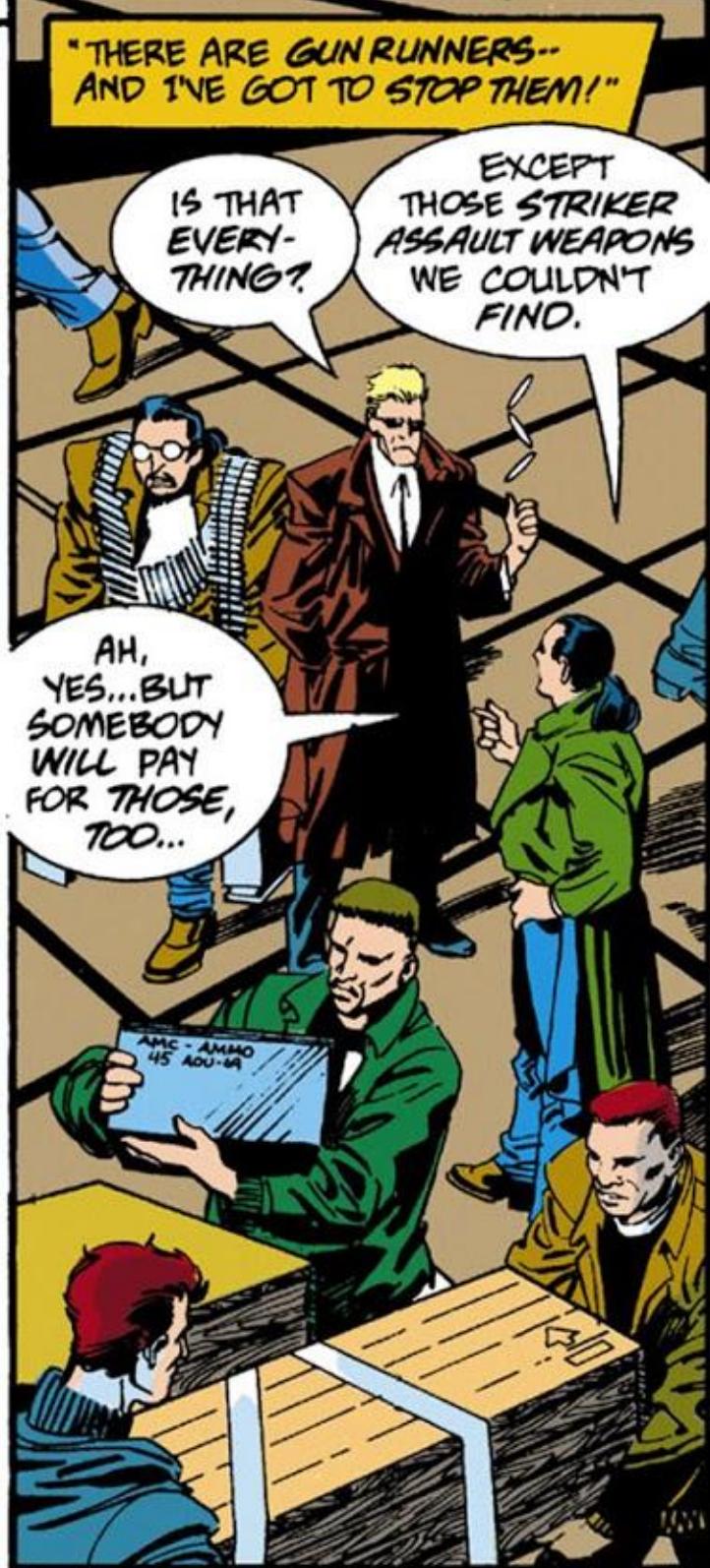
N-NO!
THE VISIONS
AGAIN...!

BRUCE TOLD ME TO KEEP JEAN PAUL UNDER TIGHT SURVEILLANCE-- REPORT ON EVERYTHING HE DOES-- BUT WHAT IS HE DOING?

MY
FATHER...AND
SAINT DUMAS...
BUT IT CAN'T
BE! NOT
AGAIN--!

WHAT DO
I TELL BRUCE?
THAT PAUL STOOD ON
A ROOF AND WENT
THROUGH CONTORTIONS--
GESTURING AT THIN AIR?





JUST SOMETHING I "LIBERATED" IN EUROPE BACK WHEN THIS MUNITIONS OPERATION WAS STILL RUN BY LOHAH-- BEFORE SELKIRK INHERITED IT.

YEAH, BUT WHAT IS IT?

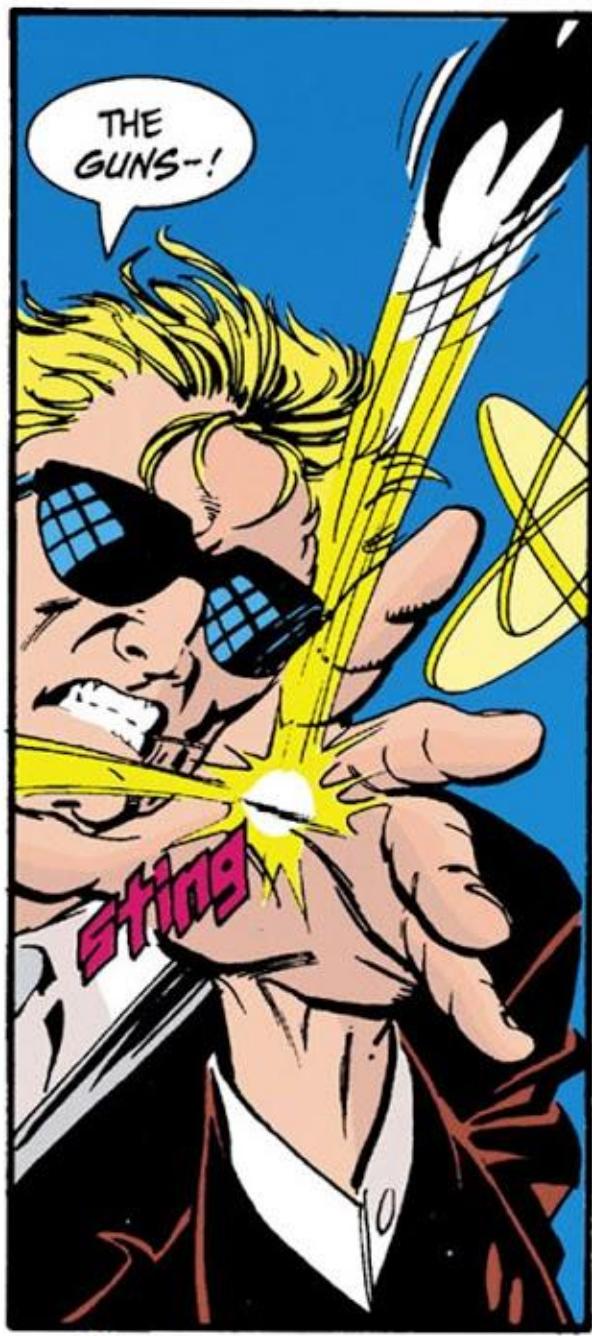
WHO KNOWS WHAT IT MEANT TO LOHAH, BUT TO ME IT'S JUST A CHARM... SOMETHING TO FOCUS MY ANGER, LIKE WHEN ONE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE RIPS OFF SOME STRIKERS FOR A SIDE DEAL...

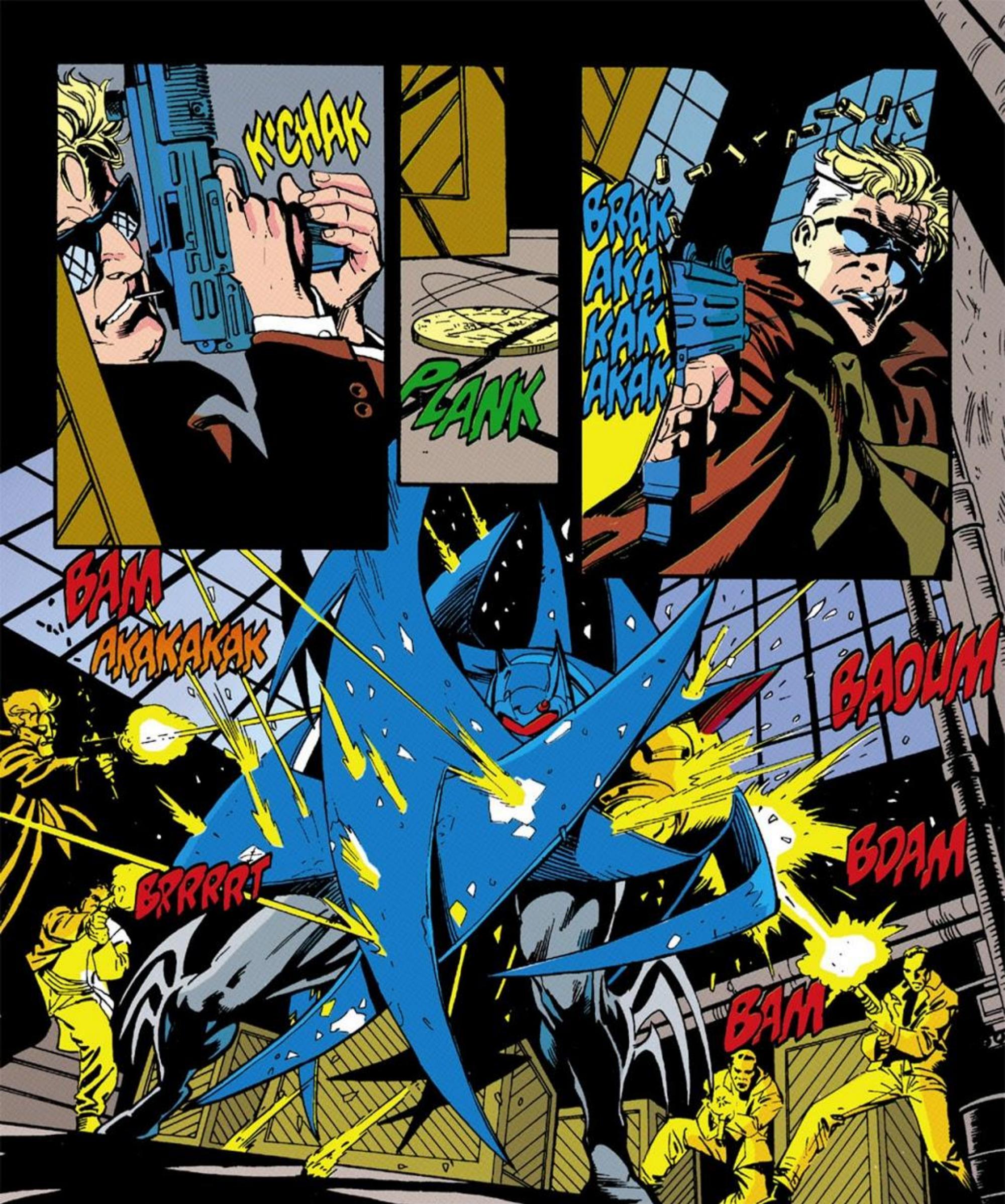
...AND MAYBE A REMINDER... OF THE PAST.

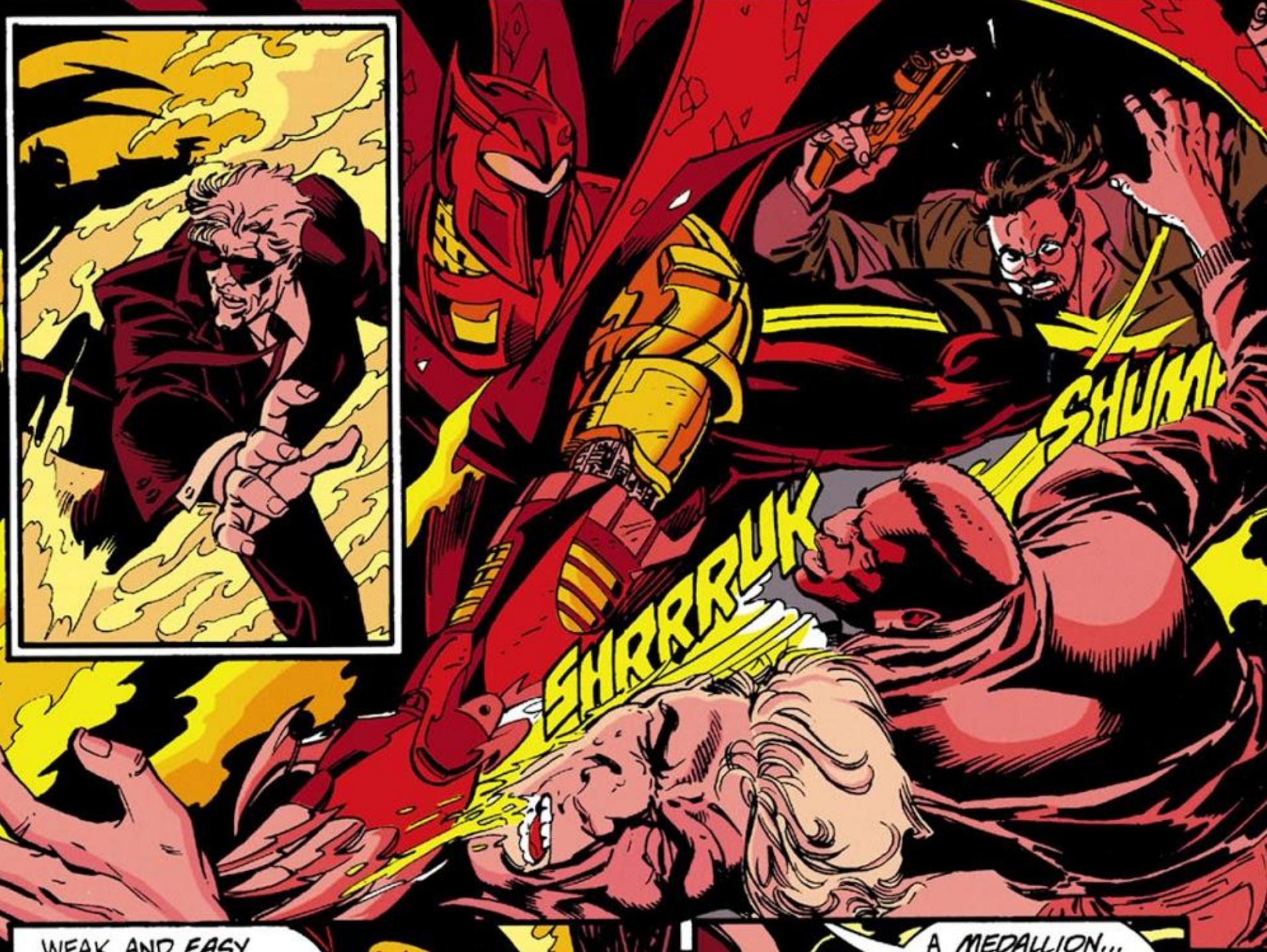
THE VISIONS ARE GONE, SCUM... AND YOU'RE DEAD!

WHAT THE--?

BRASHA!







WEAK AND EASY,
EVEN WITH YOUR GUNS,
EVERY ONE OF YOU
NOTHING BUT--

EH?
WHAT'S THAT...
ON THE
FLOOR...

A MEDALLION...
WITH THE SYMBOL
OF THE ORDER
OF SAINT
DUMAS...

THE ONES WHO PROGRAMMED
ME... TURNED ME INTO THE ASSASSIN
AZRAEL...

...CURSED ME
WITH THE VOICES AND
THE VISIONS...

"...LEHAH'S
MEDALLION..."

...THE
MONSTER
LEHAH.

"...LEHAH--MASTER
OF THE SYSTEM..."

WHAT'S
THAT HE'S
HOLDING?

WHATEVER
IT WAS, THIS GUY'S
GOTTA BE STOPPED--
AND AFTER MY
EXPERIENCE WITH
SHIVA, I JUST HOPE
BRUCE KNOWS WHAT
HE'S DOING...

...AND GETS
BACK BEFORE
THERE'S NOTHING
LEFT OF
GOTHAM TO
SAVE.

LeHAAAHH!





THREE
OF FOUR...





HE ENDS THE TALK, FORCING ACTION.

I'M FASTER THIS TIME, STRONGER, MORE IN FLOW.

BUT BEFORE I EVEN START MY MOVE, I KNOW IT WILL SUCCEED...

...MY HAND SWIFT AND SURE...

...AND STILL ATTACHED.

THIS SECOND OPPONENT IS BETTER.

BUT SHIVA WAS RIGHT...

A TRUE MASTER.

SHWISHHH

A SUPERB TEST.



--WITHOUT ASSISTANCE.



WITH NOTHING BUT MY OWN REACH--STRIVING FOR THAT WHICH IS THUS FAR OUT OF REACH.

--WITH HIS FEET.





IT'S SHARP
ENOUGH TO SPLIT
MY HEAD.

LIKE AN
ACORN.

SKAKT

GIVEN HALF
THE CHANCE.

KUNCH





AND MY TRAINER
FOR THE LONG
HAUL...

...RUNS ICE
THROUGH HER
VEINS.

I THINK
YOU'D BETTER
GO... BACK
TO THE
OTHERS.



TELL
THEM
ABOUT
ME.

PAP

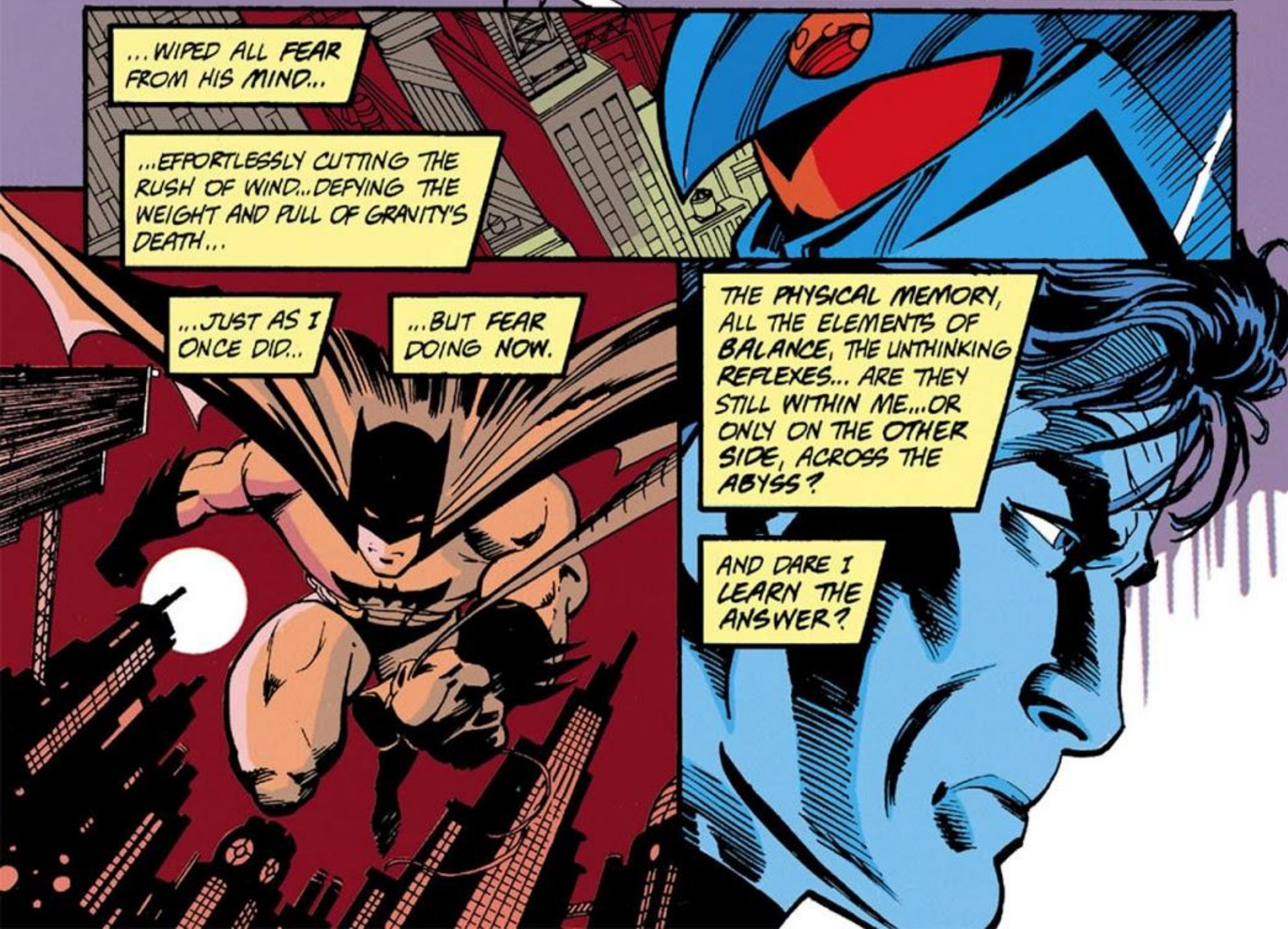
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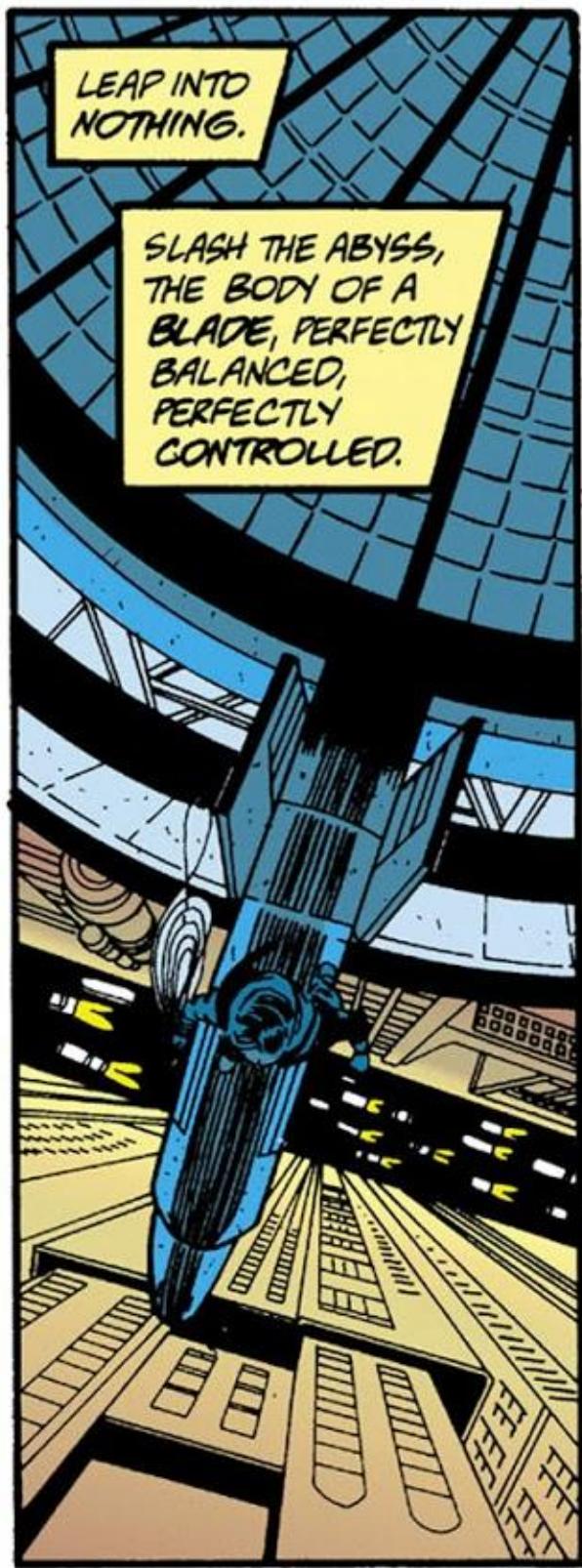
TELL
THEM
I'M
WAITING.

LADY SHIVA
IS DEATH.

BUT I WILL CONQUER
ALL OF DEATH'S
CHALLENGES...

...AND EARN THE MEANS AND
THE RIGHT TO FACE THE
BAT-DEMON WAITING
BEYOND.





IT TAKES A HUNDRED MUSCLES JUST TO SMILE... MORE THAN THAT FOR A FROWN.

AND FOR THE ABYSS...?



NO...

...NOT YET.

SHIVA IS DEATH, AND DEATH HOLDS MANY CHALLENGES.

BEYOND THEM ALL AWAITS THE BAT-DEMON WHO DEFEATED BANE...AFTER BANE DEFEATED ME.

AND I'M NOT EVEN READY TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP.



NYONIA

