



IN THE LAIR OF THE CHEETAH!

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
A

# WONDER WOMAN

119 | MAR 97

BY  
JOHN  
BYRNE

GORDISLOFSZ



OGDEN NASH WROTE OF  
THE "SOFT WING" OF  
NIGHT...

...BUT HERE IN THE  
MANMADE CANYONS OF  
GATEWAY CITY THE LONG  
HOURS OF DARKNESS ARE  
SELDOM EVER SOFT.



CONSIDER THIS PLACE--THE  
GATEWAY CITY ZOO, ONCE  
KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE  
LAND FOR ITS AWE-  
INSPIRING COLLECTION OF  
WILD BEASTS FROM EVERY  
CORNER OF THE WORLD...

...AS WELL AS ITS  
INNOVATIVE AND  
PROGRESSIVE HANDLING  
AND TREATMENT OF THOSE  
CREATURES.

ONCE, BUT NO MORE, A  
DECade AGO AN EVER-  
SHRINKING CIVIC BUDGET  
FORCED THE CLOSING OF  
THE ZOO...

...AND A KEEPER, DRIVEN TO  
MADNESS BY WHAT HE  
FEARED WOULD BE THE  
ULTIMATE FATE OF HIS  
BELOVED CHARGES...

...LET LOOSE ALL THE  
CREATURES IN HIS CARE, TO  
FEND FOR THEMSELVES IN  
THIS ARTIFICIAL JUNGLE, AS  
THEY WOULD IN THE WILD.

MOST OF THE ANIMALS  
WERE RECAPTURED, KILLED,  
OR HAVE DIED WITH THE  
PASSING OF THE LONG  
YEARS.

STILL, LEGENDS PERSIST  
AROUND THIS STRANGE,  
FEARSOME PLACE.

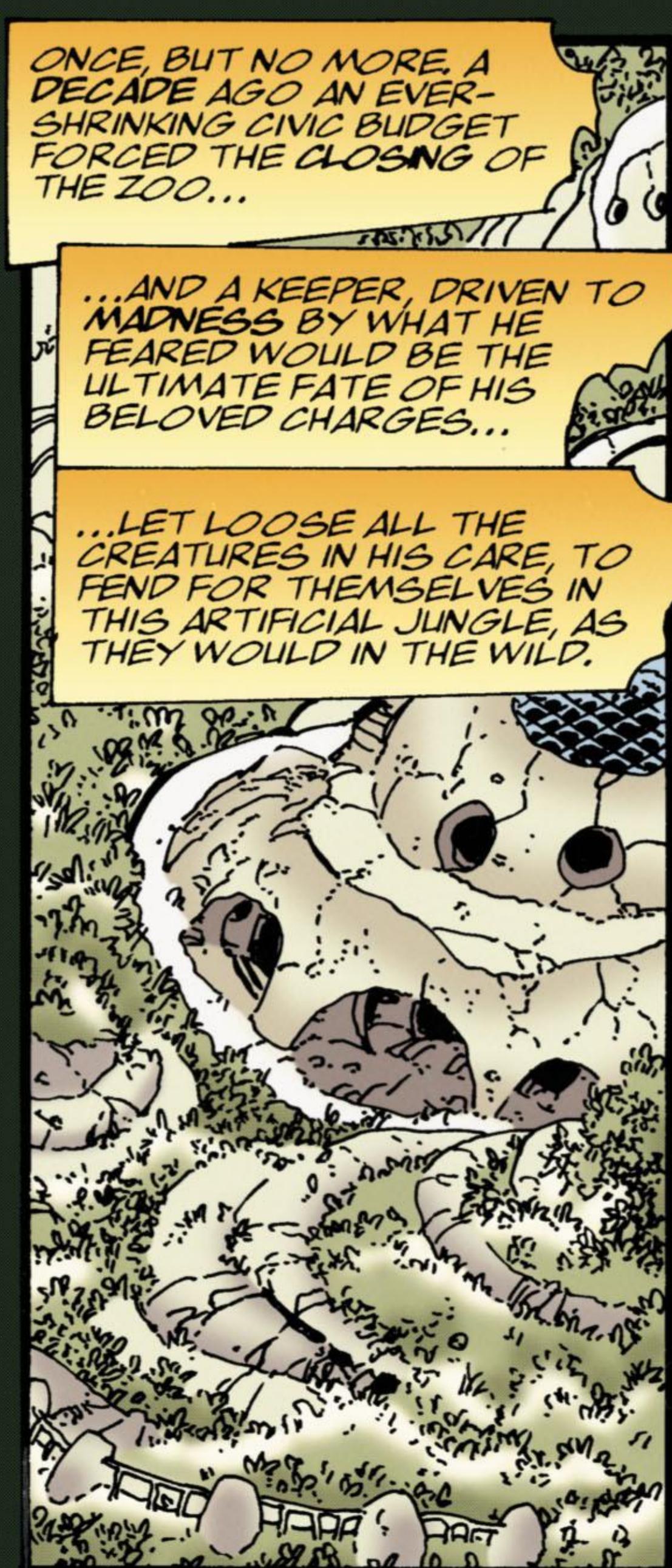
AND SOME OF THOSE  
URBAN MYTHS HAVE MORE  
THAN A LITTLE BASIS IN  
FACT.

HURH...

PASSED OUT  
AGAIN. BEEN...  
HANGING  
UPSIDE DOWN  
FOR MORE  
THAN A DAY...

WHAT'S...?

DIANA!



# INTO THE HEART OF THE NIGHT

THE INVERTED GENTLEMAN  
IS OFFICER MICHAEL R.  
SCHORR OF THE G.C.P.D.

THE FERAL THING LEAPING  
LIKE THE WILD CAT SHE SO  
STRONGLY RESEMBLES  
IS--OR MORE PROPERLY  
WAS--BARBARA MINERVA,  
WIDELY KNOWN AS  
CHEETAH.

HER TARGET THIS EVENING,  
AS ON MANY PRIOR  
OCCASIONS, IS THE  
AMAZON PRINCESS KNOWN  
TO HER FRIENDS AND  
FAMILY AS DIANA, AND TO  
AN OFTEN ASTONISHED  
WORLD AS...

**WONDER  
WOMAN**  


JOHN BYRNE  
WRITER-ARTIST

PATRICIA MULVIHILL  
COLORIST

JASON HERNANDEZ-  
ROSENBLATT  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

PAUL KUPPERBERG  
EDITOR

WONDER WOMAN  
CREATED BY  
WILLIAM Moulton  
MARSTON

LOOK  
OUT!!

IS IT THE ANGUISHED CRY  
OF HER FRIEND...

NO MATTER. STRIKE SHE  
DOES, BLINDLY, CLUMSILY...

...BUT WITH SUFFICIENT  
FORCE TO SEND CHEETAH  
ARCTIC OVER THE FOUL,  
FESTERING FLOOR OF THIS  
LION'S DEN.

KLOK!

...OR SOME DEEPER,  
INSTINCTUAL DRIVE FOR  
SELF-PRESERVATION WHICH  
CAUSES WONDER WOMAN  
TO LASH OUT AT HER  
ATTACKER?

HER ATTACKER  
MOMENTARILY DISABLED,  
PRINCESS DIANA CALLS  
UPON THE LAST OUNCE OF  
HER AMAZON WILL TO  
FORCE HERSELF TO HER  
FEET...

...AND REVEALS TO MIKE  
SCHORR'S HORRIFIED GAZE  
THE REASON FOR HER  
SUDDEN DIFFICULTY.

DIANA!  
GOOD LORD!  
WHAT HAPPENED  
TO YOUR  
HAND..? ! ?

I... DO NOT  
KNOW. I...  
STRUCK AT  
CHEETAH, BUT SHE  
ELUDDED MY BLOW.  
AND WHEN MY HAND  
IMPACTED ON THE  
CEMENT WALL...

...IT SHATTERED  
AS IF MADE OF  
BRITTLE CLAY!

BUT... WHAT OF YOU, MICHAEL? WE ALL FEARED YOU SLAIN.

YOU AND I PARTED IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THIS DAY. NOT LONG AFTER THAT YOUR SISTER, MAUREEN, CAME TO TELL ME YOU WERE MISSING.

FROM THE EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE I GUessed IT MIGHT BE CHEETAH WHO HAD TAKEN YOU, AND SEARCHING THE CITY I FURTHER GUessed SHE MIGHT COME HERE, TO THE OLD ZOO.

NO, SHE JUST GRABBED ME, RIGHT AFTER YOU LEFT... WHEN WAS IT? I'VE LOST TRACK OF TIME DOWN HERE.

IT WAS THE SHEEREST CHANCE THAT BROUGHT ME TO THIS CAGE, AND TO CHEETAH AND YOURSELF.\*

UHHH!! IF YOU SAY SO, DIANA! AT LEAST YOUR POWERS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY YOUR INJURY. BUT...

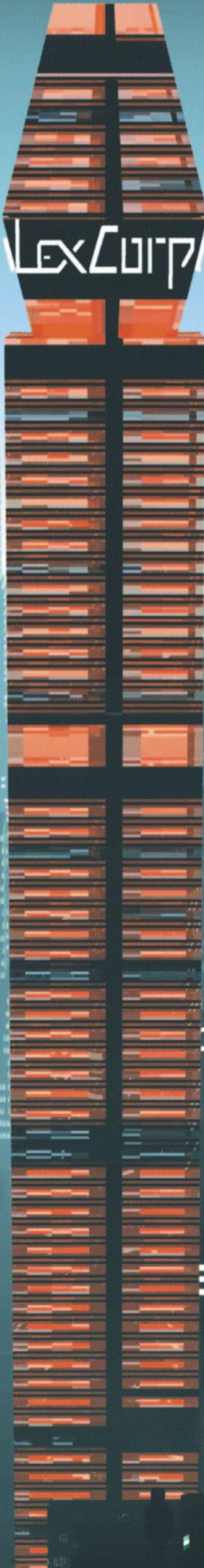
\*MOST OF IT HAPPENED LAST ISSUE -- NOW YOU'RE CAUGHT UP - PAUL

SPEAKING OF CHEETAH...

STAND BACK, MIKE. SHE IS MORE SAVAGE, MORE POWERFUL THAN THE LAST TIME WE MET...

"...BUT I MUST FIND A WAY TO SUBDUE HER..."

LOOK AT THESE STORIES!



ALL OVER GATEWAY CITY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FOUND HORRIBLY MUTILATED, AS IF THEY'D BEEN ATTACKED BY SOME WILD BEAST!

THIS IS NOT PART OF THE ARRANGEMENT WE NEGOTIATED, MR. CHUMA.

JUST "CHUMA", MR. DEPAUL. AS I HAVE TOLD YOU, IN MY PRESENT CONDITION, I HAVE NO NEED FOR TITLES AND HONORIFICS.



YOUR... PRESENT CONDITION. YOU INSIST ON MAINTAINING THIS FAIRY TALE, DON'T YOU? EVEN THOUGH YOU KNOW IT... BOthers ME.



IT IS NO FAIRY TALE, MR. DEPAUL. BARBARA MINERVA HAS BECOME DE UNCONTROLLABLE WILD THING SHE IS BECAUSE SHE SOLD HER SOUL TO BUY BACK MY LIFE.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW PREPOSTEROUS THAT SOUNDS, CHUMA? YOU STAND THERE, HALE AND HEARTY, CLEARLY HUMAN, VERY MUCH ALIVE...

...AND YOU TELL ME YOU WERE DEAD, AND THIS MINERVA WOMAN MADE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL TO BRING YOU BACK TO LIFE.

YOU LIVE IN A WORLD FULL OF PEOPLE WHO FLY, PEOPLE WHO COME FROM OTHER PLANETS, PEOPLE LIKE SUPERMAN, WHO HAVE THEMSELVES COME BACK FROM DE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH'S DOOR...

...AND YOU CANNOT ACCEPT AS SIMPLE FACT DE STORY I TELL? NOT EVEN IF I TELL YOU DE MAN YOU ONCE WORKED FOR WAS PART OF DE TALE?



WH-WHAT?!?

IT IS TRUE. LEX LUTHOR WAS SICK AND DYING WHEN AN AGENT OF DE ONE CALLED NERON APPROACHED HIM AND OFFERED RESTORED YOUTH AND HEALTH IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL.



"LUTHOR DID NOT BELIEVE HIMSELF TO HAVE A SOUL TO BARTER, AND SO HE ACCEPTED NERON'S OFFER.

"HE WAS ONE OF MANY.

"ANOTHER WAS MY MISTRESS. BARBARA MINERVA GAVE UP HER SOUL ON DE OFFER OF NERON TO RESTORE MY LIFE.

"SHE BELIEVED DAT I WAS DE ONLY ONE WHO COULD BRIDLE DE RAGING BEAST DAT WAS HER OTHER SELF.

"AT FIRST IT SEEMED ALL WOULD WORK OUT AS BARBARA HOPED IT WOULD.

"SHE STILL UNDERWENT DE TRANS-FORMATION TO CHEETAH, BUT WITH MY HELP SHE WAS ABLE TO CONTROL IT ONCE MORE.

"DEN AS NOW, SHE WAS ABLE TO SENSE DE DARKNESS DAT SQUATS AT DE CENTER OF SOME MEN'S SOULS...

"...AND DEN AS NOW IT WAS ONLY DIS HUMAN REPULSE ON WHICH SHE PREYED.



"BUT WITH EACH NIGHT'S HUNT DE TRUE COST OF NERON'S BARGAIN BECAME MORE AND MORE APPARENT.

"WITH NO HUMAN SOUL TO ACT AS A BARRIER AGAINST DEM, THE MOST BASE AND SAVAGE OF HER ANIMAL INSTINCTS BEGAN SLOWLY TO OVERWHELM BARBARA MINERVA.



"MY INFLUENCE OVER HER WAS SUFFICIENT TO COMPEL HER TO RETURN EACH DAWN TO DE CAGE I HAD PREPARED FOR HER..."

"...BUT WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS A POINT HAD COME FROM WHICH DERE WOULD BE NO RETURN, NO TRANSFORMATION BACK TO HUMAN FORM..."

"...I SET ABOUT FINDING ANOTHER WAY TO CONTROL HER."

"AND I STRUCK UPON DE NOTION OF CONTACTING WONDER WOMAN, WHO I KNEW HAD COME RECENTLY TO DIS CITY!"



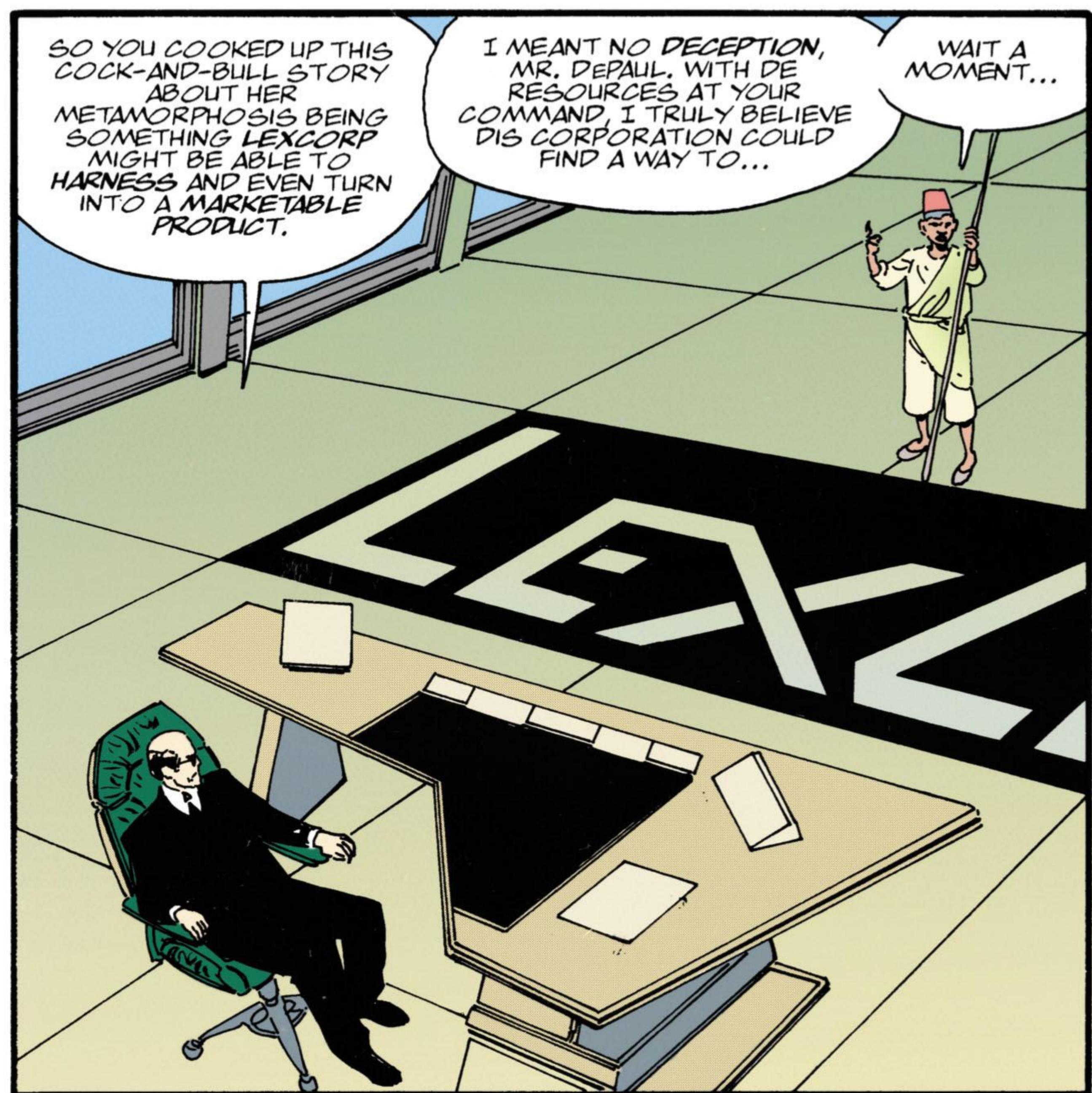
SO YOU COOKED UP THIS COCK-AND-BULL STORY ABOUT HER METAMORPHOSIS BEING SOMETHING LEXCORP MIGHT BE ABLE TO HARNESS AND EVEN TURN INTO A MARKETABLE PRODUCT.

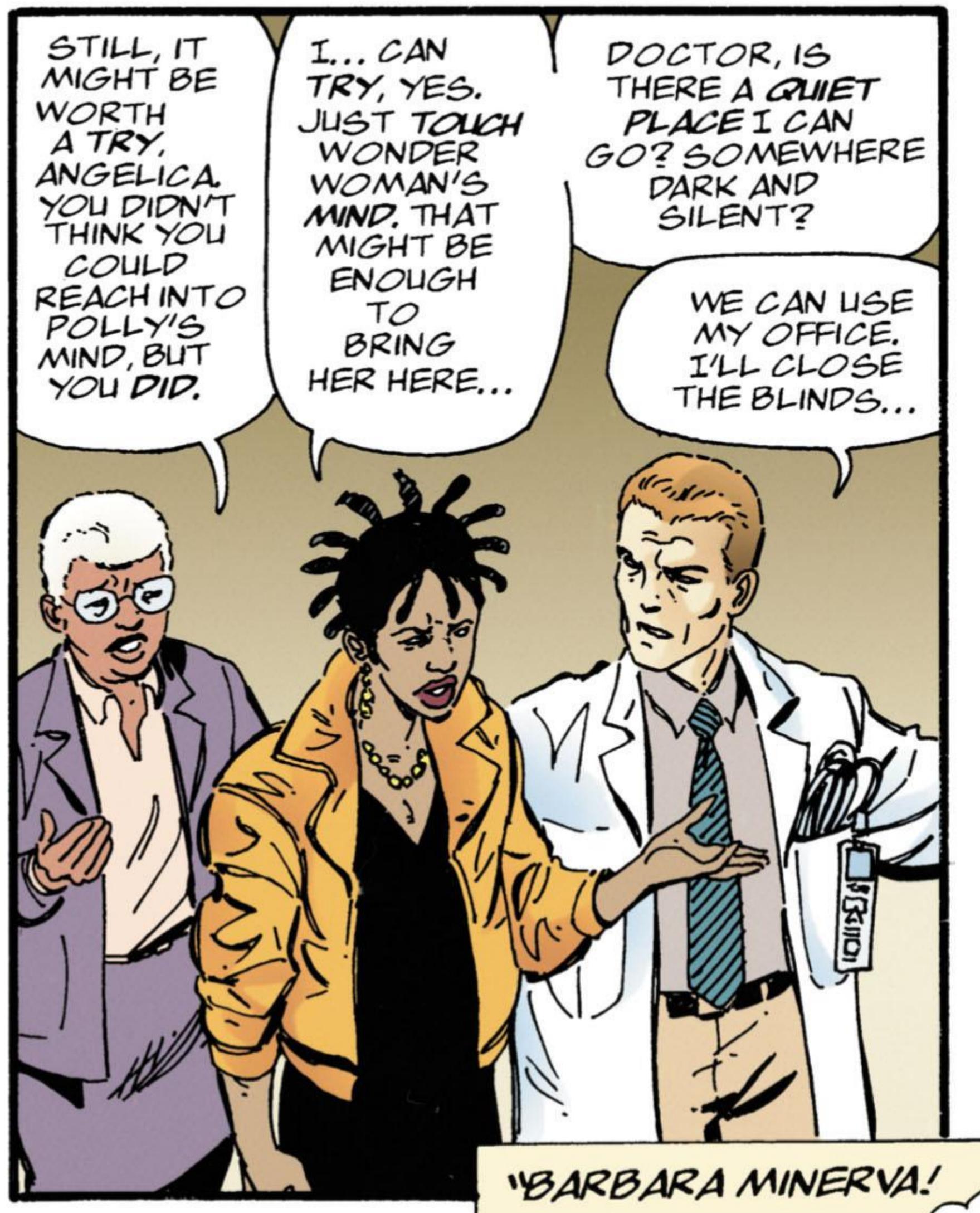
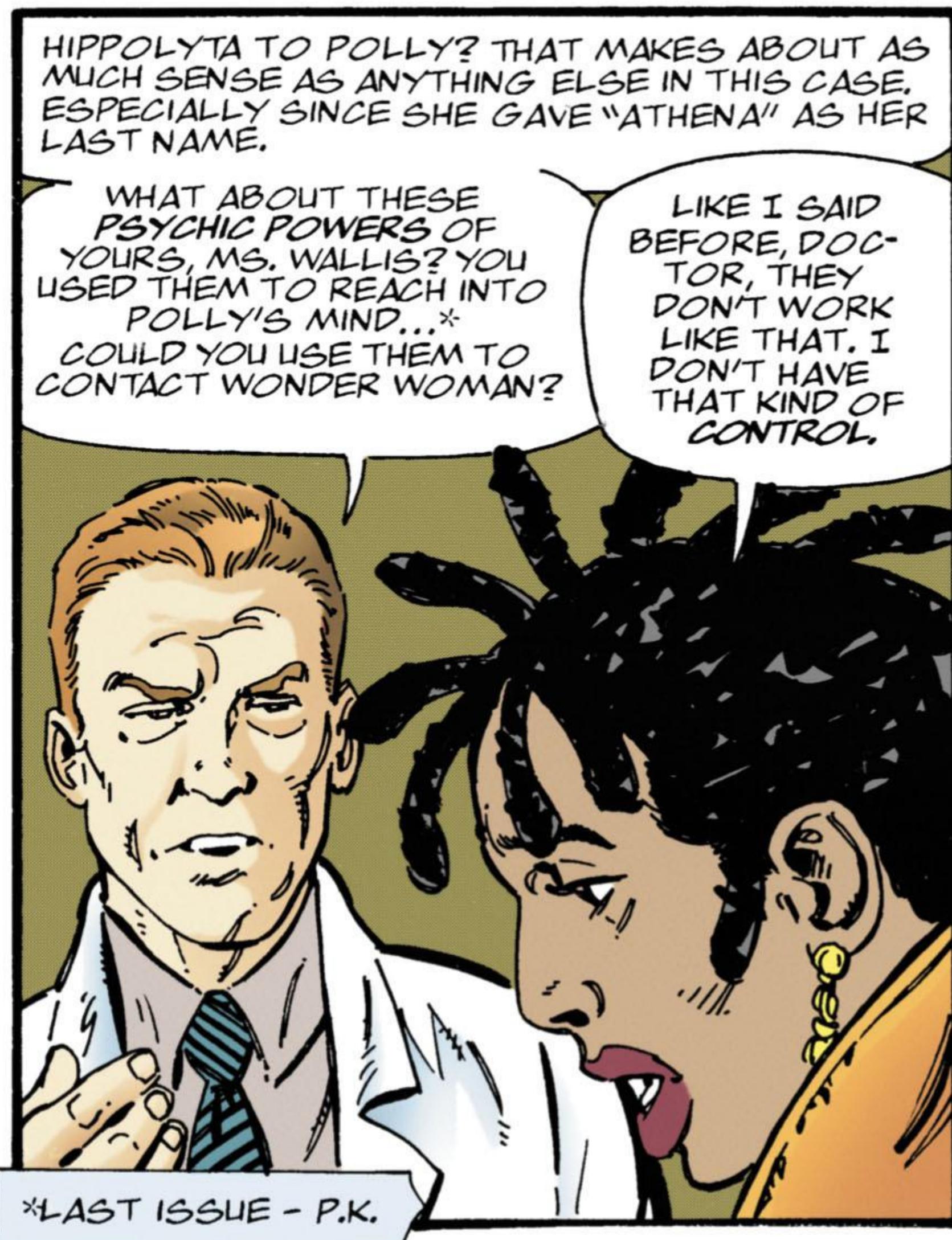
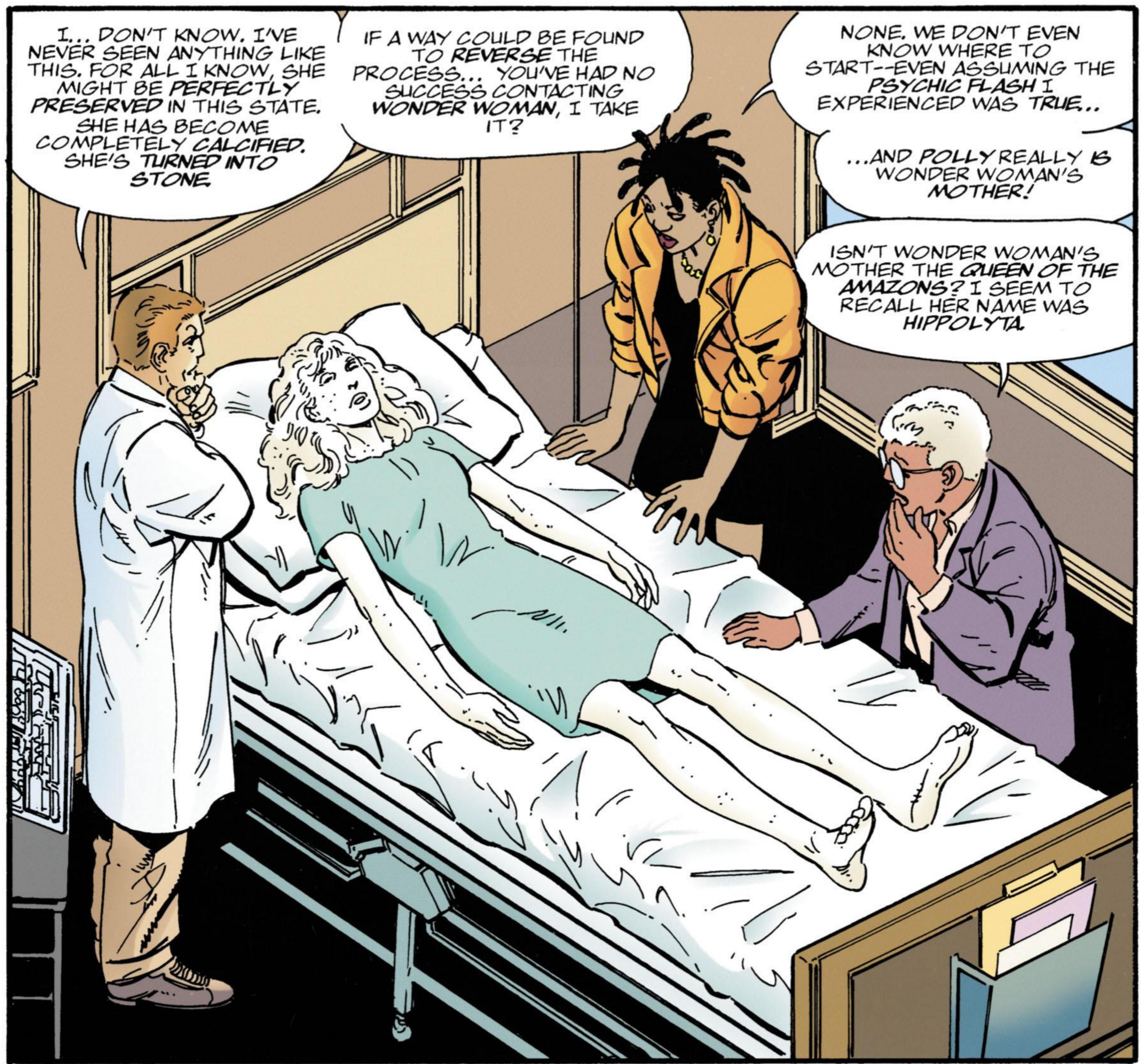
I MEANT NO DECEPTION, MR. DEPAUL. WITH DE RESOURCES AT YOUR COMMAND, I TRULY BELIEVE DIS CORPORATION COULD FIND A WAY TO...

WAIT A MOMENT...

"DERE IS SOMETIN' I MUST ATTEND TO... AT ONCE!!!

THEN... SHE'S DEAD?





BARBARA  
MINERVA! STOP  
DIS AT ONCE!

SHE IS DISTRACTED! I  
MUST SEIZE THIS CHANCE  
TO IMMOBILIZE HER  
WITHOUT KILLING HER!

CHEETAH'S POWER IS  
SUPERNATURAL, BUT FOR  
ALL THAT SHE IS STILL  
MORTAL. SHE HAS MORTAL  
NEEDS.

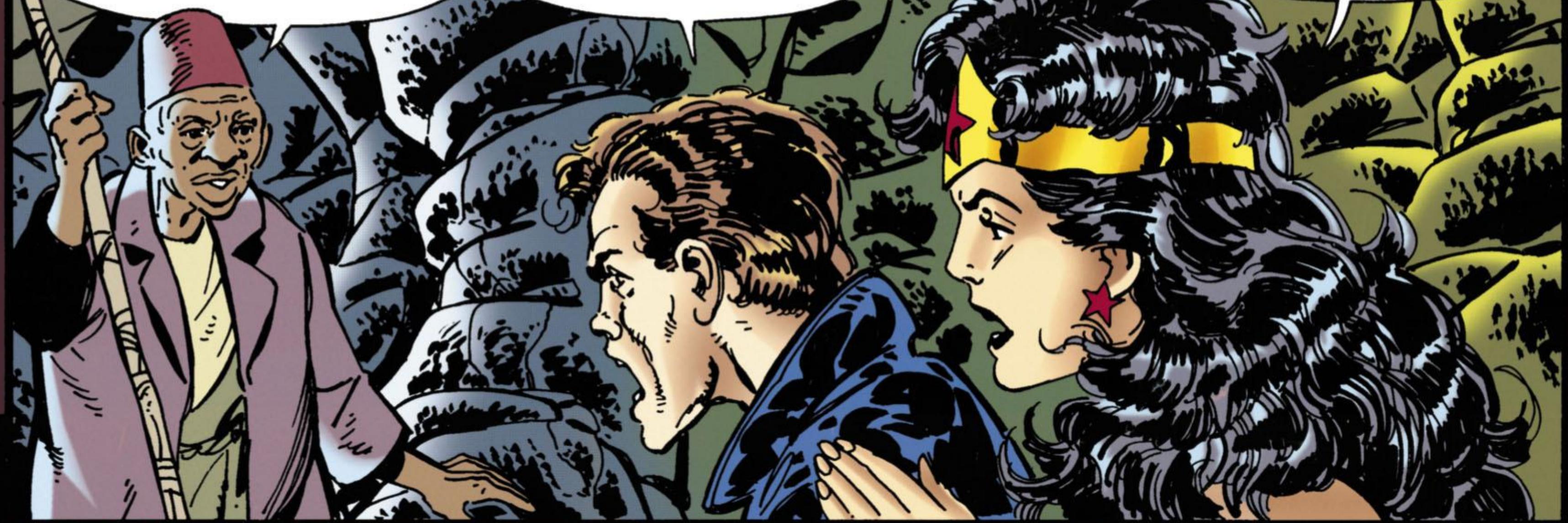
AND  
WITHOUT  
AIR...

...SHE MUST  
SUCCUMB.

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, WONDER WOMAN. I KNEW YOU WOULD BE DE ONE TO HELP US.

HELP? YOU WANT DIANA TO HELP YOU? YOU GOT AN AWFUL FUNNY WAY OF ASKING, BUDDY!

THERE IS MORE HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE. FOR ONE THING...



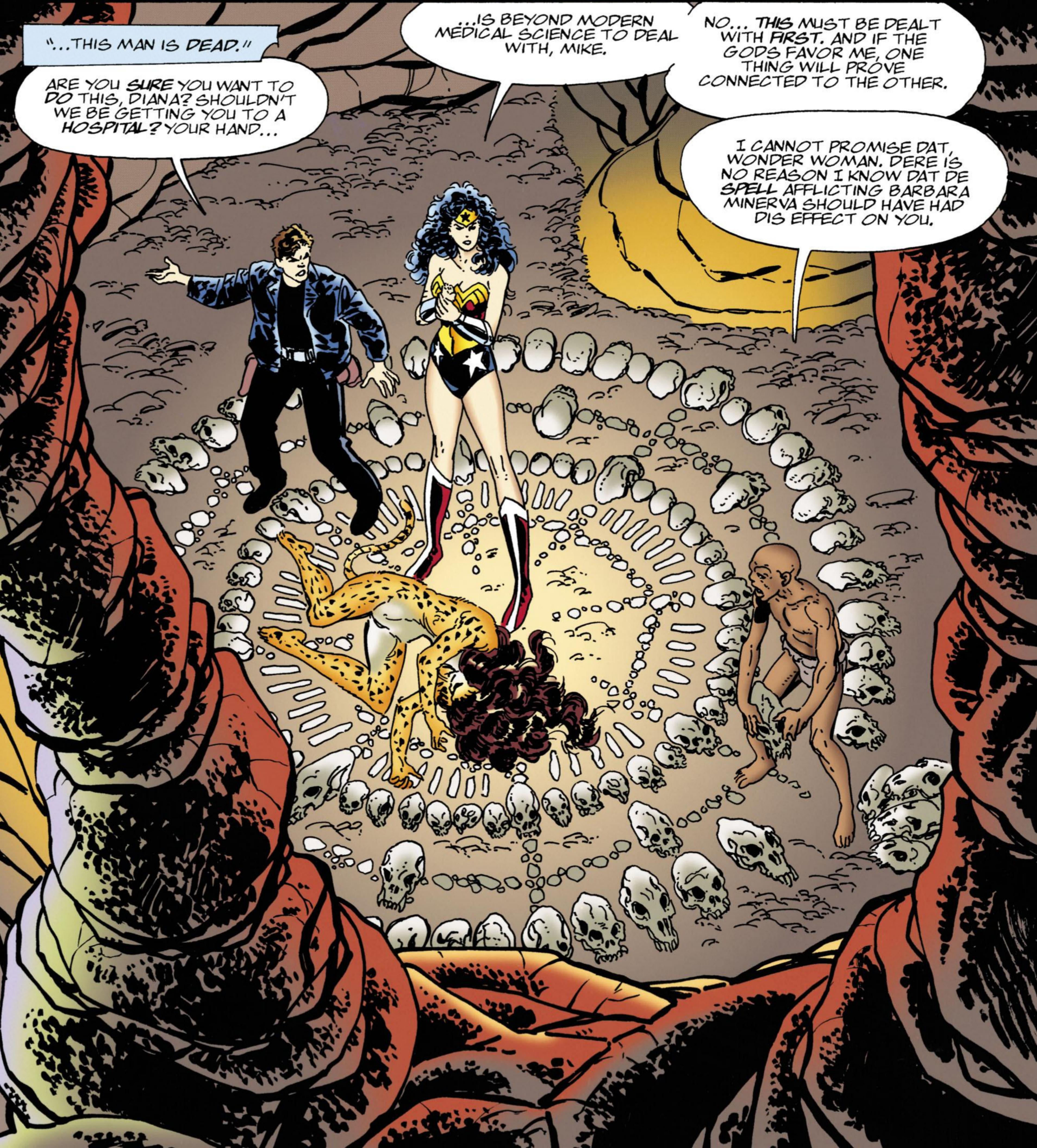
...THIS MAN IS DEAD!"

...IS BEYOND MODERN MEDICAL SCIENCE TO DEAL WITH, MIKE.

NO... THIS MUST BE DEALT WITH FIRST. AND IF THE GODS FAVOR ME, ONE THING WILL PROVE CONNECTED TO THE OTHER.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS, DIANA? SHOULDN'T WE BE GETTING YOU TO A HOSPITAL? YOUR HAND...

I CANNOT PROMISE DAT, WONDER WOMAN. DERE IS NO REASON I KNOW DAT DE SPELL AFFLICTING BARBARA MINERVA SHOULD HAVE HAD DIS EFFECT ON YOU.



DERE! DE MANDALA  
IS COMPLETED. DE  
GREAT MAGICKS  
ALREADY BESTIR  
DEMSELVES.

YOU DO NOT  
HAVE TO TAKE  
PART IN THIS,  
MIKE. THERE IS  
STILL TIME  
FOR YOU TO  
STEP OUT OF  
THE CIRCLE.

WELL, NOT ACCORDING TO  
THIS GUY! HE SEEMS  
CONVINCED THIS CHEETAH  
DAME GRABBED ME FOR  
SOME SPECIFIC REASON  
BEYOND MY... FRIENDSHIP  
WITH YOU.

NOT "CONVINCED," OFFICER  
SCHORR. BUT IF DERE IS  
ANY CHANCE AT ALL DAT YOU  
ARE SOMEHOW PART OF  
DIS, I CANNOT TAKE THE  
RISK OF LEAVING YOU OUT  
OF DE SPELL.

NOW,  
GET  
READY.  
WHEN  
DE  
CHANGE  
COMES  
UPON  
YOU...



"...DERE WILL BE NO  
PREPARATORY WARNING!"

HOLY!!!

IT IS JUST AS CHUMA  
DESCRIBED IT! THIS IS  
WILDNESS THAT DWELLS  
WHERE BARBARA'S SOUL  
ONCE WAS!



SO... JUST HOW REAL DO I NEED TO TREAT THIS PLACE, DIANA? CAN I BRAIN MYSELF ON A BRANCH, OR CUT MYSELF ON A SHARP LEAF?

HERE IS THE PROOF, IF WE NEEDED ANY, THAT WE HAVE MOVED TO ANOTHER PLANE OF REALITY. MY HAND IS RESTORED.

HEY... WAIT A MINUTE, DIANA. DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

A LOW GROWL, FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE UNDER BRUSH.

CHUMA SAID THIS WOULD BE AS REAL AS ANY WORLD I HAD ENCOUNTERED. I SHALL TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD.

GET READY, MIKE.

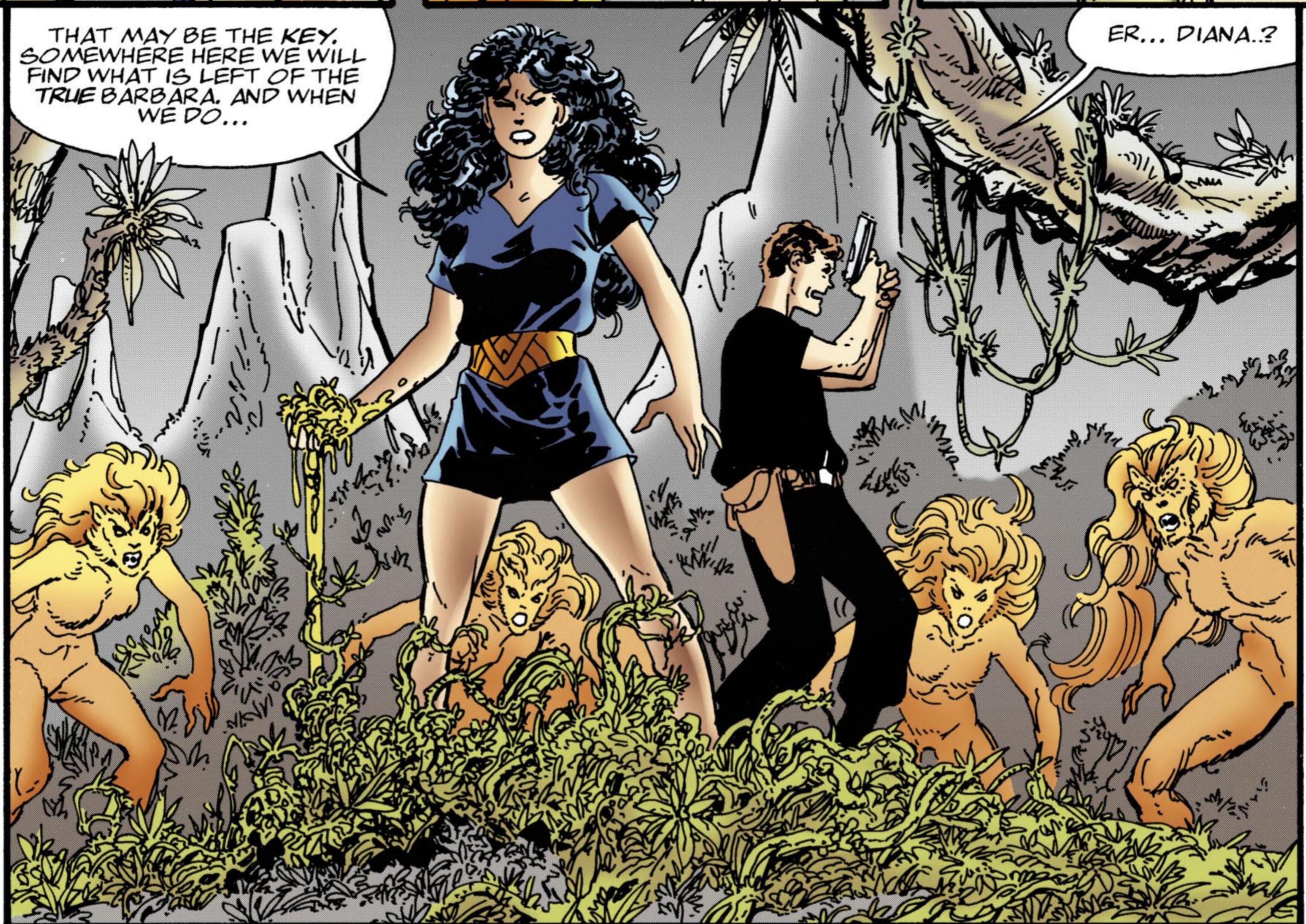
CHEETAH!

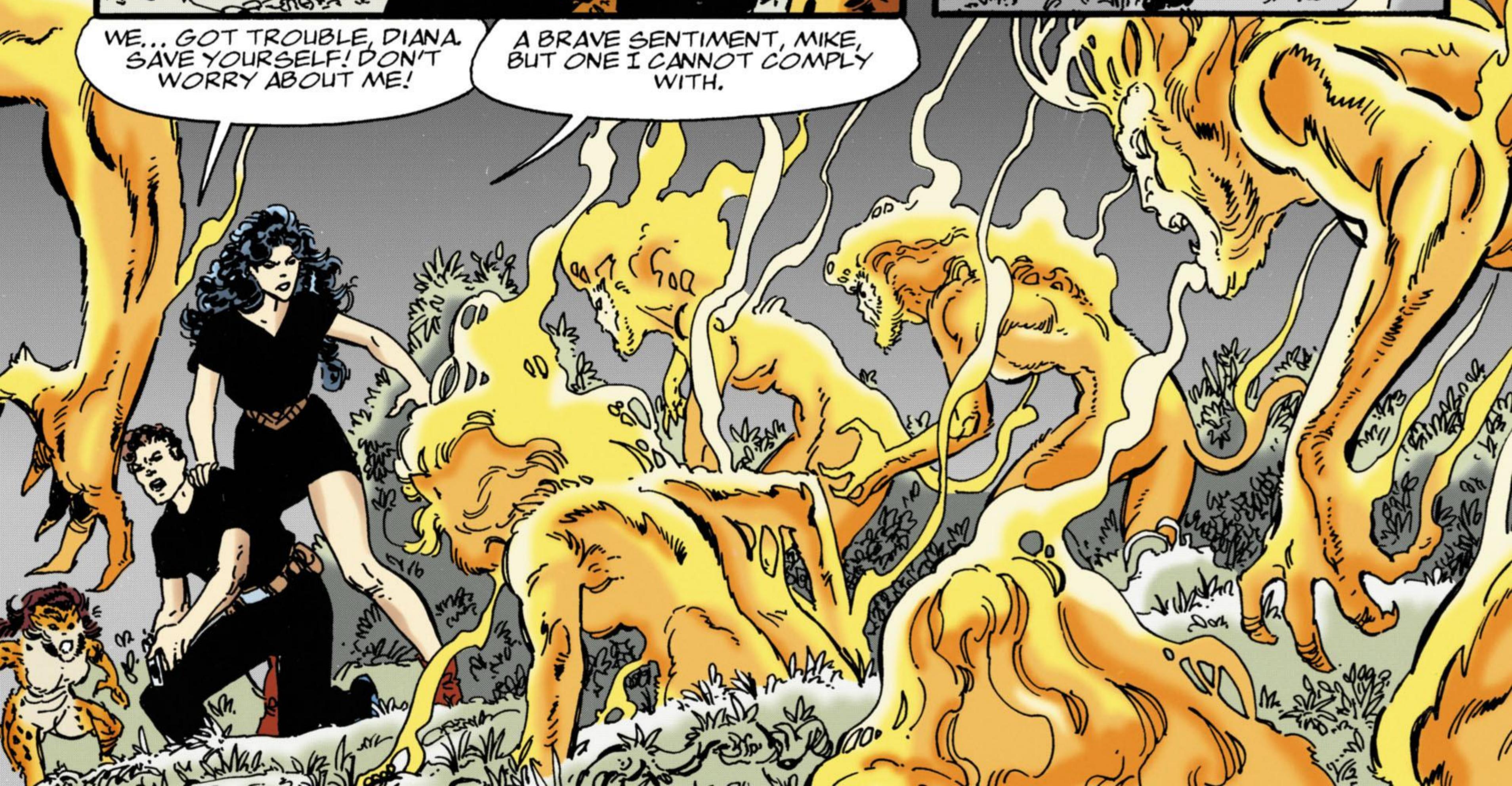
GET DOWN, DIANA!

BLAM BLAM









LET US SEE IF THESE CHEETAHS HAVE THE SAME LIMITATIONS AS THE REAL ONE!

THEY DO! I HAVE ALL MY ABILITIES HERE, AND CHEETAH ALL OF HERS. BUT APART FROM BEING ABLE TO APPEAR IN MULTIPLE FORMS...

THAT ONE... LITTLE EXTRA SEEMS LIKE... MORE THAN ENOUGH, DIANA!

CAN EVEN YOU FIGHT... A WHOLE FLOCK OF THOSE THINGS?

...SHE SEEMS TO HAVE NO ADDITIONAL POWERS!



I DO NOT KNOW, MIKE. BUT...

SOME WEEKS AGO I WAS ABLE TO DEFEAT THE ENCHANTRESS MORGANE LE FAY IN JUST SUCH A FANTASY ENVIRONMENT AS THIS.\*

THERE THE ANSWER LAY IN DOING NOTHING, SO THAT LE FAY COULD NOT SIPHON OFF EACH OF MY ABILITIES AS I USED THEM.



I WONDER... COULD SOME VARIATION OF THAT TACTIC WORK HERE?

YOU'RE NOT GONNA JUST STAND STILL AND LET THOSE CREATURES ATTACK YOU? THEY'LL SLICE YOU TO RIBBONS!



PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT.  
BARBARA MINERVA SOLD  
HER SOUL, BUT HOW MUCH  
OF HUMANITY LIES IN THE  
SOUL...

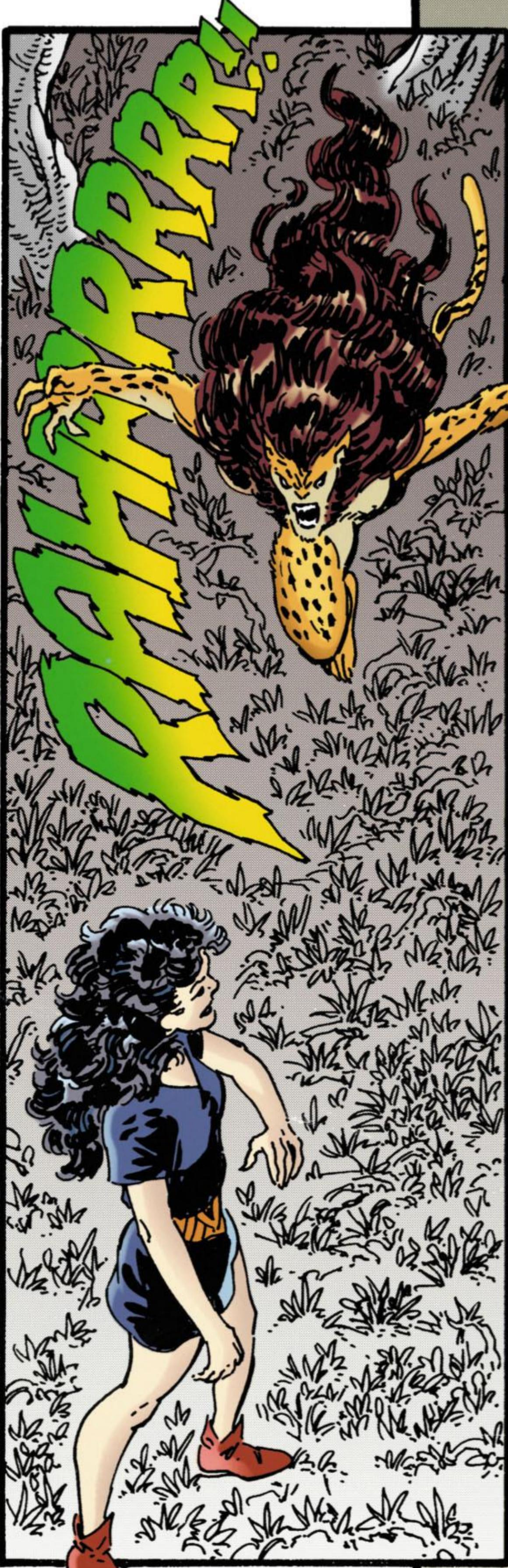
...AND HOW MUCH IN THE  
INTELLECT.

DIANA!  
DON'T!

BARBARA!  
HEAR ME!  
HEAR MY WORDS!

TO BRING YOUR FRIEND  
AND MENTOR BACK TO LIFE  
YOU MADE MOST NEARLY  
THE ULTIMATE  
SACRIFICE.

YOU HAVE PAID  
DEARLY FOR THIS.  
NOW IS THE TIME  
TO STOP SUCH  
PAYMENT AND  
RECLAIM YOUR  
SELF.



ABOVE ALL ELSE,  
AS YOUR BODY  
FAILED, YOU PRIDED  
YOURSELF ON  
YOUR INTELLIGENCE, BARBARA.

USE THAT  
INTELLIGENCE  
NOW. IF ANY  
SCRAP OF THE  
WOMAN YOU  
WERE SURVIVES  
IN WHAT YOU  
HAVE BECOME, USE IT.  
FIGHT THE BEAST.

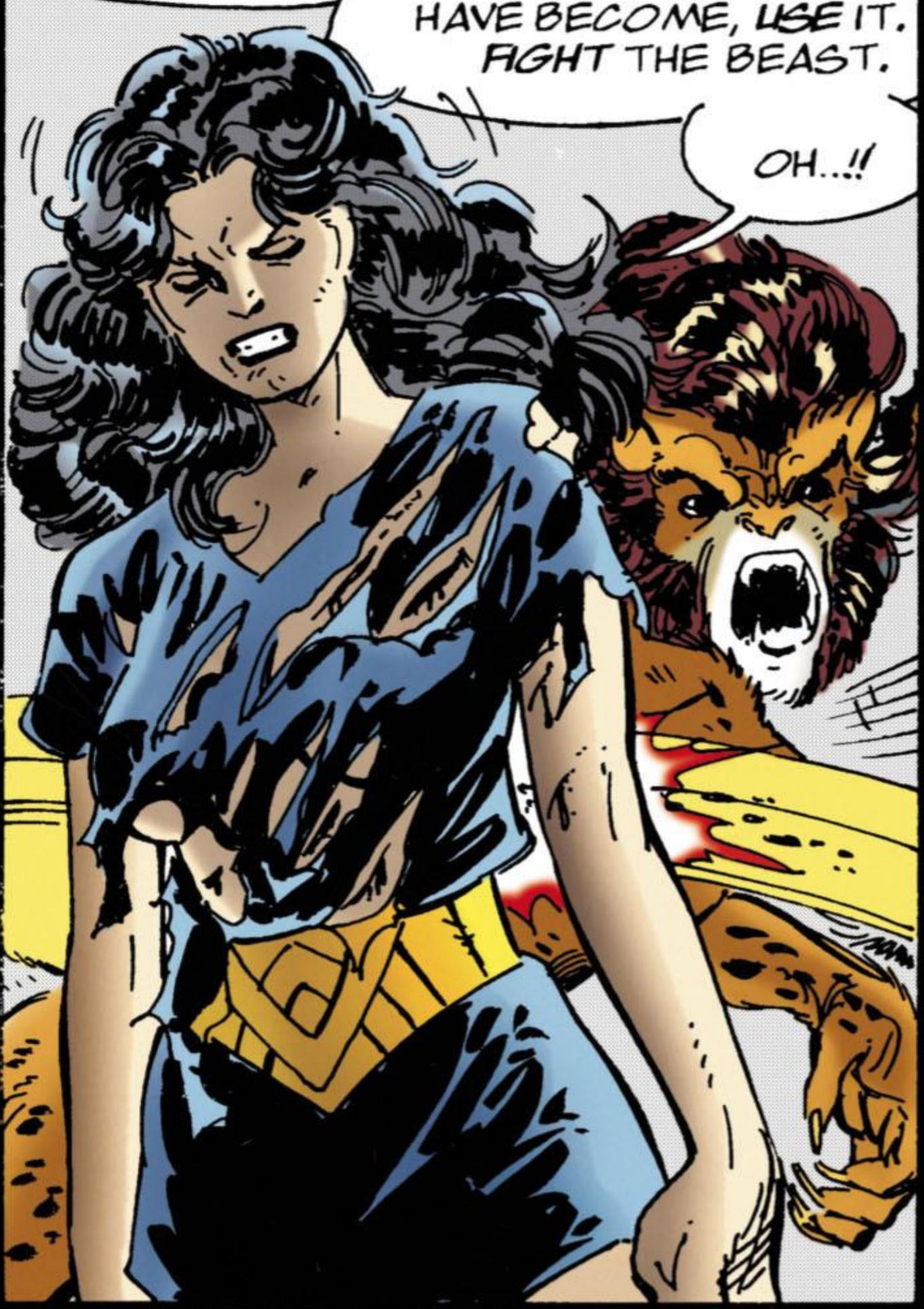
OH...!!

THIS IS CRAZY!  
I DON'T KNOW  
WHAT KIND OF  
AMAZON LOGIC  
DIANA THINKS  
SHE'S USING  
HERE...

...BUT  
THOSE CATS  
SEEM ABOUT  
AS READY TO  
REASON AS A  
SLUG FROM A  
.45.

THAT OLD BLACK GUY SAID  
WE WOULD BE IN DANGER  
HERE, NOT CHEETAH. WHICH  
MEANS DIANA IS RISKING  
HER LIFE ON SOMETHING  
THAT PROB'LY WON'T DO  
ANY GOOD ANYWAY!

AH...!



I AM TRAINED AS A  
WARRIOR, BARBARA, BUT I  
AM TRAINED ALSO TO THINK  
OF THOSE SKILLS AS A  
LAST RESORT.

THERE IS NO HUMAN  
CONFLICT WHICH CANNOT BE  
SERVED BETTER WITH  
WORDS THAN WITH THE  
SWORD.

YOURS WAS AND IS AN  
INTELLECT AS KEEN AS ANY  
I HAVE ENCOUNTERED SINCE  
I LEFT THEMYSCIRA.

NOTHING HAS HAPPENED IN  
YOUR ADULT LIFE BUT THAT  
YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO MAKE  
HAPPEN. YOU CHOSE THE  
PATH OF THE CHEETAH,  
BARBARA. YOU CAN CHOOSE  
TO REJECT IT!



YOU HAVE THE POWER TO KILL ME, BARBARA. BUT IF YOU DO, YOU ABANDON BARBARA MINERVA, AND SURRENDER ALL TO THE CHEETAH.

DIANA KEEPS SAYING HER NAME, "BARBARA, BARBARA", LIKE SHE REALLY EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO REACH INSIDE AND FIND A HUMAN BEING STILL ALIVE IN THAT MONSTER!

BUT ONE TWITCH TOWARD DIANA, AND I'M GONNA FIND OUT IF "BARBARA" HAS A BRAIN IN THAT MISSHAPE SKULL!

WELL, BARBARA? WHAT IS IT TO BE? YOUR WHOLE LIFE WAS DEDICATED TO LOGIC AND REASON. EVEN THE DEAL YOU MADE WITH NERON WAS DONE AS A RESULT OF THOUGHT AND REASONING.

YOU SACRIFICED YOUR SOUL, BUT YOUR MIND AND SOUL ARE NOT THE SAME THING.

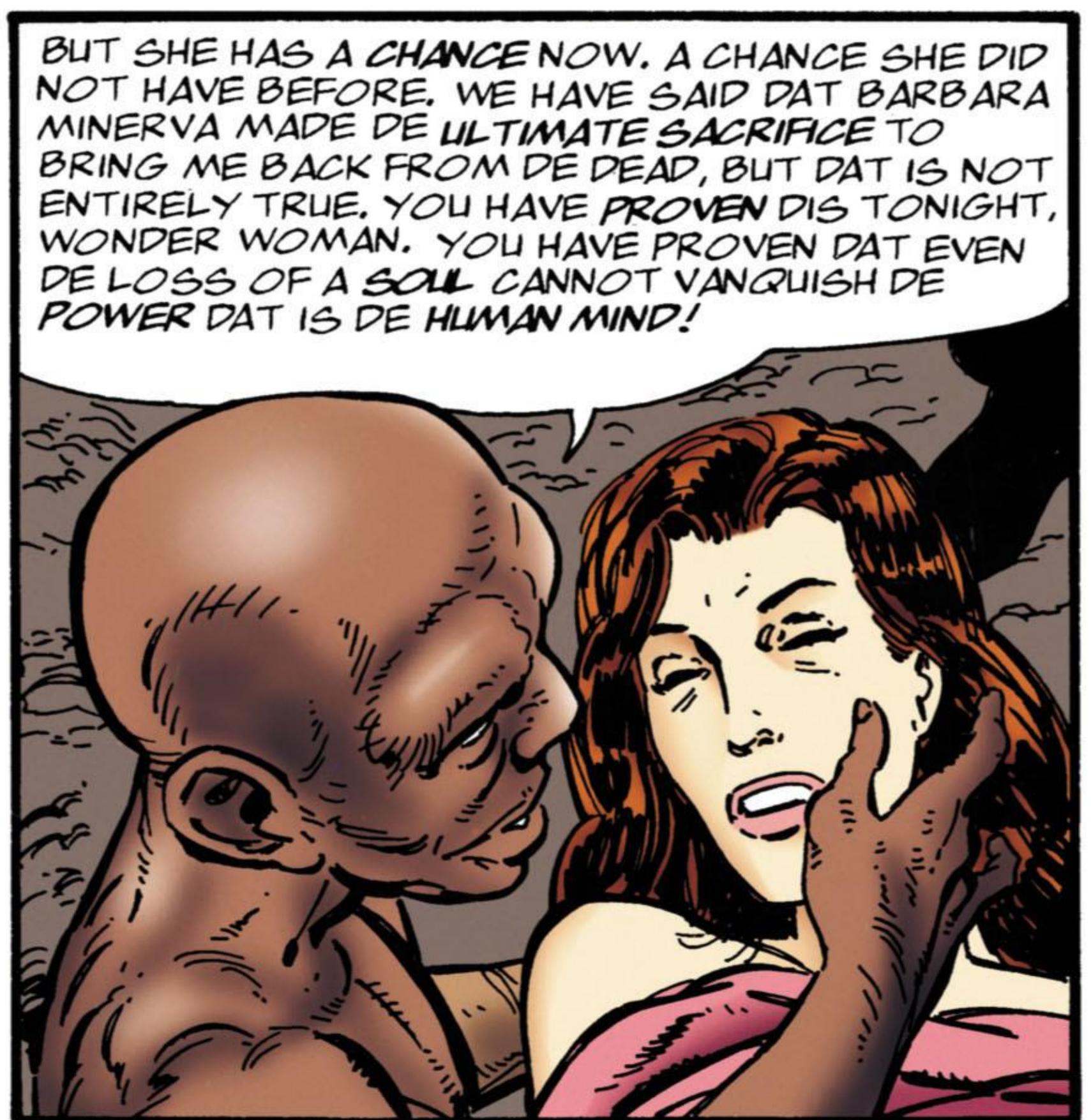
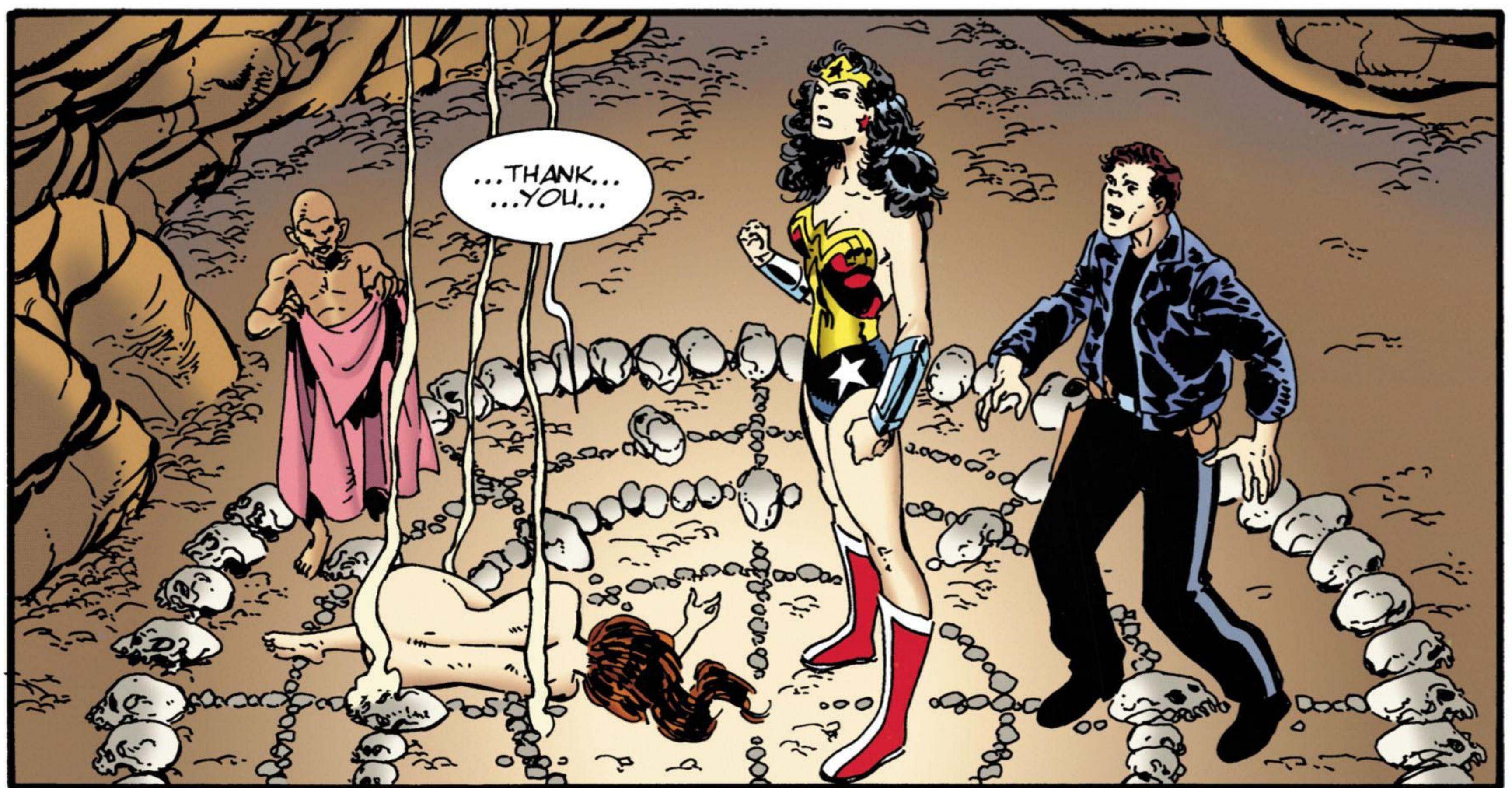
THINK, BARBARA. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE. REMEMBER WHAT YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN ABOUT.

SOMETHING'S HAPPENING... CHEETAH LOOKS... DIFFERENT SOMEHOW.

HOLY COW! I THINK IT MAY BE WORKING!!

THAT'S IT, BARBARA. USE YOUR MIND. USE YOUR INTELLECT. REMEMBER!





AN EPILOGUE, THEN, AND IN ITS OWN WAY A PROLOGUE.

THE TIME IS SIX HOURS LATER. THE PLACE IS DIANA PRINCE'S APARTMENT ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF HER FRIEND AND EMPLOYER, HELENA SANDSMARK...

THIS IS... HORRIBLE, DIANA! YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH IN YOUR CAREER AS WONDER WOMAN, BUT NOTHING THAT LEFT YOU PERMANENTLY MAIMED!

GEEZ, DIANA, MOM'S RIGHT! NOT EVEN OUR FIGHT WITH THAT FAKE DOOMSDAY DID THIS KIND OF DAMAGE!

NO, CASSIE, IT DID NOT. AND YET, LOOKING BACK I THINK THERE WAS A CLUE THERE THAT SOMETHING WAS ALREADY AMISS.

A CLUE, DIANA?



YOU RECALL THAT I INJURED MY HAND IN THAT BATTLE, AND THAT THE INJURY TOOK MUCH LONGER TO HEAL THAN I MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED.

SURE! THAT WAS WHEN I INSISTED YOU SHOULD ALLOW ME TO GO ON BEING WONDER GIRL, TO TAKE UP THE SLACK FOR YOU!

AND THIS IS NO TIME TO BRING UP THAT NONSENSE, CASSANDRA! DIANA, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO?



I AM NOT SURE, HELENA. EVEN AS WE SPEAK I CAN FEEL THE NUMBNESS CREEPING FURTHER UP MY ARM, AS THOUGH A TIME WILL COME WHEN MY WHOLE BODY REVERTS TO THE CLAY FROM WHICH MY MOTHER SHAPED IT!

YES, MIKE, IT IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN, BUT I WAS NOT BORN AS MORTALS ARE. MY MOTHER SCULPTED A BABY FROM THE CLAY OF THEMYSCIRA, AND THE GODS THEMSELVES BREATHED LIFE INTO THAT CLAY.

Y-YOU MEAN... YOU'RE REALLY SOME SORT OF... GOLEM... ??\*

I CAME AS SOON AS I RETRIEVED YOUR MESSAGE, DIANA. WHATEVER IS HAPPENING TO YOU, WE MUST ACT QUICKLY TO DISCOVER THE CAUSE.

AND YOU WERE RIGHT TO THINK JASON BLOOD IS JUST THE MAN TO HELP YOU DO THAT!



\*THE LIVING CLAY WARRIOR OF JEWISH FOLKLORE - P.K.

NEXT ISSUE: IT'S TEN YEARS SINCE COMIC READERS EVERYWHERE WERE INTRODUCED TO A NEW AND DARINGLY DIFFERENT WONDER WOMAN. JOIN US IN 30 DAYS FOR AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, AND THE BEGINNING OF DIANA'S QUEST FOR THE ANSWERS THAT LIE BURIED IN HER PAST!