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BATMAN®

PUNCH
BENDER!

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The Joker.

I have known him longer than any other criminal.

STOP...

He shot Barbara Gordon at point blank range and left her to die.

The fact that she is still alive does nothing to lessen the anguish he brought down on her.

Deemed "insane" by the courts, he never went to jail for the crime.

Despite all my efforts, I know very little about his origin...

STOP...

...Who he was before he became the monster he is today.

He shot Lieutenant Sarah Essen -- Former Police Commissioner Jim Gordon's wife -- and killed her.

The Joker's life should have ended then and there.



I cannot...

STOP...



STOP...

I will not...

...accept any responsibility...

STOP...

...for The Joker.

BATMAN...



I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...

BATMAN

CREATED
BY
**BOB
KANE**

Chapter Seven **THE JOKE**

Except that I should have killed him long ago.

STOP...ME...
IF YOU'VE
HEARD THIS ONE
BEFORE...

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Harley Quinn.

OOPSIE!

YARRGH!

HEH-HEH.
SORRY, MR. J!
HE...UH...
DUCKED!

WHAM

GET AWAY
FROM 'IM, YA BIG
GALOOT!

IF MY
GUY SAYS
HE'S INNOCENT,
THEN HE'S
INNOCENT!

RIGHT,
PUDDIN'?

In some perverse
way she loves him.

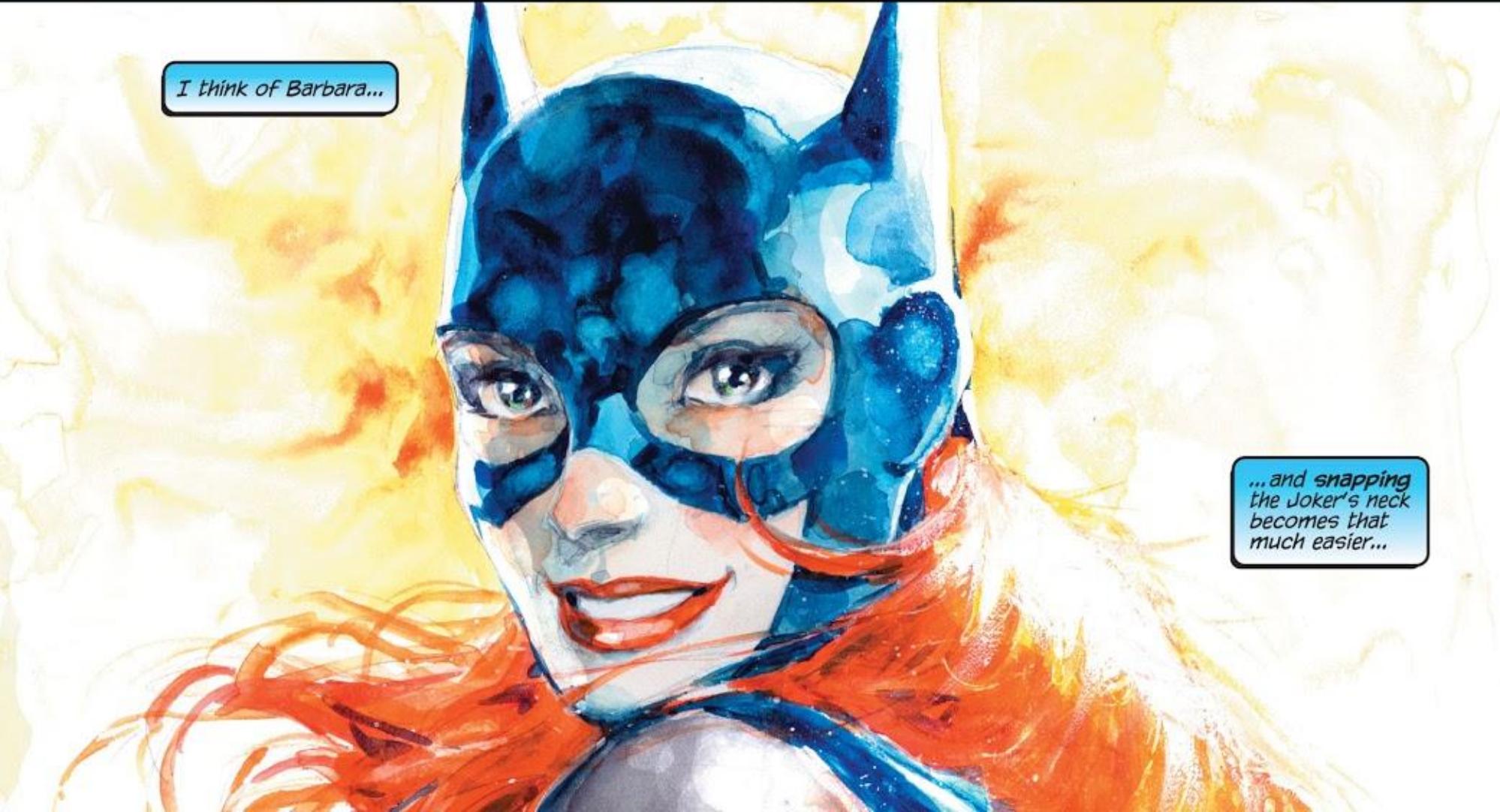
ERGL.

I will let
no one --
nothing --

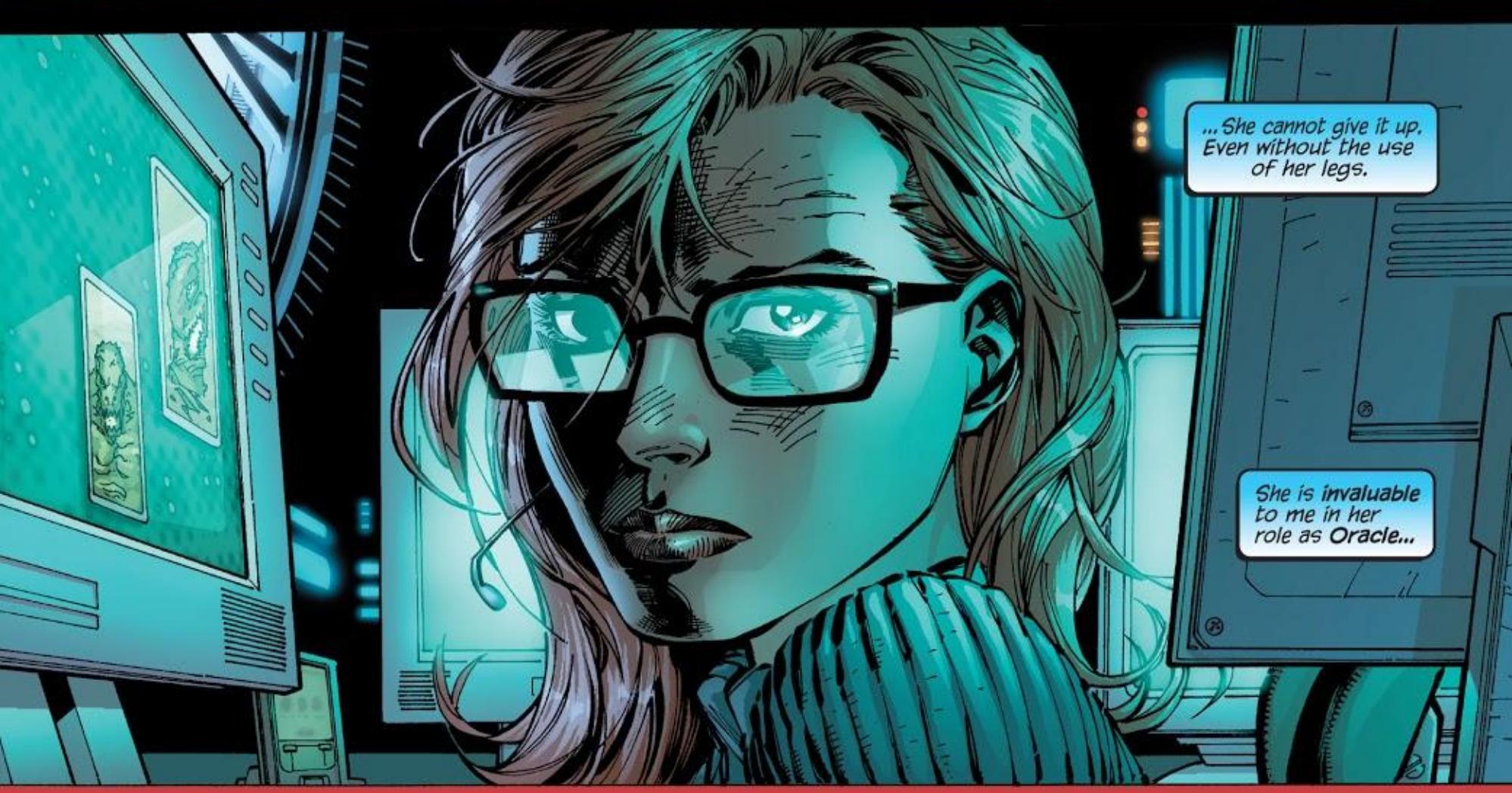
OUCHY...

-- defend The Joker
or his actions.

KRASH







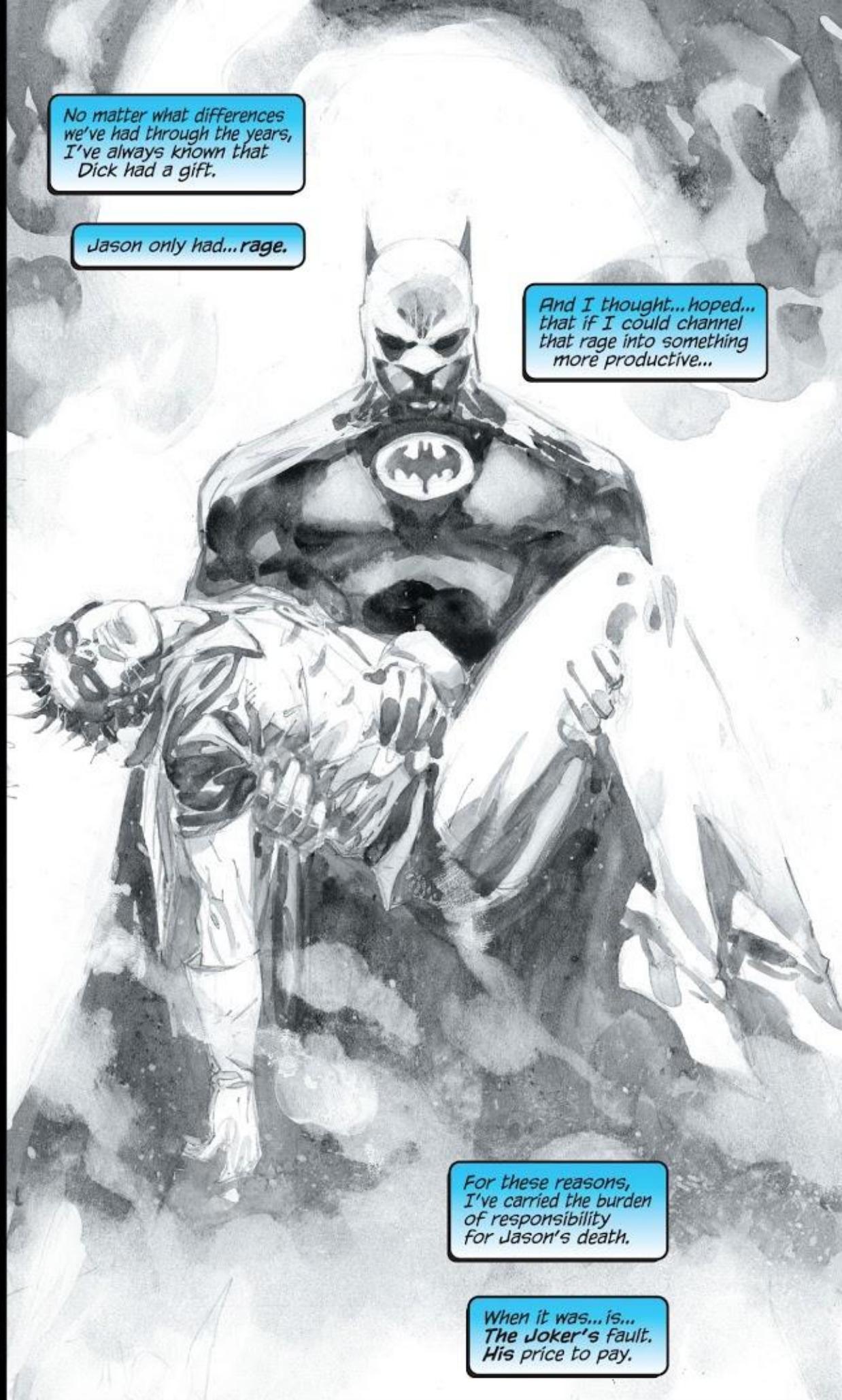






Jason never had the skills that Dick had.

I should never have let him put on the costume.



No matter what differences we've had through the years, I've always known that Dick had a gift.

Jason only had...rage.

And I thought...hoped... that if I could channel that rage into something more productive...

For these reasons, I've carried the burden of responsibility for Jason's death.

When it was...is... The Joker's fault. His price to pay.



GAHHHH!

Whatever feelings I may have for you, Selina -- and that is very complicated right now --

-- I cannot let you stop me.

Her bullet wound makes her vulnerable and I exploit it.

And I tell myself she will understand someday...

Selina...

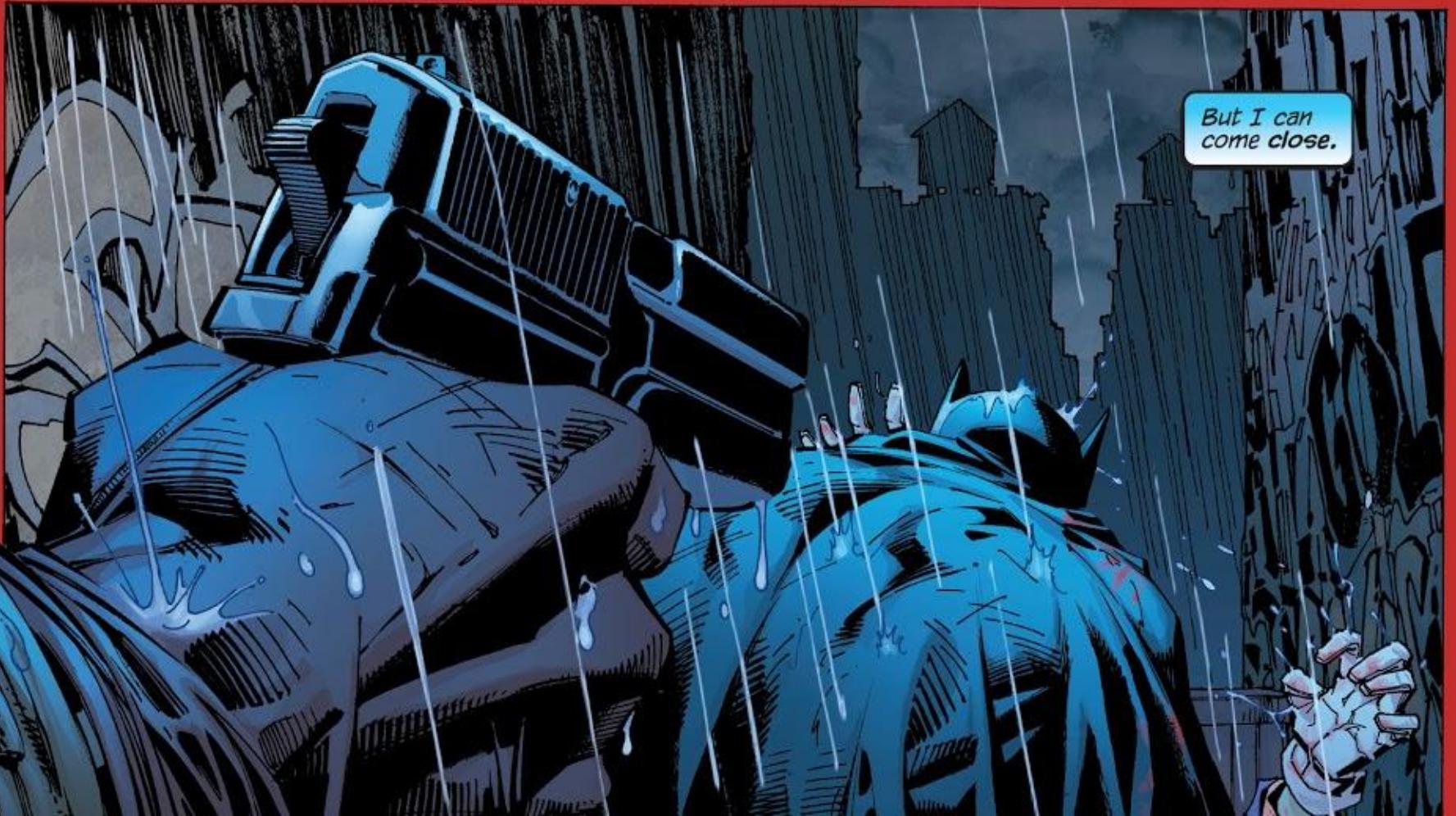


...Don't you see
that our relationship
only allows for the
possibility that
one night...

...it will be you
that I find killed
by The Joker?

I cannot...
will not...
allow that
nightmare
to become
a reality.





I could crush his windpipe and sever all oxygen from his brain.

STAND UP AND PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR.

BLAM

I could push his ribs right through his lungs and rupture his heart.

BLAM

THE NEXT SHOT, I WILL DROP YOU.

YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING. WHO AND WHAT MADE YOU WHO YOU ARE.

YOUR ROLE MODELS. THE BELIEFS THEY INSTILLED IN YOU.

AND THINK OF HOW THE JOKER COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT.

IT'S WHAT MAKES HIM WHO HE IS.
THINK.

I could pound his skull into the pavement until it fractured into so many pieces his brain would spill out.







*It was from an alley like this one
that a man with a gun emerged
from the darkness and murdered
my mother and father.*



*In that single moment,
my childhood ended.*



*I made a promise on
the grave of my parents
that I would rid this city of
the evil that took their lives.*

*Tonight... I nearly became
a part of that evil...*

