DC
BATMAN
519
JUN 95
MOENCH
JONES
BEATTY
BATMAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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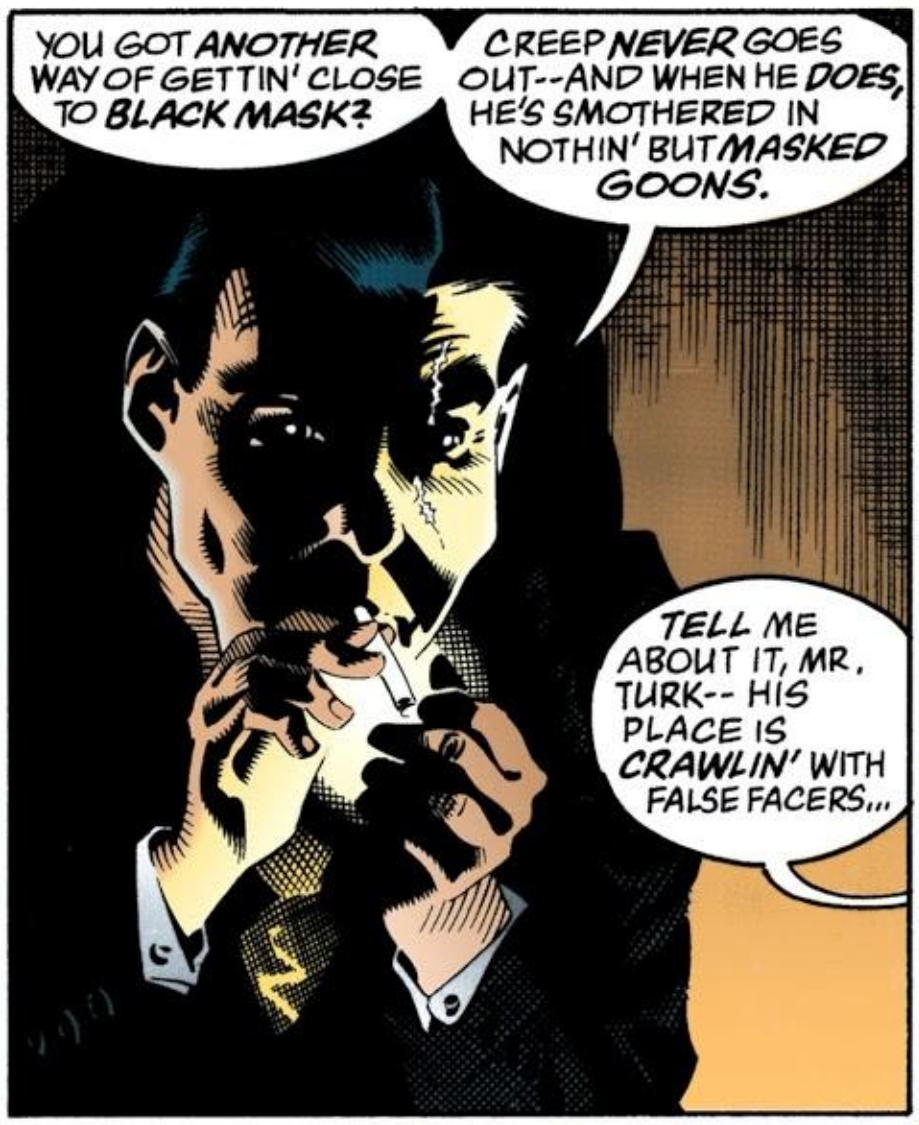
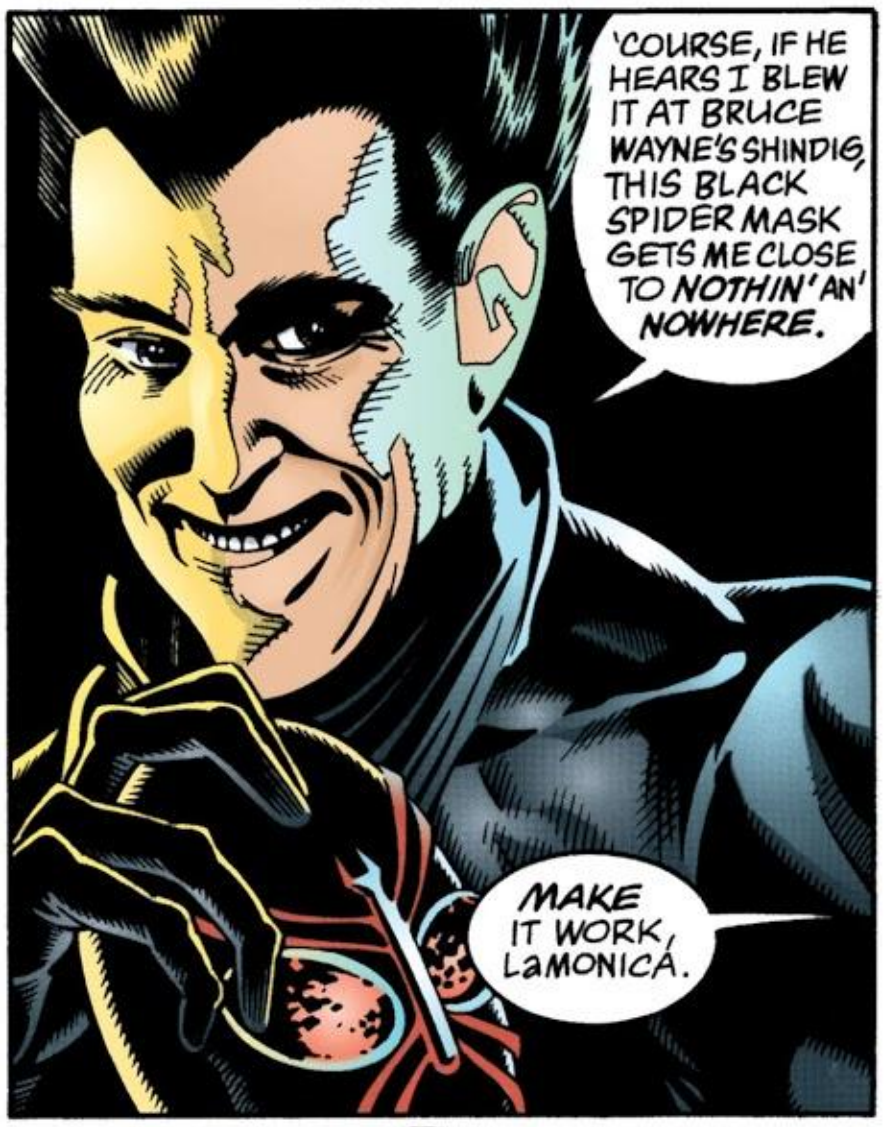
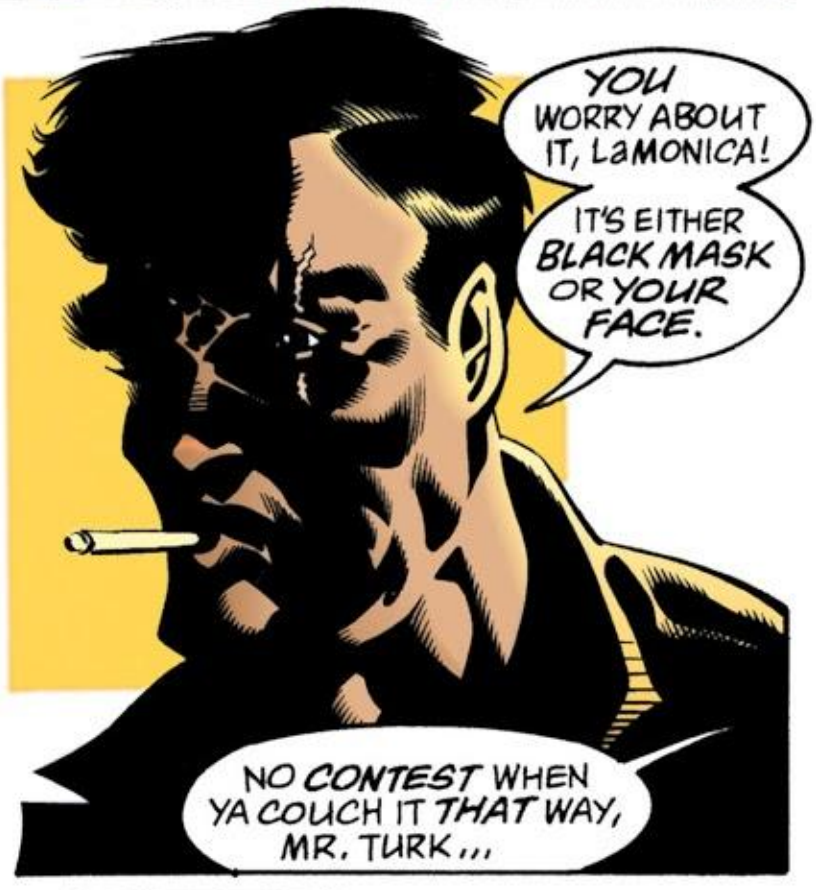
I'M TELLIN' YA-- FACE AS PRETTY AS MINE, IT'S A CRYIN' SHAME TO COVER IT UP...
...'SPECIALLY WITH A MASK AS UGLY AS THIS.
DM·KJ·JB·5
BLACK SPIDER : WEB OF SCARS


YOU GOT ANOTHER WAY OF GETTIN' CLOSE TO BLACK MASK?
CREEP NEVER GOES OUT--AND WHEN HE DOES, HE'S SMOTHERED IN NOTHIN' BUT MASKED GOONS.
TELL ME ABOUT IT, MR. TURK-- HIS PLACE IS CRAWLIN' WITH FALSE FACERS...

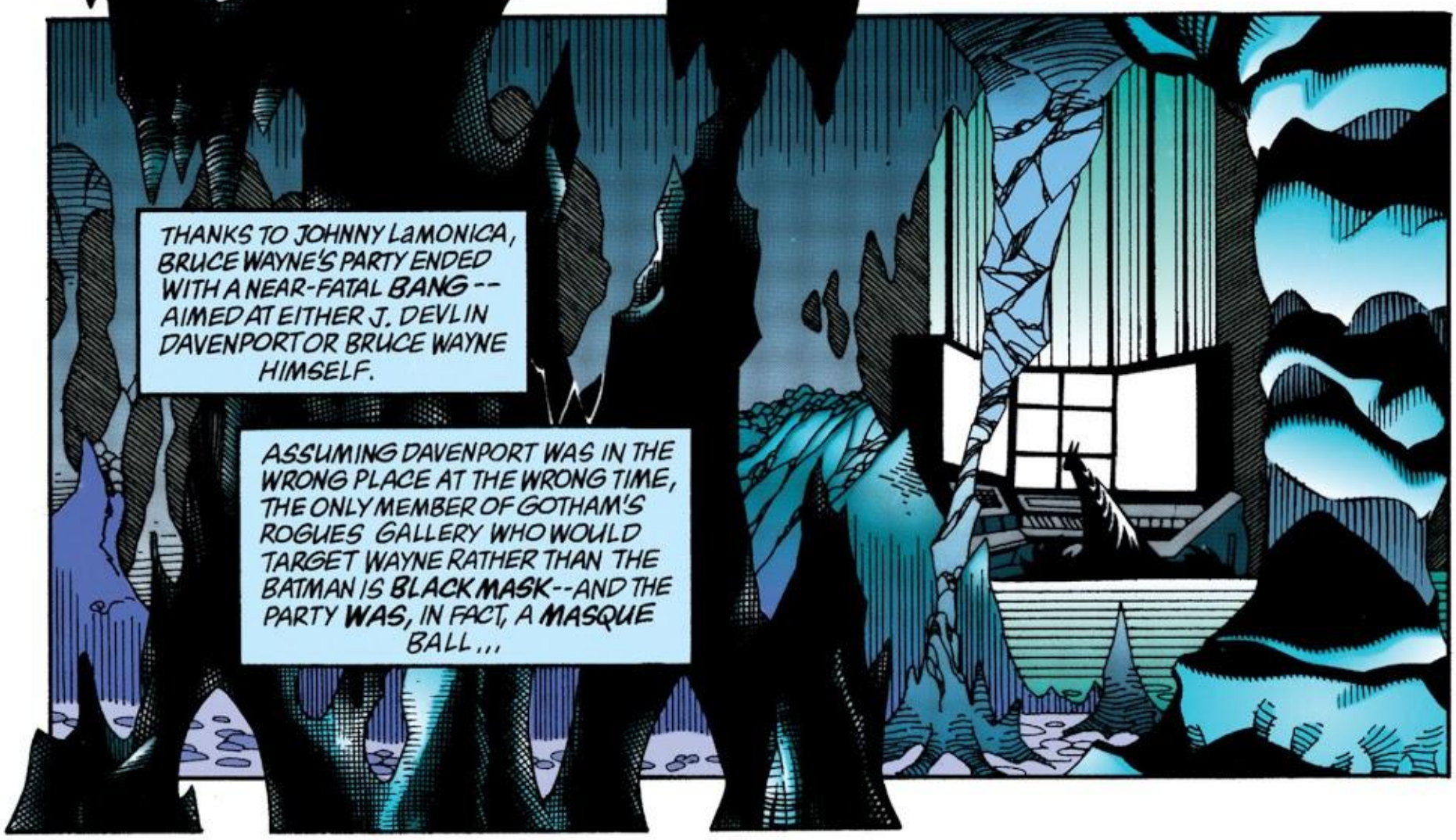

'COURSE, IF HE HEARS I BLEW IT AT BRUCE WAYNE'S SHINDIG, THIS BLACK SPIDER MASK GETS ME CLOSE TO NOTHIN' AN' NOWHERE.
MAKE IT WORK, LaMONICA.

I WANT HIS TURF, I WANT HIS GANG, I WANT HIS BLOOD.
WHACK HIM AN' YOU CAN KISS THE MIRROR FOR A WEEK--BUT JUST WHACK HIM.
HEY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, MR. TURK.

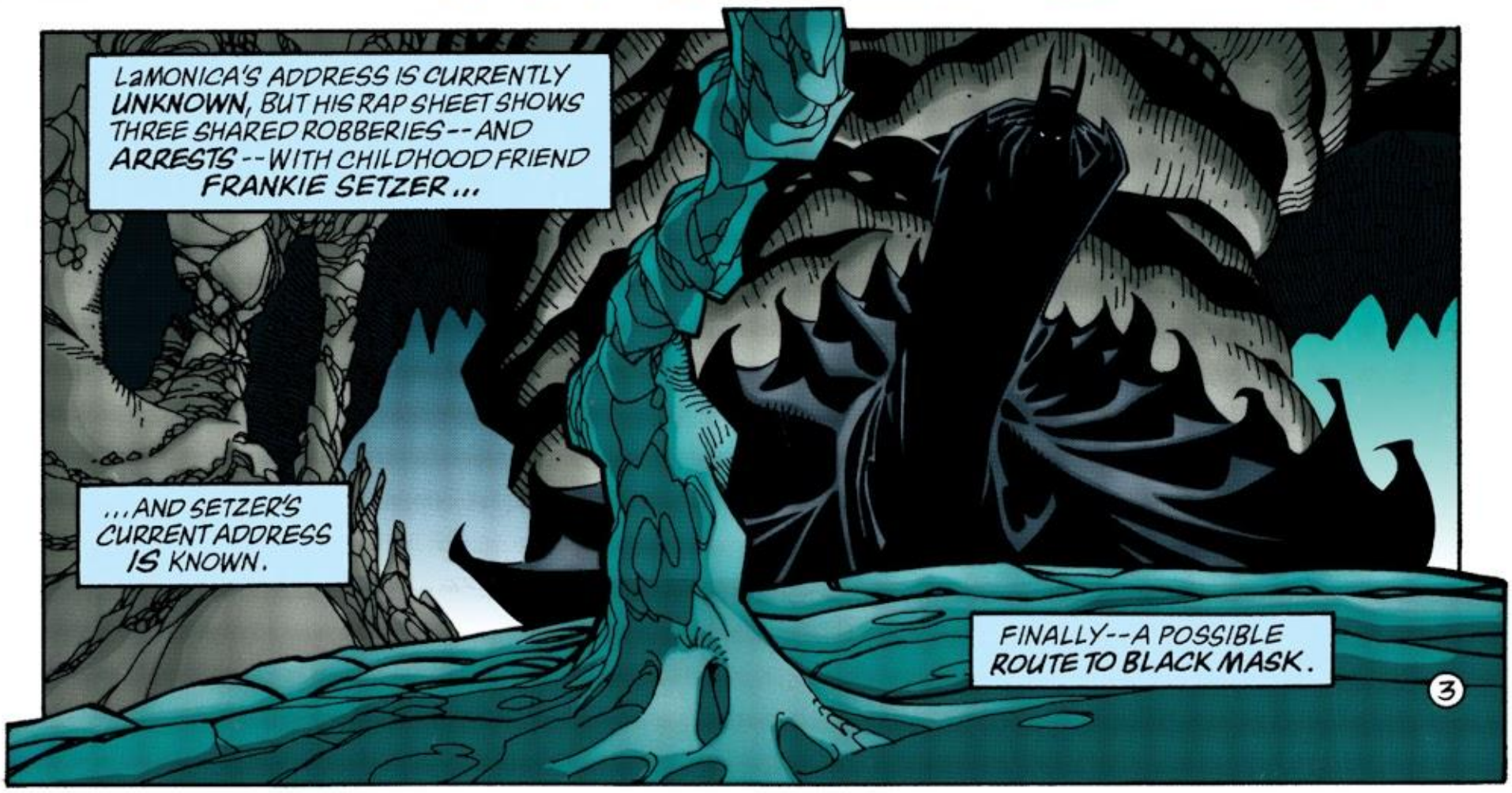

YOU WORRY ABOUT IT, LaMONICA!
IT'S EITHER BLACK MASK OR YOUR FACE.
NO CONTEST WHEN YA COUCH IT THAT WAY, MR. TURK...

...WITH BLACK SPIDER ON THE CASE, BLACK MASK LOSES FACE.
HOW?
I GOT MY WAYS...

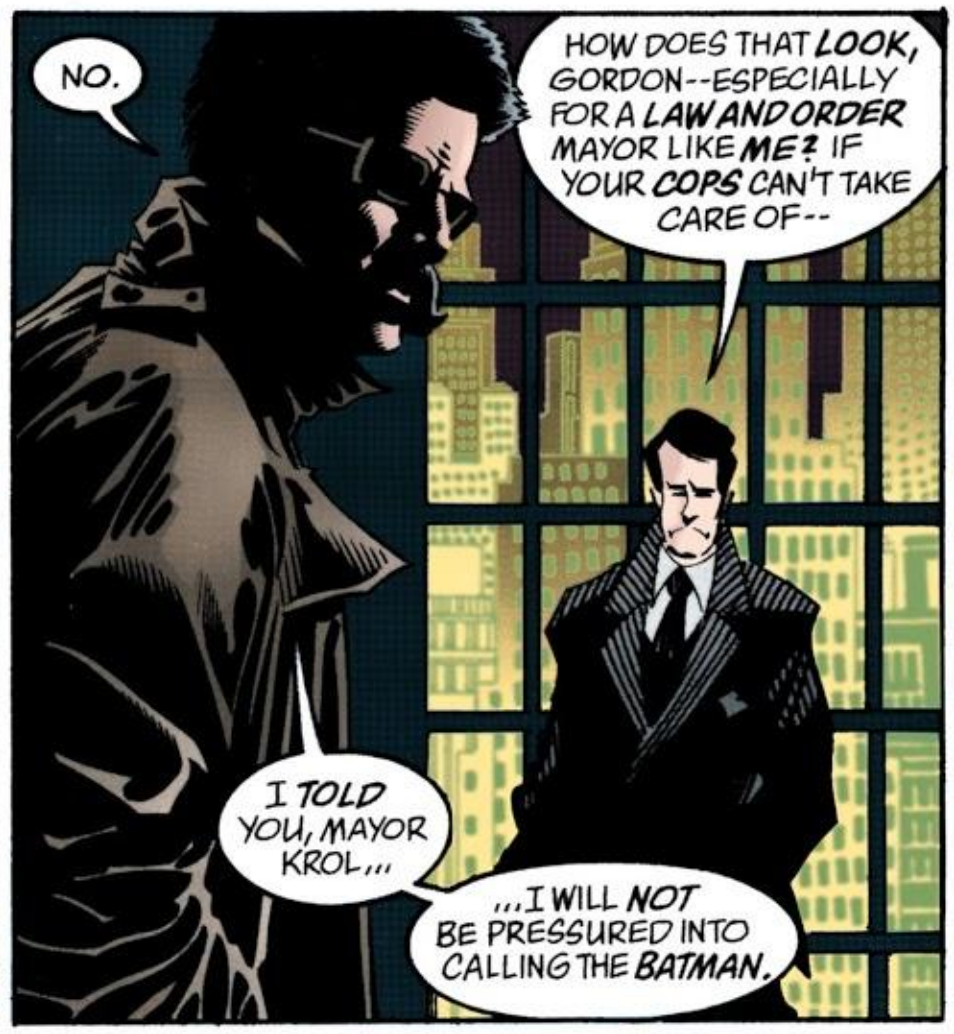
...TWO OF 'EM.
QUIET... AN' LOUD.
GOOSH AN' BOOM.


THANKS TO JOHNNY LaMONICA, BRUCE WAYNE'S PARTY ENDED WITH A NEAR-FATAL BANG -- AIMED AT EITHER J. DEVLIN DAVENPORT OR BRUCE WAYNE HIMSELF.
ASSUMING DAVENPORT WAS IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME, THE ONLY MEMBER OF GOTHAM'S ROGUES GALLERY WHO WOULD TARGET WAYNE RATHER THAN THE BATMAN IS BLACK MASK -- AND THE PARTY WAS, IN FACT, A MASQUE BALL...

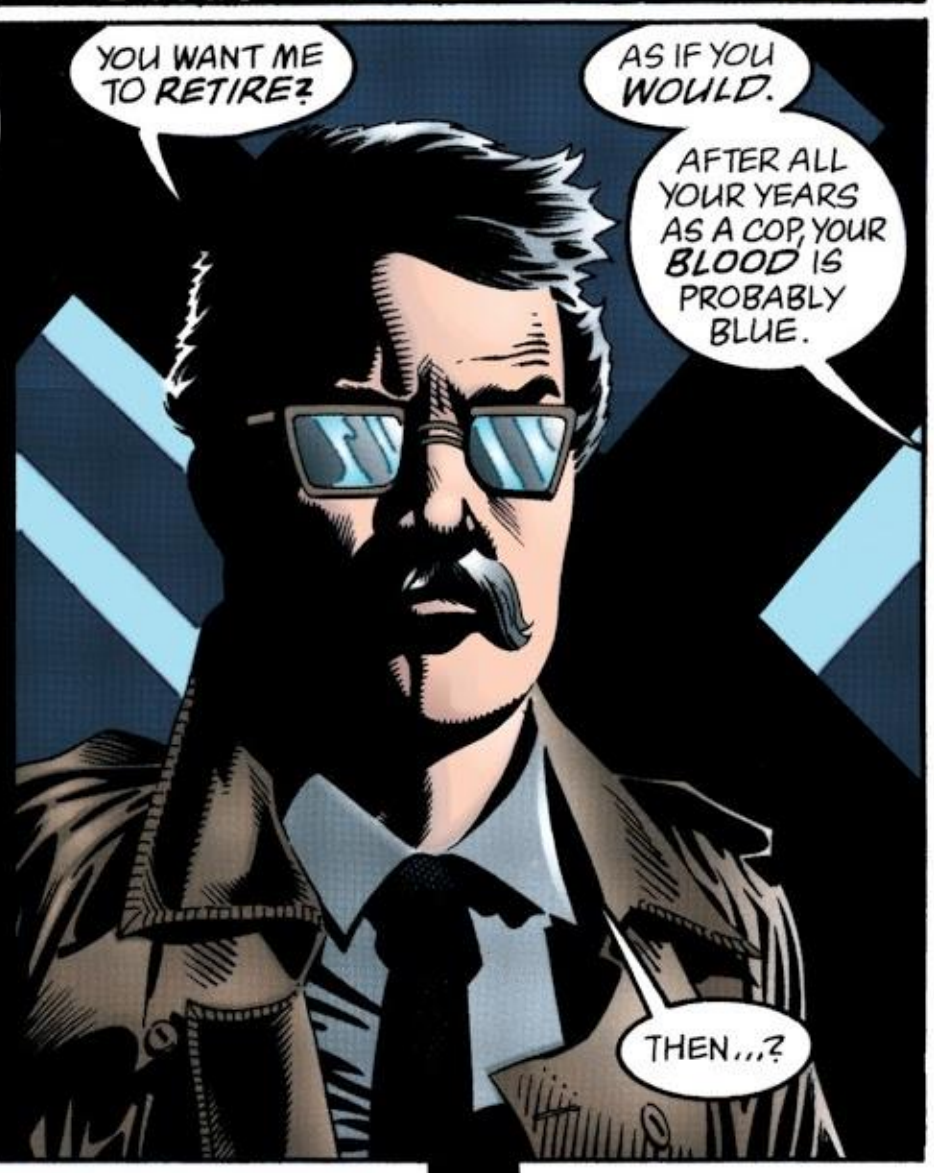
...WHICH MAY MEAN THAT JOHNNY LaMONICA'S NEW SPIDER-MASK WAS NOT ONLY A WAY TO CRASH THE PARTY...
...BUT ALSO AN INDICATION THAT HE'S NOW A MEMBER OF BLACK MASK'S FALSE FACE SOCIETY.


LaMONICA'S ADDRESS IS CURRENTLY UNKNOWN, BUT HIS RAP SHEET SHOWS THREE SHARED ROBBERIES -- AND ARRESTS -- WITH CHILDHOOD FRIEND FRANKIE SETZER...
...AND SETZER'S CURRENT ADDRESS IS KNOWN.
FINALLY -- A POSSIBLE ROUTE TO BLACK MASK.

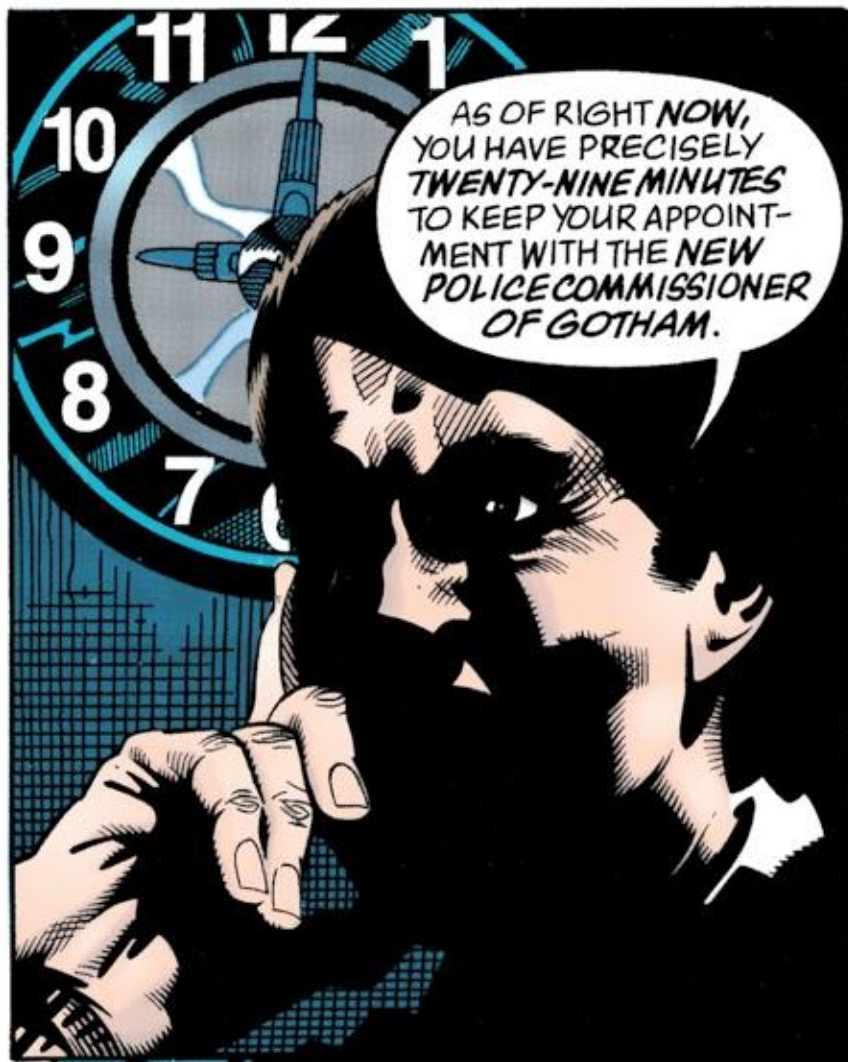
WHAT ABOUT THIS TOMMY "MANGLES" CRIMINAL, FOR INSTANCE? HE STILL HASN'T BEEN BROUGHT IN, HAS HE ...?
IT'S TIME FOR GRANGE
Marion Grange FOR MAYOR


NO.
HOW DOES THAT LOOK, GORDON--ESPECIALLY FOR A LAW AND ORDER MAYOR LIKE ME? IF YOUR COPS CAN'T TAKE CARE OF--
I TOLD YOU, MAYOR KROL...
...I WILL NOT BE PRESSURED INTO CALLING THE BATMAN.

NO?
THE ELECTION LOOMS, GORDON, AND I'M FACING THE LATEST FAD--A SQUEAKY-CLEAN DO-GOODER WOMAN CANDIDATE.
THE STAKES ARE HIGH, AND THE BATMAN IS YOUR ONLY ACE.
EITHER PLAY IT OR FOLD.


YOU WANT ME TO RETIRE?
AS IF YOU WOULD.
AFTER ALL YOUR YEARS AS A COP, YOUR BLOOD IS PROBABLY BLUE.
THEN...?

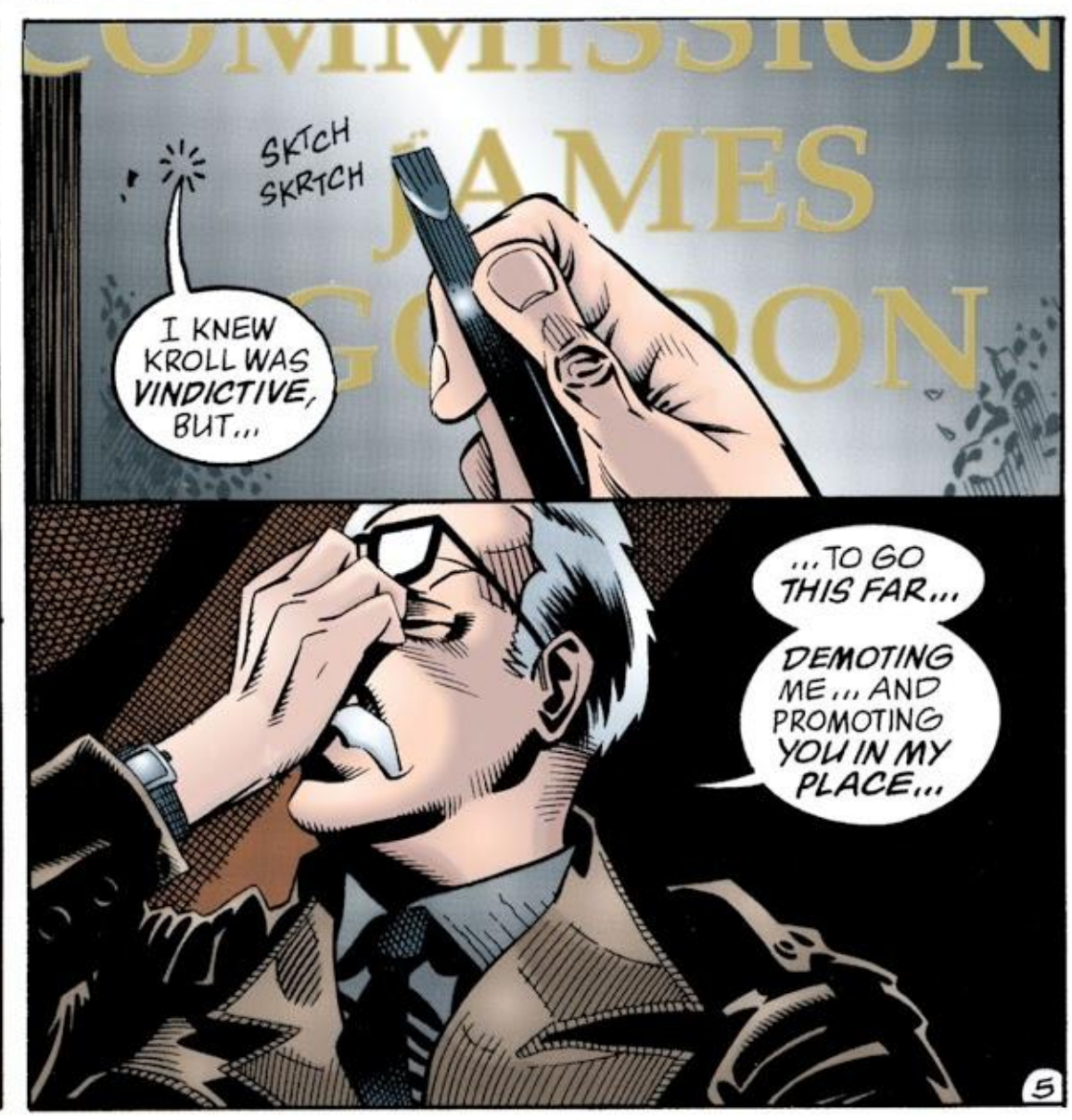
THE GAME JUST CHANGED, GORDON--
--AND I'M DEALING A NEW HAND--
IT'S TIME FOR GRANGE
Marion Grange FOR MAYOR


AS OF RIGHT NOW, YOU HAVE PRECISELY TWENTY-NINE MINUTES TO KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH THE NEW POLICE COMMISSIONER OF GOTHAM.

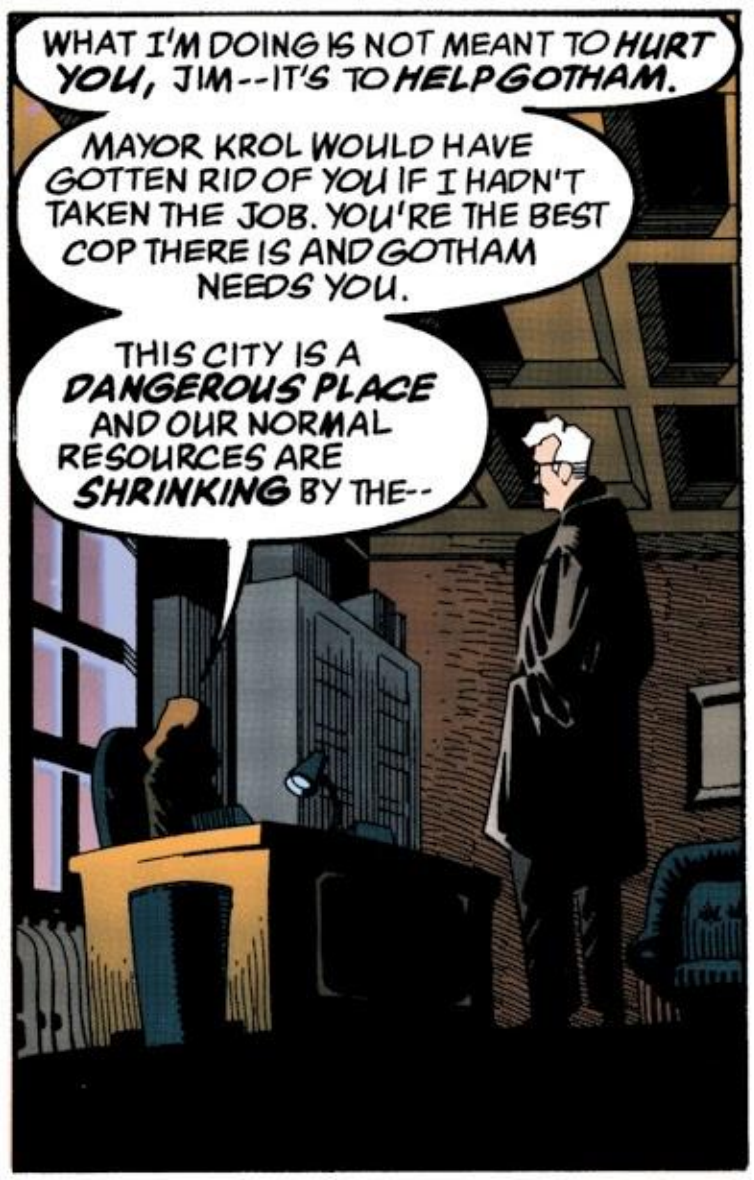
YOU...
YOU'RE FIRING ME?

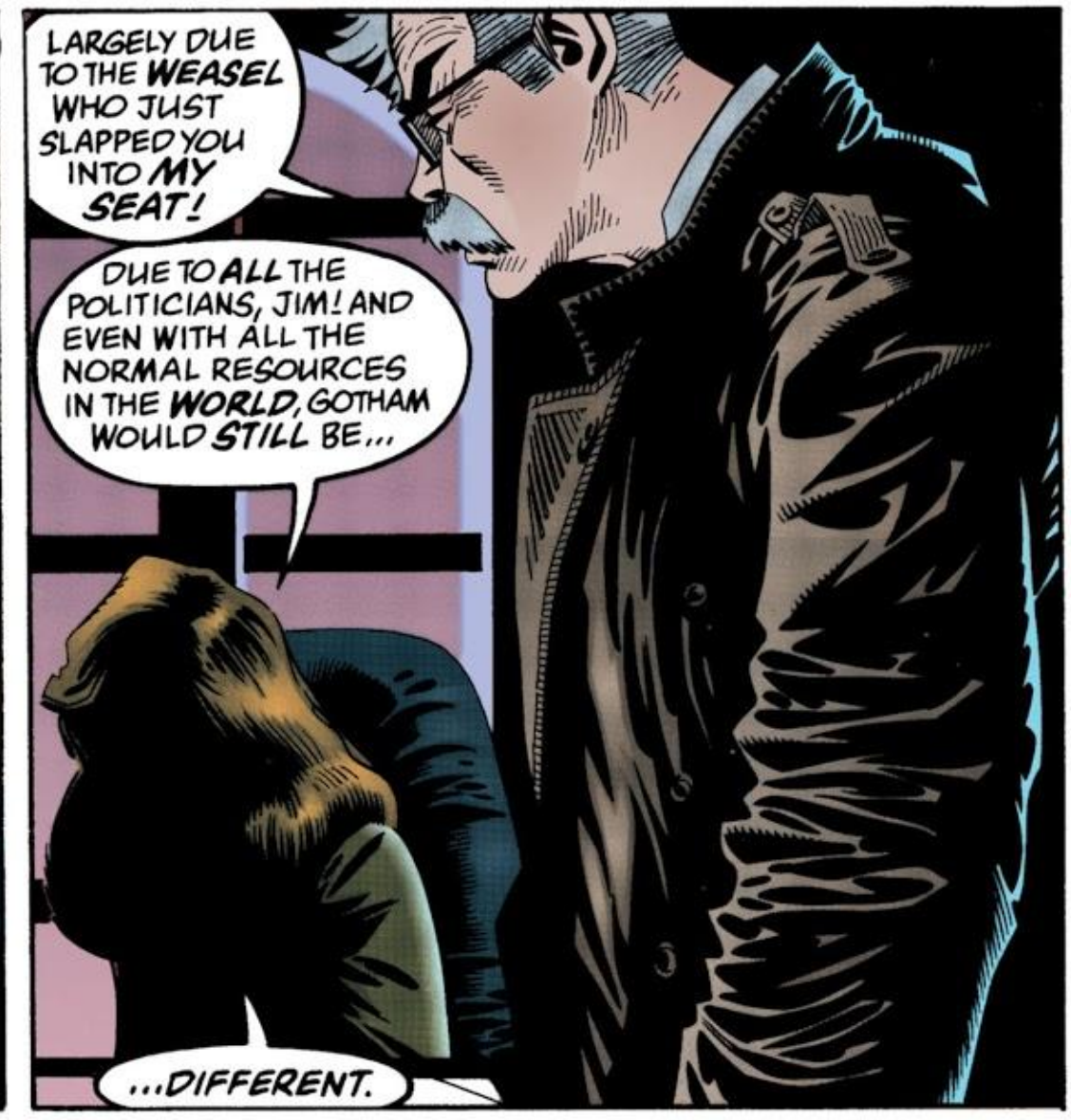
A MERE DEMOTION, GORDON.
BUT YOU'D BEST RUN.
THE MEETING IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN YOUR FORMER OFFICE--

"--AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS."
OH NO... NOT YOU...


SKTCH SKRTCH
I KNEW KROLL WAS VINDICTIVE, BUT...
...TO GO THIS FAR...
DEMOTING ME... AND PROMOTING YOU IN MY PLACE...

NOT YOU...
I...IT'S DIFFICULT ENOUGH, JIM...
SARAH GORDON
NOT YOU, SARAH.
MAYBE WE SHOULD DISCUSS THIS AFTER YOU'VE HAD TIME TO CALM DOWN...CLEAN OUT YOUR DESK...
SKTCH
SKRRT
...SETTLE INTO YOUR NEW--
INCREDIBLE.
YOU AND KROL HAD THE WHOLE THING WORKED OUT--EVERY TWIST OF THE DAGGER IN MY GUT!
SAVE THE MELODRAMA, JIM.
I KNOW THERE'S BEEN FRICTION BETWEEN YOU AND THE MAYOR, WHICH IS PARTLY WHY I ACCEPTED--
HE KNOWS WE'RE ESTRANGED, SARAH!
HE KNOWS I'VE BEEN SLEEPING HERE IN THIS OFFICE!
SKTCH SKTCH
IF YOU WANT, JIM, YOU CAN HAVE THE HOUSE NOW AND I'LL SLEEP HERE...OR TAKE AN APARTMENT CLOSER TO--
TO HELL WITH THE HOUSE!
HE'S USING YOU, SARAH--TO COUNTER THE "LATEST FAD" HE'S SO AFRAID OF! AND YOU DON'T EVEN REALIZE WHAT HE'S DOING--
--WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
SKRRT KRRT





IT'S BECOME A KILLING GROUND -- AS WELL AS A BREEDING GROUND FOR BIZARRE AND UNPREDICTABLE LUNATICS ... MANIACS!

AND IF IT TAKES MORE THAN A NORMAL POLICE FORCE TO STOP CRIMINALS LIKE--

YOU'RE PLAYING THE ACE NOW.

THE BATMAN.

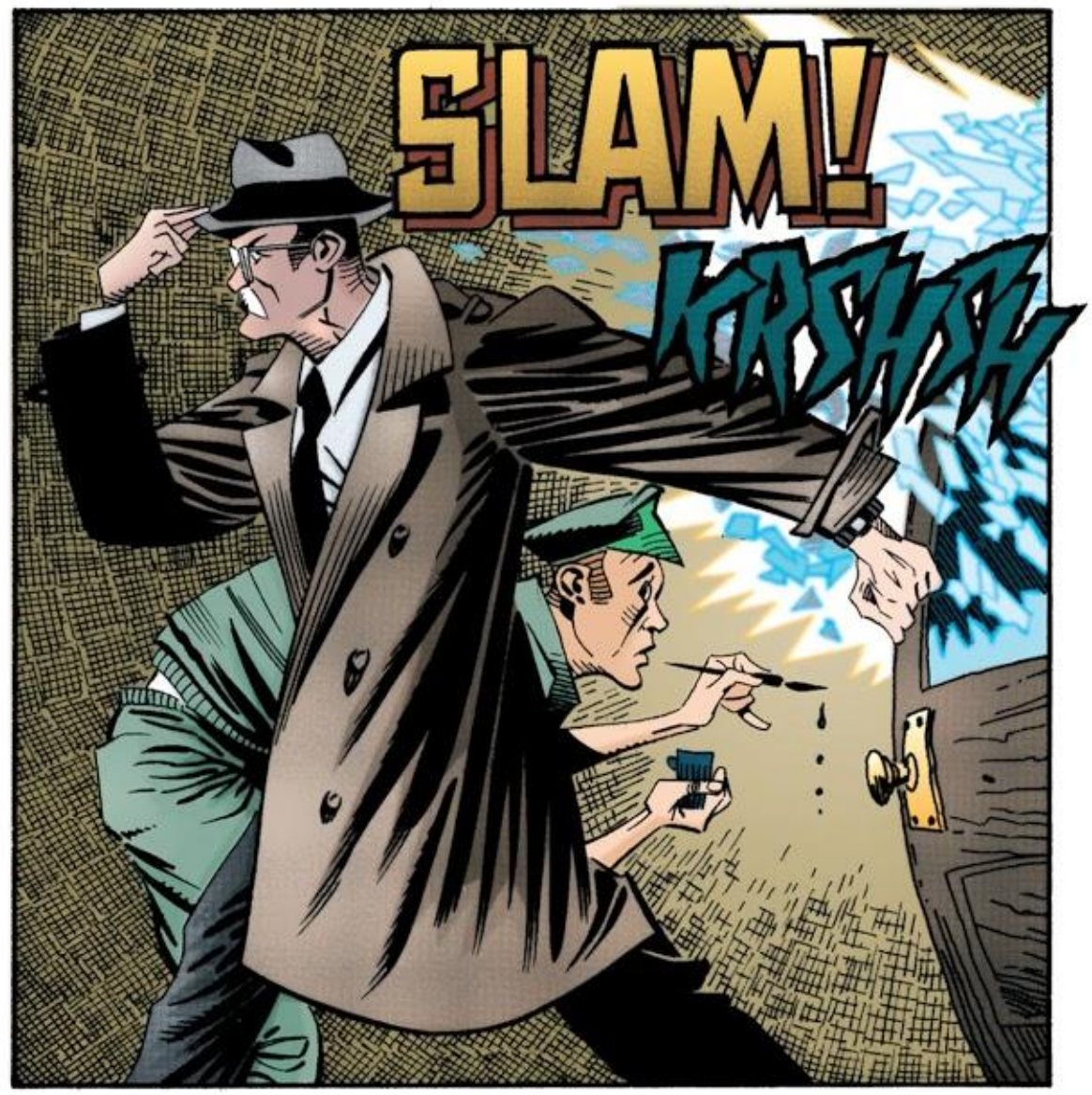
YOU DANGLED THAT DARK JAGGED CLOAK RIGHT IN KROL'S DROOLING FACE, DIDN'T YOU?

I MERELY AGREED THAT GOTHAM NEEDS--

WE REALLY HAVE REVERSED ROLES, HAVEN'T WE, SARAH?-- IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE!

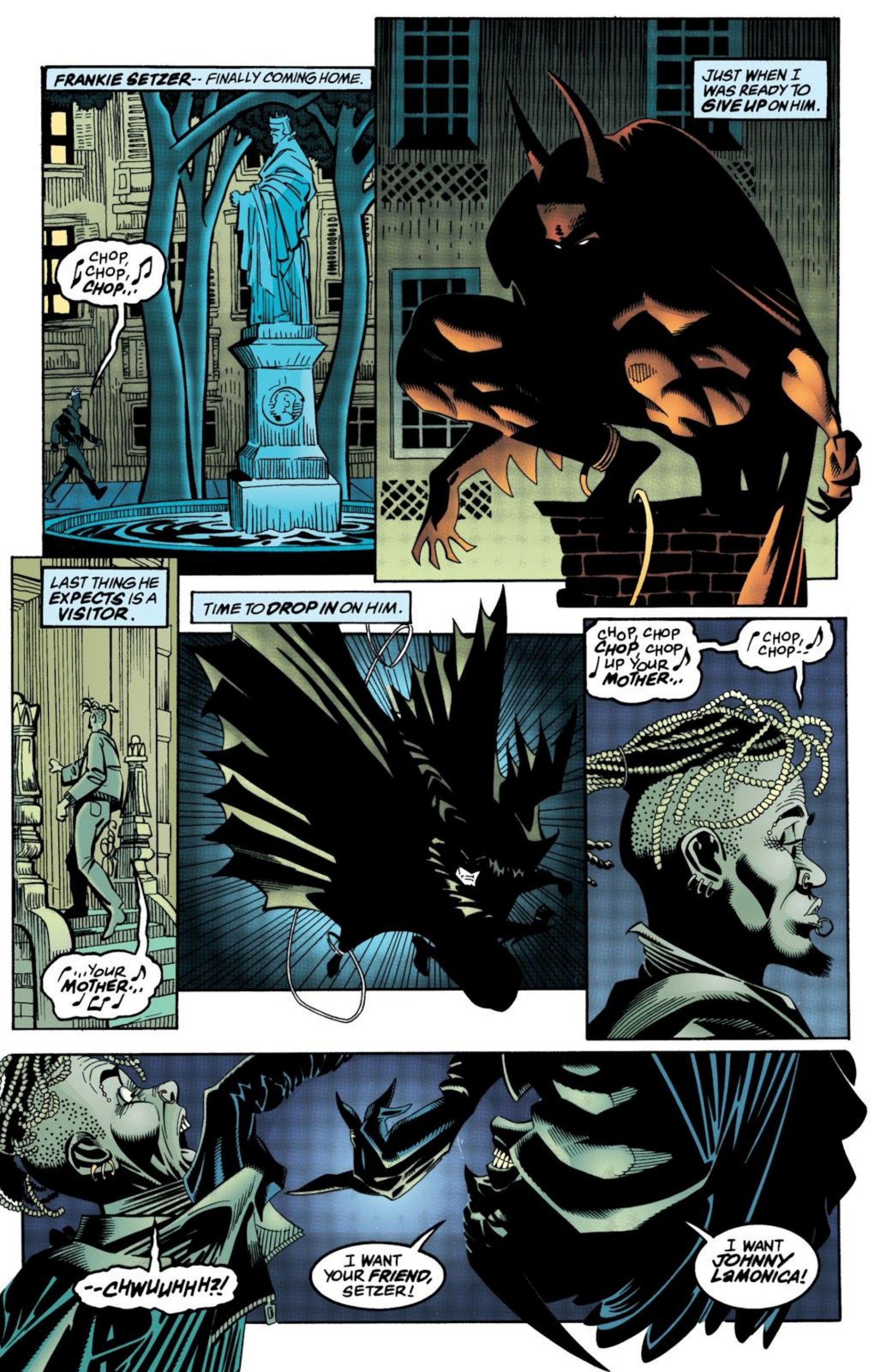
MISSIONE
SARAH

EH?


SLAM!
KRSHSK

JIM...

GOR
DO

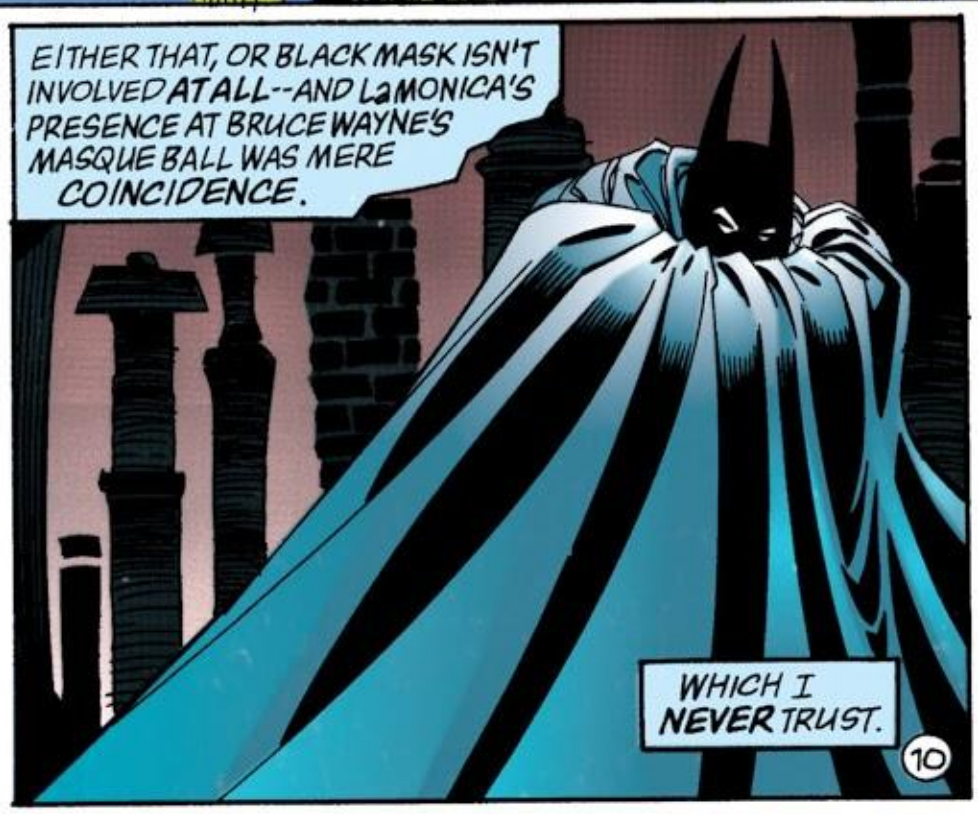

FRANKIE SETZER-- FINALLY COMING HOME.
CHOP, CHOP, CHOP...
JUST WHEN I WAS READY TO GIVE UP ON HIM.
LAST THING HE EXPECTS IS A VISITOR.
...YOUR MOTHER...
TIME TO DROP IN ON HIM.
CHOP, CHOP CHOP, CHOP UP YOUR MOTHER...
CHOP, CHOP--
--CHWUHHH?!
I WANT YOUR FRIEND, SETZER!
I WANT JOHNNY LAMONICA!

I KNOW HE'S WORKING FOR BLACK MASK, BUT WHERE IS--
B-BLACK MASK--! N-N-N-NO--THE TURK ... JOHNNY'S IN WITH THE TURK NOW...

IF YOU MEAN OTTOMAN, YOU'RE LYING.
HE'S GONE STRAIGHT.
N-NO... I SWEAR-- THE TURK'S JUST BEEN COOLIN' IT, WAITIN' TO MAKE A BIG MOVE ...RECRUITED JOHNNY LAST MONTH.

THEN HIS SPIDER FACE IS DOUBLY FALSE--
--NOTHING BUT A RUSE AND A ROLE, A WAY OF GETTING CLOSE TO BLACK MASK...
WHOA--!

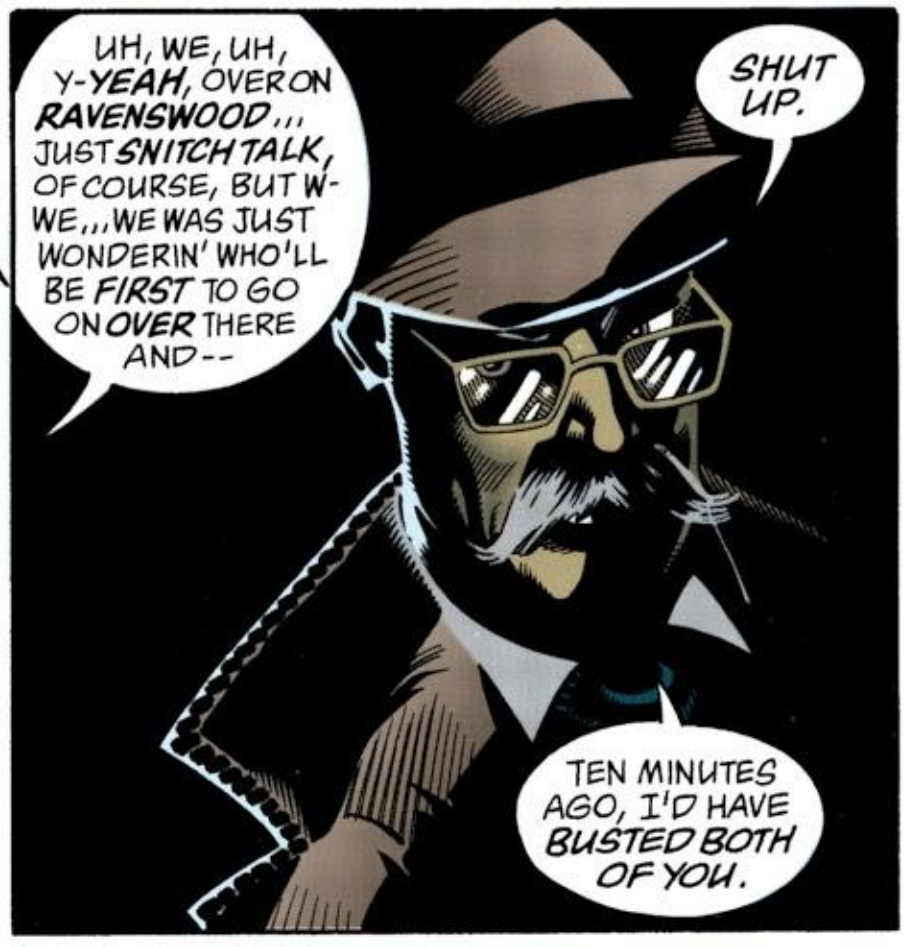
...PROBABLY TO KILL HIM AS THE FIRST STEP IN OTTOMAN'S "BIG MOVE."
B-BUNGEE JUMPING...?


EITHER THAT, OR BLACK MASK ISN'T INVOLVED AT ALL--AND LaMONICA'S PRESENCE AT BRUCE WAYNE'S MASQUE BALL WAS MERE COINCIDENCE.
WHICH I NEVER TRUST.

ANYBODY BROUGHT IN TOMMY MANGLES YET?
YOU KIDDIN'?
NOBODY'S EAGER TO EXECUTE THAT WARRANT.
ISSUED A WEEK AGO, WASN'T IT?

SO WHAT'S YOUR POINT? I DON'T SEE YOU IN ANY RUSH TO TRIP OVER IT.
HEY, I'M ASSIGNED TO--
YEAH, YEAH, THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ALL SAYIN', AIN'T IT...?
ONLY ONE MAYBE CRAZY ENOUGH TO TACKLE A MONSTER LIKE MANGLES IS BULLOCK, BUT HE JUST GOT OUTTA THE HOSPITAL.

YEAH, AND I HEAR MANGLES IS GLOATIN' ON IT ALL, HANGIN' OUT AT THE RUSTY NAIL TELLIN' COP JOKES JUST ABOUT EVERY NI--
THAT WOULD BE THE RUSTY NAIL ON RAVENSWOOD AVENUE?
COMMISSIONER G-GORDON...

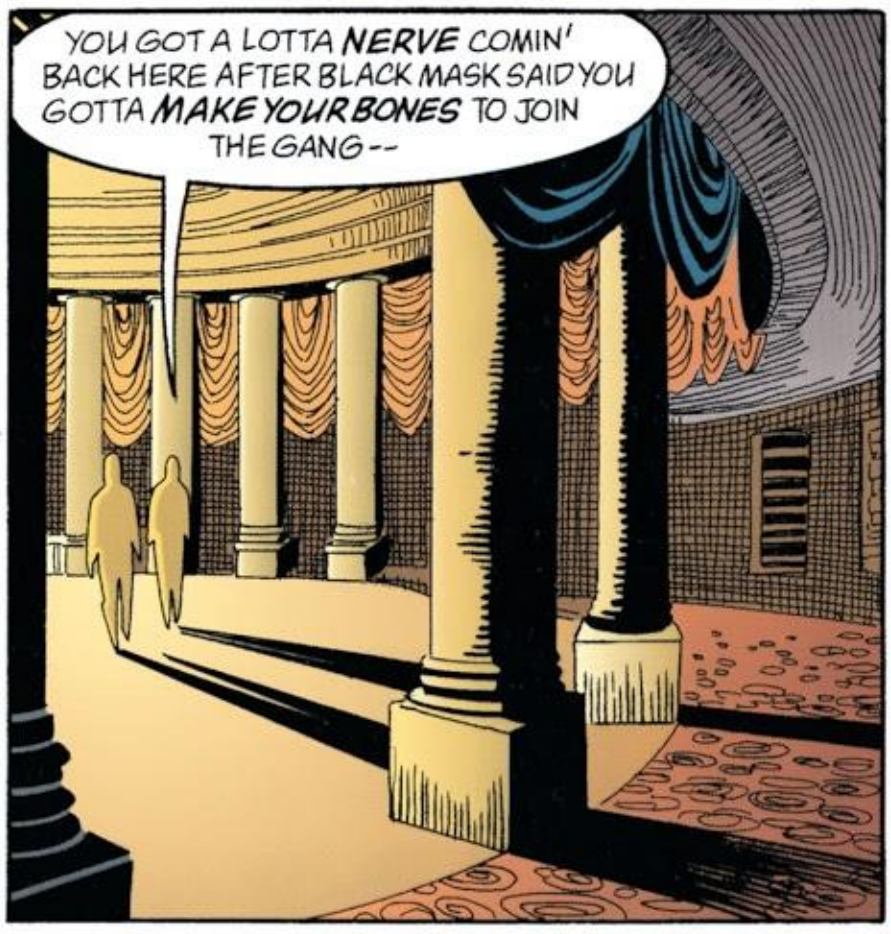

UH, WE, UH, Y-YEAH, OVER ON RAVENSWOOD... JUST SNITCH TALK, OF COURSE, BUT W-WE...WE WAS JUST WONDERIN' WHO'LL BE FIRST TO GO ON OVER THERE AND--
SHUT UP.
TEN MINUTES AGO, I'D HAVE BUSTED BOTH OF YOU.

NOW THAT I CAN'T--
--I'VE GOT BIGGER FISH TO FRY.

SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THE TURK'S ONLY PRETENDING TO BE CLEAN.
SCARS DON'T SCRUB OFF, OTTOMAN.
HUHN--?
SKRRRRINK
WHO THE--?
WHEN YOU HIRED JOHNNY LaMONICA TO PENETRATE BLACK MASK'S ORGANIZATION, WHERE DID YOU SEND HIM?
Y-Y-Y-YOU...?!
WHERE IS BLACK MASK?!
H-HE...HE'S IN AN ABANDONED M-MOVIE THEATER... THE MAJESTIC...
IF I WERE YOU, OTTOMAN, I'D FORGET ABOUT MAKING ANY MOVE, BIG OR SMALL. I'D STAY IN THERE AND KEEP CLEAN FOREVER...
...EVEN AT THE RISK OF A COLD-WATER SHOWER SHOCK.
K-CHNG
FLSHSH
YAHH!
FREEZING--!
BECAUSE IF I COME BACK... I FLUSH YOU.

MAJESTIC
CLOSED
tok tok tok

kreeeek
WELL, WELL, WELL, IF IT AIN'T THE HOTSHOT BLACK SPIDER --BUT HARDLY A TARANTULA, HUH?
NEVER SAID I WAS, CHIEF.


YOU GOT A LOTTA NERVE COMIN' BACK HERE AFTER BLACK MASK SAID YOU GOTTA MAKE YOUR BONES TO JOIN THE GANG--

--AND WITH THE NEWS SAYIN' NO ONE WAS HURT DURIN' THE DISTURBANCE AT BRUCE WAYNE'S MASQUERADE BALL.
WHAT HAPPENED-- YOUR SPIDER-FANGS RUN OUTTA VENOM?
NOPE.
JUST SAVIN' IT, CHIEF...

SKITCH
AGH-K!
...FOR YOU.

the RUSTY-NAIL
HEAT STILL ON YA, MANGLES?
I WOULDN'T KNOW...

MATTER O' FACT, IT'S NOTHIN' BUT CHILLY WHERE-EVER I GO...
TOMMY "MANGLES" MANCHESTER.
OBOY.

YEAH? WHADDA YOU WAN--
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

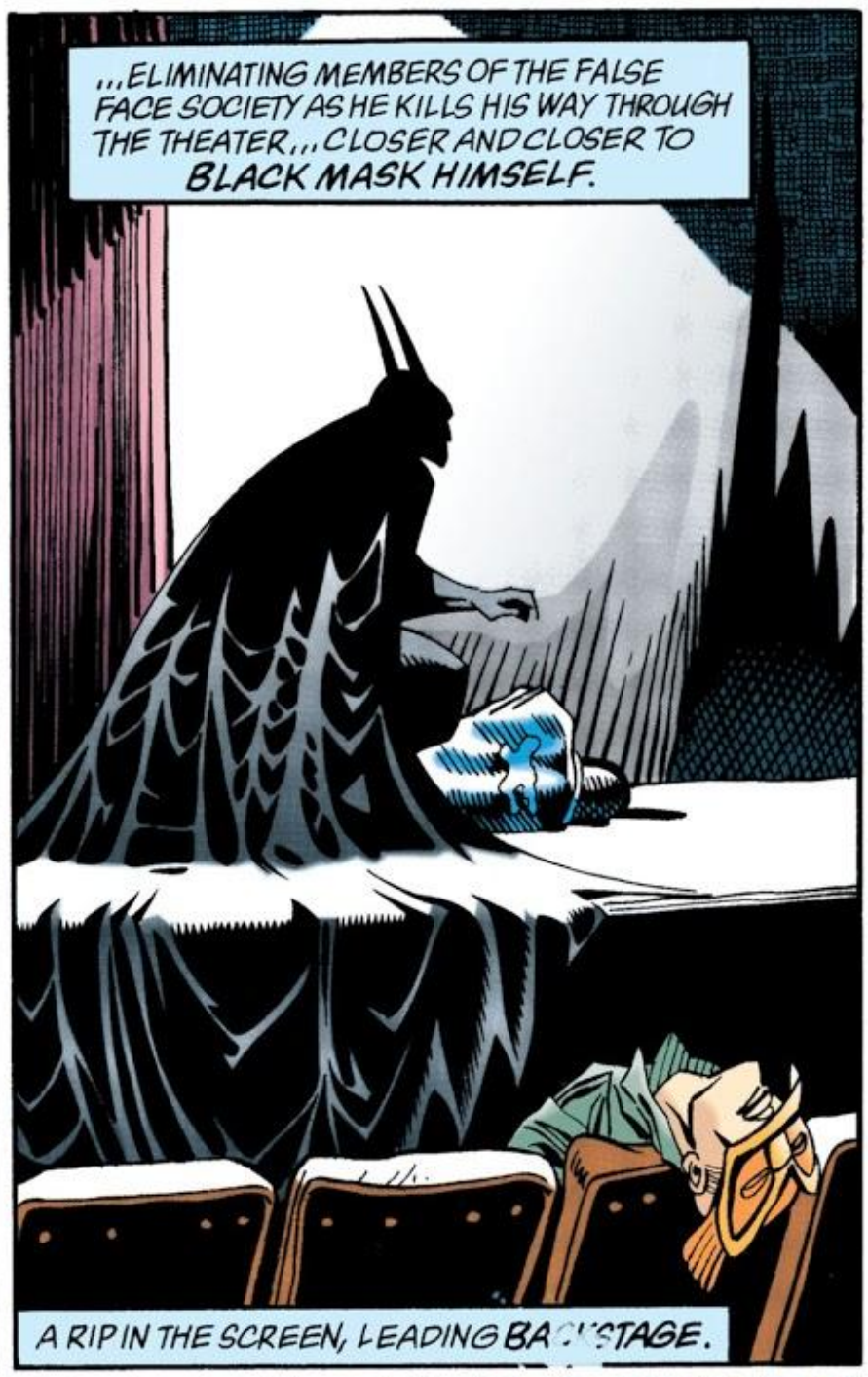
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT.

ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN AND WILL BE USED--

RUUAHHHH!
YER DEAD, PIG!
SAPT

--AGAINST YOU!
BUKSH
CHOOF
SWOKK
KLUDT
KUKRATCH
krikt
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONSULT AN ATTORNEY...

DEAD.
KNIFED.
LaMONICA'S ALREADY INSIDE, BUT TRYING TO STAY QUIET...


...ELIMINATING MEMBERS OF THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY AS HE KILLS HIS WAY THROUGH THE THEATER... CLOSER AND CLOSER TO BLACK MASK HIMSELF.
A RIP IN THE SCREEN, LEADING BACKSTAGE.

LIKE HIS LAST PLACE, THE WHOLE BUILDING IS NOTHING BUT A MASK COVERING ITS TRUE NATURE -- A HIDEOUT FOR BLACK MASK.

WHO THE--?!
LaMONICA MISSED ONE.
GOOD.

I NEED HIS MOUTH.
THRAKK

WHERE'S BLACK MASK?
D-DOWN... DOWN THE ST-STAIRS... IN--

"--B-BASEMENT."
THEY WERE PHONIES, CIRCE--MY FATHER AND ALL HIS STINKING FRIENDS...
...PAMPERED, PRIVILEGED PHONIES HIDING BEHIND MASKS OF MONEY.

BUT MY MASK IS TRUE, CIRCE--CARVED FROM THE EBONY LID OF MY FATHER'S COFFIN--MAKING IT A MASK OF DEATH.
TALKIN' TO A MANNEQUIN? THE GEEK'S BRAIN-DEAD BEHIND THAT BLACK MASK.

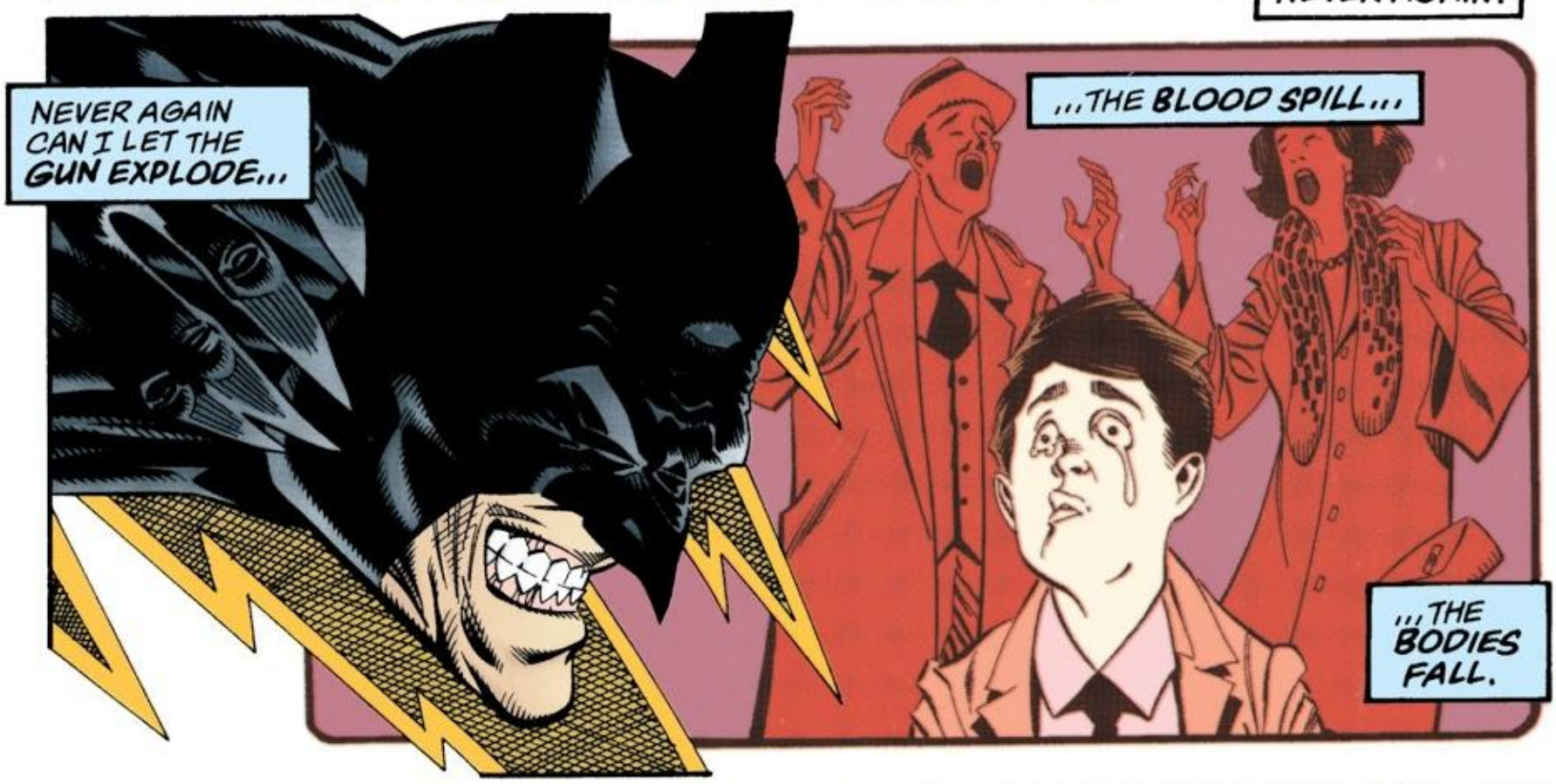
STENCH... LIKE THE SEWERS... AND THERE'S LaMONICA--DRAWING A BEAD ON BLACK MASK...

THROW BEFORE OR AFTER HE FIRES HIS GUN? IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ONE OR BOTH GOING DOWN...
NOW?
OR THREE SECONDS FROM NOW?
SWFFF
NOW.
WAKT
WHAT THE--?!
BAM!
PLOKT
CIRCE--?!

IT WAS ALSO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...
SWOKK
BATMAN--?
...AS WELL AS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ME AND JEAN PAUL VALLEY...
CHUPT
...BETWEEN THE REAL BATMAN...
THRAK
...AND THE WORST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE.
HITTING LaMONICA NOW MEANS LETTING BLACK MASK RUN...
FATHER, I HATE YOU!
...AND REMAIN AT LARGE...
IF I COULD--
KEESH
--I'D SMASH YOU A HUNDRED TIMES!

BUT STRIKING NOW--
FRAKT
GUH-H!
--ALSO PREVENTS MURDER.

I STOOD AND WATCHED IT ONCE.
THE MIRROR-- MASKING A WAY OUT THROUGH THE SEWERS!
NEVER AGAIN.


NEVER AGAIN CAN I LET THE GUN EXPLODE...
...THE BLOOD SPILL...
...THE BODIES FALL.

KRSHSH
AHRRR!
MY FAAACE!!

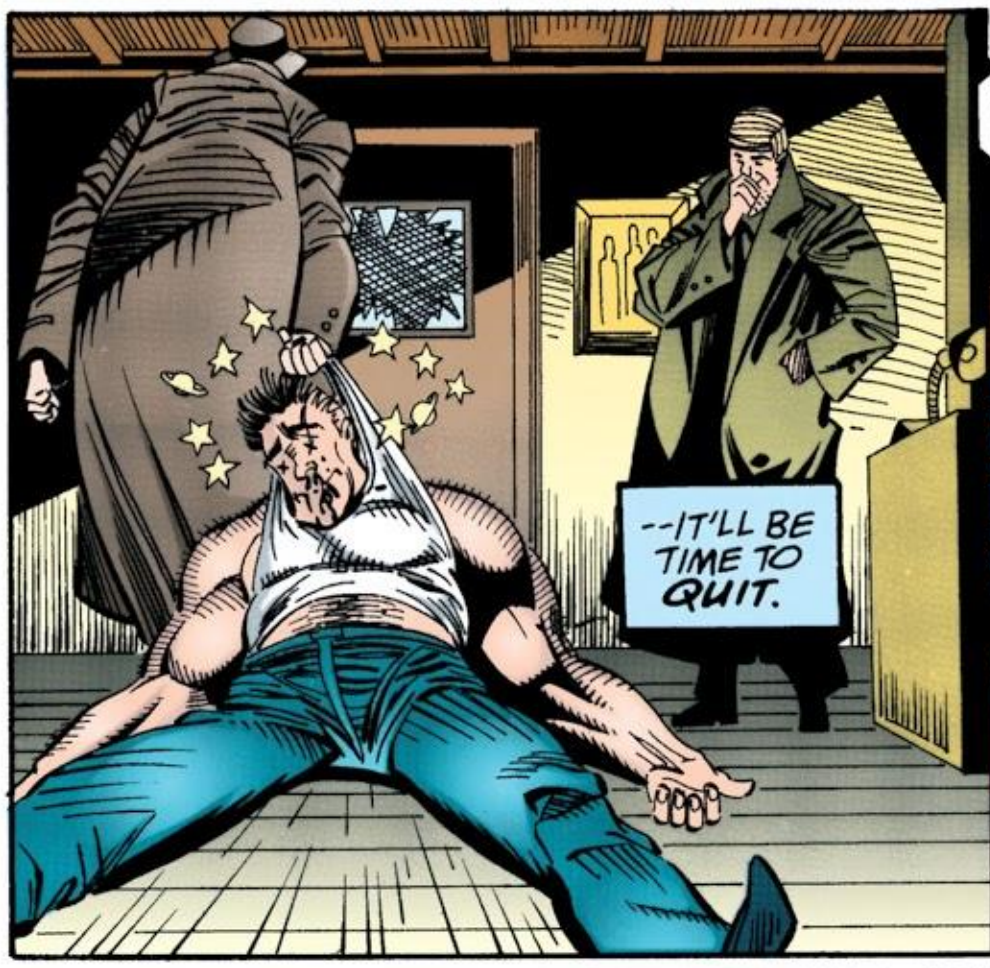
NEVER AGAIN.
HWUKSH
NEVER AGAIN WILL I PERMIT ANYONE'S MURDER--

--EVEN WHEN THE PRESERVED LIFE MASKS A SOUL ALREADY DEAD.

THE DISTURBING THING IS THAT I EVEN PAUSED ...
...TO CHOOSE...
...WHEN THERE WAS NO CHOICE TO CONSIDER.
--I CAN ONLY HOPE I'LL FEEL THE SAME.

EVEN IF BLACK MASK LIVES TO KILL TOMORROW--OR TEN YEARS FROM TOMORROW--
I'M FREE, FATHER...
GOTHAM

IF I DON'T--


--IT'LL BE TIME TO QUIT.

OH, UH, EXCUSE ME--I WAS LOOKING FOR COMMISSIONER GORDON.
YOU FOUND HER--I'M COMMISSIONER GORDON.
B-BUT...
COMMISSIONER SARAH GORDON.

BUT... I THOUGHT J-JAMES GORDON--
HAS BEEN REASSIGNED TO A MORE HANDS-ON POSITION WITHIN THE POLICE DEPARTMEN--
BWAKK

YOU CAN TAKE MY NEW "HANDS-ON POSITION"...

FWMP

BAKK
...AND STUFF IT.

N · E · X · T:

BULLOCK

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